

# ARLINGTON HOUSE

## THE ROBERT E. LEE MEMORIAL



### CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

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## HISTORY

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VOLUME I, 2001

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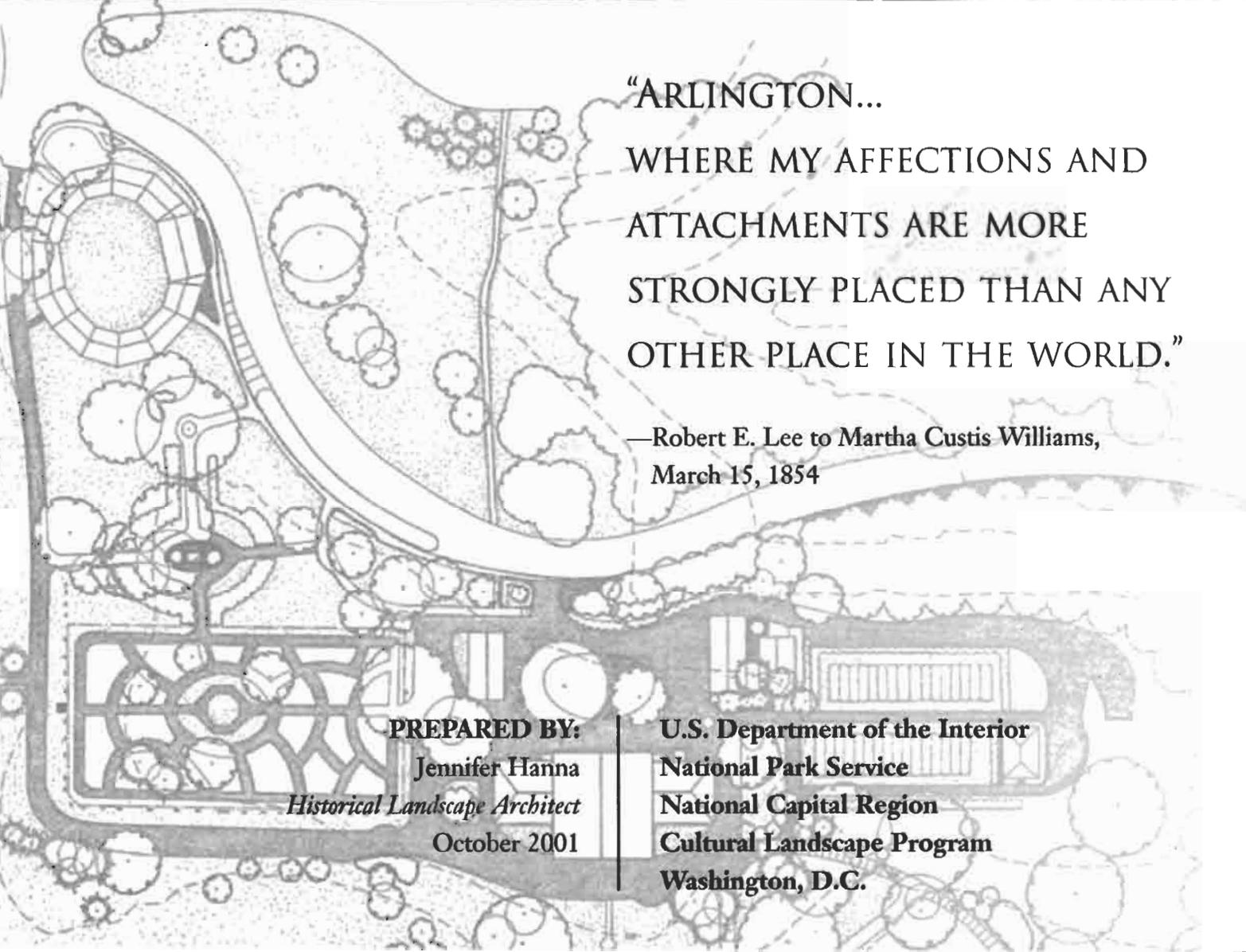
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, D.C.



# ARLINGTON HOUSE

## THE ROBERT E. LEE MEMORIAL



“ARLINGTON...  
WHERE MY AFFECTIONS AND  
ATTACHMENTS ARE MORE  
STRONGLY PLACED THAN ANY  
OTHER PLACE IN THE WORLD.”

—Robert E. Lee to Martha Custis Williams,  
March 15, 1854

**PREPARED BY:**

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October 2001

**U.S. Department of the Interior**

**National Park Service**

**National Capital Region**

**Cultural Landscape Program**

**Washington, D.C.**



*Cover Illustrations: Sketch of Arlington House by John Farley, 1824. (Virginia Historical Society); Arlington House, 2001. (Photo by Warren Miller, Visual History Project, Arlington National Cemetery)*

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## FOREWORD

Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial, sits on a hilltop above the Potomac River, commanding an impressive view of the City of Washington, D.C. It is easy to see why George Washington Parke Custis, George Washington's adopted grandson, selected this site to build his home in 1802. The new federal City was developing before his eyes and he could watch it all happen. The 1100-acre estate held the promise of good farming and pastureland, expansive forest, and plentiful game and fish; and with slaves to work the land, Custis believed he had everything a gentleman farmer would need to build a successful plantation.

While it took 15 years for Mr. Custis to finish construction of his home, the decisions that he made during this period in the design and in the preservation of the landscape surrounding the house have had long lasting effects on the estate and provide today's setting. The resulting house and the landscape that included a park and gardens have impressed many who have visited the estate. This was true while the estate was under Mr. Custis's management as well as later, when it was under the stewardship of his son-in-law Robert E. Lee; and it remains so now, under National Park Service administration.

It is hard to imagine today what the entire 1100-acre plantation originally looked like because of the graves of Arlington National Cemetery that surround the house and the remaining 16 acres of the estate. Arlington National Cemetery almost overwhelms Arlington House. This makes it all the more important that we determine the estate's history and significant resources and decide upon a course of action to preserve those resources. For it is only through this preservation that we will be able to continue to tell the story of creation and use of Arlington House, so integrally linked to the formation and design of our national cemetery. This Cultural Landscape Report and Site History compiles in one place the site's heritage, documents the changes over time, and establishes what is important to preserve. It is a great management tool and I applaud all who worked on creating it. The next step, implementing preservation strategies, is perhaps the hardest, but I believe that this report will be an invaluable guide for our efforts.

*Audrey Calhoun*

*Superintendent*

*George Washington Memorial Parkway*

*National Capital Region*

*National Park Service*





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Cultural Landscape Report for Arlington House is the result of the efforts, insight, and encouragement of numerous individuals and the cooperation of many institutions. The staff of Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial were knowledgeable and supportive throughout the research and writing of this document. Invaluable to the project were Mary Mallen, (Former) Site Manager; Karen Bryne, Historian; Collen Curry, Curator; Delphne Gross, Park Ranger; Matt Penrod, Park Ranger; and Frank Curcurullo, Supervisory Park Ranger.

The staff of George Washington Memorial Parkway never failed to provide assistance and guidance as well through their wiliness to address questions and their detailed review of document drafts. I am very grateful to Superintendent Audrey Calhoun; Assistant Superintendent, Dottie Marshall; Dan Sealy, Resource Manager; Matt Virta, Cultural Resource Manager; and Adam Badowski, Maintenance Worker Supervisor.

The project benefited through the sensitive review of the draft Cultural Landscape Report by many staff of the National Capital Region (NCR), including, Darwina Neal, Chief of Cultural Resources; Stephen Potter, Regional Archeologist; and Rebecca Stevens, Regional Historical Architect.

A special thanks to Erik Dihle, Horticulturist at Arlington National Cemetery, and Thomas Sherlock, Cemetery Historian. Profound thanks is also given to Warren Miller, Director of the Visual History Project at Arlington National Cemetery, whose photographs capture not only the beauty of the cemetery, but the history behind it.

Many libraries and archives were instrumental in the research of Robert E. Lee and his Arlington, Virginia home. My thanks to the many experts who assisted me in my quest to uncover the past, including but not limited to, Henry Gawasda, archivist, at the National Archives and Records Administration; Ingrid Kuffman, librarian at the Arlington County Library; Dean Norton, the Director of Horticulture at Mount Vernon; and Bryan Green, Associate Curator for Prints and Photographs at the Virginia Historical Society. In addition many thanks to the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union, for their generosity in allowing the reproduction of their images within this document.

Finally, this Cultural Landscape Report would not have been possible without the support of the NCR Cultural Landscape Program staff. My special thanks to Maureen Joseph, Regional Historical Landscape Architect, whose expert guidance throughout the entire project benefited the study immensely. Perry Wheelock, (Former) Landscape Historian for the National Capital Region, whose detailed understanding of landscape history helped to shape the document from the very beginning. Thank you to Kay Fanning, Historian, and Judith Earley, Historical Landscape Architect, for listening patiently to my tales of the Lees and occasional research woes. Your encouragement and advice was so helpful. My special thanks to Nick Parash, Anna Dymek, and Liz Henderson, whose exceptional talents with both computer graphics and pen and paper, are now legendary. The final production was dependent on the impressive talents of Cindy Marcotty, Graphic Designer, who created the beautiful volume layout. Thank you to all.

*Jennifer Hanna*  
*October 2001*





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arlington House rises from a steep hillside, above the eternal flame burning at the gravesite of John F. Kennedy in Arlington National Cemetery. Overlooking the city of Washington, D.C. the classical Greek Revival residence and its surrounding gardens, ringed with the graves of Union officers, reveals only part of the story of this now sacred landscape. This first volume of *The Cultural Landscape Report for Arlington House: The Robert E. Lee Memorial* traces the development of this landscape through narrative and graphics by peeling away the layers of human purposes and values to record physical change on the formerly 1100-acre property.

The Arlington House estate was begun around 1802 by the adopted grandson of George Washington, George Washington Parke Custis, as a stage upon which to demonstrate his worthiness as the bearer of his revered grandfather's legacy. Perched high on the hillside, the mansion was designed to be impressive from a great distance - even from far across the river in Washington. Arlington Spring, a public resort at the edge of the property, next door to the quarters of the slaves who worked the fields, served as the place for Custis's patriotic tales of grandeur. His audience sometimes numbered in the thousands.

Thirty years later, Custis's daughter Mary married Robert E. Lee, the future leader of the southern army during the Civil War. But prior to the decision that drew him into the arms of the Confederacy, Robert E. Lee considered Arlington his home. Lee was rarely in residence nor was he owner of the property: he was a soldier who spent most of his time campaigning with the army that was protecting the nation's expansion to the west. Only after Custis's death in 1857, did Lee come back to Virginia to manage Arlington fully. Of course, Robert E. Lee had only a few short years to farm.

For, with the onset of the Civil War, Arlington's commanding prospect also met the strategic needs of the Union forces. In May 1861 they took over the estate as the headquarters of the Army of the Potomac. Within a few years, newly free African Americans, some of whom had been slaves at Arlington, were renting lands of the former estate, now divided by the government into ten-acre parcels surrounding a Freeman's Village. Finally, when the time came to bury the tens of thousands of named and unnamed soldiers, who died in the Civil War, Arlington again was chosen. The first burials on the estate - on land that would become, by the end of the Spanish American War, the nation's cemetery - were made next to the cemetery of Freedmen's Village.

Most land development is intricately entwined with environment, economics, politics and personal aspiration. At Arlington, however, the land has been appropriated over and over again by those whose ideas were national in scope. After congressional debate and popular argument, in 1925 Arlington House became a memorial to Robert E. Lee. At Arlington the interactions between cultures are etched into the ground. Before Arlington House was a memorial, it was the center of maintenance for the cemetery. The flower garden was cut in half with monuments, the work yard swept clean. Since 1933, the National Park Service has owned and managed Arlington House and interpreted this remarkable place to the public. Most of the research, site analysis and writing for this document was completed between 1999 and 2001. Research into the experiences of those who lived and worked on the Arlington property continues.





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# EXHIBITS

## **Chapter 3**

Exhibit 1 .....Historic Period Plan, 1802-1861, 800 scale

Exhibit 2 .....Historic Period Plan, 1802-1861, 80 scale

## **Chapter 4**

Exhibit 3 .....Historic Period Plan, 1861-1865, 800 scale

Exhibit 4 .....Historic Period Plan, 1861-1865, 200 scale

## **Chapter 5**

Exhibit 5 .....Historic Period Plan, 1865-1880, 80 scale

## **Chapter 6**

Exhibit 6 .....Historic Period Plan, 1880-1929, 200 scale

## **Chapter 7**

Exhibit 7 .....Historic Period Plan, 1929-1945, 200 scale



# INTRODUCTION

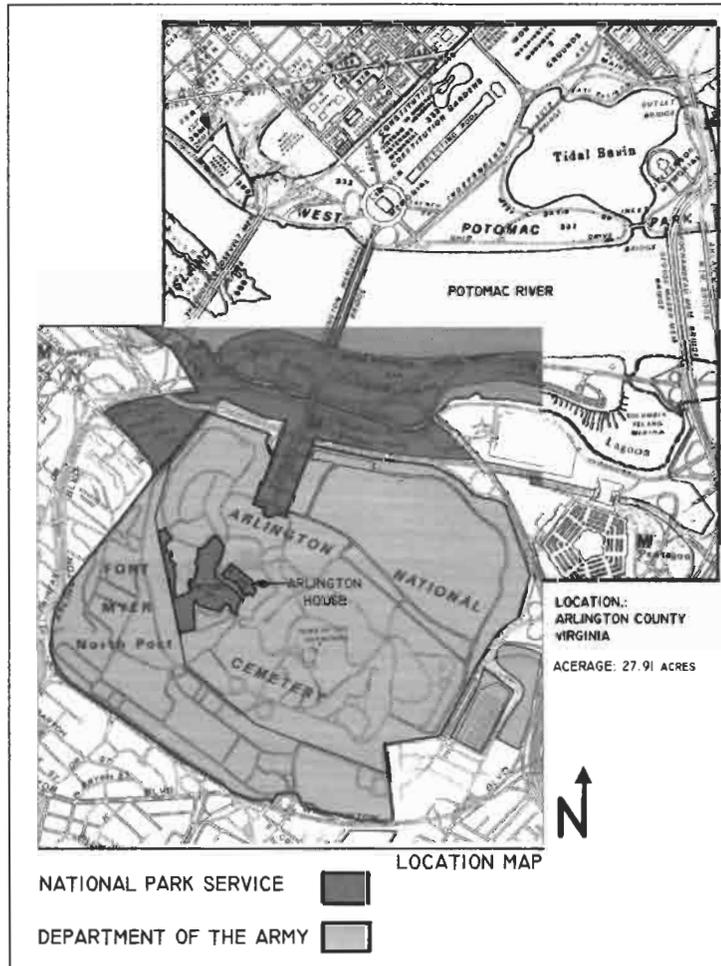
This first volume (Part 1) of the Cultural Landscape Report for Arlington House: The Robert E. Lee Memorial documents the development of the landscape of the Arlington estate from pre-history to 2001 through narrative, historic period plans, photographs and drawings. The volume is divided into seven chapters denoting periods of physical development within the chronology of the site. The probable social, political and economic determinants of those physical modifications and transformations are also explored.

## Location

The landscape of Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial is owned and administered by the National Park Service. Approximately 27 acres, the property is located in Arlington

County, Virginia. Bordered on the north, south, and east by Arlington National Cemetery, and on the west by Fort Myer, the lands of Arlington House are surrounded by property under the administration of the Department of the Army.

*1 Arlington House is located within Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington County, Virginia.*



## Scope

In order to fully comprehend the factors affecting the physical development of the original property during the first five development periods—from the Paleo-Indian period to 1883—the boundary of the approximately 1100-acre estate of Arlington House is used as the contextual boundary for the history section of

the Cultural Landscape Report. For the chapters covering the time between 1883 and 2001, the contextual boundary for the history narrative narrows gradually in scope, to allow for a more detailed discussion and analysis of developments on the National Park Service adminis-



tered property. Adjacent government land, including Arlington National Cemetery, Freedmen's Village, Fort Myer, and the Government Experimental Farm, is addressed only where the involvement of that property affected the land now managed by the National Park Service.

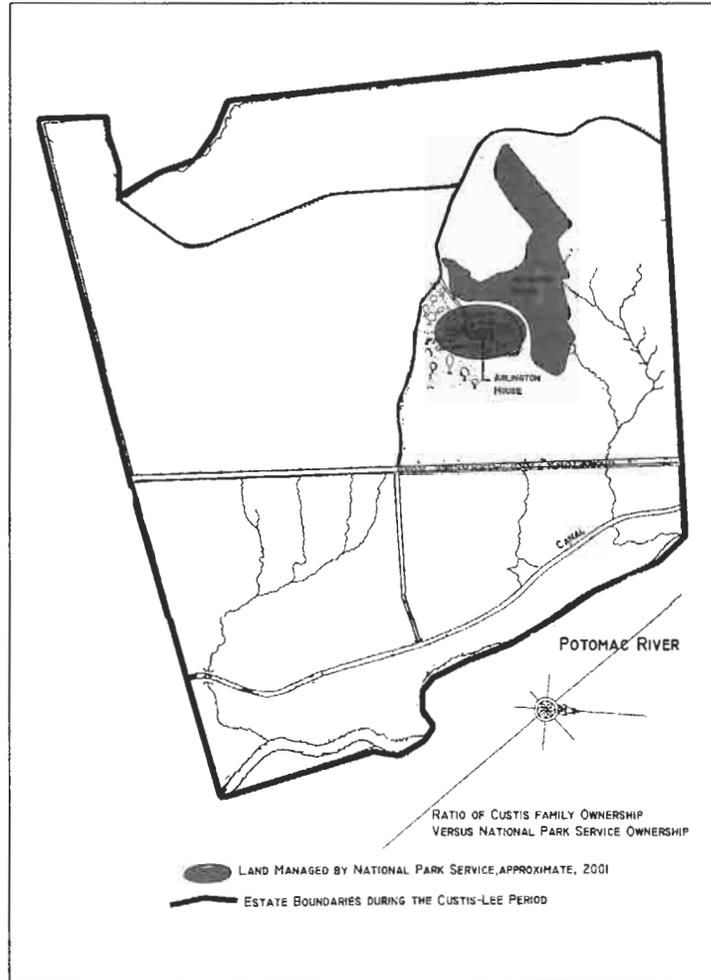
### Methodology

This document is based chiefly on the study of primary resources. Graphic materials included maps, drawings, and historic photographs. Textual resources included official and familial correspondence, agricultural and census records, Office of the Quartermaster

General Cemetery Reports, National Park Service memoranda and reports, oral history accounts and historical narratives. Secondary sources, including books and National Park Service reports written recently, were utilized primarily to provide additional context where beneficial.

The historic period plans were computer generated. Historic maps were scanned into a graphics program, digitized, and rectified to existing conditions maps. Then the historic period plans were created through comparison of the historic information to existing conditions.

The primary historic, graphical documentation of the site dates from the Federal occupation of the property beginning in 1861. Though drawings of the estate prior to the Civil War exist, no maps illustrating the estate under the ownership of the Custis and Lee families have yet been discovered. In addition, only limited archeological excavation has occurred. Thus the discussion of the property prior to the Civil War is based chiefly on written documentation and the photographs and maps executed after the war had begun.



2 Contextual boundaries map



## HISTORY SUMMARY

The periods of development for the Arlington House: Robert E. Lee Memorial landscape are as follows,

### **Pre-1608**

Within this chapter, the sequence of general prehistoric cultural development is divided into the periods standard for the northern half of the eastern seaboard; the Paleo-Indian Period (ca. 10,000-8,000 B.C), the Archaic Period (ca 8000-1200 BC) and the Woodland Period, which ends with European colonization in 1608. This chronology is augmented by a comparison of the prehistoric land conditions with the environmental attributes conducive to American Indian settlement. Finally, a discussion of the findings of recent excavations on the Arlington House property provides evidence of American Indian land use in specific locations.

### **1608-1802**

Beginning with a brief discussion of John Smith's exploration of the Potomac River in the vicinity of the future Arlington House estate, this chapter discusses the early development of the agricultural tenant landscape in northern Virginia, with specific analysis of the land grants and tenants associated with the future Arlington House property. The relationship between the Washington and Custis families is established, explaining the close associations between the evolution of Mount Vernon and that of Arlington. George Washington Parke Custis's early development of the then-named Mount Washington property (Arlington House) is discussed.

### **1802-1861**

This chapter describes the development of the Arlington House estate under the ownership of George Washington Parke Custis (GWP Custis) and Mary Custis Lee. The physical manifestations of the economic system of slavery are addressed, as are the specific ramifications of GWP Custis's desire to continue the legacy of George Washington. The integral relationships among Arlington Spring, Arlington farm, the park, gardens, the woods and other estates owned by the Custis family are considered. The physical changes to the estate associated with Robert E. Lee are described.

### **1861-1865**

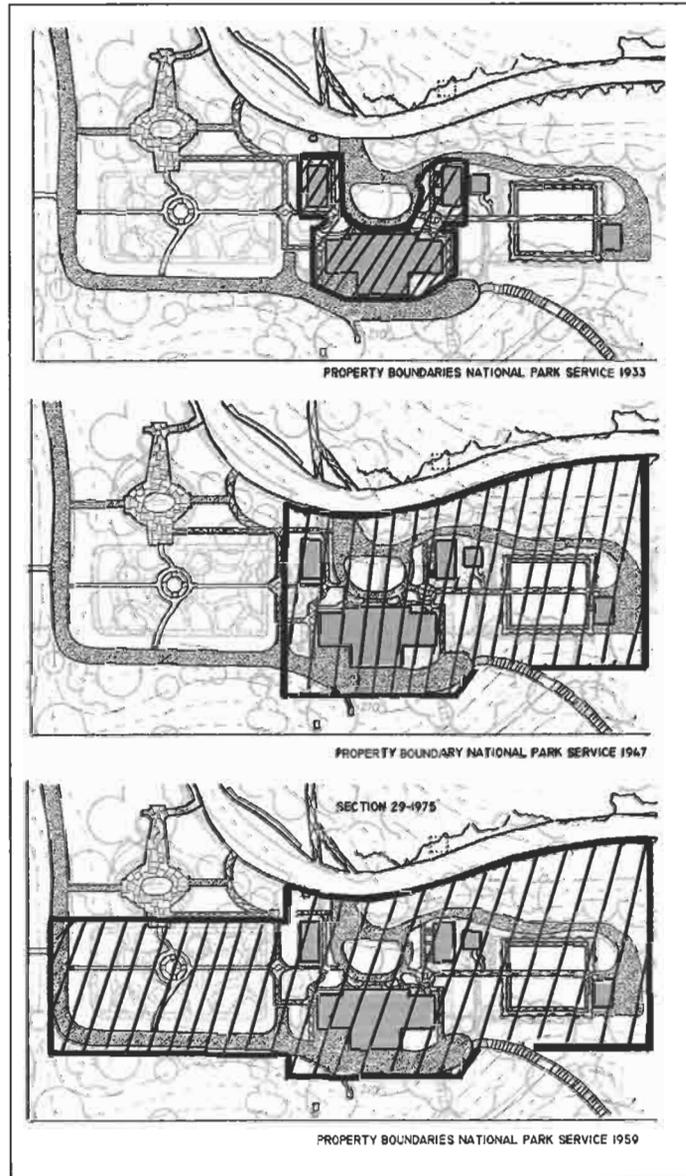
The physical effects generated by the use of the estate as the Headquarters of the Army of the Potomac during the early part of the Civil War are addressed within this chapter. The significance of the site as a holding of the United States Federal Forces and the consequences of the



presence of the army on the site throughout the Civil War is considered. The founding of Freedmen's Village in the southeastern portion of the site is discussed, as is the complicated process of the establishment of the National Cemetery at Arlington.

### 1865-1880

Chapter five describes the early development of Arlington National Cemetery, from the gradual incorporation of the agricultural and picturesque landscape of the Custis and Lee families' to the official acquisition of the property by the Federal government. The preservation of elements dating to the first half of the nineteenth century, are discussed, as well as the creation of new memorials in remembrance of the Civil War.



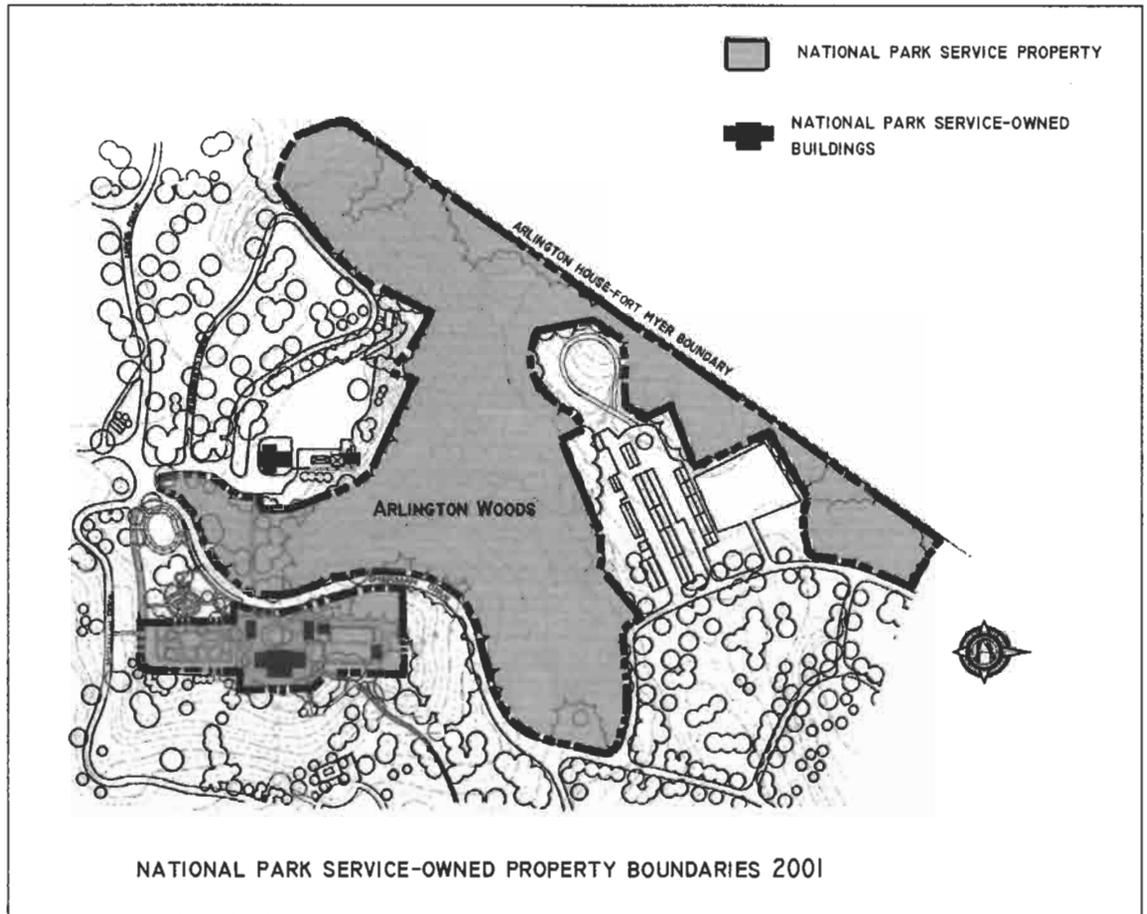
3 The total acreage of Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial currently managed by the National Park Service has increased over time to its present level of approximately 28 acres.

### 1880-1929

Chapter six describes the development of Arlington National Cemetery in reference to Arlington House, as its vortex and chief maintenance facility. The ramifications of segregation and sectionalism in the memorialization and development of the site are addressed, as are the consequences of increasing numbers of tourists to the site. Finally, the discussion and physical alterations that preceded the restoration of Arlington House and its dedication as a memorial to Robert E. Lee are considered.



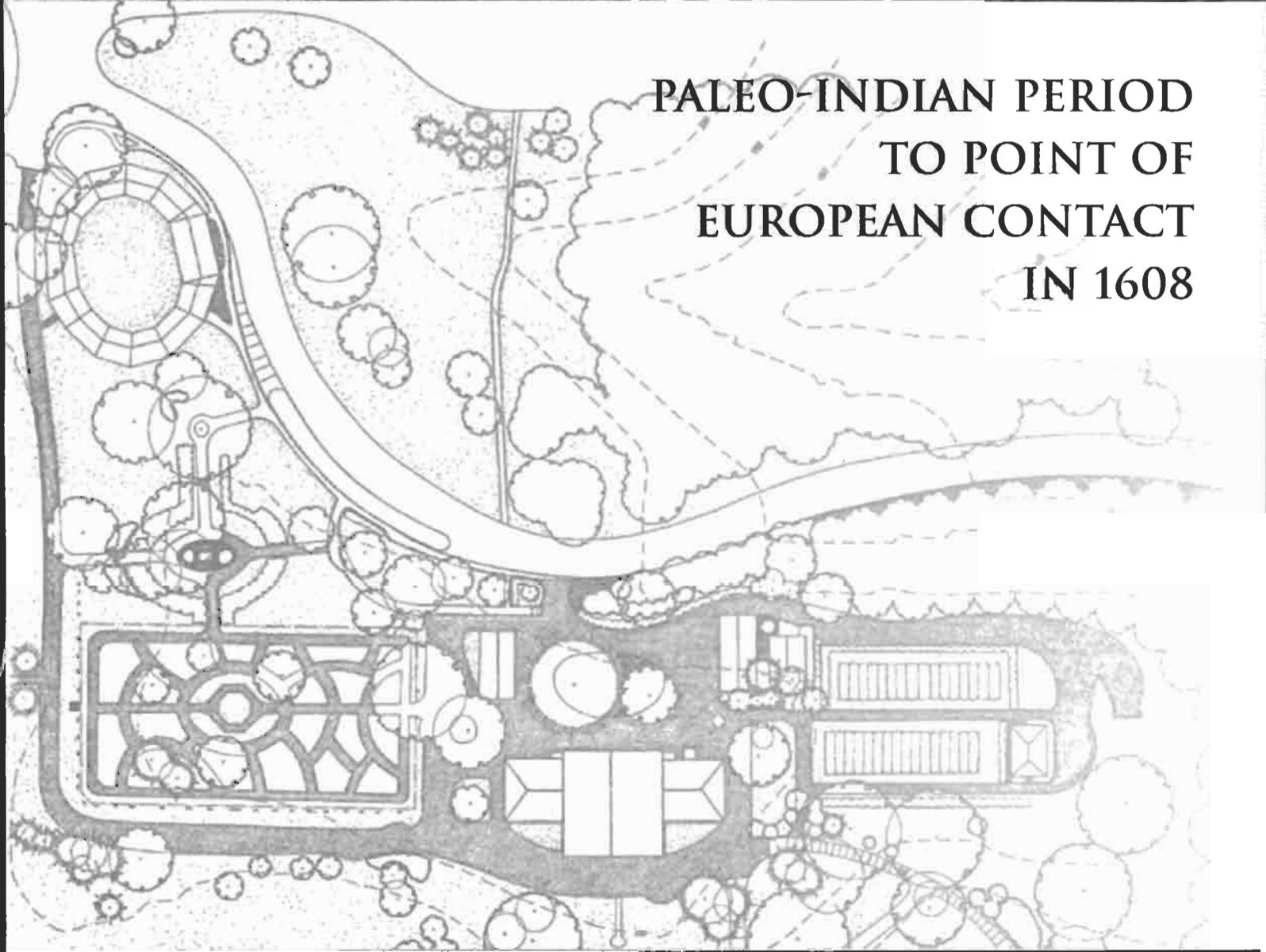
4 *The Federal land managed by the National Park Service is surrounded by Federal land managed by the Department of Army.*



### 1929 to 2001

Within this chapter, the restoration of Arlington House and surrounding landscape during the 1930s is described. The development of the landscape through the twentieth century is addressed through a discussion of various design and master plans and jurisdiction transfers. The ramifications of the transformation from maintenance facility to renowned tourism destination are addressed.

# CHAPTER I



PALEO-INDIAN PERIOD  
TO POINT OF  
EUROPEAN CONTACT  
IN 1608

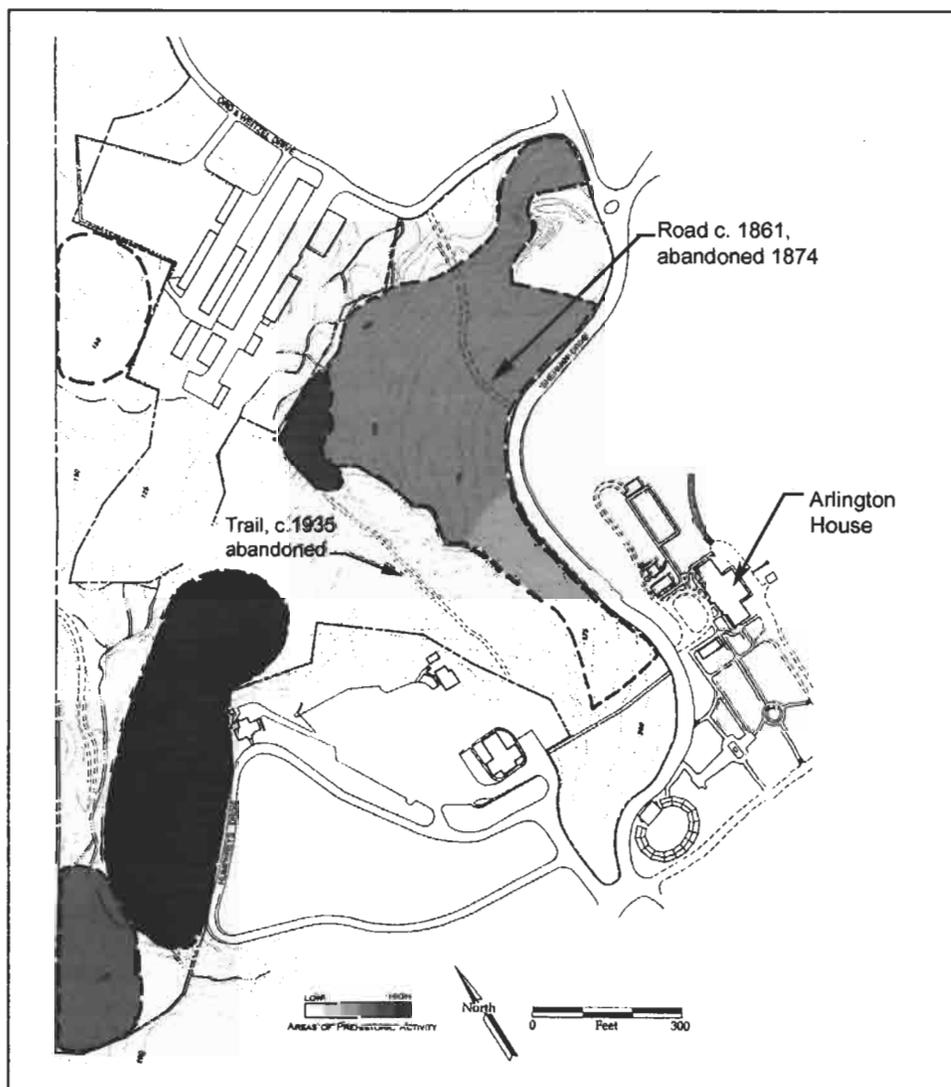


The chronology of the prehistoric development of land that became the Arlington House estate in the nineteenth century must be extrapolated in part from a general account of the Middle Atlantic region. Though excavations have occurred on the portion of the property called Arlington Woods (Section 29) and on lands adjacent to Arlington National Cemetery, the scope of survey has been limited and therefore the *exact* use of the property by prehistoric peoples is, as yet, not definite.<sup>1</sup>

The sequence of general prehistoric cultural development is divided into the periods standard for the northern half of the eastern seaboard; the Paleo-Indian Period (ca. 10,000-8,000 B.C), the Archaic Period (ca 8000-1200 BC) and the Woodland Period, which ends with European colonization in 1608.<sup>2</sup> This chronology is augmented by a comparison of the prehistoric land conditions with the environmental attributes conducive to American Indian settlement. Finally, a discussion of the findings of recent excavations on the Arlington House property will provide evidence of American Indian land use in specific locations.

The climate of the Paleo-Indian Period was characterized by cold winters and moist summers. Early in the period, coniferous forests of spruce and pine were dominant. Later

5 This map illustrates the intensity of prehistoric activity within the area known as Arlington Woods or Section 29. Based on a map from Cultural Resource Investigations at Section 29 of Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial, prepared for the NPS by Garrow and Associates, 1998.





deciduous trees such as oak, hickory and chestnut became more prevalent as the climate warmed and the sea level rose. Paleo-Indians are believed to have organized into social groups to facilitate the movement required to utilize the natural resources necessary for survival. Such migration would have followed the patterns of plant growth, animal movements, and lithic locations.<sup>3</sup> Archeological evidence in the Chesapeake Bay area reveals that the subsistence strategies of native peoples included the hunting of deer and elk, the gathering of plants and the procurement of aquatic resources such as fish and shellfish. The likely locations for the exploitation of these natural resources would have been along the headwaters of small streams with poorly drained soils. Due to the increased sea level of contemporary conditions, such areas are primarily saltwater marshes today.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, an analysis of the Paleo-Indian sites excavated in the Middle Atlantic Region reveals that “over two-thirds of all [known Paleo-Indian] sites are located in the transition zone between the Coastal Plain and the Piedmont physiographic provinces.”<sup>5</sup> Though the site of Arlington House falls into this general area, no specific archeological deposits have yet been found which contain artifacts dating to the Paleo-Indian period.<sup>6</sup>

The Archaic period is defined by its temperate ecosystem and the formation of the Chesapeake estuary. This period is commonly divided into three sub-periods, the Early, Middle and Late. Early Archaic sites (7800-5300 B.C) identified within the general region of the Middle Atlantic tend to be quite small in size. Throughout the Archaic period, American Indian subsistence was based on hunting, fishing and the gathering of wild plants. In the Middle Archaic period (6500-3000 BC), the climate began to get warmer and wetter and seasonal change became much more pronounced. Subsistence economies expanded with resources exploited on a seasonal basis. Not until the Late Archaic period (3000-1200 BC), however, did some prehistoric groups begin living for extended periods of time in permanent or semi-permanent villages.<sup>7</sup> Steatite bowls, in addition to other domestic tools such as fire-cracked rock hearths and storage pits, are characteristic of the Late Archaic period as well. A shard of a steatite bowl was found in Section 29 of the Arlington House property, suggesting that the area was utilized at least as early as the Late Archaic period. While only one of the artifacts was temporally diagnostic in the archeological investigation of Section 29, unearthed scattered lithic tools and debris provided evidence of prehistoric quarrying for quartzite and quartz.<sup>8</sup> The majority of these artifacts were associated with the extraction of lithic material, not the creation of tools. Workshop areas may have been located on higher ground outside Section 29, however no archeology was conducted outside the boundaries of the wooded area.

Occupation sites would have most likely been located along the Potomac and on bluffs and knolls around feeder streams.<sup>9</sup> In fact, the transition from a “Halifax sylvan adaptation to a Susquehanna river adaptation oriented to aquatic resources” has been identified as a chronological marker of the change from the Middle to Late Archaic period.<sup>10</sup> This is especially crucial to comprehension of the prehistoric use of the land that was to become Arlington, as it is

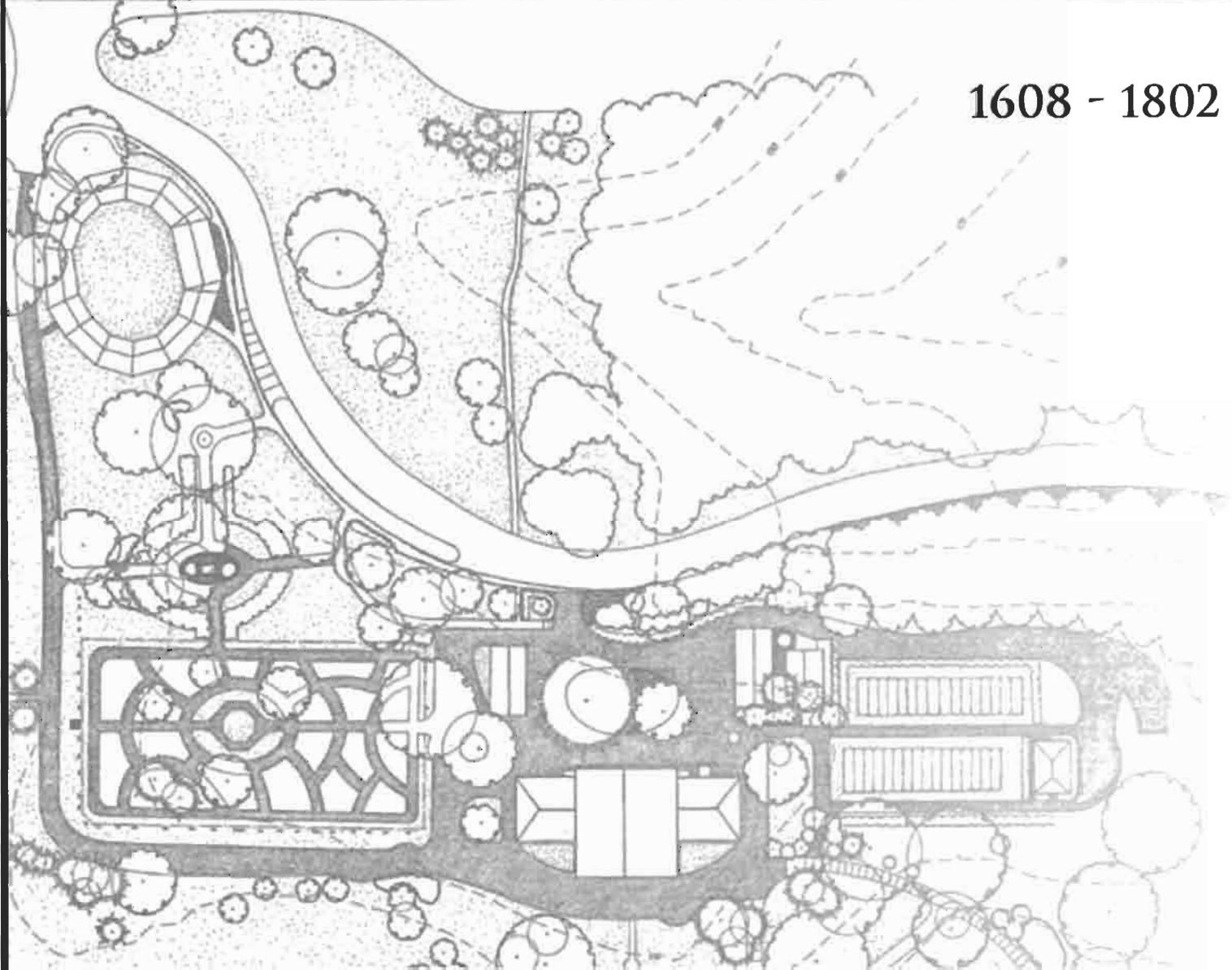


located near a large river—the Potomac. By the Late Archaic period, the climate was warm and dry, supporting deciduous-dominated forests. While evidence is scarce, the first attempts at horticultural production probably occurred late in the Archaic period. Crops most likely cultivated were squash, sunflower and chenopodium.<sup>11</sup> Anadromous fish probably played an important role in the seasonal pattern of resource procurement as well.

The Woodland Period (c.1200 BC- A. D. 1600) is defined by a much greater reliance on horticulture in subsistence economies than previously, though the resource procurement strategies remained consistent with that of the Late Archaic period. In northeastern Virginia, during the Middle Woodland period (AD 300-1000) permanent village sites along major rivers and estuaries developed, signaling a shift away from the more transient sites along small streams. “By late in the Woodland period, trade and exchange networks were established and distinct cultural groups with boundaries and localized styles emerged.”<sup>12</sup> All of these groups were Algonquian-speaking peoples of the Eastern Woodlands. In the Potomac drainage these settlements, which relied on maize horticulture utilizing cleared fields, had highly organized village structures. The possible locations of such villages in the vicinity of Arlington House have been extensively discussed in previous studies, though no excavations have identified exact village locations.<sup>13</sup> One of the most well-known of these villages was that identified by John Smith during his 1608 journey as Namoraughquend. The location of this seventeenth-century village has been variously suggested as Theodore Roosevelt Island or the area of the Pentagon today.<sup>14</sup> Further archeological research is needed to determine the specific site.

According to an analysis of the locations of known Woodland period village sites, certain criteria have been developed to forecast the potential location of American Indian village sites within non-excavated areas. The five attributes that would provide favorable environmental conditions for a village are: broad necklands, proximity to a cove, bay or an estuary, proximity to freshwater springs, soil type and the proximity to marshlands.<sup>15</sup> The landscape in the vicinity of Arlington would have exhibited most, if not all, of these contributing conditions. For instance, a marshland was formerly located in the vicinity of the Pentagon. In addition, the soil was fairly conducive to horticulture and the freshwater spring, known as Arlington Spring during the nineteenth century, was only one of many in the area. Transportation routes by land and over water existed in the vicinity of these settlements. The exact locations of these trade routes, however, are not known. As the woodland period progressed, the sociopolitical complexity within the American Indian cultures increased. With European colonization, the Late Woodland period came to a close.

# CHAPTER 2



1608 - 1802



In July of 1802 enormous hardwood trees such as oaks, hickories, and chestnuts covered the hillsides of the property that George Washington Parke Custis, the adopted grandson of George Washington, had inherited only a few months before from his father, John Parke Custis. The land was almost entirely unimproved—save for fields cleared by eighteenth-century tenant farmers at the base of the slopes that descended toward the river from the heights of land that G.W.P. Custis was to call Mount Washington. He later changed the name to Arlington House, after the Custis family estate on the Eastern Shore. On the shores of the Potomac, the black soil was rich and deep with silt compared to the relatively thin layer of clay found on the heights. A small, four-room house and a couple of outbuildings were located down on the flats where the few rough fields remained from tenant farming enterprises. To build a farm and an estate out of the property the forest needed to be cleared further up the gentle slope. Then an intensively grown market garden with rows of vegetables and fruits might be successful. Alexandria to the south, and Georgetown to the north (both towns connected to the Virginia shore by Mason's Ferry) would provide a ready customer base for the produce. The 57 slaves inherited by Custis would cut down the trees and burn the stumps. The felled logs would be used in the construction of the slaves' quarters down by the river.

The opposite shore of the Potomac was visible from a knoll which jutted out from a ridge of the Mount Washington property. Brick and wooden buildings were scattered along the river's edge and in the forest that extended back from the swampy shores. The buildings were primarily small structures, but the surrounding land had been cleared and the capital city was beginning to take shape. Spindly trees and brush formed a green haze on the Potomac Flats and on the rich flood plain of Tiber Creek, where vegetation had been planted to catch

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6 *George Town and Federal City, or City of Washington by George Beck was published in June 1801 in London, one year before George Washington Parke Custis began to develop the estate that was to become Arlington House.*

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the silt during the floods that would cause river water to nearly lap against the marble walls of the “president’s palace.”<sup>1</sup> East from the heights of Mount Washington, the old agricultural estates and recent city dwellings were visible as dots on the distant hills. Duddington, the seat of Daniel Carroll, an early Washington, D.C. landowner, dwarfed the new capital building which had only two stories of the north wing completed. Thomas Law, the husband of G.W.P.’s sister, Elizabeth Parke Custis Law, had recently constructed a home near the river’s edge. The allees and drives of the ornate gardens on Mason’s Island, the home of John Mason, were visible to the northeast of Mount Washington.

Prominently placed on the brow of the highest hill on the property, the grand estate of Arlington House would be created by G.W.P. Custis to honor the memory and ideals of his adopted grandfather, George Washington. Custis would spend much of his life attempting to fulfill this mission through the construction of his classical mansion which would sit clearly visible from the new national capital. He would be a gentleman farmer, as was his adopted grandfather. To Custis this land was new and ready to be modeled into a home suitable to his station, his ancestors, and his own political, agricultural and aesthetic values. In order to understand the landscape that G.W.P. Custis inherited, a description of the events taking place on this landscape prior to 1802 must be given. For portions of this land, had been farmed for hundreds of years before Custis arrived.

## EARLY EUROPEAN EXPLORATION AND SETTLEMENT

In 1608 John Smith, an adventurer backed by the London Virginia Company to search for gold, furs and a South Seas passage, became the first Englishman to navigate the Potomac River.<sup>2</sup> Smith, born in 1580 in Wiloughby, England, became involved in the colonization of America through the profit making ventures of the Virginia Company in 1606.<sup>3</sup> Though Smith would return to Jamestown, Virginia without gold or a route to the South Seas, the books he wrote and the maps he drew describing the appearance of the Potomac River valley give an interesting glimpse of life at the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup> In his works he documented the land uses and designs of the Algonquians, the Indian tribe which once lived upon the land now comprising the grounds of Arlington House.

John Smith and his crew identified approximately eleven different Indian groups while navigating the Potomac River from its mouth to the Little Falls.<sup>5</sup> The Nacotchtanks and the Tauxenents, part of the Conoy chiefdom, were the groups located closest to the area that was to become the Arlington estate.<sup>6</sup> The relationship and the treaties between the Conoys and the English associated with the colonization of Virginia were very significant in the chronology of land development, or lack thereof, within Fairfax County during the eighteenth century.

The total population of the Conoys located on the Virginia side of the Potomac was between 2550 and 3600 people.<sup>7</sup> Such a small number of inhabitants extended over such a large portion of land probably had minimal effect on the landscape. However, the Algonquian



Indians did make some changes to their environment as illustrated through archeological excavation and the documentation of contemporaneous cultures, such as noted in John Smith's published works. In the quote below, Smith describes the Algonquian long house, inadvertently revealing elements of contemporary English landscape design in his comparison.

*Their houses are built like our Arbors of small young springs bowed and tyed and so close covered with mats or the barkes of trees very handsomely, that notwithstanding either raine or weather, they are as warm as stoooves, but very smoaky.*<sup>8</sup>

As would be true of later European settlements in Virginia, most Algonquian settlements were located near the Potomac River, not far from fresh water springs. As Smith elaborated,

*Their houses are in the midst of their fields or gardens which are small plots of ground. Some twenty acres, some forty, some one hundred . . . In some places from two to fifty of those houses together or but a little separated by groves of trees . . .*<sup>9</sup>

Within the primarily slash-and-burn agricultural subsistence economy of the tidewater Algonquians, many varieties of maize, beans, squash, pumpkins, gourds, sunflowers and tobacco were grown. The Indians cleared wooded land for growing crops by removing bark from the lower trunks and scorching the trees in the exposed area to quickly kill them. Some of the dead trees were removed to provide planting space, while others were left standing to help prevent soil erosion.<sup>10</sup> When fields suffered nutrient depletion over time, Virginian Algonquians cleared more forest. Two primary types of fields were created and maintained for crops. The larger fields ranged from twenty to two hundred acres and were most often planted with maize and less often with beans. The smaller gardens, from 100 to 200 feet per side, contained such plants as squash, pumpkins and sunflowers and were located near the individual long houses. In addition, the Indians made use of native plant and animal species to supplement their diet. Two of the many plants pointed out by Smith in his writings were mulberries and grapes. Though, according to Smith, such species were never "pruned nor manured" by the Algonquians, this tree and vine respectively were often found growing successfully close to dwellings.<sup>11</sup> These two species would have significance in the later development of the plantations and market gardens of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Virginia. Woods surrounding the Algonquian villages would often be clear of all underbrush due to the need for firewood.<sup>12</sup> As Smith noted with admiration,

*Near their habitations is little small wood or old trees on the ground . . . so that a man may gallop a horse amongst these woods any way.*<sup>13</sup>



After completing his journey up the Potomac River, Smith returned to Jamestown and spent the winter of 1608 before returning to England in October of 1609. Though Captain John Smith returned only once to America (the northeastern shore in 1614), his publications became very effective propaganda, forwarding the cause of colonization in Virginia and in northeastern America.

In 1624, the year that Smith's *General History of Virginia* was published in England, the Court Kings Bench dissolved the charter of the Virginia Company of London. Soon after, Virginia became a colony of the crown and a beneficiary of its military might. Active conflict between the Indian tribes and the English settlers began to diminish. As the English gained a foothold in Virginia, the Indian cultures became more destabilized—their demise advanced by disease and displacement. Though the colonization process was still slow, the English began planting tobacco in the open fields of many of the Algonquian village areas. For instance in 1626, Virginia produced 132,000 pounds of tobacco. Three years later the harvest was over one million pounds.<sup>14</sup>

Transportation systems of both American Indian tribes and European colonists consisted primarily of water routes; therefore few, if any, roads were well delineated before the end of the eighteenth century. An exception to this observation is the Potomac Path. What was known as the Potomac Path prior to the mid 1740s, ran north to south along a natural ridge or fall line between the Potomac and the Rappahannock rivers. Beginning at the Occoquan, the path extended to Great Hunting Creek which would become the site of the city of Alexandria in 1749. Continuing, the Potomac Path followed the eastern ridge of the fall line to what was to be known as Falls Church in 1734, before going northward toward the Shenandoah Mountains.<sup>15</sup> Between Pohick Creek and Accotink Creek, a road branched off the Potomac Path and ran along the Potomac shore line. Though this road, created by the early eighteenth century to connect the plantations located along the river, did not follow the original Indian trail, it too became known as the Potomac Path. To prevent confusion the earlier Potomac Path, that which did follow the Indian trail along the ridge to the west, became known as Back Road. These roads, while primitive, aided in the development of land to the north of the Tidewater.

During the mid-seventeenth century, with the price of available arable land rising in southern Virginia due to its increasing scarcity, speculators moved their investments northward—from the Tidewater into the Northern Neck and to the lands that would become the Arlington estate. The main objective of these seventeenth-century investors was not the immediate development of the land; expenditure of resources on such a risky endeavor was not in their financial or personal interests. Though the threat to the settlers from the Algonquians was abating due to the disruptive presence of the English, the fear of conflict remained.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the English proprietors patented or were granted large tracts of land with the hope of future agricultural development or subdivision. The primary liability on ownership was the



ability of the grantee to pay the annual quitrent.<sup>17</sup> To meet the requirements of a colonial land patent, the grantee had to prove that the land was “seated and planted” within three years of the grant’s creation. As most of the mid-seventeenth century land grants in this area were speculative ventures, such “seating” often entailed the clearing of only a small portion of the overall land grant and the building of a modest structure. For wealthy landowners, their slaves or indentured servants often fulfilled the requirement of land occupation. Between the years of 1651 and 1655, the land from the northwest shore of the Occoquan to the falls of the Potomac was claimed by such grants.<sup>18</sup> For the next forty years, however, the legality of such land grants and the exact ownership of the resulting property holdings was ambiguous. For instance, though a 1649 patent from Charles II to a group of English proprietors had previously granted the land along the Potomac River, the colonial government in Jamestown continued to issue patents for the same lands and for other locations in the Northern Neck of Virginia.<sup>19</sup> In addition, boundaries of land grants often overlapped or were ambiguous due to poor marking, inadequate surveying, or illegal activity. Finally, because of the speculative nature of the land grants, many were lost or escheated for want of seating, or abandoned due to the difficulties imposed by the frequently harsh environment and the land owner’s managerial distance.<sup>20</sup> In fact, for the majority of the seventeenth century, most of the land in the Northern Neck was farmed by slaves or tenant farmers—primarily indentured servants—resulting in a relatively limited agricultural economy.<sup>21</sup> The development of colonial governmental administration over this land area was complicated by owner absenteeism and the need to consult distant English courts for arbitration.<sup>22</sup> The original grant of land that would one day incorporate the lands of Arlington, fit this pattern of large, non-owner occupied agricultural enterprises.

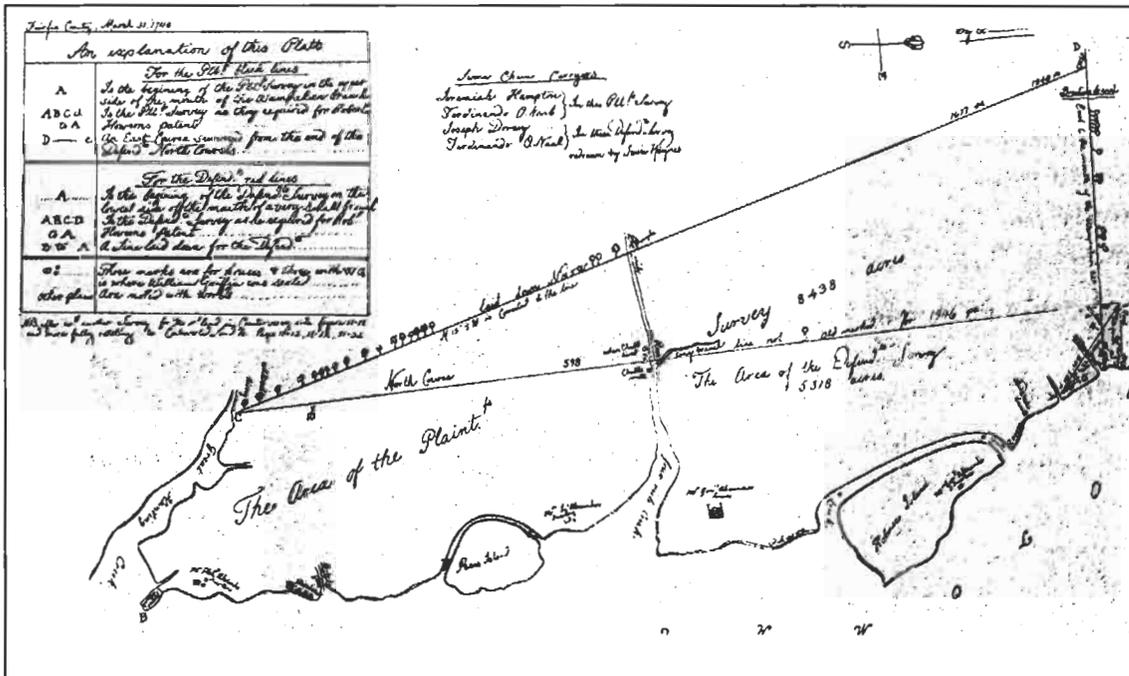
## THE LAND GRANTS

The land which comprised the estate of Arlington House was originally a portion of a 6000-acre land grant from Sir William Berkeley, Royal Governor of Virginia, awarded to English ship Captain Robert Howsing, on October 21 1669.<sup>23</sup> Made by the authority of King Charles II, the grant was in recognition of Captain Howsing bringing 120 English, Irish and Scottish settlers to live in this region of Virginia. Extending along the Potomac River from Hunting Creek on the south to a small tributary of the Potomac, just west of My Lord’s (now Theodore Roosevelt Island) on the north, the Howsing tract was dominated by woodland tree species such as chestnut, oak and hickory. It served as home and hunting grounds to both kin-based and political groups of the Algonquians, Doeg and Nacotchtanks tribes, whose settlements were scattered throughout the area.<sup>24</sup> Less than a month after obtaining the land, Howsing sold the tract for 6 hogsheads (approximately 6,000 pounds weight) of tobacco to John Alexander, a surveyor and planter, who had surveyed the tract the previous year.<sup>25</sup>



John Alexander's will, executed in 1690, bequeathed 6,550 acres of land, including the original Howsing tract property to his sons Robert and Philip.<sup>26</sup> The northwestern boundary of the patent was the line which currently delineates Arlington National Cemetery and Fort Myer. The southern boundary followed Great Hunting Creek, called Indian Cabin Creek in the patent. The eastern boundary was the Potomac River. 'Pokecory' trees, the Indian name for hickory trees, marked the southwestern boundary. My Lord's Island, now known as Theodore Roosevelt Island, was included.<sup>27</sup> In 1693 Philip gave Robert his portion of the land, excluding 500 acres which he retained for himself.<sup>28</sup>

Robert Alexander died in 1735 leaving to his children 4,930 acres of land. To his two daughters, Parthena and Sarah, he bequeathed eight hundred acres. Pearson's Island (16 acres located south of Four Mile Run) he left to his son John who resided on the island. Holmes Island (302 acres, just north of Four Mile Run) and 1,125 acres adjoining Holmes Island he conferred to his son Gerrard. Each of these tracts were described in the will as having slaves and stock located upon them.<sup>29</sup> This left approximately 2,500 acres which was divided between the sons John and Gerrard—with John taking the land south of Four Mile Run and Gerrard taking that to the north. These land inheritances were, as typical in eighteenth-century Virginia, entailed.<sup>30</sup> Such a method of property conveyance assured that land ownership would remain in the same families for generations. John and Gerrard, however, were determined to



7 This survey was created in 1746, shortly following the division of the Howsing Tract between brothers, Gerrard and John Alexander.

own their inherited land in fee simple—which allowed them the right to sell the land or divide the property through their wills without the bonds of predetermined issue. They were successful in their suit to acquire the absolute ownership of their land, reconveying to John Alexander 1,421 acres and to Gerrard Alexander 2,713 acres total in fee simple in 1745.<sup>31</sup> All of the land north of Four Mile Run, including the property which would eventually become the Arlington Estate, belonged to Gerrard.<sup>32</sup>



These large estates were illustrative of land holdings throughout the southern colonies. During the eighteenth century, enormous land holdings of a relatively few prominent English families in the colonial society, like the Custis's and Alexander's, continued to grow. For in the seventeenth and early eighteenth-century Virginia slave economy, a one thousand acre tract of arable land was the smallest unit deemed suitable to profitable production, and each slave was thought to require approximately fifty acres of land in order to be economically viable. Such land ownership patterns were apparent within Fairfax County, which had been formed in 1742 out of what was then Prince William County. Gerrard Alexander had begun the construction of his family home one year earlier on the southern section of his property, just north of Four Mile Creek.<sup>33</sup>

The house itself (later known as Abingdon) was of frame construction with oak beams and rafters. Examination of the site in 1929 indicated that the original colonial structure was five bays wide, two bays deep, one-and-one-half stories high, with a chimney on each gable end and a central hall extending through the middle.<sup>34</sup> Gerrard Alexander lived in this frame structure for the last twenty years of his life.<sup>35</sup> Such modest, timber-frame, residential architecture was common in northern Virginia during this time period, even for those of the wealthier classes. During the seventeenth century, earthfast architecture, characterized by posts and studs in the ground, and ground-laid sills, was widespread. Though the buildings erected with post-in-hole technology were relatively short-lived, due to the moist, warm environment of the south, the building style allowed for basic comfort and protection with little cost.<sup>36</sup> By the time Gerrard Alexander constructed his home on the shores of the Potomac the prominent construction style in the area had changed to incorporate the use of wooden blocks, brick piers, and, in some cases, full stone or brick foundations. By setting the structure on piers or a foundation, no framing timber was allowed to touch the ground where it might

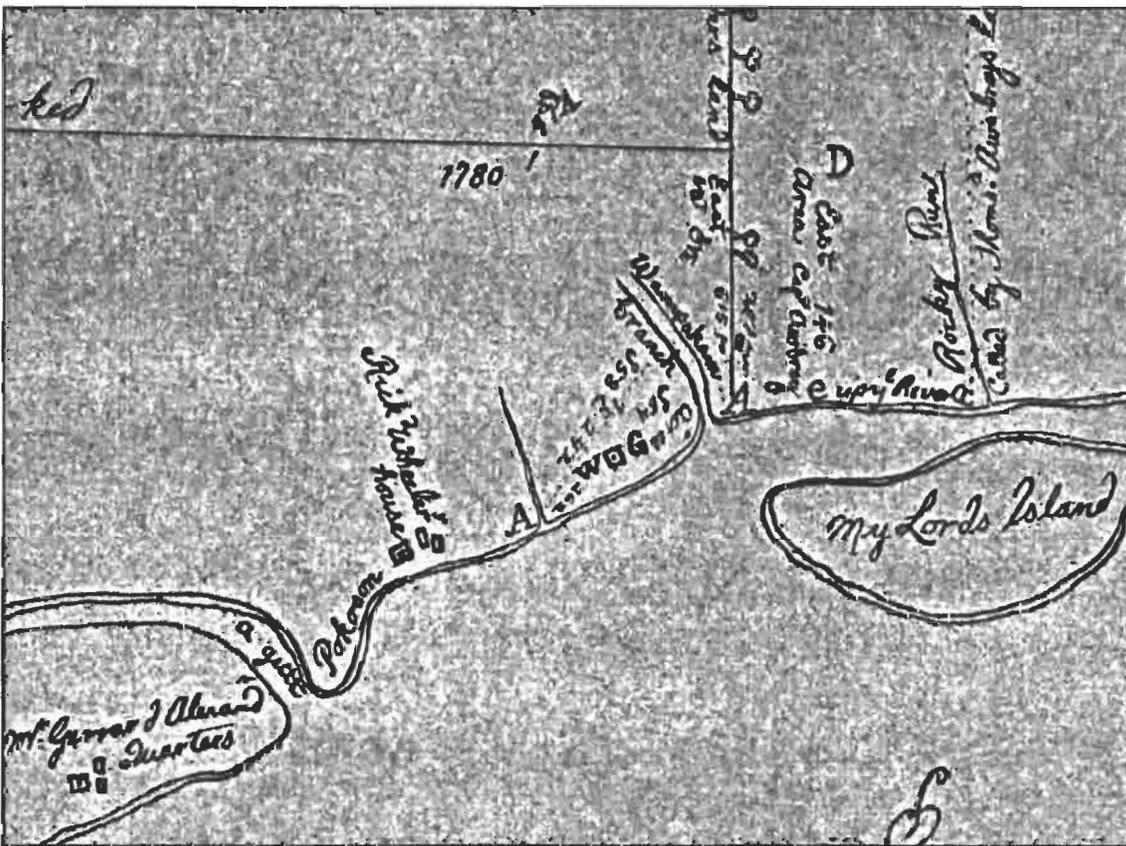
8 *Abingdon, shown here c. 1929, was the home of Gerrard Alexander in the mid-eighteenth century. G.W.P. Custis's father, John Custis, lived in the house for several years. It burned in 1930.*





absorb moisture, thereby, increasing the longevity of the buildings. As a timber house with brick chimneys instead of wood, Alexander's house was characteristic of the elite architecture of the mid-eighteenth century. As a plantation Alexander's farm estate most likely included outbuildings such as a dairy, smokehouse, icehouse, granary, kitchen, slave quarters and barns to shelter the tools, tasks and produce agricultural products.<sup>37</sup> By the 1750s Gerrard Alexander also had a brick residence in Alexandria, Virginia.<sup>38</sup>

In 1750 the land of the Howsing Tract was surveyed again—this time by Jeremiah Hampton, Ferdiando O'Neal, and Joseph Dorsey—in accordance with a suit between the Alexander bothers and Henry Awbry, an adjacent landowner to the north of Gerrard's tract.<sup>39</sup> According to this land survey, Gerrard Alexander had quarters, most likely slave quarters, located on Holmes Island (now called Daingerfield Island), in addition to his home near Four Mile Creek. North of Holmes Island, Rick Wheeler, a tenant farmer of Gerrard Alexander, had a house with two outbuildings. Continuing north along the edge of the Potomac, William Griffin, also a tenant of Gerrard Alexander, was seated with a single structure located near the mouth of the Wampakam Branch. Although the exact appearance of these tenant farm structures is not known, one or one-and-a-half story frame dwellings or log houses covered with



9 In this detail from the 1750 land survey of a portion of the Howsing Tract, the structures associated with the tenants of Gerrard Alexander are clearly visible. The house of Rick Wheeler, conforms most closely to the location of George Washington Parke Custis's first home at Arlington.

unpainted riven clapboards, often of post in the ground construction (earthfast), were typical of tenant farms in northern Virginia during that time period.<sup>40</sup> In 1760 Captain Awbry still owned the land north of Gerrard Alexander. Upon his property he appears to have constructed two relatively large structures and two small ones. At this time, the road leading from

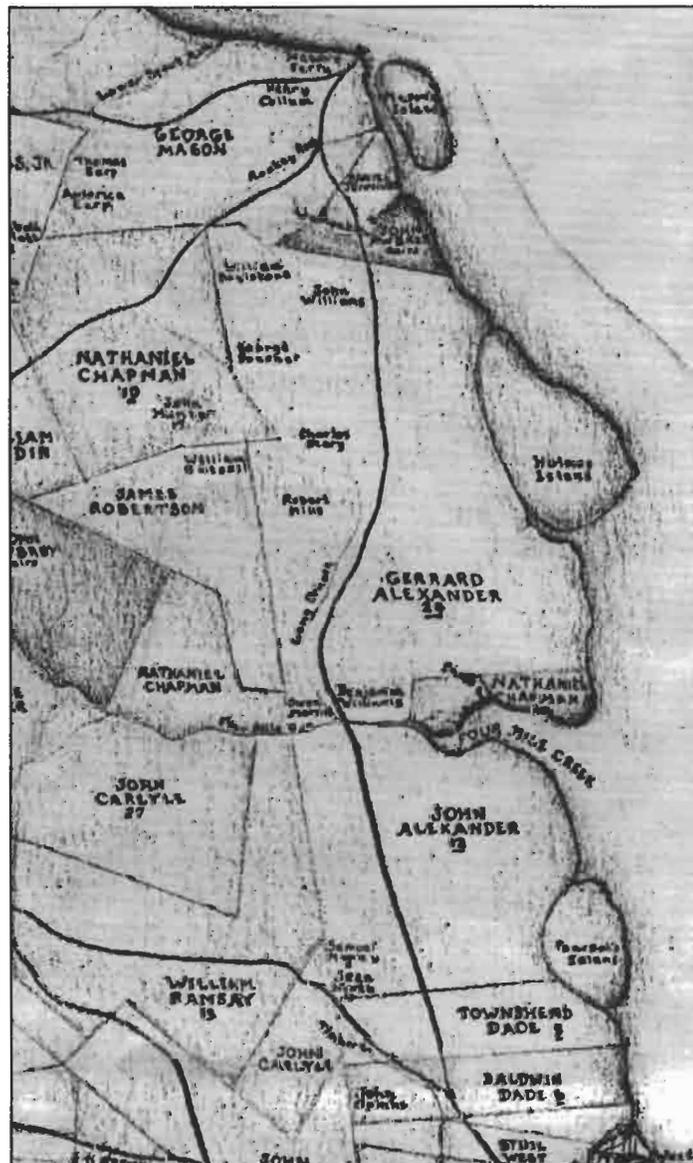


the ferry near My Lord's Island, to Falls Church (approximately in the same alignment as modern Wilson Boulevard) was called Awbry Road after Captain Awbry's land holdings.<sup>41</sup>

Like most mid-eighteenth century planters, Gerrard Alexander focused his efforts on developing his land through farms worked by tenants and slaves. By 1760 he owned twenty-four slaves and was one of the largest slave owners in the region. He also had six separate tenant farms located on his property west of the route known as the Road to Alexandria. These farmers may have been in addition to those identified living near the shores of the Potomac on the earlier mid-seventeenth-century maps described above.<sup>42</sup> Yet they may have been the same, for tenants would often move within a property as the thin, sandy, alluvial soils of the uplands that surrounded the rivers lost fertility quite quickly without active soil improvement. Though it is not known what crops were grown by these specific tenant farmers, broader patterns of agricultural development in the region reveal the context in which Alexander's tenants farmed.

By the mid-eighteenth century the cost and upset of the French and Indian War, in combination with low tobacco prices and increasingly depleted soil, had depressed the Virginia colonial market.<sup>43</sup> Earlier in the century, though the overall output of tobacco was increasing due to the increased acreage under cultivation, the stagnating land productivity and the increasing cost of slave labor intensified the effects of the low economic return on tobacco exports to England and through England, to Europe. For instance, in the 1730s and 1740s the demand for slaves had increased in Virginia. The smaller farms were consolidated into larger farms to attempt to make a profit even as the tobacco prices fell. More slaves were needed to work the larger farms. The increased demand caused the price per slave to rise substantially.<sup>44</sup> Therefore while tobacco prices were cheap, slaves were

10 This detail of an interpretive map of Fairfax County, Virginia in 1760 by Beth Mitchell, illustrates the land ownership and the locations of tenant farmers on the land that was to become the Arlington House estate.



combination with low tobacco prices and increasingly depleted soil, had depressed the Virginia colonial market.<sup>43</sup> Earlier in the century, though the overall output of tobacco was increasing due to the increased acreage under cultivation, the stagnating land productivity and the increasing cost of slave labor intensified the effects of the low economic return on tobacco exports to England and through England, to Europe. For instance, in the 1730s and 1740s the demand for slaves had increased in Virginia. The smaller farms were consolidated into larger farms to attempt to make a profit even as the tobacco prices fell. More slaves were needed to work the larger farms. The increased demand caused the price per slave to rise substantially.<sup>44</sup> Therefore while tobacco prices were cheap, slaves were



expensive.<sup>45</sup> Though, as in many colonial economies, the fluctuations in tobacco price were cyclical, the continuing rise and fall of the agricultural economy was a factor in the relatively slow settlement of the Northern Neck during the early eighteenth century. By the mid-eighteenth century some farmers were beginning to discontinue their cultivation of tobacco, a crop which was an enormous drain on soil nutrients. Some agriculturists in Virginia began to grow indigo, while others cultivated hemp, flax or cotton. However, as they were tied to relatively expensive industrial processes these crops were not grown in large quantities until the technology of the clothing mill and cotton gin became available at the turn of the century.<sup>46</sup> Wheat and corn cultivation gained popularity in the Potomac River region at this time, as grain prices tended to fall less quickly during the recurring depressions and ready markets were found in Philadelphia and Baltimore.<sup>47</sup> Milling activity was seen in the establishment of Cubbs Mill and associated residence located west of Gerrard Alexander's plantation house at the intersection of Long Branch and Four Mile Creek. Cubb was also a tenant of Robert Alexander. A mill had been located in this spot as early as 1719.<sup>48</sup>

In the early eighteenth century in the Northern Neck area of Virginia, most flour mills were relatively small custom mills averaging about three to four bushels of wheat per hour. Such custom mills, as the name suggests, ground wheat to the specifications of individual farmers. Custom mills, like the Cubb mill on Four Mile Run, were constructed on small tributary streams and were fairly isolated from large markets due to relatively poor transportation systems. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, the flour milling industry around Baltimore, Georgetown and Alexandria was flourishing. Expanding populations, improved milling technology and the construction of turnpikes at the beginning of the next century and later canals generated a much larger export of flour to local, national, and international markets. Large merchant mills developed to grind wheat to supply these increased market needs, in contrast to the local focus and smaller infrastructure of the custom mills—already common in Virginia and Maryland.<sup>49</sup> Grist mills were also part of plantation economies, supplying flour to the large agricultural workforces.

While a large number of land grants made in the first three decades of the eighteenth century in the Northern Neck were for small tracts of between 200 and 500 acres (for middle class farms with two or three slaves), much land was also controlled through large land holdings. The names Lee, Fitzhugh, Chapman, Carter, and Fairfax occurred in land grant books repeatedly as these families attempted to acquire large tracts of land convenient to waterways or established roads. In 1760, the largest land tract in Fairfax County belonged to the Fitzhugh family. The 21,996 acres of this property was over three times as large as any other property holding in the county.<sup>50</sup> This estate, called Ravensworth in the late eighteenth century, would be one of the childhood homes of G.W.P. Custis's wife, Mary Lee Fitzhugh.<sup>51</sup>

Gerrard Alexander died in 1761. Since he had previously succeeded in establishing his ownership in fee simple his testator was able to divide his land as the will delineated. To his son Robert he bequeathed his home near Four Mile Run and 904 acres. To his son and name-



sake, Gerrard, he gave 900 acres of the upper part of the tract—the land that was to become the Arlington Estate. Because Gerrard and Robert owned this land in fee simple, they were able to sell it twenty years later, to John Parke Custis, father of the master of Arlington House.

## THE CUSTIS AND WASHINGTON FAMILIES

In 1778, John Parke Custis, son of Martha Dandridge Washington and her first husband Daniel Custis, and stepson of George Washington, entered into negotiations with Gerrard and Robert Alexander hoping to buy their property along the Potomac for what he believed would be the future site of his family seat. His enthusiasm for purchasing the land was founded on several factors, including proximity to his stepfather's estate at Mount Vernon and to his wife's childhood home at Mount Airy in Upper Marlborough County. The magnificent hilltop setting offered spectacular views along the Potomac, as well as the prospect of cultivating the site's rich alluvial soils near the river and turning it into a profitable working estate.

