

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Media Development Group
Harpers Ferry Center

Historic Furnishings Report

The Shelton House at Rural Plains
Mechanicsville, Virginia

Richmond National Battlefield Park



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Richmond National Battlefield Park

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Media Development
Harpers Ferry Center
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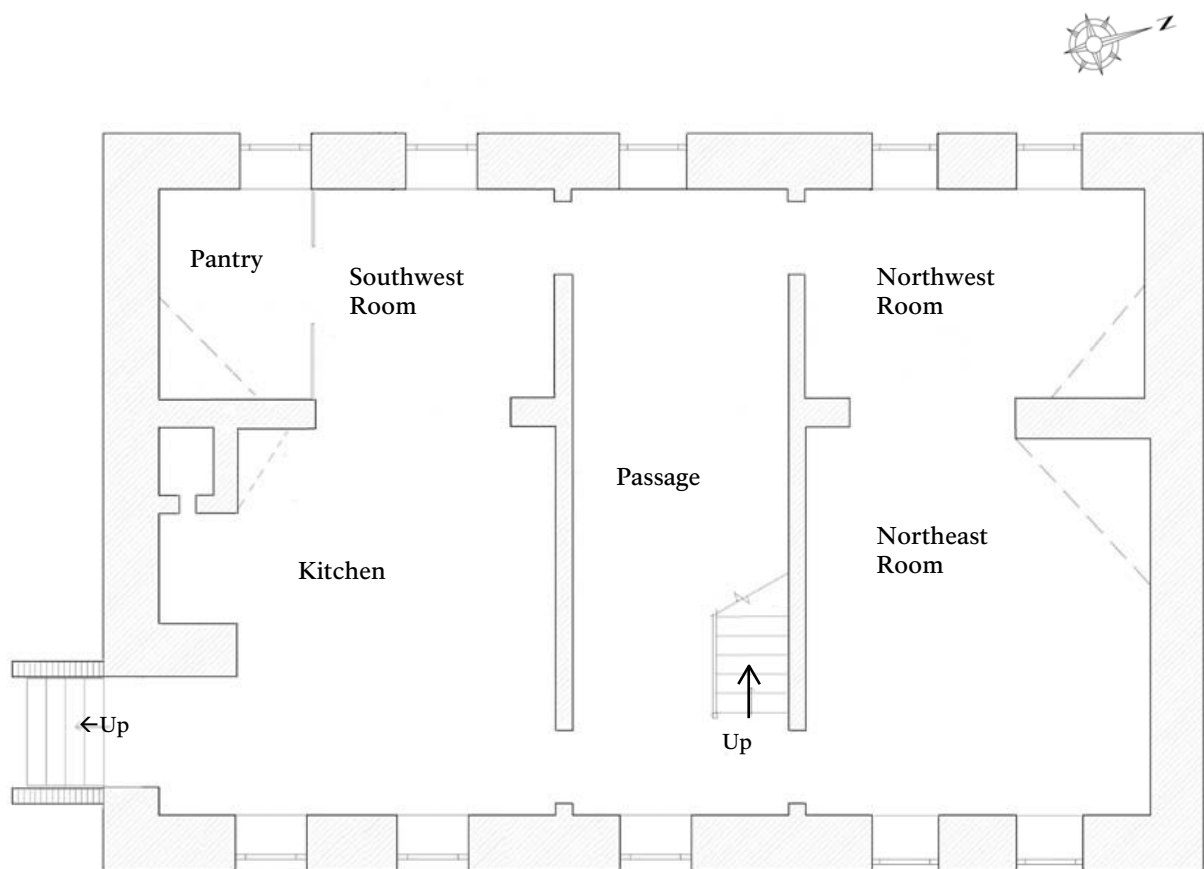
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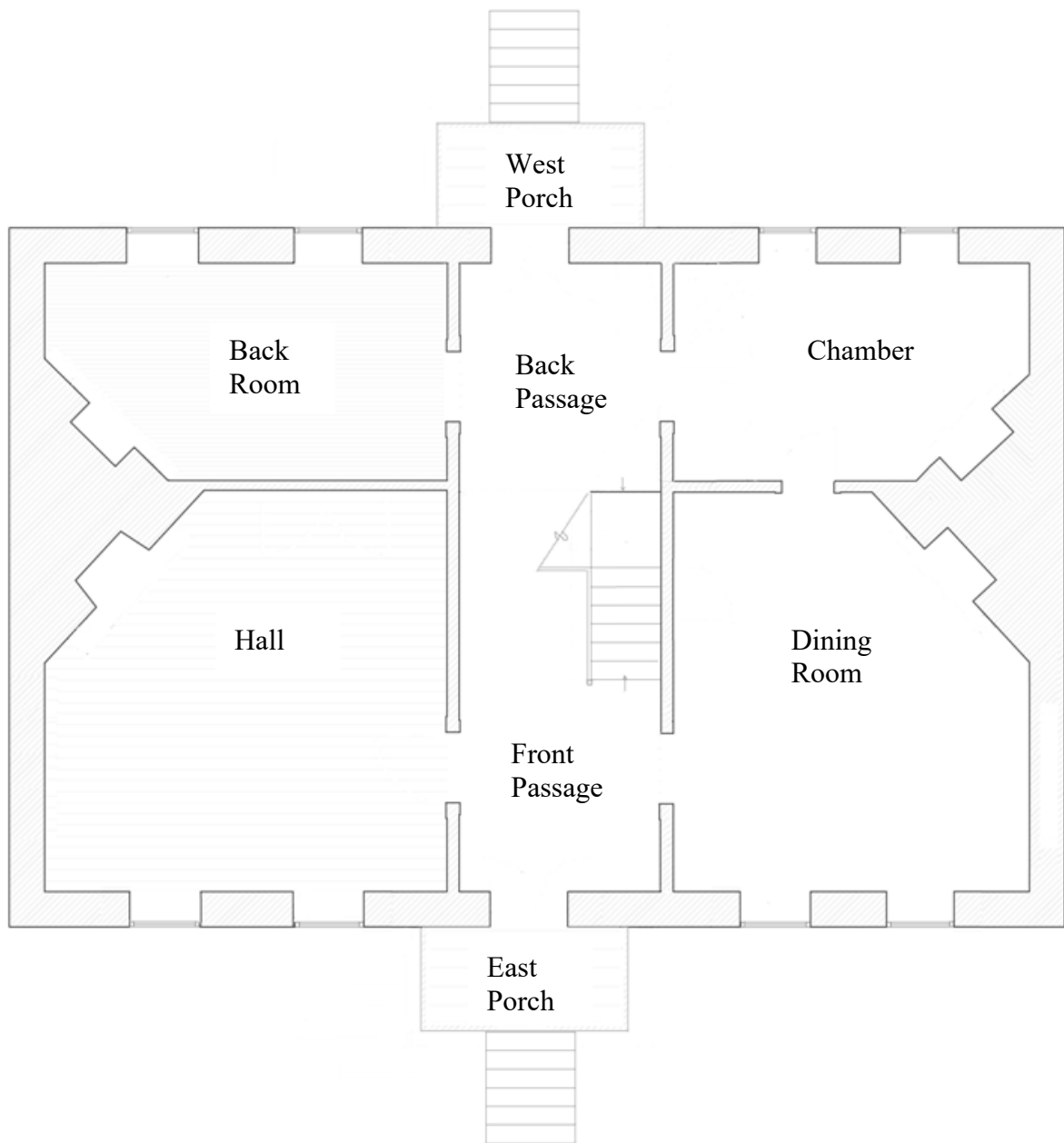
The author would like to thank Ethan Bullard, museum curator at Richmond National Battlefield Park and Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site, for his enthusiastic support for the project, for his assistance in the preparation of the report, and for his insightful comments.

