

F I N A L R E P O R T

for

National Endowment for the Humanities Grant No. RO-20600-83

Salvaging the Calvert House Site

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December 1983

## Abstract

The original proposal stressed six objectives:

1. To recover archaeological evidence of the early 17th and 18th century settlement of the town at a prime focal point--State Circle.
2. To preserve a rich archaeological deposit for scholars and for the public.
3. To preserve a hypocaust, an architectural structure rare in colonial America.
4. To help Historic Annapolis, Inc. in its city-wide preservation program.
5. To provide data on site formation in Annapolis for Dr. Yentsch's scholarly research.
6. To provide a focal point for Dr. Mark P. Leone's "Archaeology in Public" interpretation program.

The work funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities during the period February - July 1983 enabled emergency archaeology at the Calvert Site to be carried close to completion. The research contributed significantly to an understanding of the development of Annapolis in the colonial era. In fact, work at Calvert has proved critical to the humanistic objectives of the Annapolis Archaeology Project: understanding and assessing the impact of social and economic rank on the material remains of a colonial southern, urban center.

The research was also influential in establishing an archaeologically, historically, and architecturally based preservation program. The work at Calvert helped awaken the Annapolis community to the potential that archaeological research possesses and increased the community's awareness of the many changes that the city has undergone through time.

Research at Calvert was also successful in attracting private and public donations for further archaeological work in the city and, in fact, as one result of the emergency grant, Historic Annapolis has been given \$27,500 in City funds to be used in preparing a city-wide plan for the preservation of below-ground historic resources. City ordinances with the same objective are also being developed. The developer, Historic Inns of Annapolis, plans construction at four additional sites in the city during the next 12-24 months and has incorporated plans to find and to preserve fragile archaeological resources into these four projects as well. Finally, the educational impact of the Calvert archaeology project on the public was immense and general public interest in the work and its findings was widespread.

Under the aegis of Historic Annapolis, Inc., work at the Calvert site was begun in 1981 and primarily completed in 1983 as a salvage operation before renovation of the standing building (built c. 1730) and its incorporation into a large, multi-storied hotel complex. Work was funded by Historic Annapolis Inc, by the Annapolis Institute, the Committee for the Preservation of the Capital City, and the Maryland Chapter of the Society of Colonial Dames. In February 1983 emergency funding was provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities to Historic Annapolis Inc (\$20,500) for archaeology at Calvert House on State Circle under the direction of Dr. Anne Yentsch of the College of William and Mary. These funds allowed excavation to continue at the site until mid-June when construction forced a stop. During 1983 it became apparent the inhabitants of Calvert House played a pivotal role in the formation of the colonial urban center of Annapolis, Maryland and that one could discern the markers of their high social and economic rank in the artifact assemblage and associated features at the site. Additionally, the site became pivotal in the creation of an archaeologically-based preservation program for the city.

The archaeological excavations at Calvert House were a dynamic element in an informal public education program throughout the spring of 1983. As work progressed and the town watched, both public and private sectors of the community drew together with a common goal: to save the fragile, tangible historical data buried in the Calvert yard. As one result of the NEH funded project, the artifacts and site data will be presented in a series of permanent exhibits housed within the new Calvert Hotel complex while significant features exposed during excavation will be preserved and incorporated into the hotel's design. This represents a significant contribution to the preservation of the city's history by the developer, Mr. Paul Pearson. Furthermore, for the first time, the Annapolis City Council voted funds specifically for archaeology, including a limited amount (\$6000) for the salvage work at Calvert. These funds enabled excavation to continue after the NEH funds were exhausted. To those of us involved in the project, support by the city and hotel developer demonstrates the importance of Calvert House to Annapolis' residents and their commitment to preserving the past for future generations.

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The ways in which the work met objectives 1 and 5 are described

at the end of this report. Before discussing the archaeology, we will first concentrate on what was done to meet the other objectives.

Because the work outlined in the original proposal to meet objective 6 (public interpretation) was not funded by NEH, the Calvert site could not be included in the "Archaeology in Public" program. However, the site, situated beneath the Maryland State House on a busy street, was extremely visible; hundreds of people walked past each day. Visitors included residents of the city (some of whom made daily or weekly visits), city and state officials, school tours of children on educational visits to the State Capital, tourists from across the United States and from abroad. To excavate in the front yard at Calvert House was to undertake archaeology under the public's watchful eye.

