

Wilton House Museum

A Virginian Story

Interpretive Plan

2019

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction & Background.....	1
II.	Institutional Biographies.....	2
III.	Mission/Vision/Values/Impact Statement.....	5
IV.	Interpretive Commitments.....	6
V.	Interpretive Philosophy.....	7
VI.	Interpretive Themes.....	8
VII.	Core Content.....	11
	a. The Courtyard/Introduction.....	12
	b. The Lower Passage.....	14
	c. The Parlor.....	17
	d. The Dining Room.....	19
	e. The Master Chamber.....	21
	f. The Apartment.....	23
	g. The Passage/Conclusion.....	25
VIII.	Appendix 1: Biographies	
IX.	Appendix 2: Interpretive Planning Process	
X.	Appendix 3: Index of Resources	

Interpretation Plan
Introduction & Background
Keith D. MacKay, Executive Director
August 20th, 2019

Wilton House Museum's Interpretative Plan will guide the character of the museum's collection, identify interpretative periods for the historic interiors, expand gallery spaces, and inspire the museum's tours, programming, and public brand. The purpose of the Plan is to establish a scholarly narrative that appeals to as broad and diverse a public as possible while advancing our educational goals and service to the community. Implementing this Plan will be the primary focus of the organization for the next fifteen years, taking us to the 2034 centennial of Wilton's restoration.

A new Interpretative Plan was identified in Wilton House Museum's *Strategic Plan* (2017) as essential to Strategy Number One: to better understand and share this historic landmark. The Plan is the result of years of preparatory investigations and research and builds upon a foundation of physical and philosophical findings, including: a *Historic Paint Analysis* by Dr. Susan Buck (2011 & 2013), a *Think Tank* sponsored by the Chipstone Foundation (2014), a grant funded *Historic Structures Report* by Mark Wenger (2015), a survey of museum tour guests with *Visitors Count*, conducted by American Association of State and Local History (2016), a *Community Engagement Initiative* with Floricane, Inc., (2016), the process of securing *Museum Reaccreditation* by the American Alliance of Museums (2017), and an *Interpretive Plan Charrette* with museum and education peers (2018).

This Interpretative Plan articulates Wilton House Museum's educational philosophy and values as instruments in facilitating the transformation of the museum's collections, interiors, and programs essential to its survival. We are indebted to the shared commitment of the members of the Board of Managers of the NSCDA-VA and the Wilton House Museum Board, consultants and advisors, donors and volunteers, and employees, and particularly to Katie Watkins, Director of Education, who began composing this document on July 10, 2018, and has seen through its review by colleagues, peer advisors, and both boards. Its final approval on August 20th, 2019 expressed the shared commitment of the members of the Board of Managers of the NSCDA-VA and the Wilton House Museum board to prioritize Wilton House Museum through dedicated financial resources and fundraising efforts, appropriate employee goals and expectations, and the suitable selection of board and advisory leadership.

The best is yet to come!

KDM

Institutional Biographies

Wilton, an impressive example of Colonial American architecture and celebrated for its fully paneled interiors, was built ca. 1753 for William Randolph III and his wife Anne Carter Harrison Randolph, both members of politically active planter families. This centerpiece of their 2,000 acre tobacco and wheat plantation, originally known as World's End, was constructed by both free and enslaved masons and carpenters. Though the majority of these workers are anonymous, "Samson Darrill put up this Cornish in the year of our Lord 1753," was found in the southwest chamber. William Randolph III died in 1761, leaving the management of Wilton to his widow.

In the years leading up to and including the American Revolution, Anne Carter Harrison Randolph was a Virginian patriot; she was active in the 1769 "Association for the Non Importation of English Goods," and provided hospitality to several important historical figures. George Washington stayed at Wilton in March of 1775 after attending the Second Virginia Convention where he heard Patrick Henry's stirring speech in favor of American Independence. In 1781, the Marquis de Lafayette and two thousand troops made their headquarters at Wilton before advancing to victory at Yorktown. The Randolphs' son, Peyton Randolph, served in the Continental Army as an aide-de-camp to Lafayette.

When Peyton Randolph's son, William Randolph IV inherited management of the property he, together with his wife Anne Andrews Randolph, made a number of changes to the structure. These included the building of an addition and possibly the commissioning of elaborately plastered ceilings. However, according to one visitor, by the time William Randolph IV's only son Robert Randolph inherited Wilton, the accumulation of debt had left the house ". . . a forlorn ruin." Ultimately, these debts would force Robert's daughter, Catherine Randolph Mayo, to sell the property in 1859, thus ending five generations of Randolph family residence at Wilton.

After a century of Randolphs, Wilton entered a second phase of its history. The era from the Civil War to the Great Depression was marked by a succession of five owners who alternately shaped Wilton's development with aspirations to gentility, optimistic farming enterprises, messy legal battles, and bankruptcies. From its strategically significant location along the James River, Wilton experienced the turmoil of the Civil War during William Carter Knight's residency when both armies crossed its boundaries in the course of the long conflict. The country's postbellum period brought additional challenges. The country's evolution from an agrarian to an industrial economy compounded the crippling effects of war and forced Knight to sell the property in 1869. These same conditions shaped the demographics of Wilton's subsequent three owners, three northern industrialists involved in transportation and oil: Patrick Tiernan (1869 - 1873), George Cornwall (1873 - 1908), and George Finnigan (1908 - 1925). These northern scions of America's Gilded Age were drawn, ironically, to Wilton's agricultural prospects and the romantic allure of its associations with the antebellum South. They, too, left an imprint on Wilton; Cornwall was likely responsible for extending the windows and adding porches to the structure, while Finnigan's focused on improving the property and enhancing the agricultural output. Upon Finnigan's death, Richmond businessman Warner Moore (1925-1932) purchased Wilton. However, the economic

crash of 1929 impacted Moore's extensive business interests in flour milling, electricity, and transportation. With its mortgage unpaid, Wilton passed to The Bank of Commerce and Trust.

By 1932, Wilton was in foreclosure and threatened with demolition. Recognizing its architectural significance, The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Virginia (NSCDA-VA) purchased the house and, in 1934, in the face of encroaching industrial development, had it carefully moved and restored at its current location to serve as the Virginia Society headquarters. This effort was led by President of the NSCDA-VA, historic preservationist Elise Calvin Bragg Valentine (Mrs. Granville G. Valentine). The funds to purchase the house, to acquire new property, and to remove, relocate and restore it, were all raised from among the members of the Virginia Society. Essential professional assistance was provided by the experienced builder Herbert Claiborne, landscape designer Arthur Shurcliff, and historic interiors expert Susan Higginson Nash.

The Wilton House Museum Collection consists of objects, documents, and artifacts, including but not limited to archaeological and architectural materials, period and reproduction furnishings, books, photographs, prints, and archival materials. These are used together with the Interactive Collection to interpret the eighteenth and early nineteenth century planter lifestyle of Virginia, particularly that of the Randolph family, their peers, and the enslaved people who lived and worked at Wilton.

Dedicated to educating the American public, especially our youth, about our nation's early history, the NSCDA-VA opened the house to the public as an historic house museum in 1953. An extensive collection of eighteenth and early nineteenth century fine and decorative art objects was acquired to furnish the rooms according to the evidence of William Randolph IV's 1815 estate inventory. Since Wilton's opening, the NSCDA-VA has been dedicated providing the best possible service to the public, continually assessing the needs and interests of its audiences, developments in historical scholarship, new technologies, and best practices. Changes to Wilton House Museum's interiors, tours, and programming over the course of the ensuing decades has reflected this continued self-assessment and vigilant stewardship on behalf of this important historic structure.

The Wilton House Museum Board oversees the preservation, conservation, interpretation and security of the property on behalf of The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Boards and staff recognize that Wilton was carefully moved, restored, and reconstructed at the current site in 1934 under the direction of Mrs. Granville G. Valentine, President of the NSCDA-VA, and Mr. Herbert Augustine Claiborne, II of Claiborne and Taylor, Inc., a local construction firm, and remain true to their legacy. No alterations, renovations, or repairs that may threaten, permanently alter, or damage the historic fabric of Wilton will be permitted unless definitive new research justifies such a change. This Interpretative Plan reflects the institutional commitment of the NSCDA-VA to a mission and vision based on best practices and the holistic and inclusive interpretation of the story that is Virginia.

