

Description and Documentation:
Proposed Core Interpretive-Landscape Adjacent to Washington House
Interpretive Building,
George Washington Boyhood Home National Historic Landmark (“Ferry
Farm”)

The George Washington Foundation,
August 2015

The goal of the Ferry Farm Site Development Plan is described generally in the 2014 Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for its Environmental Assessment's Preferred Alternative (Alternative "D): "a rehabilitated landscape" that includes new buildings and access-infrastructure such as walkways and a connector-road, and also "a core interpretive landscape" containing "structures to demonstrate the 18th century plantation setting as authentically as possible...." This rehabilitated-landscape concept is derived from the Secretary of Interior's Guidelines for rehabilitating cultural landscapes, guidelines that include the concept of replacing missing landscape features with those of "compatible" or "reproduced" designs, as well as of adding infrastructure for new use, i.e. education and historical interpretation.

This description- and documentation report references the following:

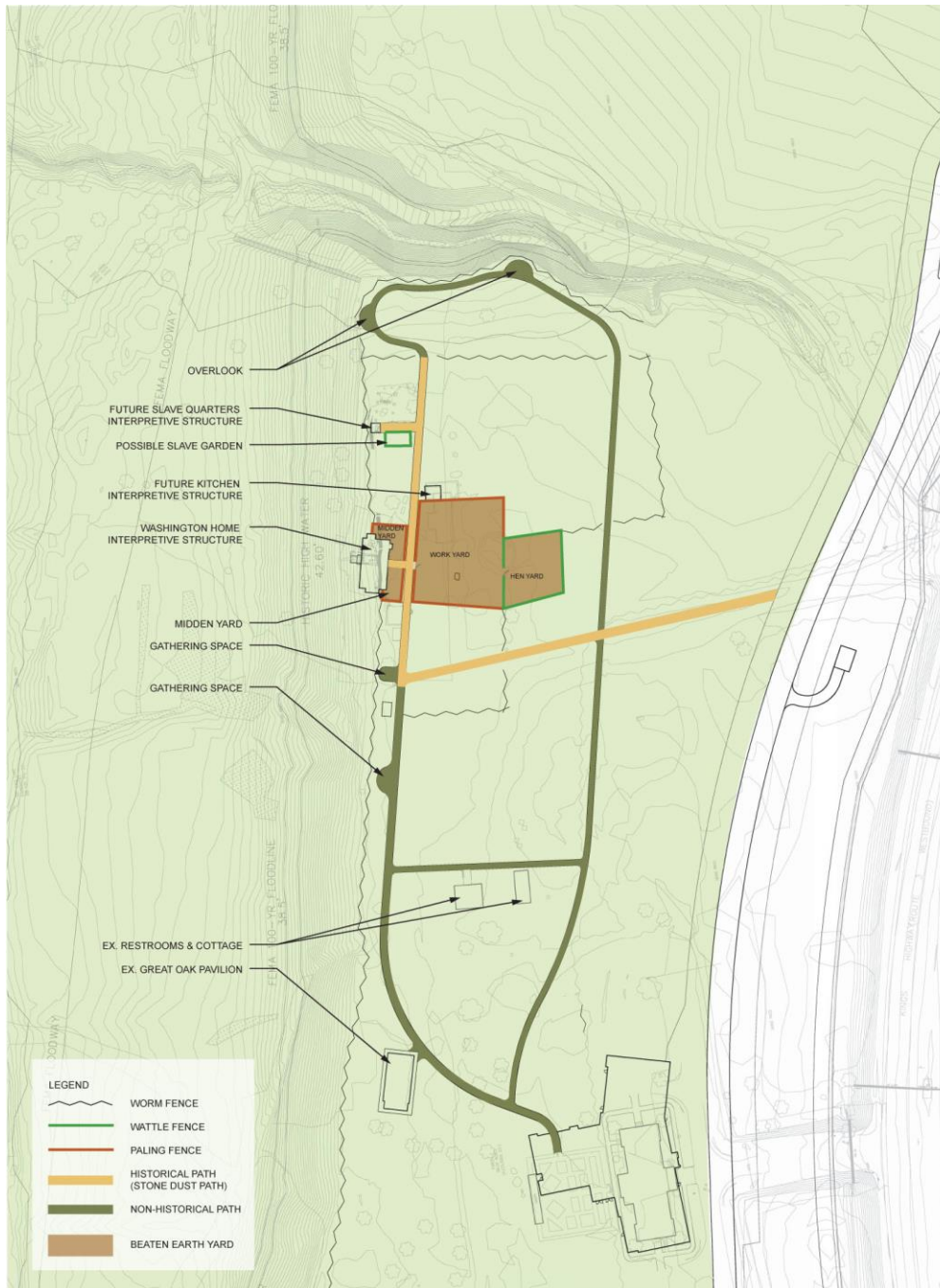
-Quinn Evans Architects, AECOM Landscape Architect, et al, *Site Plans: Ferry Farm Phase 1 Improvements*, December 19, 2014, ("*Site Plans*" below)