There is no doubt but that modest funding for objective six would have improved the public interpretation program that was, by public demand, in operation at the site. To be frank, the inescapable dialogue with the public slowed the pace at which the excavation progressed. The presence of archaeological guides/interpreters would have made the excavation more efficient.

As interest was high, the fieldcrew gave brief informal and impromptu talks to all groups or individuals who asked questions. We consistently explained what the features--a brick lined well, a brick courtyard, a brick retaining wall, the front gate--meant to us in terms of on-going analysis. We made a special point of explaining to the tours of school children what archaeologists do, why we do it, what we find, and what it means. We passed around artifacts (broken soup dishes, cow bones, clay pipes, bottles, ox horns, gun flints, window glass) while describing what these objects reveal of day to day life in colonial Annapolis. We found that the experience of touching, seeing, and feeling artifacts while observing the work in progress brought the past closer to these children. One of the most successful exhibits was a partially articulated set of fish scales from a garfish that was exposed on a layer of sand deep in the well; this prompted many discussions of the diet of early Americans. It is hard to assess the impact that this interpretation program had on children and adults, but there are clues that it was successful.

One of these clues was the interest people continually showed and the many small acts of kindness and anonymous gifts that the fieldcrew experienced. For example, there was one young woman who ran by, thrust a large bag of doughnuts into an archaeologist's hands and simply said - "you all work so hard, you must need these". Another man brought us lemonade one hot Sunday afternoon; another delivered a deliciously light rum cake late on a Saturday. Annapolitans celebrate May Day with baskets of flowers on their front doors. The local florist felt Calvert House should have a flower basket too and surprised us by

climbing over an open pit to hang it on the boarded up front entrance. Later that Sunday, the garden club judges awarded the bouquet an "honorable mention" and suggested "Governor Calvert" keep his yard "just a bit" cleaner. These were small signs, but they are evidence of the interest the community had in the site.

Work at the site was filmed by several TV crews. One group of tourists came out from Washington to visit because they had seen the site and heard the work described in a TV show aired in Florida. We encouraged the publicity for several reasons. Salvaging a site is always difficult when one comes face to face with construction requirements, and few construction companies willingly accept archaeologists on site. We were unsure how much time we would have to complete our work in light of the planned construction. There were a fortunate number of construction related difficulties that delayed the building and helped us, but it was an uncertain situation. We hoped that if the people of Annapolis were aware of our work and our findings, pressure could be exerted to keep archaeologists on-site after construction began. We also felt that public awareness was crucial in promoting a preservation program that would draw on public support for its work and in creating a program in which the public would take responsibility for the preservation of archaeological resources.

We used a variety of techniques to keep the public informed. We erected a series of signs each morning that told people what we were doing and why, who provided the funding, and what archaeology had revealed about the past life of Annapolis' residents. We installed a small exhibit of artifacts in a nearby store window. We kept the property owner/developer, Paul Pearson, informed of our findings and sought his advice and cooperation throughout the project. Mr. Pearson was immensely supportive and helpful in ways both large and small. We also kept the construction crew informed. Engineers from the Superior Foundation Company (of Baltimore) at work on the site, designed and built a series of braces for the well so that our work in the depths, 10-12 feet below the surface, could continue. The company donated both the time and the materials because of an interest in historic buildings.

The site consisted of the yard surrounding a partially demolished building and the exposed crawlspaces beneath destroyed floors. Under one wing we located a hypocaust possibly used to heat an orangery or bath house. For safety reasons, we didn't publicize that aspect of our labor. On the other hand, anyone walking around State Circle could easily see what we were finding in the front yard. The brick retaining wall and exposed portions of the brick-paved courtyard were visible and drew people to ask many questions. The most visible and exciting feature became the brick-lined well located five feet inside the front yard and approximately four feet beneath the sidewalk. The deeper we went, the more visitors we had. Questions and comments increased; some of our weekly visitors became daily visitors.