The NSCDA-VA: a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt non-profit charitable organization since 1971

To be tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the internal revenue code an organization must be organized and operated exclusively for exempt purposes set forth in section 501(c)(3), and none of its earnings may inure to any private shareholder or individual. In addition, it may not be an action organization, i.e., it may not attempt to influence legislation as a substantial part of its activities and it may not participate in any campaign activity for or against political candidates. This status allows us to receive tax-deductible contributions. Under the 501(c)(3), we are a 509(a)2 Public Charity. This designation restricts our operating budget income. Investment income can only account for one-third of our operating budget.

Wilton House Museum: AAM Accredited since 1985

The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) Accreditation is the museum field's primary vehicle for quality assurance, self-regulation, and public accountability, and rewards national recognition to museums committed to excellence in: governance, collection stewardship, public programs, financial stability, professional conduct, and institutional improvement. Developed and sustained by museum professionals for 35 years, AAM's Museum Accreditation program strengthens the profession by promoting practices that enable leaders to make informed decisions, allocate resources wisely, and provide the best possible service to the public.

Wilton House Museum Board

Wilton House Museum Board serves as the governing body for Wilton House Museum, subject to the policies of The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Its purpose is to advance the maintenance and management of Wilton House Museum, its collections, and its grounds, according both to the highest standards of stewardship and to the mission and policies determined by the NSCDA-VA Board of Managers.

Mission/Vision/Impact/Values Statements

Mission Statement

To increase public understanding of life in Virginia since the 18th century, the paradox of hardship amid elegance, and how the past continues to shape life in America today.

Vision Statement

To be a leader among house museums, preserving and examining the evidence of its past to advance the goals of the present in meaningful and relevant ways.

Impact Statement

Made curious about how historical narratives are formed, the visitor will seek out the stories behind other historic sites to develop a richer and more complex understanding of history.

Wilton's Values

- We are committed to the preservation of Wilton House Museum according to the highest standards of professional and ethical museum practices and we are dedicated to imparting the most current historical scholarship.
- We are dedicated to educating the public about the relevance of history to today.
- We value the study and teaching of history.
- We use the house and its collections to explore relevant cultural issues.
- We strive to be a recognized educational and cultural resource for the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia and beyond.
- We are committed to creating educational experiences that are inclusive of diverse audiences and perspectives.
- We demonstrate a commitment to operational and environmental sustainability.
- We emphasize service and value the importance of a positive visitor experience.
- We pursue compatible collaborations and partnerships.

Interpretive Commitments

Honest

In seeking to tell the complete story of Wilton - the historic site, its inhabitants, and the events that shaped their lives – the interpretation will include potentially troubling or controversial actions and events. In embracing these conditions, our goal is to engage openly and honestly with the paradoxes of the past so as to provide a more meaningful and relevant link between our audiences and Wilton's history.

Scholarly

Our interpretation will be founded on scholarly research and documented evidence. Where the historical record is unclear, a thoughtful analysis of comparative documents and sites will be consulted for adaptation as appropriate.

Story Based

In order to engage the public more fully, our interpretation will be founded on storytelling. Our goal is to bring historic persons and events to life in a manner that is compelling and inclusive. Grounded in scholarly research, these narratives will be presented through myriad sources, including guided tours, use of technology, print and online publications, and label copy. It will also inform the furnishings of the historic interiors. A visitor will be able to grasp a room's story and themes visually.

Adaptable

Guiding principles of honesty and scholarship require adaptability to new findings. Occasional changes in the collection, historic interiors, tours, and programs are to be expected. Adaptability will likewise allow for adjustments in interpretation to meet the interests of diverse audiences.

Accessible

Wilton's interpretation will be accessible to a broad and diverse audience. It will include clearly defined themes, a variety of formats, and give consideration to the range in cognitive and physical abilities of its visitors. Thematic content will be communicated in ways that are engaging and easily comprehended.

Diverse

Wilton's interpretation of the past will acknowledge the fluid and diverse contexts of historic perception. Recognizing that buildings, objects, historic figures, and events are perceived and understood differently, it will aim to embrace and articulate diverse perspectives.

Immersive

A fully immersive interpretive experience will be created through the appropriate integration of suitable elements, including both sensory conditions - light, sound, scent, and touch - and technology.

Invested & Reviewed

The organization will invest time and resources to the continued refinement of its interpretation. It will invest in the continued education of employees. It will also support scholarly research leading to the presentation and publication of relevant findings. We will reinvigorate our tour guide program with active training and regular review of individual performance and visitor experience. Our interpretive themes will be systematically evaluated with visitors, peers, and stakeholders.

Integrated Exhibitions

The exhibition program will further advance our mission, creating connectivity between the past and the present. Our goal is to simultaneously engage and educate, by involving audiences in our research and sharing with them our findings. Exhibitions will range from semi-permanent installations, to a dedicated changing gallery, to the integration of exhibition objects throughout the historic house. Exhibitions will speak to themes relevant to the overall interpretation of the house.

Self-Aware

Wilton's interpretation will be self-aware; it will acknowledge the biases of a curatorial construct. It will acknowledge the subjective "gaze," including that of the organization's history. It will employ first person narratives, statistical findings, and images of previous iterations of Wilton's interiors.

Summation: Wilton's interpretation will value stories that are honest, scholarly, adaptable, and accessible while invoking diverse and sometimes challenging perspectives. It will be holistic in its approach and cohesive in its implementation, embracing Wilton's unique architectural environment and social history to meaningfully address the paradoxes of life in Virginia since the 18th century and the relevancy of the past in shaping the present.

Interpretive Philosophy

"Heritage interpretation is an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information."

Freeman Tilden

Wilton is our most significant artifact and tool for engaging the public with the past and finding relevance for today. As a historic structure in continuous use, Wilton's significance and purpose

changed dramatically with each era of its history. Guests will explore the shifting meaning of Wilton over three centuries through an immersive tour experience of period rooms and galleries. Entering the house, one is introduced to a cast of characters whose personal fortunes, or the lack thereof, altered the meaning, and sometimes the physical appearance, of the house.

With limited surviving documentation, the historic interiors will be scholarly constructs using comparative documentary examples, and available anecdotal histories. The collection supports the overall interpretive themes with the goal of connecting audiences to compelling narratives.

Interpretive Themes

Within the first half of the 18th century, the Randolph family rose to powerful prominence and three generations later disintegrated into debt and nostalgia. Wilton and its inhabitants participated in the formation of a nation, contributed to its near self-destruction in Civil War, weathered the troubled times of the Reconstruction and Jim Crow era, and was reborn in the blooming of the Colonial Revival when an imagined 18th century Virginia defined good taste. The guided house tour and accompanying exhibitions will explore these themes, tying the persistence of the structure with key figures and periods in Virginia's history.

These Interpretive Themes may be expressed through a standard guided house tour, specialty tours exploring individual themes or subthemes, exhibitions, and special events or programs.

The Rise and Fall of the Landed Gentry

The Randolph family, along with their associated household, serve as representatives of a type: the landed Virginia gentry and the extended plantation community. The Randolphs reflect the changing fortunes of a people whose values and social mores governed a premier colony within an empire, forged a new nation, and then contributed to its near destruction. With the arrival of William Randolph c. 1670, the Randolphs began amassing land, human property, and governmental appointments. The Randolphs, particularly the branch residing at Wilton, maintained their social and political status through large-scale enslavement and agricultural landholdings. Each subsequent generation of the family died deeply in debt while leaving significant land and property to its heirs. By the eve of the American Revolution, six of William I's grandsons owed a total of nearly £60,000 to British merchants. Shortly after the construction of Wilton at World's End, William III's early death left his widow and heirs in debt to four different merchants for a total of £8,517.6.8. This trend continued through subsequent generations until a 19th century visitor commented that, "the general aspect of the house is that of a forlorn ruin."

