

The President's House Revisited

THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE IN PHILADELPHIA was something that weighed on the conscience of the late architectural historian Charles E. Peterson for more than half a century. A National Park Service (NPS) architect since 1929, founder of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), and a former White House architect, the Park Service assigned Peterson to Philadelphia in 1947 to assist in the creation of the national park being proposed for the area surrounding Independence Hall—now Independence National Historical Park (INHP).

The Independence Hall Association (IHA) had been established in 1942 to manage the national park's creation. Its founder and president was the distinguished Philadelphia judge Edwin O. Lewis who shared the grandiose vision of architect (and IHA vice president) Roy Larson to turn the three blocks north of Independence Hall—then covered with hundreds of nineteenth-century industrial buildings—into a vast landscaped mall. The federal government was cool to the idea, seeing the mall as more of a Philadelphia urban renewal project than an integral part of the proposed national park and, it being wartime, took little action. In 1945 Lewis turned to the Pennsylvania legislature, successfully proposing the mall as a state park and “a State Memorial to our war heroes.”¹

Two years later Peterson and NPS historian Roy E. Appelman arrived in Philadelphia to advise the Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission—a seven-member panel appointed by President Truman—on the boundaries for the proposed park and the historic buildings that should be included within it. The two NPS men urged that the block

I am indebted to the Ad Hoc Historians, Doug Heller, Sharon Ann Holt, the Independence Hall Association, Edward Lawler Sr., Joann Lawler, Angela Ashby Lerarif, Jed Levin, Barbara A. McMillan, Tamara Miller, Gary B. Nash, the late Charles E. Peterson, Dwight Pitcaithley, William Seale, George and Jacqui Shambaugh, Karen Stevens, Mary V. Thompson, Anna Coxe Toogood, Henry Wiencek, Garry Wills, and the research staff of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania for their assistance with this article.

¹ Judge Edwin O. Lewis to Sydney E. Martin, Jan. 23, 1945, as quoted in Deirdre Gibson et al., *Cultural Landscape Report, Independence Mall: Independence National Historical Park*, 2 vols. ([Denver, CO], 1994–98), 1:58.

directly north of Independence Hall (on which the President's House had stood) be part of the national park. But the commission, chaired by Judge Lewis, rejected their recommendation, banking that the state legislature would eventually fund the full three-block mall.² Peterson lost this battle with Judge Lewis—as he would later lose others over preserving nineteenth-century buildings within the park—but the Shrine Commission's final report to Congress (December 1947), of which Peterson was the uncredited primary author, made a fourteen-page argument for the national significance of the President's House site. The report concluded:

The site of the Presidential Mansion is hardly surpassed in importance by any other historical site in America. The eminent personages who lived here and the decisions affecting the future of the nation that were made here have caused a growing interest in the Presidential Mansion and the ground upon which it once stood. It is a distinguished historical site.³

If only someone had listened to Peterson. Unbeknownst to him, the IHA, the Shrines Commission, or seemingly anyone else at the time, major sections of the house's walls had survived (fig. 1). Had the site been included within the national park's original borders (INHP didn't assume control of Independence Mall from the state until 1974), the house might have been competently researched, the evidence for this uncovered, and its original walls preserved. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) had studied the house a decade earlier (and thoroughly botched the job) but, although its researchers missed the still-standing walls, they did recognize that most of the house's foundations had survived. This information was included in the report to Congress, but it seems to have been ignored. On federal land the remnants of the house probably would have been measured and recorded, an archaeological study performed, and anything original preserved. Being on state land, none of this was required or done. Instead, in what sounds like a sick joke, the state demolished the

² "The recommendation of the National Park Service representatives, Mr. Peterson and Mr. Appelman, to acquire as part of the Federal project, the square directly north of Independence Square, to be used as a center of park activities, was voted down as Chairman Lewis considered it undesirable to interfere with the State Mall plans as now constituted." Minutes of the Oct. 6, 1947, meeting of Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission, Edwin O. Lewis Papers, Acc. #96-05, box 6, folder 20, INHP Archives.

³ Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission, "Final Report to the United States Congress by the Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission" (Philadelphia, 1947), 269. M. J. McCosker was the author of the chapter on the President's House, which is posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/controversy/1947report.htm>.



Fig. 1. Southeast Corner of Sixth and Market streets, 1949, with overlay. The east wall of the President's House (center) survived almost intact as the party wall shared with 524 Market. Its west wall may have survived until the 1941 demolition of the adjacent building; one story of this may be visible here as the party wall shared with Devitt Hardware. All of these buildings were demolished, 1951–52, during the creation of Independence Mall. Photo: Evening Bulletin Newspaper Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University. Overlay: Edward Lawler Jr.

surviving walls of Washington's "White House" and erected a public toilet on its site.

Peterson settled in Philadelphia and became the first resident architect at what would later become INHP, serving in that position until his move into private practice in 1962. But he always felt that the President's House site had gotten extremely short shrift. Standing in front of Independence Hall, one could see the buildings that had housed the federal government during Philadelphia's ten-year tenure as the temporary national capital: Congress Hall to the west—the seat of the legislative branch—where the U.S. Senate met on the second floor and the U.S. House of Representatives on the first; Old City Hall to the east—the seat of the

judicial branch—where the U.S. Supreme Court met. But what about the third branch of government? A block to the north was the site of the President's House—the seat of the executive branch—where the first two presidents of the United States lived and worked from 1790 to 1800, but the only indication of this was a plaque outside the public toilet.

When I presented my research on the house to the Philadelphia chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians in December 2000, Peterson, then ninety-four, attended the lecture and invited me to show him more. He was delighted with the degree to which the building could be recaptured based on documentary evidence, and became a champion of my work. Peterson came to suspect that his hero, Robert Smith—designer of the steeple of Christ Church (1753–54), Nassau Hall at Princeton (1754–56), Carpenters' Hall (1768), and the interiors of the Powel House (1768)—was the house's likely designer and/or builder.⁴

Peterson saw the President's House as the last missing piece of his beloved Independence Park. After 150 years of confusion, and his own efforts to call attention to the site having been thwarted a half-century earlier, the puzzle of the house had been solved.

How things have changed in three years. In 2002 a reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* couldn't persuade her editor to approve a feature story on the President's House for President's Day weekend; now hundreds of articles related to the house have been published, including dozens in the *Inquirer*. In 2002 Independence Park planned to interpret the entire history of the site with a single sign; now a \$4.5 million, forty-minute "interpretive experience" is being proposed and Philadelphia Mayor John Street and City Council have pledged \$1.5 million toward making it happen. In 2002 only a small number of historians were aware

⁴ Charles E. Peterson to Edward Lawler Jr., Mar. 22, 2002, letter in possession of the author. Although the tie is tenuous, it is possible that Smith's unidentified John Lawrence project (1767) is related to the house. The only record of the project is a one sentence note: "Sir Please to pay William Warner on order the sum of nine shillings for Boering the Collumns of the frontispiece to the front Door." Robert Smith to John Lawrence, Esq., Mar. 21, 1767, as quoted in Charles E. Peterson with Constance M. Greiff and Maria M. Thompson, *Robert Smith: Architect, Builder, Patriot, 1722–1777* (Philadelphia, 2000), 105–6. This document does not correspond with any known building project by John Lawrence, who was the only brother of the widow Mary Lawrence Masters. Masters's Market Street mansion was under construction in 1767 and later became the President's House. See Edward Lawler Jr., "The President's House in Philadelphia: The Rediscovery of a Lost Landmark," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 126 (2002): 10.

that enslaved Africans had toiled in Washington's presidential household; now we know that there were not eight but nine enslaved Africans. We know their names and the jobs they performed, where they likely slept and ate, that two of them successfully escaped to freedom from the house, and that two others who had tasted freedom in Philadelphia later attempted to escape from Mount Vernon, but were unsuccessful. Most significantly, the new Liberty Bell Center (LBC), a building on which ground was about to be broken when the January 2002 article appeared in this magazine, subsequently was completed and now has been open to the public for two years. The public toilet built within the footprint of the main house in 1954 was demolished on May 27, 2003. The site was cleared for the entrance plaza to the new Liberty Bell Center, which opened on October 9, 2003. Just outside the LBC's main entrance is the site of the smokehouse, the building in which Washington directed that his stable workers—most of whom were enslaved Africans—be quartered.

The January 2002 article has stood up well to three years of scrutiny. The most significant factual error was my misstatement that Washington lodged with the Morrisises in September 1790. A contemporary newspaper records the president staying at the City Tavern.⁵ It is also now clear that Washington's designation of a first-floor room "for the *upper* Servants," was intended as a workroom, not a lodging room.⁶ To avoid overwhelming the reader, I underplayed the volume of published misinformation about the physical building—I analyzed five theories for the house's location/size/façade composition and disproved four of these. In actuality, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sources claim at least nine additional locations for the house (all of them erroneous), including the Delaware riverfront, Second Street, Third Street, Fourth Street, Eighth Street, Ninth Street, and Chestnut Street.⁷

New information has come to light on several issues regarding the President's House. The January 2002 article allowed that the undated ground plan of the property entitled "Rich^d Penn's Burnt House Lot—Philadelphia" could have been drawn as early as 1780.⁸ A nearly identical

⁵ *Pennsylvania Packet*, Sept. 4, 1790.

⁶ George Washington to Tobias Lear, Sept. 5, 1790, in *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, 39 vols. (Washington, DC, 1931–44), 31:111.

⁷ The published sources for these erroneous locations are posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/controversy/why.htm>.

⁸ Lawler, "President's House in Philadelphia," 21, fig. 3. The undated Burnt House plan is owned

version of this document descended through the Burt family, a facsimile of which was published by The Historical Society of Pennsylvania with Nathaniel Burt's 1875 lecture on the house.⁹ The Burt ground plan facsimile is dated "August 25, 1785" (fig. 2).