The city's interest was thoroughly aroused by this archaeological feature (see Fig. 1).

The archaeology at Calvert, especially excavation of the well, has gone a long way to help Historic Annapolis Inc. achieve its goal of establishing a city-wide preservation program that will "encourage property owners to help in the preservation and restoration of their lands/houses/business establishments" (i. e., objective four).

It was clear when Dr. Leone and I first visited Mayor Richard Hillman in June of 1982 to explain what we were doing and why, that archaeology was something Historic Annapolis realized could provide important information about the city's past but was also something that few townspeople knew much about. We explained the benefits of a city-wide preservation program based on the model of Alexandria and Mayor Hillman gave the program his backing and suggested others in the city who could help. Annapolis did not have an archaeologist, did not have protection for its cultural resources located below ground, and had a preservation program based primarily on standing examples of colonial architecture.

As we worked at Reynolds Tavern in 1982 we realized the depths of the interest that Annapolitans held in the history of their city. The excavation at Victualling Warehouse with its public interpretation component (funded by a grant from the Maryland Committee for the Humanities) aroused additional interest. The work in the front yard at Calvert--archaeology done under the public eye--aroused even more interest and helped provoke direct action. In late June the City Council voted to allot \$27,000 for a city-wide archaeological program to be carried out under the aegis of Historic Annapolis and specified that \$6000 of these funds be used to reimburse Historic Annapolis for continued excavation at Calvert in May and June.

The remainder of the funds were to be used in an archaeological testing program to insure that additional construction in the city would not destroy other valued below-ground resources. Currently legislation is being considered that would require archaeological testing and data recovery at all house lots within the historic district before construction permits are issued. If, as I believe, the visibility and value of the research at Calvert was pivotal and influenced people on this issue then the project was a success.

We were successful in preserving the hypocaust (see Fig. 2). The hotel architects, at the insistence of Mr. Pearson, altered the plans to incorporate the hypocaust. It will be covered by a glass floor and kept within a humidity-controlled environment. The room in which it is located will function as a small, public, exhibit area. Following further in the European preservation tradition, the other features that we found and assessed as significant will be incorporated into the hotel's front yard. The octagonal brick retaining wall and gate will be rebuilt. The

