

COATS OF MANY COLORS: THE COLONIAL REVIVAL AND THE PURSUIT OF
ACCURACY THROUGH ARCHITECTURAL FINISHES

by

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ABSTRACT

Since the mid-twentieth century, historians have studied the Colonial Revival, often emphasizing its origins in the nineteenth century, influential figures like Wallace Nutting and Fiske Kimball, and the style's lasting popularity and culture influence in the United States. Colonial Williamsburg has been a popular focus for scholars of the Colonial Revival because its restoration of eighteenth century buildings and its impact on architecture and middle-class culture. Although the Colonial Revival remains a well-researched discipline, scholars have yet to fully explore the significance of the architectural finishes of Williamsburg and their multiple incarnations since the first work done by the Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn architectural firm and designer Susan Higginson Nash. What is a historically correct architectural finish has fluctuated from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first century, particularly as white middle class Americans reimagined early American history to fit their romanticized ancestry. This fluctuation is reflected in the changing interpretations of historic interiors like the Thomas Everard House and Wetherburn's Tavern at Colonial Williamsburg.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE CURRENT STATE OF THE STUDY OF THE COLONIAL REVIVAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FINISHES

Originating in the late nineteenth century, the Colonial Revival movement in the United States was an architectural and cultural movement that reached its height in the early-to-mid-twentieth century. The Colonial Revival impacted early restorations of historic sites at Colonial Williamsburg and the historic site restorations simultaneously influenced the movement. These sites embodied and further disseminated Colonial Revival stylistic trends that embodied the movement's larger message of patriotism and a return to the nation created by the "founding fathers."¹

While many of the preservationists working to restore Colonial Williamsburg, such as Susan Higginson Nash, analyzed and researched the extant historic materials related to the restored and reconstructed structures, the limitations of available technology often prevented them from accurately identifying and implementing historical architectural finishes, such as paint and wallpaper. Furthermore, historians reduced architectural finishes to a secondary status, believing that the original inhabitants of the historic homes and public buildings considered paint and wallpaper as an afterthought to the other furnishings within the structure. These misidentified architectural finishes became the decorative foundation for the Colonial Revival, and they continued to inform institutions' approaches to the preservation, interpretation, and furnishings of historic sites for decades to come.

This thesis seeks to challenge the understanding of how preservationists used

¹ Annie Robinson, "A 'Portrait of a Nation': The Role of the Historic American Building Survey in the Colonial Revival," *Re-creating the American Past: Essays on the Colonial Revival* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 100.

architectural finishes to define historical accuracy in twentieth-century Colonial Revival interiors. Additionally, it will demonstrate how paint and wallpaper, when used as historical evidence, offer a deeper understanding of eighteenth and twentieth-century American culture through two case studies of the Thomas Everard House and Wetherburn's Tavern in Colonial Williamsburg.

Throughout the twentieth century, historians studied the Colonial Revival's architecture, nationalistic origins, influential individuals and institutions, and material culture. During the first half of the twentieth century when the Colonial Revival was at its height, scholars like Wallace Nutting and Fiske Kimball wrote contemporary works about colonial architecture and furniture that served as foundational sources for their colleagues and interested consumers.²

In the 1970s, cultural historians began to explore the significance of the Colonial Revival era. In his 1974 dissertation, William B. Rhoads offered a broad overview of Colonial Revival architecture and its incarnations across the country as a style suitable for both residential and public buildings.³ He discussed the movement's origins and popularity by conducting limited investigations into its ties to affordability, gender, social classes, the romanticism of the eighteenth century, and American identity. In a following journal article, he reinforced the impact of "patriotic sentiment" as a key factor in the architectural style's popularity.⁴ Rhoads laid the groundwork for subsequent scholars to study the Colonial Revival not just as an architectural history, but a movement with greater implications about American culture.

² Fiske Kimball, *American Architecture* (Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1928); Wallace Nutting, *Furniture Treasury*, (Macmillan Publishing Company, 1928).; Thomas Andrew Denenberg, *Wallace Nutting and the Invention of Old America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

³ William B. Rhoads, *The Colonial Revival*, (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1974), xxxxi.

⁴ Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism," *Journal of Architectural Historians*, 35, no. 4. (December 1976), 239.

In the 1980s, scholars used Rhoads' work as a point of departure for their own efforts to analyze the Colonial Revival's origins and popularity. Harvey Green agreed with Rhoads that nationalism was the root of the movement, but he sought to analyze the "cultural phenomenon" through lens of social and intellectual history.⁵ He argued that the Colonial Revival's foundation of nationalism was rooted in changing political theory and the introduction of Darwinism.⁶ Colonial imagery and language pervaded the nineteenth century political atmosphere from the Know-Nothing party of the 1830s to the labor groups of the 1870s that favored white, middle-class Protestant Americans.⁷ Reacting against the changing demographics and environment of the nineteenth century, white Protestants looked romanticized their past as an Anglo-Saxon safe haven and designated the Revolutionary Period as the Golden Age of American history. Using the Colonial Revival to romanticize their history, white Protestants attempted to "prevail in the struggle for existence" in the face of a changing United States.⁸

Historians continued to utilize social history to analyze how white middle-class citizens used the Colonial Revival to reimagine the past. The essays in Alan Axelrod's *Colonial Revival in America* (1985) reaffirm how white middle-class Americans in the early twentieth century used architecture, landscape, and other means to reimagine Revolutionary America in order to achieve their idealized vision of the United States.⁹

Chronicling the impact of the rise of the suburbs, Alan Gowans and David Gebhard also analyzed architecture from 1890 to 1930 as a physical manifestation of this nationalism. Gowans

⁵ Harvey Green, "Popular Science and Political Thought Converge: Colonial Survival Becomes Colonial Revival, 1830-1910," *Journal of American Culture* 6 (Winter 1983), 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁹ William B. Rhoads, "Roadside Colonial: Early American Design for the Automobile Age, 1900-1940," *Winterthur Portfolio* 21, no. 2 (Summer - Autumn 1986): 133-152.

analyzed the mass pre-fabrication movement and asserts that the English Colonial had the greatest impact on the American suburb because it symbolized permanence for white Americans. Like Green, Gowans asserts that white Americans used the style as a means of stability to represent their Anglo-Saxon ancestry and “as a cushion against future shock.” Although the Colonial Revival had its origins in the late nineteenth century, Gowans wrote that the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg had the greatest impact on the English style as a form of suburban architecture. It embodied the “Georgian/homestead style” that represented the upward mobility that defined early American social classes, and by the twentieth century, it became “the ultimate Comfortable House.”¹⁰ Continuing with a similar argument, Gebhard argued that the traditional nature of Colonial architecture successfully competed with the more modern styles of the 1920s and 1930s as the favored design among American homes. As a collective, the Colonial style held “suggestive powers” that reminded Americans “of a simpler, puritanical, family-oriented world of manageable scale.”¹¹ Similar to Gowans, Gebhard credited the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg as well as Colonial National Park as the “principal event that helped to promote the colonial revival of the thirties.”¹² By the mid-twentieth century, the traditional and modern styles converged to create a “modernized colonial” that created a familiar environment while catering to twentieth-century needs for both private and public structures.¹³

By the end of the decade, scholars expanded their approach to the Colonial Revival, and analyzed other avenues including material culture and its impact on museums and historic sites.

¹⁰ Alan Gowans, *The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture, 1890-1930* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986), 147-148.

¹¹ David Gebhard, “The American Colonial Revival in the 1930s,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 22, no. 2/3 (1987): 146. Although Gebhard attempts to separate these characteristics from nationalism, these three other popular traits of the Colonial Revival would have most likely attracted the white middle-class audience. Colonial architecture would continue to affirm their identity within a diverse United States.

¹² *Ibid.*, 117.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 146.

Karal Ann Marling produced an extensive study of Americans' obsession not just with the American Revolution, but specifically the cult of George Washington. She analyzed the multiple manifestations of Washington's image from artifacts with direct provenance to the man himself and ranging to Washington iconography that have been incorporated into material culture, political campaigns, and other avenues of American life.¹⁴ In *Creating a Dignified Past* (1991), various historians contributed essays that assessed the relationship between the house museums and the Colonial Revival. Many of the essays detail the influence of Victorian culture on the restoration and interpretation of the historic houses. However, Betty Crowe Leviner wrote that curators at Colonial Williamsburg consciously avoided contemporary influence when interpreting exhibition buildings. Instead, they researched and used primary sources in order to furnish the interiors with artifacts that reflected eighteenth-century Virginia.¹⁵ Throughout the twentieth century, Colonial Williamsburg has served as a window into the history of United States as it was romanticized by white middle and upper-class Americans. The institution did not broaden its narrative until the second half of the twentieth century when it began to make a concerted effort to interpret Williamsburg's African American histories.¹⁶ In the twenty-first century, historians continue to discuss impact of Colonial Williamsburg as Anders Greenspan did in his institutional history of Colonial Williamsburg in 2002.¹⁷

¹⁴ Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here: Colonial Revivals and American Culture 1876-1976* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 155.

¹⁵ Geoffrey L. Rossano, *Creating a Dignified Past: Museums and the Colonial Revival* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1991), 56.

¹⁶ In 1984 Carroll Van West and Mary S. Hoffschwelle wrote a journal article for *The South Atlantic Quarterly* detailing Colonial Williamsburg's emphasis on the colonial elite in the public interpretation. They note that at the time of publication, the organization expanded its portrayal of domestic crafts. Nevertheless, Colonial Williamsburg continued to either omit or stereotype people of African or native descent. Carroll Van West and Mary S. Hoffschwelle, "'Slumbering On Its Old Foundations': Interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 83 (Spring 1984), 129; Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *New History in an Old Museum* (Duke University Press, 1997), 100.

¹⁷ Anders Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 121 and 149.

No matter their focus, the late twentieth-century scholars of the Colonial Revival found one persistent trend: although the Colonial Revival was meant to imitate eighteenth-century Colonial America, designers most often traded historical accuracy for a view of history that was free from any impurities and complications. This trend of limited accuracy often manifested itself in historic interiors that were aesthetically pleasing to twentieth-century visitors rather than based in historical accuracy. As Americans firmly settled into the comfort and familiarity of traditional historic sites, however, historians and conservators were incorporating new technology and re-evaluating early research that would ultimately transform physical appearance the historic sites. Specific attention is now given to the Colonial Revival's relationship with historic interiors. Richard Guy Wilson's *Recreating the Past* (2006) concerns several topics related to the Colonial Revival, and three essays specifically discuss historic interiors. The authors attempt to demonstrate that the Colonial Revival's audience was not as "monolithic" as past studies have suggested, but Wilson does admit that white middle-class Americans did use the Colonial Revival to assimilate other groups of people while also elevating themselves.¹⁸ The authors also how the material culture of the homes reflected those sentiments.¹⁹ Although paint and wallpaper are at times listed on the probate and inventory records used by historians and curators, the finishes are omitted from the discussion of interpretation by most historians. Rather, these architectural finishes are typically confined to the purview of conservators, architects, and preservationists.

Some of the earliest analysis on architectural finishes at historic sites in the United States can be dated to the work during the early restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. Working

¹⁸ Richard Guy Wilson, *Recreating the Past*, 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

alongside the architectural firm of Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn, Susan Higginson Nash was an interior decorator who was hired to research and recreate the color schemes of Colonial Williamsburg in the 1920s.²⁰ Nash emphasized that the colors of Williamsburg were to be based in historical research.²¹ She and her team utilized primary sources that ranged from documentary evidence to the buildings themselves that were analyzed using early “scratch and match” tests. This “scratch and match” meant that a conservator removed the paint layer by layer on an architectural feature to uncover each known layer, and then they compared each revealed paint color it to the closest known twentieth century equivalent.²² While Nash’s work was based in historical evidence and ultimately created the aesthetic associated with early Colonial Williamsburg, her early twentieth-century technology was limited compared to the high-powered microscopes and machines that analysts and conservators use today. Historians and curators would not begin to fully understand or reveal all of the paint layers at a historic building until the last quarter of the twentieth century with the introduction of more powerful analytical technology.

From the 1950s until the 1970s, presses published several influential books on wallpaper that collectively traced its history and chronology of manufacture and popular designs. Between 1954 and 1970, E.A. Entwistle wrote two books on the subject. *The Literary History of Wallpaper* serves as a documentary guide to four hundred years’ worth of written references to wallpaper.²³ *The Book of Wallpaper: A History and an Appreciation* is more of a collective overview of the subject, and in the foreword of the second edition, Entwistle states that he

²⁰ Willie Graham, “Architectural Paint Research at American Museums: An Appeal for Standards,” 3.

²¹ Susan Higginson Nash, “Paints, Furniture, and Furnishings,” *Restoration of Williamsburg: The Architectural Record* 78, no. 6 (December 1935), 447.