Floor plans for the Shelton House

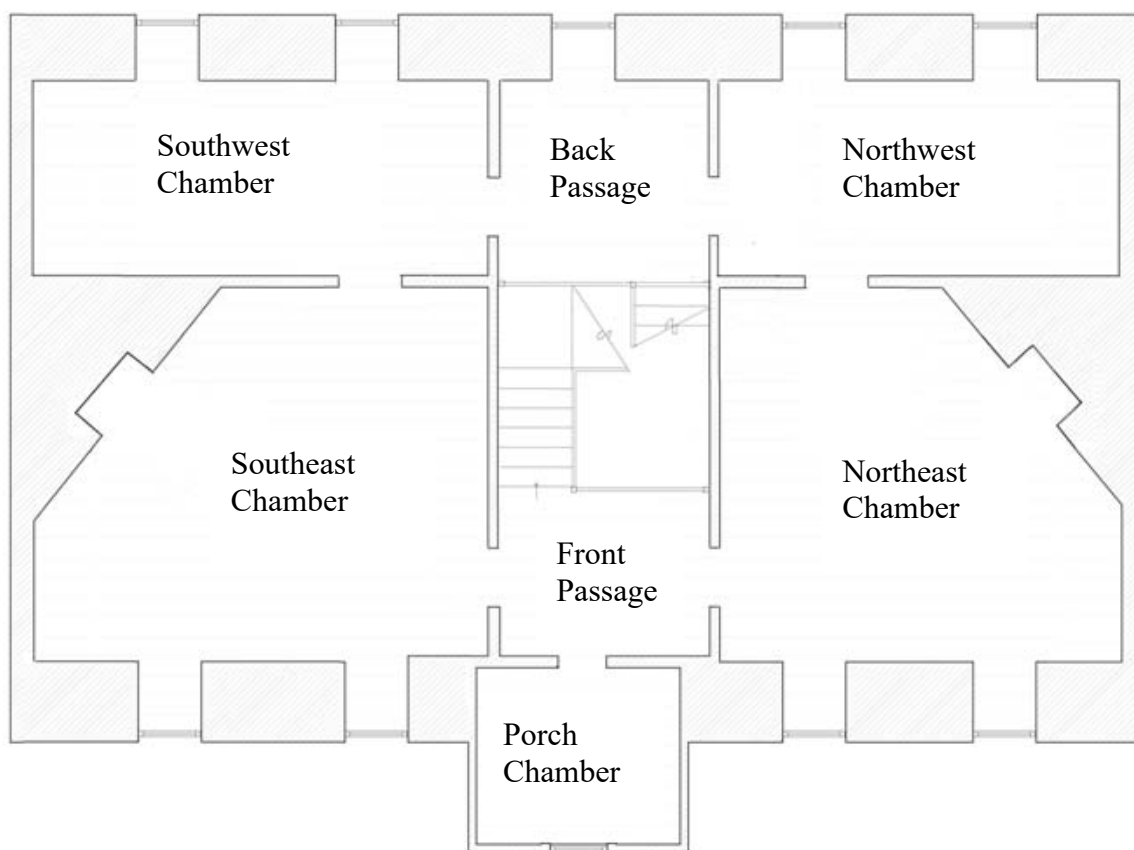
SHELTON HOUSE Ca. 1725



CELLAR, ca. 1725

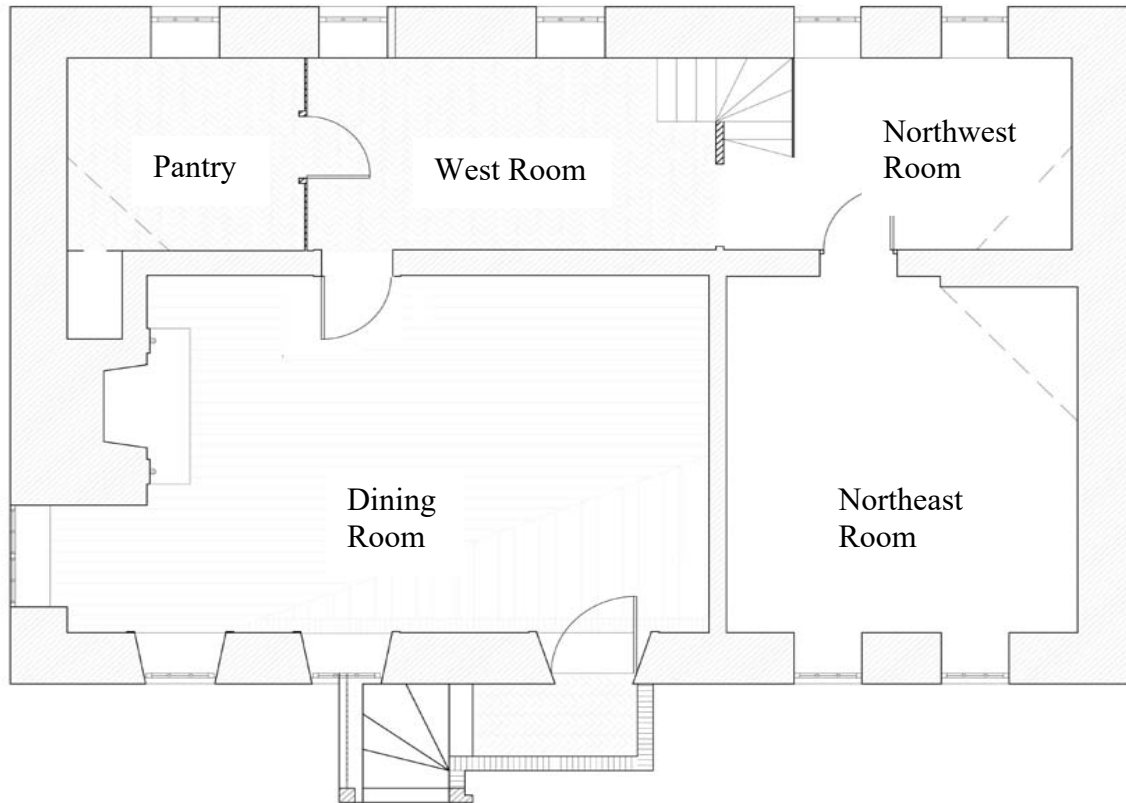


FIRST FLOOR, ca. 1725



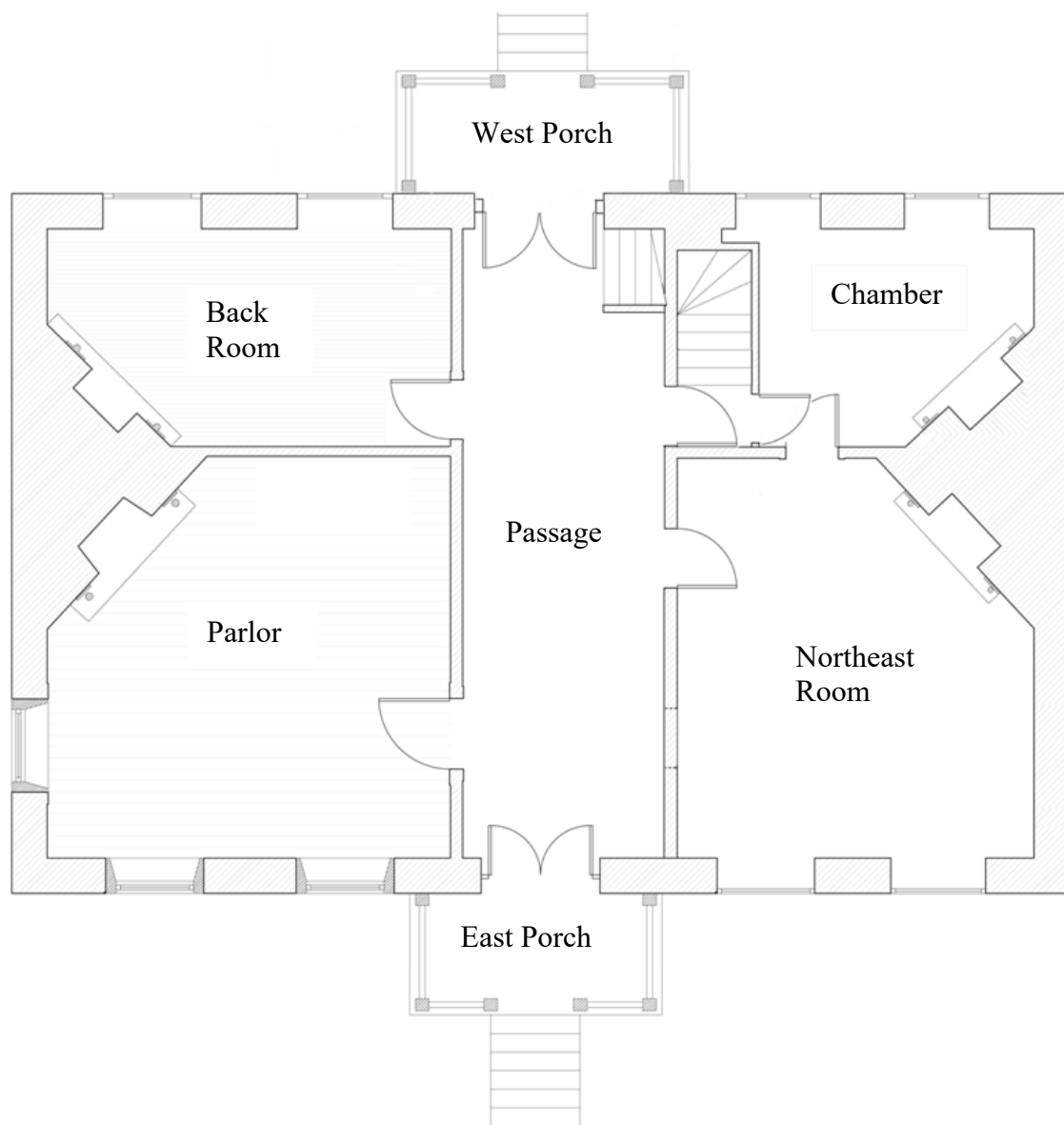
SECOND FLOOR, ca. 1725

SHELTON HOUSE Ca. 1835*

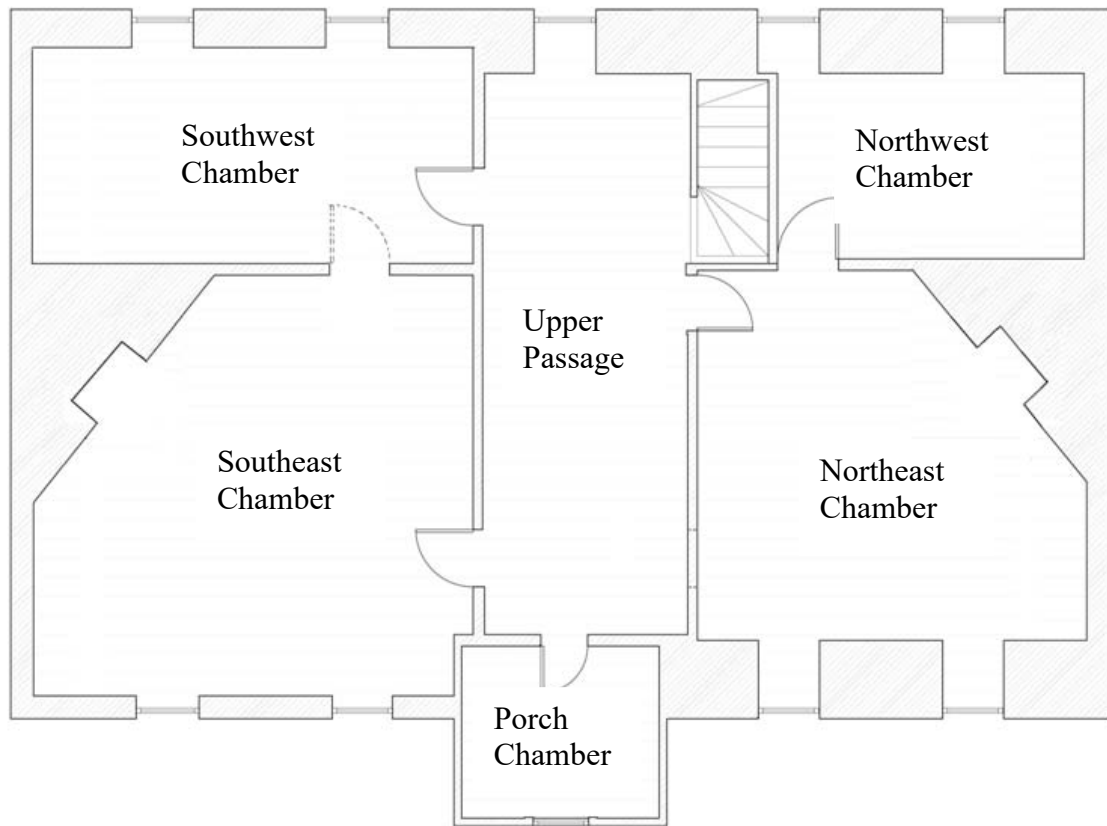


CELLAR, ca. 1835

* The 1835 floor plans show the appearance of the house during the period of interpretation. However, park staff disagree with the findings of the HSR and believe that a door existed in the basement level on the west side of the house. This belief is based on (1) written clues from soldiers and family members; (2) an original door found in the attic after the HSR was written; (3) removal of modern material from the doorway that revealed the opening was probably not a window that had been enlarged; and (4) the statement of the SHPO architectural historian that the opening “bore every hallmark of being an original pre-Civil War doorway.” Email communication, Ethan Bullard to Carol Petravage, 6/23/21.