-George Washington Foundation, *Report on the Excavation of the Washington Farm: The 2006 and 2007 Field Seasons*, 2010.

-George Washington Foundation, *The Search for Washington Outbuildings and Activity Area, Volume 2: The 2012 Field Season*, 2015 (draft currently under review by NPS and VDHR).

The core interpretive landscape of the Phase I proposal will consist of fencing, yards, paths, and pastures intended to improve visitor safety and experience and/or enhance historical interpretation. Several yards will be established: the Midden Yard, the Work Yard, and the Hen Yard. Paths and fences associated with these yards are documented by archaeology and study of typical 18th century practices.

The proposed locations of the yards and fences, as well as the fence types, are shown in detail on *Site Plans*, L103-L104 and L501-L503, and more generally on the color map below. The locations of the beaten-dirt yard surfaces are shown in detail on L103, and their components—especially stabilized native soil—are shown in cross-section on L501. (Note: the kitchen-, storehouse- and slave quarters interpretive structures, and the slave-quarters garden, are noted below for general reference but are not part of the Phase I proposals and review):



HOME FARM SITE - PATH & FENCING DIAGRAM

Ferry Farm Phase I Improvements

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June 2015

The Midden Yard, Work Yard, Hen Yard, and fencing are based upon the following evidence or necessitated by the following considerations:

Midden Yard: Just east of the Washington house is a midden yard that contains large quantities of domestic trash generated from the house itself. The area centers on the back (east) door of the structure and measures up to 95 feet north/south and up to 55 feet east/west (see map below). The sharp drop in artifact densities at the edges suggests a Virginia fence once demarcated this yard's boundaries using the house itself as part of the fencing. This would follow eighteenth century practices. Historically this area would have been a beaten dirt yard with very little vegetation where domestic trash from the house was tossed. A high concentration of artifacts on a line straight out from the back door suggests a path once existed along this axis. No other physical evidence of this path has survived. The path is a historic feature that will also improve visitor safety, enhance visitor experience, and make the area ADA accessible. The midden yard is a historic feature documented in *The 2006 and 2007 Field Seasons*, p. 76.

