

The Archaeology of Virginia's Long Seventeenth Century, 1550-1720: Previous Research and Future Directions

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Time Line

- 1561-66: Spanish expeditions from Havana and La Florida explore the Chesapeake Bay in search of trade routes to the west and to scout potential sites for settlement.
- 1570: Jesuit priests establish the Ajacan mission on the York River in an attempt to Christianize the native Indians; the venture fails the next year when the priests are killed by the natives.
- 1607: The English establish their first permanent settlement in Virginia when 104 colonists disembark at Jamestown Island and erect James Fort.
- 1607-08: John Smith and his crew explore the Chesapeake Bay and its major tributaries by boat; the Englishmen record the locations of the Indian settlements they pass.
- 1609-14: Colonists and the Powhatan Indians engage in a series of armed conflicts as the natives attempt to protect their rights to the land.
- 1614: English settlers begin to cultivate tobacco, which becomes the primary source of wealth for the colony for the next 200 years.
- 1617-22: Twenty-three "particular plantations," or subsidiary corporations controlled by stock holders, are created as part of an attempt to encourage immigration and the spread of settlement beyond Jamestown.
- 1619: The first enslaved Africans are introduced to Virginia; the first representative legislative assembly is formed.
- 1622: 200,000 pounds of tobacco are shipped out of Virginia; the homes of 1500 settlers spread for 50 miles along the James River; in response to the pressures of continued immigration of Englishmen, the Powhatan Indians attack and kill several hundred settlers in a series of coordinated attacks.
- 1624: Due to the colony's failure to develop according to plan, the Virginia Company is stripped of its administrative power and the authority reverts to the crown.
- 1624-25: A "muster" is taken of all of the English settlements in Virginia, listing @1200 inhabitants, along with weapons, provisions, and other goods.
- 1620s-30s: Due to high prices and a ready trans-Atlantic market, tobacco cultivation

for the export trade becomes highly profitable and thus encourages the expansion of the plantation system.

- 1660: As testimony to the attraction of the prosperity to be had from tobacco, the total population of Virginia reaches @25,000 individuals.
- 1668: English settlement spreads inland up to the Fall Line along the James, York, Rappahannock, and Potomac Rivers, and on the Eastern Shore as far north as Accomac.
- 1674: Total population reaches approximately 32,000; the black population numbers between 1,000 and 3,000 persons.
- 1676: In response to a series of armed encounters between colonists and local natives, a force of disaffected planters, freedmen, and servants, under the leadership of Nathaniel Bacon, overthrows the royal government; the governor's authority is reinstated later that year.
- Ca. 1690: The number of native-born adults equals that of immigrants for the first time.
- 1693: The College of William and Mary is established in Williamsburg; two years later construction begins on the imposing three-story brick college main building, now named after the well-known English architect, Christopher Wren.
- 1699: The colonial capital is moved from Jamestown to Williamsburg (formerly known as Middle Plantation); the total population reaches approximately 60,000, with the black population (enslaved and free) numbering between 6,000 and 10,000.
- 1716: Governor Alexander Spotswood leads an expeditionary force of 50 men to explore the interior of Virginia; they cross the Blue Ridge Mountains and traverse portions of the Shenandoah River Valley.

Introduction

During the roughly 170-year period extending from circa 1550 to 1720, the lands bounding the portion of the Chesapeake Bay estuary that came to be known as the colony, and later the commonwealth, of Virginia, were first explored by Europeans and then settled under the authority of the English crown. Swiftly growing to remain the largest and most populous of the Anglo-American colonies, by the end of the century Virginia had achieved stability and general prosperity as a slave-based, agriculturally dependent socio-economic system, with a highly stratified and racially polarized populace. The factors leading to this eventual outcome were primarily ecological and economic. The Chesapeake region was well suited to staple-crop agriculture, with abundant fertile and tillable land, serviced by myriad navigable streams whereby the processed plants could be transported to trans-Atlantic markets. Tobacco was the money crop, initially commanding high prices and then generally providing a healthy return on investments in land and labor, and thus its cultivation formed both the

economic and social underpinning for the Virginia and Maryland colonies (Kulikoff 1986, Middleton 1953, Morgan 1975).

The region was hardly uninhabited upon the arrival of the first few Spanish explorers and later the flood of English settlers who migrated to the New World. Native Americans had occupied the area for millennia, and the initially friendly interactions between them and the European interlopers soon gave way to intermittent deadly conflict. These strained relations defined the first decades of the era, with the English settlers coming to dominate and displace the native peoples by the last quarter of the 17th century. The English planters first brought their fellow countrymen to labor for them in the tobacco fields, but over time they were replaced by enslaved Africans, whose presence became a defining characteristic of Virginia life (Craven 1971, Kulikoff 1986, Morgan 1975, Potter 1993).

From a tiny beach head on swampy Jamestown Island beginning in 1607, English settlement expanded haltingly at first, then with greater pace. By 1634 eight counties had been established - Henrico, Charles City, James City, Warwick, Isle of Wight, Elizabeth City, York, and Northampton - with a total population of approximately 5,000 men, women, and children. Forty years later, as many as 32,000 settlers occupied virtually all of Tidewater, loosely organized into 20 counties and extending from beyond the fall line on the west across the bay to the Eastern Shore. The pattern of settlement was widely dispersed, with the vast share of the inhabitants living on individual plantations, ranging from a few dozen to many hundreds of acres in size. For much of the period only the colonial capital, Jamestown, even remotely qualified as an urban center, periodically invigorated through legislative and economic initiatives but still essentially a seasonally occupied hamlet. With the removal in 1699 of the capital to Williamsburg, that settlement replaced the earlier seat of government as virtually the only town of any size in the entire colony (Kulikoff 1986:95, Morgan 1975:404, 410-413).

As the commitment to tobacco cultivation intensified among all levels of society, and the numbers of Africans coming to the colony increased over the course of the century, the character of Virginia as a slave-based enterprise became entrenched. By the 1640s the largest planters had effectively cornered the market on the relatively small numbers of enslaved Africans that were then available (Coombs 2011). Beginning in the 1670s the influx of slaves to the colony increased dramatically, until by 1720 the contribution of blacks to the total population reached 30% (Kolchin 1993:240). By the end of the first quarter of the 18th century, Virginia's hierarchal system was in place, headed by a tightly bound group of affluent planter families, supported by the labor of an ever expanding and increasingly segregated underclass of unfree black workers. By adapting to the novel environmental and social conditions, and by responding to the opportunities and requirements attending a plantation system devoted to staple-crop tobacco cultivation, these men and women had laid the groundwork for a creolized culture that, while indebted in varying degrees to the models found in their homelands, already had taken on uniquely American characteristics (Fischer 1989, Kulikoff 1986, Morgan 1975).

Early European Settlement (1550-1670)

Europeans probably first visited the region in the year 1561, when two Spanish ships that had set sail from Havana to explore the east coast of North America entered the capes of the

Chesapeake Bay. The explorers made contact with the natives at a site near the mouth of the James River, and when they returned home they took with them a young native boy who was given the name of Don Luis. The first attempt on the part of Europeans to found a permanent settlement in Virginia occurred nine years later, when the Jesuit order dispatched seven priests, accompanied by the same Don Luis who had returned from Spain, to the York River to establish a mission known as Ajacan. The goal of the missionaries was to convert the Algonquian-speaking natives to Christianity and bind them as allies to Spain, as a means of solidifying Spanish control over the region to the south of the Chesapeake Bay (Gradie 1988).

The Ajacan mission failed catastrophically after only a few months, when the natives killed all seven of the priests. Although interactions between the Spanish and the Indians were initially friendly, and Don Luis at first acted as an intermediary between the groups, he soon abandoned the Jesuits and relations swiftly deteriorated. Scholars have interpreted these events as the result of a predictable breakdown in communication between the two groups, with the clerics violating the rules of proper behavior mandated within the exchange-based culture of the natives. The Jesuits apparently committed a series of errors in their dealings with the local people, starting with the failure to compensate them adequately for supplies that they had provided, and ending by trading goods with a rival village (Mallios 2004:134-141).

The first English voyages to the area then known as Virginia took them to the North Carolina coast, where in 1584 they established the ill-fated colony of Roanoke. The failure of Roanoke appears to have been at least partly due to the same type of inter-cultural misunderstandings that had transpired at Ajacan, leading to the total loss of the first group of settlers (Mallios 2004:141-145). By 1590 the English investors in the colony essentially gave up and turned their attentions elsewhere. During the decade of the 1590s, Spanish, French, and English ships continued to enter the Chesapeake Bay with some regularity, but these visits usually consisted of brief stopovers to gather provisions before the return trans-Atlantic voyage. The English remained interested in establishing permanent settlements in Virginia, but it was not until after the conclusion of the war with Spain in 1605 that commercial and political interests combined to foster renewed colonizing efforts (Horning 2001:5-7, Quinn 1977:

Although archaeologists believe that they have identified the general location of the site of Ajacan, no specific material evidence for the Jesuit occupation has been found. On the other hand, several Contact Period and Late Prehistoric Native American village sites have been excavated by archaeologists, which have yielded extensive collections of artifacts and other important evidence. At several of the sites - among them Great Neck in Virginia Beach, Jordan's Point on the James River near modern day Hopewell, and Governor's Land at Two Rivers, on the east bank of the Chickahominy River north of Williamsburg -- archaeologists found patterns of post molds clearly delineating the foot prints of native long houses and circular wigwams, along with various associated features (Hodges 1993, Potter 1993:24-27). The results of these investigations support the interpretation that the Powhatan Indians had established permanent settlements as their home bases, and that they were devoted to swidden cultivation of maize, beans, squash, pumpkins, gourds, sunflower, and tobacco, augmented by hunting deer and smaller species of game, fishing and oystering, and foraging (Gleach 1997, Potter 1993:32-43).

First Permanent English Settlement: The Virginia Company Period (1607-24)

When King James I considered his options for planting colonies in the New World, the most attractive came in the form of a proposal made by a group of wealthy businessmen to finance two settlements, one in New England and the other in Virginia. Their vision called for the colonies to take advantage of the local resources to supply an array of raw materials and manufactured goods that would ease the dependence of the mother country on foreign suppliers. And possibly of equal importance, the colonies also would provide an outlet for the growing multitude of landless workers who were unemployed due to the changing character of the traditional agriculturally-based English economy. The promoters hoped to reap significant profits within a few years, while the crown would benefit from an infusion of revenue from new taxes; the king approved the plan, and in 1606 the London Company was duly chartered. The expedition dispatched to New England later that year was an almost immediate failure, but the Virginia venture succeeded in establishing a permanent, if fragile, foothold at Jamestown Island beginning in May 1607 (Morgan 1975:44-91, Quinn 1977:440-464).