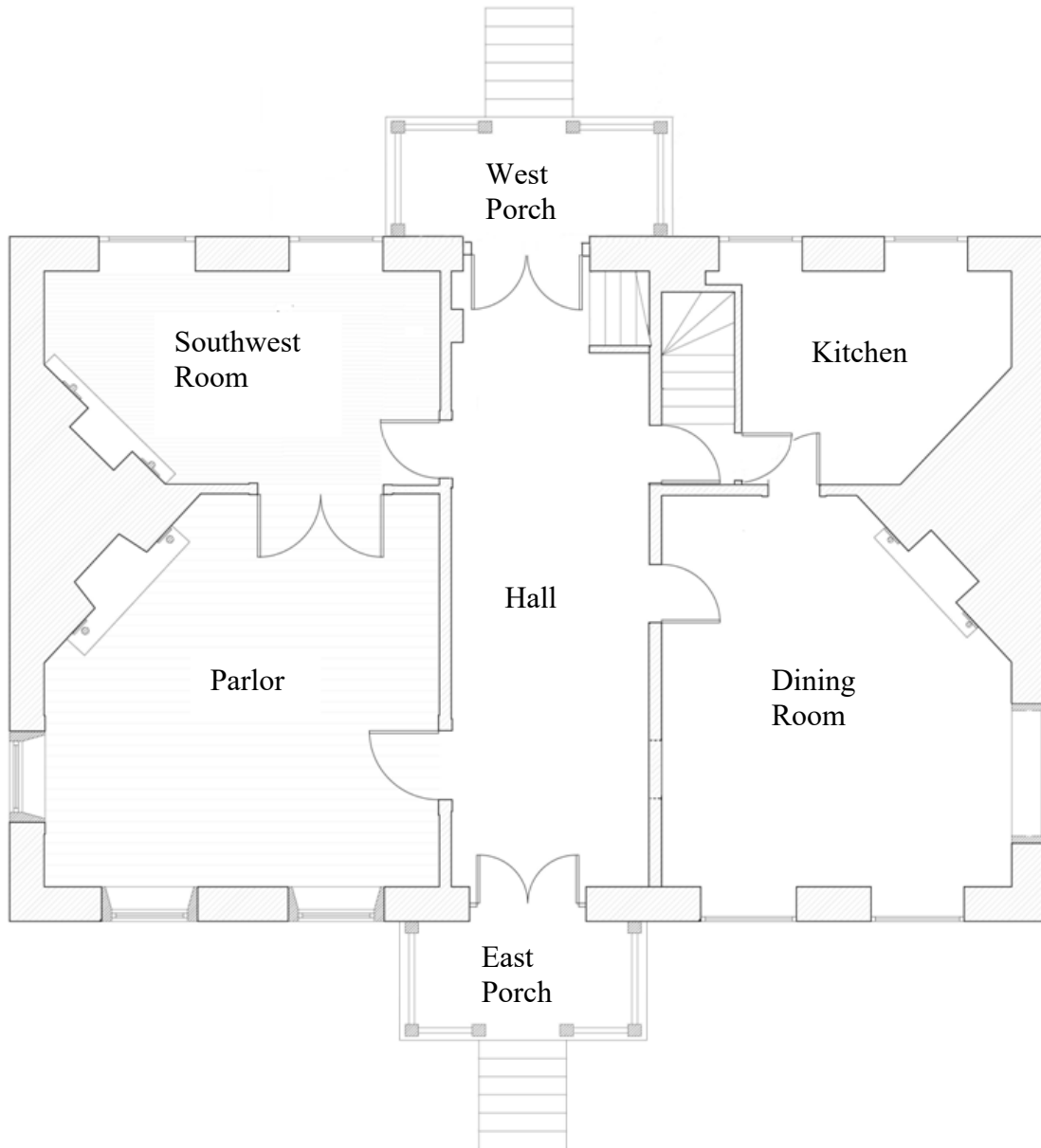


FIRST FLOOR, ca. 1835

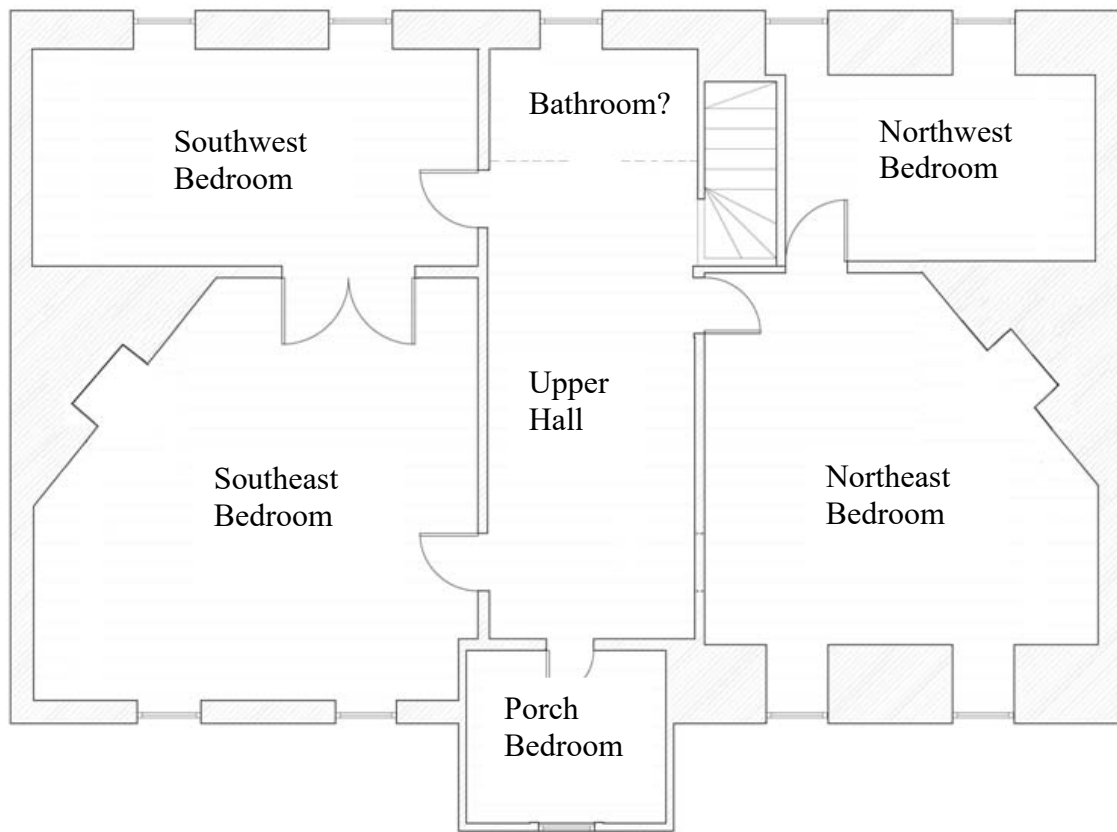


SECOND FLOOR, ca. 1835

SHELTON HOUSE
Ca. 1915

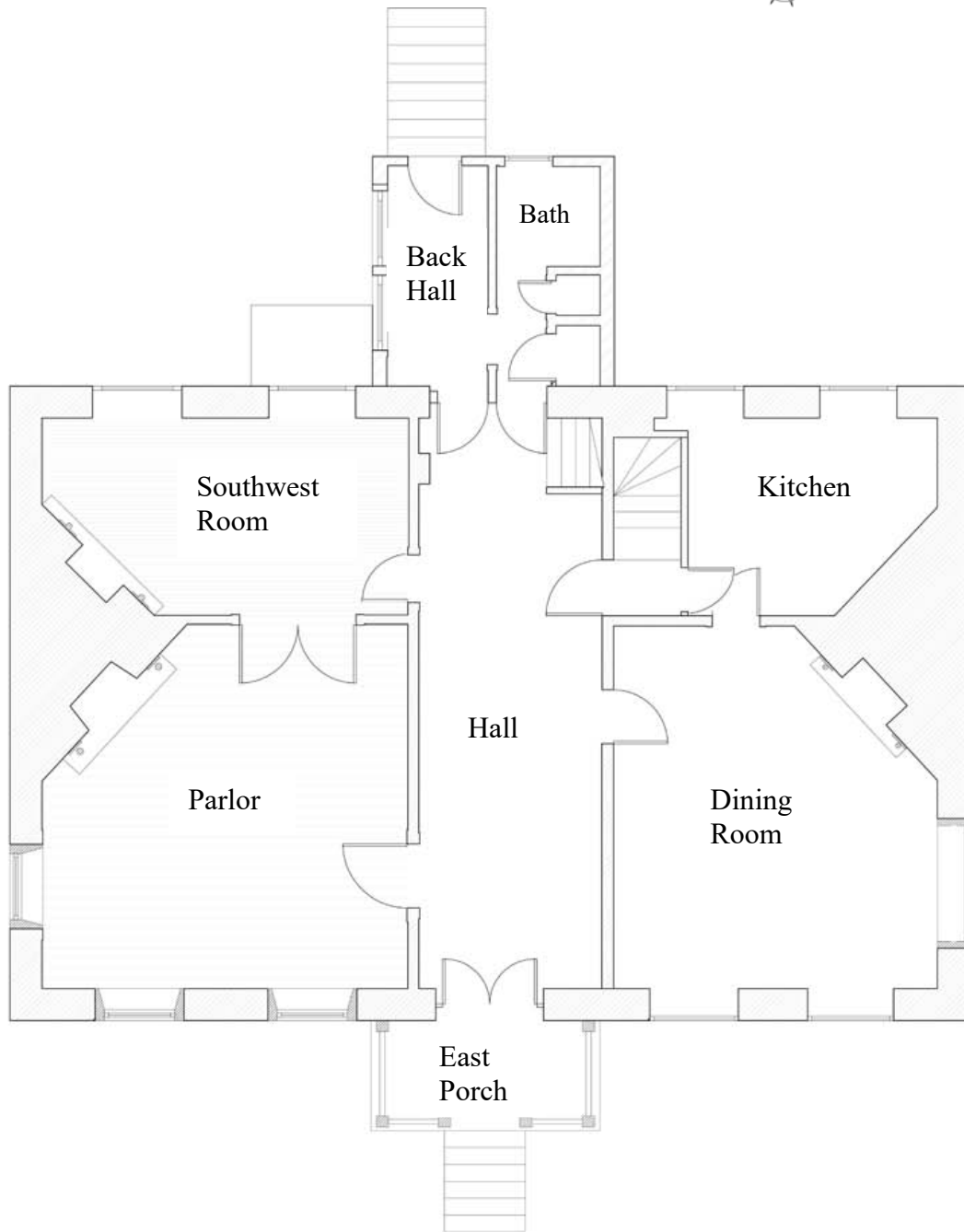


FIRST FLOOR, ca. 1915

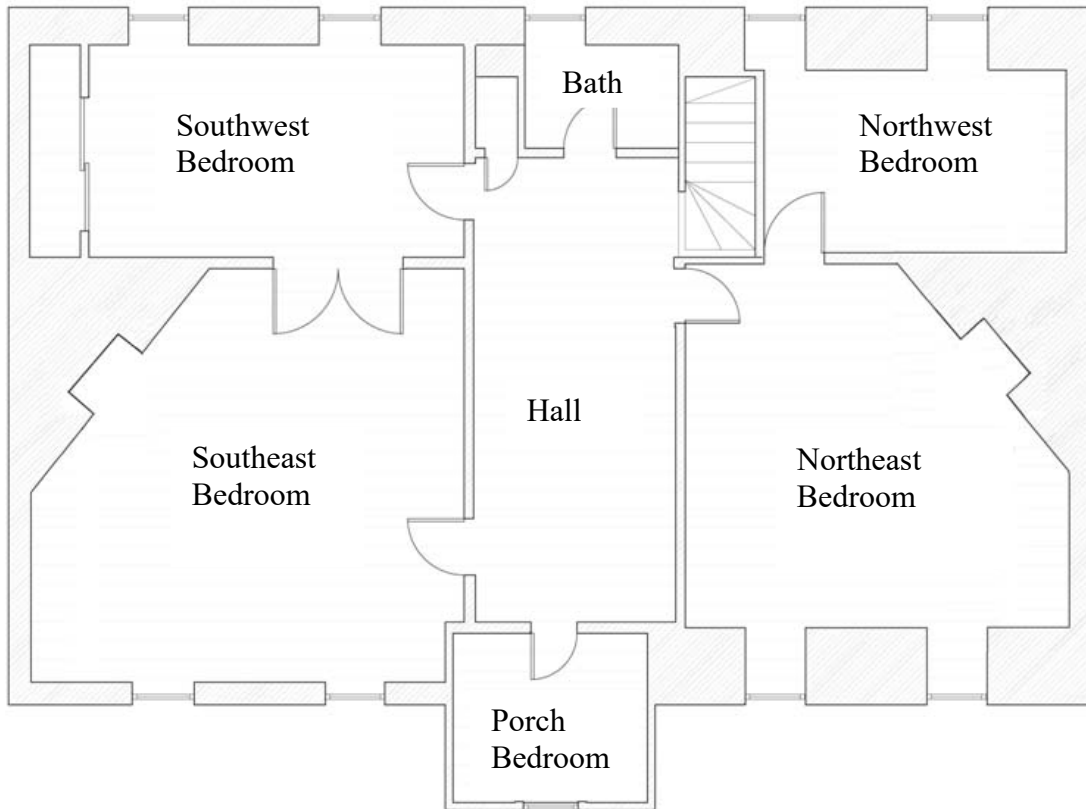


SECOND FLOOR, ca. 1915

SHELTON HOUSE
Ca. 1948



FIRST FLOOR, ca. 1948



SECOND FLOOR, ca. 1948

Administrative Information

Management Background

The Shelton House was built for John Shelton near Mechanicsville, in Hanover County, Virginia, around 1725. The Shelton family lived in the house until the death of William R. Shelton, Jr. in 2006. It has been well-known due to its age and architecture, and because of its association with Patrick Henry, who married into the family in 1754.

The one and a half story brick house has been modified over the years, but retains many elements from the Civil War period, which is the site's period of significance. In addition to the house, the Shelton family property included dwellings for enslaved workers, an overseer's house, barns, sheds, and other farm buildings.

Prior to the Civil War, then-owner Edwin Shelton, his family, and enslaved workers farmed the property, which he had expanded to nearly 900 acres. The family also operated a girls' school at the house from 1838 until the mid-1840s. During the Battle of Totopotomoy Creek in May 1864, Major General Winfield Scott Hancock and the Second Corps of the Army of the Potomac were headquartered in the house, while family members and enslaved workers sheltered in the basement.

Later generations of the Shelton family farmed and operated a nursery on the property. In 2000, William Shelton, Jr. and his wife Hollie Shelton sold the house and land to the Totopotomoy Battlefield at Rural Plains Foundation, which donated the property to the NPS in 2006 shortly after William Shelton's death.

At that time park staff acquired family papers and objects for the park collection. Significant objects include furniture and family relics present at the house during the Civil War. The family also left residual objects in the building, which the park has cleaned, identified, and stored.

