Mrs. Inman Johnson of King and Queen Addresses January Meeting on "Old Silver"

Mrs. Johnson said that silver has always been the most favored of metals for the highly skilled smiths. During the time of Henry VIII hallmarks were punched into the silver using different marks by the craftsmen, such as the maker's mark, made of silver, place, London, Leopard's head, etc. A tax was placed on coin silver which was 9 parts silver and 1 part metal. In 1740 the manufacture of Sheffield started which is silver reinforced on copper or silver plated on copper. Mathew Bolton was a famous silversmith and introduced electroplate silver in 1840 and this was marked Ep after 1840. Virginia had silversmiths before any other colony and of course silver was used for Communion Services in 1607. Silver was portable and was highly treasured and guarded by families as their most precious possession. Most of the silver came from the Mother Country because England was home until 1775.

Mrs. Johnson gave many more interesting facts about old silver and told of many outstanding silversmiths. Adam Lynn of Alexandria, John Brown, silversmith of Port Royal, Va. in 1777, Paul Revere and others including Richard Cauthorne of Essex County who was a silversmith in the early 1700's. By 1800 there were 400 silversmiths in Virginia. Any silver after 1800 was marked sterling as well as with makers and other hallmarks.

Mr. John McManus, Chairman of the Nominating Committee moved that the slate of officers submitted be accepted: Mr. Sidney J. Hilton, Sr., President; Mr. Arnold Motley, Vice President; Mrs. Percy R. Eubank, Treasurer and Mrs. William A. Wright, Secretary, were duly elected.

Mr. McManus also asked for volunteers to serve on Committees for the Bicentennial Celebration; they are needed to search for records covering the period from 1750 to 1787. The Bicentennial Commission is working on a roster of Revolutionary Soldiers from Essex and also on landmarks to discover and list those structures which were connected in any way with the Revolutionary Period. They are also working to collect any material bearing on the life style in Essex and to gather material covering the religious life and aspects of the people of Essex. A Pageant Committee has been appointed for the county and a general research com-

New Officers Installed at April Meeting; Mr. Pettigrew is Speaker

Mr. Pettigrew spoke on our common English Heritage and showed some very interesting slides of buildings in England. He stressed the marvelous heritage we had received from the Tudor period in Great Britain, specifically recalling the deeds of Henry VII, Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth the first.

Mr. Arnold Motley installed the new officers, Mr. Sidney J. Hilton, Sr., President, and the others. A rising vote of thanks was given the outgoing president, Mrs. Henrietta Wolfe and the others. Mr. Emory L. Carlton reported that Col. William Miller's (Captain-Lieutenant in Revolutionary Service) grave had been removed to Vauters Church. He gave an interesting report on the removal of the remains and the re-interment in the churchyard.

Mr. McManus reported that the Essex Bi-centennial Commission is progressing satisfactorily. Mr. Hilton suggested that in the future he have our business meeting following the program, which was agreed to.

Mr. Charles Warner stated that in 1680 The Port of Entry Act was passed in Jamestown and as a result Tappahannock was established on March 25, 1682 when the Crown purchased from Benjamin Goodrich 50 acres and that only a few lots were sold before 1691. He also stated that a plaque presented by the State of Virginia designating the 13 historic places in the town, as the Tappahannock Historic District, has been placed on the front of the Town Hall.

Mr. Junius Fishburne, Executive Director of the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, has written to Saint Margaret's School that three of the buildings, the Brockenbrough, the Coleman-Anderson and the Wright-Gordon houses would be eligible to receive funds for restoration and repair from the Federal Government because of being included in the district. The Tappahannock Historic District was placed on The National Register of Historic Places on April 2, 1973.

Mr. Warner also stated that the Town of Tappahannock and Mr. J. M. Evans, Jr. wished to use our Bulletin No. 3 dealing with the Tappahannock Historic

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The Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission (VHLC)
Architectural and Archeological Survey of Essex County

By Jeffrey M. O'Dell

The Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission was founded in 1966 as a state agency to help protect and develop the rich architectural and historical heritage of the Old Dominion. Since its establishment, one of its primary objectives has been to investigate and prepare individual dossiers on every place or structure of significance in the 40,000 square miles Virginia encompasses.

