Preliminary Report on the Bordley-Randall Site

in Annapolis, Maryland

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Background

In the spring of 1988, Historic Annapolis, Inc., was given the opportunity to begin a limited testing program of the archaeological resources at 9 Randall Court, formerly the home of Mrs. van Weems and now the residence of Philip van Weems Dod. Of particular concern was evidence of earlier garden and landscape features and the presence of early 18th-century deposits. Funds were provided for 2 days of testing.

The testing was carried out by Ann Dyjack and Shari Kondrup under the supervision of Anne Yentsch. Information concerning the garden was provided by Barbara Paca. Artifacts recovered were washed, labelled, and cataloged under the supervision of Beth Ford at the Victualling Warehouse laboratory in downtown Annapolis. Graphic illustrations were prepared by John Hennessy and Anne Yentsch in Princeton. No funds were available to do any documentary research, although there is much to be done using 18th-century sources that would help Historic Annapolis understand the development of the lot and land on Randall Court.

A photograph of the property in the late 18th or early 19th-century (*i.e.*, the Peale painting) is appended. This enlargement was made by Marion Warren. Architectural information was provided by Orlando Ridout and by Sarah Filkins.

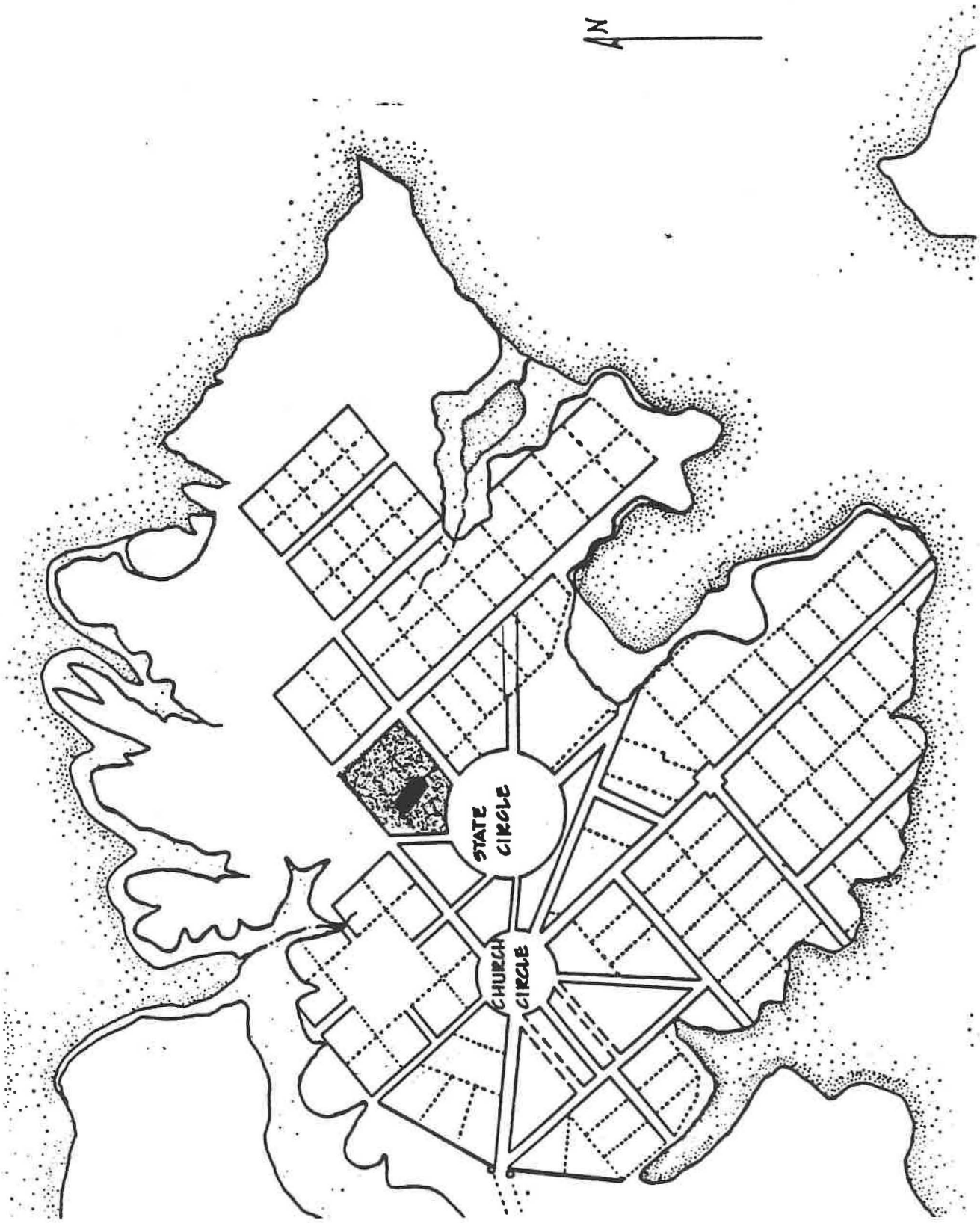
Site History

The Bordley-Randall house sits on a large hexagonal plot of ground identified as Parcel 18 in the NEH land survey/deed trace at the data bank maintained by Historic Annapolis, Inc. Parcel 18 is bounded by North Street, State House Circle, Maryland Avenue, College Avenue, and Prince George Street.

On the 1718 Beard Survey of Annapolis, the lots included in NEH Parcel 18 include lots 76, 77, 78, 79, and 80. These were originally owned by a number of different individuals and consolidated into one large town lot in the early 18th-century. The summary presented immediately below is drawn from information in the NEH parcel descriptions (on file in the data bank).

The NEH trace begins in 1726 with Thomas Bordley's will which bequeaths Parcel 18 to his son Stephen (Wills L 19:99). In 1764, Stephen's will provided his sister, Elizabeth, with a life tenancy in his dwelling house and the lots. The house and its outbuildings were listed in the 1798 tax census and assessed at $2,000.

Figure 1. Map of Annapolis showing location of Bordley-Randall Site (AP50). The original lot size in the 18th-century is shaded and the approximate location of the present house is shown in black.



Sometime before 1801 John Beale Bordley (brother of Stephen) entered into a sales agreement with John Johnson to sell him his house and lots for $1,000 (note that this is only half its assessed value) and in 1811, Bordley's executor conveyed title to the property to Johnson. Johnson then sold all lots to William S. Green for a price of $3,300.

The NEH traces carries the parcel no further forward in time. However, the present name of the house (Bordley-Randall) and its curving driveway (Randall Court) identify the name of its subsequent 19th-century owner.

The history of the hexagonal lot is more complex than the NEH trace records. While it has not been fully investigated by Historic Annapolis, Inc., research on the nearby Calvert House also brought the author in contact with a number of documents pertaining to 'Parcel 18". These provide tantalizing details of the earlier residents of Annapolis and of the c. 1690-1715 occupation of this section of Annapolis, and provide a record of the means whereby Thomas Bordley created "Parcel" 18, by purchasing the smaller lots and consolidating them.