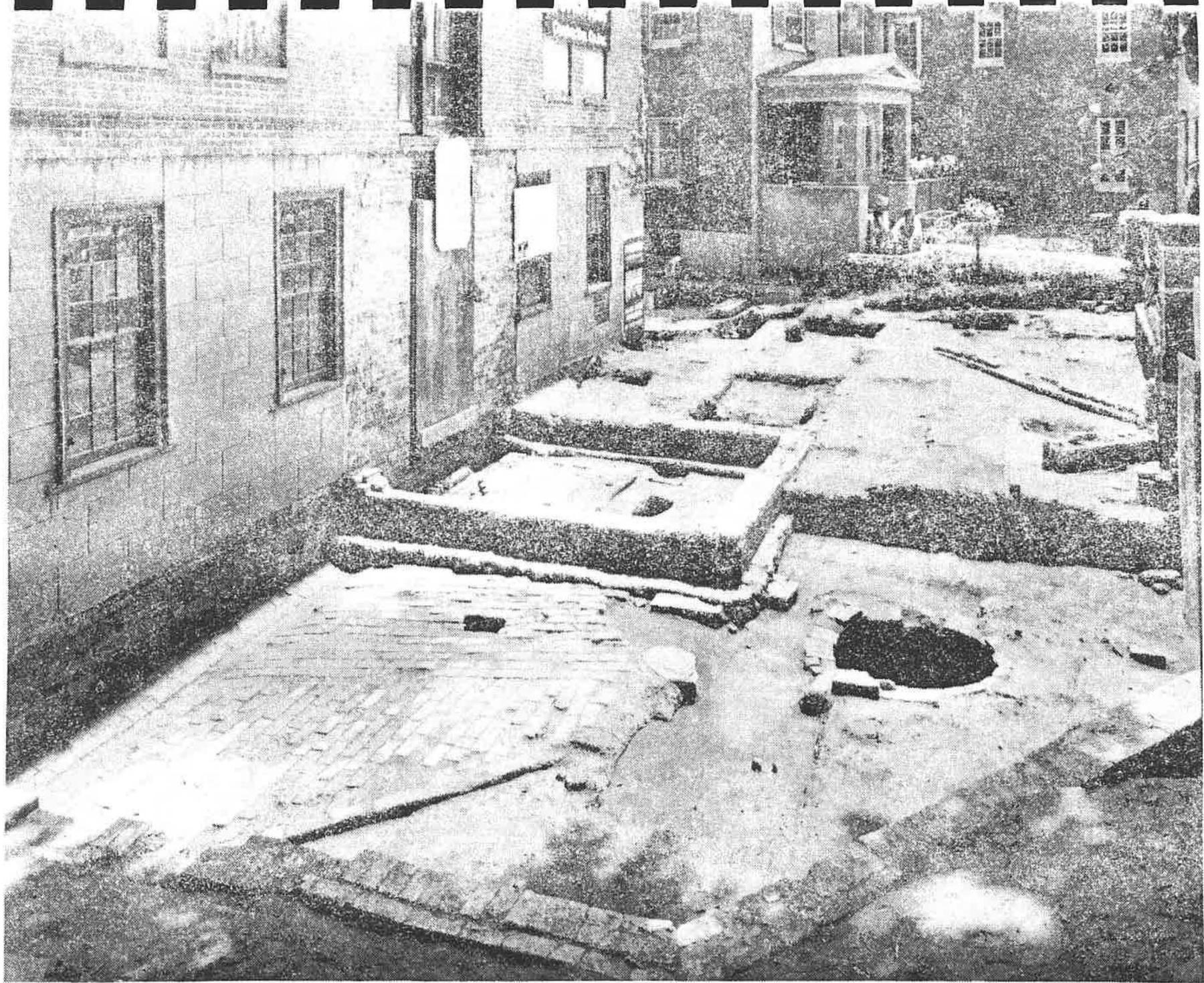


Figure 1. Photograph of the front yard at the Calvert Site. Note brick drain in service courtyard adjacent to building and well in the forefront. State Circle is to the right.