²² Roger W. Moss, *Paint in America: The Colors of Historic Buildings* (New York: Preservation Press, 1994), 90.

²³ E.A. Entwistle, *A Literary History of Wallpaper* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1960).

intended to demonstrate that “even the smallest fragment, if the design is still to be seen, can reveal something of a social history and taste.”²⁴ While that book does offer some interpretation, it took another twenty years for historians and curators to begin implementing interpretive approaches to wallpaper and paint. Entwistle’s immediate successors, such as Brenda Greysmith’s *Wallpaper* (1976), although useful as resource guides, continued to offer only histories and chronologies of the architectural finish.²⁵

In the 1980s, following the important work done by Entwistle and Greysmith, Richard Nylander published *Wallpaper in New England* (1986) and Catherine Lynn published *Wallpaper in America* (1980). Limiting his research to a specific geographical area, Nylander explored the collection found in the collection at the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (now known as Historic New England).²⁶ Like Entwistle, Lynn traced the history of wallpaper in her work, but she narrowed the timeframe to the seventeenth century until the first quarter of the twentieth century.²⁷ Using the collection of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Lynn traced the popularity and chronology of various styles during this time period and divided the chronology to specific styles. Although lacking in interpretation, both authors’ works offered invaluable research on historic wallpaper and continue to be authorities on the background and identification of wallpaper.

By the 1990s, paint analysts made important advances that forced historic sites to reassess their early restorations. Paint conservators and architectural historians like Matthew

²⁴ E.A. Entwistle, *The Book of Wallpaper: A History and An Appreciation* (London: Morrison and Gibb Limited, 1970), 5.

²⁵ Brenda Greysmith, *Wallpaper* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1976).

²⁶ Richard Nylander, *Wallpaper in New England* (Boston: Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, 1986).

²⁷ Catherine Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I* (New York: Cooper Hewitt Museum, 1980).

Mosca, Frank Welsh, Roger Moss, and Patrick Baty used developing technology in chemical analysis to reveal new and often surprising colors that contradicted the pastel colors chosen in the 1920s and 1930s.²⁸ Their work coincided with new curatorial standards in which curators “shift[ed] away from the 1930’s view of decorative arts as fine arts into the contemporary social-cultural approach” by depending on developments in historical scholarship as well as architectural investigations.²⁹ Incorporating these new developments in paint analysis and curatorial methods, Mount Vernon, Colonial Williamsburg, and similar institutions first restored during the Colonial Revival were transformed to better reflect eighteenth-century tastes rather than those of the early twentieth century. Not all institutions were as willing to accept change. In a 1995 article, Baty asked, despite the advances in paint analysis, “how much longer must the visitor to our historic houses rely on the divine good taste of the decorator to inform him, especially when the guide book is unclear or even evasive?”³⁰ When sites implemented historically accurate finishes, they only changed a building’s physical appearance and neglected to use paint and wallpaper as a way to interpret the site beyond a decorative choice.

As technology advances, historians and conservators have even more opportunities to make new discoveries and re-evaluate old ones concerning the architectural finishes. Robert Kelly’s *The Backstory of Wallpaper* and the research done by Treve Rosoman have proven influential.³¹ Conservators such as Susan Buck, Peggy Olley, Natasha Loeblich, and Kristen Travers Moffitt have joined Kelly and Mosca to contribute invaluable research to architectural

²⁸ Paula Dietz, “New Look for Historic Houses: Accuracy Replaces Idealism,” *New York Times*, January 1, 1987.

²⁹ Dietz, “New Look for Historic Houses: Accuracy Replaces Idealism.”

³⁰ Patrick Baty, “The Role of Paint Analysis in the Historic Interior,” *Journal of Architectural Conservation* 1, no. 1 (March 1995): 36.

³¹ Robert M. Kelly, *The Backstory of Wallpaper: Paper-Hangings 1650-1750* (WallpaperScholar.com, 2013); Treve Rosoman has published various articles, including “Wallpaper,” in *Interior Finishes and Fittings For Historic Building Conservation*, edited by Michael Forsythe and Lisa White (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

finishes studies. Colonial Williamsburg, just as it was in the early twentieth century, remains at the forefront of institutions who work with these conservators to re-evaluate and understand historic buildings. Using an interdisciplinary approach, these conservators work alongside the institution's architectural historians and preservationists, such as Ed Chappell, Willie Graham, Carl Lounsbury, and Matthew Webster.³² They have conducted architectural investigations of buildings both within and outside of Colonial Williamsburg, and their collective research contributes to the understandings of historic structures and pigments. Using this research, Colonial Williamsburg continues to transform the physical appearances otherwise familiar buildings to a more historically accurate eighteenth-century appearance.³³

Colonial Williamsburg's historians have now taken this research one step further by using the results of paint analysis to further interpret the structures, their inhabitants, and eighteenth century stylistic trends. Some of this interpretation began in 1996 with an article written by Margaret Pritchard and Willie Graham for *Antiques: The Magazine*. The two curators discussed the changing physical appearances of the Thomas Everard House and the George Wythe House in order to explain to visitors the reasoning for the seemingly drastic physical changes. Within the article, they also offered a brief interpretation to explore what the installation of these eighteenth-century finishes represented to the owners of the homes. For example, Pritchard and Graham argue that the Wythe's house lack of paneling, a common architectural feature in eighteenth century English gentry homes, combined with its yellow-ochre

³² Paul Aron, "Paint the Town," *Trend and Tradition* Summer 2016, 104-106.; Willie Graham, "Architectural Paint Research at American Museums: An Appeal for Standards," in *Architectural Finishes in the Built Environment*, edited by Mary A. Jablonski and Catherine R. Matsen (London: Archetype Publications, 2009), 15.

³³ Some of these transformations are more startling than others, such as the Peyton Randolph House that was changed from a Colonial Revival white color to Spanish brown. Ronald L. Hurst, "The Peyton Randolph House Restored," *Antiques: The Magazine* (January 2001).

paint, was “a deliberate attempt to suppress the dominance of any given room.”³⁴ These stylistic choices, the authors concluded, “paralleled the aspirations of the Virginia gentry on the eve of the American Revolution.”³⁵

By 2013, Pritchard, Graham, Cary Carson, and their fellow historians at Colonial Williamsburg collaborated to write *The Chesapeake House*, in which they further explored the significance of Chesapeake architecture and related materials including paint and wallpaper. Graham and conservator Susan Buck trace the changing colonial trends of paint colors and their connotations, explaining that color was now used to establish “spatial hierarchies” within gentry homes.³⁶ In the chapter on wallpaper, Pritchard discusses the popularity and use of the architectural finish in the Chesapeake as well its evolving meaning during that time. Furthering the argument that she made with Graham in the 1996 article, she discusses wallpaper’s role in creating the new Chesapeake House.³⁷

While historians and analysts have made great strides concerning the history, identification, and implementation of historically accurate finishes, there is still more to be learned from eighteenth-century finishes as historical evidence. Some historians and preservationists, like those at Colonial Williamsburg, have opened the door and begun the necessary interpretation of paint and wallpaper. This thesis serves to further that interpretation and to bridge the gap between the two historiographies of the Colonial Revival and paint analysis. I will demonstrate paint and wallpaper’s evolving role in re-creating historically

³⁴ Margaret Pritchard and Willie Graham, “Rethinking Two Houses at Colonial Williamsburg,” *Antiques: The Magazine* (January 1996): 171

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

³⁶ Graham, “Paint,” in *The Chesapeake House*, edited by Cary Carson and Carl Lounsbury (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2013), 367

³⁷ Pritchard, “Wallpaper,” *The Chesapeake House*, 376.

accurate interiors at historic sites, both aesthetically and more importantly as historical evidence that contributes to the overall interpretation of the house and its history.

The first chapter provides context to the creation of Colonial Williamsburg by reviewing briefly the use of architectural finishes in colonial Virginia. Prior to the American Revolution, the colonists typically imported paint and wallpaper from England and they purchased these finishes from the English or local merchants. Local tradesmen subsequently hung the paper and painted the interiors and exteriors of buildings. These were the preferred finishes of Virginia's elite, many of whom were connected to Williamsburg. The presence of architectural finishes in eighteenth-century Virginia buildings was a cultural marker of class and taste. Chapters two and three explore the significance of architectural finishes through two case studies of original buildings in Colonial Williamsburg's historic area, the Thomas Everard House and Wetherburn's Tavern.

In both chapters, I review the early restorations of these buildings and the early approach to the architectural finishes, and conclude with an example of how architectural finishes can be used as historical evidence to further explore the history of the building and the people associated with them. My analysis of the Everard House in chapter two focuses on the use of wallpaper in the southwest parlor. Thomas Everard was one of Williamsburg's wealthier citizens and the wallpaper is original to his occupancy and has been a permanent fixture throughout the structure's restorations. In the third chapter, the case study of Wetherburn's Tavern focuses on the exterior and the use of paint. In contrast to the Everard House, Wetherburn's Tavern demonstrates Williamsburg's transient nature during "Publick Times" as well as providing insight into Colonial Williamsburg's attempts to adapt and interpret historic exteriors of buildings that served a larger public than just the elite. The final chapter will discuss the

problems that come with implementing historically accurate finishes, from the ability and willingness of historic sites to do so as well as the public's often controversial response to new colors and finishes.

CHAPTER TWO

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT: WALLPAPER AT THE THOMAS EVERARD HOUSE

To many homeowners, wallpaper is simply an outdated form of decoration. In the eighteenth century, however, wallpaper had a more complex history. It did not just hide the bare walls of a house, but it covered up and redesigned the identity of its owner. In mid-eighteenth century Williamsburg, Virginia, Thomas Everard transformed himself from his English orphan origins to become a member of Virginia's gentry. Everard used wallpaper not just as a decorative feature, but also as a tool to reinforce visually and symbolically his new place in society.

Decorative papers originated as a deceptive measure used to imitate more elaborate designs and features such as swags in textiles and architectural elements. For centuries, crafters have used decorative papers to enliven trunks, books, and other everyday items. According to Charles C. Oman, "At no time has the inspiration for wallpaper been entirely original."

¹ In the fifteenth century, wallpaper, also known as paper hangings and painted papers, was used as an alternative to elaborate and costly tapestries, textiles, architecture, and landscapes. The textiles often featured damask and chintz designs.

But before the nineteenth century, wallpaper was still an intensive process dependent on manual laborers. Crafters often made papers out of discarded rags that were recrafted to create a heavier paper material. They then pasted the papers together to create rolls that were typically twelve feet in length, and the paper stainer would then paint the new group of papers the desired ground color.² He would subsequently use handmade, wooden blocks to stamp the paper with

¹ Charles C. Oman, *Wallpapers: An International History and Illustrated Survey from the Victoria and Albert Museum* (1982), 9.

² Catherine Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I* (New York: Cooper Hewitt Museum, 1980), 31.

different colors and designs. To install the paper, men called paper hangers or upholsterers were needed. During the eighteenth century, paper hangers usually installed wallpaper by nailing the rolls of paper at the top of the wall, and the nails were hidden with a border paper that lined chair railings, doors, windows, and other architectural features.³

Flocked paper was an even more elaborate design that involved gluing woolen shavings to parts of the paper to create a velvet texture.⁴ It was difficult and even dangerous for the people who made it as they often died from woolsorter's disease or more commonly known as anthrax.⁵ Nevertheless, because of its extravagant qualities, flocked wallpapers were sometimes called "the Aristocrats of Paperhangings."⁶ An alternative to flocked wallpaper was called mock flock, in which the designer used shades of the same color to create an illusion of the woolen texture. Described by contemporaries as 'a kind of counterfeit flock paper,' it was slightly less expensive than true flocked paper, but it was still considered a luxury item.⁷

Despite its advertisement as a cheaper alternative to textiles and wooden paneling, wallpaper, particularly of the flocked variety, remained a popular item among the upper-class society across Europe that subsequently carried over into the colonies as well. Popularly known for his oversized signature on the Declaration of Independence, John Hancock also inherited a large estate from his uncle and became a wealthy merchant in Boston.⁸ He used this fortune to install an elaborate crimson flocked paper in a floral design in his drawing room in 1773.⁹ In

³ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 137.

⁴ E.A. Entwistle, *The Book of Wallpaper* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1960), 29.

⁵ Tony Hargreaves, *Poisons and Poisonings: Death by Stealth* (Cambridge, UK: Royal Society of Chemistry, 2017), 157.

⁶ Entwistle, *The Book of Wallpaper*, 31.

⁷ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 51.

⁸ "Historical Note," Hancock Family. Hancock family papers, 1664-1854 (Inclusive): A Finding Aid. <http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~bak00160>.