National Park Service archaeologists conducted extensive excavations at Jamestown Island during the 1930s to the 1950s and succeeded in revealing abundant physical evidence of the settlement. Their failure to uncover recognizable remains of the fort that had been erected in 1607, however, led most scholars to conclude that the earliest portion of the site had been lost due to erosion (Cotter 1958). In the 1990s archaeologists working for the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (now Preservation Virginia) renewed efforts to find James Fort, and against considerable odds they succeeded not only in revealing substantial vestiges of the palisade and bastions, but also the remains of houses, trash-filled pits, wells, and many other features dating to the first decade of settlement. The fort was found to have been laid out according to contemporary European models for defensive works, and together with the evidence for making brass implements, glass vessels, and tobacco pipes, the archaeological findings suggest that the colonists were more dedicated to carrying out the entrepreneurial wishes of the company's directors than was previously believed. Nevertheless, the colony was beset by disease, food shortages, and poor relations with the natives, and the settlers struggled just to survive (Kelso 2006, Morgan 1975:71-91).

Reflecting the challenging conditions of early settlement and natural uncertainty about the future, the Jamestown colonists elected to construct dwellings based on current English models for semi-permanent buildings, which were relatively cheap to erect and easy to repair. But beginning almost immediately and escalating over time, the focus of attention turned from trade and local manufactures to agriculture, and the labor intensive nature of tobacco cultivation acted as a continuing strong deterrent to more permanent modes of traditional English construction. The impact of these considerations are succinctly summarized in a letter written by one settler to a friend back home in England during the last decades of the century: “[I] should not advise to build either a great or English framed house, for labor is so intolerably dear, & workmen so idle and negligent that the building of a good house, to you there [in Virginia] will seem unsupportable” (Davis 1963). Planters therefore experimented with a wide range of variations, striving to strike a balance between cost, longevity, and relative comfort. Certain basic traits, such as the dependence on wood as the primary building material and on structural supports provided by posts set directly into the ground, remained constant, and by the 1640s the adoption of this hybrid building type was so ubiquitous that it was widely referred to as the "Virginia house" (Carson 1974, Carson

et al. 1981, Neiman 1978, Stone 2004).

The failure of the Virginia Company to live up to the high expectations of its investors led its leaders to cast about for other avenues to success. In addition, even though settlers had begun cultivating tobacco as early as 1614, and it already was offering the promise of significant financial reward, these men hoped for more than simply serving as suppliers for England's growing demand for "sot weed." A variety of measures were implemented to increase security, encourage immigration, and provide incentives for investors to take a more active interest in the direction of the enterprise. Beginning in 1619 the company authorized grants of 100 acres of land to those individuals who already had migrated to Virginia, while "headrights" of 50 acres were allotted to new immigrants who came on their own and/or paid the cost of transporting others. At the same time, investors were encouraged to form corporations for the purpose of establishing "particular plantations." These communal units were to be settled on lands deeded from the company on the basis of headrights, and were envisioned as semi-autonomous communities. Finally, they encouraged another round of efforts aimed at producing a variety of commodities other than tobacco for export -- such as iron, lumber, cordage, and silk (Morgan 1975:92-107).

Archaeologists have excavated at several of the outlying settlements that were established beginning in 1617, including Jordan's Journey, Piersey's Hundred (also known as Flowerdew Hundred), The Maine (also known as Governor's Land), Kingsmill, Martin's Hundred, and the Falling Creek ironworks. Evidence for the types of housing that were erected in these early days indicates that already by then traditional vernacular English building forms were being adapted for use in the New World. Three of the plantations were protected by fortifications, but none of the works were as sophisticated as those erected previously at Jamestown. Instead, the later builders abandoned many of the features that were designed to defeat European foes, as they were deemed to have little value in defending against the Powhatans. The material culture found at these sites echoes the findings from Jamestown indicating that other adaptations to New World conditions in the form of diet and the trappings of daily life already were well underway as well (Hatch and Gregory 1962, Hodges 1993, Kelso 1984 and 2006, Mouer et al. 1992, Noel Hume 1991, Outlaw 1990).

The ongoing troubled relations between the English and natives reached a crisis in 1622 when the Powhatans carried out a series of highly ambitious coordinated attacks on settlements throughout the colony. Although unsuccessful in its overall goal of eradicating the interlopers, several of the outlying plantations were particularly hard hit and as many as 700 colonists were killed. At Martin's Hundred, the discovery of human skeletal remains has provided graphic testimony to the damage inflicted by the attacks. The ironworks at Falling Creek were part of the renewed attempt by the Virginia Company to exploit the region's natural resources for commercial gain, but this struggling venture was ended as a result of the Indian attack (Hatch and Gregory 1962, Morgan 1975:100-101, Noel Hume 1991).

The Muster of 1624-25

Reflecting its keen disappointment in the progress of the venture, the English crown took over managing the colony from the Virginia Company in 1624. The new administrators almost immediately initiated a house-to-house inventory of people, provisions, and munitions. Given the depredations of the natives during the uprising of 1622, when as many as a third of Virginia's population may have been killed, the muster recorded the depleted

condition of the colony. A total of 28 settlements were surveyed, concentrated on both banks of the James River extending from the falls to the mouth, and reaching across the Chesapeake Bay to the lower Eastern Shore peninsula. Of the 1,216 people who were listed, 932 were males (77%) and 270 were females (22%), with 14 individuals unidentifiable as to gender. In addition to the extremely high ratio of men to women, the population was young, with 76% under the age of 30, and white, with only 23 Africans and two natives listed. As might be expected, the overwhelming majority (89%) were immigrants who had been born in England or Europe, with only 78 native-born individuals. All in all, the results of the muster reflected the early emphasis on recruiting young males to clear land and cultivate tobacco. Evident as well were the detrimental effects of high mortality rates and a skewed male to female ratio that impeded natural population growth (Barka 1993, Morgan 1975:395-410).

Tobacco Culture

Beginning almost immediately with the arrival of the first settlers who disembarked at Jamestown Island, the Virginia colony was set on a course that would lead to a culture and a society that was different in many important respects from the one that the migrants had left behind in the British Isles. Given the inherently challenging nature of the colonizing experience the goal of replicating a society modeled closely on traditional English norms was problematic at best. Among the challenges were novel environmental conditions and alien plant and animal life, as well as an established and often hostile native population. But it was the combination of the opportunities, along with the constraints, attending the adoption of a staple crop agricultural system focused on tobacco cultivation - with the resulting widely dispersed pattern of settlement, a lack of societal controls, demographic imbalances, and the like -- that ultimately was the primary factor in developing the novel character of Virginia society (Carson et al. 1981, Craven 1971, Horn 1994, Miller 1988, Morgan 1975:180-195).

The efforts made by the leaders of the Virginia Company to encourage migration to the colony were continued by the royal governors who succeeded them. Although conflict with the Powhatans continued intermittently for many decades, the colony generally became a more hospitable environment for newcomers and "ancient planters" alike. Settlement spread far beyond the narrow confines of the James River over the course of the next several decades, and the population grew substantially as well, registering a 19-fold increase to roughly 25,000 individuals by 1660. Several factors combined to provide a strong spur to migration to the New World: a severe glut of labor in England meant that there was a ready surplus of young men willing to take their chances in the Chesapeake, the international market for tobacco boomed during the decade of the 1620s and provided a steady if less dramatic rate of return thereafter, and cheap land was readily available. The profits from growing tobacco were directly proportionate to the number of field hands available to carry out the many steps involved in planting, growing, and processing the crop, and laborers were at a premium. During the boom decade the financial return was so high that a single man with one or two helpers could expect to reap a substantial reward. Even though the price of tobacco declined significantly and remained relatively low after 1630, the equally low costs of subsistence meant that the profit margin was sufficient to sustain the existing population and continue to encourage immigration (Kulikoff 1986:30-37, Morgan 1975:395-410).

As a consequence, clearing land to establish tobacco plantations remained the overwhelming preoccupation of virtually every colonist. This led to dispersed settlement throughout Tidewater, first along the James and its many tributaries, then up the river valleys to the north

and south, and finally to the southern shore of the Potomac and up the coast of the Eastern Shore (Morgan 1975:133-157). A number of sites relating to this period have been excavated, yielding evidence for a pattern of generally modest dwellings and associated agricultural service buildings: smoke houses, dairies, servants quarters, and tobacco barns. Predictably, the character of the evidence revealed at the sites reflects the differing economic and social standing of the occupants, with remnants of masonry structures and a wide range of domestic items found at Richard Kemp's Rich Neck plantation seat near Jamestown testifying to the owner's wealth and prominence as the secretary of the colony (Muraca et al. 2003). The ambition of Kemp's plantation complex and overall lifestyle is in marked contrast with the single small earthfast dwelling and the remarkably sparse assemblage of household items found at the CG8 site, in James City County (Edwards 2004). The meager evidence from this site reflects the more modest means of its anonymous occupants, and is more representative of the lifestyle of the growing class of yeoman planters who may have begun their careers in Virginia as indentured servants (Carson et al. 1981).

During the decades of the 1630s through the 1660s, Virginia was known as "a good poor man's country." What was meant by this description was the assessment that conditions were conducive for men of only modest means to experience a degree of success that would have been almost unheard of if they had remained at home (Horn 2011). But by the mid-1660s this situation already was beginning to change. First of all, by the 1640s a growing number of the new immigrants came from relatively wealthy and politically connected families. These men often were the younger sons of the landed gentry, whose prospects for success in England were limited by the competing needs of older siblings in a socially conservative environment (Quitt 1988). Virginia, on the other hand, offered the promise of wealth, status, and power, all from cashing in on the ready availability of land and the continued steady market for tobacco. Rising levels of production of the leaf led to even lower prices over the course of the ensuing decades, which in turn forced planters to add to their holdings in land and servants, in order to increase the size of their crops to offset the lower rates of return. Small and middling planters, without the resources required to expand their plantations, found it increasingly difficult to compete. Finally, the gentlemen planters buttressed their newfound wealth and status by forming kin-based and political alliances among their peers that would dominate the workings of Virginia society for decades to come (Kulikoff 1986:37-43, Morgan 1975:196-211).