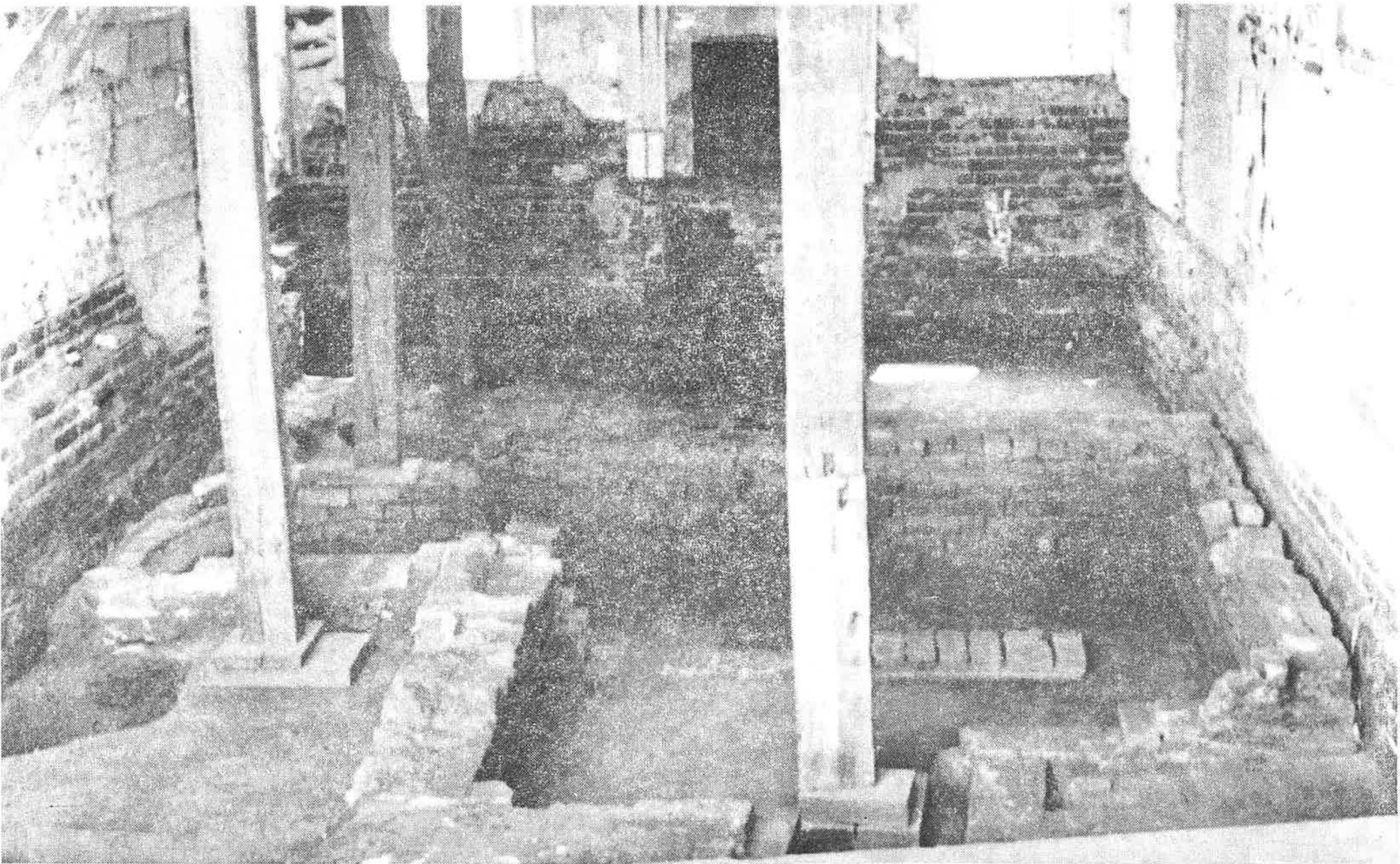


Figure 2. Photograph of hypocaust inside addition at Calvert House with building supports in place. Note height of fireplace and original floor level of addition.

new entry way will rest on the 17th century brick foundation built by the Claude family when they renovated their home in the 17th century. As much of the brick-paved courtyard (dating to c. 1730 and partially robbed) as can be retained will be retained. The brick-lined well, built c. 1730 and filled c. 1785, will be kept.

Salvaging the resources at Calvert House has required intensive, concentrated work on the part of the archaeologists involved and of the staff at Historic Annapolis as well as requiring flexibility on the part of the hotel development team. As much of the historic fabric of the colonial period as has survived and can be retained will be melded into the modern hotel complex. It should be noted that the hotel complex was not planned with the preservation of 18th century archaeological features in mind. Their existence, recognition of their value, and their import to the historiography of the community came about as archaeological research partially funded with NEH funds, was undertaken over the past year.

#### Results of the Archaeology

Calvert House is located at 58 State Circle in Annapolis, Maryland. Until June 1983, it possessed an extensive yard virtually untouched by modern development. At this date (December 1983) the only portion left untouched is a small segment of the front yard.

The lot on State Circle served as a focal point for the activities of Annapolitans for three hundred years. It was laid out in the 1690s as part of Governor Nicholson's baroque city design. Invisible today because of taller, surrounding buildings, the Calvert lot and its house were highly visible in the eighteenth century and located in close proximity to the State House. The house and its wings faced the waterfront with an extensive sloping yard rising toward the dwelling. The service area of the yard lay between the house and the State House. There were only a few, smaller domestic structures nearby. If one entered Annapolis by ship, the state capital rose impressively on the highest hill with Nicholson's undeveloped land in the forefront and Calvert House off to the side slightly beneath the State House. Even today the location of the house across the street from the 17th century Treasury Building and below the State Capitol is a commanding site. Two hundred and fifty years ago, it was a fitting location for a royal governor's home.

The core of the present building, a 40 x 20 module, was built c. 1725-30 by Governor Charles Calvert over the remains of an earlier structure dating from the early 18th century. The dwelling was a combined brick and frame structure, assumed by architectural historians to be a 1 1/2 story gambrel-roofed home.

