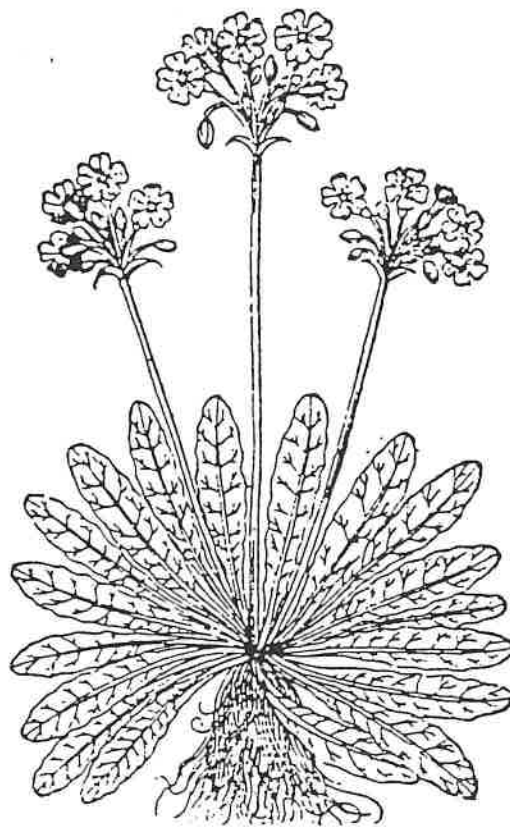


**A MAP OF
THE RIDOUT GARDEN
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND**



ARCHAEOLOGY IN ANNAPOLIS

Cover: Bird's-eye Primrose. p.333, Richard G. Hatton,
Handbook of Plant and Floral Ornament. Dover Publications,
Inc. New York 1960

A map of the
Ridout Garden,
Annapolis, Maryland

Prepared and Drawn for
Archaeology in Annapolis
Historic Annapolis, Inc.

by

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Introduction

Archaeology in Annapolis, a collaborative research project of Historic Annapolis, Inc. and the University of Maryland, is engaged in sampling the range of life from the three-century history of Annapolis. As part of this project, a map was made of the historic Ridout garden. This report presents the map and discusses the place of the garden in the archaeology of historic Annapolis.

History of the Ridout House and Garden

In the 1718 Stoddert resurvey of Annapolis (Stoddert 1718), what became the Ridout property was encompassed in lots 23 and 24. Lot 24, where the Ridout house was later built, belonged to Amos Garrett. Lot 23, to the southeast, belonged to Robert Thomas, a boatman (Anne Arundel County Deeds 1715). In 1720, Garrett acquired one-third of lot 23, including a small house, from Jane Thomas, the widow of Robert Thomas. By 1726, Garrett appears to have acquired the rest of lot 23 (Historic Annapolis, Inc. n.d.)

The deed records for the ensuing period are incomplete. In 1764, John Ridout bought "all of lot 24 plus buildings gardens ways, improvements and other appurtenances

whatsoever." (Anne Arundel County Deeds 1764). Ridout bought the adjacent Lot 23 from John Ross in 1766.

John Ridout was secretary to Horatio Sharpe, Proprietary Governor of Maryland. Ridout was born in England in 1732, and came to America in 1754 (Eareckson 1977). He built a house on lot 24, sometime between 1764 and 1774. Ridout later built three adjoining townhouses on lot 23. In a letter to his mother-in-law, Anne Ogle, he mentions "I am now about to finish the middle tenement in my new building..." (John Ridout to Mary Ogle, letter dated December 3, 1774). Between the Ridout House and the Ridout tenements was a building used as a stable that was built either by Ridout or one of the previous owners. In back of the Ridout house and behind the adjacent coach house and stable, Ridout constructed a formal terraced garden. This garden may have extended behind the tenements as well. The Ridout house and garden have remained in the hands of descendants of John Ridout to the present.