⁹ Nylander, *Wallpaper in New England*, 41 & 103.

New Hampshire, John Wentworth, a royal governor and member of a wealthy and politically powerful family, also installed a flocked paper in his home in 1769.¹⁰ Jeremiah Lee, one of the wealthiest merchants in the North American colonies, installed a blue flocked paper with a diaper pattern and in the India chintz design with palmette leaves in his home circa 1765.¹¹

¹⁰ Richard Nylander, *Wallpaper in New England*, 5.; Paul W. Wilderson, *Governor John Wentworth and the American Revolution: The English Connection*, 16.

¹¹“Sidewall England, ca. 1765,” 1938-62-25 <https://collection.cooperhewitt.org/objects/18353621/>; Hugh Howard, *Houses of the Founding Fathers: The Men Who Made America and the Way They Lived* (New York: Artsan, 2012), 58, 63.



Figure 1: Wallpaper fragment from the Jeremiah Lee Mansion in Marblehead, MA (Photograph courtesy of the Cooper Hewitt Museum).

Sidewall (England), ca. 1765
Block-Printed on handmade paper
H x W 83.5 x 55.5 cm (32 7/8 x 21 x 7/8 in.)
Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum
Gift of Grace Lincoln Temple, 1938-62-25
Photo © Smithsonian Institution

Wallpaper of all designs was sold in the southern colonies as well, particularly in the Virginia capital of Williamsburg. Local merchants like Benjamin Bucktrout advertised newly arrived shipments that often included “a neat and elegant assortment of paper hangings, of various kinds, and the newest fashions, for staircases, rooms, and ceilings.” In 1771, he offered numerous styles including embossed (another name for flocked), damask, and chintz.¹² There were other stores that also sold paper hangings. The merchants Kidd and Kendall sold “a choice collection of the most fashionable paper hangings... from the best manufactory in London.”¹³ Some customers, however, worked directly with London merchants like John Norton to buy the paper hangings.

Just as in the New England colonies, wallpaper was prevalent in the homes of the gentry class in Williamsburg. The Palace Green was home to some of the city’s most privileged citizens, including the royal governor, lawyers, and planters, most of whom were born to wealthy families. Within this confined area, at least four residents installed wallpaper into their homes during the mid-to-late eighteenth century. Lord Botetourt, the royal governor, hung a plain blue paper with a leather gilded trim in the ballroom of the Governor’s Palace.¹⁴ The son of a planter, George Wythe was a lawyer and professor who lived in a large brick Georgian home on the Palace Green. While there is currently no documentary proof of wallpaper in Wythe’s home, the minimal architectural paneling on the walls highly suggests that paper hangings have been used to distinguish between spaces in the house.¹⁵

¹² “Just Imported, and to be sold cheap for ready money by the subscriber, in Williamsburg,” *The Virginia Gazette*, May 23, 1771. Newspapers.com

¹³ “Just imported in the Matty, Capt. Fox, from London,” *Virginia Gazette*, October 5, 1769. Newspapers.com

¹⁴ Robert Beverly Letter Book, 1761-93, February 10, 1772 (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.).

¹⁵ Kim Ivey, “Hang It Up: Colonial and Early Federal Wallpaper” Presentation, *The Building Arts Conference*, Williamsburg, Virginia, September 2016.

Between Wythe and the Governor lived Robert Carter III. A wealthy planter who owned 60,000 acres and 600 slaves, Robert III made his home in Williamsburg during the court season.¹⁶ He lived in the former home of his grandfather, Robert King Carter, and redesigned the house in the early 1760s. Carter III wrote to the London merchant Norton in 1762 and placed an order for carpets, sconces, and numerous papers to be put into his home. Describing the papers and their varying qualities and sizes, he wrote, “The 1st Parlour a good Paper of a Crimson Colour- The 2^d Parlours a better Paper, a white ground wth large green leaves. The 3^d Parlour best Paper a blue ground wth large Yellow Flowers.” He also ordered “paper proper to hang a Passage and Stair Case.”¹⁷ While he did not specify the design of the papers, wallpaper fragments were later found in the house that match the brief description of the “good Paper of a Crimson colour.” Not only were the fragments crimson, but they were in a mock flock design with a white diaper pattern. Although the paper was not considered to be the “best” paper in the house, Carter III still considered it an attractive enough paper to adorn the walls of a parlour where he would have entertained other affluent Virginians. Less than ten years later, around 1770, laborers installed a similar paper for Carter’s neighbor, Thomas Everard.

¹⁶ Philip Vickers Fithian, *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, ed. Hunter Dickinson Farish, (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1957), 79.

¹⁷ Robert Carter Letterbook 1761-1764. MS. Colonial Williamsburg Archives. Colonial Williamsburg. Microfilm. M-114. pages 18-21. As cited in Mary A. Stephenson, “Robert Carter House Historical Report Block 30-2 Building 13 Lot 333, 334, 335, 336,” Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1956, 1990.

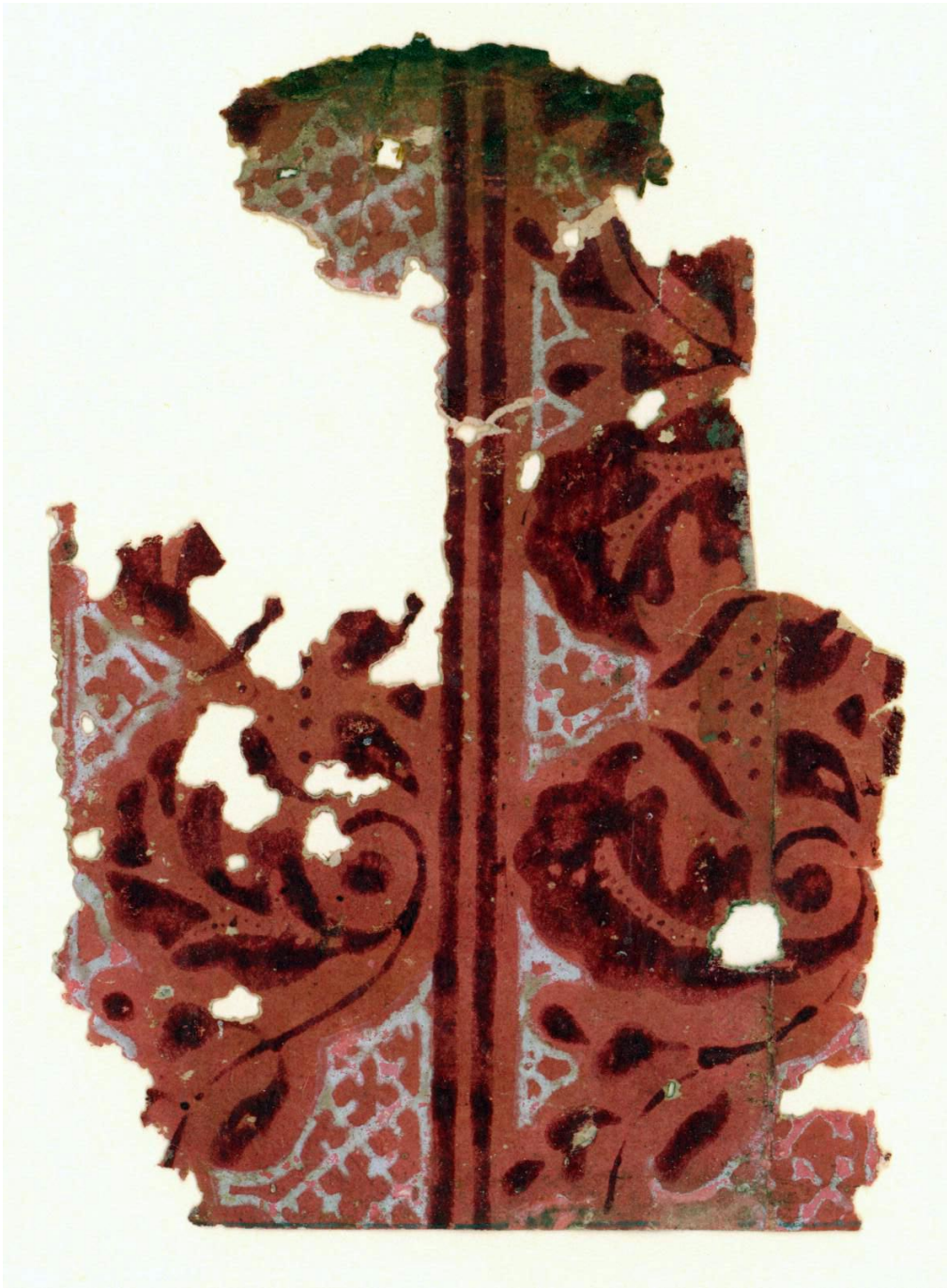


Figure 2: Crimson mock flock and backing paper found in the Robert Carter House (Photograph courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg, accession number AF-30-2.13.19, a-c).

Although they all lived on the Palace Green, Thomas Everard's background was very different than that of his neighbors. In approximately 1719, he was born in England to William Everard, a skinner, but by the age of ten, the younger Everard was placed in Christ's Hospital, a school for poor and orphaned children. For six years, Everard trained as an apprentice until he immigrated to Virginia in 1735 to work for Matthew Kemp in Williamsburg.¹⁸ A merchant by trade, Kemp was also a clerk for various courts and committees in the area. Everard learned under Kemp and other clerks, working in the Secretary's Office for seven years. By 1745, Everard graduated from his apprenticeship. Hired as a clerk, Everard quickly achieved a great deal of success. By the 1750s, Everard, a self-made man, purchased a house on the Palace Green, right next door to the royal governor and across the lawn from Carter III. After his wife died, he lived there with his two daughters and nineteen enslaved people.¹⁹ Everard continued to do well for himself. Through the course of his life, Everard was a tobacco planter, a lawyer for the General Court, a clerk of the Secretary of the Colony's office, twice the mayor of Williamsburg, and a director for the Public Hospital.²⁰

¹⁸ "Thomas Everard," Records of Christ's Hospital, *Virtual Jamestown*, http://www.virtualjamestown.org/christs_hospital/search_ch.php?search_type=advanced&app_id=534.

¹⁹ Christy S. Matthews, "In Search of Freedom," in *Williamsburg, Virginia 1699-1999*, ed. Robert P. Maccubbin (Richmond: The University of Virginia Press, 2000), 54-55.

²⁰ "The Brush-Everard House," Historic Sites and Buildings, *Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*, <https://www.history.org/almanack/places/hb/hbbrush.cfm>.



Figure 3: Thomas Everard House located on the Palace Green (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Carroll Van West).



Figure 4: Thomas Everard House's proximity to the Governor's Palace on the Palace Green (Photograph by author).

While Everard's "rags to riches" story resonates with the twenty-first century understanding of the American Dream, self-made success was difficult and even a rare achievement by the mid-1700s.²¹ Partly due to longer lifespans and "the emergence of a native-born majority," the gentry became a solidified social class that capitalized on the improving tobacco market and the rise of a slave labor economy. Totalling approximately five percent of the population, the gentry provided "livable inheritances" for their children to ensure that the fortunes stayed in the family. This cycle combined with their involvement in colonial politics ensured their place in society, as exemplified by planters like Robert Carter III who also served in the House of Burgesses. The growing power of the gentry created a stark wage gap between themselves and the lower classes, and almost eliminated any chance of social mobility.²²

Thomas Everard, however, did join Williamsburg's upper-class society and benefitted from the tobacco market and line of credit extended to the elite. While there were numerous merchants in town, Everard frequently purchased goods from John Norton, the same London merchant used by Robert Carter III. The transition of the Virginia economy coincided with the growing desire for tobacco in Europe. British markets relied on the success of the planters' crops, and in turn, the elite planters used their crops, or even the promise of a good season, as credit with British merchants.²³ Everard frequently communicated with Norton about the state of his crop, and in 1768, he wrote, "I am informed it is of a good quality and doubt not you will make the most of it." By updating Norton about the recent harvest, he ensured the merchant that

²¹ "Everard House: From Rags to Riches," Locations, *Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*, <https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/locations/everard-house>

²² Bruce A. Ragsdale, *A Planter's Republic: The Search for Economic Independence in Revolutionary Virginia* (Madison: Madison House, 1996), 6.

²³ Ragsdale, *A Planter's Republic*, 10-11.

he was still a reliable customer and it would “make good the advanced freight.”²⁴ Everard traded the “hogsheads” of tobacco for various items, including spices, alcohol, and clothing for his slaves.²⁵ Credit also “increasingly encouraged the purchase of many niceties – ‘articles of fashion’” – that made life more comfortable and pleasant and could mark a man or woman as a person of substance or notoriety.”²⁶ Everard participated in this consumer culture, and purchased luxury items for himself and his family, such as books, clothing, and other types of textiles.²⁷ Another extravagance that Everard used in his home was wallpaper.