George Valentine is mentioned in old Annapolis records as an innkeeper; he also engaged in a series of modest land sales in the early 1700s. In July 1712, he sold a piece of land containing a 30 ft dwelling house in the same aproximate location as Lot 80 (Beard Survey designation) for 30 pounds to Bordley. The deed describes the property as follows:

Beginning at a stake of Thomas Bordley's and in line of a street called Prince George and running with the line of that street southeast for 9 perches to another street being in the line of a street called Northeast Street [now Maryland Avenue] and from thence southwest 16 perches to another marked stake and then northwest 9 perches unto another stake and from thence in a straight line to the first . . . together with one 30 foot dwelling house upon the same lot. (PK 1708-1712: 491-493).

There is even earlier mention of what is perhaps the same lot in 1701 when Richard Jones, designated an innholder in the transaction (but see Baker 1983 for more information on Jones), mortgages his lot containing 2 tenements or dwelling houses to William Taylard (PK 1708-12: 407). In 1711, William Taylard and also his wife Audry acquit Richard Jones and George Valentine and his heirs from the mortgage (Ibid: 409). This seems to be the same property that Valentine then sells to Bordley, although it might instead be a lot that Valentine sells to Christopher Smithers (WT2: 219).

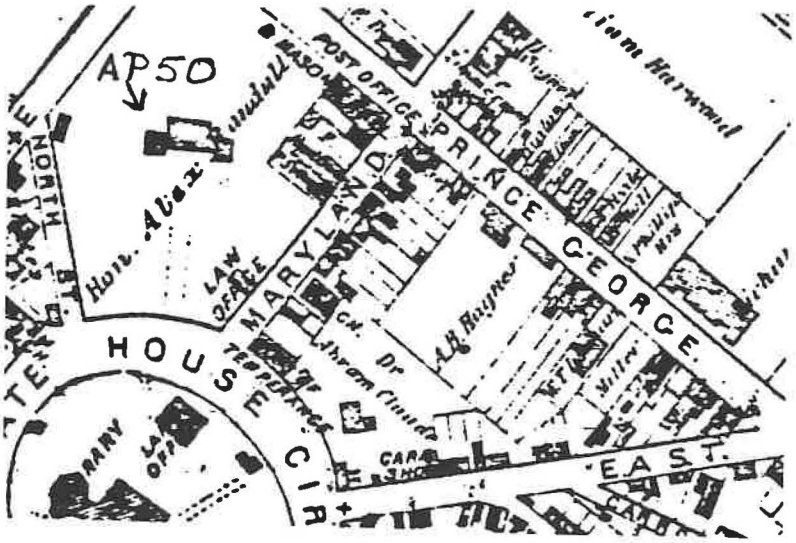
What is important about these references to prior occupations of "Parcel 18" (and note that no full deed search was done to locate them) is that

they indicate the present of earlier dwellings in the proximity of the Bordley house. Baker (1984) believes that a house existed on the property as early as 1706. The suggestion that some of the earlier houses may have lasted is seen in the 1819 tax list for Annapolis which charges Randall (then owner of "Parcel 18") with 5 buildings. One must juxtapose this, however, with the 1798 tax census which indicates the presence of only the main house, a meat house, and a long, narrow cow house (50 ft x 12 ft). And, if William Green still owned the property in 1819, then there were only 2 homes on the property. In either case, whether Randall or Green owned the land in 1819, the tax valuation was among the higher valuations in Annapolis ($3300 or $4300)

Thomas Bordley

Thomas Bordley came to Annapolis in the late 17th century when his brother, Stephen, was appointed as a minister by Governor Francis Nicholson (Bryden Hyde, personal communication). Bordley was a wealthy lawyer and merchant. Holding a number of fee-paying political positions, he also served as an elected official in the Lower House and was appointed to Governor Charles Calvert's Council in 1720 (Baker 1983:8). Bordley had substantial landholdings and was a major real estate investor. The inventory taken at his death in 1727 indicates he possessed a far-reaching mind, held a wide variety of interests, and was involved in a diverse set of income-producing activities.

Bordley gradually purchased lots 76-80 and consolidated the five lots into one hexagonal lot bordered to the south by North-east Street, to the east by Prince George Street, to the north by both North Street and Tabernacle Street (now College Avenue), and to the west by the Public Circle (now State Circle). The property stayed intached throughout the 18th-century.



Preliminary Report on the Bordley-Randall Site

The House

The Bordley-Randall house consists of a large brick central core presumbably built c. 1720; it is Georgian in style. The main house is flanked by two wings (see Sanborn map excerpt). The 1798 tax census does not gives their dimension (it is illegible for this entry). At present, a small square 'smokehouse' is situated off the east wing. It is my impression that the wings and additions to the house along its east wing are older than their counterparts to the west, but Bordley's inventory of 1727 certainly suggests there was a wing and/or outbuldings on the west side of the house at that time as well. No detailed observations or measurements of the house were made since a structural history is planned by the present property owner working with Orlando Ridout of the Maryland Historical Trust. We should note, however, that the brick work on certain segments of the house and its outbuildings is distinctive and remarkably like that visible on the nearby Calvert House (built in 2 separate sequences prior to 1730).

The Landscape

There is an 18th or early 19th-century Peale painting of Annapolis from the State House which shows the house and its yard. In this painting, the dwelling sits amidst an elaborately landscaped yard. Remnants of the garden landscape still survive, although 20th century plantings obscure many of them, and earlier brick entranceways have been buried by a cover of earth fill. The archaeological survey indicates the one major section of the garden remains and that there are indications of terracing on the northeastern side of the property. These would have sloped gradually towards the Severn River.

