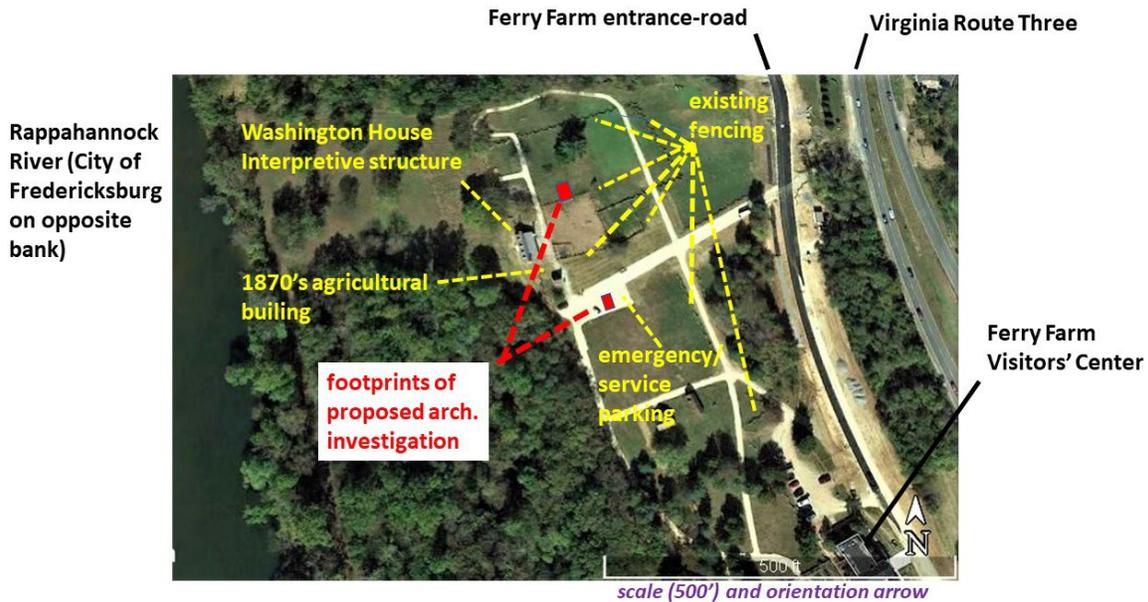


**Scope of Work: Proposed Archaeological Investigation at George Washington's  
Boyhood Home National Historic Landmark ("Ferry Farm"), Stafford County,  
Virginia, 44ST174,  
2024**

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## Proposal Location, Property Description, National Park Service Review-Background

The conservation easement held by the National Park Service (NPS) over the 76-acre George Washington's Boyhood Home National Historic Landmark (Ferry Farm) stipulates the use of the property as "historic site and education attraction." Situated at 268 Kings Highway Fredericksburg, VA 22405 (Stafford County), the property's owner, the George Washington Foundation, manages a visitor center, interpretive structures, and other educational facilities where staff and programming interpret the story of the site's past residents.



Site Map, George Washington Boyhood Home NHL: Prop. Archaeological Investigation, 2024

The conservation easement makes provision for the George Washington Foundation to propose "archaeological investigations" to the NPS for review under the terms of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, investigations that would occur under the direction of a qualified professional archaeologist. The easement incorporates among its provisions pages 44734-44737 of *Archeology and Historic Preservation; Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines* (*Federal Register*, September 29, 1983), which stipulate that archaeological documentation, including "observation, directly, through excavation," may be "undertaken as an aid to various treatment activities, including research, interpretation, reconstruction..." Approved investigations, the easement continues, "shall be documented and reported." The easement also describes the right of the NPS to protect in perpetuity the natural, cultural, archeological, ecological, open space and aesthetic features of Ferry Farm, and describes the restrictions of the easement as intended to prevent uses, which if allowed to occur, would have an individual or cumulative adverse effect.

Our research-design, as with previous archaeological investigations, includes the goal of developing a better understanding of the spatial use of the Ferry Farm landscape over the thousands of years of its occupation.

In accordance with that research design and also the Preferred Alternative (Alternative “D”) for treatment of the overall property—selected through an NPS National Environmental Policy Act/Environment Assessment public/agency/consulting-party review in 2013-2014, and including research on and creation (beginning with NPS agency/consulting-party/public National Historic Preservation Act/Section-106 review in 2015 and 2021) of an interpretive landscape with missing Washington-era landscape features and structures—our proposed archaeological investigation for 2024, below, would emphasize seeking evidence of such features and structures.