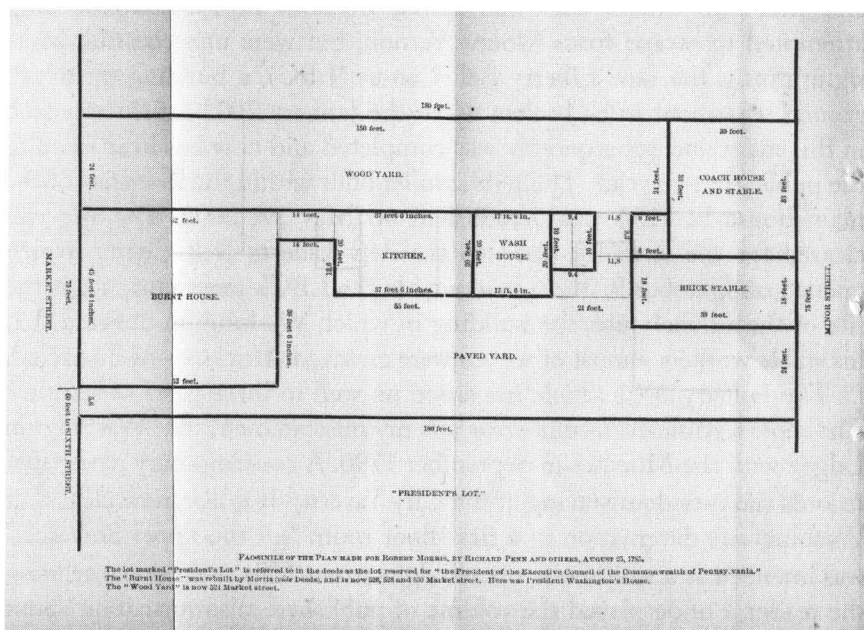


Fig. 2. Burt ground plan facsimile. Nathaniel Burt [II], *Address of Nathaniel Burt, February 12, 1875: On the Washington Mansion in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1875), op. 13. A second version of the burnt house plan (ca. 1781) descended in the family of Nathaniel Burt, who had purchased the property in 1832. This facsimile was published with his son's lecture in 1875. The only significant difference between the two is the line along the Wood Yard between the back of the kitchen ell and the stable complex is solid in the burnt house plan and dotted in this version. The facsimile is date "August 25, 1785."

The William L. Breton watercolor of the President's House that served as the basis for the illustration in the first edition of John Fanning Watson's *Annals of Philadelphia* (1830) is now on display at the Atwater Kent Museum of Philadelphia. According to the painting's provenance,

by the Pennsylvania State Archives and is posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/history/maps/burnthouse.htm>.

⁹ Nathaniel Burt, *Address of Nathaniel Burt, February 12, 1875: On the Washington Mansion in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1875), op. 13.

wood salvaged from the house's front door was used to construct its frame.

Susan Gray Detweiler has discovered a newspaper advertisement confirming that the March 10, 1797, public auction of Washington's household furnishings did take place at the President's House:

Sales of Elegant Furniture,
On Friday Next the 10th instant, at 1 o'clock,
will be sold by public Auction, at the House of
the late President of the United States, in Market street,
A QUANTITY of Valuable Household F U R -
N I T U R E, belonging to General Washington, among which are, a number of Elegant
Chairs with Sattin Bottoms, sattin Window Curtains, a Beautiful Cut Glass Lustre, and a very complete Mahogany Writing Desk, also, a Coach and Phaeton.

*Footman & Co. auctioneers.*¹⁰

Much of the surviving furniture from the Philadelphia house, including this mahogany writing desk (now part of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania Collection, Atwater Kent Museum, on loan to Mount Vernon), was purchased at the auction. The remaining "government" furniture seems to have been transferred to the White House in 1800 and probably was burned by the British in 1814.

Master Gunnery Sergeant D. Michael Ressler, chief librarian of the United States Marine Band, is the author of its bicentennial history. The U.S. Marine Corps was established by an act of Congress signed into law by John Adams on July 11, 1798. (This would have taken place in the president's private office, formerly the second-floor bathing room.) The act authorized the creation of a military band, and the Marine Band performed in Philadelphia that same year. Although there are references to bands having played at the President's House on special occasions, none is identified by name. The Marine Band played at the Fourth of July celebration in Philadelphia in 1800, but President Adams was on vacation in Massachusetts and the festivities were held at the City Tavern rather than

¹⁰ Claypoole's *American Daily Advertiser*, Mar. 8, 1797. Illustrated in Susan Gray Detweiler, *George Washington's Chinaware* (New York, 1982), 160.

at the house. It is likely that members of the Marine Band performed at the President's House for the New Year's Day receptions in 1799 and 1800. Their first performance at the White House was two months after Adams took up residency there—the New Year's Day reception in 1801.¹¹

The most significant new information regarding the physical building comes from Elizabeth M. Nuxoll, former editor of *The Papers of Robert Morris*, who has discovered two letters related to the house. The first confirms conjectures made in the January 2002 article that the construction of the icehouse and bathhouse were part of Robert Morris's 1781–82 rebuilding:

Mr Morris has moved his family to his house in Market Street, a very elegant one it is; & will be furnished superb for an American house . . . Mr Morris has run up a building for cold & warm bath—there is no convenience indeed that [he h]as not thought of, his ice house in the yard is a very great luxury as well as convenience.¹²

The second describes the construction of a heretofore undocumented room:

You have no idea, what a charming little room they are making in Market Street, [T]here is a small chimney in it, but it is more calculated for summer, [T]he side next the garden is thrown out in a Bow, with 3 windows, it over looks the garden, & street, [T]here is one window, opposite that; looks in the yard [O]n the other side the chimney, is the door, going down with steps, to the nursery, [A]lmost opposite, is the window of the chamber, that is to be converted into a door; [I]t will not be finished for 2 or 3 weeks, [I]t looks remarkably well finished and ornaments on the outside.¹³

The exact location of the president's private office—formerly, the second-floor bathing room—has been a puzzle for more than a century. The second of these letters, from Barbara Vaughn, provides the last clue needed to solve it definitively.

¹¹ D. Michael Ressler, *Historical Perspective on "The President's Own," U.S. Marine Band* (Washington, DC, 1998), 1–3. Thanks to William Seale of the White House Historical Association for suggesting this contact.

¹² Catharine Livingston to John Jay, Aug. 12, 1782, John Jay Papers, ID #13076, Columbia University.

¹³ Barbara Vaughn to Catharine Livingston, Oct. 23, 1784, transcript at INHP. Thanks to Anna Coxé Toogood for sharing Nuxoll's discoveries.

From Abigail Adams's description we know that the private office had three south-facing windows and an east-facing one.¹⁴ The only place within the back-buildings shown on the 1785 ground plan which could fit this evidence—i.e., second-floor location; possessing both eastern and southern exposures—is the room over the washhouse. Architect David H. Morgan of the WPA and, later, local historian Harold Donaldson Eberlein—each making the (erroneous) assumption that the bathhouse and the washhouse had been one and the same building—both located the private office here.¹⁵ Historian Frank W. Hutchins, after a close examination of the correspondence between Washington and his chief secretary, Tobias Lear, recognized (correctly) that the bathhouse and the washhouse must have been separate buildings and located the private office (incorrectly) in the only other place which seemed to fit the evidence—on the second floor of the main house at its southeast corner.¹⁶

All of these men possessed copies of Burt's 1875 lecture, but none seems to have grasped the significance of a document quoted in it, one which reportedly accompanied the deed from Robert Morris's March 18, 1795, sale of the house. The document described the property in two parcels: (1) "the house and lot in which the President of the United States now resides, with all the buildings thereon, that is, the lot *on which the house stands*" and (2) "*the twenty-four feet lot adjoining to the eastward, on which the bath house and other buildings are erected.*"¹⁷ The 1796 John Hills map of Philadelphia lends further credence for this adjoining lot—the wood yard—having been the bathhouse's location, since it shows an addition attached to the east wall of the piazza and/or kitchen.¹⁸ Relying on Burt's quotation from the 1795 document, the Hills map, and clues

¹⁴ "[T]he Presidents Room . . . in which I now write has three larg[e] windows to the South. The sun visits it with his earliest beams at the East window, and Cheers it the whole day in winter." Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Mar. 15, 1800, in *New Letters of Abigail Adams, 1788–1801*, ed. Stewart Mitchell (1947; Westport, CT, 1973), 238–39.

¹⁵ David H. Morgan, "190 High Street, Philadelphia, Research Data 1937–38," Works Progress Administration Project #13341, sheet 66, Manuscript Dept., American Philosophical Society; Harold Donaldson Eberlein, "190, High Street (Market Street below Sixth): The Home of Washington and Adams, 1790–1800," in "Historic Philadelphia: From the Founding until the Early Nineteenth Century," special issue *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s., 43, part I (1953): 163.

¹⁶ Frank W. Hutchins, "The 'Washington House' in Philadelphia," *Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine* 61 (1927): 125.

¹⁷ Burt, *Address on the Washington Mansion*, 32. Italics in original.

¹⁸ A detail of the 1796 John Hills map showing the house is posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/history/maps/hillsmap.htm>.

contained in Washington's and Adams's correspondence, I located the bathhouse in the wood yard in the conjectural floor plans that accompanied the January 2002 article. Vaughn's letter confirms that this was correct.

But, *how* does it do so? At first glance, the details contained in the letter seem puzzling. Where could this summer room have been located? Vaughn's description of a three-window bow facing the garden and another window, opposite, facing the yard means the room must have had views both east and west. This eliminates the possibility that it had been attached to the east wall of the kitchen or main house, since either building would have blocked the view west. The letter mentions steps going down to the nursery, so the summer room cannot have been on the ground floor. It is arguable that the summer room might have been the bathhouse's second floor, but its east-west views would have been possible only if the bathhouse had been attached to the piazza and the second floors of both buildings were combined into a single room. Lear's letters imply that the back stairs (at least the run from the first story to the second) had been located within the piazza.¹⁹ Vaughn's steps going down to the nursery might be a confirmation of this, although it seems curious for the summer room to have been converted into a bathing room—a place where one might have expected privacy—while also serving as a stair hall for the back stairs and the passage from the main house to the bedrooms over the kitchen. This conjecture also puts the nursery either downstairs in the kitchen or in the first-story room of the bathhouse.

Comparing Abigail Adams's description of the private office—three windows facing south, one window facing east, no mention of a bow—with Vaughn's description of the summer room—three windows facing east in a bow, one window facing west—all but eliminates the possibility that the summer room had been the bathhouse's second floor. If the room was not located on the first or second floors, it must have been on the third.

The only solution that fits all the evidence is that the summer room was a third-story structure, probably made of wood, built atop both the bathhouse and the piazza (fig. 3).²⁰ Vaughn's window "that is to be con-

¹⁹ See Lawler, "President's House in Philadelphia," 44n103.

²⁰ The 1798 insurance policy does not list the summer room, but the omission is, in and of itself, not particularly significant. The policy also does not list the smokehouse, the piazza, and several other buildings either mentioned in the Washington-Lear correspondence or known to have been part of the house. These buildings may have been considered of insufficient value to insure. Mutual Assurance Company, policy nos. 894–95, June 19, 1798, copy in the 500 Market Street/Washington Mansion file, Philadelphia Historical Commission.