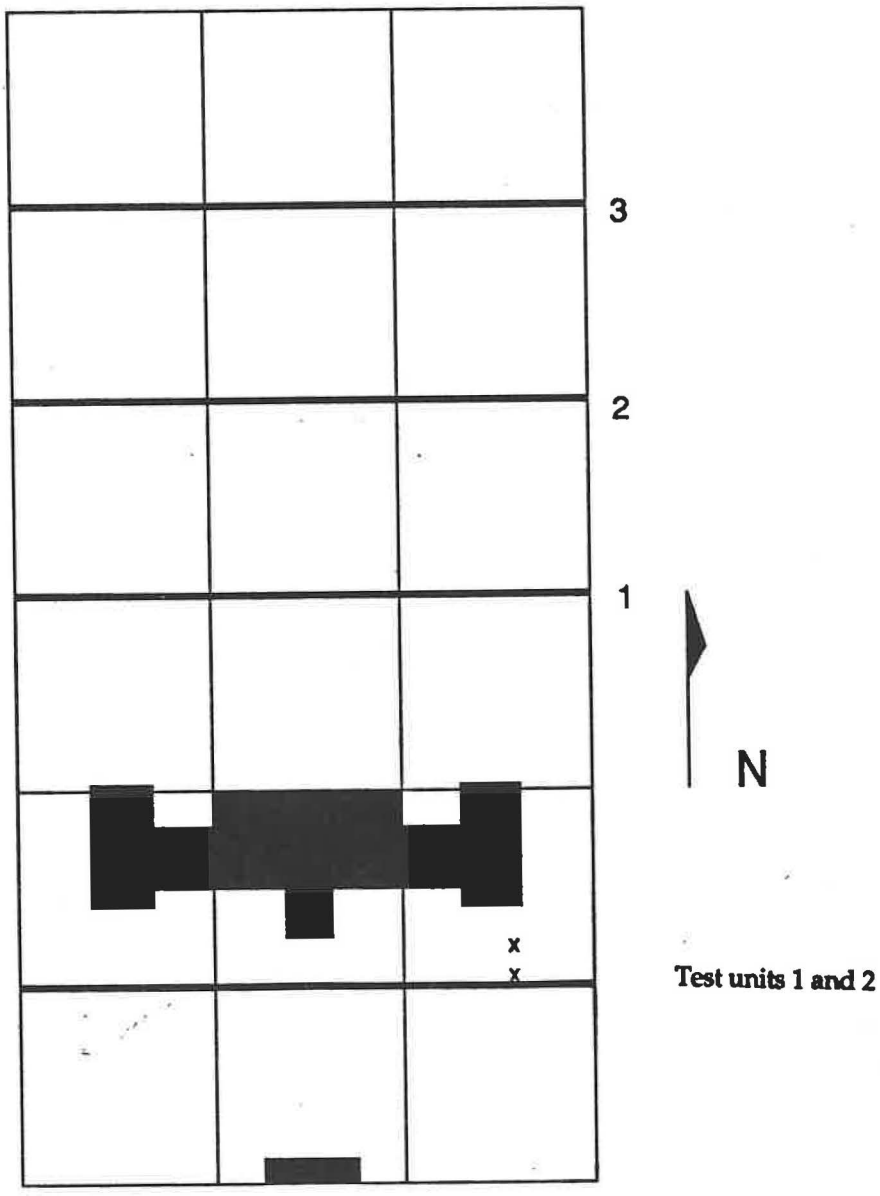
Siting of the House: The original main block of the house is approximately 60 ft. long and 30 ft. wide.[1] It is connected to two wings by two hyphens. Each hyphen is approximately 16 ft. long and 12 ft. wide; the east wing is still approximately 48 ft. long and 24 ft, and the original west wing appears to have had similar proportions. The central entrance porch is a 16 ft. square. This creates a footprint remarkably like that of the William Paca House (built in the 1760s), but presumably pre-dating it.

[1] All measurements were taken from sketch made from a scaled engineer's drawing of the property in the possession of Philip van Weems Dod; while they are sufficient for the purposes of this brief report, detailed measurements should be taken for future analysis.

The house rests on a high, level terrace. Towards State Circle, the terrace is approximately 25–30 ft. wide and drops abruptly to a depth 4 ft. lower. The drop is visible in test excavation unit #3 (see below).

We used a geometric grid similar to Paca and Wright (1983) to analyze the William Paca Garden and used a rectangle with the proportions of 32 x 64 (*i.e.*, a double square) to plot the few excavated units within it.

Note that the use of the Paca grid predicts a major garden feature in the approximate location of the terrace fall line on the Circle side of the property. Further, while the drop on the northern side of the property appears gradual, there is also evidence of filling. Probing in the north yard indicates a solid, lower level, possibly an earlier garden walk, that descends as one moves away from the house and that is in line with the original north central doorway. No excavation units were placed in the north yard.



Dark lines shown on grid suggest locations of 18th-century garden contour lines. See Leone and Shackel n.d., Paca 1981, Paca-Steele and Wright 1983, 1985 1987, Shackel 1987, Yentsch 1988, and Yentsch *et al* 1988 for futher information.

At a minimum, we recommend that in 1989 several units be placed near the north-south axis line and also recommend the use of limited trenching in a north-south line across the yard to test for the presence of earlier terraces and lower yard surfaces.

Summary of the Archaeological Excavation in 1988

Three test units were excavated, two to subsoil, and a shovel-test pit was placed in the driveway cut. The first two units were placed on a level area south of the kitchen wing which then slopes sharply to a lower yard level.

Test Unit #1, a 2.5 x 2.5 unit, was placed 12.5 ft. south of the southeast corner of the kitchen wing and extended to a point 15 ft south of the kitchen. Its location is indicated on Figure 3.

As might be expected this close to any dwelling or outbuilding, the stratigraphy of unit #1 was complex; 5 different strata (strata A, B, C, D, and E) were observed resting above a feature that bisected the unit, running north-south, and appeared to cut into the subsoil.

Of these, strata D and E are the most interesting; D is thick while E is a only a thin lens. Strata D consists of a mottled soil containing quantities of 19th and 18th century artifacts (Chinese porcelain, creamware, pearlware, and coarse earthenwares, fragmentary pipe bowls), building materials (mortar, broken window glass, and nails), and faunal remains. A partial pipe bowl was also recovered.

Despite its lack of depth, strata E also proved to be a lens rich in artifacts. Similar in nature to what was found in D, the level also contained earlier materials: delft (*i.e.*, tin-glazed earthenware), fine white salt-glazed stoneware, and thinly potted gray-bodied stoneware. Strata E may also contain the remains of a bell jar.

These strata overlie a feature (Feature 2) in the western sector of the unit which was not excavated. It lines up with the eastern wall of the kitchen wing and may be associated with that addition. However, it is probably an extension of the sewer pipe line (Feature 4) found in Unit 2 due south of Unit 1. Hence one can only interpret their contents as coming from a disturbed context. However, the wealth of material within these strata are a strong indication of the potential richness of the site and the fact that they are from a disturbed context is not pertinent at this point. This is because sewer trenches placed through yards uproot and disturb soil layers, but the soil taken out when the trench is dug is also normally placed back within it. Hence the

presence of early materials in these disturbed contexts indicates the existence of early 18th-century soil layers off the kitchen wing.

We initially thought Feature 2 cut into sterile sub-soil, but after excavation of Unit 2 realized that instead it cut into a level of 18th-century garden soil similar to that located at the Calvert Site. The use of rich, almost sterile garden soils as fill in early 18th-century gardens constructed close to the beginning of occupation at a given site are one of the complexities that garden archaeologists must work with on Chesapeake sites. At the Calvert site, almost sterile fill layers were used to build up the yard surface near the house and a similar use at Bordley-Randall, creating a terraced effect for the mansion house, is also surmised. Further evidence to support this is found in the existence of a deeply buried mortar floor located at a depth of 5.1 ft below datum (*i.e.*, approximately 5 ft. below the present ground surface) which was found in a post-hole inserted into the unit to test for the presence of deeper layers and/or to verify that what we had interpreted as subsoil actually was subsoil.

Test Unit #2. This unit was also a 2.5 ft. x 2.5 ft. square placed 7.5 ft due south of Unit #1 (*i.e.*, 25' south of the southeast corner of the original kitchen wing). Like Unit 1, the A and B strata were represented by the sod layer and a thin lens of humic soil that lay beneath it. The sewer pipe also ran through this unit, creating an east-west boundary line that was difficult to work around given the small size of the unit. However, there was neither the staff nor the time to extend the unit.

The ceramics in the sewer pipe line represent almost the entire spectrum of 18th-century wares. For example, there is a sherd of Rosso antico, blue salt-glazed stoneware, and a variety of delft, Chinese porcelain as well as hand-painted creamware.