The Historic American Buildings Survey, a program instituted by the Federal government, had paved the way, but a more extensive and detailed survey of Virginia's old buildings was needed. With the rapid economic growth of the state, many structures were being demolished for roads, urban renewal, and housing and industrial developments. Moreover, with the shift in population from rural areas to the cities, many old farmsteads lay abandoned and decaying. In light of the rate at which these vestiges of the past were disappearing, it was deemed essential to make as thorough a study as would be economically feasible in as short a period as possible, so that there would be an adequate record of those structures that could not be saved, and so that preservation efforts could be launched on behalf of those places which appeared salvageable.

This survey project received greater impetus with a Federal grant in 1973. Suitably qualified regional survey agents were hired on a part-time or temporary basis to map, draw, photograph and collect brief histories on every important standing structure in each of the designated counties. At present there are some 10,000 individual landmarks on file and accessible to the public in the VHLC offices in Morson's Row, just off Capitol Square in Richmond.

While the original focus of the Landmarks Commission was primarily on architecture, archeology has become an increasingly important aspect of the total program of recording and interpreting the past through the material culture of earlier generations. Dr. William Kelso, archeologist for the VHLC, has been in charge of the excavations at Kingsmill, a large tract near Williamsburg which is being developed for housing by the Anheuser-Busch Corporation. Important insights into 17th and 18th century life have been gained by the salvage archeology conducted here and at other sites across the state.

Unfortunately, in Virginia, as elsewhere in the United States, the archeological evidence which remains is being erased at a deplorable rate by the same inexorable push of construction and economic expansion that spells doom for so many of our early standing buildings. For this reason, a formal archeological survey was recently begun by the Landmarks Commission to parallel the original (and ongoing) architectural survey. The objective of this survey is to map the locations of and briefly research all early (i.e., colonial, or important pre-Civil War) sites, including those of houses, public buildings, and industries. Thus, when a new road is put through or a housing tract developed, the VHLC might be able to conduct a "salvage" (as opposed to a full-scale) dig at the particular site so as to extract as much information as possible in a short time (e.g., two to ten days). Of course such an excavation cannot be as thorough and informative as one would wish, but at least the more salient features of the site can be determined before it is destroyed for all time.

Essex was among the first few counties selected to be surveyed archeologically, and this writer was engaged by the VHLC for that purpose in July, 1973. The Rev. Ralph E. Fall, rector of St. Anne's Parish, had already begun an architectural survey for the VHLC of three counties, including Essex. In the course of the archeological survey, however, the writer came across or learned of many standing structures which were then duly photographed and reported upon. In addition, a concerted effort has been made to copy any old photos, paintings or drawings of buildings that are now gone or that have been substantially altered.

Essex was extremely fortunate in already having a published record of many of its most important early houses and house sites. Those dedicated individuals who prepared the booklet Essex County, Virginia: Its Historic Homes, Landmarks and Traditions under the auspices of the Essex County Women's Club, cannot be praised too highly. The first edition appeared in 1940, and the publication was expanded and revised in the 1957 edition (which is still available). Brief histories and descriptions of 141 houses and churches were included in the 1957 booklet, and 32 of these places were accompanied by photographs.

Not long after embarking on this VHLC survey, Essex County's remarkable wealth of unchronicled history began to manifest itself. The Rev. Fall had already reported on about 125 landmarks (mostly those treated in the Women's Club Book) when the archeological survey commenced. By the completion of the project in April 1974, the writer had gathered information on over 300 additional sites and structures, and had taken over one thousand photographs. Even at this, the project could have continued indefinitely. Just to locate and briefly research a fraction of all the colonial house sites in Essex could take years or even a lifetime, and would involve walking every acre of cultivated ground in the county (in order to find bricks, ceramic fragments, and other indications of early habitation). Some abandoned houses appeared to be known by only a handful of people in the county, and one wonders how many ancient, partially decayed houses may still stand unrecorded and forgotten in remote, forested areas of Essex.

Although it is impossible to ever call a study of this nature complete or definitive, the writer feels reasonably satisfied that most of the important early houses and house sites that are still known or remembered by people living in the county today have been investigated. My primary objective has been to collect all that people now know of a house and its history. It is this information that disappears with the passage of time, never to be recorded. So often people have expressed their regret at not having listened to their parents or grandparents talk of old times and family history; when young, one is not interested, but then in later years when interest in the past awakens, it is

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too late to gather it and pass it on. Thus it is hoped that the family history—however brief—gathered in these reports will be of value to future generations.

