IV. Influence of College on Town, 1699–1732: Catalysts for American Architecture and Town Planning

Detail, figure 124.

Virginia was the largest and most populous of the English colonies, but never developed a colonial town on the scale of Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, or Charleston. Although Norfolk had been laid out in 1680, as late as 1728 it contained no more than its original fifty-one lots. Despite this William Byrd II considered Norfolk to have "most the air of any town than any in Virginia."[1] Of the above-named towns, all of which had been founded before Williamsburg was laid out in 1699, Philadelphia alone was like it insofar as it, too, was a planned city that consisted of a regular formal plan (figure 92). Like Williamsburg, Philadelphia, as designed by William Penn, was arranged much like a Roman *castrum* in which the major north-south street (the *cardo*) and the major east-west street (the *decumanus*) intersect at a center square (the *forum*), thereby dividing the town into four quarters. Penn intended the center square to accommodate most public buildings, but growth clung to the Delaware River, bordering Philadelphia on the east, and did not reach Center Square until the end of the Colonial period. Embracing exactly two square miles, the plan of Philadelphia was more than four times the size of Williamsburg and was larger than any other colonial town, even approaching the size of London itself. By 1698 Gabriel Thomas was able to call Philadelphia "a Noble and Beautiful City . . . [with] above two thousand houses, all Inhabited, and most of them Stately, and of Brick, generally three Stories high, after the Mode of London." While this description may seem incredible for its time, it would have been unthinkable without the democratic provisions outlined six years before the Glorious Revolution in Penn's Charter of Privileges.[2]

Memory of the great fire of London of 1666 was certainly a factor for Penn when he fixed on so spacious a plan and one that he described as "a green country town." He envisioned free-standing houses separated on all sides by gardens, orchards, or fields.[3] The unimplemented plans Wren and Evelyn prepared for the rebuilding of London may have inspired him; they certainly had some influence on Nicholson in his plan for Williamsburg just as they had five years before in 1694 when he planned Annapolis (figure 93).[4] Wren's thoroughly Baroque plan for London is characterized by broad radiating avenues punctuated by *rond-points*.[5] Like Annapolis, it has two dominant squares, one to house St. Paul's Cathedral, the other, offices of commerce (figure 94). Nicholson's plan of Annapolis is the first instance of the use of Baroque radiating avenues and *rond-points* in the colonies. Nearly all streets gyrate out from the two large circles that house edifices of church and state. A third, quite large residential square, Bloomsbury Square, never developed, while a much smaller fourth square was intended to house markets. Annapolis is quite different in layout from Williamsburg, but there are still some similarities.

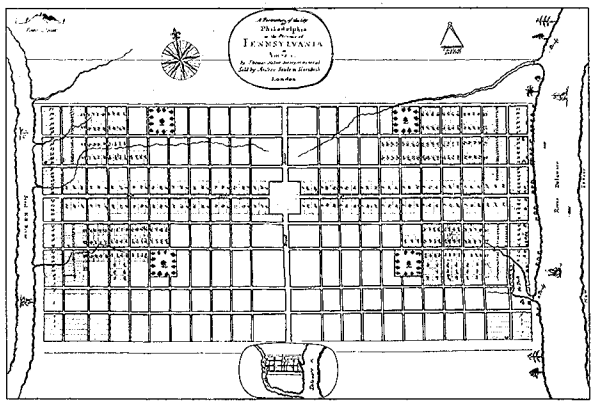


Fig. 92. Thomas Holme, *Plan, City of Philadelphia, by William Penn et al., c 1682*, drawing, from a restrike in John C. Lowber, *Ordinances of the City of Philadelphia*, 1812 (Philadelphia, 1812), courtesy of Historic Urban Plans, Ithaca, New York.

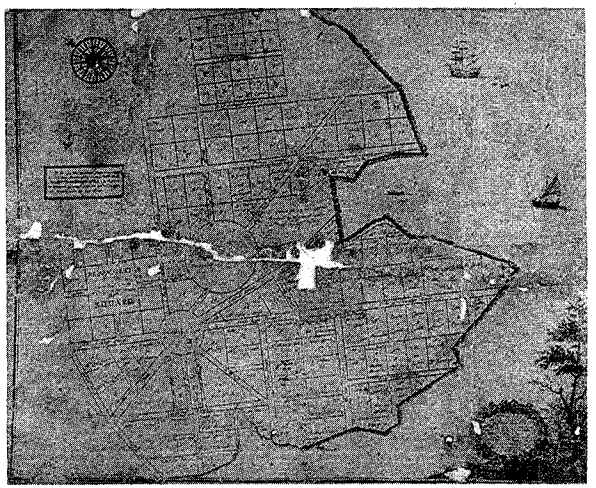


Fig. 93. James Stoddert, *Unsigned Manuscript Copy Drawn from the Survey of Annapolis, Maryland, in 1718, from the Plan, Annapolis, by Francis Nicholson, 1694*, drawing, 1743, Maryland State Archives [MdHR G 1427-006].

They are roughly the same scale, both create vistas by dominant streets, and both are dominated by two buildings—in Annapolis, the Statehouse and St. Anne's Church, in Williamsburg, the College and Capitol, linked by Duke of Gloucester Street. Finally, both towns may also be read as urban expressions, and on Nicholson's part at least, of the political ideals of the Glorious Revolution. The link between the two Annapolis circles is School Street, named for the founding and construction there (or nearby) in 1696 of another Nicholson project, King William's School (later St. John's College) with which Nicholson was assisted by Dr. Thomas Bray.[6]

Much earlier than Philadelphia, Annapolis, and Williamsburg, but perhaps a portent of their plans, is the planned city the Dutch built between 1565 and 1585 and named Willemstad (Williamsburg) in honor of William the Silent, William III's grandfather (figure 95). This fortified port city, expressive of the Dutch struggle for independence, is a modified octagon defended by seven large bastions and is about the same scale as Annapolis and Williamsburg. Like Williamsburg, Willemstad is dominated by a square and a park or "Green." The latter is dominated by the octagonal Dutch Reformed Church while the square at the entrance to the town accommodates the market as well as the Town Hall and a house for the Prince of Orange. Like Williamsburg, the Market Square also housed the magazine. Expressive of Dutch republican zeal, the Town Hall is larger than the Prince's house, and its cupola alone is shown answering that surmounting the dome of the church. This is also like Williamsburg where the cupolas of the College and Capitol answer each other. The market squares of both Willemstad and Williamsburg are intersected by major north-south streets. The other north-south street in Willemstad crosses the main street in front of the church and has a tree-lined avenue on its north portion similar to Williamsburg's

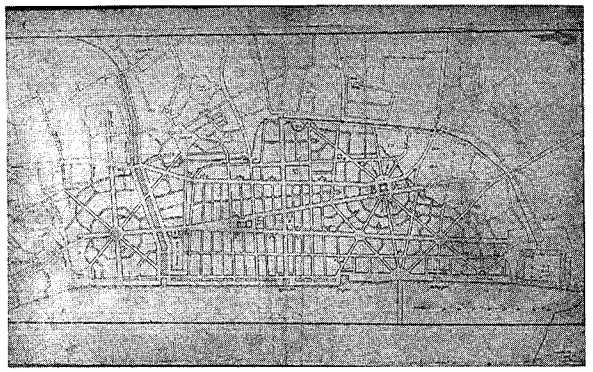
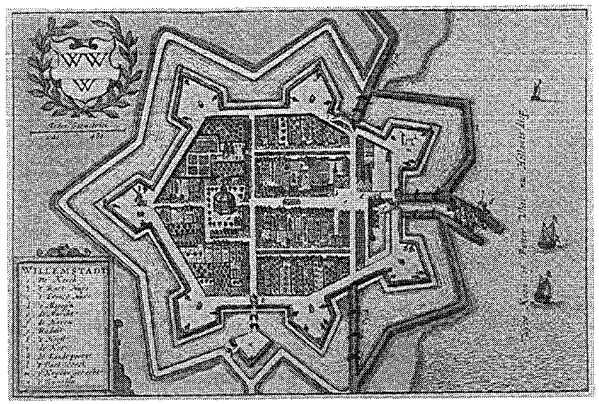


Fig. 94. Christopher Wren, *Plan for London*, drawing, 1666, The Warden and Fellows of All Souls College, Oxford.