Essentially, along the eastern edge of the unit we came down on a series of undisturbed yard surfaces. The first of these was strata C which contained late 18th-century materials with some 19th-century inclusions. Feature 4 (a sewer pipe trench) cut through levels D, E and F, and lay above Feature 9--brick rubble from the demoliton of a building. Strata D-2 overlay a dry-laid stone wall running N-S through the unit. A post hole and fragments of the surviving post (Features 7 and 8) were at the same level and may be the remains of a late 18th or early 19th century fence line. Artifacts from Strata E, the rich brown soil east of the wall below D-2 (only a *very* narrow segment of this deposit was accessible in the unit), were primarily of early 18th-century origin (*i.e.*, c. 1720-30 fine white salt-glazed stoneware sherds comprised 27% of the pottery and was of the same thin-bodied ware with a slightly gray cast found in the early Calvert deposits).

In the western sector, there was a heavily disturbed rubble midden (Feature 9). It contained nothing that was particularly diagnostic (a porcelain sherd, a gray-bodied stoneware, and a sherd of delft), but this was in itself of note given the large quantities and varities of ceramics found in the upper layers of the unit. The building rubble was not present in the unit closer to the kitchen wing (unit 1) and hence the rubble (which appears to be from the destruction of a building) represents a destruction layer cut by the pipe trench.

Just above the mortar floor which was located at a depth of three feet below the surface, the remains of a mid-18th-century bone handled knife were retrieved.

Test Unit #3, a 2.5 ft. x 2.5 ft unit, was placed 40 ft. south of the house[1] in the present grassy circle to see whether there were remains of any earlier drives or walkways to the house from State Circle in line with the central axis of the yard (determined by placing an imaginary line through the existing central doorway). The area today is covered by ivy and no remains of earlier walkways are visible. Excavation was begun by shovel-shaving.

Two layers of soil became visible (strata A and B) before a brick feature (Feature 3) spanning the entire unit was uncovered.

Stratum A was a loose sandy loam and dark brown in color (7.5YR3/2). It contained a single piece of pearlware and a segment of an old iron lock. Stratum B was a sandy, clayey loam, also darkly brown in color (7.5YR3/4), that was identified as a fill layer overlying the bricks. It was not sterile; an oyster shell and 2 small pieces of redware were observed within it.

Feature 3 consisted of soft, crumbled, broken brick that solidly covered the unit. These were uncovered at a depth of 3.7 ft. below the first step of the porch stairs, or at an approximate depth of 1.5 ft below ground surface. This unit was left open so that Mr. Dod could show visitors the feature.

It is unclear whether the bricks were once the original surface of a driveway that saw heavy use (and hence damaged the bricks) or if they formed a base for some other type of drive/walk. Visible in the eastern sidewalls 1 ft. above the brick, at the intersection of strata A and B was a line of 6 bricks. However, given the fill represented by strata B, it is doubtful that the higher line of brick is associated with the lower--it is more likely that these represent 2 different sequences of drives/walks.

Bag 16 contains artifacts recovered immediately above the surface of the brick. With the exception of a sherd of pearlware (popular c. 1785-1820),

[1]Its precise location is 40 ft south of the southwest corner of the second step to the entrance porch.

these appear to be of mid 18th-century origin and include Wheildon ware (popular c. 1755-1765) and fine white salt-glazed stoneware (popular 1730-1765). Thus there is a high liklihood that Feature 3 is actually of 18th-century origin. Note that the Peale view of Annapolis from the State House shows a formal entrance way that could have been brick-paved.

The Artifacts

The artifacts from this site are as plentiful and of as highly quality as those recovered from the nearby Calvert Site. This is not surprising given the information in Thomas Bordley's inventory. In 1727, Bordley maintained a small store stocked with white earthen plates and porringers (*i.e.*, delft), cups, saucers, syllabub glasses, earthen pans, sugar, and other marketable items. His cellar contained stoneware pots and jugs (as well as a bottle of capers) with more stoneware and earthenware located in the kitchen. The inner room contained China custard cups, saucers, cannisters, sugar dishes, and a punch bowl with the bottom broken. There were 73 pieces of China in the parlor and more delft plates. Additional porcelain was stored on the second floor.

We are preparing a typed copy of the artifact list which will be appended to this report at a later date. Here we wish only to present a series of graphs that depict the way in which the relative proportions of the various ceramics alter as one excavates deeper at the site. These clearly indicate the presence of predominately early 18th century deposits in the yard off the kitchen wing and indicate that later 18th century materials are present too. While these deposits are deep, they are not unduly so. They indicate that it should be possible to delineate in some detail the 18th-century yard surfaces (and recover evidence of the 18th century landscape).

Recommendation

There is little doubt but what 9 Randall Court is one of the most archaeologically signficiant properties in the city today as it is one of Annapolis' most historic houses. Excavating the Bordley-Randall site should be rewarding for it is likely that remains of a garden as elaborate as the William Paca Garden is Bordley-Randall's buried legacy.

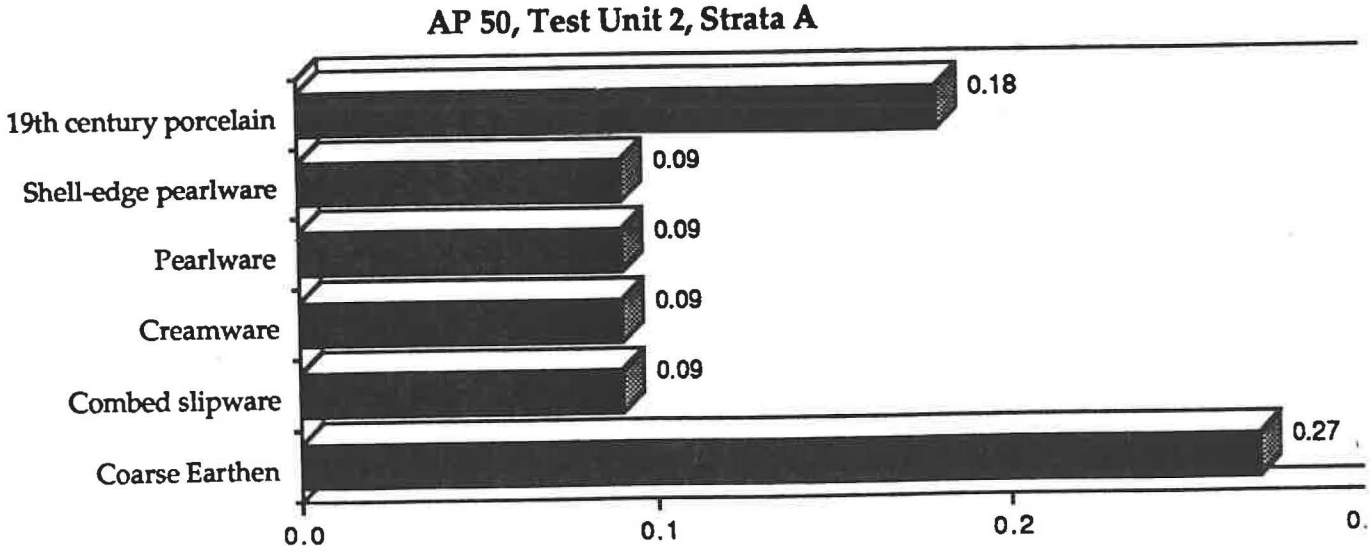
Bordley-Randall would be an ideal site to test the degree to which Barbara Paca's geometric analysis predicts the location of garden features and Barbara should be involved at a planning level once the property is mapped and we have better dimensions for the earlier sectors of the building from Orlando Ridout. This is a site where it is particularly important to have someone with his skill as a vernacular architect available for consultation.