The Custis family, like the Fitzhughs mentioned previously, were large land holders in eighteenth-century Virginia. John Custis IV (1678-1749), John Parke Custis' paternal grandfather, owned three main residences. Arlington, the origin of the name Arlington House, was located on the Eastern Shore overlooking the waters of Old Plantation Creek. He also owned a plantation named Queen's Creek about one mile north of Williamsburg. In 1717, after the death of his wife Francis in 1715, he moved with his two children, Francis Parke and Daniel Parke Custis to a large home within the city of Williamsburg. Here he developed extensive picturesque ornamental, fruit and vegetable gardens, famous throughout the country. He imported a large number of plants from Europe and was actively involved in the design of the garden landscape. He also owned books on horticulture and landscape design.<sup>52</sup> These books were inherited by his son, Daniel, who in turn passed them on to his son John—G.W.P. Custis's father.<sup>53</sup> Such books as *Salmon's History of Plants* (1710), *A Dictionary of Husbandry, Gardening &ca.* (1717), *Compleat Housewife* (1734), *The Flower Garden*, (ca. 1730), *The Florists Vade-Mecum* (1682) were included in the book inventory, illustrating at least some written authority on gardening and husbandry. Daniel Custis (1712-1757), the future father of John Parke Custis, educated in England, was a scholar of both horticulture and botany. In 1749, when Daniel was thirty-seven, he began to court eighteen-year old Martha Dandridge of New Kent County. Daniel and Martha married in the spring of 1750 and established their home at White House on the Pamunkey River.<sup>54</sup> They had four children, two of whom died young.<sup>55</sup> In 1757, shortly after the death of his two young children, Daniel passed away leaving the management of his extensive land holdings to Martha. She was now one of the wealthiest women in the colony—owning over 17,000 acres of land in plantations in six different counties, about 4049 £ worth of material goods, and 285 slaves worth approximately 8958 £.<sup>56</sup> Along with the land that would become the Arlington Estate, many of the descendants of the 285 slaves would be inherited by her grandson, G.W. P. Custis.



Within a year, Martha Custis was engaged to George Washington, a colonel in the Colonial army. With her two young children, John and Martha (Patsy), she moved to Mount Vernon soon after her marriage. Washington accepted the two children as his own, assisting greatly with the raising of both.<sup>57</sup> With his marriage to Martha he controlled her dower rights of one-third of the large estate of Daniel Custis, and even more financially important, the two-thirds share of John Custis's inheritance. As his guardian, George Washington attempted to guide the education of John, hiring a series of tutors for the boy. However, correspondence between John, Washington and his tutors suggests he was not the most dedicated scholar. Regardless he managed to get through an education centered in Annapolis and later King's College in New York City. While in Annapolis he met Eleanor Calvert. The Calverts, whose home was Mount Airy in Upper Marlborough, Maryland, were well acquainted with the Washingtons.<sup>58</sup> The two were married in 1774 after John's studies in New York City were cut short by his older sister Patsy's death in 1773. In order to prepare John for his inheritance of the Custis properties, George Washington took him and Nelly to Williamsburg in the fall to visit the Custis properties there. These plantations, inherited by John through his mother Martha, were in the counties of New Kent, King William, York, Northampton and Hanover.<sup>59</sup>

Shortly after Eleanor Calvert and John Custis were married they came home to Mount Vernon. During the first couple years of their marriage they lived both at the White House plantation and Mount Vernon.<sup>60</sup> Towards the end of 1778, anxious to have his own home now that he had two children, and concerned that currency would continue to depreciate due to the Revolutionary War, John began to look for land convenient to Mount Vernon and Mount Airy and large enough to support a plantation. In 1778 he found what he was looking for in the thickly timbered tract along the Potomac River belonging to the Alexander brothers, John, Philip and Gerrard—the future land of Arlington.

Custis ended up purchasing the land from the brothers for quite a large sum, and was severely reprimanded by his stepfather, George Washington, for the outrageous terms of purchase. To Robert Alexander, Custis agreed to pay 12 £ per acre to Robert Alexander and, at the expiration of twenty-four years, to pay the principal with compound interest. Under the terms of this agreement Custis would not own the land outright until twenty-four years from the date of the contract. Custis agreed to pay Gerrard Alexander eleven pounds per acre, to be paid at Christmas of that year. As Washington wrote in a letter to his adopted son,

*as a friend and as one who has your welfare at heart, let me entreat you to consider the consequences of paying with compound interest . . . with respect to your purchase from Robert Alexander I can only say that the price you have offered for it is a very great one, but as you want it to live at and as it answers yours and Nellie's views and is a pleasant seat and capable of great improvement, I do not think the price ought to be a capital object with you.<sup>61</sup>*

The tracts of land purchased from the two Alexander brothers were separated by a tract



belonging to a third brother, Philip Alexander, which Custis had hoped to eventually acquire, though he never did. John Custis and his wife Eleanor moved into Robert Alexander's former house located near the mouth of Four-mile Creek, renaming the estate Abingdon. According to accounts of the property, remnants of ornate gardens, including boxwood and lilac shrubs and jonquil bulbs remained into the twentieth century. Whether these plants truly dated to the time of the Custises, as was suggested in the 1929 article in the *Daughters of American Revolution Magazine*, is uncertain.<sup>62</sup> John and Eleanor Custis and their four children, Martha, Elizabeth, Eleanor (Nelly) and George Washington Parke (G.W.P), continued to live at Abingdon until John's death.<sup>63</sup>

In September 1781, a few months after the birth of George Washington Parke Custis, John Custis traveled to Williamsburg to serve as a volunteer aide to General Washington. In the city swarming with French and American troops Custis celebrated the British failure to force its way into the Chesapeake Bay. The end of the Revolutionary War was certain. Yet only a few days later, sick with camp fever, John Custis died, never to return to Abingdon. According to family tradition, it was as George Washington attempted to comfort his wife and daughter-in-law that he promised to care for the two youngest children, Nelly Parke and George Washington Parke Custis, "as his own" for the remainder of his life.<sup>64</sup> In turn, after John Custis's death G.W.P. Custis came to regard George Washington as a father.

With the war over, the family returned to Mount Vernon. In 1783 Eleanor Custis married Doctor David Stuart, a well-respected, highly educated man of relatively little fortune. The two young children, Washington and Nelly, spent time at both their mother's house, Abingdon and at Mount Vernon with their grandparents.<sup>65</sup> As the children grew, they began to spend more and more time at Mount Vernon and the Washingtons gradually took over their

11 "The Washington Family" by Edward Savage, c. 1796, included from left to right, George Washington Parke Custis, George Washington, Martha Parke Custis and Martha Washington.



Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association



upbringing.<sup>66</sup> Though Mount Vernon was not entirely typical of the farming enterprises in northern Virginia in the late-eighteenth century, the estate provided G.W.P. Custis with a clear example of the promise of agricultural pursuits. In addition, six of the plantations overseen by George Washington were owned outright by G.W.P. Custis or were to be inherited by the boy when he came of age. In General George Washington he found a willing teacher.

As a young boy, G.W.P. Custis followed his adopted grandfather around the estate, listening to him talk with prominent visitors about issues pertinent to both the estate and the country as a whole. He listened as George Washington spoke about the importance of good roads in releasing the young American country from its dependency on Europe. Washington also believed that breeding hardier agricultural stock would help guarantee continuing economic and therefore political freedom. As a grown man, G.W.P. Custis would illustrate his adherence to these principles in his own experiments with farming and animal breeding.<sup>67</sup> G.W.P. Custis also adopted the agricultural model provided by George Washington, which had been formed both by



Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association

12 George Washington Parke Custis, 1795, by Robert Edge Pine

Washington's personal morals and his economic situation. General Washington was in a difficult position, simultaneously an agriculturist in the slave economy of northern Virginia and a leader of a new democracy. He realized that the soil of his land was very depleted and that his slave populations were increasing through birth and inheritance. Because of his moral beliefs and his position as President, he did not feel that he could sell his slaves, though they were in some ways an economic drain. Neither, however, could he set them free in his lifetime, for this too would have caused him political difficulty and economic hardship. In addition, he could not move west, as did many of his prominent neighbors, due to his political ties. Therefore he turned to "new husbandry" and the possibilities inherent in modern agricultural practices such as soil conservation and deep plowing. George Washington was not simply interested in abstract theory, but instead was fascinated by the details of agriculture, horticulture and gardening. As Washington wrote from Mount Vernon in 1797, shortly after the completion of his presidential terms,

*I am once more seated under my own Vine and Fig-tree and hope to spend the remainder of my days . . . in peaceful retirement, making political pursuits yield to the more rational amusement of cultivating the earth.*<sup>68</sup>

As a grown man, G.W.P. Custis would promulgate these theories and values as well, though



perhaps he did not as successfully emulate them.

Washington guided young G.W.P. in his formal education, as he had the boy's father. Even though "Young Washington", as he was sometimes called, was not the most determined scholar, he had a series of influential tutors, including Tobias Lear and the Reverend Stanhope Smith.<sup>69</sup> In 1798, the boy entered St. Johns College in Annapolis, Maryland. He spent only one year there, however, before returning to live at Mount Vernon. That ended his formal schooling, much to Washington's regret. When he came of age, G.W.P. would inherit an enormous amount of land and a large number of slaves. George Washington wanted to ensure that G.W.P. was prepared to succeed under the heavy responsibility of their management. It is also important to note, in defense of G.W.P., that although formal education was an integral part of a planter's upbringing, Custis was the only male child of a wealthy land holder. Therefore Custis knew that he would inherit property and become a gentleman agriculturist, a landed farmer. Children who had many male siblings or those males not first born were often required to learn a lucrative trade such as law, medicine or engineering. A military career was also possible; though financial success was not certain.<sup>70</sup> Hence for G.W.P. Custis, doing well in his scholarly achievements was not so much an economic necessity, as a social grace and political advantage.

In the last years of the eighteenth-century, the country was again preparing for war, nervous about possible conflict with France. The ports of Alexandria and Georgetown were bustling. After a three month training period and with the influence of General George Washington, G.W. P. entered the army as a Lieutenant. The war never came, but thereafter G.W.P. was referred to as Major in certain social circles, the rank at which he was discharged. With the war with France averted, the local social and economic environment continued much as it had prior to the Revolutionary War. After his term as president (1789-97), Washington returned again to Mount Vernon, to oversee his fields and his almost 300 slaves.<sup>71</sup> G.W.P. stayed with him at Mount Vernon.

The Fairfax County land owners who had held their property for the longest, such as the Washingtons, the Lees, and the Fitzhughs, held much of the power in the community. The wealthy land owners, through their elected offices and appointed positions, directed the location of roads and bridges by appointing road surveyors. They regulated water mills and ordinaries (taverns), nominated tobacco inspectors, and sited warehouses, churches and court-houses. They were also justices in county courts. As a young man, G.W.P. Custis would promote this arrangement though his political aspirations—becoming a member of the Federalist party—fighting the egalitarian theories of government that were gaining prominence in many other sections of the country. Like most of the upper class, he believed that the government should remain in the hands of the wealthy and well-educated, despite what his fellow Virginian, Thomas Jefferson, expounded. Custis' beliefs would lead him to run for the Fairfax County General Assembly in 1802. Supporting a Federalist platform, he condemned the idea



of universal suffrage and felt that only land-owners could be trusted to defend American soil. He lost by a wide margin.

Throughout the later half of the eighteenth century, the agricultural economy of northern Virginia was in a state of flux. The population of slaves had increased exponentially.<sup>72</sup> While the slave populations grew, the land became increasingly barren. Washington saw this in his own estate. Though he practiced soil conservation policies, he was a relatively cash poor individual when he died in 1799; as many were in the county. In response to the nutrient depletion in the soils and the expected population increases with the creation of the federal city, the markets shifted to less labor intensive grain crops and smaller market gardens. In addition, domestic slave trade was beginning to increase. By the late eighteenth century, the invention and widespread marketing of the short-staple cotton gin, the availability of land in the southwestern territories for cotton production, the shift in the Upper South from tobacco culture to large-scale grain production, and the closing of the international slave trade, left the domestic slave trade booming.<sup>73</sup>

Improving transportation systems, such as turnpikes and toll roads, facilitated this increased level of trade in the ports of Georgetown and Alexandria. In 1785 the Assembly in Richmond appointed commissioners to improve roads from Alexandria to Vestals' and Snicker's Gaps and to convert them into tolled turnpikes; the fee collected would generate funds for road maintenance. Previously most roads had been marginally maintained by county governments or private individuals. With the increasing traffic around the major port cities, the old method of road funding was simply not adequate. By 1795, the Assembly enfranchised private companies to build and oversee a number of turnpikes. Among these was the Alexandria to Little River Turnpike Company which, by 1811, had constructed a twenty-foot wide road from Alexandria thirty-four miles west to Little River in Fairfax County. The possibility of a water route inland was also suggested through the incorporation of the Potowmack Company and the James River Company in 1784.<sup>74</sup> Yet even with George Washington as a strong proponent, the canal companies of Virginia, Maryland and the new federal city would not complete the construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal extending from Georgetown to Cumberland, Maryland until over fifty years later.<sup>75</sup> With the improving transportation routes, the port cities were expanding. As always, however, views of the urban development were colored by the biases of the individual recorder as the following two quotes illustrate. Around 1790, William Loughton Smith wrote of his journey to Alexandria,

*A noble view of Georgetown from the heights on the Virginia side . . . . The road being chiefly through the woods, you have only now and then a view of the river. . . Alexandria is a considerable place of trade. . . It suffered under the old constitution, but is now thriving rapidly; the situation of the town, a capital one, a fine eminence, plain level and bounded by a pretty range of hills, an excellent, sage and commodious harbor. . . there are about*



*3200 inhabitants, the houses principally of brick, the streets are not paved and being of clay after rain they are so slippery it is almost impossible to walk in them. . . .*<sup>76</sup>

Only a few years later, in 1795, a European emigrant described the port city in a slightly different manner,

*Alexandria is one of the most wicked places I ever beheld in my life; cock-fighting, horse racing, with every species of gambling and cheating . . . with no less than between forty and fifty billiard tables . . . I would not give one thousand pounds sterling for all the uncultivated land I have seen here.*<sup>77</sup>

In addition to the bustling ports of Georgetown and Alexandria, across the Potomac from Abingdon and from the land that would soon be the Arlington House estate, the capital city was just beginning to form.

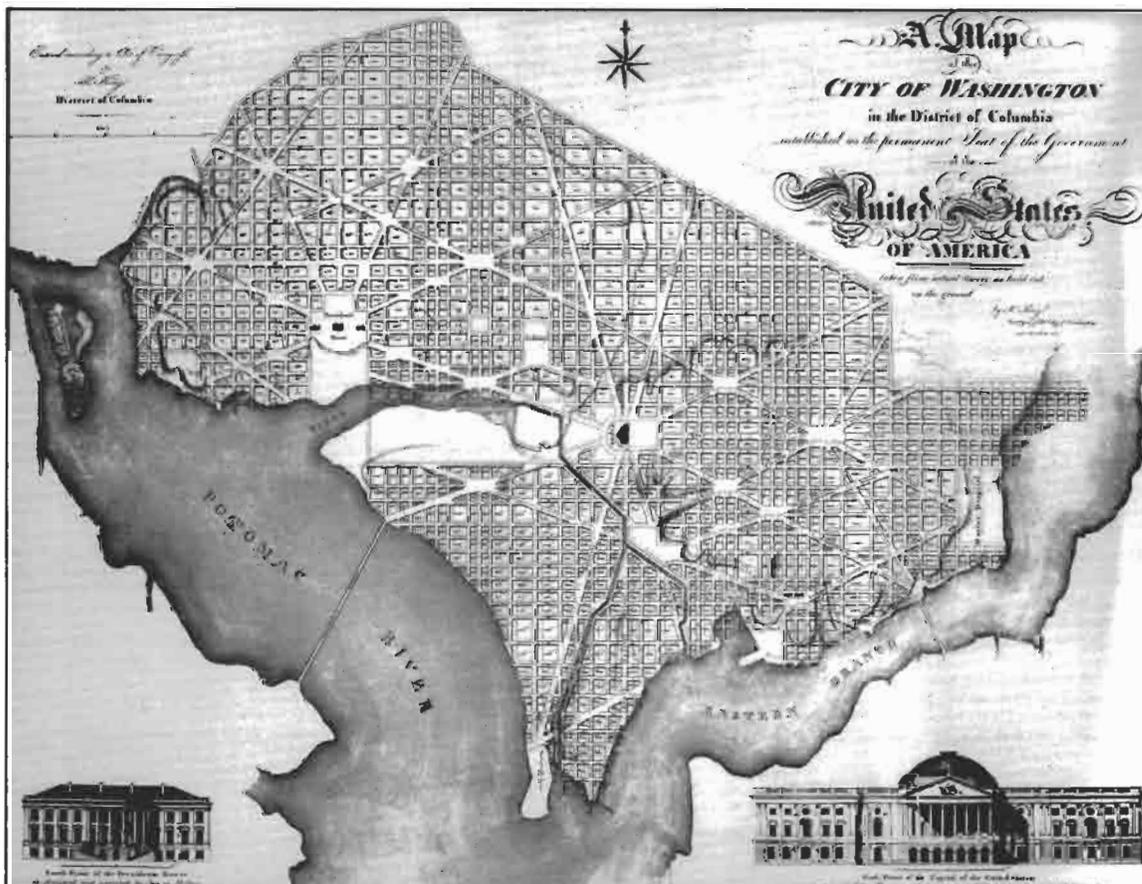
In November of 1799, Lawrence Lewis (G.W.P.'s brother-in-law) and G.W.P. Custis left Mount Vernon to inspect the Custis's White House plantation in New Kent County. G.W.P. Custis, in learning from the older and well-established Lawrence Lewis, was preparing to take over management of his lands. Very quickly the knowledge would be necessary for, shortly after their arrival at White House, General George Washington passed away at Mount Vernon.<sup>78</sup> At Washington's death, in addition to the two thirds of the estate of his father John Parke Custis, G.W.P. owned the property willed to him by his adopted grandfather, the Four Mile Tract. The 1200 acre Four Mile Tract, was located north of Four Mile Run, an affluent of the Potomac River. George Washington had purchased this property in 1774 from James and George Mercer for 892 £, approximately seven dollars an acre. He believed the tract was valuable both for its forest of primarily hardwoods and its proximity to Alexandria.<sup>79</sup> Though George Washington he had always planned to construct a mill on the property, he never did. G.W.P., who always referred to the property as the Washington Forest Tract, had a saw mill in operation by 1807.<sup>80</sup>

With Martha Washington's death in 1802, her portion of G.W.P. Custis's inheritance from his long deceased grandfather Daniel Parke Custis, was conveyed. John Parke Custis had left no will. Therefore, except for Eleanor Calvert Custis Stewart's dower rights as a widow to John Parke Custis, G.W.P. Custis inherited all of John Parke Custis' properties, including the White House plantation, Romancock (later renamed Romancoke) and Arlington on the Eastern Shore.<sup>81</sup> Through her will, Martha Custis Washington left household valuables to her grandson, including all her silver plate, a set of Cincinnati china, all her books save the family bible, an elaborate master bed and bedclothes, and other assorted furnishings. At the sale of her estate, G.W.P. also purchased a large number of household goods from side boards to soap jars—perhaps already thinking about the establishment of his own home at Arlington House.<sup>82</sup>



Eleanor Calvert Custis Stewart, G.W.P.'s mother, who was living with her large family at Hope Park agreed to settle her dower rights in Martha Washington's estate—worth one-third of all of the property of John Custis at his death—for an annual payment of \$1750 in silver for as long as she lived. She had six more children and lived until 1811.<sup>83</sup>

G.W.P. Custis moved into a small four room house located on the muddy flats of the Potomac River, on the land that was to become part of the Arlington estate. The house, once the home of a tenant of Gerrard Alexander, was primitive by Mount Vernon, or even White House plantation, standards. There Custis stored the belongings of his adopted grandfather, George Washington, items which he had purchased at the General's estate auction. On the damp ground of the flood plain, the material of the tents and flags used by the General during the Revolutionary War quickly began to mold.<sup>84</sup> Custis realized that in order to protect the relics, he would need to move into a more substantial residence soon. Like the plantations of Mount Vernon and Mount Airy, he desired a location that would command an extensive vista and yet be on land flat enough for accompanying dependencies and gardens. Here, at the top of the forested slope that ascended beyond the rutted Alexandria Turnpike, the land was relatively level and the crest of the hill fairly broad—ample enough for a substantial residence. From the heights he could see the beginnings of Washington D.C. and the wide Potomac River.



13 A Map of the City of Washington in the District of Columbia established as the permanent Seat of the Government of the United States of America taken from actual survey as laid out on the ground. Robert King, Surveyor of the City of Washington, 1818.

Geography and Maps, Library of Congress



## CONCLUSION

Perhaps the landscapes of Mount Vernon and the infant federal city across the water provided inspiration for the eventual development of the Arlington estate. It is difficult to say with certainty. Regardless, the views of the surrounding landscape were the result of hundreds of years of slow development. The fields at the base of G.W.P.'s sloping property were created by the tenants of John Alexander, or perhaps earlier by Algonquian tribes. G.W.P.'s father, John Parke Custis, had purchased this property thirty years prior because of its location, its aspect, and its aesthetic potential as a grand estate. Yet he never had the chance to fulfill his vision. There was no physical evidence of his ownership on the land, save for the tenant houses and rough fields near the Potomac. In the new century, improvements in transportation connecting this land to the markets of Georgetown, Washington and Alexandria would help create the economic environment in which the estate could develop. Just over a year would pass before Custis would begin in earnest to build the grand monument to his heritage—the Arlington House estate.

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*14 Estates associated with the lives of the Custis and Lee families are overlaid on a map of modern day Virginia.*

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1) **Stratford Hall**-  
Westmoreland County. In 1717, Thomas Lee purchased the land for Stratford Hall Plantation and, during the period of 1730-1738, built the brick Georgian Great House. Birthplace of R.E. Lee in 1807.

2) **Pope's Creek**-  
Westmoreland County. George Washington was born at Pope's Creek Plantation on the Potomac river in 1732. He lived at this plantation for the first three years of his life.

3) **White House**-  
New Kent County. Colonel Daniel Parke Custis' Pumunkey River mansion. John Parke Custis managed his fathers large New Kent County plantation. Custis married Martha Dandridge.

4) **Abingdon**-  
Arlington County. Originally granted to Robert Howson in 1669 who sold it to John Alexander for 6,000 pounds of tobacco. The first house was built in the 1740's by Gerard Alexander I, John's great grandson. George Washington's adopted stepson, John Parke Custis lived on the site for several years. The house burned in 1930.

5) **Mount Vernon**-  
Fairfax County .Home of George Washington from 1747 until his death in 1799. The land was patented in 1674, and the house was built (1743) by his half brother Lawrence Washington. George Washington inherited it in 1754.

6) **Arlington House**-  
Fairfax County. 1100 acre estate and seat of the Custis and Lee families. The manor house was begun in 1802 by George W. P. Custis. Arlington was later lived in by R.E. Lee and his family until they fled in 1861 due to advancing Union forces.

7) **Ravenworth**-  
Fairfax County. Built in 1796 by William Fitzhugh of Chatham, relative of Mrs. R.E. Lee. When Mrs. Lee fled Arlington House during the Civil War, she stayed at Ravenworth briefly, but fearing that Union troops might harm the home, she journeyed further south. The mansion was burned in 1925.

8) **Romancoke**-  
King William County. Custis family plantation located on the Pumunkey river.

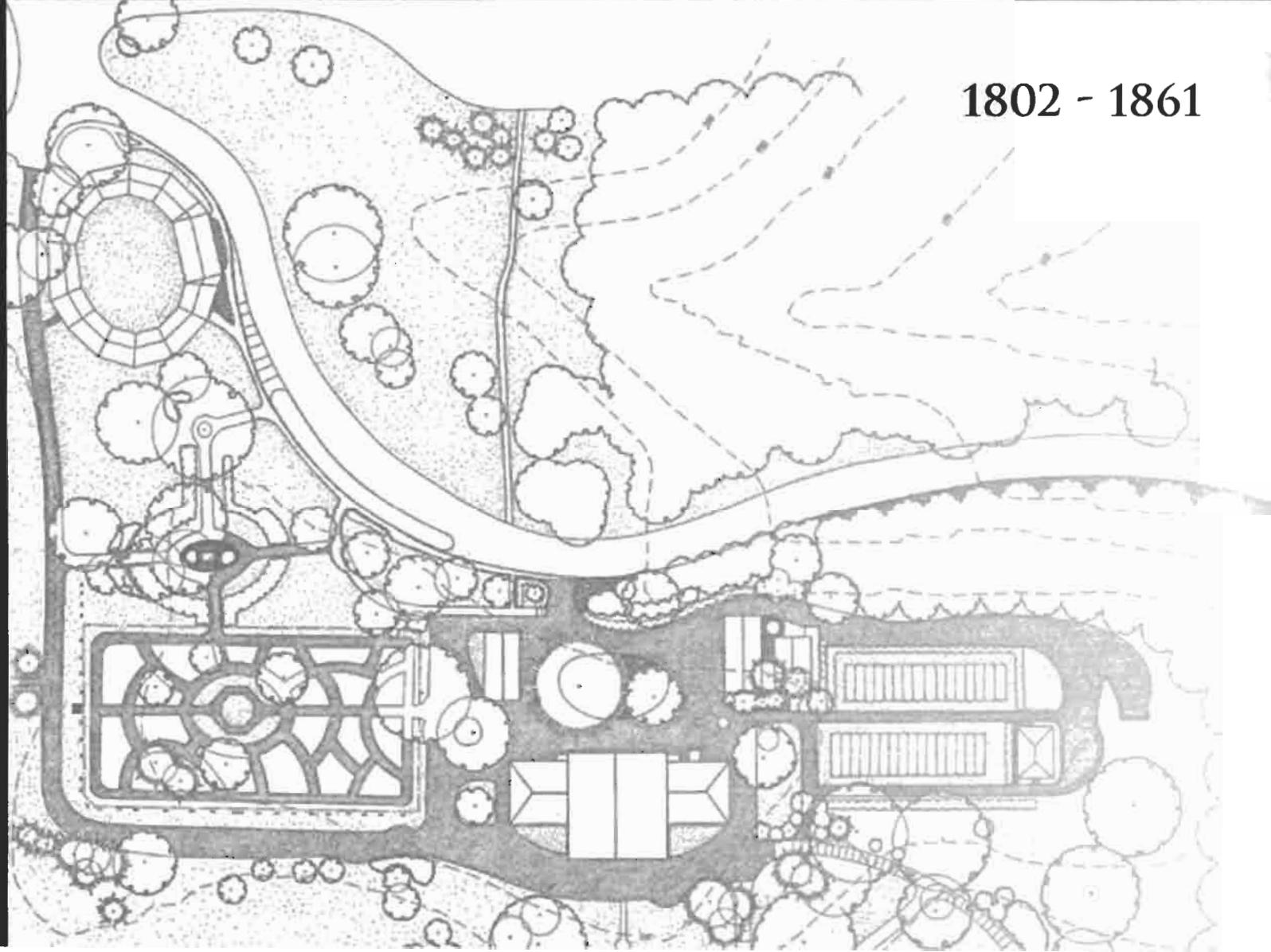
9) **Chatham**-  
Stafford county. William Fitzhugh, built this large brick home, begun in 1768, completed by 1771. Mary Fitzhugh Custis born here (later she married GWP Custis)

10) **Arlington**-  
Northumberland County. John Custis II acquired this property on the Northern Neck of Virginia in the mid seventeenth century. He began building the manor house, named Arlington after his native locality in England around 1670.





# CHAPTER 3



1802 - 1861



## FIRST YEARS AT ARLINGTON

George Washington Parke Custis did not remain long in the simple four room house on the pocosin of the Potomac River, surrounded by the rough fields of the former plots of Alexander's and later John Custis's land tenants.<sup>1</sup> The hot humid air of July that gathered in the low swales near the river was not healthy and the damp was destroying the belongings he had purchased from the estate of his guardians, George and Martha Washington. In 1802, high on the brow of the most prominent hill of the 1100 acre property, he began construction of what was to eventually become the northern wing of Arlington House.<sup>2</sup> With this endeavor, the four room cottage east of the Alexandria Georgetown Turnpike became the residence of his Arlington farm manager and overseer, as it continued to be in later decades.<sup>3</sup> In honor of the first president and to reinforce his own claim as the "Child of Mount Vernon," Custis named his new estate, Mount Washington.

George Washington Parke Custis, like many large landowners in Virginia during the early nineteenth century, was rich in land and slaves but cash poor. Inheritances from his father John Custis, his grandmother Martha Custis Washington, and his guardian George Washington, provided G.W.P. Custis with over 18,000 acres of land and approximately two hundred slaves.<sup>4</sup> This put the young man in the top one percent of all slave holding individuals in the south, for most who owned slaves held fewer than twenty.<sup>5</sup> Yet Custis was not without debt or financial obligations. In addition to the annual payment of \$1750 he made to his mother, Eleanor Calvert Custis Stewart, to settle her dower rights in the estate of John Custis, his expensive purchases from the estates of George and Martha Washington had diminished his cash supply.<sup>6</sup>

Custis had attended the public sales of the estate of George Washington in November 1801, and one year later that of Martha Washington. Many of the purchases he made were practical, for he needed supplies to develop the relatively raw land of Mount Washington. Though fairly heavy with clay, the fertile soil of the flat plain near the Potomac would be suitable for a working farm, while the sloping hills to the west would provide a beautiful prospect and setting for his home and gardens. What he needed, as a newly independent, landed farmer were the tools with which to work the soil and harvest the crops. Custis wanted to create a landscape that would convey to those in the port towns of Georgetown, Alexandria and the infant national capital, that he was the bearer of the legacy of Washington. In paying tribute to his adopted grandfather, Custis played the role of gentlemen farmer, attempting to emulate both Washington's aesthetic design sensibilities and his agricultural improvement proclivities. He acquired stock from Mount Vernon, including one mare and her young foal, one horse, one ram, five cows, thirteen mules and one jennet (a female donkey).<sup>7</sup> The mules would prove especially valuable to Custis in the establishment of his estate, for not only were mules generally healthier, longer-lived and cheaper to feed than horses, stud fees from the Arlington mules



provided a source of income.<sup>8</sup> He also purchased many farm implements and tools, such as a corn drilling machine, a flax break, a potato tiddle, wool and flax spinning wheels, a boat, an ox cart, six harrows and a set of blacksmith's tools.<sup>9</sup> In total he spent approximately forty-five hundred dollars on his purchases.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile in the flat, rich plains down by the river approximately fifty-seven slaves were improving the remnants of the previous tenant farm—most likely by fixing and building enclosures, clearing land of scrub growth and the river of snags. Slave cabins were constructed as were agricultural buildings to support the grain crops and market garden he planned for the area. In November of 1803 John Ball, the manager of Mount Washington, placed an advertisement in the *Alexandria Gazette* for a single man qualified to undertake the management of a large market garden.<sup>11</sup>

That Custis chose to cultivate a market garden is not surprising. Market gardens were large plots of land on which crops were grown to provide fresh vegetables and fruits to more urban centers. Though such gardens required intensive cultivation, Custis had inexpensive labor available in his slaves. In addition, at 1100 acres Mount Washington was one of the largest properties in the vicinity of the port towns. This proximity was a definite advantage, for the less time the vegetables took in transport, the fresher the produce and the greater return on investment due to the cheaper transportation costs. Transportation routes were slowly improving in the area. The same year of Custis's arrival, 1802, a skirting canal had been completed by the Patowmack Canal Company around Great Falls and also one at Little Falls, on the Virginia side. Though the Alexandria Canal would not be extended over Custis's property from Georgetown to Alexandria for another forty years, the Potomac River was partially navigable. Although Long Bridge, south of the Arlington estate, was not constructed until 1809, Mason's ferry, which went from Georgetown to Analostan Island, had begun its route in the 1740s.<sup>12</sup> The island was connected to the Virginia shore through a causeway. Finally, the potential return from a market garden was high, for the portion of Fairfax County in which Custis's property was located had been incorporated into the new District of Columbia in 1801 and many felt that the new government center would be a boon to local economics. Georgetown, Alexandria and Washington were growing and the market for agricultural products was expanding. Three years later, when the topic of retrocession of the western shore of the Potomac to Virginia was discussed, Custis was firmly against it.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the market garden, Custis grew wheat and corn on the flat plains down by the river. Mount Washington's proximity to Alexandria, which was an important port for the shipment of grain to Europe because of the French Revolution and Napoleon's Wars, gave Custis an advantage over farmers further inland.<sup>14</sup> Tobacco, though possibly grown on the property in the previous century, no longer made economic sense. As Custis knew well from his youth spent accompanying his adopted grandfather on his walks around Mount Vernon, tobacco was an enormous drain on soil fertility. Though marl, a type of lime which was beginning to be used as a fertilizer, did improve the harvest of most crops, it did little for tobacco.



Manure, another fertilizer, made it taste bad.<sup>15</sup> Most importantly, tobacco required large plots of land, and Mount Washington had only a limited supply of tillable soil. In contrast, the picturesque slopes of the property dotted with the cedars of secondary forest growth did provide pasture land—an agricultural use that would conform perfectly to the design ideals of the naturalistic English Landscape School, and the “Park” that was eventually created on the slopes of Mount Washington.<sup>16</sup> The design of Mount Washington, later renamed Arlington House, was in many ways to exemplify this connection between the pragmatic necessities of an agricultural slave economy and the picturesque aesthetic sense of the antebellum period.

Custis, like Washington, began promoting agricultural improvement as a very young man. In the spring of 1803, the same year that Custis began construction on the classical mansion that was to become Arlington House, he placed an advertisement in the *Universal Gazette*, a Washington D.C. newspaper:

*For the encouragement of an American breed of sheep I will give a premium of forty dollars, for the finest ram lamb that can be produced in the month of March 1805...the lambs to be inspected by four gentlemen of judgment and respectability...in addition to the premium, the breeder of the fortunate lamb will be entitled to demand a ram of the improved breed, at any time within ten years.*<sup>17</sup>

The “improved breed” to which Custis referred was from Mount Washington, a ram born of the sheep of Mount Vernon. Custis expounded in local and national newspaper articles on the value of agricultural improvement and on the benefits resulting from a reliance on American soil and ingenuity for goods, instead of those of Europe. Such a federalist and agrarian political inclination was not surprising considering the heritage of Custis. George Washington had exemplified the gentleman farmer and throughout his life strove to improve the agricultural condition of the American Colonies and later that of the new nation. Custis had adopted his concern about the lack of an adequate breed of sheep that would provide a fine-grain wool which could compete with the merino wool coming out of Europe. During the years that Custis lived at Mount Vernon, Washington worked hard to develop a breed of sheep that would survive in the climate of Virginia and produce a warm thick wool. He was only partly successful. In the early nineteenth century, with the wars in Europe, American domestic products were increasingly lucrative. Custis’s interest in the development of a manufacturing industry, through his promotion of sheep husbandry, was a direct link with the beliefs of Washington that arose out of the American Revolution, substantiating Custis as the true inheritor of the legacy of George Washington. To rely on England’s exports was, to Custis and to Washington, dangerous to the political autonomy of the country. Like his adopted grandfather, Custis believed that America was only as strong as her agricultural practices. As an editorial in the *Boston Patriot* stated in 1809, “Among the most distinguished patrons of



American Agriculture may be ranked George Washington, R.R. Livingston, late ambassador to France, D. Humphreys, late Ambassador to Portugal and Spain, and G.W.P. Custis.<sup>18</sup>

Custis's promotion of wool production took an even more prominent form in his annual sheep shearing. At these events, held in April of the years between 1805 and 1811, individuals from around the area gathered by a fresh water spring (later named Arlington Spring) at the edge of the Potomac River, just east of the farm. Here, with George Washington's military tents erected next to rustic arbors covered with honeysuckle and laurel, the guests gathered to watch the shearing, to eat and to listen to speeches of Custis and other well-known landed farmers. The public sheep shearings at Arlington Spring established a precedent of hospitality and display at the estate. Though Arlington Spring, as the social gathering place and resort came to be called, would last for another fifty years, the sheep breed called Arlington Improved never caught on. By 1809, the breed was losing popularity to the European merino. With the War of 1812 imminent, the last sheep shearing was held in April of 1811. However, sheep would graze at least occasionally within the park at Arlington for the next fifty years. As a relative of Custis wrote of the view from the front portico of Arlington in the 1850s:

*We [went] down to the porch where the beginning of the day is beautiful to behold, its early light thinning on the dewy lawn where the sheep who have sought shelter near the house during the night crop the moist grass.*<sup>19</sup>

## EARLY IMPROVEMENT OF THE ESTATES— ARLINGTON, WHITE HOUSE AND ROMANCOCK

From his vantage point high on the hill, Custis could look down through the oaks, cedars, hickory and elms to the cleared fields of the farm and on to the emerging city of Washington across the river. The house in which he lived during his first two years at Mount Washington, though not as small as the overseer's residence down on the farm, was humble compared to the later mansion. Of brick construction, the first floor of the house had only three rooms.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps Custis had grander ideas in mind than this simple brick structure. In any case, he did not have the resources to afford them yet.

In placing his modest home on the most prominent and highest point on the 1100 acre property, overlooking the river, Custis was following an established custom. From the beginning of the American colonies, primary structures were often built on high points, for both aesthetic and defensive reasons. As the century progressed, as technology and settlement advanced and the ideas of the English landscape school drifted to the newly formed United States, the aesthetic drama of a high elevation became even more valuable to the elite. Often in Virginia, the largest land owners carefully selected their elevated positions, siting their plantations to assure maximum prominence in the landscape.<sup>21</sup> Custis was familiar with this



approach at Woodlawn plantation. Woodlawn, a Georgian mansion that sat high on a hill overlooking Mount Vernon and the Potomac River, was the home of his sister, Nelly Custis Lewis and her husband Lawrence Lewis. Lawrence Lewis, a good friend of Custis, shared his interest in agriculture. Tudor Place, began in 1808, was the home of Custis's other sister, Martha Peters; over time it developed into a grand classical mansion with extensive gardens. Chatham, the home of his future wife, Mary Lee Fitzhugh, was also located high on a bluff overlooking the Rappahannock River. Yet only Mount Vernon exemplified the Custis's ideal estate.

The years of accompanying his knowledgeable guardian around the grounds of Mount Vernon probably imbued Custis with the naturalistic design approach that would influence him for the rest of his life. The Mount Vernon mansion had a two-story veranda which extended the entire length of the back façade. The view from this porch was of the gently sloping hillside, covered with long grass and dotted with specimen and massed trees, placed to frame vistas of the river and distant shore. Such pastoral design elements—irregular spatial

*15 East Front of Mount Vernon c.1792 and attributed to Edward Savage reveals, through the thoughtful placement of trees, the ha ha wall, and the curving lines of the landscape, characteristics of the English Landscape School of design.*



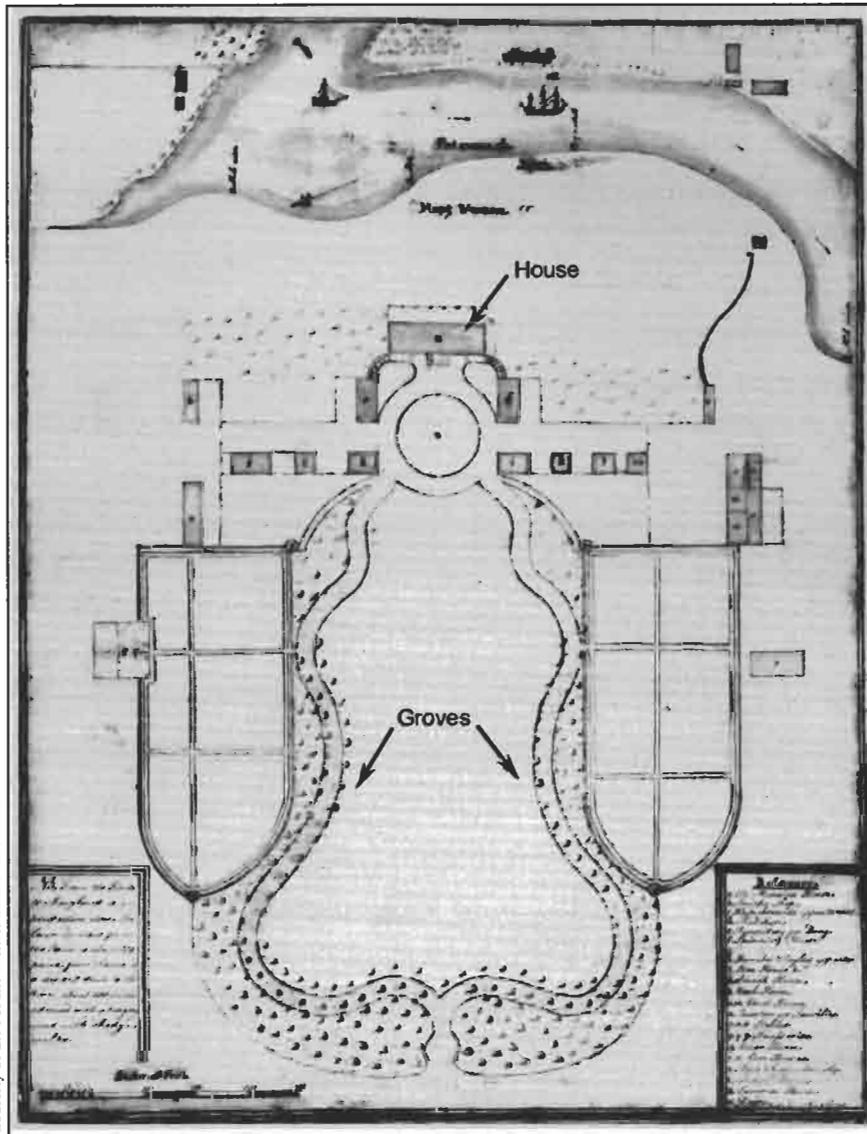
Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association

organization, serpentine lines, gentle slopes and rough lawns extending to the foundations of houses—were advocated in the English Landscape School of design. This picturesque, landscape design style grew out of the industrial revolution and the enclosure movement in England in the mid-eighteenth century and was interpreted and illustrated in the gardens of such prominent individuals as Andre Parmentier and Thomas Jefferson.<sup>22</sup> As the description of Mount Vernon illustrates, Washington also experimented with this relatively new style of garden design.



In the early 1780s, shortly after young Custis came to live with his guardian, Washington had embarked on a design and building campaign at Mount Vernon that would last until his death in 1799. Washington remodeled the driveway into a curvilinear alignment and established “groves” of trees on either side of the drive. He attempted to cloak the working elements of the farm in a picturesque veil—moving the rectangular walls and houses that enclosed the

upper and lower flower and vegetable gardens, to hide the pragmatic necessities.<sup>23</sup> In the landscape of Arlington, such control of access and views would play a prominent role in the eventual organization and design of the land. Custis may have had images of Mount Vernon in mind when he sited his humble house high on the hill and in creating his pastoral park which descended down the slope from Arlington House. In the



16 *The Vaughan Plan, presented to George Washington in 1787 by his friend Samuel Vaughan, illustrates the landscape of Mount Vernon. Map annotated for clarity, 2001.*

now vanished woodland garden grove once located to the southwest of Arlington House were elements similar to the groves created by George Washington at Mount Vernon years earlier. Like Washington, Custis had professional help for he hired William Spence, the head gardener from Mount Vernon.<sup>24</sup>

Spence had been employed by George Washington in November of 1797 as an indentured servant from Scotland with a term of three to four years.<sup>25</sup> Little is known of his specific training, but Scottish gardeners were common in early nineteenth-century America.<sup>26</sup> At

Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association



Mount Vernon Spence had been responsible for the addition of boxwood to the gardens, and had also participated in the implementation of Washington's design ideas.<sup>27</sup> What role Spence played in the layout of the grounds of Arlington is unknown, however he was most probably involved.

Custis first concerns were practical. Existing correspondence suggests that from 1802 to 1803, Custis was focused primarily on organizing his many properties into a profitable enterprise, concerned with the growing of crops, the construction of agricultural structures, and the work of his slaves. By November 1803 he hired John Ball to assist him in running the large estate.<sup>28</sup> Ball, whose grandfather had worked for Washington at Mount Vernon, was knowledgeable and freed Custis, somewhat, to concentrate on his other plantations.

The two primary estates from which family income was generated were Romancock and White House, located about ten miles apart on the Pamunkey River in the central tidewater of Virginia. By 1804 Custis had hired James Anderson, a former farm manager at Mount Vernon, to run them.<sup>29</sup> Anderson had been employed at Mount Vernon from approximately August of 1796 to December of 1799. Like Spence, Anderson was Scottish and learned agriculture through apprenticeship. In assuring George Washington of his suitability to the tasks of a farm manager he had stated,

*. . . I was bred to from my Youth the management of Stock We say is an Essential part of the Farmers business, the knowledge of a Dairy, Ditching and Hedging with Thorns are I think things Familiar to me, as well as the practical parts of Farming in Britain, conjoined with six Years experience in this county where soil and climate make some alleviations necessary.*<sup>30</sup>

Though Washington found Anderson slightly defensive and cantankerous when he offered suggestions for improvement in the farm manager's agricultural work, he proved to be an able overseer.<sup>31</sup> A farm manager had to be able to keep accurate income and expenditure accounts. He also had to understand all aspects of agriculture, milling, and fishing, in addition to such skills as carpentry, distilling, and pomology (the horticulture of apples.) Finally he had to ensure that the primary equity of the plantation, the human slaves, remained financially sound—that they worked to their capacity and that they remained healthy enough to do so. The farm manager, in the case of the Custis properties, almost always had an overseer at each property to whom the slaves responded directly. It was the manager, however, who determined the capabilities of the overseer. Anderson worked for a number of years managing the outlying plantations. The job was often transitional, a step in the quest for land ownership. For instance, in 1804 James Anderson became a tenant farmer of Custis when he was able to lease Mockin Island, one of Custis's inherited properties. Custis often hired immigrants, Scottish and Irish individuals, newly arrived in America as overseers and farm managers.



White House and Romancock had been farmed since their purchase by John Custis in the mid-eighteenth century. Unlike John Custis and later George Washington, G.W.P. Custis was highly reliant upon the agricultural success of these properties. The Mount Washington (or Arlington) estate was not intended to be self-sufficient. Instead, Arlington was a family seat supported by the profit from production at the other estates. This fact would guide its development into a primarily decorative landscape until G.W.P. Custis's death in 1857. Only when Arlington was separated in ownership from the Pamunkey properties by Custis's will to his grandchildren, would new requirements of the landscape arise.

The property of Romancock and Lower Quarter (the slaves' quarters), as it was often referred to in quarterly farm accounts, contained approximately 4656 acres including 1200 acres of marsh land and a grist mill.<sup>32</sup> During the mid-eighteenth century, under the ownership of John Custis and the oversight of George Washington, the primary crops produced on the Romancock property were tobacco, corn, and wheat, though oats and peas were also grown.<sup>33</sup> By the time the grist mill was constructed on the property by James Anderson in the early nineteenth century, cotton had replaced tobacco as the primary source of revenue. Corn and wheat, however, remained important crops.<sup>34</sup> In addition, the large area of marsh provided hay and pasture for livestock—primarily sheep, cattle and hogs.<sup>35</sup> Approximately sixty slaves were involved in the agriculture, milling, and distilling at Romancock.<sup>36</sup> Diversity of land use on the Pamunkey estates helped to insulate Custis from the harsh agricultural economy as the nineteenth century progressed.

White House and Old Quarter was about five hundred acres larger than Romancock. White House, where Martha and John Custis first lived, was the most valuable of all John Custis' estates during the 1750s.<sup>37</sup> This remained true, for Custis paid almost twice as much tax on White House as on Romancock during the early nineteenth century. In 1832 White House and Old Quarter listed ninety-seven slaves, fourteen horses and mules, two colts, forty seven head of cattle with six calves, one-hundred-forty-nine sheep, ninety-four hogs and sixty pigs.<sup>38</sup>

Though the monetary output of these two estates was directly tied to the agricultural ability of the farm manager and to the resources of the farm itself, the success of the production was also influenced greatly by the clarity of communication between Custis and his farm managers. Early in his life Custis seems to have been fortunate, having in his employ knowledgeable and responsible managers. Such a relationship is shown in a letter from a manager of the Romancock and White House estates.

*As respects cider and brandy, there is none. I think I wrote you in the latter part of the spring there was no fruit. I have not seen a crab apple this season neither here nor else where. Destruction of fruit was very general in this section of country, both of apples and peaches. Your instructions respecting the shipment of stoves will be punctually attended to*



*as likewise your instructions relative to the clothing . . . . To Mrs. Custis you will be pleased to say, that no addition has been made to the lot of working hands here [Romancock]. . . At White House there are three; two boys, twin children of Ceasar and Dolly and one girl, daughter of Carpenter Billy and Dinah . . . .*<sup>39</sup>

As time would reveal, such clear communication would not always be the case.

During 1803 the estate of Mount Washington (or Arlington) continued to develop. As in many agricultural slave economies, fish were an important commodity. Anadromous fish such as shad and herring were integral in the diet of the slaves and also supplemented the farm income when the fish were salted, barreled and sold at inland markets. At Mount Washington the tide and the current of the Potomac River were of almost equal strength, therefore fishing was not restricted to high or low water. But the calm in the river flow also proved problematic, for it caused frequent accumulations of silt and other debris, creating numerous snags which could catch the valuable nets or seines and cause them to tear.<sup>40</sup> Regardless of the obstacles, however, the improvement of the estate continued.

## CONSTRUCTION OF ARLINGTON HOUSE

By early 1804, Custis had most likely engaged George Hadfield to design the residence that would become Arlington House, for construction of the south wing had begun.<sup>41</sup> Where Custis and Hadfield met is unknown, but, as young, wealthy men in a relatively small circle their introduction is not surprising.<sup>42</sup> George Hadfield had been in America only a few years. A pupil at the Royal Academy of Arts, he had traveled extensively in Italy and absorbed the theories and characteristics of the classical architectural style through drawing restorations of ancient temples. In 1795, around the time that John Mason, Custis's neighbor, began building his home on Mason's Island, Hadfield accepted an offer to take over the construction of the Capital in the new federal city. There he became entangled in controversy and was eventually discharged without completing the building. Following his work at the Capital, Hadfield was employed in the design of private residences.<sup>43</sup> In fact, Hadfield's designs, with Arlington House as one of the most prominent, were especially influential in the northern United States where his architectural concepts were disseminated throughout the upper east coast and eastern Midwest portions of the United States.<sup>44</sup>

According to recent scholarship, Arlington House, a two-story, stuccoed brick house, was the first temple-form residence built in the United States.<sup>45</sup> The classically-styled temple-and-wing structure is characterized by arched front façade windows, bilateral symmetry, and a prominent temple portico. The enormous front portico, which by 1830 was scored or painted to resemble stone, was designed in a simple Doric order, perhaps inspired by the Greek Temple of Hera Argive at Paestum in Italy. The Temple of Hephaestus (or Theseum) is also believed to have been an influence on the design of Arlington, as both temples have por-



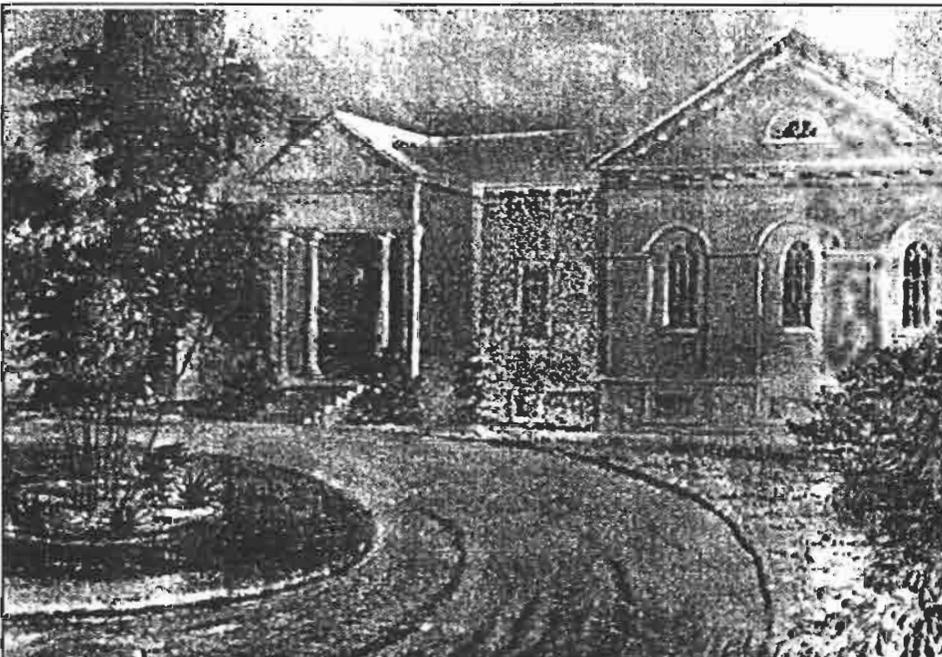
Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia



17 *The earliest extant sketch of Arlington House was done by John Farley in 1824.*

tics and massing similar to Arlington House.<sup>46</sup> The land upon which the Arlington residence was to be located gradually sloped from north to south and grading had to be undertaken in the construction.<sup>47</sup> Most likely the area to the north and south of the house was smoothed into flat terraces at this time in preparation for the gardens. Whether Hadfield had any input in the design of the landscape is unknown. Recent scholars have suggested, however, that had Hadfield had a longer, more prosperous career, he would have become extremely influential in the development of the picturesque garden in America.<sup>48</sup> Regardless, the creation of a temple-form residence backed by a forest and fronted by what would be a pastoral park landscape

Library of Congress



18 *Mason estate on Anolostan Island, c.1820, artist unknown*



conformed perfectly to the design aesthetics generated in Britain during the end of the eighteenth century.

With at least the concept of the overall design understood, Custis's original two story house was altered during the construction of the southern wing, so that the facades of the buildings matched.<sup>49</sup> Like the capital across the Potomac, Arlington House was built in stages and not finished until 1818. The design and construction of Arlington House, though unique in architectural design, was not completely without precedent. About ten years previously, John Mason had begun construction on a large Neoclassical home on Analostan Island, just north of Custis's property. Whether Hadfield drew inspiration from this structure is not known. But there are similarities between the Mason mansion and the structure that was to become Arlington. Like Arlington, the Mason house had large arched windows on the front façade and was covered in a light-colored pebble-dash stucco. The house also had a portico of the Doric or Tuscan order on the front façade, though not as enormous as at Arlington.<sup>50</sup> Like Custis's plantation home, Mason's mansion was sited to capture views and was constructed in stages.<sup>51</sup> In fact, only the central section and west wing of the Mason mansion's five-part pavilion design were ever completed.

On July 7, 1804, almost two years to the day after he first moved to Mount Washington, Custis married Mary Lee Fitzhugh. Mary Fitzhugh, then sixteen, had grown up at Chatham in Stafford County, Virginia. The main house of Chatham, a fifteen hundred acre estate, was

19 *Mary Fitzhugh Custis at 21 years old in 1809, a year after the birth of her daughter Mary Custis*

20 *George Washington Parke Custis, c.1809*



Arlington House Archives

sited on a plateau defined by steep ravines to the north and south. Three large terraces descended down the western slope which faced the Rappahanock River. 52 Mary's father, William Fitzhugh, Jr., also owned the nine thousand acre estate of Ravensworth,

south of Arlington in Fairfax County. During her marriage to Custis, after William Fitzhugh constructed a large home at Ravensworth, Mary often visited. She inherited a portion of the property through her father's estate, and later additional property following her brother's death.<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, like Arlington, Ravensworth was approached through an "oak park." It is not known whether Mary gardened as a young girl or had any influence on the design of the landscape at Chatham or Ravensworth, however her role in the development and care of the gardens and grounds of Arlington is firmly established. Both Mary and her daughter, Mary Randolph Custis born in 1808, were deeply involved in the design, care and organization of the flower and vegetable gardens and to a slightly lesser extent-the entire Arlington Estate.



Soon after their marriage, the Custis's began to refer to their home as Arlington House, instead of Mount Washington.<sup>54</sup> Most likely the name was adopted from Arlington on the Eastern Shore, a plantation which had been purchased by John Custis IV, G.W.P.'s great grandfather and well-known plantsman, about one hundred years earlier. Arlington on the Eastern Shore was approximately 500 acres and included a cemetery of the Custis family. By 1822, when G.W.P. Custis had the "old Arlington" property surveyed, only the chimney of the manor house remained.<sup>55</sup>

For the first thirteen years of the Custis's life at Arlington, the construction on the central portion of the house was halted due to a lack of funds. They lived in the two brick wings, which were separated by an open yard approximately fifty-eight feet wide, perhaps connected by a temporary hyphen structure or walkway. Though the design of the gardens around the mansion at this time is unknown, evidence of continued development on and around the estate exists. For instance in 1807 Custis began construction of flour and saw mills on the Washington Forest Tract, an eleven-hundred-acre forested property along Four Mile Run inherited by Custis at the death of Washington. These custom mills were small scale business ventures serving only the needs of Custis and people of the immediate area.<sup>56</sup> Throughout his life, Custis would also sell land lots of timber from the Washington Forest Tract to supplement his income. Interestingly he proposed a short lived development scheme—attempting to subdivide the Washington Forest Tract to develop a town named Mount Vernon.<sup>57</sup> In this Custis was perhaps ahead of his time, for there was little interest in the lots, and the development never occurred.

Washington, Georgetown and Alexandria, however, continued to grow in population. In 1808, the Washington and Alexandria Turnpike Company was organized in Alexandria by Jonah Thompson to construct the Alexandria and Georgetown Turnpike from Long Bridge, which was called Bridgepoint, on Alexander's Island south to the town of Alexandria. The following year a road was built from the ferry landing across from Analostan Island south through Custis's land to the Columbia Turnpike.<sup>58</sup> No doubt this improved transportation—both the Alexandria and Georgetown Turnpike, and Custis's ferry which had begun its route in 1807—increased the property value of the Arlington Estate, or at the least enhanced the return from the market garden and field crops.

Custis continued to promote the need for agricultural improvement in the country, especially in the south. In describing his plan to form a National Board of Agriculture in 1810, he elaborated on the state of American farming,

*No country ever suffered more from the want of agricultural improvement than ours. The general tillage of many parts of the union is a plunder of the soil and a robbery . . . what must be the reflections of the foreigner on beholding the state of agricultural improvement in the Southern country . . . would they not, on beholding many of our fields, say, surely this land has endured either the wrath of Heaven or the scourge of war and famine.<sup>59</sup>*



Though harsh his description was quite apt, for agriculture in southern America at this time was suffering. The benefits of fertilizer, including gypsum, guano and lime, as a method of increasing soil fertility, were not widely understood and disseminated. Even individual farmers who knew about the benefits often could not afford to implement change on their properties. Property values in the area plummeted as the crop returns shrank due to depleted soil coupled with the blockade of the Chesapeake Harbor by the British during the War of 1812. Contributing to this loss in property values was the emigration of farmers westward as the soil in the east became depleted. Yet like Washington, Custis was tied to northern Virginia by politics and through his personal quest to insure that the agrarian and patriotic values of the early Republic were instilled in the next generation.

Though Custis often wrote to popular periodicals on the value of progressive agricultural methods such as soil augmentation and deep plowing, lack of money was a major limiting factor in his attempts to follow his own advice. He was not alone. Many farmers and plantation owners found themselves in similar financial straits, or worse. Because of the amount of land Custis owned, his resources were diversified enough to allow him to do better financially than other local farmers. The market garden on the Arlington property and distilleries and mills at Romancock and on the Washington Forest Tract, respectively, provided supplemental income. He also sold rights to speculators to use the pastures of the Arlington estate to fatten cows before they were sold at market. In 1816, Custis recorded 1500 head of cattle.<sup>60</sup> The cattle served an additional purpose since their manure was extremely valuable to increasing production on Arlington Farm. So sure was he of manure's benefits, that Custis offered a prize to the individual farmer who could manure the most land with his own animals.<sup>61</sup> Around this same time, he purchased the *Lady of the Lake*—a ferry used to ship his products from the lower estates, Romancock and White House, to the markets of Georgetown, Washington and Alexandria. Not until 1843, about twenty years later, did the Alexandria Canal open and cross the Arlington estate from north to south parallel to the Potomac River. Though Robert E. Lee, who married Mary Randolph Custis in 1831, expressed worries that the slaves working in the fields of Arlington Farm would be distracted from their work by the passing boats, most likely the canal was an economic improvement to the estate.<sup>62</sup>

But in the 1820s transportation systems were still primitive in the area. It was not until technology allowed the improvement of internal transportation systems—canals and railroads primarily in the 1840s and 1850s—that the area witnessed an agricultural renewal. These transportation improvements were funded in part through increasing returns on agricultural products. Expanding markets for grains and flour due to the removal of restrictions on West Indian and South American trade in the 1830s had resulted in a wider use of agricultural improvement methodologies, thirty years after Custis first began advocating them. In addition, northerners faced with rising land costs and overcrowding in states such as New York, began to purchase land in the area, bringing with them new farming practices. In short,



Custis's own experiences—both successes and failures—in developing the Arlington estate often mirrored the economic and agricultural cycles of the larger environment of northern Virginia and Maryland.

## ARLINGTON FARM AND SPRING

Though the main purpose of Arlington was as a family seat and decorative landscape used to convey the status of both the Custis and the Washington families, Arlington Farm was an integral portion of the estate. The farm was located at the eastern edge of the property along the Potomac River and contained the market garden, crop fields, pasture, a fishery, and the homes or quarters of approximately fifty slaves at any one time. By late in the tenure of the Custis and Lee families, the slaves were living in five log cabins, each one ranging from 270 to 350 square feet in size, but the exact appearance of the cabins is unknown. Two of the cabins were located along the road which led west from Arlington Spring at the edge of the Potomac River to the main gate of the Arlington Estate off of the Alexandria and Georgetown Turnpike. The other slave quarters were located amongst the farm buildings which included at various times, a wheelwright's shop, a blacksmith, a saddlery, a poultry yard, a carriage shop, a granary, a large feeding barn, and a pump house.<sup>63</sup> Cattle, chickens and hogs were kept in and around these buildings. The structures may also have contained housing for some slaves. Two large outdoor sinks, either of stone or wood, were also located here. These hollowed out logs or soap stones were often used for washing or the preparation of food.<sup>64</sup> The wide variety in the types of farm buildings was not unusual for the first half of the nineteenth century. Though Arlington was not a self-sufficient plantation, the more jobs fulfilled by the slaves, the less cash outlay required by the Custis and Lee families. Therefore, slaves on the estate were not solely agriculturists. Some had to be skilled in blacksmithing, animal husbandry, and the working of leather for saddles and other products. To supplement their diets, the slaves most likely had family vegetable plots near their cabins. By the 1840s, a fenced orchard stretched to the south of the road which ran from the Alexandria Canal west to the overseer's house. The overseer's house, the original home of Custis when he moved to Arlington, was one of the only non-log structures on the farm. It was two stories with a porch that stretched across the back overlooking a work yard and slave quarters. Fields with crops such as corn and rye were located to the north and south of the farm buildings. In 1850, the farm produced 200 bushels of rye, 900 bushels of Indian corn, 150 bushels of oats, twenty bushels of peas, fifty bushels of Irish potatoes, and thirty tons of hay.<sup>65</sup>

Land use and production levels on Arlington Farm were never constant. Crops were rotated, new crops were grown, new land cleared for cultivation, and old fields allowed to lie fallow. For instance, in a letter to the *American Farmer* in May of 1825, Custis described his efforts in reclaiming the marsh land located south of Arlington Farm, along the Potomac River:



*I attacked an ash pocosin [swamp], with Irishmen, some four years ago, dyked and ditched . . . which kept out the tide and drained the surface sufficiently for cultivation. In March a part of it was standing in wood . . . The wood was cut off, the brush burnt and the first of June men brought on their backs, bales of corn plants- without horse, plough or hoe-they made a hole with a sharpened stick and thrust in the plants, all of which lived and flourished and after receiving two hoeings to keep down the weeds, the crop ripened to the tune of at least 20 bushels the acre . . . indeed a tangled forest of corn.<sup>66</sup>*

Custis recognized the value of soil fertility in sustaining such yields and quickly pointed out the unique characteristics of the ash pocosin that created such results. He also urged the reclamation of these marshes throughout the area.

*An ash pocosin is not an affair of mud and bulrushes, as most marshes are, but a collection of vegetable matter, decaying since the time of father Noah . . . Stock kept constantly on this land is a great advantage to it, giving it [the land] firmness, and preventing the growth of weeds. . . In this case the green sward soon roots out the wild growth, and gives the very finest pasture. The dykes are always planted with pumpkins and afford a very great crop.<sup>67</sup>*

Custis continued to experiment with different crops on his reclaimed marsh land. For instance, in a letter to his wife Mary Custis in 1839 he mentions his plans to grow hops and pasture hogs on the drained pocosin. He also laments the loss of the cabbage crop and the promising celery—most likely both grown in the market garden on the farm.<sup>68</sup> Like all farmers, Custis was reliant on the economics of the market and on the weather. Some years were worse than others. In 1830 Custis requested leniency on a bank loan due to the “poor condition of agriculture in the area.”<sup>69</sup> Always attempting to increase his income, Custis experimented with various agricultural techniques. For example, though a post and rail fence was used around the kitchen garden, a ditch and fence combination enclosure on Arlington Farm, as described in the following passage:

*The great value of wood in this part of the country, together with the perishable nature of its fencing (locust, cedar and chestnut excepted, which are very expensive) induced me to try an experiment in banking and ditching, for the purposes of enclosure. I first cut a ditch of five feet in width and three feet in depth, and leaving an offset of nine inches, sodded the face of the bank, fronting on the road, of a western exposure. The bank was topped by a fence of two old rails. The sodding has stood well the effect of three winters; the offset peeled away by the post which has induced me to dispense with it, and sod entirely to the bottom of the ditch. The height from the bottom of the ditch to the top of the bank is now eight feet; two rails make about two feet more . . . an enclosure thus made is proof against the inroads of all kinds of trespassing animals . . . and nobody burns it-nobody steals it . . .<sup>70</sup>*



This type of fence became quite common along the C & O Canal during the first half of the nineteenth century. It was also used at Mount Vernon, but Custis makes no note of its use at Washington's estate in his article. Though he wrote to the periodicals and newspapers of the day, proclaiming the necessity of agricultural advancement and the importance of George Washington in the history of the United States, Custis also created for himself the perfect venue at which to convey these ideas—Arlington Spring.

Arlington Spring was first begun as a place to hold the early nineteenth-century sheep shearings started by Custis to publicize his breed of native sheep. In 1811, Custis made some of his first improvements to the site by erecting a “bower for the reception of his guests that was adorned by laurels and honey suckle...”<sup>71</sup> Though the sheep breed never truly caught on, the spring itself became extremely popular as a day resort at which individuals from the surrounding cities could relax, picnic and dance. The calm water from the wide Potomac River lapped against the wooden wharf at the eastern edge of Arlington as the ferries docked to bring the visitors across from Washington.<sup>72</sup> The two ferries were huge broad barges with very shallow drafts—only nineteen inches on the “G.W.P. Custis”- which allowed them to navigate the tides of the Potomac River. On the fenced, eight-acre site of Arlington Spring seats were placed under the locusts, cedars, maples and oaks growing in clumps in the long grass.<sup>73</sup> The famous spring flowed up from a rocky outcropping near a enormous oak tree, which grew near the outdoor dancing pavilion. The kitchen and dining room, simple wood-sided one story structures built in the early 1840s, were tucked up against the berm of the Alexandria and Georgetown Canal, which divided Arlington Spring from the farm. All the structures were



Arlington House Archives

rustic, creating a sylvan resort at which all the “respectable people of Washington” regardless of their “current condition in life” could gather.<sup>74</sup> By the 1850s, between 50 and 200 people would come to the spring each day during the summer.<sup>75</sup> Though slaves would sometimes serve the guests at Arlington Spring, free blacks

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*21 A description of Arlington Spring was included in an article on the Arlington estate by Benson Lossing in Harpers Magazine, 1853.*

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were not permitted. Visitors to the spring often listened to Custis tell tales of his childhood spent at Mount Vernon and remember stories of the Revolution once told to him by George Washington. According to Morrison's *Stranger's Guide to the City of Washington* published in 1852, Arlington Spring had,

*... still, retired walks, inviting lawns, shaded by beautiful groves, and the finest view of the river and the city imaginable. The fine manners and instructive conversation of the venerable proprietor often add to the life and social enjoyment of those who seek from the dust and crowds of the city a few hours' relaxation and retirement amid the charms of this cool and quiet spot.*<sup>76</sup>

For those who wished to fish, tackle was available free of charge. Hunting was prohibited, as was alcohol, though refreshments were sold.

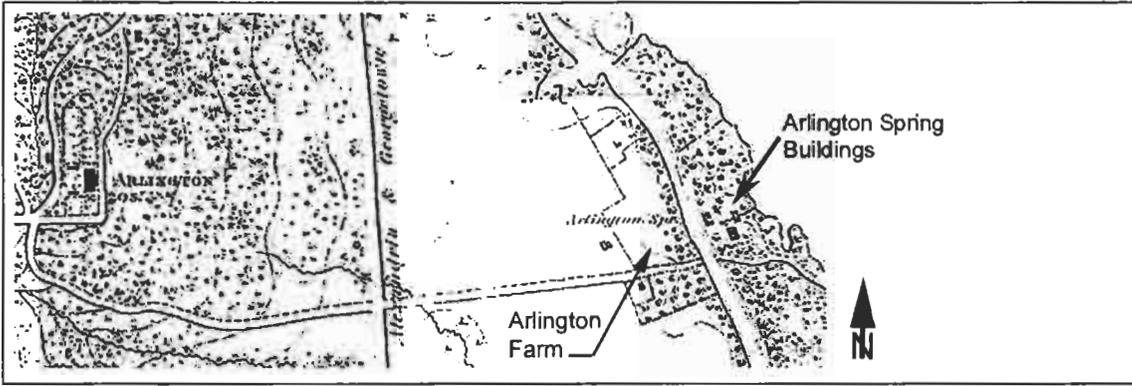
While the precedent of Arlington Spring clearly lies in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century medicinal and recreational development of mineral springs of western Virginia, Custis's spring differs from these earlier health spas and social gathering places.<sup>77</sup> Though the site for Arlington Spring was in fact dictated by the location of the spring itself, little comment as to the healthful benefit of the water was made by contemporary visitors. The setting did provide a gathering place for socializing, yet unlike the major resort springs of early nineteenth-century Virginia, Arlington Spring was devoted primarily to a middle-class clientele. Custis may have copied what he knew of the grand Virginia mineral springs, where his wife and daughter would often "partake of the waters", but more importantly he created an early tourist stop on the Arlington House estate, where "all sorts" could meet to hear of the life of George Washington.

It is interesting that Arlington Spring, a public resort, was located directly east of the farm and slave quarters of the Arlington estate. Although visually separated from Arlington farm by the Alexandria Canal beginning in 1843—approximately the time in which the Arlington Spring structures were erected to promote increased visitation to the spring—the private space of the farm and the public space of the spring were still intricately entwined. In fact, to move from the spring to the main house on the Arlington estate, one had to pass under the twenty-foot-high berm of the canal through a culvert, described as a "wet dripping tunnel" and travel through the heart of the farm and the slaves quarters.<sup>78</sup> The road then continued west through the farm and fields, across the Alexandria and Georgetown Turnpike to the main gate of the Arlington Estate.

During the nineteenth century, this arrangement of public and private space was not at odds with the normal spatial organization of plantation landscapes. The wealth of the southern elite was most often comprised of slaves and land. Custis was no exception. To reveal the pragmatic elements of the farm landscape to the public—especially when the farm was separated physically from the decorative, more elite portions of the estate—was not unusual.



National Archives



22 Though many of the buildings on Arlington Farm are not shown immediately east of the Alexandria Canal, Arlington Spring is seen clearly next to the Potomac River on this detail from the Environs of Washington Prepared from original Surveys of the Engineer Department 1864-1866. The field work for this map was probably completed prior to or early into the Civil War.

Indeed, the slave’s cabins, barns, fields and orchards illustrated the prosperity of the Custis and Lee families clearly to the visiting public.<sup>79</sup> However, as revealed in Robert E. Lee’s comments about the affect of the Alexandria Canal on the work habits of the Arlington Farm slaves, this proximity to public environments may have affected the lives of the slaves.

*The whole place will be exposed to the depredations of the public, his [Custis’s] own people [slaves] will have more opportunity for gossip and idleness and greater temptation and inducement to appropriate the small proceeds of their labor to themselves.<sup>80</sup>*

More likely such proximity resulted in less autonomy in the slaves lives, not greater. Custis too, as the owner of Arlington, spent a relatively large portion of his time on the farm or at Arlington Spring, thereby diminishing the autonomy of the slave community on the farm and their ability to arrange their own environment. In any case, Robert E. Lee’s words suggest the nature of the relationship between slave and owner. Yet the slaves did appropriate land for their own use. According to oral history, the cemetery which held the ancestors of the Arlington slaves was located to the north of Arlington Spring, east of the farm, near the Alexandria Canal culvert.<sup>81</sup>

The arrangement and design of the landscape of the Arlington estate reflected not only the aesthetic taste of the time and the pragmatic necessities of a southern slave economy, it also revealed the individual natures and desires of the Custis and Lee families. As a niece of Custis wrote, remembering her childhood visits to Arlington,

*One evening all were at the spring when on climbing the steep bank of the canal, I saw G.W.P. standing, wrapped in contemplation of the western sky robbed in all its gorgeousness of color. I asked him if he was enjoying nature’s painting, he replied “I am studying the effect for my picture.”<sup>82</sup>*

G.W.P. Custis was an artist and writer, in addition to a plantation owner. For although he never referred to Arlington as a plantation, his other properties were run as such and directly supported his endeavors at Arlington. His primary objectives in composing his paintings



and plays was to convey the original patriotic nature of the earliest days of the United States, to reinforce George Washington as the vortex of that American history, and to augment his own role as the keeper of the Washington relics and the inheritor of the Washington legacy. Though never considered extremely accomplished in the arts by his contemporary critics, G.W.P. continued to paint and write throughout his life. These three goals shaped the development of the Arlington landscape as well. The architecture and placement of Arlington House is exemplary of this focus.

Classical in style and designed to appear impressively large from a great distance, the completed mansion reinforced the hierarchy of the estate and the Custis and Lee families' place in society. Though the exact evolution of the grounds immediately around Arlington House is not known, the house itself was finished by 1818.<sup>83</sup> The final phase of construction was done by Cornelius McLean at a cost of fifteen hundred and fifty dollars.<sup>84</sup> The light colored, cement stucco on the building, invented by the firm of David Meade Randolph of Richmond, was installed on the east, north and south facades of Arlington. David Randolph's wife, Mary Randolph, was a distant cousin to both Mary Randolph Custis Lee and her husband, Robert E. Lee. Author of the well-known cookbook *The Virginia Housewife*, she was buried on the slope to the east of Arlington House within the park in 1828.<sup>85</sup> By the time of the Civil War, at least the east façade of the wings and main portico section had been scored and streaked with paint to suggest marble blocks. The west façade was ornamented with

23 *The first known public illustration of Arlington House was included in a tourist handbook, Washington Guide, by William P. Elliot in 1826.*



Arlington House Archives

a one-story, open arcade, reinforcing the significant relationship between the original architectural design of the mansion and

the landscape of the estate. These open arcades were enclosed, however, within a few years of completion. Reactions to the completed mansion were mixed, as revealed in the following quote from an English traveler visiting Washington in 1832:

*It is visible for many miles, and in the distance has the appearance of a superior English country residence beyond any place I had seen in the states, but as I came close to it, I was woefully disappointed.*<sup>86</sup>



The stable for the housing of horses and carriages was probably constructed around the same time the house, between 1803 and 1818. The stable was located where the administrative building (ca 1932) now stands, to the west of Arlington House across a wooded ravine. Suggestive of a miniature Arlington House, the original stable had a two-story center section with one-story wings to the east and west. Like the main house, the stable had a stucco finish and arched windows. The center section, fronted by a portico with four Doric columns, was used to store hay on the upper level and carriages and harnesses on the ground level. The wings each held the horse stalls. This building may have also provided sleeping rooms for a few slaves associated with the care of the horses.<sup>87</sup> By the time of the tenancy of Robert E. Lee, a wooden wagon shed and cattle shed were most likely located to the immediate south of the stable.