In many cases the court records were consulted, and proved valuable in filling in gaps; but they were not used to the extent they might have been, due to the unjustifiably time-consuming nature of courthouse research. Thus, although it cannot be denied that the records hold a great wealth of information, I have used them sparingly, because of the unfortunate fact that the project was limited in its scope, and financial resources. It was decided that time could be better spent collecting data in the field that demanded immediate attention. Moreover, the court records in most cases—contrary to the assumption of many—give very few if any clues to the nature or date of a particular house in question. Only land owners and tracts of land can be traced in the records, and even at this one can spend hours and emerge with little in the way of tangible results. Since the records are permanent and can be consulted at any time by anyone with the interest and time to do so, I have felt few misgivings about leaving them; wills, deeds and court orders are a largely unexplored resource for future investigation.

The greatest resource in this endeavor has been the people of Essex County. Almost without exception they have been hospitable in the extreme and willing to share their knowledge and interest; in many cases they have gone out of their way to help me in this research. Among those many of whom I owe a special debt of gratitude are: Mr. Arnold Motley; Mrs. Daisy T. Gouldin; Mr. Barbee Spindle; Miss Elva Powers; Mr. Charles Warner; Mrs. Wythe Bowe; Mr. Spottiswood Taliaferro; Mrs. Joseph Ewing; Mr. Charles Durham; Mrs. S. B. Baird; Mrs. J. D. Hutchinson, and Mr. Wm. Albaugh. Surely, meeting and working with the people of this county has been the most rewarding personal aspect of these months of research.

In the course of the architectural survey, one of the questions most frequently posed was “How old must a house be to be of interest to you?” This, of course, is a query that cannot be answered with exactitude, since the importance of a building is dependent upon more factors than age alone. Generally, though, any structure built before the Civil War would be photographed and its floorplan sketched. Backhouses and log cabins were just as important an aspect of the material culture of 150 years ago as were the “great houses”, and fully deserve to be recorded as a vestige of a vanished way of life. Obviously, more photos and more attention would normally be lavished on a house such as Blandfield; than a corn crib, but if that corn crib has unusual or unique construction features, then these are as carefully photographed and documented as a handsome 18th century house would be.

Buildings constructed in the early 1800s, however, are of little interest if they have been so altered as to obscure their original lines, construction features and materials. On the other hand, there might be certain structures built after 1860 which are of particular significance because of the rarity or fine quality of their architecture, or the importance of their historical associations. While there are no examples of the latter in the county (as yet), Fairfield and Farinholt's are excellent examples of the High Victorian style house, which is so sparsely represented in this section of Virginia.

Although dwellings comprise the large majority of old buildings in the county, among the most interesting survivals of earlier modes of living are non-domestic structures, e.g.: churches, schoolhouses, farm buildings, stores and industrial structures. There were few industries in this section before the coming factories made their appearance after the Reconstruction Era. Other than blacksmith shops and other plantation industries, and with the exception of a tanyard located near Dunsville in the early 19th century, and an 18th century bakehouse on the Piscataway Creek, the only known ante-bellum “industrial” enterprises in Essex were the water-powered sawmills and gristmills. Today only five gristmills still stand in the county: Essex; Hunters; Latane; Motley; and Smith-Wright Mills. Essex Mill is particularly noteworthy, as it is one of the last working mills still grinding flour and meal in the United States. Other mills that were operating in this century include: Baysors; Croxtons; Crittendens; Farinholt's; Jones (formerly Beverleys); Scotts; Spindles; STIFS; Ware; and Wrights (formerly Bohannans).

There are still a surprising number of barns which have come down to us from the late 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries, and most of these structures are still in use. They include the barns at: Bloomsbury (Spindles); Beaver's Hill (now in ruin); the Blagman Place, near Pedro; Elmwood (the only brick barn in Essex); Farmville, at Riverdale near Tappahannock; Kendale; Mt. Pleasant (two barns); Port Tobago (the largest in Essex, with a length of 90 ft.); Rosemount; Bover's Rest; Sunnyside, near Miller's Tavern (a saddlenotch log barn); the Thornton Taylor Place, near Hunter's Mill (made of logs, and now in ruin); and the barn at Spring Hill, near Dunsville which was constructed from the timbers of the building that preceded Ephesus Baptist Church. In addition there are plank (i.e., log hewn square) corncribs still standing at Elmwood, Mt. Pleasant and on the road to Daingerfield Landing.

Log structures are of especial interest, as there are relatively few left in tidewater Virginia. Before embarking on this survey, the writer had seen only the three corncribs at Elmwood; over the past few months a total of 20 individual structures made of logs or planks have been located in the county. These include: 7 corncribs; an outside kitchen; a meathouse; 3 barns; and 8 dwellings (one of which is quite substantial, with a center hall and two rooms). Usually a log house will be covered with weatherboards, and thus is effectively disguised. People who have lived in plank or log dwellings (of which there were numerous examples 40 or 50 years ago) insist that they cannot be matched by a frame house for their ability to retain heat in the winter and remain cool in the summer.