Sub Themes

- The Randolphs as Representatives
- Revolution Comes to Wilton
- Tobacco Culture & the Plantation Economy
- Wilton's Enslaved Community

Female Stewardship & Preservation

The story of Wilton is frequently one of women. Anne Harrison Randolph retained life rights to Wilton after the early death of her husband, William Randolph III, and outlived its first generation of heirs, marking Wilton as an example of a matriarchal plantation. Anne navigated the complexities of plantation management and motherhood simultaneously as Virginia marched inexorably towards revolution. Sympathetic to the patriot cause, Anne publicly participated in the 1769 Virginia Association boycotting English goods and played host to both colonial militia and continental line soldiers throughout the Revolutionary War.

Following the death of Anne's grandson, William Randolph IV, his widow, Anne Andrews Randolph, filled the role of Wilton's female steward. She and her children lived alternately at Wilton proper and their associated Fighting Creek plantation while she raised the next heir, Robert Randolph. After Robert's death, Wilton became the property of another woman, his daughter Kate Isham Randolph. The last of the Randolph's to inherit the estate, Robert's daughter filed to auction Wilton Plantation in 1859.

Though the sale marked the end of a century of family ownership, it did not mark the end of female stewardship. In 1932, following its reversion to the Bank of Commerce and Trusts, Wilton was purchased by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Virginia, meticulously dismantled and reassembled in the Near West End of Richmond. This monumental effort saw Wilton's interiors restored to the height of their mid-18th century extravagance, reflecting the position of a young gentry family yet to enter its period of debt and decline.

Sub Themes

- Female Plantation Stewardship
- Women and the American Revolution
- Women in Historic Preservation
- Women Enslaved at Wilton

Heritage & Nostalgia

Wilton's history carries with it dual narratives of heritage and nostalgia. This is reflected both in the Randolph lineage that lost its place of political and financial prominence and in later waves of Colonial Revival reverence for Revolutionary figures, carrying with it a sense of loss of a perceived gentility and social position. The Randolph family experienced a diaspora, their descendants relocating to any part of the country that enabled them to live comfortably. Tokens of grandeur remained in the family as the Randolph portraits passed from parent to child, and in 1846, a lineal descendent would bear the name Wilton Randolph as a reminder of the plantation they once owned. In 1932, Mrs. Calvin Bragg Valentine announced at a meeting of the NSCDA-VA that the Society desired to, "care for a colonial house replete with historical lore, that would embody in itself the ideals for which the Society exists, and would stand as a living memorial to its purpose to preserve the finest and best that remains of our colonial period." Mrs. Valentine emphasized the architectural significance of the home with its remarkable original paneling and intact Georgian design. The house would now meet its new purpose as the headquarters of a society determined to honor the generation that had constructed it; the carefully conceived message intended in Wilton's architectural design remained potent 200 years later.

Sub Themes

- The Colonial Revival
- Women in Historic Preservation
- The Lost Cause
- Jim Crow
- American Myth-Making & Memorialization

The Significance of Structure

While centuries of occupation and ownership have shifted the use and meaning of Wilton, the physical structure itself exists as a constant. Built with clay dug from World's End and pine felled in nearby forests, the structure of Wilton serves as the manifestation of Virginia's natural bounty and a tangible reflection of the skilled craftsmen- both free and enslaved- who took no part in that prosperity. Its design embodied the themes of luxury and restraint valued in colonial gentry society served to signify the family's station. Wilton's core meaning and use has shifted over 250 years of occupation, ranging from a wilting remainder of a family's fortune to a chance at newfound prominence and prestige, to that which instead ended in a struggle to keep family and farm together. Revived as a symbol of

Reconstruction, it was finally reimagined as the emblem of a bygone era, a physical edifice that embodied the spirit of the Colonial Revival. Today, Wilton House Museum serves as a place where time, architectural design, and heritage intersect.

Sub Themes

Virginian Architecture & Craftsmanship

Women in Historic Preservation

The Symbolism of Structure

Georgian Architecture & Design

Core Content

Site Interpretation

The following is a manifestation of the identified interpretive themes in the form of a guided house tour. These themes may be expressed through a standard house tour, specialized tours focusing one or more themes or subthemes, permanent or temporary exhibitions, and special events. This portion of the Interpretive Plan is intended to be flexible and represents the standard guided tour of Wilton House Museum. This document is a framework that can and should be modified or changed with newly discovered scholarship and changing interpretive techniques.

Primary source documentation for the Randolph family at Wilton fails to provide us with any single prominent figure, year or time period that communicates a compelling and relevant narrative. Our story, therefore, is in the progression of time experienced by the historic structure and how larger historical trends or events expressed themselves in the domestic sphere.

This new interpretive vision for Wilton is expressed through a chronological tour, taking us from 1761 to 1833. The time ranges for each interpretive space were selected to emphasize transitional or impactful moments in both Wilton and Virginia's history. The format identifies the Main Theme or interpretive goals of the space and then breaks down those goals into three Key Themes & Narratives expressed in the space. These Themes are paired with Key Figures discussed and Objects Illustrating Narrative. This is not a summary of all Objects within a space, but those that can be used to directly represent a facet of the Theme or Narrative expressed in that stage of the guided tour experience.

The interpretive spaces are followed by an Appendix containing biographical studies of each key steward and figure of Wilton addressed in this plan. These biographies will serve as the compiled standard of interpreting Wilton's residents and may be updated as new information and research come to light.

The implementation of this plan will require a thoughtful and impactful Furnishings Plan that will confidently and immediately express the time period and key interpretive themes featured in the space. The visitor to Wilton House Museum will be able to visually identify the relative time period and overall narrative of a space.

The Courtyard/Introduction

Main Theme: The courtyard is to serve as the introductory area to guided tours. This portion will consist of a brief introduction to the themes of the house tour: The Rise and Fall of the Landed Gentry, Female Stewardship & Preservation, Heritage & Nostalgia, and The Significance of Structure. Here we will establish the symbolism of Wilton and how Georgian architecture embodied the values of the builder's society. The introduction will outline expectations for the tour to include length of time and tour etiquette.

<i>Key Themes & Narratives</i>	<i>Key Figures</i>	<i>Objects Illustrating Narrative</i>
The Persistence of Structure: Wilton as a structure has survived a revolution, a civil war, the ownership of six families and a complete relocation. Built for the prominent Randolph family, it passed through the hands of both local and northern investors until it caught the eye of preservationists nearly 200 years after its construction. While its role and meaning has changed throughout the centuries, each period of ownership has had the edifice as a constant and prioritized the structure's integrity.	The Randolph Family Northern Investors The NSCDA-VA	

<p>Georgian Architecture: This style of architecture originated in England and was inspired by Renaissance themes of simplicity and symmetry. The Georgian style became very popular with wealthy Virginia plantation owners as a highly visible statement of how they wished to be seen by the public- wealthy, aristocratic, and influenced by ideals of classical learning. This message was received by the Randolphs' peers; it was also perceived by the NSCDA-VA 200 years later.</p>	<p>Virginia Gentry</p> <p>NSCDA-VA</p>	<p>The edifice:</p> <p>Flemish bond Rubbish Brick Dentil Cornice Pilasters Entablature Pediment</p>
<p>Tour Content: Today we are going to follow the rise and fall of a wealthy gentry family: The Randolphs of Wilton. We will begin with the construction of Wilton and end with the last family heir nearly a century later. Here we will also outline tour expectations to include length of time and tour etiquette for in the interior of the home.</p>		

Historical Context: The Georgian style of architecture originated in England, with the first examples being built in the mid-1600s. Elaborate H or E shaped mansion country homes began to be replaced by rectangular, symmetrical designs that in turn became adopted by smaller, middle class homes. This style of architecture was inspired by Renaissance themes of simplicity and symmetry and made its way to England through drawings, pattern books and foreign architects. This style peaked early in the 18th century and fell out of fashion in favor of loftier designs influenced by Greco-Roman architecture as the century progressed. The 18th century saw the development and distribution of the first true architectural pattern books, and the exchange of this literature from England to the colonies allowed planters to model their homes after prominent English examples: indeed, aspects of Wilton's design can be traced directly to patterns from *Palladio Londinensis*, published in England in 1734. Very quickly a standard plantation format began to emerge: one large prominent brick building and a series of smaller, symmetrical dependencies that flanked the 'great house.' This imagery emphasized the symbolism of rank in society, asserting a sense of hierarchical order from the arrangement and quality of construction of the structures on this small rural village. In sum, the design of the planter's home and estate reflected how he

wanted to be perceived by his peers and by society: wealthy, aristocratic, and influenced by ideals of classical learning.

