



ROBERT "KING" CARTER

**BUILDER OF
CHRIST CHURCH**

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Cover picture of Robert Carter as older man. Courtesy of Sabine Hall.

Foreword

This biographical sketch prepared by the research staff of Historic Christ Church commemorates the builder of Christ Church—Robert “King” Carter of Corotoman. A companion booklet tells the story of the church itself.

Given the prominence, wealth, and influence of Robert Carter in his own day, this account provides but an introductory and summary picture of the man known to many of his contemporaries as “King” Carter.

This work would not have been possible without the use of the typed transcripts of the unpublished diary and letterbooks of Robert Carter, generously provided to Historic Christ Church by Dr. Francis L. Berkeley, Jr., and permission to make copies of the original manuscripts granted by Dr. Edmund Berkeley, curator of manuscripts at the Alderman Library.

The staff is indebted to the Virginia Research Center for Archaeology for permission to use the Corotoman excavation report and to Dr. Carter L. Hudgins of Mary Washington College for data on archaeological findings on the site of Robert Carter’s mansion house at Corotoman. We are also indebted to Dr. Hudgins for his review of the manuscript and to Mr. John Hemphill, historian of Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., for his detailed critique and valuable suggestions.

The Foundation for Historic Christ Church, Inc., is indebted to architect Alan McCullough for his conjectural drawing of Carter’s Corotoman mansion, a black and white reproduction of which appears in this booklet. The large watercolor original is on display in the Foundation’s museum.

It should be noted that all quotations of Robert Carter used in this narrative are taken from his published and unpublished diary and letterbooks, the originals of which are at the University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, and in the collection of unpublished Carter papers at the James Monroe Museum and Library, Fredericksburg, Virginia.

L. VanLoan Naisawald
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Introduction

Robert “King” Carter is best known as one of the wealthiest and most influential of the great Virginia planters of the late 1600s and early 1700s. What is less well known is that he alone was responsible for the entire cost and construction of one of the finest churches ever built in America—Christ Church, situated between Irvington and Weems in Lancaster County, Virginia.

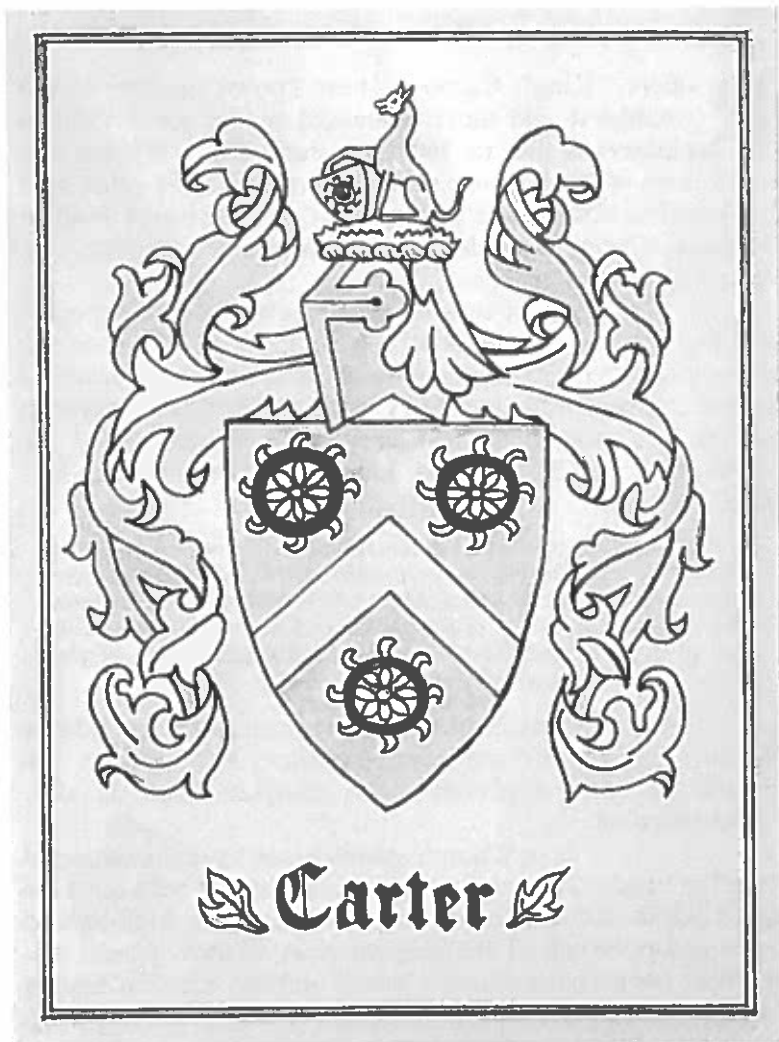
One of the two men known to have seen the now-lost first vestry book of Christ Church, covering the years 1665-1759, left an account of Robert Carter’s proposal to and contract with the vestry of the church. This account was recently found in the Carter papers collection of the James Monroe Museum and Library, Fredericksburg, Virginia.

In 1730 he [Carter] made a proposal for a new brick Church at his own cost & charges, reserving the north end & a large pew opposite the pulpit to him & his family and their heirs: and the liberty to use whatever of the old Church he might find useful; and to get the timber necessary for the new Church off the Glebe land. This was accepted by the vestry.

According to a letter written in August 1734 by Robert’s oldest son and chief executor, John Carter, the church was then expected to be completed shortly after Christmas 1734.

Christ Church stands today almost unchanged from the hands of the artisans who completed it between 1734 and 1735. It still retains its original twenty-six high-backed pews and over half of the original glass window panes. Authorities have called Christ Church perhaps the outstanding example of colonial church architecture extant in the United States.

The church remains a magnificent memorial to Robert Carter and to the culture of his time. This short narrative is designed to tell the reader something about Robert Carter, builder of Christ Church.



Wm. Carter
1811 - 1871
1811 - 1871
1811 - 1871

ROBERT "KING" CARTER BUILDER OF CHRIST CHURCH

In the files of Historic Christ Church Foundation are the names of over 65,000 descendants of the man history has come to know as Robert "King" Carter. In a sense it is unfortunate that Carter has not acquired the wide popular fame of his contemporary William Byrd, probably due in large part to the fact that Byrd's interesting and humanly amusing diaries have been edited and published. But during their lifetimes it was Robert Carter who was, in fact, the dominant Virginian in the colony's political power structure. Where, then, did this man have his origins? What was the source of his immense wealth, and what were the qualities that enabled him to reach these summits of success?

Family Background

The latest accepted evidence of the ancestry of the Virginia Robert Carter line indicates descent from the Carters of Garston Manor, Watford, in Hertfordshire, England. Robert's grandfather was a wine merchant of Christ Church, Newgate Street, London. Robert's father, John Carter, first came to Virginia in 1635 as a merchant and for a few years traveled in that capacity between England and the colony. By 1640 he had settled in Upper Norfolk county and was elected to the House of Burgesses from that county (afterwards changed to Nansemond County). This position of public trust was usually reserved for the affluent and better educated planters.

In 1642 John Carter obtained title to 1300 acres on the north side of the Rappahannock River in what is now the community of Weems in Lancaster County, on the peninsula between the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers known as the Northern Neck. It was not, however, until 1654 that John was settled on this new land.

Under the laws of that period, a person taking title to a tract of Crown land was required to settle it within a specified period of time, either by himself or with tenants, or the deed became null and void. For reasons unclear John had not settled his land by the end of the grace period and was faced with the prospect of losing his title. In May 1652 he petitioned the legislature for an extension of time, pleading as reasons for the delay personal fire damage of an unspecified nature and the fact that Indians were still living on the land; their removal had to be undertaken before he would be able to settle it. The petition was granted. Shortly thereafter the Indian problem was solved, and by 1654 John Carter was in residence and the Carter dominance and legacy on the Northern Neck of Virginia had begun.

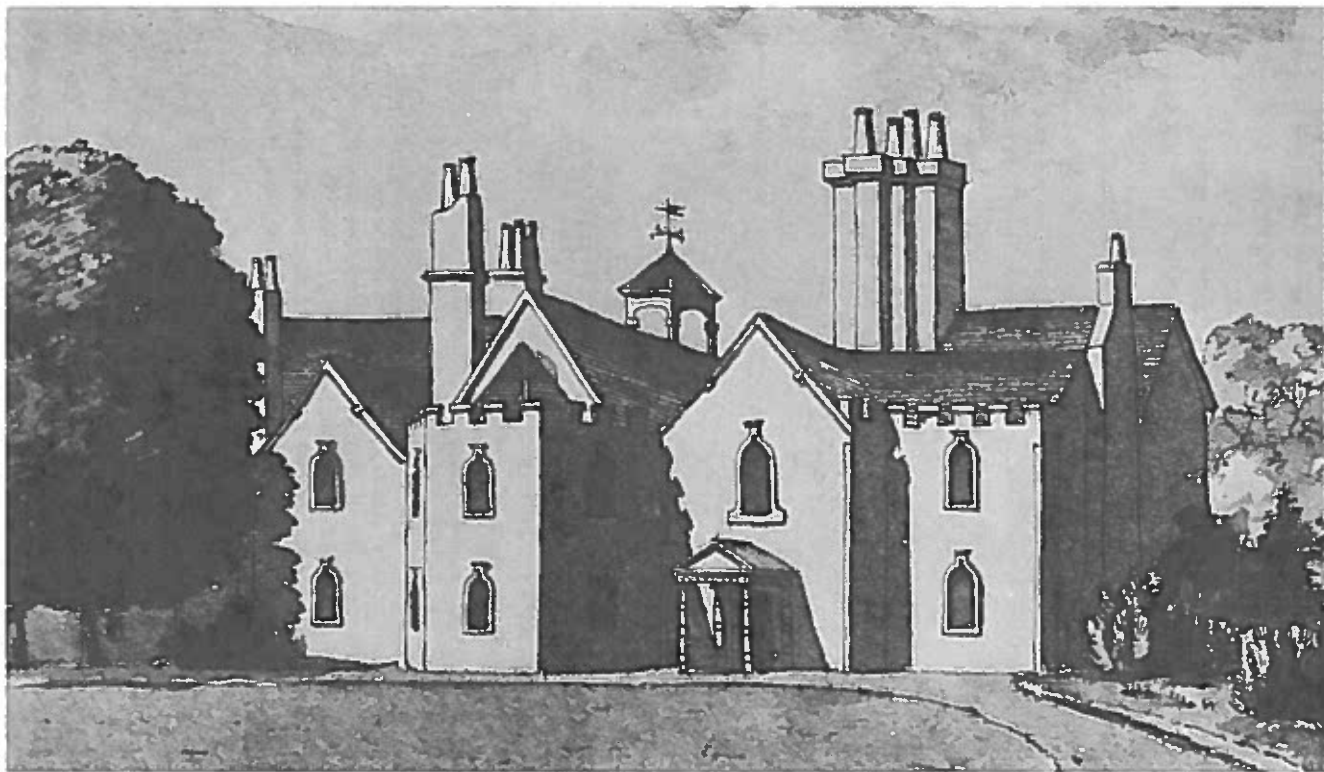
On a point of land between what is now called Carter's Creek and the Corotoman River, both of which flow southward into the Rappahannock, John Carter built his first house. He immediately undertook the planting of tobacco, by this time a thriving occupation in Virginia.

