

**Scope of Work: Proposed Archaeological Investigation at George Washington's Boyhood Home National Historic Landmark ("Ferry Farm"), Stafford County, Virginia,  
2019**

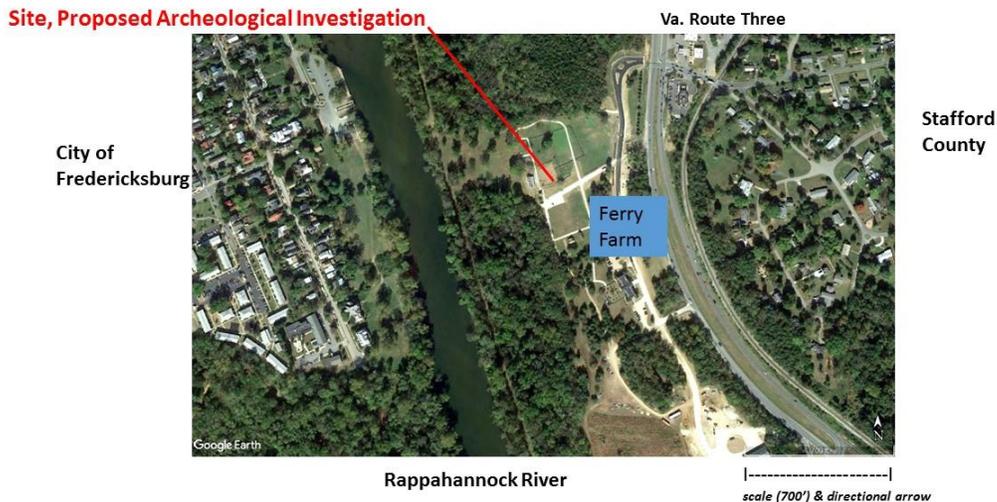
**44ST174**

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**David Muraca  
Director of Archaeology, George Washington Foundation**

## Location, Property Description, National Park Service Review of Proposals

The National Park Service-held conservation easement for the 75-acre George Washington's Boyhood Home National Historic Landmark ("Ferry Farm") restricts its use to "historic site and education attraction." Situated at 268 Kings Highway Fredericksburg, VA 22405 (Stafford County), the property's owner, the George Washington Foundation, manages it in that capacity, with a visitor center, interpretive structures, and other educational facilities where staff and programming share the story of the site's past residents, based upon archaeological- and documentary investigation.



### Location: George Washington's Boyhood Home National Historic Landmark ("Ferry Farm")

The NPS reviews easement-based proposals under the terms of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The easement makes provision for the George Washington Foundation, to propose new "archaeological investigations" to the NPS for review and approval, investigations that the NPS supervises or that occur under the direction of a qualified, NPS-approved professional archaeologist (since 2002, Foundation Director or Archaeology David Muraca). Approved investigations, the easement adds, "shall be documented and reported."

Since 2011, such documentation has been accomplished through the following types of reports submitted for review and comment by the Foundation to NPS, the Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer, and the consulting parties to a (now-under-revision) programmatic agreement: 1) an annual status report, including of cataloging, curation, and scholarly activity; 2) an interim technical report, of about a dozen pages, summarizing the previous year's archeological investigations; and 3) a monograph technical report. The proposed investigation would be documented and reported in the same fashion.

This review combines (the combination occurring with the approval of the Va. Dept. of Historic Resources) the Section 106/National Historic Preservation Act steps of Initiation of Consultation; Identification of Historic Properties; and Assessment of Effects.

### Proposal for 2019

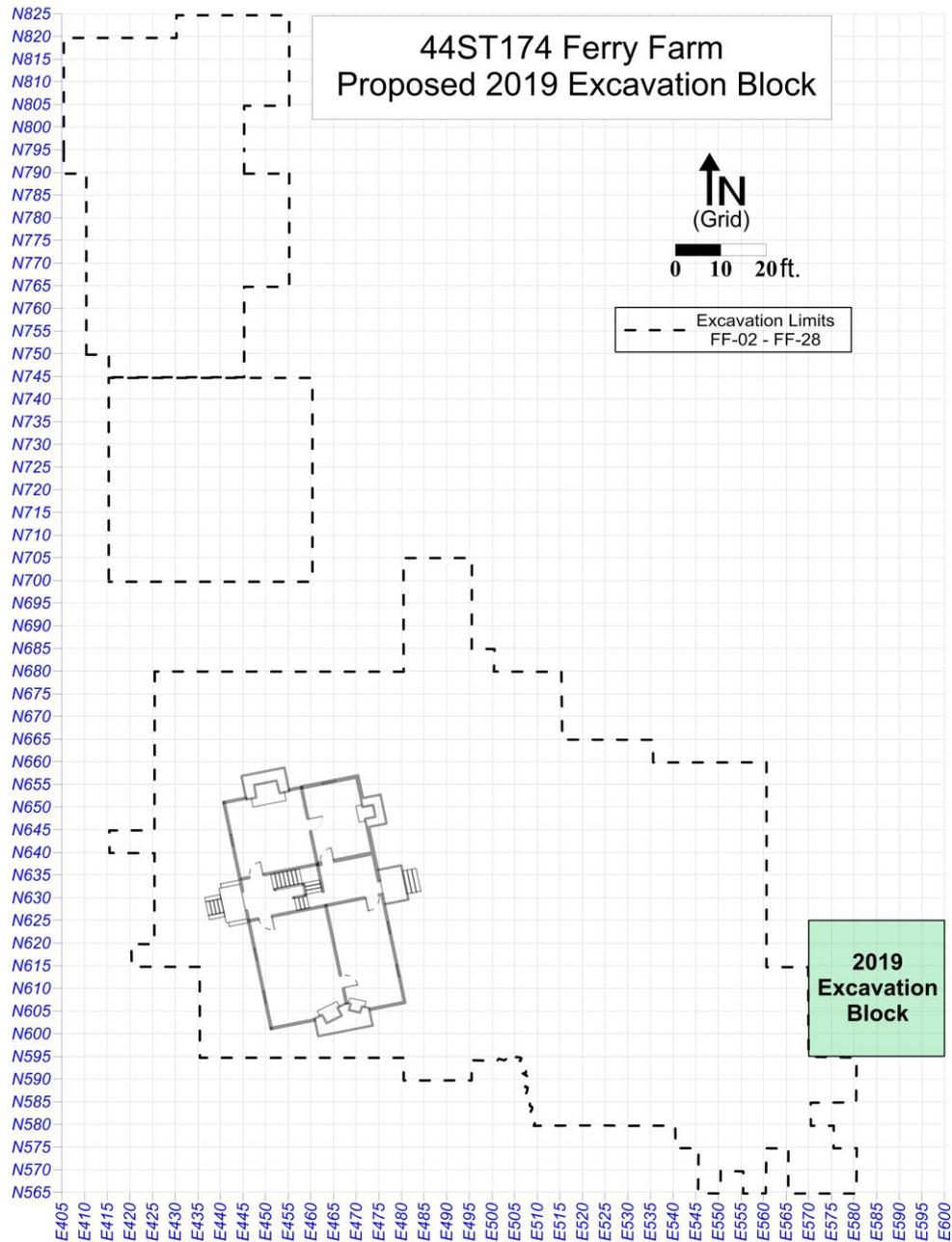
For the 2019 field season, the Foundation proposes to excavate within an area in the southeast corner of the Washington Farm Workyard at Ferry Farm.