Archaeological research in 1982/83 demonstrated that it also had extensive and elaborate outbuildings, including an orangery or heated bathhouse.

Portions of the building burned in 1752 and again in 1762. What remained of the structure was renovated into a house of Georgian design. In the 1760s a brick addition (approximately 15 feet wide x 40 feet long) along the east wall of the dwelling was built. It covered the remains of a hypocaust that once heated the orangery or bathhouse. A smaller brick building, 12 x 12, was attached to the end of the addition and a frame outbuilding (15 x 12) was located on or adjacent to the rear of the building.

Prior to the Revolution the building was rented to several merchants/entrepreneurs, including Charles Wallace, the primary contractor for the construction of the third State House. During the war it served as a barracks for the State of Maryland. After the war the house again became the home of a prominent Annapolitan. In the 19th century, the property was purchased by Annapolis Mayor Abram Claude who enlarged the building and altered its facade to a Victorian mode. The NEH funded archaeology has provided additional information, including details on additional buildings and archaeological features for which no historical record survives and little precedent exists.

The most provocative of the archaeological features was the hypocaust foundation, 15 feet long by 8 feet wide, built of brick with traces of the interior heating ducts, ventilation system, and fire pit intact. Two post holes adjacent to the hypocaust probably held supports for a frame structure heated by the hypocaust.

Hypocausts were dry air heating systems developed by the Romans and used to heat their baths. With the invasion of Britain and northern Europe, the technology was brought to a colder climate and refined. During the late 17th century the technology was transferred and integrated into the design of "stoves" that wealthy Englishmen and Europeans used to heat orangeries, bathhouses, and palace rooms. The orangeries (wooden structures) were built with large, arched windows to draw in sunlight. Wood fires in apse-shaped fireboxes at one end of the hypocausts created heat that traveled slowly beneath the floors through brick tunnels or ducts and heated the building above. The archaeological data obtained thus far corresponds closely with the known descriptions, especially that in the 1730 edition of Miller's Gardener's Dictionary.

Hypocausts are rare structures affordable only by the elite. The Calvert family home in England possessed one (date of construction unknown) and another was built in Annapolis at Calvert House on State Circle between 1727-34. It is possible and probable that the Calvert hypocaust was among the earliest examples built in the colonies and provinces of the New World. There are rumors that one was built for the Governor's Palace in

Williamsburg but no traces were found during archaeological excavation of the Palace in the 1930s (Noel Hume, personal communication). William Byrd built one at Westover in Virginia c. 1733. There is a smaller, late 18th century hypocaust on King George St. in Annapolis, and one at Wye Island on the Lloyd's Eastern Shore property that dates to the mid 18th century. Another of equivalent age was found at Mt. Clare in Baltimore. The latter was built by or for Charles Carroll the Barrister, originally of Annapolis. George Washington's hypocaust was built from plans of the Mt. Clare hypocaust.

Archaeology in the front yard indicates that the location and probable orientation of the original Calvert dwelling was towards the east and the Severn River or, towards the south and the Annapolis harbor. This orientation was changed in the 1780s. The change in orientation followed after or accompanied other changes in State Circle prompted by the rebuilding of the State House, a job begun in 1771 but not completed for 10-15 years. The evidence for the shift, is contained in three features that were filled or covered over in the early 1780s and in another feature, an octagonal brick retaining wall, built at that time. Early in the 19th century portions of State Circle were raised again. The octagonal retaining wall no longer articulated with the Circle road and the yard was altered once more. The three features consist of a brick-lined well, a brick-paved service area with a drain abutting the dwelling (forming a work area between the well and the building), and a post-hole building of undefined dimension and function. The latter, however, began at the south side of the 'front door' of the dwelling and extended 15 feet towards the Circle. Work on all of these features was incomplete when demolition of the back portion of the present building began in June of 1983 and archaeological excavation halted. A proposal to NEH for continuing work contains provision for further archaeology at the site to complete excavation of these features.