Robert Carter's Early Years

John Carter's second son, Robert, was born at his father's house at Corotoman to Sarah Ludlow Carter, John's fourth wife, in 1663. Sarah died while Robert was still very young and his loss was doubled when his father died in 1669, leaving him a parentless child of six under the guardianship of his older brother John.

By the time of his death John Carter's landholdings on the Northern Neck had increased to some 6160 acres, which passed largely to his oldest son, John II, though 1000 acres were willed to Robert. John II expanded the Carter holdings on the Northern Neck during the next twenty-one years. When he died without a male descendant in 1690, most of the Carter landholdings passed to Robert, then 27 years of age.

Few facts are known of the 21-year period of Robert's life from the time of his father's death until he inherited his father's and brother's holdings. His father's will provided for a traditional English education for Robert, noting in particular that he should learn to read and write Latin. His



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Garston Manor, Hertfordshire, England

brother sent him to England, but the duration of his stay is uncertain. A letter Robert wrote to an English agent years later complained of the extravagances of his own sons who were then at school in England, and remarked, "The world is strangely altered, sure, since I was young. I lived with old Mr. Baily [sic] six years . . . I never stood my brother in £30 in any one year of the time."

Perhaps of equal or greater importance in Robert's overall education was the first-hand knowledge he gained of the tobacco business from the London end. Mr. Bailey, with whom he lived, was a successful merchant whose trade with Virginia was considerable. Bailey's residence and place of business were probably contiguous, and a young man as astute and sharp-eyed as Carter proved to be would no doubt have observed and learned much about the trade. Carter in his maturity had reason to believe that no one knew more about the Virginia tobacco business than he did.

Whatever the duration of his formal English schooling, its effect on Robert Carter was one of intense belief in the value of education. "It is not fine cloaths nor a gay out-sight," he wrote to a young man under his guardianship, "but learning & knowledge and wisdom and vertue that makes a valuable man."

Years later, writing in 1724 to agent William Dawkins in London, Carter turned the topic from business to the education of his three sons and more specifically of son Landon.

I could wish Mr. Low had kept in the old way of teaching the Lattin Tongue & had made my Boys perfect in their understanding of Lillie's Grammar and of the Old School books that We and Our fore Fathers learned. There is one Book which did me the most service of any that I was Acquainted with, to Witt, the Jannua Linguarum Trilinguis in Latin English & Greek Writ by John Comenius, the best stock of Latin Words and in the best sense to Suit the Genius of Boys Even to their Manhood, of any Book that I ever met In my life.

He continued by asking Dawkins to give "positive directions" to Mr. Low that Landon be made to master this text in all three languages and further, if Low could not do this, Carter stated he would move Landon to another school. While he felt Low took good care of the boys' morals, Carter remarked that unless Low gave them a lasting education then "all our cost is thrown away."



Judith Armistead Carter. Courtesy Shirley Plantation

Carter's appreciation of the mechanics of early teaching and of the importance of continuing one's education in later life was apparent in his further statement:

the greatest part of their work is to do after they have left the school, it is not reading a few scraps in the Poets & other Classicks that makes boys understand the Scope & design of the Authors.



Betty Landon Carter. Courtesy Sabine Hall

At Robert's death his library was large and varied for the time, with over 250 classical works in Greek and Latin and a considerable number of books devoted to the study of law. Other titles covered a variety of subjects that included history, geography, religion, medicine and agriculture—undoubtedly subjects he had been introduced to during his school days in England.

Upon his return from England, young Robert gradually assumed directorship, under his brother's guidance, of his legacy. By the time he was 25 years of age in 1688, Robert had become successful enough to win the hand of Judith Armistead of "Hesse" in Gloucester County. From this marriage came five children, but only son John and daughters Elizabeth and Judith lived to maturity. Their mother Judith's death in 1699, at age 34, left Robert with the task of raising his young, motherless, children.

Robert was married again in 1701 to the widow Betty Landon Willis whom he later called "a competent housewife and much loved helpmate." Betty bore him ten children, but she too died young, at 36 in 1719. Of the fifteen children by his two marriages, ten attained maturity.

Until his brother's death in 1690, at age 43, Robert Carter followed the typical life of a second son of the English gentry, living in comfort albeit as a lesser light than his elder brother. He apparently operated his 1000 acres successfully. He built a house during this period, and recognition of his status in the community came with his appointment in 1688 as Justice of the peace for Lancaster County. His brother's death two years later changed Robert's life markedly, and a seemingly latent but boundless surge of energy, drive, ambition, and business skill suddenly came to the fore.

Sources of Wealth

Robert Carter's prominence in Virginia during the rest of his life was due unquestionably to his many abilities and talents, which he utilized to build a virtual economic empire. Of this, tobacco was the keystone.

A principal source of Carter's income was his export of tobacco to England, primarily to London but at times to other English as well as Scottish ports. Indeed, Carter stated in no uncertain terms that tobacco was of critical importance to his financial well-being. In a letter to Samuel Hallows in May 1728, he stressed that "wee have no other way to return any income from our lands but by that trade." To another he wrote that "the making of tobacco is our only trade."

Like most planters of large estates, Carter usually shipped his leaf on consignment to an agent in England. The agent then sold the tobacco, presumably at the best



Robert Carter as a young man. Courtesy Joseph and Margaret Muscarelle Museum of Art, College of William and Mary

price (although Carter often questioned some of his agents' diligence in obtaining the best price), took out his own commission, and placed the remainder in an account under the planter's name. Carter never lacked for competent agents, using a half dozen or so in the various ports of England and Scotland.

With a tobacco shipment usually went a letter to the agent ordering goods Carter wanted shipped when the vessels returned the following year. The agents thereupon debited Carter's account for the cost of the goods plus a commission for their time and trouble.

Carter frequently augmented the revenue from his own tobacco with outright purchase and resale of the crops of smaller planters. In other instances he acted as their agent, intending to reap profit whichever course was chosen.

His writings reflect the extreme attentiveness, care, and pride that went into his cultivation of top-grade tobacco. When he once heard that agent Micajah Perry had apparently sold some tobacco for other planters at a better price than Carter's, he was quick to protest, saying, "I cannot allow myself to come behind any of these gentlemen in the planter's trade."

In another letter, written to agent William Dawkins concerning the quality of his leaf, he said, "I take as vigilant care to prevent these things as any man." Another time in response to criticism he snorted back, "No man of my circumstances in the country takes more care in handling his tobacco than I do," albeit he conceded that some of his overseers might not be of the highest caliber. But, he continued, "I am old enough [64] to know the trade."

Crop-damaging weather, falling tobacco prices, and periodic loss of considerable numbers of his slaves to disease always evoked plaintive cries of impending disaster, but through it all Carter not only survived but survived on the plus side of the account book.

English investments provided another source of income. In times of high tobacco prices and profits, Carter would direct his agents to invest monies in England, always insisting that such investments pay him the going rate of interest. Because communications between Virginia and London were slow, Carter found it difficult at times to understand and accept falling interest rates or inflation in the mother country.

In a colony where banks were non-existent, it was natural for a man of Carter's wealth to make loans—usually at the going rate of interest. Additionally, he had his own small fleet of boats, flats, and other craft which he rented or sometimes used himself for local hauling of cargoes for which he charged shipping fees.

Carter also derived considerable income from salaried political positions, with their accompanying perquisites. These included the offices of Treasurer of the Colony and Naval Officer of the Rappahannock (whereby he was recipient of fees paid by all vessels entering or leaving the river), as well as membership in the House of Burgesses and, later, on the Governor's Council. Such positions unquestionably helped with cash flow, particularly when the price of tobacco tumbled.

A source of income that may have rivalled his tobacco profits was his dealing in land. A big boon to him in this business was his appointment in 1702 as agent and Virginia representative for Lord Fairfax's vast Northern Neck Proprietary. Carter was recommended for this position by one of the foremost mercantile houses of England, that of Micajah Perry, who also happened to be one of Carter's own agents.

The Proprietary had its origins following the English Civil War, the execution of Stuart King Charles I, and the establishment of the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell. The beheaded king's son and namesake (later King Charles II) went into exile on the Continent but, abetted by a sizeable following, never relinquished his claim to the throne. Upon the Stuart restoration in 1660, the new king rewarded seven of his ardent supporters-in-exile by granting them title to an immense tract of unsettled land on the Northern Neck of Virginia. This territory extended westward to the then-undetermined headwaters of the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers, an area variously estimated as between one and two million acres. Ninety-odd years later, after a lengthy legal battle begun by Robert Carter, the western boundary was determined to be a north-south line connecting these headwaters just east of the Allegheny Mountains. The Proprietary as originally estimated extended almost one-and-a-half million acres; under the new ruling it encompassed an estimated five-and-a-quarter million acres. This royal gift was called a proprietary grant, which meant that the recipients were the sole owners. They, rather than the Crown, would collect and keep taxes (quitrents) and profits from sales of the land.