In addition to the stable and associated structures, an ice house was located to the west of the slave quarters, which was located immediately west of the northern wing of Arlington House. Little is known about this building, which was gone from the site by the 1890s. According to archeological and cartographic evidence, the building was constructed by digging a pit, perhaps as large as 25 x 25 feet, which was then lined with planks. A structure of an unknown design was placed on top of the pit.<sup>88</sup>

Most likely the two dependencies, still located to the immediate west of the main house, were constructed between 1803 and 1818. Like the house and stable, these two structures are classical in appearance and of brick construction. The exterior



Arlington House Archives

*24 Though this image dates to the late 1890s, it shows the portico and structure of the original stable, located to the west of Arlington House.*

treatment is a relatively coarse pebble-dash stucco. The two buildings are formally aligned with the two wings of the main house in an arrangement typical of early nineteenth-century architecture. The facades of the buildings that face outward toward the formal spaces of the gardens are highly ornamented, reflecting the design elements of the house. The facades facing the work yard are relatively plain. The northern outbuilding was identified by Robert E. Lee in his insurance policy of 1859 as a kitchen. The northern façade of this two-story banked brick structure is detailed with four Doric pilasters under a curving arch recessed into the façade approximately a foot. Nine windows provide light. The one-story southern façade has three doors placed at even intervals, each with a painted panel of a hunt scene above the entrance. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the summer kitchen was in the eastern half of the lower level of the building. According to oral history, the western half was used



25 *The southern façade of the northern slave quarters, which faced the utilitarian yard in the early nineteenth-century, reveals its plainness in 2001.*



NCR Cultural Landscape Program

as quarters for the coachman. The upper story contained three rooms, each used as slaves' quarters. At one time the slaves who lived here included Ephriam, a gar-

dener; George, the cook; Eleanor Harris, the housekeeper and Judy, a nurse.<sup>89</sup> Storage space for garden tools was also located in this building.

In the insurance policy, the southern structure is identified as the storehouse, however, it did serve additional purposes. The western third of the building provided a "sleeping room" for the Gray family—Selina, her husband Thorton, and their six children.<sup>90</sup> The center portion was identified by former Arlington slaves as a smoke house and by a relative of the Lee family as a wash room. It most likely served a variety of purposes throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. The eastern-most room in this building was used as a store house for dry goods and slave rations, kept under lock by Mary Custis, and later Mary Lee, as managers.<sup>91</sup> The space between the two classically-styled outbuildings was a work area. The well, hand-dug and approximately 48 feet deep, is still located within the yard between the main house and the northern slave quarters. According to an 1850s drawing, it had a simple wooden post elevating a weighted lever. The yard was kept open in rough grass with a few high-limbed, deciduous trees, such as locust, for shade. The west façade of the main house matched the plainness of the facades of the outbuildings that faced the yard. The house facade was not

26 *A drawing of south façade of northern slave quarters, c. 1855, was included in the scrap book of a member of the Lee family.*



Arlington House Archives



stuccoed while the Custis and Lee families lived there, for the yard was not an area that was meant to be entered or seen by guests of the Custis and Lee families. Like the farm and quarters below, the yard was at least partially controlled by the house slaves—a space appropriated by the individuals through their many tasks. In fact, historic images reveal that the work yard was screened from the formal carriage turn-about in front of the house by a row of cedar trees.<sup>92</sup>

Much of the landscape of the Arlington estate actively used by people was molded into a loose series of spaces, connected and separated from one another through vistas and truncated views. Circulation routes also served to influence development—whether the formal carriage drive extending west up the hill, around the southern end of the flower garden to end in a turn-about at the north end of the eastern façade of the mansion, or the narrow path to the

slave church on the southern end of the estate. Within this landscape, various members of the Custis and Lee families and the slaves had different areas of influence. Though G.W.P.



Arlington House Archives

27 The line of evergreen trees (most likely cedars) extending from the northern wing of Arlington House blocked the view into the kitchen garden and yard area. East façade of Arlington House, detail of photograph, c.1864

Custis was the owner of the property for all but four years of the Custis and Lee families' lives there, other family members, hired employees, and slaves managed and influenced the development of the estate in many ways. For instance, both Mary Custis and Mary Lee helped manage various aspects of the property as the following quote reveals from a letter sent from Mary Lee to Mary Custis,

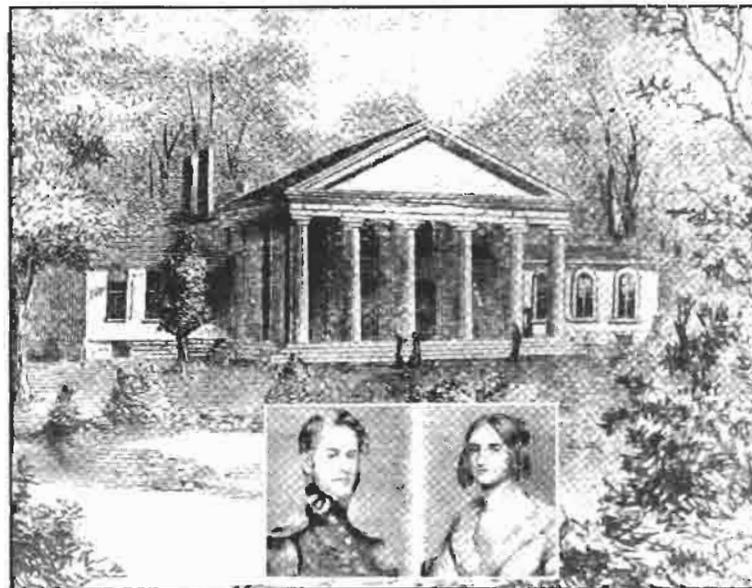
*As respects my mare Kate, I wish very much that Parkes [a slave] should use her during his spare time in hauling out manure down to the corn field, not the garden, from those heaps which are rotted, but when he can not be spared from Daniel's [slave] side if the mare is wanted at the garden, let Obahiah [slave] drive her but it must be under Austin Braum's [slave] especial supervision. I want Daniel to work up that large heap by the Georgetown Road a little and keep it up so as to hold the slops which I hope they will all diligently empty into it . . .<sup>93</sup>*



Of course, the marriages, births and deaths of family members and slaves at Arlington also affected the development of the property.

In June of 1831, Mary Randolph Custis married her childhood friend Robert E. Lee. Lee, though a member of southern aristocracy through both the Lee and Carter families, was an army officer with little inheritance and limited financial resources. This lack of family wealth would play a role in the development, or lack thereof, at Arlington. Lee was born at Stratford Hall in 1807, the son of Henry “Lighthorse Harry” Lee, a Revolutionary War hero and former governor of Virginia, and Ann Hill Carter of the Shirley plantation on the James River. Throughout Mary Custis Lee and Robert E. Lee’s forty-year marriage, Lee was away from Arlington for the majority of the time due to his military career. In contrast, Mary Custis Lee and the seven Lee children spent a great deal of time at Arlington. During the few years

28 East façade of Arlington House with the portraits of Robert and Mary Lee, 1831



Arlington House Archives

that Lee was stationed close to Arlington, he assisted G.W.P. and Mary Custis in their oversight of the estate and outlying plantations. It wasn’t until after George Washington Parke Custis’s death in 1857, however that Robert E. Lee had much direct involvement in the development of the Arlington estate. Yet his emotional

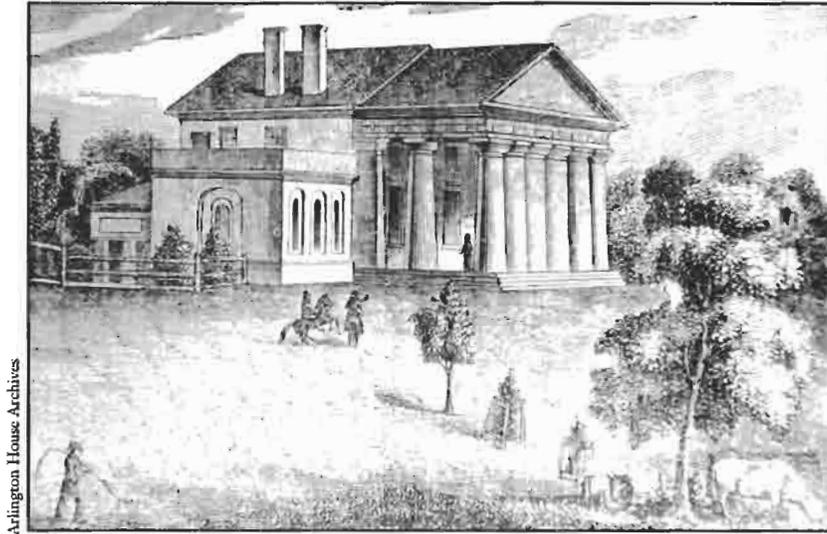
connection to the home as revealed in letters and occasional visits is clear. Five years after his marriage to Mary Custis, Robert E. Lee wrote,

*The country looks very sweet now, and the hill at Arlington covered with verdure and perfumed by the blossoms of the trees, the flowers of the garden, honey-suckles, yellow Jasmine, &c is more to my taste than at any other season of the year.<sup>94</sup>*

## LANDSCAPE APPEARANCE BY 1840

By the mid-1840s the general arrangement of the landscape—the image that Robert E. Lee’s words evoke—was probably in place, though like the agricultural portion of the estate, the design was constantly evolving. It is very difficult to know when each portion of the landscape developed. By this time, however, the main elements of the Arlington estate landscape were: the farm, the “Park”, the flower garden, the garden grove, the yard, the vegetable garden and the forest. A clue to the progression of their development may be found in the gen-

eral economy of the area, for as Custis emphasized throughout his life, his fortunes and his ability to improve his properties were controlled by the general agriculture state of affairs. During the 1830s, the agricultural situation had not improved,



29 Arlington House from southeast, c.1845

therefore financial resources for much of this decade were limited. As Custis's brother-in-law acknowledged in his address to the Colombian Institute in 1830, real estate values had fallen in the area thirty to fifty percent as the staple crops of Virginia—cotton, wheat and tobacco—were reduced in price thirty to forty percent.<sup>95</sup> However, by the 1840s things began to change for Custis, as well as for many local land owners. In typical style, Custis related his own agricultural experiences to the United States Agricultural Society and was met with great applause:

*At length things arrived at their lowest state of depression, when the crops upon my two great estates [Pamunkey River plantations] amounted to 700 bushels of a trash undeserving the name of wheat; and it was at this period of universal gloom that better destinies suddenly dawned upon Southern Virginia. My long agony was over. By the use of marl, oyster-shell, clover and plaster of Paris, together with improved tillage and the very able management of the gentleman who has charge of my estates in the south-150 miles from my residence-my old patrimonial acres have shook off the garb of barrenness and desolation and now flourish and blossom as the roses.<sup>96</sup>*

Perhaps he was spurred to use fertilizers through his knowledgeable farm manager of the Pamunkey estates, William Nelson.<sup>97</sup> Or perhaps he was simply responding to the increasingly available transportation routes which brought down the price of the fertilizer. Regardless, the lands of the area were improving and thereby so were the crops, the monetary returns and the property values. The profit on the fisheries increased as well, for as Custis wrote to his farm manager:

*Fiseries are becoming of increasing value-the demand owing to facilities of rail road and canals . . . Fish will never be low priced again!<sup>98</sup>*



30 "Arlington House, The Seat of G.W.P. Custis, Esq." in Harper's New Monthly Magazine, October 1853



Arlington House Archives

Probably no later than the late 1840s, the main entrance to Arlington was located on the Alexandria and Georgetown Turnpike directly west of the farm. A narrow, dirt or graveled, carriage drive passed through the gate immediately west of the turnpike, wound west up the hill, first passing through fields of broom sedge and Indian corn dotted with green cones of cedars. Approximately three-fourths mile up the road, a footpath extended north off the drive and into the park which descended down the hillside from the house. In the park,

hemmed in on the south by the carriage drive to the house and on the north by the thick native forest growth, trees grew in graceful clusters and singly in "solitary beauty", either allowed to grow in place or planted to frame views.<sup>99</sup> A graveled foot and bridle path led among these trees, the surrounding grass kept short by the livestock which often roamed the hillside and by the periodic cutting of the slopes with scythes. Rough stone seats were placed at intervals to capture views of "the Beautiful."<sup>100</sup> This English Landscape-style garden, described in popular literature as being "an artful imitation of nature," was evocative of the grounds at Mount Vernon.<sup>101</sup> At Arlington the slope to the east of the house was called "the Park" by the Lee family members. This description of the Park at Arlington in Harper's New Monthly Magazine of 1853 contains characteristics similar to many other "parks" on contemporary estates along the east coast.

*In front, sloping toward the Potomac is a fine Park of 200 acres, dotted with groves of oak and chestnut and clumps of evergreens and behind it the dark of forest.*<sup>102</sup>

The Park may have been created at the very beginning of the estate development through the influence of William Spence, George Hadfield, Mary Custis, or G.W.P. Custis himself. The Park may have also developed more gradually through the use of the space for



pasture land, and additions and subtractions of ornamental and practical vegetation resulting in the “highly cultivated meadow” that was described in the early 1860s writings and revealed in Civil War era images. Regardless, the naturalistic landscape of the Park had precedent throughout the east coast beginning in the first half of the eighteenth century and increasing in popularity through the 1860s.<sup>103</sup> Credit for the popularization of this picturesque ideal in America is often given to Andrew Jackson Downing, whose work, *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening as Adapted to North America* (1849) promoted the theories of English landscape designers Humphry Repton (1752-1843) and his editor John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843). Downing was also involved in the design of landscape surrounding the Capital in the early 1850s. So his work may have had an indirect influence on the development of Arlington. Even with the local dissemination of Downing’s ideas, however, the naturalistic garden, or “modern style”, as it was called in many nineteenth-century books and periodicals, was not always recognized in the landscape by lay individuals as a designed space, especially when compared to more formal elements of the typical nineteenth-century, relatively small-scale, flower garden. Certainly, at Arlington the flower and vegetable gardens were often admired. These fenced gardens spread out from the end of each wing, in harmony with the symmetry of the classical architecture and in stark contrast to the dark forest to the west.

The kitchen garden lay on the north side of the mansion. Hidden from view by hedges from visitors who approached the estate from the southeast, this garden contained vegetables and fruits to provide fresh and canned produce. A row of fruit trees lined both sides of the central path, which was on an axis with the central path of the flower garden located to the

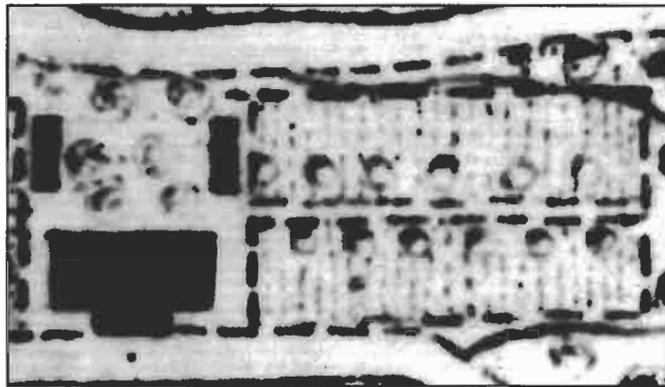


31 "Arlington from the Great Oak", a photograph taken in 1864 by Andrew Russell, reveals the picturesque nature of the Park of Arlington, even during the Civil War.



south of the mansion. The garden extended from immediately north of the northern slave quarters, approximately 200 feet. The area of the garden, which was cleared of large trees, was almost rectangular; the eastern boundary was slightly bowed to conform to the terrain. The topography afforded a slightly northerly aspect and a southern exposure. Tall trees, however, screened the garden from storms and winds out of the northwest. No direct evidence of herbs in the kitchen garden has been found thus far, though herbs may have been integrated into the

32 The lines of trees on either side of the central path in the kitchen garden are shown in this detail from the *Environs of Washington* Prepared from original Surveys of the Engineer Department 1864-1866.



National Archives

overall planting of vegetables. The garden was surrounded with a post and rail fence to keep animals from destroying the vegetables and fruits. According to a drawing done by one of the Lee children during the 1850s, a gate ornamented with pickets hung at the southern entrance to the vegetable

garden.<sup>104</sup> As revealed in the following quote from a friend and relative of the Custis family, Elizabeth Randolph Calvert, the kitchen garden, like the yard, was located near the work and living space of the slaves,

*. . . appropriately back of the kitchen; reaching from here to where the plateau on which the mansion stands begins to descend. . . Two large barberry bushes sentinel the gate and in due season hang out their coral berries in bunches that make a mantle of color. From this garden are gathered in the prime freshness and age what the vegetable world offers to the needs and also enjoyment of man . . .*<sup>105</sup>

The flower garden was south of the mansion and slave quarters in the space between the house and the carriage drive. The carriage drive formed the southern and western boundaries of the garden. A picket fence with wide palings painted white surrounded the garden on the south, north and east sides. On the western side, the garden most likely was blended into a more naturalistic or wild garden area called the “grove,” without separation by a fence. The only gate known to have existed during the Custis and Lee era was located in the center of the north end of the eastern section of the flower garden. The formal portion of the flower garden was approximately one acre in size. In the Custis and Lee families, the female members designed the flower garden (its original layout was by G.W.P. Custis) and oversaw its care by slaves. Little specific information about the design of the space is known, for there are no plans of the garden during the Custis and Lee family occupancy.<sup>106</sup> The flower garden, like the rest of the estate, was not static. The design was continually altered by the introduction of new plants and the removal of others, by the seasons, and by the changing tastes of the

Custis and Lee women. Each of the Lee girls had a space, either in the flower garden or in the grove, in which to grow their own plants.<sup>107</sup>

As Annie Lee wrote to her good friend in September of 1858, "I am devoted to my flowers . . . and have 24 little geraniums of my own raising, plenty of Parmese violets, heliotropes and callas."<sup>108</sup> The flowers which Annie lists are all annual species, requiring over-wintering in the conservatory located on the western façade of the southern wing of the main house, or purchasing anew each spring. The form of this flower garden, a mixed herbaceous garden

containing  
perennials,  
annuals and  
some shrubby  
vegetation, was  
reflective of  
the style of  
garden pro-

Arlington House Archives



33 Watercolor painting  
"Arlington House, The Seat  
of G.W.P. Custis, Esq." in  
Harper's New Monthly  
Magazine, October 1853

moted in some mid-nineteenth-century books and periodicals. Most of these publications were directed towards women, for as Thomas Fessenden wrote in *The New American Gardener* in defense of his inclusion of ornamental gardening information:

*should the agriculturist have no taste for ornamental gardening, yet such is the laudable taste of the fair daughters of America at the present day that there are comparatively few that do not take an interest in the flower garden.*<sup>109</sup>

Such garden literature divided the discussion of ornamental garden design into two sections; that on "modern" or landscape gardening, a style reflected in the Park, and that of the formal or "ancient" garden style illustrated by the paling-fenced flower garden at Arlington.<sup>110</sup> For instance, in *The American Flower Garden Directory* published in 1832, growing requirements are included for both the shrubbery, which was typical of the Park or the Grove at Arlington, and the boxwood hedge, which was most likely incorporated into the Custis and Lee flower garden. During the early nineteenth century, many formal flower gardens were divided into geometric beds with a variety of plantings including shrubs, annuals and perennials. This was the type of flower garden planted at Arlington. Monographs on particularly popular plants, reflecting Victorian fads, began to be widely published in the 1830s. Two of the most popular monographs were about flowers planted at Arlington, roses and dahlias.<sup>111</sup> Another book published at the time, Thomas Bridgeman's *The Florist's Guide* (1836), suggests elements of the formal flower garden at Arlington when describing the shapes of the flower beds.

*A great variety of figures may be indulged in for the flower-beds. Some choose oval or circular forms, others squares . . . and intersected winding gravel walks . . . and it should be so situated to form an ornamental appendage to the house.*<sup>112</sup>

Bridgeman also provides an early description of the proper arrangement of a mixed perennial border, stating that “there is no part of gardening which requires so much elegance of taste and fancy.”<sup>113</sup>

34 The flower garden arbor of the Custis-era flower garden remained on the property until the 1880s. Stereoscopic card, c.1870



Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

The flower garden's principal walk at Arlington was most likely of gravel and was approximately six feet wide. The path went in a straight line north to south through the garden. The path, narrowed to four feet wide, passed through a wooden arbor located in the center of the garden. Wooden benches curved around the inside of the arbor. Lattice work extended from the roof of the arbor to the base on all six sides of the hexagonal shaped structure. Vines, including yellow flowering jasmine, and red and pink honeysuckle covered most

of the woodwork throughout the summer. Brief descriptions of the arbor by Lee family members and post-Civil War photographs, suggest that the structure was fairly simple, serving to provide shade and a resting place, as well as an ornament for the embellishment of the garden. In 1930 the former landscape gardener from the cemetery, David.H. Rhodes, described the arbor as he remembered it, revealing more clues to its design. The woodwork, according to Rhodes, was “of ordinary posts and lumber for the main structure, but the lattice work was of dressed and painted wood. The top or roof of the arbor had a somewhat concave curved outline to a small central point at top.”<sup>114</sup> According to two women who had been slaves at the Arlington estate “two large magnolia trees, white and pink, were growing near to the center and a good deal of box and shrubbery was located at the back” of the garden as well.<sup>115</sup> Long



after the Lees had left Arlington, Elizabeth Calvert painted an image of a moment in the gardens through her remembrances.

*Is it at the touch of memory only that flowers bloom here in such exquisite perfection, or did the yellow jasmine from its raised arbor in the center of the garden send forth a wide spread fragrance and shower its countless trumpet shaped flowers down? Did the encircling bed of daily roses send their offering of perfume in the air from their brilliant blooms, did the pines in points of the garden beds shade masses and masses of lily of the valley from which we gather in lavish quantities beauty and fragrance, did hyacinths, tulips, tall lilies all the 'beauties of sisterhood' bloom in unconstrained delight?<sup>116</sup>*

Yet the flower garden was not simply a place of beauty. Instead it served to forward both the political and the social beliefs of the Lee and Custis women. Slavery, as a social institution and as an economic practice, played an integral role in the development of the flower garden in many ways, some more obvious than others. While both Mary Custis and Mary Lee oversaw much of the organization and design of the flower garden, the slaves did much of the actual horticultural work. As Mildred Lee, the youngest daughter, recollected,

*My mother spent hours here, digging, weeding and directing "Old George," little George, Uncle Ephraim, Billy and swarms of small Ethiopians. I can see her now with a white sun-bonnet hanging down her back! Visitors from Washington, Alexandria, Georgetown, always ended by a stroll in the gardens.<sup>117</sup>*

Moreover, it was through the selling of bouquets and garlands of yellow jasmine flowers that Mary Custis and Mary Lee helped to fund the American Colonization Society.<sup>118</sup>

The American Colonization Society had been formed in 1817 to address the issue of slavery in American society. The objective of the organization was to transport free African Americans, and/or those slaves manumitted by their owners, from the United States to the coast of Africa to form a colony.<sup>119</sup> A predicted corollary effect of the emigration, and one promoted by the society, was the diffusion of American democracy and Christianity throughout the continent. In the early years of the Colonization Society, G.W.P. Custis believed strongly in its doctrines.<sup>120</sup> However, by the 1840s and 1850s he had become disillusioned with their validity as a method of solving the problem of slavery in southern society—though these were, in fact, the years of the Colonization Society's greatest influence.

In Virginia, members of the Colonization Society were primarily women of the gentry class—connected to one another by kin, class and location. Many had been involved in and influenced by the early nineteenth-century evangelical movement that had occurred within the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches. Mary Custis and Mary Lee, both Episcopalian, embod-



ied the typical profile of the American Colonization society member, integrating their social and religious beliefs into their theories of slavery, individual rights and education. Legitimized by the American Colonization Society, Mary Custis and Mary Lee taught at least some of the Arlington slaves reading and writing, perhaps to enable them to be better equipped to survive as colonists in Liberia. The Colonization Society recommended educating future African American/ Liberian colonists, especially the women who were to make the long arduous journey.

Mary Custis and Mary Lee contributed monetarily to the Colonization society throughout their married lives. In the nineteenth century there were few approved ways for women of the gentry class to raise money. During the summer months, early in the morning when the flowers in the garden were at their peak, a few designated slaves would gather together bunches of blossoms and form them into nosegays to sell at the markets in Georgetown and Washington. Nosegays with their natural perfume were extremely popular during the nineteenth century as a method of covering up the harsh smells of both the city and other individuals. As such, the flowers usually made into these bouquets needed to be both long lasting once cut, and to have a strong pleasant perfume. Roses, lily of the valley, and chrysanthemums, all documented as growing in the Arlington flower garden, were all popular nineteenth-century nosegay flowers. The young Lee girls would also contribute their efforts to the cause by weaving garlands of jasmine blooms—thought to keep linens fresh. These would be sold as well, and the money saved to pay passages to Liberia.<sup>121</sup> The Lee family funded, through the efforts of their slaves, the passage to Liberia for members of one family of Arlington slaves, William and Rosabella Burke and their four young children. Shortly after the family's arrival in Liberia, Rosabella Burke wrote to Mary Custis Lee of their happiness and success in Liberia. At the end of the letter she asked Mary Lee to give their love to their relatives, Catherine, Agnes and Marianne Burke, who remained at Arlington.<sup>122</sup> Most likely permanent separation from their family members was the price that the Burkes paid for freedom. Mary Lee so firmly supported the society that, at her death, she left her inheritance from her uncle, William Fitzhugh of Ravensworth, not to her children but to the American Colonization Fund.<sup>123</sup>

The members of the Burke family were not the only Arlington slaves to be manumitted. George Washington Parke Custis gave freedom to a number of women and children in the early nineteenth century.<sup>124</sup> In addition, he allowed Maria Syphax, her husband Charles Syphax, and her children to use a seventeen-acre parcel of land on the southern boundary of the Arlington estate as their home beginning in 1826. Most likely he gave to Maria Syphax, who had been manumitted along with her children, an unwritten life lease as there was never a deed to accompany the transaction. It was on this property that the “old school house” or church of the Arlington slaves was located. Quite often the Custis and Lee family members also attended this church, walking or riding along the path that led about a mile through the woods south of the mansion house. The release of a parcel of land to the Syphax family, the



only time such a division of the Arlington estate was made, whether officially or not, also reveals the complicated and sometimes conflicting relationships between the Lee and Custis families and their slaves. These practices and beliefs are often hidden in the physical history of the land. Illustrative of this is the flower garden, a symbol of the wealth and leisure of the Custis and Lee families, but also an artistic endeavor and a discrete example of the promotion of political and social principles by the women of the estate. The garden also served as a medium by which certain enslaved people could earn their own freedom.

To the west of the flower garden was the area identified in family letters as the grove. This was an area which, though a flower garden, was kept wilder than the more formal flower garden to the east.<sup>125</sup> Enormous oak and elm trees formed a canopy above this fenced space, providing shade for the understory vegetation. Mount Vernon also had landscape areas identified as groves. There the groves were located along the outside edges of the front curvilinear drives leading to the mansion. The groves at both Arlington and Mount Vernon were filled with many species of both native and non-native vegetation, informally arranged, thereby bridging the territory between natural woods and formal gardens or lawn. Like the Park, it is difficult to know when the grove was created, however it is clear that the grove was being improved from the following excerpt of a letter from G.W.P. Custis to his granddaughter Agnes Lee in 1853:

*We are getting on with the Grove. Daniel hauled a good deal of manure with the cart and the carriage horse and we are wheeling off the old roots and brush and spreading the manure evenly over the surface. A part of the posts are ready for the fence but I wish to get the cleaning up and spreading of the manure done before frost comes.*<sup>126</sup>

Mildred, the youngest daughter of the Lee's remembered the grove with these words:

*The grove was a place of mystery to me! It was the part of the Park enclosed in the garden and was the special resort of squirrels, blue bells of Scotland and grape vines, where we used to swing. Here too there was an arbour covered with a grape vine, with a big mossy natural stone for a seat—a capital place to crack hickory-nuts . . . Just on the edge of the Grove, under a spreading tree, was my own little garden, a white lilac in one corner and violets forming the borders of the beds. Harry Washington Gray [slave and son of Thorton and Selina Gray] was my head gardiner [sic] and much fonder of play, than work. Here were the graves of my cats . . .*<sup>127</sup>

The forest, composed primarily of oak, chestnut and elm trees, was a dominant part of the landscape. In fact, the forested sections of the property composed over half of the entire estate. No evidence has been found to suggest that Custis or Lee harvested many of the trees.



Immediately behind the house, within the ravine area, the land was poorly suited to development due to the steep grade and unstable soil, unsuitable for building or farming.<sup>128</sup> Besides Custis did not need to cut down the forests at Arlington since he had the Washington Forest tract, 1200 acres of almost completely forested land only slightly to the south. There he had a saw mill as part of the Arlington Mill establishment. Relatively small numbers of trees were taken from Arlington for firewood, or stovewood, as it was called by the Custis's and Lees. In fact, it was recognized that the removal of select vegetation from the forest would improve its condition, as shown in the following quote from Mary Lee to her mother,

*Parkes [a slave] might also have out a few loads of that wood just back of the grove, which you know was much improved by some attention of that sort formerly.*<sup>129</sup>

However more than an economic rationale probably lay behind the preservation of the forests at Arlington. Early on in the history of the estate, the forests were considered integral to the success of the home's design. The dark trees provided a beautiful, imposing backdrop to

the pale-colored classical architecture of Arlington House—a characteristic of the estate commented on throughout its history. During the Marquis de Lafayette's return trip to America in 1824, he spent an evening at Arlington. As they stood together on the portico, looking out over the grand prospect towards Washington, Lafayette cautioned Mary Custis, "Cherish these



Arlington House Archives

forest trees around your mansion. Recollect, my dear, how much easier it is to cut a tree down than to make one grow."<sup>130</sup> In amongst these forest trees roamed animals and birds, hunted by Custis and his grandsons. Walks were taken in the woods for pleasure. The path to the "old school house", or church of the Arlington slaves located on the Syphax property, led through the forest to the south of the mansion. Finally, it was here, in the forest just slightly southwest of the house, that George Washington Parke Custis and Mary Fitzhugh Custis were buried. The burial spot of Mary Custis, who passed away in 1853, was chosen by her daughter.

35 Drawing of the gravesite of Mary Fitzhugh Custis, c. 1853



*After breakfast, she [Mrs. Lee] went with William [Fitzbugh] to the spot where the precious remains were to be buried. She fixed upon one between the road to the park and the gate. The gate opens into the road leading to the old school house.<sup>131</sup>*

## IMPROVEMENTS

Beginning in the 1850s, Custis became “seized with a spirit of improvement” at Arlington, encouraged by the increasing returns from his Pamunkey estates.<sup>132</sup> For as he said to his White House farm manager, William Nelson, in 1854, the White House wheat crop was the best he had seen in his 52 years of farming.<sup>133</sup> The success of the crops, coupled with the strong commodities market in Europe and South America, increased the prosperity of the Custis household. He ordered guano and clover seed and plaster of Paris to increase the soil fertility.<sup>134</sup> New steps were built on the portico, and hexagonal bricks were made for its floor. Arlington Mill was also repaired. The railroad was being built through Romancock and though the immediate affect, according to Custis, was negative due to Custis’s donation of land and the potential taking of his resources at the estate, the future prospects of benefit from the railroads was great.

As the decade progressed Custis, now in his seventies, became increasingly ill. Mary Lee began to take charge of necessary improvements to the estate. She had great faith in her son’s agricultural ability, gently questioning the path taken by his father, Robert E. Lee.

*There is great talk of an agricultural bureau at Washington to improve the science of agriculture. I hope by the time you come to be a farmer it will have done great things. I trust soldiering a few years will content you my dear son. I think your father would have been glad in the earlier years of his married life to exchange his profession for that of a farmer if circumstances had permitted. Your grandpa says when I tell him so [that] “he would not then have gained so much glory.” But I think his happiness is better than glory and the anxiety we all suffered during his long absence in that fatal country which has been the growth of so many officers and soldiers. . . .”<sup>135</sup>*

Yet, young Custis Lee was not old enough, nor did he desire to take over complete responsibility of Arlington. Much fell instead to Mary Lee. About a week before her father’s death, she wrote to inform her husband that,

*The stable being pronounced unsafe, we have a carpenter here putting on a new roof . . . if I had one on to superintend, I would have had the whole stable rearranged which would have been much more satisfactory, nor do I know enough of building to know if they are doing it properly.<sup>136</sup>*



Though improvements to Arlington continued, both Custis and Robert E. Lee begin to realize that Nelson's management of the Pamunkey estates, especially at the White House plantation, was not as capable as previously thought. Due to poor record-keeping by Nelson, and inadequate communication by both Nelson and Custis, debts against the estate surfaced. The relative distance between the Pamunkey estates and Arlington had proved a limitation to Custis's oversight throughout his life. Shortly before his death at age 76, Custis sent the following letter to his new White House manager:

*I am greatly pained, disappointed and mortified to hear that you have found my affairs so dilapidated and out of sorts, more especially in want of houses and other deprivations of my unfortunate Negroes, it ought not to be so, my negroes have been heavier worked than many slaves in Virginia, so much so, that neighbors of my estates have addressed to me anonymous letters complaining of the subject.<sup>137</sup>*

Custis continues, stating that the new manager's first duty would be to improve the health and the living conditions of the slaves. However before the improvements could be accomplished, Custis passed away in October of 1857. His complicated will outlined his bequests to his child and his grandchildren. His daughter, Mary Custis Lee, was to have a life inheritance of Arlington. At her death, the property was to go to his oldest grandson, George Washington Custis Lee. The other two grandsons were to get White House and Romancock. The girls were to receive ten thousand dollars each, payable from the sale of the other properties, including the Smith and Monockin Islands. Finally, the slaves at Arlington were to receive their freedom within five years, all debts against the estate being paid.<sup>138</sup>

The primary result of this will was that, for the first time, Arlington was to be separated from the support of the plantations of White House and Romancock. Arlington would no longer be simply a family seat. Instead the estate would have to function as a self-supporting entity—a difficult prospect considering the limited availability of arable land. Though the farm on the eastern boundary of the property had always contributed to the family wealth, it was Romancock and White House, that made the grand design of Arlington even remotely possible. Eager to see the terms of the will fulfilled, Lee set about improving the farm and grounds with the help of his son who was to inherit the estate. He repaired farm buildings. He attempted to determine the exact metes and bounds of Arlington, concerned that neighbors were encroaching over the boundary. He augmented the soil of the farm fields by creating a lime kiln for shells in an outlying oat field, spreading the lime on the fields as far as it would go and then supplementing the lime with guano and plaster. He also improved and rented out Arlington Mill.<sup>139</sup> Though his army duties prevented him from constant oversight of the farm, he wrote often to his son detailing necessary work:



*I hope you have been able to sow the oats, clover seed and that the garden is advanced . . . you might clean up that part of the Park, just after entering the gate. Cut down the briars and small stuff with the briar scythes, and clean up the swamp and open the ditch. It will improve the appearance of things and make it more healthy.*<sup>140</sup>

Lee believed that, in order to ensure that his daughters received their monetary inheritance and the slaves their freedom in the allotted time, he needed to improve the efficiency of Arlington. Therefore he rented out a relatively large number slaves to other estates, at least one from every slave family at Arlington, except for Thornton and Selina Gray's



National Archives

36 By 1864, the graves of Mary Fitzhugh Custis and George Washington Parke Custis were marked by significant monuments.

and Margaret and Billy Taylor's.<sup>141</sup> Such upheaval in the relatively stable familial relationships within the slave community at Arlington, perhaps coupled with increased demands, resulted in a number of slaves running away between 1858 and 1861. Abolitionists, in northern newspapers and in person, urged the slaves to leave Arlington as well. Lee, not wanting to lose valuable property and perhaps burdened by the costs of jail and sheriff fees, took some slaves south to the other plantations.<sup>142</sup> Lee also made changes in other aspects of the estate management. In the summer of 1859, he improved the buildings and grounds at Arlington Spring and then leased it to a concessionaire. Fortunately, visitors to the spring kept coming, even without G.W.P. Custis, the "patriarchal proprietor."<sup>143</sup> On July 4, 1860, ten thousand people attended the Fourth of July celebration.<sup>144</sup> Lee faced many difficulties even after the financial accounts of the White House and Romancock plantations were settled, for Arlington had relatively few resources to enable it to be a self-sufficient farm. In July 1860, Lee wrote to his son in frustration:

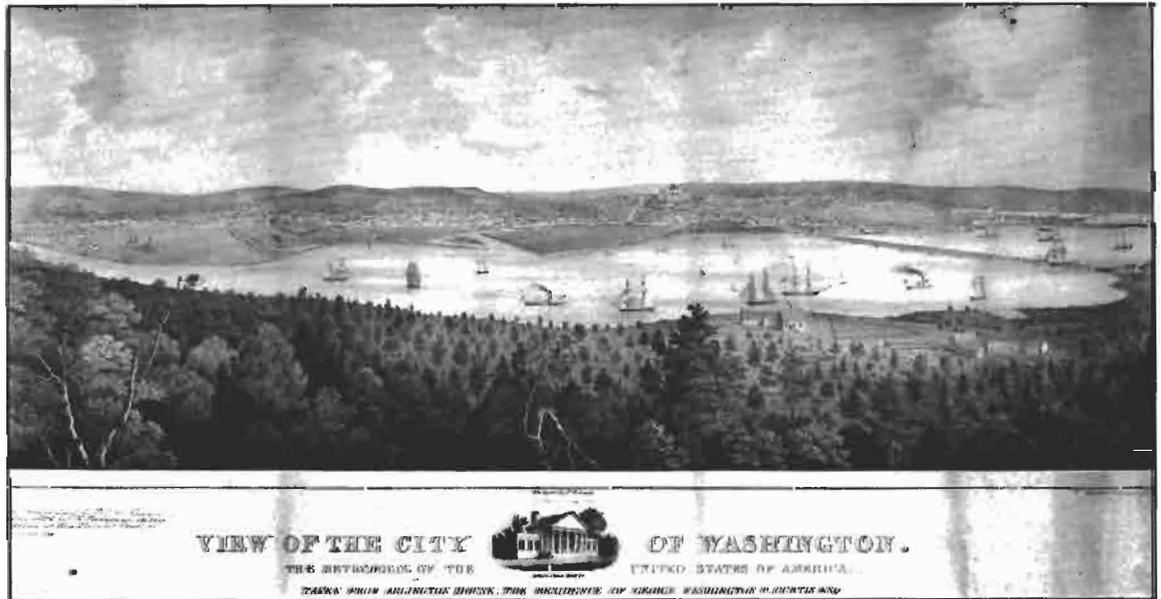
*It does not aggrieve me to tell you that it will take a stronger man than I am to supply funds for the wants at Arlington, [and] the White House if this state of things is to continue. When will it end?*<sup>145</sup>



Less than one year later, the situation of the Lee family and that of their slaves would change drastically.<sup>146</sup> On April 12, 1861, South Carolina shore batteries opened fire on Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor signaling the beginning of the Civil War. The North, or Union, had 22 million citizens, with a strong economy supported by an established industrial base and transportation system. In contrast, the South or Confederacy, which eventually included eleven states with nine million people, was based on an agricultural economy defined by a loose infrastructure and a relatively weak transportation network. Nevertheless, on April 17, 1861 Virginia seceded from the Union. Surrounded by friends and family anxiously waiting at Arlington, Robert E. Lee was faced with a choice—whether to join forces with the south or the north—his state or his country. Earlier in the year he had expressed his feelings on the matter to his son, now master of Arlington.

*The South in my opinion, has been aggrieved by the acts of the North, as you say. I feel the aggression and am willing to take every proper step for redress . . . As an American citizen I take great pride in my country, her property and institutions, and would defend any State, if her rights were invaded. But I can anticipate no greater calamity for the country than the dissolution of the Union.*<sup>147</sup>

37 "View from the City of Washington . . . Taken from Arlington House, the Residence of George Washington Parke Custis, Esq." 1838



Courtesy of the Mariner's Museum, Newport News, Virginia

Now he paced under the trees that grew in the Park at the east edge of the flower garden, back and forth—and into his room where he remained until after midnight. Then Robert E. Lee, a United States army officer for over thirty years, wrote a letter resigning his federal post. Two days later he accepted the command of the Virginia forces, never again to return to Arlington.



The “heights of Arlington”, as the estate was described in local papers, promised strategic advantages for both the northern and southern forces, so high above the city of Washington. Yet to the Union, occupation of Arlington was crucial, for without it the defense of the capital was jeopardized. The Lees knew this and expected the Union forces to take possession very soon. The carpets were rolled up. The curtains taken down. The most valuable belongings, including some of the Washington relics, were sent to Richmond and Ravensworth, where the family was to stay. Everything was boxed, stored in closets or locked in the attic. With Robert in Richmond, her youngest children safe at Ravensworth, and preparations for departure made, Mary Lee waited. She wrote in disbelief to her husband:

*I never saw the country more beautiful, perfectly radiant. The yellow jasmine in full bloom and perfuming the air, but a death like stillness prevails everywhere. You hear no sounds from Washington, not a soul moving about.*<sup>148</sup>

A few days later, acceding to the pleas of her husband who was afraid for her safety, Mary Lee departed Arlington with a few of her slaves, leaving others behind to tend and possibly protect the estate.

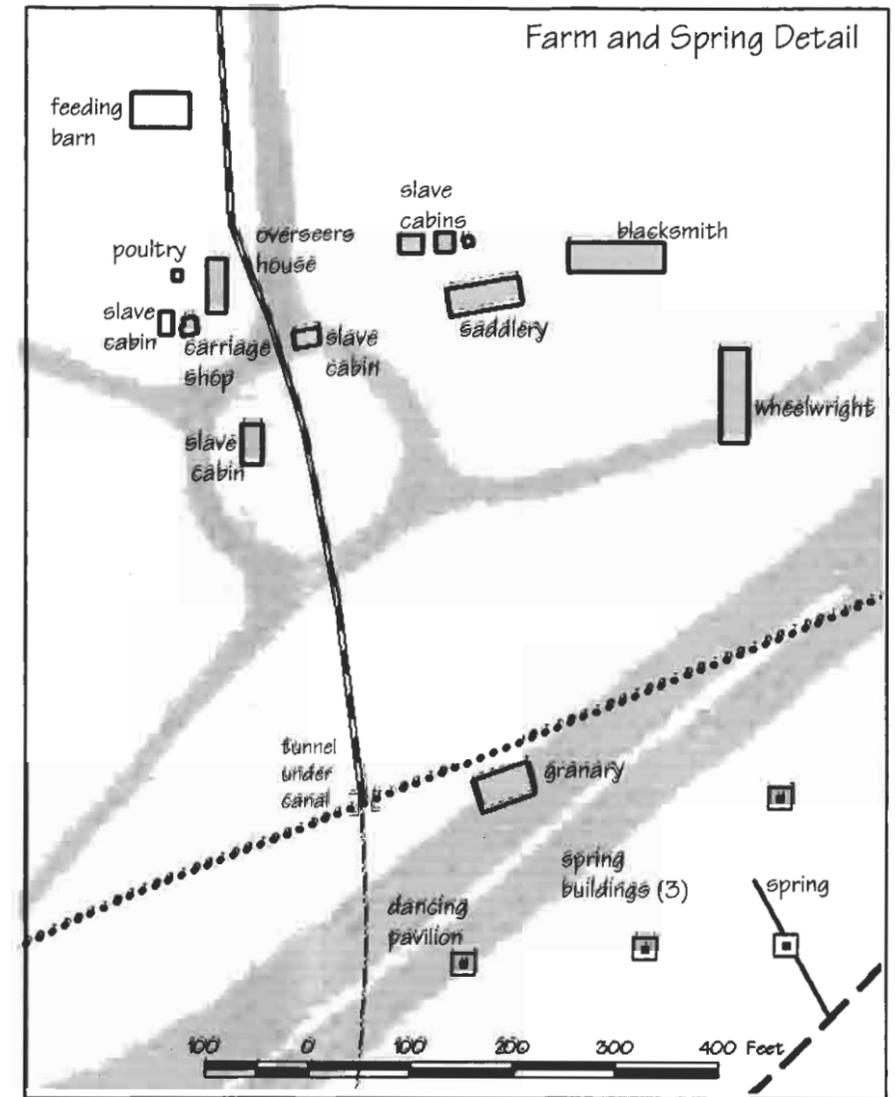
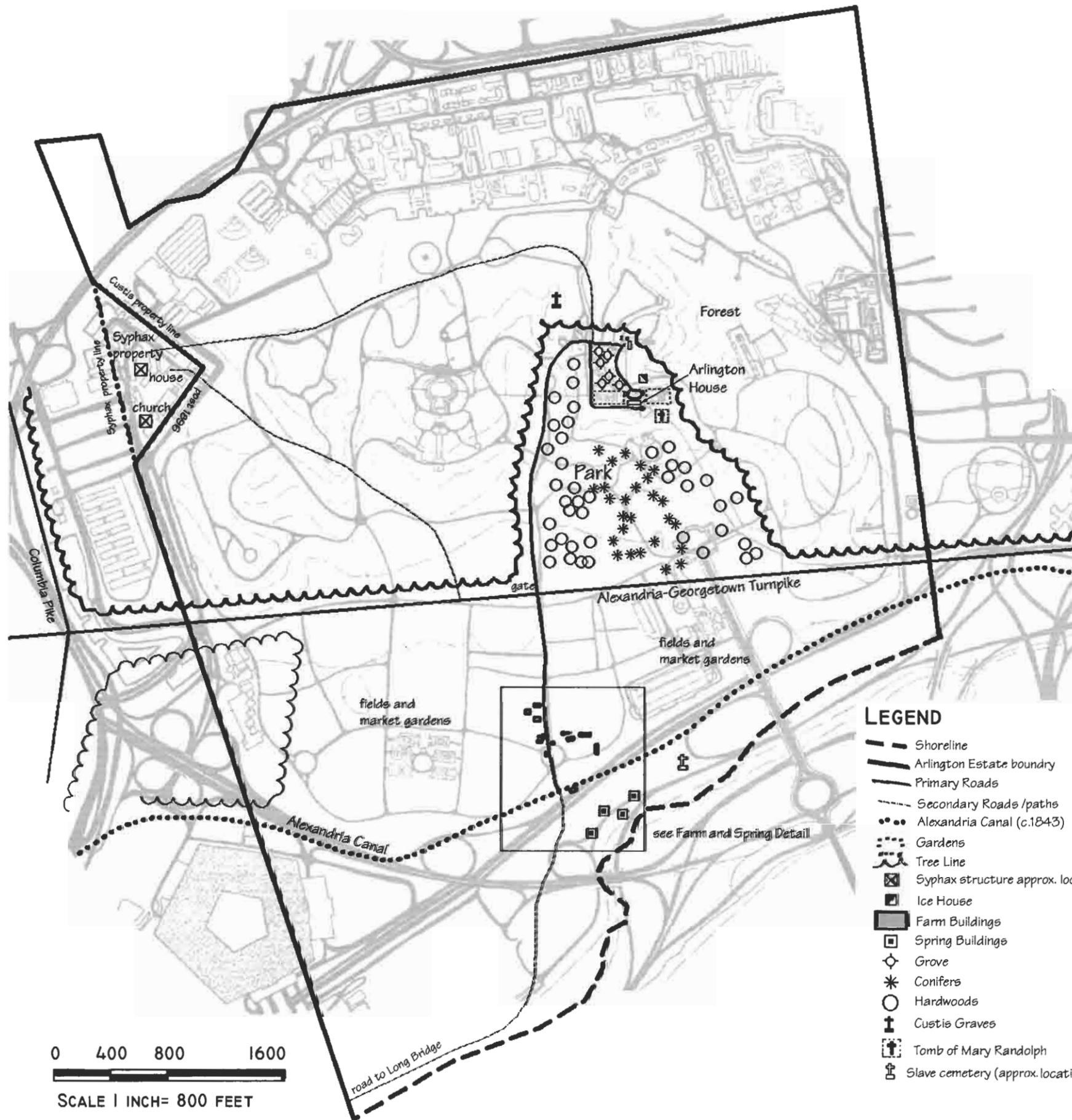
Under a full moon on the night of May 23, 1861, a column of eight thousand men marched across the Potomac, over Long Bridge and spread out over the low land of Arlington and on towards Alexandria.<sup>149</sup> The war had begun.

## CONCLUSION

Arlington, begun in 1802 by George Washington Parke Custis, was influenced by many factors. The organization of the estate—the formal flower garden, utilitarian yard, Park, forest, slave quarters, fields, farm and spring—each reflected the physical structure demanded by an early nineteenth-century slave economy. The landscape also illustrated the aesthetic tastes of both the individuals involved with the site and the era in which they lived. The role of George Washington Parke Custis as the bearer of the legacy of George Washington was revealed in the design of Arlington House, in the creation of a classical mansion “visible with half an eye.”<sup>150</sup> In the conception of Arlington Spring as a retreat for the middle-class, Custis provided an audience for his own stories, helping to assure the continuation of this legacy. The farm next to the spring on the flat pocosin of the Potomac, while not large, met many of the needs of the Custis and Lee families and the approximately sixty slaves who lived on the property. However the other two estates, White House and Romancock, provided the funds necessary for the development of Arlington and the financial security, such as it was, of Custis and



his dependants. Mary Custis's marriage to Robert E. Lee did little to alter the development of the estate directly, for Lee was rarely there, though his emotional attachment to the home was very strong. Arlington House, perched high on the slope overlooking the city of Washington, conformed perfectly to the ideals of a nineteenth-century, picturesque, family-seat. Such a commanding prospect also met the strategic needs of the Union forces. Only then did the legacy of Arlington House as the "Lee Mansion" begin.



**SOURCES:**

ENVIRONS OF WASHINGTON PREPARED FROM ORIGINAL SURVEYS OF THE ENGINEER DEPARTMENT 1864-1865 SHEET 5 AND 6. NARA II RECORD GROUP 77. F99, CARTOGRAPHIC BRANCH

ARLINGTON PARK STABLES. NARA II. RG 92. F-110 SHEETS 1-9.

MEISS, MONTGOMERY C. PART OF ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA. US S. COAST SURVEY. REGISTER NO. 1065. ON FILE, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, CARTOGRAPHIC BRANCH, WASHINGTON D.C.

TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SURVEYED IN THE YEARS 1856-59 BY A. BOSCHKE. PUBLISHED BY D. McCLELLAND, BLANCHARD AND MOHRN. WASHINGTON D.C. 1861. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CALL # G3850 1861 .B6 VAULT OVERSIZE

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**NOTE:**

A map of existing conditions is screened underneath the historic period plan.



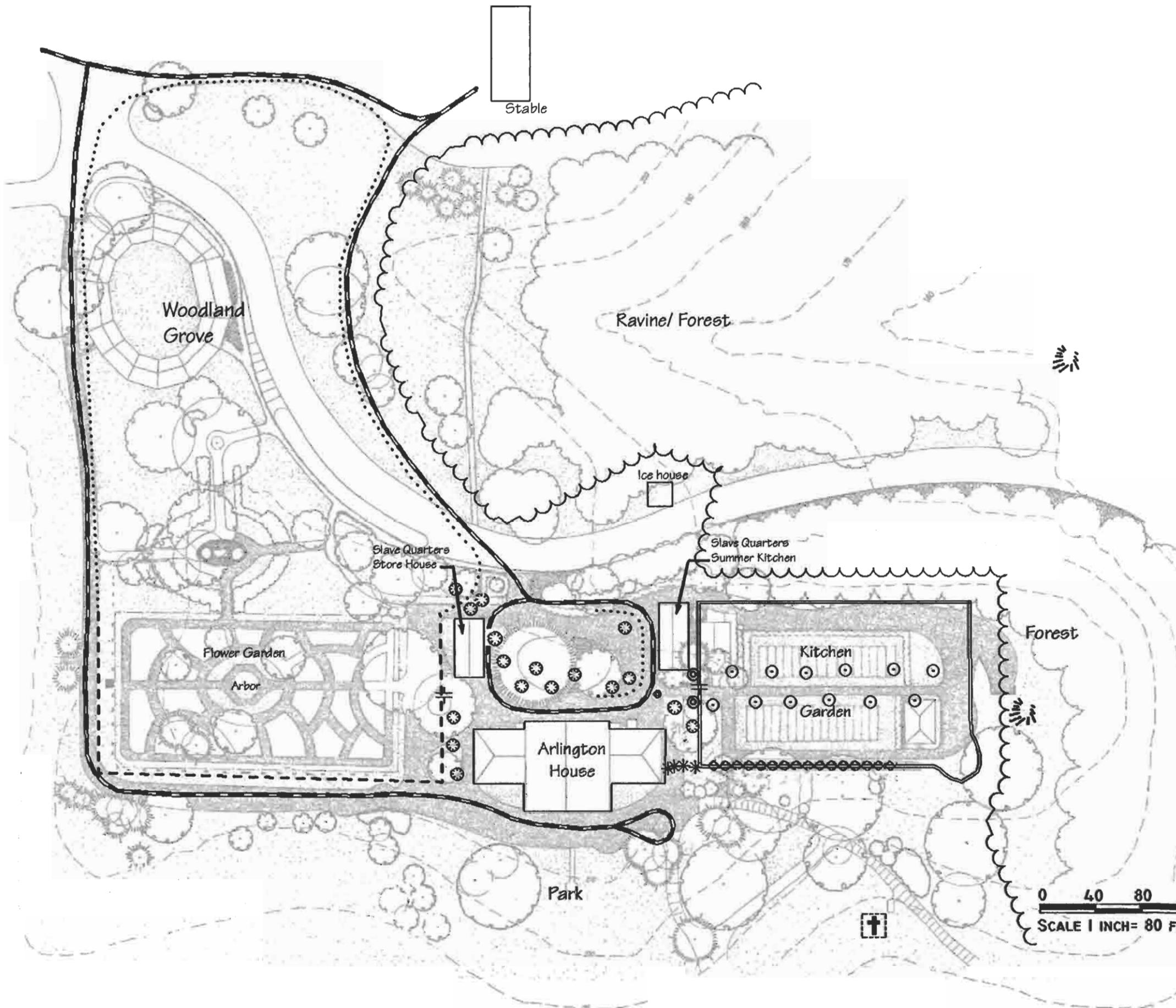
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

**1802-1861**  
**Historic Period Plan**  
**ARLINGTON HOUSE**  
**THE ROBERT E. LEE MEMORIAL**  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

PREPARED BY:  
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION  
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PROGRAM  
J. HANNA, A. DYMEK, E. HENDERSON, N. PARASH

855/20901 lot 2



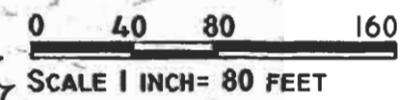


**LEGEND**

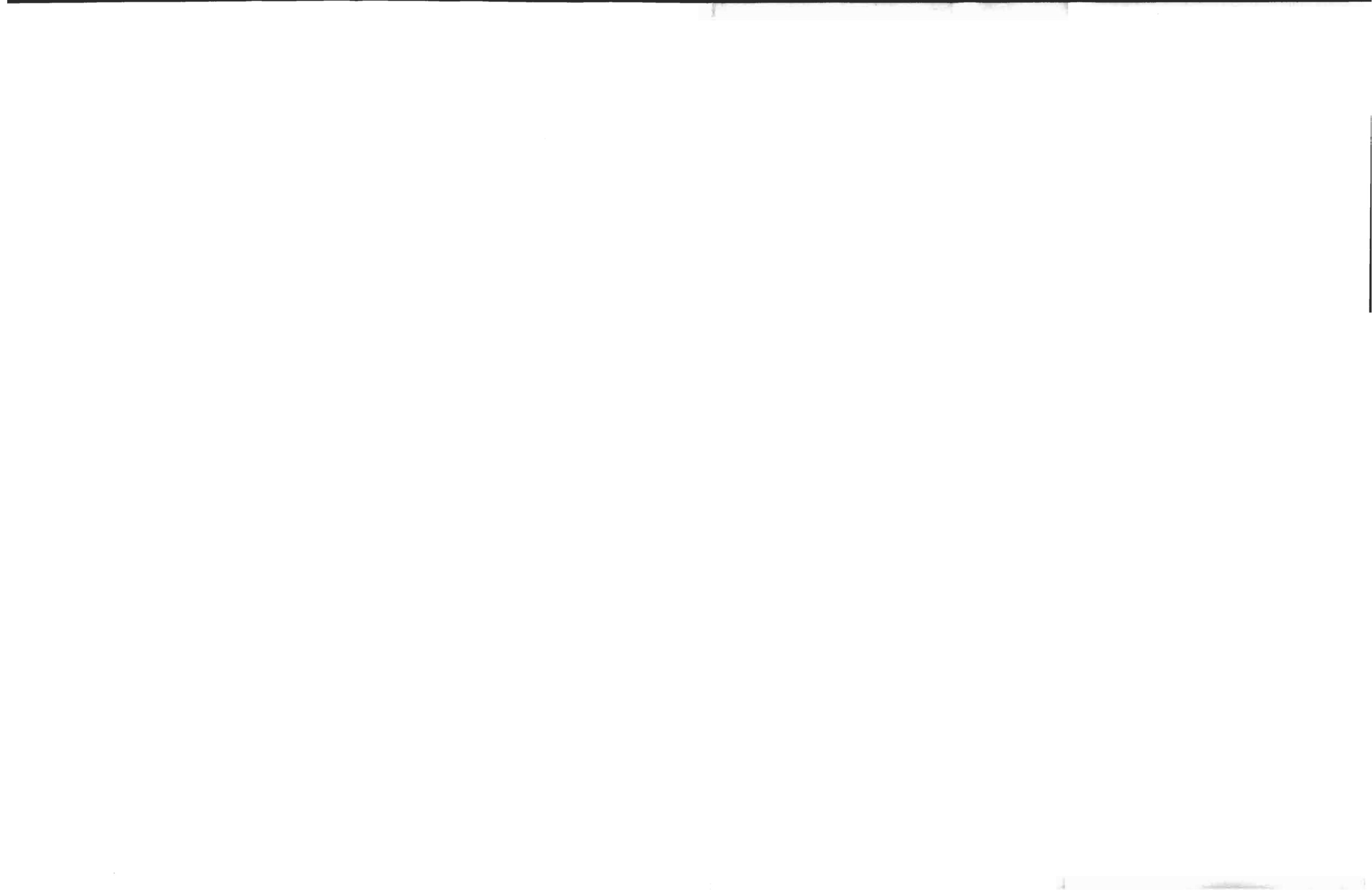
- Roads
- Fence post and rail or split rail
- Wood paling fence
- ... Post and rail fence
- ~ Tree Line
- ⊗ Hedge of large shrubs
- ⊙ Barberry shrubs
- ⊙ Deciduous trees of unknown type
- ⊙ Fruit Trees
- \* Evergreen Trees
- Well
- ⊥ Gate
- ☼ Dump Site
- ⊕ Tomb of Mary Randolph
- Arbor, location approximate

**NOTE:**

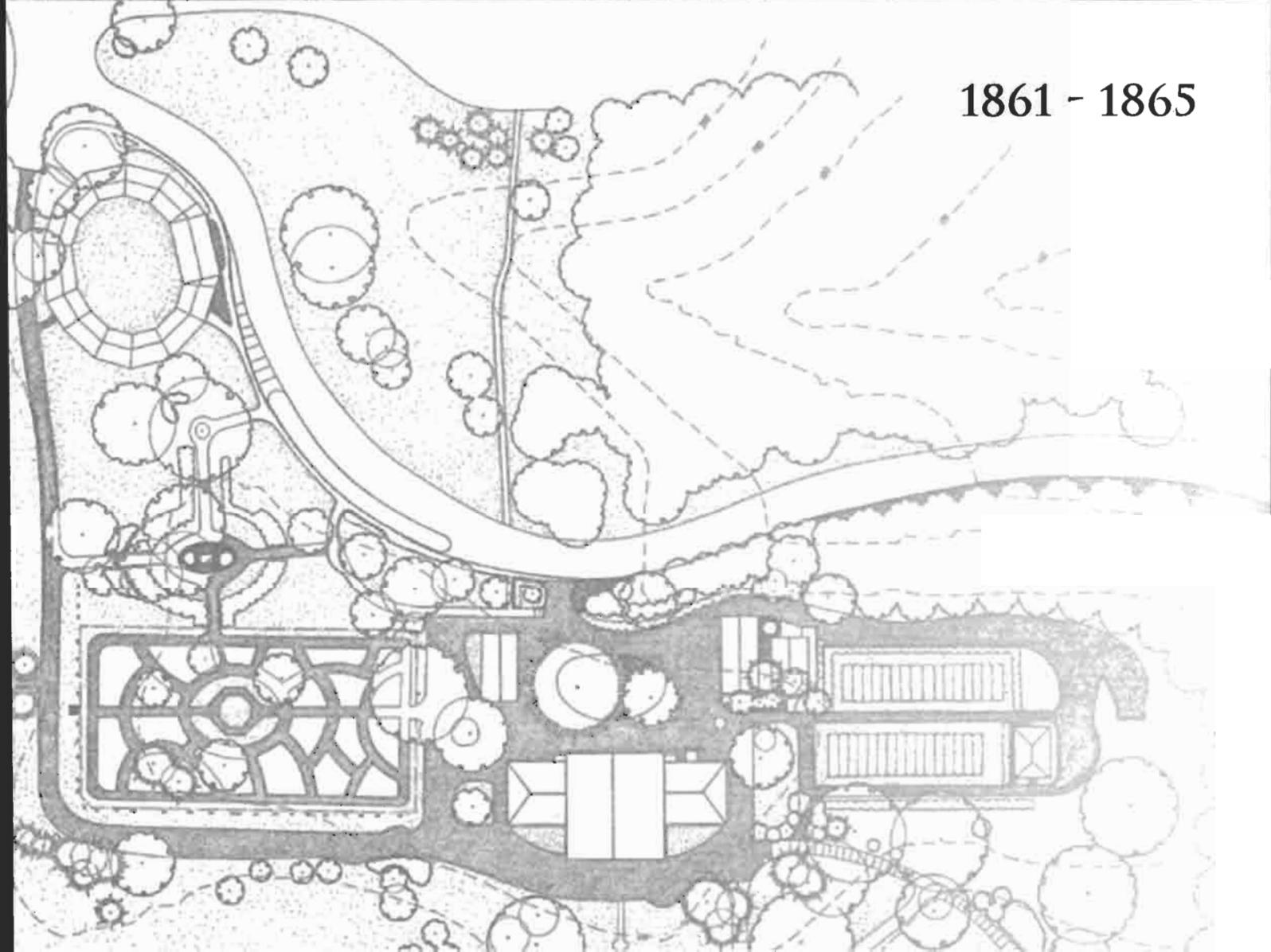
This historic period plan portrays the landscape of Arlington House, as it may have appeared circa 1859, based on analysis of primary materials related to the site and the Custis and Lee families. The historic vegetation illustrated represents only the approximate location of vegetation. A map of existing conditions is screened underneath the historic period plan. For sources see previous historic period plan.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
 CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT  
**1802-1861**  
**Historic Period Plan**  
**ARLINGTON HOUSE**  
**THE ROBERT E. LEE MEMORIAL**  
 ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA  
 PREPARED BY:  
 NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION  
 CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PROGRAM  
 J. HANNA, A. DYMEK, E. HENDERSON, N. PARASH



# CHAPTER 4



1861 - 1865

*They cannot take away the remembrances of the spot, [Arlington], and the memories of those that to us rendered it sacred. That will remain with us as long as life will last and that we can preserve.*<sup>1</sup>

*Robert E. Lee to Mary Lee, Christmas 1861*

In the late evening of May 23, 1861 the Seventh Regiment of New York was among the thousands of soldiers ordered forward from the southern end of Long Bridge, where a tete-de-pont was under construction, to the slopes of Arlington.<sup>2</sup> Near Arlington Spring, as part of the first major military action of the Civil War, the soldiers of the Seventh constructed tents with branches cut from the many varieties of native trees that shaded the smooth, sodded lawn of Custis's old resort. With picks and spades they joined the other regiments the next morning, following the engineers' lines of entrenchment, cutting into the hills. On Arlington farm the fruit trees in the orchard by the overseer's house were felled for they obstructed views.<sup>3</sup> Such earthworks were crucial to the defense of the Union capital, for "a single hostile battery could have fired the city with its shells" from the command of Arlington House.<sup>4</sup> In order to boost protection, by May 29th the Eighth New York regiment set up camp amid the enormous oak and elm trees to the south of the flower garden.<sup>5</sup> Deeper into the war, placards were hung around many of the largest trees, asking soldiers to refrain from cutting them down. Many soldiers must have been convinced, for when the war ended, many of the largest trees near the mansion and flower garden remained.

But on that first morning, while the federal forces constructed earthen defenses down near the Potomac River, only a few individuals climbed the heights to Arlington. Among them was Major General Charles W. Sandford, in charge of all New York regiments within the

*38 View of Arlington Heights with military tents placed near Arlington House as part of the Army of the Potomac's headquarters, 1861*





District of Columbia. He established his divisional headquarters at Arlington House. Instead of moving into the mansion, he had three large tents erected between the house and the flower garden. The next day he issued a proclamation stating that all property taken for use by the federal forces in Fairfax County, in which Arlington was then located, would be protected and used only for suppressing unlawful acts against the Union.<sup>6</sup> Yet control of vandalism over the 1100 acres of the Arlington estate would prove more difficult. Down at the farm, the Arlington overseer, John McQuin, protested that a few soldiers of the thousands of troops that traversed the estate had “shot his chickens and rabbits and scared his wife.”<sup>7</sup> For the most part, however, during the first year of Federal occupation, the promise of preservation of the house and gardens was upheld.

Yet the difficulties of being separated from her home were no less acute for Mary Lee. She had departed around May 18th, leaving the majority of the Arlington slaves behind. Concerned for their welfare and for her own, she wrote to General Sandford only a few days after the Federal advance into Virginia:

*It never occurred to me, General Sandford, that I could be forced to sue for permission to enter my own house and that such an outrage as its military occupation to the exclusion of me and my children could ever have been perpetrated by any one in the whole extent of this country. . . I intended to have obtained a permit and have returned to make some further arrangements for the comfort of my servants many of them old and infirm, but was told by a gentleman who had made the same attempt that none could be given, so I am homeless . . . You have a beautiful home and people that you love and can sympathize perhaps even with the wife of a “traitor and a rebel.” I implore you by the courtesy due to any woman and which no brave soldier could deny, to allow my old coachman by whom I send this letter to get his clothes, to give some letters to my manager relative to the farm &c., to give my market man a pass that will enable him to go and return from Washington as usual, where his family reside. My gardener Ephraim also has a wife in Washington and is accustomed to go over there every Saturday and return on Monday. My old cook has also a wife in the neighborhood, to allow the servants to go on with their usual occupations unmolested by the soldiers and protected by your authority, also to allow my boy Billy whom I only left at home to complete some work in the garden to come to me with his clothes as I can not use my carriage without his aid & to permit my maid Marcellina to send me some small articles that I did not bring away. She and the woman in the yard, Selina, can get what I want out of the house. I will not trouble you with any further requests—only pray that God may ever spare you and yours from the agony and inconvenience I am now enduring.<sup>8</sup>*

A reporter from the New York Tribune, there on the heights the first day with General Sandford, interviewed some of the slaves, but unfortunately wrote little of their responses.<sup>9</sup>



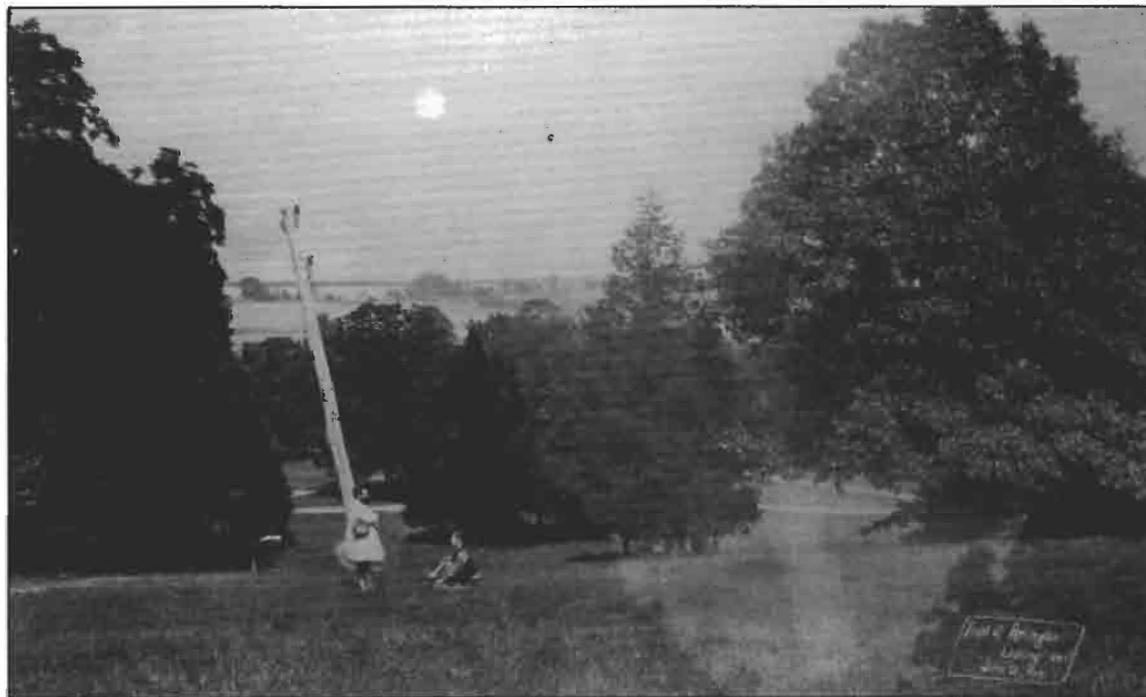
Both the slaves whose primary work was located in the house, yard and gardens—including Selina Gray, George Clarke, Eleanor Harris, Perry Parks, Daniel and Ephriam—and most of the slaves whose quarters were down on the farm, remained on the Arlington Estate.<sup>10</sup> Some assisted the federal soldiers with tasks such as washing and cooking, while others continued with agricultural work. Though they were “left with a month’s provisions” according to the journalist, most stayed on the estate for at least another year which required the production of food.<sup>11</sup> On the farm, about fifty slaves remained in the quarters at least through 1862 and most likely continued to garden in their family vegetable plots as much as their situation allowed.<sup>12</sup> This type of self-sufficiency was common on plantations throughout Northern Virginia during the war. For instance, slaves at Mount Vernon supported themselves after the abandonment of the property by its owners through growing vegetables and selling firewood.<sup>13</sup> The slave families at Arlington faced perhaps a greater challenge in their daily interactions with the soldiers occupying the estate.

At the end of May, Brigadier General Irvin McDowell, in charge of the newly-named Army of the Potomac, took over the tent headquarters set up by General Sandford just south of the mansion at Arlington. Prior to the war, McDowell had been good friends with the Lee

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*39 As revealed in this view  
cast from Arlington House,  
even during the Civil War,  
many of the trees of the pic-  
turesque Park were retained,  
June 1864.*

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National Archives

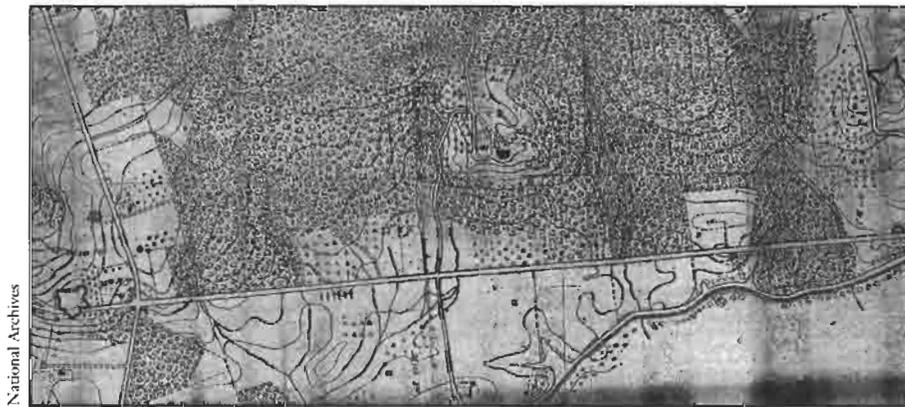
family and now he wrote to assure Mary Lee that her property would be protected.<sup>14</sup> Improvements to the military post continued. Within weeks a telegraph line, connecting Arlington with Washington, was set up on wooden poles that descended down the east-facing slope through the Park.<sup>15</sup> McDowell was anxious to know the exact situation of fortifications within the territory occupied by the federal Army, therefore he commissioned the U.S. Coast Survey to create a map of the District of Columbia and northern Virginia illustrating the forts, batteries and roads then under construction.<sup>16</sup> Fresh from the Union army’s repulsed attack



on the Confederates at Bull Run (officially named the First Battle of Manassas) on July 21, McDowell recognized the need for a better defense system adequate to protect Arlington, thereby preventing at least one way of attack on the capital city. Fort Corcoran to the north and Forts Albany and Runyon to the south had to be connected. Therefore a chain of lunettes was constructed, including Fort Tillinghast, Fort Cass and Fort Woodbury west of Arlington House.<sup>17</sup> Fort DeKalb to the northwest of the estate property line and Fort Craig to the southwest were also built as part of this continuous defensive line in advance of the heights of Arlington.<sup>18</sup> To link the new forts, many roads were cut through the woods and a belt of trees both large and small was felled through the forest in front of Arlington to allow for passage and communication.<sup>19</sup>

Another primary purpose of the new road construction was to ensure that the headquarters, Arlington House, had more than one entry or egress in case of invasion by enemy

forces. During the life of G.W.P. Custis, and later under the management of Robert E. Lee, the Arlington estate had only one



National Archives

40 The placement of armaments and tents are shown as crosses and triangles on this detail of a map of the landscape of Arlington House. Topographic Survey of U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Washington, D.C. 1864

carriage drive which connected it to the main roads and the Potomac; that which extended west from Arlington Spring, through the farm and up the slope through the Park to the mansion, stables and yard. This situation of limited egress and entry was dangerous, for if the Confederate forces advanced, there was only one method of retreat for the Union Army. To solve this problem, the drive to the estate was extended to the west through the woods, immediately west of the yard, down into the ravine behind the house and back up again before turning east and continuing down the slope to meet the turnpike at the northeastern corner of the property.