Another question frequently asked is “how old is this house?” More often than not there is no historical record or even suggestion as to the age of a building; it is then that one must rely solely on the architecture of the house to arrive at an approximate construction date. The floor plan, interior woodwork, and construction details all have a good deal to tell the architect, but for the inexperienced layman, perhaps the simplest (and usually the surest) method for estimating the age of a house is by its chimneys and brickwork. All substantial frame houses built before the Civil War (and many thereafter) have (or at least originally had) chimneys, and a brick or rock founda-
tion or basement. If of brick, the bond (pattern of laying the bricks) can tell one a good deal. English bond, which is achieved by alternating rows of stretchers (bricks facing lengthwise) and rows of headers (bricks with ends revealed) is used in the 17th century and for courses below the water table in the 18th century period. Flemish bond (each row composed of alternating headers and stretchers) is used throughout the 18th century. American bond (3 or more rows of stretchers to one of headers) was introduced around 1800. Up until 1820 there 3 rows of stretchers to one of headers; from about 1820 to about 1860 the ratio is 5 to 1. After the Civil War, brick bond usually degenerates into irregular American bond or common bond (all stretchers). It is interesting to note that some early 19th century brick houses are of Flemish bond (which was considered more handsome, but harder to lay) on the facade, and of American bond at the sides and rear.

Many houses are ascribed inaccurate dates by persons who have no knowledge of such fundamental principles as those described above. The tendency is to peg an 18th century date on a house if the court record indicates there was a person living on a particular plantation in, say, 1760. One must remember that the reference may well be to an entirely different house, or to an earlier house on whose foundations the present one was constructed. The vast majority of houses in the VHC files are of 19th century vintage. There are only about 35 18th century houses still standing in Essex, and considering the ravages of time, it is remarkable that so many remain. There are two houses which may date to the late 1600's: Bowlers and Greenway—but both of these buildings have been heavily altered. Bathurst was a beautiful example of a late 17th century house until it was pulled down around 1935. Woodville and Travelers Rest (the old Lumpkin place near Bestland) probably date from the early 1700s, and both of these houses possess notable and highly unusual features.

Although space here does not allow further description of particular buildings and sites brought to light, perhaps it would be appropriate to close with a short but tantalizing roster of some of the more unusual "finds" the VHLC Essex survey has recorded or focused upon: The site of Beaufort Town (established in 1769 at Laytons); the secret circular stairs (now gone) at the Brockenbrough house; the unique Federal stair rail at Strawberry Hill; the site of the home of John Peyton McGuire, famous Episcopal rector; the remarkable diamond-paneled doors at Belmont; the site of Mt. Prospect, home of James Webb, signer of the Leeds alone Resolutions; a eaveater pent at Vernon Farm; the site of what was probably a French Hugenot log house; a completely forgotten brick church dating from the early 1800s at Charleton Plains; the Howard Grove "Poor Farm", founded in the 1840s; the last mud chimney known to exist in Virginia (Just over the Essex line, near Tignor in King and Queen); the rare brick-and-plaster mantel at Berry Hill; the site of Fairmount, where Richard Cauthorn III wrote the first Arithmetic in the South; the site of Greenfield, seat of the Daingerfields (Col. Wm. Daingerfield was a Burgess who led the Revolutionary forces in this area); a stretch of the old King's High-

New Officers Installed

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District. This has been very helpful in selling our town to interested persons wishing to live in this area. It was agreed that the Society should have more of these bulletins reprinted and that we continue to sell them for 50c a copy, but that they should not be printed or used by others. Mr. Warner also stated that the price of printing the bulletin had gone up from $75 or $80 each issue to $125 an issue. The Society voted unanimously to continue printing the bulletin at this price.

Mr. Gordon Lewis asked that we get photostatic copies of the early land books, deeds, etc. which we do not have recorded in our Clerk's Office and moved that a committee be appointed by the president to work toward this objective; the motion was seconded by Mr. Carlton, and passed.

MRS. WILLIAM A. WRIGHT, Secretary

Officers of the Society

President ——————————— Mr. Sidney J. Hilton Sr.
Vice-President ——————— Mr. Arnold Motley
Treasurer —————————- Mrs. Percy R. Eubank
Secretary —————————— Mrs. William A. Wright

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