²⁴ Thomas Everard, 1719-1781, “Letter from Thomas Everard to John Norton, 1770 August 11,” *John Norton & Sons Papers, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library*. Accessed April 30, 2017.

²⁵ Thomas Everard, 1719-1781, “Thomas Everard letter to John Norton, 1768 August 20,” *John Norton & Sons Papers, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library*. Accessed May 3, 2017. <https://rocklibnorton.omeka.net/items/show/119>.

²⁶ Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 35.

²⁷ Thomas Everard, 1719-1781, “Letter from Thomas Everard to John Norton, 1771 July 20,” *John Norton & Sons Papers, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library*. Accessed April 30, 2017.



Figure 5: Fragment of the yellow mock flock paper found in the Thomas Everard house (Photograph courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg, accession number: AF-29.10.15, a-i).

According to evidence generated through chemical analysis of existing paint layers, Everard renovated his home around 1770. At that time, laborers repainted and papered multiple rooms. Carpenters also built additional rooms on the rear of the house.²⁸ In what is believed to be Everard's dining room, paper hangers installed a yellow mock flock paper with a pin-stripe diaper pattern. Colonial Williamsburg has multiple fragments in its architectural collections with analyses and provenances that date to this period of Everard's ownership. The fragments in Colonial Williamsburg's collection show the two shades of yellow used to create the illusion of a flocked damask pattern with palmette leaves, like the papers found in the homes of John Hancock and Jeremiah Lee in New England. The existing wallpaper fragments are smaller than a letter-sized envelope, and therefore do not show a full repeat. In the current interpretation of the house, a company specializing in historic reproduction of wallpaper has reimagined what the full effect would have looked like and used the traditional eighteenth-century hand-blocked methods.

²⁸ "Cross Section Microscopy Thomas Everard," Kristen Travers.



Figure 6: The interior of the Thomas Everard House with reproduced yellow mock flock wallpaper (Photo courtesy of Dr. Carroll Van West).

In 1770, Everard also signed the Virginia Nonimportation Agreement in which he joined a group of citizens, particularly planters and merchants, who promised not to import or buy English imported goods, including “paper hangings.”²⁹ It was originally put forth in 1769, but was unsuccessful. When George Mason redrafted the 1770 Agreement, he wrote “the sense of Shame and the Fear of Reproach must be inculcated, and enforced in the strongest manner.” Each county had a committee that were given the power “to investigate violations and to publish the names of merchants or importers who sold enumerated goods.” They were also “authorized to publish the names of such signers of the association as shall violate their agreement.”³⁰ John Prentis, a merchant in Williamsburg, violated the agreement in 1774 and, as Mason hoped for, he was publicly shamed in the *Virginia Gazette*. Implicated with Prentis was the London merchant John Norton. Prentis soon after issued a public apology in the newspaper and both men tried to dissociate Norton from the violation.³¹

According to the rules of eighteenth century domestic spaces, the home was meant for entertaining, and as such it was an extension of one’s own identity. Parlours and dining rooms became important entertaining spaces, particularly for the elite like Robert Carter III and Everard.³² However, the rules of eighteenth century society also dictated that visitors had to be of a certain social class before they could even enter certain rooms. Citizens that would have been most affected by the Nonimportation Agreement, like smaller farmers, would have never entered

²⁹ “Virginia Nonimportation Resolutions, 22 June 1770,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified December 28, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0032>. [Original source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, 1760–1776, ed. Julian P. Boyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950, pp. 43–48.]

³⁰ Robert Rutland, *Papers of George Mason 1725-1792* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 116-121.

³¹ William G. Keener, *Prentis Store Historical Report, Block 18-1 Building 5*, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series – 0023, (1957, 1990), 58-59.

³² Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press for The Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1982), 76.

the dining room to see Everard's new wallpaper. Nevertheless, Everard was not just a planter. As the mayor of Williamsburg and a successful lawyer across York County, his clients and constituents spanned from Lord Dunmore to the more common Virginian.³³ He risked losing their respect and their business if he was found in violation of the agreement.

The timing of Everard's signing of the Nonimportation Agreement, the dating of the wallpaper, and the implication of Norton begs the question, why would Everard, a prominent member of Williamsburg society, risk public shaming just to redecorate his home? Even though located on the Palace Green, Everard's house paled in size and style, when compared to the dwellings of Carter III, George Wythe, and the Royal Governor. If the home, and particularly entertaining areas, were extensions of one's identity, the best way for Everard to reinforce and maintain his place in a society with limited social mobility was to install decorative features like those of his wealthier neighbors. Aside from the color, the yellow wallpaper that Everard installed in his home was very similar to the "good paper of a Crimson color" that Carter III used in the 1760s. Wallpaper was a nonverbal, and yet not so subtle, indicator to reaffirm one's status in the distinctly upper and lower-class world of colonial Virginia.

There are possibilities that Everard did not violate the agreement, such as if the paper was manufactured in America or if it was installed earlier than 1770. Nevertheless, much of the evidence is stacked against Everard. His relationship with the merchant John Norton, Norton's association with John Prentis who violated the agreement, and the clout of Everard's social circle like Carter III with a similar wallpaper that was ordered from Norton highly implicate Everard as

³³ Toni Guagenti, "From orphan to colonial leader: The story of Thomas Everard, Virginia's most famous founding," *Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*. Web. <http://www.history.org/features/orphan/>; Thomas Everard and John Randolph, "Williamsburg To Writ," *Virginia Gazette* March 26, 1772, 2. Newspapers.com; "Williamsburg...election of a mayor," *Virginia Gazette*, December 4, 1766, 3. Newspapers.com.

being in violation of the agreement. Everard's 1770 renovation of his house demonstrates that wallpaper is more than just a decorative feature. Instead, it was the social tool of a man from humble origins to maintain his status among Virginia's most affluent citizens. In the home of a self-made man, the sight of mock flock yellow wallpaper could either make or break his place in society and among his peers.

CHAPTER THREE

REVISITING WETHERBURN'S TAVERN IN THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

The paint colors of Colonial Williamsburg have permeated the American decorative, domestic palette since the Susan Higginson Nash took the first paint samples in 1929. But the colors Nash identified are not the same as those identified and analyzed by twenty-first century conservators. Technology plays a major role in the new consensus of colonial paint colors. But the questions raised by conservators and historians have also changed.

The impact of technology and modern scholarship on the look of Colonial Williamsburg's historic buildings is no better shown than in the three major transformations undergone by Wetherburn's Tavern since it was first acquired by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in 1964. To the average visitor, Wetherburn's Tavern has simply rotated from a white paint scheme to red-brown and then returned to white. However, the paint analysis and subsequent interpretations behind these changes reveal an evolving understanding of one of Williamsburg's most significant historic buildings and the interesting tavern-keepers who managed the business.

In eighteenth century Williamsburg, taverns, also known as ordinaries, and coffee houses were important social spaces in which the enlightened, the elite, and the everyday men shared ideas and information, particularly concerning current events. The Raleigh Tavern, for example, is where the prestigious honor society, Phi Beta Kappa Society was founded in 1776. The Apollo Room in the Raleigh Tavern was host to grand balls and to political unrest. In 1769 and 1774, the burgesses met here to protest British rule and created a Committee of Correspondence which

resulted in the call for delegates to create the first Continental Congress.¹ The Raleigh Tavern burned in 1859, but it became the Foundation's first reconstruction when it finished rebuilding the Raleigh in 1932.

Wetherburn's Tavern, also known as The Bull's Head or the Bland-Wetherburn House, was another popular gathering place in Williamsburg during Henry Wetherburn's tenure as tavern keeper between 1751 and 1760. The site, however, was active for at least 40 years before Wetherburn's occupancy, but the building as it is seen today was not constructed until Wetherburn's occupancy.² While researchers have yet to uncover the exact construction date of the current building, the first owners have been documented. Thought to be the original proprietor, Richard Bland owned the property until 1716 when Nathaniel Harrison purchased it. Benjamin Harrison inherited it in 1727. The latter Harrison subsequently sold it to Henry Wetherburn in 1738.³ Wetherburn did not occupy this tavern, however, until a few years later because he was operating the Raleigh Tavern almost directly across the street.

Although his exact origins are unknown, Henry Wetherburn worked as a tavern keeper from at least 1731 until his death in 1760. He first appears in the records when he married the widow Mary Bowcock and acquired an ordinary's license for the Raleigh Tavern. His new wife was the recent widow of Henry Bowcock, who originally operated the Raleigh Tavern until his death between 1729 and 1730. When Wetherburn married his new bride, she held the ordinary license for the tavern, which she acquired less than a year earlier in 1730.⁴ Wetherburn

¹ George Humphrey Yetter, *Williamsburg Before and After: The Rebirth of Virginia's Colonial Capital*, (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation: Williamsburg, 1988), 91.

² J.F. Waite, "Mr. Wetherburn's Tavern, Block 9, Building 31, Summary Architectural Report," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1968, 1.

³ J. Douglas Smith, "Wetherburn's Tavern Historical Report, Block 9 Building 31 - Originally entitled: "Wetherburn's Tavern Interpretation," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1968, 2-3.

⁴ Ray Townsend, Wetherburn's Tavern Historical Report, Block 9 Building 31 Lot 20 & 21 Originally entitled: "Wetherburn's Tavern," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1966, 1.

proceeded to operate the tavern after their marriage until he was evicted in 1743.⁵ Having purchased the two lots across the street five years earlier, Wetherburn moved his business, and by 1746 he was operating out of the building that is known today as Wetherburn's Tavern.⁶

A series of events drastically altered his life, and it is this time between 1751 and 1760 that is the period of interpretation for the site today. In 1751, Mary Bowcock Wetherburn died and John Blair, another resident in town, briefly noted in his diary that he attended the late Mrs. Wetherburn's funeral, followed by, "He has found her hoard they say."⁷ Ten days after his wife's death, Henry Wetherburn married another tavern keeper's widow, Anne Marot Shields. Her husband, James Shields, operated Shields Tavern until his death in 1749. While no other information has been discovered concerning the "hoard" John Blair noted in his diary, Henry Wetherburn lived interesting final years as a tavern keeper on the Duke of Gloucester Street. He seemed to have rented an ordinary to John Doncastle in the early 1750s, but Henry Wetherburn returned to the profession by 1756.⁸ When he died in 1760, a detailed inventory was created that forms the foundation for much of the interpretation for its current use as an exhibition building at Colonial Williamsburg.

Today, Wetherburn's Tavern is one of the Foundation's surviving 88 original buildings and it stands as "only original high-end tavern interpreted as such in the Historic Area."⁹ Since its construction around the 1740s, the building has been in continuous use with purposes

⁵ Ibid., 2 and 7.

⁶ *Parks' The Virginia Gazette*, January 23, 1746, 4.; Mary A. Stephenson, "Mr. Wetherburn's Tavern: Block 9, Colonial Lots 20 and 21," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1965, 11.

⁷ John Blair, "Diary of John Blair," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (1899), 8. doi:10.2307/1915788.

⁸ Stephenson, "Mr. Wetherburn's Tavern: Block 9, Colonial Lots 20 and 21," 18-19.

⁹ Cynthia D. Jaworski, *Wetherburn's Tavern Planned Preservation Project Completion Report Block 09 Colonial Lots 20 and 21*, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series – 1706, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, 2004, 1.

including a tavern, a girls' school, and a home.¹⁰ In 1964, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation entered into a long-term lease with the owners of the building, the Rodarmor family and the Bucktrout-Braithwaite Memorial Foundation.¹¹ Under the direction of Colonial Williamsburg, Wetherburn's Tavern has undergone three restorations related to architectural finishes. Each resulted in a new interpretation of the eighteenth-century history of this tavern.

When Colonial Williamsburg acquired Wetherburn's Tavern, the Foundation conducted an "ambitiously documented research and restoration project in its first preservation efforts" at the site.¹² The Foundation conducted an architectural investigation to recreate the paint scheme for both the interior and exterior of the building. Most of the weatherboards were replaced overtime, but during the architectural investigation, a few weatherboards that were thought to be original were found in a wall cavity. From what the investigators could tell, "this board represented the earliest color application – red – followed by a thick accumulation of whitewash."¹³

Whitewash, or limewash, was a very common, affordable technique for painting both the interiors and exteriors of buildings before and after the eighteenth century. It consisted of mixing a substance called "whiting" with slaked lime or water to create a milky consistency that could then be painted over a surface, particularly stone, timber, or brick. The whitewash coated the surface, and even created a hygienic barrier against dirt and other germs to which the surface

¹⁰ George Humphrey Yetter, *Williamsburg Before and After: The Rebirth of Virginia's Colonial Capital* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1988), 98.