Rise of the Plantation System (1670-1720)

During the half-century period beginning circa 1670, the Virginia colony completed its transformation from a frontier outpost to a fully realized creole society defined by its commitment to tobacco and the resulting dispersed network of plantations that depended for their success on the labor of enslaved workers. The wealthiest land holders were able to purchase most of the enslaved Africans that were imported to the colony in increasing numbers during the last decades of the century, while the others were left to compete in acquiring laborers from the steadily declining pool of white immigrants. The competitive advantage that this gave to the larger planters soon led to even greater widening of the social and economic gap between them and their less well-to-do and less politically connected neighbors. By the end of the era, Virginia society had taken on a highly stratified structure, with a relatively few wealthy families occupying the highest positions, dominating a broad underclass comprised of small planters and landless laborers, and juxtaposed against a

rapidly growing caste of black slaves. Archaeologists have identified patterns in the material record correlating with these developments, as measured primarily in the types of houses that were built, the foods that were eaten, and the range of household objects that were employed (Carson et al. 2008, Coombs 2011, Graham et al. 2007, Horn 2011:327-328, Pogue 2001).

Bacon's Rebellion, 1676

Growing tensions between royal officials and their gentlemen planter allies, on the one hand, and the majority of colonists comprised of small planters and landless freedmen, on the other, erupted into open rebellion against the government in 1676. Traditionally portrayed by historians as a precursor to the American Revolution of a century later, the immediate causes of the conflict were much more localized, with their roots in the long trajectory of intermittently hostile relations between the English and the local Native Americans (Washburn 1954). By 1676 the numbers and the influence of the natives both were in steep decline, and they had been reduced to tributary status along the periphery of colonial society. Following on a renewed outbreak of hostilities, the rebellion took shape when a group of men living on the margins of settlement refused to accept Governor Berkeley's plan to embark on what they considered to be a series of unnecessary and expensive defensive measures, instead of taking more proactive steps to halt once and for all the Indians' capacity to inflict damage on the colonists (Carson 1976).

Nathaniel Bacon was a recent immigrant who possessed the resources and the political connections to establish himself as a man of substance in the colony. But he sided with the disaffected planters against the governor, and he even accepted an offer to lead a military campaign aimed at punishing the Indians. Berkeley reacted by declaring Bacon and his followers outlaws, an ill-considered act on the governor's part which served to redirect the rebels' attentions from killing Indians to venting their grievances with the authorities. Bacon and his followers succeeded in defeating the royal forces in open combat, burning the capital, looting the homes of citizens loyal to the government, and forcing the governor to flee across the bay to the Eastern Shore. But before the end of the year, Bacon was dead of the "bloody flux," and with his passing the rebellion lost what direction it had. Berkeley and his followers soon returned to power with a strengthened resolve to hold in check the resentments of the underclass against the gentry (Carson 1976, Morgan 1975:250-270, Sprinkle 1992, Washburn 1954).

The site of the Clifts plantation in Westmoreland County, located on the property that in the 18th-century became the Lee family's Stratford Hall, was excavated under the direction of Fraser Neiman for the Lee Memorial Foundation in the 1970s. The Clifts site excavation and analysis was one of the seminal projects of the "new archaeology" of 17th-century Virginia, providing precise and compelling data on the transformations that English architectural traditions underwent in the New World. Occupied over a span of six decades, the development of the Clifts "manner house" epitomizes the trajectory of those changes, as well as offers a glaring contrast between the evolving vernacular architecture and the ambitious brick "polite house," Stratford Hall, that was subsequently built by the Lees some 60 years later. Along with the many important findings relating to the character of the main house and the associated quarter, the homelot was found to have been enclosed by a wooden palisade erected by the occupants as a defensive measure against the Native Americans during the unrest leading up to Bacon's Rebellion. In addition to the ditch-set palisade walls, bastions built into two of the opposing corners provided the defenders with the benefit of enfilading

fire, and testify to the relative sophistication of the installation (archaeologists revealed a modified version of this plan at the contemporary Hallowes site, which consisted of palisade fences attached to opposing corners of the planter's house itself to act as towers) (Hodges 1993, Neiman 1978 and 1980).

From a Society with Slaves to a Slave Society

In the years following Bacon's Rebellion, a combination of factors served to accelerate the transformation of Virginia's initially relatively egalitarian society into one that was increasingly stratified along economic, cultural, and racial lines. The continued depressed prices paid for tobacco was at the heart of the issue, which simultaneously reduced the opportunities available to small planters and recently freed servants, and in turn favored men who had the capital to invest in African slaves. Since enslaved workers were more costly than servants, men with limited resources continued to try to buy indentures, but a man who could afford the higher prices hoped to purchase slaves as they were more profitable in the long run. The transition from white servants to enslaved blacks was not immediate by any means, but by the 1690s the declining rate of white immigration was acute, and virtually all planters by that time had turned to acquiring slaves if they could. The result was that by circa 1700 the vast majority of unfree workers in the Chesapeake were black, and the proportion was increasing every year. Over the next 20 years, the percentage of slaves in the work force continued to grow dramatically, for the same reasons that had allowed the white population to expand over the last half of the 17th century: natural increase due to higher rates of birth and survival, a more normal sex ratio, and the formation of relatively stable family groups (Kulikoff 1986:37-43, Morgan 1975:295-315).

Archaeological data in the form of the sizes and configurations of slave housing provides insight into the changing demographics of Chesapeake plantation slavery. The unprecedented wave of enslaved workers brought to Virginia after 1670 was comprised largely of adult males imported directly from Africa. Patterns of post holes marking the footprints of the dwellings that housed these people indicate that they often were barracks-like structures. At a number of these sites clusters of small pits have been found that had been dug into the ground below the floors of the structures, suggesting that they served as personal storage spaces for the unrelated occupants. Over the course of the 18th century, as kin-based family groups became increasingly common within the enslaved population, the housing was adapted to meet their different needs. Slave cabins generally took on smaller dimensions more conducive for individual families, and the number of subfloor storage pits seems to have decreased accordingly (Fesler 2004, Heath 2010:162-168, Morgan 1998:104-124, Neiman 1997).

The study of animal bones and other faunal remains has allowed archaeologists to gain previously unforeseen insights into the foodways of colonial Virginians. As with architecture, the archaeological evidence indicates that already in the first years of settlement the subsistence practices adopted by the colonists represented significant departures in response to the New World ecology. The greatest changes are indicated in the meat diet, principally consisting of an initial dependence on wild species and on pork, reflecting the fact that fish, wild mammals, and a variety of birds and other wildlife were available in abundance, and that pigs reproduced with gusto and were much better adapted than cattle to survival in the relatively harsh frontier environment. Over time, cattle raising gained in popularity as colonists found the greater investment in their care worth the effort, and as a

result the ratio of beef to pork bones found in archaeological assemblages increased dramatically, as did the overall ratio of domestic to wild species. After decades of decline, however, the volume of pig bones found at archaeological sites increased again beginning circa 1680. This development has been interpreted to be related to the rising numbers of enslaved Africans in the colony, and to the strategy of masters to make use of cheaper and more easily acquired cuts of pork as the primary meat ration (Carson et al. 2008, Graham et al. 2007, Miller 1988).

A wide range of other data indicates that the standard of living known by most settlers in 17th-century Virginia was considerably lower than what their fellow countrymen experienced back in England. As measured by the presence or absence of domestic furnishings like cooking and dining implements, ceramic and glass table wares and storage vessels, items of personal adornment and leisure, and the like, it is clear that by the time the first generation of Virginians had staked their future on tobacco, they already had jettisoned many of the accepted trappings of English material life. The conditions that the immigrants experienced during the first decades of settlement were found to be particularly grim. Lorena Walsh (1979) concluded that most settlers attained only a "rude sufficiency" at best; Cary and Barbara Carson (1976) characterized conditions experienced by those toward the bottom of the social pyramid as "remarkably, almost unimaginably primitive." Needless to say, when it came to the living conditions experienced by the growing numbers of enslaved blacks who found themselves laboring under the heavy hand of Virginia's sot weed planters, they were harsh, indeed (Horn 1994, Morgan 1998:102-203).

The fluid and culturally diverse nature of Virginia society during the 17th century, where Englishmen of all ranks, Native Americans, and Africans -- enslaved and free -- interacted on a level of remarkable intimacy, is indicated by a variety of interrelated strands of evidence. One way that archaeologists have contributed to the discussion is by plotting the distribution and social dimensions of locally made tobacco pipes and ceramic vessels that likely reflect shared contributions made by Indians, Africans, and Englishmen. Given its importance to the economy of the colony, it is not surprising that smoking tobacco became a ubiquitous pursuit among all levels of Virginia society. Tobacco pipes made from local clays and either hand formed or molded into English shapes, and decorated in a mix of English and Algonquian designs, have been found on Virginia sites in large numbers beginning in the 1640s, and they continued in use through the end of the century. These pipes probably initially were made by both natives and colonists, and later by blacks as well, to serve the needs of men of modest means: they were cheaper alternatives to the white clay tobacco pipes that were imported to Virginia in vast quantities from England and Holland. In a related development, a type of locally made pottery referred to as colonoware has been found at Virginia plantation sites spanning the period from the 1620s through the 18th century. Generally speaking these wares at least superficially resemble both Native American pottery from the Contact Period and traditional African vessels. But they often also exhibit a variety of features -- such as flat bottoms, lug handles, and a range of forms -- that clearly are European in derivation, and which qualify them as a unique blending of cultural prototypes. As with the locally made pipes, these ceramics likely represent the handiwork of Native American, English, and African makers at different times, and filled a demand by members of the humbler ranks of society for vessels of relatively low cost (Heath 1996, Mouer 1993, Mouer et al. 1999).

The society that had emerged by mid-century still was extremely fragile, suffering from high

rates of mortality and marked by an unnaturally high proportion of males that hindered the formation of families, depressed rates of reproduction, and retarded social cohesion. After 1680, however, the rate of English immigration decreased steadily, coinciding with reduced opportunities for advancement for freedmen and small planters. The unintended consequence of this development was a more normal sex ratio, and, with it, a significantly elevated birth rate that meant that by the 1690s the numbers of native-born white Virginians approached parity with the immigrant population for the first time. As a consequence of this demographic shift, life expectancy increased generally, meaning that families were less likely to be sundered by parental deaths, and which further contributed to a more stable social order. Thus the processes of adaptation and innovation had culminated in a society dominated by the complex relations between tobacco planters, large and small, and the laborers upon whom their prosperity depended (Kulikoff 1986:37-43, Morgan 1975:133-157).