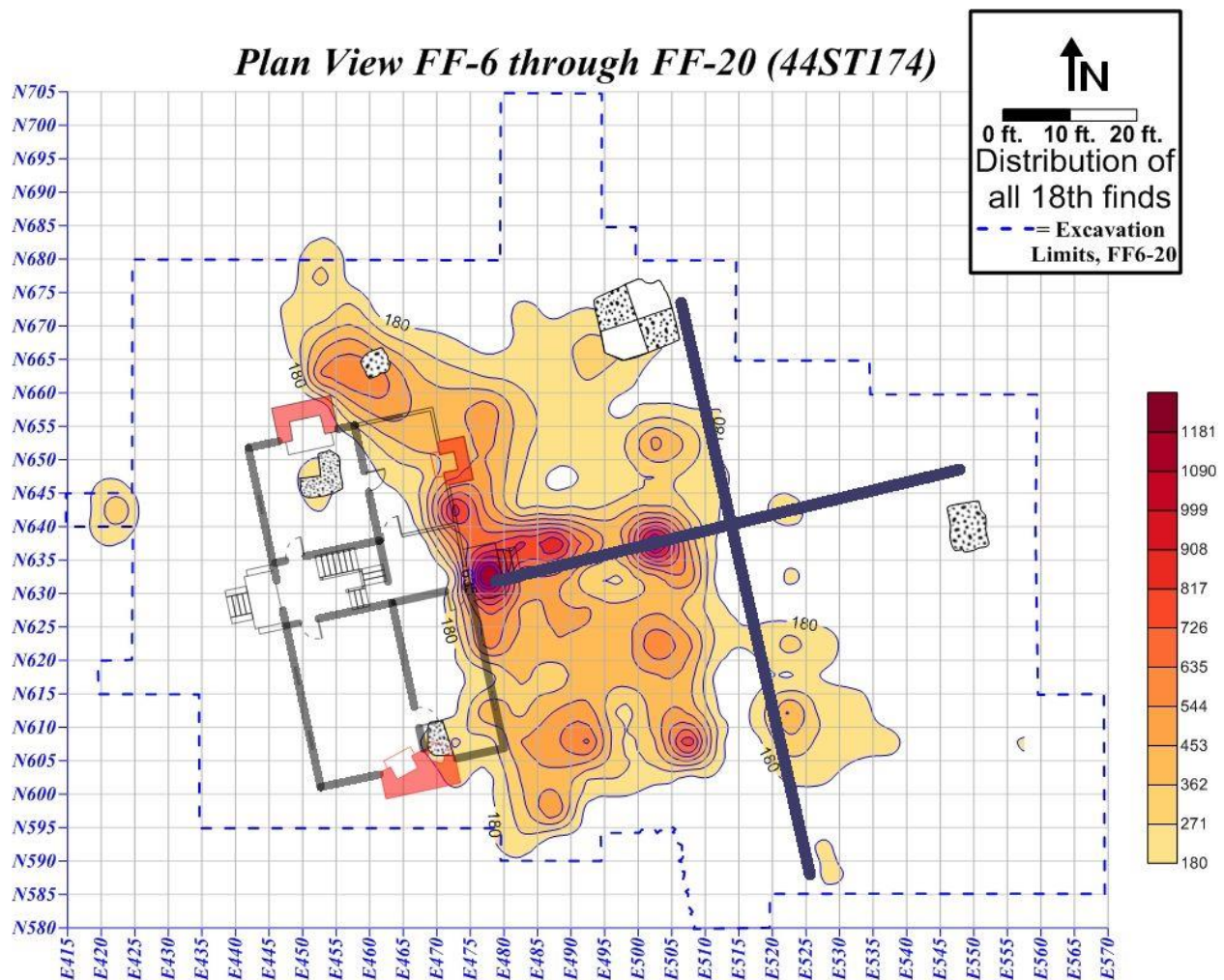


Figure 2. Distribution of linear cluster of artifacts suggesting a path leading out the back door of the house. The Regular edges of the midden cluster indicate a fencing system was used to contain the midden area. *Summary of relevant data from work during field seasons 2007-2014.*

Fencing along the edge of the flood plain and the ravine north of the archaeological site: This non-historic Virginia fence is designed to improve visitor safety (*Site Plans*, L502). The Virginia Fence is period appropriate and a well- documented landscape feature of the area.

Work Yard: Archaeology has identified what appears to be a work yard and associated store house that dates to the Washington period. The work yard is east of the house and the midden yard and also dates to the Washington period, and is documented in *The 2012 Field Season*, p. 69. This portion of the archaeological site measures 90 ft. north/south and approximately 45 ft. east/west. The area is characterized by a lighter concentration of domestic artifacts, the presence of a storehouse structure, and non-architectural activity areas, the most prominent of which is wig maintenance (see map below). While no structures were uncovered in the central portion of the yard, this area served as the core of wig maintenance activities based on the concentration of wig curlers.