Carter served two distinct and separate terms as agent for the Fairfaxes: the first term from 1702 to 1711, the second from 1722 until his death in 1732. The interruption was occasioned by the Fairfaxes' appointment of Colonel Edmund

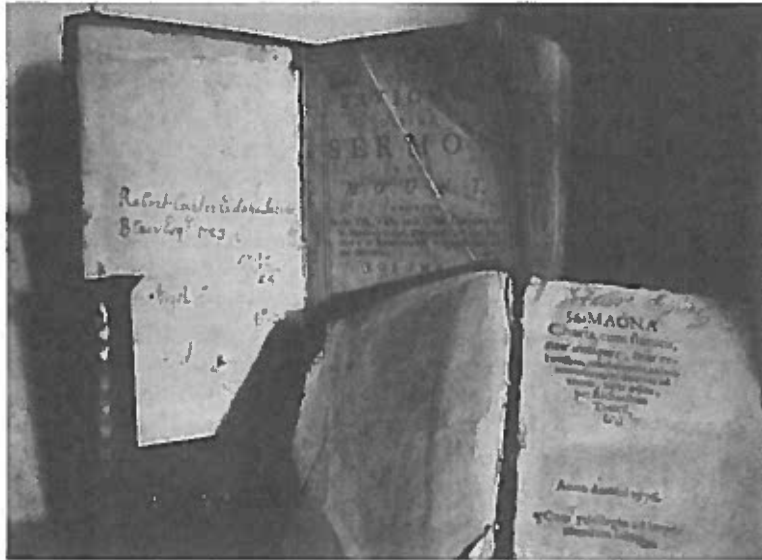
Jenings as agent, in the hope of exacting more revenue for less effort. Jennings, however, was a failure. In 1719 the Fairfaxes listened to the wealthy and influential mercantile house of Micajah Perry and once again appointed Robert Carter to the post.

Carter was paid a salary as agent. Additionally he was also able to turn a profit through sales of proprietary lands, not only for Lord Fairfax but for himself. It is significant that in this era no moral or legal conflict of interest was recognized in an agent's purchasing from his principal prime lands in his own and his family's names. Robert, no doubt recognizing the social and economic benefits to himself of his own legacy of 1000 acres from his father, was determined to leave all his surviving children and grandchildren well endowed. Therefore many of his purchases of Fairfax lands were made in his children's names as well as in his own. Businessman Carter, always attuned to ways of making a profit, no doubt recognized that lands titled to his minor children were not taxable until they reached 18 years of age.

Carter purchased more than 110,000 acres of Fairfax lands, and he chose his acres with great care. Writing to a friend, he remarked, "Upon my first having this [appointment as agent], I was desirous to inform myself the best where I could find some large quantities of good land to take up for my children and grand-children." He went on to say, in a possible moment of conscience, that he hoped "no body will blame me for regarding my own children."

If Carter sought his own gain by this office, he also looked after the Fairfax interest dutifully. By challenging the original bounds of the Proprietary, he added almost two million acres to the Fairfax claim. He also issued to others patents totaling over a million acres in the western part of the Proprietary, thus increasing revenues to the Fairfax family as well as to himself.

Indicative of Carter's opportunistic eye to future potential profits was his 180-degree reversal of position concerning the policies of the Northern Neck Proprietary. In 1695 Carter had led a vehement protest by members of the House of Burgesses against the Proprietor's agent of that time for exacting quitrents that Carter alleged were double those paid to the king for Crown-sold lands. Carter complained that, under the proprietary system, it was possible for a man to hold



Books of Robert Carter. Courtesy Shirley Plantation

title to 50,000 or more acres of land with a secure title without having to settle or tenant-settle any part of it. Yet, in 1702, when he became the Fairfax agent, Carter readily accepted the position under the prevailing ground rules and apparently abandoned his previous philosophy.

Carter had an uncommon eye in spotting opportunities for profitable business enterprises. His business judgment failed him only once, when he invested in the unprofitable copper mine at Frying Pan in Northern Virginia.

In a period when there were no local banks, Robert Carter carried on his business transactions by mail and in person. His dealings with tobacco agents in England were conducted by letters carried by ship captains. These letters frequently showed as return address "Rappahannock" or "Corotoman." When notified by his English agent of the proceeds of a sale and the credit to his account, Carter, like most other planters, would pay for ordered goods by a short note called a bill of exchange, the forerunner of today's check. Many of his local dealings were accounted for in pounds of tobacco.

While hard coinage was available in Robert's time, it was not common in the New World, and when obtained it was prized. Robert Carter however, always seemed to have quantities of coin on hand. In his diary he recorded, for example, his expenditures for trips to the colonial capital at Williamsburg. He paid for these with a wide variety of coins: English crowns, silver shillings, and gold guineas; Spanish gold pistoles, silver, gold guineas, gold doubloons, and paper notes; Portuguese gold moidores; and Arabian coins, to mention those most frequently used.

When Robert died he is said to have left over 10,000 pounds sterling, and, by inventory, 734 slaves and 2266 head of cattle, plus sheep, hogs, and horses. He owned 45 sizeable quarters or plantations, and his total land holdings at his death came to a reported 300,000 acres. When the value of his other investments, including those in London, is added to his livestock, slaves, buildings, equipment, and boats, Carter's worth must have been enormous even by today's standards. While there were other men in his day who were wealthier, such as some of the planters of South Carolina and the West Indies, Robert Carter was certainly an extremely wealthy man whose liquid assets in Virginia may have been exceeded only by those of John Custis of the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake. In any event, Carter was able to send all of his sons to England for schooling, a costly undertaking. Once asked why rich men grow richer, Carter answered, "We are but stewards of God's building; the more He lends us the larger He expects from us, and happy they that make a right use of their Master's talents."

Land Holdings

The extent of Carter's estimated 300,000 acres stretched from the Chesapeake Bay to the Allegheny Mountains. In his will, dated 1726, lands in no less than fourteen different then-existing counties were bequeathed to his children. In his home area of Lancaster County alone his holdings were extensive. His original inheritance of 1000 acres included two tracts on the Corotoman River. Another 6160 acres, inherited from his brother John's original holdings, included a mill called the Great Mill and forty acres at the head of the eastern branch of the Corotoman River. In later years this mill was referred to locally as Kamp's and Carter's Mill. An

abandoned 19th century mill still stands on this spot (as of 1986) on the north side of State Route 3, about two miles north of the town of Kilmarnock.

To add milling capacity to his growing empire, Robert purchased in 1695 another mill in the lower part of Lancaster County, often called the Little Mill, earlier termed Jackson's Mill, and now referred to as Dunton's Mill. This has also been located off present State Route 3, several miles south of Kilmarnock. Route 3 was termed in many early deeds "the mill road."

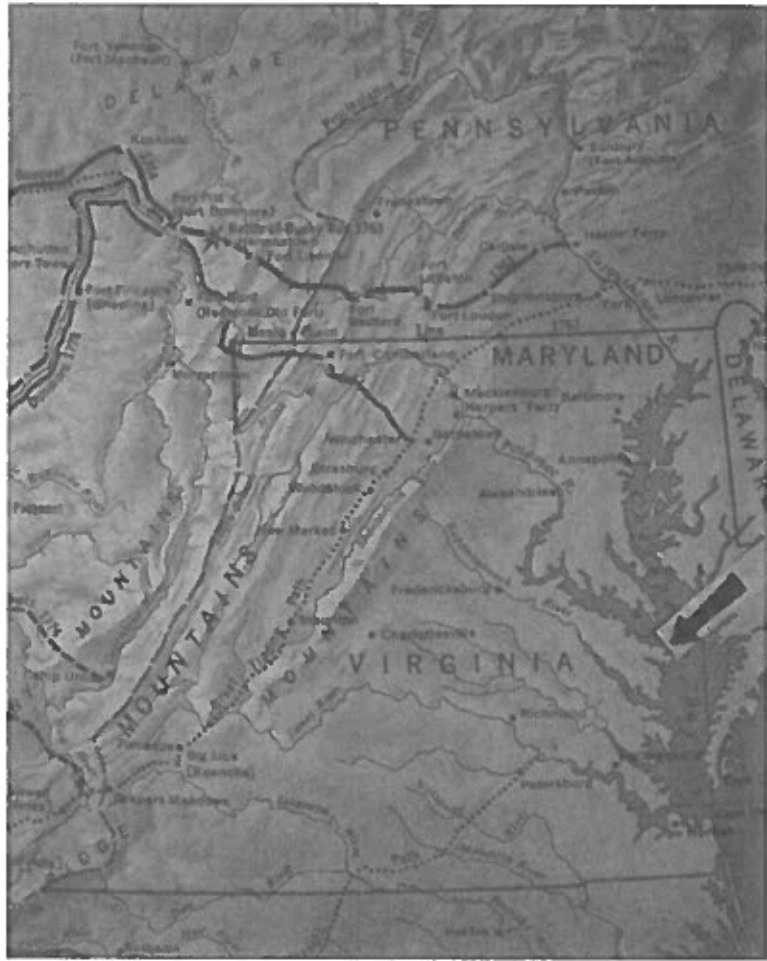
Robert's land inheritance from his brother was divided in John's will into six so-called quarters, a quarter being an old English term that carried no specified size nor shape but was generally a separate entity in itself. Each quarter usually carried a name, had an overseer, slaves, livestock, supplies, and grew tobacco. In brother John's will these six were called: Hills, Changeling, Old House, Indian Town, Curritoman (Corotoman), and Mt. Jeans.

As Robert's insatiable hunger for land continued, he acquired a number of additional quarters in Lancaster County: Brick House, Gibson's Plantation, Poplar Neck, Office Quarter, Wolf, and Mirattico (Morattico). Today the location of some of these quarters can be fairly well established. Others, such as Changeling and Wolf, have not been identified, and still others can be located only in general terms.

The inventory of Robert Carter's estate, taken after his death by direction in his will, showed the following quarters and plantations. Acreage was not given, only the inventory of slaves, livestock, and tangible goods.