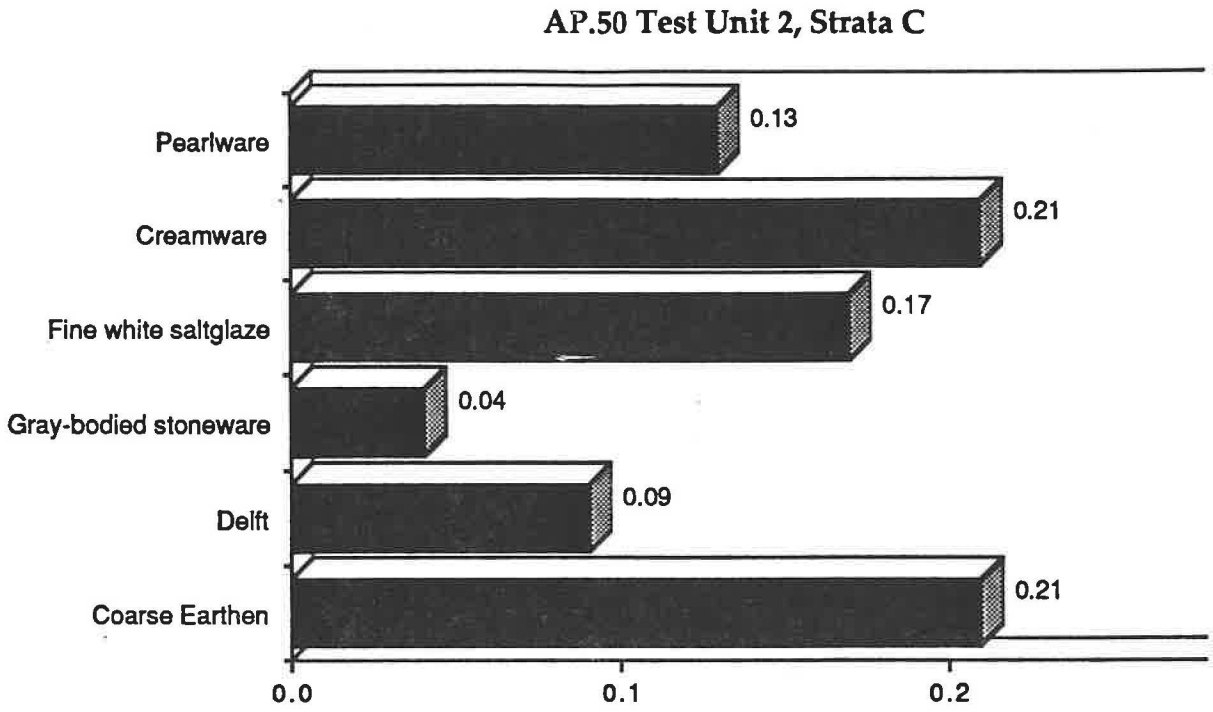
To raise federal or institutional funds for a site like Bordley-Randall, Historic Annapolis must be able to demonstrate its potential in more detail than the few test units of 1988 provide. Testing should be done in the back yard, as noted above, and it would be worthwhile to map the property and put some additional units off the front doorway and by the west wing. Several units should also be placed against the smokehouse walls and the kitchen wing. All of this should be coordinated with an architectural survey.

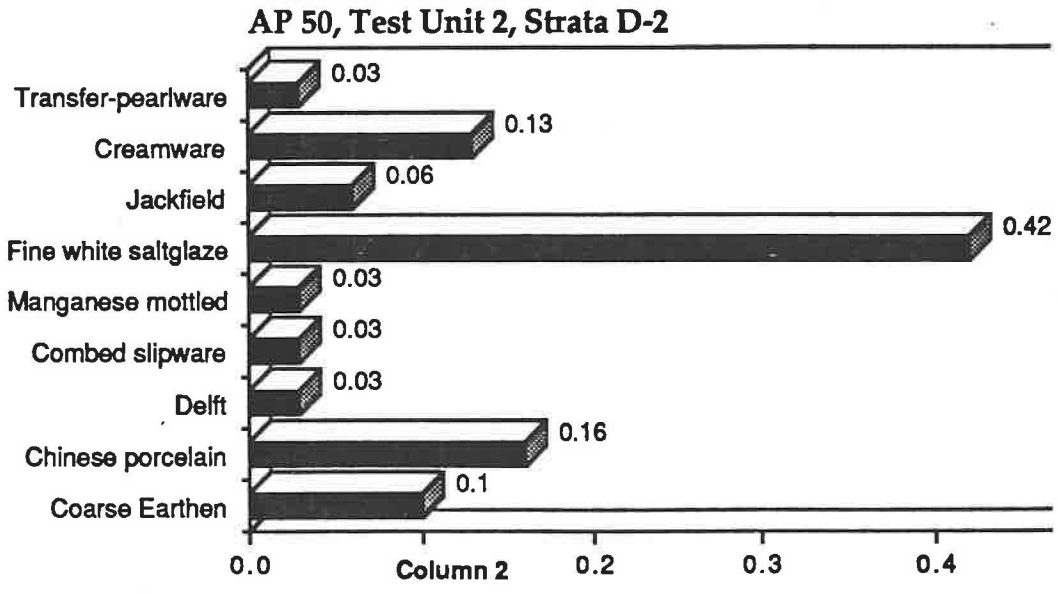
In the meantime, Historic Annapolis should secure emergency funds so that if the plumbing fails or there is need to dig in the yard for building repairs, this can be quickly and efficiently accompanied by (and preferably preceded by) excavation and monitoring. If we knew what areas of the site were slated for landscaping in the near future, these could also be given priority in the testing program. The areas closest to the house are probably the most sensitive and informative. Still, given the liklihood that earlier buildings stood on the consolidated lot, there is also need to pay attention to the edges of the property (especially on the Maryland Avenue side) when landscaping and/or repairs are required in their portions of the property.