This architectural message was easily perceived by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The NSCDA-VA was founded in 1892 with membership consisting of women who are of lineal descent from an ancestor who rendered significant service to his or her country during the Colonial period before July 5, 1776. In December of 1932, Mrs. Elise Calvin Bragg Valentine, President of the NSCDA-VA, announced the Society's desire, "to care for a colonial house replete with historical lore, that would embody in itself the ideals for which the Society exists, and would stand as a living memorial to its purpose to preserve the finest and best that remains of our colonial period." Without any surviving papers, letters, or journals of the family, the architecture constructed for William Randolph III conveyed its intended message across time.

Virginia S.O.L.s: N/A

The Lower Passage (c. 1750-1775)

Main Theme: The Lower Passage serves as the introductory point to the Randolph family, the concept of the landed gentry, the building of Wilton and the dynamics of plantation life. In inclement weather, this is where the tour and general orientation will begin. In this space we will establish the key foundational figures of Wilton, the power and influence of the Randolph family, and how that status is translated through architecture and design.

Key Themes & Narratives	Key Figures	Objects Illustrating Narrative
<p>The Landed Gentry: The rise of the Randolphs in Colonial Virginia was marked by the acquisition of land, slaves, and political influence. This class built its fortune on large scale tobacco farming, which required all three. WRI, a second son, immigrated to Virginia to build his fortune and estate. Like many planters, his death left a combination of debt and newfound influence in an emerging society. The Lower Passage of Wilton, with its family portrait gallery and expensive interior paneling, emphasizes the overall</p>	<p>The First Families</p> <p>William Randolph I</p>	<p>Fry-Jefferson Map</p> <p>Tobacco Notes</p>

importance of the Randolphs both to Virginian society and to William Randolph III.		
<p>The Youngest Son Makes a Bid for Position In 1742, the youngest son of William Randolph II inherited his father's 7,000 acre Fighting Creek estate. William Randolph III soon added Mill Quarter, Buffalo, and Bush River to his holdings. The rapid land purchases of WRIII culminated in the construction of Wilton. WRIII brought to Wilton his young family and approximately 100 enslaved African and African-American men, women, and children. The architecture of this new home and layout of its supporting features imparted a sense of hierarchical order and control and serves as a powerful symbol of societal rank. WRIII served as a representative for the House of Burgesses, a justice on the Henrico County Court, a member of the vestry of Henrico Parish, a Colonel in the Henrico Militia and a trustee for Richmond infrastructure development. These appointments highlighted the legal power and influence that came hand in hand with land ownership.</p>	<p>William Randolph III</p> <p>Wilton's Enslaved Community</p>	<p>Wollaston Portraits</p> <p>Interior Paneling</p> <p>Fry-Jefferson Map</p>

<p>The Matriarch: A 19 year old Anne Carter Harrison married into the powerful Randolph family, bringing with her an inheritance in the form of money and a young enslaved woman, Dorcas. Shortly after the completion of Wilton WR III dies, establishing Anne as the Widow of Wilton. Anne retained life rights and never remarried, serving as steward of the mansion and the family's far flung properties. She navigated the complexities of plantation management, motherhood, and a Revolution while trying to provide for and preserve the legacy of her family.</p>	<p>Anne Randolph</p> <p>Dorcas</p> <p>The Randolph Children</p>	<p>Wollaston Portraits</p>
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Historical Context: In a reflection of English social constructs, the Virginian gentry consisted of wealthy families of great land holdings and political influence that did not necessarily hold titles of nobility. While in England this system included rental tenant income, in the new colony this lifestyle became almost synonymous with large-scale ownership of enslaved Africans trafficked to America in the 17th and 18th centuries and their descendants. The aftermath of Bacon's rebellion saw a consolidation of wealth, power and slave ownership as society began to shift from the system of indentured servitude and towards the massive cultivation of tobacco. Many of the founders of these "First Families," represented a blend of Planter, Merchant and Attorney, gaining significant power and influence in almost all manners related to politics and commerce. The great homes of the gentry were designed to convey their social status and were usually situated near waterways. Whenever possible, they would be situated on hilltops to command a greater view of their holdings and greater landscape. This lifestyle was made possible and perpetuated by systems of credit, which lead to the majority of gentry families leaving significant debts to their inheritors. While these debts did not necessarily hinder the day-to-day lives of these families, a single lost crop or larger economic downturn could seriously threaten their long-term legacies. Many of these families became staunch leaders in the American Revolution, organizing boycotts, and providing the political leadership that established the call for independence and finally in organizing armed rebellion.

Virginia S.O.L.s: VS.1, VS.3, VS.4, VS.5.a

The Parlor (c. 1775-1783)

Main Theme: The Parlor introduces the period of uncertainty and promise that accompanied the American Revolution. In this space we will explore the roles different members of the Wilton household played during the Revolutionary period and the paradoxes of fighting for liberty in the slave holding south.

<i>Key Themes & Narratives</i>	<i>Key Figures</i>	<i>Illustrative Objects</i>
<p>A New Heir: When William Randolph III died in 1761, his son Peyton had recently come of age. Peyton had inherited five of his father's properties and resided at Wilton with his new wife, Lucy Harrison, and his mother Anne, who had retained life rights to Wilton. While the family was now being confronted by debts and beginning to experience their financial decline, the Parlor of the 1780's was still the height of fashion. By the eve of the American Revolution the Wilton Randolphs had openly declared themselves in favor of protest and rebellion, leading to inner-family conflict- notably culminating in a physical altercation at the dinner table.</p>	<p>Peyton Randolph</p> <p>Lucy Harrison Randolph</p> <p>Lewis Burwell</p>	<p>Reproduction 1769 Virginia Gazette</p> <p>Pilasters</p> <p>Dentil Cornice</p> <p>Interior Paneling</p>
<p>Revolution Comes to Wilton: The Second Virginia Convention brought George Washington to Richmond and by extension, to Wilton. Shortly after, Peyton was commissioned as a major in the Continental Army while Anne and Lucy remain at Wilton. Peyton took on a new role as aide de camp to the Marquis de Lafayette, who made Wilton his headquarters in May of 1781.</p>	<p>Anne Randolph</p> <p>George Washington</p> <p>The Marquis de Lafayette</p>	<p>Military Accoutrements</p> <p>French Topographical Maps</p>

<p>Liberty for Some: Continental troops from all walks of life encamped at Wilton in the presence of over 100 enslaved African-Americans. Lafayette's forces held a slave auction while encamped in a dramatic juxtaposition of a war in the name of liberty and the perpetuation of injustice. It was shortly after this occupation that Peyton died, manumitting Warwick in his will- the only individual to be freed by the Wilton Randolphs. The other 105 people living in bondage at Wilton would be willed to Peyton's heir and perpetuate the inter-generational chain that provided the Randolphs' income.</p>	<p>Warwick</p> <p>Wilton's Enslaved Community</p>	
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Historical Context: The rapid approach of the American Revolution was welcomed or rejected by varying degrees in different branches of the Randolph family, and the Virginia gentry as a whole. The Wilton Randolphs emphatically sided with rebellion. The June 27th, 1769 issue of the Virginia Gazette identified Anne Harrison Randolph, William III's widow, as a participating member of the Virginia Association, an organization formed to boycott the importation of English goods. Richmond found itself the center of revolutionary activity with the First and Second Virginia Conventions in 1774 and 1775, respectively, to elect representatives to the Continental Congresses. George Washington followed his participation in the 1775 Convention with a visit to Wilton, a home friendly to his cause. When war came Virginia's Continental Troops were sent outside of the state to serve, leaving local militia to fill in the void in the colony's defenses. Henrico and Chesterfield militia encamped at Wilton throughout the American Revolution. 1781 marked the year that the Marquis de Lafayette first arrived in Virginia, sent in pursuit of Benedict Arnold. In May of 1781 Wilton became the headquarters of Lafayette and approximately 2,000 troops. While encamped, Lafayette was visited by the Baron von Steuben, General Muhlenberg and then-governor Thomas Jefferson as they coordinated the raising and arming of local forces. Several months of skirmishing and maneuvering lead Lafayette's men from Wilton to Yorktown, where the final major battle of the American Revolution would take place.