Rise of the Virginia Gentry and a Culture of Consumption

As a relatively small number of wealthy and politically prominent families came to dominate the Virginia colony, they sought ways to demonstrate their status and separate themselves from those among white society who they considered to be their inferiors. At the same time, the presence of a growing caste of enslaved blacks encouraged small planters, freedmen, and even indentured servants, to band together in racial solidarity, and thus helped to defuse the resentments among poorer whites that had been a prime feature of the discontent leading up to Bacon's Rebellion. Finally, among whites the growing enslaved population fostered a fear of revolt, and brought with it the passage of laws that established tighter controls over their activities, together with the hardening of racial boundaries and a greater segregation of the social landscape. White Virginians adopted a variety of strategies aimed at helping them to negotiate the increasing complexities of a slave-based society, and the character of their housing, the foods they ate, the clothes they wore, and the types of household objects they acquired all were enlisted to aid in this process of self definition (Carson 1994, Carson et al. 2008, Graham et al. 2007).

As the character of housing is a primary means of self-fashioning in virtually every culture, it is not surprising that the Virginia house continued to be adapted to meet the evolving needs of colonial society. Servants and/or slaves living on modest-sized plantations still may have resided in the main dwelling with the planter family, but increasingly over the last decades of the century the living quarters for both black and white workers were shifted to outbuildings. Removing laborers and their clutter from the primary household allowed a much greater degree of privacy, and opened the way for a number of design innovations aimed at demonstrating the wealth, status, and power of their owners (Neiman 1990 and 1993). Chief among these was the central passage, a hallway that ran the width of the house and acted as a buffer between the private chambers and the main entrance to the dwelling, the first recorded example of which appeared in Virginia in 1719 (Wenger 1986).

Building in brick was a traditional means of signifying wealth and social prominence in England, but few men in Virginia before the 1660s had either the means or the inclination to adopt that strategy. At least a few dwelling houses sporting masonry foundations and walls partially comprised of brick were built beginning as early as the 1620s, and a number of brick structures were erected at Jamestown in the 1660s as part of yet another failed attempt to realign the character of the struggling capital with traditional English notions of what

proper town architecture was like. The two-story brick dwellings erected by John Page in 1662, near what later became the new capital of Williamsburg, and by Arthur Allen in 1665 in Surry County, across the James River from Jamestown (the extant house today is known as Bacon's Castle), are particularly notable exceptions. In both instances their status-conscious builders modeled their homes after up-to-the-minute English precedents (Brown 1998, Carson et al. 2008, Graham et al. 2007, Upton 1980).

A new type of "polite" house came into being by the turn of the century, often built at least partially of more costly brick. Robert Beverley noted the trend in 1705, when he recorded in his history of the colony that, "The private buildings are of late very much improved; several Gentleman of late having built themselves large Brick Houses" (Beverley 1705:289). The newly popular features simultaneously increased privacy for the occupants, provided spaces appropriate for entertaining peers and participating in high-status activities such as punch and tea drinking, and accommodated the display of a wide array of fashionable household furnishings. In short, the houses of the gentry were increasingly reshaped in order to support a new set of behaviors modeled on English ideas of gentility, which were embraced as a means of reinforcing the occupants' claims to exalted social position (Carson 1994, Carson et al. 2008, Graham et al. 2007, Wenger 1986).

Other material measures of the adoption of genteel behavior -- first by members of the gentry and eventually trickling down to those lower on the social pyramid -- include developments in the types of ceramic vessels used and the acquisition of a wide range of household amenities. It appears that the pattern of ceramic use changed dramatically over the course of the century. Early on, assemblages were overwhelmingly dominated by vessels used in preparing and storing food, reflecting a traditional style of folk cuisine suited to frontier conditions. By the last decade of the century the proportions of individualized table wares and beverage containers had increased dramatically, signifying the introduction of tea wares and other specialized vessels, and a new focus on fine dining. This trend is echoed by the steady appearance of other household amenities, such as table knives and forks, utensils to allow meats to be prepared in a variety of ways, curtain rings and candlesticks, tables and chairs, and many more. Together these patterns indicate that over the course of the century not only did members of the Virginia elite seek to enter into a culture of consumption, but they embraced it as a crucial means of defining their social identity (Carson 1994, Pogue 1993, Yentsch 1990 and 1991).

Theoretical Considerations

With the renewed interest beginning in the 1960s and 1970s in studying the character of the developing society of the Chesapeake colonies, the focus shifted to a detailed portrayal and interpretation of the patterns of everyday life. The portrait of the development of the Chesapeake that emerged from the pens of documentary historians over the course of the 1970s and 1980s provided a strong narrative structure to guide archaeological research (Carr, Morgan, and Russo 1988, Kulikoff 1986, Morgan 1975, Tate 1979). It is the now-familiar depiction of a band of immigrants emerging from the crucible of the relatively harsh conditions of life found in America and finally transforming by the first decades of the 18th century into a fully realized, hierarchical, slave-based plantation society, that has provided the interpretive context for the archaeological studies that were undertaken over much of the last four decades (Hudgins 1993, Pogue 2001).

Theoretically speaking, the impact of the colonizing experience in adjusting English cultural norms to the New World became the underlying perspective taken by most historians (Greene 1988:166-169, Main 1982, Tate 1979:32-36); although one ambitious and controversial synthesis is notable for adopting a strongly diffusionist stance (Fischer 1989, Walsh 2011). Until recently most archaeologists have also emphasized adaptive theories, such as the frontier gradient model (Keeler 1978, Miller 1984, Stone 1990), as well as Wallerstein's (1974, 1979, 1980) world systems theory (Edwards and Brown 1993), and an explicitly evolutionary approach championed by Neiman (1990, 1993). Others have coupled an adaptive mechanism to other perspectives in an attempt to explicate broad trends in the development of Anglo-Chesapeake society. Notable among these scholars are James Deetz (1977), who adopted the ideas of structural anthropology to formulate his conception of the emerging "Georgian" world view; Mark Leone (1988) and others (Leone, Potter, and Shackel, 1987, Shackel 1992, 1993) who linked the rise of individualism to a theory of merchant capitalism; and Cary Carson (1994) and others (Martin 1994, Pogue 1997, 2001) who took a page from English scholars (McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb 1982) to postulate that a profound change in social norms occurred first in England and then spread to America over the course of the Colonial Period that has been dubbed the "consumer revolution."

All of these models share the basic conception that colonization necessitated significant modifications to traditional English cultural and social norms as the result of adapting to conditions in the New World. Consensus among scholars sharing this view has not been reached as to specific details of the process of adaptation, but a broadly defined trajectory of change has been postulated by a number of writers, which have their foundation in the frontier gradient model that achieved widespread prominence in the 1960s (Casagrande et al. 1964, Lewis 1975). In these scenarios, an initial period of adjustment was marked by failed attempts to replicate English traditions, followed quickly by experimentation and, in short order, selection of specific new behavioral modes. By the end of this phase, English material culture generally was simplified for use in America. This was followed by a longer period of more subtle adjustment, when general strategies for survival had been selected and were widely followed, and finally by increasing cultural elaboration resulting from the long-term success of the colonization effort (Deetz 1977:36-43, 1988:364-365, Greene 1988:81, Miller 1984:372-394, Stone 1990).

The frontier model - and all other theories that postulate a series of developmental phases -- has been criticized as essentially an empirical generalization that implies a predictable trajectory of change. According to this criticism, interpretations based on the model simply describe the results of historical process without providing any mechanism for understanding the causes of variations in behavior (Neiman 1990:214-216). Similarly, a popular criticism of adaptive paradigms in general maintains that this perspective "reduces individual human beings to automatons and overlooks the manifest complexity of individual behavior" (Hodder 1986:25, Lett 1987:92-93). The response by Harris (1968:649) in defense of his theory of cultural materialism may be extended to encompass adaptive theories in general: "Cultural materialism does not predict the behavior of individuals; it predicts the behavior of aggregates of individuals" (Lett 1987:93). Thus, adaptive theories of culture change should not be expected to provide causal explanations in specific instances, but rather seek to account for cultural systems of behavior. The challenge in developing any explanatory model is to link it with mechanisms that account for the greatest variety of behaviors. In any case, the undoubted wide-ranging impact of the colonizing experience remains a constant in

virtually all attempts to interpret the social development of 17th-Chesapeake society and culture, and explanations grounded in an adaptive perspective seem likely to continue to claim analytical primacy in the future.

Among historians the state of scholarly inquiry regarding the Early Chesapeake has been acknowledged as having “lost much of its vitality during the past twenty years because of a perception of the field as overcrowded and a major shift of interest to other topics and regions” (Horn 2011:330). A number of recent contributions have served to reenergize the field, however, and these developments have naturally begun to influence the theoretical approaches taken by historical archaeologists. On the one hand, this consists of a broader shift away from a regional focus to one that embraces the trans-Atlantic connections that provided the context and the driving force behind the development of the Chesapeake. At the same time, new research suggests that the regional perspective has served to mask important developments that are likely to be better understood from a sub-regional level of analysis (Bradburn and Coombs 2006, Coombs 2011, Morgan 2011, Walsh 1999, 2001, 2011). In essence the recent shift in perspective represents the latest round in negotiating the inherent tension that exists regarding proper scales of investigation: ranging from global, to trans-Atlantic, to regional, to sub-regional, all the way down to individual homesteads. For archaeologists questions of scale are of particular importance, as they most often are faced with the challenge of extrapolating their interpretations from an extremely limited data set - typically beginning with the findings revealed at one specific site - in hopes of elucidating broader patterns of behavior.

From at least the 1950s scholars generally had been well aware that the Chesapeake region was a composite of sub-regions defined by a range of environmental, economic, and demographic factors. But for the majority the overall similarities far outweighed the differences (Middleton 1953). Furthermore, the focus on comparing the Chesapeake with other areas - primarily New England and the Carolina Lowcountry, and later the Caribbean and Ireland - served as the primary stimulus for the initial wave of documentary research in the 1960s and 1970s, and thus fostered a strong regional perspective (Morgan 2011:300-301). The recent stimulus for both historians and archaeologists to adopt a sub-regional scale of investigation was the renewed awareness of “important regional variations depending on local economic specialization and the presence (or absence) of increasing numbers of enslaved Africans working in the fields of large plantations,” and the research opportunities these differences seemed to offer (Horn 2011:327). Of particular significance in this regard was the appearance of two essays authored by Lorena Walsh (1999 and 2001), in which she segmented the Chesapeake into three zones according to their primary economic foci - growing either sweet scented or oronocco tobacco, or pursuing a regime of mixed farming - and identified associated differences in the patterns of slave holding. Although more an altered research design rather than a shift in theoretical paradigm per se, these developments already have influenced a number of Chesapeake archaeologists to refocus their attention on the possible benefits that a sub-regional level of inquiry may offer for the analysis and interpretation of patterns in material culture (King et al. 2006, Levy, Coombs, and Muraca 2007, Samford and Chaney 2010).