The Shelton House at Rural Plains is part of the Totopotomoy Creek Unit of Richmond National Battlefield Park. The park was authorized by Congress on March 2, 1936. The house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. The Shelton House is also included in the National Park Service (NPS) Cultural Resources Inventory System-

Historic Structures (CRIS-HS), under the management category of “Must be Preserved and Maintained.”¹

Under NPS administration, the site is open to the public on weekends from May through October. Critical planning documents such as the Cultural Landscape Report, Historic Structures Report, and structural treatment reports have been prepared for the resource. This Historic Furnishings Report (HFR) builds on and complements existing planning reports, documenting historic use and occupancy of the structure from 1725-2006, supporting interpretation of the site in the period of historical significance (1864), and providing guidance for future media planning.

Following interior restoration, the Shelton House at Rural Plains will serve as a destination for interpretive programs and will contain limited historic furnishings and other media interpreting the Battle of Totopotomoy Creek, the Shelton family and their enslaved laborers, and civilian life in Hanover County during the Civil War. This report also recommends updating the site wayside exhibit plan to improve site orientation and interpretation when the house is not open to visitors.

¹ See Barbara A. Yocum, *The Shelton House at Rural Plains, Historic Structures Report, Richmond National Battlefield Park, Mechanicsville, Virginia*, (Lowell, Massachusetts: National Park Service, Historic Architecture Program, August 2012), p. 11. (Hereafter, “Yocum, HSR”.) Language updated to reflect change from “List of Classified Structures” to “Cultural Resources Inventory System-Historic Structures (CRIS-HS).”