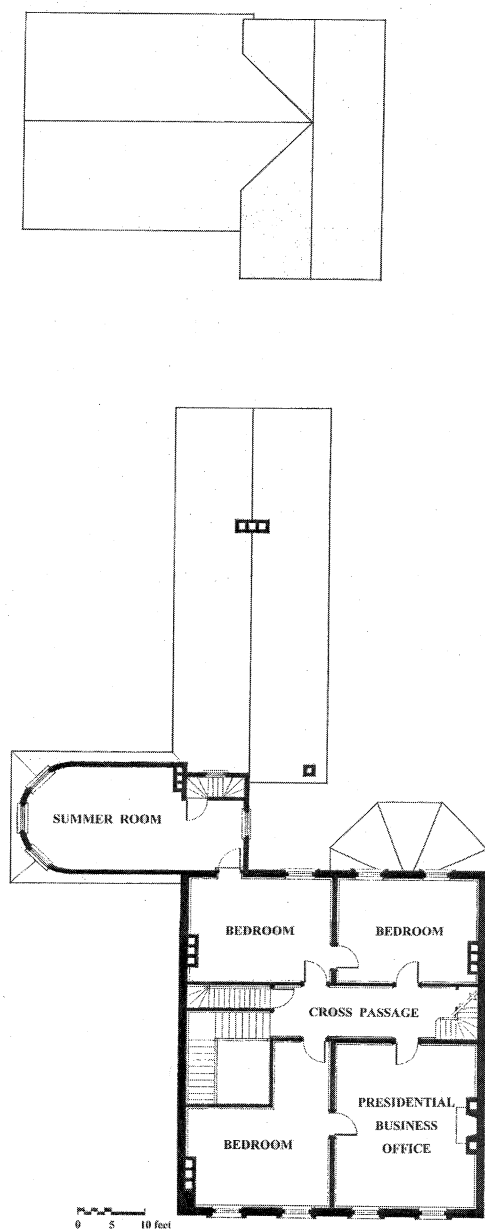


Fig. 3. Conjectural plan, third floor. The presidential business office, the equivalent of today's West Wing, was where the president's staff worked. The summer room probably housed guests. © 2002 Edward Lawler Jr.

verted into a door" would have been the easternmost third-floor window on the back (south façade) of the main house. Her description of this window as "almost opposite" the door to the stairs would argue that the back stairs rose along the piazza's west wall before turning and ascending to the summer room. (If the back stairs had risen along the piazza's east wall, as conjectured in the January 2002 article, the door to them would have been *directly* opposite this window.) Thus, the room at the bottom of the stairs—the nursery—would have been the second-floor front room over the kitchen. This makes sense, since the adjacent rear room is presumed to have been the Morris'es own bedroom—and likely later served as the bedroom for the Washingtons and the Adamses.

This conversion of an existing window into a doorway to the summer room is the "clinch" for pinpointing the location of the bathhouse, and, with it, that of the private office. Without the conversion, one could argue that the bathhouse could have been located almost anywhere along the east wall of the kitchen and that the summer room had been built atop it and/or the second floor of the kitchen ell. The window-cum-doorway anchors the summer room to the main house's third story, and *that* requires the bathhouse (beneath two-thirds of the summer room) to have lined up with the east wall of the piazza (beneath the remaining third). The location of the bathhouse in the January 2002 article was, to some very minor extent, conjectural. With the confirming evidence from Vaughn's letter, it can now be said that the bathhouse—the second floor of which served as the president's private office and likely cabinet room—could have been located nowhere else.

The summer room provides a probable answer to the question of where guests were housed. Mrs. Washington's granddaughter, Martha, and her husband, Thomas Peter, honeymooned at the house in 1795; the following year the teenaged George Washington Lafayette (son of the marquis) and his tutor, Fresnel, were guests for an extended stay. The summer room also may have been where Washington himself lodged from May to September 1787, as Robert Morris's houseguest during the Constitutional Convention.²¹

The third floor of the main house contained four rooms, a lateral hall-

²¹ The 1784 summer room may have been the very first "bowed" room in Philadelphia, and the possibility that Washington slept there and knew it well is intriguing. Six years later, as president, he added the two-story bow to the south side of the main house, and this addition is believed to have been the inspiration for other bows and oval rooms, including those of the White House. See Lawler, "President's House in Philadelphia," 25.

way, front and back stairs to the second floor, and stairs to the fourth. The northwest room would have had the same dimensions as the yellow drawing room directly below it, about 24 × 21 feet, and almost certainly became the presidential business office—the equivalent of today's West Wing. Washington saw its third-floor location as inconvenient: "My office [in New York] was in a front room below, where persons on business immediately entered; where as in the present case they will have to ascend two pairs of Stairs, and pass by the public Rooms as well as private chambers, to get to it."²² The president's chief secretary, Tobias Lear, and a couple of junior secretaries worked in this single room and lived in the adjoining bedrooms. Lear expressed frustration that "persons who have business to transact may appear at any time."²³ Complaints by visitors—especially those seeking appointment to federal offices—about the difficulty of obtaining access to the president would argue that Washington did not frequent the third floor during business hours.

The likely expansion of the piazza westward (rather than eastward, as conjectured in the January 2002 article), requires a tweaking of the conjectural floor plans. In these, I have widened the piazza by three feet.²⁴ The revised plan for the first floor is shown in figure 4.

Because Vaughn's letter describes the summer room's chimney as having been by the door to the stairs (and presuming that those of all three stories would have been gathered into a single stack), I have moved the chimneys of the first-floor bathing room and the second-floor private office (the president's room) from the north wall to the southwest corner. This allows me to move the conjectured bulkhead leading to the bath-house's cellar—presumed to have been the Morrisises' wine cellar²⁵—to the center of the north wall. I have added a narrow alleyway through the

²² George Washington to Tobias Lear, Nov. 14, 1790, in *The Papers of George Washington, Presidential Series*, vol. 6, July–November 1790, ed. Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville, VA, 1996), 654.

²³ Manuscript letter (recipient and date unidentified) in William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, as quoted in Ray Brighton, *The Checkered Career of Tobias Lear* (Portsmouth, NH, 1985), 62.

²⁴ The circumstantial case for the piazza's being widened westward is strong. Without expansion, its 5½-foot-wide interior (as shown on the 1785 ground plan) probably would have been too narrow to accommodate the back stairs without their blocking the first-floor doorway to the main house. Also, presuming that the rear-façade windows had been arranged in a similar manner to those of the front façade, an unexpanded piazza's west wall would have intersected the main house in the middle of the second- and third-story windows.

²⁵ Lawler, "President's House in Philadelphia," 45, 80.

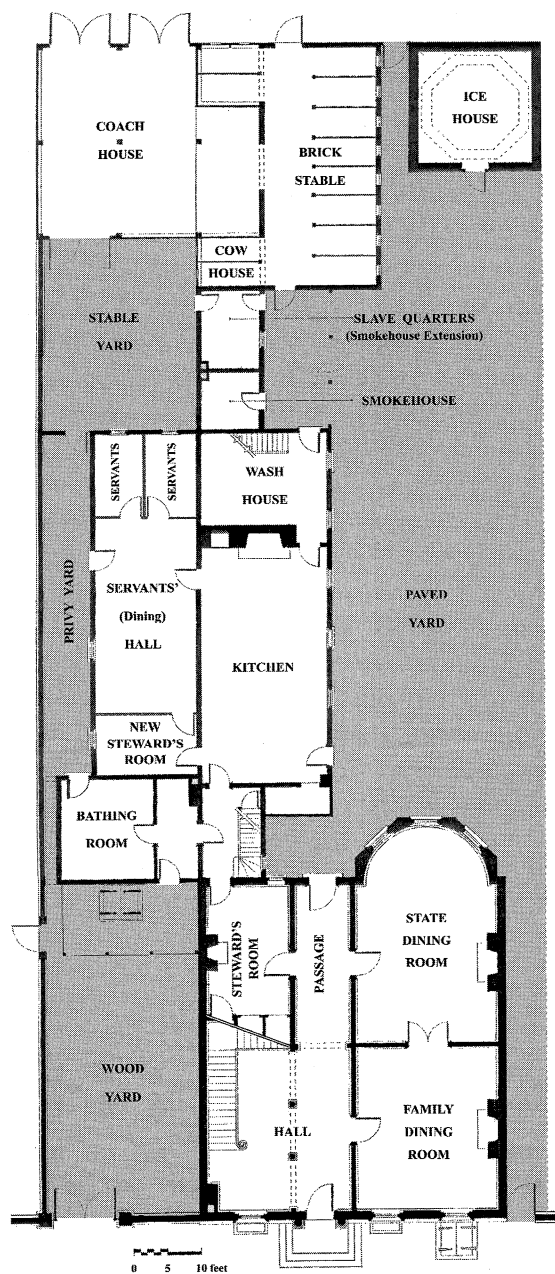


Fig. 4. Revised conjectural plan, first floor. © 2002 Edward Lawler Jr.

bathhouse, along with a door from the bathing room to the privy yard.²⁶ The wooden cisterns mentioned in Burt's 1875 lecture presumably stood atop a shed built off the kitchen—what Washington called the “small room adjoining the Kitchen (by the Pump).”²⁷ Within the stable section of the coach-house and the cow-house, I have turned the horse stalls ninety degrees. In the main house, I have turned the short run of stairs from the first-floor landing to the second-floor landing ninety degrees.²⁸

Washington and Lear went back and forth in their correspondence over whether lodging rooms for (white) married servants should be built at the south end of the proposed servants' hall. Lear claimed the rooms were unnecessary, arguing that the two husbands could be housed with the other men and the two wives with the other women. But Washington was dubious, questioning whether separating the couples might not “be a foundation for the loss of their Husbands [from the household]?”²⁹ Lear proposed building a new steward's room at the north end of the servants' hall. His language makes it clear that these rooms were to be carved out of the interior of the hall once it was built rather than appended to its exterior.³⁰ Although the 1798 insurance policy seems to confirm that the servants' hall was constructed,³¹ there is no corroborating evidence that the lodging rooms or the new steward's room were built within it. James and Fanny Hurley (newlyweds in 1790) and Fidus and Jane Imhoff continued to work in the presidential household for years, the wives inter-

²⁶ Charles E. Peterson estimated that the President's House would have had several privies for the white residents and visitors, a separate one for the white household servants, and another for the enslaved Africans.

²⁷ Burt, *Address on the Washington Mansion*, 13. George Washington to Tobias Lear, Oct. 27, 1790, in *Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 31:136. The pump was located outside, near the northwest corner of the kitchen. The shed is shown built off the kitchen's north wall, but it also could have been built off the west wall. See Lawler, “President's House in Philadelphia,” 26n62, 44n104.

²⁸ Thomas Twining's 1796 description of the house can be interpreted to fit either stair configuration. See Lawler, “President's House in Philadelphia,” 31n73.

²⁹ Tobias Lear to George Washington, Oct. 17, 1790, ser. 4, General Correspondence, George Washington Papers, Library of Congress, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html>; Washington to Lear, Nov. 7, 1790, in *Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 31:149. Washington's concern that the couples might leave if separated seems to imply that they had had their own rooms in the New York presidential household.