Virginia S.O.L.s: VS.1, VS.3, VS.5, VUS.1, VUS.4,

The Dining Room (c. 1800-1815)

Main Theme: The Dining Room introduces Wilton's first real period of decline in the midst of the birth of a new nation. In this space we will discuss the era of William Randolph IV's stewardship as he shouldered the debts of his forefathers and the responsibilities expected of his station in a transitional period for the estate and the country as a whole.

<i>Key Themes & Narratives</i>	<i>Key Figures</i>	<i>Objects Illustrating Narrative</i>
The Debts of His Forefathers: The debts of WR III were court-ordered to be paid in 1797, saddling his grandson with the payments. The builder's grandson, William Randolph IV, was now ultimately responsible for paying the debt accumulated in the construction of Wilton. In WR III's attempt to construct a legacy for his family in the form of architectural accomplishment, he financially ruined his descendants.	William Randolph III William Randolph IV	Family Silver Objects being inventoried
Becoming Americans: WR IV came of age during the birth of the American Constitution, establishing personal liberties for men of his station but enshrining the institution of slavery. WR IV would be confronted almost immediately by this paradox when he served as a justice for Henrico County in judgement of participants in Gabriel's Rebellion. By 1812, WR IV was the largest slaveholder in Henrico County- in a state where 40% of the population was held in slavery.	William Randolph IV Gabriel Virginia's Enslaved Population	Washington family portrait Neoclassical sideboard

<p>A New Matriarch: The death of WRIV in 1815 lead to the final division of the properties of WRIII. Robert Randolph, then 5 years old, would inherit Wilton as his sole estate. Anne Andrews Randolph was named as sole executor of the Fighting Creek and Wilton estates, with a full inventory being one of the first orders of business. Anne was now a significant land owner and one of the largest slaveholders in Henrico. Her husband's early death and her new station echo Anne Harrison Randolph, the first matriarch of Wilton, continuing the family's pattern of death and inheritance.</p>	<p>Anne Andrews Randolph</p> <p>Robert Randolph</p>	<p>Key Basket</p> <p>Children's toys</p>
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Historical Context: The Federalist Era ran from approximately 1788 – 1800, the range of time that William Randolph IV was coming of age and witnessing the shaping of a nation. The new Constitution took effect in 1789 and was quickly followed by the Bill of Rights, the establishment of a national currency, and the rise of political parties. The process of ratification included bitter debate on what role slavery would play in this new nation, with southern representatives successfully retaining not only their right to own humans as property, but to use their slave ownership to increase their state's representation with the Three-Fifths Compromise. Further compromise compelled states where slavery had been outlawed to participate in the trade with the Fugitive Slave Clause, further cementing race-based slavery as an American institution. This paradox of a government supposedly dedicated to liberty but protecting enslavement came to a head in 1800 Virginia with Gabriel's Rebellion. Stopped before it could begin, Gabriel's slave rebellion was to include several hundred slaves with the goal of capturing Virginia Governor James Monroe and seizing the capital city of Richmond. Gabriel and twenty-five of his co-conspirators were executed following the planned uprising, but widespread fear of future rebellions lead to a tightening of restrictions on the movement and activities of both free and enslaved African Americans and set the tone for a nation already experiencing the fissures that would lead to Civil War.

Virginia S.O.L.s: VS.1, VS.6, VS.7, USI.7,

The Chamber (c. 1815-1828)

Main Theme: The Chamber brings us to the second major period of female stewardship of Wilton and its dependent properties. In this space we will discuss Anne Andrews Randolph's property management in a period of political and economic unrest throughout the United States of America.

<i>Key Themes & Narratives</i>	<i>Key Figures</i>	<i>Objects Illustrating Narrative</i>
The Matriarchal Plantation: Anne Andrews Randolph managed Wilton, Mill Quarter, and Fighting Creek plantations for the thirteen years of her widowhood, shifting her residence between Wilton and Fighting Creek seasonally. Anne oversaw a period of financial growth for Wilton with an emphasis on improving soil quality and diversifying crops- in 1818, Wilton's wheat revenue increased six-fold over a single year. During an overall national economic depression, Wilton remained relatively stable due to Anne's management.	Anne Andrews Randolph	Bills of sale Travelling bags
A Network of Relations: With her husband's death, Anne became one of the largest slaveholders in the region- a population whose labor she and her family were entirely reliant on for income. She depended upon a network of property managers, overseers, and creditors to maintain the Randolph properties while she raised their respective heirs. During this period she remained close with her family; her brother, John, came to live with her at Wilton and in the year of 1819 she travelled with her children to visit family in Philadelphia and New Orleans.	Anne Andrews Randolph Robert Randolph Catherine Randolph Elizabeth Randolph	Overseers correspondence/bills Clothing purchases from travelling Barrels of sugar/molasses

The Apartment (c. 1830-1839)

Main Theme: The Apartment represents Wilton in its final period of Randolph ownership and significant structural decline. In this space we will conclude the narrative of the decline of a once-prominent gentry family.

Key Themes & Narratives	Key Figures	Objects Illustrating Narrative
<p>A Fine Specimen of Virginian Character: From his earliest days, Robert Randolph was being raised to be a landed Virginia gentleman. Unlike his grandfather Peyton, who had inherited five plantations, Robert inherited only Wilton. After receiving a private formal education, Robert attended UVA for a year before coming into his inheritance. Finances were likely dire for Robert as he assumed responsibility, despite the competent management by Anne Andrews Randolph.</p>	<p>Robert Randolph</p> <p>The Randolph Family</p>	<p>Family Portraits</p> <p>Riding Crop</p> <p>Mint Julip Cups</p> <p>Maps</p>
<p>But Such Ruin: In 1833, author Catharine Sedgwick noted the poor physical condition of Wilton and its residents- “broken down fences, a falling piazza, defaced paint... little slave urchins whose limbs were scarcely covered with rags.” Robert told his visitors that he had in his possession “ample fortune” and “about one hundred and fifty slaves.” In reality, Robert’s funds were dwindling, and the estate reported only 27 tithable slaves that year. It was with Wilton in this state that Robert married Mary Louisa Cunningham in 1835 and the following year had their only child and heir, Catherine “Kate” Isham Randolph.</p>	<p>Catharine Sedgwick</p> <p>Robert Randolph</p> <p>Catherine “Kate” Isham Randolph</p>	<p>Bills</p> <p>Furnishings in Poor Condition</p> <p>Child’s toys</p> <p>Ropes on Bannisters</p>

The Passage/Conclusion

Main Theme: A return to the Lower Passage will conclude the tour of Wilton House Museum and summarize the themes and period of Randolph ownership.

<i>Key Themes & Narratives</i>	<i>Key Figures</i>	<i>Objects Illustrating Narrative</i>
The Passage of Time: Wilton passed through the hands of five more families between 1859 and 1932. During the Civil War the estate experienced four years of intermittent occupation and close calls, narrowly avoiding the fate of many other nearby homes. It became an investment property for northern financiers in the Reconstruction period and then a series of ultimately unsuccessful farms before passing into the hands of the Richmond Bank of Deeds & Trusts in 1932. It was then that the property came to the attention of the Virginia Society.	Wilton's Owners The NSCDA-VA	c. 1920s photos of Wilton's interior c. 1920s photos of Wilton's altered exterior
A Virginian Story: The story of Wilton in many ways reflects the story of Virginia and how larger historical events and trends influenced the domestic sphere. Wilton and its inhabitants participated in the formation of a nation and its near self-destruction in civil war and survived both war and abandonment. Its relocation to Richmond in the Great Depression was both a marvel of technique and a powerful symbol of Colonial Revival priorities and tastes.		