The archaeological data at Calvert indicates a massive alteration to the city's landscape related to changes in the use and form of State Circle. The western boundary of the site abuts State Circle for 80 feet; the ground in the southern sector of the yard has been cut away indicating the original ground surface was once 1-3 feet higher. There was no indication of any sheet refuse nor 18th century artifacts found in the excavation units in the south yard, although early 19th century materials were retrieved. These findings indicate the yard was cut back and leveled in the early 19th century. The house, which originally was built to accommodate the naturally occurring slope of the land, became sited on a level plot of land through this activity. While these alterations might suggest only minor modifications to the Circle, the stratigraphy in the north yard clearly reveals 8-10 feet of fill and the present roadway/sidewalk is an additional three feet higher. In other words, the original topography of State Circle at the point where it abuts the north sector of the yard was 12 feet lower in the past. This does

represent a major change and may indicate the series of ridges and gullies on which the town was built extended up to the State House. Given the extreme slope of the land observed across the Calvert lot, it is clear that a level roadway (as now exists at the Circle) could not have existed in the 18th century if it followed the present road's path.

It is my belief that much of the architectural debris found in the front yard of Calvert House may come from the destruction of the second Maryland State House in 1770 and the construction of the third State House over the following decade. This was a totally unexpected finding. Because of its potential importance in providing information on the earlier State House, something of interest to many in Maryland, the study is proceeding cautiously. Interest in the State buildings at Annapolis has always been high and is heightened at the present by the Bicentennial Celebration of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Treaty of Paris exhibit and celebration scheduled for 1983/84, and the forthcoming 350th anniversary of the State. In 1972, Dr. Morris L. Radoff (former State Archivist) collected all available information about the Maryland State House, the oldest standing State House in the nation, and published it. He noted in his preface that in the book's contents, "the only thing lacking will be the archaeological help on State Circle", something the State was unable to fund at the time, but work at Calvert has partially provided.

#### Laboratory Work & Conservation

The destruction and filling of the hypocaust (c. 1770) was accompanied by deposition of debris of all kinds, organic and inorganic. The immediate area surrounding the hypocaust was effectively sealed and protected by a wood floor overlying the hypocaust. Metal, wood, ivory, lace, bone, paper, leather, food refuse, Chinese porcelain, buttons, and children's toys were hidden from sight and protected beneath the floorboards. We sought funds to excavate and preserve this deposit. We are progressing with conservation, but do not have sufficient funds to conserve nor process all artifacts adequately. Several hundred objects have been conserved and more are in treatment. A back-log exists. Priorities have been established. Those that required immediate attention have been conserved and returned to Annapolis. Work on others is currently in progress at William and Mary under the direction of Mr. Curtis Moyer, Conservator at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (and formerly of the College of William and Mary).

Excavation in the front yard produced equal quantities of material, that also require conservation. Some of the iron from the well was in fragile condition and required immediate work, but our scheduling has also taken exhibit and public

interpretation needs into account in terms of artifact priorities.

The density of artifacts at Calvert House exceeds that at other sites in Annapolis although the reasons why are not yet clear. I am not sure that the high social status of the property owners is sufficient reason to fully explain the discrepancy. We are working with a collection that contains close to a quarter million artifacts. Laboratory processing of these was delayed by the continued excavation which required my presence in Annapolis through the winter, spring, and early summer. Some work was done by William and Mary students during the spring and work began again in September as students returned to the campus.

Priorities were established based on analytical needs. The front yard sub-assemblages from discrete features which will help us interpret the complex stratigraphy of the yard are being processed first. In late August a second well was found at Reynolds Tavern. For comparative purposes, the well artifacts have priority. Material from the well has been washed and labelled; it is now being mended, minimum vessel counts derived and a computer inventory compiled. A large quantity of material from the hypocaust was saved for fine-screening and sorting (after being processed initially through 1/4" screen) but lack of funds necessitates storage of the deposit and storage of the ethnobotanical and faunal materials.

The artifact collection from Calvert shows differential representations of ceramics and glasswares that relates to the status of the occupants. There is no doubt but what the quantity and quality of individual artifacts is far above that of the artifact collection from Victualling Warehouse, a commercial site on the Annapolis waterfront that burned c. 1790. Quantities of materials are also much higher than contained in the depositions at Reynolds Tavern. There is no evidence of any extensive broadcast sheet refuse at the site. This also sets the site apart from others in the Chesapeake region.

