

Interim Report
on
Reynolds' Tavern Excavations

Prepared by Historic Annapolis
for the
Maryland Historic Trust

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Introduction

The purpose of this interim report is to document all archeological research undertaken thus far at Reynolds' Tavern. This report was requested by the Maryland Historic Trust in response to proposed construction by Mr. Paul Pearson's Inns of Annapolis organization. Reynolds' Tavern is owned by the National Historic Trust for Preservation. It is managed for them by Historic Annapolis which has, in turn, leased it to the Inns of Annapolis for restoration and operation.

Archeological Research at Reynolds' Tavern

Three phases of archeological excavation have taken place at Reynolds' Tavern. In 1978, Dr. Kenneth Orr, completed 19 days of fieldwork ultimately excavating "14 trenches and 3 tests." A substantial amount of artifacts were recovered and a report was produced detailing the research (Orr 1978). Copies of this report, slides of the excavation, and the artifacts are on deposit with Historic Annapolis. The research was sponsored by that organization.

The second phase of archeological research, in 1982, was again undertaken with the sponsorship of Historic Annapolis. Dr. Anne Yentsch of the College of William and Mary directed excavations supervised by Ms Susan Mira. Approximately 800 square feet of the exposed yard surface was excavated. Draft summaries have been prepared by both Mira (1983) and Yentsch (1983).

A third phase of archeological research is being directed by Dr. Richard J. Dent of the University of Maryland. Some

excavations took place between July and October of 1983 and continued work will be undertaken as soon as obstacles (concrete pad and brick floor) are cleared. Excavations completed to date under the direction of Dent cover approximately 550 square feet. A well has been completely excavated, a large 19th century privy tested (50% sample), and a feature of unknown function in the interior of the structure has also been excavated. These excavations were also sponsored by Historic Annapolis. Dent will produce the final report on the entire Historic Annapolis research effort at Reynolds' Tavern.

Excavation Summary

Reynolds' Tavern site (18 AP 23) is located on Church Circle in Annapolis, Maryland. This parcel of land is flanked by Franklin Street and the Farmers National Bank. The rear of the site abutts an access road to the bank parking lot (figure 1). Existing historic structures on the site include the two and one-half story Georgian tavern, built circa 1747, and a small brick meathouse probably built in the early 19th century (figure 2). A modern storage shed is also attached to the meathouse. These structures are situated in a yard measuring approximately 96 feet deep by 62 feet wide. Of this area approximately 45 feet by 60 feet (about 3,350 square feet) were excavatable. Structures or concrete pavement cover the remaining area.

As mentioned before, three phases of archeological research, all sponsored and funded by Historic Annapolis, have been

undertaken at Reynolds' Tavern. The results of these excavations will be discussed in the following manner. First, the work of Orr (1978) will be outlined. This research focused on the front, one side, and a small portion of the rear yard of the tavern. The excavations were controlled by a unique grid system which can only be understood in relation to the objectives of that particular research. Second, the excavations in the remaining yard (research of Yentsch and Dent) will be grouped for the convenience of discussion. A common grid system was employed for these excavations and both were undertaken with similar research goals.

To begin, Orr (1978) states three research goals:

- 1) to define evidence of grade line across front elevation, placement of front cellar windows and possible entrance and bulkhead complexes, porch floors and stoops, and old pavements;
- 2) define cellar entrance at Franklin Street end of tavern;
- 3) excavate test pits in tavern yard to assess the need for further excavations.

Approximately 450 square feet of soil matrix were processed within the test units illustrated on figure 3. Over 1700 artifacts were recovered from some 15 cultural strata and ten features. The report produced by Orr (1978) more than adequately details this research. The present report will concentrate on summarizing this research.

The research goals outlined above dictated test units in three areas of the site - under the existing sidewalk in the front of the tavern, under the existing sidewalk at the Franklin Street side of the tavern, and in the rear yard. These three

areas will be discussed in turn. Again, these data are drawn from Orr (1978).

Excavations at the front of the tavern indicate that the present porch was not original to the structure. Architectural documentation supports this conclusion (Historic Sites Report 1978). The first porch or stoop was a low square platform with brick sides containing an earthen core and probably a wooden deck. A short set of risers, probably also of wood, carried a person entering the house to the level of the front door.

Sometime early in the 19th century, modifications were made to the original stoop. Soil matrix was added to raise the floor level and a second brick course was added to the stoop walls. Two courses of brick were provided as a step base to the door level and the front of the porch was extended with a brick step also probably provided for mounting the platform. The present canopy was also added.

Later in the 20th century a last phase of porch modification was evident. The porch deck was raised until it was flush with the door threshold. Sidewalls were again raised and two concrete steps were constructed for mounting the porch. The canopy was raised to compensate for these modifications.