Palace Green. It is not coincidental that such similarities exist, for both towns honor the memory of a family who symbolized political, religious, and artistic liberty.[7]

Nicholson's role in fixing on the Middle Plantation site for the College over other sites in late 1693 suggested to John W. Reps that he "may already have formed an opinion about its desirability for further urban development [there, and] had considered the advantages of combining the seat of government in the colony with its center of higher education" (figure 96).[8] At the very least the site selected for the College in the summer of 1694 was fortuitous. It was placed at the west end of a narrow, relatively flat stretch of land between streams feeding the York River to the north and the James River to the south. Given the wish to create a wide axial street, it is difficult to see how any other site in the area of Middle Plantation could have taken into account both the existing Bruton Parish Church (1682) (as the act for the College required), and a topography relatively free for more than a mile to the east of major impediments. Blair had written Locke and the Board of Trade in the fall of 1697, before Williamsburg had been laid out, stating that government officials ought to reside where the General Assembly met, and that "if this [was] the same place where the Colledge is (which for health and all other Conveniences is the fittest place in the Country for such a Town) this would make one good town at once."[9]

The simple, almost finite, but straightforward survey made by Theodorick Bland in April 1699 at Nicholson's instigation (figure 97), dominated as it is by the Duke of Gloucester Street, does not take into account the urban growth implied by

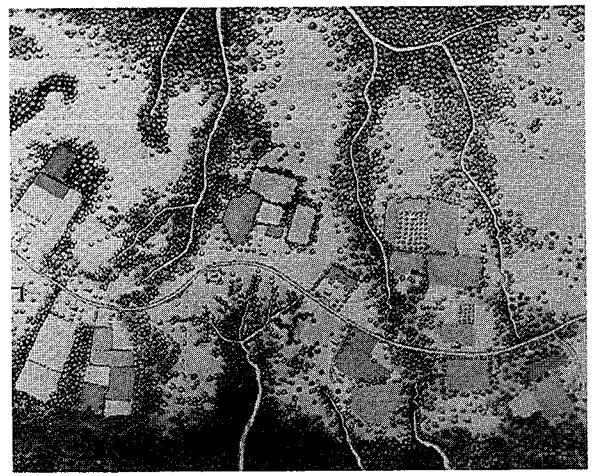


Fig. 95. *Plan of Willemstad, Holland, begun 1565*, from Joannes Blaeu, *Stedenatlas van de Vereenidge Nederlanden* (Amsterdam, 1647), courtesy of Historic Urban Plans, Ithaca, New York.

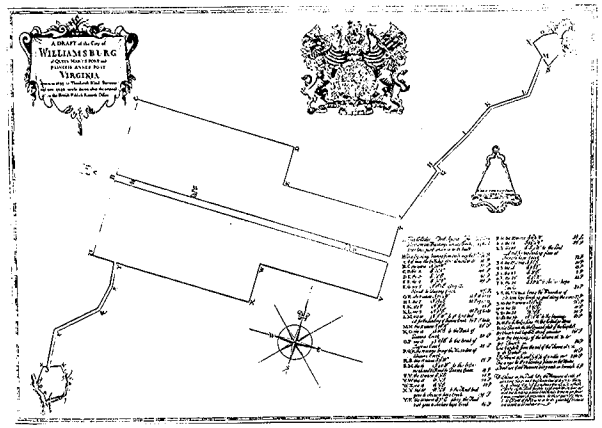


Fig. 96. Frances Dayton, *Conjectural Plan of Middle Plantation, Virginia in 1699*, 1956. This drawing is reprinted from *Tidewater Towns* by John Reps, published by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1972.

Fig. 97. Redrawing after Theodorick Bland, *A Draft of the City of Williamsburg, of Queen Mary's Port and Princess Anne's Port, Virginia drawn in 1699 (original in the British Public Records Office)*, 1940, from Rutherfoord Goodwin, *A Brief & True Report Concerning Williamsburg in Virginia. . . .* (Williamsburg, 1940), Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

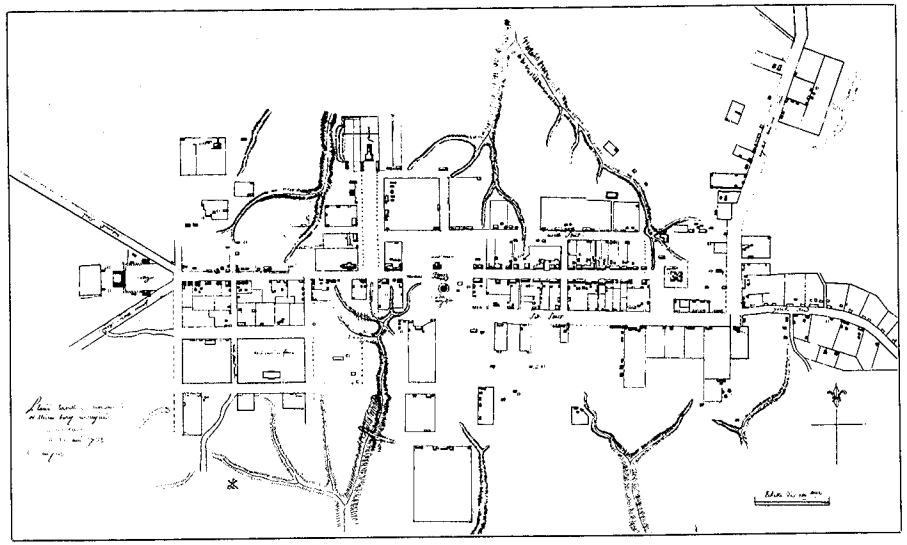


Fig. 98. Artist unknown, *The Frenchman's Map, Williamsburg*, drawing, c. 1782, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

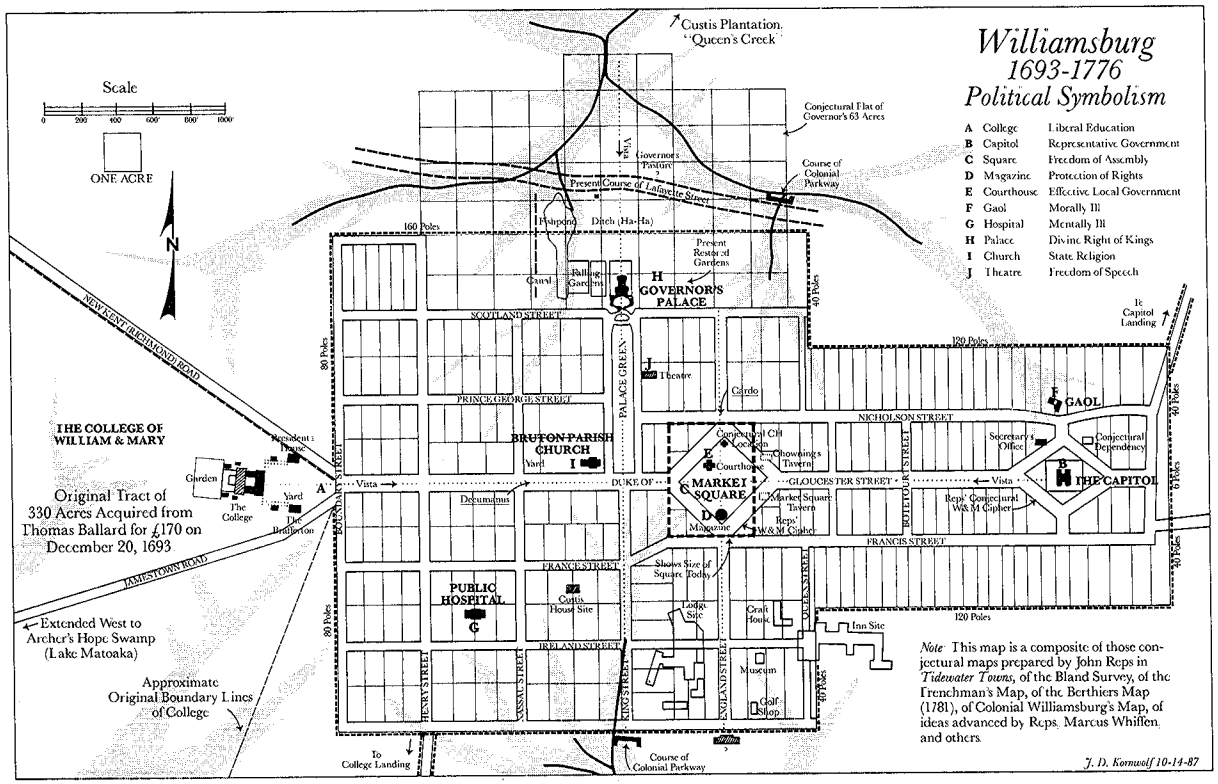


Fig. 99. *Symbolic Plan of Williamsburg (1699–1771), Composed of Elements from Bland Survey, Frenchman's Map, Reps's Plans, and Other Sources*, pen and ink, 1988, by the author.

Penn's plan for Philadelphia. Located in what would become the highly industrialized northeast, Philadelphia forecasted many a later northern city. Williamsburg's plan and major buildings, on the other hand, to some extent like those of Annapolis, influenced not so much cities as the layouts of plantations, colleges, and gardens with a sense of gracious proportion and order. The single important exception to this in eighteenth-century America was Washington, D.C., which, built between Annapolis and Williamsburg, drew upon both for its radiating avenues, *rond-points*, and symbolically placed major public buildings.

Bland's survey is the only extant example of visual evidence of the town's plan before the 1780s. Plans (or maps) drawn after 1780 include Simcoe's Map of c.1781 and the so-called Frenchman's Map of c.1782 (figure 98). The conjectural plan of Middle Plantation as it might have appeared before Williamsburg was laid out shows the first Bruton Church surrounded by a walled yard. Further east are buildings owned by John Page, some of which were torn down in order to permit completion of Duke of Gloucester Street. The Bland survey shows only the College, as projected and built, and the projected Capitol. The Frenchman's Map is the most valuable of all surviving eighteenth-century plans or maps of the city because it shows all its public buildings, except the Theatre, and also confirms that Bland's survey was followed.[10] The survey is a rational scheme in which forty poles (660 feet) was used as the module throughout in increments of 40, 60, 120, and 160.[11] The overall length of the town as depicted in the plan is exactly 7/8th of a mile. In addition to the 200 acres allotted the town, an additional sixty-three were surveyed for access roads from the town to port and warehouse facilities on the York (Capitol Landing) and the James (College Landing) rivers.