Throughout the former estate to the north, south and east of the mansion thousands of soldiers bivouacked in the forest and fields.<sup>20</sup> In early July of 1861, a young soldier described the scene,

*through the green forest leaves gleams the white canvas of the tents and on the highest ridge westward rises an imposing structure with a portico and colonnade in front, facing the river, which is called Arlington House . . . a large United States flag floats from the roof which shames even the ample proportions of the many stars and stripes rising up from the camps in the trees . . .*<sup>21</sup>



For the first time in history, the American flag flew from the pediment of Arlington House. Yet even with the needs and deprivations of war, the house and the gardens near it remained unmolested. A New York Times reporter wrote in the fall of 1861 that, though the home was that of the “rebel leader,” it was also “hallowed grounds as once being the estate of the Custis family from whence sprang the wife of Washington.” The garden he described as a “mass of flowers.” Another visitor commented that “after the vandalism I have witnessed in the destruction of property in and about the houses of rebels and elsewhere, it was a pleasurable relief to find here . . . enforced respect for the property and furniture . . . the garden, with its fences is preserved . . . the garden is fine . . .”<sup>22</sup> Though General McClellan had replaced General McDowell as the Commander of the Army of the Potomac soon after the First Battle of Manassas, McClellan lived in Washington D.C., so McDowell remained at Arlington trying to preserve the estate from damage. One reason the estate remained in relatively good condition that first year, at least in the vicinity of the main house, was the care given by the slaves. Selina Gray, identified by Mary Lee in the letter to General Sandford as “the woman in the yard,” had lived in the western third of the southern slave quarters with her husband and children during the residency of the Custis and Lee families. During the federal occupation, she played an important role in the protection of the Washington relics, some of which were, out of necessity, left behind in the departure of the Lees. Though a few relics were eventually stolen from the house, she ensured for at least the first year of occupation they were locked and secure.<sup>23</sup>

41 Selina and Thorton Gray,  
no date



Arlington House Archives

Regardless of the protection afforded by his former elite position in Washington society and the care of the slaves remaining at Arlington, Robert E. Lee predicted the loss of his home as early as Christmas 1861. He wrote sadly to his daughter,



*Your old home if not destroyed by our enemies has been so desecrated that I cannot bear to think of it. I should have preferred it to have been wiped from the earth, its beautiful hill sunk, and its sacred trees buried, rather than to have been degraded by the presence of those who revel in the ill they do for their own selfish purposes . . .*<sup>24</sup>

One month earlier Lee, as the executor of G.W.P. Custis's will, had received a court decree requiring that the slaves at Arlington, Romancock and White House, one hundred and eighty-eight total, be given their freedom by January 1, 1863. General Lee abided by this decision, as he had planned to do, and freed the slaves on December 29, 1862, giving them the option to depart or remain on the various estates.<sup>25</sup> At Arlington it is difficult to determine which of the slaves remained on the estate at the time of their manumission.<sup>26</sup> Many slaves did continue living on the estate after attaining their freedom; for in Freedmen's Village, a federal settlement for freed slaves established on the southeastern section of the estate in May of 1863, there were former Custis and Lee slaves.<sup>27</sup> At least a few individuals remained for the rest of their lives at Arlington, working for the cemetery and in old age providing priceless insight to visitors curious about the appearance of the property before the war.

During the winter of 1861-62, thousands of soldiers camped on Arlington Heights. According to an Englishman who had visited the military installation on the old estate in early spring, much of the park and forest in the eastern section of the property had been damaged.

Arlington House Archives



*42 Soldiers cutting trees at Arlington in the first year of the Civil War as published in Harper's Magazine, autumn 1861*

In his book, *Six Months in the Federal States*, he explained the rather eager attitudes of the soldiers to his foreign readers,

*The greatest difficulty was experienced in hindering the soldiers from cutting down the trees; and when at last Western regiments were stationed at Arlington Heights, it was found impossible to protect the timber. To soldiers from the backwoods settlements it seemed simply absurd to suppose that any man could object to having his ground cleared for him; and no amount of argument or expostulation could persuade them that it was not one of the rights of man to cut down any trees he came across. Hence, by this time the park had been sadly devastated. It had, too, that dreary deserted look which a park always has when there is nobody to look after it. The ground was so covered with stumps of trees and broken fences that it was with difficulty we could pilot our horses through the brushwood.*<sup>28</sup>



43 These officer's barracks were probably located in the vicinity of the Arlington House stable, June 1864.

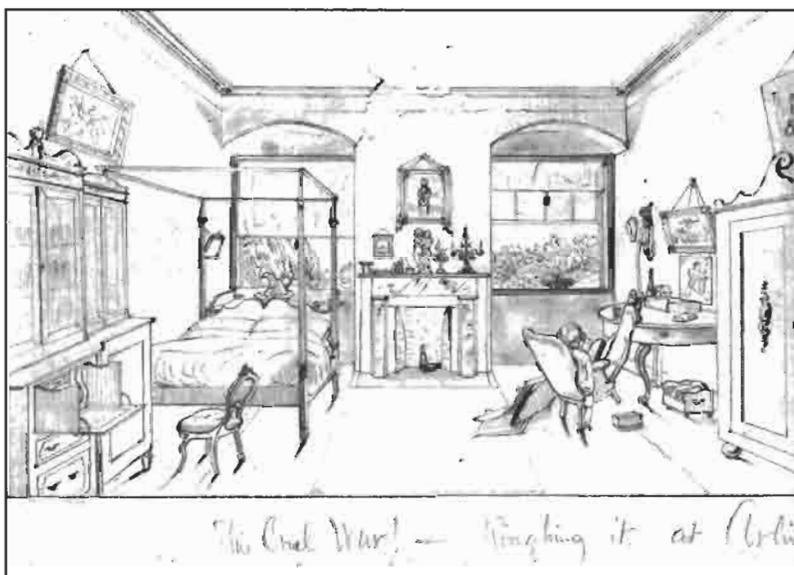


National Archives

Yet, the simple fact was that in areas of encampment, wood and other resources needed for food and shelter were scarce. The fence posts and trees that provided timber for housing or fuel for fires most likely proved indispensable and irresistible.

After the long winter, in March of 1862 most of McClellan's army departed for Fort Monroe to begin the advance up the Peninsula towards Richmond. The only evidence left behind from the regiments were the "blackened circles of campfires" that dotted the hillsides.<sup>29</sup>

44 "The Civil War—Roughing it at Arlington", most likely drawn by a Union officer late in the Civil War, proves that even in war time humor survived.



Arlington House Archives

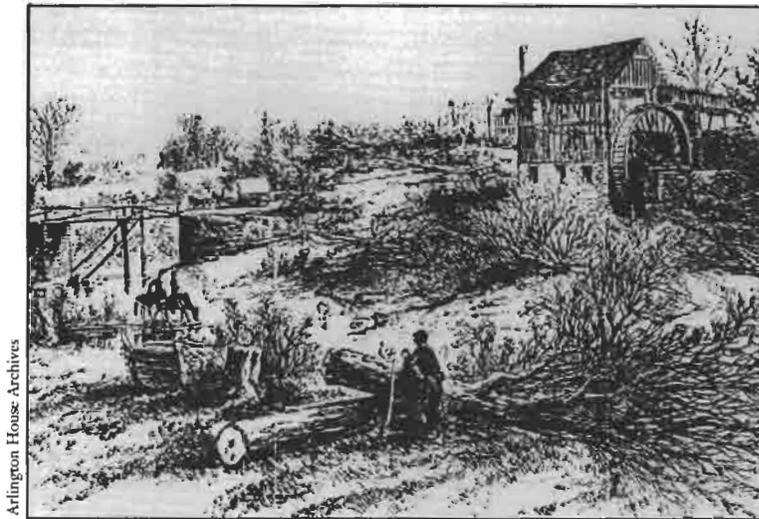
Though several thousand enlisted men remained on the heights to guard the federal capital after McClellan's departure, with the shift of the war campaign south, the intensity of activity at Arlington slowed. Lower ranking officers and their families stationed at nearby forts moved into the

mansion vacated by McClellan and his staff. Once again the walls of Arlington held children's voices. Yet the departure of the highest ranking army officials, those personally connected to General Lee and his family through shared social circles prior to the war, also affected the



upkeep of the site. The increased neglect may have also resulted from the departure of the slaves when Freedmen's Village was established. In any case, "all the boundaries, garden plats and smooth reaches of green turf . . . were swept away and even the gradually descending terraces were broken down and became but ragged embankments."<sup>30</sup> In fact, after the Union defeat at the Second Battle of Manassas in late August 1862, General McClellan ordered the Arlington mansion burned if the Confederates moved on Washington. But the southern forces came no closer and the estate was spared. As a result of the defeat, however, construction of Fort Whipple was begun to the northwest of the house necessitating the removal of a large swath of trees.<sup>31</sup>

By 1863 according to Anthony Trollope, an English novelist who visited the estate:



Arlington House Archives

45 In addition to the damage done during the Union occupation of Arlington, Arlington Mills, the custom mill begun by George Washington Park Custis in the early nineteenth century, also suffered. Harper's Magazine, autumn, 1861

*the whole place was then one camp. The fences disappeared. The gardens were trodden into mud. The roads had been cut to pieces and new tracks made everywhere through the grounds. But timber still remained.*<sup>32</sup>

During the time between the removal of the headquarters of the Army of the Potomac and the creation of the national cemetery, the landscape surrounding Arlington House changed. The white paling fence surrounding the flower garden and the last of the post and rail and board fences from other locations on the estate were most likely removed for lumber. During the Custis and Lee



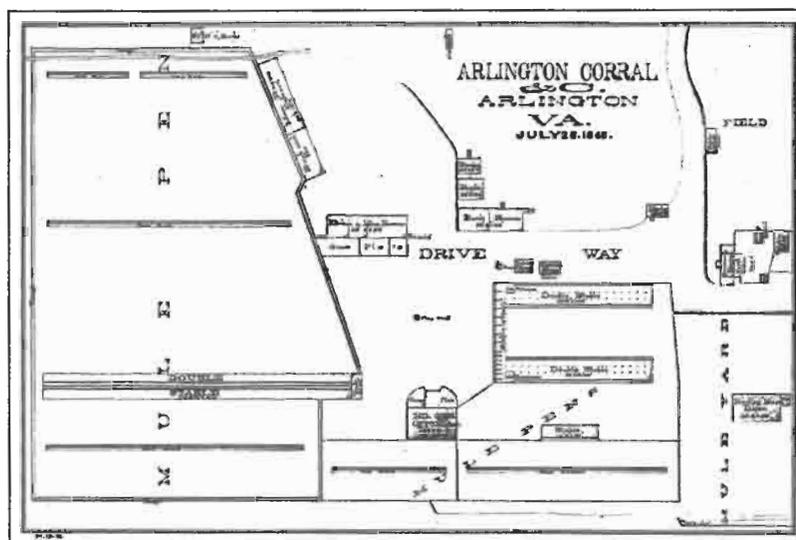
National Archives

46 During the war, the yard west of Arlington House was pounded dirt, broken only by scattered trees preserved for their valuable shade, June 1864.



ownership, the landscape immediately surrounding the mansion had been defined by areas of forest and meadow, turf and gravel, footpaths and carriage drives, and of course gardens. But by 1863 the demands of war had broken down these defined areas, mixing them into one another, resulting in a homogeneous landscape of pounded dirt interspersed with trees preserved for their valuable shade. Foot and horse trails created by army troops, gullied by rain, criss-crossed the park east of the house, though much of the slope was still covered in long grasses.

47 When the Civil War began, the former agricultural buildings of the Arlington estate were used by the Union army in the construction of Arlington Stables. This map was created as part of an army inventory following the war; 1865.



National Archives

48 This large Union army horse and mule corral was built near the former gate into Arlington Park, at the junction of the carriage drive to Arlington House and the Alexandria and Georgetown Turnpike.



National Archives

Down on the former Arlington farm, massive alterations were also made to meet the requirements of war. Whole regiments of soldiers had bivouacked just west of the Alexandria and Georgetown Turnpike, across from the former farm and slave quarters of the Arlington estate. During the war, the barns, slave cabins and other structures associated with the agricultural pursuits of G.W.P. Custis were taken over by the federal forces and utilized in support of the Arlington Stables. This facility was set up by the government to care for the

mules and horses of the Union army. Large corrals and stables were constructed to supplement the existing early nineteenth-century buildings. To provide more space and visibility, the trees by Arlington Spring were eventually cut.<sup>33</sup>



## OWNERSHIP OF ARLINGTON

Up until 1863, Arlington had been occupied by the federal government without legal title to the property as was often the case in wartime. Mary Lee, as direct inheritor of the estate of her father George Washington Parke Custis, still owned the land. Shortly after McClellan's departure south in March of 1862, Congress passed a law authorizing "the collection of direct taxes in the insurrectionary districts within the United States." Under this legislation, property owned by individuals loyal to the Confederacy within the boundary of the United States, such as the Lees, could be assessed federal taxes. If these taxes went unpaid, then the property would be forfeited to the government and put up at auction to be sold to the highest bidder. This law was amended in 1863, to wit "any such sale of any tracts, parcels or lots of land which might be selected under the direction of the President for government use for war, military, naval, revenue, charitable, educational or police purposes might be at said sale, be bid on under directions of President and struck off to the United States." It was under the authority of this law that the United States government attained ownership of the Arlington estate.<sup>34</sup>

On September 16, 1863, Mary Ann Randolph Lee, as holder of the title to Arlington, was assessed \$92.70 in taxes on property worth, according to the 1860 census, approximately \$34,100. She was given sixty days to pay. Mary, suffering from acute rheumatism and behind enemy lines, was unable to make the journey to Washington herself and so sent someone else to make the payment. The law, which required the owner of the property to make the tax payment, was held strictly in this case, perhaps because the wife of the leader of the Confederate Army held the deed. In any case, the individual sent by Mrs. Lee was turned away. With the taxes unpaid Arlington was forfeited to the United States. The property was to be sold at public auction on January 11, 1864. On the sixth of January, under the 1863 amended tax act, President Lincoln made an order directing that the Arlington estate be bid on and acquired by the United States for war, charitable and educational purposes.<sup>35</sup> Therefore the property was purchased by the federal government at an auction for \$26, 800.00. The local newspaper described the event:

*Sale of Confiscated Lands—sale anxiously looked for, took place in Alexandria at noon under supervision John Hawkhurst William . . . .at times the bidding was quite spirited and the prices were considered good. The first property sold was No 1, Arlington estate, late occupied and owned by General R.E. Lee, 1000 acres valued at 34,100. Sold to the government for 26, 800. No 2 Custis Mill property, 500 acres valued at 7000 Sold to R.E. Flannigan for \$4100.<sup>36</sup>*

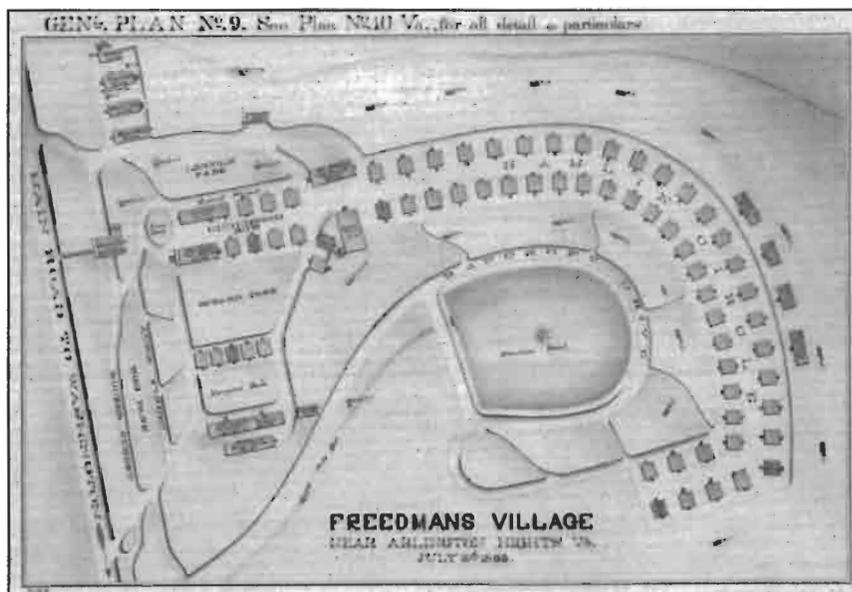


Whether President Lincoln's motivations in acquiring clear title to Arlington included its potential as the site of a national cemetery is unknown. The use of the property during wartime was unquestioned. But in January of 1864 an end to the war was becoming clearer. By purchasing the property out-right by authority of a Presidential Executive Order, a clearer title was established and the standing of the Lee family in a potential law suit to restore their property was diminished, though not forever. The legality of the initial federal confiscation of Arlington would be called into question for the next twenty years.<sup>37</sup> In the meantime, however, Arlington was put to a variety of uses.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF FREEMEN'S VILLAGE

Freedmen's Village was established under the authority of the Department of Army in May of 1863.<sup>38</sup> The village was located on the southern portion of the Arlington estate, west of the Alexandria-Georgetown Turnpike. Of the many freedmen's camps that would be established on both sides of the Potomac River by the end of the Civil War, Freedmen's Village at Arlington was by far the most famous. The first camps constructed to deal with the influx of former and fugitive slaves into Washington were located downtown near the Capitol. These temporary camps quickly became over-crowded and proved unhealthy. Moreover, only minimal protection could be offered against the Maryland slave owners attempting to regain their "property." Danforth B. Nichols of the American Missionary Association and Lieutenant Colonel Elias M. Green, Chief Quartermaster of the Department of Washington, were charged with the task of finding a new site—preferably on high ground, outside the confines of the city, but near enough to ease communication and to be within the protective confines of the Army installation.<sup>39</sup> As a result of their search, in the spring of 1863 one hundred individuals, many of them the former slaves of the Custis' and Lees', formed a new community on the Arlington Estate. Billed to Congress, who funded the resettlement, as a model of charita-

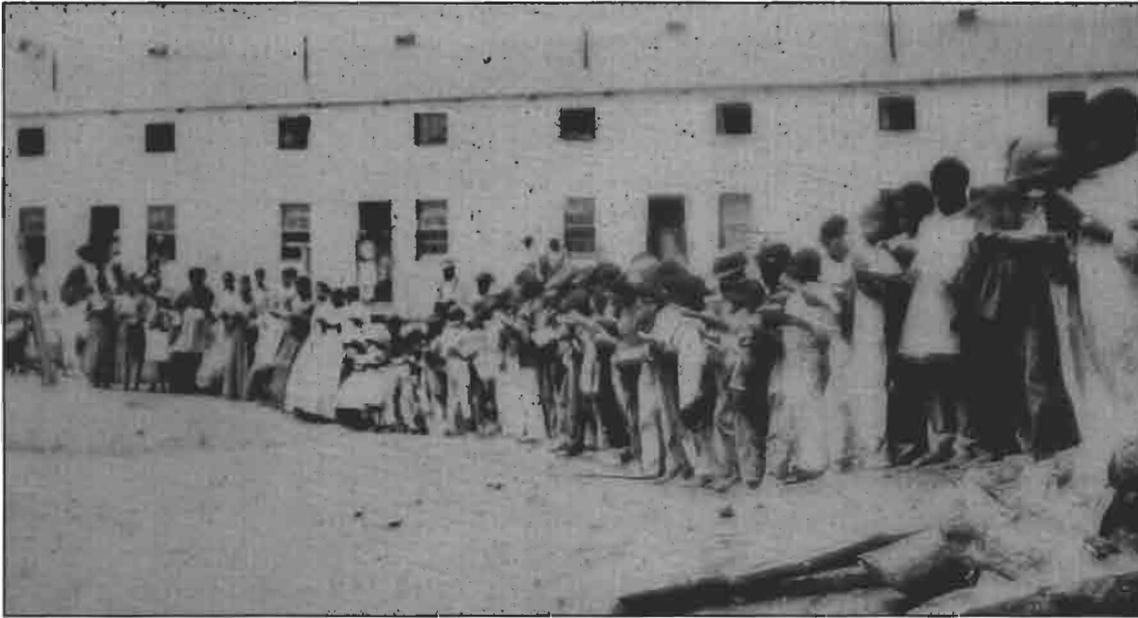
49 Plan of Freedmen's Village, 1865



National Archives

ble housing, the village plans were rendered in water-color conveying a clean, pleasing image of the community complete with central lake and fountain.<sup>40</sup> While not quite aspiring to the graphics of the plans, most build-

ings in the village were of permanent wood frame construction. Approximately 28 feet by 24 feet and one-and-one-half stories high, they were sheathed with rough weather boarding and organized around a central street.<sup>41</sup>



National Archives

Many of the individuals who made up the community were fugitive and former slaves from Virginia, called “contraband” by officials, for they were considered property of the south taken in war: Though most if not all slaves escaped their southern masters through their own enterprise and not through the coercion of the northern soldiers. The “contraband” were



51 Perspective drawing of Freedmen's Village in *The Child's Paper*: December 12, 1864, page 1

50 Residents of Freeman's Village, c.1868



joined by those slaves newly freed under the District of Columbia Emancipation Proclamation which was passed in 1862. Within a year, over one thousand people lived within the boundaries of the Freedmen's Village. While some individuals moved on as quickly as possible, others stayed and improved their individual homes by planting trees and raising vegetables. Many of the residents in the village, with its churches, school, and hospital, were women and children since most of the able bodied men enlisted or served as military laborers outside the Washington area.<sup>42</sup> In addition, some Freedmen's Villagers worked nearby on other portions of the old Arlington estate, in the government's agricultural fields, raising hay and other crops to pay the monthly rent of their homes.<sup>43</sup> Sojourner Truth lived in the community for a year and often served as a liaison between the former slaves and the federal officials. Though there was much sickness and poverty, the death rate of two per day in Freedmen's Village compared favorably with the five people per day rate in the District camps. Between May of 1863 and May of 1864, a cemetery for deceased members of Freedmen's Village was established in the northeast corner of the Arlington estate near the Alexandria and Georgetown Turnpike. Later this spot became the location of the first soldier burials made at Arlington by the federal government. By late 1865, with the end of the Civil War, a movement began to disband the contraband camps and disperse the residents into the countryside and to the north. Many of the villages were broken up. At Freedmen's Village on Arlington estate, however, the former slaves were allowed to stay. The irony of the slaves once managed by Robert E. Lee, farming Arlington as free men and women did not go unnoticed by the officials of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedman and Abandoned Lands. By the time the village was disbanded in the late 1880s, it was the oldest Freedmen's Village in the country.<sup>44</sup>

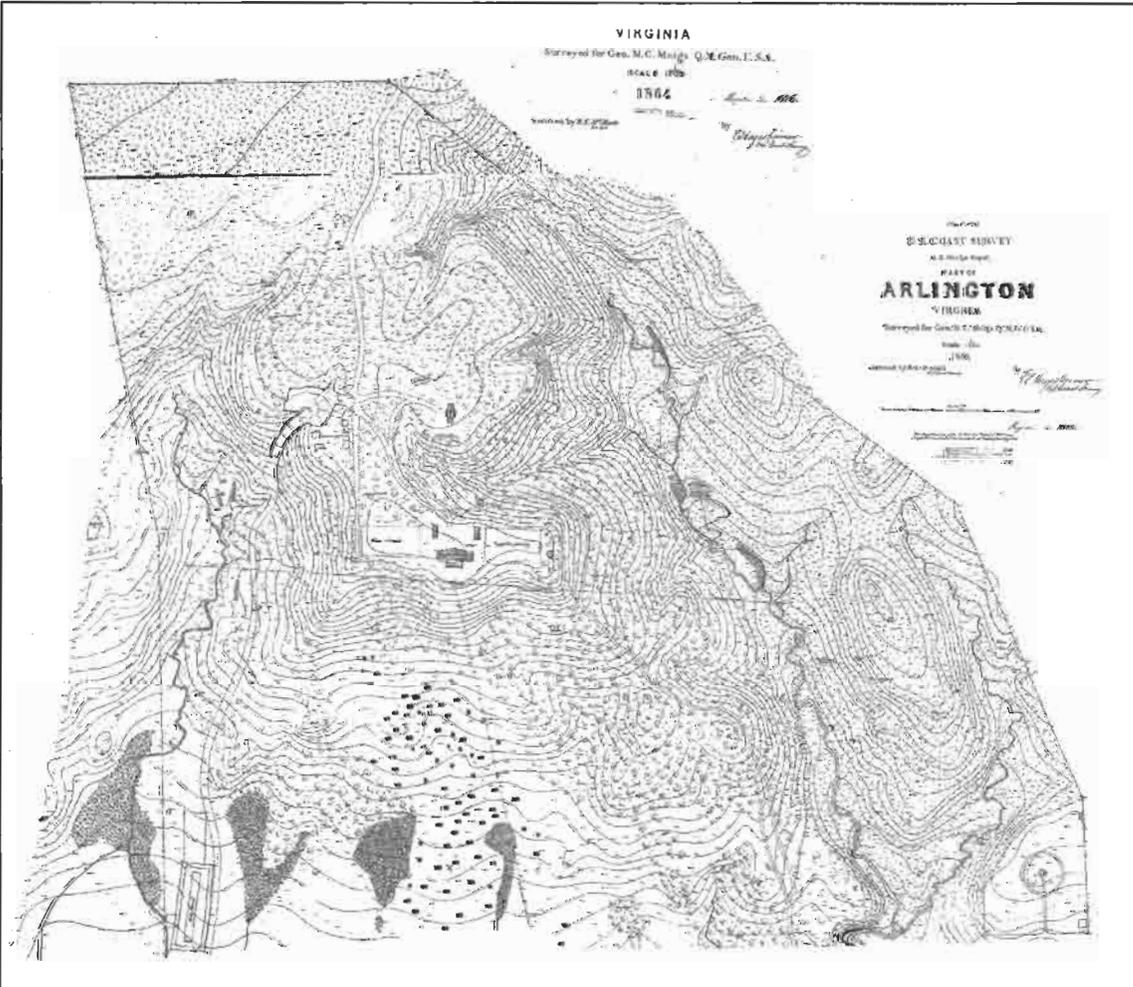
## FIRST MILITARY BURIALS

Even as early in the war as 1862, questions began to arise as to the proper burial of the Union soldiers. Articles and editorials in the papers in the northern cities commented on the irreverent burials and inadequate sites of interment experienced by the fallen men. In response to a clear need, on July 17, 1862 Congress enacted legislation authorizing the President to purchase "cemetery grounds" to be used as national cemeteries for "soldiers who shall have died in the service of the country" and gave authority of their oversight to the Quarter Master General of the United States.<sup>45</sup> Locally, by late in 1863, the primary federal burial ground, the Soldiers Home, was nearly full.<sup>46</sup> Following the enormous loss of life in the Battle of Wilderness in early May of 1864, Major Daniel H. Rucker and Captain James Monroe of the Quarter Master General's Office were ordered to make a careful examination of all sites eligible for burial use near the District.<sup>47</sup> They reported in favor of Arlington. Since January, the site had been owned by the United States due to the purchase ordered by President Lincoln. In addition to being convenient to the hospitals in Washington and Alexandria, the high elevation of the site provided both pragmatic security from floods and the aesthetic beauty of the picturesque view



to and from the capital. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it was the former home of the leader of the Confederate Army, Robert E. Lee. Montgomery Meigs, a prominent Washington D.C. engineer and the Quarter Master General for the United States, assumed responsibility of ordering the first interments. In response to Rucker's recommendation, General Meigs wrote on June 15, 1864,

*The Arlington mansion and the grounds immediately surrounding it are by the direction of the Secretary of War appropriated for a Military Cemetery. The bodies of all soldiers dying in the hospitals in the vicinity of Washington and Alexandria after the grounds now at Alexandria are full will be interred in this cemetery. You will cause the grounds not exceeding 200 acres to be immediately surveyed, laid out and enclosed for this purpose not interfering with the grounds occupied by the freedman's camp—I enclose a sketch showing the form and location . . . Mr. Edward Clark will act as Architect and Engineer of the Cemetery having accompanied me this morning on an inspection of the grounds he will be able to point out the portion of the grounds in which internment should be immediately commenced.<sup>48</sup>*



*This U.S. Coast Survey map was commissioned by General Montgomery C. Meigs at the creation of the National Cemetery at Arlington in late spring of 1864.*



Yet the first burial had occurred one month earlier on May 13, 1864 when Private William Henry Christman, a farmer from Pennsylvania, was interred at Arlington.<sup>49</sup> He was buried near the cemetery of Freedmen's Village, at the northeast corner of the old Arlington estate near the Alexandria and Georgetown Turnpike. When Meigs made a subsequent visit, he discovered the graves of more soldiers in the northeast corner near the "contraband cemetery." He was angry and reiterated the importance of burying the soldiers nearer to the mansion.<sup>50</sup> On June 15, 1864, General Meigs wrote to Secretary of War General Stanton, who had jurisdiction over Arlington as a military installation, to affirm that the burials of soldiers in the northeast corner would end. He went so far as to suggest that after the cemetery was "property enclosed, laid out and carefully preserved", the soldiers recently interred in the lower northeastern section of the property [should] be removed to an area closer to the house, for "the grounds about the Mansion are admirably adapted to such a use."<sup>51</sup>

His directions were followed to some extent, as revealed by this official War Department 1865 report on the beginnings of the cemetery:

*Interments were commenced May 13, 1864 first at the northeast angle of the enclosure, by no means the most suitable place but desired by General DeRussy who then occupied the dwelling house, who gave as a reason that he wished the bodies buried as far from the residence as possible. This limited spot—bordering on a little swale and marsh is nearly filled up, but it is still being used for the interment of colored soldiers. It also contains the remains of some contrabands, so called.<sup>52</sup>*

This northeast portion of the cemetery was referred to as the "lower cemetery" or "contraband cemetery" for a number of years after the establishment of the National Cemetery at Arlington. The burial of soldiers near the "contraband cemetery" was discontinued soon after Meigs made his visit. The officers living in Arlington House, however, then ordered that the interments be made in the western portion of the grounds, not wishing to live near the dead. At this point, over sixty burials were occurring daily. When Meigs returned once again and found the graves lying to the far west of the house near the military grounds of Fort Whipple, he was satisfied. The burials there continued.<sup>53</sup>

Federal army officers, in contrast to enlisted men, were buried in a line along the flower garden. In all, forty-five officers were interred around the outside of the rectangular flower garden to the south of the mansion. Most likely, Meigs determined the location. The first, Captain Albert Packard, was buried four days after Private Christman. By the end of the month, over 2600 individuals had been buried in the cemetery. Soon a substantial, wooden paling fence fronting the Alexandria and Georgetown Turnpike was erected around the cemetery grounds.



The survey which Quarter Master General Meigs had requested was begun immediately by staff under Albert D. Bache of the U. S. Coast Survey. The survey simply outlined the existing conditions of the property, showing trees, fencelines, and estate buildings, and those buildings constructed by the federal forces. There were no design suggestions made. A series of photographs made in June of 1864 by Andrew J. Russell, at the time a photographer with the United States

Military Construction Corporation, documented the condition of the Arlington property and recorded in detail the destructive effects of wartime use. In December of 1865, Smith Lee, Robert E. Lee's brother, visited Arlington. Studying the altered landscape,



National Archives

53 Part of a series of photographs taken by Andrew Russell, a photographer with the United States Military Construction Corporation who documented the landscape of Arlington when it was officially declared a national cemetery, about a month after the first military burials. This image is probably of the northeast corner of the area then defined as the cemetery, currently Section 27.

he remarked that the house might still be used for a home if the officers' graves from around the flower garden were removed and the cemetery fenced off. This perhaps influenced Meigs to continue the cemetery development around the mansion.<sup>54</sup> The following quote, from an officer stationed at Arlington one year after its establishment as a cemetery, suggests that Meigs was determined to ensure that United States retain the property. Meigs himself, however, never stated this rationale for his actions.

*The Quartermaster General, some time ago, expressed his regret, that interments had not been made in close proximity to the Arlington House so as to more firmly secure the grounds known as Arlington cemetery to the Government by rendering it undesirable as a future residence or homestead.<sup>55</sup>*

The lawns and gardens of Arlington, neglected and trampled during the war by the thousands of troops that camped and drilled on the slopes, gradually were repaired. The bare earth was resodded, though patches of weeds blanketed areas where grass refused to grow.<sup>56</sup> The flower garden was enclosed again—this time with a narrow paling fence, white washed as before the war. The forests were gone down by Arlington Spring near the Potomac, in the vicinity of Fort Whipple to the north of the house, and by the unfinished Fort McPherson to the south.<sup>57</sup> But most of the enormous trees that before the war provided the dramatic dark



backdrop to Arlington House remained. In 1865, the graves were concentrated in two areas—in the northeast corner of the property and to the southwest of the house. There below enormous oaks and elms, the graves of thirteen thousand soldiers were marked with simple wood headboards painted white.<sup>58</sup> Black lettering revealed their names, where known, and for the Confederates buried, a simple word was printed, “Rebel.”<sup>59</sup> Yet, even acknowledging the veracity of Smith Lee’s observation, the National Cemetery at Arlington would never again be a home to the Lee family.<sup>60</sup>

Did Montgomery C. Meigs, Quarter Master General of the Army, create Arlington National Cemetery in spite? Were the soldiers interred to ensure that the land would be held in perpetuity by the people of the United States, and never again be the personal property of the Lee family or their descendants? Only his words written ten years after the cemetery establishment, suggest his reasoning:

*In establishing the cemetery . . . it was my intention to have begun the interments nearer the mansion, but opposition on the part of officers stationed at Arlington, some of whom used the mansion and who did not like to have the dead buried near them caused the interments to be begun in the Northeastern quarter of the grounds. On discovering this . . . I gave special instructions to make the burials near the mansion. They were then driven off by the same influence to the western portion of the grounds . . . and on discovering this second error I caused the officers to be buried around the garden . . .*<sup>61</sup>

The officers graves were placed around the flower garden at a time when the paling fence did not exist to hide the white headboards from those who would admire the roses in the beds. Yet Meigs did not act alone. Arlington, unlike many southern estates seized during the Civil War, was bought by the United States outright under an order given by the President of the United States. The creation of the cemetery at Arlington was sanctioned by the head of the Department of War, Edwin Stanton after it was chosen by General Rucker. At the time, opinions on the creation of the cemetery at Arlington were varied. Many who had fought for the Union, whose words were echoed in the northern newspapers, believed that the estate could be put to no finer use than the burial of those who had lost their lives fighting in the war. In contrast, many sympathetic to the Confederate cause felt that the confiscation of Robert and Mary Lee’s home amounted to stealing and desecration—a vicious act of the north against the southern people.

In placing the graves around Mary Lee’s garden, the same space which held the flowers once sold by slaves to raise funds for their own freedom, insurance against the return of the estate to the Lees was created. The federal officials realized that the disinterment of the officers around the garden would not be allowed in the political climate following the war. Instead, the graves would remain forever a reminder of the enormous cost of the conflict. Robert E. Lee, who became the president of Washington College (later renamed Washington



54 The graves of the officers buried in the 1860s remain lining the flower garden today, 2001.

and Lee University) never returned to Arlington. Mary Lee came back only once. Neither seriously attempted to regain the property, though throughout their lives they sadly lamented its loss. But here too, as in other facets of their lives, the Lees understood the enormous importance of reconciliation in the restoration of the country.

In May of 1868, on the first official Memorial Day held in this country, under the portico of Arlington the following address was given by Brigadier General James Garfield, future President of the United States. In honoring the deceased soldiers he read,

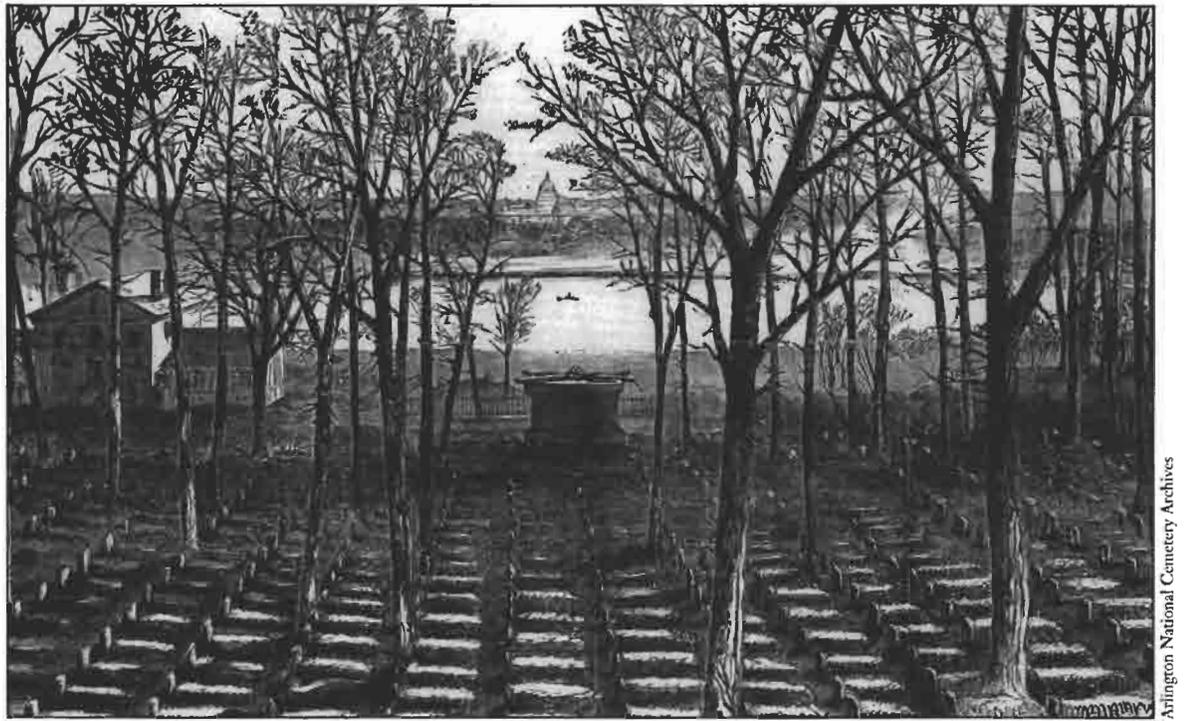
*What other spot so fitting for their last resting place as this, under the shadow of the Capitol saved by their valor; Here where the grim edge of battle joined; Here where all the hope and fear and agony of their country centered; here let them rest, asleep in the nation's heart*

*Seven years ago, this was home of one who lifted his sword against that of his country and who became the Emperor of the rebellion. The soil beneath our feet once watered by the tears of slaves, in whose hearts the sight of yonder proud capital awakened no pride and inspired no hope. The face of the goddess that crowns it, was turned toward the sea and not toward them. But thanks be to God, this arena of rebellion and slavery is a scene of violence and crime no longer!*

*This will be forever the sacred mountain of our Capital. Here is our temple, its sacrament is the sarcophagus of the heroic hearts; its dome the bending of heavens; its alter candles the watching stars. Hither our children's children shall come to pay their tribute of grateful homage.<sup>62</sup>*

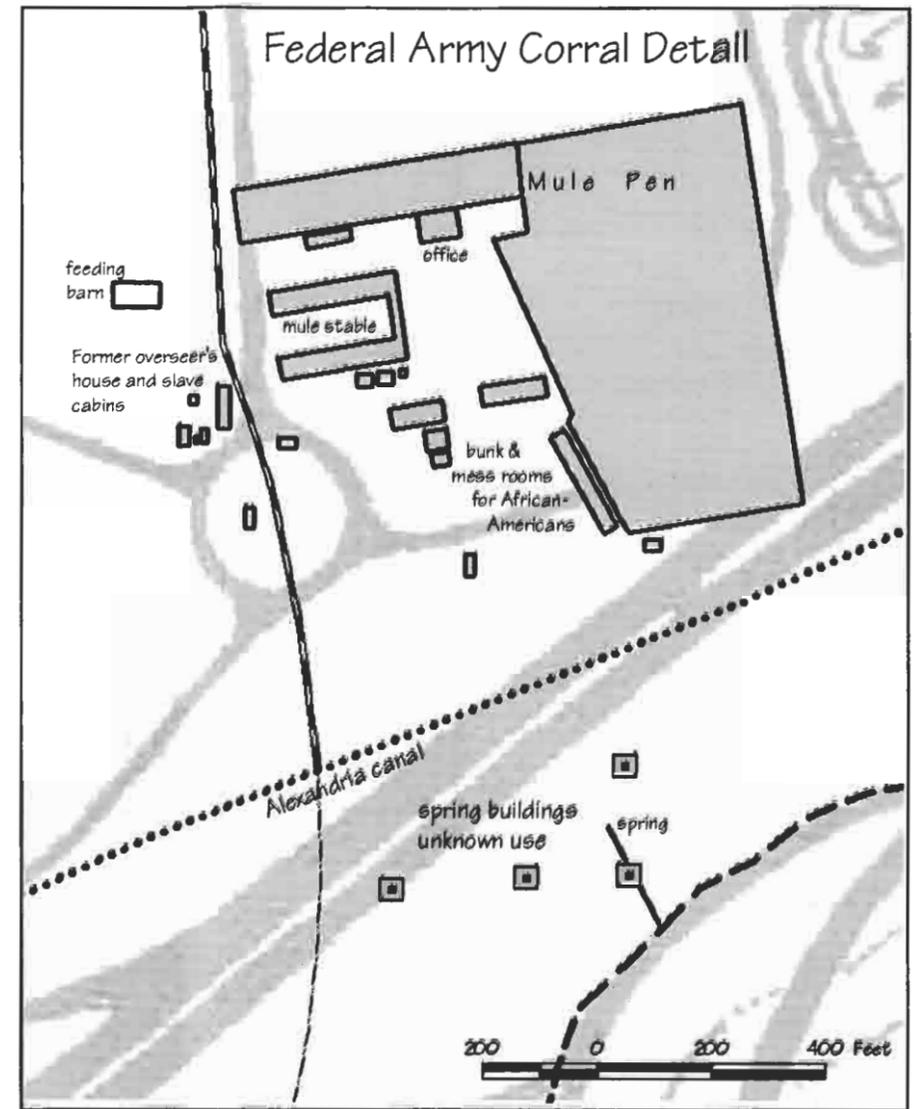
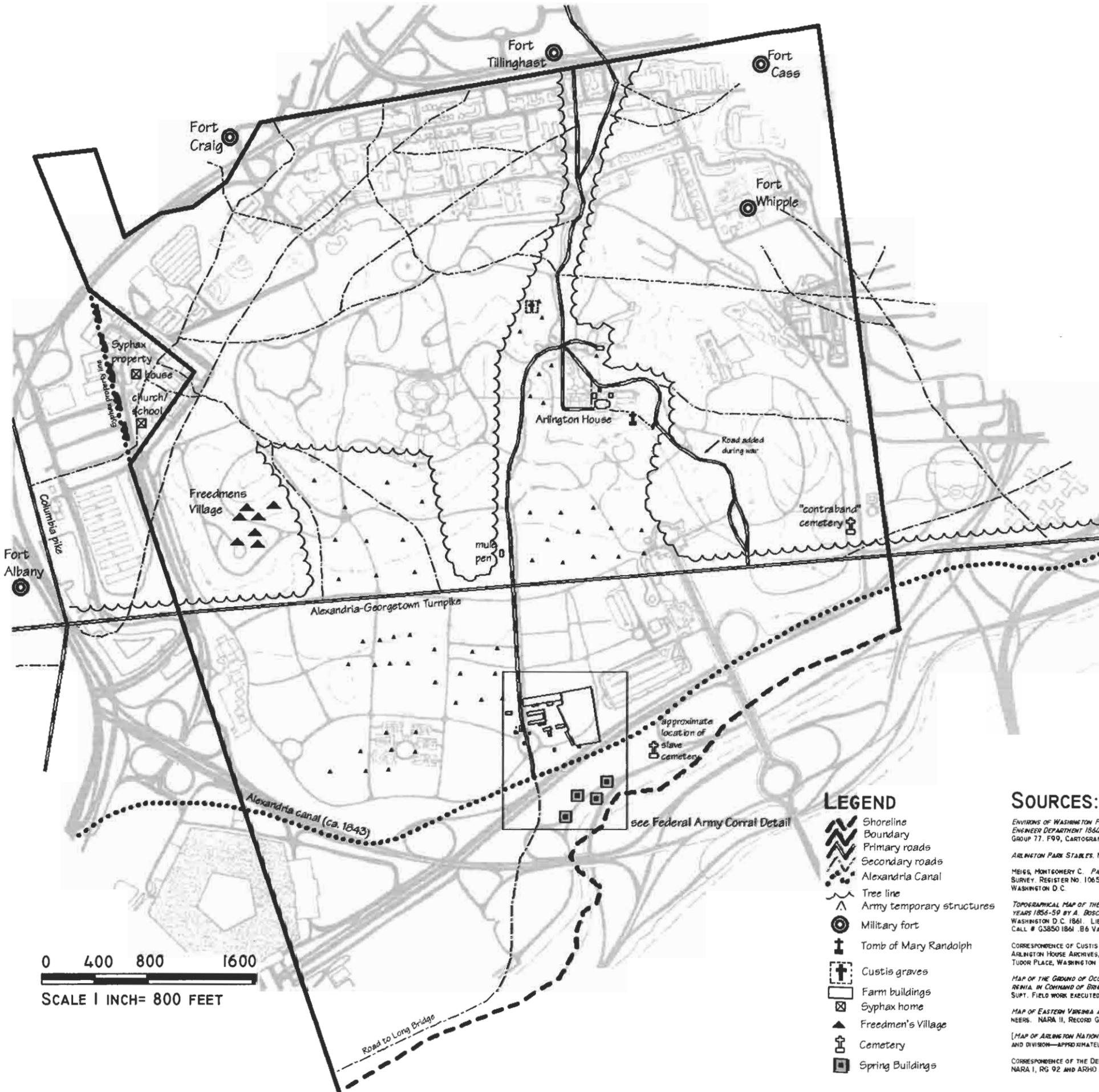
## CONCLUSION

55 The artist most likely utilized liberal dramatic license when sketching this section of the cemetery as no graves were ever known to be west of the Tomb. However, the image illustrates clearly the prevalent melancholic aesthetic. Tomb of the Unknown Civil War Soldier in "Soldiers Cemetery at Arlington Heights," *Harper's Weekly* March 27, 1869



Arlington National Cemetery Archives

On the first day of the federal invasion of the site in May of 1861, a young army Captain, Charles Russell Lowell, followed the carriage drive through the forests and green meadows of the park to Arlington House. Looking out past the bivouacked troops towards the city of Washington, he proclaimed in a letter to his mother that he had seen “no place like it for position and well-improved natural advantages.”<sup>63</sup> Sixty years before this same expansive prospect had convinced George Washington Parke Custis to build a grand home here, where it could be seen by everyone, as a tribute to his adopted grandfather George Washington. The Union army took away Arlington from Custis's daughter for almost the same reason; because the estate's elevated position held a view that encompassed all of the federal capital. And when a place to bury the tens of thousands of named and unknown soldiers who died in the battles of the Civil War was needed, the high ground of the estate again seemed the most appropriate. In quietly though unwittingly surrendering their home to the reconstruction of the Union, the Lee family made an enormous sacrifice—a gift that would be echoed in the thousands of white gravestones that would soon line Arlington's once forested hills.



0 400 800 1600  
SCALE 1 INCH= 800 FEET

**LEGEND**

- Shoreline
- Boundary
- Primary roads
- Secondary roads
- Alexandria Canal
- Tree line
- Army temporary structures
- Military fort
- Tomb of Mary Randolph
- Custis graves
- Farm buildings
- Syphax home
- Freedmen's Village
- Cemetery
- Spring Buildings

**SOURCES:**

ENVIRONS OF WASHINGTON PREPARED FROM ORIGINAL SURVEYS OF THE ENGINEER DEPARTMENT 1864-1865 SHEET 5 AND 8. NARA II RECORD GROUP 77. F99, CARTOGRAPHIC BRANCH.

ARLINGTON PARK STABLES. NARA II. RG 92. F-110 SHEETS 1-9.

MEIGS, MONTGOMERY C. PART OF ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA. U.S. COAST SURVEY. REGISTER NO. 1065. ON FILE, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, CARTOGRAPHIC BRANCH, WASHINGTON D.C.

TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SURVEYED IN THE YEARS 1856-59 BY A. BOSCHÉ. PUBLISHED BY D. McCLELLAND, BLANCHARD AND MOHR. WASHINGTON D.C. 1861. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CALL # G3850 1861 .B6 VAULT OVERSIZE

CORRESPONDENCE OF CUSTIS AND LEE FAMILY MEMBERS, 1861-65. ARLINGTON HOUSE ARCHIVES, HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, TUDOR PLACE, WASHINGTON D.C.

MAP OF THE GROUND OF OCCUPATION AND DEFENSE OF THE DIVISION OF THE U.S. ARMY IN VIRGINIA IN COMMAND OF BRIG. GEN. IRON McDOWEL. 1861 U.S. COAST SURVEY A.D. BACHE SUPT. FIELD WORK EXECUTED DURING PARTS OF JUNE AND JULY 1861. NARA II

MAP OF EASTERN VIRGINIA AND VICINITY OF WASHINGTON, 1862 U.S. ARMY, CORPS OF ENGINEERS. NARA II, RECORD GROUP 77, CARTOGRAPHIC BRANCH.

[MAP OF ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY] ILLUSTRATING LOCATION OF FREEDMEN'S VILLAGE 1 AND DIVISION—APPROXIMATELY 10 ACRE PLOTS. 1865 PARTIAL COPY IN MAP FILES, ARHO.

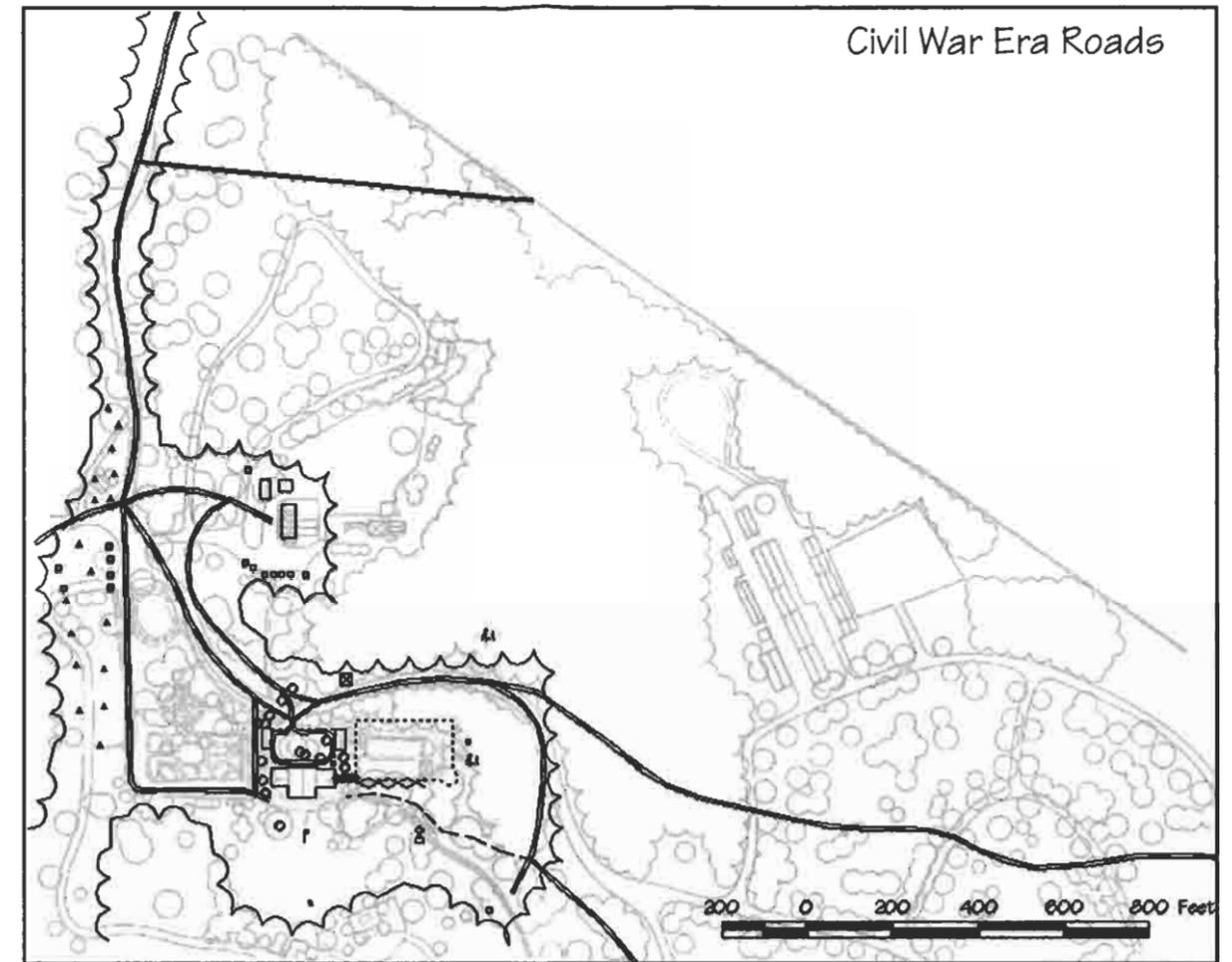
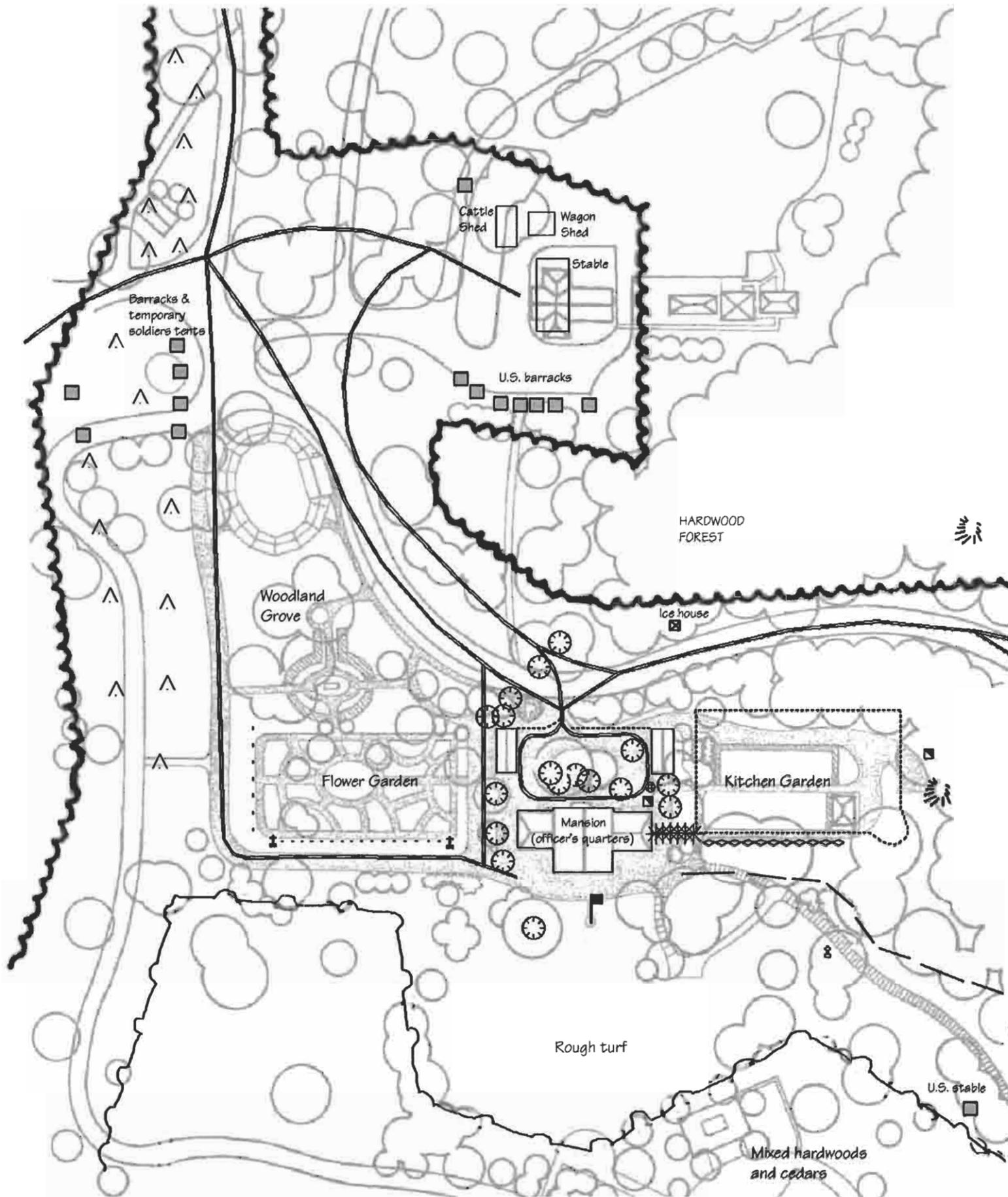
CORRESPONDENCE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ARMY, QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE, NARA I, RG 92 AND ARHO ARCHIVES



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT  
**1861-1865**  
**Historic Period Plan**  
**ARLINGTON HOUSE**  
THE ROBERT E. LEE MEMORIAL  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA  
PREPARED BY:  
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION  
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PROGRAM  
J. HANNA, A. DYMEK, E. HENDERSON, N. PARASH

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**LEGEND**

- Roads
- Fence
- Evergreen hedge
- Identified trees
- Hedge
- Dump site
- Army buildings
- Minor road/path
- Army barracks (temp.)
- Well
- Flagpole
- Tomb of Mary Randolph
- Soldier's graves
- Icehouse
- Outbuilding
- Forest treeline (approx. location)

**SOURCES:**

*ENVIRONS OF WASHINGTON PREPARED FROM ORIGINAL SURVEYS OF THE ENGINEER DEPARTMENT 1861-1865. SHEET 5 AND 8. NARA II RECORD GROUP 77, F99, CARTOGRAPHIC BRANCH.*

*ARLINGTON PARK STABLES. NARA II. RG 92. F-110 SHEETS 1-9.*

*MEIGS, MONTGOMERY C. PART OF ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA. U.S. COAST SURVEY, REGISTER NO. 1065. ON FILE, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, CARTOGRAPHIC BRANCH, WASHINGTON D.C.*

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*MAP OF THE GROUND OF OCCUPATION AND DEFENSE OF THE DIVISION OF THE U.S. ARMY IN VIRGINIA, IN COMMAND OF BRIG. GEN. IRON McDOWEL. 1861 U.S. COAST SURVEY A.D. BACHE SUPT. FIELD WORK EXECUTED DURING PARTS OF JUNE AND JULY 1861. NARA II*

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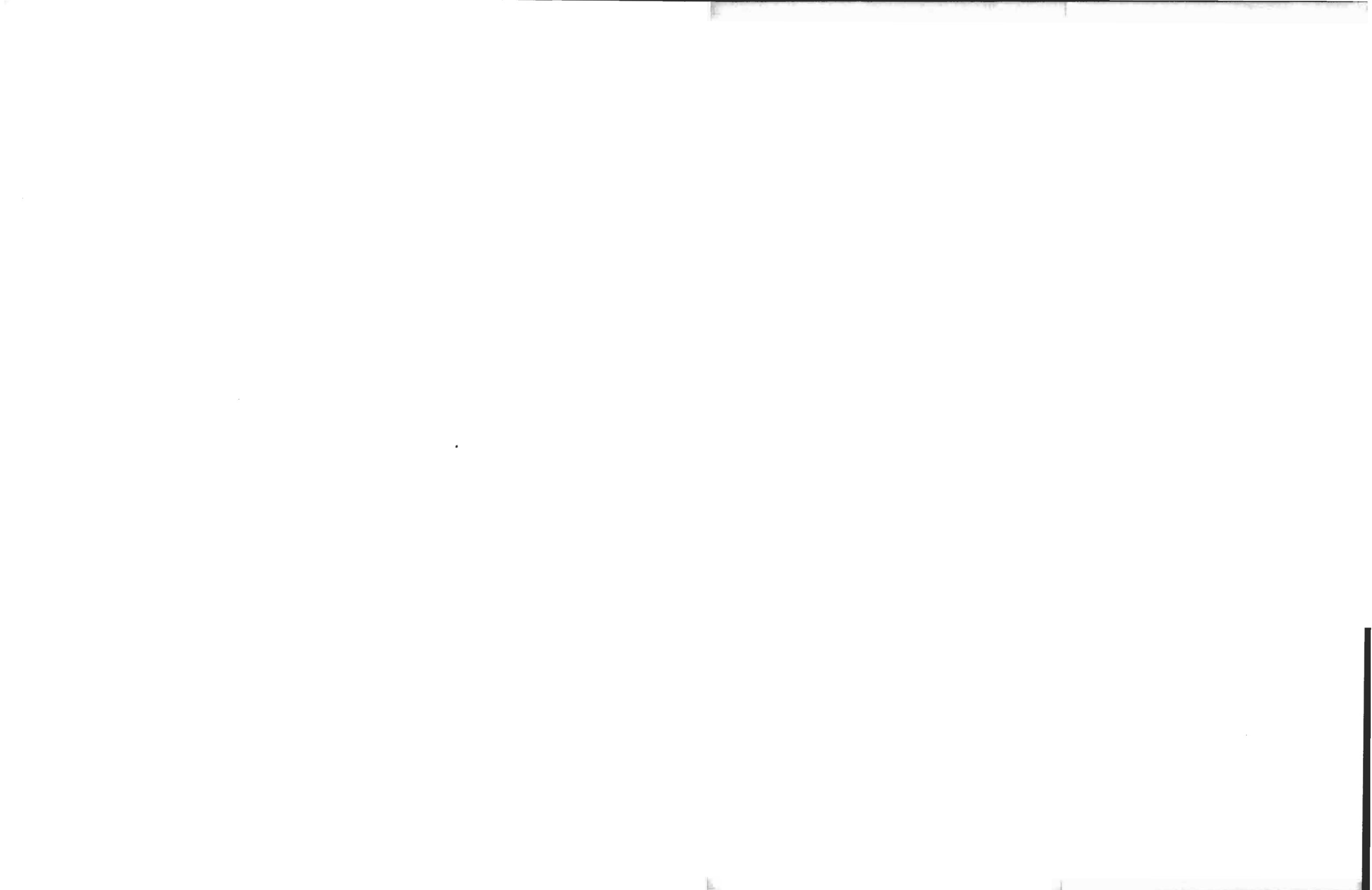


SCALE 1 INCH = 200 FEET

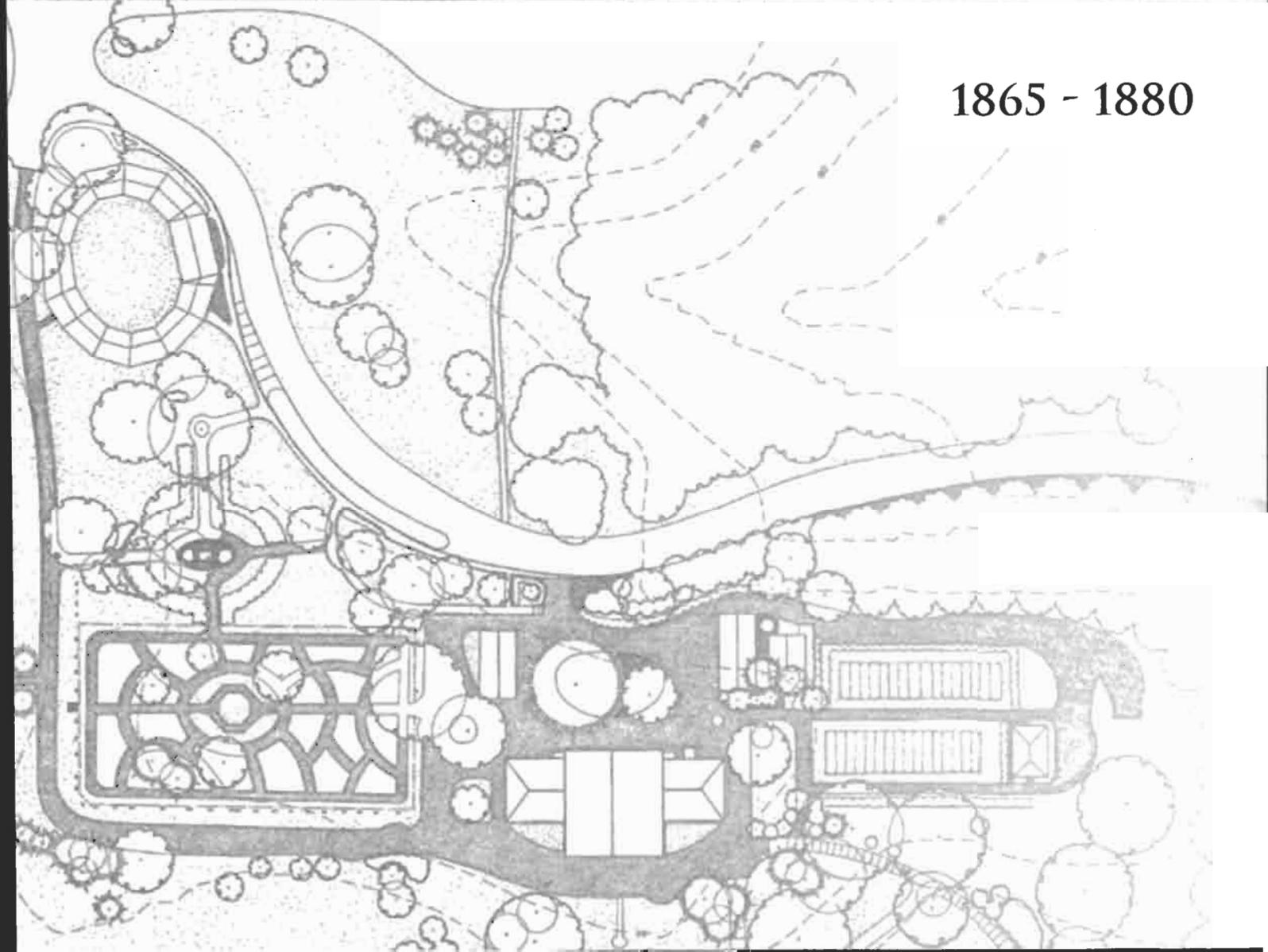
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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**1861-1865**  
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# CHAPTER 5



1865 - 1880

After Brigadier General James Garfield's Memorial Day speech ended, his audience of officials, soldiers, and mourners gathered at the Tomb of the Unknown Civil War Soldier to the south of the mansion. Two years prior, at the order of Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs, a large granite sarcophagus had been placed here in what had been the grove or woodland garden of Mary Custis and Mary Lee.<sup>1</sup> By then evidence of the grove, adjacent to and west of the more formal flower garden, had almost disappeared. Its nat-



Arlington House Archives

uralistic design hidden in luxuriant weeds. Its once distinct paths lost among the beaten tracks of Union soldiers. A white-washed fence, erected by the newly commissioned army staff, surrounded only the eastern half of the flower garden. As the assembled mourners

gazed past the rectangular granite monument towards Washington, spring flowers were visible through the fence's narrow palings.<sup>2</sup> If the war had not destroyed the woodland grove, this solemn monument, through its sheer size, most certainly did. A local newspaper described its creation in vivid detail:

*A more terrible spectacle can hardly be conceived than is to be seen within a dozen rods of the Arlington mansion. A circular pit, twenty feet deep and the same in diameter, has been sunk by the side of the flower garden, cemented and divided into compartments and down into this gloomy receptacle are cast the bones of such soldiers as perished on the field and either were not buried at all or were so covered up as to have their bones mingle indiscriminately together. At the time we looked into this gloomy cavern, a literal Golgotha, there were piled together, skulls in one division, legs in another, arms in another, and ribs in another, what were estimated as the bones of two thousand human beings.<sup>3</sup>*

The vault was sealed in September of 1866 with the remains of 2111 unknown soldiers from the battlefields of Bull Run and the Rappahannock River inside.<sup>4</sup> A single, well-worn Rodman gun was mounted on each corner of the monument and a pyramid of round shot crowned its top. To allow for close contemplation of the monument's inscription, a gravel path

56 *Decorating the Tomb of the Unknown Civil War Soldier, 1868. "Unknown Soldiers' Monument at Arlington," Harpers Weekly June 20, 1868*



was made around the base of the tomb. A circular walk was then constructed forty-five feet from the center of the monument. These two were connected by a perpendicular path which ran east to west and bisected the circle. The space between the paths was sodded and a few planting beds were sown, most likely with annual flowers.<sup>5</sup> As the first unknown soldiers' memorial in Arlington cemetery, this monument came to symbolize the sacrifices of tens of thousands of men, for almost half of all the soldiers who died in the Civil War were unknown.<sup>6</sup>

For at least twenty-five years following the end of the war, the physical development of the National Cemetery at Arlington related directly to the political, social, and economic views of the majority in Congress and of the officials of the United States Quartermaster

National Archives



57 Though undated, due to the presence of the Rodman guns on top of the monument and the picket fence surrounding the flower garden, this photograph was probably taken shortly after the creation of the Tomb, c. 1866.

General's Office. The challenges of Reconstruction confronted in the chasm between the north and the south, the rampant racial inequities endemic in both northern and southern societies, the monuments of reconciliation in the shadow of the Lost Cause, all became etched into the landscape of Arlington. Often in commemorating an ideal or person on the grounds of the cemetery, the evidence of a conflicting ideal or individual was destroyed—whether consciously or unconsciously. Memorials to Union Civil War generals took the place of the gardens, arbors, fields and buildings that previously revealed the aesthetic, social and economic characteristics of the Lee's antebellum estate. The relatively small size of these monuments, the Temple of Fame, the Memorial Amphitheater, the Unknown Civil War Soldiers Memorial—was due to the enormous cost of the Civil War; a cost measured for some not only in lives lost and millions spent, but in the disintegration of the southern slavery economy. Restricted funding limited the immediate adornment of the cemetery grounds; physical changes corresponded directly with the money allocated by the frequently polarized Congress of the late Reconstruction period. Yet the once private estate of Arlington, in 1865 a military installation battered from the privations and demands of warfare, would be gradually transformed into a national burial ground embellished with hundreds of ornate decorations and solemn tributes to honored dead. By the end of the nineteenth century, Arlington House would also emerge, in the midst of the graves of Union soldiers, as one of the most revered icons of the southern Confederacy.

## ARLINGTON AFTER THE WAR

In 1865 with the Civil War over, the primary objective of the Quartermaster General's department, and therefore the principal duty of the cemetery staff, was to bury the dead. An ambitious federal program was initiated to locate, recover and re-inter thousands of deceased soldiers from battlefields and temporary burial sites associated with the military hospitals and posts. Within three years over fourteen thousand deceased soldiers, from many different battles and many different backgrounds, lay at Arlington—over three times as many as at any of the other thirty-three national cemeteries.<sup>7</sup> In the early development of the national cemetery, the desire for an organized design of grave plots and an efficient and aesthetic road system gave way to the need

58 *Arlington House, south facade, c.1865*



Arlington House Archives

to accomplish interments quickly. But even such pragmatic development was expensive. By 1867, the expenditure for Arlington, at over one hundred and seventy thousand dollars, was over three times as much as the next largest expenditure reported in the accounts of the Secretary of War.<sup>8</sup>

Though a battle never occurred on the soil of Arlington, the use of the estate to house and train

Union soldiers throughout the four and a half years of the Civil War caused the destruction of fences, forests and buildings, and the deterioration of gardens, fields and roads. The domestic carriage drives and footpaths of the Custis and Lee households were altered, in some cases, beyond recognition. By 1865 the drive which had linked the horse stable west of the house to the work yard when the property was a residence, had been divided into many distinct, adjacent routes. Thousands of soldiers had simply followed the path of least resistance from the Union officers' quarters near the stable to the west entrance of the house or headquarters. The portion of the carriage drive which had wound around the southern end of the flower garden and passed in front of the mansion to a turn-around east of the northern wing had also lost its strict borders. Its once graveled surface had eroded into the slope to the south and east of the house. In the yard area west of the house, the ground had become so trampled that little veg-



etation grew. Instead the firm earth spread almost smoothly to the trunks of scattered trees whose lower branches had been trimmed off to increase visibility and to provide for ease of movement. Many of the largest trees around the mansion had been preserved during the war for their valuable shade. One was the enormous weeping willow west of the north wing of the house.<sup>9</sup> Five trees, locusts most likely, stood near what had been the storehouse and southern slave quarters. Their trunks appeared whitewashed, perhaps to reflect lantern lights in the dark. Or possibly the white appearance of the trunks was the effect of hungry livestock, tethered to nearby hitching rails, chewing the bark for nourishment.<sup>10</sup> Thin whips of deciduous trees grew up unchecked around the foundation of the mansion. All the buildings were worn. Dampness that siphoned up from the soil in the rain, and dust that blew in dry weather, alter-



Arlington House Archives

*59 The neglect of Arlington House during the war, and through the years immediately following is clearly revealed in this 1867 photograph.*

nately clung to the foundations. The stucco of the walls was chipped revealing the brick beneath. Weeds overran the perennials and roses in the flower garden. Yet the wooden arbor remained in its center. The broken wooden lattice walls and roof were still draped with red and pink honeysuckle. White-painted headboards, dwarfed by towering weeds, ran parallel to the outside of the newly erected, white-washed, paling fence on the eastern and southern sides of the garden. The kitchen garden, which was located to the north of the mansion and remained enclosed by a wooden fence, may have fared better than the flower garden.<sup>11</sup> Though the shrubs which bordered the kitchen garden on the west were overgrown, at least some of the fruit trees that lined its central path survived. The Park, with its grassy hill still dotted with picturesque trees and shrubs, was crossed by worn paths: The once smooth slope undulated with rough trenches and redoubts. Regrading of the slopes to the east and south of the house, done in an effort to combat the erosion that occurred from intensive wartime use,



was accompanied by problems as well. As the superintendent of Arlington wrote to the Quartermaster General in the late summer of 1867:

*I have the honor to draw your attention to that part of the cemetery in front and below the house, between it and the main road [Alexandria and Georgetown Road], which, by the removal of the sod during the summer of 1866 and 1867 has the appearance of a wilderness of weeds, in some places from five to seven feet in height.*<sup>12</sup>

Down at the farm and spring by the Potomac River, the consequences of the war were even more extreme. The agricultural buildings on the farm and the picturesque kitchen and pavilion of G.W.P. Custis's Arlington Spring had all been modified by the army to serve specific functions during the war or removed completely for lumber. Though the brick overseer's house, into which Custis had first moved in 1802, had suffered damage it remained. It was surrounded by the temporary structures and the modified agricultural buildings that had contained the veterinary facility and horse and mule corrals of the Union army. Following the Civil War, the enormous corral and the structures that could not be used were removed. The remaining buildings were eventually incorporated into Freedmen's Village on the southern end of the federal property. But most of the trees, including the enormous oaks and elms that had sheltered Arlington Spring, were gone.<sup>13</sup>

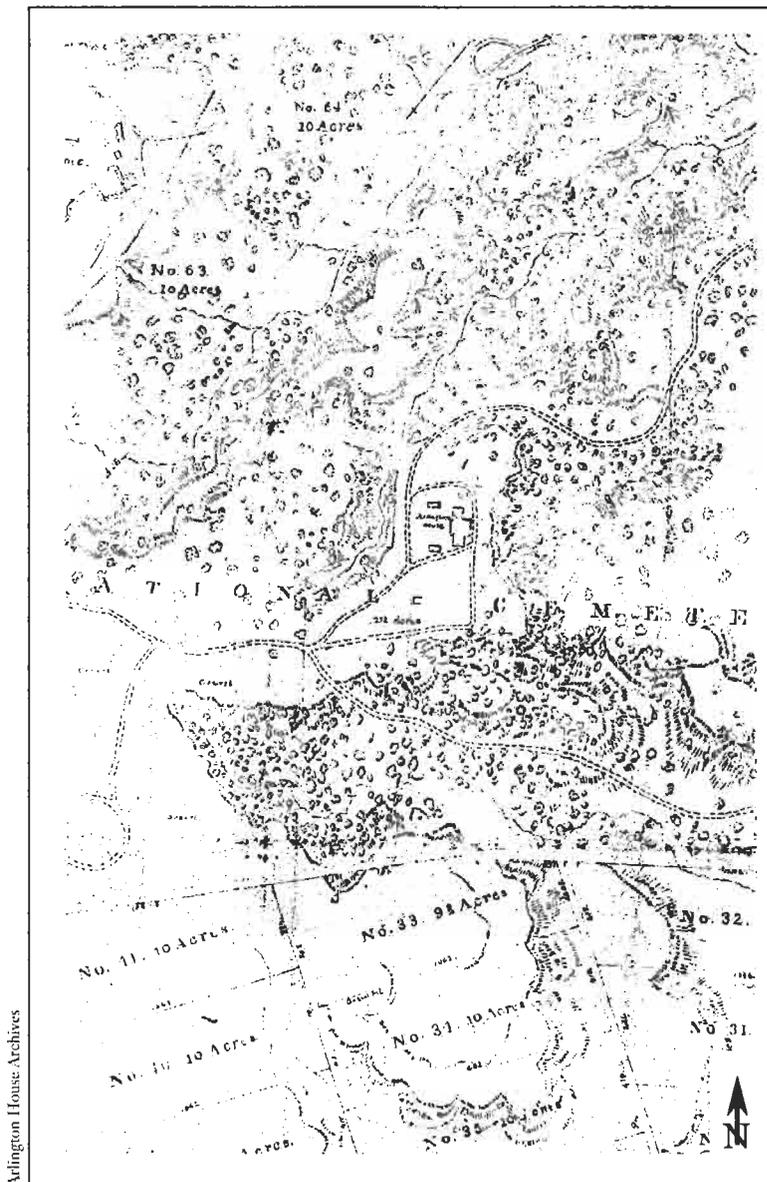
The poor condition of the Arlington estate exemplified the general situation of much of northern Virginia by the end of the Civil War. During the conflict northern Virginia had been both between and behind enemy lines. As John Trowbridge, a northerner visiting the area between Alexandria and Manassas soon after the surrender at Appomattox described the scene, there was "no sign of human industry, save here and there a sickly, half-cultivated corn field. The country for the most part consisted of fenceless field abandoned to weeds, stump lots and undergrowth."<sup>14</sup> Yet numerous northern businessmen and farmers like Trowbridge, many of whom had passed through northern Virginia during the war, were returning south with their families, eager to take advantage of falling land prices. These communities of northerners, as well as re-established southern agriculturists, gradually improved the farms and economy of the area surrounding the cemetery. In time, the appearance of both Arlington National Cemetery and the privately held farmland surrounding the federal property improved. The land of the former Arlington estate not incorporated into the cemetery to the east, west and south of the mansion remained a military reservation and was used for agriculture. Many of the former slaves of G.W.P. Custis lived there in Freedmen's Village.