³⁰ “[W]hen the Servant's hall is built, instead of an additional room or two for the [ac]commodation of such Servants as may have wives, I propose] to have the Steward's room in the end of the building adjoining the house.” Tobias Lear to George Washington, Oct. 31, 1790, ser. 4, General Correspondence, George Washington Papers.

³¹ Mutual Assurance Company, policy no. 894, June 19, 1798, 500 Market Street/Washington Mansion file.

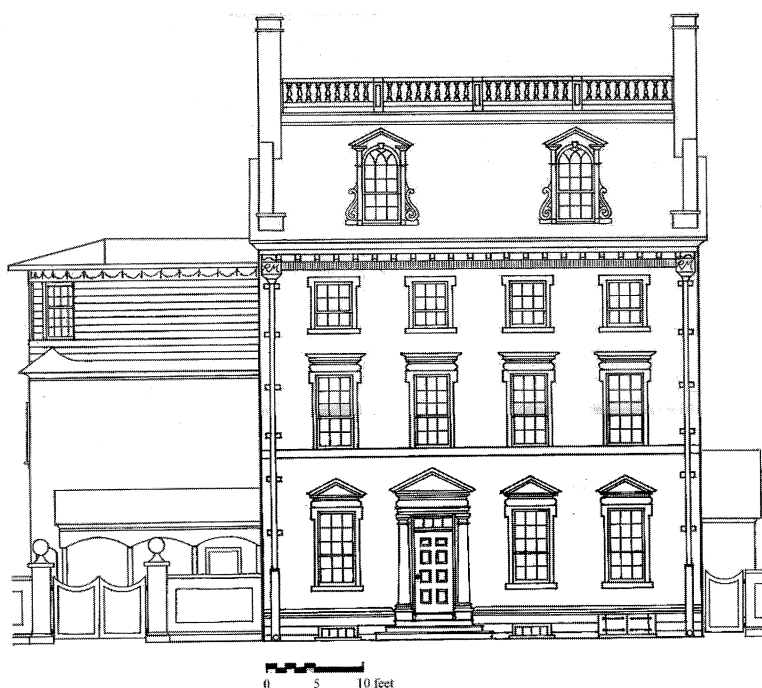


Fig. 5. Revised conjectural elevation of the President's House in Philadelphia. © 2005 Edward Lawler Jr.

mittently or part time. This would seem to argue that Washington made some accommodation for the couples' privacy.

The revised conjectural floor plan shows two small lodging rooms at the servants' hall's south end and a new steward's room at its north end. The discovery of the third-floor summer room also necessitates a revision of the conjectural elevation (fig. 5). The only other significant revisions in this are the addition of the alleyway through the east end of the bathhouse (left) and a change in the roof of the icehouse (far right), a building mostly obscured by the main house.³²

³² The conjectural elevation on the cover of the January 2002 *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* shows the President's House icehouse with a low, hipped roof. This feature was based on measured drawings of the icehouse at the Octagon in Washington, DC (ca. 1801). Historic American Buildings Survey, no. DC-808, Library of Congress. Washington sought Morris's advice on building an icehouse at Mount Vernon, and he replied that "Thatch is the best covering for an Ice House." Robert Morris to George Washington, June 15, 1784, ser. 4, General Correspondence, George Washington Papers. This letter strongly suggests that the President's House icehouse had a thatched roof. Since a steep slope is necessary for thatch to shed water, the icehouse's roof has been changed to a steep gable.

Interest in the enslaved Africans has been the engine driving the growing public awareness of the President's House. The January 2002 article focused on the physical building and the chain of misinformation that culminated in its surviving walls being demolished in the 1950s. I had done little original research on the enslaved Africans and wound up repeating errors found in the standard sources. I was thunderstruck upon learning that one of them, Austin, had died in 1794. Because there was no mention of his death in Washington's published correspondence and no apparent evidence to the contrary, I had presumed that he had returned to Mount Vernon at the end of Washington's presidency. Mary V. Thompson, research specialist in the Mount Vernon Collections Department, told me about Austin's death and freely shared her massive research on Washington's enslaved Africans. The biographical sketches below are based as much on her work as my own.

First, an explanation of the legal status of most of the enslaved Africans in the presidential household: Martha Washington's first husband, Daniel Parke Custis (1711–57), died intestate. Under Virginia law his estate was held in trust for his minor children, but his widow was granted a dower interest—the lifetime use of one-third of the assets. Among these were 285 enslaved Africans, valued at £9,014.³³ Martha Custis received the use of one-third of these enslaved Africans, plus that of their increase (future children and grandchildren), all to be returned to the estate on her demise. Because of their legal status, they were referred to as “dower” slaves.

Martha Custis married George Washington in January 1759, and he was named legal guardian of her two young children and administrator of the Custis estate. The dowers were moved to Mount Vernon and its surrounding farms, where more than a dozen intermarried with Washington's enslaved Africans, producing offspring.³⁴ Virginia's slave codes did not recognize slave marriages, declared the status of a child the same as that of the mother, and accorded the father no legal relation to

³³ “Complete Inventory, by Counties, of the Estate [of Daniel Parke Custis],” in “Worthy Partner”: *The Papers of Martha Washington*, ed. Joseph E. Fields (Westport, CT, 1994), 61–76. The enslaved Africans represented about 40 percent of the value of the estate, exclusive of 17,438 acres of land. Douglas S. Freeman, *George Washington: A Biography*, vol. 3, *Planter and Patriot* (New York, 1951), 20–22.

³⁴ Edna Greene Medford, “Beyond Mount Vernon: George Washington's Emancipated Laborers and Their Descendants,” in *Slavery at the Home of George Washington*, ed. Philip J. Schwarz (Mount Vernon, VA, 2001), 142.

his child.³⁵ Legal status had little effect on the day-to-day lives of the enslaved Africans at Mount Vernon, at least until the deaths of George and Martha Washington. By the provisions of his will, his 124 enslaved Africans were freed; on her demise, the dowers (which over forty-three years had increased to 153 enslaved Africans) reverted to the Custis estate and were distributed among her four grandchildren.³⁶

Pennsylvania had been the first state to take action to abolish slavery, but the Gradual Abolition Act of 1780 was generally a weak law.³⁷ It permitted citizens of other states to reside in Pennsylvania with their personal slaves for six months, but it also empowered those enslaved to free themselves if they were held in the state beyond that period. Slaveholders responded by transporting their human property out of state just before the six-month deadline. Removing the enslaved Africans from Pennsylvania—even for as little as one day—was enough to interrupt the *continuous* residency required for them to qualify for manumission. Subverting the state law would have been especially easy in Philadelphia, where New Jersey was a one-mile boat ride away.

Congress, under the Articles of Confederation, was meeting in Philadelphia in 1780 when Pennsylvania's Gradual Abolition Act went into effect. The federal government then had only one branch—the legislative—and members of Congress and their personal slaves were specifically exempted from the state law. Ten years later when the national capital returned to Philadelphia after seven years elsewhere, the federal government under the Constitution had three branches. In February 1791, a bill was introduced in the Pennsylvania Assembly exempting all officers of the federal government from the Gradual Abolition Act. This change would have provided relief to the president, the members of his cabinet, the vice president (although John Adams never owned a slave), and the justices of the Supreme Court—albeit not to their enslaved Africans—but the bill was suppressed after vigorous opposition from the

³⁵ A. Leon Higginbotham Jr., *In the Matter of Color: Race and the American Legal Process: The Colonial Period* (New York, 1978), 43–44.

³⁶ "It can be assumed that the 'disagreeable consequences' Washington spoke of in his will actually came to pass: the Mount Vernon slave families probably were to a large extent broken up by the forced separation of the dower slaves from Washington's freed slaves." Fritz Hirschfeld, *George Washington and Slavery: A Documentary Portrayal* (Columbia, MO, 1997), 222.

³⁷ The full text of the 1780 Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery is posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/history/gradual.htm>. Subsequent amendments to the act are discussed in Higginbotham, *In the Matter of Color*, 303–5.

Pennsylvania Abolition Society.³⁸ This attempt by the assembly to expand the exemption to the slaveholding officers of the executive and judicial branches may have been related to a larger effort to persuade Congress to abandon the planned move to the District of Columbia—scheduled for December 1, 1800—and name Philadelphia the permanent capital of the United States.³⁹

Following the bill's defeat, Washington conferred with his attorney general, fellow Virginian (and slaveholder) Edmund Randolph.⁴⁰ Rather than risk losing the enslaved Africans the president had brought to Philadelphia in a legal challenge, Randolph advised him to rotate them out of the state. Washington saw himself as having good reason to skirt the Pennsylvania law: six of the initial eight enslaved Africans in the presidential household were dowers, owned by the Custis estate. Were they to obtain their freedom through his negligence—i.e., allowing them to remain in Pennsylvania beyond the six-month deadline—he might be required to reimburse the estate for their value.⁴¹ To prevent this, Washington rotated all the enslaved Africans who worked in the President's House out of state until the end of his presidency.

Many of the best and worst of Washington's actions regarding slavery took place while he was president. He resolved to free all the enslaved Africans that he owned,⁴² yet he punished one that he deemed incorrigible, Waggoner Jack, by shipping him to the West Indies (a possible death sentence).⁴³ He attempted to sell his western lands and rent out the farms

³⁸ Edward Needles, *An Historical Memoir of the Pennsylvania Society, for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery; the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage, and for Improving the Condition of the African Race* (Philadelphia, 1848), 38–39.

³⁹ That Philadelphia was perceived as hostile to slaveholders and, therefore, considered by many an unacceptable choice for the permanent national capital is discussed in Garry Wills, *"Negro President": Jefferson and the Slave Power* (Boston, 2003), 209–11.

⁴⁰ Excerpts from Washington's correspondence regarding the Gradual Abolition Act are posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/slaves/washingtonand8.htm>. Attorney General Randolph's own personal slaves obtained their freedom because of his misunderstanding of the Pennsylvania law.

⁴¹ "As all except Hercules and Paris are dower negroes, it behoves me to prevent the emancipation of them, otherwise I shall not only loose the use of them, but may have them to pay for." George Washington to Tobias Lear, Apr. 12, 1791, in *Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 37:573–74.

⁴² "I have another motive which makes me earnestly wish for the accomplishment of these things, it is indeed more powerful than all the rest. namely to liberate a certain species of property which I possess, very repugnantly to my own feelings." George Washington to Tobias Lear, May 6, 1794, in *Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 33:358.