The 1699 act that established the Capitol and Williamsburg specified that the blocks of the town were to be divided into half-acre lots, and that houses on Duke of Gloucester Street were to be built exactly six feet back from the street line and were to face the street in a similar manner. They were to be at least twenty by thirty feet and had to be built within twenty-four months after lots had been purchased. Such legislation was clearly intended to effect a sense of density and urban scale. The Frenchman's Map makes clear (as does Williamsburg today) that the setback for buildings was followed. The act also provided for the future incorporation of the city with a mayor, aldermen, and council, and as early as 1700 lots were being sold. Clearly, a more detailed plan of Williamsburg, locating its lots and secondary streets, had been drawn by that date. It probably bore some features like those Reps has conjectured, in part reconstructed from post-Revolutionary plans of the town.

The plan of Williamsburg, as prepared by the author, is intended to be a composite of key features of the Bland survey, the Frenchman's Map, later city maps, and Reps's theories about the possible configurations of the W & M ciphers Nicholson is known to have incorporated in the original plan (figure 99). Even before the Governor's Council and House of Burgesses enacted legislation authorizing the capital's relocation, in May–June 1699, Nicholson had lobbied for its support, had instructed Bland to prepare the survey, had helped arrange a fête on May 1, 1699, where College students delivered five orations on behalf of Middle Plantation as the site of the new capital, and may even have prepared a more detailed plan of the proposed town as still more incentive to Council and House to approve the move. Nicholson's zeal for the new town appears to have been such that he would have pressed for it even without the fire in the Jamestown Statehouse the previous October,

for the events he was now orchestrating went forward despite orders from the Board of Trade to rebuild the Jamestown Statehouse as soon as possible.

During the May Day celebration, which found the College hosting Governor, Council, and Burgesses, the last of the five known orations given appears to have been calculated as the clincher, one perhaps prepared with coaching from Nicholson himself:

> *First . . . the Colledge will help to make the Town. The chief difficulty in making a Town being in the bringing a considerable number of Inhabitants to it. . . . The very numbers of the Colledge who will be obliged to reside at this place will make up above 100 persons to be constantly supplyed at this markett. And these it is like will encourage Tradesmen to come and live here. . . . Besides the Colledge being not yet finish'd will employ in builders and Labourers a very considerable number.*

The student concluded by appealing to his listeners' sense of pride in their colony and, unless being unusually well-traveled, was provided with more coaching from the governor:

> *There is one thing perhaps worthy of our consideration, that is, that by this method we have an opportunity not only of making a Town, but such a Town as may equal if not outdo Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Charlestown, and Annapolis; and consequently such a Town as may retrieve the reputation of our Country, which has suffered by nothing so much as by neglecting a seat of trade, wealth, and Learning, and running altogether into dispersed Country, plantations. If ever we would be equal these our Rivals, we must contrive to joyn our heads and purses together . . . by a friendly cohabitation and society to do jointly one with another . . . what no man can do singly. . . . Therefore, if any help presents for enlarging of the society, such as this would be of uniting the Town and the Colledge, it ought by no means to be neglected.*[12]

Nicholson swiftly followed up on the orations by sending a message to the House of Burgesses on May 3 with regard to the new Statehouse. "I doe recommend to you to have such a Pile of Buildings Erected so soon as possible as may not be only larger, but more conveniently serve the publick Uses than that which was unfortunately burnt the last fall."[13] The House approved the move to Middle Plantation on May 18, the Council, the next day. On May 24 they met in a joint session "to Consider of a Modell for the Statehouse, and what quantity of land will Necessarily be required for that purpose, and also what will be the most proper Methods of Carrying on the Said Building." On the same day "a Plott or Draught of the building" was produced, a design that must have owed very much to Nicholson.[14] On May 25, remarkably detailed specifications for the building, which would be incorporated "in a Bill directing the building of a State House," were set out in the Journal of the House of Burgesses. It appears clear that a model as well as drawings of a design had been prepared with sufficient exactitude to permit detailed descriptions of the building's features.[15] Its dimensions, thicknesses of its brick walls, the specification of sash windows, and other novel details appear unprecedented in Virginia legislation:

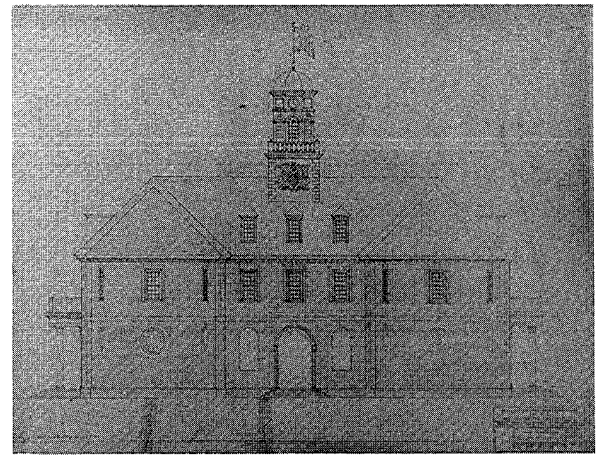
> *The Gallary between the two buildings to be raised upon Piazos and built as high as the other Building, and the Walls to be of the same thickness, and a Cupolo to be in middle of the Cross building and that there be an Iron Balcony upon the first floor in Each ffront. . . . That one Building be appropriated to the Use of the Genll Court and Council and the offices thereto belonging. That the other building be appropriated to the Use of the House of Burgesses and the Offices thereof.*[16]

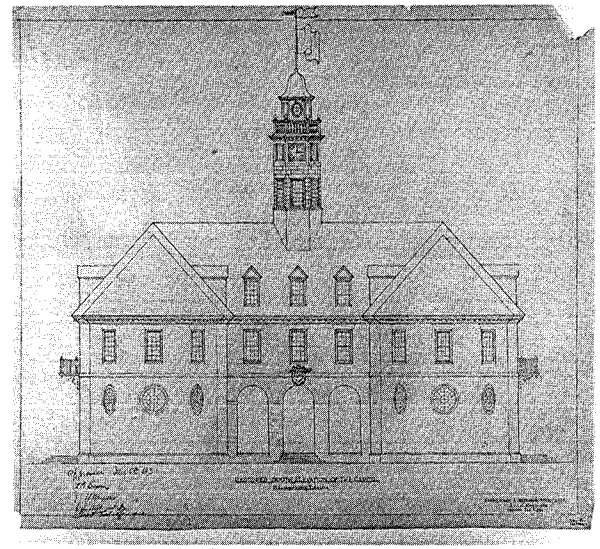
When the bill was read to the House on May 27 the term "Statehouse" was still used, but when it was delivered a second time, on May 30, the term "Capitoll" had been substituted. After a

third meeting on June 6, the bill passed the following day. On June 8 Nicholson signed into law "An Act directing the building the Capitoll and the City of Williamsburgh." The manuscript copy of this act as well as the Bland survey show the plan of the Capitol in the form of an **H** and neither shows nor describes the apsidal ends of the main chambers that were to so distinguish the south façade. The designer of the initial manuscript plan may have intended the Capitol to be basically two buildings of differing but closely related functions linked by what might have been a quite diminutive, if Baroque, cross gallery with porch chambers. The inside dimensions of both wings were set at twenty-five by seventy-five feet, a 1:3 proportion answering that of the main range of the College but also a size and proportion approximating that of the Jamestown Statehouse.[17]

Bland drew the Capitol standing in the middle of Duke of Gloucester Street, which, despite its ninety-nine-foot width, would scarcely have accommodated the double-pile structure whose north and south façades extended some ninety feet, those facing east and west, about eighty-two feet. But Bland located the Capitol close to where it was built, some 4,480 feet away from B on the survey that marks the western end of Duke of Gloucester Street and the beginning of the College Yard. Clearly then, some kind of square was required around the Capitol. The act further specified that a site 475 feet square was to be surveyed for the Capitol and that "the Space of two Hundred Foot of Ground every Way from the said Capitoll . . . shall be . . . kept for the said Use and to no other Use or Purpose whatsoever." Henry Cary, Sr., was appointed undertaker in November 1699 and spent the following year and first seven months of 1701 gathering materials. On August 8, 1701, the cornerstone was laid. In the same month important changes were made to the design as specified in the "Act giving further directions in building the Capitol." These changes called for a larger cross gallery than was originally planned—some thirty feet square—and that semicircular apsidal, rather than square, ends were to terminate the principal chambers on the south façade (figures 100a–d).[18]

That both the walls of the first story and the twin apses were in place by June 1702 is affirmed





Figs. 100a–b. Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn, *South Elevation, before and after the discovery of the Bodleian Plate, The Capitol, Williamsburg (1701–1705), Reconstruction, 1931–1934*, drawings, 1928, 1931, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