Research Trends

Over the last 40 years studying the development of Anglo-American society in Virginia and

her sister colony of Maryland became one of the most dynamic fields of scholarship in the field of early American history, and the research undertaken by Chesapeake historical archaeologists played an important role in this renaissance. The remarkable and largely unexpected findings that began to emerge in the early 1970s from excavating sites like Flowerdew and Martin's Hundreds, Kingsmill, Governor's Land, and the Clifts Plantation, in Virginia, and St. Mary's City, in Maryland, energized the field, testifying to the richness of the archaeological record, and suggesting the potentially dramatic insights to be gained from its careful investigation (Hudgins 1993). At that time the early Chesapeake already had become the focus of renewed attention on the part of documentary historians who were bringing to bear the methods and the perspectives of what was then referred to as the "new social history" (Carr, Morgan, and Russo 1988, Tate 1979). Given the shared focus on the quotidian aspects of daily life, it is not surprising that a synergy between the two disciplines would emerge as a strong feature of Chesapeake research, and one which has continued down to the present (Carson et al. 2008, Graham et al. 2007, Hudgins 1993, Walsh 2011).

The dominant interpretation of early Virginia society that was in vogue prior to the new discoveries of the 1970s was the product of the work of historians like Alexander Brown and Philip Bruce, writing in the 1880s and 1890s, and of their successors, prominent scholars like T.J. Wertenbaker and Wesley Frank Craven, who were active in the decades just before and after the Second World War. Given the prevailing perspective of the era, their approach was overwhelmingly political in focus, and with the events of the 17th century considered to be important largely as a prelude to what was really of interest: the march toward national independence that culminated in the American Revolution. When these scholars elected to consider issues relating to daily life, their perspective once again was framed primarily by looking backward from the accomplishments of later generations, namely the presumed grandeur and cultural attainment of the planter society that they viewed as the dominant feature of the 18th century. Although the challenge of settling an alien landscape was acknowledged by some to have been a major influence in framing the colonists' experience, the depth and the breadth of the impact of the environment, and the novelty of the social and economic adaptations that came to characterize the region, were downplayed. The society that had its beginnings along the shores of the James River and then spread throughout the Chesapeake thus was viewed simply as a slightly backward version of that found in the British Isles at the time (Carr, Menard, and Russo 1988, Hudgins 1993, Tate 1979).

It is no surprise, therefore, that the archaeologists and other scholars of material culture who attempted to make sense of what had been uncovered at Jamestown, and at the few other domestic sites dating to the 17th century that had been excavated up to that time, were heavily influenced by this perspective. The focus on the findings at Jamestown obscured rather than clarified this picture, moreover, as the features marking its growth did not fairly represent contemporary developments at the surrounding plantations. Thus, Henry Forman, whose writings appeared over a 30-year period beginning in 1938, viewed the character of the architectural evidence from 17th-century Virginia and Maryland as essentially representing traditional, what he called "Medieval," English forms. The many brick buildings that he and others excavated at Jamestown and at St. Mary's City naturally led Forman (1938, 1948, 1957, also see Jester 1957:20-25, Morrison 1952:134-165, Waterman and Barrows 1932) to infer that houses supported by brick foundations, comprised either entirely of masonry or with the brickwork supporting box-framed English-style cottages, were the regional norm dating virtually from the first years of settlement. The presence of these and other amenities, and the confusion caused by misdating a number of standing structures -- some by as many

as 75 to 100 years -- reinforced these scholars' erroneous conclusion that builders in the New World had experienced a considerable measure of success in almost immediately replicating familiar, if antiquated English models (Edwards 1982; but for an early reassessment of the prevalence of brick buildings in 17th-century Virginia, see Pierson [1970] 1976:23-24).

Scholars attempting to manipulate other categories of material culture to portray the character of “domestic life” in 17th-century Virginia followed the lead of the architectural historians in viewing conditions in the colony as watered down versions of those found in England, and with the colonizing experience itself having only a minor impact on living standards (Hudgins 1993). This upbeat appraisal is epitomized by Annie L. Jester in her book, *Domestic Life in Virginia in the 17th Century*, one of the series of pamphlets that were published by the Jamestown Anniversary Commission in 1957. Jester concluded that, “it will be seen that these furnishings were as elaborate or as simple as in the comparable home in England,” and that “even the planter with a modest household” possessed a table dressed with linen and set with plates and other vessels made of pewter, ceramics, and glassware, surrounded by an array of furnishings like chairs, beds, and chests, and outfitted with a variety of cooking utensils, such as iron pots and pans, skewers, ovens, and the like. In short, she concluded that the settlers had just what any self respecting cottager back home in Yorkshire or Sussex might expect to own (Jester 1957:52-57).

It is important to note that Jester's findings were based almost exclusively on her highly selective reading of the evidence provided by probate inventories, with the archaeological data from Jamestown cast in a minor supporting role. Jester may have been the first, but she hardly was the last scholar studying early America to privilege the evidence gleaned from inventories and other documentary sources as a more readily available and more easily interpretable alternative to archaeological data to inform their investigations (Stone 1977). It would be many decades before Chesapeake archaeologists could look to a corpus of comparative evidence from excavations as a viable starting point to consider such issues (King et al. 2006, Pogue 1993).

In a sense the work that began in the 1970s built on the findings from the excavations that had been undertaken at Jamestown in the 1930s and early 1940s, and again under the direction of John Cotter (1958) in the years leading up to the 350th anniversary celebration. But the evidence generated by archaeologists and historians that piled up so impressively during the boom decade of the 1970s was in such stark contrast to much of what had been found at Jamestown, that the earlier interpretations were discarded almost immediately and entirely. Forman's portrayal of the development of Chesapeake architecture and Jester's characterization of 17th-century living standards, for example, simply collapsed under the weight of the new research. Suffice to say that where the archaeologists and historians of the earlier generations saw a moderately successful, if beleaguered, effort to replicate the social trappings and cultural norms of Elizabethan England in the Chesapeake colonies, the baby boomers envisioned a volatile mix of social misfits and men on the make striving within the evolving norms imposed by an alien ecology. Grasping desperately at any and all options that came to hand, discarding traditions that failed to make the grade, and at different times battling with and borrowing from, and to a degree ultimately blending with, African and Native American cultures, they cobbled together a new life in the New World (Carson et al. 1981, Hudgins 1993, Tate 1979).

Exploring the character of Chesapeake vernacular architecture has been a particular focus of

research, with the trajectory of its development closely linked by architectural historians and archaeologists alike to the interpretive narrative outlined above. Central to this discussion was the discovery of the popularity of the hybridized vernacular building form which came to be known at the time as the “Virginia house.” The development of this type of architecture began with the earliest years of settlement, as colonists selected and then quickly modified a traditional lightly framed building style in the face of New World conditions. The labor-intensive nature of tobacco production served as a spur for continued experimentation, leading to the many labor saving features that came to define the Virginia house. The resulting hybrid boasted a remarkably low construction cost relative to erecting the traditional box-framed structures that were the norm in England. Over the course of the century the design of Virginia housing continued to evolve -- to address both functional and stylistic concerns -- with many of those changes interpreted as reflecting the ascendance of a native-born gentry elite, and their desire to more clearly delineate their owners' status, both real and desired, during a period of dynamic social development (Carson 1974, Carson et al. 1981, Carson et al. 2008, Main 1982, Neiman 1978 and 1993, Stone 2004).

The basic argument for the significance of the Virginia house as an indicator of social change was first articulated in print by Cary Carson and Garry Stone in 1974, then was elaborated by Fraser Neiman in 1978, and finally was “canonized” by Carson and his four co-authors in their highly influential article, “Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies,” that appeared in 1981. Although the sample of sites and structures available for study in the late 1970s was tiny - while as many as 150 earthfast structures had been identified either in documents or by digging, detailed information was available from only about two dozen archaeological sites -- the interpretation that was offered was so amply bolstered by the documentary evidence that it almost immediately gained universal acceptance (Carson 1974, Carson et al. 1981, Hudgins 1993, Neiman 1978, Pogue 2001, Stone 1974).

In hindsight, this precocious achievement also may have had the unintended consequence of glossing over variability in the data that forestalled other lines of investigation. For example, although the vast majority of the region's buildings were determined to have been timber-framed and supported by earthfast posts, the focus on that larger pattern likely stunted systematic study of the many fewer, but hardly insignificant brick structures that also were present (Brown 1998, Levy 2005). Furthermore, with the interpretive focus firmly trained on tracing the broad regional patterns of architectural development, until recently considerably less effort was expended on considering the significance of variations in house types and their spatial and temporal distribution (Carson et al. 2008, Graham et al. 2007, King and Chaney 1999).

As with housing, diet has been a traditional focus of archaeological inquiry, and its study succeeded in generating a complementary body of data to bring to bear on the topic of social change. By analyzing animal bones and other food remains recovered from datable contexts found at most of the same sites that yielded the sample of structural evidence first studied by Carson and others, Henry Miller (1984, 1988) proposed that the diet of the English inhabitants of the Chesapeake changed dramatically over the course of the 17th century. Furthermore, these developments were argued to follow the general trajectory of initial adaptation and later elaboration suggested by the architectural and documentary evidence. At first, English subsistence practices underwent significant modifications in direct response to novel features of the Chesapeake ecology. Over time, more subtle adjustments were

made, including a re-emergence of the importance of traditional English food sources, and a corresponding reduction in the proportion of wild species consumed. This change is linked to increasing prosperity and improved animal husbandry practices that enabled colonists to recapture elements of English foodways traditions that had been jettisoned earlier under the stress of New World conditions (Miller 1984:294, 372-382, Miller 1988).

Another important body of evidence that has been brought to bear on these topics was provided by the renewed and much more sophisticated analysis of the information found in probate inventories (Carson and Carson 1976, Carr and Walsh 1988, Horn 1994, Kulikoff 1986). Not only are the records relatively detailed and the sample refreshingly large, but since the vast majority of the inventoried estates were assessed according to their monetary value, it is possible to make comparisons between the contents of estates according to wealth class at any given period, and to trace patterns of change over time. One of the most significant results of this research was the finding that living standards throughout the Chesapeake, and for virtually all households in all wealth categories for the entire period, were much lower than what was the norm back in England. Most telling was the conclusion that, for much of the era, even those more affluent members of Chesapeake society seem to have had limited opportunities to demonstrate their status materially, and were often content with owning more of the same generally utilitarian possessions as those found in the homes of their poorer neighbors. These compelling results soon achieved almost universal acceptance, which once again had the unintended consequence of skewing interpretation and obscuring other avenues of research (Pogue 1993).