<p>The Winning of Wilton: Today, the Virginia Society owns and operates Wilton House Museum as a historic house museum. Here we will thank our visitors for attending our tour, answer any final questions, and indicate the presence of any other interpretive content at WHM, to include exhibitions, specialty tours, or special events.</p>		
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Historical Context: After the Randolphs, Wilton was owned by five different families between 1859 and 1932: William C. Knight, Patrick H. Tiernan, George Cornwall, George P. Finnigan, and Warner Moore. Richmond became the Capital of the Confederacy in 1861, and Wilton was a logical choice for occupation with its boat landing and open fields. After four years of occupation by both Confederate and Union forces, Wilton trades hands once again, becoming the property of investors from Oilville, Pennsylvania. The transfer occurred shortly after Virginia ratified a new state constitution that recognized the 14th and 15th Amendments; a condition of its readmission into the Union. At the same time, women’s organizations were increasingly becoming involved in the preservation of historic sites and the funding of monuments throughout the late 19th and early 20th century. The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Virginia reflected this national trend. Fearing for the structural integrity of Wilton, Mrs. E. Calvin Bragg Valentine, President of the Virginia Society, proposed that the NSCDA-VA purchase, dismantle, and relocate Wilton for use as its headquarters. Fundraising began in 1932, and landscaping was completed by Arthur Shurcliff in 1936, fully completing the relocation process. Wilton House Museum became accredited by the American Alliance of Museums in 1985.

William Randolph III

(1723-1761)



William Randolph III, born November 22nd, 1723, was the fifth and youngest son of William Randolph II and Elizabeth Beverley. After the early death of his mother, Randolph went on to study law at the College of William & Mary.

At age 19 he inherited from his father, "...all my Land lying on the Branches of fighting (sic) Creek in Goochland County containing Seven Thousand & Odd Acres with all negroes thereon... [and] all my Plate & Household Goods..." Now established as a substantial land holder, Randolph married Anne Carter Harrison sometime between 1743-45. Together they had 8 surviving children: William, Peter, Harrison, Benjamin, Peyton, Anne, Elizabeth, and Lucy. During his life

Randolph amassed land, political appointments, and established himself as a member of the Virginian gentry class.

Randolph added to his inherited fortune by producing potash and growing tobacco, as well as serving as a debt collector agent for a Bristol merchant. In addition to the 7,000 acres located at Fighting Creek, he added at least 21,130 acres to his landholdings during his lifetime. Randolph was active in local government, first elected to the House of Burgesses at age 22 in 1745 representing Goochland. Later, he served as the representative for Henrico in 1752 after serving as clerk to the House. From 1748 to his death in 1761, Randolph served as a justice on the Henrico County Court. In 1752 received an appointment as one of the trustees to lay out the city of Richmond. Randolph acted as a lieutenant colonel in the Henrico militia, and was a vestryman for the Henrico parish from 1748-1761, where he also served two terms as church warden.

In 1747 Randolph purchased a plot of land known as, "At World's End," and completed construction on his Georgian mansion, Wilton, sometime in the 1750s. Apart from one brief trip to England in 1759 in an attempt to recuperate his health, Randolph spent all of his 38 years in Virginia. When he died in 1761 he left his widow - Anne Harrison Randolph - with life rights to Wilton and immense debt. Randolph owed a total of £8,515.6s.8d to four different merchants at his death- the modern day equivalent of over one million US dollars.

Anne Carter Harrison Randolph

(~1723 -)



Anne Harrison Randolph, born circa 1723, was one of the eleven children of Benjamin Harrison IV and Anne Carter, daughter of 'King Carter.' She lived at Berkeley Plantation in Charles City until her marriage to William Randolph III sometime between 1743 - 45.

On July 12th, 1745, "lightning struck the House of Col. Benjamin Harrison ... which kill'd him." Harrison bequeathed ample fortune to his children, leaving Anne, "one thousand pounds Sterling ... I also give to my Daughter Anne a negro girl named Dorcas to her and her heirs forever."

Together, William III and Anne had 8 surviving children: William, Peter, Harrison, Benjamin, Peyton, Anne, Elizabeth, and Lucy. They and their children resided at Fighting Creek Plantation in Goochland until the construction of Wilton in the 1750s. The early death of her husband in 1761 left Anne with life rights to Wilton

and an estate £8,515.6s.8d in debt. In 1775, she likely oversaw the public auction of William III's belongings in Richmond in order to raise funds to manage her family's debt.

Anne's position as a land manager gave her the political leverage to publicly join the Virginia Association, a 1769 boycott of English goods in response to the Townsend Act. While property holding white men largely conducted this boycott, the Virginia Gazette published, "the names of the widow Ladies who have acceded to the association," including both Anne and her widowed sister-in-law at Chatsworth, Lucy Bolling Randolph. Anne's own family experienced a schism over the Revolution: her brother, Benjamin Harrison V, signed the Declaration of Independence. Her sister Lucy, on the other hand, lived out her life as a loyalist in England.

George Washington visited Wilton in 1775 following the Second Virginia Convention. During the American Revolution, Anne would play host to a succession of militia units until the arrival of the Continental Army and the Marquis de Lafayette in May of 1781. At least once, Anne was visited by the British army in search for her son, Peyton. As recorded by her great-granddaughter, "they went all over the house, in her chamber they opened a draw (sic), & took out some small pieces of Jewelry... After watching about the premises, several hours, they returned to their Vessel, & sailed down the River."

Anne and her children remained friends with the Washingtons, paying them a visit at Mount Vernon in 1786. Washington recorded in his daybook that on September 9th, "the Widow Randolph of Wilton, with her 3 Sons & a daughter," arrived for a visit. While there, Washington noted that, "Mrs. Randolph, Miss Harrison, Mrs. G. Washington... went to Alexandria after breakfast & returned before dinner."

Anne is recorded as receiving a legacy from her father's estate in 1793- now in her 70's, Anne outlived not only her husband, but all of her children. For over 30 years, Anne was the stalwart matriarch of Wilton, managing the plantation through financial turmoil, a revolution, and the birth of a new nation.

Peyton Randolph

(1748 - 1784)



Peyton Randolph, born 1748, was one of the eight children of William Randolph III and Anne Carter Harrison Randolph. He was raised at Fighting Creek Plantation in Goochland County before the construction of Wilton in Henrico. Like his father, Peyton went on to study law at the College of William & Mary.

He was 13 when his father died in 1761. While William III's will is lost, Peyton's last will and testament indicates that he inherited Wilton, Fighting Creek, Buffalo, and Bush River Plantations.

In May of 1775 the Virginia Gazette announced Peyton's marriage to Lucy Harrison, daughter of Benjamin Harrison V of Berkeley. The two resided at Wilton with Peyton's mother, who retained life rights to the home. Together they

had four children: William, Peyton, Richard Kidder, and Betty.