Interpretive Objectives

The primary interpretive themes for Richmond National Battlefield Park are listed in the park's 2017 Foundation Document. Interpretation of the Shelton House will support Themes 2 and 3:

- **Civilians at War.** The stories of civilians, free and enslaved, and the multitude of sites in the park connected with their lives ... help illuminate the complicated stories of the war, its causes and results, and its all-encompassing effect on every representative of the population.
- **The Battles for Richmond.** Military operations around Richmond defined the course of the Civil War and the careers of the era's political and military leaders, while the casualties sustained by both armies on these battlefields reverberated throughout Northern and Southern communities.

In particular, the use and history of the Shelton House supports sub-themes such as:

- The personal and economic costs of war, and the militarization of private assets
- The evolution of a mid-size Southern plantation as it changed from an economy based on enslaved labor to one that relied on free, paid labor
- Continuity and change in society as white property owners attempted to retain power over free African American citizens
- The premise that convictions have consequences, as experienced by the Shelton family, who were supporters of secession

Furnishing rooms such as the basement kitchen and dining area, where civilians sheltered during the battle at Totopotomoy Creek, and the northeast room under siege will support interpretation of the effects of war on all civilians. Interpreting the southwest room on the ground floor as a plantation office with a view of enslaved dwellings and agricultural activity, and in May 1864, a battle between federal and Confederate forces, will support the theme of conviction and consequence, as well as providing an opportunity to discuss the changing economy of the Shelton plantation.

Operating Plan

The Shelton House is currently (2020) open to the public on weekends from May through October. Volunteers staff the building, with ranger-led tours of the Totopotomoy Creek Unit available at special occasions, events, and anniversaries.

After historic furnishings and other media are installed inside the house, it is anticipated that the house will be staffed when open, but visitors will experience the interior at their own pace, without a guided tour. Visitors will access the first floor and the cellar dining/kitchen area only.

The HFR includes a recommendation to develop a cohesive system of wayside exhibits to provide orientation and interpretation for visitors parking at the lot and using the grounds recreationally. The parking lot and grounds are open year round from sunrise to sunset.

Accessibility Strategy

This report recommends providing audio description for all furnished rooms open to the public, to be completed after the furnishings are installed. Park and Harpers Ferry Center staff can determine opportunities for developing tactile reproduction furnishings during the furnishings production phase.

Access to the cellar is limited to visitors who can navigate the narrow stairs from the ground floor. The park will provide written, oral, and photographic descriptions of interpretive content on the first floor.

Prior Planning Documents

The following planning documents affect the use and management of the Shelton House at Totopotomoy Creek Battlefield:

Foundation Document, Richmond National Battlefield Park, Richmond, Virginia, National Park Service, 2017

Cultural Landscape Report for Rural Plains, Richmond National Battlefield Park, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, John W. Hammond, 2016

Collection Management Plan, Richmond National Battlefield Park, Richmond, Virginia, Northeast Museum Services Center, National Park Service, 2015

Historic Structure Report, The Shelton House at Rural Plains, Richmond National Battlefield Park, Mechanicsville, Virginia. Historic Architecture Program, Northeast Region, National Park Service, Barbara Yocum, 2012

Cultural Landscape Report, Part I, Totopotomoy Creek Unit, Richmond National Battlefield Park, Hanover County, Virginia, Dutton and Associates for the National Park Service, 2010

Archeological Overview and Assessment, Archeological Identification Study of the Shelton House Precinct, Totopotomoy Creek Battlefield Unit, Richmond National Battlefield Park Hanover County, Virginia, volume I, Dutton and Associates, for the National Park Service, 2010

Totopotomoy Creek Unit Interpretive Concept Plan, Richmond National Battlefield Park, Richmond VA, Dutton & Associates, LLC in association with the PRD Group, Ltd., 2010.

Media Recommendations

An exterior wayside plan specific to the Rural Plains unit should be developed for the site.

Individual waysides could address:

- Identification of the building and orientation to the site (parking lot)
- Identification of walking trails (parking lot)
- Construction of the house (pathway to house)
- Area under the front entrance of the house used by General Hancock (east front)
- South exterior wall showing repairs after shelling (south lawn)
- Earthworks (various locations west of the house)
- Interpretation of enslaved workers at the site
- Interpretation of outbuildings
- Interpretation of American Indian history at the site, especially Chief Totopotomoy and his connection to the Chimborazo unit

Interpretive panels for interior spaces should also be developed. Topics could include:

- Brief introduction to the Shelton family (Central Passage)
- Impact of the May 1864 battle on the house and family (Northeast Room)
- Meal before the battle (Dining Room/Kitchen)
- Information on the School for Young Ladies (Dining Room/Kitchen)
- Economics of the plantation and dependence on enslaved workers (Southwest Room)

Historical Information

A Note on Sources

Important primary sources used in this report are included in the Shelton Family Papers (RICH 7850), Richmond National Battlefield Park, located at Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site. The papers include ledgers, receipts, memoirs, clippings, and other personal papers which provide particularly good information on the students at Edwin Shelton's School for Young Ladies, as well as the names of enslaved workers held by the Oliver and Shelton families. These papers also include information about people working for Edwin Shelton after the Civil War.

The Personal Property Tax Records for Hanover County, located in The Library of Virginia, provide a yearly snapshot of the Shelton family's wealth, recording livestock, vehicles, timepieces, and other possessions from 1782 to 1927. The record for 1815 includes information on all household furnishings assessed, but this is the only year for which the Commonwealth of Virginia listed specific furnishings in the tax records. The tax records also give information on how many males, both black and white, were living on the property at the time of assessment.²

An inventory of furnishings, equipment, livestock, and enslaved workers was taken after the death of Joseph Shelton in September 1784, and a detailed inventory of household furnishings was made after Edwin Shelton's death in October 1874, followed by a list of items sold from his estate in 1875. Though these records were made ninety years apart, they help illustrate the economic standing and manner of living of both Shelton men and their families, while providing evidence about specific furnishings used in the house.

A will made by Mary Shelton Truehart (1799, Goochland County), a close relative of the Shelton House owners, provides relevant comparative evidence about household furnishings and personal possessions in the late 18th century.

The Historic Structure Report for the Shelton House at Rural Plains, completed by NPS Architectural Conservator Barbara Yocum in 2012, includes a detailed analysis of the chain of ownership of the house and property at Rural Plains, as well as thorough documentation of the structural history, recommendations for treatment, and analysis of wallcoverings and architectural elements. The Historic Structure Report (HSR), along with the Cultural

² Tax records recorded "tithables," individuals who paid a tax, or who had a tax paid for them. This included free white men over sixteen, and black and Indian men and women over the age of sixteen, with some changes over time. The category remained on personal property tax records until at least 1875. See http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/tithables_vanote.htm for additional information.

Landscape Report published in 2016, provide important resources for the current planning effort.

History of the Structure

The Shelton House at Rural Plains was built around 1725, a construction date based on analysis of original wooden framing performed in 2006-2007.³ It is a 1-1/2 story brick house with a cellar kitchen, and first and second floors bisected by a wide passageway. The house faces east, with an original second story porch chamber constructed over the main entrance.⁴

The first John Shelton in America was documented in the area that would become the Rural Plains plantation as early as 1719, but it is not clear that he built the house. He died in 1725 leaving a widow, Elizabeth, and nine minor children.⁵ Elizabeth married attorney Thomas Prosser by 1728, so it is possible that the house was constructed by Elizabeth, or by Elizabeth with Thomas Prosser.

The brick for the house was probably made on site by skilled free and enslaved brick makers, and other construction materials were locally produced. Many original elements are missing, although some of the original brickwork and wood framing remains, in addition to the layout of the main rooms on the first and second floors.⁶ Elizabeth's second son Joseph Shelton tried to sell the house in 1777, advertising: "a commodious brick dwelling-house with four rooms and a passage upon the first floor, and the same above stairs and in the cellar,"⁷ a description which is still essentially accurate.

The cellar contained a kitchen with a fireplace on the south wall, and three additional rooms used for storage or for servants. There were four rooms on the first floor, in addition to the center passage. The HSR identifies the larger rooms as the hall and dining room, facing the front of the house to the east, with the smaller and more private back room and chamber on the west. The second floor contained two large chambers on the east side, with a porch chamber in the center extending over the east porch below. These three rooms were accessed directly from the center passage, while the smaller rooms on the west side were accessed through the larger rooms. A U-shaped stairway located between the first and second floors originally ran along the north wall of the first floor and ended in the center passage on the

³ Dr. Edward R. Cook, William J. Callahan, Jr., and Dr. Camille Wells, "Dendrochronological Analysis of Rural Plains, Mechanicsville, Hanover County, Virginia," January 2007, in Yocum, HSR, p. 4.

⁴ Yocum, HSR, p. 69-70.

⁵ Yocum, HSR, p. 17-18.

⁶ Yocum, HSR, p. 69.

⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, 19 September 1777, Purdie: p.2, col. 3, cited in Yocum, HSR, p. 75.

second. Each of the four chambers on the first floor had a fireplace, as did the two larger chambers on the second floor.⁸

When John Shelton III moved in with his wife and children around 1785, he remodeled the house. It is not clear who was living in the house before the family moved in. John Shelton enlarged the windows and exterior doorways, rebuilt the chimneys, and updated interior finishes. The floorboards on the first floor were replaced, though the layout of the rooms remained the same.⁹

John Shelton III installed new doors and mantels, with the new woodwork painted “Spanish brown,” a red-brown paint used on both the interior and exterior. The ceiling framing was painted black in the cellar, except for in the larger northeast room, which was whitewashed on the ceiling and brick walls.¹⁰

By 1835, John Shelton’s son Edwin lived in the house with his wife, four children, and enslaved workers. Around this time Edwin started a “Female School,” and he may have used some rooms in the house for the students and teacher, particularly the cellar kitchen which was converted to a dining room around that time. The Edwin Shelton family remodeled in the Greek Revival style, changing doorways and windows, and enlarging the east porch to its current size.