The Ridout house and garden are one of a number of large and beautiful houses with formal gardens constructed in Annapolis in the period before the American Revolution. One visitors in 1769 comments,

"The buildings of Annapolis were formerly of small dimensions and of inelegant construction; but there are now several modern edifices which make good appearance. There are few habitations without gardens, some of which are planted in a decent style and are well stocked." (Eddis 1969:13).

Another visitor describes Annapolis in 1797:

"The houses are almost all of brick, and spacious. Many are quite large, and have pretty gardens, better kept than any that I had seen in America." (La Rochefoucault 1799:92) [my translation-JWH]

At least half a dozen gardens or fragments of gardens have survived to the present in Annapolis. The William Paca Garden, now completely restored, illustrates how much can be recovered from a property that seemingly had been completely destroyed. Archaeological investigations allowed the restoration of this garden in spite of substantial later construction over its site.

The Ridout property has remained in the same family since John Ridout first bought it. The garden retains its original landscaping with only minor changes in plantings and flower beds. Because of the pristine state of the garden, Archaeology in

Annapolis decided to make a measured contour map of it. The map is presented as figure 1 of this paper.

Mapping Procedures

Joseph W. Hopkins, III and Nigel Holman spent four days making a measured one-foot contour map of the Ridout garden, using tape measures and a transit. In addition to the contours, breaks of slope on the terraces were recorded. A series of features on the lower three terraces were noted. These features consisted of slightly raised areas under the grass that now covers these terraces. The features could also be detected by the difference in feeling underfoot of the areas surrounding the features and the area within the features. St. Clair Wright, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Historic Annapolis, Inc., suggested that the features may be parterres.

The Ridout Garden

The Ridout garden is landscaped into five terraces which descend from the Ridout house. A sixth terrace or ramp bounds the garden to the northwest. Figure 2 presents a schematic plan of these terraces.

The Ridout house sits on terrace A (figure 2). This terrace is approximately four feet lower than the level

of the sidewalk on Duke of Gloucester Street. The break of slope of terrace A is aligned with the back facade of the Ridout house. Terrace A has an extension that underlies the steps leading to the garden entrance of the Ridout house. Below terrace A and its extension is terrace B. There is no indication of a ramp or steps descending from terrace A to terrace B.

Terraces C, D and E (figure 2) form a unit that descends for the length of the garden. These three terraces are divided in two parts by a central walk which is aligned with the garden entrance of the Ridout house. There is a ramp where the central walk crosses the fall of each terrace. The falls descend three feet in about eight feet, while the ramp descends the same distance in twelve to fifteen feet. The central walk is bordered by flower beds that were probably put in in the 1950s (Mrs. Thorpe Richards, personal communication). The flower beds line up with the breaks of slope on the sides of the ramp between the terrace flats, which suggests that the flower beds follow the original width of the walk. The present central walk is 11'6" wide on terrace C, and 12' wide on terraces D and E.

The garden is bordered on the northwest side by a sixth terrace or ramp (terrace F). (Figure 2) This terrace forms a

ninety-five degree angle with the Ridout house and terraces A through E. This means that terrace F diverges from the central walk as it moves away from the house. Where terraces A through E form a series of steps and falls, terrace F descends at an even one in ten slope. This slope parallels the average slope of the combined terraces and their falls.

Discussion

There were two main goals for mapping the Ridout garden. The first was to evaluate the degree of disturbance of the Ridout garden. The second was to explore mapping as a tool for analyzing the meaning contained in surviving 18th century gardens.

In general, the main features of the garden, the terraces, the falls, and their defining breaks of slope, were remarkably clear. The falls descend at roughly a 1 in 3 ratio. This matches an 18th century prescription for building falls in a garden:

"The proportion that the base of a slope ought to have to its perpendicular is three to one, that is, if that perpendicular height be ten feet, its base must be thirty feet: and the like of all others." (Langley 1726:201, quoted in Leone 1984:31).

If the garden followed this prescription, its present proportions suggest the garden has been little disturbed in its major outlines.