There is no doubt but that the Calvert collection will be of immense use to us and to others in piecing together the social system and daily life characteristic of 18th century Annapolis and contrasting it with that of the hinterlands. The way we hope to proceed was discussed in a grant proposal for continuation of the project submitted to NEH in October of 1983.

#### Summary of Work

It is ironic to find a site inhabited by two, perhaps more, Maryland Governors with tangible, artifactual evidence of the presence of high-status individuals and yet find so little documentary information concerning the site. We have been forced

to read the archaeological record recovered at Calvert House almost as though it were a classical archaeological site for which no records exist. At times we have been thwarted by elements beyond our control. As one example, Dr. William Kelso (of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation) volunteered to take archaeomagnetic samples from the hypocaust floor but found that the presence of metals (namely a nearby 20th century furnace and the steel supports for the building) negated any reading. Our method has been to determine what information we needed to interpret specific features and attributes of the Calvert dwelling or to understand the use of space at the site and then to proceed accordingly. At times this required alteration of the schedule proposed in the 1983 emergency grant.

A work plan was provided on pages 24-26 of the original proposal. A quick run-through of the archaeological tasks that we undertook as we moved from recovering data and interpreting one feature (the hypocaust) to an overall analysis of the site as a city household lot is as follows: We finished excavation of the hypocaust, established the articulation and building sequence of the north addition, dated the construction of a 12 x 12 brick shop adjacent to the house and contained within a second "crawl-space" area under another addition. We also found a number of post-holes, but since the south side yard was heavily disturbed we could not conclusively ascertain whether they were part of the earliest site dwelling (Philonon Hemsley's home). We were unable to fully sample the back yard and prohibited from monitoring construction activity in the back yard in a thorough way, but were able to ascertain that the backyard became a locus of activity beginning in the early 19th century and was not a locus of activity during the colonial period.

We set aside the backyard sampling program as work in the front yard revealed the extensive activity that occurred there. Work in the front yard was primarily done with a professional crew that ranged from a minimum of 3 individuals to a maximum of 8 under the direction of Dr. Yentsch with on-site supervisors James Sorenson and Robert Sonderman. Work in the front yard began in March when a group of volunteer undergraduates from William and Mary joined the professional crew over their spring break. These students were succeeded by a small group from the University of Maryland who also devoted their spring break to work at Calvert House. Other student help included a number of individuals from the Washington area who participated in a fieldschool run by the Smithsonian under the direction of Dr. Leone. For most of the spring and early summer work at the site was carried out on a 7 day/week basis.

Work was directed towards dating the octagonal brick wall that abutted the 1730 dwelling, unravelling the series of gates or entrances to State Circle that existed, establishing the original topography of the site, assigning a construction date to the original dwelling, locating the 18th century yard surface, delineating the sequence of entrances and walkways, establishing

the extent and function of the brick paving in the front yard as well as dating its construction and that of the overlying deposition (including one rubble layer and a lower, artifactually-rich strata), dating another and different paved area in the south side yard, dating both the fill in the well and the construction of the well.

One can readily see by comparing the work outlines above with that proposed originally that this portion of the project expanded beyond our initial plans. Cost of the additional work was primarily borne by Historic Annapolis Inc., with reimbursement of \$6000 assured by the city. In essence what happened is that the activity areas we assumed would be located in the backyard (as is usually encountered at most non-urban sites) was located at Calvert in the front yard.

A complete synthesis of the Calvert data is not possible without additional work, but that portion of the project funded by NEH from 1 February - 31 July has carried us well beyond what we imagined possible when we undertook the work at Calvert in 1982. It has contributed significantly to our understanding of the development of Annapolis in the colonial era. In fact, it has proved essential and fruitful to our scholarly research objectives: understanding and assessing the impact of social and economic rank on the material remains of a colonial city. The research has also been influential in establishing a preservation program that is both archaeologically and architecturally based. Furthermore, the project helped awaken the Annapolis community to the potential that archaeological research possesses and increased their awareness of some of the many changes their city has undergone over time. We believe the objectives specified in the original proposal were met and that the grant monies produced results, interpretively, archaeologically, pragmatically, not possible otherwise.