The entrance to the cellar was moved from the south side to the front of the house (the east side) and placed under the front porch. The stairway in the main passage was also reconfigured and moved to the northwest corner chamber on the first floor. The kitchen in the cellar was enlarged and finished as a dining room, with a wood floor installed on top of the packed earth. The fireplace was made smaller, and a new mantel was installed. The walls were finished off with plaster and a chair rail, and the ceiling was covered with lath and plaster.¹¹

The HSR states that the cellar rooms were probably finished in whitewash, which may be supported by a bill from James King to Edwin Shelton dated 1838. King charged \$2.00 for “whightwashin two new Romes,” and had done work previously for Shelton, for which Shelton still owed him. King also charged \$1.24 for “paving ough side of house”.¹²

One of the two rooms west of the new dining room (the pantry and west room, or back hall) probably held a stove, because King also charged \$2.00 for “paving Stove rume” at that time.¹³ If the Sheltons installed a cook stove in a smaller room in the cellar, they would no longer cook in the fireplace, so would have reason to make it smaller and install a decorative mantel. Cast iron stoves were becoming increasingly popular during this period, and were

⁸ Yocum, HSR, p. 75-77.

⁹ Yocum, HSR, p. 88-90.

¹⁰ Yocum, HSR, p. 90.

¹¹ Yocum, HSR, p. 100-102.

¹² Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 21.

¹³ Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 21.

more fuel efficient than fireplaces. At the time of Edwin Shelton's death in 1874, he owned a stove and cooking utensils worth \$2.00.¹⁴

The HSR notes that in the southwest corner room: "The dirt floor ... is covered with bricks laid in a herringbone pattern. Because this flooring continues beneath the circa-1835 wooden partition wall on the north side, it is believed to be contemporary with, or predate, the partition."¹⁵ The west room or back hall also has a brick floor that continues beneath the wooden partition, although it is covered with a thin layer of concrete.¹⁶ Assuming that the 1835 date for renovations is not firm, it may be that Edwin Shelton modified the cellar arrangements while he was operating the school, instead of in anticipation of opening it.

As part of Edwin Shelton's improvements, he repainted the exterior woodwork white, painted the shutters green, and wood-grained the front and back doors. Woodwork in the first floor passage and the northeast room was also grained, as was the parlor door. According to the HSR:

All the fireplace mantels were painted black, and possibly veined, in imitation of black marble. Baseboards were painted dark gray or black in most rooms, except the formal parlor, where a glossy cream-white paint finished the baseboards, casings, and window sashes. The woodwork (excluding mantels and baseboards) of the room behind the parlor was painted blue-green, and the room behind the [former] dining room [on the first floor] dark green. Gray paint was used in the cellar and second-story rooms, except the back chambers that retained some of their old red-brown finishes.¹⁷

In May 1864, during the Battle of Totopotomoy Creek, the house was used as headquarters by Union Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock, and was damaged during the fighting. Confederate artillery fire struck the house 51 times and a shell went through a wall, exploding in a first floor chamber. Lt. Robert Robertson noted in his diary that the walls were "filled with fragments of the shell."¹⁸

After the war the brick exterior walls were repaired, as were interior walls and ceilings, and floorboards. In the HSR, Barbara Yocum points out that all the window sashes in the southwest room on the first floor are replacements, which suggests that this room was the one hit by the artillery shell.¹⁹ Additional repairs included repainting the exterior woodwork, and repainting baseboards, mantels, and window and door casings inside. Woodwork in the first

¹⁴ Edwin Shelton Inventory and Appraisement, November 24, 1874, Hanover County Will Book #3, Hanover County Records, The Library of Virginia (LVA).

¹⁵ Yocum, HSR, p. 201.

¹⁶ Yocum, HSR, p. 207.

¹⁷ Yocum, HSR, p. 103. See HSR, Appendix B, Paint Analysis.

¹⁸ Robert S. Robertson; Charles N. and Rosemary Walker, eds., "Diary of the War by Robert S. Robertson," *Old Fort News*, vol. 28 (Fort Wayne, IN: Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society, 1965), p. 201, in Yocum, HSR, p. 115.

¹⁹ Yocum, HSR, p. 115.

floor northeast chamber was regrained and the small room behind it was painted dark green. A new metal roof was installed and painted green.²⁰

In 1887 the house passed from Edwin Shelton's widow, Sarah, to her son, Walter Shelton. In the early 20th century Walter defaulted on a loan, and the house was put up for auction. Walter's son William purchased the house in January 1903. William married Maud Greenlee in 1915 and they made improvements to the house at that time, including adding a window on the north wall of the first floor and installing electric lighting. The William Sheltons installed a kitchen in what had been the northwest chamber on the first floor, and used the adjacent larger room as a dining room. The HSR concludes that indoor plumbing was probably installed at this time, along with a coal burning furnace.²¹

In the mid-20th century the roof was replaced, and around 1948 William Shelton replaced a porch on the west side of the house with a new wing including an entry hall and a full bathroom. He and his wife also installed or remodeled a bathroom on the second floor, and replaced the coal furnace with an oil furnace. Public electricity replaced battery powered electricity in the 1940s.²²

William Shelton's son Bill and his wife Hollie made changes to the house after they married in 1961, including replacing windows, installing new flooring over existing, installing plywood paneling on walls in the first floor, updating the kitchen, removing some fireplace mantels, and removing plaster from second story rooms.²³

When the National Park Service acquired the property as a unit of Richmond National Battlefield Park in 2006, the park installed an intrusion and fire protection system, replaced the furnace, repaired interior and exterior masonry, and attended to deferred maintenance as required. The park continues to monitor and maintain the site.²⁴

For a complete structural history including detailed information on historic finishes, molding, and doorways, see *The Shelton House at Rural Plains: Historic Structure Report, Richmond National Battlefield Park, Mechanicsville, Virginia*, by Barbara Yocum, Historic Architecture Program, Northeast Region, National Park Service, 2012.

²⁰ Yocum, HSR, p. 116.

²¹ Yocum, HSR, p. 119-120.

²² Yocum, HSR, p. 124-125.

²³ Yocum, HSR, p. 125.

²⁴ Yocum, HSR, p. 133.

Analysis of Historic Occupancy

John Shelton (associated c. 1725) As noted above, although it is estimated that the Shelton House was constructed around 1725, it is not clear who lived there for the first fifty years or so after it was built. Records for St. Paul's Parish in New Kent County, Virginia document the first John Shelton's presence in the parish as early as 1704.²⁵ He was a wealthy man with status in his community; when he died without a will in 1725, he left behind his wife, Elizabeth, nine minor children, and slaves. Elizabeth administered his estate, which eventually passed to their oldest son, John Shelton II. By 1728 Elizabeth had married Thomas Prosser, an attorney, who died by 1751.²⁶ Although the house was built around 1725, as confirmed by the age of the timber used in its construction, no evidence indicates that Elizabeth and Thomas Prosser lived there.

John Shelton II (associated c. 1759-1769) The estate passed to John and Elizabeth's oldest son John Shelton II by 1759. At that time he was over 40 years old, married to Eleanor Parks of Williamsburg, and father to four children. He owned another property in St. Paul's Parish, and his wife inherited a large property in nearby Hanover Courthouse, Hanover County.²⁷ There is no evidence to suggest that John Shelton II and his family resided at the Shelton House near Totopotomoy Creek.

John Shelton's younger daughter Sarah married statesman Patrick Henry in 1754.

Joseph Shelton (associated c. 1769 -1784) When John Shelton II died around 1769, the Shelton House property passed to his brother Joseph, who never married. It is not clear why John did not leave the property to one of his sons, but it is possible that he was in debt to his wealthier younger brother.²⁸

Joseph Shelton owned other properties in Virginia, including an estate in Louisa County, Virginia, which was probably his main residence. The 1785 inventory of Shelton's estate

²⁵ The property is located in a section of New Kent County that became Hanover County in 1720. St. Paul's Parish was divided in 1727, with the western section designated St. Martin's Parish. Around the time the Shelton House was constructed, the property location was St. Paul's Parish, Hanover County. See Yocum, HSR, p. 7, and Churchill G. Chamberlayne, ed., *The Vestry Book of St. Paul's Parish, Hanover County, Virginia, 1706-1786*, (Richmond: The Library Board, 1940).

²⁶ Yocum, HSR, 17-19.

²⁷ See Yocum, HSR, for details of ownership of the property, p. 17-22.

²⁸ Yocum, HSR, 24.

shows that at his “Homehouse” he kept more than 30 enslaved workers, and furnished the house with beds and bedding, china, mirrors, silver, and kitchen equipment. At the Hanover property, in contrast, he kept only two brass locks, a walnut table, picture frames, and maps, suggesting that he used the house as a place of business. There were only nine enslaved workers on the property, along with livestock and farm equipment.²⁹

Joseph Shelton advertised the property for sale in September 1777, in the *Virginia Gazette*:

For sale, in the county of *Hanover* on *Totopotomoy* creek, a valuable TRACT of LAND containing about six hundred acres, whereon is a commodious brick dwelling-house with four rooms and a passage upon the first floor, and the same above stairs and in the cellar, with all convenient outhouses necessary for a family, and cleared land sufficient to work eight hands, with a barn and tobacco houses. It lies on the main road from Richmond town, at the falls of *James* river to *Hanover* town, about twelve miles from the latter, and about eight miles from *Hanover* courthouse. It is remarkable for its being healthy, owing to its pleasant, high, and dry situation. It is convenient to several valuable mills, and to churches and meeting houses. The terms may be known by applying to the subscriber, on the premises.