**General Site Plan: Proposed Archaeological Investigation, 2019**

Artifact distribution maps of several classes of artifacts, found during past investigations, suggest that an activity area and/or structure is located in the southeast corner of the Workyard. The Foundation therefore proposes a small block-excavation to investigate this phenomenon. The block would measure 36 ft. by 36 ft. and placed to expand the Workyard investigation-area to the east.

This proposed work would follow the protocol of past archaeological investigations at Ferry Farm. In order for future generations of archaeologists to apply new methods and techniques there, portions of significant, sealed context and all remains of foundations would be left unexcavated. For sealed context, between one quarter and one half of the fill would likewise be left intact depending on the Foundation's archaeologists' understanding of the feature. For complex features, they would excavate three quarters of the fill. For features that are easy to interpret, half of the fill would be left unexcavated. They would also leave unexcavated a number of squares in the block proposed for 2019, preserving examples of the stratigraphic sequence in that portion of the site. The portion left behind is usually selected because it represents typical stratigraphy, thus excavation of squares that contain architectural remains are not usually selected for preservation.



*Archaeological Documentation*

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

*Research Design*

Along with establishing a review process for proposed archaeological investigations, the NPS-held conservation easement notes the goals at Ferry Farm of “restore and perpetuate the historic scene and the

historic archeological resources.”

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

Most of the artifacts recovered at Ferry Farm are situated in the plowzone. By understanding the distribution of these finds in association with the physical remnants of structures, fences, and work areas, and in conjunction with the local context provided mostly by the historical record, researchers are able to tease out meaning from these data sets.

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

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

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

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

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

4. *Develop a better understanding of the spatial use of the landscape over the thousands of years of occupation at the Ferry Farm site.* The site was in use before and after the Washington Family occupation. Several thousand years earlier, American Indians used this area repeatedly as a temporary campsite. Excavations have unearthed numerous projectile points, tools, flakes and for the first time a concentration of Middle Woodland pottery was recovered in 2012. The 2014 excavation uncovered two prehistoric

features. In the nineteenth century, Ferry Farm operated as a plantation, and was impacted heavily by the Battle of Fredericksburg.

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

### *Excavation Strategy*

The excavation employs a grid oriented 10 degrees west of magnetic north. All locations in this text are in reference to grid north. With the help of the National Park Service, Ferry Farm staff established two permanent datum points south and west of the site that were tied into the USGS coordinate system using GPS. Using temporary grid coordinates for excavation units in the field, staff archaeologists later convert the temporary grid coordinates into USGS coordinates.

Using 5-ft.-square excavation units, the research design calls for the use of the open-area excavation technique. This technique requires archaeologists to uncover a site layer by layer resulting in a detailed "snapshot" of a particular point in time. For most of the site machine plowing created only two layers of stratigraphy (topsoil and plowzone). The area in FF-18/20/22 appears unplowed and several natural layers and associated features have been encountered. Using trowels and shovels, excavators remove these layers in standard excavation units.

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

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

Soil chemistry samples are collected from both plowed soils and feature fills. University of Delaware has agreed to analyze the soil chemistry and report the results back to the GWF.

### *Curation and Cataloging*

Once inside the laboratory, artifacts are washed, sorted, identified, labeled, and cataloged in an Access database. They are permanently stored in the Ferry Farm archaeology lab. Small finds in need of stabilization are conserved by outside contractor. Additional details about small find artifacts, including photographs and metric attributes, are recorded in the department's object catalog database.



*Proposed excavation-area looking east.*



*Proposed excavation-area looking southwest.*