By the 1990s several scholars had focused on analyzing specific subsets of the material culture universe that was available to Virginia colonists, with the results of much of that research presented in a volume of papers organized and published by the Council of Virginia Archaeologists (Reinhart and Pogue 1993). At one end of the spectrum, Jay Gaynor, a museum curator with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, analyzed a single class of artifacts -- woodworking tools -- which until then had received little attention from scholars of material culture. Gaynor 1993 (also Harvey 1997:75-96) demonstrated the value of archaeological data in contributing to understanding the types of tools that were used in the Chesapeake, as well as offered insights into how settlers employed them. At the same time, he also suggested that the patterns that were revealed had interpretive significance in relation to larger questions of social development. At least in the case of woodworking tools, this study found that the English prototypes had not undergone any perceptible alterations in their physical character, even while the specific uses to which they were put experienced subtle changes.

If the interpretive benefits deriving from Gaynor's detailed treatment of a little-studied class of artifacts came as a pleasant surprise, Bill Pittman's assessment of the contributions of ceramic analysis to provide similarly enlightening insights was the opposite. One of the most ubiquitous and arguably the most intensively-studied of any type of artifact found on Chesapeake sites, tens of thousands of hours of painstaking sorting, cataloging, and mending hardly seemed to have repaid the investment. Pittman (1993) attributed this deflating circumstance largely to a methodological flaw -- the lack of a standardized language to describe ceramic wares and forms - which served as a major impediment to comparative analysis. The predictable call for Chesapeake archaeologists to rectify the situation followed, which almost 20 years later seems to have been only fitfully pursued (but see Beaudry et. al 1983 for an important early attempt to standardize vessel terminology).

Pittman could point to one notable contribution that had been made to the study of early Chesapeake society based on ceramic evidence, however: the work of Anne Yentsch (1990 and 1991) in analyzing changing patterns in ceramic vessel use over the course of the century. As the result of a laudable willingness to reanalyze a number of collections in order to enhance their comparability, Yentsch was able to manipulate data from ceramic assemblages derived from more than a dozen Chesapeake domestic sites. She divided each of the assemblages according to five broad functional categories based on vessel type, and then plotted the percentages of each category to determine if and to what degree their popularity changed over time. The result was a strong pattern of directional change, with food preparation and storage vessels predominating during the first decades of settlement, which Yentsch interpreted as reflecting a traditional, or folk, cuisine suited to the straightened circumstances of New World conditions. By the last quarter of the century, however, she found that the percentage of individualized vessels for consumption, and particularly new types of drinking vessels that were made in the potteries of Staffordshire, England, had increased dramatically. Yentsch combined these data with documentary evidence to argue that this marked a shift from a folk to a more “courtly,” or fashion-conscious mode of dining.

Dennis Pogue (1993) returned to the issue of living standards that had been raised by Jester more than 30 years before. He first attempted to expand upon the findings made by Yentsch by adding to her sample of ceramic assemblages and by incorporating other categories of material culture into the discussion. Although the sample size in both cases remained quite small -- just over 20 total assemblages gleaned from a slightly smaller number of sites from Maryland as well as Virginia -- the findings were consistent with those previously reported by Yentsch. Furthermore, this result seemed to offer support for the interpretation that by the last quarter of the 17th century the Chesapeake was experiencing a revolution in consumer behavior reflecting the social and demographic developments outlined above. Also of note, these data indicate that certain types of household objects, characterized as amenities (such as table knives and forks, individualized ceramic vessels, and others) seem to have found their way in increasing numbers into Chesapeake households several decades earlier than was suggested based on historians' interpretations of inventory data (Carr and Walsh 1988).

This finding in turn led to considering the broader question of the reliability of inventories to reflect the full range of objects that were actually used in households. Apparently because of biases and inconsistencies in recording on the part of inventory takers, the objects so helpfully listed in probate records were found to under represent various significant classes of household objects. Thus, interpretations based solely on inventory data may well understate the number and variety of household goods owned by Chesapeake colonists. This seems especially significant for studying those settlers occupying the lowest rungs of the economic ladder, and the archaeological data therefore represents an invaluable source of evidence to balance these omissions (Hawley 1989, Lucchetti 1990, Pogue 1993 and 1997).

Another focus of research has yielded an impressive body of evidence concerning the daily lives of Virginia colonists by studying their physical remains. Led by the work of physical anthropologists based at the Smithsonian Institution - first by Lawrence Angel in the 1970s, then continuing up to the present under the direction of Douglas Ubelaker and Douglas Owlsley -- important insights have been drawn relating to burial practices, physical manifestations of daily activities, disease, diet, dental health, and more. Beginning with the

earliest analyses of skeletons exhumed from the The Maine, Clifts Plantation, Governors Land, and Martin's Hundred sites, and bolstered by many more subsequent studies at Jamestown and elsewhere around the region, the quantity of skeletal data that has been recovered is by now voluminous. Together with human remains excavated at St. Mary's City and various Maryland sites, this material allowed for the preparation of a widely praised exhibition, *Written in Bone*, that opened at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in 2009 and which is expected to remain on display for a period of four years (Walker 2009). Broadly speaking, the findings reinforce the characterization of living conditions in the early Chesapeake as harsh, indeed, providing graphic evidence of high rates of mortality and morbidity (cf. Angel 1976, Aufderheide et al. 1981, Aufderheide et al. 1985, Kelso 2006:125-168, King and Ubelaker 1996, Owsley 1990, Phung, King, and Ubelaker 2009).

If the scholars of the 1950s and 1960s devoted little time and energy to considering the role of Native Americans and Africans, enslaved and free, in the makeup of Colonial Virginia society, by the 1970s historians had begun to address this omission (Craven 1971, Morgan 1975, Sobel 1987, Tate 1979). Not surprisingly, the region's archaeologists followed suit, and by the 1990s several scholars offered assessments as to the contribution of the discipline in studying the dynamics of English, Native American, and later African, interactions over the course of the century. In his COVA essay, Dan Mouer (1993) adopted an interdisciplinary approach in arguing that Virginia society underwent a process of creolization, incorporating elements from African, Native American, and various European groups to form a new and distinctly American folk culture. For investigators focusing primarily on the Native American side of the equation, charting the wide-ranging changes to traditional Indian practices as a result of the contact experience was the dominant approach (Hodges 1993, King and Chaney 2004).

In her assessment of the state of knowledge relating to Virginia's Native American peoples during the Contact and early Colonial Periods, Mary Ellen Hodges stressed the limited contribution made by archaeology. She concluded that the "archaeological research ... has generated only incomplete patches of data for a small sample of incoherent and temporal contexts," and that, "For most regions of Virginia, ethnohistoric research [still] has produced the best body of cultural and historical information to date that can be summarized in a narrative ... of resident native populations following European contact" (Hodges 1993:33). Over the last two decades, considerable effort has been devoted to expanding the archaeological data base both by excavating additional sites and by reanalyzing and synthesizing the results of earlier studies. Given the wide interest generated by the 400th anniversary of the settlement of Jamestown in 1607, the majority of these efforts focused on the Powhatan chiefdom that played such an important role in the era of initial Native American-English contact (cf. Blanton and King 2004, Gallivan 2003, Gleach 1997, Rountree 1989 and 1999, Rountree, Clark, and Mountford 2007, Turner and Opperman 1993).

One particularly significant outcome of this intensified focus on the Powhatan confederacy has been to refine Randy Turner's (1986) earlier observation that the archaeological record does not confirm expectations of a highly centralized, politically hierarchical, and socially stratified society to the degree suggested by the ethnohistorical evidence (Gallivan 2003 and 2004). Martin Gallivan's study of household and community dynamics in the James River basin did reveal patterns reflecting greater sedentism, increasingly concentrated nucleated settlements, and wider diversity in housing suggesting the growing prominence of elites, as

well as other indications of an evolving stratified social hierarchy. The evidence suggesting these developments is relatively subtle, however, and the findings only became apparent as the result of a combination of finely grained site-specific analyses and inter-site comparisons, and points to the value of conducting additional studies of this type in providing an independent set of data to complement and critique interpretations based on the ethnohistorical sources (Gallivan 2004).

Other scholars continued to expand the focus to include tribal and chiefdom societies from around the region that lay beyond Powhatan's control (Boyd 2004, Hantman 2001, Klein and Sanford 2004, Lapham 2004, Potter 1993, Rountree and Davidson 1997, Wall 2004). This broadened perspective has offered the opportunity to address region-wide questions of change and diversity relating to trade and exchange both between natives and colonists and within Native American society (Boyd 2004, Klein and Sanford 2004, Lapham 2004). For all of these investigators, the impact on Native American society and culture as a result of the experience of interactions with English settlers remains a defining focus of their work. Tracing changes to traditional systems of exchange and, in particular, the ramifications of the growing importance of trading beaver fur and later deer hides to the English in exchange for a range of goods, has been an especially popular undertaking (Boyd 2004, Klein and Sanford 2004, Lapham 2004, Mallios 2004, Wall 2004). One measure of the extent of the impact of contact on native culture is provided by documenting the rate of replacement of traditional prestige items by European trade goods. Although such replacement occurred with great rapidity in some areas, the extent and rate of change and, presumably, the impact of contact, has been found to vary significantly over time and space (Boyd 2004, Klein and Sanford 2004, Wall 2004). In general, these studies indicate that "innovations and social transformations did not occur uniformly across the region," with "social, ecological, and historical factors influenc[ing] the pace and type of change within local areas" (Klein and Sanford 2004:55). Thus, these results further support the need for more fine-grained studies of native groups throughout the region in order to produce a balanced and nuanced interpretation of the impact of cross-cultural exchange (Barber 2008).

Julie King and Ed Chaney (2004) make the case for integrating a Native American point of view into what heretofore has been the overwhelmingly Anglo-centric focus -- more recently expanded to include the study of Africans - that has been the norm for Chesapeake historical archaeology. Archaeologists whose primary field of interest is prehistory generally have addressed historic-period sites occupied by Indians, while historical archaeologists have largely ignored those sites, even paying little attention to the native artifacts recovered from English contexts. Because of this professional division, according to King and Chaney (2004:194-195), "native people and their cultures are often missing from the colonial landscapes archaeologists reconstruct." Pointing to the tendency of archaeologists to focus on the impact of contact on native lifeways, King and Chaney (2004:195) also argue that the opportunity to explore the reciprocal influence on English culture and society has been ceded to scholars primarily making use of the ethnohistorical record (also see Chaney, in King et al. 2006). Europeans' borrowings of features of Native American material culture that were better suited to the conditions found in the New World are universally acknowledged: especially techniques of hunting and fishing, and agricultural practices such as tobacco and corn cultivation. But the authors maintain that the day-to-day role played by Native Americans in colonial life has been minimized.