¹¹ "CW Agrees to Acquisition of Historic Bull's Head Inn," *The Daily Press* Newport News, Virginia, 19 May 1964, 21.

¹² Mark Kutney and Myron Stachiw, "New Findings at Wetherburn's Tavern," *Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter* 22, no. 4 Winter 2001/2, 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 11.

would otherwise be exposed.¹⁴ Despite being one of the more affordable finishes, even the more well-to-do families initially requested whitewash in their homes, just as Richard Richardson requested for his “Best room” in 1718.¹⁵ Over the following decades, however, painters and owners preferred to use the more durable and consistent oil-based paints. Whitewash was still used on more vernacular buildings and interiors in an attempt to save costs for the building owner.

As taverns, establishments like Wetherburn’s and the Raleigh Tavern were places of transience in Williamsburg. Wetherburn’s was in a prime location on Duke of Gloucester Street and it was frequented often by people of stature. It was located across from its competitor the Raleigh Tavern and not far away at the end of the street was the Capitol building. With the high traffic of customers also came a high amount of debris and waste. The Duke of Gloucester Street was practically a dirt road in the eighteenth century, and accumulated dust in the dry seasons and mud when it rained. Therefore, whitewash was used on frequently visited buildings because it was easily and cost-effectively reapplied when necessary. The use of the whitewash was understood to be the attempts of “a tavern owner trying to maintain appearances while minimizing expenses.”¹⁶

After four years of restoration, Wetherburn’s Tavern opened in 1968 on the “‘biggest day’ for the restored 18th century capital of Virginia since the formal opening of the Historic Area in 1934.”¹⁷ Officials introduced Wetherburn’s Tavern as an exhibition building alongside three other major sites in the Historic Area, including the Peyton Randolph House, the James

¹⁴ Patrick Baty, *The Anatomy of Color: The Story of Heritage Paints and Pigments*. (Manhattan: Thames and Hudson USA: Manhattan, 2017), 38.

¹⁵ Moss, *Paint in America*, 14.

¹⁶ Kutney and Stachiw, “New Findings at Wetherburn’s Tavern,” 10.

¹⁷ “Old Williamsburg Doors Open,” *The Daily Press Newport News*, Virginia 23 June 1968, 53.

Geddy House, and the reopening of the College of William and Mary's Wren Building.¹⁸ Over the course of the following three decades, the paint shop at Colonial Williamsburg repainted the tavern with a "simulated whitewash" effect at least five times.¹⁹

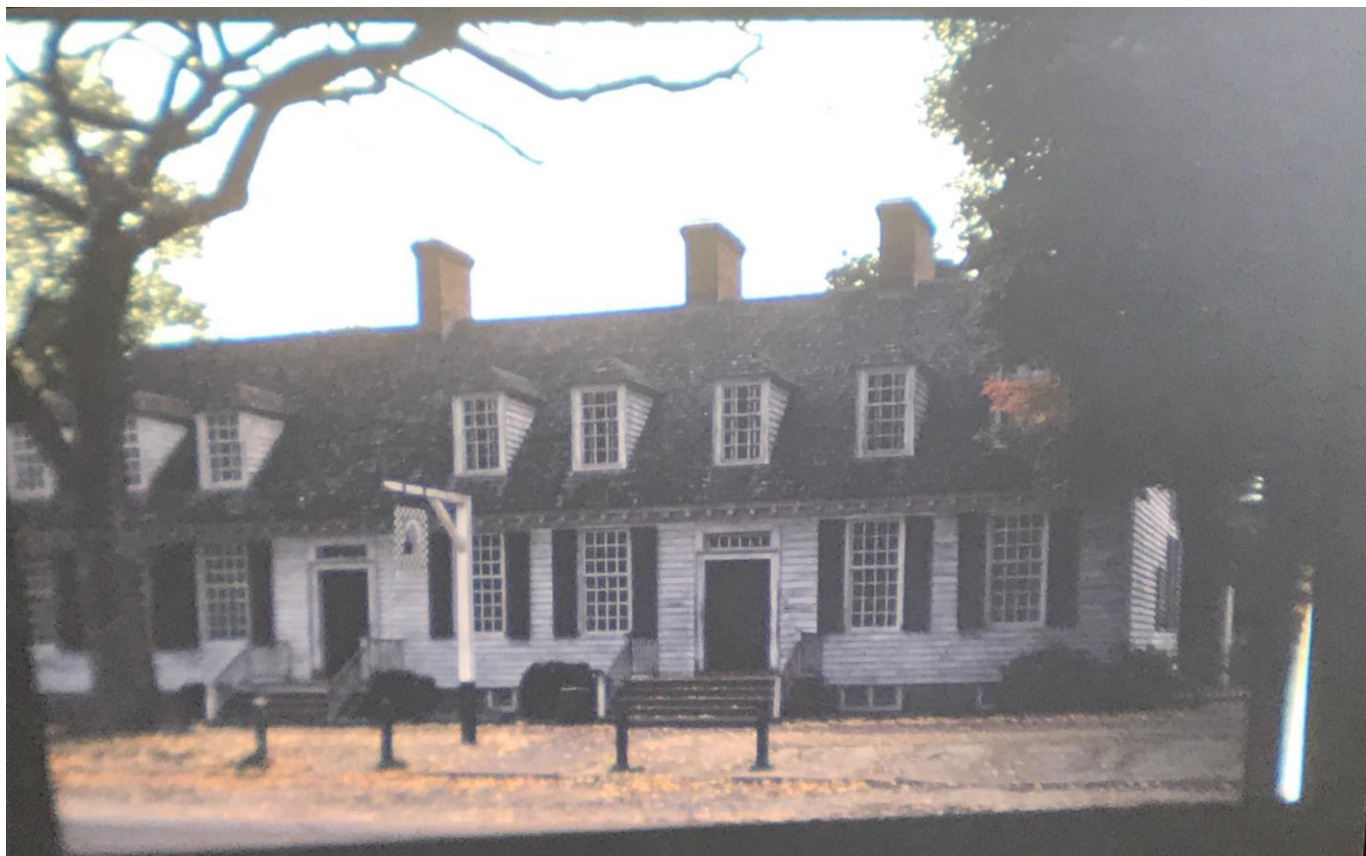


Figure 7: Photograph of Wetherburn's Tavern between 1978-1981 (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Mary S. Hoffschwelle).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Kutney and Stachiw, "New Findings at Wetherburn's Tavern," 11.; W.E. Jacobs from WG Swarts Wetherburn's Tavern Block 9 Building 31 Project 65-1104 July 6, 1967.

In 2000, architectural conservator Mark Kutney and architectural preservationist Myron Stachiw revisited the original samples and conducted new research on Wetherburn's Tavern. According to their findings, they determined that the timeline of the paint layers was misinterpreted in previous scholarship. Beginning during the original restoration, Susan Higginson Nash and the architectural team discovered an abundance of Spanish brown samples but, due to limited early twentieth-century technology, they often assumed that this color was a primer, and that perception continued into the 1960s scholarship.²⁰ Rather than the red paint being a primer and immediately covered by white (or lime) wash at the time of Henry Wetherburn's occupancy, the red paint was instead considered to be the finish coat. Because of accumulation of dirt on the red-brown paint sample, investigators then concluded that the thick white wash layers were applied after Wetherburn's death in 1760.²¹ The new analysis led to the repainting of Wetherburn's Tavern to a deep red-brown color in 2001, and the physical transformation coincided with an extensive update to the interpretation of the building.²²

Since the 1968 opening of the building, curators have utilized the extensive 1760 inventory taken at the time of his death. The inventory provided a window into the material life of the tavern keeper that was the basis for the understanding of the man and his life during the ten years he kept the ordinary. In 1985, the curatorial department at Colonial Williamsburg revisited the original inventory at the York County Courthouse. Their reassessment resulted in a new understanding of the social hierarchy that lay behind each room "which, [they] believe[d],

²⁰ Frank S. Welsh, "The Early American Palette: Colonial Paint Colors Revealed" Roger Moss, *Paint in America*, 102.

²¹ Kutney and Stachiw, "New Findings at Wetherburn's Tavern," 12.

²² Mary Miley Theobald, "The New Look of Old Wetherburn's," CW Journal Winter 2002-2003, <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/winter02-03/wetherburns.cfm>

may have been unnoticed until now.”²³ During the 2001 restoration, curators once again reassessed Henry Wetherburn’s inventory, and continued to build upon the work others did before them in the 1980s. Curators including Robert Leath and Margaret Pritchard continued to emphasize how social hierarchies impacted the various people within the tavern, including the gentry, enslaved people, and women.²⁴

The re-examination of Wetherburn’s coincided with a reassessment of other buildings in the Historic Area, including the Peyton Randolph House. Just as the two buildings opened together as 1968, both buildings underwent paint analysis which concluded both were a red-brown color during their respective periods of interpretation and they were subsequently repainted in 2001. The Peyton Randolph house was previously understood to be a white color harkening to the Colonial Revival movement of the early twentieth century in contrast to the more modest whitewashing of Wetherburn’s Tavern.

²³ Ronald L. Hurst, Betty C. Leviner “Re-examination and analysis of Henry Wetherburn’s inventory” Revised October 9, 1985.

²⁴ Mary Miley Theobald, “The New Look of Old Wetherburn’s,” CW Journal (Winter 2002-2003), <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/winter02-03/wetherburns.cfm>



Figure 8: Wetherburn's Tavern repainted with the red-brown paint (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Carroll Van West).

The repainting of the two buildings, however, revealed a closer alignment of the men's public reputations in the colonial capital. As more sites underwent paint analysis, the results revealed a greater abundance of red-brown paint as the finish coat instead of being a primer.²⁵ Architectural historians concluded that colonial painters often used red or Spanish brown color on important public buildings and private dwellings.²⁶ The refined red-brown exterior of Henry Wetherburn's Tavern would have welcomed reputable guests like Peyton Randolph inside, and the interior, as recorded by the 1760 inventory, "would have reminded most gentlemen of their parlors back home."²⁷ While the tavern did have other rooms that catered to men of other social classes, the exterior of the tavern would have been a familiar sight to people of a higher station and also a unique opportunity to those of a lower status who might otherwise not have been permitted to enter.

In 2015, the architectural preservation and research departments examined Wetherburn's Tavern once again. Architectural historians Edward Chappell and Jeff Klee were investigating the existence of an eighteenth-century porch.²⁸ Through this process, materials analyst Kristen Travers Moffitt collected new paint samples while "trying to find the length of the porch based on breaks in the paint stratigraphy."²⁹ During Moffitt's analysis, she discovered that the red-brown color was only on the cornice at the west end of the building, while all the earlier paint colors were white or off-white.

²⁵ Frank S. Welsh "The Early American Palette: Colonial Paint Colors Revealed," in *Paint in America* ed. Roger W. Moss, 73.

²⁶ Cary Carson and Carl Lounsbury, eds., *The Chesapeake House: Architectural Investigation by Colonial Williamsburg* (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2013), 364.

²⁷ Mary Miley Theobald, "The New Look of Old Wetherburn's," *CW Journal*, Winter 2002-2003, <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/winter02-03/wetherburns.cfm>

²⁸ Kristen Travers Moffitt, "Wetherburn's Tavern Block 9, Building 31," Paint Analysis Report, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, July 6, 2017, 1.

²⁹ Matthew Webster, Annabeth Hayes to, "RE: Questions About Wetherburn's & Paint Changes At CW", email, 2018.

The project was put on hold until 2017 when the samples from the 2000 paint analysis were discovered in collections storage. Working with Grainger Director of Architectural Preservation Matthew Webster and Associate Curator Dani Jaworski, Moffitt compared the 2000 samples to those collected in 2015 and discovered discrepancies. The red-brown color that Mark Kutney understood as the finish coat was actually the primer as it had been understood in first restoration in 1968. Instead of attributing the buildup of dirt on the red-brown paint to the passage of time between paint layers, Moffitt reported, “it should be noted that all early layers show severe deterioration. This is very typical of exterior paints that have been exposed for a very long period of time.”³⁰ The finish coat, however, was not whitewash as it had been believed in 1968. Moffitt compared the thickness of each layer in the highest quality samples and concluded that the subsequent, thicker layer of white lead paint was in fact the finish coat, whereas the thinner red-brown paint was in fact a primer and was comparable to other samples found at other sites in the Historic Area.³¹ These findings resulted in an immediate need to once more correct the paint scheme at Wetherburn’s Tavern, and this time to a white lead color.

³⁰ Kristen Travers Moffitt, “Wetherburn’s Tavern Block 9, Building 31,” Paint Analysis Report, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, July 6, 2017, 2.