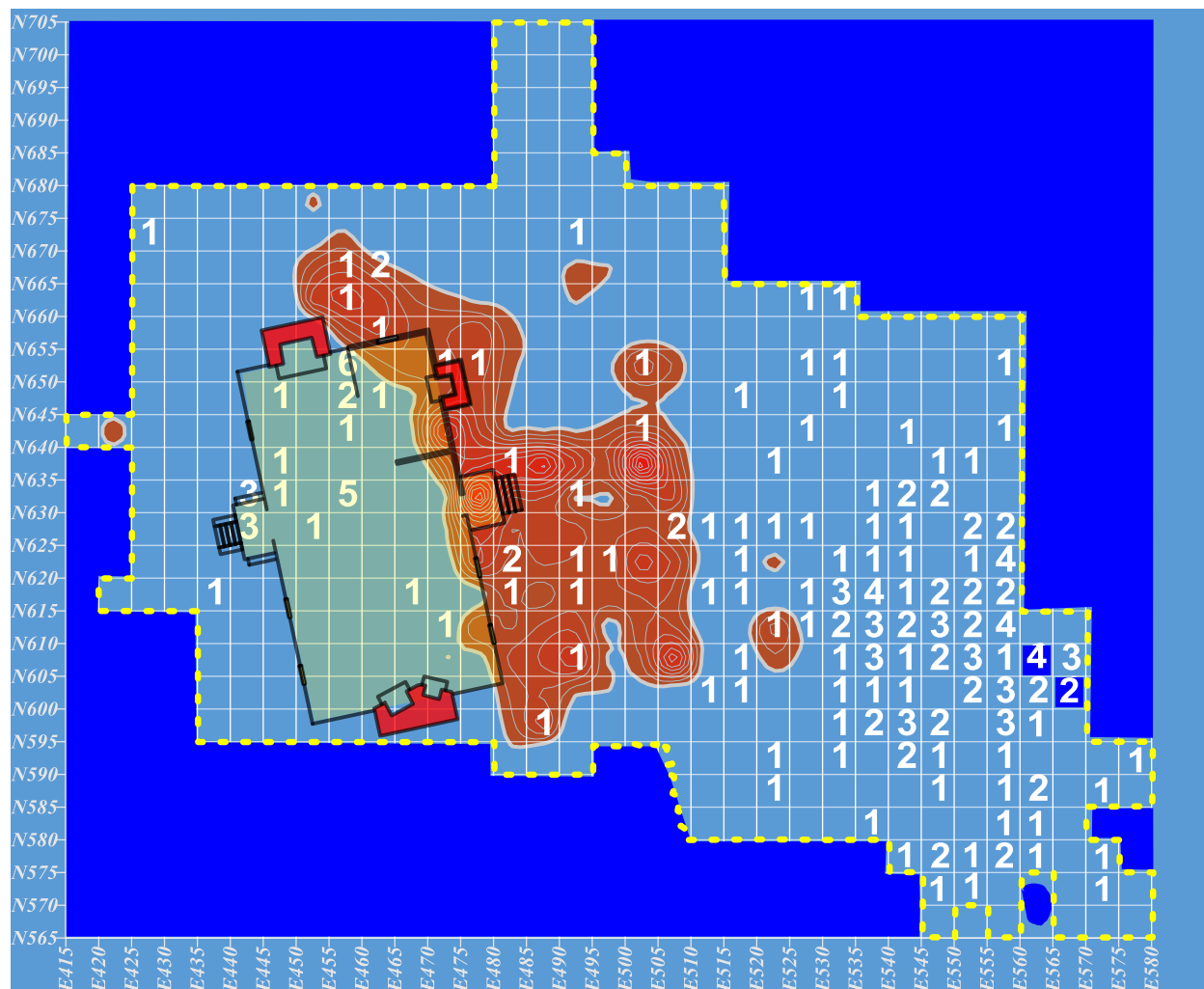