Joseph Shelton³⁰

Although Shelton’s primary residence was not in Hanover County, he must have spent some time at the Totopotomoy Creek property, since he was “on the premises” to discuss terms with potential buyers.

The property did not sell in 1777, and it is unclear who lived on the property aside from the enslaved workers. At the time Joseph Shelton wrote his will in September 1780, he included a provision allowing his sister Mary Shelton Truehart to live in the house. According to his will, she was entitled to live there until she died or remarried, and also have the use of twenty cattle, twenty hogs, two “good plough horses” and the “Negroes.” After Mary died or remarried, the enslaved workers were to be divided among Joseph’s three brothers -- David, Samuel, and William. Joseph’s household furniture was to be divided between his brother William, and his nephew John Shelton.³¹

It is not clear why Joseph included the clause concerning his sister, because Mary Truehart was dead at the time Joseph made his will. She had made her own will in Goochland County in November 1779, “being weak in body but of sound memory” and died in December. Joseph Shelton knew she was ill and that she had made her will, because he was one of her

²⁹ Inventory of Joseph Shelton, 1785, Louisa County Will Book 3, 95-101, Louisa County Microfilm Reel no. 21, The Library of Virginia.

³⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, 19 September 1777, Purdie: p. 2, col. 3, in Yocum, HSR, 25.

³¹ Will of Joseph Shelton, 1780, Louisa County Will Book 3, 29-32, Louisa County Microfilm Reel no. 21, The Library of Virginia, in Yocum, HSR, 26.

executors and witnessed her signature on the will. He also proved the will in court on December 20, after she had passed away.³²

Mary Truehart possessed a significant estate worth over 5,000 pounds, which included housewares, farm tools, livestock, and three enslaved workers.³³ She owned her own land, where she was living when she made her will, and left it to her grandson, Nathaniel Raine.³⁴

By 1782, overseer Stephen Hunter was living at Joseph Shelton's Hanover property, along with ten enslaved people, all of whom were recorded as being over sixteen years of age. There were seven horses and fifteen cattle on the property. In 1783 there were six horses or mules and 26 cattle on the property, along with enslaved workers, but no overseer. In 1784, there was no overseer recorded.³⁵

Individual enslaved workers (c. 1780-1784)

In 1780 Joseph Shelton identified the following enslaved people at the Shelton property in Hanover County: "Henry [ill] and his wife Sary and her increase [,] Bristol Parker a young fellow [,] Jane Solamon [ill] Moses and the children of Sarah above named."³⁶

The 1782 personal property tax record for Joseph Shelton's Hanover property listed enslaved workers Dick, Frank, Jane, Milly, Tom, Nat, Shadrack, Will, David, and Ned, all of whom were recorded as being over sixteen years of age.³⁷

In 1783, Dick, Frank, Jane, Milley remained, and were listed as tithable (over 16 years old). The names of Nat and David were scratched out in this category, and included with the younger workers: Tom, Nat, David, Sarah, Shadrack, Billey, Ned and Sam, were under age 16, and so not "tithable" or taxable.³⁸

In 1784, the list included Dick, Frank, Jinny, Milley, Charles, Shadrack, Billey, Ned, Nat, Dave, Sarah, Sam. Only Dick, Frank, Jinny, and Milley were over age 16.³⁹ At the time an inventory of Joseph Shelton's estate was taken in January 1785, Ned, Sarah and Sam are

³² Will of Mary Truehart, 1779, Goochland County Deed Book 13, p 15-16, Goochland County Microfilm Reel 5, The Library of Virginia.

³³ Inventory of Mary Truehart, 1780, Goochland County Deed Book 13, p 228-229, Goochland County Microfilm Reel 5, The Library of Virginia. Pounds, shillings and pence were commonly used currency in the Commonwealth until the early 19th century.

³⁴ Will of Mary Truehart, 1779, Goochland County Deed Book 13, p 15-16, Goochland County Microfilm Reel 5, The Library of Virginia.

³⁵ 1782, 1783, and 1784 Personal Property Tax Records for Joseph Shelton, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, 1782-1803, Reel 159, The Library of Virginia.

³⁶ Will of Joseph Shelton, 1780, Louisa County Will Book 3, 29-32, Louisa County Microfilm Reel no. 21, The Library of Virginia.

³⁷ 1782 Personal Property Tax Record for Joseph Shelton, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, 1782-1803, Reel 159, The Library of Virginia.

³⁸ 1783 Personal Property Tax Record for Joseph Shelton, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, 1782-1803, Reel 159, The Library of Virginia.

³⁹ 1784 Personal Property Tax Record for Joseph Shelton in Hanover, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, 1782-1803, Reel 159, The Library of Virginia.

missing from the list, perhaps indicating that they had left the estate, or they were not Shelton's property to give away.⁴⁰

John Shelton III (associated 1784; resided 1786 – October 31, 1798) Joseph Shelton died in September 1784 and his nephew John Shelton III inherited the house and property at Totopotomoy Creek. Twelve enslaved people remained on the property, although no overseer is listed. An inventory of the estate was taken in January 1785, and includes only nine of the previously listed enslaved workers. The inventory also includes horses, pigs, hogs, cows, cattle, tools, a grindstone, a table, maps, frames, seed, and fodder.⁴¹

John Shelton and his wife, Ann Southall Shelton, moved to the Totopotomoy Creek property around 1786, with their infant son John Southall, and Shelton's three children from his first marriage to Nancy Williamson. The older children included Robert (b. 1774), Walter Parks (b. 1777) and Eleanor (b. 1779). Shelton employed William Gilman as an overseer in 1785; that year he was taxed on six enslaved workers over the age of 16, with two workers under 16.⁴² At the time of his death in 1798 he had an unnamed overseer working on the property.⁴³

Shelton and Ann Southall had six children together: John Southall (b. 1785), Alexander Barrett (b. 1787), Phillip Turner (b. 1791), Harriet Ann (b. 1794), Polina (b. 1796) and Edwin (b. 1798). Polina Shelton died in 1797.⁴⁴

Shelton died in October 1798, leaving the Hanover County estate to his wife. He left debts and legal issues that his sons, his wife, and eventually her new husband worked through after his death. Documentation of one case, in which slaves were apparently sold for less than they were worth to the advantage of the estate, reveals that a man named John Trevilian, probably a neighbor, lived with Shelton at the time the slaves were sold.⁴⁵

The circumstances of the sale are not completely clear, but Trevilian's testimony in a deposition given prior to 1805 provides some information about the sale of slaves that took place at the plantation sometime between 1786, when Shelton moved to the plantation, and 1798, when he died. The slaves were being sold to satisfy a debt. The "negroes were set up

⁴⁰ Will and Inventory of Joseph Shelton, 1780 and 1785, Louisa County Will Book 3, 29-32 and 95-101, Louisa County Microfilm Reel no. 21, The Library of Virginia.

⁴¹ Inventory of Joseph Shelton, 1785, Louisa County Will Book 3, 95-101, Louisa County Microfilm Reel no. 21, The Library of Virginia.

⁴² 1785 Personal Property Tax Records for John Shelton, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, 1782-1803, Reel 159, The Library of Virginia and Yocum, HSR, p. 27.

⁴³ Will of John Shelton III, copy in RICH 7532, Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site (NHS).

⁴⁴ Victoria Toms, "Brief Genealogy of the Shelton Family," copy in Shelton Family Papers, in Yocum, HSR, 27.

⁴⁵ Deposition of John Trevilian, no date, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series III, Box 1, Folder 15. The deposition states: "Did you not live with Capt. John Shelton at the time the property was sold to satisfy Riddles execution ag^t the said Shelton?"

separately” and the sale took place about one o’clock. Trevilian reported that there were “not more than five” people at the sale, which was held at Shelton’s “dwelling house.”⁴⁶

When asked if there was a race taking place at the court house on the day of the sale, Trevilian answered “he believed there was something to do at the court house that day” but he didn’t know what it was. When asked if the negroes “sold low” he said he believed they did, though he couldn’t recall the amount. He was then asked: “What do you think Matt, Stephen, Mark, Squire, Peter, Jupiter, Hannah, Aggy, Molly, Dolly, & Keziah were worth at the time they were sold?” He was asked if he thought that the prices would have been higher if the people had been sold at the Court House “or any other public place,” and he said he thought “probably they might.”⁴⁷

Ann Shelton, a defendant in the case for which Trevilian provided the testimony, pointed out that some of the enslaved were “conveyed in kind for my benefit,” and Shelton had only sold his life estate in them. Trevilian acknowledged: “that there was such a deed of trust in which some of the negroes are included which Deed of Trust is of record in Hanover County Court” and that at the sale this was made known. Therefore the sheriff was selling only John Shelton’s “right or life estate” in the slaves, which did not include Ann Shelton’s portion.⁴⁸ This complicated transaction may have been typical for the Shelton family and their peers, as they invested in and managed enslaved people, real estate, and crops.