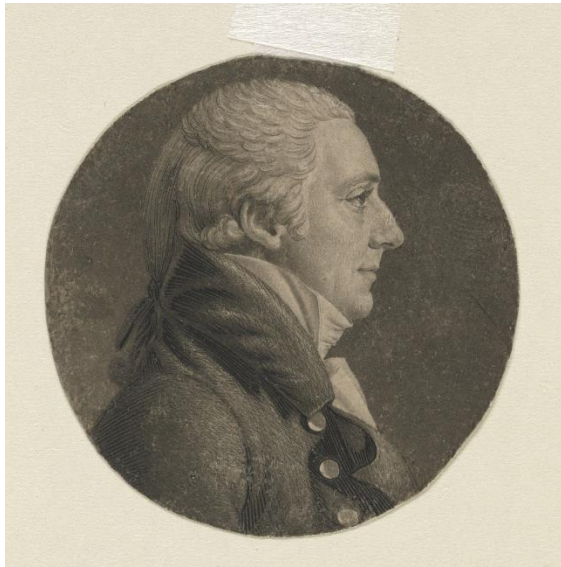
Peyton was an active participant in the American Revolution, which notably led to conflict within his own family. While at a family gathering at Chatsworth in October 1775, Peyton "got into a Political discussion," with his brother in law, Lewis Burwell. Feeling insulted, "Payton (sic) struck him, Burwell Snatch'd a knife and struck him in the side, but Fortunately a rib prevented it's proving Mortal." Peyton attained the rank of captain when the war began and served as a recruiter for the "State Legion of Light Horse," in Richmond taverns. He additionally served as an aide-de-camp to the Marquis de Lafayette during his Virginian campaigns, likely prompting Lafayette to make Wilton his headquarters for ten days in May of 1781. He resigned from the military due to poor health, which shortly preceded his death.

Peyton was a prolific slaveholder. At his death he owned 261 slaves, establishing him as one of the largest slaveholders in James River plantation region. Interestingly, his will contained the only manumission in Wilton's history: "I do hereby emancipate and give liberty and freedom to my negro man Warwick and I charge the estate hereby given to my son William with three barrels of corn three hundred pounds weight of nett pork, and five pounds, to be paid and delivered to him annually."

Peyton's death on May 16, 1784 was announced by local newspapers and referenced in correspondence between James Madison and Thomas Jefferson. His will named Edmund Randolph the guardian of his children and left ample inheritance to each in the form of land, livestock, and enslaved persons. Peyton's death saw a significant break-up of the family landholdings and would pass Wilton to his son, William Randolph IV.

William Randolph IV

1779 - 1815



William Randolph IV, born 1779, was the eldest of the four children of Peyton Randolph and Lucy Harrison Randolph. He was born and raised at Wilton, which he would eventually inherit.

William's father died in 1784, splitting up his landholdings among his children: William, Peyton, Richard Kidder, and Betty. Peyton's will named Benjamin Harrison VI of Berkeley and Edmund Randolph as guardians of his children and left both the Wilton and Fighting Creek estates to five year old William. His guardians, in addition to his mother and step-father, Anthony Singleton, served as custodians of William's inheritance until he came into his majority in the year 1800.

William took control of Wilton at a difficult time- a suit brought by his grandfather's creditors was successful. The Randolphs were compelled to finally pay their 1761 debts in 1797, the same year William's name began to be listed in Wilton's personal property and tax records. Responsibility came quickly to the new owner of Wilton. Within a year of claiming his inheritance, William served as a justice for Henrico County and found himself sitting in judgement of accused participants in Gabriel's attempted slave rebellion in 1800.

While no personal papers or recollections of his participation in this trial survive, the circumstances would have been of utmost relevance to his financial interests: William's inheritance included 101 enslaved persons and in 1812 he was the largest slaveholder in Henrico County, his wealth reliant entirely on the exploitation of inter-generational slave labor.

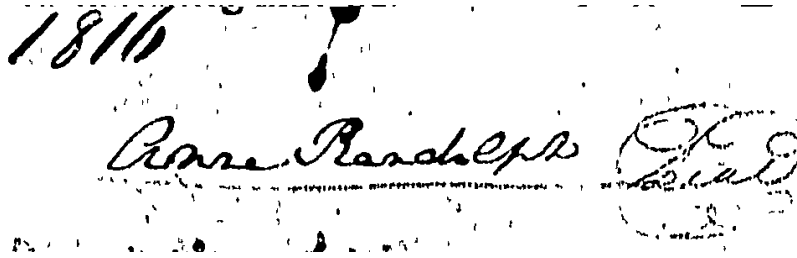
Shortly after, William married Anne Andrews of Williamsburg sometime in 1801. Together they had three children: Elizabeth, Catherine, and Robert. By 1803, William continued his political ambitions by serving in the Virginia House of Delegates representing Henrico County. During this time, his stewardship saw the first major change made to Wilton's façade in the form of a now-removed porch on the side of the structure.

Reminiscent of his father, William died young at the age of 36 and left Wilton to his five year old son. His death in 1815 led to the final partition of the family landholdings: Robert would inherit Wilton when he came of age, and all other property was divided between his two sisters. William must have had tremendous faith in his wife, as his will named her both the guardian of his children and gave her, "power at anytime to dispose of any part of my property that she may think proper for the payment of my debt." Anne was the sole executor of her late husband's estate and continued to manage it until Robert came of age, alternating her residence between Wilton and Fighting Creek.

William Randolph IV's tenure at Wilton followed a very similar pattern to that of his predecessors. He quickly became involved in the administration of debts, local politics, and plantation management. His death saw the final division of the once substantial Randolph landholdings amassed by his grandfather.

Anne Andrews Randolph

1780 – 1828

A handwritten signature of Anne Randolph in cursive script, with the year '1816' written above it. To the right of the signature is a circular stamp or seal, partially legible, which appears to contain the text 'WILTON' and '1819'.

Anne Andrews Randolph, born 1780, was one of the five children of Reverend Robert Andrews and Elizabeth (Betsy) Ballard. Anne was born and raised in Williamsburg, Virginia before her marriage and relocation to central Virginia.

Anne came from a politically and intellectually active family. The Reverend Andrews was one of only a few clergy to sign a 1774 House of Burgesses non-importation agreement, served as a chaplain to the Virginia Militia, and represented Williamsburg in the Virginia House of Delegates (1790-1798). Andrews served as private secretary to Governor Thomas Nelson in 1781 and retained a professorship in Moral Philosophy, Fine Arts, and Mathematics at the College of William and Mary from 1777-1789.

Anne married William Randolph IV c. 1800 and together had three children: Elizabeth, Catherine, and Robert. The period immediately following their marriage saw financial hardship and a series of land sales in Powhatan County, most likely due to the Randolphs being court compelled to settle their 1761 debts.

William Randolph IV died in 1815, naming Anne as the sole executor of his will and guardian of their children and giving her, “power at anytime to dispose of any part of my property that she may think proper for the payment of my debt.” Their son Robert, then 5 years old, would inherit Wilton when he reached his majority and all other property was divided equally between their two daughters. Anne, however, was the sole recipient, “all of the Negroes together with the increase same,” totaling 94 men, women, and children living at both of William’s plantations at the time of his death. In effect, this gave Anne control of approximately 80% of all of Wilton’s financial holdings and made her one of the largest slaveholders in Henrico County.

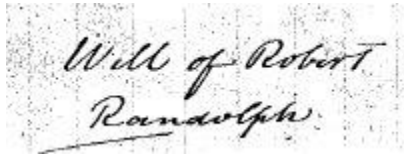
Anne managed Wilton and Fighting Creek plantations from 1815-1828. Her brother John Andrews, a clerk at Branch Bank of the United States at Richmond, resided with her “probably as long as she was a widow.” Her account books remain the most complete source of documentation of Wilton’s expenses and daily operations and can be considered remarkably accurate in comparison with previous financial records. Anne oversaw one of the only periods of financial growth at Wilton, with the 1815-1821 period being the only exception to the trend of overall decline for the family. This may be in part due to Anne’s oversight of the dramatic wheat revenue increase during her period of management.

The Randolph executive account reveals a tangled web of payments and debts to relatives, merchants, and contractors, as well as giving insight into how Anne managed multiple properties. Anne and her children split their time, residing at Wilton during the winter months and maintain a summer residence at Fighting Creek. In January of 1819 Anne took her children to visit her brother Robert in New Orleans. In July of that year noted that she visited the Andrews family home in Philadelphia.

Anne died in 1828, two years before Robert achieved his majority. Her tenure at Wilton saw the plantation at its most financially successful, built entirely on the foundations of intergenerational slave labor laid by the Randolphs. Her efforts were not enough, however, to protect Wilton from the financial downturn that the stewardship of Robert would introduce.