## FREEDMEN'S VILLAGE CONTINUES

The legislative mandate of the Freedman's Bureau, which had established Freedmen's Village at the southeastern corner of the Arlington Estate in 1863, was due to expire in 1868.



As in villages of freed slaves elsewhere, steps were taken to remove the inhabitants and their homes from Arlington. Due to the ensuing controversy, however, the residents of Freedmen's Village were allowed to remain. An inventory of the residents, buildings and other improvements was made and the individuals were allowed to purchase their homes. The federal government retained ownership of the land, in addition to the right to evict the residents with little notice. Between 1866 and 1868 about four hundred acres of land—property outside of the boundary of the National Cemetery but within the original boundaries of the estate—was divided up into parcels averaging ten acres each and rented to the Freedmen's Villagers in an attempt to increase their financial autonomy. Land was cleared where feasible and used to grow crops including corn fodder, buckwheat, and potatoes.<sup>15</sup> In addition to cultivating the surrounding fields, many of the villagers were employed by the cemetery and at Fort Whipple as day laborers.<sup>16</sup>



*60 Approximately four hundred acres of land surrounding Freedmen's Village was divided up into 10 acre parcels and rented to Freedmen's Village residents for agricultural use in 1868. Only a portion of the map (1868) has been found thus far.*

Former slaves of Arlington, including Martha Smith, Daniel Richardson, Margaret Taylor, and Lawrence, James and William Parks, lived in the village and on the scattered ten-acre farms.<sup>17</sup> Yet only one family, the Syphax's, claimed legal ownership of the land upon which they lived and worked.<sup>18</sup> Maria Syphax and her descendants had lived on the parcel, a seventeen acre triangle cut out of the southern border of the original estate, for forty years. With the entire estate under federal ownership, the children of Maria and her husband Charles Syphax were worried that they might lose their property, as no official deed had recorded the



gift by G.W.P. Custis to Maria Syphax at her manumission in 1826. In 1865 her son, William Syphax, wrote to President Johnson requesting compensation for his parents. He asked that they be allowed to purchase from the federal government the:

*small parcel of ground on which they live and to which they claim to be equitably entitled, at the rate at which the United States purchased the Arlington Estate, and to receive a legal title for the same, so that for the few remaining days of their earthly existence, and their children after them, they may enjoy the security and benefits which Mr. Custis benevolently designed they should possess . . . .*<sup>19</sup>

President Johnson forwarded the letter to the House of Representatives and a bill was passed, legally and permanently separating the Syphax property from the Arlington military reservation.<sup>20</sup>

## PRAGMATIC IMPROVEMENTS AND MONUMENTS TO MOURNING

Arlington was not the only national cemetery influenced by the mandates of Congress. In February of 1867, the “Act to Establish and to Protect National Cemeteries” was passed by Congress, directing Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to “have every national cemetery enclosed with a good and substantial stone or iron fence; to cause each grave to be marked with a small headstone or block; to direct the appointment of reliable veterans as cemetery superintendents; and to erect adequate quarters to house cemetery superintendents.”<sup>21</sup> In compliance, the construction of a Seneca sandstone wall was begun at Arlington. Eventually the wall replaced the white-washed paling fence that had formerly enclosed the cemetery’s 230 acres and divided the grounds from the agricultural land of Freedmen’s village residents. The final section of the wall was constructed in 1897 when the last portions of the former Arlington

61 *A field of the dead in  
Arlington National  
Cemetery, 1868*

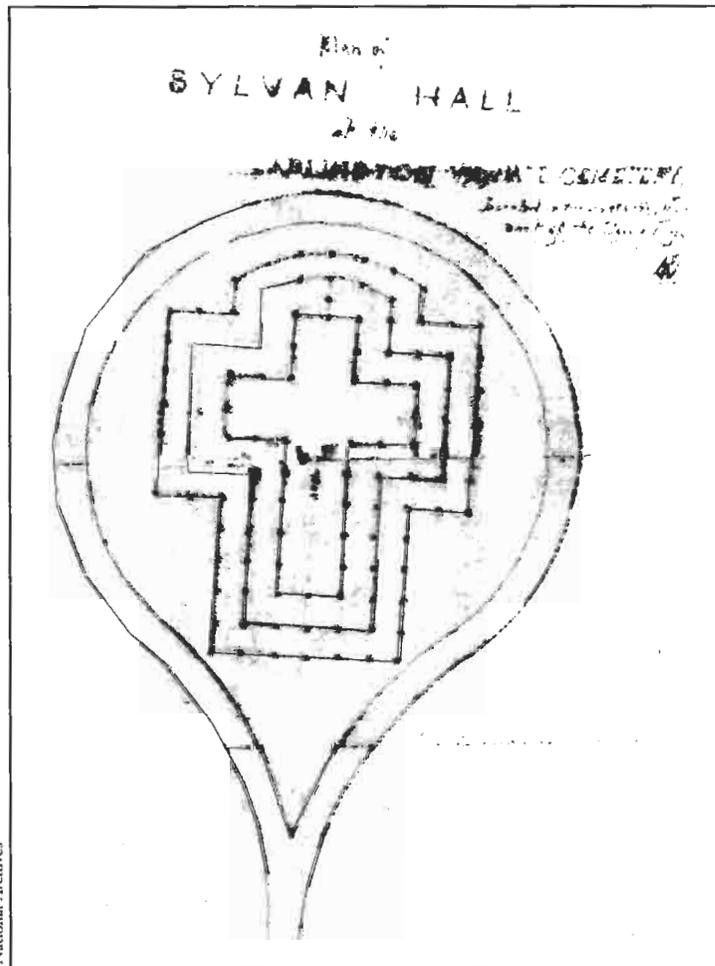




estate were incorporated into the cemetery.<sup>22</sup> Though the 1867 act committed Congress to maintain a long range fiscal policy regarding cemetery expenditures, the enormous outlay of funds required to erect permanent markers at hundreds of thousands of veterans' graves around the country called for a special appropriation. Such appropriations were not made until 1873 when Congress set aside one million dollars for the erection of permanent headstones.<sup>23</sup> Until at least 1873, each soldier's grave at Arlington was marked by a rounded headboard of oak or chestnut, whitewashed and printed with black lettering spelling out the names and regiments of each of the deceased. As the superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery lived in Arlington House the construction of "suitable quarters" was not needed.

Some national cemeteries were designed by prominent landscape professionals such as William Saunders, the designer of the 17-acre Union burial area next to the decade-old rural cemetery in Gettysburg, but for the first decade of development, the design and embellishment of Arlington was overseen by military personnel of the Quartermaster General's office.<sup>24</sup> Though Saunders was eventually asked to serve as a consultant in the design of Arlington in the early 1870s, it was Brigadier General Montgomery Meigs as Quartermaster General of the Department of Army who had the most influence over the layout and embellishment of the cemetery during the late 1860s and early 1870s. Meigs had been appointed Quartermaster General by President Lincoln in 1861. As an engineer prior to the war, his work was significant in the development of

Washington, D.C. He was in charge of the construction of the Washington Aqueduct from 1852 to 1860 and supervised the building of the wings and dome of the national Capital. As previously discussed, Meigs oversaw the burials in all national cemeteries during the war, including Arlington. He also suggested design elements. In 1870, after returning from a trip to Europe, Meigs proposed that a "sylvan hall," or "temple" of elms or maples in a pattern to suggest the knave of a gothic cathedral be planted at every national cemetery in the



62 Plan of Sylvan Hall, c.1870, general design by Montgomery C. Meigs

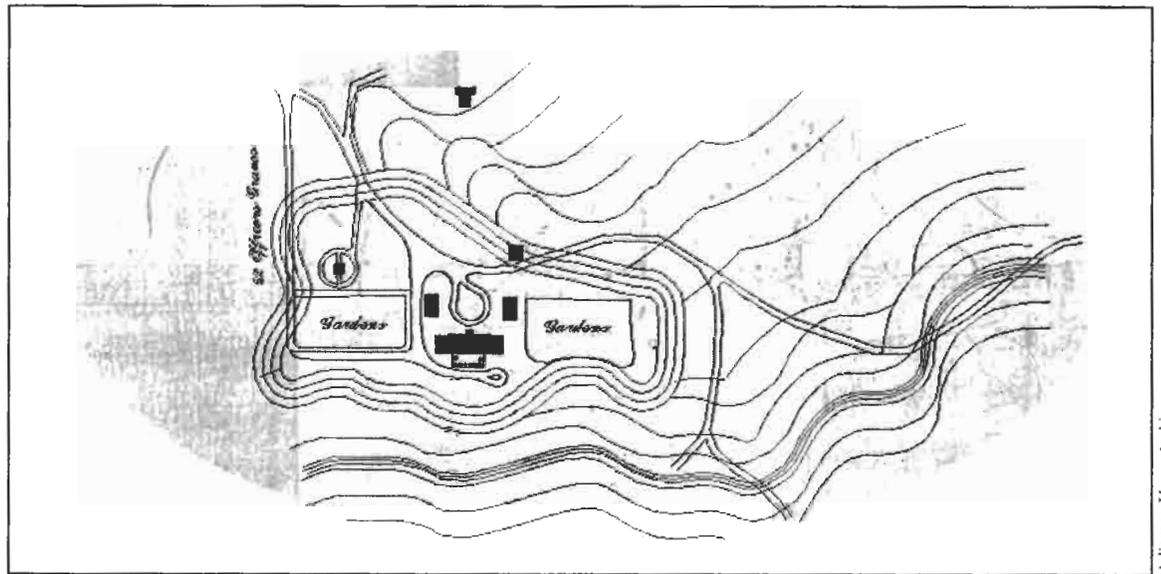
National Archives



country where sufficient space and appropriate climate and soils allowed. It was to consist of a “grove of five avenues with center about the oval in the Western part of the grounds to be crossed by five avenues at right angles so as to make a shaded hall of verdure and a grove of weeping willows near the south gate where the ground is favorable.” The Sylvan Hall was planted in the southwest corner of the cemetery around an elongated oval cul-de-sac in 1870.<sup>25</sup>

For the most part, however, the energies and funds of the War Department were focused on burial and the improvement of existing resources. In spring of 1864 a circular drive was laid out in the northwest corner of the property to access graves located there. The carriage roads that wound around Arlington House during the time of the Custis and Lee families were regraded and redefined. The drive that circled around the work yard west of the house was reestablished, as was the circular turn-around to the east of the northern wing. The roads that had been added during the war; the road between the southern slave quarters and the flower

63 Both the roads of the Custis-era and those that were constructed during the Civil War, were restored following the creation of the national cemetery. Detail of map U.S. National Cemetery Arlington Virginia. 1869, annotated for clarity, 2001



Arlington House Archives

garden, and the road that descended down the hillside from west of the mansion to the Georgetown and Alexandria Turnpike were reconditioned. Circulation links were also necessary to connect the burial plots with the cemetery headquarters of Arlington House and surrounding public roads. One burial location on the grounds, the “Lower Cemetery,” was located in the low-lying northeast corner of the property. The other primary burial plot was in the section called the “National Cemetery,” on the higher elevation of the southwestern corner.<sup>26</sup> In 1869 a road was built along the northern boundary of the cemetery. Yet even by 1870, though the cemetery roads were recorded in good condition, scars from the four-and-a-half years military occupation were everywhere.<sup>27</sup>

*At every few rods one encounters remains of old redoubts and entrenchment, sometimes occupying the summits of little knolls and sometimes standing threateningly upon the bare plains. Across the embrasures of the forts, trees have grown, in leaning postures; the gun-*



*platforms are pierced with gentle sprays of green, and in the beds of the moats are found flowers, and shrubs that bear berries. The wind and the sun are trying hard to obliterate the remaining proofs of the days of sorrow; and in some cases they have so far succeeded that an entrenchment is merely to be traced by a line.*<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the pragmatic elements of a burial ground—access roads, enclosure to prevent theft and to establish permanency, and thousands of wooden grave markers—elements were added to the landscape immediately surrounding Arlington House to support its use as a center of mourning and memorialization. At first, this honor was almost entirely focused on the glory and sacrifice of the Union Civil War soldiers. Union officers were buried along the white fence of the flower garden. Though the first memorial to Unknown Civil War soldiers was not inscribed with the names of victors or vanquished, the first few “Decoration Day” celebrations held in the memorial’s shadow were to honor Union soldiers only. The American flag, first attached to a staff on the peak of the pediment of Arlington’s portico in 1861 by Union soldiers, now flew from a pole directly in front of the portico stairs.<sup>29</sup> Yet gradually this focus would broaden, as economies improved, and as the myth of the Lost Cause took hold. Visitors came to Arlington every month out of sadness, pride, nationalism, and curiosity. By the end of the century, their numbers would increase tenfold.

As the burials continued through the 1860s, improvements to the grounds proceeded apace. The house, including the west façade which had been covered in stucco for the first time after the war, was repainted a light yellow in 1867.<sup>30</sup> The volunteer saplings growing from the base of the building foundations were cut till only a few vines, honeysuckle and winter jasmine, remained.<sup>31</sup> A white sign with black lettering reading “Superintendent” was hung above the central door on the west façade. In the early 1870s, when the landscape gardener was hired, he too would have his home and office inside the Arlington mansion.<sup>32</sup> Behind the main house, the old summer kitchen and slave quarters were decaying rapidly.<sup>33</sup> These structures were used for storage and to house cemetery workers, some of whom were former slaves of Custis. Around the flower garden and on the slopes to the east and south of the house, the lawn had been resodded. The grass was half as tall as the white headboards which quickly rotted in the warm damp climate of Virginia. In 1869, one hundred cedar trees were planted “around the officers graves and the main drives.”<sup>34</sup> The paling fence that had been rebuilt around the flower garden and the fence around the kitchen garden were newly whitewashed.<sup>35</sup> The flower garden, neglected during the war, had regained its beauty, though it was different in content.

## FLOWERS IN THE GARDEN

After the war, except for several rather “poor trees” including one or two Norway spruce and a white-leaved poplar, several clumps of hardy ivy growing on dead tree stumps, and the



vines growing on the arbor, there was very little in the way of permanent ornamental vegetation within the flower garden.<sup>36</sup> By 1871 gravel walks in the garden were repaired and the planting beds were prepared for the addition of annuals, thousands of “summer flowers” which grew in “hot beds” until being placed into the garden.<sup>37</sup> In 1872 roses were added.<sup>38</sup> A hedge of arborvitae was planted in an open border between the garden flower beds and the fence as a screen. Many years later, a landscape gardener was asked to describe the arrangement of the garden paths when he arrived in 1873. Though not quite sure of the exact layout due to the irregularity of the garden design and the lack of documentation, he described it in the following manner:

*One principal walk extended around the entire flower garden at a distance of about four feet from the inclosing picket fence. That one walk extended from the entrance gate—straight through the old arbor, or summer house, to the south end of flower garden and there connected with the boundary walk. Also that curved walk passed either side of the summer house and then connected with the main center walk at points north and south of that structure, which resulted in the summer house and adjacent plot being enclosed in an oblong-shaped—rather than circular-shaped plot—enclosed by walks. The result of this plan was that the entire garden was comprised of flower beds and walks only—there being practically no two beds alike in shape or size.<sup>39</sup>*

In order to grow all of the flowers and plants required around the mansion and elsewhere in the cemetery, a greenhouse was built in the northeast corner of the garden in 1870. With a brick foundation and glass walls, the fairly small structure was able to contain over 800 flower pots filled with plants in its first year of use.<sup>40</sup>

64 In order to grow the flowers necessary to beautify the grounds of the cemetery, a small greenhouse was constructed in the northeast corner of the flower garden in 1870. Stereoscopic card c.1875



Arlington House: Archives

In 1873 David H. Rhodes, a trained landscape gardener, was hired by the Quartermaster General's Office to oversee the development of Arlington. Rhodes quickly took charge. By 1874, the monthly report of the cemetery superintendent listed all the buildings in good condition.<sup>41</sup> “Neat houses” were erected over the well and a glass roof was installed on the conservatory of the main



house to provide better growing conditions.<sup>42</sup> The neat house consisted of a simple hipped-roof, four post structure that prevented leaves and other debris from contaminating the well water. Pumps replaced the rope and buckets.<sup>43</sup> In the spring of 1874 benches with curving cast iron frames and simple wooden slat seats were purchased.<sup>44</sup> Iron urns painted white and filled with annuals were placed in various locations around the building. Behind the house in a circular planting beds Rhodes planted two *Cedrus deodara*, or Deodar Cedars.<sup>45</sup> In addition, he believed that the house, standing starkly on the crest of the hill, needed foundation plantings to blend the architecture gracefully with its surroundings. Therefore in 1878 he planted magnolia trees in front of each wing of the main house with plantings of specimen evergreens at the foundation, including “boxwood, yews and arbor vitae.” Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs continued to make suggestions for increasing the beauty of the landscape at Arlington. “Please give orders that clumps of caladium esculentum and of canna [annual flowers] be planted next season in front of the mansion at Arlington,” he wrote. The planting beds were created next to the base of the flag pole along the drive immediately east of Arlington House.<sup>46</sup>

Many factors contributed to these rapid improvements of Arlington National Cemetery and Arlington House during the 1870s. By the late 1860s most of the soldiers who had died during the Civil War years had been permanently interred. Virginia reentered the Union in 1870 and Reconstruction formally ended. In the early 1870s, Alexander R. Shepard, as governor of the District of Columbia, lobbied legislators and pushed projects through to clean up and improve the national capital, perhaps spurring the Arlington improvements. Shepard oversaw the construction of numerous buildings, the paving of roads, and the creation of parks in the District of Columbia. One such landscape project was Frederick Law Olmsted's redesign of the Capitol grounds in 1872. Finally and most importantly, Congress appropriated money to fund cemetery improvement. With the increasing institutional reverence paid to Civil War soldiers of both sides, the preparations for the coming United States centennial celebration, and the gradual economic recovery, funds were dedicated to the task of fulfilling the agenda of the 1867 Cemetery Act. Arlington National Cemetery, as a prominent and local example, benefited from these new allocations. In 1873, as a result of the new funding, Secretary of War William W. Belknap adopted the first design for grave stones erected in national cemeteries. For the known dead, the War Department adopted a slab design of marble or other durable stone four inches thick, ten inches wide and twelve inches in height above the ground. The part above the ground was to be polished and the top slightly curved.<sup>47</sup> The headstone for Confederate soldiers was slightly different in shape and the use of the word rebel was discontinued. Slowly these came to replace all the wooden headboards at Arlington.

In response to the increasing number of visitors to Arlington who were motivated in part by the recent improvements, Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs felt a more formal and larger venue for memorial services was necessary. In 1874, a Memorial Amphitheater was



constructed near Arlington House within the area that had been the woodland grove garden of Mrs. Custis and Mrs. Lee. As described in the *National Republican*, a Washington Newspaper,

*Quartermaster General M.C. Meigs has had erected just to the southwest of the Arlington mansion, a magnificent amphitheater with a capacity for seating five thousand. It is a perfect circle of considerable diameter; with raised seats of earth, covered with fresh green grass. The roof is of canvas supported in the center and periphery by tall columns. . .*<sup>48</sup>

By Decoration Day 1876, the tendrils of the wisteria that had been planted at each column of the amphitheater covered the structure. Thousands of visitors came to Arlington, many driving up the carriage road on the northern edge of the cemetery. The western end of this road, near Arlington House, had recently been realigned to lessen its steep grade.<sup>49</sup> The former road section was still visible, however, cutting through the forest west of the house. A visitor to the cemetery that Decoration Day, or Memorial Day as it was later to be named, commented on the beauty of the cemetery. He pointed out, perhaps unconsciously, the differences between the northern lower cemetery and the southern upper portion, as he drove from the northeastern corner of the grounds up to Arlington House.

65 Memorial Amphitheater,  
1903



Arlington National Cemetery Archives

*Here a beautiful sight was presented. A number of graves on both sides of the drive were observed first, but few of which were decorated. These, Captain Smith said, were graves of freedmen who were followers during the war and most of whom died in the hospitals. Further along the graves assumed a neater appearance and upon each was placed a diminutive United States flag, which denoted that we were passing over the ground beneath which rested the remains of those brave souls who had fought and died for the sake of their country. Rose bushes, which have been planted within the year, bordered most of the lots and were in full bloom.*<sup>50</sup>



Though some portions of Arlington Cemetery were being developed for burial, much of the federal reservation defined as the cemetery remained in woodland, as during the Custis and Lee period. By the 1870s there were indications that a few large trees had been taken out of the area to the north and west of Arlington House, probably by military troops; but there was no evidence of any general removal of trees, according to the accounts of D.H. Rhodes.<sup>51</sup> The majority of the forest trees in this area were red, white and chestnut oaks, interspersed with various types of elms. A few American beech trees were located immediately north of the kitchen garden. According to Rhodes these were seedlings which originated from one or two old trees located in this particular portion of the grounds. As the only collection of beech in the cemetery at that time, he felt they deserved special preservation. Though much of the property was forested, only very limited funding was devoted to the management of the trees, much to Rhode's dismay. Regardless of the limited resources devoted to them, the trees of Arlington would continue to influence the visitors' experience of the cemetery, for the dark forests embodied nineteenth-century picturesque sentiment. Such an aesthetic was captured perfectly in these words from Historic Arlington published in 1890:

*The everlasting hills, the groves of oak and elm will stand for centuries, nature's vast memorial cathedral, amid whose leafy aisles the errant wind shall murmur eternally a sad requiem or in fiercer blast, a jubilant paean of martial glory.*<sup>52</sup>

All aspects of the forest environment, the trees, the flowers, even the dappled sunlight contributed to the sanctimony of mourning. In the spring of 1870, only five years after the end of the war, an unknown visitor wrote,

*the violets were making purple the graves of "unknown soldiers" and down in the woods, I found the anemone, the dog-tooth violet, the lady's-slipper, the fringed polygala, the hepatica. Nature was repeating herself with immortal precision and beauty . . . I stooped and dropped my gathered violets and anemones on the sod which covered the soldier who had died that I might live . . . and I thought of legends, old and new, sacred and profane; and of the experiences past and present, national and individual, which teach us that there are some truths, that there is some knowledge and some revelation, which only come to us over a grave.*<sup>53</sup>

The peaceful reassurance of the forested glade and sodded graves was deceiving, however, for the physical evidence of dissention, as well as healing, clearly inscribed the cemetery grounds. The former home of General Robert E. Lee, a hero of the south and a man esteemed by many in the north, was almost empty. Its once grand rooms used for storage and to house cemetery workers. Monuments to the dead stood nearby in the garden bordered on two sides with the



graves of Union officers. The tools and buildings of maintenance and management—the temporary sheds, greenhouses, and cisterns—as yet discrete, nonetheless muddled the appearance of the hallowed grounds. The farm fields and homes of the newly freed African Americans appeared quite prosperous as a result of the hard work and dedication of Freedmen's Village residents. Yet frictions between the Department of Army and the Freedmen's Villagers living on federal land continued to flare. To some, the contrast between the past and the present was so painful that they suggested that Arlington House be destroyed. The Lee Mansion, so named by Union soldiers as they stared towards Arlington heights from their camps down by the Potomac during the Civil War, was an acute reminder of both past injustices and honorific events.<sup>54</sup> As an article in a local newspaper suggested,

*The best thing that can now be done in view of the actual possession of the place [Arlington House] by the government is to take the house down . . . by sweeping away the contrasting element one will not be led, while wandering among the rows of graves—those holy ranks to which we owe everything—to remember that the grief he feels has been calculated to inflict a sting upon those who once called this place their own.<sup>55</sup>*

The polarized convictions concerning what should be done to the landscape of Arlington simply reflected the sectionalism of the country, and the politics of division and reconciliation in all its hidden forms.

## THE LEES AND THE LEGALITY OF FEDERAL OWNERSHIP OF ARLINGTON

After the war ended, the Lees settled in Lexington, Virginia where General Lee assumed the presidency of Washington College, later named Washington and Lee University. The properties of White House and Romancoke (whose name had been changed from the earlier spelling Romancock) were returned to William Henry Lee (Rooney) and Robert E. Lee, Jr. respectively. Smiths Island was regained through a court action in 1868. Arlington, however, remained in federal possession. The property, which had been willed to Mary Lee by her father George Washington Parke Custis for use during her lifetime, would have been inherited by her oldest son George Washington Custis Lee at her death, had not the federal government taken the property in lieu of back taxes. The property therefore had been a life estate, in Mary Lee's name only. There were many reasons for the Lee's reluctance to publicly fight to regain Arlington. First, both Mary and Robert E. Lee felt strongly that the bitterness caused by the war needed to be healed. Public scrutiny of the federal government's action was sure to foster anger. Secondly, Mary Lee's ownership of Arlington was in life only, therefore her legal standing may have been less secure than that of her son who was due to inherit the property in fee simple at her death. Finally, the futility of the fight may have been clear to her



in the extreme political climate immediately following the Civil War. Yet she always deeply regretted the federal government's use of Arlington during wartime and felt the sharp sting inflicted by the burial of Union soldiers in the soil of her home. Mary Lee wrote shortly after the war:

*. . . the small enclosure allotted to his and my mother's remains [are] surrounded closely by the graves of those who aided to bring all this ruin on the children and country. They are even planted up to the very door without any regard to common decency.*<sup>56</sup>

The belongings of her father, the precious Washington relics from Mount Vernon, that Mary Lee had been forced to leave behind in her quick departure from Arlington had been removed by government officials to the Patent Office. She was able to get permission from President Johnson to recover her belongings. Yet the President's judgement was overruled by Congress in a resolution passed on Johnson's last day in office. It would be another thirty years before the belongings of George Washington were returned to the descendents of Mary Lee.<sup>57</sup> In 1870, Robert E. Lee passed away without ever returning to Arlington. Mary returned only once for a brief moment three years later. She wrote of her visit sadly:

*I rode out to my dear home but so changed it seemed but as a dream of the past. I could not have realized it was Arlington but for the few old oaks they had spared and the trees planted on the lawn by the General and myself. . . .*<sup>58</sup>

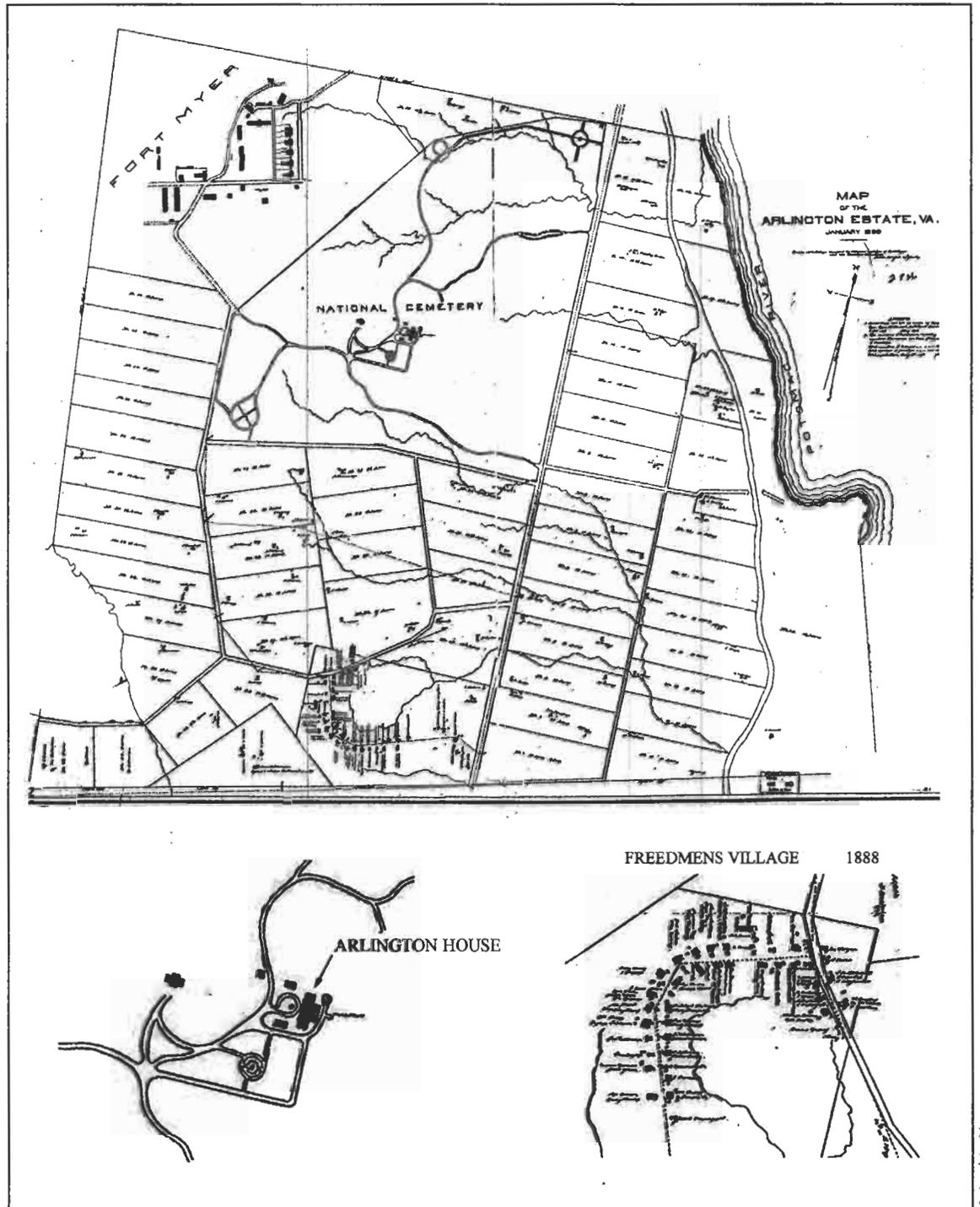
She died shortly thereafter. The year of her death, her son George Washington Custis Lee began his suit against the federal government for the return of the Arlington property. Bills were introduced in Congress both for and against restitution. Finally, in 1882 the case was decided in the Supreme Court. The federal acquisition of the property during the Civil War was deemed a taking without just compensation and therefore illegal. Custis Lee was paid a sum of \$150,000.00 to settle the debt.<sup>59</sup> On March 10, 1883 the United States was given a clear title to the Arlington property.<sup>60</sup>

## THE END OF FREEDMEN'S VILLAGE

With the Arlington Estate firmly in federal hands, the breakup of Freedmen's Village, which had been attempted before, was now inevitable. According to the Regulations of the Army, "No civilian will be permitted to reside upon a Military reservation unless he be in the employ of the government . . . no permission will be given any one to cultivate any portion of a Military reservation."<sup>61</sup> In the years immediately following the Supreme Court decision, attempts were made to remove the freedmen from the village and surrounding farms. After much resistance by the residents, the displacement efforts were stopped and an inventory of the village and the surrounding agricultural properties was made detailing the existing struc-

tures and improvements. According to the findings of the study, there were 763 individuals living on the former Arlington estate outside the boundaries of the cemetery. They had improved their individual lots by adding trees, vines, houses and outbuildings, though they did not own the land. According to the findings of the study, on the portion of the former Arlington estate outside the boundaries of the cemetery, eight agricultural buildings and slave quarters remained from the era of G.W.P. Custis. These structures were located near the eastern edge of the property, where the farm and market gardens of the Arlington estate had once

66 This map was part of an inventory conducted prior to the discontinuance of Arlington's Freedmen's Village in the late 1880s, Map of the Arlington Estate, Virginia, 1888.





been. The former slaves of Custis, unlike the other Freedmen's Village residents, did not have to pay rent. The disbanding of Freedmen's Village began around 1888. A sum of fifteen thousand dollars was appropriated by Congress to reimburse the renters for the buildings and other improvements and to cover the estimated cost of removal of the buildings and improvements if desired. Many of the buildings were relocated, as were trees and other vegetation.<sup>62</sup> However, in the 1930s landscape gardener Rhodes described the fruit trees long ago planted by the residents of Freedmen's Village scattered among the graves of Arlington Cemetery. New lands gradually opened up for the expanding development of the cemetery. With the removal of the last resident-around ten years later, the oldest government-run Freedmen's Village in the country disappeared.

## CONCLUSION

The disbanding of Freedmen's Village was only one step in the long process of converting Arlington National Cemetery from a relatively small burial ground, to one of the largest and most significant federal cemeteries in America. Once the landscape was restored from the effects of the Civil War and the first monuments to the war's heroes constructed, the work of expanding the cemetery to contain the ever increasing number of deceased veterans began. Following the decision of the Supreme Court in 1883, the United States government held the title to the Arlington estate free and clear. Through the last two decades of the nineteenth century, drastic changes would take place on the landscape of Arlington House.



**LEGEND**

-  Evergreen tree, most likely a variety of cedar
-  Deciduous trees, most likely varieties of elm and oak
-  Acer, sp.
-  Magnolia, sp.
-  Flower Bed
-  Gravel
-  Concrete

**SOURCES:**

U.S. NATIONAL CEMETERY ARLINGTON VIRGINIA 1869. SCALE 100 FEET TO 1 INCH. NARA 1. COPY MAP FILES ARHO

MAP OF ARLINGTON ESTATE VIRGINIA JANUARY 1868 SHOWING ALL BUILDINGS OCCUPIED BY CIVILIAN OFFICERS OF FORT MYER (1862) AND THE NATIONAL CEMETERY. U.S. CONGRESS: WASHINGTON D.C. COPY ARHO ARCHIVES. ON FILE: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS. CARTOGRAPHIC DIVISION WASHINGTON D.C.

SCHEMATIC PAVEMENT AROUND MANSION AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY. NOVEMBER 8, 1905. DISTRICT QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE. NARA RG 92. COPY MAP FILES ARHO

ARLINGTON VA. MILITARY RESERVATION FORT MYER AND THE NATIONAL CEMETERY WITH ANNEX SHOWING THE ROAD TO ARLINGTON BRIDGE. DISTRICT QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON D.C. JANUARY 10, 1894. NARA 9 RG 92. COPY MAP FILES GWP/PH/ADJUTANT

NATIONAL CEMETERY ARLINGTON VIRGINIA 1906. QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE. COPY MAP FILES ARHO. ORIGINAL NARA 11 RG 92

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY VIRGINIA PLAN FOR REDEVELOPING GROUNDS ABOUT LEE MANSION APPROVED BY CFA MARCH 21, 1921. NCR 855/11/900. PLAN FEB 25, 1921

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY VIRGINIA. PLAN FOR WORK TO BE DONE AT LEE MANSION. AUGUST 10, 1925. TIC, NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NCR, NP-S)

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY RESTORATION OF ARLINGTON MANSION STUDY FOR DRIVEWAYS, WALLS AND PLANTINGS AROUND MANSION ON SITES OF OLD FLOWER AND VEGETABLE GARDEN 1919. QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE. ORIGINAL ARHO ARCHIVES

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY. PRESENT LAYOUT OF ARLINGTON MANSION SHOWING APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF DRIVEWAYS, PLANTINGS, ETC. c. 1920. QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE. ORIGINAL ARHO ARCHIVES

PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS, ARLINGTON HOUSE ARCHIVES, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, NATIONAL ARCHIVES

**NOTE:**

Location of vegetation is approximate and based primarily on historic photographs.

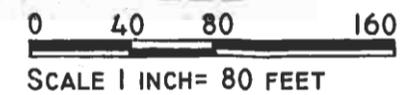
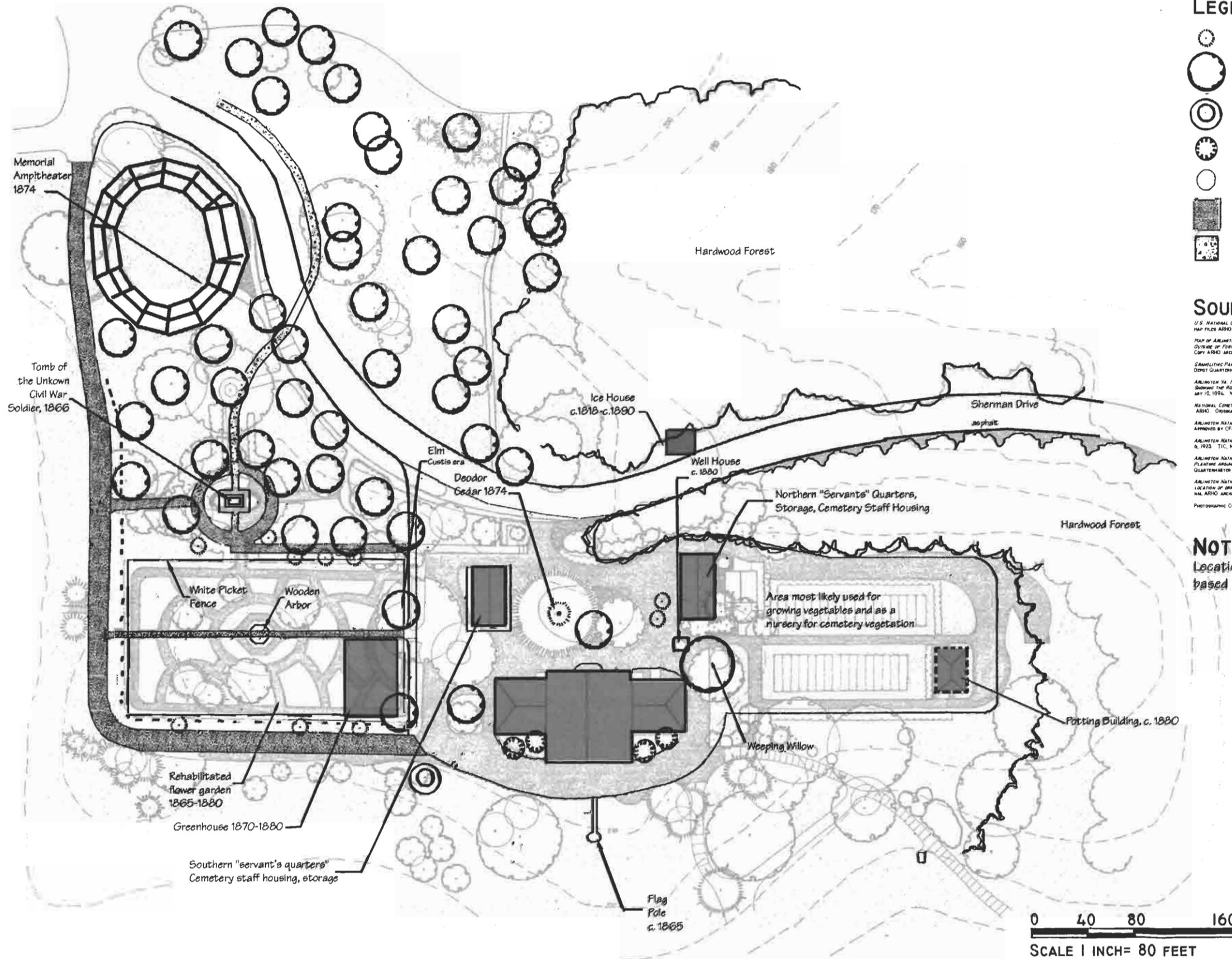


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

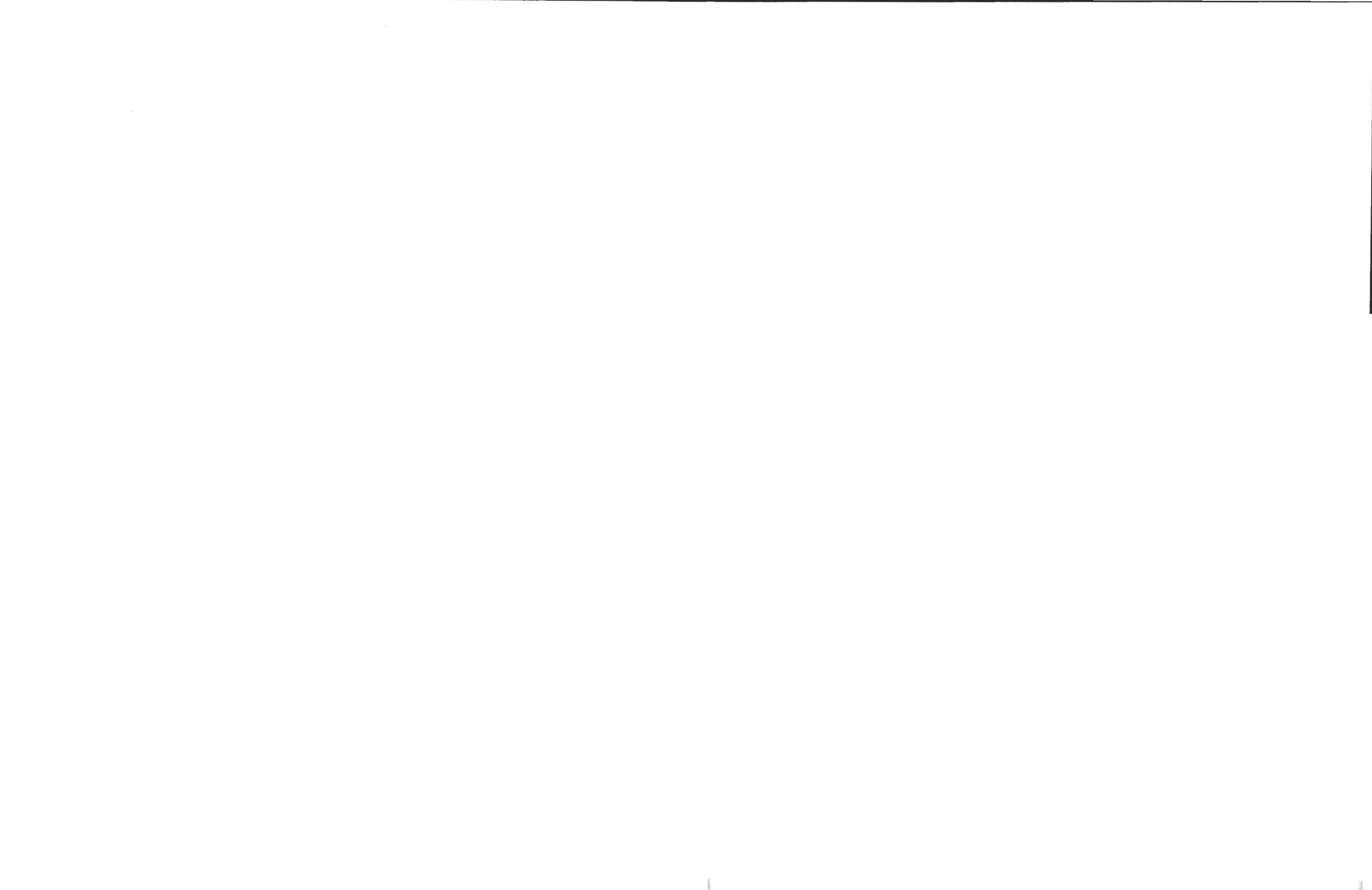
**1865-1880**

**Historic Period Plan  
ARLINGTON HOUSE  
THE ROBERT E. LEE MEMORIAL**

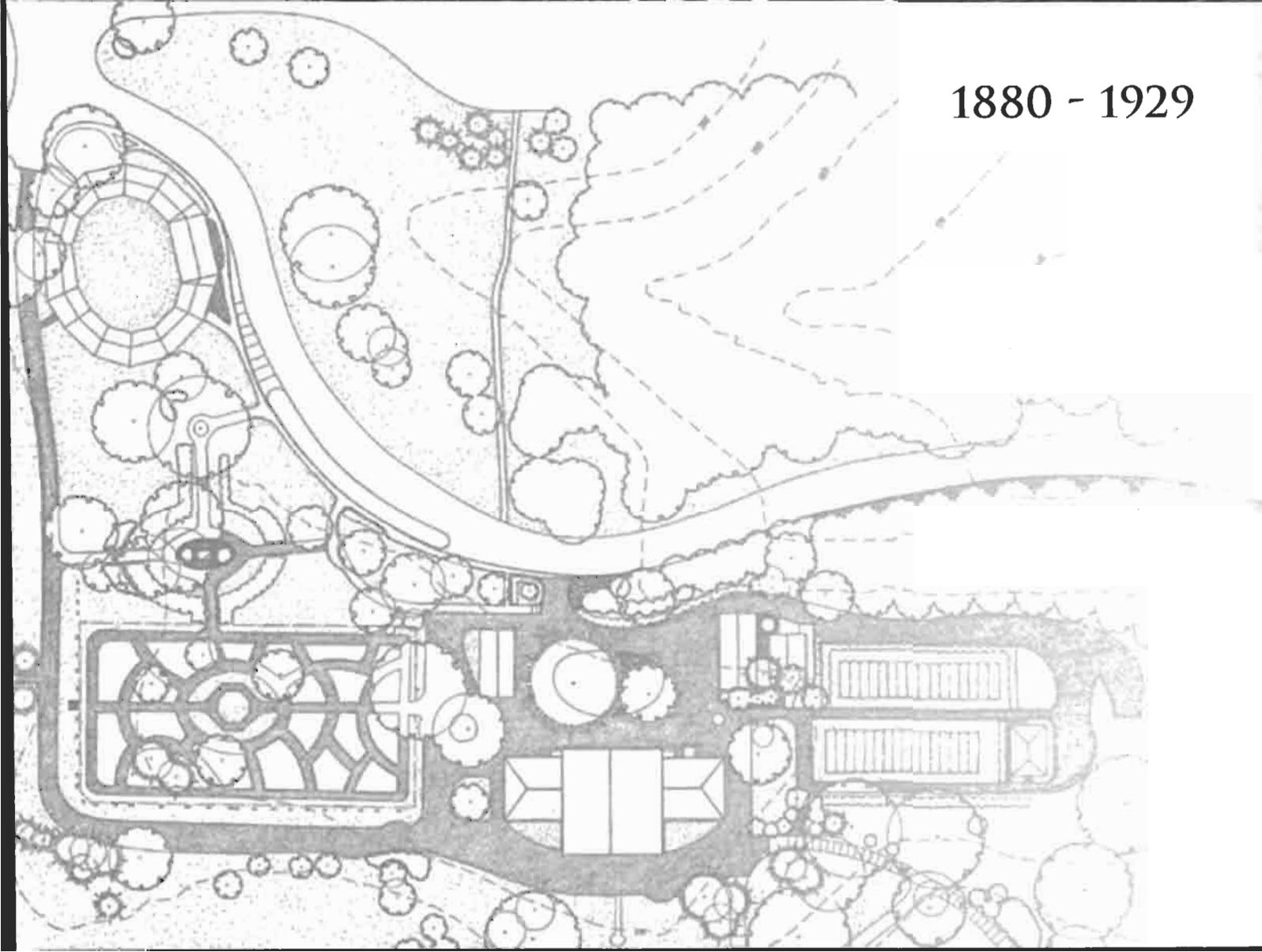
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA  
PREPARED BY:  
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION  
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PROGRAM  
J. HANNA, A. DYMEK, E. HENDERSON, N. PARASH



855/20903



# CHAPTER 6



1880 - 1929

As decades went by, aging veterans of the Civil War were passing away in greater and greater numbers. Organizations of widows and elderly soldiers around the country gathered to raise money to erect monuments to past military glories. Even those that did not mourn at the graves visited the cemetery to view the memorials. Through the late nineteenth-century the use of cemeteries as public parks, for picnicking and contemplating nature, gained social acceptance and heightened popularity. Moreover, the construction of the

electric rail lines during the early 1890s, coupled with cessation of tolls on the bridge from Georgetown across the Potomac, allowed more people to come to Arlington. Expanded facilities were required, not only to maintain the cemetery grounds, but to provide for the needs of these new visitors.



Arlington House Archives

Water was needed for irrigation and drinking. During the early 1880s, when new water lines were being installed at Fort Myer and Arlington Cemetery, a brick water tower was built to the west of Arlington House, within the planting bed created by Rhodes in 1874. The water was pumped by steam from natural springs within the cemetery and then redistributed throughout the grounds. By the late 1880s, a force pump, within a wooden encasement, had been installed in the Custis-Lee era well to provide drinking water. The pump was removed shortly thereafter, however, due to the accumulation of a disagreeable odor when the top of the well platform was closed. The simple hipped-roof over the well was replaced with a more ornate version in the 1880s. The new four-sided roof was slightly concave and extended to a finial at the top, much like the profile of the roof of the original flower garden arbor. Public lavatories were also constructed at

this time, to the immediate north of the northern slave quarters, blocking the original entrance to the summer kitchen on the lower story of the north facade. The vine-covered, former slave quarters were used for storage and for housing.



Arlington House Archives

67 *Arlington House, as drawn by Richard Lovett, 1891*

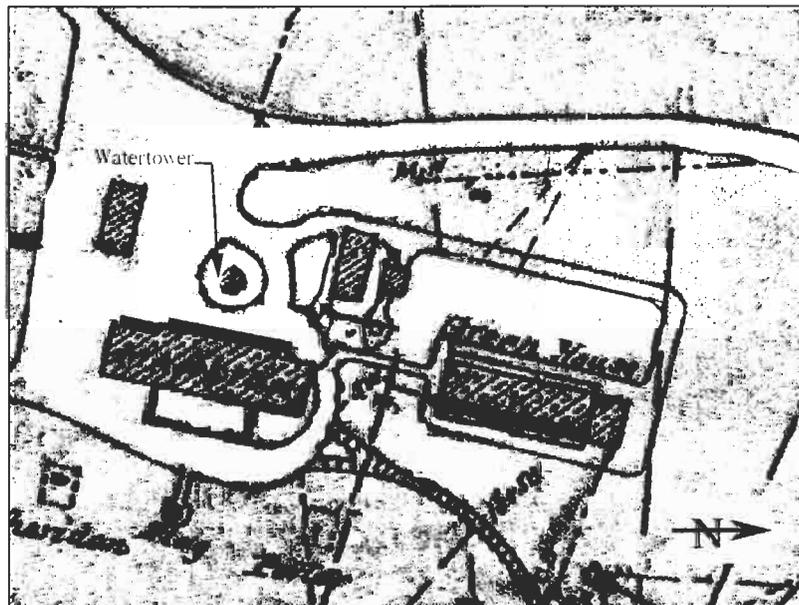
68 *The water tower, visible in the center of the photograph, behind Arlington House, was removed by 1916. photograph c1890*



69 Children at well near the northern slave quarters, 1904

The additions to the cemetery grounds were accompanied by changes to the structures as well. New slate roofs were added to the slave quarters, stable and to the wings of the mansion.<sup>1</sup> With the settlement of the Lee court case and the disbanding of Freedmen's Village, the acreage devoted to cemetery use increased. In order to supply the demand for vegetation to plant out in the grounds, by 1888 a new greenhouse and a potting building had been constructed in the eastern half of the what had been the kitchen garden.<sup>2</sup> The greenhouse was one hundred feet long and thirty feet wide, with a brick foundation and glass walls inside an iron frame. The cornice of a two-story potting building, attached to the immediate north of the greenhouse, was ornamented with dentils and had a ventilation copula projecting from each face of the slate-clad hipped roof.<sup>3</sup> An access road between the yard area to the west of the mansion and the potting house was built along the western edge of what had been the kitchen garden area.

Between the access road and greenhouse were the plant growing plots. With the construction of these new facilities, the circa-1870 greenhouse was removed from the flower garden.<sup>4</sup>



70 This map detail reveals the location of the greenhouse as well as the comfort station to the immediate north of the northern slave quarters. Arlington Va. Military Reservation Fort Myer and the National Cemetery with Annex Showing the Road to Aqueduct Bridge. January 10, 1894.



The design style of the cemetery landscape near Arlington House reflected the design begun in the 1870s. Ornate iron urns sometimes filled with flowers and grasses, cast iron benches, thick foundation plantings, and the ever increasing use of annuals in the flower garden all reflected the aesthetic movements occurring elsewhere around the country in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Though many designers, artists and writers—such as America’s Frederick Law Olmsted, and Englishmen John Ruskin and William Robinson—were stressing the desirability of natural effects, curving lines and the removal of gardensque-styled ornamentation, others felt that only in masses of color, geometric shapes, and complicated ornamentation was true and appropriate garden beauty found. For as Peter Henderson, the famous nurseryman and publisher, lamented in the 1880s (no doubt with an eye to his own nursery sales) what a “pity it is that the bedding system has not been adopted in Central Park,” due - he imagined - to “incompetency or lack of taste.”<sup>5</sup> The herbaceous flower garden as designed by members of the Custis and Lee families remained in place after the end of the war, though it underwent incremental changes with the development of the national cemetery over the next ten years. Elsewhere around the country, carpet-bedded annuals, or the planting of showy annual flowers in strict shapes cut into the surrounding turf became extremely popular. Such colorful flower beds graced the lawns of many of the new federal buildings across the Potomac River.

There were many reasons for the rise in popularity of this formal style of garden. New plant material from abroad and from improved methods of hybridization, quicker and safer transportation, and cheaper, better printing technology, such as the inexpensive chromolithograph, all increased the marketability and availability of the plant varieties necessary for ornate horticultural displays. The heightened mechanization of horticultural activity with lawn mowers and cultivators, and the availability of cheap labor with immigration also contributed to the rise in popularity of the labor-intensive design style. The managers of Arlington believed that the complicated landscape of Arlington, strewn with memorials and dotted with graves, would be an appropriate palette for the floral designs.<sup>6</sup>

## HONORING UNION HEROES OF THE CIVIL WAR

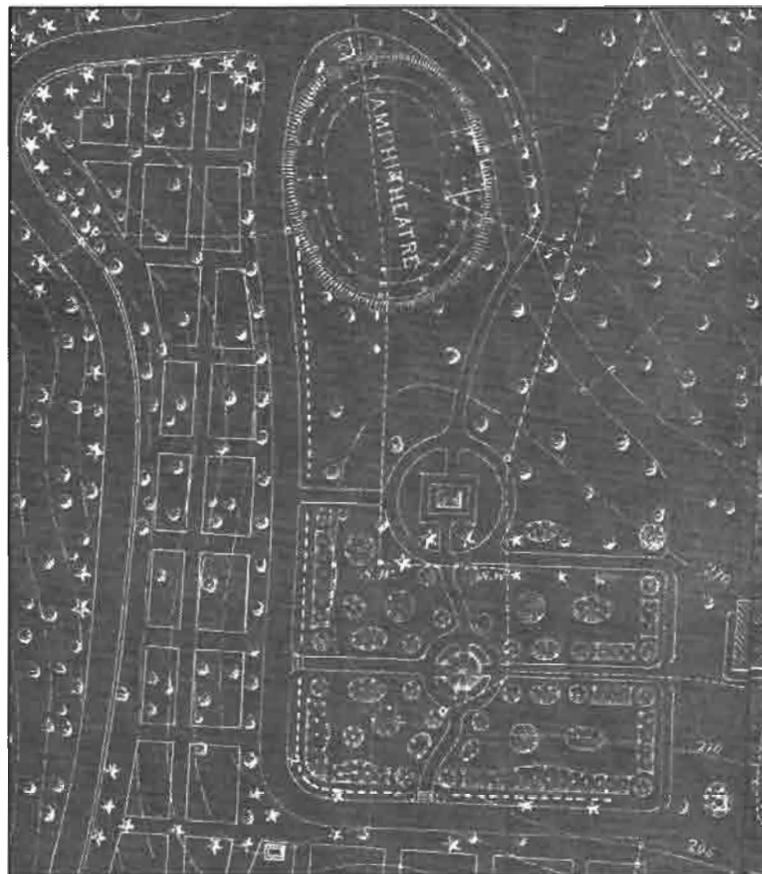
In 1885 the flower garden of Arlington House was completely redesigned, at the direction of Colonel R. N. Botchelder, the officer in charge of the cemetery and with the approval of the Quartermaster General. The plan, which was designed by Rhodes, called for the removal of the arbor that had been erected during the time of the Custises in the center of the flower garden.

With the redesign in 1885, this arbor was removed, as was the picket fence that surrounded the garden. In 1874, the additions to the original circa 1870 greenhouse in the northwest corner had been torn down, though the main structure remained. The “limited boxwood hedges,” and the trees within the garden, including the “magnolia and northern pine” were

removed as well.<sup>7</sup> The entire site was then plowed up and regraded. New entrances to the garden, one each on the east, west and south sides, augmented the original entrance on the north. A brief flight of steps was constructed at each of the east and south side entrances to pass up the short, steep slope to the terrace level of the garden. Small, fluted iron urns sat atop pairs of concrete pedestals located at the termination of each stair flight. New walks, crossing the garden from north to south and east to west, connected to the existing walks around the Tomb of the Unknown Civil War Soldier. These gravel walks met under the dome of the new Temple of Fame. Rusticated iron benches with backs and arms shaped like gnarled twigs provided resting spots under the Temple and on the portico of Arlington. As part of Rhodes's design, a border of hardy roses was established on the east and south sides of the garden as a backdrop for the officers graves, now in clear view from the Temple with the removal of the paling fence. About fifty new flower beds were cut in the large expanses of turf around the Temple. Thousands of annuals with exotic foliage and brightly-colored flowers were planted into the beds to provide an exuberant show during the warm months. In some years, the plants were arranged to form words—the number of war dead and the names of its northern heroes spelled out in blooms.<sup>8</sup>



Arlington National Cemetery Archives-Horticultural Department



National Archives

71 The south end of the flower garden, filled with carpet bedded annuals, was photographed for a tourist guide book for Arlington National Cemetery in 1903.

72 This detail of a map of Arlington National Cemetery from 1901 reveals a planting bed design, similar, if not identical to the design installed by Rhodes. National Cemetery Arlington, Virginia 1901



73 In the flower garden the number of dead is written in flowers, c.1920. The temple of Fame, 1885-1969, stands the background. photograph by Charles Martin



Arlington House Archives

The Temple of Fame had been erected in 1884 from the stone columns, entablature and frieze discarded from the US Patent Office after a large fire destroyed portions of the structure in 1877. A gateway and rostrum at the

National Cemetery at the Old Soldier's Home was created out of the same material.<sup>9</sup> About a year after construction of the Temple of Fame, the names of many Civil War heroes of the Union Army were engraved into the frieze around the domed roof and onto the columns.<sup>10</sup> For the next seventy years, the Temple of Fame would serve as a focal point in the grounds surrounding Arlington—revered by some, reviled by others.

In 1888 one of the most honored of the Union leaders during the war, General Philip Sheridan, passed away. A prominent spot on the slope to the immediate east of Arlington House was chosen for his burial. There was great controversy over his burial location. No voices expressed concern that his grave would detract from the setting of Arlington House. To the contrary, in contemporary descriptions of the cemetery, the granite block of his grave,

74 The irony of a monument to General Sheridan, a Union officer, in the shadow of Arlington House did not go unnoticed. postcard, c. 1895



THE MANSION FROM THE FRONT OF SHERIDAN'S MONUMENT.

War's reverses are nowhere exhibited with greater force than here, where the proud monument to Sheridan stands fronting the very entrance to his enemy's former home.

Arlington House Archives

bearing a bronze relief of a flag and the head of the general was thought to be one of the most beautiful and sacred elements of the grounds, looming up large in front of the "Lee Mansion."<sup>11</sup> Access to this important grave site was of primary importance; for this reason, the cemetery at the Soldiers Home had been considered as a burial spot, for it was in closer proximity to the residents of Washington D.C. After much debate, however, the Arlington



Cemetery location was finally chosen, because as a cemetery, development of the lands was completely restricted to burial. There would be no neighborhood encroachment upon the grounds.<sup>12</sup> Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter, who died in 1891, was also buried on the slope in front of Arlington House to the north of General Sheridan's gravesite, as was General Horatio Gouverneur Wright in the same year.<sup>13</sup> The burying of "highly esteemed" Union officers on the slope east of Arlington House was discontinued by the late 1890s.<sup>14</sup> General George Crook, who passed away in 1890, was meant to be re-interred in this location at Arlington National Cemetery in 1898. The policy had been recently changed, however, and his monument was erected to the east of the flower garden within the officer's burial section. Crook Walk, extending from the southern end of the flower garden down the southern slope, was named after him.<sup>15</sup>



75 The Custis Walk, built to connect Arlington House with the depot stop of the electric rail line by the Sheridan Gate, was constructed around 1893. Detail from a map, Arlington, Virginia Military Reservation Fort Myer and the National Cemetery with Annex Showing the Road to Aqueduct Bridge, 1894.

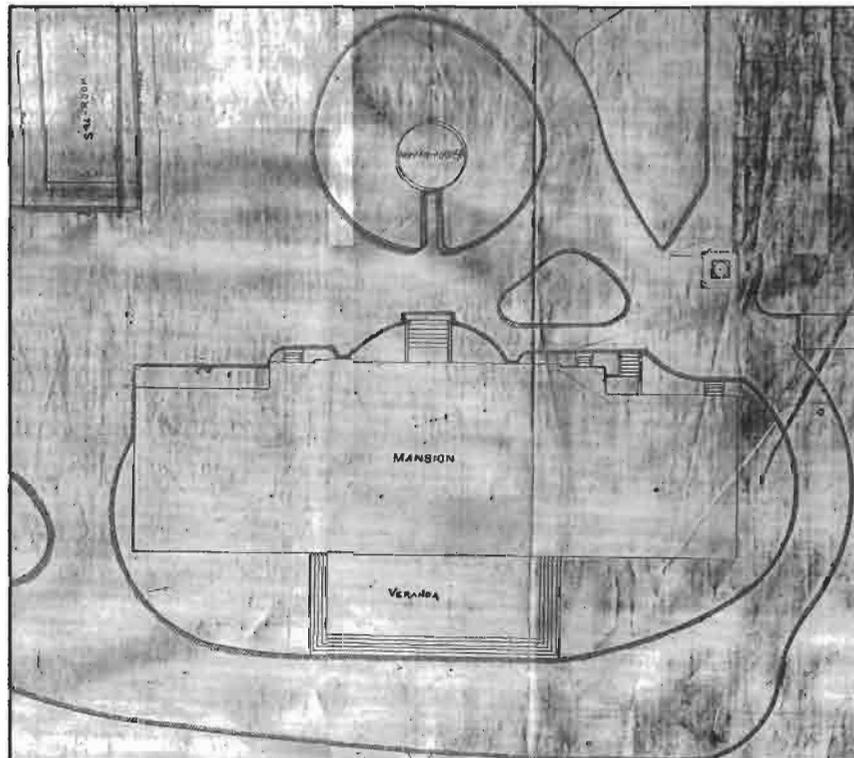
George Washington Memorial Parkway Archives

## MAINTENANCE AND CHANGE ARLINGTON HOUSE—"EMPTY AND SPOTLESS"

In the early 1890s, technology was creating an even stronger links among the national cemetery, Washington, D.C. and other surrounding communities. The Arlington and Falls Church Electric Railway ran to the northwest of Arlington House and stopped at the Fort Myer Gate into Arlington National Cemetery. To the east of Arlington House, the Washington, Alexandria and Mount Vernon Electric Railway ran along what had once been the Alexandria and Georgetown Turnpike, by then renamed the Alexandria and Georgetown

Road. The rail stop was located at the Sheridan Gate. By 1893, a paved walk, later named the "Custis Walk", extended from the Sheridan Gate entrance up the slope to Arlington House. Benches were built to provide seating along the walk.

Between 1873 and 1890 little had been done to



improve the surface of roads with macadam or other paving. According to the recollections of Rhodes, during times of heavy rains the gravel roads through the cemetery and the ground around Arlington House would become a "quagmire and almost impassable." This was especially true during times of high use, such as in the spring of 1892 when the Grand Army of the Republic encampment was held in Washington, D.C. The large group of Army veterans visited the damp grounds of Arlington House and turned lawns and drives into a "quagmire."<sup>16</sup> Shortly thereafter, proposals were made to lay granolithic paving around Arlington, providing for ease of movement and maintenance.<sup>17</sup> By 1893 granite pavers and scored concrete paving surrounded the entire house, for the first time providing a circulation route around the northern wing of the mansion. At this same time, asphalt pavement was laid on the main drive between the mansion and the western or Fort Myer entrance. In addition, a granolithic sidewalk was laid near to and parallel with the north side of the drive from Arlington House to

76 Granolithic Pavement  
around Mansion at Arlington  
National Cemetery.  
November 8, 1893,  
annotated for clarity, 2001

Arlington House Archives

Fort Myer to accommodate pedestrian visitors who came to the cemetery via electric trolley lines from Rosslyn and D.C.<sup>18</sup>

Another draw to the cemetery was the restoration of Fort McPherson. In 1894, D. H. Rhodes oversaw

the “restoration” of Fort McPherson, a fort south of Arlington House that had never seen duty since it was not finished before the Civil War ended. Yet, newly covered with soft turf and decorated with flower beds and iron ramparts, Fort McPherson represented the many Civil War earthworks that were quickly being lost to development. These included Fort Whipple (where much of the original earthwork was destroyed in the construction of Fort Myer adjacent to the National Cemetery), Forts Cass and Corcoran, and Fort Woodbury, which was cut up into the street system of Fort Myer Heights.<sup>19</sup>

In the flower garden and around Arlington House, planting continued. The annual beds in the flower garden were filled with cannas, ornamental grasses and annuals. By the 1890s, the trees and shrubs in the foundation planting installed in the

1870s by Rhodes were growing large, especially the Magnolia trees in front of both wings. Window boxes on the east and south facades were overflowing with flowers. Like the foundation plantings, the window boxes attempted to soften the abrupt contrast between the Greek revival architecture and the surrounding land—a contrast considered by many to be unattractive. Yet not all changes made were additions. In 1896 a hurricane struck, toppling over three hundred trees on the grounds of Arlington. One of the trees damaged was the remaining large deodor cedar (the other tree had died previously), located next to the water tower in the plant-

George Washington Memorial Parkway Archives



77 The restored Fort McPherson, a Civil War fort that never saw action, was located within the cemetery grounds, south of Arlington House. Arlington Va. Military Reservation Fort Myer and the National Cemetery with Annex Showing the Road to Aqueduct Bridge, 1894

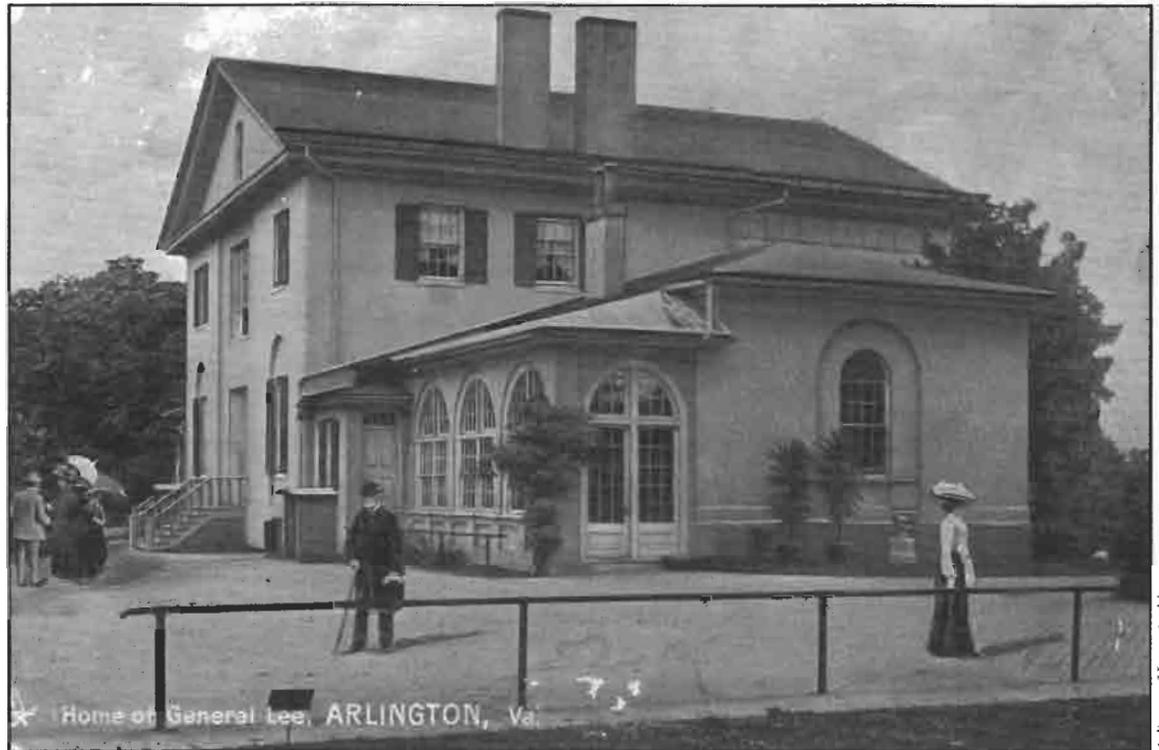
Arlington House Archives



78 Arlington House with flower boxes and foundation plantings, c.1890



79 *Tourists at Arlington,*  
*postcard, c.1910*



Arlington House Archives

ing bed west of Arlington House. The top of the cedar was broken off. Though its removal was considered by cemetery staff, the tree was eventually preserved.

Through the first decades of the twentieth century, the magnolias on the east front of Arlington House continued to grow and shade out the smaller shrubs at their base. After the land around the mansion was paved in 1893, the white iron urns were set into planting beds. One such island bed was at the southern end of the southern wing. An urn was placed in this bed, surrounded by individual boxwood specimens. Iron urns were also placed to the east of Arlington House, beside the drive that extended along the front of the house, within beds of annuals and ornamental grasses. In the center of the planting bed in front of Arlington House the flag pole arose from a small berm, its base framed with evergreen shrubs.

Yet these changes to the Arlington grounds were ignoring, and even sometimes wiping away evidence of the past. While the wooden headboards of Civil War casualties were replaced with stone, the gravestones of Mary and George Washington Parke Custis in the southwestern portion of the grounds, were “stained and defaced” without a “railing around the graves.” Only the lilies-of-the-valley continued to grown in swathes around their bases.<sup>20</sup> Just the crumbling brick walls of the overseer’s house remained down on the farm. The house was most likely deemed superfluous when the Freedmen’s Villagers were forced to leave in the late 1880s and was subsequently condemned by the Department of Army.<sup>21</sup> The stable built under the direction of Custis, to the west of Arlington House, was destroyed by fire in July of 1904. The reconstructed stable, finished within three years, was built of brick in a style very similar to the original, with its Doric-columned portico, symmetrical-wing, and stuccoed walls.<sup>22</sup> The Temple of Fame took the place of the flower arbor. The revered graves of northern officers



pierced the eastern slope that rose to the new foundation plantings near the house. Arlington was, as one woman wrote in 1906 after walking through the unused rooms, “empty and spotless.”<sup>23</sup>

Yet as war had torn the country apart, war would help to heal at least the sectionalism, if not the racial division, that circumscribed the cemetery grounds.<sup>24</sup> In February of 1898 the sinking of the American ship the USS Maine in Havana harbor signaled the beginning of the Spanish-American War. The outcry from the American public, partially spurred by extensive media reporting, was enormous. The bodies of the American sailors who died in the explosion were brought back to Arlington National Cemetery where the men were buried with honors and a monument to the sinking of the USS Maine was later erected. Arlington National Cemetery was no longer, as it had been in the past, primarily associated with the burial of Union soldiers (regardless of the fact that the existing burials included a relatively small number of Confederate soldiers as well as

many Freedmen’s Villagers). Instead, America rallied behind the patriotic military cause. The tragedy of the sinking of the Maine unified the country in its identification of Arlington as a national cemetery. For as John Osborne, whose brother had just died in the war, wrote of Arlington House in one of the first official histories of the cemetery:



Arlington House Archives

80 U.S.S. Maine Memorial, postcard c.1930

*. . . . Indeed not even hallowed Mount Vernon is so rich in historic associations, for Arlington is at once the old home of the adopted son of George Washington. . . . the former home of the principal actor in the drama of the ‘Lost Cause’ and as such endeared to all Southerners; the last resting-place of thousands of heroic defenders of the Union and therefore cherished at countless firesides in every Northern State; and, finally, the eternal bivouac of hundreds of gallant martyrs of our recent war for suffering humanity, by whose solemn advent Arlington has been consecrated anew as truly a National Cemetery.*<sup>25</sup>

With renewed vigor, Americans came to the cemetery and to Arlington House—in honor of Washington, in reverence of Lee, in mourning of those recently lost—all with curiosity for a landscape etched deeply with the ideological struggles of the nation. The Spanish-American War resulted in new graves, new mourners, and new attention to the grounds around Arlington House. For the former home of Robert E. Lee was integral to the National Cemetery, was in fact its vortex. The view east from the portico stretched beyond the iron urns and annuals bordering the front drive, past the granite blocks dedicated to Rear Admiral



Porter, General Sheridan, and Admiral Wright. The grassy slope descended the hillside, spotted with picturesque trees as it was when G.W.P. Custis created his Park seventy-five years earlier. The view encompassed the enclosing stone wall running along the Alexandria and Georgetown Road and beyond, through the scrubby woods and old fields to the Potomac River. Washington D.C. lay in the distance. Standing at the newly-completed Washington

81 In this 1912 postcard, the American flag takes prominence over the former "D.C. Residence of Robert E. Lee."



Arlington House Archives

Monument, looking out towards Virginia, Arlington House sat high on the brow of the hill. Dark forests formed a background for the temple-like structure and white gravestones lay as if planted in fields down the hillsides of the cemetery.

Much of the land which had been used as fields and homesites by residents of Freedmen's Village between the Potomac River and the Alexandria and Georgetown Road was lying fallow by the turn of the twentieth century. The northern end of the area was used as an army post garden. In 1900 the United States government transferred approximately four hundred acres of what had been the Arlington Estate, lying between the boundary of Arlington National Cemetery and the Potomac River, to the Department of Agriculture.<sup>26</sup> Subsequently, the land was used as an experimental farm to improve plant hybridization and cultivation methods until military necessity demanded its return to the Department of Army prior to World War II. This area of the estate contained many natural springs, including the famous Arlington Spring of the previous century. Drainage tiles were installed in many existing drainage ditches and to drain large areas of low-lying lands. The trees, briars and underbrush that had grown up since the removal of the Freedmen's Village residents ten years prior, were removed and plowed under. Crops such as cowpeas, crimson clover, rye and buckwheat were planted. Land was also put into pasture. Lawn areas were created around the structures to show "rural people" what could be done to landscape a home.<sup>27</sup> The government's experimental farm, where once the fields of Arlington farm were located, linked the agricultural advancement proclivities of Custis and his promotion of the need for a national agricultural improvement farm with the eventual use of his estate. As such the contours of the old farm fields, though altered in product, retained their form from Custis's days.<sup>28</sup> Modern use and technology were changing other portions of the Arlington landscape as this quote from 1918 reveals:



82 The Government Experimental Farm was located where once were the fields of Arlington Farm, and later those of the residents of Freedmen's Village. The straight road lined with trees is in the approximate location of the Custis-era road from that led from the farm to Arlington Spring. The road that runs across the center of the photograph, right to left, is Arlington Ridge Road—the old Alexandria and Georgetown Turnpike, c.1925.