Addressing issues of ethnicity and creolization by linking specific archaeological artifact

types with ethnic groups, both as producers and users, became popular beginning in the 1970s. In his COVA essay, Mouer (1993) pointed to the research on colonowares and Chesapeake pipes as providing the most compelling evidence to date for studying the creolizing process, as he concluded that it was likely that Africans, Native Americans, and Englishmen all had a role, at different times and in varying degrees, in the manufacture and use of these products. In a path-breaking article published in 1962, Ivor Noel Hume first coined the term Colono-Indian ware (now generally called colonoware) to describe the locally produced, smoothed or burnished earthenware vessels that had been recovered in significant quantities from a cluster of sites located along the lower James and York River valleys. Based on a number of attributes that suggested to him that a mixture of native pottery techniques and European design influences were at play, Noel Hume attributed the vessels to Native American manufacture to serve as items for trade with colonists. Similarly, tobacco pipes formed out of local clays (now commonly referred to as Chesapeake pipes) and made both with and without molds, were initially attributed to English and Indian makers, respectively (Harrington 1951, Henry 1979, Noel Hume 1962).

Further research focusing on Chesapeake pipes also led other investigators to conclude that the decorative motifs found on many of the objects were African in derivation, and thus suggested to them that blacks were responsible for making pipes exhibiting those markings (Deetz 1993 and 1999, Emerson 1988 and 1999). More recent investigations appear to support the original interpretation that Native Americans most likely were responsible for producing the hand-formed examples of local pipes, and that the molded versions were the work of white colonists. This finding is based on a combination of documentary and archaeological data (Davidson 2004, Mouer et al. 1999), including plotting the variability in the presence and the numbers of Chesapeake pipes found in a sample of artifact assemblages recovered from 18 domestic sites in Maryland and Virginia spanning the period from circa 1620 to 1740 (Cox, Luckenbach, and Gadsby, in King et al. 2006). Local pipes were found to be present in substantial numbers (between nine and 25 percent of the total pipe assemblages) on five of the sites, all of which were occupied in the middle to third quarter of the 17th century. The steep drop off of Chesapeake pipes found on sites after 1680 has been interpreted as a reflection of the growing maturity of trans-Atlantic trade, and, in particular, the explosion of imports from the west England port city of Bristol. Bristol was a major pipe making center, and pipes with identifiable marks of Bristol producers dominate archaeological assemblages beginning in the 1680s. Given the timing, it seems more likely that English colonists and Native Americans had been the makers of local pipes rather than Africans, and that their ability to compete with cheap English imported pipes ceased at about the time of the first major influx of African slaves to the Chesapeake (Cox, Luckenbach, and Gadsby, in King et al. 2006).

Almost 20 years later, Susan Henry (1980) expanded on Noel Hume's analysis by incorporating a number of additional assemblages in her detailed study of Virginia colonowares. She also formally addressed the question of the identity of the potters by comparing the vessels' characteristics with those associated with West African pottery, in addition to making comparisons with wares of Native American production. She concluded that while the American and African wares shared some general attributes, the evidence indicated a stronger connection with Native American pottery traditions. But in subsequent investigations other scholars came to a controversial different conclusion, arguing that Africans are likely to have been the "primary" producers of colonowares (Deetz 1988 and 1999:42-45, Ferguson 1980, 1992, 1999). At any rate, the strong correlation of the ware type

with sites inhabited by Africans and their descendants suggests that at least in certain circumstances those vessels served as an important element of their material culture, and therefore have particularly strong interpretive potential in that context (Heath 1996, Mouer et al. 1999, Steen 1999).

Another set of archaeological data that has been found to be strongly correlated with African occupations consists of the presence of one or more relatively small subfloor pits found within the footprints of structures hypothesized as serving as quarters for the enslaved. A pattern of single cellars typically located just in front of the hearth has been found associated with home sites believed to have been occupied by white settlers. These features tend to be substantial in size, and they are widely believed to have served in the traditional capacity of storing perishable food stuffs. In contrast, multiple subfloor pits have been found within numerous structures identified as slave quarters, and these are generally smaller in size and seem more likely to have served a variety of functions beyond simple food storage. The earliest examples date to the late 17th century, when enslaved Africans were first being introduced to Virginia in large numbers (Fesler 2004). The question of the precise functions of the features remains a subject of debate, but most of the pits apparently held personal items and some of them may even have been used as ancestor shrines (Samford 1999 and 2007). Although the number of sites where multiple pits have been found so far is small, and they are largely limited to the James River valley, the average number of pits recorded per house site seems to have increased during the first half of the 18th century, then declined precipitously after 1760. This trend has been interpreted to correlate with region-wide changes in household composition, as quarters for the enslaved increasingly came to shelter family units rather than large numbers of unrelated individuals (Fesler 2004, Heath 2010, Neiman 1997).

More recently, scholars have begun to adopt a sub-regional approach to studying the material culture of enslaved Africans (Heath 2010). The rationale for this research is based on Walsh's (2001) finding that there were important demographic differences between enslaved populations across the region, with peoples originating from culturally distinct areas of Africa found to cluster together. This naturally raised the question of whether these cultural differences manifested themselves in the archaeological record. Following along with Walsh's (2001) conclusion that slaves imported to the Upper Chesapeake generally originated from an area in Africa that was culturally distinct from those introduced to the Lower Chesapeake, Samford and Chaney (2010) selected assemblages from 12 northern sites to compare with those from 11 sites excavated in lower Tidewater Virginia. They then compared patterns associated with three selected attributes: quarter architecture, subfloor pits, and colonoware. The initial results are suggestive, with Upper Chesapeake quarters found to be smaller in size and containing fewer subfloor pits, on average, and with colonowares found in much smaller numbers, in contrast to the sites associated with their counterparts in the Lower Chesapeake. It goes without saying that the sample of sites used in this preliminary investigation is quite small, however, and they also range across an extremely broad span of time, more than 150 years. In addition, the question of the attribution of the sites' as having been inhabited by slaves in some instances is questionable (cf. Pogue and White 1994), and the total absence of colonowares found on Upper Chesapeake sites in this study is clearly the result of inadequate sampling (Heath 1996). As with other attempts to consider patterns of behavior on a sub-regional scale of analysis, the small numbers of assemblages available to study remains an impediment.

A number of developments occurred over the last decade to help reenergize interest and stimulate renewed research in the archaeology of early Virginia, even as the findings of documentary historians have offered an intriguing new interpretive perspective. Just as preparations for the 350th anniversary celebration of Jamestown's founding in 1957 spurred a diverse program of scholarly inquiry in the years leading up to the event, planning for the 400th anniversary celebration led to intensive new excavations at the town site itself, combined with an effort to revisit and reassess the previous work there and elsewhere (Carson et al. 2008, Graham et al. 2007, Horning 2001, Kelso 2006, King et al. 2006). The anticipated wide interest in Jamestown's anniversary on the part of the general public was the source of substantial funding to establish major new museums and associated programs devoted to telling the story of the founding and early development of Virginia, each erected within a two-mile radius of the site under the sponsorship of three organizations: the private foundation, Preservation Virginia (formerly the APVA); The National Park Service; and the state-funded Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation. The bright spotlight trained on Jamestown brought other benefits as well, as a number of other early Colonial domestic sites received greater attention than might otherwise have been the case (Mallios 1999 and 2000), and public and private funding was secured to support efforts to identify and excavate important Native American sites dating from the Contact Period (Turner 2004). At the same time, collaborative efforts to compile region-wide data bases of archaeological materials were carried out both to stimulate additional research and to provide a context for interpreting the Jamestown story (www.apva.org; www.chesapeakearchaeology.org). When taken together these efforts represented major contributions to the corpus of knowledge relating to 17th-century Virginia, building on the synthesis of research that had been prepared for the COVA volume that appeared in 1993 (Reinhart and Pogue 1993).

After having been relegated to the sidelines during the headiest days of renewed interest in the study of the 17th-century Chesapeake, a series of steps were taken in the early 1990s that aimed at restoring Jamestown to a place of scholarly prominence in time for the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of its founding in 1607. First was the effort on the part of the National Park Service to undertake a systematic reassessment of the research that had been carried out in the 1930s-1950s. The agency contracted with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the College of William and Mary to work in partnership to reanalyze the artifact collections, review the excavation records, and prepare a detailed tract map of the property boundaries and other important features (Bragdon, Chappell, and Graham 1993, Horning 2001). A subsequent phase of investigation consisted of comprehensively surveying the entire island and conducting limited excavations in selected areas (Blanton 2001). Shortly after this effort was initiated, the APVA elected to undertake intensive archaeological excavations on the portion of the island that they owned, hiring William Kelso to lead the project that began in 1994, and which is ongoing (Kelso 2006).

Kelso and his team almost immediately began to uncover features and artifacts indicating that the site of the fort marking the first English settlement of the island in 1607 had survived. This was a remarkable development, given the widespread assumption that the fort site had been completely lost as a consequence of centuries of erosion of the James River shoreline. Since then, much of the fort's trench-set palisade and two surviving bastions, numerous structures, wells, trash-filled pits, human burials, and other features have been revealed, and hundreds of thousands of artifacts were recovered. This work has yielded a number of remarkable discoveries about the character of the settlement which not only indicates the richness of the evidence at hand but also should serve as the basis for many

decades of additional analysis (Kelso 2006:229, Hudgins 2005).

Together with the findings of the Jamestown Reassessment project led by Cary Carson, the results of the excavations carried out by the APVA allow the trajectory of the development of Jamestown to be much more fully understood. Jamestown appears to have passed through three iterations: two failed experiments followed by a successful urban formula, with the latter then reestablished at the new capital city of Williamsburg after Jamestown was abandoned in 1699. The first trial took the form and function of a well defended trading post, where the English intended to act as middlemen trafficking in the gold, furs, and skins that they assumed were to be had by trading with the native peoples. Once it became clear that the natural wealth of the area lay in other resources, and that the Powhatan Indians were unwilling to engage in the type and scale of transactions that the English anticipated, the efforts of the settlers were redirected to extractive industries such as mining and harvesting naval stores, and growing tobacco as a staple crop. As tobacco cultivation came to dominate all other occupations, Jamestown was largely abandoned for much of each year, with planters relocating to live on their widely dispersed outlying holdings, and the city's boarding houses, taverns, and warehouses experiencing periodic bursts of prosperity when the government was in session and when the tobacco crop was ready to ship. This model of a sparsely settled court town was replicated at Williamsburg beginning in 1699, and then spread throughout the region as satellite communities were established to accommodate those functions on a local level (Carson et al. 2008).