In addition to deciphering the evolution of the porch at Reynolds' Tavern, Orr (1978) also detected the presence of a gutter system which once ran along the front of the house. This feature consisted of a trench containing oyster shell, a thin sand lens covering the shell, and a brick cap. Artifacts within the shell indicate this feature was probably original to the tavern. The standard explanation for such features is that they

calcify water thus protecting the mortar of the foundation walls below.

Other tests determined that the cellar windows once extended one foot below their present base. Their original base also marks the 18th century grade. This land surface appears to have been covered by brick and sloped 10-15 degrees to the southwest.

Testing on the Franklin Street side of the tavern (figure 3) revealed a bricked-in bulkhead entrance. Although remains were sparse, there was some evidence of a brick floor and possibly wooden steps. This entrance would have allowed access to the cellar of the structure from the street. The entry appears to have been original to the building.

Excavations by Orr (1978) in the rear yard consisted of three tests - one along the front of the meathouse, another near the side of the meathouse, and a third between the tavern and the meathouse (figure 3). Test 1 located traces of a kitchen midden between the tavern and meathouse. This midden appears to have been made up of lenses of sheet refuse periodically covered with sand. Artifacts from the builder's trench of the meathouse indicate the structure dates to the early 19th century. Test 2 revealed little other than the original land surface. Test 3, however, located an in situ cobblestone roadway. A single sherd of creamware partially under one of the cobbles suggested to Orr (1978) that the road was associated with the early years of the tavern.

In conclusion, Orr's (1978) excavations revealed much about the house and early features associated with its construction and

use. Many of his conclusions were reinforced by later excavations. Orr should also be commended for completing this testing without extensively disturbing the archeological record of Reynolds' Tavern.

The overall intent of the 1982 and 1983 excavations, undertaken by Yentsch and Dent respectively, was to understand the use of space in the yard that remains (locate associated structures, middens, wells, etc.) and to recover samples of the material culture and other remains associated with activities in and around the tavern. Another goal was to mitigate the affects of proposed construction on the archeological record of Reynolds' Tavern.

While the research goals of Yentsch and Dent were similar, slight differences existed in excavation methods. For both excavations control was maintained via a grid, with 5 x 5 foot cells, aligned toward a permanent datum (figure 4). This datum also served as an elevation reference point. Yentsch also employed a variety of trenches to further test the yard.

In all cases, test units were excavated in stratigraphic layers. These layers could either be natural soil horizons or cultural episodes. Features were treated separately. Plan views and profiles were produced and a photographic record was maintained. Differences do exist between the method of note keeping employed in the 1982 versus 1983 excavations. In 1982 written descriptions were produced to document the research. For the 1983 season, forms were created for this task. All artifacts have been washed and labeled. Items in need of conservation were treated and more detailed analysis of all

artifacts is now under way.

Combining the 1982 and 1983 excavations, 45 cells (5x5 feet) of the grid were excavated and 14 half-units were also tested - approximately 1350 square feet. Figure 4 also illustrates the units completed thus far. Exposed yard surface includes roughly 3,350 square feet. In all, 40% of this surface was excavated between 1982 and 1983. The remainder of this section of the report will document these excavations. This discussion will start with units near the tavern and proceed toward the back of the yard.

Three units (NO E5, NO E10, S5 E10) were excavated near the existing back porch of the tavern. Generally speaking, moderate amounts of sheet refuse, probably issued from the nearby window (now a jib door to the back porch), were recovered in these units. Most of the artifacts date to the late 18th/early 19th centuries. A pad of rough fieldstones and brick drain to divert water away from the tavern were also excavated. Evidence suggests this drain structure dates to the beginning of the 19th century. One suggestion is that this drain helped to divert water away from the nearby cellar entrance excavated by Orr (1978).

Units S5 W5, NO W5, N5 W5, and N5 W10 were excavated in 1983. There was extensive disturbance in this area from utility lines. Again, however, substantial deposits of sheet refuse indicate this area also received deposits via the nearby window. Artifact assemblages date these deposits from the mid-18th to 20th centuries. Specific early notable types include tin-glazed earthenware, white salt-glazed stoneware, creamware, pearlware,

etc.

Moving away from the tavern, units S5 W20, N0 W15, and N10 W20, were rather random in the information they yielded. S5 W20 contained an oyster shell layer with tin-glazed earthenware and 18th century bottle glass above and tin-glazed earthenware, early stoneware, pipe stems, and bone below. A coin dated 1739 was also recovered below the shell lens. These artifacts would date the refuse deposit to the early years of the tavern. The other two units, contained similar material but in low quantities and not in discrete deposits.