*The old post road is now a modern automobile road. Four lines of telegraph poles are strung with wires parallel to the road. On one side is an electric railway over which a shuttle car runs between Arlington Junction on the Alexandria line and Rosslyn. To the east are the fields of the experiment station, now prosperous in appearance but which a few years ago presented a most discouraging outlook to one who would seek to make crops grow. Along the west side of the road is a wall of red Seneca sandstone topped with slabs of bluestone. It runs straight but weaves up and down as it crosses the convolutions of the land...<sup>29</sup>*

By 1904 the total number of individuals buried in the cemetery reached 19,734.<sup>30</sup> Though the burial of Union officers in the vicinity of Arlington House no longer occurred, a few interments were made near the house. Captain John Williams, who had been killed almost one hundred years previously in the East Florida campaign of 1812, was reinterred at Arlington at the southern end of the flower garden. The stone slab which lay over his grave in his original burial spot in the cemetery in St. Marys, Georgia was placed over the new grave. In 1911 Pierre Charles L'Enfant, U.S. Engineer and brevet major in the army during the Revolutionary War who had been commissioned to design the original plan for the City of Washington, was reinterred just east of the front of Arlington House, regardless of the regulations, to cease burial on the slope.<sup>31</sup> The classically-styled monument of white marble was placed to overlook Washington, D.C. with its gridded and radial streets laid out over two hundred years prior by L'Enfant.<sup>32</sup> The reinterment of the French artist and city planner on the national mall had been considered previously. But the development of the downtown core and mall had to conform to the 1902 McMillan plan of the Senate Park Commission and burial did not fit within the scope of their design. The mall was not a grave yard, local newspapers pointed out.<sup>33</sup>

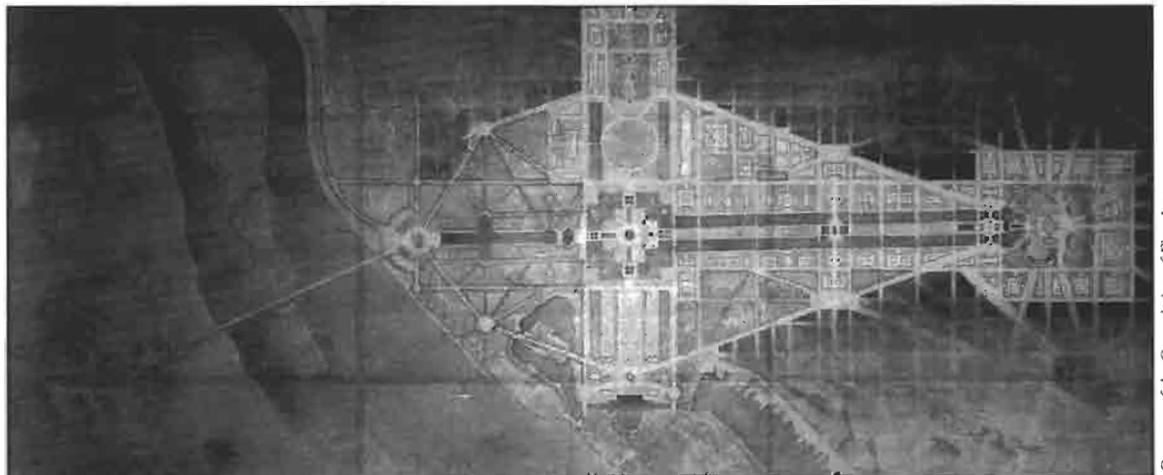
The Senate Park Commission, or McMillan Commission, had been established in 1901 through the efforts of Senator James McMillan from Michigan. The plan created by the com-



mission reestablished the preeminence of L'Enfant's design for Washington D.C., through recommendations based both on primary research of L'Enfant's eighteenth-century documentation and from inspiration gathered in the commission's sojourns to various European capitals. The commission members included Daniel Burnham, a well-known architect who had overseen the creation of the "White City" for the Chicago World's Fair in 1893; Charles McKim of the architectural firm McKim, Mead and White known for their classically styled works; Augustus St. Gaudens, a highly respected sculptor; and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., a well-known landscape architect. The secretary was Charles Moore, the former political secretary of Senator McMillan.<sup>34</sup> Moore would eventually influence the development of the landscape of Arlington House through his role as chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts. The McMillan Commission Plan, which included both a formal redesign for the mall area and a plan for a regional park system, was to guide the development of Washington, D.C. far into the future. One important component of the McMillan Commission Plan was the emphasis placed on views between existing memorials and places of intense reverence, like Arlington, and the sites of future memorials on or adjacent to the National Mall. The physical and symbolic connection between Arlington House and the future site of the Lincoln Memorial played a critical role in the plan. To the creators of the 1902 McMillan Commission Plan, Arlington House was a potent symbol of the former Confederate cause and of the south in general. The site of the future Lincoln Memorial was, in contrast, emblematic of the north. The plan recommended the construction of a classically-styled bridge to connect Arlington in Virginia with the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.. Arlington Memorial Bridge was not completed, however, for another thirty years.<sup>35</sup>

Throughout the 1910s only limited changes were made in the immediate vicinity of Arlington House. The granolithic pavement almost completely surrounding the mansion and slaves quarters provided space for parking, increasingly needed as the number of personal cars in surrounding communities multiplied. In 1921 with the end of World War I came the dedication of the grand Tomb of the Unknown Soldier south of Arlington House in the location of a mid-nineteenth-century gravel pit. This new amphitheater supplanted the "Old"

83 *McMillan Commission Plan, 1902 Unpublished rendering, first published with the title, General Plan of the Mall System*



Courtesy of the Commission of Fine Arts



Memorial Amphitheater constructed in the 1870s. The publicity surrounding the dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier contained within the new Memorial Amphitheater generated increased scrutiny of the grounds surrounding Arlington House. Though D.H. Rhodes remained the head gardener in charge of cemetery upkeep, others would begin to exert influence over the design and management of this landscape, which was growing more significant with each war America fought.

## POLITICS AND IDEOLOGY BEHIND THE RESTORATION OF ARLINGTON HOUSE



84 Arlington House, c.1910 postcard

Charles Moore, the former secretary of the McMillan Commission and now chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, was very vocal in his review of the design and care of the grounds of Arlington. The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) had been created in 1910 by President Taft to review the proposed developments in the city of Washington D.C., assuring that new designs and changes to existing conditions conformed with the McMillan Commission Plan. The landscape of Arlington House, visible from Washington and a focal point within Arlington National Cemetery, was within their purview. For instance, as revealed in this letter to the Quarter Master General's office, Moore clearly did not approve of the urns and annual flower beds so conspicuous in the landscape surrounding the house.

*When the frosts come the Commission would like to see the flower bed in front of the Arlington Mansion cleared and grassed over and all the iron vases around the mansion taken out and lost . . . the flower beds on the square south of the Mansion also should be put into grass. This will mean some pretty serious heart burns but it is in the interests of economy and efficiency.<sup>36</sup>*

Though Colonel Penrose, the officer in charge of the cemetery, responded that yes, the urns would be "lost", the removal of the flower garden must have proved a bit too politically difficult for the annual beds remained through at least 1930. But Moore, as representative of the Commission of Fine Arts, was not the only party interested in the development of the Arlington.



For over sixty years, much of Arlington House had been empty save for the few rooms used by employees, namely Rhodes and the cemetery superintendent, and for display of various plaques and relics of the Union Army stored within its downstairs rooms. Views concerning the historical value of the house varied, reflective of the many opinions about the rights and wrongs, causes and effects of the Civil War. Perhaps these varied viewpoints were also shaped by aesthetic taste. Nonetheless, many prominent individuals believed something should be done quickly with the mansion. From at least as early as the late 1860s, Arlington National Cemetery had been revered by those sympathetic to the Union cause. The sectionalism that had divided the country and prevented Arlington National Cemetery from attaining complete national acceptance had been assuaged first by the Spanish-American War and then fully diffused by the tremendous cost of World War I. For instance, southwest of Arlington House, a Confederate Monument first proposed by Congress in 1900 had been dedicated in 1914. Arlington House was significant as a setting of the early history of the Republic, as the property of the adopted grandson of George Washington. Homage was also paid to the structure and grounds as the home of Robert E. Lee. For these two reasons, according to commentators, Arlington House deserved better than to be left to slow deterioration. But to what purpose? According to some, the proper action would be to restore the house and grounds to the moment of Lee's departure in 1861, as a revered monument to the primary hero of the southern Confederacy. Others proposed that a museum should be created within its walls—a museum to honor the Union Forces.<sup>37</sup> Still others believed that, in fact, the restoration of the house and grounds should reflect the days of Custis. As a local journalist pointed out, some interested parties were taking action:

*The southern colony in Washington has become greatly interested in the proposition made by Mrs. Frances Parkinson Keyes, wife of the Senator from New Hampshire, and a group of friends to form an association of women similar to the regents of Mount Vernon whose purpose will be to restore the Lee mansion at Arlington National cemetery to its original appearance.<sup>38</sup>*

Though the wife of a northern senator, Frances Parkinson Keyes was a native of Virginia. She submitted appeals to the American, primarily female, public through articles in *Good Housekeeping Magazine*:

*Whatever our opinions and traditions may be, moreover, we all realize now that Robert E. Lee was one of the greatest generals and one of the noblest men who ever lived. To every American woman the abuse of his home must seem a disgrace; to every Southern woman it must seem a sacrilege.<sup>39</sup>*



She gained the ear of Senator Louis C. Cramton of Michigan, who would later sponsor the restoration's enabling legislation through Congress.

Charles Moore and the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) became aware of her objectives concerning the treatment of Arlington House. He was eager to ensure that the CFA, Keyes and the congressional representatives were all of like minds concerning the Arlington House and grounds restoration. As he was to find out, however, they were not. He wrote to Frances Keyes in late summer of 1921 after reading her letters in *Good Housekeeping Magazine*, one year after the dedication of the classically-styled Arlington Memorial Amphitheater and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.<sup>40</sup>

*In a dispatch from Upperville, Virginia, to the Star of July 31, your name is given as one of the leaders of the group of women who will attempt to obtain permission of the Government to reclaim the historic old residence Arlington, and furnish it. This commission [CFA] has made plans for the treatment of the grounds around the mansion, with a view of restoring to them the character of a house of that period. These plans are now before the Secretary of War for adoption and we have no reason to think that they will not be adopted since they have been approved by the Quartermaster General . . . .<sup>41</sup>*

Yet to restore the mansion and grounds to the period of the house's construction—or the first fifty years of the Republic as Moore would later term it—was not exactly what Frances Keyes or Senator Cramton envisioned. Though the actual restoration of the grounds was still ten years in the future, the plans referred to by Moore in the letter would serve as the basis for this future restoration. In March 1923, Moore wrote to the Quartermaster General warning him of the restoration ideas brewing:

*There is a movement on foot to have the Mansion furnished, in which movement Representative R. Walton Moore of Virginia, Representative Louis C. Cramton of Michigan and others are much interested. Various organizations have proposed to undertake the task but it has seemed to the Commission of Fine Arts that no one organization should be permitted to monopolize the work in which there is widespread interest . . . it is eminently proper that the name Arlington Mansion should be applied to the house and that it should be refitted both as to the house itself and the grounds immediately surrounding it, as a home representative of the first fifty years of the Republic of the United States.<sup>42</sup>*

However, with the influence of Frances Parkinson Keyes (who would go on to become a widely read novelist) and other individuals, a bill to restore Arlington House “as nearly as practicable to the condition in which it existed immediately prior to the Civil War,” was forwarded through Congress by Senator Cramton.



In May 1924 CFA Chairman Moore was called to testify at the hearing on H.J. Resolution 264, “authorizing the restoration of the Lee Mansion in the Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia” before the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress. In his statement, he proposed a compromise, suggesting that perhaps the house as a whole could be restored to the “Custis Mansion or Arlington Mansion” and that the room in which Robert E. and Mary Custis Lee were married could be restored to the condition that it was at the time of their marriage. He also pointed out that Lee never occupied the house for any length of time.<sup>43</sup> Following this statement, he reminded the congressional committee that the plans for the grounds surrounding Arlington House were already completed and accepted by the Department of War.

Nonetheless, a joint resolution authorizing the restoration of the “Lee Mansion” to the period of time directly prior to the Lee family’s departure was passed by Congress and approved by President Calvin Coolidge on March 4, 1925.<sup>44</sup> Shortly thereafter, a survey was conducted by the Quartermaster General’s office to determine an estimate for the cost of the restoration, including the price associated with the construction of new buildings to house the employees currently living in the slave quarters and in a few rooms of the mansion. The findings were published in the *Evening Star*:

*It will cost about \$225,000 to restore the ancestral home of the Custis family in the Arlington National Cemetery to the condition it was in when Gen Robert E. Lee and his wife, formerly Miss Mary Ann Randolph Custis, lived there at the outbreak of the Civil War, in accordance with the legislation enacted by Congress in March . . . Under the act the Secretary of War is “authorized and directed” to restore the old mansion “as nearly as practicable to the condition in which it existed immediately prior to the Civil War and to procure, if possible, articles of furniture and equipment which were then in the mansion and in use by the occupants there and if the original furniture is not available to procure reproductions of the same.”<sup>45</sup>*

The Quartermaster General’s report was quick to point out that “no allowance has been made in the above estimates for roads, walks, special grading or planting, as these items have been covered by previous estimates for the sections surrounding the Mansion as part of a general scheme for progressive improvements to the National Cemetery submitted in October 1923.”<sup>46</sup> Yet the subject of restoration—of what to when—was far from decided.

In October 1925, Charles Moore visited President Calvin Coolidge to discuss the plans for Arlington House. The *New York Times* reported soon after that the plan of “creating a shrine to the memory of Robert E. Lee in the restoration of the Lee Mansion in Arlington National Cemetery probably will be dropped.”



*Following a visit of Charles C. Moore, Chairman of the Fine Arts Commission, paid to President Coolidge today, it became known that an entire change of base with regard to the project virtually has been determined upon. The mansion will be restored, not in the decorative style it had as occupied by General Lee, but in the period style of the earlier years in which it was occupied by members of the Custis Family. There is no real demand from the South that a Lee shrine be established in Arlington Cemetery, Mr. Moore declared.<sup>47</sup>*

Following his visit with the President, Moore was asked by acting Secretary of War, Dwight F. Davis, to oversee the acquisition of furniture as the mansion was undergoing restoration. Moore accepted.<sup>48</sup>

After refusing to allocate money to fund the restoration, Congress appropriated ten thousand dollars, at the prodding of Moore to fund a “thorough investigation and survey” to determine the condition of the Arlington House and cemetery buildings in March of 1928.<sup>49</sup> Others commented publicly on the sorry condition of the mansion and condemned the proposed restoration. Marietta M. Andrews, a local author, wrote of Arlington House in her book *George Washington’s Country*:

*The house is inexpressibly desolate in its present conditions, amid all the natural beauty of its surroundings . . . Its denuded rooms speak louder than words in subtle reproach of this that was done . . . little temples and summer-houses that do not hang together at all with the architectural plan of the main building . . . flower beds in studied forms that are supposedly ornamental. Arlington now is the last word in bad taste and inelegance; and the crowning mistake to my mind, would be to furnish it in imitation of the home of the Custises and the Lees.<sup>50</sup>*

Nevertheless, eventually plans for the restoration went forward. The restoration of Arlington House and surrounding grounds was placed under the jurisdiction of the Quartermaster General of the War Department, with immediate supervision by Colonel Charles G. Mortimer. All facets of the project were subject to the approval of the Commission of Fine Arts, for according to local papers, it was the first project of its kind ever undertaken by the Federal Government, Department of Army. In 1929 Congress appropriated \$90,000 to fund the “continuing restoration of the Lee mansion and the procurement of furnishings...” subject to the approval of the Commission of Fine Arts.<sup>51</sup> This was done with the hope that “when the present work was completed funds would be made available for the complete restoration of the gardens and walks.”<sup>52</sup> The construction of Arlington Memorial Bridge between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery, whose completion aligned with the bicentennial celebration of George Washington’s birth, most likely spurred the funding of the Arlington House restoration project.<sup>53</sup> As the *Evening Star* stated in 1929,



*By the time the Arlington Memorial Bridge opens a new and picturesque route to the National Cemetery another shrine of universal interest to Americans restored to its original state will be thrown open to the public.<sup>54</sup>*

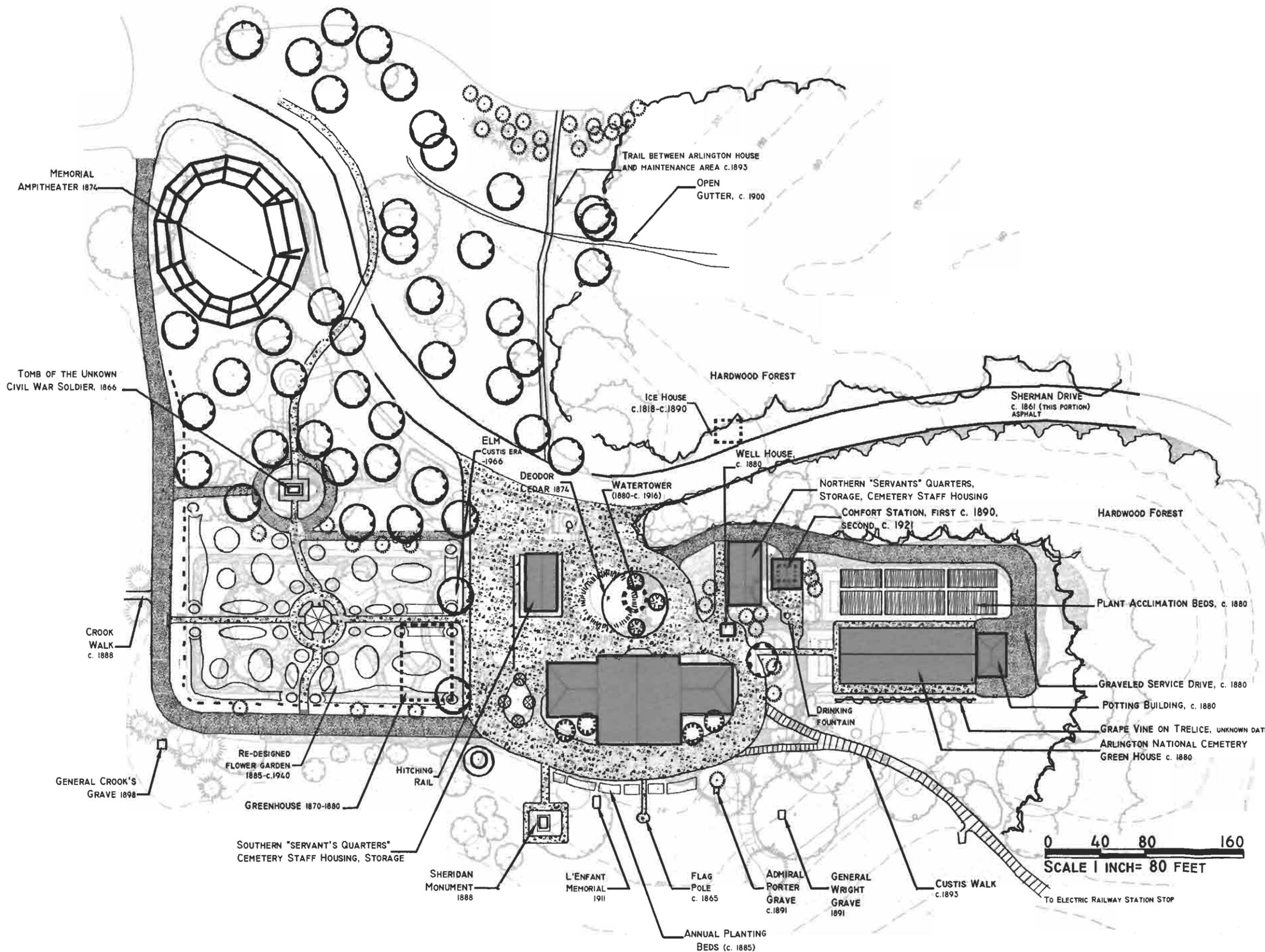
## CONCLUSION

85 Arlington National Cemetery from the air, c.1925



Arlington House Archives

The exact objective of the restoration was not yet clear; regardless it had begun. The fight over the objectives of the restoration would profoundly shape the development of the landscape. Would the new design reflect the colonial period of Custis and Washington, or would it instead mirror the early Victorian characteristics of the 1860s as a “shrine” to General Lee? Over eighty years had passed since the Tomb of the Unknown Civil War Soldier was placed in the grove south of Arlington House. Now monuments and memorials rose from the green hillsides in all directions. Across the Potomac River, Washington, D.C. had expanded exponentially. Arlington National Cemetery was linked to surrounding communities through rails, rivers and roads. Though the cemetery and the country remained racially segregated, the sectionalism that had affected Arlington and America was healing in the face of new international struggles. In the coming years, the restoration of Arlington House and grounds would occur within this complex environment.



- ### LEGEND
- TEMPLE OF FAME, 1885-1965
  - EVERGREEN TREE, MOST LIKELY A VARIETY OF CEDAR
  - DECIDUOUS TREES, MOST LIKELY VARIETIES OF ELM AND OAK
  - ACER, SP.
  - MAGNOLIA, SP.
  - HORSE CHESTNUT
  - BOXWOOD
  - FLOWER BED
  - GRAVEL
  - CONCRETE
  - NON-EXTANT BUILDING, c. 1929

### SOURCES:

U.S. NATIONAL CEMETERY ARLINGTON VIRGINIA 1869. SCALE 100 FEET TO 1 INCH. NARA 1. COPY MAP FILES ARND

MAP OF ARLINGTON ESTATE. MARCH JANUARY 1868 SHOWING ALL BUILDINGS OCCUPIED BY CITIZENS OUTSIDE OF FORT MYER (SAC) AND THE NATIONAL CEMETERY. U.S. ENGINEER, WASHINGTON D.C. COPY ARND ARCHIVES. ON FILE, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS. CARTOGRAPHIC DIVISION WASHINGTON D.C.

EMERALDITE PAVEMENT AROUND MANSION AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY. NOVEMBER 8, 1893 DEPOT QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE. NARA RG 92. COPY MAP FILES ARND

ARLINGTON VA. MILITARY RESERVATION FORT MYER AND THE NATIONAL CEMETERY WITH ADJACENT SHOWING THE ROAD TO ARLINGTON BRIDGE. DEPOT QUARTERMASTER'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON D.C. JANUARY 10, 1894. NARA RG 92. COPY MAP FILES GWHP/PH/ADJUTANTS

NATIONAL CEMETERY ARLINGTON VIRGINIA 1901, QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE. COPY MAP FILES ARND. ORIGINAL NARA II RG 92.

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY VIRGINIA PLAN FOR REDEVELOPMENT GROUNDS ABOUT LEE MANSION APPROVED BY CFA MARCH 21, 1928. MCR 856/1/1900 PLAN FEB 23, 1921.

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY VIRGINIA. PLAN FOR WORK TO BE DONE AT LEE MANSION. AUGUST 10, 1925. TIC, NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NCR, NPIS)

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY RESTORATION OF ARLINGTON MANSION STUDY FOR DRIVES, WALKS AND PLANTING AROUND MANSION ON SITES OF OLD FLOWER AND VEGETABLE GARDENS. 1929. QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE. ORIGINAL ARND ARCHIVES

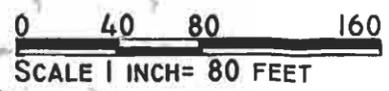
ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY. PRESENT LAYOUT OF ARLINGTON MANSION SHOWING APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF DRIVE, WALKS, PLANTING, ETC. c. 1920. QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT, ORIGINAL ARND ARCHIVES

PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS, ARLINGTON HOUSE ARCHIVES, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, NATIONAL ARCHIVES

**NOTE:**  
LOCATION OF VEGETATION IS APPROXIMATE.



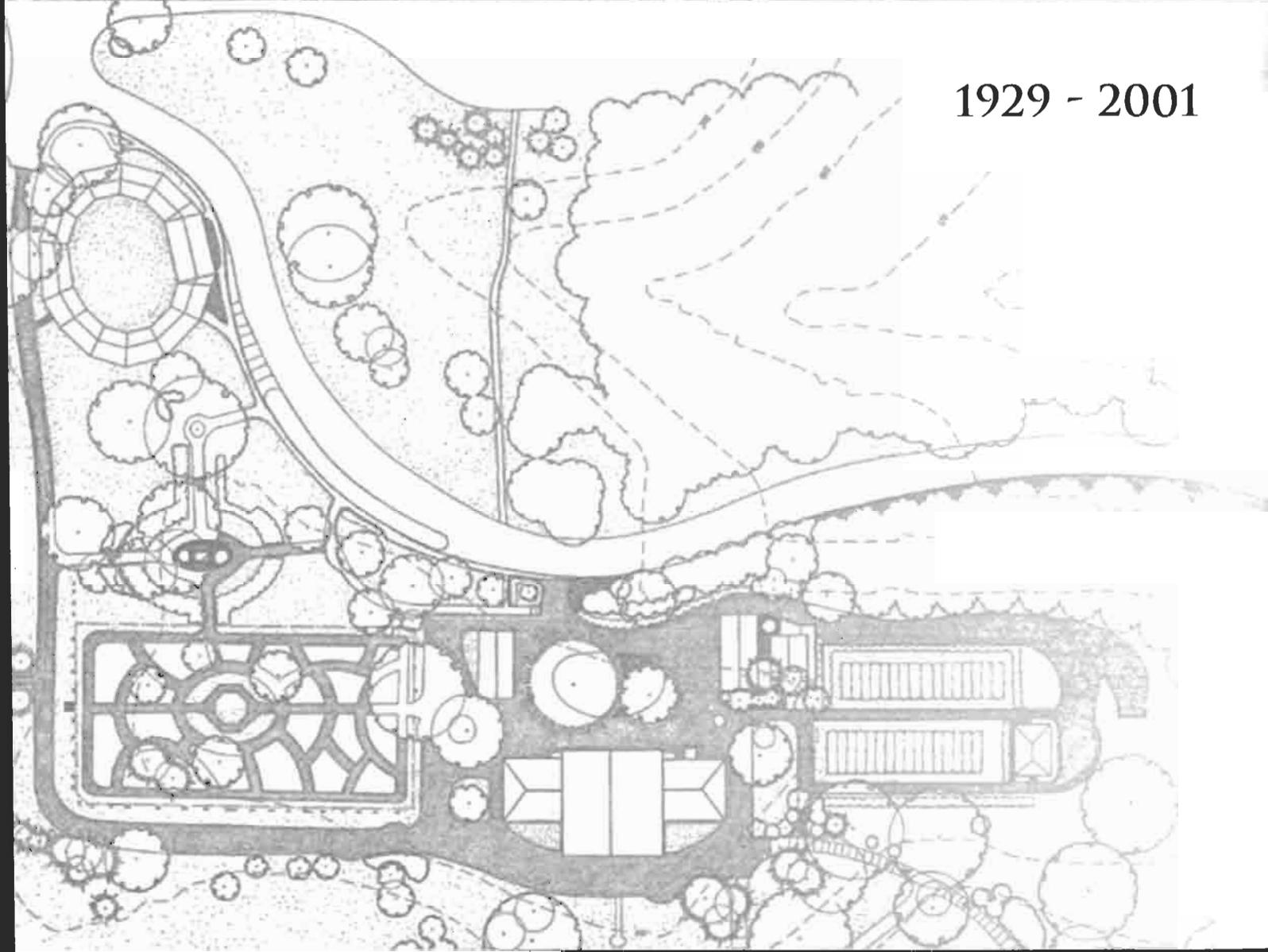
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT  
**1880-1929**  
**Historic Period Plan**  
**ARLINGTON HOUSE**  
THE ROBERT E. LEE MEMORIAL  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA  
PREPARED BY:  
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION  
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PROGRAM  
J. HANNA, A. DYMEK, E. HENDERSON, N. PARASH



855/20904



# CHAPTER 7



1929 - 2001



While Chairman Charles Moore was trying to influence legislation pursuant to the restoration of Arlington House, other members of the Commission of Fine Arts were serving as design consultants, recommending modifications to the landscape. As early as 1919, CFA member and landscape architect James Greenleaf reviewed the development ideas of Major Lemly, then in charge of Arlington Cemetery. Intent on sim-

86 *The Tomb of the Unknown Civil War Soldier is in the foreground, with the Temple of Fame in back. postcard c.1910*



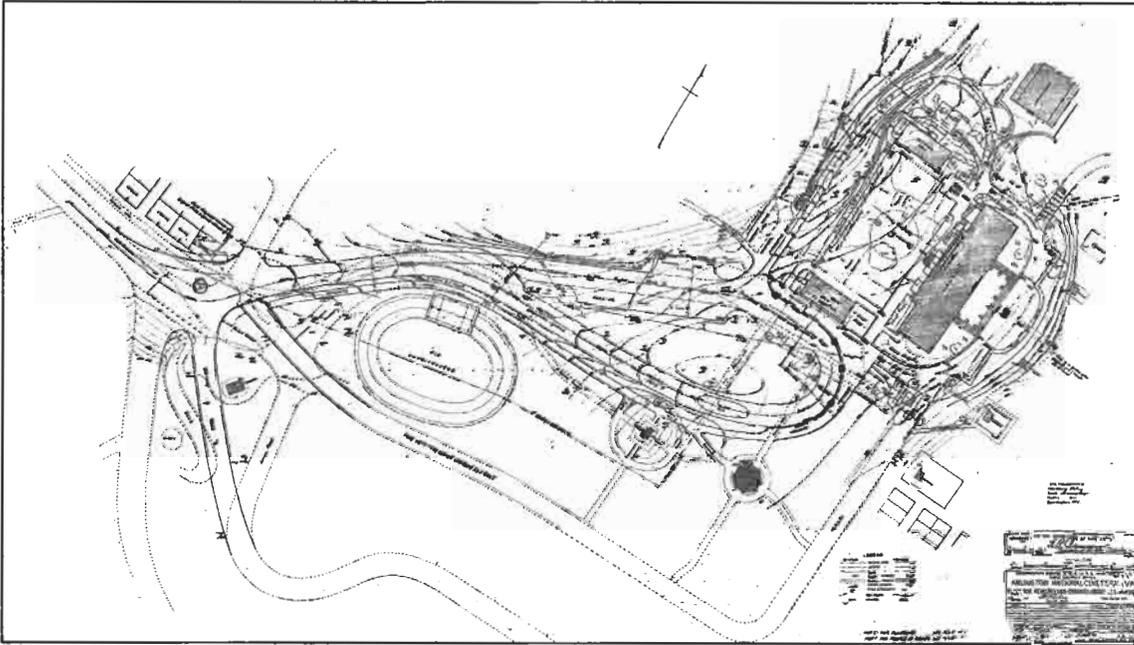
Arlington House Archives

plifying the memorial grounds, Greenleaf recommended that all flower beds and cast iron planting urns be removed immediately, believing their showiness ill-suited to the solemnity of the cemetery. He proposed planting low-growing boxwood instead, as the dark green, delicate foliage of boxwood would be more subdued than the brightly colored annual plantings remaining from the 1880s design of Rhodes. After reading Greenleaf's comments on his proposal, Major Lemly requested from the Commission a full and "frank" report on the grounds.<sup>1</sup> The CFA agreed and quickly offered further suggestions regarding proposed planting schemes for the Memorial Amphitheater, to the west of the flower garden, in addition to the landscape immediately around Arlington. Nevertheless, much to the Commission members' frustration, few if any of their suggestions were taken by the Quartermaster General's Office. Ever determined, ten years later Chairman Moore was still pushing for the demolition of the Temple of Fame and the removal of the flower beds south of Arlington House.

*. . . cannot means be taken to remove the tin top arrangement, known as the Temple of Fame? I told Abraham Garfield that he must be prepared to see the name of his father*

*[General Garfield] disappear. He said that he did not know it was there, so he would not feel badly . . . ?*

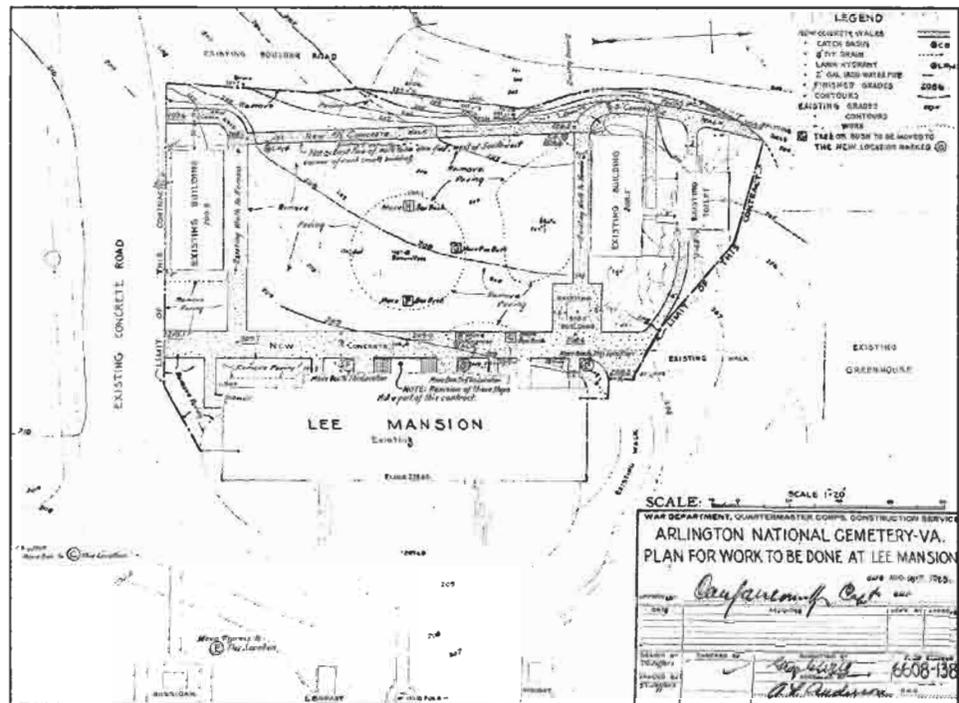
## EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS



Arlington House Archives

*87 Arlington National Cemetery Arlington Virginia. Preliminary Plan for Improvement of Grounds prepared under the direction of the national Commission of Fine Arts, September 1921.*

In 1921 the Quartermaster General's Office presented a plan to the Commission of Fine Arts addressing the "Remodeling of the Grounds about the Lee Mansion." There were two primary objectives guiding their plan. The first was to improve the safety of visitors through the redesign of roads and paths. The second was to create a setting that properly represented the solemn and patriotic essence of the National Cemetery and Arlington House. The Commission agreed with the proposition that the visitor parking area be moved from the yard between the two slave quarters to west of the Monument to the Unknown Civil War Soldier. According to the landscape plan, a large roadway loop drive was to be located at the northern end of the flower garden to provide access to this new parking area. As the Quartermaster General's Office suggested, the removal of the flag pole and the L'Enfant tomb was necessary to restore the slope to its early nineteenth-century appearance. As in the days of Custis and Lee, the vista from the portico to the future Arlington Memorial Bridge and beyond to the national mall was considered extremely important. To enhance the viewing area, the 1921 landscape design included a boxwood hedge paralleling the eastern façade of the house, outlining a brick terrace from which to view the city of Washington. Though the Commission approved the landscape plan, there was no congressional appropriation to fund the project. The 1921 plan, however, formed a basis for future development proposals and the eventual alterations of the landscape.



88 Arlington National Cemetery Virginia. Plan for Work to be Done at Lee Mansion. August 16, 1923

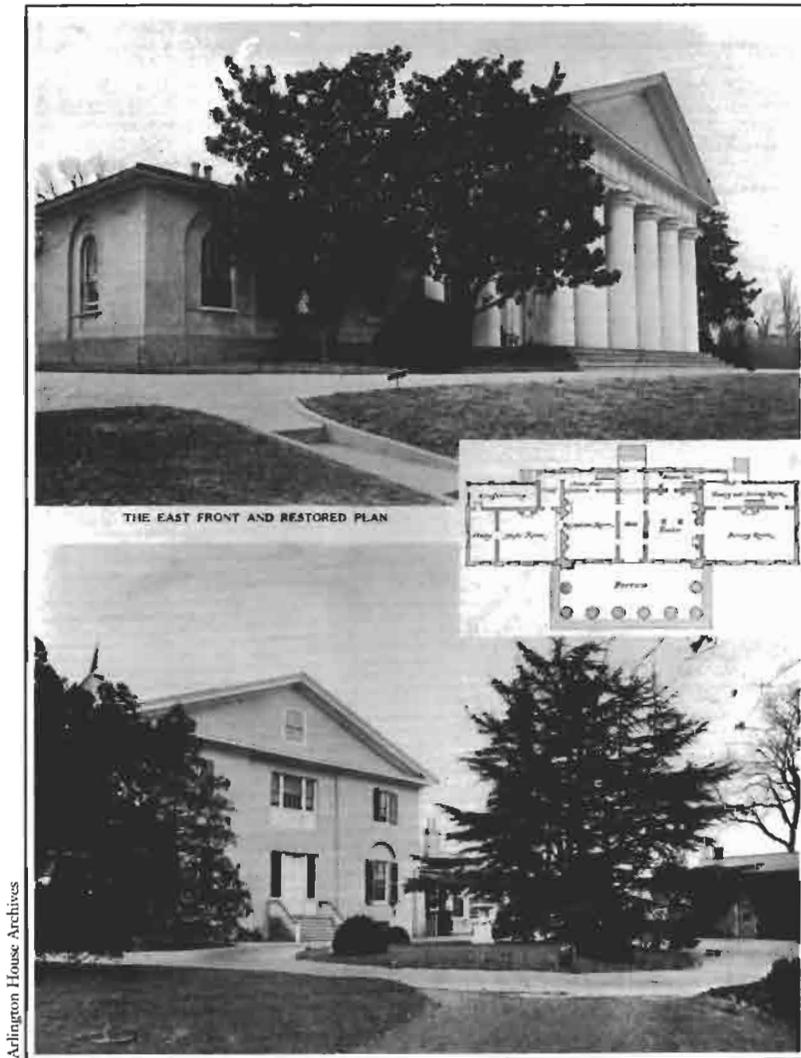
Arlington House Archives

As part of the General Scheme for the Progressive Improvements to the National Cemetery, submitted in October 1923 by the Quartermaster General's Office, plans were drawn up detailing the work to be done to the grounds immediately west of the mansion.<sup>3</sup> Greenleaf conducted the Commission's review of the cemetery development plan. The proposal for the area immediately west of Arlington House called for the removal of all the Victorian iron vases and the existing concrete paving which encircled the house. New concrete walks were to be constructed by the army to provide access to the slave quarters, the newly built comfort station, and the mansion.<sup>4</sup> In the 1923 plan, as in the 1921 plan upon which it was based, visitor access and landscape aesthetics formed the two central components. For instance, according to the plan, thick plantings were to be arranged to screen the recently rebuilt comfort station and the pedestrian paths. Whether Greenleaf had any role in developing the 1923 plans for the yard area of Arlington House is not known.

James Greenleaf (1857-1933) was a member of the Commission of Fine Arts from 1918 to 1927. Though well-known for his design of the private estates of the wealthy in New Jersey, Connecticut and Long Island, through the 1920s he increasingly became involved in high profile, public projects such as the Arlington House restoration. As he did at Arlington, Greenleaf emphasized clarity of line and simplicity in vegetative palette in many of his landscape designs.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the attention devoted to the landscape by Greenleaf and other designers, the structures of Arlington House were also receiving the notice of professionals. Only a year after the development plans were created for Arlington National Cemetery, architect Gilbert L. Rodier wrote an article for *Architectural Forum Magazine*, detailing the architectural evolution of Arlington House. Within the article he included the first known measured

drawings of the building.<sup>6</sup>

Shortly thereafter changes in the administrative personnel of Arlington occurred that, like the varied personalities of the Commission of Fine Arts, would impact the future development of the grounds. In January of 1926, almost one year after passage of the legislation calling for the restoration of Arlington House, General B. F. Cheatam was appointed as Quartermaster General. General Cheatam, whose father was on General Lee's staff through the Virginia



89 Arlington House, prior to any organized restoration work, as illustrated in *Architectural Record* March, 1924

campaigns, had a great personal interest in General Lee and his home. After General Cheatam's retirement in 1930, he served as the resident superintendent for Stratford, General Lee's birthplace.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, General William E. Horton, who came in shortly after General Cheatam as Chief of the Construction Division, was known for his interest in, and fine collection of, colonial era artifacts. In March 1928, spurred by Chairman Moore and perhaps by the personal interest of the Quartermaster General Cheatam, the first \$10,000 was appropriated by Congress to fund the restoration. Moore was quick to remind the new Quartermaster General of the objective of the restoration in the minds of the Commission of Fine Arts:

*The entire work in Arlington is based on the restoration of the mansion and grounds as an estate representative of the manners, customs, and taste of the first half century of the Republic.<sup>8</sup>*

Colonel L. H. Bash came into the Quartermaster General's Office in September 1928, and later succeeded Horton as Chief of the Construction Division. He eventually became



Quartermaster General. Oversight of the finances and contracts was given to Charles G. Mortimer. Mortimer was described by Major Leisenring, the Army architect supervising the historical research preceding the restoration project, as a “Virginian with a flare for old furniture and houses.”<sup>9</sup> Each of these men, with the members of the CFA, would become involved in the restoration of the house and grounds, shaping the results through their personal beliefs, loyalties and agendas.

## THE LANDSCAPE OF ARLINGTON HOUSE PRIOR TO THE RESTORATION

In 1929, Congress added ninety thousand dollars to the money previously allotted for the Arlington House restoration. No money, however, was made available for the restoration or redesign of the grounds. As the Washington D.C. Evening Star pointed out, in addition to the restoration of the building fabric, the appropriations were needed to:

*so far as possible . . . refurnish Arlington House in the Colonial Period, though little hope is held out for obtaining many of the original pieces which graced its chambers . . . It will stand as a fitting memorial to two of America's most distinguished families, as well as to the memory of the South's great military leader.*<sup>10</sup>

In 1929 a committee was formed to guide the restoration of Arlington House and grounds. The committee was comprised of staff of the Quartermaster General's Office, as well as members of the Commission of Fine Arts. The committee members included General William E. Horton, Major Luther M. Leisenring, Lieut. Colonel C. G. Mortimer, Charles Moore, Mr. H. P. Caemmerer the Secretary of Commission of Fine Arts, and two privately practicing architects, E. W. Bonn and Walter Peter, a relative of the Lee family. In April the men met at Arlington to assess the existing condition of the property and to discuss the restoration of the house, outbuildings and landscape. According to an account of the restoration written years later by the Army architect, Leisenring, all participants agreed that the house should not be made into a museum, filled with glass cases, stuffed with memorabilia. According to Leisenring, all present felt that the restored mansion should seem to visitors as if the “Lee family of 1860 had gone out for the afternoon and would soon return.” The interpretation of the grounds, however, required much more layering of use and meaning, for the land held not only the gardens of Custis and Lee, but hallowed graves and memorials to honored dead. The redesign of the landscape would reveal, perhaps more clearly than that of the house, the balancing act between the preservation of the cemetery and the re-creation of the historic scene of the “Lee Mansion.”

As the restoration committee walked the grounds around Arlington House in the spring of 1929, the landscape they crossed contained the remnants of almost one hundred and fifty



years of varied use. South of Arlington House, the garden with its center punctuated by the Temple of Fame, was dotted with bright beds of annual flowers and ornamental grasses. During the summer, along its eastern border a row of roses obscured the gravestones of the Civil War officers. From the Temple of Fame, the Monument to the Unknown Civil War Soldier was visible within the shadows of tall oaks and elms. The concrete paths through the garden and around the monument's base were little altered from the design of fifty years before. From the Temple of Fame the view to Washington was framed by deciduous trees located down the slope east of the garden. Between the garden and the southern slave quarters, an asphalt road connected the old carriage drive east of the mansion with Sherman Drive to the west. Concrete scored to resemble granite pavers completely surrounded Arlington House, with only a few open spaces allowing for planting near the buildings. The largest opening in the paving, located to the west of the mansion, contained the enormous deodor cedar with branches reaching out horizontally across the yard. The large brick water tower installed next to the cedar in 1881, had been removed around 1916 and in its place was a cast iron vase and four large boxwoods planted at equal intervals around the circular island bed. A narrow band of ground had been left open encircling the slaves quarters to allow for the ivy and trumpet vine that clung to the walls of the two outbuildings. Along the east façade of the house, large magnolia trees and the few shrubs that could survive in the ever increasing shade, concealed the northern and southern wings. Five circular clumps of ornamental grasses and a row of annuals punctuated the crest of the slope in front of the portico. A concrete path led to and around the Sheridan grave from the concrete drive that passed in front of the house. A planting of evergreens surrounded the flag staff, which still rose from a knoll in front of Arlington next to the tombs of L'Enfant, Wright and Sheridan. In what had once been the eastern half of the kitchen garden, a large green house stood on the earthen terrace. A grape arbor ran along the eastern edge of this terrace to screen the greenhouse from the steps of the Custis Walk, located below and to the east. As part of an official cemetery plant nursery, the western half of the former nineteenth-century kitchen garden was lined with neat rows of seedlings acclimating to the natural elements before being planted out in the cemetery. The concrete path that led from the yard area west of the house past the comfort station to this utilitarian area was lined with a low hedge of boxwood.<sup>11</sup>

According to the minutes of the Commission of Fine Arts, the findings of the restoration committee's site analysis were unanimous. They suggested that a heating plant be constructed adjacent to the existing public comfort station to replace the heating system inside Arlington House. They firmly recommended, as previously proposed in the 1920s, that the "granolithic walks and driveways" around Arlington House be removed and replaced with gravel. Grass, the committee said, was to extend up to and around the entire building, except for the area near the west entrances. The kitchen garden to the north of Arlington House was to be restored in place of the greenhouse. A brick walk was to be located on the east side of



the mansion surrounded by additional, unspecified plantings. Moore added that he hoped the east slope of the mansion could be restored to its “original state,” which he realized would require moving the L’Enfant tomb to a site to the south side of the mansion, as proposed years earlier by Greenleaf. In addition, the removal of the “unsightly signs” in and about the mansion was also suggested.<sup>12</sup> Finally, the restoration committee decided that the exact for roads, sidewalks and gardens should be made the subject of a separate study with “plans prepared by a landscape architect.”<sup>13</sup>

Of course there were some disagreements between the Commission of Fine Arts and the Army. Colonel Bash wrote to General Horton, Chief of Engineering in the Quartermaster Generals Office, commenting on the CFA’s rendition of the committee’s findings:

*For his [Moore’s] information . . . what actually happened was that I told Mr. Moore that it would be a nice thing to restore the old garden north of the Mansion and remove the greenhouse, but that I did not think there was any immediate prospect of getting authority to make the change. There was no proposition on my part to place a brick walk on the east side of the mansion, but Mr. Moore himself made the recommendation that a carriage driveway paved with brick be built. The proposition about removing “unsightly signs” was the personal recommendation of Mr. Moore.<sup>14</sup>*

Meanwhile, research into the past was moving ahead. Major L.M. Leisenring was canvassing all local libraries and archives to gather information on the early days of Arlington House. Louise P. Latimer, librarian for the District of Columbia, was contacted. Like many others, she was interested in the developments occurring at Arlington and offered personal opinions of the site. In April of 1929, the same month in which the professionals met to discuss the future development of Arlington, she wrote to Colonel Bash detailing many opportunities for improvement to Arlington House and grounds. She suggested locating parking for automobiles over the hill, “where the stables are.” She suggested planting myrtle below the trees to the east of the wings—unknowingly solving the problems of growing grass in such a highly used area, pointed out by both the CFA and the Army. She also believed that the cast iron urns and cannas (annual flowers) were inappropriate to the site. She suggested that “early style” benches be placed around the grounds and on the portico, instead of the current iron and wooden ones. Bash assured her in his reply that the urns and flowers were going and that a study was being undertaken of the grounds. He agreed the benches were an excellent idea. Like Moore, Latimer emphasized the importance of restoring the slope in front of the mansion. Politically savvy, she suggested concentrating on the importance of restoring the landscape scene to the era of Custis, not to Lee, when recommending that the memorials and graves be removed. Bash responded candidly, that their removal was wanted but that the process would be slow.<sup>15</sup> All of her suggestions were eventually taken in some form or another.

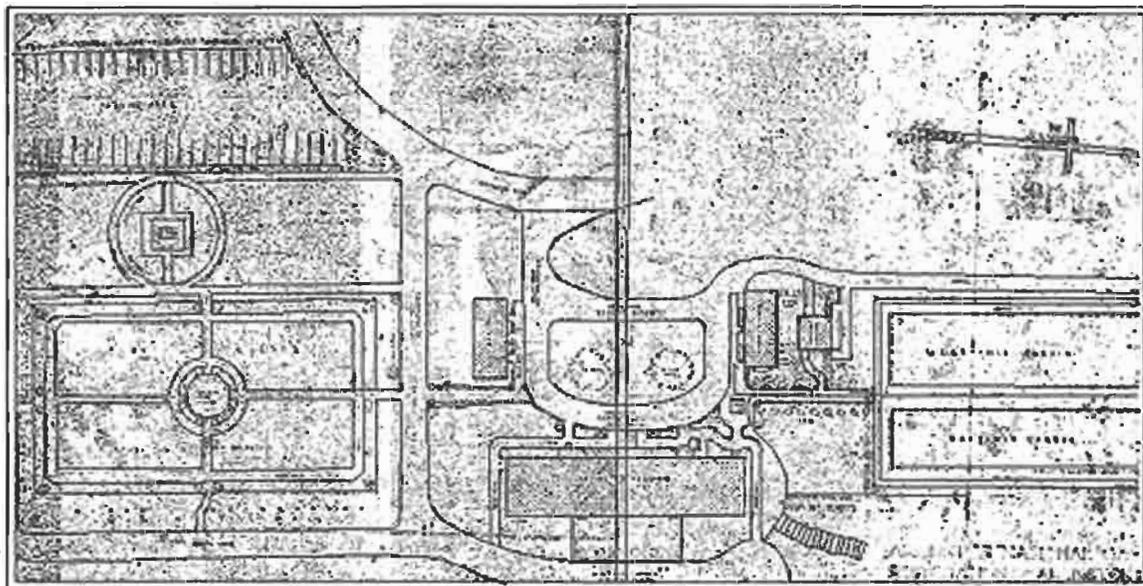


In addition to culling through books and records from local repositories, oral history played an considerable role in the analysis of the landscape of the Custis and Lee era. Leisenring interviewed former slaves of Mary Lee and G.W.P. Custis, including the daughters of Thorton and Selina Grey, Mrs. Annie Baker and Mrs. Ada Thompson, who would have been seven years old and three years old respectively at the time of the federal army occupation in 1861.<sup>16</sup> James Parks, born on the Arlington estate and an employee at the cemetery for his entire life, also offered insight into the arrangement of farms, fields and gardens, as did D. H. Rhodes, who retired as landscape gardener in 1930. Robert E. Lee, Jr., the son of General Robert E. Lee was also interviewed by Leisenring. However, according to the comments of the National Park Service historian on staff when the property was transferred in 1933:

*no thorough or complete study of or search for full historical data on Arlington has been made. Mr. Leisenring has studied the problem, has gathered what data he has been able to, and as a result of his studies and his thoughts on the problem has drawn up the plans. In my opinion before having had a chance to go into the matter with any degree of thoroughness, Mr. Leisenring has worked with considerable feeling and faithfulness toward an appropriate treatment of the problem. He very kindly gave me a copy of a study he made some time ago and which contains his ideas on the general treatment of the grounds and buildings . . . . Fragmentary evidence only is basis for the restoration of the kitchen garden.<sup>17</sup>*

## COLONIAL REVIVAL PLAN

In 1930 plans for the treatment of the grounds at Arlington House were created by the Quartermaster General's Office and submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts for review. The Commission brought the plans to the attention of Ferruccio Vitale, a landscape architect



90 This map, created by the Department of Army, illustrates many of the ideas mulled over by the Committee of Fine Arts when considering the restoration of Arlington House and grounds. Parking is moved west of the flower garden and the greenhouse is removed entirely. Arlington National Cemetery, Restoration of Arlington Mansion, Study for Drives, Walks and Planting Around Mansion on sites of old flower and Vegetable Garden c.1930.



out of New York City and member of the CFA.<sup>18</sup> A letter from Quartermaster General J. L. DeWitt accompanied the plans. General DeWitt explained to the Commission that “though the present appropriations were not sufficient to cover the entire cost of the proposed restorations of the surrounding gardens it was desired to have a definite plan upon which to base any work now possible.” He outlined the proposed restoration of the flower and vegetable gardens, assuring the Commission that careful research had been made as to the location and general plan of the gardens. Ever conscious of the limited budget, he suggested that the presence of the lattice summer house, “a central feature of the old fashioned garden” during the period of Lee’s departure from the estate, might be suggested through the planting of vines around the existing Temple of Fame. As did all the prior restoration plans, DeWitt proposed replacing the concrete drives and walks adjacent to the buildings, this time with gravel or brick walks. He was concerned as well that the outbuilding immediately north of the northern slave quarters, “used for a guard house and toilet room,” be screened more completely from public view. In addition, he pointed out that in the proposed plan the vehicular traffic was rerouted from the rear of the mansion to a parking area near the Memorial Amphitheater. He also assured the Commission that, regardless of what was accomplished, the intention of the Quartermaster General’s Office was not to remove any of the “old forest trees,” for their “preservation was of great importance.” Finally, he informed them that he had not submitted the plans to the Secretary of War or any other authority but had counted on the prior involvement of the Commission before he went forward.<sup>19</sup>

The Commission, with the comments of Vitale, approved the 1930 landscape plan for Arlington with the following stipulations. Eager to reinforce the importance of the nineteenth-century landscape, they recommended that the walk currently leading to the Sheridan monument be removed, and that vegetation be used to screen the monument from the mansion. The Commission, returning to the plans of 1923, proposed that, if possible, the drive on the east front should be eliminated and a study made for a simple brick terrace in front of the mansion so as to accommodate sightseers gathering to enjoy the view over the city. They concurred in the ultimate removal of both the L’Enfant and Wright monuments to another part of the cemetery. They approved the creation of a screened parking area to the east of the memorial amphitheater with the provision that this parking area not be brought too near the old amphitheater. Again members of the Commission reiterated their belief that the landscape would be more pleasing without the Temple of Fame. In fact they suggested that, if possible, the Monument to the Unknown Civil War Soldier could be re-erected in place of the Temple for they felt that the significance of the monument had been inappropriately minimized. This sentiment would inform the future design of the flower garden, which was left for further study. Once the Commission approved the plan for the grounds immediately surrounding the house, an estimate of \$17, 508.25 to “raze greenhouse, remove concrete paving, put in gravel roads and walks, and brick walks” was submitted.<sup>20</sup>



This proposed landscape design, with its symmetry, brick sidewalks, boxwood hedges, and limited floral ornamentation was typical of the Colonial Revival-style, a design style whose escalating nation-



Arlington House Archives

91 A view to Arlington House, over the Arlington Memorial Bridge, a few years after bridge construction. 1939

wide popularity was engendered by the 1932 bicentennial celebration of George Washington's birth. Locally this anniversary was expressed in the construction of the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway; a parkway stretching fifteen miles from Mount Vernon to Memorial Circle, part of the design for Memorial Avenue, directly east of Arlington House. The parkway, while planted with native swaths of vegetation and augmented with rustic guardrails, was detailed with classical white signs ornamented with broken pediments. The design of Arlington Memorial Bridge, which opened in 1932, also reflected the classical revival occurring in Washington and elsewhere around the country. This movement was led by individuals such as those who sat on the Commission of Fine Arts—schooled in the design principles of the Ecole Beaux Arts.<sup>21</sup>

To the artist of the Colonial Revival—whether with a medium of buildings, land or canvas—beauty and use were to accompany each other always. Deriving from both the classical revival movement galvanized in Washington, D.C. by the McMillan Commission Plan of 1902 and the Arts and Crafts movement, illustrated in such horticulturally elaborate schemes as Dumbarton Oaks and the residential designs of local landscape architect Rose Greeley, the Colonial Revival style was widely represented during the 1920s and 30s along the east coast. Whether the layout of the colonial revival garden could actually reproduce the exact design of the specific garden in colonial times, was not of the utmost importance. The emphasis, as illustrated in such contemporaneous restorations as Colonial Williamsburg and Mount Vernon, was on emulating the values and ideals thought to have been integral to the genesis of America. As Arthur Shercliff, a landscape architect, wrote in an essay in *The History of the George Washington Bicentennial Celebration*, “pleasure lay in a garden which showed man’s control of that wilderness . . . straight paths, hedges straight.” At Arlington, the paths that were created in the 1930s were straight, as were the tightly trimmed boxwood hedges that lined the walks. In the same volume Fletcher Steele, also a landscape architect, outlined the elements of the correct “colonial garden.” The service areas should be near together, all opening on the enclosed “yard” if possible. Privacy, he noted, was of the utmost importance: “walls alternated with hedges and fences to



separate the garden from the outer world.” Garden structures lay within beds regularly edged with boxwood and bounded by walks. At Arlington, tightly trimmed hedges would line the beds of the restored kitchen garden. A bird bath would grace the juncture of the walks. “It is typically colonial” Steele



Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies Society

wrote, his words in the present tense, “to run these paths through, around and across the vegetable gardens, cutting them into plots. The paths themselves are frequently bordered by flower beds and small fruit trees.” At this time according to Steele,

the gardens of Mount Vernon were undergoing “exemplary restorations,” with intricate beds of boxwood crossed with brick paths. For as he explained of the building materials, “Washington used brick and wood, which were common materials for houses and gardens in Virginia. . . . Usually it is best to continue garden objects . . . of the same stuff that the house is built.”<sup>22</sup> Such would be true in the garden restorations at Arlington as well.

That a Colonial Revival-style landscape was eventually installed at Arlington—around a house that was dedicated by Congress to interpreting General Lee and the 1860s—is not surprising. The close connection between Arlington’s restoration and the 1930s landscape restoration of George Washington’s Mount Vernon was intentional, for the early nineteenth-century gardens of Arlington had been reflective with the early Republic landscape of Mount Vernon. As Leisenring explained to the Commission of Fine Arts in 1932, “the whole scheme of the garden [is] something like that of Mount Vernon because G.W.P. Custis had brought it [the design] from Mount Vernon.”<sup>23</sup> So when the gardens of Mount Vernon were planted with boxwood beds and lined with brick paths, so too was the landscape of Arlington House (though much more simply), revealing a 1930s vision of the “early Republic” just as Chairman Moore had recommended.

The Commission of Fine Arts and their associates continued to comment on the gradual changes around Arlington House. Greenleaf, aged 72 and retired, a man who had always been deeply interested in development of the grounds, according to Moore, was called back to Arlington House in the spring of 1931. He recommended that the post and chain fencing around the Sheridan and Porter gravesites be removed immediately, hinting that perhaps the monuments could be screened with cedar trees, flanking the mansion to the north and south.<sup>24</sup>

To the west of the house, the steep grade of the land was making the 1930 plan difficult to follow. As a designer, Greenleaf was not as concerned with the supposed historical accura-

92 Mount Vernon Flower garden in 1933 as photographed for the History of the George Washington Bicentennial Celebration. The Arlington House grounds design was based, in part, on the restoration occurring simultaneously at Mount Vernon.



cy of the landscape as he was with the safe access of visitors to the site and of the proper landscape aesthetics. He suggested reducing the slope of the grade west of the house and removing the circular drive to ease the conflict between the pedestrians and the vehicles. General Bash and Colonel Mortimer had other ideas, however. Greenleaf wrote to Moore shortly after his visit:

*I am just back from a very pleasant morning at the Arlington Mansion with General Bash and Colonel Mortimer. I feel I made a very pleasant acquaintance. Beyond that I might just as well go to my room and smoke my pipe. The fact is, as General Bash described it, he got an appropriation from Congress on the basis of restoring as far as possible the old conditions, including the entrance drive between the two wings that were the slave's quarters and workshops. He has already resurfaced the driveway very nicely with gravel and that's that.<sup>25</sup>*

Revealed in this statement is a fundamental difference between the two treatment approaches, that of the professional landscape architects and designers of the Commission of Fine Arts and that of some members of the Quartermaster General's Office. The South did not need another shrine to Lee, Moore had written four years earlier. According to the Commission, Arlington House was "one of the famous buildings of the early days of the Republic in Washington" and the furnishings, the architecture and the landscape were to reflect this ideology.<sup>26</sup> In the architectural restoration, their doctrine was revealed in the CFA's request to change the mantels in some of the interior rooms from those present in the time of Lee, to the original. Their rationale was that the existing Victorian mantels were not part of the "original fabric" and that their replacement with colonial examples would "preserve the old lines of the fireplaces."<sup>27</sup> Though it was known that a circular drive existed behind the mansion in the era of Lee, it was difficult to manage visitors on the site with such an arrangement and so its removal was recommended.

Changes were progressing slowly, however, according to the approved 1930 grounds plan, which did include the circular drive. Plantings of evergreen shrubs were installed around the Porter and Sherman graves to hide the memorials from visitors at Arlington House.<sup>28</sup> The old drinking fountain was removed and a new field stone well head



Arlington House Archives

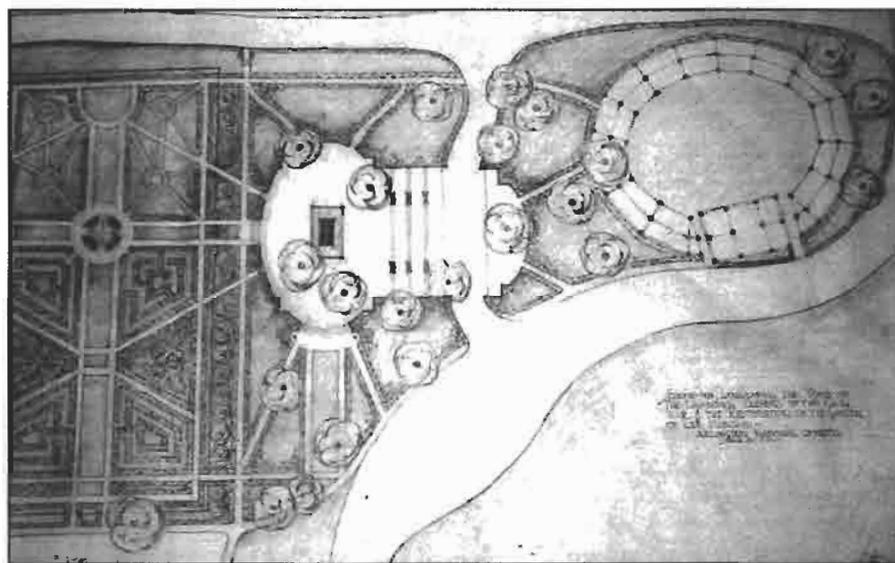
93 *The new stone well cover, located just north of the northern slave quarters, as well as the brick paths and neatly trimmed boxwood hedges, are all characteristic of the Colonial Revival style. photograph 1933*



built over the well west of the mansion.<sup>29</sup> By 1931, most of the concrete paving surrounding the mansion and outbuildings had been replaced with gravel. Following the plan of 1930, brick walks were installed to connect the kitchen garden with the main house, slave quarters and comfort station. The use of brick not only conformed to the theories of Colonial Revival design, it created a hierarchy of circulation on the grounds, helping to guide the one million visitors who passed through the site each summer. Lilac, yew and boxwood lined the walk to the greenhouse and screened the comfort station. A iron dinner bell was erected near the comfort station. Nevertheless, the restoration of the historic Arlington kitchen garden had not begun due, in part, to the need to tear down the cemetery greenhouse first.<sup>30</sup>

By 1932 the restoration of the structures, the main house and two slave quarters, was almost completed. The summer kitchen had been restored in the bottom floor of the northern slave quarters. However changes to the landscape since the 1860s, namely the construction of the comfort station to the immediate north of the slave quarters, required that the openings to the kitchen be placed on the south façade of the slave quarters instead of the historically accurate north facade. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the ground to the north and east of the northern slave quarters most likely sloped down from the main house towards the kitchen, allowing for ground level access from the northern side to the ground level, banked summer kitchen. The interior of the summer kitchen was re-excavated as it had been filled close to or just after the Lee family's departure, and plantings screening the railings around the entrances to the lower floor were made.

Yet it was not only the comprehensive restoration of Arlington House, its gardens



Arlington House Archives

*94 This 1932 plan for the "restoration of the flower garden and the redesign of the Tomb of the Unknown Civil War Soldier," with its parterre flower beds, is similar to the flower garden at Mount Vernon. The 1932 design was never implemented.*

and grounds, that captured the attention of the public. The improvement of surrounding memorials - particularly the Tomb of the Unknown Civil War Soldier - also warranted

attention. Beginning with the construction of the Tomb to the Unknown Soldier in 1921 and continuing up until the Second World War, Civil War veterans and their descendants, as well as patriotic societies and the Secretary of War himself, expressed concern that the Civil War monument, located behind the flat terrace of the former flower garden, was not given enough promi-



nence. They wrote letters to congressional members and local newspapers, and voiced their opinions to employees of the Army and members of the Commission of Fine Arts. In light of their concerns, and with a desire to create momentum for funding the flower garden restoration, ornate plans were drawn up by designers in the Quartermaster General's Office. The beautifully rendered drawings, illustrating the "restoration" of the flower garden with many different renditions of intricately woven boxwood beds and a monumental stairway leading from the flower garden to the Tomb of the Unknown Civil War Soldier, were taken before the Commission of Fine Arts.

After General Bash assured the Commission that every effort had been made in the designs to provide the Civil War monument proper stature in the landscape, Chairman Moore informed him that the "Civil War people would be satisfied if there could be a view over the city from the tomb, the same as from the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of



Arlington House Archives

the World War." He added that, after the Temple of Fame was removed, the placement of any structure within the flower garden—namely the proposed summer house—would block this significant view and he strongly advised against its construction.<sup>31</sup> Regardless of the grand recommendations and plans, the Temple of Fame remained. No arbor was built, but the annual flower beds, long disparaged by the Commission, were removed.

*95 The annual flower beds were removed from the flower garden area, south of Arlington House by 1931. The Temple of Fame, however, remained. The enormous elm tree was mentioned by Elizabeth Calvert in her description of the flower garden, almost one hundred years before this image was taken.*

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ACQUIRES ARLINGTON HOUSE

On June 10, 1933 the building designated as the "Lee Mansion" and the two slave quarters were transferred from the War Department to the Department of the Interior, pursuant to Executive Order 6166 which transferred all parks, monuments and reservations under federal-administration to the National Park Service.<sup>32</sup> Because Arlington National Cemetery was used for active burial, it remained under the jurisdiction of the War Department. The Executive Order that recorded the transfer, however, did not specify the boundaries of the area pertinent to the administration and protection of the buildings. While the buildings were now under the administration of the newly-named Office of National Parks, Buildings and Reservations (later to be renamed the National Park Service), the land surrounding them



remained under the jurisdiction of the Department of War, Quartermaster General's Office. The work of the restoration therefore continued under the direct supervision of Colonel Charles G. Mortimer, in charge of Arlington National Cemetery at the request of Arno B. Cammerer, Director of the Office of National Parks, Buildings and Reservations. The Commission of Fine Arts was not particularly pleased. On January 25, 1934 Moore wrote to President Roosevelt asserting that, "the transfer of the mansion itself to the Office of National Parks, Buildings and Reservations is bound to lead to a host of petty conflicts of authority . . . In the interest of good administration, both mansion and cemetery should be in the same hands, responsible to the superintendent on the ground."<sup>33</sup> Though at first FDR "rather agreed with Chairman Moore," Harold Ickes, then Secretary of the Interior, quickly discussed the matter with the President and it was decided to let matters stand.<sup>34</sup> Moore was not the only individual to protest the transfer. Colonel Mortimer complained that the expense and difficulty in administering the site would increase. A Congressional resolution forwarded by the General Organization of the Sons of Confederate Veterans stated:

*whereas this unified estate mansion and grounds had always been one before, . . . and whereas in view of the fact that the Department of the Interior is charging a small admission fee to Arlington and other historic, Governmentally controlled houses, and it being of the opinion of the Sons of Confederate Veterans that this principle does not encourage patriotism and is undesirable therefore . . . the transfer of the Lee Mansion back to the administration of the War Department shall be considered an act of justice and an act of retaining patriotic historic unity.*<sup>35</sup>

An editorial in the Washington Post spoke out against the transfer of Arlington House as well. "By Executive Orders . . . the mansion was separated from its historic unity. . . placed under the administration of the parks service of the Department of Interior. This was no doubt considered practical, but the tradition of Arlington has been cut in two. Many persons are asking that Arlington Custis-Lee mansion be restored to its historic unity with its Arlington grounds under the War Department."<sup>36</sup> A simplistic reason for the outcry may have been the ten cent admission to Arlington House charged by this newly-formed section of the National Park Service.<sup>37</sup> The National Park Service, known for its management of the western wilderness lands—the icons of Yosemite and Yellowstone—now had control of many of the historic, cultural landmarks of the east. How would the United States Interior Department handle this new duty?

## KITCHEN GARDEN RESTORATION

In 1933, with the passage of the Public Works Administration Act, \$12, 209.40 was allotted to restore the gardens of Arlington House. Arno N. Cammerer, the Director of the



Office of National Parks, Buildings and Reservations, formally requested that Colonel Charles G. Mortimer of Arlington National Cemetery continue in direct oversight of the restoration. A third of the amount was allocated towards painting the interior and exterior of the buildings and the planned replacement of the wooden steps on the east, north and south sides of the portico with steps of stone. The remaining money was to go to the restoration of the kitchen garden and some “minor improvement to walks, gravel drives and grass plats on the mansion grounds.”<sup>38</sup> At the transfer of lands from the Department of War to the National Park Service in 1933, military officials had expressed concern that the National Park Service would not know how to adequately address the management needs of military sites. In response, administrators at the Department of Interior had assured officials at the Department of War that appropriate military personnel would be consulted on projects concerning these former military, now park, lands.<sup>39</sup> Not only did the National Park Service have no legal jurisdiction over the property surrounding Arlington House, they were not in a position to impose varied use standards or restoration plans. Therefore the physical manifestation of the National Park Service’s administration of Arlington House on the landscape was minimal for at least the first few years. For the twenty-two thousand visitors who came to the grounds in March of 1934, perhaps to take a look at the beginning recreation of the kitchen garden, the officers of the War Department and the cemetery employees were the most visible management presence.

Early in 1934, the large circa 1880 greenhouse was removed from the kitchen garden,



Arlington House Archives

though the brick potting house remained in the northeast corner of the garden space. Now that the restoration of Arlington House was almost completed, the army was no longer allowed to use its rooms for management. The reproduction stable building built circa 1907 on the footprint of the

*96 The cemetery administration building was rehabilitated around 1935 with decorative awnings. photograph, c.1935*

early nineteenth century stables to the west of Arlington House was converted into the administrative offices for the staff of the cemetery. The walk between the administration building and the yard area of Arlington was bricked, visually connecting the brick walks of Arlington House with that of the administrative area. The 1907 structure itself was rehabilitated with



awnings jutting out over new window sash. A large parking lot extended around the building. It was named the Chaffee Place public parking after the cemetery superintendent whose new Colonial Revival-style house was nearby. A large greenhouse, a replacement for the one torn down in the kitchen garden, extended west from the back of the administrative building. This work was completed by April of 1935.

With the greenhouse removed from the immediate vicinity of Arlington House, the work of restoring the kitchen garden could begin in earnest. According to newspaper reports and the documentation of the army and National Park Service, only fragmentary evidence served as the basis for the restoration of the kitchen garden. The Quartermaster General's Office, under Colonel Mortimer and L.M. Leisenring, followed the landscape treatment plan created in 1930 by the army and approved by the Commission of Fine Arts.

By the summer of 1934, once the old clay and debris had been hauled out and 100 cubic yards of top soil brought in, the kitchen garden had been divided into two main beds. The



Arlington House Archives

eastern plot was in the location of the former greenhouse. The western bed had been created years earlier by cemetery staff as a planting space to acclimate greenhouse seedlings to the outdoors. A low boxwood hedge had been planted around this rectangular bed about 1932. Concurrently, shrubs were planted to screen the comfort station. To complete the symmetry of the design, a low boxwood hedge was added around the newly-built eastern bed. In addition to a perimeter brick walk around the entire garden, a brick walk ran north to south through the center of the garden, dividing the eastern and western plots from one another. A cruciform-shaped turf walk then divided the interior of the two plots, creating a total of eight planting beds. The gravel drive, constructed in the 1880s to access the greenhouse, remained in place along the western border of the garden. According to the design plans, the entire garden was to be surrounded by a fence on the outside of the perimeter brick walk. The fence was never constructed, most likely for lack of funds. By the summer of 1934 perennial and annual flowers had been planted in the outside borders of the garden. Vegetables, bulbs and young seedlings were growing in the interior.<sup>40</sup>

97 The potting building remained at the northeastern corner of the kitchen garden, after the greenhouse was removed. photograph 1938.

By the winter of 1935, the restoration of the kitchen garden had been declared complete.<sup>41</sup>

The presence of flowers in the kitchen garden is not surprising. Flowers were an important part of the interpretation of the Custis-Lee Mansion, as it was then called, both inside and outside the house.

Inside, bouquets were used daily to reinforce the idea that the family had simply “stepped out for a moment.” Outside, the importance of the flower garden to Mrs. Custis and Mrs. Lee was emphasized. The re-creation of the flower garden to



Arlington House Archives

98 *The kitchen garden filled with flowers and fruit trees, c.1953*

the south of the house, though planned since the late 1920s, had always been considered more problematic than the re-creation of the kitchen garden. Even though the National Park Service did not own the land of either area, north or south of the mansion, they included the kitchen garden plans in the 1930 treatment of the site. The flower garden restoration had been tabled for want of further study. In addition, to restore the flower garden required the removal of the Temple of Fame, still a sore point with some. Therefore, due to the inability of the National Park Service to restore the flower garden, flowers gradually came to replace many of the vegetables in the kitchen garden.