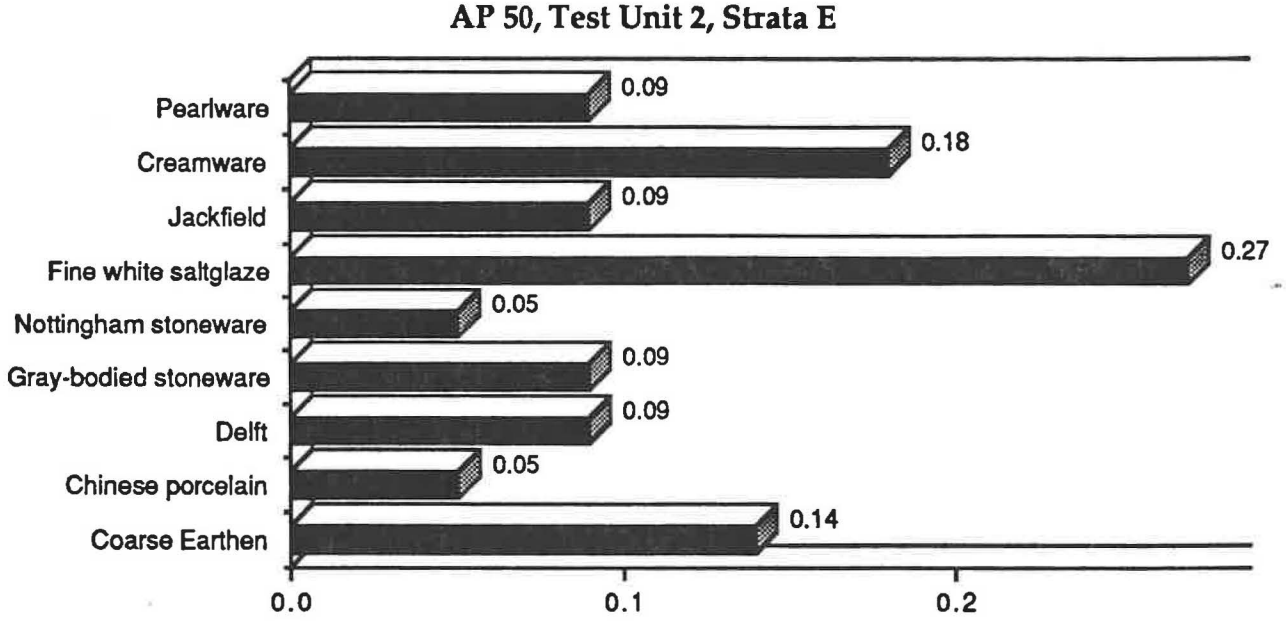
I personally am very interested in finding out more about the Circle's evolution over the years and believe that some work should be done at the entrance to the property. Probing indicates the presence of extensive brick surfaces extending from the house towards the Circle and the remains of the 18th or early 19th-century yard and drive may still exist below ground. If beneath it, there was the 17th century circle boundaries (as we located at Calvert), we might be able to tie the two sites together sufficiently to plot the earlier outline of the Public Circle in its northeastern quadrant.