## **Proposal Specifics**

### ***Overview***

For the 2024 field season, the George Washington Foundation’s Department of Archaeology proposes to continue investigations in the same general locations (site map above) as those investigated in 2023, following NPS Section-106 review and approval, but a) to expand the southernmost investigation-location by adding on its east an adjoining area of 20 ft. by 35 ft. (eastern half of “FF-42” on site plan below) and b) investigate at the northernmost location a 110 ft. x 100 ft. area (“FF-44” on site plan below) in a zone disturbed previously and extensively by: construction in 1914 of a farmhouse with a concrete cellar; construction in the 1990’s, on and near the site of the 1914 farmhouse, a house-sized building for historical interpretation (itself removed in the 1990’s); and archeological testing in the 1990’s.

### ***FF-42 (on site plan below)***

In 2017, archaeological monitoring of a utility line uncovered a large feature containing organic fill that contained Washington-era artifacts. The utility line was re-routed to avoid this feature and the area was backfilled. In 2023, a block measuring 35 ft. by 35 ft. was NPS Section-106 reviewed and approved for excavation, but the archaeology department only opened an area that measured 20 ft. by 25 ft. centering on the large rectangular feature originally uncovered in 2017. Also in 2023, the department excavated two opposing quadrants of the feature and removed a small column sample for macro- botanical analysis.

In 2024, the archaeology department is planning to return to this location by continuing to excavate more of the 35 ft. by 35 ft. area (in 5 ft. squares)—and to add to its east a proposed, adjoining investigation-area of 20 ft. x 35 ft.—to better understand the feature and to identify any related features situated around the pit. As part of the investigation, we are proposing to hand excavate the plowzone that exists in this area. Once the plowzone is removed, we will look for any other architectural features (postholes/piers) associated with this pit and excavate them as well.

We also proposed excavating one more quarter of the pit fill meaning that a total of 3/4s of the fill of the feature will be excavated leaving one quarter to be set aside. Investigators

will also identify two 5ft. squares inside the block for preservation, where no excavation will take place.

The footprint of this work—completion of the investigation of the 35’ by 35’ area and of the proposed, adjoining area of 20 ft. by 35 ft. is labelled “FF-42” on the site plan below.

***FF-44 (site plan below)***

A separate excavation block (FF-44) that measures 110 ft. by 100 ft. would be established in an extremely complicated portion of the site that was extensively disturbed throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This location contains the subsurface remains of a kitchen constructed during the Strother occupation of the site, retained in use during the Washington era, and featuring a stone-lined cellar. Later, the same location hosted successively a nineteenth-century farmhouse; a c. 1914 farmhouse featuring a concrete-lined cellar and that subsequently burned; and an exhibit structure installed by Stafford County in the mid-1990s and later removed. The NPS Section-106-reviewed-and-approved archeological investigation of 2023 included the Department of Archaeology placing a test unit over top of the Washington period kitchen-cellar to initiate planning for future investigation.

The purpose of the proposed excavation block at FF-44 is to ascertain what remnants of the colonial kitchen structure which burned during the Washington occupancy survived the construction of the later buildings described above. Previous archaeological work uncovered a portion of the stone-lined cellar that survived both the colonial period fire and the establishment of subsequent structures. The location of FF-44 is also designed to give the George Washington Foundation’s archaeologist and other researchers a chance to see and record the stone foundation of this colonial kitchen cellar to facilitate a better understanding of when and how this structure was built.

Of note is that in the 1990s archaeological testing was undertaken by Espey Huston and Associates for Stafford County within what we now designate FF-44. The proposed 2024 excavation will remove the backfill of these excavation units and the re-examine those. The FF-44 block also extends over previous archaeology undertaken by the George Washington Foundation’s Department of Archeology (FF-16). If necessary, the 2024 excavation will excavate the backfill of FF-16 as well.

As part of the excavation, foundation archaeologists will remove the sand deposited during the 1990s backfilling of the 20<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse's concrete basement. Once this sand is removed excavators will map and photograph this feature and sample a portion of the fill of the colonial kitchen cellar in order to establish the date of its construction and destruction and better understand the role that this kitchen played during its use during the Strother/Washington occupation of the site. Espey Huston and Associates excavated a small portion of the kitchen cellar fill in the 1990s and if needed the foundation archaeological team will remove that backfill as well.