Lancaster County	11 quarters or plantations, plus two mills and the vestry tract
Northumberland County	4 quarters or plantations
Richmond County	9 quarters or plantations
Westmoreland County	10 quarters or plantations
Caroline County	1 quarter or plantation
King George County	2 quarters or plantations
Stafford County	4 quarters or plantations
Spotswood County	2 quarters or plantations
Prince William County	2 quarters or plantations

Each of the 45 quarters or plantations had an overseer, and each was stocked with slaves, horses, hogs, cattle, and goods.



Location of the Northern Neck.

Maritime Activities

One of Robert Carter's earliest boyhood memories must have been of stately sailing vessels moving up and down the Rappahannock River. As he matured, these ships turned from objects of curiosity and interest into the essential keys to his survival and economic greatness.

From Virginia's earliest days waterways were critical. Even after a network of roads appeared, they were narrow, often rutted and in poor condition, and frequently impassable in wet weather. The rivers and the bays were for years, then, the major roadways available for travel and commerce.

Virginia was blessed with a number of rivers flowing into the Chesapeake Bay and thence into the Atlantic Ocean. Most of these were navigable for eighteenth-century ships for about 100 miles inland before falls and shallowing depths ended their usefulness as highways of commerce. Four of the rivers, the James, York, Rappahannock, and Potomac, created three major peninsulas—the Lower, the Middle, and the Northern Neck. It was on these peninsulas that the early colonists settled, with a waterway at their front door.

The center of the Carter holdings was a place now known as "Corotoman," situated on a point of land at the confluence of three waterways: the Rappahannock River, a smaller river called the Corotoman, and a short navigable creek that became known as Carter's Creek. Here ships to and from Europe had easy access to the Carter headquarters at Corotoman. At this point the Rappahannock was wide, and there were a number of protected anchorages close to shore that gave shelter from storms and allowed easy loading and unloading of cargoes.

During Robert Carter's day, upwards of 200 ships, on average, sailed from England for the colony in the fall and early winter. At this time of year they could take advantage of the prevailing seasonal winds to make their way down the English Channel and around the western tip of France to a course across the Bay of Biscay, past the northwest tip of Spain and the coast of Portugal. They probably stopped at Madeira for wine and to restock fresh vegetables. From there the ships headed south to the Tropic of Cancer where they picked up the trade winds and headed toward the island of Barbados. Here rum and sugar were traded. It was then a run of some 1500 miles up the coastline of the New World to the Rappahannock River.

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plantation. It was usually midsummer when they set sail for England, and this time the flow of the winds dictated a northeast route with the Gulf Stream, then east above the 40th parallel with westerly winds. It was a shorter six- to seven-week trip back.

The Rappahannock, Corotoman, and Potomac Rivers were arteries and veins of "King" Carter's commercial and financial existence. Close to his landing at Corotoman came ships of varying size from ports in England and Scotland, often by way of West Indies stopovers. From the holds of these merchantmen came boxes of linens, casks of wine and cases of brandy, silverware, hats, clothing, chinaware, shoes, tools, and manufactured goods of every type. These were lightered ashore by Carter's own shallow draft boats. Much of the cargo was resold in his store near the end of his wharf.

Having brought manufactured goods to the New World, the ships then took aboard Virginia tobacco for export. Trade in the "noxious weed," as King James I once termed it, had grown at an astounding rate since a fine grade of tobacco was first cultivated by John Rolfe at Jamestown early in the seventeenth century. By Carter's day the yearly maritime traffic between Virginia and the mother country was considerable. A typical merchant ship was a little over 100 feet in length and would have been rated by today's standards as a 200-ton vessel. It carried some 600 hogsheads of tobacco weighing between 700 and 1000 pounds each.

Carter personally owned two—possibly three—sloops for local trade. Two were named the *Georg* and the *Ann*. Additionally, he owned a pinnace, several barges or flatboats, and a vessel he called a *piriaugo*—probably a pirogue, a canoe-like craft of some size.

From "King" Carter's diary and letters it emerges that he shipped cargo and imported goods during the period 1720-1732 in more than 65 different ships, and at least 85 different ship captains are referred to by name. Carter wrote several times of seeing fleets of twenty to forty ships gathered at the mouth of the Rappahannock River to sail in convoy during times of threat by Spanish or pirate ships.

Today, some two and a half centuries after Carter jotted the daily entries in his diary, one can readily detect his apprehension when an expected ship had not arrived or his restrained joy when he heard a ship's cannon



Robert Carter in Middle Age. Courtesy Shirley Plantation

announce its arrival, particularly with a special person aboard—one of his sons returning from England, perhaps. Then, again, there is grave concern when rumors of war with Spain were heard.

Political Career

In colonial Virginia public and civil offices such as sheriff, justice of the peace, militia and naval officer,

member of the legislature, were filled by the wealthier men of the colony. These responsibilities were accepted, not only for pay (not all the offices carried a stipend), but as a duty tied to social station—the old tradition of *noblesse oblige*. Society here, as in the mother country, had become highly structured, and the system tended to preserve the *status quo* of the well-to-do. However, the availability of land to ex-indentured servants provided rapid access to status and wealth unobtainable in England.

Robert Carter, like his father and older brother before him, became a vestryman of Christ Church. By 1691 he had been elected by his vestry associates as churchwarden, a step upward in the socio-political-religious strata of the colony. It was while he was a warden that he ordered from England some of the church plate for Christ Church.

Political recognition of Carter's affluence and social status came, as noted earlier, with his selection in 1688 as a justice of the peace. The office in those days was analogous to that of a county judge, with jurisdiction over minor civil and criminal cases. No legal training was required, but it was common practice at the time for the well-educated to be knowledgeable in English law. No pay was associated with this office but it was often a stepping-stone to election to the House of Burgesses. It was, in fact, the first big step on the political ladder of which Robert would eventually ascend every rung.

At age 28 Carter attained a major upward step, being elected to the House of Burgesses from Lancaster with Captain William Ball, serving actively on a number of important committees. By April 1692 he was a member of the powerful and prestigious Committee of Propositions and Grievances. For reasons unknown he did not serve as a delegate to several sessions of the legislature, but he appeared again in 1695 as chairman of the Propositions and Grievances Committee. A year later, in September 1696, he rose still higher with his election to the powerful position of Speaker of the House. At the age of 33, Robert Carter was a political factor to be reckoned with.

Carter served as Speaker through 1697, but failed, for reasons unknown, to be reelected during the 1698 session, although he did serve in this session as a delegate. His delegate service continued in the 1699 session, and his name

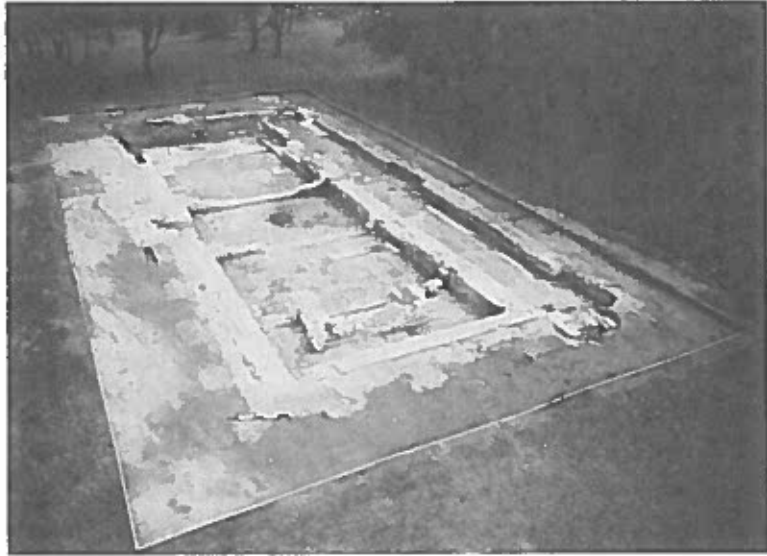
was again proposed as a candidate for Speaker. In this instance there was considerable opposition—twenty votes for another candidate against twenty for Carter. The tie was apparently broken, allegedly when late-arriving delegates cast their votes for Carter.

In May 1699 the legislature decided that the Speaker of the House should also serve as Treasurer of the Colony. The legislature, no doubt influenced by Robert Carter's business acumen, selected him for this important post. An additional salary as Treasurer was authorized, set at four percent of duties collected. It is highly significant that the holder of this office was required to post bond in the amount of £5000—a goodly sum of money for that day.

A year later, in 1700, Carter's political star rose even higher when he was named a member of the Governor's Council, which was in effect the upper house of the legislature and also the colony's highest court. Carter's political base had already been broadened in the summer of the previous year when the governor appointed him colonel and Commander-in-Chief of the Lancaster and Northumberland County militias. One month later he was appointed Naval Officer of the Rappahannock, another sought-after and remunerative position.

Appointment to the Governor's Council was by recommendation of either the governor or prominent and influential individuals in England to the Crown authorities in London. If approved, the appointment was for life during good behavior. In addition to serving as the upper house and high court, the Council, acting with the governor, served as the executive arm of the colony, its actions often extending beyond its more common duty as an advisory body to the governor. In the period 1701-1705 there was much disharmony between Governor Nicholson and the legislature, friction which continued into the tours of several subsequent governors. By the summer of 1720 a wearied Robert Carter wrote to an associate, "Politics I hope I have done with for the rest of my days."

But it was not to be. In 1726 Governor Drysdale died in office and Robert Carter, then President of the Council, became acting governor, serving as such for fourteen months until newly-appointed Governor Gooch arrived.



Excavated ruins of Robert Carter's Mansion House

Carter then reverted to his role as council member, and remained active until his death on August 4, 1732.

During his days as a burgess Robert Carter had become affiliated with the newly created College of William and Mary. In later life, when his wealth and prestige had greatly increased, he was appointed rector of the college.

"King" Carter's career of public service reflected his ability, prominence, influence, and great political power in Virginia. By the time of his death he had held every important political office in the colony.

Daily Life

Robert Carter looked with disdain on certain expenditures of a close friend and neighbor, expenditures he considered ostentatious, frilly, and showy. Yet Carter himself in many ways lived in regal style. While keeping careful account of every pound, shilling, and penny he spent, Carter demanded and was willing to pay going prices for quality merchandise.