There has been some rearranging of the plantings. The flower beds that border the central walk, and several bushes and trees were planted in the 1950s (Mrs. Thorpe Richards, personal communication). Some of the vegetation at the bottom of the garden may have been added in the 1950's to screen the property from the Green Street School (St. Clair Wright, personal communication). The possible parterres noted in the mapping represent earlier plantings in the garden. At this point it is not possible to establish when these beds were planted.

The original garden may be extended onto the adjacent property to the southeast where John Ridout had three tenements. The northern corner of the property where terrace F is, may have been added by a later property exchange. (Mrs. Thorpe Richards, personal communication). This is suggested by the extension of terrace F from the property line on this corner. A title search will identify the property borders at the time the garden was designed and built. Mapping behind the Ridout townhouses will establish if the garden extended onto these properties.

The garden is broadly symmetrical. The central walk is aligned with the garden entrance to the Ridout house, which

in turn is centered on the back facade of the house. On closer examination, the garden also has a number of asymmetries, some subtle, and others more striking.

The most striking asymmetry of the garden is the different treatments of the northwest and southeast sides of the garden. Terrace F, which diverges 5' from the axis established by the central walk, borders the garden on the northwest. The 5' divergence may be a deliberate attempt to manipulate the perspective on that side of the garden. There is no parallel ramp on the southeast side of the garden. The terraces may extend behind the Ridout townhouses to the southeast. These buildings were constructed by Ridout, and the garden may originally have been designed to be seen as a whole, behind both the Ridout house and one or more of the three "tenements" or townhouses.

Terraces C, D, and E are not the same size. Terrace C is 44' wide and terrace D is 35' wide. Terrace E, at the bottom of the garden, is 60' wide. A viewer at the top of the garden would perceive terraces C and D as two identical terraces descending to the bottom of the garden (terrace E). Since terrace C is actually wider than terrace D, the effect would be to make the bottom of the garden appear more distant than it really is.

The extension of terrace A, immediately beneath the steps of the garden entrance of the house, is also asymmetrical. The top of the terrace extends beyond the side of the house some five feet on the southeast side, while it is aligned with the wall of the house on the northwest side. This asymmetry may be the result of later excavation and disturbance of the original proportions of the terrace. The terrace retains a symmetry of form which argues against disturbance. If the asymmetry is original, it mirrors the asymmetry of the garden. The terraces extend only 65' from the center of the central walk to the edge of terrace F on the northwest side of the garden, while they extend 73' to the property edge on the southeast and may extend onto the adjacent property. The asymmetry of terrace A may reflect a subtle adjustment to compensate visually for the asymmetry in the garden.

The bottom terrace, terrace E, is substantially wider than the other terraces. It has other features that set it off. First, if the possible parterres that were detected are old, their orientation may be indicative of the different treatment of this bottom terrace. The possible parterres on terraces C and D are oriented with the long axes of the terraces, while the possible parterres on terrace E are at right angles to the long axis of the terrace.

The contour map suggests a stream may have flowed through this bottom terrace. A stream or run passed through the adjacent property to the east. Traces of this stream were uncovered in the Newman Street excavations (Hopkins 1984). This stream's alignment would connect with the channel in the bottom of the Ridout garden. The central walk in the garden should have ended with a visual focal point. This channel suggests that some sort of pool might have provided such a feature

The map of the Ridout garden highlights a number of suggestive features that may be characteristic of 18th century gardens in Annapolis, as well as, perhaps, other English gardens in analagous situations. John Reps describes the pattern of construction of large homes and gardens in Annapolis:

"The designs for a number of the great townhouses in the city [of Annapolis] were obviously influenced by English Architectural handbooks which chiefly illustrated mansions intended for rural locations with ample grounds. In England it would have been considered inappropriate to place such dwellings on limited town lots; in Annapolis the combination provided the Maryland Capital with a most unusual and pleasant architectural heritage. For the most part these dwellings were located on or close to the street lines. Front yards, where provided, were quite shallow, with the main lawns and gardens located to the rear of the dwelling for privacy and maximum use of the restricted sites." (1972:136).