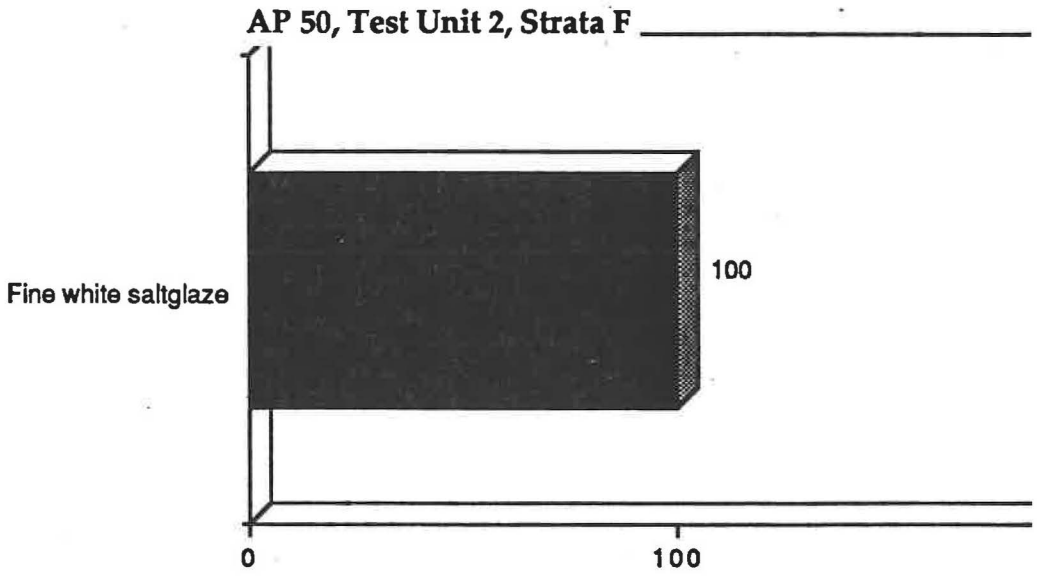
Artifact Frequency Graphs

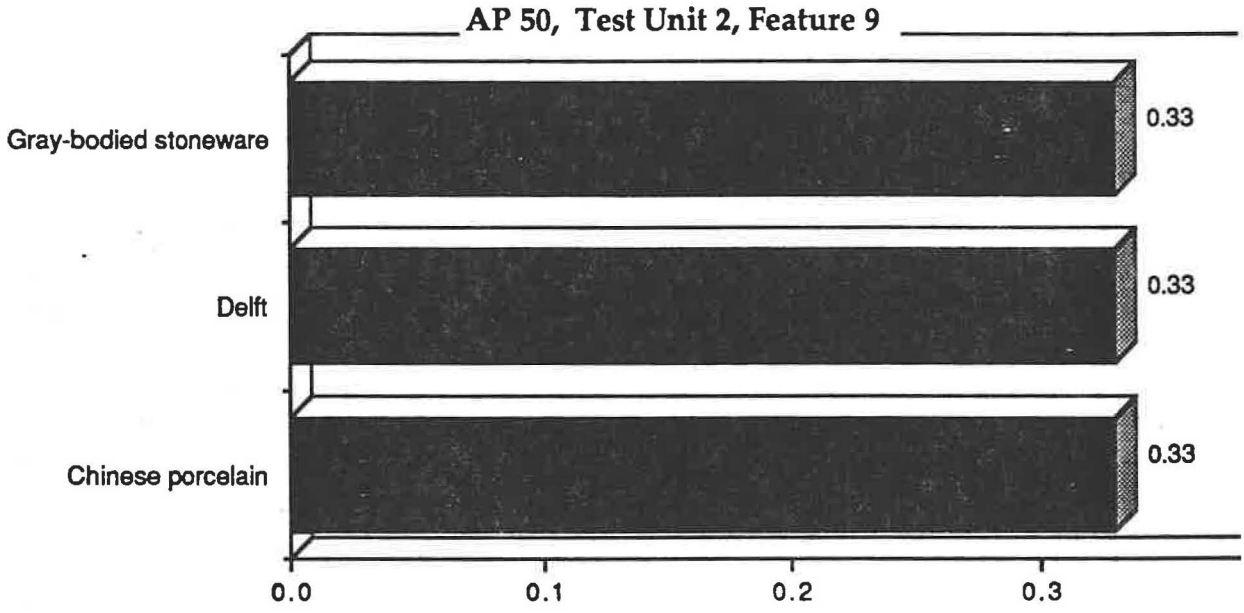


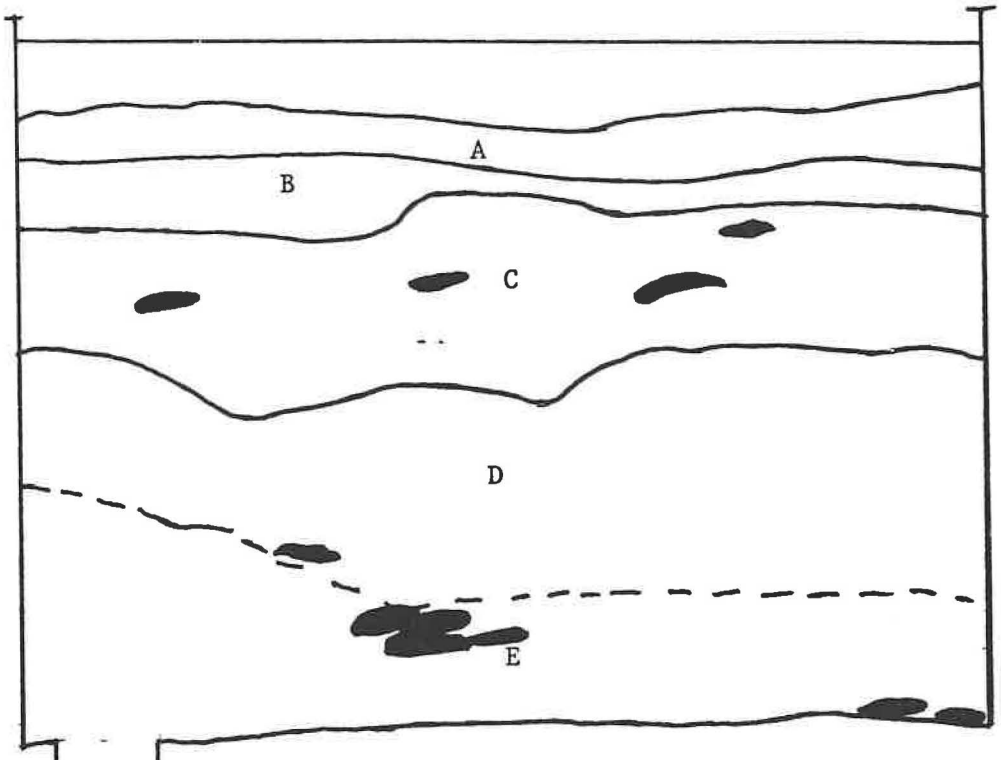

AP.50 Test Unit 2, Strata C
Pearlware
Creamware
Fine white saltglaze
Gray-bodied stoneware
Delft
Coarse Earthen
0.13
0.21
0.17
0.04
0.09
0.21
0.0
0.1
0.2


AP 50, Test Unit 2, Strata D-2
Transfer-pearlware
Creamware
Jackfield
Fine white saltglaze
Manganese mottled
Combed slipware
Delft
Chinese porcelain
Coarse Earthen
0.03
0.13
0.06
0.42
0.03
0.03
0.03
0.16
0.1
0.0
Column 2
0.2
0.3
0.4


AP 50, Test Unit 2, Strata E
Pearlware
Creamware
Jackfield
Fine white saltglaze
Nottingham stoneware
Gray-bodied stoneware
Delft
Chinese porcelain
Coarse Earthen
0.09
0.18
0.09
0.27
0.05
0.09
0.09
0.05
0.14
0.0
0.1
0.2


AP 50, Test Unit 2, Strata F
Fine white saltglaze
100
0
100

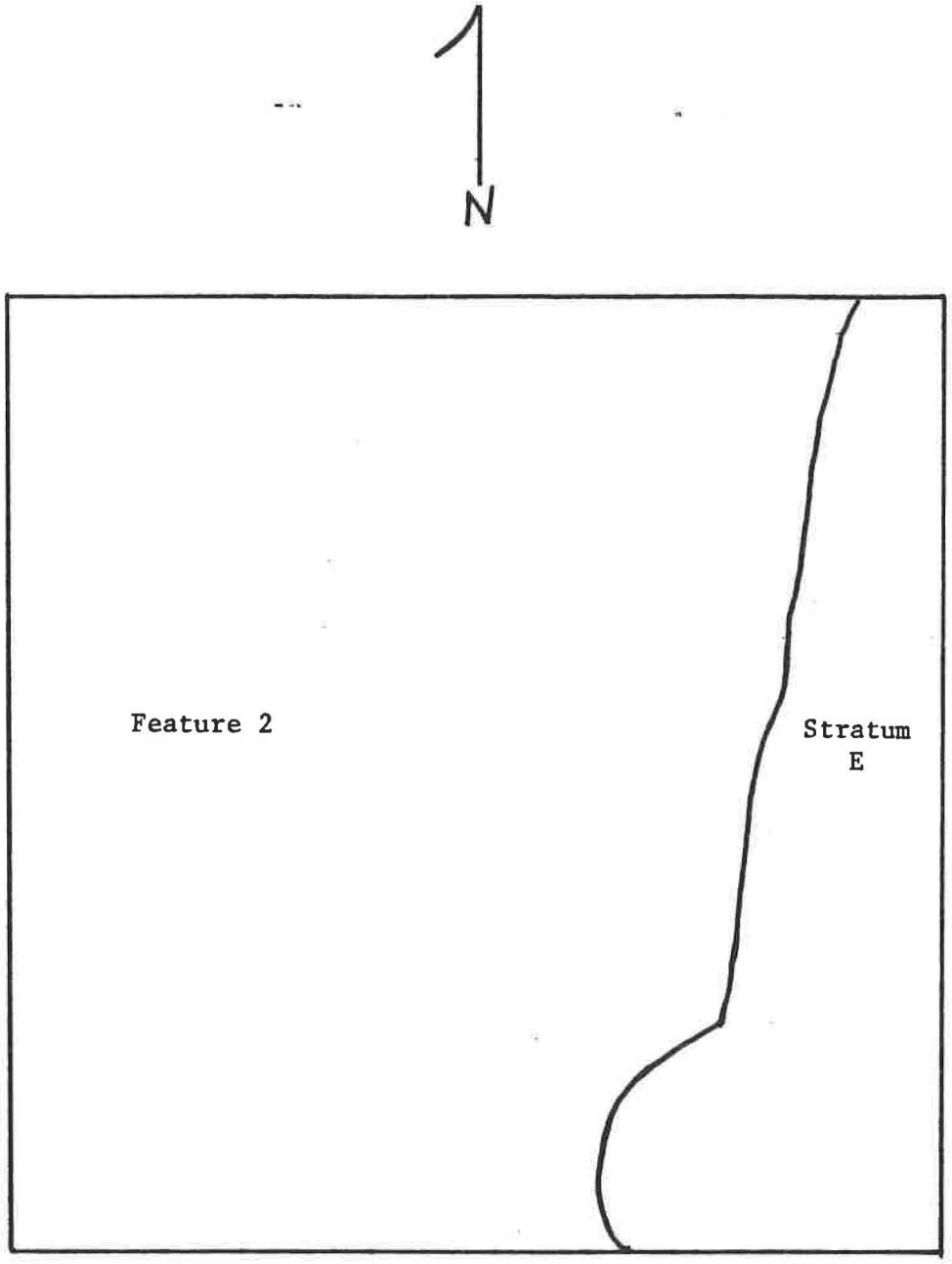

AP 50, Test Unit 2, Feature 9
Gray-bodied stoneware
Delft
Chinese porcelain
0.33
0.33
0.33
0.0
0.1
0.2
0.3