His letters to his agents are filled with instructions to purchase a variety of items of the best quality. If the goods furnished were below the quality he expected, he was quick to let his agent know by return mail. He lived well, buying the so-called better things of life: premium quality wine, brandy, English ale and cider, carefully made leather goods, top-quality linens and silks, English and Irish stockings, hats, clothes, ruffles, boots and shoes to fit the season, dress-silk sword belts, and fine coffees, silver, pewter, china, and fine books. In an odd contradiction of character, Carter paid handsomely for clothing for himself and his family, but such clothing, he insisted, had to be plain and practical; he would not accept frilly and showy garments that his agents contended were the fashion in London.

Carter's daily duties and responsibilities might well have been beyond the capabilities of many a man. There was, first of all, the time-consuming job of running his own vast and scattered tobacco plantations. Overseers were often not of the highest caliber, and Carter, a hard task-master, found it necessary to visit his far-flung quarters frequently. Taking constant inventory of his quarters and his store required time and thought. Account ledgers had to be kept, lists of needed supplies made and ordered. When shipping season was on, Carter was almost daily closeted with this ship captain or that, settling accounts, bargaining over space and shipping rates, and pumping for news of conditions in Europe.

From the records available, there were days when Carter must have dictated letters for hours, even writing some himself to his agents, neighbors, and local business contacts, sons studying in England and even to married daughters who were themselves mistresses of large plantations and mothers of families.

He became the legal guardian of a number of children of deceased family members and close friends. All of this took much time, thought, and attention. There were also the many time-consuming details of his land dealings as agent for Lord Fairfax. Further, Carter found himself traveling to Williamsburg to carry out his duties as a burgess and later as a member of the Council. But all these activities seem to have exhilarated rather than exhausted the man. Despite endless professional demands he found time to enjoy his family, eating and drinking, card playing, reading, conversation with guests,

and, from time to time—when the dancing master was present—a ball. There are references also to his enjoyment of horse racing.

The Mansion House

When young Robert Carter returned from his schooling in England, he probably lived with his brother John for a time in a house John had built near their father's. After 1688, when Robert married Judith Armistead, their house of residence at Corotoman is conjectural. It is known that he began about 1688 to build his own house, but it was not finished until 1690. However, that was the year his brother died and all of the home plantation became Robert's.

At some point between 1710 and 1720 Robert began to plan a brick mansion house, very large by Virginia standards of that time. By 1721 he had ordered from England limestone paving blocks from the Isle of Purbeck. He imported artisans. One of these claimed that he was a skilled builder but, to Carter's disgust, turned out to be utterly incompetent. The building of the mansion, however, went on, and it was probably around 1725 that the great house was finished.

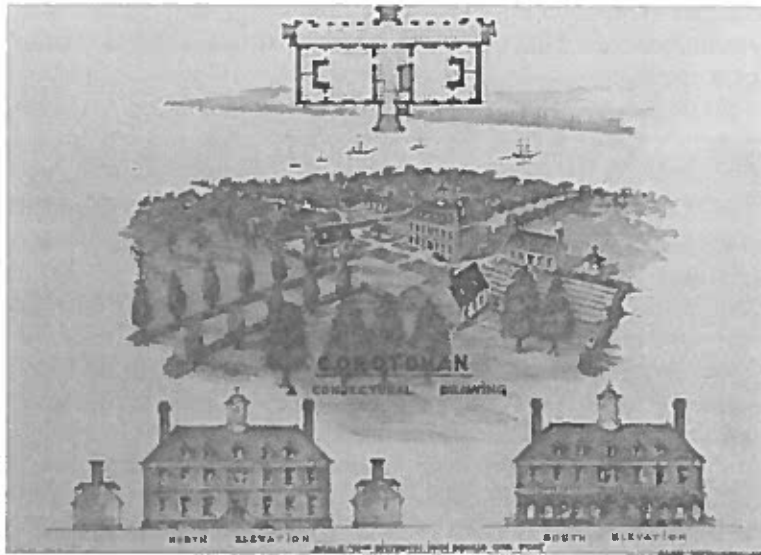
Sadly, this stately mansion, the pride of its owner, did not long stand. A fire of unknown origin ravaged it in the winter of 1729, forcing a lonely and feeble Robert Carter to return to his "old house."

Carter never rebuilt his mansion. The ruins stood for years, a source of bricks and other materials for Carter's successors and later for anyone's picking. We shall probably never know the source of Carter's design and who the architect or master builder was. No contemporary sketch or drawing is known to exist. The drawing that accompanies this text is purely conjectural, but it does provide some idea of the mansion's possible size, style, and grandeur.

Historians have long wondered about the details of the mansion. Some amateur digging in the ruins was done in the 1930s but it was not until 1960 that Ivor Noël Hume, distinguished Williamsburg archaeologist, defined the dimensions of the house. In 1976 Dr. William M. Kelso of the Virginia Research Center for Archaeology added to Mr. Noël Hume's work, so that a small data base was available for

The Heritage Library
Hilton Head Island

[23]



Conjectural Drawing of Carter's Mansion House by Alan McCullough

professional archaeological excavations. These were undertaken in 1977-79 under the auspices of the Virginia Research Center for Archaeology, with Dr. Carter Hudgins as project director.

The excavations disclosed that the dimensions of the house were 40 × 90 feet. By piecing together artifacts and contemporary accounts, a possible picture emerged. As one approached from the north along a cedar-lined farm lane, past numerous outbuildings, one probably came to a manicured forecourt. Two small dependency buildings to the east and west of the court framed a large brick, shingled-roofed Georgian dwelling with a Renaissance-inspired façade. Its foundations would have supported 2½ stories above an English basement.

A short flight of flared stone steps led to a small unsheltered stoop. Here rubbed-brick pilasters topped by a single pediment surrounded a massive door. Probably three windows, capped by a simple rubbed-brick, flat jack arch, flanked each side of the door. Below these a beveled course of bricks separated the first floor from the English

basement, whose massive foundations were 3½ courses wide.

A remarkable feature of the basement was an elaborate drainage system. The floor sloped gently from west to east and away from the center. Water flowed from the center toward the outer walls and into an exit tunnel that carried it eastward to the river several hundred yards away. Evidence of this tunnel still exists.

Above the first floor windows a belt course marked the boundary between the first and second stories. On the upper floor there were possibly seven windows facing the court. Atop was a steeply pitched, shingled, hipped roof with massive interior chimneys toward each end.

The house, in the pattern of earlier Virginia houses, was only a single room deep. On the first floor, to the left and right of an unheated central hall, were two fireplace-heated chambers or rooms, and behind these were deep closets. The large central hall was offset to the west to provide space for a wide staircase to the second floor. The two downstairs rooms were not equal in size. The hall was paved with polished black and white marble tiles laid in geometric pattern. Cornices and pilasters decorated the hall. The downstairs room to the right of the hall, as one entered from the forecourt, was the parlor and most decorated room in the mansion, with pilasters, a heavy cornice, and a massive marble mantel about the hearth at the gable end of the room. The bricks of the hearth were faced with blue hand-painted delft tiles.

The larger room across the hall was apparently used as a bed-chamber by Carter, in his later years at least, when crippling attacks of gout handicapped him. Its walls were probably plain, no carved or polished marble decorated the hearth, and the delft tiles here were plainer than those in the other room.

Across the river-side façade of the house ran an unusual 10 × 90 foot corridor-like room or gallery. The purpose and appearance of this part of the structure have puzzled both archaeologists and architectural historians. Such evidence as was found indicated that the basement level of this gallery may have been used to channel household traffic in and out of the mansion. The first floor level may have been an arcaded portico, giving the south façade a design unique among Virginia plantation houses of the day.

From the debris of the fire uncovered by the archaeologists, it was possible to ascertain that there had been shutters—probably internal ones—evidenced by recovered H-shaped shutter hinges. Also found were door locks, the largest collection of delft-tile shards yet discovered in a single structure in the United States, as well as drawer pulls, strap hinges, bed bolts, and butterfly hinges that indicated the presence of fine furniture. What the family managed to save, if anything, before the heat and flame became intense remains unknown.

Food and Drink

What did a man of Robert Carter's immense wealth and affluent life style eat and drink? His diary gives a good description.

Providing meat for the table was no problem. Cattle and hogs were plentiful, as were sheep. As noted in his diary, "this day kill me a veal and lamb." Wild game, of course, was plentiful, but Robert Carter at no time in his writings mentions hunting. No doubt his servants and overseers, as well as friends, provided game for his table. He commented about venison that was brought to him, and in one instance noted that he had eaten "a whole squirrel, drank plentifully of cyder and six glasses of wine." In another case he tells of devouring a pigeon.

The rivers and creeks provided excellent fish, and Carter specifically mentioned eating oysters, rockfish, striped bass, drum, and herring. On one occasion Carter wrote that "my son Charles and Gumby catcht 4 drums and 2 bonetoes."

Poultry was also an important source of Carter's diet; chicken headed the list. Besides roasted and fried, frequent mention is made of stewed chicken, chicken broth, chicken "pye," chicken minced, and chicken wings. Variety was provided by geese, turkeys, pigeon, and other fowl.

Carter's garden furnished numerous vegetables for that day: potatoes, asparagus, carrots, turnips, greens, onions, parsley, beans, peas, squash, and cabbage. In addition to vegetables, the gardens produced such fruits as strawberries, gooseberries, and raspberries.

In his orchards Carter raised apples, pears, quinces, apricots, and peaches. Apples were an important

crop, as cider was a principal drink. Every fall Carter took a personal interest in its making, from harvesting the apples and mashing them into juice to bottling and storing the finished product. For example, on August 20, 1723, he recorded, "I made 23 butts of Sydr, 11 coolers next." Even corks were his concern: ". . . gave out 3 gro corks the first out of my new corks."