⁴³ Paul Leland Haworth, *George Washington, Farmer* (Indianapolis, 1915), 204. Haworth states that Waggoner Jack was sold in 1791, but does not give a source for this information. Two years later,

surrounding the mansion at Mount Vernon as part of a selfless effort to purchase the dowers from the Custis estate and free them,⁴⁴ yet he pursued one dower, Oney Judge, for years following her escape. Perhaps most momentously, he signed the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act into law.⁴⁵

The Fugitive Slave Act gave teeth to Article IV, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution, which guaranteed the right of a slaveholder to recover a runaway slave. The 1793 act established the legal mechanism for accomplishing this, made it a federal crime to assist an escaping slave or interfere with his recapture, and set severe fines for doing so. This act violated the concept of states' rights—the federal government mandating that “free” states defer to the property law of “slave” states—but political pressure trumped principle, perhaps because slaveholders wielded enormous power in Congress. The act had a chilling effect on the lives of the one-fifth of the American population that was of African descent—every escaped slave became a fugitive for life, subject to possible seizure at any moment anywhere within the territory of the United States, and even free African Americans lived at constant risk of being kidnapped and sold into bondage by unscrupulous slave catchers. Washington made no known comment on the act,⁴⁶ but even if he had personally opposed it, vetoing the legislation would have been futile—the vote margin in the U.S. Senate was not recorded, but the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Fugitive Slave Act overwhelmingly by a margin of forty-seven to eight.⁴⁷

Below are biographical sketches of the nine enslaved Africans who worked in the President's House. Scraps of information have been pieced together from numerous sources, although precious little is known about

Washington encouraged his estate manager at Mount Vernon to use the example of Waggoner Jack as a threat to keep insubordinate slaves in line. George Washington to William Pearce, Mar. 3, 1793, in *Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 32:366.

⁴⁴ Henry Wiencek has pieced together the likely details of Washington's plan to free the dowers: His western lands would be sold and the farms surrounding Mount Vernon divided and rented out, with the money going to the Custis estate. These proceeds would partially purchase the dowers, who would become indentured servants working either for the Custis heirs or hired out to others as laborers for a period of time. Thus, the dowers would work themselves out of slavery. Families might be separated temporarily, but no one would be sold, and all would eventually be free. Washington was unsuccessful in finding buyers for his western lands, but Wiencek suspects that uncooperative Custis heirs also may have undermined the plan. Henry Wiencek, *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves, and the Creation of America* (New York, 2003), 339–42.

⁴⁵ The full text of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 is posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/history/slaveact1793.htm>.

⁴⁶ Hirschfeld, *George Washington and Slavery*, 191.

⁴⁷ Thanks to historian Garry Wills for his insights on this point.

their actual lives. Approximate age, occupation, and legal status come from the 1759 Custis estate inventory and the 1786 and 1799 Mount Vernon slave censuses.⁴⁸ Information on where they were to be housed in Philadelphia comes from the Washington-Lear correspondence. The nine enslaved Africans left no writings, nothing of their own thoughts or inner life, so that nearly everything that is known about them is filtered through a white perspective. The point of view, biases, and motives of each chronicler should be borne in mind whether he/she be a Custis grandchild, the president's secretary, or an abolitionist minister.

Moll, a dower slave, was a nanny for Martha Custis's two surviving children. She was about nineteen when she was brought to Mount Vernon following the January 1759 wedding of Martha Custis and George Washington, and so was born around 1739. She probably nursed Mrs. Washington's daughter, Patsy, until the sickly girl's death at age seventeen in 1773. There is no record of her having had a husband or children of her own.

Moll has been described as the First Lady's personal maid in the New York and Philadelphia households,⁴⁹ but she probably was primarily the nanny to her two youngest grandchildren. When she arrived at the President's House in 1790, it is likely that she slept in one of the divided rooms over the kitchen with either eleven-year-old Nelly or nine-year-old G. W. Parke Custis.

Moll is not mentioned in Martha Washington's surviving correspondence, although the household account books from New York and Philadelphia regularly record purchases of shoes, stockings, and fabric for her. The Washingtons do not seem to have worried that she would take advantage of the Gradual Abolition Act to obtain her freedom—at least once she seems to have stayed in Pennsylvania beyond the six-month deadline. Moll was the only one of the initial eight enslaved Africans to work in the President's House for the whole six-and-a-quarter years and

⁴⁸ The 1789 Custis estate inventory is cited above, note 33. The 1786 Mount Vernon slave census is published in Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington*, vol. 4, 1784–June 1786 (Charlottesville, VA, 1978), 277–83, and is posted at <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/slavery/diaries/index.html>. The 1799 Mount Vernon slave census is published in W. W. Abbott, ed., *The Papers of George Washington, Retirement Series*, vol. 4, April–December 1799 (Charlottesville, VA, 1999), 528–40, and is posted at <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/will/slavelist.html>.

⁴⁹ Stephen Decatur Jr., *Private Affairs of George Washington* (Boston, 1933), 32, 225.

to return to Mount Vernon at the end of Washington's presidency. Tobias Lear's famous account of Washington's final hours records her standing at the door of his bedroom as he died on December 14, 1799.⁵⁰ After Martha Washington's death in 1802, Moll would have become part of the household of one of the Custis grandchildren—it is not known which. One of them later described her as "Mammy Molly, my old Nurse, who always overwhelm'd me with caresses when I visited Mt Vernon, & from whom I was ever afflicted to part—" ⁵¹

Austin, a dower slave, was the son of Betty, a seamstress, who brought him as a baby when she came to Mount Vernon following the January 1759 wedding of Martha Custis and George Washington. The identity of his father is not known, but Austin was of mixed racial heritage. Beginning in the mid-1770s, he worked as a waiter in the mansion at Mount Vernon, and he appears also to have worked as a postilion or footman for the carriage. During the Revolutionary War, Austin probably was one of the young men who accompanied Martha Washington on visits to her husband in the field.

Austin was the half-brother of Oney Judge. His wife was another dower, now thought to have been a seamstress named Charlotte.⁵² Austin's position in the presidential household is unclear. First-person accounts of state dinners describe all the waiters as white, but it is possible that he served the family meals. Some of the purchases for him in the household account books seem related to the house and others to the stables, which may indicate that he performed a dual role at the President's House. Austin and Lewis List, a white servant, accompanied Washington and his secretary on a return trip from Mount Vernon in late October 1793, but Philadelphia was in the midst of a yellow fever epidemic so their destination became Germantown, Pennsylvania, six miles northwest of the city. Initially, he and List may have been the entire staff

⁵⁰ Diary of Tobias Lear, Dec. 14, 1799, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Custis Law to David Baillie Warden, Apr. 20, 1808, as quoted in William D. Hoyt Jr., "Self-Portrait: Eliza Custis, 1808," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 53 (1945): 97.

⁵² Moll, who past historians presumed was his wife, was about eighteen years his senior. Mary V. Thompson makes the case for Charlotte having been Austin's wife in "Different People, Different Stories: The Life Stories of Individual Slaves from Mount Vernon and Their Relationships with George and Martha Washington" (unpublished paper presented at symposium "George Washington and Slavery," Mount Vernon, VA, Nov. 3, 2001), 30–32.

of the Deshler-Morris House, which served as the executive mansion for two-and-a-half weeks until the crisis was over. The following summer, the Washingtons vacationed at the Germantown house, and their staff likely included Austin, Moll, Hercules, and Oney Judge.⁵³

The Washingtons trusted Austin to make long rides on his own, including trips from Philadelphia to Mount Vernon. He died on December 20, 1794, during one of these solo trips, after a fall from his horse near Harford, Maryland. He was survived by a widow and five children: two sons, Billy (born ca. 1782), Timothy (born 1785), and three daughters, Elvey, Jenny, and Eliza (probably born between 1786 and 1795). After Martha Washington's death in 1802, Austin's children seem to have been inherited by G. W. Parke Custis and probably were moved to Arlington House (now Arlington National Cemetery).⁵⁴

Hercules, one of Washington's slaves, was the chief cook at Mount Vernon by 1786. His wife was a dower slave called Lame Alice, a seamstress, and they had three children, Richmond (born 1776), Evey (born 1782), and Delia (born 1785). Alice died in 1787. Washington was dissatisfied with the cook at the presidential residences in New York and brought Hercules to Philadelphia in November 1790. Richmond came along as a kitchen worker. It is likely that Hercules, his son, and Christopher shared a divided room on the fourth floor of the President's House.

The Washingtons appreciated Hercules's expertise as a cook and gave him special privileges, among them earning money by selling leftovers from the presidential kitchen.⁵⁵ A vigorous portrait attributed to Gilbert Stuart traditionally is thought to depict him (cover ill.).

From Tobias Lear, we know that Hercules was aware that the

⁵³ The presence of the enslaved Africans at the Deshler-Morris House in 1794 is inferred from entries in the household account book. Shoes were bought for Moll the day before the July 30 move to Germantown, and for Hercules (Aug. 15), Oney Judge (Aug. 23), and Austin (Sept. 8) during the Washingtons' vacation. "Washington's Household Account Book, 1793-1797," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 30 (1906): 312, 315, 316, 318.

⁵⁴ Mary V. Thompson has discovered four enslaved Africans named Austin working at Arlington House in the 1850s. She presumes that some, if not all, of these were grandsons and great-grandsons of this Austin. Thompson, "Different People," 37.

⁵⁵ George Washington Parke Custis, *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington*, ed. Benson J. Lossing (New York, 1860), 423. Custis's complete description of Hercules is posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/slaves/hercules.htm>.

Washingtons planned to rotate him out of Pennsylvania to prevent his qualifying for emancipation under the state's Gradual Abolition Act.⁵⁶ In June 1791, he stayed several days beyond the six-month deadline but did not register with the state, possibly because doing so would have meant permanent separation from his family—his son had been sent back to Virginia ahead of the deadline, his two daughters were at Mount Vernon, and he may have had a second wife and another daughter there.

Hercules escaped to freedom in March 1797, reportedly on the morning the newly retired president and his family began their return trip to Virginia.⁵⁷ Less than a month after the escape, Louis-Philippe (later king of France) visited Mount Vernon. His manservant spoke with Hercules's daughter and "ventured that the little girl must be deeply upset that she would never see her father again; she answered, *Oh! Sir, I am very glad, because he is free now.*"⁵⁸

By the provisions of Washington's will Hercules was emancipated in 1801, making him no longer a fugitive. Richmond, Evey, and Delia, dower slaves through their mother, remained in bondage.

Richmond was the son of Hercules and Lane Alice. He was born in 1776 and had two younger sisters, Evey and Delia. Because their mother was a dower slave they also were dowers. Richmond was eleven when his mother died in 1787. Three years later his father asked Washington's permission to bring him to the President's House. Washington reluctantly agreed, and Richmond worked as a scullion in the kitchen for the first year in Philadelphia. Among the teenager's duties would have been to sweep the chimneys. He probably slept with his father and Christopher in a room on the fourth floor of the main house. Washington returned him to Mount Vernon in October 1791, and Richmond probably worked there in the mansion kitchen.

Richmond was caught stealing money at Mount Vernon in November 1796. Washington assumed that the theft was part of a planned escape attempt, possibly of the father and son together. Hercules did escape to freedom several months later in Philadelphia, but alone. Washington

⁵⁶ Tobias Lear to George Washington, June 5, 1791, ser. 4, General Correspondence, George Washington Papers.