The portrayal of the rise and fall of Jamestown is presented in an article authored by Carson and four colleagues -- two historians, two architectural historians, and one archaeologist -- that appeared in the pages of *The Journal of Southern History* (Carson et al. 2008). The story of Jamestown is offered as one source of evidence to support their thesis that the development of Chesapeake society is the familiar one of Old World traditions adapted to the conditions found in the new. The two other sources of evidence brought to bear in support of this thesis are the by-now familiar ones: architecture and foodways. Another treatment of much of this same analytical territory appeared in the pages of the *William and Mary Quarterly* in 2007, this time authored by Willie Graham and four colleagues -- in this case including two historians, two architectural historians, and one archaeologist (Graham et al. 2007). While there are some differences in interpretation and focus between the essays, both articles essentially support what has come to be the normative interpretation of the development of society in the 17th-century Chesapeake as a distinctive formulation that emerged from the complex interplay of forces and factors -- many of which have been alluded to throughout this essay. That the findings of the two pieces bear a great deal of resemblance is not surprising given that they share an author, but an even more important factor is that they depend largely on the same data. In particular, both studies make use of a recently developed source -- the Database of Early Chesapeake Architecture -- that contains information on more than 450 buildings from Maryland and Virginia spanning the years 1607 to 1720.

A group of archaeologists and historians led by Julie King initiated a parallel project to develop a database of comparative evidence. The effort, known as the Comparative Archaeological Study of Colonial Chesapeake Culture (CASCCC), was supported by a collaborative research grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the initial phase of work was completed in 2006. The product to date consists of a database of artifacts excavated from 18 archaeological sites from Maryland and Virginia, together

spanning the period from 1620 to 1740 (www.chesapeakearchaeology.org). As with the architectural database, this effort grew out of the conviction that a corpus of comparative data is crucial to the ongoing and more nuanced study of material life in the Chesapeake (King et al. 2006). The compilation has served as the basis for comparing data sets according to selected social, economic, and spatial variables, with the preliminary results suggesting that significant variation in material culture existed between households over time and space. A more surprising outcome was the finding that when the average scores for the presence of amenities between Virginia and Maryland were compared, Virginians in every wealth category had higher scores than their Maryland counterparts (Levy, Coombs, and Muraca 2007, Pogue 2007). These results have been interpreted to reflect a variety of social and economic differences between the colonies, and thus supports the value of undertaking more detailed analyses of assemblages on a sub-regional level.

A related focus of the CASCC (King et al. 2006) was to provide the same level of detailed information for the material culture of the sites' African and Native American occupants as for the English planter households. As the ability to identify artifacts and their patterns of use with members of specific ethnic groups is a well-documented challenge (Fesler and Franklin 1999, Neiman 1999), the spatial evidence is likely to be crucial in sorting out whatever patterns may exist. While it is likely that virtually all of the plantation sites occupied after the 1650s housed enslaved Africans as well as whites, in most instances it seems probable that any Native American materials found reflect trading relationships rather than their actual habitation. Two sites (one in Virginia and the other in Maryland) were selected which are believed to have been occupied by Native Americans during the second half of the 17th century. The mixture of European and native artifacts found at the two sites was remarkably similar to each other and equally dissimilar from the English plantations, indicating that the natives in these instances retained much of their traditional material culture while adopting certain types of foreign objects. These tantalizing results suggest the interpretive gains to be made by expanding the overall sample of assemblages offering this level of detail, or better (King et al. 2006, www.chesapeakearchaeology.org).

Future Directions

Recent trends in Chesapeake scholarship suggest that the coming years will witness more efforts to reassess and refine the regionally focused interpretive model that has been the norm. Similarly expanding interests in more nuanced analyses of the contributions made by Native Americans and Africans to early Virginia history are equally likely to refocus research along sub-regional lines. This is not to say that interpreting the development of 17th-century Anglo-Chesapeake society as primarily a reflection of the processes of cultural adaptation in the face of the alien conditions and the novel mixture of peoples that characterized life in the New World is likely to be discarded. But as is the nature of all scholarly exercises (Kuhn 1962) - and for a variety of reasons including new discoveries, the simple passing of time and of generations, shifting interests, and funding opportunities and constraints -- these findings and approaches have come under increasing scrutiny (King et al. 2006, Levy, Coombs, and Muraca 2007, Samford and Chaney 2010). Pursuing more fine grained investigations covering a range of questions and topics, old and new, necessarily brings with it the need to gather comparative data sets that are sufficiently robust to support those efforts. The recent examples of compiling this type of evidence serve as the greatest reason to be optimistic about generating productive new insights in the future. Yet

challenges remain. One fundamental issue is whether, after more than 40 years of industrious digging, cataloging, and number crunching, the raw data exists to measure up to the demands of scholars as they pursue their research. Another is the basic question of whether those collections will be given the quality care and attention required to survive.

The Database of Early Chesapeake Architecture (DECA) already has provided crucial evidence to inform two recent syntheses of the study of the 17th-century Chesapeake (Carson et al. 2008, Graham et al. 2007), and it has the potential to serve as the platform for pursuing an even wider range of research questions. With information captured for several hundred buildings from throughout the region, the DECA database comprises a refreshingly large and comparable sample for one of the most intensively studied aspects of early Chesapeake material culture. It should be particularly amenable for investigators to trace more closely the distribution of house forms and other characteristics of early architecture over time and space. Current plans call for the database to be made available to scholars and others as a web based research tool (Graham et al. 2007). This has not yet come to pass, however, and the observations offered in this essay have depended on the limited published evidence.

The Comparative Archaeological Study of Chesapeake Culture (King et al. 2006) comprises the searchable catalogues of artifact assemblages retrieved from 18 domestic sites (seven in Virginia, 11 in Maryland), combined with associated information on the sites and both previous findings on the part of the original investigators and selected new analyses, all of which is now available via the web (www.chesapeakearchaeology.org). Already the database has been employed to refine our understanding of variability in the types of domestic accoutrements found on the household level. But while the availability of this material represents a major step forward in allowing scholars to carry out comparative research, it remains an extremely small and limited sample. There were two main criteria for inclusion in the database: the existence of already completed artifact catalogues, along with a systematically obtained artifact sample that could be used to study intra-site distributional patterns. These requirements necessarily limited the potential number of sites, and funding constraints under which the project was carried out precluded standardizing or substantially supplementing the cataloging protocols. The core of the data consists of the linked catalogues, which had been generated by more than a dozen different investigators over a 40-year time span, and the character and level of detail of the information naturally varies accordingly. This variability is a particularly challenging circumstance, placing a variety of restrictions on analytical options.

Two studies carried out as part of the CASCCC project suggest both the benefits and other challenges associated with using the existing database to undertake subregional analyses. Phil Levy, John Coombs, and David Muraca (in King et al. 2006:58-62, also see Levy, Coombs, and Muraca 2007) focused their attention on plotting the variability in selected artifact types between households that they identified as belonging to a hierarchy of socio-economic classes: colonial elites, county elites, ordinary planters, and tenants, servants, and slaves. Not surprisingly, by plotting the presence and absence of selected artifact types they found differences that seem to reflect the standing of the occupants, with the elites more likely to live in larger houses with brick features, and with a greater range of domestic accoutrements and amenities. These findings thus provide support for a growing body of evidence (Pogue 1993 and 2001) to suggest that the image of Chesapeake colonists as a whole as unable or unwilling to acquire the trappings of “comfortable living” has been overdrawn. But the size of the samples upon which these assessments are based remain quite

limited, and when assemblages are grouped for comparison according to socio-economic and spatial variables, the numbers involved are alarmingly small. Levy, Coombs, and Muraca (2006 and 2007) proceeded by sub-dividing 11 site assemblages between four different classes; in a subsequent investigation they expanded their sample to 16 assemblages sorted into only three classes. This resulted in as few as two and never more than six sites representing broad swaths of Chesapeake society and together spanning more than a century in time. Similarly, Pogue's (2006 and 2007) studies of region-wide trends in consumer behavior covered a 120-year period and was based on artifacts recovered from just 24 sites. As all of the authors have acknowledged, while the outcomes of these studies are highly suggestive, they must be considered tentative until the size of the sample is increased significantly.

A third comparative database, the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery (DAACS), is being assembled under the direction of Fraser D. Neiman (and hosted by the Monticello Foundation), to enable inter-site research on slavery throughout the Chesapeake, the Carolinas, and the British Caribbean (www.daacs.org). Unlike the CASCCC, the creators of DAACS were able to secure funding that is adequate to allow the archaeological collections to be re-catalogued according to a new and uniform set of protocols. Therefore, certain problems with comparability -- at least in terms of reporting the artifact data - have been minimized. The database currently contains information from 23 sites, although as of this writing only one of those assemblages dates to the time period under investigation here. As the database is expanded, and presumably includes more sites dating to the period before 1720, this should serve as a crucial resource in conducting the types of fine-grained analyses that are likely to form the core of future research.

The growing interest in compiling databases to support comparative research has spurred scholars to reexamine collections associated with previously excavated sites, some of which were first investigated many decades before. Over the last 50 years dozens of archaeological sites dating to the period spanning the 17th and early 18th centuries have been excavated which have not been completely analyzed or fully reported on. Many of these projects were carried out under the umbrella of cultural resource management, sometimes in dire salvage situations, with inadequate funding to conduct comprehensive post-excavation processing and report writing. A team of investigators led by Barbara Heath at the University of Tennessee elected to reanalyze and prepare a final report on the Newman Neck site, a late 17th-early-18th-century domestic complex on Virginia's Northern Neck that was salvaged in 1989-1990, which demonstrates the value of re-examining such "abandoned" resources (Heath et al. 2009). Even though the field records were found to be somewhat lacking, the overall quality of the excavation was sufficient to allow the investigators to prepare a relatively detailed and highly informative report.

The conviction that the artifacts and associated records generated by archaeological investigations should be preserved in perpetuity is a standard tenet of the discipline (Childs 2004). But recent cutbacks in funding and attempts to redirect the efforts of the state and federal historic preservation programs may well threaten the ability to fulfill that commitment. In the case of the Newman Neck site the artifacts and records had been protected and preserved by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources at their laboratory and collections facility in Richmond and thus were available for scholars to study. But the Commonwealth of Virginia does not operate a comprehensive curation program, and according to a recent survey carried out by the Council of Virginia Archaeologists, many

similarly valuable collections are held by a range of entities - colleges and universities, historical societies, cultural resource management firms, and private individuals - often under less than ideal conditions. More troubling are the recent efforts on the part of legislators and bureaucrats in Virginia and elsewhere to limit the responsibility of government in preserving both old and recently generated archaeological materials, which calls into question whether collections such as the one from Newman Neck even may be available for future reanalysis (White and Breen 2011).

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