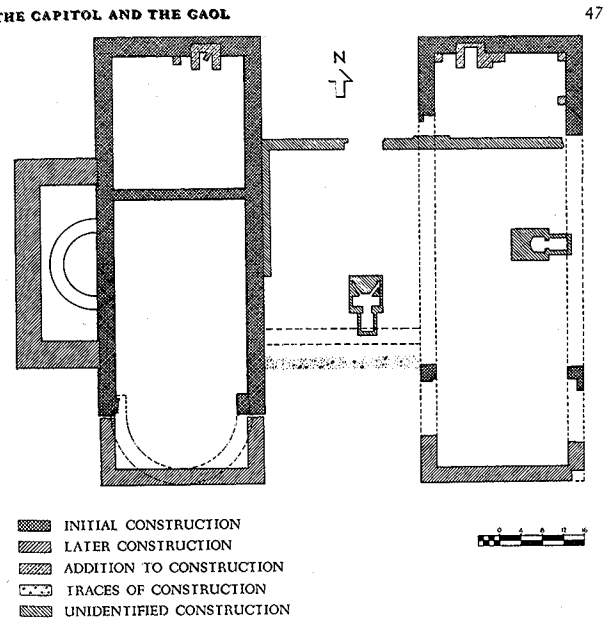


Fig. 100c. *Plan of Excavated Foundations, The Capitol, Williamsburg (1701–1705), Reconstruction, 1931–1934*, from Marcus Whiffen, *The Public Buildings of Williamsburg* (Williamsburg, 1958), Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

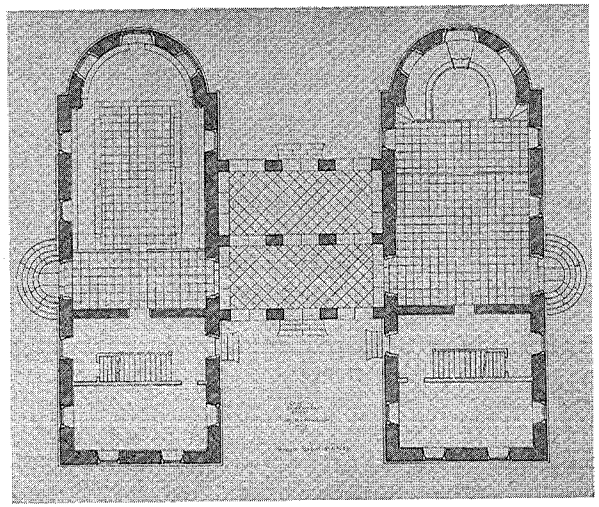


Fig. 100d. Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn, *Plan of Reconstructed First Floor, The Capitol, Williamsburg, (1701–1705), Reconstruction, 1931–1934*, drawing, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

by Michel's drawing. The first story of the Capitol housed the General Court in the west wing, the House of Burgesses in the east. The Courtroom was complete enough by April 1703 to be used; the Governor's Council first met in their chamber above the Court on October 20, and on April 21, 1704, the Burgesses finally occupied their chamber. The open loggia linking both wings was an obvious invitation for burgesses and burghers to gather, just as the conference room above it was a link for combined sessions or meetings of Council, Court, and Assembly. On May 4, 1705, the Burgesses authorized the building of a wall, 181.5 by 214.5 feet, around the Capitol sixty feet away from the east and west façades, and fifty feet from those facing north and south. Final painting was complete in May 1705 only months before Nicholson was removed as governor and the College burned.

The Capitol is an architecturally significant building for its style and mode of planning were wholly new to Virginia. This was perceived at the time by Robert Beverley who wrote of the College and Capitol:

> *There are two fine Publick Buildings in this Country, which are the most Magnificent of any in America. One of which is the College before spoken of, and the other the Capitol or State-House, as it was formerly call'd. That is, the House for Convention of the General Assembly, for the Setting of the General Court, for the Meeting of the Council, and for the Keeping of their several Offices.*[19]

In addition to its sash windows that balanced those of the College, the Capitol is thought to have been built of Flemish Bond brick with bluish glazed headers, and appears to have set the standard for the fine brickwork to follow in eighteenth-century Virginia.

It is of even greater significance that the name "Capitol" is an obvious allusion to the Capitoline Hill in Rome where the city's major temple stood, and where the Roman Senate also

met. Marcus Whiffen, as noted, pointed to Basil Kennett's *Romae Antiquae Notitia,* first published in London in 1696 and dedicated to Queen Anne's son, the Duke of Gloucester, for whom Williamsburg's main street was named, and who would have ascended the throne had it not been for his death in 1701 (figures 9 and 101). Kennett illustrated Rome's major temple, the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, as well as the Pantheon, and the book enjoyed numerous editions into the American Revolution.[20] Another Roman tradition was invoked when the square ends of the wings were transformed into semicircular apses recalling the Roman civil basilica. Not until Lord Burlington had designed the quite Roman Assembly Rooms in York in 1718 did Britain match this American allusion.[21] There is evidence that some Roman Catholic churches in Maryland may have had semicircular apses, which may have further inspired Nicholson to restore to the form its original secular and civil connotation. In this regard it is not surprising that it was in Nicholson's Annapolis that the dome (also associated previously with sacred uses), from Rome's Pantheon to Wren's St. Paul's, would be first given a markedly secular use in the thirteen colonies in Maryland's third statehouse, that begun in 1770 and completed in 1789.[22]

It should be remembered that Nicholson was lieutenant governor of New York in 1688–1689 when the Glorious Revolution took place. The same year Virginia legislated its new Capitol, a new City Hall was built in New York, a city then still much colored by its Dutch origins and traditions. Built in 1699–1700 at the corner of Broadway and Wall Street, its appearance is known by an elevation made in 1745–1747, redrawn in 1818 by David Grim (figure 102). New York's City Hall bears remarkable resemblance to the Capitol and, conversely, to Dutch more than to English precedents for the design of town halls. Like the Virginia Capitol as seen from its north façade, City Hall consists of seven bays, two in each of the projecting pavilions and three in the similarly arcaded gallery with chamber above connecting the two wings. Both are two-story brick buildings with watertables and a stringcourse separating the stories, both are covered with hipped roofs, and both are crowned by large, quite Dutch lantern towers or cupolas. Both also are shown with balconies on the piano nobile.[23]

The only remarkable difference was the more vertical and Dutch proportions of City Hall that also lacks any allusion to Ancient Rome. Moreover, the sash windows of the Capitol make it more classical than do the windows of City Hall that remain the traditional transomed casements with leaded panes. More than the English, however, the Dutch had a tradition of building town halls, the most magnificent of which was begun in Amsterdam in 1648, as very major elements of the townscape. New York's City Hall reflects that tradition, politically and architecturally.

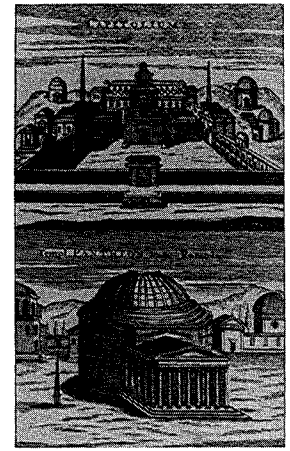


Fig. 101. *Capitolium and Pantheon,* from Basil Kennett, *Romae Antiquae Notitia: Or, The Antiquities of Rome* (London, 1763), Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

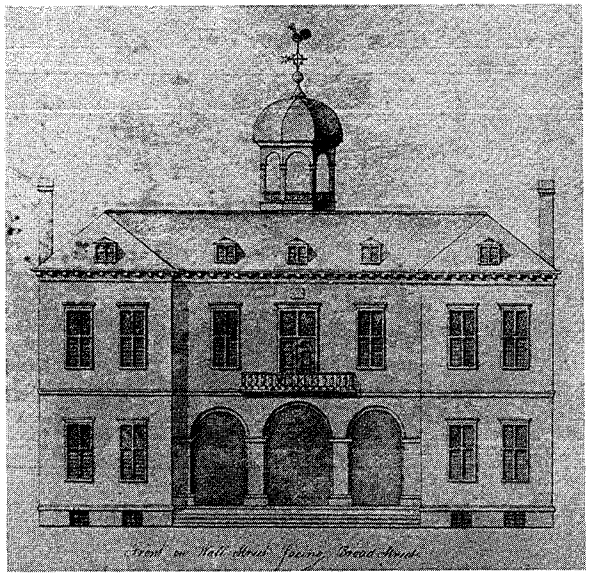


Fig. 102. David Grim, *Elevation of New York City Hall, New York City, 1699*, detail of drawing from 1818 of the building as it appeared in 1745–1747, courtesy of the New-York Historical Society, New York City.