Regardless of the grand landscape plans proposed by the army in 1932 for the treatment of the flower garden and the Tomb of the Unknown Civil War Soldier, the flat terrace south of Arlington House remained simply a stretch of turf punctuated with the Temple of Fame. Though the National Park Service requested \$17,000 to finance the flower garden “restoration” with picket fences, marble seats, a fountain, and plants in 1935, no funding was allocated.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps to alleviate some of the skepticism, shortly around the time that the funding was denied, a wide sandstone slab walkway was installed around the Tomb of the Unknown Civil War Soldier, replacing the simple concrete sidewalks that had formerly encircled the sarcophagus.<sup>43</sup> According to National Park Service records, during the summer of 1936, there were over one million visitors to Arlington House to view the new restored buildings and landscape. That year new white and green painted signs were prepared to guide visitors’ passage along the brick walks.<sup>44</sup>

## WAR-TIME MAINTENANCE

By the late 1930s, the military was expanding their facilities on the grounds of the Arlington reservation as elsewhere around Washington D.C., due to the advancing threat of

99 *The many buildings of the South Post of Fort Myer, in the foreground of this image (1950), were in the location of the nineteenth-century fields of Arlington farm.*



Museum Resources Conservation Center

another World War. Down the slope from the house, on the former fields of the Government Experimental Farm, the Army was constructing the South Post of Fort Myer. Eventually the South Post would en-

compass the entire area between the Pentagon and Memorial Avenue, south of the newly-named Arlington Ridge Road (formerly Alexandria-Georgetown Turnpike). The enormous expenditure necessitated by World War II delayed proposed projects and deferred maintenance on many lands of the National Park Service. Only basic upkeep, such as lawn mowing and pruning, occurred on the grounds immediately surrounding Arlington House. In addition, due to the need for emergency blackouts, the flood lights that had lit the east façade of Arlington House on historically significant dates were shut off for the duration of the war.<sup>45</sup> Yet despite the war, the need to balance the historical significance of the cemetery with the desire to present a sympathetic view of Robert E. Lee and his home, never remained far from the minds of National Park Service administrative staff. Sheridan's tomb, once considered the most "beautiful thing at Arlington" had been screened with a variety of shrubbery.<sup>46</sup> Wright's grave, however, remained prominent on the slope east of the house. Randle Truttet, the Chief of the National Memorial and Historic Sites Division of the National Park Service, wrote of the need to preserve the setting of the mansion in 1942:

*If this monument [Wright] was screened the view towards the city would remind one of a country park rather than a cemetery, and would add much to the atmosphere of the mansion setting. In addition, the presence of a Union Officer's grave in such plain view so close to the old home of General Lee is unpleasant to say the least to many southern people not wholly reconstructed.<sup>47</sup>*

Major Mortimer responded that screening the gravestones from the west was fine, but that they should still be visible from the east.<sup>48</sup>

With the end of World War II in 1945, a bed of hybrid tea “Peace” roses was planted immediately east of the southern slave quarters. Elsewhere around the grounds, evidence of deferred maintenance was visible, especially in the plantings. In addition, some landscape elements thought to pose

hazards to visitors were addressed. For instance, shortly after the war, the assistant superintendent wrote to request that the “wickets”, the thick, scalloped, wire edging separating the planting beds from the walks to prevent people from taking short cuts across the beds, be replaced



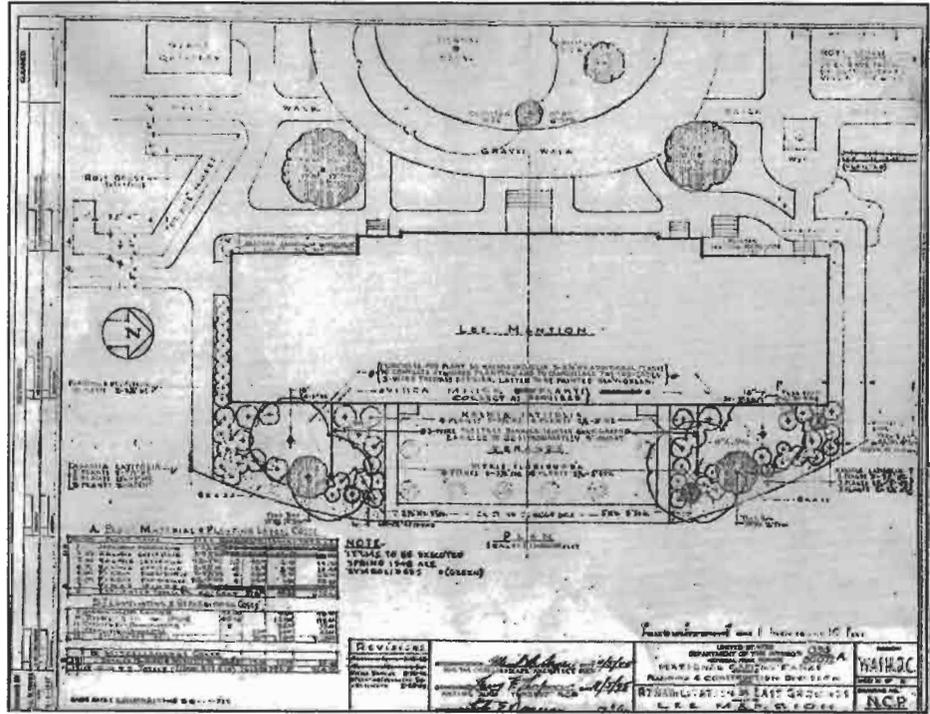
*100 Planting bed of Peace roses, southwest of Arlington House, 1967*

with a short hedge to prevent visitors from stumbling.<sup>49</sup> Wisteria and trumpet vine were smothering the outbuildings, their thick tendrils working under the historic stucco.<sup>50</sup> With the war over and the grounds of Arlington House in need of rehabilitation, the wording of the legislation that had transferred Arlington House and the slaves’ quarters from the Department of War to the Department of the Interior was revisited. Jurisdiction over and management of the grounds was confusing. In 1947, it was determined that the executive order pursuant to the 1933 transfer of Arlington House could be construed to allow for the transfer of enough land to maintain the structures and interpret the site as a national memorial. The phrase “enough land” was determined to take in the land of the kitchen garden, including the potting building and the yard area. It did not include the comfort station and the land upon which it sat near the northern slave quarters, nor did it include the flower garden south of the mansion. In total, 97000 square feet or 2.374 acres was transferred in fee simple to the National Park Service.<sup>51</sup>

With the legal transfer of this portion of the original Arlington estate property, the National Park Service embarked on a massive vegetative rehabilitation and redesign. Irving Payne, Chief Landscape Architect for the Buildings and Grounds Division of National Capital Parks within the National Park Service, had created a plan for the redesign of the grounds to the east and west of Arlington House in 1945, though installation was not planned until March of 1948.<sup>52</sup> In 1948, Payne generated a rehabilitation plan of the northern kitchen garden, first

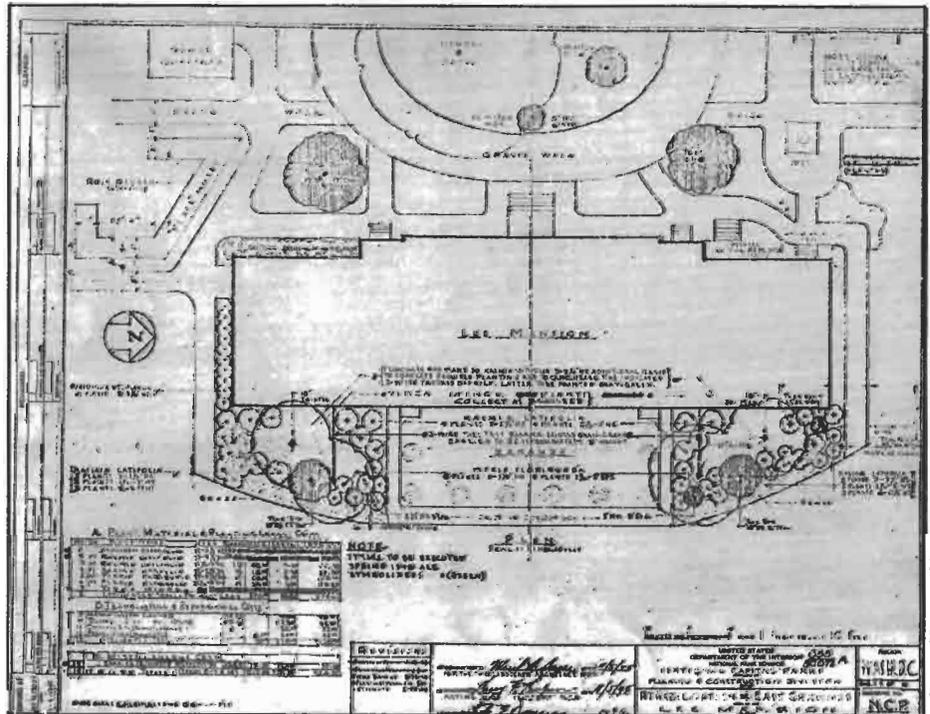


101 Rehabilitation of West Grounds, Lee Mansion by Irving Payne. October 1945



Arlington House Archives

102 Layout and Development Plan North Garden, Lee Mansion Grounds by Irving Payne. March 18, 1948



Arlington House Archives

requesting the 1930 “proposed study for the rehabilitation of the flower and vegetable gardens lying south and north of the Lee Mansion” from the Department of Army cemetery staff.<sup>53</sup> Though the formal nature of Irving Payne’s design for the landscape continued the theme of past designers on the site, including the extensive use of pruned hedges, his plant palette was much more extensive. For instance, in an approximately two-acre environs of Arlington House, he included over forty different varieties of shrubs. He proposed heavy foundation plantings for the east side of the house and attempted to discourage visitor “trespass” through



the installation of prickly shrubs such as Japanese Barberry.<sup>54</sup> In the northeast corner of the kitchen garden Payne designed a planting of roses. To the north of the roses were the vegetables, separated by a bird bath. A “fruit garden” took up the western half of the kitchen garden area. Around the entire space he installed a hedge of American Holly. Then the boxwood that previously formed the outside hedge of the kitchen garden may have been replanted to screen the Monument to the Unknown Civil War Soldier from the flower garden area, blocking the view to Washington, D.C. once declared so important by veteran’s groups and the Commission of Fine Arts. Some boxwood was also moved to the edge of the woods to the north and east of the kitchen garden to form a transition between the woods and the turf area near the potting house.

By 1948 the magnolias in the eastern foundation plantings had grown enormous, blocking the view of the house wings from the slope below entirely. In 1953 plans



Arlington House Archives

*103 The wings of Arlington House are almost completely hidden by the magnolia trees, planted eighty years before by D. H. Rhodes. They were removed one year after this image was taken in 1954. L'Enfant's Memorial is in the foreground.*

were drawn up and studies were made to justify cutting down the magnolias. In January of 1954 the magnolias were removed from in front of the wings.

By the early 1950s the National Park Service staff had implemented the planting plan of Payne. As at other National Park Service sites around the country, visitation was increasing. In order to improve interpretation of Robert E. Lee’s story, Murray Nelligan, one of the first historians employed at Arlington House, wrote a comprehensive social history of the Custis and Lee families at Arlington from the eighteenth century to their departure from the estate at the beginning of the Civil War. To more fully express the significance of these two families, a museum was created in the early 1950s to display artifacts associated with their lives at Arlington.<sup>55</sup> The museum was placed in the potting building in the north east corner of the old kitchen garden. With the new research being conducted on the life of Robert E. Lee and his family, additional elements were added to the landscape of Arlington House most likely to assist in the interpretation of the site. For instance, in 1954 a large bed of camellias was planted near the northern wing of the house (where there was room) because oral history had revealed that Mary Lee sometimes referred to the conservatory, on the southern wing of the house, as the camellia house.<sup>56</sup>



In 1955 the Lee Mansion was officially designated the Custis-Lee Mansion. According to the statement of Joel Broyhill, the representative from Virginia who introduced the legislation, the change was requested to avoid confusion with Stratford Hall. At this time the Custis-Lee Mansion was designated as a permanent memorial to Robert E. Lee.<sup>57</sup>

In the spring of 1959 a bill was introduced to extend the grounds of the Custis-Lee Mansion to allow for the “completion of the physical layout of the mansion. . . .representing a continuation of the plans of the Quartermaster General,” in essence to restore the flower garden. On August 18, 1959, the land of Mary Custis and Mary Lee’s flower garden was transferred from the Department of War to the National Park Service.<sup>58</sup> Plans for the restoration of the flower garden went forward, slowly.

## J. F. KENNEDY GRAVESITE

*104 The first grave  
marker of President John F.  
Kennedy was quite simple.  
photograph 1963*



Arlington National Cemetery Archives

Yet, there were some events that altered the landscape surrounding Arlington House for which no one could plan. On November 25, 1963—three days after his assassination—President John F. Kennedy was buried on the eastern slope below Arlington House. The original burial site, chosen for its accessibility to the American people and its prominence in the landscape, was quite small and surrounded by a white picket fence. Over sixteen million people visited Kennedy's grave during the three years following his death.

Due to the overwhelming crowds, cemetery officials and members of the Kennedy family decided a more permanent site should be constructed. The architectural firm of John Warnecke and Associates was hired to design the grave and its surroundings.

NCR Cultural Landscape Program, 2001



105 *The vista from Arlington House east towards Washington, D.C. encompasses the Kennedy Gravesite, completed by 1967.*

The entire site, which includes a depressed circular walkway leading to a marble elliptical plaza, is banked into the hillside. From the plaza, a short flight of steps leads to the rectangular terrace and grave area laid with irregular stones of Cape Cod granite. Originally walks were to descend down the eastern slope linking Arlington House with the south side of the Kennedy gravesite plaza. The walk, however, was not built. Instead, a small viewing terrace was constructed slightly north and east of Arlington house, connected to the grounds by a short concrete stairway. The area around the gravesite was planted primarily with flowering trees including, magnolias, crab apples, cherries and hawthorns, and native species of yellow wood, American holly and willow oaks.<sup>59</sup> Following the dedication of the gravesite, the entire hillside below Arlington House, about 3.2 acres, was set aside to honor the memory of President Kennedy by the Secretary of the Army, assuring that it remains open forever.<sup>60</sup>

In May of 1964, the Secretary of Defense ordered that the hardwood forest west of Arlington House, containing 24.436 acres, be preserved in perpetuity, the land maintained in a park-like manner to provide an appropriate setting for the mansion.<sup>61</sup>



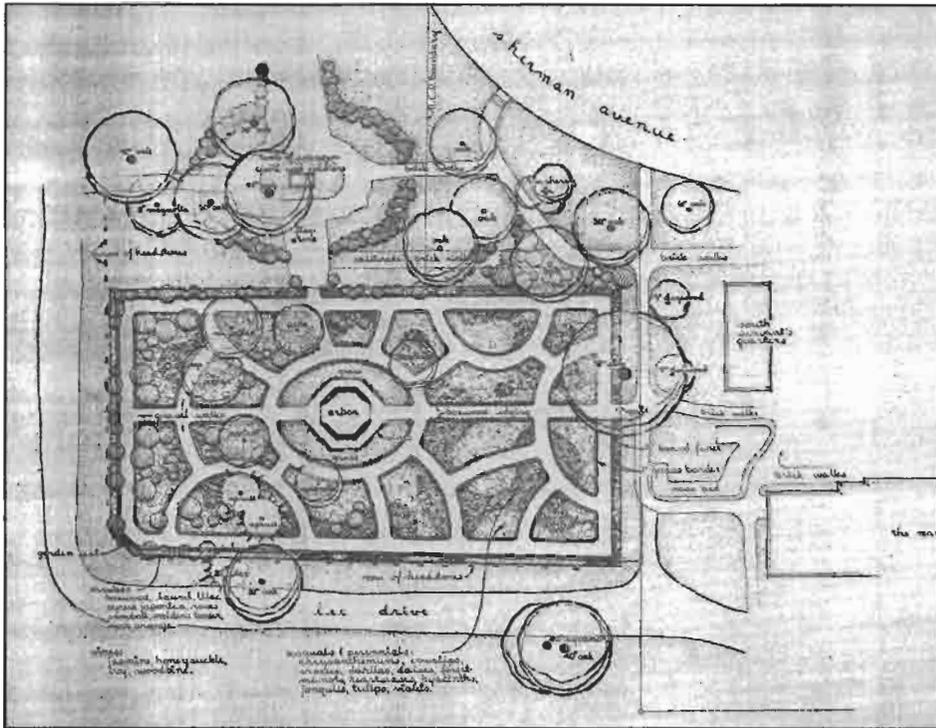
## CUSTIS-LEE MANSION MASTER PLAN

By the mid-1960s, no major alterations to landscape owned by the National Park Service had occurred since the rehabilitation of the grounds in the late 1940s. With the increased visitation generated by the introduction of the tour bus system to Arlington National Cemetery in the early 1960s, something needed to be done to address issues of resource protection and interpretation. In 1966 the National Park Service created a master plan for the Custis-Lee Mansion. There were four major factors which contributed to the specific objectives of the plan. The first was the increasing understanding and regulation of historic resources with the passage of the Historic Preservation Act in 1966. This Act, which was spurred by the destruction in the wake of national urban renewal and highway construction policies of the postwar era, formulated standards of preservation and called upon the National Park Service to create the National Register of Historic Places. The passage of the 1966 act encouraged the NPS to focus on historically significant properties through the allotment of additional funding towards their preservation. The second factor was embedded in the National Park Service's nationwide response to increasing visitation and limited funding during the war years, Mission 66. Initiated in 1956, this ten year program was funded to upgrade park facilities and improve resource management. Thirdly, across the country at both the national and local levels, the theories of living history interpretation and their basis in the rise of material culture studies, generated an increased focus on re-creating settings appropriate to telling specific stories. Tours of house museums and other sites, led by costumed guides became increasingly common, in parks both within the National Park Service and without. Finally, a master plan was produced following the 1957 legislation that created the Custis-Lee Mansion as a permanent memorial to Robert E. Lee. As the mission statement of the 1966 Master Plan read,

*The interpretation and restoration programs at Custis-Lee National Memorial will provide the visitor with a moving personal experience leading to a clear understanding of R. E. Lee and his place in American history.*

In order to achieve this mission of “understanding the life and worth of Robert E. Lee”, the “historic scene as it appeared in April of 1861” needed to be recreated. This re-emphasis on the place of Robert E. Lee in the interpretation of Arlington House was characteristic of the 1950s and 1960s—a time associated with a rebirth of southern patriotism in light of concurrent re-evaluations of the causes of the Civil War. A major portion of recapturing the scene was the re-creation of the flower garden.

Now that the National Park Service clearly held jurisdiction over the land of the former flower garden, the Temple of Fame was taken down in 1967, much to the delight of the Commission of Fine Arts. A rectangular flower garden was recreated on the terrace south of



Arlington House Archives

106 Plan for the Restoration of the Flower Garden, 1964



Arlington House Archives

107 The shrubs west of Arlington House were kept tightly pruned along the brick paths installed in the 1930s. photograph 1969

Arlington House with gravel paths and irregular curvilinear beds. In 1964 a plan had been created by the National Capital Office of Design and Construction of the National Park Service to restore the flower garden. Based on the oral history recorded during the 1930s, a few trees were planted at the southern end of the garden, including Norway spruce, magnolia, apricot, pear and white poplar.<sup>62</sup> A fence was put up around the garden, but quickly taken down when disapproved by the Commission of Fine Arts. Unfortunately, the large elm that had stood near



the northern entrance to the garden since the days of Mary Lee died following the restoration of the garden. Its stump, however, remained for several years. Around the kitchen garden and yard, visitors still walked along the brick paths installed in the 1930s. Post and chain fencing was strung along the sides of every brick walk, except for within the flower garden, to prevent visitors from wandering off the paths. Most of the vegetation from National Park Service's 1947 planting was now mature and large. In order to contain their size, the boxwood and Japanese holly on the grounds were pruned into tight curving forms and hedges.

By 1970 the plantings of the flower garden had become established. In 1972, the name of the Custis-Lee Mansion was legally changed to Arlington House: The Robert E. Lee

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*108 Shortly after the flower garden was restored the enormous elm tree which stood at the north entrance to the garden in the first half of the nineteenth century died. photograph c.1971*

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Arlington House Archives

Memorial through legislation introduced by Representative Broyhill.<sup>63</sup> In May 1975, pursuant to the Federal Property Administrative Services Act of 1949, the National Park Service acquired 24.44 acres of land that had been set aside in 1964 by the Secretary of the Army in perpetuity to provide an appropriate setting for Arlington House.<sup>64</sup> The National Park Service agreed to assume the preservation and management of the forested area. With the flower garden restored, the kitchen garden was replanted with vegetables. Fruit trees and shrubs were also planted including raspberries, gooseberries, currants, pears, cherries, and plums.<sup>65</sup>



## LANDSCAPE SIMPLIFICATION AND INTERPRETATION

The landscape areas not within the flower or kitchen garden were gradually simplified. As the brick walks continued to heave with the freeze thaw cycles, the brick paving was removed intermittently. The Peace rose bed, planted in honor of the end of WWII was most likely removed in the late 1970s. Gravel was used as a replacement material where planting beds and brick walks were removed. With the increased use of gravel, most of the post and rope, and post and chain fencing that had outlined the brick paths to prevent visitors from walking on the planting beds or the grass were removed. The flower garden, which had been reconstructed in the late 1960s with gravel paths dividing many curving flower beds, had in its center an open grassy area, set to someday receive the arbor or summer house. The construction of the summer house, though proposed, had been denied by the Commission of Fine Arts and other regulatory planning boards under which the Arlington House grounds fell. Instead interpretive signs were added around the grounds to help describe the appearance of the Arlington landscape in 1861.



*109 The south façade of Arlington House and the flower garden, 2001*

NCR Cultural Landscape Program, 2001

During the 1980s the varied jurisdiction of the site continued to affect its development. In 1981 the lavatory building, or comfort station, north of the northern slave quarters was transferred to the National Park Service.<sup>66</sup> The land upon which the comfort station build-



ing was located, however, was retained by the Department of Army and leased to the NPS under a renewable five-year permit. The administration building, the early twentieth-century reproduction of the original stables building, had been transferred to the NPS: the parking lot and the nearby structures remained under the ownership of the Department of Army.<sup>67</sup> Around Arlington House, the graveled area continued to be extended as the brick walks around the slave quarters were removed. National Park Service signs were added. The historic elm tree, once located at the center of the northern edge of the flower garden, having succumbed to Dutch elm disease was replaced. Based on analysis of the 1864 photograph collection by Andrew J. Russell, a Kentucky coffee tree was planted immediately south of the southern wing of the house.

By the 1990s, the flower garden again needed rehabilitation. A plan was created and implemented based on both research into the specific Custis and Lee-era flower garden and flower gardens of the early nineteenth century. The garden design utilized existing trees and some existing shrubs and perennials, while adding plant material. Due to safety concerns, the remaining brick walks near the house, slave quarters, and comfort station, and through the kitchen garden were removed. Memorial Amphitheater was restored by the Department of Army. The use of Section 29, or the wooded area located to the west of Arlington House first set aside for preservation in 1964 by the Secretary of War, was reconsidered as space for burials. Officials of the Department of Army, realizing that the current land of Arlington National Cemetery would be at burial capacity within ten years, approached officials of the National Park Service with a proposal to allow burials in such portions of the wooded area as could be determined not to have historical significance or archeological resources. On February 22, 1995, the Department of the Interior and the Department of the Army signed an interagency agreement to transfer portions of Section 29 or Arlington Woods. A Cultural Resource Investigations Report was written, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and in satisfaction of the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and other legislation. The report detailed the existing cultural resources within the primarily wooded 24.44 acre parcel. A draft environmental assessment was developed based on the Cultural Resource Investigation Report and the environmental issues regarding the site. Released for public review in June of 1999, a decision on the land transfer is still pending.<sup>68</sup>

In 1999, the pea gravel covering the walks and drive ways surrounding Arlington House was replaced with bank run gravel.<sup>69</sup> In 2000, the fire-damaged administrative building built in 1907 on the footprint of the Custis Lee stables was rehabilitated for use as administrative offices for staff of Arlington House: The Robert E. Lee Memorial.



*110 Arlington House over  
the grave lined hills, 2001*

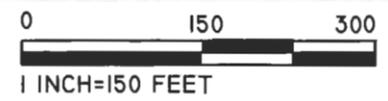
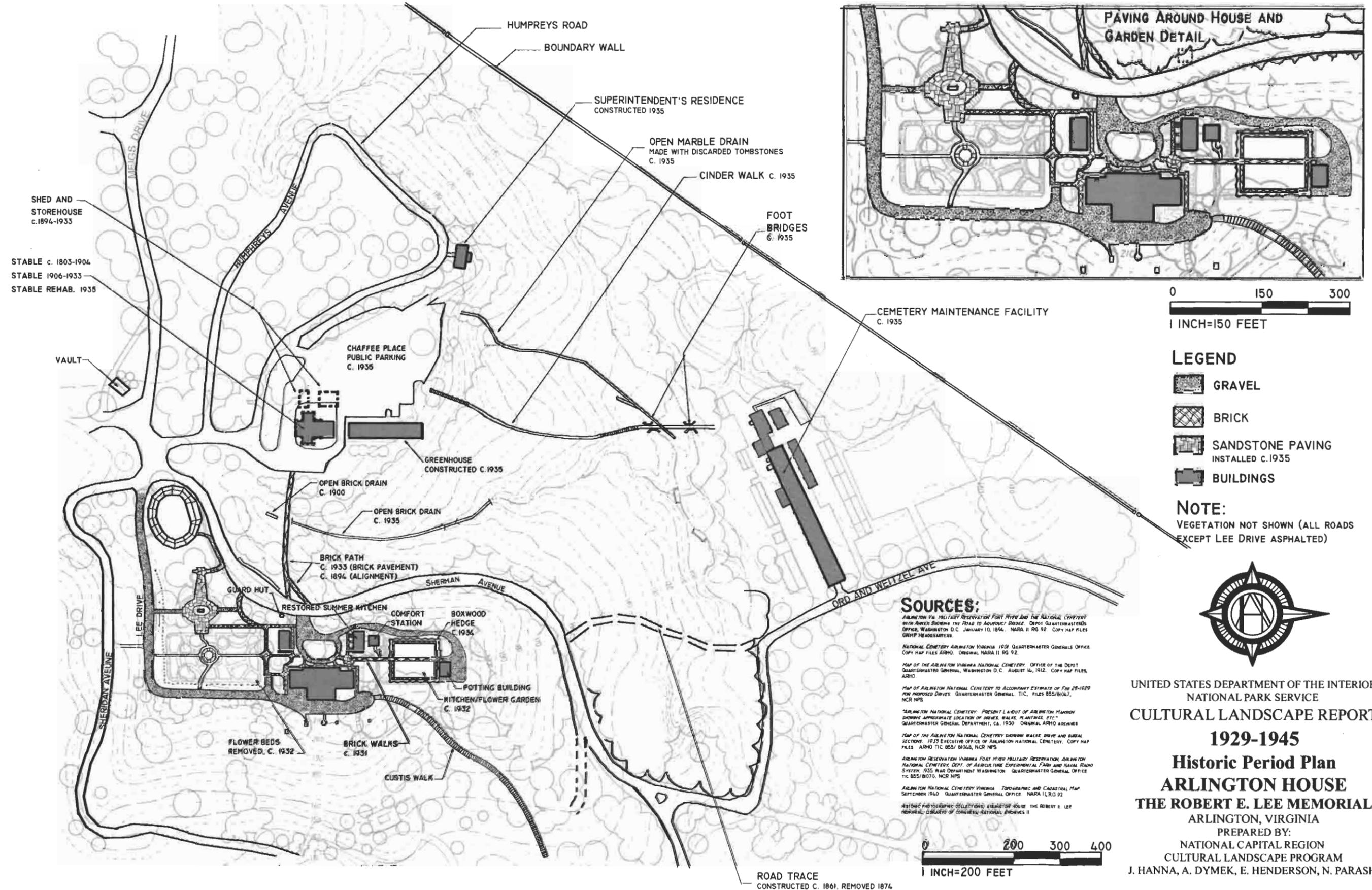
## CONCLUSION

In 1928, with a legislative mandate to restore Arlington House to the moment of Lee's departure in 1861 and with the close guidance of educated, opinionated, and politicized members of the Commission of Fine Arts, the Quartermaster General's Office began their first major structural restoration. The landscape around Arlington House, dotted with the graves of soldiers, became the central gathering place for the hundreds of thousands of people who visited the national cemetery and the newly designated Lee Mansion annually. The pragmatic necessities of cemetery maintenance—the greenhouse, the water tower, and the administrative offices—were gradually removed and replaced by a new comfort station, a museum, and a tour bus stop. The grounds of the restored Arlington House, crossed with brick walks, lined with boxwood hedges, with a kitchen garden full of flowers, reflected evolving public sentiment concerning the causes and effects of the Civil War (whom was to blame, whom deserved glory and why) and simply the desires of visitors. In addition, the land revealed the design philosophy of the professional landscape architects and architects overseeing the projects. As the century progressed, as the vegetative screens planted to block the views of surrounding graves and monuments slowly grew and separated the grounds around the house from the cemetery, visions of the past were also transformed.



The landscape of Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial, reflects two hundred years of historic development. Over time people have manipulated the topography, the trees, the roads, the paths, and the views to fit their needs. Through their alterations, the legacy of George Washington and the power of agricultural advancement has been conveyed; an army has prepared for war, one nation's capital has been protected from invasion and another's destroyed. In one of the longest-lasting Freedmen's Villages in America, the lives of newly-freed slaves were supported and yet contained. Thousands of dead were buried on the cemetery slopes around the trunks of trees, both those trees newly planted and those hundreds of years old. Wars' heroes have been honored with memorials and then, sometimes, the evidence of these once sacred monuments has been hidden or removed.

In efforts to memorialize and in attempts to forget, from the Civil War to the Colonial Revival, the landscape of Arlington has been imprinted with the beliefs of those who have cared for the grounds, of those who have visited, and of those whose vision holds the land sacred and meaningful. In adding to and subtracting from the landscape, each generation has revealed as much about their own era as they have about the history of Arlington. The present, in this respect, is no different than the past.

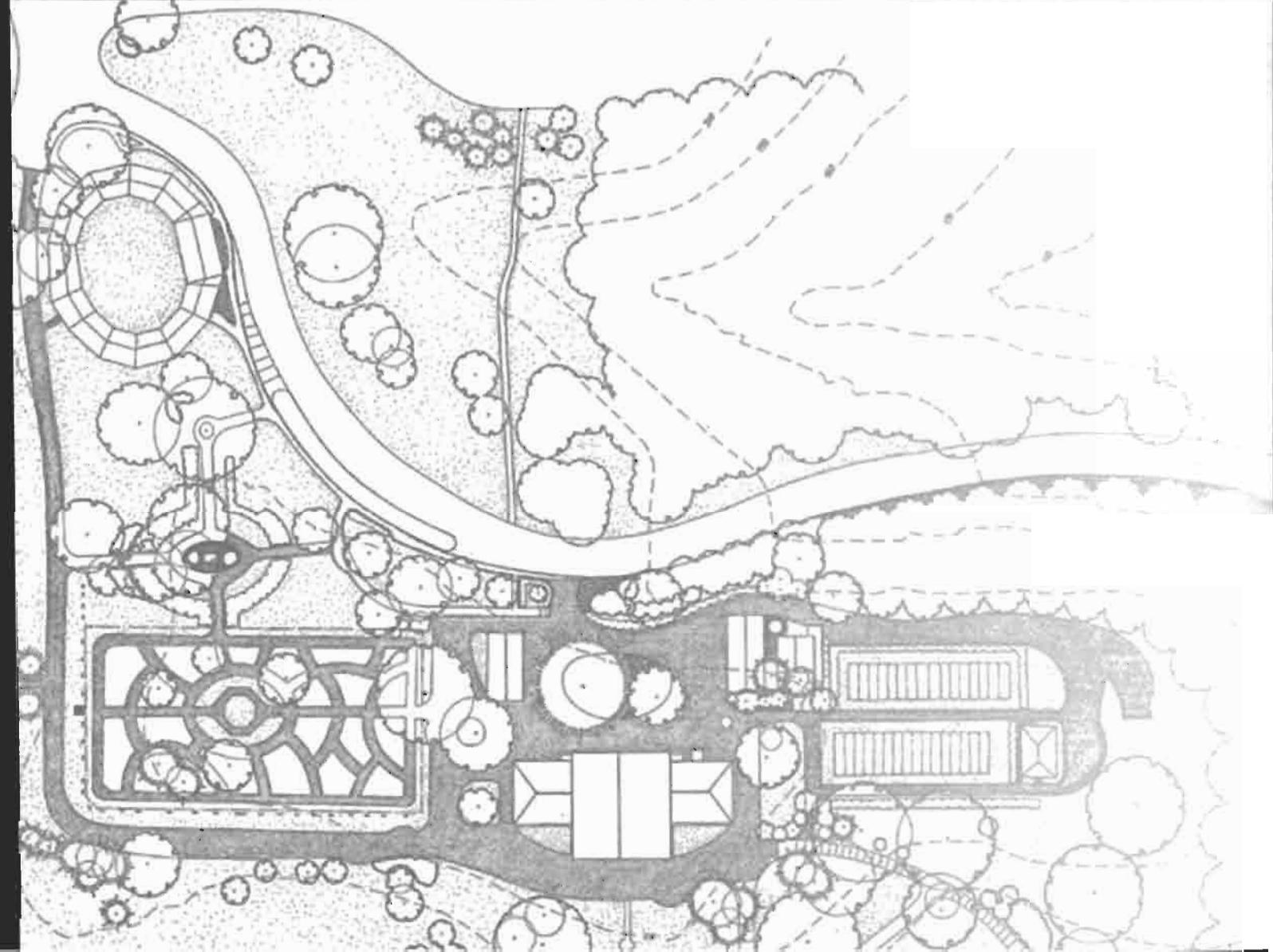


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
**CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT**  
**1929-1945**  
**Historic Period Plan**  
**ARLINGTON HOUSE**  
**THE ROBERT E. LEE MEMORIAL**  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA  
PREPARED BY:  
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION  
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PROGRAM  
J. HANNA, A. DYMEK, E. HENDERSON, N. PARASH

855/20905



# ENDNOTES





## CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup> Only one temporally diagnostic artifact was discovered in the 1998 archeological study—a steatite sherd not associated with the lithic extraction areas. It was dated to the late Archaic period. Patrick H Garrow, et al. *Cultural Investigations at Section 29 at Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial, Arlington County, Virginia*, (Atlanta, GA: Garrow and Associates, Inc., September 1998): 145.

<sup>2</sup> Garrow, et al: 8. The specific dates associated with the three developmental periods are highly controversial. For instance, the dates of the Archaic period may vary as much as one thousand years, however the dates given are generally accepted.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Cissna, *Historical and Archeological Study of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, Arlington County, Virginia*, Occasional Report #4 Regional Archeology Program, National Capital Region, (National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 1990): 6.

<sup>4</sup> Garrow, et al.: 8.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph R. Dent, *Chesapeake Bay Prehistory: Old Traditions, New Directions*, (Unpublished Manuscript, 1988): 59, in Cissna, 1990: 6.

<sup>6</sup> For further discussion into the lack of Paleo-Indian sites in Virginia in general see, E Randolph Turner, III “Paleoindian Settlement Patterns and Population Distribution in Virginia,” in *Paleoindian Research in Virginia: A Synthesis*, J. Mark Wittkofski and Theodore R. Reinhart, Editors, (Richmond, VA: Archeological Society of Virginia): 1989.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel L. Mouer. “Formative Transition in Virginia” in *Late Archaic and Early Woodland Research in Virginia: A Synthesis*, edited by Theodore R. Reinhart and Mary Ellen N. Hodges, pp 1-88, as quoted in Garrow, et al.: 11.

<sup>8</sup> Garrow et al., 145.

<sup>9</sup> Cissna, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Garrow et al., 11.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>13</sup> For a description of various existing archeological sites in Arlington County, see Paul Cissna’s National Park Service Report, *Historical and Archeological Study of the George Washington Memorial Parkway*. 1990. Two known pre-historic sites are located on Theodore Roosevelt Island and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. According to contemporary scholars further research is needed to support the identification of the villages. In addition, Proudfit (1889) identified a village site on the north side of what is now the Pentagon. This site has most likely been destroyed.

<sup>14</sup> Cissna, *The Piscataway Indians of Southern Maryland: An Ethnohistory from Pre-European contact to the Present*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, American University, Washington, D.C. 1986: 111. Stephen R. Potter, “The Indians of Seventeenth Century Fairfax” *Fairfax Chronicles: A History, Archaeology and Preservation Newsletter*, 7(4): 1, 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen R. Potter., *An Analysis of Chicococan Settlement Patterns*. Ph.D. Dissertation, (Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina: Chapel Hill, North Carolina), 1982: 360 in Cissna, 1990: 7.



## CHAPTER TWO

<sup>1</sup> Pierre L'Enfant refers to, in notes and labels on his maps, the site of the future White House as the "Presidential Palace." See *Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States*, Facsimile of manuscript in John Rep's *Washington On View: The Nation's Capital since 1790*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press 1991), 20-21. Description also aided through analysis of "A Map of Washington, D.C. : The evolution of the center of two centuries of growth and change" by Joseph Passonneau and Partners. The map of conditions in 1800 was created by T.L. Loftin. It is an exact tracing from a 1798 version of the L'Enfant design for Washington. Buildings and locations on the Loftin's map are identified through the use of the 1800 survey made for President Jefferson.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Froncek, *An Illustrated History: The City of Washington*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1977): 10. Stephen R. Potter, *Commoners, Tribute, and Chiefs: The Development of Algonquian Culture in the Potomac Valley*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 8-14.

<sup>3</sup> The men set sail on December 20, reached Virginia and established the colony of Jamestown in April. As the months passed, unrest increased within the colony due to the lack of supplies, harsh weather, quickly disseminating disease and a perceived laziness of some colonists by others. Sick of the arguments, eager to make a fortune and desperate to find food for the colony, Smith left Jamestown to explore and map the Chesapeake Bay region. What he found, as he traveled by boat with his crew as far as the Potomac fall line at Little Falls, was not uninhabited wilderness. Instead he encountered many different groups of Algonquian Indians living along the shores. For information concerning the development of land property law in Virginia see, *The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619*, Second Edition. (New York). 1823.

<sup>4</sup> Two of John Smith's books on Virginia were *Map of Virginia (1612)*, and *Generall [sic] History of Virginia, New England and the Summer Isles (1624)*. They provide a portrait of the colony of Virginia during the early seventeenth century, though colored by contemporaneous ethnocentrism.

<sup>5</sup> Near Little Falls, the Algonquian Indian groups on the Maryland shore were the Nacotchtanks, Piscataways, Pamunkeys, Najemoys, Potapacos and Yacomacos. The groups living on the Virginia shore were the Tauxenents, Patawomekes, Matchotics, Chicacoans and Wicocmococ. Potter, 11.

<sup>6</sup> Conoy was the name given to the group of Algonquian-speaking peoples by their Iroquoian-speaking enemies. According to a description contained in a letter written in 1639 by a Jesuit priest, the extent of the Conoys' territory, as determined by the control of the paramount chief, included land from St. Mary's County, Maryland to Washington, D.C. Such a dominion possibly included the lands on the Virginia side of the Potomac River from a point opposite the city of Washington to below Mount Vernon. As such, the Conoy dominion most likely included the lands that would become the Arlington Estate. Potter, 19. See also Clayton Colman Hall's *Narratives of Early Maryland*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925): 125.

<sup>7</sup> Potter, 23. Paul Cissna estimates approximately 3600 people in the Conoy group total, most located on the Maryland side of the Potomac River circa 1608. Paul Cissna *Historical and Archeological Study of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, Arlington County, VI*. Occasional Report #4, National Capital Region, (Washington, D.C.: Department of Interior, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> John Smith, *The True Travels, Adventures, and Observations of Captain John Smith in Europe, Asia, Africa and America: and The Generall History of Virginia, New England and the Summer Isles, Books I-III*, Edited with introduction and notes by E.A. Benians, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1908): 109. Also quoted in *Commoners, Tribute and Chiefs*, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, *The True Travels, Adventures and Observations of Captain John Smith . . .*, 109



<sup>10</sup> Potter, 33. See also Susan Limbrey, *Soil Science and Archaeology*, (London: Academic Press, 1975): 124

<sup>11</sup> Smith, 99.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, 109.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, 109.

<sup>14</sup> As profits from the fur trade dwindled more colonists sought their fortunes in tobacco rather than furs. For more on the decline of the fur trade in this area see Potter, 188.

<sup>15</sup> The first Falls Church, then called New Church or Upper Church, was built in 1734. As one of the main establishments of the Church of England in the area, the church and subsequent court house (circa 1742) became a cross roads for the few settlers living in Virginia's northern neck. Though the court house was moved to Alexandria in 1754, Falls Church continued to be a gathering place throughout the eighteenth century. The structure of Falls Church, first built by Richard Blackburn, was rebuilt on the same site in 1769 and designed by James Wren of Falls Church. For more information about the history of Falls Church, Virginia see Melvin Lee Steadman, Jr.'s *Falls Church by Fence and Fireside* (Falls Church Public Library: Falls Church Virginia, 1964) and Tony P Wren's *Falls Church: History of a Virginia Village* (Historical Commission of City of Falls Church, Virginia, 1972).

<sup>16</sup> In addition, settlement suffered a temporary setback during the Susquehannock War of 1675-76 and Bacon's Rebellion of 1676 when neighboring Indian tribes crossed the Potomac and began to attack the new settlers. Troops led by Virginia and Maryland forces combated the attacking Indians, killing many of them. After this defeat the Susquehannock tribes moved southward into the tidewater area and joined with other Indian tribes to take revenge on the European settlers, thus setting the conditions which culminated in Bacon's Rebellion. For more information on the influence of Bacon's Rebellion on the colony of Virginia see, Jane Carson's *Bacon's Rebellion 1676-1976* (Jamestown, VA: Jamestown Foundation, 1976).

<sup>17</sup> Quitrent or quit rent was the rent paid by a freeholder in lieu of services which might otherwise have been required of him. At this time, the approximate yearly quit rent on one hundred acres was two shillings. Charles W. Stetson, *Four Mile Run Land Grants*, (Washington: Mimeoform Press, 1935): 7.

<sup>18</sup> Although the first grant made north of the Occoquan River is difficult to determine with certainty, scholars have identified the first patent in this area as "Doeggs Island", 2,109 acres at the confluence of the Occoquan and Potomac Rivers, made to Robert Turney on July 8, 1651. Netherton's *A History of Fairfax County*. See also Robert M. Moxham's *The Colonial Plantation of George Mason* (Springfield, Virginia: Colonial Press, 1974): 4.

<sup>19</sup> This original charter, dated September 18, 1649, lists the patentees as Ralph Lord Hopton, Baron of Stratton; Henry Lord Jermyn, Baron of St. Edmund's Bury; John Lord Culpeper, Baron of Thoresway; Sir John Barkeley; Sir William Morton, Sir Dudley Wyatt and Thomas Culpeper, Esq. -all subjects of Charles II. For a more detailed analysis of early land grants in Virginia see *Virginia Land Grants: A study of conveyancing in relation to Colonial politics*, Privately Printed, (Richmond: The Old Dominion Press 1925): 148-149.

<sup>20</sup> When land is escheated, it means that the ownership of the property reverts to the state or sovereign—in this case England—due to a lack of a defined inheritor, or by reason of a breach of condition.

<sup>21</sup> Stetson, 4-5. See also Netherton et al., 15-17.

<sup>22</sup> As an example of the discontinuity in governmental jurisdictions, the land that was to become Arlington County, the county in which the Arlington Estate is currently located, was successively in the counties of Northumberland (1645), Westmoreland (1663), Stafford (1666), Prince William (1730), Fairfax (1742), District of Columbia (1801),



Alexandria (1846) and finally in 1920, Arlington. For further discussion of the evolution of laws and legal issues in Fairfax County, later Arlington County in Virginia see, William Waller Henning's. *The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619*, Second Edition, (New York), 1823, and Stetson's Four Mile Run Land Grants.

<sup>23</sup> This law was known as the head-right legislation, designed to encourage immigration to the colonies. Under existing law, Captain Howsing was entitled to receive a grant of 50 acres for each settler to whom he gave passage to the new colony. Stetson, 1. See also, Philip Alexander Bruce, *Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*. . . (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1895).

<sup>24</sup> The name Doeg was a later seventeenth-century term for Tauxeuents. The name change sequence was thus, Tauxenent, Taux, Toag, Doag and finally Doeg. The Nacotchank name was eventually Anglicized to Anacostia. Personal Communication, Stephen Potter, Regional Archeologist, National Capital Region, NPS to Jennifer Hanna, Historical Landscape Architect, September 8, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> Stetson, 1. The actual deed for this transaction has been lost, however, according to this and other secondary sources, 6 hogsheads was the amount of consideration.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 4. John Alexander's third son, John, died within his lifetime without issue.

<sup>27</sup> Theodore Roosevelt Island has had many names including, Analostan Island, Mason's Island, Barbados. For more information about the development of Theodore Roosevelt Island see, Kay Fanning. *National Register Nomination for Theodore Roosevelt Island*, (Washington, D.C.: Department of Interior, National Park Service, 2000). See also Stetson, 9-11.

<sup>28</sup> Philip had a son, also named Philip who inherited this 500 acres of land. This land was a portion of the original land conveyance that formed the city of Alexandria in 1742. It is most likely that from this Philip Alexander, Alexandria received its name. Stetson, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>30</sup> When a will declared a conveyance entailed, the inheritance was limited through lineal descent. If the family line ran out, the fee ownership of the property reverted to the original grantor or his successors in interest.

<sup>31</sup> This type of legal procedure is formally referred to as docking the entail. For further discussion of the chain of title of Virginia land grants see, Stetson, *Four Mile Land Grants*.

<sup>32</sup> Gerrard was a member of the prosperous and elite class of planters in eighteenth century Virginia. One of the original trustees of the town of Alexandria and a burgess from Fairfax County, Gerrard Alexander lived in the house subsequently called Abingdon. Stetson, 13. Walker, Mark et al. *Phase II Archaeological Site, Washington National Airport* (Washington, D.C.: Parsons Management Consultants, 1989). 13-16.

<sup>33</sup> Though some sources suggest that a house was built on this tract of land by John Alexander before his death in 1677, most likely the first substantial structure built on the property was Gerrard Alexander's home circa 1740, shortly after Gerrard inherited the land from his father John. See Stetson, 10.

<sup>34</sup> Delos Smith, "The Abingdon of Fairfax County." *Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine* Vol. LXIII. No 2. (June, 1929), 325-330. For further information about the estate of Abingdon see, Eleanor Lee Templeman. *Arlington Heritage, Vignettes of a Virginia County*. (Arlington, Virginia: Self publication): 1959; Ruth Lincoln Kaye "Lost Heritage: Early Homes that have Disappeared from Northern Virginia." *Northern Virginia Heritage*. February 1987, 11-20.



<sup>35</sup> A description of the house, as it remained in 1908, is given in an article by J. Harry Shannon in the *Illustrated Sunday Magazine* as cited in Walker et al., 19.

<sup>36</sup> The high mortality rate during the 1600s in Virginia most likely played a role in the prevalence of impermanent architecture. So too did the requirements of the tobacco, cash crop agricultural economy which was tied to the economic instability of England. For a very good discussion of impermanent architecture of the seventeenth century in Virginia and Maryland see, Cary Carson, Norman F. Barka, et al. "Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies" in *The Winterthur Portfolio, A Journal of American Material Culture* (Summer/Autumn, 1981): 135-197.

<sup>37</sup> For further discussion of structures and rural landscapes of eighteenth-century Virginia see Camille Wells's "The Planter's Prospect: Houses, Outbuildings and Rural Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia" in *Winterthur Portfolio*, 28, 1. This article describes the development of agricultural architecture through the analysis of farm advertisements in the *Virginia Gazette* during the eighteenth century.

<sup>38</sup> Michael T. Miller, *Alexandria's Forgotten Legacy; The Annals of Wm. F. Carne*. (Alexandria, VA: Alexandria Library, 1984), 159.

<sup>39</sup> *Map of Howsing tract, 1746* surveyed by Jeremiah Hampton, Feriando O'Neal and Joseph Dorsey. Arlington House: Robert E. Lee Memorial, Archives.

<sup>40</sup> Issac Rhys, *The Transformation of Virginia 1740-1790*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press 1982):33.

<sup>41</sup> Awbry Road retained that name into the nineteenth century.

<sup>42</sup> According to a secondary source map, the tenants were, from south to north, Benjamin Williams, Owen Morris, Robert Mills, Charles Story, George Boucher, John Williams and William Boylstone. All of the tenant farms were located to the west of the road to Alexandria except for that of Benjamin Williams. From an interpretive historical map of *Fairfax County Virginia in 1760* by Beth Mitchell. Published by Office of Comprehensive Planning, County of Fairfax 1987. George Washington Memorial Parkway, Turkey Run Headquarters Library.

<sup>43</sup> For further discussion of the affects of the French and Indian War on the American Colonies see Francis Jennings's *Empire of Fortune, Crowns, Colonies and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1988).

<sup>44</sup> Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The development of southern cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800*. (Williamsburg, VI: University of North Carolina Press, 1986): 78-79. For a numerical analysis see Donald Sweig Northern Virginia Slavery: A Statistical and Demographic Investigation Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Department of History. College of William and Mary. 1982.

<sup>45</sup> To further analyze, by 1749, slaves made up twenty-eight percent of the population. In 1757, within the Turro Parish of Fairfax County in which Alexander's land was located, twenty-one men held 75 slaves (or forty percent of the total slave population) in groups of twenty or more. The proportion of owners with less than ten slaves was high, however, the percentage of slaves in this group was lower. Sweig, 31.

<sup>46</sup> Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin in 1793.

<sup>47</sup> Kulikkoff: 101; U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*, (Washington, D.C.1976): 1158, 1190-1191.

<sup>48</sup> Stetson, 10.



<sup>49</sup> Susan Winter Frye. *The Evolution of Mill Settlement Patterns in Antietam Drainage*. (Unpublished Thesis, College of William and Mary, Virginia 1984):22-26. See also, Louis C. Hunter. *A History of Industrial Power in the United States, 1780-1930*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia 1979).

<sup>50</sup> This property, listed in the Northern Neck grant book as being granted to William Fitzhugh on October 1, 1694 was originally granted to John Matthew in April of 1684. As with many large land tracts of the time period, such an isolated land holding was difficult to seat. Fitzhugh was still actively seeking tenants in 1690. Unable to seat the property, Fitzhugh took another grant on the land in 1694. Ravensworth, as it was called, stretched from what is currently Shirley Highway, to south of the Little River Turnpike. The plantation was subsequently divided through inheritance. Mary Lee Custis, wife of G.W.P. Custis and daughter of William Fitzhugh, received 800 acres of the Ravensworth Tract in 1809. Ravensworth was located just south of modern Annandale.

<sup>51</sup> The other homes of Mary Lee Fitzhugh were Chatham, near Fredericksburg, Virginia and a house in Alexandria, Virginia. Shortly after her marriage in 1803, she would inherit a portion of the Ravensworth tract.

<sup>52</sup> Peter Martin, *The Pleasure Gardens of Virginia from Jamestown to Jefferson*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991) 54-64. See also Ralph T. Whitelaw Virginia's *Eastern Shore A History of Northampton and Accomack Counties*, (Camden, Me. : Picton Press, 1989), 114-117; Paul Wilstach. *Tidewater Virginia*. (New York City: Blue Ribbon Books, Inc, 1929): 175, 194.; Collinson, Peter. *Brothers of the Spade: Correspondence of Peter Collinson, of London and of John Custis of Williamsburg, Virginia, 1734-1746*. (Worcester, 1949).

<sup>53</sup> There are at least three lists of books which document the holdings of Daniel Parke Custis and John Parke Custis. Most of John Parke Custis's library was inherited by G.W.P. Custis at the death of this father in 1781, though held by George Washington and Martha Washington as official guardians of G.W.P. Custis. The first book inventory was made in 1759-61 by George Washington. The second was made in 1764 by George Washington. The third list was made in 1782 by Lund Washington. See W.W. Abbot, Ed. *The Papers of George Washington, Colonial Series*, volume 6, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983-1995): 283-301.

<sup>54</sup> White House was located in New Kent County, about twenty-five miles east of Richmond. The property is listed, though not by the name White House, in the Assignment of the Widow's [Martha Custis Washington's] Dower in October 1759. W.W. Abbot, ed. *The Papers of George Washington, Colonial Series*, volume 6, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983-1995): 217-219. Further research is necessary to determine when the White House plantation received its name. See *Records of Alexandria County, D.C. Deed Book E*, 127-132.

<sup>55</sup> The children of Martha Dandridge Custis (1731-1802) and Daniel Parke Custis (1711-1757) were: Daniel Parke Custis (1751-1757), Francis Parke Custis (1753-1757), Martha Parke Custis (1755-1773) and John Parke Custis (1754-1781)

<sup>56</sup> At the death of Daniel Parke Custis in 1757, three appraisers were appointed to inventory and value his holdings. The list detailing the holdings and value of Daniel Parke Custis's estate are found in *The Papers of George Washington, Colonial Series*. W.W. Abbott, Editor. (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1983-1995), Volume 6: 201-265; "Worthy Partner": *The Papers of Martha Washington* compiled by Joseph E. Fields (Westport CN: Greenwood Press, 1994): 60-76.

<sup>57</sup> George Washington became legal guardian of John Parke Custis and Martha Parke Custis in October of 1761. At this point, Washington had unquestionable rights to oversee the property belonging to the infant John Parke Custis. Martha Washington surrendered her dower rights to George Washington as well. Abbott, 206

<sup>58</sup> Mount Airy, located in Upper Marlboro, in southern Prince Georges County, was built in 1725. The estate was home to the Calvert family until 1903.



<sup>59</sup> This inventory is from the inventory of Daniel's properties at his death, as inherited by his wife Martha Dandridge Custis in 1758. Abbott, 201-265; Stetson, 26.

<sup>60</sup> Between the births of Elizabeth Parke Custis in 1776 and Martha Parke Custis in 1777 they lived at the White House plantation in New Kent County. Nelly oversaw the raising of the children and domestic tasks while John was elected to the General Assembly in Richmond.

<sup>61</sup> John Fitzpatrick, Ed. *The Writings of Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*. (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1931): Volume 11: 457.

<sup>62</sup> Smith, "The Abingdon of Fairfax County." *Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine* Vol. LXIII. No 2. (June, 1929), 325-330. The archeological remnants of Abingdon were incorporated in the design of the expansion and rehabilitation of National Airport of Washington, D.C. in the late-twentieth century.

<sup>63</sup> Eleanor Parke Custis, known as Nelly, was born on March 21, 1779 and died in 1852. She married Lawrence Lewis (1767-1839) in 1799. Lewis, Nelly Custis. *George Washington's Beautiful Nelly: The Letters of Eleanor Parke Custis Lewis to Elizabeth Bordley Gibson, 1794-1851*. Edited by Patricia Brady. (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).

<sup>64</sup> George Washington Parke Custis. *Memoirs of Washington*. (New York: Union Publication House, 1859): 254f.

<sup>65</sup> The ownership of Abingdon was transferred back to the Alexanders in 1792 because Eleanor Custis Stewart and her husband Doctor David Stewart could not make payments according to John Custis's real estate agreement. A suit was brought in which a court settlement was made whereby General Washington paid Robert Alexander for the years of the Custis occupation and the Custises moved to Hope Park, twenty miles from the city of Alexandria. Walker, Mark, et. al. *Phase II Archaeological Study: Abingdon Plantation Site, Washington National Airport* (Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, Parsons Management Consultants). August 1989; Jackson, Donald, editor and Dorothy Twohig, assistant editor. *The Diaries of George Washington, 1732-1799*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976-1979): 219.

<sup>66</sup> For a detailed account of the childhood and education of G.W.P. Custis see, Murray Nelligan's "Old Arlington.": *The Story of the Lee Mansion National Memorial*. (United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Capital Region, 1954).

<sup>67</sup> Nelligan, 39.

<sup>68</sup> George Washington to Dr. James Anderson, April 7, 1797. As quoted in Mac Griswold's *Washington's Gardens at Mount Vernon: Landscape of the Inner Man* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999): 131.

<sup>69</sup> Nelligan, 40-41. The Reverend Stanhope Smith was very forward thinking concerning the equality of races. He advocated the end of slavery, stating that all races had a common genetic origin and equal abilities. These beliefs may have influenced the young G.W.P. Custis in his own beliefs concerning slavery.

<sup>70</sup> Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South*, (New York: Oxford University Press): 130.

<sup>71</sup> For further discussion of George Washington's relationship with his slaves and attitudes towards slavery, see Dorothy Twohig's paper to be included in *The Papers of George Washington*, upon their publication. "That Species of Property": *Washington's Role in the Controversy Over Slavery*. Originally presented at a Conference on Washington and Slavery at Mount Vernon, October 1994. See <http://virginia.edu/gwpapers.html>



<sup>72</sup> To further explain, while the percentage of slaves in the total population in 1749 was twenty-eight percent, their numbers had grown until in 1782 slaves made up forty-one percent of all tithables in Fairfax County. Netherton, Nan et al., 28-36.

<sup>73</sup> Stevenson, 174.

<sup>74</sup> Pawlet Nathaniel Mason Pawlett, *A Brief History of the Roads of Virginia 1607-1840* (Charlottesville, VI: Virginia Highway and Transportation Research Council, 1977):4-7. *A History of Roads in Virginia "The Most Convinient Ways"*. (Richmond Virginia: Department of Transportation, 1992): 3-7.

<sup>75</sup> For further information on the history of canal development in the area see, Thomas Swiftwater Hahn and Emory L. Kemp's *The Alexandria Canal: Its History and Preservation*. Volume 1, Number 1, (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 1992) and *Chesapeake and Ohio Canal: Official National Park Handbook* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1991).

<sup>76</sup> Albert Mathews Ed. *Journal of William Loughton Smith-1790-1791* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1917) as reprinted in T. Michael Miller. *Pen Portraits of Alexandria Virginia, 1739-1900*. (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books Inc., 1987): 37-38.

<sup>77</sup> S. M. Hamilton, *The Columbia Mirror and Alexandria Gazette*, October 27, 1796: 2 Mathews, Albert, Ed. *Journal of William Loughton Smaith-1790-1791* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1917) as reprinted in Michael T. Miller. *Pen Portraits of Alexandria Virginia, 1739-1900*. (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books Inc., 1987): 39-40.

<sup>78</sup> Nelligan, 55.

<sup>79</sup> Washington purchased 378 acres from Stephen Grey and 790 acres from Gabriel Adams. Washington surveyed the property many times, the last time in 1785. Stetson, 49, 51,60. See Also, *Letters to Washington by S.M. Hamilton*, Vol. IV: 286.

<sup>80</sup> *Alexandria Gazette*. (June 16, 1807).

<sup>81</sup> W. W. Abbott, Editor. *The Papers of George Washington, Colonial Series*, Vol. 6., 202-209. The other children did not inherit because the common law canon of descent gave preference to males over females. This law remained active until 1785, so that G.W.P. became sole owner at his mother's death. The name of the Romancock estate was changed to Romancoke sometime in the mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>82</sup> From the will and estate accounts of Martha Washington as related in Joseph Field's. *Worthy Partner: The Papers of Martha Washington*. (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press 1994), 406-417.

<sup>83</sup> Nelligan, 58. This agreement was recorded April 4, 1803 in *Records of Alexandria County, D.C. Deed Book E*, pp. 127-132, 133-135.

<sup>84</sup> Nelligan, 74. See also, Custis, George Washington Parke. *Memoirs of Washington . . .* (New York: Union Pub. House, 1859): 52.



## CHAPTER THREE

<sup>1</sup> This building was most likely the house, identified by a 1746 map of the Howsing tract as belonging to a tenant of Gerard Alexander during the period of time in which the map was created. Howsing Tract Map surveyed by Daniel Jennings 1750; Tract map dated March 31, 1746. Surveyor Jeremiah Hampton et. al. George Washington Memorial Parkway Headquarters, Natural Resource Map Files, Turkey Run, Virginia. A pocosin is a swamp or marsh especially in an interfluvial area of the coastal plain of the southeastern United States.

<sup>2</sup> Custis began construction of Arlington House in 1802, though it was not called Arlington House until 1804. Arnest, Harry Lee and John D. Sligh. *Historic Structure Report, Architectural Data Section, Phase II*. (National Park Service, Department of Interior 1985): 11.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Decker and Angus McSween. *Historic Arlington*. (Decker and McSween Publication: Washington, D.C. 1892). According to the authors, Decker and McSween, the house of the former manager/overseer of Arlington farm was still standing in 1892. See also, *Environs of Washington prepared from original surveys in the Engineer Department 1864*. Map (U.S. War Department. Office of the Chief of Engineers. Headquarters Office): Cartographic and Architectural Branch RG 77. National Archives at College Park, MD. *U.S. Coast Survey. A.D. Bache Supdt. Part of Arlington Virginia, Surveyed for M.C. Meigs, QMGUSA. 1864*. Library of Congress, Mapping Division. Copy ARHO.

<sup>4</sup> This 18,000 acres includes approximately, Mount Washington/Arlington House (1100), Washington Forest Tract (1200), Mockin and Smith's Islands (6,000), Romancock (4656), White House (5,000) and Arlington on the Eastern Shore (537). For lists of inherited slaves see, W.W. Abbot, editor of *The Papers of George Washington Volume 6, Colonial Series*. "Schedule A: Assignment of the Widow's Dower." (Charlottesville : University Press of Virginia, 1983-1995): 217-220; Prussing, Eugene Ernst. *The Estate of George Washington, Deceased*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company 1927): 448-459.

<sup>5</sup> John Michael Vlach. *Back of the Big House*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1993): 8. In 1860 there were only about 2300 plantations at which 100 or more slaves were owned in the slave holding states. Though these slaves were not located all at one plantation, the mere fact that Custis owned outright so many individuals, is a clear indication of his position in southern aristocracy.

<sup>6</sup> Recorded April 4, 1803 in Deed Book E, Alexandria County, D.C.: 127-132, 133-135.

<sup>7</sup> Eugene Ernst Prussing, *The Estate of George Washington, Deceased*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company 1927): 448-459 and "Worthy partner" : *The Papers of Martha Washington* compiled by Joseph E. Fields. (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1994): 102-107.

<sup>8</sup> Almost twenty years earlier, George Washington had received donkeys from both the King of Spain and Lafayette. After a few false starts, he was highly successful in breeding mules. Those that Custis purchased at the public sale were descendants of the original stock. See John C. Fitzpatrick. *The Writings of George Washington, 1745-1799*. Volume 28. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931-1944): 426. and G. Terry Sharrer's. "'An Undebauched Mind:' Farmer Washington at Mount Vernon 1759-1799" in *Magnolia: Bulletin of the Southern Garden History Society*. Winter 1999-2000.

<sup>9</sup> Prussing, 448-459.

<sup>10</sup> G.W.P. Custis to Alexander Moore, Alexandria Virginia. February 15, 1843. Custis Family Papers, Mount Vernon.



<sup>11</sup> Alexandria Gazette, November 16, 1803.

<sup>12</sup> Kay Fanning, *Theodore Roosevelt National Register of Historic Places Nomination*. (Department of Interior: Washington, D.C. 2000): 2.

<sup>13</sup> Nelligan, *Old Arlington: The Story of the Lee Mansion National Memorial*. Unpublished study (U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service: Washington, D.C. 1953): 84.

<sup>14</sup> During the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, which lasted from 1792 to 1815, much of Europe was in a state of war and upheaval. At the time in which Custis first began to farm at Arlington, the property the British Royal Navy had placed an extensive commercial blockade around France, and France was preparing to attack England. As such, the demand for American grain products increased. For more information see, James Burbank. "The French Revolt and Empire" in *The War Times Journal*, (March 2000) online at <http://www.wtj.com/articles/>. See also, Nelligan 63.

<sup>15</sup> Sharrer, 4. Tobacco adopts the flavor of the soil in which it grows. See also, John Brinckerhoff Jackson. *Landscape in Sight: Looking at America*. (New Haven: Yale University Press 1997): 137.

<sup>16</sup> The secondary forest growth characterized by the cedars was most likely a result of the much more extensive agricultural cultivation undertaken by tenants of Gerrard Alexander during the seventeenth century.

<sup>17</sup> *National Intelligencer*. November 24, 1809.

<sup>18</sup> Boston Patriot, reprinted in the *National Intelligencer*, October 25, 1809.

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Randolph Calvert. "Childhood Days at Arlington." Undated handwritten manuscript (circa 1870). Arlington House Archives (ARHO).

<sup>20</sup> The configuration of the upper story rooms of the house is unknown. Archeological and architectural investigation, which revealed small rafter pockets in the east wall of the pantry and regularly spaced post holes found under the brick floor of the cellar stairway hall, suggest the possibility of a makeshift wood porch on the west façade. Harry Lee Arnest III and John D. Sligh. *Historic Structure Report. Arlington House: The Robert E. Lee Memorial*. (US Department of the Interior: Denver Service Center Northeast Team 1985): 15-17.

<sup>21</sup> Edward Chappell, "Menokin: Prospect, Orientation and Outside Finish," *Newsletter Chronicling the Preservation of Menokin Plantation*, (August 1999). For more information concerning the development of gardens in the eighteenth century see Barbara Wells Sarudy's *Gardens and gardening in the Chesapeake, 1700-1805*, (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.)

<sup>22</sup> The enclosure movement in England during the mid eighteenth century revolved around the practice of wealthy landowners enclosing common fields for their own use, usually for the purpose of raising sheep. Thomas Jefferson created a garden at his estate Monticello which had characteristics of the English Landscape style of gardening. Andre Parmentier published essays about this "modern" style of gardening in the 1828 catalogue for his nursery and botanic garden in what is now Brooklyn New York. In England, Humphry Repton, a horticulturist during the eighteenth-century, promoted the ideals of the less formal gardening style, in his book *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening* published in 1795. According to Repton the landscape should display natural form and hide natural defects; should be open; should be designed in a naturalistic style; and all aspects of the landscape should be pleasing and if not they should be concealed—characteristics which correspond to the design at Arlington. For more information about the development of the English School of landscape gardening in America see Brenda Bullion, *The Science and Art of Plants and Gardens in the Development of an American Landscape Aesthetic (1620-1850)*. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University 1990): 9-20.



<sup>23</sup> Mac Griswold, *Washington's Gardens at Mount Vernon: Landscape of the Inner Man*, (Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston 1999): 84-85.

<sup>24</sup> *Alexandria Gazette*. Nov 4, 1802. This is an announcement stating that a dog was lost from Mount Washington. William Spence is listed as the contact. ARHO.

<sup>25</sup> James Anderson to George Washington August 1797 and George Washington to James Anderson (of Scotland) November 4, 1797 in Dorothy Twohig, Ed. *The Papers of George Washington: Retirement Series. March-December 1797* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia: 1998).

<sup>26</sup> This would hold true throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. According to A. J. Downing, author the famous mid-nineteenth century landscape design book, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America*, only 3% of working gardeners were native born Americans in 1852. A.J. Downing. *The Horticulturist* (June 1852). The countries most known for their gardening skills were the Irish, Scottish, English and German. See Patricia M. Tice *Gardening in American 1830-1910*. (Rochester, New York: The Strong Museum 1984): 57.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, Dean Norton, chief-horticulturist at Mount Vernon. January 2000. Correspondence, Lisa Odum, Associate Librarian Mount Vernon, to Jennifer Hanna, Historical Landscape Architect, National Park Service, January 27, 2000.

<sup>28</sup> On July 20, 1803 Custis placed an advertisement in the *Alexandria Gazette*, for an overseer to "take charge of the Mount Washington Estate." In November of the same year, John Ball was listed as manager of Mt. Washington and placed an advertisement for a gardener or "person qualified to undertake the management of a large market garden. *Alexandria Gazette*, November 16, 1803. ARHO

<sup>29</sup> In 1800, James Anderson was still at Mount Vernon, for a letter is exists from Anderson to Martha Washington, dated July 21, 1800 stating that he should quit because "he's a bad manager." His self deprecating remark should not necessarily be taken as fact, for such statements seem to be endemic to Anderson's personality regardless of their truth. For more information concerning the character of Anderson see Joseph E. Fields, Ed. *Worthy Partner; the Papers of Martha Washington*. (Westport, CN : Greenwood Press 1994). By no later than June of 1804, Anderson has been hired as manager of the Pamunkey estates. G. W.P. Custis to James Anderson, June 3, 1804. ARHO.

<sup>30</sup> Dorothy Twohig, Editor. *The Papers of George Washington, Retirement Series March-December 1797*. (Charlottesville, VI: University Press of Virginia. 1998): 21. James Anderson to George Washington August 28, 1796.

<sup>31</sup> George Washington to James Anderson, December 21, 1797; February 1 and 6, May 22, June 11, 1798; See *George Washington's Mount Vernon, At Home in Revolutionary America* by Robert F. Dalzell, Jr. and Lee Baldwin Dalzell for more general information concerning the relationship between George Washington and his farm managers.

<sup>32</sup> Romancock, also spelled Romancoke (by the late nineteenth century) was called the Claiborne's when Daniel Park Custis purchased it from the estate of William Claiborne (d. 1746) in 1750. This property was 2880 acres in 1759. John Custis purchased an addition 1776 acres in 1774. *The Papers of George Washington Volume 6, Colonial Series*. W.W. Abbot, editor "Schedule A: Assignment of the Widow's Dower." (Charlottesville : University Press of Virginia, 1983-1995): 217-220. The property is described as containing 4821 acres of land, however, according to a land grant dated 1799, Record Book 37, Page 34. Historical Society of Virginia. Manuscript Division.

<sup>33</sup> *Papers of George Washington Volume 8. June 1767-December 1771* "Crops Made of the Custis Plantations by Joseph Valentine, 1760-1770. Dated 1770." (Charlottesville : University Press of Virginia, 1983-1995.): 421-425.



<sup>34</sup> G. W. Walden, farm manager to G.W.P. Custis, July 5, 1818. ARHO.

<sup>35</sup> For instance in 1818, the year that Custis finished construction on Arlington House, the two estates together yielded about six thousand dollars in income. The expenditures on Romancock and White House amounted to approximately one thousand two hundred and thirty two dollars-including the \$350 dollars paid to a Mr. Walden as manager. White House/Old Quarter and Romancock/Lower Quarter also had separate overseers. In 1832 there were about 150 sheep, over a hundred head of cattle and approximately 175 hogs and pigs. In addition, James Anderson designed a distillery at Romancock similar to the one at Mount Vernon. "Statements of Accounts of Expenditures of Estates in 1818" Custis Family Papers. Virginia Historical Society. Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>36</sup> According to an inventory of slaves on the Romancoke property made in 1825, Custis owned 26 males and 26 females which included sixteen children under the age of ten. "List of Names and Ages of Negroes at Romancock and Lower Quarter, 1 January 1825. In Virginia Historical Society Manuscript Division. Richmond, Virginia. By G.W.P. Custis's death in 1857, there were only 43 slaves at the estate. Inventory of G.W.P. Custis estate taken 1 January 1858. ARHO.

<sup>37</sup> The White House plantation had been inherited by G.W.P. through his father John Custis who had inherited the property with the death of his father, Daniel Custis, in 1759. *Papers of George Washington Volume 6*: 230-233.

<sup>38</sup> "Return from July 1st to October 1st 1832 of stocks and crops on the estates White House and Roman Cock [sic]." Custis Family Papers. Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>39</sup> Undated letter from W.P. Walden, farm manager of the White House and Romancock estates, to G.W.P. Custis. Most likely this letter dates to circa 1820. Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>40</sup> Nelligan, 64.

<sup>41</sup> Harry Lee Arnest and Cornelia Lee to Mrs. Richard Bland Lee. April 13, 1804. As quoted in Nelligan, 76, photocopy in Lee Family Papers. Library of Congress.

<sup>42</sup> Harry Lee Arnest and Julia King. "George Hadfield" in *New American National Biography*. John A. Garraty editor. (New York: Oxford University Press 1999).

<sup>43</sup> Obituary of Hadfield. *Daily National Intelligencer* (February 13, 1826). No plans of Arlington House as drawn by George Hadfield have been discovered yet.

<sup>44</sup> Hadfield's designs were disseminated by a group of architects who admired his work, including his pupil, William Parker Elliot. Hadfield-influenced, temple-and-wings houses can be found from Massachusetts to New York and in the eastern Midwestern states of Ohio, Michigan and Illinois. Public structures derived from Arlington include Long's Church of St. Peter the Apostle in Baltimore and several statehouses. See Julia King's. "Honour's Temple: George Hadfield's Arlington House, The Most Conspicuous Residence in America." Department of Art Birkbeck College. University of London, England. <http://www.let.uu.nl/CIHA/posurs/097.htm>

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Harry Lee Arnest, 10; and Jonathan Elliot, *History of the Ten Miles Square, The permanent Seat of the General Government of the United States*. 1830, 290.

<sup>47</sup> Pousson, "Archeological excavations at Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial, Arlington County, Virginia" (Washington, D.C. : U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service 1983 ): 16

<sup>48</sup> James D. Kornwolf, "The Picturesque in the American Garden and Landscape before 1800," *British and American*



*Gardens in the Eighteenth Century: Eighteen Illustrated Essays on Garden History*. Ed. Robert P. Maccubbin and Peter Martin. (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation: Williamsburg Virginia 1984), 102.

<sup>49</sup> It has been suggested that the building materials for Arlington House were taken from the site. This is difficult to prove or disprove. Nelligan, 74.

<sup>50</sup> Fanning, 35.

<sup>51</sup> John Mason on Anolostan Island employed a well known gardener, David Hepburn. He would go on to write with John Gardiner in 1804, one of the earliest horticultural treatises to include aspects of ornamental garden design in America-*The American Gardener containing ample directions for working a kitchen garden, every month of the year and copious instructions for the cultivation of flower gardens, etc.* (City of Washington: Samuel A. Smith for Authors 1804).

<sup>52</sup> Shawn Eyring, "Chatham Manor Cultural Landscape Inventory." (Department of Interior, National Park Service. October 1992).

<sup>53</sup> In 1809, at the death of her father, Mary Lee Fitzhugh Custis inherited 800 acres of the Ravensworth estate. In 1830 she inherited approximately 5700 acres of the estate to be kept in trust for Mary Custis Lee, her daughter. In Mary Custis Lee's death in 1874, this property was divided amongst her children. For more information on Ravensworth and this inheritance, see Netherton, Nan. *Fairfax County History* (Fairfax, Va.: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, 1992): 161-163.

<sup>54</sup> First known use of the name Arlington House by G.W.P. Custis is in *G.W.P. Custis to the Speaker of the House of Representatives December 11, 1804*. (Washington, D.C.: 1804); as cited in Nelligan, 81.

<sup>55</sup> The Old Arlington property was sold by G.W.P. Custis sometime in 1832 for \$8,500 to John Goffigon Sr. R.E. Lee to Mrs. Mary Custis August 15, 1832. Library of Congress, Custis Family Manuscripts.

<sup>56</sup> For more information on the development of milling in the area see Louis C. Hunter's *A History of Industrial Power in United States, 1780-1930*. (Charlottesville : Published for the Eleutherian Mills-Hagley Foundation by the University Press of Virginia 1979); See also, *The Evolution of Mill Settlement Patterns on Antietam Drainage*. Thesis College of William and Mary 1984.

<sup>57</sup> *Alexandria Gazette*, June 19, 1804: 2.

<sup>58</sup> Netherton, 194-195. Op cite. Shepherd. *Statues at Large*, 1: 378-88.

<sup>59</sup> *National Intelligencer*, Nov 24, 1810; *Alexandria Gazette* Dec 31, 1810. Nelligan, 116.

<sup>60</sup> Nelligan, 143.

<sup>61</sup> *National Intelligencer*, November 24, 1809.

<sup>62</sup> R.E. Lee to Mary Custis, March 20, 1839, DeButts-Ely Manuscripts. Library of Congress. ARHO.

<sup>63</sup> This description is based on a variety of sources including, the Insurance Policy for Arlington House written by Robert E. Lee, dated 1859; U.S. Census Bureau Records 1850, 1860 Agricultural Census, Alexandria County, Virginia. National Archives. Washington, D.C.; Arlington Corral &c. Arlington, VA July 25, 1865 Record Group 77, National Archives. This map, part of a land survey undertaken during the Civil War, documents the locations of Arlington farm buildings by indicating the former use of Civil War army structures confiscated by the Federal Army. *Environs of Washington Map* (1864). National Archives, RG 77.



<sup>64</sup> John Vlach, *Back of the Big House, The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press 1993):34-37.

<sup>65</sup> 1850 Agricultural Census, Alexandria County, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>66</sup> G. W. P. Custis, "Banking with the Spade, Together with a thing or two on the subject of wooden soled shoes-reclaimed marshes, etc." in *American Farmer* (May 6, 1825).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> G.W.P. Custis to Mary L. Custis, September 16, 1839. ARHO.