Robert Randolph

1810 - 1839



Robert Randolph, born 1810, was one of the three children of William Randolph IV and Anne Andrews Randolph. After the early death of his father in 1814, his mother raised him as the only male heir to Wilton.

William Randolph IV named Anne Andrews as the legal guardian of their children, and gave her control of both of his plantations until their children came of age- Robert would inherit Wilton, and their two daughters were willed Fighting Creek plantation. Account books from this period reveal that Robert and his family were fairly well traveled, visiting maternal relatives in Philadelphia and his namesake uncle in New Orleans. Like the earlier males of his line, Robert received a formal education. His mother's account book records tuition payments when Robert was 10, and eventually he studied at the University of Virginia in 1829. In 1826, Robert's older sister Catherine married George Taylor and they made Fighting Creek their primary residence. Taylor became Robert's legal guardian at this time, shortly preceding his mother's death in 1828.

Unlike his great-grandfather William Randolph III who managed five plantations, Robert inherited only Wilton in 1830. In 1833, Robert discharged Taylor of any responsibility for Wilton's estate or debts. Robert may have been selling members of the enslaved community at Wilton at this time to raise money; the number of tithable slaves at Wilton decreased from 47 individuals in 1825 to 27 in 1833. In that year novelist Catherine Sedgewick visited Wilton and described Robert as, "a fine specimen of Virginian character, his face expressive of frankness and generosity, and his person of the fearless, bold habits of a country gentleman and sportsman." However, she shrewdly evaluated his property. "But such ruin! – broken-down fences, a falling piazza, defaced paint, bannisters tied up with ropes, etc. [...] the general aspect of the house is that of a forlorn ruin. [...] as it is, he gives déjeûners and balls."

It was with Wilton in this state that Robert married Mary Louisa Cunningham of Norfolk in 1835. The following year Catherine "Kate" Isham Randolph, their only child and first named female heir, was born.

In 1839, Robert died at the age of 29. In his last days he wrote a rambling will that was challenged in court which confirmed the trouble the estate was in. Although he told Sedgewick in 1833 that he had, "an ample fortune," with which to repair his home, he admitted in his will that he had recently calculated his debts and found the sum, "far above what I thought it was." Robert left his widow one third interest in Wilton after settling his debts ("which I have been promising [to pay] for years but I never have (sic) the money," and the estate to his daughter. Although he named George Taylor his executor, Taylor recused himself from the responsibility, as he was still owed money from the estate.

Robert's widow soon remarried and relocated their family to New York. Wilton would be rented out to tenant farmers under the management of James M. Taylor until its final sale in 1859. The following suit to pay Robert's final debts was not settled until 1875, after almost everyone involved in the proceedings had died.

Robert was the last adult Randolph to own and live in Wilton. His period of poor stewardship saw the final dissolution of William Randolph III's holdings and the end of Randolph ownership at World's End.

Wilton's Enslaved Community

1747 - 1846

Between 1747 and 1846, the Wilton Estate was home to between approximately 27 and 105 enslaved African American men, women, and children. The lack of extensive documentation from the Wilton Randolph family line paired with the destruction of many of Henrico County's records in the Civil War resulted in a tragic lack of detail about the lives of Wilton's enslaved residents. Two sets of wills and inventories from the late 18th and early 19th century compromise all of the written record. These wills can be compared with the findings of a 1998 William & Mary Center for Archaeological Research (WMCAR) excavation of a series of dwellings located north of the Randolph home to attempt to piece together the lives of some of those who lived at Wilton for generations.

The community brought to the plot of land first known as World's End by Williams Randolph III were a mixture of Africans who had been recently trafficked to Virginia and the second and third generation descendants of slaves. Many of these individuals were descended from slaves imported by William Randolph I and subsequently left to his sons as inherited property. The early Wilton residents represented a range of cultures and languages- William Randolph III published in 1752 that two newly imported Africans had escaped Wilton, and that they spoke no English. The WMCAR excavation uncovered evidence of West African folk medicine, housing patterns and adornment traditions passed down through generations. The living quarters' excavation also suggested those who were enslaved at Wilton were active consumers in their local economic network, possibly aided by their close proximity to Wilton's boat landing and their skill navigating central Virginian waterways.

Most of the individuals enslaved at Wilton labored in producing tobacco and wheat, with a subset of skilled laborers representing trades that included blacksmithing, carpentry, and wagoneering. Having a skill could mean more regional mobility and the ability to carry news and goods while being leased to other locations, but carried the risk of a higher valuation in the eyes of their enslavers; in 1775, two "valuable" carpenters were sold from Wilton to help pay rising debts. These sales continued over the following decades, with the enslaved population paying the price for the Randolph's mounting debts. By 1833 only 27 tithable slaves resided at Wilton, and a visitor to the plantation in that year remarked on the Randolph's inability to provide even the basics of adequate care and clothing: "At the gate we were met by two little slave urchins whose limbs were scarcely covered with rags..."

In almost a century of plantation ownership, the Wilton Randolphs emancipated only a single individual. After detailing who would inherit the bulk of his 105 slaves, Peyton Randolph's 1784 last will and testament ended with this provision: "I do hereby emancipate and give liberty and freedom to my negro man Warwick, and charge the estate hereby given to my son William with three barrels of corn, three hundred pounds weight of pork and five pounds, to be paid and delivered to him annually."

In 1846, a suit was filed to divide the Wilton estate to better facilitate its sale. At this time, all crops and slaves remaining at Wilton were sold to settle debts.

Pending the discovery of further documentation, most of what is known about the people who lived and died at Wilton is filtered through the lens of the legal proceedings of their enslavers. The absence of their voices has long skewed the conversation surrounding Wilton in favor of its small number of white residents at the expense of the hundreds of African American families who constructed the mansion and shaped daily life at World's End. Wilton was home to a diverse and vibrant network of individuals whose descendants continue to shape America today.

Appendix 2: Interpretive Planning Process

Timeline Reinterpretation of Wilton

- 2011
Dr. Susan Buck conducts Paint Investigation of the Parlor
- 2013
Dr. Susan Buck returns for Paint Investigation of entire house.
- 2014
Chipstone Foundation Idea Day
Jon Prown, Franklin Vagnone, Mark Wenger, Sumpter Priddy, Sylvia Yount, Donna Harris, David Crank, and
- 2015
Historic Structures Report by Mesick, Cohen, Wilson, Baker Architects
AAM Museum Reaccreditation Begun
- 2016
AAM Museum Reaccreditation Application Due March 2016
Interpretation Committee Formed, quickly changed to the Strategic Planning Committee
Dr. Susie Rawles, Laura Towers, Brenda Parker, Molly Carey, Nancy Holcomb, Lissie Lowelsy-Williams, and employees Keith MacKay, William Strollo, and Andrew Lunney.
AAM Tables Reaccreditation November 2016, requiring community input in planning
- 2017
AAM Museum Reaccreditation Begun
Community Engagement Initiative with Floricane
Included stakeholder roundtables, interviews, and public charrette.
Surveying Museum Visitors with AASLH
Strategic Planning completed with the goals of better understanding, sharing, and caring for Wilton approved. The first strategic plan priority is the writing of an interpretation plan and the second a furnishings plan.
Natalie Larson and Dr. Susan Buck investigate passage and parlor for evidence of eighteenth century picture hanging and window treatments.
- 2018
Establish Themes/Tour Route/Interpretive Period
VCU Graduate History Course researches the enslaved community
Peer Reviewers Established and Participate in an Interpretation Plan Charrette
Susan Schowler, Curator, Mount Vernon; Diane Ehrenpreis, curator, Monticello; Jen Hurst Wender, Director of Education, Preservation Virginia; Ed Ayers, Professor of Humanities, University of Richmond; Ted Maris Wolf, Director, EnRichmond; Eric Gable, Anthropologist, University of Mary Washington.
- 2019

Appendix 2: Interpretive Planning Process

Submit Rough Draft to Strategic Planning Committee

Peer Review Period

Museum Board Approval Vote

Appendix 3: Index of Sources

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