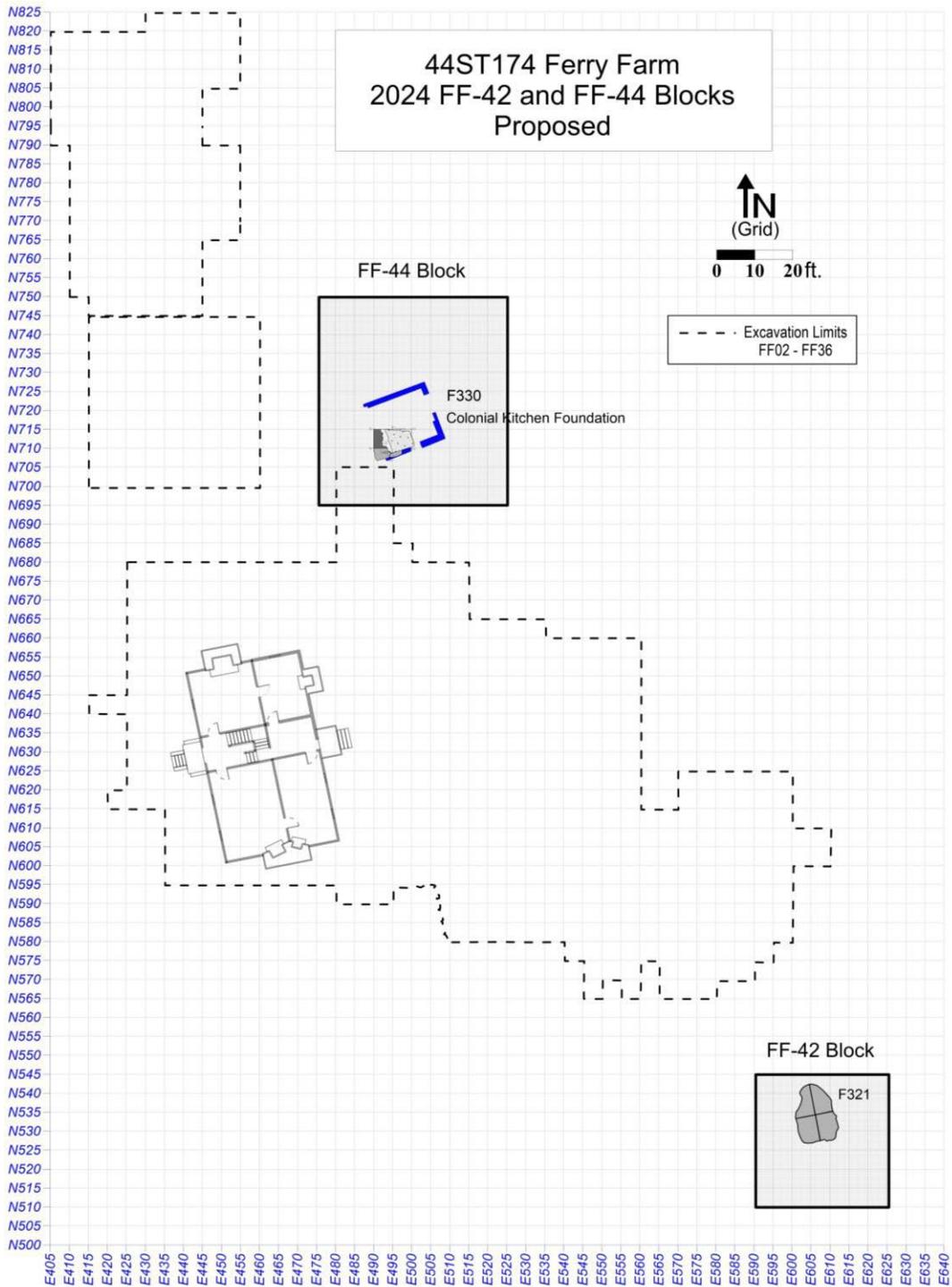
A small column sample will also be excavated to retrieve and analyze any macrobotanical materials present in the burned layers.

Investigators will identify four contiguous 5ft. squares for preservation, where no excavation will take place and stratigraphic sequence will be preserved.

### ***Additional Archeological Set-Asides; Reporting***

The proposed investigation of both blocks would follow the format of past investigations at Ferry Farm. So that future generations of archaeologists may apply new methods and techniques, portions of significant, sealed context of all pre-20th century brick or stone foundations remains would be left unexcavated. For sealed contexts, between one quarter and one half of the fill would be left intact depending on the Foundation's archaeologists' understanding of the feature. For complex features, they would excavate three quarters of the fill. For features that are easy to interpret, half of the fill would be left unexcavated.

For our proposed reporting, see "Reporting" section on the final page of this Scope of Work.