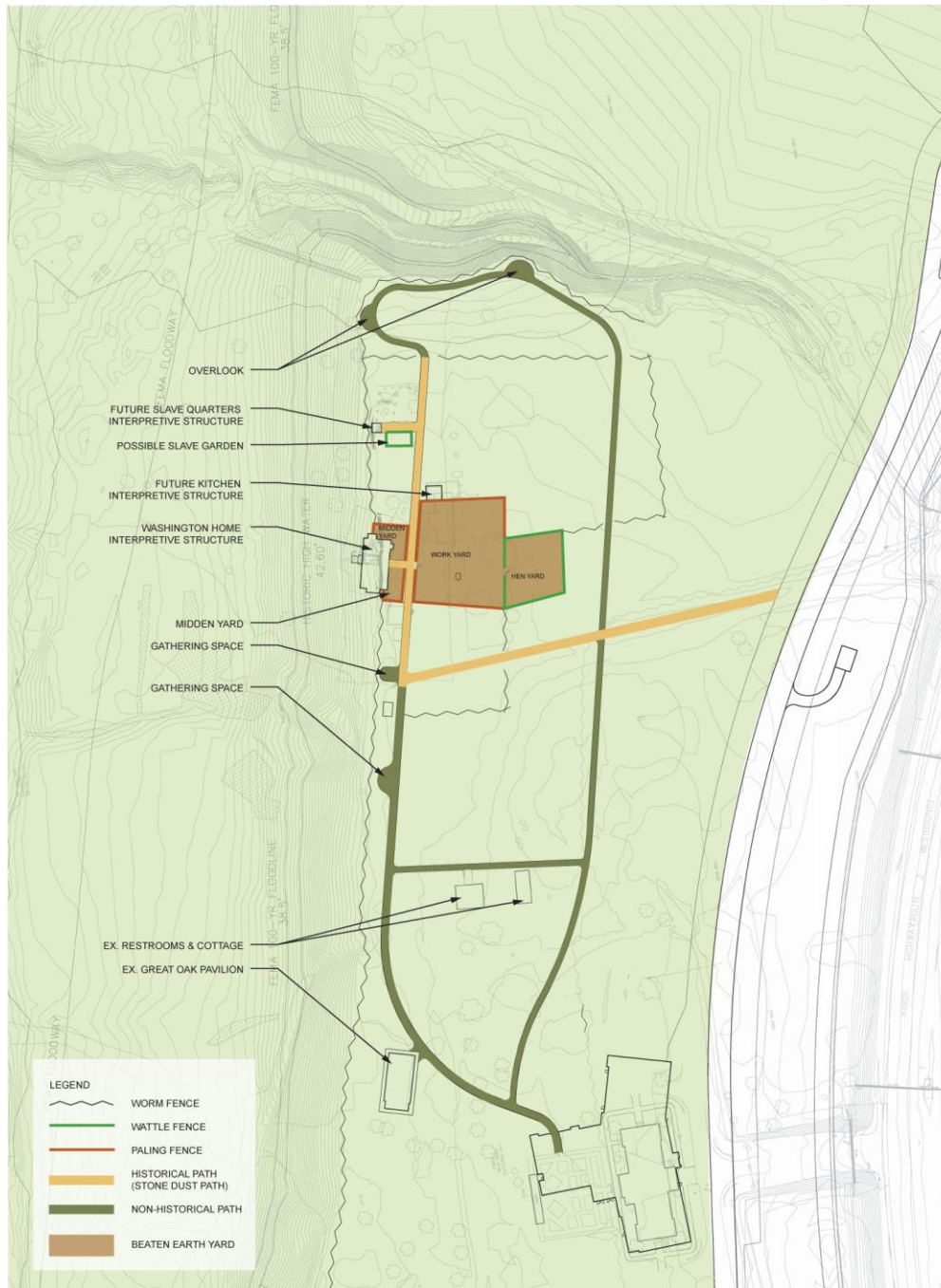