The next group of units excavated was roughly in the center of the yard. This includes units N5 W35, N5 W45, N10 W45, N10 W40, N15 W40, and N15 W45. The most significant finding in this group of units was a dense mortar layer (thickness varies from 1.5 to 3 inches). Artifacts above and below this feature date it to circa 1720-1750. It may therefore predate the tavern or accompany its construction. No wood impressions (such as lathing marks) are evident and distinct grooves were present. The mortar is of an oyster and lime variety. In short, it is hard to assign any particular function to this pavement other than to say it might have been associated with a temporary structure of some sort. However, no post molds, concentrations of nails, etc. can be noted.

Units S15 W35 and S15 W50, located along the Franklin Street fence, contained little of interest. For the most part these units contained a random mix of 18th, 19th, and 20th century artifacts. The area containing these units was evidently part of a garden constructed by the library.

Units N30 W45, N35 W45, N35 W40, N30 W40, N25 W40, N40 W35, N35 W35, N25 W35, N25 W30, N25 W30, and N20 W30 were excavated to reveal the cobblestone roadway. This roadway had originally been discovered by Orr (1978). In short, the roadway once ran from the central rear door of the tavern (now part of the 1906 addition) toward the meathouse. It then appears on the other of the meathouse and appears to be heading toward the west. The meathouse, an early 19th century structure, was placed through the roadway. This cobble roadway is distinctly laid with a central drain and borders. It flares toward the rear of the tavern with more roughly laid stones. Fill on top of the roadway includes creamware and pearlware. This should date the feature itself to the earlier years of the tavern. Orr (1978) felt it was related to Reynolds' livery stable. An alternative hypothesis may be that the roadway linked the tavern to West Street, a main artery to the city.

Moving toward the tavern, units N25 W25, N35 W25, N40 W25, N40 W 20, N35 W20, N30 W20, N25 W20, N20 W20, N40 W15, N25 W20, N30 W15, and N25 W15 are centered around a deep stone-lined well. Artifact deposits and faunal material date from a variety of periods, but much of the material is assignable to the 18th and early 19th century. Again, this seems to be sheet refuse and primary refuse deposits spread or dumped into the area.

The well, excavated to a depth of 40 feet, seems to have been filled at a single point in time. Preliminary evidence indicates this event may be linked to the construction of the 1903 addition. One interesting artifact deposited in the well

fill was a 17 foot wooden water pipe. A similar object was observed in the City of London Museum. In Europe such water delivery systems were common in the 17th century. Such pipes were still in use in this country into the 19th century.

Behind the meathouse and storage shed number of units were also excavated. This area includes units N60 W75, N55 W75, N50 W75, N60 W70, N55 W70, N50 W65, N60 W65, N55 W65, N50 W65, N60 W65, N55 W65, N50 W65, N60 W60, N55 W60, N50 W60, N60 W55, N55 W50, N50 W55, N60 W55, and N55 W50. A large privy, dating to the mid-19th century was dissected with a 50% sample excavated. As mentioned before, the cobblestone roadway also appears on this side of the meathouse. A large and very significant primary refuse deposit was also excavated. Although a good portion of this feature was destroyed by utility lines, excellent faunal remains and artifact deposits were encountered. Artifacts in the deposit date it to the mid-18th century.

Last, a large feature was excavated from within the interior of the tavern. This feature, in the room which once contained Reynolds' hat shop is subterranean and was built over a barrel arch. Evidence suggests the feature's storage compartment was once lined with wood. Access to the storage compartment would have been through floor level trap doors. A current hypothesis suggests this feature was employed to store pelts and supplies, for Reynolds' hat making business, in a cool and dry environment. Stratigraphy around the feature suggests it was original to the tavern or was built soon after its construction. More research, on function and construction techniques remains to be done on this important feature.

Recommendations

Immediate plans for construction include the proposed underpinning of the tavern and excavation of the underground kitchen below and out from the 1906 addition. It is suggested that this work be allowed to start without delay. This recommendation is based on the following conclusions and qualifications:

- 1) A 40% sample of artifact deposits has been completed in the exposed yard area. This seems to be a reasonable sample for this type of site.
- 2) Monitoring, however, should be allowed on the one side of the 1906 addition where no testing was possible due to a concrete apron.
- 3) The well, which will be partially destroyed, should be capped and filled to preserve what remains.
- 4) The feature in the basement should be covered to prevent damage.
- 5) No construction should be allowed near the cobblestone road. This area should be filled to prevent damage.
- 6) The central hallway in the basement interior must be removed and adequate time given over to archeological testing.
- 7) The concrete pad in front of the storage shed should be removed and archeologists must excavate before any construction takes place in that area.

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