Site Plan: Proposed FF-42 and FF-44 Blocks (western half of FF-42 previously Section-106 reviewed and approved by NPS)

## Unanticipated Discoveries

For the 2024 archaeological investigation, we propose to adopt the protocols, below, in the event of the discovery of human remains—the protocols adopted for our past archaeological investigations proposed to and approved by NPS through its Section 106 reviews:

*The George Washington Foundation shall make all reasonable efforts to avoid disturbing gravesites, including those containing Native American human remains and associated funerary artifacts. The Foundation shall treat all human remains in a manner consistent with the ACHP's Policy Statement Regarding Treatment of Burial Sites, Human Remains and Funerary Objects (February 23, 2007; <http://www.achp.gov/docs/hrpolicy0207.pdf>).*

*If such are encountered, the Foundation will immediately notify the NPS, which shall immediately notify the SHPO and the consulting parties. All work involving subsurface disturbance will be halted in the area of the resource and in the surrounding area where further subsurface materials can reasonably be expected to occur. If the remains are determined to be of Native American origin, the Foundation shall comply with the provisions of NAGPRA and the accompanying regulations at 43 CFR Part 10. If the remains are determined not to be of Native American origin, the Foundation shall comply with the Virginia Antiquities Act, Section 10.1-2305 of the Code of Virginia, final regulations adopted by the Virginia Board of Historic Resources published in the Virginia Register on September 20, 2016, 17VAC5-and found in the Code of Virginia 10.1-2305 et seq, or subsequent revisions.*

## Site Photographs



View to the West of Excavation Block (FF42) located South of the Emergency-Access Road).



View to the North of the proposed work at FF-42 south of the Emergency-Access Road. (Building Under construction at rear interprets the Washington-era storage-structure and was NPS Section-106 reviewed and approved in 2020.)



View to the South of the proposed block (FF-44) intended to investigate the Washington/Strother-eras kitchen remains, amid the subsurface remains of successive, 20<sup>th</sup>-century structures.

## Archaeological Documentation

The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Archaeological Documentation require a Statement of Objectives, and a discussion of the methods and the techniques required to accomplish these objectives.

### *Research Design*

Archaeological interpretations usually start by addressing some very basic questions that over time give way to more nuanced questions. Initial research questions include: When was the structure built? How long was it in use? Which pieces were original to the structure? Which pieces were added and when? When were some of the pieces abandoned or replaced? A second set of questions deal with the notion of function. How was the structure used? Is it a domestic, agricultural, or support building? If domestic, who used it – master, overseer, servant, or tenant? Did the occupants change over time? Does the social standing of new occupants differ from the original owners as the land and buildings become rundown?

A large percentage of the artifacts recovered at Ferry Farm are situated in the plowzone. The rest are situated in sheet refuse and in feature fill. By understanding the distribution of these finds in association with the physical remnants of structures, fences, and work areas, and in conjunction with the local context provided mostly by the historical record, researchers can tease out meaning from these data sets.

Once the basic questions are answered, more sophisticated research questions can be addressed, including:

*1. Develop a better understanding of the spatial organization of eighteenth-century plantations.* The spatial organization of plantations from this period is poorly understood in part because few of these sites have undergone large-scale excavation. Of particular interest are the changing relationships between the planters, indentured servants, and the enslaved. Archaeology is well positioned to help delineate the spatial aspects of the systems put into place to ensure that these groups could co-exist even though they pursued vastly different goals in life.

*2. Develop an understanding of how George Washington came to exhibit certain unique attributes that served him well in his adult life.* Washington developed these characteristics as a boy at Ferry Farm. For example, George developed a fascination with the western portion of Virginia early in life, through his exposure to travelers heading west along the Ferry Road beside his home. This interest stayed with him throughout his adult life. His boyhood home promoted genteel English behaviors such as surveying, the tea ceremony, and proper plantation management. By exploring the material circumstances of his situation and those of his family we may be able to trace the origins of these character traits, traits which form the basis of the nascent American cultural psyche, an identity which Washington adopted, and which ultimately led to his enthusiastic support for, and participation in, the American Revolution.

*3. Develop an understanding of the economic and social circumstances of the Washingtons before and after Augustine's death.* While the death of a patriarch is a shattering experience for most families, Augustine's family suffered more than most. At his death Augustine Washington, following the practices of the day, provided a parcel of land to each of his sons, leaving the home farm and ten slaves to George, to be inherited when he turned 21. As tradition dictated, George's mother, Mary, managed the farm until he came of age. Mary remained a widow for the remainder of her long life. Lost revenues from the two expansive plantations given to Augustine's oldest sons greatly reduced the income of those family members that remained at the home farm.