Although wheat was grown in the colony, it was not generally popular. Robert Beverley, in *The History and Present State of Virginia* (1705; Chapel Hill, 1947, p. 292) wrote that, "The bread in Gentlemen's Houses is generally made of Wheat, but some rather choose the Pone, which is the Bread made of *Indian Meal*. Many of the poorest sort of People so little regard the *English Grain*, that . . . they don't mind to sow the Ground."

In addition to corn and wheat, barley and oats were also grown. These grains provided Carter with hominy, malt, gruel, and pancake bread, panady bread, mush, and toast.

Sugar in various forms—white, brown, powdered, as well as desserts of all sorts are mentioned in the diary. Frequent references by Carter to lime juice, imported from the Indies, indicate that this was a favorite of his, and he often gave it as a gift.

On Sunday, September 1, 1723 Carter wrote, "I rise abt 8 drank 3 dishes of sage tea abt 11 I drank my coffee & milk . . . [later in the day] . . . I eat a broiled pidgeon that was highly seasoned with peper eat some Bermudas Potatoes & some apple pye drank abot a pint of cydr . . ."

Just as he enjoyed eating, he also took delight in drinking fine wines and brandy, and he was sophisticated in his selections, insisting on the best. He wrote an agent to get him from Madeira "a Couple pipes of the best of their Wine . . . I am willing to go to the highest that I may have the most Celebrated of their wines."

A variety of other beverages was noted in his diary, most often at times of ill health. Of the prosaic non-alcoholic type, coffee and various flavors of tea are mentioned, along with water, often taken with additives such as sassafras, rose, and cordial. And, of course, there was cider.

That Carter was altogether human and fallible appears in a diary entry of August 1727, when he wrote,

One agent received a prompt slap on the wrist for a shipment Carter received: "Stark, naught such I never met that bare the name of French Brandy." And Robert Carter was not above frequenting the taverns of Williamsburg when the day's work with the legislature was done. His diary reflects that he partook once of a large bowl of rack [arrack] punch [See Appendix IV], a drink he also used at home.

Carter apparently kept large quantities of beverages of all sorts in his cellar at Corotoman, much of it to be used as gifts to friends and others. For example, he kept great supplies of ale to give to ship captains and other business associates. Much of this ale was imported from Dorchester, sometimes four hogsheads of bottled ale (2000 bottles) at a time. Giving away bottles of rum to persons who served him in one way or another was a Carter custom. Writing in August 1726, he noted, "Signed conditions with Westmoreland overseers. Gave them a bottle of rum." In another case in 1725 he wrote, "Sam Jones brings me a bass—has a bottle of rum."

There is no doubt that Robert Carter enjoyed his drinking until advancing age and illness began to take their toll. "I had a violent night both for pain and uneasiness by the wine I drank . . ." This may have slowed him down, but a later diary entry reads, "Eat a leg and wing of a chicken, drank six glasses of wine . . ." and "Drank too much wine the next day my head acht."

Thus, while Carter apparently made some concessions to his physical condition, he continued to enjoy his drink, as this segment of a letter to one of his agents bears out:

Since I have been afflicted with the gout I have quite left off drinking red wine; I drank some more of your margoes [margaux] yesterday with Russell than I have done this twelve month. If you could send me a gross or 18 dozen of good white wine such as Captain Russell knows I love, upon reasonable terms and in good large bottles, t'would be acceptable, and if he brings me in 20 dozen of right good ale it would not be amiss. Your beer in a cask does not stand it well whatever is the reason.

Carter's Ills and Remedies

In a day when attaining maturity was uncertain, given all the diseases of the eighteenth century and the

virtual absence of knowledgeable medical treatment, it is remarkable that Robert Carter reached the age of 69 before he died. And when one considers his health problems, to say nothing of the so-called cures and remedies of the times, it is all the more surprising.

The first evidence of Carter's health problems appears in a letter protesting his worthiness to become a member of the Governor's Council in 1700. He was 37 years old at this time. Pleading the great distance from his home at Corotoman to Williamsburg, along with the fact that he was already Speaker of the House, Carter added, "My personal Disabilities and Infirmities with which I am too well acquainted renders me an unfit object of so high a favor." The nature of these ills remains unidentified, but he was certainly beginning to have health difficulties while still relatively young by today's standards. By the time his extant diary begins at age 57, his problems were truly growing.

In the summer of 1720, in a letter to agent Richard Perry, Carter complained of gout, a disease that was to rack him frequently all his remaining years. He said that he was going to abstain from drinking claret or red wine, which he felt was the culprit.

In addition to the agonizing seizures of gout, Carter mentioned fits of distemper (apparently a generic collective term he used for ill health in general), flux, stomach upsets, diarrhea, headaches, fever or ague, running or festering eyes, pleurisy, breathing difficulty, black urine, difficulty in sleeping, dismal dreams, and various other pains, including toothaches!

Of all of his ailments, gout ravaged him the most painfully, forcing him to virtual immobility for periods varying from days to months at a time. When he regained movement, it was with a crutch or by being carried. The disease sometimes hit him first in one foot and then, to add to his misery, attacked the other.

The gout, moaned Carter to the governor in February 1724, had been "an inseparable companion to me all this winter," adding that he had not been on a horse since last in Williamsburg, nor had he had shoes on one whole day so swollen were his feet. Indeed, he continued, he had been to church but two or three times, in these instances using a coach with his feet wrapped. Thus, Carter hoped the governor would

excuse him from the summons to attend a Council meeting in Williamsburg.

One can trace the increasing frequency and seriousness of Carter's ills in his diary for the years 1720-32. By the time he was 65 in 1728, Carter wrote a letter saying, "I have lived to taste the infirmities of old age, every day brings its uneasinesses along with it."

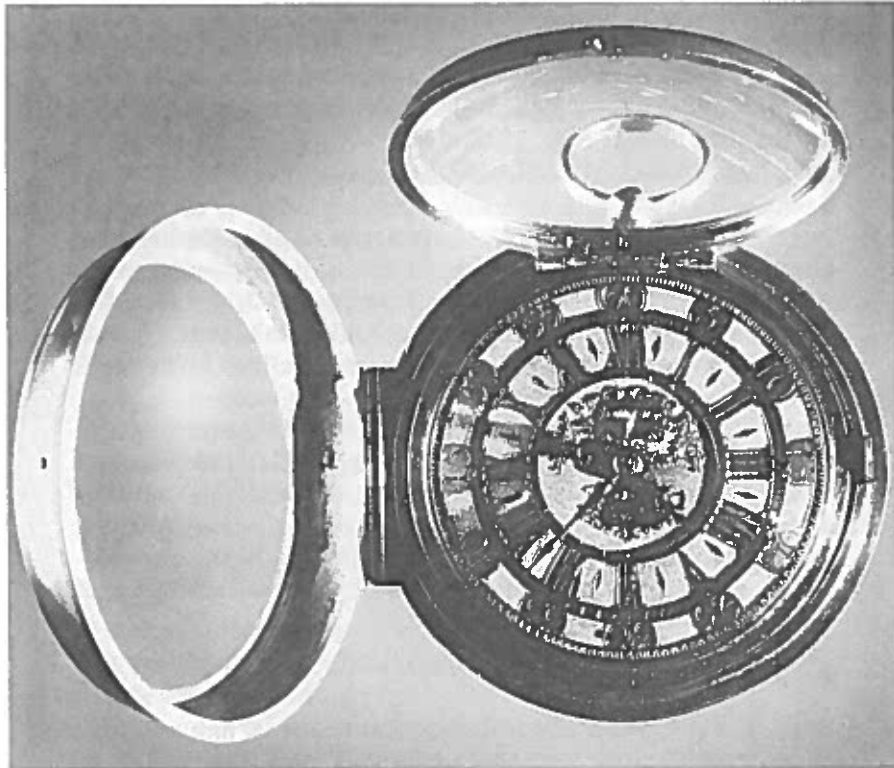
Remedies for these assorted ailments included German spa water and soaking in Bristol water—apparently waters he imported for medicinal purposes. Other remedies included patent medicines such as Anderson's pills, Scotch pills, Stoughton's drops, herbs, various laxatives and chemicals.

The actual cause of Robert Carter's death, whether a specific disease or simply the collective ravages of advancing years, is unknown, though one obituary says he died of the "bloody flux," probably dysentery. However, the man was remarkable to have survived physically and emotionally as long as he did in the face of almost half a lifetime of health problems.

Robert Carter—The Man

Portraits of Robert Carter reveal him as a man of fair complexion, long thin nose, thin lips, small piercing eyes, stern gaze, probably balding at an early age, and becoming paunchy, with heavy jowls, in middle years. In his last portrait—the one used as the cover illustration to this booklet—Carter shows an apparent loss of weight after middle age.

What of Robert Carter's personality, his character? The answers come largely from an interpretation of his own writings in his diary and letter books, which cover a 12-year period in his later life. There are also a few surviving references to the man by contemporaries. But it is frustrating, in one sense, to pore over Carter's known writings, which cover the years 1720-32, seeking details of his personal life, thoughts, and feelings. Personal entries appear from time to time in his letterbooks, but these are basically business correspondence—letters that contain an immense amount of information about the Virginia tobacco trade and the economics of his time. Carter's diary is a virtual log of events of the day, but all too brief in content for the casual reader to grasp their full meaning or read any story behind them. These entries were



Gold watch made in London, 1711-1713, given by Robert Carter to Daughter Elizabeth.

written, it would appear, more as brief reminders for Carter, whose memory would then be jogged to recall the story in full. Today's historians wish he had gone into greater detail when he wrote about his visitors, his family activities, various personalities, and his innermost thoughts.

Yet enough of the man's personality emerges from time to time to provide glimpses of his character and his values. As indicated earlier, certain letters reflect the intensely high value he put on education. To his sons at school abroad, he preached not only the value of learning and the need for godliness, but also frugality. He displayed a bit of parental anger from time to time when his sons incurred debts he considered outrageous. Son Landon, at sixteen years of

age, ran up a bill in London in a little less than a year and a half that exceeded £323—a tidy amount for that day. Father Carter said that such a debt for a boy of that age was “beyond all comparison.” But he did acknowledge that Landon’s “morals appear to be . . . agreeable and his education so well advanced.” Of son Robert’s escapades, he remarked that he hoped Robert would heed the warnings he had been given “before he bites off the bridle and suffers by a dear bought experience.”