³¹ Ibid., 3.



Figure 9: Wetherburn's Tavern in the middle of repainting to a white-lead appearance in July 2017 (Photo by author).

Even today, the exterior changes at Wetherburn's Tavern to a white-lead inspired paint scheme have been considered by many visitors to be simply a return to the site as it was during the first restoration.³² White-lead paint was a staple color at early Colonial Williamsburg and in the Colonial Revival movement at large. In 1938, the Dutch Boy paint company released an advertisement with an image of man and a child in eighteenth century dress painting their home that was situated in a neighborhood of Colonial-inspired houses. The description stated, "Since Colonial Days, White-Lead has guarded American homes.... White-lead is an American tradition."³³ While many of the early Colonial Revival paint colors were incorrectly based on the faded versions of originally vibrant colors, the use of white-lead paint was one of the more accurate choices during this period. In her early work at Colonial Williamsburg, Susan Higginson Nash's research concluded that many of the original buildings in the Historic Area were white during the eighteenth-century.³⁴ As technology has continued to improve, the physical appearances of various buildings in the Historic Area have changed accordingly, but there is still a considerable presence of white-lead inspired buildings.³⁵

³² Matthew Webster "RE: Questions About Wetherburn's & Paint Changes At CW.".

³³ "Since Colonial Days..." Advertisement. 1938. Personal collection of the author.

³⁴ Moss, *Paint in America*, 93.

³⁵ As paint standards have changed and lead has been removed from the chemical formulas, sites like Colonial Williamsburg work with paint companies like Benjamin Moore to find the nearest match possible when restoring buildings. Wetherburn's Tavern was repainted with a "White Dove" color in the Benjamin Moore collection that was the closest match to the eighteenth-century white lead sample discovered by Moffitt; Matthew Webster, Annabeth Hayes to, "RE: Questions About Wetherburn's & Paint Changes At CW", email, 2018.



Figure 10: Wetherburn's Tavern with its white lead appearance in August 2017 (Photo by author).

With the discovery of the presence of white lead during Henry Wetherburn's occupancy in the 1750s, the interpretation of the property must be revisited once more. While the tavern no longer resembles the homes of men like Peyton Randolph and white-lead was a pervasive color during this time period, its presence on a building such as a tavern was still significant. The fact that Wetherburn applied the white-lead color over the entire exterior of the building was a statement to his patrons and anyone who saw his building from the Duke of Gloucester that he was a man of means who could afford to keep his building pristine. At a popular tavern, patrons would be constantly in and out of the building, and consequently there was a build-up of grime, which resulted in the deterioration of the paint noted by Kutney and Moffitt in their analyses. During this time in his life, Henry Wetherburn married his second wife, he was a successful tavern keeper, and even pursued overdue debts in court with much success.³⁶ The layers of paint noted by Moffitt and the state of Wetherburn's personal affairs indicate that he had the means to repaint the ordinary as necessary to ensure that he maintained appearances in the town. It sent a message to visitors and even passers-by that this was operated by a respectable tavern keeper and it welcomed guests of a certain caliber. Just as the Dutch Boy advertisement later intimated almost two hundred years later, "white-lead guarded American homes [and taverns]."³⁷

³⁶ Stephenson, "Mr. Wetherburn's Tavern: Block 9, Colonial Lots 20 and 21," 18.

³⁷ "Since Colonial Days..." Advertisement. 1938. Personal Collection.

CHAPTER FOUR

ACCESS TO AND RESTORATION OF ARCHITECTURAL FINISHES OUTSIDE OF
COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

Since John D. Rockefeller acquired his first “antique” of the Paradise-Ludwell House that marked the beginning of Colonial Williamsburg, professionals have been trying to recreate the most accurate representation of life in Williamsburg, Virginia.¹ Architectural finishes helped to define the physical setting for eighteenth century life, and as technology has progressed and understandings changed, the mission and dilemma are the same as the one faced by Susan Higginson Nash in the 1920s: “All in all, a fascinating problem is there to be solved in every opportunity to simulate the effects produced by the early American painters in Colonial Virginia.”² Today, architectural historians, preservationists, and conservators continue to investigate buildings and follow the evidence, and sometimes those changes result in unexpected color changes, such as the Peyton Randolph House; a return to something more familiar, like at Wetherburn’s Tavern; or a recreation of a wallpaper fragment that was previously hidden, like at the Thomas Everard House.

To adequately investigate and subsequently restore a building to a period of significance requires significant time, skill, and budget, particularly for large scale projects such as those that are conducted at places like Colonial Williamsburg. At any historic site, cost will always be a concern, but for a larger organization like Colonial Williamsburg, substantial projects are more feasible than for smaller institutions that have more difficulty in accessing the appropriate funds. Because of their ability to engage in substantial research and then act on the results,

¹ Bill Sullivan, “Paradise Found, 91 Years Ago Today,” *Making History: Inspiration for the Modern Revolutionary*, Colonial Williamsburg, <http://makinghistorynow.com/2016/12/paradise-found-90-years-ago-today/>

² Susan Higginson Nash, *Restoration of Colonial Williamsburg*, *The Architectural Record* (December 1935), 449.

organizations like Colonial Williamsburg have paved the ways in areas like architectural research and preservation. They have consistently remained a leader in the restoration of architectural finishes since the first work done by Susan Higginson Nash and Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn in the 1920s until today as seen with their dedication to accurately depicting buildings in the Historic Area according to the research instead of what is en vogue at the time. Just as Myron Stachiw and Mark Kutney wrote in 2001, “The ultimate goal in these studies has always been the same – to accurately interpret paint color as it was in the eighteenth century and not as it meets our modern sense of what is tasteful.”³

Because of that commitment to evidence, the general public is at times surprised by the decisions of experts. According to the Grainger Director of Architectural Preservation and Research, Matthew Webster, “Change at historic sites is tough. History is supposed to be known, so when there is a change, people assume it is because we wanted to change it, not because it is a matter of accuracy.” Webster and his team have noticed that “if we slow down the information push, confusion increases,” therefore to help the public adapt to these changes, they keep lines of communication open between the conservation labs, collections storage, and the visitors. They disseminate the updated information through lectures, articles, tours such as “Meet the Curator/Conservator” and “Building Detectives,” and now an “Architectural Clues” exhibit at Colonial Williamsburg’s DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum. These all serve as resources to better educate the public about the new changes they are seeing on familiar buildings, and how the experts conducted their research that resulted in these changes. Because of the Grainger Department’s commitment to sharing the research and staying connected with their audience, the

³ Kutney and Stachiw, “New Findings at Wetherburn’s Tavern,” 11.

public's response to these changes "has definitely improved."⁴

To further improve the understanding and relationship between the department and the visitor, the interpreters, curators, and preservationists could explore the impact and the histories behind the choices of these architectural finishes for people like Thomas Everard and Henry Wetherburn. The Foundation has taken the initial steps toward this route. After making substantial progress in transitioning the Historic Area from its Colonial Revival appearance to a more accurate eighteenth-century depiction, the Foundation is starting explore a more meaningful interpretation of these finishes. In structures with wallpaper, for instance, visitors often ask the interpreters the meaning behind them, and the department has supplied the interpreters with training guides to better assist them in answering basic questions associated with the historic interiors (see Appendix A). The staff discusses some of the eighteenth-century impact of these choices in select lectures and tours, but to explore it at a case study level for specific sites like the Everard House and Wetherburn's Tavern would give the visitor insight into the cultural impact of these finishes in the eighteenth century beyond a simple aesthetic choice.

Despite the success of places like Colonial Williamsburg, very few sites have the means to operate at this level. Before organizations can incorporate the material culture value of architectural finishes into their interpretation, they must first face the issue of access to financial and analytical resources. For smaller institutions that wish to conduct paint analysis and restoration of a historic building, it still takes a great deal of money and time just as it would at an institution like Colonial Williamsburg. But coupled with even fewer resources, the process moves much slower and on a smaller scale. In Franklin, Tennessee, the non-profit organization

⁴ Matthew Webster, Annabeth Hayes to, "RE: Questions About Wetherburn's & Paint Changes At CW", email, 2018.

the Battle of Franklin Trust (BOFT) and the state agency Tennessee Historical Commission (THC) joined together in a public-private partnership to preserve the accessory buildings on the Carter farm.⁵ For the state-owned site, the THC allotted \$150,000 in their budget and received a gift of construction from local contractors.⁶ The BOFT also raised \$170,000 through 629 private donations to cover any remaining costs.⁷ With their combined budget, the groups contracted Matthew Mosca to conduct paint analysis on the exterior and interior, and they hired local contractors to restore the building to its 1864 appearance. The project was completed successfully in late 2017.⁸

Most sites that wish to conduct architectural investigations and analyze historic finishes will operate more similarly to the Carter farm office project instead of Colonial Williamsburg. Colonial Williamsburg's projects often move more quickly because almost every required partnership is in-house, including the preservationists, the historians, the tradesmen, the materials analyst, and the paint shop. Furthermore, Colonial Williamsburg partnered with the Benjamin Moore paint company in 2013 based on the eighteenth and nineteenth century architectural evidence.⁹ Although this is a line that is also available to the general public, this paint collection allows the Foundation to more easily access necessary colors when restoring future buildings. The majority of other sites, however, do not have these resources close at hand, and they will have to build the partnerships and raise the funds in a manner similar to that of the THC and

⁵ Dan Brown, "Tremendous Progress at State Historic Sites," *The Courier* 71, no. 1 (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Commission, Winter 2018), 1-2.

⁶ "Minutes," State Building Commission, September 8, 2016.
<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/statearchitect/documents/SepSBC16.pdf>

⁷ David Walsh, "Carter House farm office going through restoration; bullet holes share the tale of survival," *Franklin Homepage*, August 8, 2017. <https://franklinhomepage.com/carter-house-farmhouse-going-through-restoration/>

⁸ "Carter Farm Office Progress Report," *Battlefield Dispatch* 5, no. 4, Battle of Franklin Trust, Fall 2017, 7.

⁹ Brittany Voll, "Colonial Williamsburg, Benjamin Moore Launch New Paint Line," *Williamsburg-Yorktown Daily*, May 17, 2013.

BOFT. Furthermore, many organizations will likely have to raise money independently without state support.

Because of the cost and time associated with the chemical analysis and restoration of historic finishes, there is wide range of implementation of this research depending on the individual institution's means. It can range from organizations like Colonial Williamsburg to smaller scale sites that still have inaccurate Colonial Revival finishes. As technology continues to advance every year, some institutions like Colonial Williamsburg have the ability to conduct new research on buildings like Wetherburn's Tavern that have already been revisited multiple times in the present century, while other smaller organizations like Rippavilla in Spring Hill, Tennessee have yet to formally revisit their Colonial Revival finishes.

A possible solution to this growing gap could still lie with Colonial Williamsburg. Already the leader in preservation and architectural research, the organization could take that next step in fully demonstrating the historical value of accurate historic finishes. Organizations that have already analyzed and restored their historic buildings can lead the way in demonstrating that architectural finishes offer a new lens of cultural and social interpretation as I have shown in this thesis through the case studies on the Thomas Everard House and Wetherburn's Tavern. If Colonial Williamsburg and its peers would not only restore historic finishes but also interpret them, they would demonstrate to the other historic sites accurate historic finishes offer a new component to interpretation and possibly attracting new and repeat visitors during a time when historic sites are looking to find new ways to increase their dwindling attendance.¹⁰

¹⁰ J. Freedom du Lac, "Struggling to attract visitors, historic houses may face day of reckoning," *The Washington Post*, December 22, 2012.

While technology has been the answer for many historic sites to stay connected to younger visitors, readdressing the accuracy of their buildings' finishes offers another form of tangible history while also offering another component to the technology push. Even if historic sites can only afford to initially analyze the historic finishes and not restoration, they can incorporate these findings into tools like Story Maps to still provide a visual component to the findings and incorporate the cultural and social significance of the architectural analysis. Through promotion of this new research, the organizations might then be able to raise awareness to subsequently raise the funds to restore the building for on-site visitors.

While the analysis and interpretation of architectural finishes is still a novel idea to some institutions, the research conducted at sites like Colonial Williamsburg have demonstrated that architectural finishes were often more than a mere decorative choice. Instead, they have underlying meanings that are still being discovered today as preservationists, analysts, and curators employ improving technology to better understand historic buildings and the people who used them. While there are still many organizations that have yet to incorporate these tools due to limited funds and resources, organizations like the Battle of Franklin Trust and the Tennessee Historical Commission demonstrate that the analysis and restoration of historic finishes is not just reserved for larger institutions, but instead it can also be accomplished through public-private partnerships.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Training Guide to Wallpaper in Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Area

Written by
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INTRODUCTION

- Wallpaper was introduced into the southern colonies by the 1740s and was stocked by both local retailers and ordered by colonists directly from English merchants.
- Many of the designs were inspired by textiles, architecture, geometric figures, or landscapes.
- “Like other kinds of household objects, wall treatment were used expressively, with a full appreciation of the ideas and associations they embodied. For this reason, textile or paper hangings offer a means by which to recover the social meanings attached to domestic spaces.”¹¹
- Wallpaper was an expensive interior finish, but it was a more economical choice when compared to textiles. It quickly became fashionable among wealthy families in the early 18th century in the American colonies.