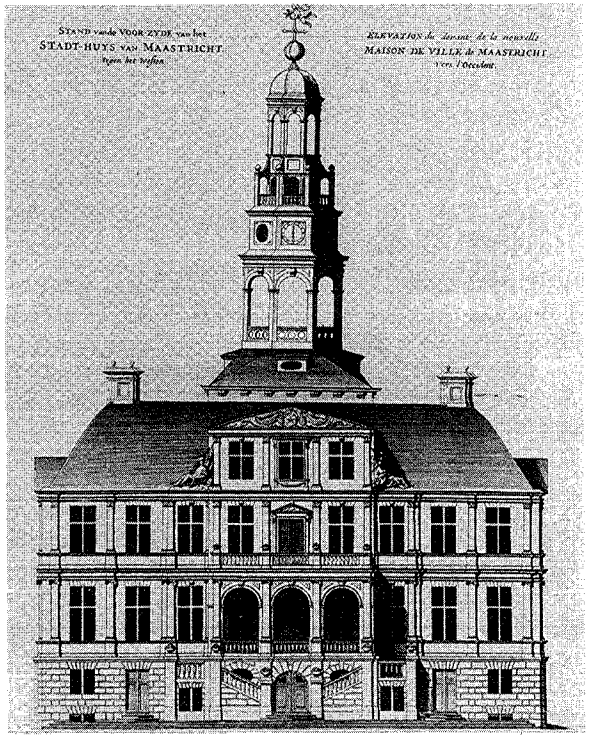
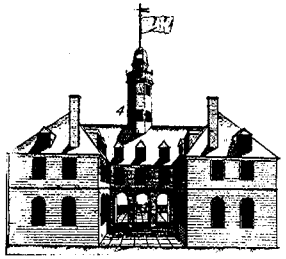


Fig. 103. Pieter Post, *Elevation, Town Hall, Maastricht, 1656*, from Pieter Post, *Les ouvrages d'architecture de Pierre Post* (Leiden, 1715), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.



The Capitol, detail from the Bodleian Plate, figure 21.

Because of the stylistic similarities of City Hall and Capitol, Dutch precedence, if not influence, is inferred for Williamsburg as well. Pieter Post had provided the basic elements for City Hall and Capitol by 1645 with his design of Huis ten Bosch (figure 58). Post went on to design the Town Hall at Maastricht (1659–1664), which, though nine bays wide, has a three-bay center arcade, a two-story height, and a hipped roof crowned by a lantern tower grander even than a combination of those on the Capitol and City Hall would produce (figure 103). Nevertheless, the architectural elements of the Maastricht Town Hall approximate those of City Hall and Capitol more closely than do any comparable buildings in England. Steven Vennecool's Town Hall at Enkhuizen (1686) is a more immediate precedent, for it has the seven-bay façade of Capitol and City Hall composed in a similar manner with two-bay end sections enframing a three-bay center section in the then fashionable Dutch Flat Style (figure 104). It also sports a cupola nearly identical to that shown in the City Hall, and has a balcony in an identical position. The bull's-eye window that graces the center bay of the attic story in the Enkhuizen Town Hall is nearly identical to those six illuminating the apses of the Capitol.[24]

Additional embellishments were installed on the Capitol before Nicholson left as governor, one of which was an inscription where "at top there was cut the Sun, Moon, and planet Jupiter,

and underneath thus HER MAJESTY QUEEN ANNE HER ROYALL CAPITOLL." According to Whiffen, the sun symbolized God, the moon, the Roman virgin goddess, Diana, who often figured in allegories about Queen Elizabeth and, therefore, might have symbolized Virginia. "Jupiter was Jupiter Capitolinus and therefore stood for the Capitol. Thus the whole device symbolized the light of God shining upon Virginia and her Courts and Assembly."[25] The inscription "done in cutt Brick" was placed above the loggia on the south apsidal façade. In Roman Catholic and Anglican churches in the period, the apse or chancel end of the church was oriented to the east, that is, to Jerusalem. The Capitol was sited with a flanking, rather than principal, façade fronting Duke of Gloucester Street. It is likely that Nicholson deliberately intended to disorient the Capitol, locating its most important façade with its symbol of "the light of God" looking south (actually slightly southwest) in order to overlook lands in that direction belonging to Virginia's and America's future, and away from regions to the north and east—lands associated with England and Europe and the past.[26]

A public building closely related in function if not in form to the Capitol was authorized by an act of October 1701. The Gaol, built the next year at the top of the ravine just northwest of the Capitol, was specified as a brick structure to house persons who were awaiting trial. The Gaol measured twenty by thirty feet with a twenty-foot square exercise yard adjoining it and was made secure by a ten-foot high brick wall. It was to contain three rooms, one for the gaoler, and one each for male and female prisoners who would be incarcerated there only before their trials. A brick debtor's wing was added to the west side of this yard by Governor Spotswood in 1711; a brick wing for the gaoler was added to the south of the original building about 1722 when a south yard was also added along the flank of the original yard and debtor's wing. The composite, functional, and even confusing composition of the Gaol is a fitting contrast to the nearby monumental and formal Capitol.[27]

Early descriptions of Williamsburg and plans of the town dating to after 1781 are helpful in visualizing what Nicholson had or intended to have laid out before his departure as governor in 1705 and what major buildings would comprise the town by 1715. Robert Beverley and Hugh Jones both spoke of Nicholson as its designer and of his having implanted in the street plan "W" or "W & M" ciphers meant to honor the monarchs who had made the college and town possible (figure 99). In 1705 Beverley wrote that Nicholson

> *flatter'd himself with the fond Imagination, of being the founder of a new City. He mark'd out the Streets in many Places, so as that they might represent the Figure of a W. in memory of his late Majesty King William, after whose name the town was called Williamsburg.*

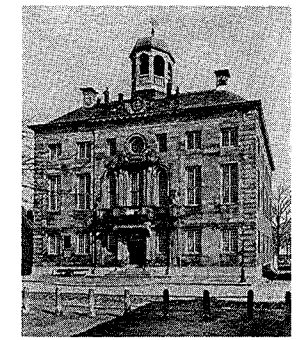


Fig. 104. *Town Hall, Enkhuizen, Steven Vennecool, architect, 1686*, photograph: The State Service for the Preservation of Historic Monuments in the Netherlands, Zeist.

In 1724 Jones reiterated that Nicholson

> *laid out the city of Williamsburg in the form of a cypher, made of W. and M. . . . Fronting the College at near its whole breadth is extended a noble street mathematically straight (for the first design of the town's form is changed to a much better [one]).*

In the second edition of his book in 1722, Beverley noted the following changes in the plan, made, it appears, under Governor Spotswood when "the streets of the Town [had been] altered from the fanciful Forms of W's and M's to much more Conveniences."[28]

If it were not for the Bland survey showing Duke of Gloucester Street as the only dominant feature of the plan, one could infer from Jones's remark that this street was only later laid out and that the Nicholson plan featured various diagonal streets like those of Annapolis but that also formed Ws and Ms. Reps prepared several conjectural plans showing how Nicholson's ciphers and Duke of Gloucester Street might have been reconciled. While evidence for the ciphers is unclear and conflicting, as late as 1783 Johann David Schoepf observed that "several off-streets running south and east" of Duke of Gloucester Street "are planned in the form of the letter 'W'." Those referred to as running "east" may also be what are shown adjacent to the Capitol in four Williamsburg plans dating to c. 1800. Those that Schoepf placed "south" may be what Reps attempted to reconstruct in Market Square. Curiously, neither the Frenchman's Map nor Simcoe's Map shows such streets.

The arrangement Reps proposed surrounding the Capitol is of interest (figure 99). The wall built around the Capitol fits into the diamond space he interpolated around the wall in such a way that the space measures about 480 feet from east to west points, 360, from north to south. If, however, Reps's diamond square is accepted as one whose size was determined by the wall, a four-acre site is created, exactly what Kennett claimed was occupied by "the Capitol" in Rome.[29] Moreover, the resulting configuration as well as its scale are in the spirit of the 475-foot square site specified in the 1699 act, just as the diamond square would have brought greater harmony and meaning to the site. The combination of wall and square would have echoed the hexagon form of the Capitol's cupola, and the "cipher" would have enabled visual and physical access to the principal fronts, connecting roads and vistas toward the north and south façades. The siting of the Capitol takes on new meaning when set in a space like the one Reps proposed because the resulting roads would have provided otherwise absent formal links to Capitol Landing and College Landing, the two major ways members of the Council, Court, and Assembly would arrive at both Capitol and capital.[30]

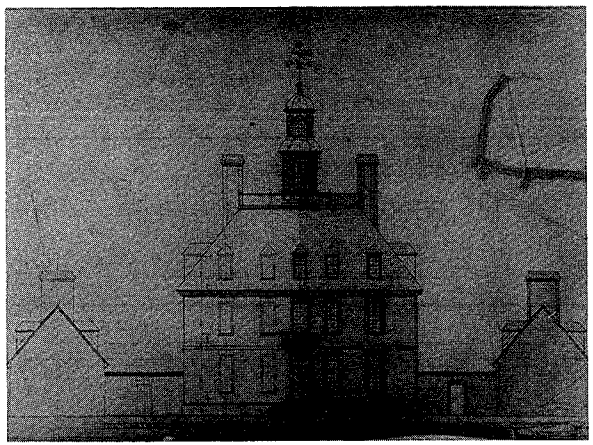
More needs to be said of Williamsburg's plan, about Market Square, Palace Green, about the larger section of the town to the west, and about the possibility that Nicholson had the Roman *castrum* in mind in laying out the town. It appears that however modest in scale, Greek, Roman, Renaissance, and Baroque planning principles are all at work in Williamsburg. Its streets are laid out as rectangular blocks and form a basic grid-iron pattern that the Greek, Hippodamus of Miletus, has long been credited as having codified. But Williamsburg's plan is not a pure grid-iron because the extraordinary width of Duke of Gloucester Street, as seen in Bland's survey, divides it into two halves and makes all other streets secondary. This is uncharacteristic of true grid-iron plans. The similarly impressive Palace Green also disturbs the purity of a grid-iron plan. If Reps's theory is correct, the town was further divided into two quarters; that to the west was larger and was meant to be associated with the College, Parish, and townspeople, and the smaller east section was to be associated

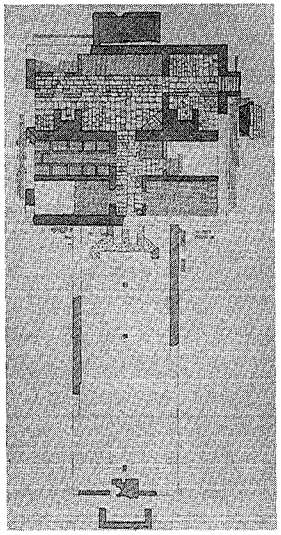
because of its many inns and shops with visiting government officials and planters. In this regard, Market Square becomes the vital link between the two because it is also in the center of the plan from a formal point of view, functioning both like an *agora* in a Greek town and a *forum* in a Roman town.