<sup>69</sup> G.W.P. Custis to Sam H. Smith. January 5, 1830. G.W.P. requested that the interest on \$2500.00 which amounted to \$200.00 be lessened. ARHO.

<sup>70</sup> Custis, "Banking with the Spade . . ."

<sup>71</sup> *National Intelligencer*, May 7, 1811.

<sup>72</sup> The wharf was built by Captain Page in 1852 at Arlington Spring. He also built the "canny little sprite" [the G.W.P. Custis] the same year for trips to Arlington Spring. The Arlington Belle was owned by Custis and began service in 1846. *Daily National Intelligencer* March 11, 1852.

<sup>73</sup> Sarah Reed, *A Romance of Arlington*, (Boston, Mass. : The Chapple Publishing Co., Ltd. 1908): 181.

<sup>74</sup> B. Lossing, *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*. "Arlington House, the Seat of G.W.P. Custis, Esq." September 1853. ARHO.

<sup>75</sup> Passage one way from Washington to Arlington Spring was 12 1/2 cents, a gentleman and two ladies 25 cents. Lossing, B. in *National Intelligencer*, June 19, 1854.

<sup>76</sup> Rev. R. R. Gurley, *Morrison's Stranger's Guide to the City of Washington*, (Washington, D.C.: W. M. Morrison & co. 1852).

<sup>77</sup> For more information about the development of springs as medicinal, recreational and social spaces see: Henry W. Lawrence's "Southern Spas: Source of the American Resort Tradition" in *Landscape* (Volume 27, Number 2. 1983.) Carl Bridenbaugh, "Baths and Watering Places of Colonial America" in *The William and Mary Quarterly* (April 1946).

<sup>78</sup> Calvert, "Childhood Days at Arlington".

<sup>79</sup> For more information on the relationship between the social and economic aspects of slavery and the physical development of plantation/farm landscapes see Vlach's *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1993).

<sup>80</sup> R.E. Lee to Mary Custis, March 20, 1839. Debutts-Ely Manuscripts, Library of Congress.

<sup>81</sup> "Recollections of Emma Syphax, Sarah Wilson, Annie Baker and Ada Thompson." These women were the daughters of Selina and Thorton Gray who were "house" slaves of the Lee and Custis families during the 1850s. Interviews and transcript dated 1929. ARHO.

<sup>82</sup> Calvert, "Childhood Days . . ."



<sup>83</sup> Receipt. "Received of George WP Custis Esq. Eighteen dollars which with other funds before received is in full of wages for plastering at Arlington House and of all demands." August 22, 1818. Receipt. "Received of G.W.P. Custis two hundred dollars on account of his building being fifteen hundred and fifty dollars in cash up to this date." August 18, 1818. ARHO.

<sup>84</sup> G.W.P. Custis to Cornelius McLean payment receipt for \$1550.00 for construction of house. Custis Manuscripts, Virginia Historical Society. Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>85</sup> *New York Republican Chronicle*. (March 16, 1818) reprinted in the *Washington, D.C. Gazette* (May 7, 1818). See also "The Building of Arlington House," by Murray Nelligan in the ARHO archives. Mary Randolph (1762-1828). *The Virginia House Wife*. (Birmingham, Alabama: Oxmoor House, Reprinted 1988).

<sup>86</sup> Godfrey T. Vigne, *Six Months in America*, (London: Whittaker Treacher & Co., 1832), 147 as quoted in Nelligan, 149.

<sup>87</sup> David H. Rhodes, "Historic Memories of Arlington National Cemetery by David R. Rhodes, Landscape gardener at Arlington From April 14, 1873 to March 1930. Transcript copy ARHO.

<sup>88</sup> Information about the appearance of the ice house is limited. The first map of the site dates to the Civil War and little historic written documentation dating to ownership the Custis and Lee families addresses the ice house. The last map which documents the location of the ice house is dated to 1894. For discussion of recent archeology at the site see Garrow and Associates, Inc. *Cultural Resource Investigations at Section 29 at Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial, Arlington County, Virginia*. September 1998. ARHO

<sup>89</sup> "Recollections of Emma Syphax, Sarah Wilson, Annie Baker and Ada Thompson." Former slaves, 1929. Calvert, "Childhood Days at Arlington." ARHO.

<sup>90</sup> Elizabeth Randolph Calvert, in her description of the property at the time of the Custis and Lee family use, describes the room at the western end of the southern slave quarters as a "sleeping room", not a home or house. When one considers that eight individuals used this small space for housing, such a reference is not surprising. In addition, Lee in writing the insurance policy for the property identified the southern building as a store house, not a quarters. Calvert, Elizabeth Randolph. "Childhood Days at Arlington." See also Robert E. Lee, Insurance Policy for Arlington, Dated 1859, ARHO.

<sup>91</sup> "Recollections of Emma Syphax, Sarah Wilson, Annie Baker and Ada Thompson." Transcript dated 1929. Calvert, "Childhood Days at Arlington." ARHO

<sup>92</sup> Image of east façade of Arlington House., 1864. Civil War photographs of Washington and Virginia in the A.J. Russell Album, 1861 - 1865. RG 64. National Archives. Cartographic Branch. Interview with James Parks, former slave at Arlington. Transcript circa 1925. ARHO.

<sup>93</sup> Mary Lee to Mary Custis May 1, 1844. Custis Papers. Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>94</sup> R.E. Lee to Capt. Andrew Talcott. May 5, 1836. Lee Family Papers. Virginia Historical Society

<sup>95</sup> Thomas Law, Address to the Colombian Institute of Washington. 1830. ARHO.

<sup>96</sup> G.W.P. Custis's address to United States Agricultural Board as reprinted in *National Intelligencer*, September 27, 1855.

<sup>97</sup> Custis went so far as to suggest that his farm manager, William Nelson and Edmund Ruffin, the man credited with the promotion of fertilizers in the agricultural press, write articles and promote agricultural advancement as a team.



<sup>98</sup> Custis to Nelson, c. 1850. ARHO.

<sup>99</sup> Calvert, "Childhood Days . . ." Undated manuscript (circa 1870). ARHO.

<sup>100</sup> Karl Decker and Angus McSween. *Historic Arlington*. (Washington, D.C.: Decker and McSween Publishing Company 1892), 87.

<sup>101</sup> For more information about contemporary descriptions and advice concerning American gardens see, Robert Buist. *The American Flower Garden Directory: Containing Practical Directions for the Culture of Plants in the Flower Garden, Hot House, Green-House, Rooms or Parlour Windows &c.* (Philadelphia: E.L. Carey & A. Hart 1839): vii.

<sup>102</sup> George Washington Parke Custis Obituary. *Harper's Weekly*. (New York, New York October 24, 1857).

<sup>103</sup> One of the first documented gardens designed in the picturesque and pastoral English Landscape School was Middleton Place, Henry Middleton's estate in Charleston S.C. (circa 1741). Drayton Hall, also outside of Charleston incorporated elements of this design style. Latter but more local, Spring Garden, a plantation on the Pamunkey River owned by Thomas Jones, had a garden "laid out in the English style" by the late eighteenth century. So too did William Hamilton at Woodlands near Philadelphia (1787-89). For more information on the development of the English Landscape School in America see *British and American Gardens in the Eighteenth Century*, edited by Robert P. Maccubbin and Peter Martin, (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation: Williamsburg Virginia 1984).

<sup>104</sup> This drawing, circa 1857, was done by a member of the Lee family. Original, ARHO.

<sup>105</sup> Calvert, "Childhood Days . . ." ARHO.

<sup>106</sup> D.H. Rhodes, the landscape gardener who was hired in 1873 to manage the horticultural aspects of the relatively new Arlington National Cemetery, wrote a description of the garden around 1930. In it he related his recollections of the garden as he remembered it in 1874-after the Civil War and nine years of Army oversight. The changes made in the garden design between the Lee ownership and the Army occupation will be discussed in the next chapter. D. H. Rhodes. "Notes pertaining to the old flower garden south of Arlington Mansion by Mr. D. H. Rhodes. Landscape Gardener at Arlington where he has been employed since 1873." (War Department, Office of the Quartermaster Supply Officer, Washington, D.C.), circa 1930. ARHO, original transcript, Arlington National Cemetery Archives.

<sup>107</sup> *Growing Up in the 1850s: The Journal of Agnes Lee*, edited by Mary Custis Lee deButts, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press 1984), 10-11.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. Annie Lee to Helen Bratt. September 16, 1858.

<sup>109</sup> Thomas Fessenden. *The New American Gardener: containing Practical Directions on the Culture of fruits and Vegetables; Including Landscape and Ornamental Gardening, Grape-Vines, Silk, Strawberries, &c.* Fourth edition (Boston: Carter and Hendee) 1830, as quoted in Jennifer Hanna's *Ornamental Garden Design: The Rise of Floricultural Publications and the Role of James Vick, Rochester Seed House Owner* (Master's Thesis Ithaca, New York: Cornell University 1997): 36-38.

<sup>110</sup> Among the early nineteenth-century books that addressed ornamental garden design through a two part discussion of modern/landscape gardening and ancient/formal gardening were: Bernard M'Mahon, *The American Gardener's Calendar Adapted to the Climates and Seasons of the United States. &c.* (Philadelphia: B. Graves, 1806); Thomas Fessenden. *The New American Gardener &c.* (Boston: Carter and Hendee 1830); Robert Buist. *The American Flower Garden Directory &c.* (Philadelphia: E.L. Carey & A. Hart, 1839). William Cobbet, *The American Gardener &c.* (London: C. Clement 1821) and (Frederick, Maryland: J. Robinson, Circulating Library and J. Robinson & Company 1823).



<sup>111</sup> For examples, see Robert Buist. *The Rose Manual &c.* (Philadelphia: for the author by Messr. Carey & Hart 1844); Edward Sayers. *Treatise on the Culture of the Dahlia and Cactus* (Boston: Weeks, Jordan and Company 1839).

<sup>112</sup> Thomas Bridgeman, *The Florist's Guide &c.*, (New York: Mitchell & Turner 1839), 11.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>114</sup> D.H. Rhodes to Major F. E. Matteson. June 19, 1930. ARHO.

<sup>115</sup> Transcript of interview titled, "Notes made in 1929 by Mrs. Mary Pagen from conversations with four old colored women-former slaves at Arlington." ARHO.

<sup>116</sup> Calvert, "Childhood Days. . . ."

<sup>117</sup> Mildred Lee, *Recollections*. Lexington July 20, 1890. As reprinted in Agnes Lee's *Growing up in the 1850s: The Journal of Agnes Lee*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press 1984): 116.

<sup>118</sup> Calvert, "Childhood Days at Arlington . . ."

<sup>119</sup> In order not to "disrupt the labor force," the emigration of the individual colonist had to be accepted by both the free black colonist, and the individuals "who have an interest in their labor." American Colonization Society, *Annual Report*. Volume 7 (1824): 7-8.

<sup>120</sup> For a discussion of George Washington Parke Custis's role in the American Colonization Society see, Douglas Eugene Pielmeier. *Arlington House: The Evolution of a Nineteenth Century Virginia Plantation*. (Unpublished thesis, 1996). ARHO.

<sup>121</sup> Calvert, "Childhood Days at Arlington . . ." Diary of Mary Anna Randolph Custis Lee. June 9, 1853. Virginia Historical Society, Mss5: 1L5114:1; Mary Fitzhugh Custis to Mary Custis Lee, Fortress Monroe, Old Point Va. October 8, 1831. Virginia Historical Society, Mss2 C9695.

<sup>122</sup> According to the list of slaves emancipated in will of G.W.P. Custis December 29, 1862 included Catherine Burke and child; Marianne and Agnes Burke. Copy in ARHO. William and Rosabella Burke emigrated with their four children Granderson, Cornelia, Alexander and Martha. A 1855 letter between Rosabella Burke and Mary Lee was published in *African Repository and Colonial Journal*. Volume 35, No. 7, (February 20, 1859): 216.

<sup>123</sup> Mary Custis's brother, William Henry Fitzhugh who passed away in 1828 firmly supported the American Colonization Society, and therefore may have been an early influence on Mary, or visa versa. William H. Fitzhugh, quoted in "American Colonization Society," *National Intelligencer*. January 13, 1826. Will of Mary Lee dated November 3, 1857. Lee, George Bolling Papers 1813-1924. Library of Congress.

<sup>124</sup> The paternity of these children, and Custis's relationship with their mothers been brought into question many times. At Custis's death in 1857, northern newspapers published articles pertaining to the subject of the possible paternity of his "mulatto slaves." For an interesting study of the American Colonization Society in the southern United States highlighting additional rationale for the Custis and Lee women's interest in the American Colonization Society please see, Marie Tyler McGraw's, "My Old Mistress Promise Me . . ." Draft. 3/19/00. For more information on the identity of the manumitted women and children of Arlington see, Pielmier, Douglas Eugene. "Arlington House: The Evolution of a Nineteenth Century Virginia Plantation" Unpublished study. Arlington House: The Robert E. Lee Memorial, 1996. ARHO.



<sup>125</sup> Interestingly, the use of the word "grove" in American history has a religious connotation as well, for grove often identified the spot as a location of a religious camp meeting. No evidence has yet surfaced suggesting that the "grove" at Arlington House was used for religious purposes, however. See John Brinckerhoff Jackson. *Landscape in Sight: Looking at America*. (New Haven: Yale University Press 1997).

<sup>126</sup> G.W.P. Custis to Agnes Lee, 1853, Custis Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>127</sup> Mildred Lee, Recollections. Lexington July 20, 1890. As reprinted in Agnes Lee's *Growing up in the 1850s: The Journal of Agnes Lee*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press 1984): 117-118.

<sup>128</sup> Interview. June 28, 1999. Dan Sealy, Natural Resources Specialist, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Virginia. National Capital Region, National Park Service. The soil profile, a relatively porous upper strata with marine clay sub-strata, prevents water infiltration into the lower stratum and leads to a condition known as rotational slip. In this situation, the increased water build up eventually causes "slipping" of the soil layer, resulting in terrace-like stepping of the topography, unsuitable for building or farming.

<sup>129</sup> Mary Lee to Mary Custis, May 1, 1844, Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>130</sup> G. W. Lafayette to G.W.P. Custis, January 3, 1825. See also statement of G. W. P. Custis to Benjamin Perley Poore, quoted in Poore's "Waifs From Washington," *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, Volume IV (Boston: F. Gleason March 19, 1853): 190.

<sup>131</sup> Mrs. William N. Fitzhugh of Ravensworth to Mrs. Abby Nelson, 1853, excerpt as copied by Murray Nelligan in ARHO

<sup>132</sup> Mary Lee Custis to George Washington Custis Lee, October 15, 1851. ARHO.

<sup>133</sup> G.W.P. Custis to Francis Nelson, June 17, 1854. ARHO.

<sup>134</sup> G.W.P. Custis to F. Nelson, December 11, 1850 and April 3, 1851, Custis Papers. William and Mary College. ARHO.

<sup>135</sup> Dec 5, [1856?] Mary Lee to Custis Lee, Mss1 L51 606, Custis Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>136</sup> Mary Lee to Robert E. Lee, October 2, 1857. ARHO.

<sup>137</sup> G.W.P. Custis to William O. Winston, January 28, 1857. ARHO.

<sup>138</sup> G.W.P. Custis's will, probated on December 7, 1857, is located in the Manuscript records of Alexandria County, VA. Copy in ARHO.

<sup>139</sup> Robert E. Lee to George Washington Custis Lee, May 17, 1858. ARHO.

<sup>140</sup> Robert E. Lee to George Washington Custis Lee, May 1860. R.E., Lee Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>141</sup> The slaves rented in 1859/60 were: Leante Bingham, Jim Bingham, Mary Norris, Julieanne Check, Catherine Check, Henry Check, Catherine Burke, Marion Burke, Agnes Burke, and Robert Parks in addition to "several negroes" unidentified in the accounts as rented. "Transcript of R.E. Lee's Return to the Court as Executor of G.W.P. Custis' Estate for Period June 1859 to June 1860 Confirmed and ordered to be recorded August 1861. Alexandria Will Book 8, page 92. ARHO.



<sup>142</sup> “Transcript of R.E. Lee’s Return to the Court as Executor of G.W.P. Custis’ Estate for Period 1857 and 1858, Will Book 7, page 485. ARHO.

<sup>143</sup> *National Intelligencer*, June 29, 1858.

<sup>144</sup> Nelligan, 424-425.

<sup>145</sup> R.E. Lee to George Washington Custis Lee, July 4, 1860, R.E. Lee Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>146</sup> Lee had commanded the Federal forces at Harpers Ferry during the raid there in October of 1859. Freedman, *Lee*. I, 395f. See also Nelligan, 426.

<sup>147</sup> Robert E. Lee to George Washington Custis Lee, January 23, 1861. ARHO

<sup>148</sup> Mary Lee to Robert E. Lee, May 9, 1861, Ely-DeButts Collection. Library of Congress. ARHO.

<sup>149</sup> At the same time as this group of soldiers crossed, another smaller group crossed the Aqueduct Bridge from Georgetown, while a third regiment came ashore in Alexandria. Nelligan, 463.

<sup>150</sup> Robert E. Lee to Mary Custis Lee, April 24, 1832, Ely-Debutts Collection. Library of Congress. ARHO

## CHAPTER FOUR

<sup>1</sup> R.E. Lee to Mary Lee, December 25, 1861. ARHO

<sup>2</sup> A *tete-de-pont* is a field earthwork created to protect a bridge.

<sup>3</sup> Clark Emmons, *History of the Seventh Regiment of New York* (New York: The Seventh Regiment 1890): 201.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 199-201.

<sup>5</sup> “Letter from the 8th Regiment Headquarters of General Sandford”, *New York Times*. May 29, 1861. “Washington Sunday June 9, 1861.” *New York Times*, June 13, 1861.

<sup>6</sup> Major-General Charles W. Stanford. May 25, 1861 as quoted in *The History of the Seventh Regiment*.

<sup>7</sup> Diary of S.P. Heintzelman. May 26, 1861. Heintzelman Papers. Library of Congress. Manuscript Division; Nelligan, 465.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Lee to General Sandford, May 30, 1861. Transcript in Lee Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>9</sup> *New York Tribune* May 27, 1861. ARHO.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Lee to General Sandford, May 30, 1861.; “An inventory of the slaves at Arlington belonging to the estates of G.W.P. Custis taken January 1, 1858.” Will Book 7. Alexandria County Records: 368-378. ARHO.

<sup>11</sup> *New York Tribune* May 27, 1861.

<sup>12</sup> Fred W. Conklin to “Charley.” December 16, 1861. ARHO. Robert Goldthwaite Carter, April 25, 1862 as quoted in *Four Brothers in Blue* (Washington, Press of Gibson Bros., Inc., 1913).

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Reidy, “Coming from the Shadow of the Past: The Transition from Slavery to Freedom at Freedmen’s Village, 1863-1900.” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*: 408.



<sup>14</sup> McDowell to Mary Lee, May 30, 1861. McDowell took over the command of General Sandford before Sandford had the opportunity to answer the letter written by Mary Lee. McDowell, therefore, addressed the issues she raised. Local and northern newspapers commented on the odd location of the headquarters, outside of the mansion instead of in it. Most gave the rationale that by not living a tent and not in the mansion, the General endeared himself to the soldiers, who were living in tents on the heights. *New York Daily News* July 9, 1861. *Washington Republican* July 12, 1861: 3. William Howard Russell. *My Diary North and South* (Boston: T.O.H.P. Burnham 1863): 395.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel P. Heintzelman, MS Diary, Thursday June 20, 1861; June 8, 1861 *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* NY.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Coast Survey Map of the Ground of Occupation and Defense of the Division of the U.S. Army in Virginia in Command of Brigadier General Irvin McDowell. 1861. See also, William Howard Russell's *My Diary North and South*. (Boston: T.O.H.P. Burnham 1863): 195.

<sup>17</sup> A lunette is a military fortification with two projecting faces and two parallel flanks.

<sup>18</sup> U. S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 70 Volumes (Washington, D.C.: The Government Printing Office, 1880-1901): Volume 5, 11, 678-84.; *Pictorial War Record*. January 28, 1882; Rose, C.B. Jr. "Civil War Forts in Arlington." (October 1960). *Arlington Historical Magazine*.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*: "Our Camps and Strongholds." (New York) June 15, 1861.

<sup>21</sup> Diary entry July 8, 1861 in William Howard Russell's *My Diary North and South*. (Boston: T.O.H.P. Burnham 1863): 394.

<sup>22</sup> November 14, 1861. Alfred L. Castleman, *The Army of the Potomac: Behind the Scenes*: (Milwaukee, Strickland & Company 1863): 53. See also, Markie Williams to Mary Lee, July 25, 1862. Virginia Historical Society, Custis Letters.

<sup>23</sup> For more information about Selina Grey and the Washington relics see, Karen Byrne. "Selina Gray." *Cultural Resource Magazine*. No 4. 1998. Most of the Washington relics that were left in the house at the time of the Lee family's departure were taken by the Federal authorities and placed in the Patent Office for the duration of the War. After the war, Mary Lee sued the federal government unsuccessfully for their return. Ruth Preston Rose. "Mrs. General Lee's attempts to regain her possessions after the Civil War." In *American History Magazine*. October 1978.

<sup>24</sup> R.E. Lee to Mary Custis (Daughter), December 25, 1861. ARHO

<sup>25</sup> Alan T. Nolan, *Lee Considered: General Robert E. Lee and Civil War History*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1991).

<sup>26</sup> As the Arlington estate was located on Virginia state land occupied by the Union forces, the slaves did not fall into the narrow category of those freed through the Emancipation Proclamation of September 1862.

<sup>27</sup> The former Arlington slaves who were heads of household at Freedmen's Village during the first years of its establishment, included, Margaret Taylor, Austin Brannen, Lawrence Parks, William Parks, Martha Smith, James Parks, Daniel Richardson, and members of the Syphax family. Bettie Taylor, Sallie Norris, and Lousia Bingham. *Valuation of Property Holdings of Freedmen's Villagers, Heads of Family and Owner of Improvement*. From Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the District of Columbia for Bureau of Refugees, Freedman and Abandoned Lands 1865-1869, in Arlington House Archives. See also, National Archives. Microfilm Publication. M1055 Roll 21. Miscellaneous Reports and Lists.



<sup>28</sup> Edward Dicey, *Six Months in the Federal States* (London 1863): 16-18.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>30</sup> Decker and McSween, 61; See also *Six Months in the Federal States*, entry for March 1862.

<sup>31</sup> Fort Whipple, later removed, became the site of Fort Myer which exists today.

<sup>32</sup> Anthony Trollope *North America* ed. 1968, (New York: Harper & Brothers 1862, 1968 edition): 315

<sup>33</sup> D. H. Rucker to M.C. Meigs. Washington, D.C. June 24, 1863. See also, Map of Arlington Stables. June 1865. National Archives, Cartographic Division. F-110.

<sup>34</sup> Libel of Information filed in United States v. All the Rights, Titles of Robert E. Lee etc., February, 1864. ARHO.

<sup>35</sup> President Abraham Lincoln. 6 January 1864 as cited in 43d Congress 1st Session. Senate Mis. Doc. No. 96. *Memorial of G.W. Custis Lee of Virginia Setting Forth his Claim to "Arlington" &c.* April 6, 1874.

<sup>36</sup> Arlington Mill was destroyed in August of 1861, soon after the military occupation of Alexandria Virginia. *Pictorial War Record: Battles of the Late Civil War*. V.1 (New York: Stearns & Co.) 1882: 303.

<sup>37</sup> The final fate of the Arlington estate was decided in a Supreme Court decision which determined that the taking of the property from the Lee family was not legal. Deed transferring the property from G.W.C. Lee to the United States Government. March 31, 1883. ARHO.

<sup>38</sup> For more information on the history of Freedmen's Village, see Joseph Reidy's "Coming from the Shadow of the Past: The Transition from Slavery to Freedom at Freedmen's Village, 1863-1900 in *the Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. (October 1987); Paul Skeels Peirce, *The Freedman's Bureau: A Chapter in the History of Reconstruction* (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa 1901); *Act to Establish Bureau for the Relief of Freedman and Refugees* March 3, 1865. *U.S. Statutes at Large, Treaties and Proclamations of the U. S. of America*. Volume 13. (Boston 1866): 507-509.

<sup>39</sup> L. Col. Elias M. Green to M.C. Meigs, Quarter Master General, July 22, 1863. ARHO.

<sup>40</sup> Freedmen's Village at Arlington. National Archives and Records Admin. RG 92. F110.; *Harpers Weekly*. (New York). May 7, 1864.

<sup>41</sup> John Tweedale, Chief Clerk to Secretary of War to Quarter Master General, March 27, 1888, George T. Borrett, *Letters from Canada and the United States*.

<sup>42</sup> David Donald Ed. *Inside Lincoln's Cabinet: The Civil War Diaries of Salmon P. Chase* (New York, London and Toront, 1954): 235 in Joseph Reidy "Coming from the Shadow of the Past: The Transition from Slavery to Freedom at Freedmen's Village, 1863-1900," in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (October 1987).

<sup>43</sup> During this time, from 1863-1868, there were five government farms in the area called "camps". They were Springdale, Rucker, Wadsworth and Collins. The exact location of the farms is unknown, though some were most likely within the boundaries of the Arlington Estate. Reidy, 414. See also *Harpers Weekly* (New York) May 7, 1864.

<sup>44</sup> Riedy, 426.

<sup>45</sup> In an omnibus act approved by President Lincoln on July 17, 1862, Section 18 provided: "That the President of the US shall have power, whenever in his opinion it shall be expedient, to purchase cemetery grounds and cause them to be securely enclosed to be used as a national cemetery for the soldiers who shall die in the service of the county." Monro MacCloskey, *Hallowed Ground: Our National Cemeteries*. (New York, R. Rosen Press 1968).



<sup>46</sup>The Old Soldiers Home, which held approximately 6000 graves, was officially closed the same day that Arlington Cemetery opened. *Congressional Serial No 1230-38th Congress, 2nd Session. House Executive Document for Quarter Master General.*; M.C. Meigs's Report to Secretary of War dated November 8, 1864 by Capt. James M. Moore. NARA I RG 92.

<sup>47</sup>The Battle of the Wilderness was a tactical Confederate victory. General Grant lost more than twice as many soldiers (about 18,000 to 8,000) as did Lee.

<sup>48</sup>Meigs to Brig General D. H. Rucker Chief Quarter Master General, June 15, 1864. NARA I RG 92, Consolidated Correspondence File, Old Military and Civilian Records.

<sup>49</sup>A member of Company G of the 67 Penn Infantry became the first soldier to be buried at Arlington. Private William Christman died on May 11, 1864. L. Reinhart, Rebel, N.C. is listed as Running No 1. in a later register. He died on May 17, 1864.

<sup>50</sup>Meigs to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, August 5, 1871; M.C. Meigs to Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War. April 14, 1873. NARA I. RG 92, Consolidated Correspondence File, Old Military and Civilian Records.

<sup>51</sup>General Meigs to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, June 15, 1864. NARA I RG 92 Consolidated Correspondence File, Old Military and Civilian Records.

<sup>52</sup>Report by Cemetery Official to Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, June 10, 1867. NARA I. RG 92. Box 6. NW-81E.576

<sup>53</sup>Meigs to Secretary of War F. G. Barbadoes, August 3, 1871. NARA I. RG 92, Consolidated Correspondence File, Old Military and Civilian Records.

<sup>54</sup>Letter to Brigadier General D. H. Ruckers from officer at Arlington (name illegible), December 17, 1865. NARA I. RG 92. Box 132, Entry 576.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Thomas, T. Status report on the condition of Arlington National Cemetery, Aug 31, 1867. NARA I, RG 92.

<sup>57</sup>Fort McPherson was begun south of Arlington House in 1864. The military fort was never finished, nor did it see military action.

<sup>58</sup>Report on the Condition of Arlington Cemetery to General Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, June 10, 1867. National Archives. RG 92. Box 6. NM-81 E.576.

<sup>59</sup>George T. Borrett, Letter dated Oct 6, 1864 in *Letters from Canada and the United States*. (London: 1865): 235.

<sup>60</sup>Letter to Brigadier General D. H. Ruckers from officer at Arlington (name illegible). December 17, 1865. NARA I, RG 92. Box 132, Entry 576. For the beginnings of the court case brought by the Lee family to regain their property after the Civil War see, "Memorial of George Washington Custis Lee of Virginia." April 6, 1874. 43rd Congress. 1st Session.

<sup>61</sup>M.C. Meigs, Quarter Master General to Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War, April 14, 1873. NARA I, RG 92.

<sup>62</sup>This speech, delivered by General Garfield, later the president of the United States, was quoted in a letter written by Benjamin Austin, County Clerk, Alexandria to General Whitiaker. December 10, 1882. National Archives. RG 92. Memorial Day was first proclaimed an official holiday on May 5, 1868 by General John Logan. *Report of the Arlington Memorial Amphitheater Commission* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office 1923): 8.



<sup>63</sup> Charles Russell Lowell to Mrs. Lowell, May 25, 1861. Letter as cited in Edward W. Emerson. *Life and Letters of Charles Russell Lowell*. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Company 1907):209. Charles was the brother of the famous American poet, James Russell Lowell. Charles would die as a result of battle wounds in October of 1864.

## CHAPTER FIVE

<sup>1</sup> *Report on the Inspection of the National Cemeteries in the Department of Virginia* to Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War. Washington, D.C. June 10, 1867. Records of the Quartermaster General's Office [RG 92]. Box 6. NM-81 E. 576 National Archives I; Quartermaster General M.C. Meigs to Secretary of War. Edwin Stanon. April 14, 1873. RG 92. Box 6. The memorial was created under the superintendence of Colonel Ludington. *Report to the Secretary of War for the year 1866*. RG92, Box 6. *Congressional Serial No 1285 39th Congress. Second Session House Executive Documents*. 1866-1867. NARA I.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson R. East, Superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery to L. Thomas, Adj. General Orf. A., Washington, D.C., August 31, 1867. National Archives I. RG 92.

<sup>3</sup> *National Intelligencer* (1866) as quoted in *In Honored Glory: Arlington National Cemetery the Final Post*. by Philip Bigler. (Arlington, Va.: Vandamere Press 1986): 30. A golgotha means a place of great suffering.

<sup>4</sup> "Decoration Day." *Washington Chronicle*. May 30, 1874; "Notes on Research for South Garden." ARHO.

<sup>5</sup> Also in this report are listed the numbers of individuals buried at Arlington as follows: "8191 White Soldiers, 3720 Colored Soldiers and Contrabands" Thompson R. East, Superintendent, Arlington Cemetery, VA. "A Report and Conditions and Requirements of the Cemetery under his Charge. Aug. 24, 1867." NARA I. RG 92. Series NM81E225. Title: Consolidated Correspondence File, Old Military and Civilian Records.

<sup>6</sup> According to the "Secretary of War's Report for November 20, 1868" in *Congressional Serial No. 1367* 40th Congress, 3rd Session 1868-69, House Executive Documents the total number of graves of Civil War soldiers reported was 316, 233. Only the occupants of 175, 764 were identified. Seventy-two national cemeteries were reported. NARA I.

<sup>7</sup> According to the Report of the Secretary of War for the year 1866, the dead were disinterred from all parts of Maryland and Virginia within a circuit of thirty-five miles from Washington and "removed to the national cemetery at Arlington to the number" of approximately 2000. See *Congressional Serial No. 1285 - 39th Congress*, Second Session House Executive Documents 1866-1867. This was over three times as many as the next largest of the nine national cemeteries within the District of Washington in 1869. This included 15, 585 Union soldiers and 347 Confederate soldiers. *Congressional Serial No 1412*. 41st Congress. Second Session. House Executive Documents 1869-70. October 1869. NARA I. ARHO.

<sup>8</sup> Report to the Secretary of War. "Statement showing the number of national cemeteries completed in the fiscal year ending June 30, 1867." November 1867. *Congressional Serial No 1324*. 40th Congress. 2nd Session. 1867-68 House Executive Documents. Library of Congress.

<sup>9</sup> Though the *Washington Chronicle* "Decoration Day." May 30, 1876, states that this willow was the same tree that (according to a legend repeated by Union soldiers) was planted by G.W.P. Custis from a twig of Alexander Pope's willow at Twigham, and therefore was the origin of all weeping willows in the United States, this is most likely incorrect. The afore described weeping willow was planted by John Custis at Abingdon in the late eighteenth century. See *Scribner's Monthly: An Illustrated Magazine for the People*, "The Weeping Willow", V2 Issue 4, August 1871:386. See also Eleanor Lee Templeman. "Abingdon, Alexander-Custis Plantation," in *Arlington Heritage*.



<sup>10</sup> Dan Sealy, Resource Manager, George Washington Memorial Parkway to Jennifer Hanna, Historical Landscape Architect, April 20, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Historic photographs dating to 1864 and 1865 suggest that the fence around the kitchen garden may have been both post and rail and a wood board fence. A drawing from the 1850s shows an entrance gate with vertical pickets.

<sup>12</sup> Thompson R. East to Quartermaster General Rucker. "Report in Regard to Condition of Cemetery." Aug 31, 1867. NARA I Consolidated Correspondence File, Old Military and Civilian Records. <http://www.va.gov>.

<sup>13</sup> For detail of Arlington farm building use by Federal Army during the Civil War see map, "Arlington Corral Arlington Virginia, July 25, 1865." NARA II. RG 92. Cartographic Division. F-110 sheets 3 & 4 of 9; For references to trees being cut at Arlington Spring see Dicey, Edward. *Six Months in the Federal States* (London 1863):16-18. Karl Decker and Angus McSween. *Historic Arlington* (Decker and McSween Publishing Company: Washington, D.C. 1892): 70. D. H. Rucker to M.C. Meigs. Washington, D.C. June 24, 1863. NARA I RG 92. Series: NM81E225, Consolidated Correspondence File.

<sup>14</sup> John F. Trowbridge, *The South: A Tour of its Battlefields and Ruined Cities*. (Hartford, Conn.: L Stebbins, 1866): 82.

<sup>15</sup> Bobbi Schildt, "Freedmen's Village." *Northern Virginia Heritage*. February 1985: 10-20.

<sup>16</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for 1866*. Congressional Serial #1285. Series of House Executive Documents. NARA I. "Freedmen's Village, Arlington Virginia" in *Harper's Weekly* (New York) May 7, 1864. See also Joseph P. Reidy "Coming from the Shadow of the Past: The Transition from Slavery to Freedom at Freedmen's Village, 1863-1900." In *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. October 1987: 403-428.

<sup>17</sup> "Inventory of Residents and Valuation of the Buildings and Improvement at the Freedmen's Village in Arlington 1868." Freedmen's Village Vertical File. ARHO.

<sup>18</sup> William Syphax to Secretary of War, William W. Belknap. Washington City, January 27, 1876. Original NARA I. Copy in the Neligan Date Files. ARHO.

<sup>19</sup> William Syphax, Messenger at the Department of Interior, to President Andrew Johnson, May 11, 1865. Records of the Department of Justice (RG NARA I. Copy in Date Files, ARHO.

<sup>20</sup> Cornelius Syphax also worked for the federal government in the Arlington National Cemetery and lived with his mother on the Syphax "interference" as it was known by the Quartermaster General's office. William Syphax to William Belknap, Secretary of War. January 27, 1876. NARA I, copy ARHO.

<sup>21</sup> Act to Establish and to Protect National Cemeteries. February 27, 1867.

<sup>22</sup> According to D.H. Rhodes, in the late 1890s there were only four small iron gates for entrance; at Ord and Weitzel, Sheridan, McClellan and the Fort Myer gate . . . also a small service gate known as the Gravel pit gate located in the south wall at a point about 200 yards east of what is now the west or Confederate gate. See David Rhodes. "Notes Pertaining to the Old Flower Garden south of Arlington Mansion by D. H. Rhodes. Landscape Gardener at Arlington. Where he has been employed since 1873." Office of the Quartermaster Supply Officer. Washington, D.C., Circa 1930, ARHO.

<sup>23</sup> The replacement of all wooden headboards with the specified headstones was completed nationwide in 1877 at a total cost of \$786,360. A balance of \$192,000 remained and it was then recommended to Congress that this money be used to mark those graves in national cemeteries not included by the Act of March 3, 1873, and for the erection of permanent markers at all known soldiers' graves outside the national cemeteries. An act, approved February 3, 1879, authorized these expenditures and the second gravestone program was undertaken. Though Arlington was



included under the 1873 cemetery appropriation, replacement had not yet begun by November of 1874. *Monthly Report of the Condition of National Cemetery Arlington Virginia*. November 1874. NARA I. ARHO. For further information about 1873 and 1879 Acts see website for Department of Veterans Affairs. Office of Facility Management at <http://www.va.gov/>

<sup>24</sup> For more information on William Saunders see Charles Birnbaum and Robin Karson. Editors. *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*. (McGraw-Hill: New York City 2000): 327-330. Determination of the exact recommendations and work of William Saunders at Arlington National Cemetery requires further study.

<sup>25</sup> *Report of the Secretary of War*. Nov 30, 1870. Congressional Serial No. 1446-41st Congress. 3rd Session. 1870-1871 House Executive Documents. See also, Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs to [?]; Washington, D.C. August 10, 1870. ARHO.

<sup>26</sup> The two names of the separate sections of the cemetery were defined by the Quartermaster General's Office during the late 1860s. See [unnamed Employee of Arlington Cemetery] to Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War. Washington, D.C. June 10, 1867. National Archives I. RG 92. Series NM81E225. Title: Consolidated Correspondence File, Old Military and Civilian Records.

<sup>27</sup> *Monthly Report of on the Condition of the National Cemetery at Arlington for the month of April 1869*. NARA I. RG 92. Box 132. Copy in date files, ARHO. For road arrangement see maps: *U.S. National Cemetery, Arlington, Va. 1869*. Quartermaster Generals Office, copy ARHO Map files. Original unknown location.; *Part of Arlington, Virginia Surveyed for Gen. M.C. Meigs, Quartermaster General, U.S. Coast Survey. A.D. Bache Supdt., 1864*. Copy in Library of Congress, Cartographic Division. Copy ARHO Map Files.

<sup>28</sup> "Arlington." November 14, 1874: 620. ARHO.

<sup>29</sup> The exact location of the flag pole during the subsequent restorations of Arlington House and grounds has been a subject of interest and contention for the past eighty years. No flag pole is illustrated in any documentation prior to the Civil War. The flag pole is first mentioned by William Howard Russell in his diary entry for July 8, 1861, printed in *My Diary North and South* (Boston : T.O.H.P. Burnham, 1863): 394. The collection of photographs taken by Andrews Russell 1864, however, does not show a flag pole. Yet, the map created to inventory the site prior to the formal formation of the cemetery (1864) does show a flag staff located to the immediate east of the portico, approximately twenty feet from the portico steps. See endnote 26. The first official mention of the flagpole is in the *Monthly Report of the Cemetery Superintendent August 1874*. NARA I RG 92. Copy Date files, ARHO. See Memorandum, Report on Flagpole at Lee Mansion National Memorial, by Murray H. Nelligan. Randle B. Truett, Chief National Memorials and Historic Sites Division to the Superintendent. February 16, 1951. ARHO.

<sup>30</sup> *Monthly Report for the Arlington National Cemetery*, August 1867. NARA I. RG 92. Box 132. Copy in date files, ARHO.

<sup>31</sup> Rhodes, "Historic Memories of Arlington National Cemetery by David H. Rhodes, Landscape Gardener at Arlington from April 14, 1873 to March 1930." Unpublished manuscript [1930]. ARHO.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. See also Benjamin Marchus, Ed. *Washington during War Time; a series of papers showing the military, political, and social phases during 1861 to 1865. Official souvenir of the Thirty-sixth annual encampment of the Grand army of the republic; collected and ed. by Marcus Benjamin under the direction of the Committee on literature for the encampment*, (Washington, D.C.: The National Tribune co. 1902): 83.

<sup>33</sup> *Monthly Report of on the Condition of the National Cemetery at Arlington for the month of April 1869*; Monthly report for March 1871, NARA I, RG 92, Entry No. 576, Box No. 132.

<sup>34</sup> *Monthly Report*, April 30, 1869, NARA. I, RG 92, Consolidated Correspondence File.



<sup>35</sup> *Monthly Report*, April 1871, NARA. I, RG 92, Consolidated Correspondence File

<sup>36</sup> Rhodes, "Notes Pertaining to the Old Flower Garden south of Arlington Mansion by D. H. Rhodes, Landscape Gardener at Arlington. Where he has been employed since 1873." Office of the Quartermaster Supply Officer, Washington, D.C. , Undated, Circa 1930.

<sup>37</sup> *Monthly Report*, August 1868, *Monthly Report*, April 1869, *Monthly Report*, Nov 30, 1872. Thompson R. East, supt. NARA I, RG 92. Entry 576. Box 132.

<sup>38</sup> *Monthly Report*, November 30, 1872, *Monthly Report of the Condition of the National Cemetery at Arlington Virginia for the months of September and of October* 1870. RG 92. Entry No 576. Box # 132. NARA I.

<sup>39</sup> Rhodes, "Notes Pertaining to the Old Flower Garden . . .", 2.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. see also *Monthly Report*, November 30, 1872, *Monthly Report of the Condition of the National Cemetery at Arlington Virginia for the months of September and of October* 1870. RG 92. Entry No 576. Box # 132. NARA I.

<sup>41</sup> During this time, the eastern room of the southern slave quarters was occupied by building materials, the center section tools and the far room by the watchman and laborer. (1873 and for 7-8 years after.) From 1885 until 1930 this building was home of J. H Marcey and family in order that he might oversee the greenhouse and stock of plants in the absence of the Landscape Gardener, who for many years, had extensive detached duties at other points to perform. D. H. Rhodes, "Historic Memories of Arlington . . .", 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Monthly Report of the Condition of the National Cemetery at Arlington, Virginia* August 1874. NARA I, RG 92. Entry 576 Box 132.

<sup>43</sup> *Monthly Report of the Condition of the National Cemetery at Arlington Virginia*, November 1874. Frederick Kauffman, Supt. NARA I RG 92. Entry 576 Box 132.

<sup>44</sup> Major Myers to Quarter Master General, May 25, 1874. NARA I RG 92.

<sup>45</sup> These trees were purchased, in six inch pots, from the John Saul Nursery at 7th Street Washington, D.C. Rhodes, "Memories": 10. ARHO.

<sup>46</sup> Montgomery Meigs to Captain A. F. Rockwell, Assistant Quartermaster General, Washington, D.C., October 3, 1874. NARA I RG 92. Consolidated Correspondence of the Quartermaster General. ARHO.

<sup>47</sup> *History of Government Provided Headstones and Markers*. <http://www.cem.va.gov>, 11/30/1999.

<sup>48</sup> "The Day of Decoration: The Grand Army Ceremonies at Arlington Today." *National Republican*. May 30, 1874. Washington, D.C.

<sup>49</sup> *Report of the Inspector of National Cemeteries for the Year 1874*. Executive Document #28, Sen. 43d Congress 2nd Session.

<sup>50</sup> "Decoration Day" *Washington Chronicle*. Tuesday, May 30, 1876.

<sup>51</sup> Rhodes defined the area as that north of a line drawn from Fort Myer's gate to Sheridan Gate.

<sup>52</sup> Decker and McSween, 68.

<sup>53</sup> Annon. Three Visits to Arlington. Ca 1870. Virginia Historical Society. Richmond Virginia. Call Number: I 234 A7 T45.



<sup>54</sup> Homer Gage. *A Boy in Washington in 1878*. Worcester, Mass., Priv. print. [The Davis Press] 1938.

<sup>55</sup> "Arlington." November 14, 1874. From Photostate Negative Files, ARHO Archives

<sup>56</sup> Mary Lee to "friend" 1866. As quoted in Philip Bigler's *In Honored Glory: Arlington National Cemetery, The Final Post*, (Arlington, Va.: Vandamere Press: 1986), 30.

<sup>57</sup> Ruth P. Rose, "Mrs. Robert E. Lee vs. the U.S. Congress." *Northern Virginia Heritage*, Vol III, #2 June 1981.

<sup>58</sup> Mary Lee to Mrs. Cocke, June 20, 1873, John Hartwelle Cocke Collection, #5680, University of Virginia Library as quoted in Mary P. Coulling's *The Lee Girls*. (John F. Blair: Wiston -Salem NC 1994, 3rd Printing): 179.

<sup>59</sup> The case was argued in the Supreme Court on the 18th and 19th of October 1882. Opinion of the Court was rendered by Mr. Justice Miller on December 4, 1882. General George Washington Custis Lee agreed to sell the property to the United States for \$150,000.00 and signed the deed on March 31, 1883.

<sup>60</sup> Copy of deed in Photostat Files, ARHO. May 14, 1883. Teste, Benjamin Austin. G.W.C. Lee. Original in Arlington County Court House.

<sup>61</sup> Regulations of the Army. (Par. 138, as amended by G.O. 26, of 1883.) As cited in letter, March 27, 1888 to Quartermaster General. ARHO.

<sup>62</sup> S.B Holabird, Quartermaster General to Lt. Col. B.D. Card, Deputy Quarter Master General. War Department, Washington, D.C. December 23, 1887; C. [?]. Dawn, Deputy Quartermaster General to Quartermaster General, Washington, D.C. March 27, 1888. This latter letter included an account of the history of Freedmen's Village as well as an inventory of properties associated with agricultural lands of the Freedmen's Village residents. The inventory was accompanied by a map. *Map of the Arlington Estate, Va. January 1888*. LC Cartographic Division G388 A64 185. U5. ARHO.

## CHAPTER SIX

<sup>1</sup> Quartermaster General, U.S. Army to Depot Quartermaster. Washington, D.C. August 14, 1885; ARHO *Historic Structure Report: Architectural Data Section, (Phase II)*: (Denver Service Center, Northeast Team, National Park Service, Department of Interior 1985): 61.

<sup>2</sup> Rhodes, "Notes Pertaining to the Old Flower Garden south of Arlington Mansion by D. H. Rhodes. Landscape Gardener at Arlington. Where he has been employed since 1873." Office of the Quartermaster Supply Officer. Washington, D.C. [1930]. See also, "Expenditures on Arlington House, 1874-1895," as compiled from *Annual Reports of the Cemetery Superintendent* in Charles Snell's *Historic Structure Report, Historical Data Section*. (Denver Service Center, National Park Service, Department of Interior 1985): 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Cemetery Superintendent*. January 8, 1889. RG 92 Entry 576 Box 133. Arlington National Cemetery Va.

<sup>4</sup> "Arlington National Cemetery" in Historical Records of the Cemetery Division. 1894, ARHO; Rhodes, 10. *Monthly Report of the Condition of the National Cemetery at Arlington Virginia*, Jan 1889. NARA I RG 92. Entry 576 Box 132.

<sup>5</sup> One of Peter Henderson's most famous horticultural books was *Gardening for Pleasure: A guide to the Amateur in the Fruit Vegetable and Flower Garden* (New York : O. Judd Company, 1875); The Olmsted Quotes are cited in Henry Hope Reed and Sophia Duckworth's *Central Park: A History and Guide*. (New York, C. N. Potter, 1967): 2 and 46.



<sup>6</sup> Jennifer Hanna. *Ornamental Garden Design: The Rise of Floricultural Publications and the Role of James Vick, Rochester Seed House Owner* (Thesis, Cornell University 1997): 93-121.

<sup>7</sup> Rhodes, "Notes Pertaining to the Old Flower Garden . . .": 3.

<sup>8</sup> Rhodes, "Notes Pertaining to the Old Flower Garden . . .": 3. Photograph, in *Fame's Eternal Camping Ground: Beautiful Arlington, Burial Place of America's Illustrious Dead*. Enoch A. Chase in *National Geographic Magazine*. 630. Photographer, Charles Martin.

<sup>9</sup> Letter, Anon. May 6, 1888. ARHO.

<sup>10</sup> The cornice was inscribed with the names of Washington, Lincoln, Grant and Farragut; its columns with the names of Meade, McPherson, Sedgwick, Reynolds, Humphreys, Garfield, Mansfield and Thomas. John B. Osborne, *The Story of Arlington* (1899): 35.

<sup>11</sup> "Where Sheridan Will Lie: Something about Arlington Cemetery." *New York Times*. Aug 9, 1888. ARHO: Karl and McSween, 88.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Rear Admiral David D. Porter was born June 8, 1813 in Chester Pennsylvania. During the Civil War he was a commander in the Navy. He passed away in February of 1891.

<sup>14</sup> According to Decker and McSween, the slope was reserved as the burial place of "highly distinguished officers of either the army or the navy." *Old Arlington*, 88.

<sup>15</sup> Crook died on March 21, 1890 in Chicago while in command of the Department of the West. He was originally buried in Oakland, Maryland, but was moved to Section 2 of Arlington National Cemetery on November 11, 1898 due to the neglect of his grave site in Maryland.

<sup>16</sup> Rhodes, "Notes Pertaining to the Old Flower Garden . . .": 10. ARHO.

<sup>17</sup> Rhodes, "Historic Memories of Arlington . . ." [1930]. "Granolithic Pavement Around Mansion at Arlington National Cemetery," Nov. 8, 1893, Depot Quartermaster's Office. ARHO. The Grand Army of the Republic was founded in Decatur, Illinois on April 6, 1866 by Benjamin F. Stephenson, membership was limited to honorably discharged veterans of the Union Army, Navy, Marine Corps or the Revenue Cutter Service who had served between April 12, 1861 and April 9, 1865.

<sup>18</sup> See map, *Arlington, Va Military Reservation, Fort Myer and the National Cemetery with Annex showing the road to Aqueduct Bridge*. (Depot Quartermaster General's Office, Washington, D.C. Jan10, 1894). Copy map files ARHO.

<sup>19</sup> Frank L. Averill, *Guide to, and maps of, the national capital and vicinity, including the fortifications* (Washington, D.C., Law reporter print 1892): 19. "The Fort Drive: Major Powell's Proposed Circuit of the War-Time Defenses, Historic Remains about this City." *Washington, D.C. Evening Star* May 23, 1896.

<sup>20</sup> *Harper's Weekly*. May 29, 1886, Vol. 30: 347.

<sup>21</sup> Decker and McSween, *Historic Arlington*, 28-29.

<sup>22</sup> Stable was destroyed by fire on July 21, 1904. New stable blueprints dated September 14, 1904. Contract for constructing stable awarded to R.E. Boiseu of Washington 1907 for 6495.00 The new stable was 67' 8" long by 34' 4" wide RG 92. File # 85160 Box 1037. Office of the Quartermaster General 1800-1914 Document file.



<sup>23</sup> Iza Duffus Hardy, *Historic Buildings of America as Seen and Described by Famous Writers*. Esther Singleton, Ed, (New York, Dodd, Mead & company, 1906): 15.

<sup>24</sup> Arlington National Cemetery was segregated from its beginning. However, segregation was not formally mapped and organized until the early twentieth century. As described in newspapers and historical accounts, "The portion of the Cemetery lying west of the house is devoted to the white soldiers, that on the northern side is allotted to the black soldiers. George C. Evans, Editor. *Visitors' Companion at Our Nation's Capital: A Complete Guide for Washington and its Environs et al.* (George G. Evans: Philadelphia 1892): 153. See also, Thompson R. East, Arlington Super. To M.C. Meigs. August 31, 1868. NARA I. RG 92. Office of the Quartermaster General 1800-1914 Document file., M.C. Meigs to Secretary of War Edwin Staton. April 14, 1873. NARA I, RG 92. Office of the Quartermaster General 1800-1914 Document file.

<sup>25</sup> John B. Osborne, *The Story of Arlington. A history and description of the estate and national cemetery, containing a complete list of officers of the army and navy interred there, with biographical sketches of heroes of the Civil and Spanish wars, and notable memorial addresses and poems Washington, D.C.* ( Press of J.F. Sheiry 1899): 4.

<sup>26</sup> U. S. Military Reservations. National Cemeteries and Military Parks, etc. Revised Edition, 1916. 411. (Act of April 18, 1900 as amended June 3, 1902; 32 Stat. 293).

<sup>27</sup> Nan Netherton, *Arlington County in Virginia: A Pictorial History*, (Norfolk: Donning Co. 1987), 98-102.

<sup>28</sup> Wayne D. Rasmussen, "Arlington - An Agricultural Experiment farm in a changing Era." January 14, 1966. Lecture transcript. Arlington County Library Vertical Files. Agricultural Farm.

<sup>29</sup> *The Rambler*, December 8, 1918. ARHO

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, April 28, 1904.

<sup>31</sup> L'Enfant was born in Paris, France August 2, 1754 and died June 14, 1825. He was buried at Green Hill in Prince George County, Maryland. The site of the burial in Arlington was selected by the board of Commissioners with the assistance of the Army Captain A. B. Shattuck, in charge of National Cemeteries. [www.arlingtoncemetery.org](http://www.arlingtoncemetery.org).

<sup>32</sup> L'Enfant. *Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States*. Facsimile of a manuscript by Peter Charles L'Enfant in the Library of Congress. Published in Washington by the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, 1887.

<sup>33</sup> "L'Enfant's Remains: Suggestions that they be placed in Congressional Cemetery.": Washington, D.C. *Evening Star*: (July 7, 1904): 1. See also, Helen No clay. *Our Capital on the Potomac*, (New York, London, The Century co. 1924). L'Enfant was reinterred because his grave at Green Hill was considered to be neglected.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Moore (1855-1942), who was educated and had experience in journalism, was also from Michigan. Kohler, Sue A. *The Commission of Fine Arts: 1910-1995*. (Washington, D.C.: The Commission of Fine Arts 1995): 51.

<sup>35</sup> The concept of connecting the Virginia shore with the Washington D. C. side of the Potomac was first considered in the 1880s. For in-depth discussion of the development of Arlington Memorial Bridge see Sue A. Kohler. *The Commission of Fine Arts: A Brief History 1910-1984*. Washington: Commission of Fine Arts, 1984; KressCox Associates. Historic Structures Report, Arlington Memorial Bridge. Washington: prepared for the National Park Service, 1986; Fisher, Perry G. Historical and Design Issues: Memorial Avenue and the Great Entrance to Arlington National Cemetery. In Reports prepared for Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc. May 21, 1991.



<sup>36</sup> Charles Moore to Colonel Penrose, Quartermaster General, Oct 5, 1922. Penrose responds that it will be done as money allows. ARHO.

<sup>37</sup> For instance, in February 1926 a bill was proposed outlining the use of Arlington House as a museum for trophies and emblems of the Union Army and Navy of the United States during the Civil War. Feb 17, 1926. (69th Congress, 1st Session. S3180).

<sup>38</sup> "Plan to Restore Home of Gen Lee." *Washington Post*. N.D. Copy ARHO.

<sup>39</sup> Frances Parkinson Keyes, "Letters from a Senator's Wife," in *Good Housekeeping Magazine*. August 1921.

<sup>40</sup> The cornerstone for Arlington Memorial Amphitheater was laid in 1915 and dedicated in May of 1920, following World War I. *Report of the Arlington Memorial Amphitheater Commission*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office 1923): 19 and 47.

<sup>41</sup> Charles Moore to Mrs. Henry Keyes, Aug 5, 1921. NARA 66, Records of the Commission of Fine Arts.

<sup>42</sup> Charles Moore, Chairman CFA to Quartermaster General, March 12, 1923. ARHO.

<sup>43</sup> *Restoration of the Lee Mansion, Hearing before the Joint Committee on the Library, Congress of the United States 68th Congress, First Session Pursuant to the H.J. Res. 264, Authorizing the Restoration of the Lee Mansion in the Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia, May 28, 1924.* (Washington, D.C., 1925): 5.

<sup>44</sup> *Public Resolution-No 74. 68th Congress (H. J. Res. 246.)*

<sup>45</sup> "225,000 To Restore Lee Home Asked by Army After Survey," *Evening Star*; Washington, D.C. August 15, 1925. The total costs were \$160,000 for restoration and furnishing of buildings, \$92000 for new buildings to house workers and office space. according to those listed in the official Quartermaster Generals Office report. NARA IRG 92, Entry 1891, Box 67, File 600.13

<sup>46</sup> Cost estimates for Restoration July 9, 1925. ARHO

<sup>47</sup> "Lee Memorial Plans to be Dropped." *New York Times*. October 26, 1925. ARHO

<sup>48</sup> Historic Structure Report, Data Section, 162.

<sup>49</sup> L. M. Leisenring, *The Restoration of Arlington Mansion*. An unpublished lecture given with slides at Archives Auditorium for Thomton Society. April 16, 1945. ARHO. See also, *Historic Structure Report, Data Section Volume I*: 165.

<sup>50</sup> Mariette M. Andrews, *George Washington's Country*, (New York, E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc. 1930): 144.

<sup>51</sup> War Department Bulletin No 6, March 18, 1929, and an act making appropriations to supply deficiencies in certain appropriations for the fiscal year ending June 30 1929, and prior fiscal years, to provide supplemental appropriations for the fiscal years ending June 30, 1929, and June 30, 1930 and for other purposes. As cited in Historic Structure Report, Data Section Volume I: 165.

<sup>52</sup> "Arlington House will be Restored" Sept 14, 1929. Washington, D.C., *Washington Evening Star*.

<sup>53</sup> The construction of Arlington Memorial Bridge, designed by the architectural firm McKim, Mead and White, occurred between 1926 and 1932.

<sup>54</sup> "Arlington House will be Restored" Sept 14, 1929. Washington, D.C., *Washington Evening Star*.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

- <sup>1</sup> CFA meeting minutes March 10, 1919. CFA Archives. National Building Museum. Washington, D.C.
- <sup>2</sup> Moore to Bash, Chief Construction Division, Office of the Quartermaster General. July 17, 1930. ARHO.
- <sup>3</sup> Draft of Report on Restoration of Lee Mansion. July 9, 1925. ARHO.
- <sup>4</sup> *Arlington National Cemetery, VA Plan for Work to be Done at Lee Mansion* War Department, Quartermaster Corps. Construction Service. Aug 16, 1923. ARHO Map files. No plans for the landscape east of Arlington House from this period have yet been found. *General Scheme for the Progressive Improvements to the National Cemetery* (1923) recorded the proposed 1921 changes to the circulation around Arlington House, though the changes had not yet been made. The plan also emphasized the view line between the proposed memorial bridge and the "Lee Mansion."
- <sup>5</sup> Birnbaum and Karson, Editors, essay on James Greenleaf by Ania Bass. 146-149.
- <sup>6</sup> Gilbert L. Rodier, "Arlington House" *Architectural Forum*, March 1924.
- <sup>7</sup> L. M. Leisenring, *The Restoration of Arlington Mansion*. 1945. ARHO.
- <sup>8</sup> Charles Moore to General Cheatham. Nov. 14, 1928. ARHO.
- <sup>9</sup> Leisenring, 2. Even after the house passed to NPS in July of 1933, Mortimer remained in charge.
- <sup>10</sup> Corinne Frazier, "Arlington House will Be Restored." *Washington, D.C. Evening Star*. Sept. 14, 1929.
- <sup>11</sup> "Arlington National Cemetery: Present Layout of Arlington Mansion showing approximate location of drives, walks, plantings, etc." Quartermaster General Department, ca. 1930. ARHO.
- <sup>12</sup> CFA meeting minutes 11/18/29. Moore to Colonel Bash, Nov 19, 1929. CFA Meeting Minutes 11/18/29, Exhibit L. CFA Archives.
- <sup>13</sup> Restoration of Arlington Mansion to Quartermaster General Report, April 17, 1929. ARHO.
- <sup>14</sup> L. H. Bash to Quartermaster General, Chief Engineering Division. Memorandum for Chief, Engineering Division, November 19, 1929. ARHO.
- <sup>15</sup> L. H. Bash to Louise P. Latimer. The Public Library of the District of Columbia 29, April 1929; and Louise P. Latimer to L. H. Bash, April 24, 1929.
- <sup>16</sup> Interview, by L. M. Leisenring of Mrs. Annie Baker and Mrs. Ada Thompson daughters of Thornton and Selina Grey, March 3, 1930. Transcript ARHO.
- <sup>17</sup> Elbert Cox, Assistant Historian, U.S. Department of the Interior. Memorandum for Mr. Chatelain. November 15, 1933.
- <sup>18</sup> CFA meeting minutes March 20, 1930. CFA archives
- <sup>19</sup> J.L. DeWitt Maj General, Quarter Master General to Charles Moore, Committee of Fine Arts, March 19, 1930 CFA archives.
- <sup>20</sup> Bash to Leisenring, April 9 1930. CFA archives.



<sup>21</sup> The beaux-arts style gets its name from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts academy in France. The objectives of the architectural and design program were many. Primarily, however, architects trained in the Beaux-Art attempted to establish universal architectural ideals through the study of the five classical orders. Human movement through space was to define the volume and form of the architecture as much as the ordered scheme of the design, often reflecting function or status. Marvin Trachtenberg and Isabelle Hyman. *Architecture from Prehistory to Post Modernism*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc 1985), 445, 455.

<sup>22</sup> Fletcher Steele, *History of the George Washington Bicentennial Celebration*. "The Colonial Garden Today." Volume II, Literature Series. United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission. Washington, D.C. 1932.

<sup>23</sup> Bash to Moore, January 18, 1932. CFA archives.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Moore, Chairman Commission of Fine Arts to General DeWitt, April 24, 1931. CFA archives.

<sup>25</sup> James Greenleaf to Charles Moore, July 2, 1931. Moore to General DeWitt, April 24, 1931. ARHO.

<sup>26</sup> CFA meeting minutes March 22, 1930. CFA archives.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Moore to General Bash, March 21, 1930. CFA meeting minutes. CFA archives.

<sup>28</sup> *Arlington National Cemetery, Restoration of Arlington Mansion study for Drives, Walks, and Planting around Mansion and on sites of Old Flower and Vegetable Garden*. 1930.

<sup>29</sup> Report dated July 5, 1931. ARHO.

<sup>30</sup> *Washington Star*: July 5, 1931.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Moore to General Bash, January 25, 1932. CFA files.

<sup>32</sup> Executive Order No. 6166 of June 10, 1933 as interpreted by Executive Order No 6228 of July 23, 1933. (HSR, 120 and 134-135). This executive order consolidated all federally-administered parks, monuments and reservations under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, abolishing the Office of Public Buildings and Parks of the National Capital.

<sup>33</sup> Moore to President F.D.R., January 25, 1933. CFA archives.

<sup>34</sup> Harold I. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior to Charles Moore, February 2, 1934. ARHO, CFA archives.

<sup>35</sup> Resolution 180 "Resolution on Arlington Lee Mansion." ARHO. Transfer from War Dept to NPS. April 3, 1939. Public No 19-76 Congress Chapter 36, 1st Session (H.R. 4425).

<sup>36</sup> "The Lee Mansion." *The Washington Post*. Editorial Page. June 27, 1939.

<sup>37</sup> Fairfax Downey, "Arlington." *Field Artillery Journal*. May-June 1939.

<sup>38</sup> Department of Interior, Memorandum for the Press. Release for November 10, 1933. ARHO.

<sup>39</sup> Report on "restoration in part of the kitchen garden on north side of the mansion as contemplated in the original study, improvement of the trees, walks planting and grass plots" J. L. DeWitt to Director, National Parks, Buildings and Reservations. Oct 2, 1933. ARHO.

<sup>40</sup> Plant nursery receipt, dated January 23, 1935. ARHO.

<sup>41</sup> National Park Service. "Estimate of September 30, 1933." July 9, 1934. ARHO.



<sup>42</sup> Aug 23, 1935 National Park Service request and estimate. ARHO.

<sup>43</sup> *Map of Arlington National Cemetery showing Walks Drives and Burial Sections*. Executive Office Arlington National Cemetery April 13, 1935.

<sup>44</sup> Harper L. Garrett, Assistant Historian, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. May 18, 1936. In 1943 the signs around the mansion were still white with green letters. August 31, 1943. Stanley W. McClure, Acting Chief National Memorials and Historic Sites Division, NPS to Mr. Gillen. ARHO.

<sup>45</sup> Chas. G. Mortimer, Colonel to Mr. Hetrick, Lee Mansion. January 19, 1942. ARHO.

<sup>46</sup> "Where Sheridan Will Lie: Something about Arlington Cemetery." *New York Times*. Aug 9, 1888. Copy ARHO: Karl and McSween, 88.

<sup>47</sup> Randle B. Truett, Chief National Memorial and Historic Sites Division, NPS to Mr. Gillen, NPS, July 9, 1942.

<sup>48</sup> Chas G. Mortimer to Mr. Randle B. Truett, Sept 10, 1942.

<sup>49</sup> Frank T. Gartside, Assistant Super. to Mr. Thompson, August 24, 1945.

<sup>50</sup> Walter H. Sheffield to Mr. Thompson, March 27, 1946.

<sup>52</sup> *"Rehabilitation of West Grounds Lee Mansion. Rehabilitation of East Grounds, Drawn in September of 1945, planned for execution in March 1948. Layout and Development Plan, North Garden: Lee Mansion grounds, Arlington National Cemetery*. Irving Payne 1948. ARHO.

<sup>53</sup> Benjamin L. Breeze, Acting Chief Planning Division, NPS to L. M. Leisenring, The Quartermaster General's Office, Construction Division. Architectural Section, December 10, 1947. ARHO.

<sup>54</sup> This technique of using thorny vegetation to help guide visitor's experience of sites was used by Payne in other National Park Service locations, including Meridian Hill Park in Washington, D.C.

<sup>55</sup> "Museum Planned as Adjunct to Lee Mansion." *Washington Evening Star* April 18, 1950.

<sup>56</sup> Interview, by L. M. Leisenring of Mrs. Annie Baker and Mrs. Ada Thompson daughters of Thornton and Selina Grey. March 3, 1930. Transcript ARHO.

<sup>57</sup> Statement of Representative Joel T. Broyhill of Virginia before the Library and Memorials Subcommittee, Committee on House Administration in support of HR 10595, April 11, 1972 ARHO. House Joint Resolution 274, 84th Congress, a resolution paying tribute to Robert E. Lee introduced by Joel T. Broyhill Rep. From Virginia: Also sponsored in the Senate by Senator Estes Kefauver.

<sup>58</sup> H. R. 5138 (Pub L. 86-170, 73 Stat. 390 ). Roger Erest, Secretary of Interior to Mr. Aspinall. April 13, 1959. Land Record No 332. Nov. 20 1959. Land acquired by transfer from the Secretary of the Army by letter of November 3, 1959. ARHO. Land Acquisition file.

<sup>59</sup> *John F. Kennedy Grave at Arlington* May 25, 1965. Technical Information Center Map. 81117-5 and 81118-36. National Capital Region. National Park Service.

<sup>60</sup> Official web page of Arlington National Cemetery. The redesign of the Kennedy gravesite was begun in 1965 and completed July 20, 1967. <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.org/>

<sup>61</sup> Land Record No 470. May 19, 1964. National Capital Region Reservation File.



<sup>62</sup> "Restoration of Flower Garden", Custis-Lee Mansion, National Capital Office, National Park Service, February 19, 1964. ARHO.

<sup>63</sup> Statement of Representative Joel T. Broyhill of Virginia before the Library and Memorials Subcommittee, Committee on House Administration in support of HR 10595, 92nd Congress April 11, 1972. Public Law 92-333 Approved June 30, 1972. Copy in National Capital Region Reservation Files.

<sup>64</sup> Land Record No. 742. Arlington House. May 15, 1975. ARHO. Transfer and Acceptance of Military Real Property dated 10/21/1975. National Capital Region Reservation Files. 63 Stat. 384, as amended, 40 U.S.C. 483.

<sup>65</sup> Receipt for vegetation. Dansville, New York. April 30, 1971. ARIHO.

<sup>66</sup> Transfer and Acceptance of Military Real Property. Form DD 1354 Transfer Authority, Letter dated 4 November 1981, National Capital Region Reservation Files.

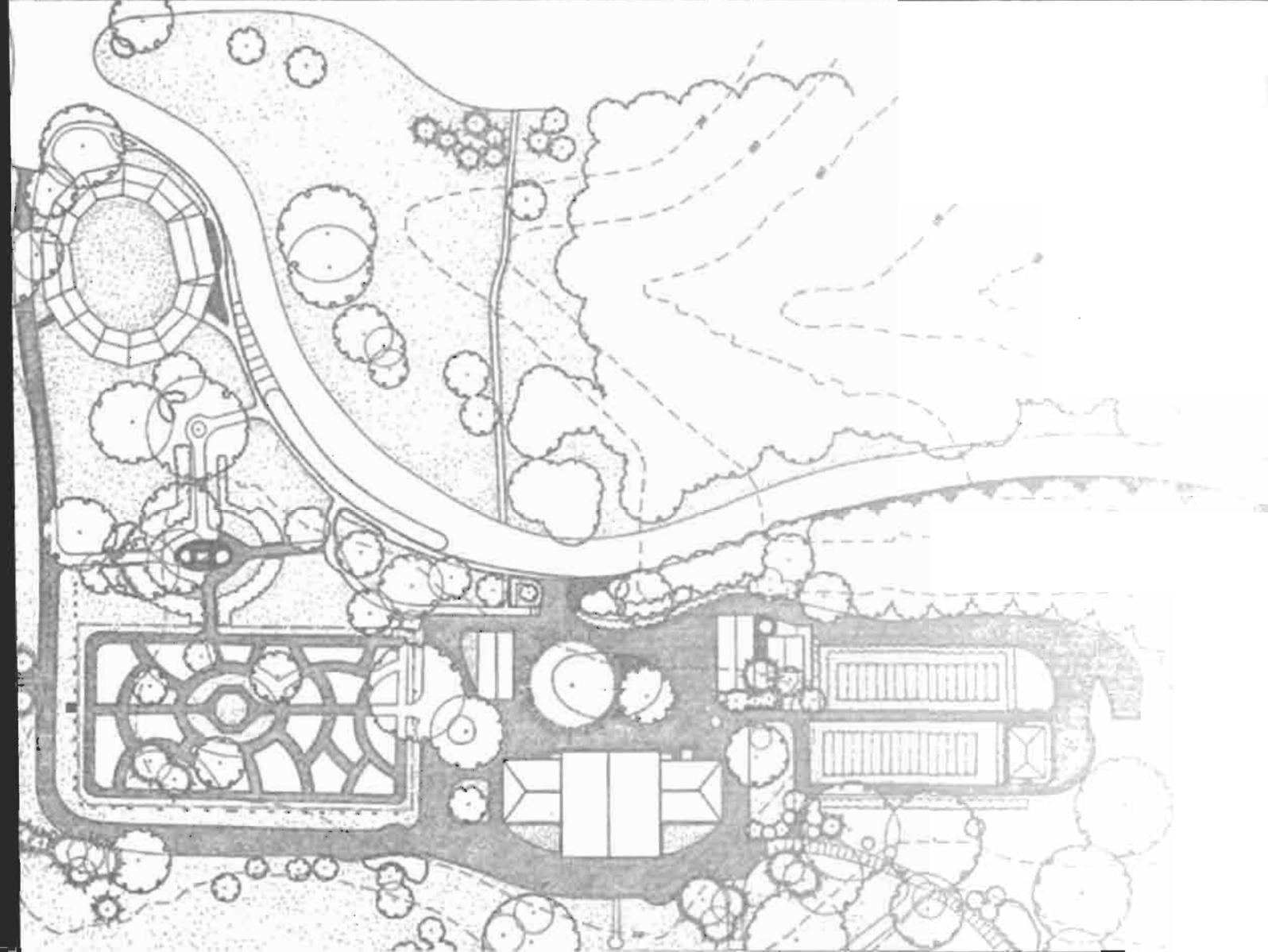
<sup>67</sup> Audrey Calhoun, Superintendent George Washington Memorial Parkway to Jennifer Hanna, Historical Landscape Architect, National Capital Region, July 1, 1999.

<sup>68</sup> "National Park Service, Briefing Statement for the House Subcommittee Hearings, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Section 29 Land Transfer to Arlington National Cemetery, January 20, 2000. Garrow, Patrick H., Heather Mills, Jeff Holland, Todd Cleveland and Bill Nethery. U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. (North Carolina: Garrow and Associates Inc.) September 1998.

<sup>69</sup> Matt Virta, Cultural Resource Manager, George Washington Memorial Parkway to Jennifer Hanna, Historical Landscape Architect, National Capital Region, August 8, 2001.



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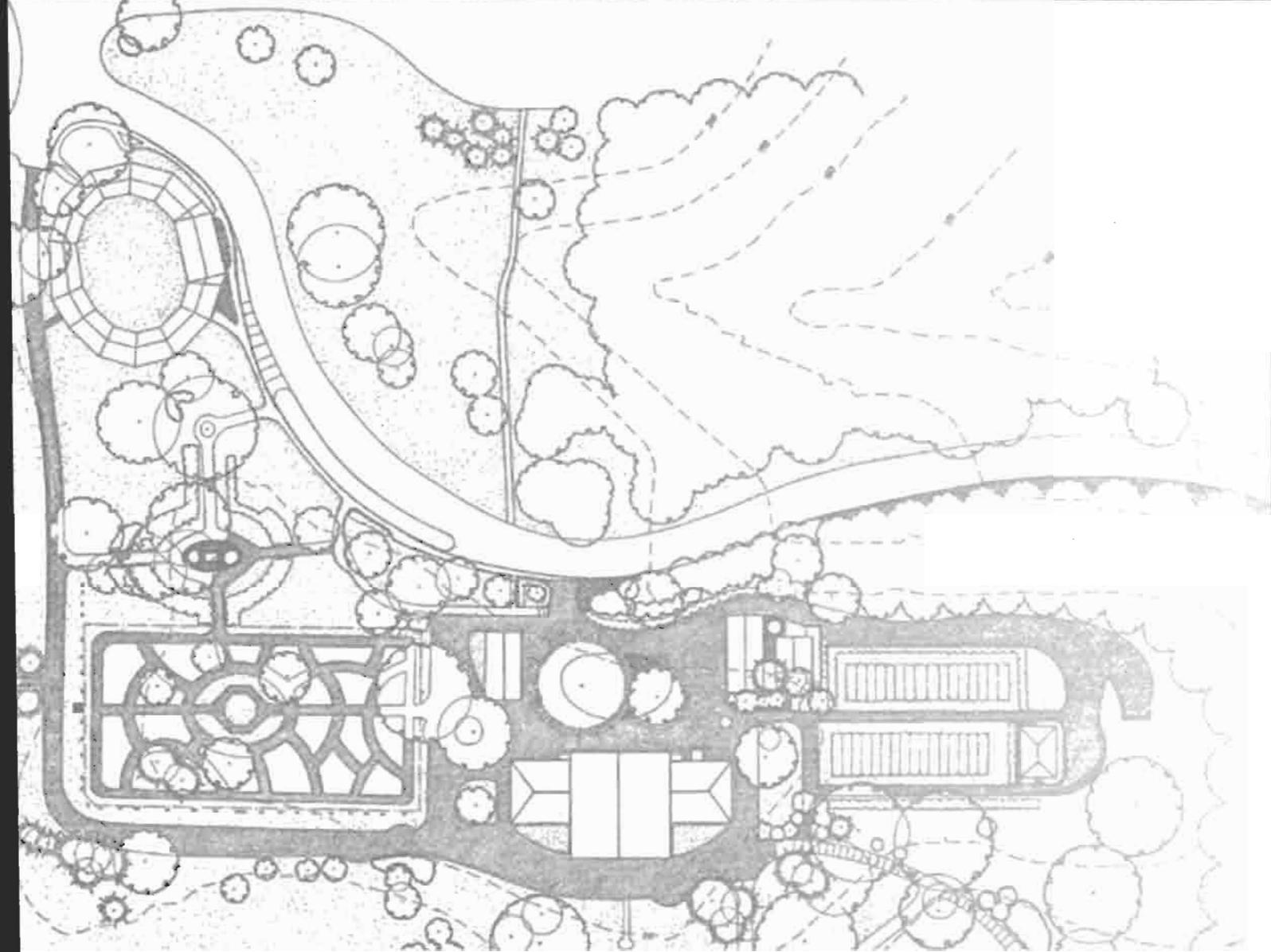
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