His letters to his agents reflect a no-nonsense business approach, a hewing to the letter of the agreement. The quality of integrity is evident, but there is little warmth or emotion. Indeed, one strains to find much emotion showing in his extant writings. A quick temper shows here and there, but a sense of humor, such as one finds in the writings of his contemporary, William Byrd, is totally lacking. He expresses concern over the well-being of his slaves and urges kindness by his overseers, but his motives may have been as much economic as altruistic. He could just as quickly be extremely severe with a recalcitrant slave.

When ill health struck him—most often painful sieges of gout—Carter became personal and human in his diary. Then we learn more of his daily habits, food, drink, medicine, and, to an extent, his thoughts. But even the death of a close relative did not move him to unburden himself beyond a brief mention. The loss of his great mansion house received only a few brief comments.

To his family and close friends Carter was generous; it is obvious that among his greatest pleasures in life were his children and grandchildren. In addition to providing for his sons’ future with sizeable landholdings, Carter used his political power to have them appointed to powerful and remunerative local government positions—John as Secretary of the colony, and Robert, then Charles, as Naval Officer of the Rappahannock. His interest in his daughters, even after they married, remained intense; he was a frequent visitor to their homes and was generous in his gifts to them of land and silver and jewelry. In this connection, it is interesting to note that by far the greatest number of famous descendants of Robert Carter stems from his daughters. He was quite protective of his girls. When widowed daughter Elizabeth told him of her intent to marry Dr. George Nicholas, a man Carter felt was

below her social station and of questionable intent, an "Imprudent Match" in his words, Carter went into a pique, though a thorough reconciliation came about shortly thereafter.

On the other hand, he could be unfeeling, as he was toward his predecessor as agent for the Northern Neck Proprietary and former Council member, Colonel Edmund Jenings. When Carter replaced Jenings, part of the agreement with the Fairfaxes was that he would try to recover money that Jenings owed them. Despite the fact that Jenings was aging and in various ways admittedly no longer capable, Carter hounded him to the last shilling, writing to an agent that he had both the colonel and his son "bound to me body and bones."

That Carter had a considerate side is demonstrated in the instructions in his will that kindness be shown to the children of a convicted murderer whose estate had come into Carter's possession.

Carter's feelings and compassion for others can also be seen in a letter he wrote in July 1726 concerning news of the death of Governor Hugh Drysdale. The relationship between Carter and Drysdale had been good in comparison with his relationship with the preceding governor, Alexander Spotswood. Carter wrote that he was very tenderly affected by the "loss of so good a Governor whom we were all in hopes of his getting well . . ." As Carter was President of the Council, he now found himself acting governor. "The Post I am now to act in," wrote Carter in apparent genuine modesty and honesty "is so far from being grateful to me that nothing less than absolute necessity will draw me to it."

Robert Carter was a fair but hard taskmaster. With his family he was hard but generous, and with the friends and business associates he liked, he was the same. Friends, ship captains, and overseers who graced his favor often received gifts such as lime juice, cider, or fine wine. For those who opposed him or those he disliked, however, he was hard and ruthless, as was the case in his "body and bones" grip of Colonel Jenings and his son.

Carter was quick to speak his mind, particularly if he felt aggrieved, insulted, or taken advantage of. This is clear in letters to his agents regarding the quality of his tobacco or prices lower than anticipated, inferior goods

shipped to him, or what he felt were excessive expenditures by his agents on his sons' behalf.

There were certainly those who found Carter to be cold and haughty. One scathing account of Carter comes from Governor Nicholson in 1704. But it should be noted that in the preceding year Nicholson had committed some unusual practices as governor and had fallen afoul of his Council. So bad had conditions become that Carter led a petition by members of the Council to the Crown to have Nicholson removed. So it can be assumed there was some prejudice when Nicholson wrote of Carter's

extraordinary pride and ambition, using several people haughtily, sometimes making the Justices of the Peace . . . wait two or three hours before they can speak to him . . . to people that will flatter, cajole and as it were adore him, he is familiar enough, but others he uses with all haughtiness and insolence possible.

Like many prominent public figures Carter, among his contemporaries, was a controversial man.

There is, however, no question that Robert Carter was a Godfearing man and a strong supporter of the Church of England in America, and he was determined that his children be raised in that church. References to his Creator and to accepting misfortune as God's will are frequent. He is known to have been a vestryman and church warden in early manhood, and he continued to be a frequent churchgoer as long as his health permitted. When church silver was needed, Carter ordered it through his agent with instructions that, should the cost exceed the assets the church had provided, the difference was to be charged to his account.

Finally there was his gift to God and memorial to his family, Christ Church. Surely one who did not walk in fear and awe of his Maker would not have done these things.

Carter's main interests can be summarized: his family, the quest of wealth, and power. In his mind the best way for him and his sons to serve these interests was through education. He was convinced that a solid grounding in the taught subjects of that day was a key to success, so convinced that he spared no expense to see that all his sons were provided an excellent English schooling. This fact was recognized by the author of Robert's tombstone epitaph, when he

noted that in educating his progeny Robert "expended a vast amount of money." The full epitaph reads as follows:

Here is Buried

The Honorable ROBERT CARTER, ESQUIRE, a man who adorned good breeding with exceptional gifts and time-honored morals. As a GOVERNOR of the COLLEGE of WILLIAM and MARY, he was its champion in perilous times.

SPEAKER of the HOUSE and TREASURER under the most serene SOVEREIGNS WILLIAM, ANNE, GEORGE the FIRST and SECOND.

While in the general assembly he became president of the council for a period of six years; for more than a year while acting GOVERNOR of the COLONY, he defended with equal justice the royal authority and the common freedom. Provided with extensive wealth worthily acquired, he erected at his own expense this sacred building as a great monument of devoted duty towards God. He enriched it.

To all whom he courteously entertained he was neither a lavish nor a frugal host. Debts generously forgiven bear witness to a remarkable liberality.

He joined to himself in marriage, first JUDITH, the daughter of JOHN ARMISTEAD, ESQUIRE; then BETTY, descended from the gentle line of LANDONS; by whom he begot a numerous progeny, in the educating of whom he expended a vast amount of money.

At length, full of honor and of days, having displayed the rewards of an illustrious life, he died on the fourth day of August in the year of our Lord, 1732, at the age of 69.

The unhappy mourn the comfort, the widows the protection, and the orphans the father, taken away from them.

And finally there is a view expressed in an obituary of Carter published in *The American Weekly Mercury* of Philadelphia, PA., in the issue of September 7, 1732. It read:

Virginia, Aug. 24. We have the following Account from Virginia, of the Death of the Honorable Robert Carter, Esq. late President of the Council in Virginia, who departed this Life on the 4th of August, 1732, in the 69th Year of his Age, he died emmensely Rich, he has left among his children above 300,000 Acres of Land and above 1000 Negroes, besides 10,000 Pounds in Cash, Etc. He was building a very handsome Brick Church in his own Parish at his own Expense, which will be finished by his sons, and 'tis said he has by his Will ordered all his Debtors to be forgiven their debts, and many other generous Acts he has done, being too tedious to insert.

With Carter's passing, one of the most powerful men in American colonial history departed the scene. Few since have rivaled him in economic and political influence and power. He left behind nine living children: sons John, Charles, Landon, and George, and daughters Elizabeth, Judith, Anne, Mary, and Lucy. None of the sons attained Robert Carter's degree of prominence, though John became secretary of the colony before his father's death and, as the eldest, inherited the lion's share of his father's estate.

All of Carter's children were left sizeable legacies, and the Carter name continued to be a respected and powerful one. His daughters married well, and notable descendants of Robert Carter included three signers of the Declaration of Independence: Carter Braxton, Thomas Nelson, Jr. and Benjamin Harrison; two U.S. Presidents: William Henry Harrison and Benjamin Harrison; General Robert E. Lee; Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Edward White; eight governors of Virginia; several prominent bishops of the Episcopal Church; and numerous others who have served their country well in a variety of capacities.

Robert "King" Carter left the nation not only the legacy of a great family, but he left it a magnificent building. Historic Christ Church stands today a living link with our nation's past.

Appendix I Lineage of Robert "King" Carter

John Carter 1613-1669
married

(1) Jane Glyn George (d. inf.)	(2) Eleanor Eltonhead Elizabeth m. (1) Nath. Utie (2) Henry Johnson	(3) Anne Carter John II (c. 1648-1690)	(4) Sarah Ludlow Robert "King" (1663-1732)	(5) Elizabeth Sherley Charles (1669- ?)
m. (1) 1688 Judith Armistead (1665-1699)				
Elizabeth (c. 1692-1734) m. (1) Nath. Burwell m. (2) Geo. Nicholas	Judith (c. 1693) d. inf.	Judith (1695-1750) m. 1718 Mann Page	John (1696-1742) m. Elizabeth Hill of Shirley	Sarah (c. 1697-1702) d. inf.
m. (2) 1701 Betty Landon Willis (1684-1719)				
Anne (1702-1743) m. Benj. Harrison	Robert (1704-1732) of Nomini m. Priscilla Churchill	Sarah (c. 1704) d. prior 1719	Betty (c. 1705) d. prior 1719	Charles (1707-1764) of Cleve m. (1) Mary Walker (2) Anne Byrd (3) Lucy Taliaferro
Ludlow (c. 1709) d. prior 1719	Landon (1710-1778) of Sabine Hall m. (1) Elizabeth Wormeley (2) Maria Byrd (3) Elizabeth Beale	Mary (1712-1736) m. George Braxton	Lucy (1715-1763) m. (1) Henry Fitzhugh (2) Nath. Harrison II	George (1718-1742) d. in Eng. unm.