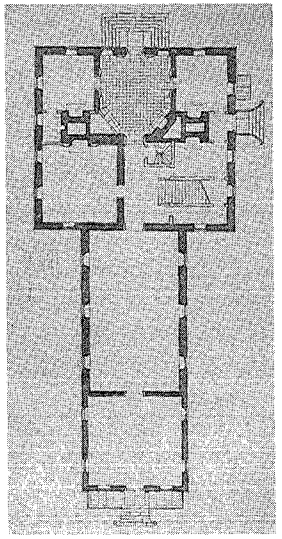
Reps also fixed a W & M cipher around the periphery of Market Square (figure 99). Its form, however, hinges largely on the placement of the Magazine, a structure not built until 1714, some nine years after Nicholson had left. The possibility of a cipher around Market Square is thus properly considered with the construction of the Magazine in 1714–1715 when the W & M features of Nicholson's plan may not yet have been abandoned. If such ciphers were intrinsic to Williamsburg's original plan, they do not contradict the further possibility that Nicholson also intended it to express the form of a Roman *castrum*. Read this way, the Duke of Gloucester Street becomes the *decumanus*; midway down its length and bisecting exactly Market Square and the town itself is the *cardo*, England Street. Williamsburg thus becomes a *castrum* divided into the usual four quarters. If this is a correct reading of the plan, then there seems to have been an almost deliberate move not to make the Governor's Palace an intrinsic part of it.

The Renaissance and, particularly, Baroque features of the plan are the Duke of Gloucester Street with its controlled vistas and the similarly controlled and even wider Palace Green. It is hard to believe that Nicholson's hand is not to be seen in Palace Green, for as early as 1691 he carried instructions from the Board of Trade to the burgesses for "the building a house for the Governor." In 1698, upon his return as governor, he carried a similar message, but found the burgesses perturbed that "no advance is made on the other side towards the building of the said house." At the same time, he was charged to "consider of the fittest place for building the same." The attention directed toward the building of the Capitol from 1699 until 1704 was an acceptable excuse to delay action on the governor's house, yet Nicholson was once again urged by the Board of Trade in January 1700 to build a "convenient house" for the governor. When he again took the matter to the House of Burgesses and Council they disputed the rightful source for funding, but Nicholson did not come away emptyhanded. On September 4, 1701, he was authorized to purchase a sixty-three acre site, land that had slightly earlier been referred to as "about fifty or sixty acres adjacent the Lotts assigned in the City of Williams Burgh for a house to be built on for the residence of the Governor, which land belongs to Henry Tyler." This is the land that abutts the lots at the north end of Palace Green; it had obviously already been assigned to the governor. Sixty-three acres neatly fits the site on which the Palace was built (figure 99).[31]

Three reasons may be advanced for the particular site chosen for the governor's house, a building not called the "Palace" until 1714. First, it was deemed necessary to have as many as sixty-three acres purchased for the estate. Had they all been located within the town, the governor would have occupied more than a quarter of it. But had all acreage been entirely in the country, his residence would not have been in the capital. A Versailles-like solution thus seemed appropriate; let Palace and town abutt, but only slightly overlap. In this sense his house was more a château, like Versailles and Kensington, than it was a palace like the Louvre or Whitehall. A second reason for the particular location of the Palace was the situation of Bruton Parish Church. The creation of Palace Green against the existing churchyard provided an architectural and urban link between Church and State, a fundamental objective of the Glorious Revolu-







Figs. 105a–c. Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn, *South Elevation, Foundation, and First Floor Plan, Governor's Palace, Williamsburg (1706–1716), Reconstruction, 1931–1934*, drawings, c. 1929–1930, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

tion. The Palace symbolized the monarchy, represented by the governor; the Church symbolized Anglicanism, represented by Commissary Blair. Finally, the land on which the Palace was built was a crown of land surrounded on all sides (except the south) by deep ravines, which thus isolated and "fortified" its site much as moats would have done. No terrain within the town was more ravinous than that of King Street, the intended extension of Palace Green south of Duke of Gloucester Street.[32] Because of this terrain, King Street never developed. This, in turn, ensured that the vista from the Palace continued in an unbroken fashion southward through Palace Green, onward to a relatively natural expanse of land south of Duke of Gloucester Street, and then out of town as if to reach to infinity.

When Edward Nott replaced Nicholson as governor in the summer of 1705, one of his first actions came in October when he wrote the burgesses that "by the Royal Command [I] Recommend Earnestly to you Gentlemen . . . the building a house fit for the Reception of your Governor." On May 1, 1706, his Council asked Nott "to cause a draught of such a house as by him shal be thought most convenient to be laid before the House of Burgesses." Nott responded that he would "leave it wholy to you to give such directions." In late June "An Act directing the building of a[n] house for the Governor" was passed, with an allocation of £3000, a sum to be raised from a new tax on the import of slaves and liquor. The specifications given for the house, outbuildings, and gardens, though not as detailed as those for the Capitol, were still quite specific. The house was to

> *be built of brick, fifty-four foot in length, and forty-eight foot in breadth, from inside to inside, two-story high, with convenient cellars underneath, and one vault, sash windows, of sash, glass, and a covering of stone slate, and that in all other re-*

spects the said house be built and finished according to the discretion of the overseer. . . . And be it further enacted, That a kitchen and stable . . . be likewise built . . . according to the discretion of the said overseer.[33]

Henry Cary, Sr., was once again appointed to this position, having apparently completed the Capitol to the government's satisfaction.[34]

Governor Nott died within a year of his arrival, and Virginia remained without a governor until Lieutenant Governor Spotswood arrived in June 1710.[35] Surprisingly, work on the Palace proceeded anyway (figures 105a–c). If today's reconstructed Palace accurately reflects what burned in 1781, it is to Cary's credit that such a handsome structure was achieved without the presence of a patron. Nonetheless, on April 28, 1708, Cary reported that while the entire £3000 allocated had been spent, the roof was not yet up and little work had been achieved on the inside. It appears all funds had been consumed in building the brick walls of both the house and its dependencies and, possibly, in constructing the interior frames. An additional £200 allocation permitted the house to be roofed before Christmas. By summer 1709, the kitchen, flanking the forecourt to the southwest, had been built. When Spotswood arrived he found considerably more money was still needed, and at least three further allocations totalling some £2,090 were made between October 1710 and November 1712.

The 1710 act provided "for finishing a House for the Governor" and specified that a

Court-Yard, of dimensions proportionable to the said house, be laid-out, levelled and encompassed with a brick wall four foot high, with ballustrades of wood thereupon, on the said land, and that a Garden of the length of two hundred fifty-four foot and of the breadth of one hundred forty-four foot from out to out, adjoining to the said house, to be laid out and leveled and enclosed with a brick wall, four foot high, with ballustrades of wood upon the said wall, and that handsome gates to be made to the said court-yard and garden.