⁵⁷ Decatur, *Private Affairs of George Washington*, 296–97.

⁵⁸ Diary entry for Apr. 5, 1797, Louis-Philippe, King of France, *Diary of My Travels in America*, trans. Stephen Becker (New York, 1977), 32.

demoted Richmond to a field laborer, and he was unmarried and working at River Farm in 1799. His fate and that of his sisters after Martha Washington's death in 1802 is not known.

Giles, a dower slave, worked as a postilion or footman for the carriage at Mount Vernon and sometimes as a driver. He appears to have been about the same age as Austin, a teenager in 1774, which would have meant he was born in the late 1750s. During the Revolutionary War, Giles probably was the young man who accompanied Martha Washington on her visit to the encampment at Valley Forge from January to June 1778. There is no record of his having had a wife or children.

Giles accompanied Washington to Philadelphia in May 1787 for the Constitutional Convention,⁵⁹ as did the general's body servant, Will Lee. The two black men would have stayed with Washington in Robert Morris's house on Market Street, which three years later became the President's House. They returned to Mount Vernon in September.

Giles was brought to New York in April 1789 to work in the stables of the presidential residence, and he probably accompanied Washington on his northern tour in October and November. A year later he was brought to Philadelphia and would have lived in the quarters adjoining the stables of the President's House. Giles drove the baggage wagon for Washington's southern tour in March through June 1791. Early in the tour he was somehow injured so severely that he was no longer able to ride a horse and was left behind at Mount Vernon when Washington returned to Philadelphia.⁶⁰ Giles is not listed in the 1799 Mount Vernon slave census, which likely indicates that he had died.

Paris, one of Washington's slaves, worked as a stable-boy at Mount Vernon. He was younger than Austin and Giles, a teenager in April 1789 when he was brought to New York to work in the stables of the presidential residence. He may have accompanied Washington on his northern

⁵⁹ An entry in Jacob Hiltzheimer's diary confirms Giles's presence in Philadelphia: "July 3. [1787]—On returning we met his Excellency General Washington taking a ride on horseback, only his coachman Giles with him." Jacob Cox Parsons, ed., *Extracts from the Diary of Jacob Hiltzheimer* (Philadelphia, 1893), 128.

⁶⁰ George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, Apr. 1, 1791; Washington to Tobias Lear, June 19, 1791, in *Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 31:261, 302.

tour in October and November of that year. Paris came to Philadelphia in November 1790 and would have lived in the quarters adjoining the stables of the President's House.

In March 1791 Paris accompanied Washington on his southern tour, but his misbehavior on the trip angered the president. As punishment, Washington left him behind at Mount Vernon and returned to Philadelphia without him.

There was a good deal of sickness at Mount Vernon in the autumn of 1794. In late September or October, Washington's estate manager wrote him of Paris's death.⁶¹

Christopher Sheels (born ca. 1775), a dower slave, was the nephew of Will, also known as Billy Lee, who had been Washington's body servant throughout the Revolutionary War. In the postwar years, Will was injured in two serious falls and became incapacitated. Christopher assisted his uncle in attending to the president in New York in 1789, and when the capital moved to Philadelphia the following year, Will was retired to Mount Vernon and Christopher became the president's sole attendant. The teenager probably lived on the fourth floor of the main house in a room with Hercules and Richmond. The length of Christopher's stay in Philadelphia may have been as little as a year—he was back at Mount Vernon in January 1792.

Christopher seems to have been one of the few Mount Vernon slaves who could read and write. He may have been taught by Will, who reportedly was an evangelical Christian.

George Washington Motier Lafayette, the teenaged son of the Marquis de Lafayette, lived with the Washingtons for more than a year in Philadelphia and Virginia beginning in April 1796. Christopher was close in age to him, and the two seem to have become friendly. Soon after the president's retirement Christopher was bitten by a dog that was feared rabid and was sent to Lebanon, Pennsylvania, for treatment. He and young Lafayette traveled together for part of the journey. Several weeks later, Washington wrote the Frenchman of Christopher's recovery.⁶²

⁶¹ The estate manager's letter is not located, but the president responded in George Washington to William Pearce, Nov. 2, 1794, ser. 4, General Correspondence, George Washington Papers.

⁶² George Washington to George Washington Motier Lafayette, Dec. 5, 1797, in *Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 36:97.

In September 1799, Christopher requested Washington's permission to marry an enslaved African from another plantation, one who also seems to have been able to read and write. A few days later Washington intercepted a note sent between them outlining an escape plan and foiled it. Three months later Christopher attended to Washington on his deathbed.

After Martha Washington's death in 1802, Christopher would have been inherited by one of the Custis grandchildren. Nothing is known of his subsequent whereabouts.

More is known about Oney Judge than any other Mount Vernon slave because interviews with her appeared in abolitionist newspapers in the nineteenth century.⁶³

Oney (born ca. 1774) was a dower slave, the daughter of Betty, a seamstress, and Andrew Judge, a white English tailor who was an indentured servant at Mount Vernon in the early 1770s. Austin, about fifteen years Oney's senior, was her half-brother. Washington does not seem to have recognized Andrew Judge as Oney's father, which may indicate that Judge himself did not admit paternity. At about age ten Oney was brought into the manor house, probably as a playmate for Martha Washington's granddaughter, Nelly Custis. Oney became an expert at needlework and eventually became Martha Washington's body servant.

In 1789, Oney was one of seven enslaved Africans brought by the Washingtons to New York to work in the presidential residence. With the change in the capital in November 1790, she was brought to Philadelphia, and she probably shared a room over the kitchen with Nelly at the President's House. Oney accompanied the First Lady on shopping trips and social visits. There are entries in the household account books for clothes for the teenaged girl and trips to the circus.

On March 20, 1796, Martha Washington's eldest granddaughter, Elizabeth Custis, married English expatriate Thomas Law. The Washingtons were unable to attend the Virginia wedding, but invited the couple to visit Philadelphia and honeymoon at the President's House. Martha Washington informed Oney that she was to be an eventual gift

⁶³ The two interviews are posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/slaves/oneyinterview.htm>. The interviewer, Rev. Benjamin Chase, spelled Oney's name "Ona," which may have been how she pronounced it. Similarly, G. W. Parke Custis pronounced Hercules's name "Harkless."

to the bride.

Oney had made friends among Philadelphia's free black community. Philadelphia was both a center of abolitionism and home to a large free black population. Oney planned her escape with the aid of her free black friends. She slipped away one night in May or June 1796 while the Washingtons were having dinner and was hidden until she could find passage on a northbound ship. She either sailed directly to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, or arrived there by way of New York. Later that summer, Elizabeth Langdon, daughter of Senator John Langdon of New Hampshire, spotted Oney walking on a street in Portsmouth. Elizabeth was one of Nelly's closest friends and a frequent visitor to the President's House. Oney was able to elude Elizabeth, but Washington soon learned of her whereabouts.

Washington asked Secretary of the Treasury Oliver Wolcott to handle the matter, and the latter wrote to Joseph Whipple, the collector of customs of Portsmouth, requesting his help in the return of the president's wife's servant. Whipple attempted to comply with what must have seemed like an intimidating order, but warned that abducting Oney and placing her on a ship headed south might cause a riot on the docks.⁶⁴ Whipple interrogated her and reported to Wolcott that, "After a cautious examination it appeared to me that she had not been decoyed away as had been apprehended, but that a thirst for compleat freedom which she was informed would take place on her arrival here & Boston had been her only motive for absconding."⁶⁵ Oney tried to negotiate through Whipple, offering to return to the Washingtons if she would be guaranteed freedom upon their deaths. An indignant president responded in person to Whipple's letter: "To enter into such a compromise with *her*, as she suggested to *you*, is totally inadmissable, . . . it would neither be politic or just to reward *unfaithfulness* with a premature preference [of freedom]; and thereby discontent before hand the minds of all her fellow-servants who by their steady attachments are far more deserving than herself of favor."⁶⁶

Two years later, Washington's nephew, Burnwell Bassett Jr., traveled to

⁶⁴ As Henry Wiencek observes, had the plot to kidnap Oney been carried out, it would have violated the due process required by the very 1793 Fugitive Slave Act that Washington had signed into law. Wiencek, *Imperfect God*, 324.

⁶⁵ Joseph Whipple to Oliver Wolcott Jr., Oct. 4, 1796, ser. 4, General Correspondence, George Washington Papers.

⁶⁶ George Washington to Joseph Whipple, Nov. 28, 1796, in *Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 35:296-98.

New Hampshire on business. He was entertained by the Langdons and, over dinner, mentioned that one of the things he planned to accomplish was the recapture of Oney. This time the Langdons helped Oney, who was now married to a sailor named Jack Staines and the mother of a child.⁶⁷ Word was sent for her family to immediately go into hiding. Bassett returned to Virginia without her.

Oney had three children with Staines, all of whom predeceased her, as did he. Apparently in her place, her younger sister, Delphy, was bequeathed to Mrs. Washington's granddaughter in 1802.⁶⁸ Because of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, which Washington signed into law in Philadelphia (likely in his private office, barely a dozen feet from where she slept), Oney lived the last fifty-two years of her life as a fugitive. Oney Judge Staines died in Greenland, New Hampshire, on February 25, 1848.

I uncovered and announced evidence of Joe, a ninth enslaved African brought to the President's House, in 2004.⁶⁹ Washington mentioned "Postilion Joe" in an October 19, 1795, letter written toward the end of an eight-day journey from Mount Vernon to the capital.⁷⁰ We can infer that Joe arrived in Philadelphia the following day with the rest of the traveling party. A postilion was a footman for the presidential coach, and Joe would have worked in the stables of the President's House and probably been housed in the quarters between the kitchen and the stables. It is not known how long Joe was in Philadelphia—he may have stayed until March 1797, the end of Washington's presidency.

There is no documentation for Joe's exact age. As a dower, his absence from the Custis estate inventory likely means he was born after January 1759. Similarly, his inclusion as an adult in the 1786 Mount Vernon slave census implies that he was then over age fourteen. His wife, Sall, a seamstress, was born around 1769; Joe may have been about the same age. At the time he came to Philadelphia, they had three sons—Henry, age seven; Elijah, age three; and Dennis, age one.

⁶⁷ Legally, Oney's child was a dower slave and therefore property of the Custis estate, even though the father, Jack Staines, was a free man.

⁶⁸ Wiencek, *Imperfect God*, 290. Delphy was manumitted after five years.

⁶⁹ Edward Lawler Jr., "9th Enslaved African Discovered in Washington's 'White House'—at Liberty Bell's New Home" (press release, Independence Hall Association, July 1, 2004). The complete press release is posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/news/iha070104.htm>.

⁷⁰ George Washington to William Pearce, Oct. 19, 1795, in *Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 34:338.