TERMS

- **Paper hangings** or **painted papers**: 18th century terms for wallpaper.
- **Flocked, embossed, or imboss’t**: Terms used to describe the papers with woolen shavings that created a velvet texture, imitated cut velvet fabrics. A popular style among Virginians, and were typically hung in the most formal entertaining spaces like parlors because they imitated the more expensive textile designs.
- **Mock Flock**: Term used to describe a paper that uses forced perspective and shadows to appear “flocked” but the velvet texture has not been applied.
- **India papers**: Term sometimes used to describe Chinese papers, papers from the Eastern hemisphere, or papers inspired by those designs. The imitation of these papers are sometimes referred to as **Chinoiserie**.
- **Paper stainer, paper hanger, upholsterer**: The various tradesmen involved with wallpaper. The stainer painted and designed the paper. The paper hanger or upholsterer were the installers. Some tradesmen did all of these tasks.
- **Repeat**: One full pattern of a wallpaper design. On full rolls or samples, you can see the dot or dash that distinguished between repeats that assisted the hanger in knowing where to cut and paste designs together.

¹¹ Pritchard, *The Chesapeake House*, 383.

- **Selvedge:** The unprinted part of the paper on a full roll of wallpaper. One side is trimmed off before being pasted together and installed.
- **Backing or lining paper:** paper that served as a dust barrier between wallpaper and the canvas. Because the backing paper could absorb some of the wheat paste, it also allowed the wallpaper to be installed with a more even appearance.¹² Sometimes it was painted the same ground color as the main wallpaper, but newspapers were used as well.
- **Block printed paper:** Terms used to describe wallpaper that is designed with wooden blocks. Sometimes called **hand blocked** or **wood blocked paper**.
- **Stenciled paper:** Paper that was designed by applying a stencil to paper and painting over it. The stencils were made of leather, oilcloth, or pasteboard. It was a cheaper method, but didn't produce the same results as block-printed paper.
- **Ground:** The main background color of a roll of wallpaper.
- **Distemper paint:** A type of paint commonly used for wallpaper. There are many types of distempers, but in 18th century Colonial America, made using calcium carbonate (or chalk) pigment, water, glue, and sometimes china clay. The glue was made from animals and served as binder to ensure the paint would stick to a surface. Distemper paint was preferred because it often created brighter colors. However, it was also water soluble and easily damaged. Because of this, painters made the switch to oil paint for architecture.¹³
- **Oil paint:** Paint was commonly found on architecture after 1720/ While the composition differed, it was typically made by mixing oil (usually linseed oil), dry pigment, and a drying agent. The painter ground the ingredients together on a slab with a muller (large stone that is flat underneath) until the desired effect was produced. The colors lead white and lampblack were often added to create lighter or darker shades. It was an intensive process, and too much of one ingredient could drastically change the consistency or the color. The process had to be repeated numerous times to create however many gallons of paint that were needed. Because 18th century paint was heavier-bodied, brush marks usually showed in the application to the wall. Sometimes a gloss or varnish coat would be applied on top to create a more uniform color and effect, as well as to increase the life of the paint.
- **Paste:** In Colonial America, wheat paste was primarily used to hang wallpaper. It is sometimes called starch paste as well.¹⁴

WHY USE WALLPAPER? WHAT WAS IT FOR?

- **First and Foremost:** Wallpaper is a decorative and architectural finish, and like other finishes, it provides clues about the importance of the room, the house, and its owner.
- According to social practices, but also supported by physical evidence, the doors between each room would have been closed. Depending on one's social status, a guest would only see one room at a time, or possibly only one room at all. Therefore, each room was like its own world and the decorations did not have to match other spaces in the house.

¹² Robert M. Kelly, "Historic Paperhanging Techniques: A Bibliographic Essay," International Preservation Trades Workshop. (Lancaster, PA, August 2-6, 2011), 3.

¹³ Moss, *Paint in America*, 240-242.

¹⁴ Kelly, "Historic Paperhanging Techniques," 2.

Specific wallpapers and colors were deemed appropriate for particular rooms, which meant that wallpaper and paint could elevate the importance of a room, thus establishing architectural hierarchy.¹⁵

- In the first half of the 18th century, some wealthy colonists, including those in Virginia, hung their walls with tapestries, gilt leather hangings, and costly textiles. Wallpaper does not appear evident in Virginia until the middle of the 18th century.¹⁶
- Wallpaper was considered an imitation of these elaborate hangings. Today, we consider “mock” or “imitation” products to be negative or something lesser than, but that wasn’t true in the 18th century.
- “During the second quarter of the eighteenth century, gentility also produced a new kind of house in the Chesapeake colonies, a physically refined dwelling, adapted to the daily pursuits of an emerging gentry class. Among the most visible attributes of this new house were the colors and patterns that eventually embellished its walls and the ornaments that occasionally enriched its ceilings.”¹⁷

WHERE WERE THEY HUNG?

- **Formal Rooms (parlors, dining rooms)**
 - The most important, and most expensive, colors such as blue, green, and crimson were often found in these spaces. Crimson was considered the best color to display paintings with gilded frames.
 - Wallpaper with damask designs were often found in these areas because they imitated expensive tapestries and other textiles that were previously hung in formal parlors in English houses. **Flocked** wallpaper, which imitated cut velvet, was often found in the parlors. **Mock flocked** and other papers were used dining rooms. Dining rooms were never hung with textiles or flocked paper because they absorbed food odors, see the yellow paper at the Thomas Everard house.¹⁸
- **Bedchambers**
 - Tranquil papers were often hung in these areas. They had restful designs and were usually the most affordable. The common designs included stripes, loose meandering floral motifs, or modest rococo foliate designs, like at the Everard House.¹⁹
- **Passages**
 - These papers were usually architectural or scenic. They imitated the stone entries of the grand English houses, and were an attempt to “call in the indoors,” as stated by Thomas Jefferson who ordered wallpaper that imitated brickwork and painted the floors green. They were particularly popular in the Chesapeake, as

¹⁵ Pritchard, *The Chesapeake House*, 391.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 377.

¹⁷ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 20.

¹⁸ Pritchard, *The Chesapeake House*, 377-388.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 389-391.

documented by sources call for specific papers to be used in this area. Robert Carter III ordered a paper that was to be hung in his passageway.²⁰

- **Ceilings**
 - Some papers were designed specifically for the ceiling, and were used throughout the colonies, such as Mount Vernon and the Miles Brewton House in Charleston, SC.²¹

HOW WAS IT MADE?

- In the 18th century, wallpaper was made from rag paper, a much heavier paper than we know today. The paper maker created it by soaking rags and other leftover textiles like cotton and linen in chemicals and water, beat them down, and then spread out the new mushy substance over a wooden frame with a wire mesh (sometimes this would leave a watermark). The new substance would then be dried, flattened, and smoothed.
- This had to be done for each sheet of paper that would later be pasted together one by one to create a roll.²²
- The paper stainer then painted on the **ground** color, which is the primary background color. When designing the paper, it could be stenciled, hand-drawn, or block-printed. Hand-blocked or block-printed papers were particularly prevalent in the 18th century. Typically, each color required its own block, and the more blocks a design required, the more expensive it would be. The black/white shadow used in the blue paper at the Thomas Everard House is an exception. Those two colors could be applied using the same block, saving time while adding the illusion of depth.

WHO INSTALLED IT? HOW?

- In urban areas in the American colonies, paper hangings were primarily installed by professionals that were either upholsterers, stationers, paper strainers, or paper hangers. Others could have also installed the paper if they were trained to do it or were familiar with wallpaper. In more rural areas, it was typically done by amateurs such as handymen and other tradesmen like glaziers and carpenters, and sometimes women and African Americans (presumably slaves).²³
- Rolls of wallpaper have **selvedge**, which is the unprinted part of the paper. The selvedge was usually 1-2 inches, and one side's selvedge would be trimmed off and the other would be left alone. The trimmed part was pasted on top of the untrimmed part creating an overlap.²⁴ Because the trimming was done by hand, sometimes it would be uneven, and borders were used to cover up jagged edges and the tacks that were used in the

²⁰ Ibid., 383-384.

²¹ Ibid., 381.

²² Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 31.

²³ Kelly, *Historic Paperhanging Techniques*, 2.

²⁴ Ibid.

stretchers or the walls.²⁵ The borders lined other architectural details in the room, like doors, windows, and the chair railing.

- In Colonial America, it was primarily installed using wheat paste, and it was usually pasted either directly to plaster or to a canvas. If it was pasted to a canvas first, tacks were then used to secure the canvas to the lathe, and the tacks were covered with border papers. The wallpaper could also be pasted to a painted **backing paper**, and together they were pasted to a canvas that was tacked directly on to the wooden battens or onto wooden stretchers. If it were the latter, the stretchers were subsequently tacked onto the wall, and could be removed later if the owner wished to move the paper into a different room. This is typically why you see tack holes in wallpaper.

WALLPAPER IN COLONIAL AMERICA AND COLONIAL VIRGINIA

- **Timeframe**
 - Wallpaper was popular in the New England colonies by the early 18th century, but it doesn't become popular in the Chesapeake region until the 1750s.²⁶
- **Importation, Manufacturing, and Trade**
 - Before the 1760s, wallpaper in colonial America was strictly imported. The majority came from England, because of the strict importation laws that it placed on the American market with the Acts of Trade and Navigation. However, English papers were still some of the best available until the end of the 18th century when France began to dominate the market. Some did come from other parts of Europe, like France. Some came from China and India, and these were called "India" papers regardless of origin.²⁷ However, the English wallpaper manufacturers often imitated these "India Papers" and sold them to the colonists.
 - Wallpaper was still imported in the last half of the eighteenth century, but the 1765 Stamp Act and 1767 Townshend Acts imposed a higher tax on various goods, including wallpaper. This pushed many colonists, including in Virginia, to sign Non-Importation Agreements in which they promised not to import or buy newly imported English goods. Colonies created committees that investigated violations, and if anyone was found guilty, their names were published in local newspapers. The agreements were redrafted and republished until about 1774.
 - There were some American manufacturers of wallpaper, like in Philadelphia. Many of these paper stainers advertised as having been trained in Europe.²⁸ However, the quality of American wallpaper appears to have paled in comparison to their European counterparts. The major selling point of this paper was its role as a cheaper imitation of other papers.²⁹

²⁵ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 152.

²⁶ Pritchard, *The Chesapeake House*, 352.

²⁷ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 24-25.

²⁸ Ibid., 107-108.

²⁹ Ibid, 117-118.

- Although they did exist, no known sample pattern books have survived from the 17th or early 18th centuries in England or USA.³⁰ (Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 26.)
- Both local and English merchants and tradesmen are selling and installing them in Williamsburg. The wealthier colonists, like Robert Carter, were more likely to order directly from London merchants.
- Examples:
 - **Benjamin Bucktrout** – cabinetmaker, also sold newly arrived goods including paper hangings
 - **Joseph Kidd** and **Joshua Kendall** – merchants and upholsterer, advertised the sale and installment of paper hangings
 - **William Siddall** – advertised his skills as a paper hanger as well as a book binder
 - **Joseph Lockley** – advertised his skills as a painter, plasterer, and paper hanger
 - **Thomas Bladon** – London merchant, but also the person from whom Robert Carter bought his paper hangings.
- **Design**
 - The English papers often used grisaille (gray tones) and a pop of one other color. (e.g. the Pagoda paper in Peyton Randolph). When color was used, it was often in a monochromatic style. Blue was also one of the most popular color of English papers. It was also one of the most expensive pigments which increased its popularity among the wealthy.³¹
 - Most of the colonists that could afford wallpaper adhered to the English styles of the time, both in terms of color, and what papers were appropriate for different rooms. Many merchants stocked wallpaper, allowing people to choose from a variety of options. However, men like Robert Carter, did order specific papers, such as a blue and yellow paper.³²
 - Early examples of wallpaper from the Chesapeake region are scarce due to the humidity and heat and the fact they were pasted directly to plaster. Also, wallpaper and wall treatments are rarely listed on a probate inventory. Once wallpaper and other finishes were applied to the walls, they became a part of the house and could no longer be resold, and therefore lost their value as “moveables.” This was typical throughout the American colonies.³³ Many of our written records come from local advertisements, orders, invoices, and the few probate inventories that do include paper hangings.³⁴

POPULAR PATTERNS AND TRENDS IN COLONIAL AMERICA

³⁰ Ibid., 26.