This quote exactly describes the Ridout house and garden. The garden reflects the resolution of problems of making the Georgian principles of symmetry, and other principles of 18th century garden-making, work the with particular problems posed by an urban, New World setting. Problems faced include how to make asymmetrical garden behind a complex of three buildings (the Ridout house, the stable, and the three tenements) that were not symmetrical, and the problem of dealing with the edges of the constricted urban lot. A particularly interesting edge would have been the northeastern edge along terrace E. Here the Ridout garden would have abutted the garden behind the house of Charles Carroll, which lay on the site of the present Green Street School. This problem would have also existed on other urban Annapolis garden, like the Hammond Harwood and the Paca Gardens, as well as possibly the Paca Garden and the Brice House garden. The Ridout garden may help illuminate how this problem was dealt with.

Further Research

We must know what the original borders of the garden are in order to analyze the proportions of the features of the garden. The original property boundaries to the

northwest will be determined by title research now being done. It appears likely that the garden as originally conceived extended into one or more of the tenement properties to the southeast. These tenements were built by Ridout. Mapping of the property behind these buildings should answer this important question.

Excavation would address other questions. Excavation on the falls and on the upper terraces would test the amount of disturbance of all these features. We have no written descriptions on how the plans for formal gardens were executed. Excavation would establish the actual procedures used to build the terraces, falls, and ramps of the garden. While excavation could thus provide important information about the Ridout garden, the most important information from these gardens is recovered by the non-destructive process of mapping. The analysis of the features of these gardens revealed by mapping is the primary tool for understanding them.

Summary and Conclusions

The Ridout garden represents a pristine and undisturbed example of an 18th century formal garden in Annapolis. The analysis of the Ridout garden can serve as a model for understanding how principles of the Georgian order, as

reflected in rules for garden making, were expressed in the New World. Mark Leone (1984) has shown that gardens can be considered artifacts that represent ideologies. In this case the transformations of the European rules for making gardens to the New World situation reflect transformations in the ideologies of Europe brought about by the colonial experience.

The formal gardens of the 18th century are an important feature of colonial construction in the New World. The gardens provide a basis for insight into 18th century concepts of how the world should be ordered: of public and private, of the relations between the natural world of man, as well as practical resolutions of theories about all of the above. Principles learned in the Old World were adapted to the conditions of the new. This project represents a preliminary step in the analysis of these important features. This analysis, which has a potential to learn a great deal about colonial life in Annapolis, in Maryland, and in Virginia in the 18th century, is largely non-destructive and is inexpensive to execute. This paper is a model for a first step in this study.

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Figure 2
THE RIDOUT HOUSE AND GARDEN