A lack of resources prevented George from going to England for a formal, classical education, as his planter-class peers did. Money was so tight that George did not even attend a colonial college, instead becoming a surveyor. In a letter to Lawrence, George cancelled a planned visit for fear that his poorly fed horse was not up to the task. Archaeology will shed light on the material aspects of their lives during this difficult period. How did these hardships influence George Washington as he grew to manhood and became a proponent of the American Revolution? What was daily life like for the Washington families and the domestic enslaved workers who performed much of the work around the plantation house.

*1. Develop a better understanding of the spatial use of the landscape over the thousands of years of occupation at the Ferry Farm site.* The site was in use before and after the Washington Family occupation. Several thousand years earlier, American Indians used this area repeatedly as a temporary campsite. Excavations have unearthed numerous projectile points, tools, flakes and for the first time a concentration of Middle Woodland pottery was recovered in 2012. The 2014 excavation uncovered two prehistoric features. Several prehistoric features have been subsequently recovered along with an intermittently present American Indian layer. In the nineteenth century, Ferry Farm operated as a absentee owned farm, and was impacted heavily by the Battle of Fredericksburg.

The recovery of the land and its continued agricultural use during the post bellum period is an important, yet poorly understood and underappreciated aspect of Virginia history. Archaeological investigations will contribute significantly to an analysis of this era. A successful and expansive farming occupation was established here in the twentieth century. The Colbert Family appreciated the history of their property. In addition, popular movements to preserve the site began here in the twentieth century, well after such efforts were underway at Mount Vernon but in conjunction with the Wakefield National Memorial Association efforts at the birthplace of George Washington.

### ***Excavation Strategy***

The excavation employs a grid oriented 10 degrees west of magnetic north. All locations in this text are in reference to grid north. With the help of the National Park Service, Ferry Farm staff established two permanent datum points south and west of the site that

were tied into the USGS coordinate system using GPS. Using temporary grid coordinates for excavation units in the field, staff archaeologists later convert the temporary grid coordinates into USGS coordinates.

Using 5-ft.-square excavation units, the research design calls for the use of the open-area excavation technique. This technique requires archaeologists to uncover a site layer by layer resulting in a detailed "snapshot" of a particular point in time. For a large portion of the site machine plowing created only two layers of stratigraphy (topsoil and plowzone). The areas directly north and east of the house are unplowed and several natural layers and associated features have been encountered. Using trowels and shovels, excavators remove these layers in standard excavation units.

Layers and features are assigned unique numbers for identification purposes. Information about the physical attributes of these layers and features are recorded using the standard context form developed by the George Washington Foundation (GWF) Archaeology Department. Items recorded include Munsell color, soil texture, samples taken, documentation, and a general description. Features are further recorded using plan and profile drawings, photographs, and elevations. All measurements are taken in feet and tenths of feet.

All soils are screened. Plowzone, cultural layers, and features containing light concentrations of artifacts were passed through a ¼-inch mesh hardware cloth. Artifact rich-features are water-screened using 1/16<sup>th</sup> inch mesh.

Soil chemistry samples are collected from both soil layers and feature fills. Virginia Tech has agreed to analyze the soil chemistry and report the results back to the GWF.

Once inside the laboratory, artifacts are washed, sorted, identified, labeled, and cataloged in an Access database. Ceramics and glass are crossmended and are analyzed as objects instead of sherds. Artifacts are permanently stored in the Ferry Farm Visitor Center. Small finds in need of stabilization are conserved by an outside contractor. Additional details about small finds, including photographs and metric attributes, are recorded in the department's object catalog database.

The budget for the entire project is \$ 100,000.

## **Reporting**

As per past reporting, we propose to provide to the NPS, for its review and comment--and distribution to DHR and the NPS's Section-106 consulting parties for review and comment--an Interim Technical Report with the preliminary results of and our conclusions for the 2024 archaeological investigation. We had submitted such reports annually under the requirements of the now-expired Programmatic Agreement for Ferry Farm, and prior to submitting—biennially or triennially—corresponding, far larger Monograph Technical Reports ever, which include artifact catalogs and typically cover

multiple investigations. We propose to continue this protocol for the 2024 investigation. (As a signatory to the original Programmatic Agreement we have approved the wording of its draft replacement, now under a final stage of review and anticipate operating under a finalized, signed Agreement soon.)