Sall and the children were owned by Washington and received their freedom following his death by the provisions of his will. They took the surname "Richardson." Joe would have been one of the 153 dowers inherited by Martha Washington's grandchildren following her death in 1802—it is not known which. Although he remained enslaved, Joe and Sall Richardson managed to stay together and had at least seven children, all of whom were free. Two of their sons were working at Mount Vernon in 1835.⁷¹

INHP has identified five additional enslaved Africans in Washington's Philadelphia household—but three of these were white servants, nothing is known about another, and the fifth never existed. INHP distributed a report entitled *Background and Preliminary Planning for Interpreting the Site at 190 High Street—Now SE Corner of 6th and Market Streets* at a May 13, 2002, meeting with historians and community leaders, and at the Pew Charitable Trusts' symposium on the President's House four days later. This listed Henry, John, and Martin among the enslaved. Entries in the second volume of the household account book kept in Philadelphia between March 1793 and March 1797 (purchased by The Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1904 and published in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* between 1905 and 1907) make it clear that Henry Waskan and John Klein were not enslaved Africans but German indentured servants.⁷² There is no evidence that Martin Klein (John's brother?) was an enslaved African: the only Martin listed in the 1799 Mount Vernon slave census was an infant. Martin Klein first appears in the documentary record in a May 4, 1792, entry published in Stephen Decatur Jr.'s *Private Affairs of George Washington* (1933). Decatur conjectured: "Martin was a white boy who worked about the stables in return for his keep. He was probably a recently arrived German immigrant."⁷³ The circumstantial evidence makes it much more likely

⁷¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, Nov. 16, 1835. Thanks to Mary V. Thompson for sharing this reference.

⁷² "[August 22, 1794] Contingt Exp's . . . Pd Cap[tain] Chris. Franklin for the passage etc. of John Klein for which he is to serve three years . . . [\$]57.10," and "[September 6, 1794] Contingt Exps . . . pd [B. Bohlen] for 2 Dutch servants as follows Jo. Henry Waskan £25.19.0 Margt Held £24.4.6." "Washington's Household Account Book," 316, 318.

⁷³ Decatur, *Private Affairs of George Washington*, 254. Stephen Decatur Jr., a descendant of Tobias Lear, discovered the household account book's first volume in his attic in the 1920s. This listed the presidential household purchases during Washington's sixteen months in New York and his first

that Martin was an indentured servant. He was troublesome, and Washington had him incarcerated (not something one could do to a volunteer or wage worker).⁷⁴ There is also an unexplained payment made to him in March 1795, the kind of "good luck" payment a master awards when one has fulfilled one's indenture and is leaving the household.⁷⁵ And Martin Klein is never mentioned again.

A revised version of the INHP report was posted on the Liberty Bell Center page of the INHP Web site in October 2002. This listed Henry (again), Davy, and Bain among the enslaved Africans. Who this Davy was remains a mystery. He is known only through a single entry in the household account book, recorded during the Washingtons' 1794 vacation in Germantown, Pennsylvania.⁷⁶ At this time there were four enslaved Africans at Mount Vernon named Davy—an infant, a toddler, a carpenter (no age recorded), and an overseer in his fifties—but none would seem a likely candidate for the presidential household. Had this Davy been an enslaved African, he probably would have remained in Philadelphia for at least several months. The absence of additional entries for him in the household account book or any reference to him in Washington's correspondence points to the likely conclusion that he was a local Germantown boy hired temporarily (and possibly replaced by John Klein two weeks later). There is no evidence that a household servant named Bain ever existed, let alone that he was an enslaved African. B-A-I-N is a century-old typo in the household account book transcript.⁷⁷ It should read B-A-U-R, as in Jacob Baur, Washington's valet and hairdresser.

The list of enslaved Africans on the INHP Web site was never corrected, but, after thirteen months, the report was removed from the Liberty Bell Center page in November 2003.

twenty-eight months in Philadelphia. Decatur published extensive excerpts in the 1933 book, along with his expert commentary, but the complete first volume has never been published.

⁷⁴ "Case 154. Martin Cline, confined Aug. 6, 1794. Charged on Oath of James Germain, Steward to the President of the United States (and done by the desire of the President), with being frequently Drunk, neglecting his duty, and otherwise misbehaving. To be Kept untill legally discharged. Discharged Aug. 22." Vagrancy Docket, Philadelphia County, Philadelphia City Archives, as quoted in *Life in Early Philadelphia: Documents from the Revolutionary and Early National Periods*, ed. Billy G. Smith (University Park, PA, 1995), 84. Thanks to Billy G. Smith for sharing this reference.

⁷⁵ "[March 30, 1795] House Exps'. p'd Martin Kline in full . . . [\$]20.00." "Washington's Household Account Book," 472.

⁷⁶ "[August 9, 1794] Contgt Exps pd. (by J. G.) for a pr shoes for Davy." "Washington's Household Account Book," 314.

⁷⁷ "[September 19, 1794] House Exps . . . gave Bain to buy pomatum [hair wax] for Mrs. Washington . . . 37[¢]." "Washington's Household Account Book," 320.

James Thomas Flexner also contributed to the confusion about the enslaved Africans in the President's House. He discovered a letter that he misinterpreted to mean that Washington had freed an enslaved African named John Cline at the end of his presidency.⁷⁸ Washington wrote of having granted Cline (Klein, see above) "his freedom," but this meant having released him from the months of service remaining on his indenture contract, not having freed him from slavery. Flexner also jumped to the conclusion that Nathan, a cook at Mount Vernon, had worked at the President's House.⁷⁹ Although Washington wrote of his intention to bring either "Hercules or Nathan from the Kitchen at Mount Vernon to that in Philadelphia,"⁸⁰ only the former made the trip.

Leila Herbert claimed that Washington brought an additional enslaved African to Philadelphia. She stated that Cyrus, a postilion at Mount Vernon, worked in the President's House stables, but gave no reference for this (or nearly anything else).⁸¹ Cyrus is not mentioned in any of the documentary evidence related to the house. But if the presence of a tenth enslaved African in Washington's Philadelphia presidential household should ever be proven, it would not be surprising if he were Cyrus.

The issue of "slave quarters" and their location at the very door of the new Liberty Bell Center has caused tremendous consternation at Independence National Historical Park (fig. 6). INHP has had the responsibility of interpreting the President's House since 1974, when it took over control of Independence Mall from the state. That this responsibility was essentially ignored for more than twenty-five years may be attributable to the jungle of misinformation about the house, to embarrassment over the public toilet built on its site, to research and interpretation having been focused on *existing* buildings, to underfunding and understaffing, to apparent public apathy, and a whole host of other excuses. But, as the following pages illustrate, there seems to be little

⁷⁸ George Washington to James McAlpin, July 3, 1797, as quoted in James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington: Anguish and Farewell (1793–1797)* (Boston, [1972]), 432.

⁷⁹ James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington and the New Nation (1783–1793)* (Boston, [1969]), 270.

⁸⁰ George Washington to Tobias Lear, Sept. 9, 1790, *Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 37:571.

⁸¹ Leila Herbert, *The First American: His Homes and His Households* (New York, 1900), 88.



Fig. 6. The President's House ground plan, October 2004. As part of an October 30, 2004, public forum on the President's House, National Park Service archaeologist Jed Levin and Independence Hall Association historian Edward Lawler Jr. temporarily marked the outline of the main house and its back-buildings in the entrance plaza of the Liberty Bell Center. Ground plan © 2001 Edward Lawler Jr.; Photograph © 2004 Edward Lawler Jr.; Overlay © 2004 Independence Hall Association.

doubt that the issues of slavery and race played a part in INHP's resistance to fully interpreting the site.

The Washington-Lear correspondence establishes that the smokehouse was located one-room's distance from the stables. In 1790, Washington directed that the smokehouse be converted into a lodging room for stable workers, two or three of whom were enslaved Africans. Lear proposed instead that the building be extended to the stables to make two lodging rooms, and the president agreed. The segregation by race in the servant housing assignments planned for elsewhere in the

house suggests that one of these rooms was to be for the white coachman and the other for the black stable workers.⁸²

In late November 2000, archaeologists from John Milner Associates, Inc. (JMA) discovered the stone pit of Robert Morris's icehouse at the southwest corner of the President's House property. The archaeologists initially dismissed this extraordinary artifact as a nineteenth-century construction because the map on which they relied showed Morris's stables at that location. (In the 1930s, the WPA redrew and altered the 1785 ground plan, moving the coach-house and stables twenty-four feet to the west. In 1985, INHP created a map that was based, in part, on the WPA's altered ground plan. This was the map that misled the archaeologists in 2000.) On December 7, I presented my research on the President's House to the Philadelphia chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians, making the conjecture that the icehouse had been located at the property's southwest corner. It was not until several days later that I learned that the archaeologists had discovered the icehouse pit in this same spot. JMA and I began sharing our work, and their maps confirmed something that I had long suspected—the site of the smokehouse (the unidentified building shown on the 1785 ground plan between the kitchen and stables) would be directly outside the front door to the soon-to-be-constructed Liberty Bell Center.⁸³ Knowing that Washington had designated that stable workers—most of whom were enslaved Africans—be housed in the smokehouse, I immediately contacted the Park Service, although it was two months before an INHP official met with me. He was skeptical of my research and challenged it using the WPA's flawed work, Harold Eberlein's 1953 monograph, and the comprehensive theory (all described and refuted in my 2002 article).⁸⁴ Then, he cut off communication between us. Rather than dealing with the "slave quarters" issue and its potential effect on the planned LBC building, INHP chose to ignore it.

Five months after this meeting, INHP published a report concluding that the back-buildings shown on the 1785 ground plan had no longer

⁸² Tobias Lear to George Washington, Oct. 31, 1790, ser. 4, General Correspondence, George Washington Papers.

⁸³ The 1785 ground plan shows that the smokehouse could not have stood on the stables' east side (because of the coach-house) or south side (because of Minor Street). The discovery of the icehouse pit ruled out the west side of the stables as the location. The unlabeled building shown on the 1785 ground plan—11 feet, 8 inches north of the stables—is the only known structure that could have been the smokehouse.