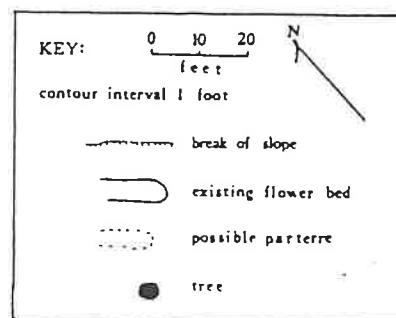
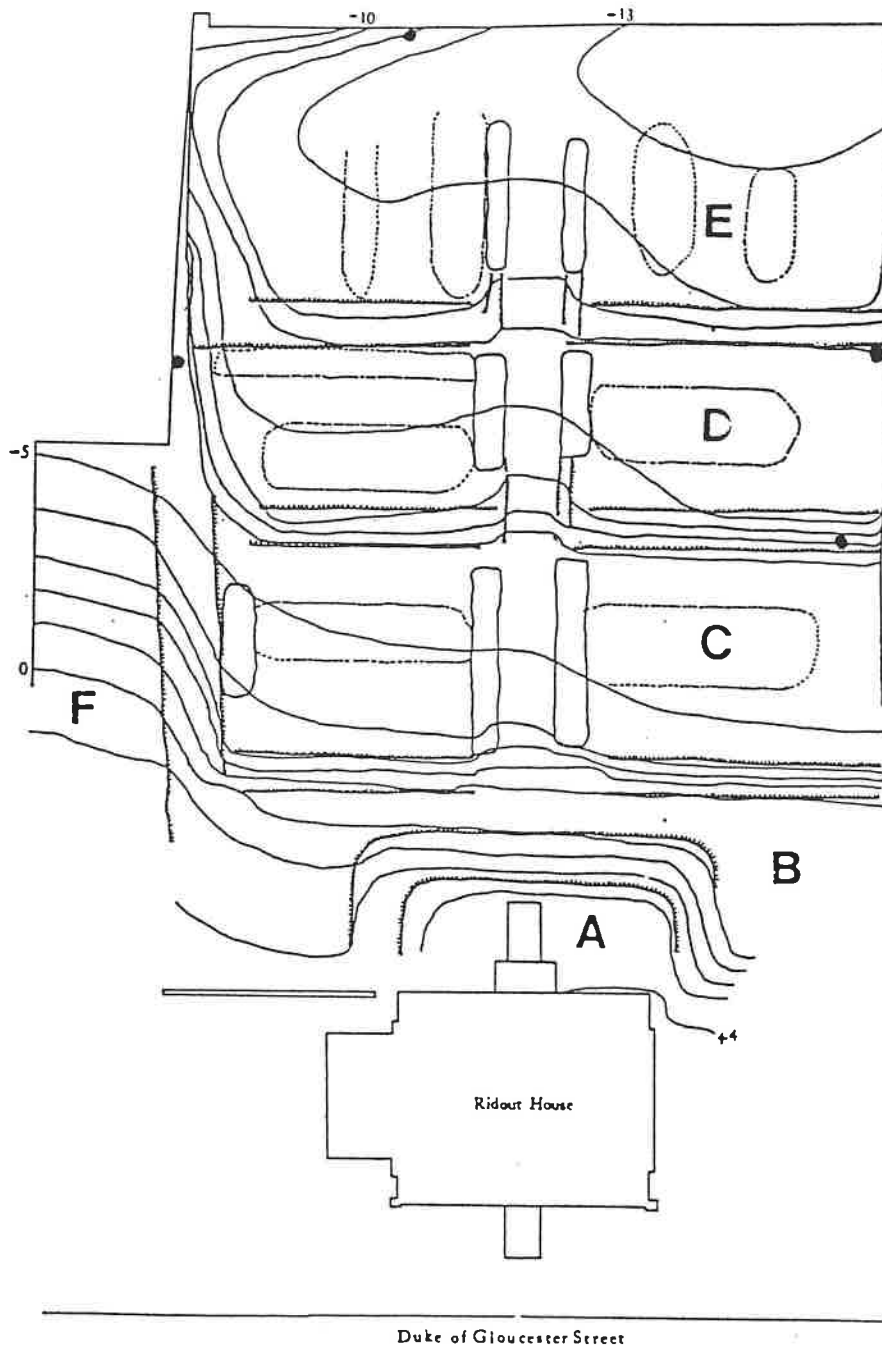
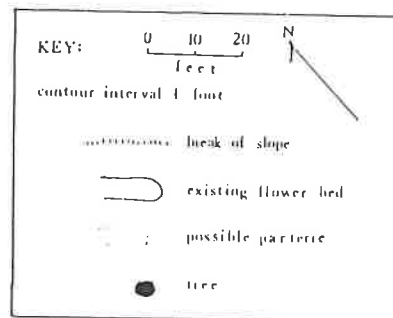
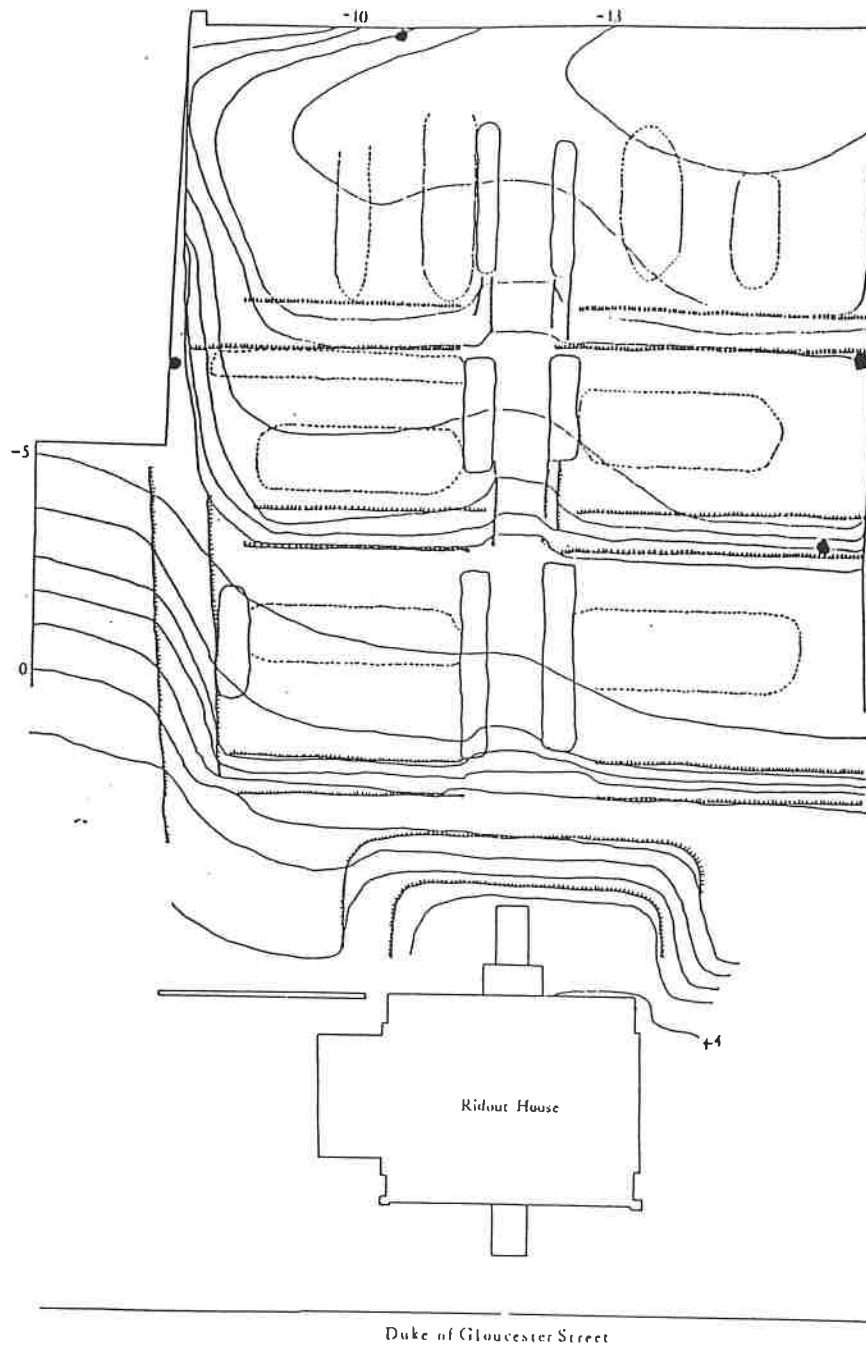


FIGURE 1

THE RIDOUT HOUSE AND GARDEN



Prepared And Drawn For Archaeology In Annapolis
By Joseph W. Hopkins III, Assisted By Nigel Holman

Figure 2
THE RIDOUT HOUSE AND GARDEN