Appendix II
**Physical Problems
Mentioned by Robert Carter
in His Diary**

Ague	Malaria
Back pains	Oppression
Bad dreams	Oppression in lungs
Black urine	Pains
Breathing problems	Pains in head
Cholic pains	Pains in side
Colds	Pleurisy
Diarrhea	Shivering
Disease in bowels	Stomach upsets
Distemper	Swelling behind ears
Faint	Swelling of feet
Fever	Toothaches
Gout	Veins swollen
Grippled	Violent looseness
Headache	Vomiting
Humour in eyes	Wind
Lameness	

Appendix III

Medicines Used by Robert Carter

Andersons pills—a patent medicine
Balsam of saltpeter—potassium nitrate
Bark—containing quinine—Peruvian, chichona or Jesuits bark
Blisters—plasters prepared by dipping flannel in caustics and applied to the skin
Bristol waters—the waters of warm springs at Clifton, near Bristol, England
Buckbine drops
Clyster—soft soothing enema
Clyster of aniseed—rectal administration of medication to drive away windiness
Cream of Tartar—common name of potassio-antimonious tartrate
Duobus
Edgars drops—a patent medicine
Elixir Hypo—a sweetened liquid containing alcohol
Hyers Picra—a bitter cathartic powder or paste
India rhubarb—a purge, powder or infusion of rhubarb with an addition of aromatic astringents
Ipecacuanaha (ipecac)—plant root, purgative
Ipoco, 25 gr.
Laudanum—composed of opium, saffron extracted with Canary wine
Lemon cider wine
Manna—pot type plant used as cathartic or emetic
Margaux—a drink (claret) made in Margaux, France
Oil of amber—product of the whale obtained by its dry distillation
Oil of aniseed—stimulant, essential oil obtained from herb plant by distillation with water, used to purify intestines
Physick—a vomit (emetic), usually ipecacuanaha
Plague water—herbs and roots in spirits of wine used to prevent the plague

Sage tea—infusion of the herb plant, sage or salvia, used as a stomachic or stimulant to purge
Sassafrass tea—dried bark of the tree used as an infusion for comfort—a stimulant good for rheumatism
Scotch pills—a patent medicine
Senna—pot-type plant used as cathartic or emetic
Snuff—powdered tobacco
Spaw—German spa water from mineral springs, for health
Stoughtons drops—a patent medicine
Sol Vol
Sulphate of iron
Sulphates of metal, artificial
Vitriol—artificial sulphate of metal
Voldrops

Appendix IV

Some Food and Beverage Terms Used by Robert Carter

Arrack	alcoholic spirits, especially distilled from cocoa sap or rice
Butt	a large cask for wine or ale—equals two hogsheads
Carboy	a large glass bottle protected by basketwork or a wooden box
Flitch	the side of a hog salted and cured
Gammon	smoked or cured ham, the lower end of a side of bacon
Madeira	a Portuguese island in the Atlantic off the coast of North Africa furnished much wine to colonial America. The island is still famous for its wine.
Malt	a grain which has been germinated artificially by heat and moisture
Panada	a thick sauce or paste made with bread crumbs and seasoning, often served with roast, wild fowl or meat
Phial	or vial, the container in which wine was sent
Pipe	a large cask for wine or oil equal to four barrels, two hogsheads, or half a ton and containing 126 wine gallons
Rack punch	(arrack punch) a drink seasoned with arrack, a strong distilled liquor from the east
Shoat	a young weaned pig

- Syllabub** a drink or dish made of milk or cream mixed with wine, cider, or the like, often sweetened or flavored
- Trifle** (English cookery) a dessert consisting of custard or some substitute, and usually containing cake, soaked in wine or liquor, and jam, fruit or the like

Appendix V

Food and Beverages

Mentioned by Robert Carter

MEAT

bacon
beef
fat
ham
mutton & lamb
pickled pork
pork
shoat
veal

POULTRY

chicken
chicken broth
chicken pie
chicken wings
minced chicken
stewed chicken
duck
fowl
geese
pigeon pye

DAIRY PRODUCTS

butter
cheese
cream
eggs
milk

VEGETABLES

beans
cabbage
dried beans
dried peas
peas
potatoes, Bermuda
potatoes, Irish
potatoes, sweet
turnip tops

GRAIN

barley, French
bread
corn
corn meal
English meal
gruel
hominy
Indian meal
malt
mush
oats
Panady bread
pancake
toast
wheat

CONDIMENTS

aniseed
lime juice

mustard
pepper
pickles
salt
vinegar

FRUIT AND NUTS

apples
cherries
chocolate nuts
cocoa nuts
currants
grapes
walnuts

SWEETS, DESSERTS

apple pie
cake, frosted, plum
chocolate
jam
minced pie
molasses
pudding
sugar, white,
 brown
 powdered, loaf
sugar rum
sweetmeats

**BEVERAGES—
ALCOHOLIC**

ale, southern
beer
brandy, French &
 Virginia
burgundy
Canary
cider with brandy
 & sugar
champagne
claret
Hautbrion
hock
lemon cyder wine
Madeira
port
rack punch
Rhenish
rum
sack
weymouth

**BEVERAGES—
NON-ALCOHOLIC**

cider
cocoa
coffee
cordial water
Falconar's tea
green tea
mountain drink
rose water
sage tea
sassafrass tea
sassafrass water
tea

FISH

bonetoe
drum
oysters

GAME

pigeon
squirrel
venison

Appendix VI

The Conjectural Drawing of Corotoman

by
Alan McCullough. A.I.A.

In attempting to show with reasonable accuracy a structure of immense interest and importance to its era and to history, it is important that proof beyond a reasonable doubt be arrived at. Where physical remains are limited, as is the case at Corotoman, certain assumptions based on history and the known architectural forms of the period in Virginia and in England become relevant to the project. Also pertinent in the effort to solve the puzzle would be the choices of the owner, Robert Carter, based upon what we know of his character, taste, and position in the Colony.

The archaeologists have done a fascinating work in uncovering and recording the foundations of the great house and in recreating, based upon artifacts found there, a chapter in 18th century life and history. However, the fire that devastated the house and the dismantling that through the years almost totally removed all brickwork and stonework from the site, have made an accurate reconstruction difficult.

This conjectural drawing has been based upon solid evidence as to foundation plan and dimension only. We do not know with certainty, for instance, the location, type or number of windows. We know little of interior door locations. We do not know with certainty yet whether two flanking buildings formed a north courtyard. The limits of funds prevented thorough excavation in this area. Exact form of loggia or gallery, indicated by lighter foundations on the south front, remain uncertain. We do not know whether the great house had a cupola or dormer windows.

The foundations, however, testify to the existence and location of the massive chimneys. Also established is 18th-century symmetry, suggested by the centered flared stoop and the accented central element of the south gallery.

The archaeologists findings indicated strong evidence of a massive house rising two and one half stories above an English basement. This suggests that the attic, under the steep wood-shingled roof forms prevalent in this English Renaissance period, would be utilized for living spaces and would have dormer windows.

The archaeologists found rubbed brick, flat arches over windows, a belt course, and molded brick water-table at first floor line. These were usual details in fine manor houses of the period. Chimneys were often featured with rubbed brick caps or flat arches in this period.

It is thought by the archaeologists that remains indicated a large brick molded entrance doorway on the North Front. This would be in keeping with the English Renaissance manor houses of the late 17th Century, rather than the later, more ornate, wood entrances featured at Westover for example, in the 1830s.

The archaeologists' finding of deposits of melted lead from the intense heat of the fire leaves the question unanswered as to whether this lead represented the muntins or quarrels in leaded casement windows, since lead was also used for roofing and flashing and might indeed have been used for wood sash pulley weights.

It is thought likely that the windows chosen for Corotoman would more likely have been the more common wood sashes, today called double hung. These were currently being installed at Williamsburg in the Capitol, 1699-1703, the Governor's Palace, 1706-1720, and the Wren Building of this era. It is known that Robert Carter's official duties carried him to Williamsburg frequently during these years of planning and building Corotoman, and Carter was known to be an associate of Governor Spotswood, who was active and enthusiastic in these public building programs.

Carter's years in London could have given him an awareness of art and architecture which was considered important in the education of young Englishmen. His time in London coincided with the virtual rebuilding of London by Christopher Wren after the great fire of 1666. The older Elizabethan and Jacobean forms were being replaced by the early Georgian throughout London and vicinity. It was these forms which were the antecedents of the Virginia manor houses and public buildings of the entire 18th century.

These structures followed symmetrical patterns generally with steep dormered roofs, vertical accents as to window sash proportions, and chimneys—frequently accented with cupolas in England as in the Capitol, Governor's Palace, Wren Building, and Rosewell (begun in 1726).


Flanking wings or buildings forming a partially enclosed forecourt were frequently found in the English antecedents as well as in Virginia structures, as at the Governor's Palace, later at Rosewell, Mt. Airy and others. The archaeologists suggest that when further excavation at Corotoman is authorized, they may find remains of two such flanking buildings as shown in the conjectural drawing. We do not know with certainty that any such strong avenue of cedars existed on the axis of the house. In fact it is suggested that the approach road may have curved from the west side of the property.

The point has been made that Robert Carter chose a plan for Corotoman quite different from other important houses of the period. Being only one room in depth made it akin in plan to the earlier 17th-century houses such as Bacon's Castle (1660). Of course Carter's original house, to which he probably returned after the fire, was one room in depth. It was the scale and sheer inner size of the great house—30' × 90', not including loggia, wings, or dependencies—which made it much longer than others of its time.

Another unique difference was the 10' × 90' gallery or loggia along the south front facing the river, both architecturally pleasing and practical as an entryway and passage. This piazza was included in the Wren Building at Williamsburg and in many court-houses of the time, Hanover County Court house being one example.

The locating of large storage closets around and behind massive chimneys was also somewhat unusual. This preempted both ends of the building on all floors from use for living areas. It is not known with certainty whether east and west ends of the building had windows in the closets and it seems reasonable that end windows would have been omitted. It is tempting to speculate that Carter may have realized some advantage of insulation from the winter chill by locating closets on outside walls.

Archaeologists are puzzled by a unique basement room directly beneath the entrance hall and of the same



size. It is not known if this room had an access from the basement as the partition walls had been dismantled to a point below the line of doorframing. It is possible that this room served as a "vault" for security purposes.

It is not known with certainty whether stairways existed behind chimneys, for serving upper floors, but this is thought to have been the case.

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