Figure 3. Archaeological Distribution of wig curlers (in white) in relationship to midden yard distribution (in red). *Summary of relevant data from work during field seasons 2007-2014.*



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Figure 4. Home Farm Site – Path and Fencing Diagram

Hen Yard: Documentary evidence from George Washington's own hand establishes the existence of this feature on the landscape. Too ephemeral for archaeological discovery, the Hen yard first shows up in the 1770s survey of Ferry Farm prepared by Washington as he was about to sell the property. Hen yards were traditionally fenced to keep predators away from the chickens. The location of the Hen yard was determined by overlaying the Washington survey on the modern landscape.

Historically Based Fencing: The midden yard is situated on the south side of the house and is bounded by fences on three sides with the house itself making up the fourth side. While no direct evidence of fencing was unearthed, artifact distribution patterns clearly show that formal boundaries once existed for this year. A common type of colonial Virginia fencing that leaves no archaeological trace is called the Virginia fence, also known as worm fencing. This fencing will use 11-foot lengths and will measure 5 feet in height. The fence will be made of cedar.

Two other types of fencing that leave very little archaeological evidence will also be employed in the Washington yard space. A wattle fence will be installed at the Hen yard. George Washington documents the henyard in his survey notes of Ferry Farm in 1772. Waddle fences were typically used for hen yards in the 18th century. This type of fence leaves no archaeological footprint. This fence will use 1- to 2-inch diameter stakes driven into the ground nine inches. Willow branches will be woven between the stakes for a total height of 4 feet. See *Site Plan*, L-503 for details. A different fence will be used around the slave quarter garden – that of picket or pale fence. This fence will be 3 ft. tall and extend into the ground about 6 inches. It is designed to keep animals out of gardens and numerous historical examples of this type of fencing exist (See Vanessa Patrick's "Partitioning the Landscape: The Fence in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," *Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report -0134*). These types of fence will also serve to increase visitor safety.

Historic Core Beaten Earth Path: To make the site accessible and to facilitate visitor safety and enhance the visitor experience, we will be installing a path system in the historic core (see Home Farm path and fence diagram –this document) that connects with the path from the Visitor Center (Sheet L-103). This path measures approximately 500 ft. long in a loop that runs roughly around the perimeter of the historic core. This path is 6.0 ft. wide with viewing stations that expand to 15 ft. across in areas of scenic or historic interest.

Part of the path is prompted by non-historic access-needs and part by historic documentation. The historic part includes a path that runs out of the rear (east side) of the interpretive building house into the midden, and a north-south path that intersects the midden path. Evidence of both these paths comes in the form of artifact distribution maps. The midden map indicates a path was present based on a linear concentration of artifacts. The north-south path is indicated by linear clean space that may indicate where a wider path once existed.

The historic entranceway from the east has also been inspired by evidence of an historic path. Washington's survey notes show a gate at the intersection of this landscape feature and the 18th century road. A raised linear landscape feature that measures about 20 feet in width survives on the modern landscape. Photographs of the farm in the 20th century clearly show this historic entranceway.

Non-historic Fences in the Historic Core: Also in the historic core are perimeter fences that employ Virginia fencing situated on the edges of the historic core. These fences will protect visitors from dangerous topography and to keep children from exploring areas containing poison ivy and disease-carrying insects.