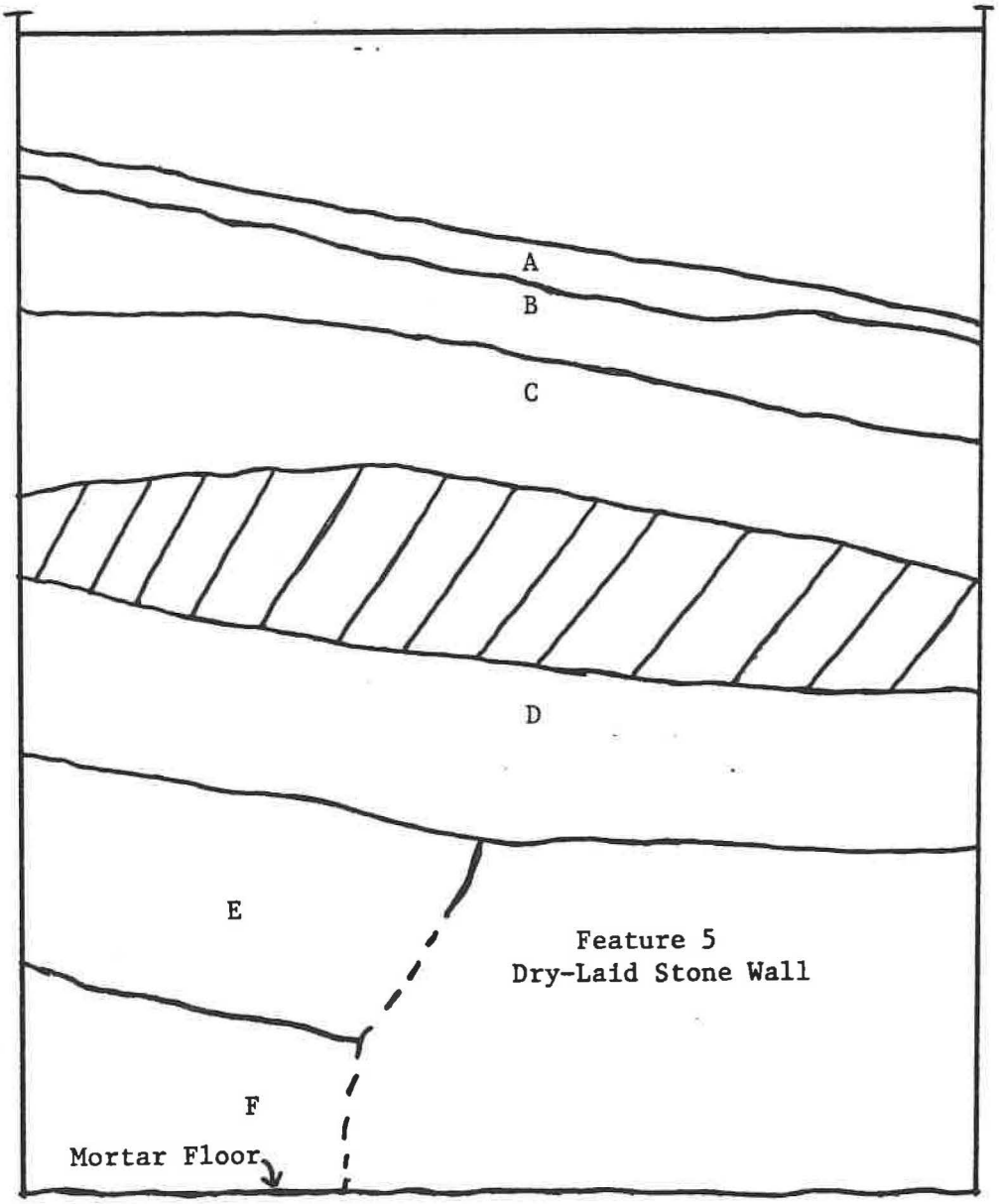
East Profile, Test Unit 1 (AP 50)

Mortar floor

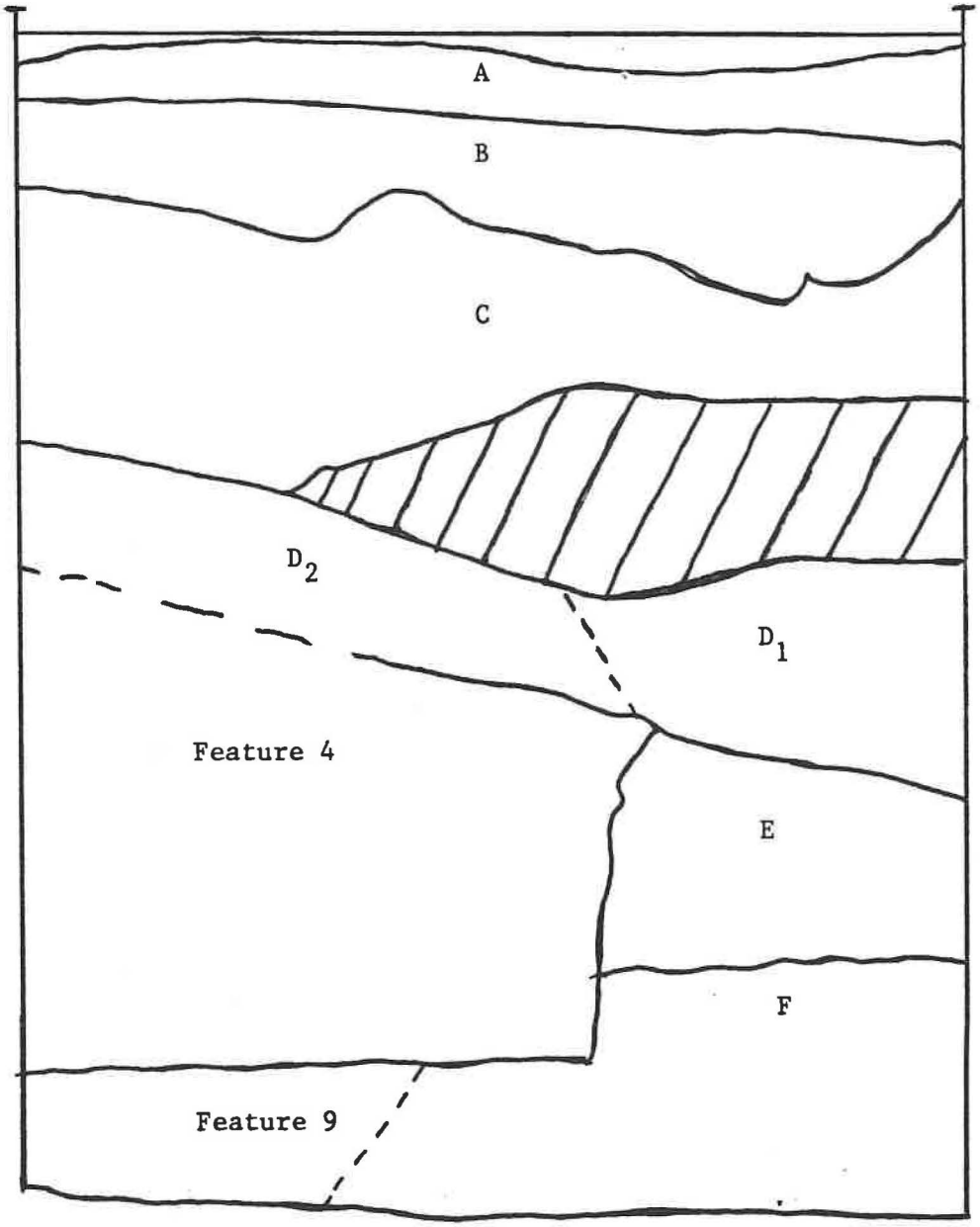
Plan View, Test Unit 1 (AP 50)



East Profile, Test Unit 2 (AP 50)



North Profile, Test Unit 2 (AP 50)



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