³¹ Ibid., 147-148.

³² Pritchard, *The Chesapeake House*, 382.

³³ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 17.

³⁴ Pritchard, *The Chesapeake House*, 376.

- *Note: there are others, but these are some of your most prevalent ones, particularly because of importation laws prior to the American Revolution.*
- **Plain papers:** one solid shade of ground that was painted on the roll of paper (e.g. blue paper in the Governor's Palace. Thomas Jefferson also ordered plain papers in 1790). Popular from the late 18th into the 19th century.³⁵
 - **HA:** Governor's Palace, Supper Room
- **Chintz/India Papers:** chintz described simple floral patterns as well as more elaborate designs inspired by Eastern textiles. "India Papers" is another term that was used to describe Eastern inspired wallpaper.
 - **HA:** Peyton Randolph House, Second Floor Stair Hall and Upper Parlor
- **Damask:** imitated the design often found in linen, cotton, and silk textiles. Some advertisements refer to paper hangings and damask, indicating that some textiles were still being sold.
 - **HA:** George Wythe House, Parlor
- **Gothic/Pillar and Arch:** typically used in passageways, particularly popular even before the Revolution
 - **HA:** Peyton Randolph House, Stair Hall
- **Striped:** included not just solid color stripes, but also floral stripes and sometimes with geometric designs too. Prevalent in the 18th century, but with improvement in technology, they became even more common in the 19th century.³⁶
 - **HA:** George Wythe's Bedchamber
- **Flocked:** created by gluing woolen shavings to parts of the paper to imitate cut velvet.
 - **HA:** No examples currently; however, there is the yellow paper at the Everard House is a "mock flock."
- **Borders:** the border papers covered up irregularities during installation (see above: "Who installed it? How?"), but they also were popular with plain papers because they imitated architectural moldings and added more elegance (think of the gilt trim in the Governor's Palace).³⁷ They were also used with other papers as well, and could either match the ground of the wallpaper or incorporate other designs, such as egg and dart, festoon, floral, etc.³⁸

³⁵ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 125.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 143.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 128.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

WALLPAPER IN THE HISTORIC AREA

Peyton Randolph House

- **Pillar and Arch**
 - Pillar and Arch papers were typically used in passageway areas. They imitated the stone entries of the grand English houses, and were an attempt to “call in the indoors,” as stated by Thomas Jefferson who ordered wallpaper that imitated brickwork and painted the floors green. This fascination with the outdoors precedes Americans’ early 19th century preoccupation with landscape painting. (Pritchard, *Chesapeake House*, 384-5.)³⁹
 - There is an advertisement for gothic papers in the Maryland Gazette, placing the style in the Chesapeake region. This particular pillar and arch pattern was used because the wooden blocks still exist for it.
 - The pillar and arch paper was block printed.
- **Pagoda**
 - Chinese or **India papers** were popular during the 18th century, but were typically reproduced by English wallpaper manufacturers that were subsequently sold to the colonies.
 - This particular paper was inspired by the paper in the Jeremiah Lee Mansion in Massachusetts. Jeremiah Lee was a highly successful merchant and ship owner. He was one of the richest men in the North American colonies. For more information, see Judy Anderson, *Glorious Splendor: the 18th Century Wallpaper in the Jeremiah Lee Mansion in Marblehead, Massachusetts*, (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Co. Publisher, 2011).
 - English papers often used grisaille (gray tones) and a pop of one other color. When color was used, it was often in a monochromatic style.⁴⁰
 - The pagoda paper is a block-printed design and partially stenciled.

Thomas Everard House

- **Yellow Damask**
 - This yellow, mock flock damask paper was originally block printed. It is reproduced from original wallpaper fragments that date to ca. 1770. The fragments are currently in the CWF collection. The paper is reproduced by Adelphi Paper Hangings.
 - Damask papers were often found in the best rooms of the house, typically the parlor because these papers imitated expensive tapestries and other textiles that were previously hung in the formal parlors in English houses. In the second half of the eighteenth century, dining rooms were also important entertaining spaces in which damask papers would have also been found.

³⁹ Pritchard, *The Chesapeake House*, 384-5.

⁴⁰ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 147-148.

- Mock flock papers could be used in dining rooms. This is because textiles and flocked papers were never used as they absorbed food odors.⁴¹

- **Blue Medallion**

- Reproduced from original wallpaper fragments that date to ca. 1770. The fragments are currently in the CWF collection. The original fragments were discovered underneath a cornice. The paper is reproduced by Adelphi Paper Hangings.
- This paper was block printed and also incorporates a technique known as slip printing, which is how the white and black shadow is created. Whereas typically only one color could be used with an individual block, slip printing allowed both white and black paint to be on one block, and a slight adjustment of the block allowed both colors to be printed creating an illusion of a shadow. (Adelphi Paper Hangings)
- This paper is in the rococo design, exemplified by the S-scrolls and the framed medallion. It resembles decorative plasterwork that was popular in France during the time.
- “In general, the most prevalent patterns for bedchambers were also the most affordable. These were the simple stripes most often used in combination with loose meandering floral motifs, or modest rococo foliate designs, such as the patterns that was discovered during the restoration of the Thomas Everard House, adjacent to the Governor’s Palace in Williamsburg. About 1770, Everard remodeled the interior of this house by adding new woodwork, paint, and wallpaper. This rococo foliate and scroll fragment from the first-floor bedchamber would have been relatively expensive to produce, requiring only one woodblock, since the depth in the design was created by printing both the black and the white with the same block.”⁴²

George Wythe House

- **Ipswich Sprig (pink)**

- Sprig patterns were very popular designs that were manufactured by English, French, American companies.⁴³
- Small sprig motifs gained popularity in the 1760s and remained in fashion until about 1815, after which they gave way to papers with larger scale repeats.
- A reproduction of this pattern (discovered in Ipswich, Massachusetts) was commissioned by the Smithsonian Institution for use in the 1760s parlor of the Choate House at the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. The pattern has also been installed in Colonial Williamsburg. Historically, it was used in a parlor, dining room or, perhaps, a best bedchamber.

⁴¹ Pritchard, *The Chesapeake House*, 388.

⁴² Ibid., 390.

⁴³ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 126.

- **Red Damask Paper (Madison Damask)**
 - Crimson was considered the best color to display paintings with gilded frames.⁴⁴
 - Wallpaper with damask designs were often found in these areas because they imitated expensive tapestries and other textiles that were previously hung in formal parlors in English houses.
 - This particular pattern was originally found inside of a trunk in Richmond and is thought to be either French or English, ca. 1800-1815. The original fragment is flocked, but the reproduction is a mock flock.
 - The same reproduction that is used at Montpelier. It is reproduced by Adelphi Paper Hangings. To see the wallpaper investigation at Montpelier, go to: http://www.digitalmontpelier.org/mp_media/slideshows/public_show/57?position=4
- **Blue Framed Prints Paper (Hallway)**
 - Reproduced from a wallpaper found at Doddington Hall in Lincolnshire, England, UK. A fragment of this paper is in the CWF collection. It dates from 1770-1780. There are also fragments of this paper in the V&A collection.
 - This is called print room wallpaper in which the wallpaper imitates the print rooms that were popular in England in the mid-eighteenth century. Print rooms were either wallpapered or painted and had paper imitations of framed pictures pasted on to the walls.
- **Green damask upstairs**
 - This is the green colorway of the yellow damask found in the Thomas Everard House. The yellow damask is based on an original fragment that was found in the Thomas Everard House.
- **Plain Green with border – dining area**
 - The most important, and most expensive, colors such as blue, green, and crimson were often found in these spaces. In the second half of the eighteenth century, plain papers were popularly used in Europe and were adopted in colonial America as well. Benjamin Franklin wrote to his wife in 1765 about installing blue paper with a gilt border in their home in Philadelphia, and Thomas Jefferson also ordered plain papers in 1790. George Washington also inquired about plain papers when he was redecorating the ballroom at Mount Vernon in 1784.⁴⁵
- **Pink/Red Vermicelli Paper**
 - Vermicelli patterns were popular in the 18th century. This design only needed one block to be printed, making it a simpler style. It would have been appropriate for a bedchamber.

⁴⁴ Pritchard, *The Chesapeake House*, 387-388.)

⁴⁵ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 125-127.

- Vermicelli paper is mentioned in Noel Riley & Patricia Bayer, *Elements of Style*, 2003.
- Companies that made vermicelli paper
 - Heussner & Co.
 - Cole & Son
 - Brunschwig and Fils
- **Purple/white stripes**
 - Stripes were an extremely popular pattern for bedrooms and private spaces. There are a few images of striped paper recorded in period prints and paintings.
 - For example, see “The Painting Room,” printed for Robert Sayer & John Bennett (1774) from the Winterthur Collection.

Governor’s Palace

- **Plain Blue Paper – Ballroom and Plain Green Paper – Supper Room**
 - “Blue and green were the most popular colors in plain papers not only for the founding fathers but also for the more ordinary eighteenth-century populace. They were the colors standardly advertised for plain papers in American newspapers during the 1780s and 1790s. The blues were occasionally described as “sky” or “verditer” – a color derived from copper carbonate pigments.”⁴⁶
 - Although plain blue wallpaper was popular throughout both Europe and Colonial America, it is important to note that plain blue paper was also hung in King George III’s private rooms at Buckingham Palace during the same time period and shortly before King George appointed Lord Botetourt to be the Royal Governor of Virginia. (Graham Hood, <http://www.chipstone.org/html/publications/1993/Hood93/>)
 - George Washington wrote in 1784, “I have seen rooms with gilded borders/ made, I believe, of papier mache fastened on with Brads or Cement round the Doors and Window Casings, Surbase, &ca.; and which gives a plain blew, or green paper a rich and handsome look. Is there any to be had in Philadelphia? And at what price?”
 - Lord Botetourt’s blue wallpaper was noted more than once in various primary sources. In 1771, Robert Beverley wrote, “I observed that L^d. B. had hung a Room with plain blue Paper, & border'd a narrow Stripe of gilt Leather, wh. I thought had a pretty Effect.” Robert Beverley Letter Book, April 15, 1771, Beverley Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond. There are also records of payment from Lord Botetourt to Joseph Kidd when he mended the paper in 1769 and 1770 “The Estate Accounts of Lord Botetourt,” in Mary Goodwin, “Governor's Palace,” unpublished research collections, Department of Research and Record, CWF n.d., pp. 214-215.
 - For comparison: See the second floor parlor of the Governor’s Palace. Red textiles were installed as the wall finishing. This would have been the highest style interior finish that one could have in the colonies.

⁴⁶ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 127.

Charlton Coffeehouse

Note: Although Charlton's Coffee House is a reconstruction, various architectural fragments were reused when the Cary Peyton Armistead House was built over the same foundation in the late nineteenth century (Loeblich, Cross-Section Microscopy of Charlton's Coffeehouse, 1-2). When Dr. Susan Buck, a paint analyst, examined some of these fragments, she discovered a residue that strongly resembles starch paste, which supports the argument that wallpaper was used in the coffeehouse. (Buck, Coffeehouse Wallpaper Search, 20).

- **Sayward Gothic**

- An English wallpaper that dates to 1770-1790 (*or second half of the eighteenth century*). *Sayward Gothic is a classic quatrefoil pattern found under several layers of later paper in the home of Jonathan Sayward in York, Maine. It was installed between 1761 and 1767.* In examining the original document, the background color appears to be a light blue. However, the reverse side of the subsequent paper layer – where most of the paint from the Sayward layer had transferred – clearly shows it to have been a very deep Prussian blue, as shown in the historic colorway, above. As was the fashion of the time it was hung with a narrow border.
- Reproduced by Adelphi Paperhangings
- The original fragment is in the Historic New England Collection (see below)

- **Chestertown Vine**

- An English wallpaper that dates to ca. 1765. The surviving document for Chestertown Vine was found in the Buck-Bacchus Store, the oldest commercial building in Chestertown, Maryland (and also the home of Adelphi's Buck-Bacchus Border). The building was constructed in 1735 by John Buck, a wealthy Devonshire, England merchant who expanded his business holdings in the colonies. The building was purchased by William Bacchus in 1854, who used it as both a store and a residence.
- Reproduced by Adelphi Paperhangings
- Floral patterned wallpapers were largely inspired by textiles and they were the largest group of repeating patterns for wallpaper used in Colonial America.
- The original fragment is in the Colonial Williamsburg collection. (Note: The color way was altered from the original for the Coffeehouse paper.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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