Also specified was a "kitchen garden" enclosed with "pailes," an orchard and pasture ground surrounded by "a good ditch and fence," and finally, fenced wooden outbuildings for livestock.[36] The "good ditch" specified may well have been intended to be a ha-ha, a feature associated with the Picturesque garden.[37] Allocated funding was not forthcoming, and it was the further request for these funds in December 1714 that led a member of the Governor's Council to derisively call the house a "Palace" and to question Cary's lack of frugality.[38]

Whatever Cary's shortcomings may have been as undertaker, it is clear he attempted to follow the specifications set out in the act. A house and garden of so large a scale, finished with a slate roof and sash windows, and with so classical and monumental a character, was unprecedented in Virginia. The elevation, plan, and aerial perspective of the reconstructed Palace and its gardens make this clear (figures 105a, d, e). The symmetrical, matching forecourt dependencies are the first known to have been built in the colonies, and almost immediately became widely influential. The interior dimensions of the Palace, forty-eight by fifty-four feet, produced a pile measuring fifty-four by sixty feet externally; given usable space on four floors, this meant a structure with over 12,000 square feet. When he began construction of the Palace in 1706 Cary had only the College and Capitol to view as models. It is thus difficult to imagine that with so costly and vast a project and without a governor present that Cary, by means of his own travels, was not familiar with recent Dutch or English architecture or with architectural prints or books. Because the books Kip and Campbell published around 1715 were not yet available, the various editions of Vingboons's book remain

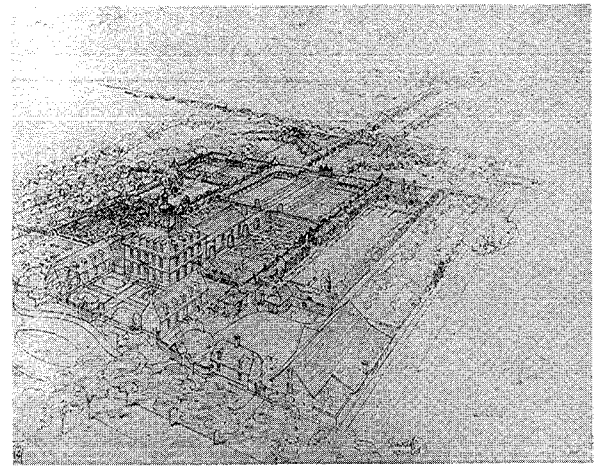


Fig. 105e. *Plan for the Grounds of the Governor's Palace,* drawing, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

a likely source.[39]

It has been shown that by 1700 houses and gardens like the Governor's Palace were to be seen in England and the Netherlands. The Palace's similarity to Winde's Ashdown (figure 67) was noted. With Sandywell in Gloucestershire and New Parke in Surrey even closer precedents are seen for the Palace (figures 106–107). Both predate the Palace but were built after similar designs had been published in at least two editions of Vingboons's book (1648 and 1665). Schless pointed to Winde's Ashdown, to Sandywell, and to Vingboons's Ganzenhoef House (figure 62) as "influences" on the Palace.[40] The Ganzenhoef house and Sandywell are both two-story, five-bay brick houses with steeply pitched but flattened hipped roofs like the Palace, and Sandywell is shown crowned by a balustrade and a cupola like the Palace. The gardens Kip shows surrounding Sandywell, particularly the Palace Green-like mall shown in front of the house, take on particular meaning when compared to the bird's-eye perspective Arthur Shurcliff drew of the Palace and the Palace Green as it is shown in the Frenchman's Map. Moreover, Kip's engraving of New Parke in Surrey is also usefully compared to Shurcliff's drawing because it shows a similar grand allée projecting out from the center bay of the garden façade with symmetrically disposed parterres like those in the reconstructed gardens of the Palace. The Palace and New Parke also share a series of terraces to the left; those at New Parke ascend, those at the Palace descend. New Parke even has a "Mount" in the upper left of the print in a position quite similar to that covering the icehouse in the Palace gardens. Outward from all of this stretch still further, seemingly to infinity, intersecting avenues punctuated by *rond-points* like those Nicholson laid out in Annapolis and may have intended in Williamsburg.

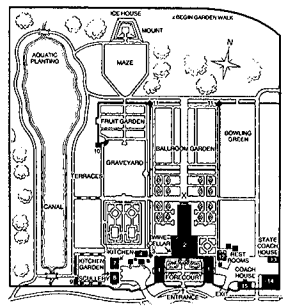


Fig. 105d. Arthur Shurcliff, *Bird's-eye View, Governor's Palace and Gardens,* drawing, 1932, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Whiffen noted that European houses with features like the Palace could be seen in print as early as Serlio's treatise. By 1706 the type of house Inigo Jones had created in England with the design of the Maltravers house (c. 1638) (figure 52) had become common in Britain and in the Netherlands, if not yet in America. John Summerson postulated that Jones's Prince's Lodging (1619) (figure 51) measured forty-four by sixty-eight feet, a house similar in proportion but slightly smaller than the Palace. He considered that it had a double-pile plan with two twenty-foot square rooms to either side of a central hall measuring twenty by forty feet, the whole being a play of 1:2:3 proportional relationships.[41] Neither archeology nor Jefferson's plan suggests this had been the original plan of the Palace where the greater depth would have almost permitted a triple pile, as at the Mauritshuis. The absence of foundations under the wall, which today and in Jefferson's plan separates foyer from parlor on the first floor, caused Whiffen to suggest, with good reason, that this division into two rooms was not original, and that the foyer and parlor were originally one great hall.[42]

The act specified a garden at the Palace 144 by 254 feet. The actual width of house and

dependencies is 148 feet, which is probably why the former width was selected. Because the depth of the house is fifty-four feet, it is likely that that footage accounts for fifty-four of the 254-foot length intended for gardens on either side of the house, leaving a rear projection of 200 feet. The Frenchman's Map, on the other hand, shows a main garden about 148 by 360 feet, somewhat close to what was reconstructed under Arthur Shurcliff's direction. This greater later length was perhaps occasioned by the addition of the thirty-two by eighty-foot ballroom wing, probably designed and added in 1751–1752 by Richard Taliaferro.[43] The map also shows the kitchen garden as specified in the act, as well as additional gardens that were not. These were Spotswood's "Falling Gardens" (1717)—three terraces that descended to the ravine north of the house. The "Falling Gardens" led to Spotswood's "fine Canal" and "Fish-Pond." The presence of both kitchen and "Falling Gardens" was confirmed by archeology. Curiously, no surviving eighteenth-century plan or map shows the canal or pond.[44]

It has already been suggested that Palace Green, the 200 by 1,000-foot mall that provides a full vista of the Palace from Duke of Gloucester Street, was an explicit part of Nicholson's plan. Whiffen, however, considered it might not have been created until 1737 when it was first mentioned in connection with Philip Finch being paid £10 "for laying and planting the Avenue to

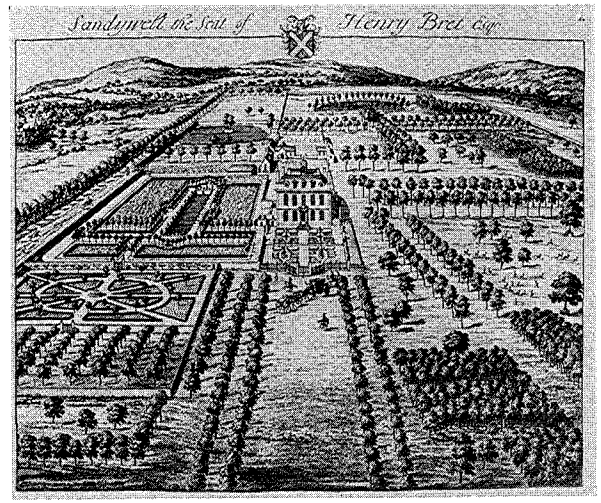


Fig. 106. Johannes Kip, *View of Sandywell, Gloucestershire*, engraving, from Nancy Halverson Schless, "Dutch Influence on the Governor's Palace, Williamsburg," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XXVIII (1955), 255, fig. 2.

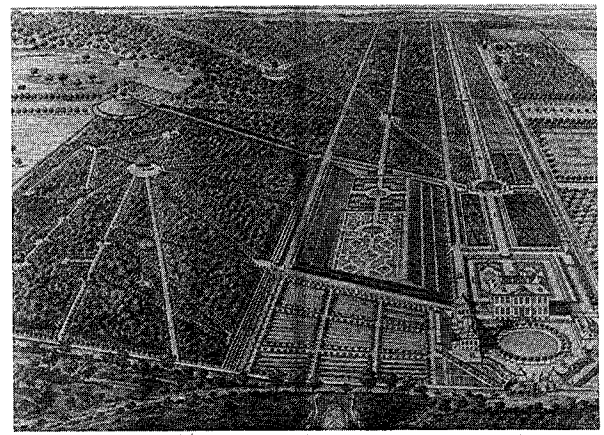


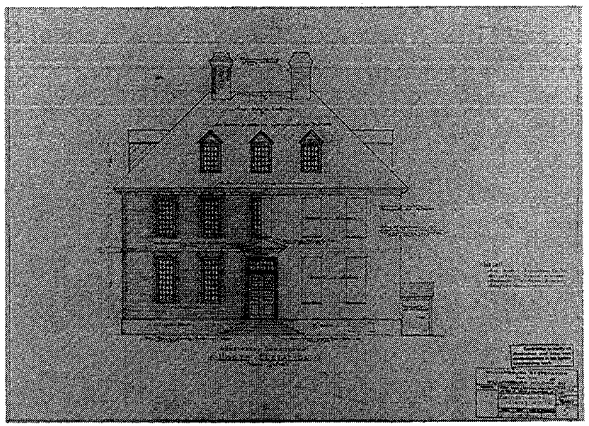
Fig. 107. Johannes Kip, *View of New Parke, Surry, Thomas Banckes (attribution), architect*, engraving from Johannes Kip, *Britannia illustrata* (London, 1722), Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