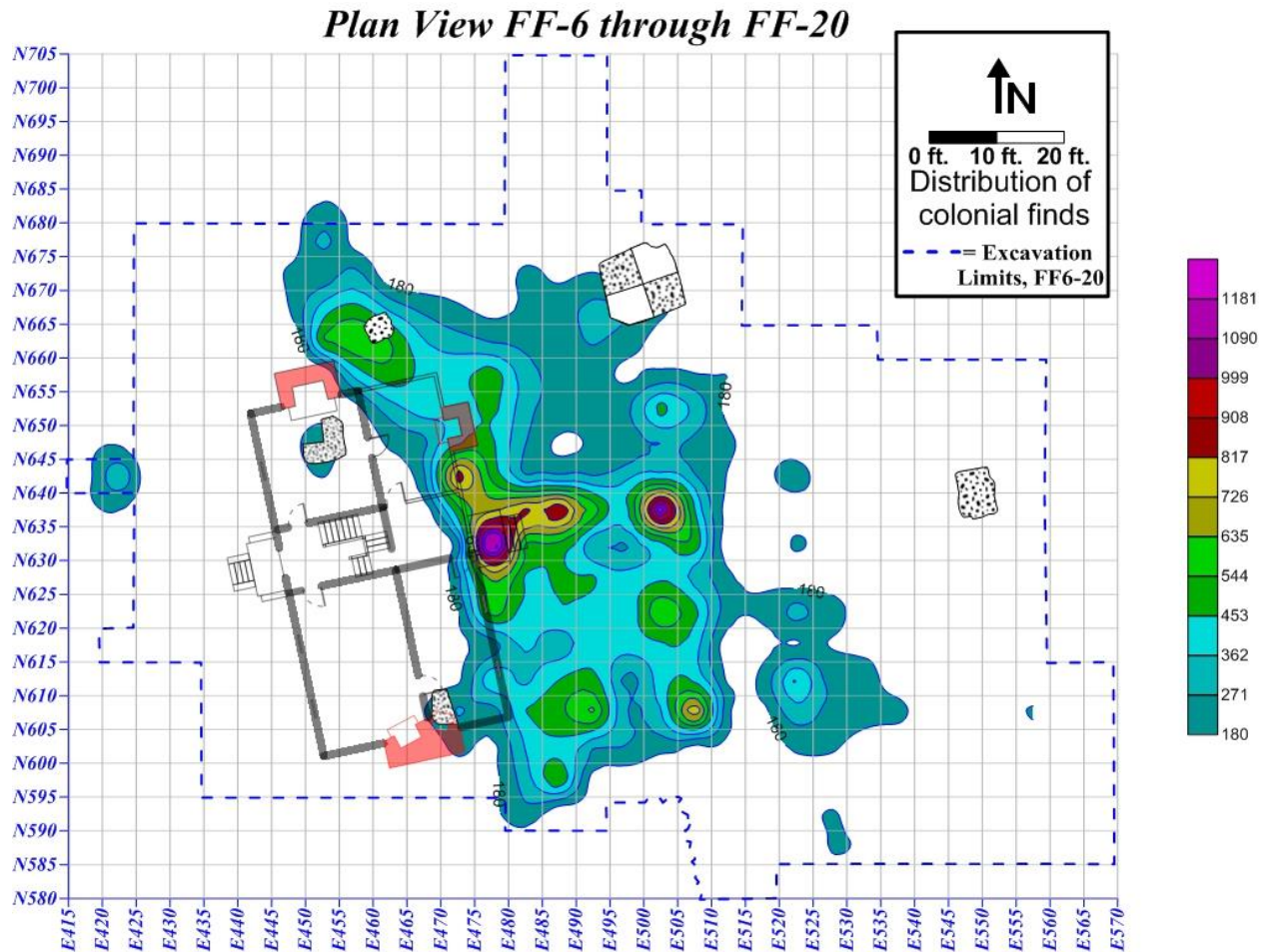


Figure 5. Surfer Map showing concentrations of colonial artifacts (middens) around the Washington house. *Summary of relevant data from work during field seasons 2007-2014.*

Raising Grade Around Interpretive Building: Given the need to elevate the interpretive building but also reflect visually the relationship of the Washington House to 18th century ground levels, up to one foot of soil will be added around the north , west, east, and south sides of the house that eventually flattens entirely to existing grade at a distance of between 5 to 40 feet. In order for this fill to have a natural appearance, the width of the fill area will be 34 feet out from the house on the north side , 26 feet on the south side, 40 feet to the east side, and 5 feet to the west side.