⁸⁴ See Lawler, "President's House in Philadelphia," 72–79, 88–89.

existed in 1790.⁸⁵ This seemed to be a complete reversal of the position INHP had held for the previous sixteen years.⁸⁶ The new conclusion was based on minor discrepancies in the recorded dimensions of the house's back-buildings at three points in time. In a comparison of the recorded dimensions, common sense would argue that there was a strong likelihood that the 54 × 18 foot back-building recorded in the 1773 insurance survey, the 55 × 20 foot kitchen/washhouse shown on the 1785 ground plan, and the 52 × 18 foot (interior dimensions?) kitchen listed in the 1798 insurance policy all had been one and the same building.⁸⁷ But the August 2001 report did not allow for this possibility and used these minor discrepancies to discredit the best historical evidence: the 1785 ground plan. INHP bolstered its arguments by relying on the same 1985 INHP map that had misled the archaeologists nine months earlier, without ever mentioning that this map was inaccurate and had itself been discredited by the discovery of the icehouse pit. INHP's denial that enslaved Africans could have been housed outside the planned Liberty Bell Center was so complete that the near-certainty that the unlabeled building shown on the 1785 ground plan had been the smokehouse was never mentioned; even the word "smokehouse" did not appear in the 110-page report.⁸⁸

INHP presented new arguments about where enslaved Africans had been housed in an October 2002 article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*:

⁸⁵ Anna Coxé Toogood, "Historic Resource Study, Independence Mall: The 18th Century Development, Block One, Chestnut to Market, Fifth to Sixth Streets" (Philadelphia, National Park Service, Aug. 2001), 56–58. Pertinent excerpts posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/controversy/study.htm>.

⁸⁶ In 1985, INHP created a map of Block One of Independence Mall showing the properties as they had existed at the time of the 1787 Constitutional Convention, including the Robert Morris house. Although the coach-house/stable was erroneously moved to the southwest corner of the property, the dimensions of every back-building were the same as those shown on the 1785 ground plan. (A detail from the INHP map is posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/history/maps/1985map.htm>.) An August 1997 report on the 500 block of Market Street by INHP consultant Sharon Ann Holt mentioned nothing about the house's back-buildings having been demolished and replaced. INHP's 1985 map was presented to the archaeologists as accurate in 2000. I had extensive meetings with JMA in December 2000 and January 2001, and there was no mention of the house's back-buildings having been demolished and replaced.

⁸⁷ INHP conceded that these were likely the same buildings at the November 18, 2003, round-table (see below).

⁸⁸ The August 2001 report proposed that the unlabeled building shown on the 1785 ground plan between the kitchen and the stables had been the icehouse, even though this structure was barely one-quarter the size of the "16 [foot] square" icehouse described by Robert Morris in 1784. Following the November 2000 discovery of the icehouse pit some forty feet from this site, INHP proposed that the unlabeled building could have been an earlier icehouse, but not that it could have been the smokehouse. Toogood, *Historic Resource Study*. . . *Block One*, 75. The June 15, 1784, Morris-Washington letter describing the icehouse is quoted in Lawler, "President's House in Philadelphia," 89–90n227.

Some scholars and African Americans are dismayed over what they perceive as inaccurate or misleading statements about slavery contained in a preliminary National Park Service text commemorating the house in Philadelphia used by George Washington during his presidency.

The text asserts that Washington, who kept as many as eight slaves at the Market Street residence, housed his "servants" throughout the house. The building had no "slave quarters," according to the Park Service, because no part of it was used exclusively by slaves. . . .

Phil Sheridan, spokesman for Independence National Historical Park, said that "primary documents call it [the rear of the President's House] the servants' hall."

There are no historical records "that said it was a slave quarters," Sheridan said. "If someone has evidence we are in error, we would like to see it." . . .

"There's no question slaves existed on the site," Sheridan said. "But we're standing with what Washington called it, and we are standing with the fact that no one knows if slaves slept there or if slaves didn't sleep there."⁸⁹

Based on these arguments, INHP officials assured Philadelphia's African American leaders that there was insufficient evidence to mark a "slave quarters." The Appropriations Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives inserted a provision in the Department of the Interior's FY2003 budget requiring the National Park Service to study the President's House and report back to it.⁹⁰ In compliance with this directive, NPS initiated a design process for the site in October 2002. Relying on the same INHP arguments made in the *Inquirer* article, designers from the Olin Partnership spent months under the misapprehension that the servants' hall had been a large dormitory in which both white and black servants were housed. The designers proposed that this building's

⁸⁹ Stephan Salisbury, "Proposed Wording on Slave Quarters Draws Fire," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 31, 2002. The complete article is posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/news/inq103102.htm>. INHP's spokesman was mistaken: the servants' hall and smokehouse were different buildings. The servants' hall was a dining hall and work space—save (perhaps) for the two small lodging rooms for white married servants proposed for its south end. Washington may not have used the term "slave quarters" to describe the smokehouse, but he did designate that it be used to house stable workers—most of whom were enslaved Africans. There is no evidence to suggest that the stable workers would have been housed anywhere else since all the other known lodging rooms can be accounted for in the housing assignments in the Washington-Lear correspondence. Still, under the strictest standards, one must *infer* that the stable workers were housed in the smokehouse.

⁹⁰ House of Representatives, *Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2003*, 107th Cong., 2d sess., July 11, 2002, H. Rept. 107-564, 46-47. The complete bill is posted at http://www.cfo.doe.gov/budget/billrept/fy03/hint_report_hrpt_107-564.pdf.

entire footprint be set aside for a commemoration of the enslaved Africans, until INHP admitted that there was no evidence that any of them ever had been housed there. Preliminary designs for the whole site were unveiled in January 2003 at a public meeting at Philadelphia's African American Museum and were submitted to the House Appropriations Committee in March.⁹¹ In the designs, the smokehouse area—the only part of the 1785 ground plan that can be expressly associated with enslaved Africans—was “erased” from the map.

That same month, INHP defended the erasure of the smokehouse at a symposium inspired by the President's House controversy held at Cliveden in Germantown, Pennsylvania. An INHP historian argued that there was no documentary evidence that the building had existed. I responded that the Washington-Lear correspondence contains multiple references to the smokehouse, and that it seemed unlikely that the president and his secretary had been suffering from a collective hallucination. In a subsequent letter INHP again dismissed the existence of the smokehouse: “While the correspondence indicates a desire to transform a smokehouse into quarters for stable hands, some of whom were enslaved, there is no evidence that this intention was actualized. Indeed, the 1798 survey makes no mention of the purported structure. Until we have confirming evidence that the structure existed, we cannot mark it in the ground.”⁹² Following my stinging reply, the INHP abandoned this ludicrous argument.

As the citizens' advisory organization for INHP, the Independence Hall Association wrote to the House Appropriations Committee in early April 2003 praising the Olin Partnership's basic concept for the President's House site, but recommending a number of changes—foremost among these, the marking of the “slave quarters.”⁹³ IHA also proposed that the whole 55 × 35 foot footprint of the house's kitchen ell be utilized to commemorate the enslaved Africans and to educate visitors about slavery *before* they arrived at the door to the Liberty Bell Center. The design of the LBC, then more than a year into construction, called for two massive brick piers supporting a forty-foot-long decorative trellis

⁹¹ The preliminary designs are posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/plans/jan2003/index.htm>.

⁹² Mary A. Bomar to Edward Lawler Jr., May 23, 2003. INHP's letter and my response are posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/controversy/bomar1.htm>.

⁹³ The Independence Hall Association's Apr. 2, 2003, letter to the House Appropriations Committee is posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/controversy/ihaletter.htm>.

to be erected on the site of the kitchen ell. In the letter to the Appropriations Committee and in a subsequent face-to-face meeting with INHP officials, IHA board members strongly advocated that these piers not be built—but, five months later, they were. In September, as the piers were under construction, community representatives who had participated in the previous winter's tainted design process took their concerns directly to INHP's new superintendent, Mary A. Bomar. She had been unaware of the controversy, and once it was explained to her that the decorative piers would preclude the possibility of ever using the kitchen ell's footprint for a commemoration of the enslaved Africans, she ordered them demolished.

The Liberty Bell Center's grand opening was a month later, on October 9, 2003. In his remarks, Governor Edward G. Rendell alluded to the house and to "those whose history has not been told," and Congressman Joseph Hoeffel spoke at length about the importance of the site. Mayor John Street made the President's House a major part of his speech and pledged \$1.5 million from the City of Philadelphia for the site.⁹⁴

INHP convened a roundtable of scholars on November 18, 2003, posing a list of questions for discussion.⁹⁵ While participants disagreed over what term should be used to describe the smokehouse and its proposed extension—"slave quarters," or something else?—the roundtable found that there was sufficient evidence to infer that enslaved Africans had been housed there.⁹⁶

An October 30, 2004, public forum on the President's House attracted hundreds to the Independence Visitor Center.⁹⁷ To illustrate the site for the meeting, a full-sized outline of the main house and its back-buildings was temporarily marked in the entrance plaza of the Liberty Bell Center. At the conclusion of the forum there was a guided tour of the outline during which, for the first time, INHP publicly acknowledged the "slave quarters." The public forum was a major turning point in the controversy. In

⁹⁴ The speeches of Governor Rendell, Congressman Hoeffel, and Mayor Street are posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/lbc>.

⁹⁵ The questions for discussion are posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/controversy/questions.htm>.

⁹⁶ A "Consensus Document" resulting from the roundtable is posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/controversy/consensus.htm>. A "Minority Report" is posted at <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/controversy/minority.htm>.

⁹⁷ INHP's report on the public forum is posted at http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/controversy/october_30_2004_report.htm.

December 2004, INHP committed to marking the back-buildings between the kitchen and stables exactly as they are shown on the 1785 ground plan, and to labeling the area "Smokehouse/Slave Quarters." This breakthrough is attributable to the work of INHP's gifted superintendent, Mary A. Bomar, who arrived in Philadelphia in February 2003 and is now the new director of the Park Service's northeast region. An interpretive marker at the site will explain that the best historical evidence indicates that Washington's stable workers—including enslaved Africans—would have been housed there.

Despite the controversies of the recent past, the outlook at Independence National Historical Park seems hopeful. The wealth of new information about the President's House presents an extraordinary opportunity for interpretation—of the presidencies of Washington and Adams, of the executive branch of the federal government in the early republic, and of the issues of freedom and unfreedom through the stories of nine enslaved individuals, two of whom escaped to freedom from the house. Appropriate recognition of the site will also fulfill a heretofore-neglected part of the mission outlined in INHP's "charter"—*The Final Report to the United States Congress by the Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission* (December 1947), authored by Charles E. Peterson.⁹⁸

In the future, visitors to INHP will be able to experience all three branches of the federal government during Philadelphia's 1790–1800 tenure as temporary capital of the United States, imagine themselves within some manifestation of the "White House" of Washington and Adams, and learn about the lives and contributions of all the residents of the President's House.

Peterson, who died in August 2004, would have been proud.

Independence Hall Association

EDWARD LAWLER JR.

⁹⁸ The report to Congress was incorporated into the enabling legislation under which Independence National Historical Park was created in 1948. Thanks to former NPS chief historian Dwight Pitcaithley for his insights on this point.

Postscript: On September 6, 2005, U.S. Congressman Chaka Fattah announced a federal appropriation of \$3.6 million for the President's House site. This, combined with the City of Philadelphia's commitment of \$1.5 million, guarantees that the project will be completed.