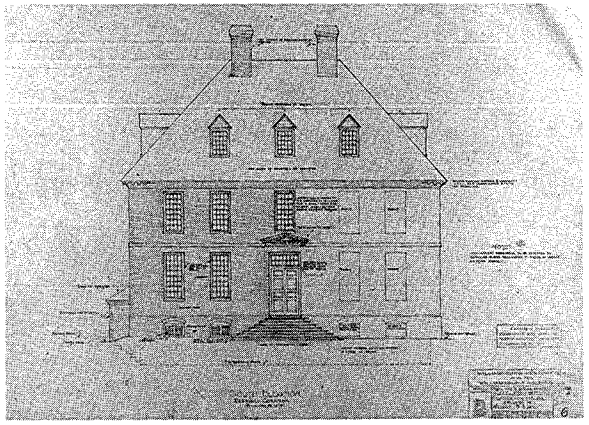
the Governors House."[45] Given the relatively modest sum mentioned, one is led to think this referred only to the planting of the "avenue" of trees clearly shown in the Frenchman's Map and characterizing the Green today. Peter Martin, on the other hand, has recently shown that the Green may have been a creation of the period around 1717 when Spotswood, in an attempt to achieve a "vista," asked John Custis for permission to cut down trees. After dining with the governor, Custis wrote Philip Ludwell II on April 18, 1717, that Spotswood had asked him whether he might "cut down some trees" on Custis's land in order to make "a vista." Custis consented, but complained that the governor "cut down all before him such a wildness as he thought fitt" to a greater extent than had been asked for and unnecessarily for the sake of "his vista."[46]

Several factors point away from a theory that the land in question was Palace Green. It is a highly articulated space and is so shown on all maps since c.1781. Measuring almost exactly five acres set on end, it has a proportional relationship and scale difficult to imagine having been casually created in the heart of town on someone else's land. Not only is it doubtful that Custis owned this land, it is difficult to imagine how one would approach the Palace or Playhouse, which was being built next to it in 1716–1718, without access through this space. On the other hand, it is perfectly plausible to think Spotswood might have given Palace Green its definite form, especially in view of the site selected for the Playhouse and William Keith's remark about his skill "in the laying out of Ground to the best Advantage." Custis owned two well-known properties in or near Williamsburg. His own celebrated gardens occupied the entire block bound by Francis and Ireland streets against King Street, the southward extension of Palace Green, which never developed because of the ravinous site. Surely this was the southward vista Spotswood sought, one that would have permitted him a view through the entire width of the town. These lands would at least have adjoined property Custis is known to have owned. In addition, Custis's plantation, Queen's Creek, stood less than a mile north of town, no farther distant from the Palace to the northeast than the Palace was from the Capitol.

The relatively high land on which the Palace had been built was surrounded by streams feeding Queen's Creek on all sides except to the south, which was the Palace's connection with the town and probably why the site was selected in the first place. One of these ravines separated the Palace from the Custis plantation. When Custis dined with the governor on a later occasion, he reported that the governor "then . . . told me there was a Swamp that did belong to me in which grew a great deale of wood, and alledged it would never be of much service to me, by reason I could not come at it with a Cart without going through his pasture (but that was a mistake)."[47] Custis would not have had a problem with his cart or with the governor's pasture in the King Street area, but he might have had one with the areas north of the Palace just mentioned. Again, it does not appear Spotswood had firewood on his mind but rather vistas, in this case to the north across lands forming part of Custis's Queen's Creek plantation. The "swamp" referred to may also have been that which Spotswood sought to dam to create his canal and fishpond.[48]

Both Whiffen and Martin perceived a conflict between Spotswood, as royal governor, and key burgesses and planters, like William Byrd, John Custis, and Philip Ludwell. According to Martin, Spotswood indulged in "court gardening" with an "imperial" approach at great odds with Custis's "empirical" approach.[49] Surely, Custis does not appear to have been sympathetic to Spots-





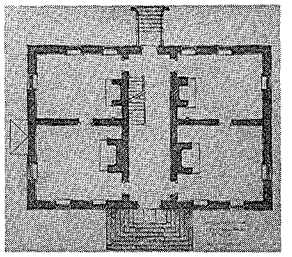


Fig. 108. Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn, *North Elevation, the Brafferton, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, 1723, Henry Cary, Jr., Undertaker (attribution), Restoration, 1931–1932*, drawing, 1931, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Figs. 109a–b. Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn, *South Elevation and Plan, President's house, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, 1729–1732, Henry Cary, Jr., Undertaker, Restoration, 1931–1932*, drawing, 1931, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

wood's quest for vistas. Looming was a contest between royal authority and prerogative, on the one hand, and, on the other, the wish to assert Virginia's independence, here expressed in differing attitudes to gardening. Despite his avid love of gardens, Custis impugned Spotswood's vistas knowing that funds had not been authorized for either terraces or pond. However, Spotswood's fishpond indicates a taste for what would soon develop as the Picturesque *jardin anglais,* despite his knowledge of the gardens of Versailles and his apparent interest in books on architecture and landscape. While Spotswood's terraces and pond may have seemed excessive to Custis and his friends, many a Virginia planter emulated them throughout the balance of the century.[50] What Nicholson had initiated with the College, Williamsburg, the Capitol, Gaol, and Palace, Spotswood continued and finished. He managed to complete both house and garden at the Palace, had the Gaol enlarged, saw to it the College was reconstructed, designed and paid for some of the new Bruton Parish Church, designed and supervised construction of the Magazine, and patronized the country's first theatre. William Keith was correct when, in 1736, he wrote of Spotswood,

> *his skill in Architecture, and in the laying out of Ground to the best Advantage, is yet to be seen in Virginia, by the Building of an elegant safe Magazine, in the Centre of Williamsburgh, and in the considerable Improvements which he made to the Governor's House and Gardens.*[51]

The Brafferton (1723) and the President's house (1732) appear to have been among the first responses to the layout of buildings at the Palace (figures 108 and 109a–b). President Blair had ultimate responsibility for both, and was surely motivated by the fact that the rebuilt College was a full story smaller than what had been built originally. He also deserves credit for seeing that the Chapel was built at the same time as the President's house, that its design was made to match that of the Hall, and that, as was seen, the new west façades created for both Chapel and Hall also matched and responded in their fenestration to the Capitol at the opposite end of the street. These two façades stand almost as proof that any plans for completing the original quadrangle had been abandoned. The Brafferton was made possible by funds accrued from the Boyle bequest. Its 1723 date is assured because Hugh Jones mentioned it as having been completed that year and because it still bears

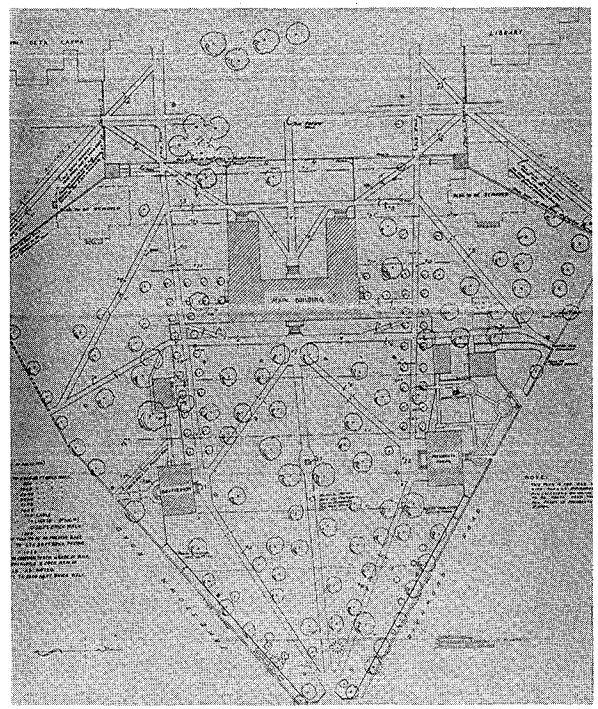


Fig. 110. Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn, *Plan of College Yard, The College of William and Mary*, drawing, c. 1931, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

a brick set into the south façade bearing that date. Whiffen suggested that Henry Cary, Jr., both designed and built this Indian school, on the basis that he had just completed the Palace and would begin to build both the President's house and the Chapel in six years time.[52] The President's house has a true double-pile plan, undoubtedly based on that of the Brafferton where the usual two rooms on one side of the center passage were opened to one, probably in order to serve as classrooms. Both buildings appear identical but are not in either scale or position. The two are, however, five-bay, two-story piles built in Flemish Bond brick and covered by steeply pitched hipped roofs pierced by dormers. Both have pedimented entrances of rubbed brick that are illuminated by transoms, features new to Virginia.

It is unfortunate that the engraver of the Bodleian Plate, in the fashion of the day, omitted detailing the windows in all buildings drawn. To this extent it is somewhat a supposition of the restoration that the number of lights per sash in the Palace was assumed to diminish with each rising story as they do in both the Brafferton and the President's house. The windows there have sixteen lights above sixteen, sixteen above twelve, and nine above six in each successive story.[53] A final and important similarity between the two buildings is their proportions. The Brafferton measures fifty-two by thirty-four feet; the President's house, fifty-six by thirty-eight feet, proportions smaller but similar to the Palace's sixty by fifty-four feet. A huge difference was the cost: the President's house was budgeted at £650, a mere tenth of that £6,500 spent on the Palace. Moreover, the width of the Brafferton and the President's house equals the height from grade to chimney tops; the length of both is one and a half times the width, and the height of their walls from grade to cornice is also half the width of the longer façades and half the height of the buildings to their chimney tops. Unlike the College, Palace, and President's house, the Brafferton never burned and thus gives special authenticity to the new style.

Not only is the President's house larger than the Brafferton, it is far from being aligned with it. The arrangement of the two in relation to the College is a response to the Palace's rela-