Individual enslaved workers (c. 1786-1798)

As described above, John and Ann Shelton sold enslaved workers named Matt, Stephen, Mark, Squire, Peter, Jupiter, Hannah, Aggy, Molly, Dolly, & Keziah at a sale on their property in the late 1700s. Children were also sold: “The other negroes being young ... their names and value are not recollected.”⁴⁹

Trevilian estimated sales prices as follows:

Matt 25 or 30 pounds

Stephen 30 pounds

Mark 50 pounds,

Squire 15 pounds

Peter 50 pounds

Jupiter 30 pounds

Hannah 25 pounds

Aggy 30 pounds

Molly 40 pounds

Dolly 40 pounds

⁴⁶ Deposition of John Trevilian, no date, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series III, Box 1, Folder 15. Ann Shelton married in December 1804 and changed her name, so it is assumed this deposition took place prior to her second marriage.

⁴⁷ Deposition of John Trevilian, undated, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series III, Box 1, Folder 15.

⁴⁸ Deposition of John Trevilian, undated, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series III, Box 1, Folder 15. Life estate means ownership only for the lifetime of the owner. Ann Shelton may still have had an interest in the enslaved workers and children that were being sold.

⁴⁹ Deposition of John Trevilian, undated, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series III, Box 1, Folder 15.

Keziah 15 pounds⁵⁰

Ann Shelton (resided 1786 – June 3, 1830) Ann (Nancy) Southall married John Shelton around 1784, and they moved to the Totopotomoy Creek property by 1786. Shelton died in October 1798, leaving her with five children under the age of 16. The estate was transferred to her around 1800, and she married Peter Foster, also of Hanover County, on Saturday, December 15, 1804.⁵¹

Ann Shelton, of the “B. House” was assessed \$10.12 in taxes in 1804. This covered three enslaved children between 12 and 16 years old, 11 enslaved workers over 16 years old, and one white male over 16. The white man may have been her son Alexander (b. 1787) or her son John Southall (b. 1785), or someone else.⁵²

Ann Shelton Foster lived at the Shelton House with her second husband, children, and other family members until her death on June 3, 1830.

Peter Foster (resided December 1804-March 11, 1833) When Foster married Ann Southall Shelton, she owned far more property than he did. Before their marriage in 1804, he was the only adult white male living at his residence, and he owned one enslaved worker. He was assessed 92 cents in taxes, less than a tenth of the value of Ann Shelton’s property.⁵³

After Foster moved to the Shelton property in 1805 (or probably in late 1804 after his December marriage), he paid a tithe of \$12.56 which covered 15 enslaved workers over 12 years old, and 8 horses. The Fosters always kept a carriage (worth under \$100), which was also assessed. Tithes at the Shelton property continued to be Foster’s responsibility until 1827, when Ann’s son Edwin Shelton took over the payments. Over the 22 years Foster headed the household, there were usually between 12 and 14 enslaved workers over the age of 12 on the plantation, and an unknown number of children.⁵⁴

The 1810 census records 22 enslaved people on the property, of which ten were children. Peter and Ann Foster, ages 52 and 50, lived in the house with Ann’s grown children Edwin, Philip Turner, John Southall, Harriet (only 14), and Eleanor.⁵⁵ Philip Turner and John Southall were over 16 at the time of the census, but were not included as tithable males in the property tax assessment, usually made in the spring, indicating that they may not have lived at the plantation full time.

⁵⁰ Deposition of John Trevilian, undated, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series III, Box 1, Folder 15.

⁵¹ *Virginia Argus*, Wednesday, December 19, 1804, p. 3, column 5.

⁵² “B. House” may refer to a brick house. 1804 Personal Property Tax Records for John Shelton, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, 1782-1803, Reel 160, The Library of Virginia.

⁵³ 1804 Personal Property Tax Records for Peter Foster, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, 1804-1824, Reel 160, The Library of Virginia.

⁵⁴ Personal Property Tax Records for Peter Foster, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, 1804-1824, Reel 160, and 1825-1840, Reel 161, The Library of Virginia.

⁵⁵ *1810 United States Federal Census*, Hanover County, Virginia, p. 53, [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010, accessed September 2018.

In October 1819, Ann Foster's youngest sister, Paulina Southall Jones, died while staying with the Foster's at the Totopotomoy plantation.⁵⁶

In 1820 there were 27 enslaved people on the land. Peter and Ann Foster lived in the house with John Southall, Edwin, and a white girl between the ages of 10 and 16. Twelve people in the household were engaged in agriculture, according to the census.⁵⁷ The girl living with the Fosters may have been Frances Bullington, whom Ann Foster mentions in her September 1829 will. She leaves \$25 to Bullington "now living in my family."⁵⁸

Phillip Turner Shelton, age about 30, died at the house in February 1821.⁵⁹ Phillip had inherited slaves from his father and the Fosters held them until they were sold by Phillip's surviving trustee at the Eagle Hotel in Richmond in late 1830, after Ann Foster's death.⁶⁰

Individual enslaved workers (c. 1800-1830)

Ann Shelton Foster appears to have retained ownership of some of the same enslaved workers sold in the sale recorded above. In her will, made on September 18, 1829 she bequeathed "Isabel, Cloe, Patty and her children, Richard and Garland" to Edwin Shelton. After she died, she wanted her son John S. Shelton to have "my Negro Aggy now in my possession." She had previously loaned him Agnes, Salley, Robert and Jane. Her granddaughter Harriet Ellen Shelton was to receive Dolly, and granddaughter Harriet Ann Shelton was to receive "my Negro Mary, the daughter of Cloe."⁶¹

She also loaned "my Negro man Rubin and my boy Henry" to her husband Peter, and at his death the value of the "property" was to be split between her sons Edwin Shelton and John S. Shelton.⁶²

Ann Foster owned additional people that she did not specify in her will, but that were to go to her sons John S. and Edwin. She also recorded instructions regarding her enslaved women: "it is my will and desire that the off spring of the female slaves herein specifically disposed

⁵⁶ *Richmond Enquirer*, October 29, 1819, p. 3, c. 5, The Library of Virginia microfilm #23a. Paulina Jones' home was in Henrico County.

⁵⁷ *1820 United States Federal Census*, Hanover County, Virginia, p. 30, [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010, accessed September 2018.

⁵⁸ Transcript of "Last Will and Testament of Ann Foster," by Virginia Toms, "Brief Genealogy of the Shelton Family," Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7532.

⁵⁹ *Richmond Commercial Compiler*, February 27, 1821, p. 3, c. 3, The Library of Virginia microfilm #23a. Phillip died on February 19.

⁶⁰ Bill of Sale, Will Byrd Chamberlayne, December 1830, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series III, Box 1, Folder 16.

⁶¹ Transcript of "Last Will and Testament of Ann Foster," by Virginia Toms, "Brief Genealogy of the Shelton Family," Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7532. Patty's son Richard was probably about five at the time Ann Shelton wrote her will. See below for additional information.

⁶² Transcript of "Last Will and Testament of Ann Foster," by Virginia Toms, "Brief Genealogy of the Shelton Family," Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7532.

born after the date of this my will should go with the mother and be held by the same tenure as the mother in each, and every case that may possibly occur”.⁶³

Edwin Shelton (resided 1798 - November 4, 1874) and Sarah Elizabeth Oliver Shelton (resided September 1827 – July 21, 1887)

Edwin Shelton (b. 1798) lived at the Shelton House all his life. It was under his ownership that the property was first called “Rural Plains.”⁶⁴ On September 4, 1827 he married Sarah Oliver, the daughter of wealthy Hanover County merchant and property owner Isaac Oliver. Sarah’s father loaned her land and four enslaved workers before her marriage. If she had children, which she did, she would keep the land and the slaves.⁶⁵

Shelton was a successful farmer, an active member of his community, and an officer in the Virginia militia. He was appointed a captain in the Virginia militia in 1831, and a lieutenant colonel in the Seventy-Fourth Regiment of Infantry in 1833.⁶⁶ Under his ownership he more than doubled the size of Totopotomoy property, increasing the holding to 893 acres by 1857. He also started a school for young women in early 1838, which he operated until around 1844.

Sarah and Edwin Shelton had nine children, seven of whom lived until adulthood. During the first years of their marriage, Edwin’s mother and stepfather lived with them and their growing family. About a year after Shelton’s mother died, he advertised the property for sale in the *Richmond Enquirer*, describing “a comfortable two story brick dwelling house” with the “usual out houses” which would include quarters for enslaved workers, farm buildings, and a barn.⁶⁷ Soon thereafter Sarah Oliver Shelton’s father died, leaving money and slaves to Edwin Shelton.⁶⁸

Little information has been located about specific furnishings at the plantation at this time, but it is clear the Shelton family was prosperous. During the 1830s, Edwin typically owned at least 11 or 12 enslaved workers over the age of 12, also four or five horses, with a carriage and harness valued at \$200. In 1835, the Sheltons acquired a “coachee” valued at \$450, and taxes increased accordingly.⁶⁹

⁶³ Transcript of “Last Will and Testament of Ann Foster,” by Virginia Toms, “Brief Genealogy of the Shelton Family,” Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7532.

⁶⁴ Yocum, HSR, p. 6-7.

⁶⁵ Will, no date, Isaac Oliver, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 18.

⁶⁶ Shelton Family Papers, Maggie L. Walker NHS, in Yocum, HSR, p. 32. See also RICH 6430, Edwin Shelton Commission, Commonwealth of Virginia Militia, June 7, 1833.

⁶⁷ *Richmond Enquirer*, July 17, 1831, in Yocum, HSR, p. 29-30.

⁶⁸ Papers from estate of Isaac Oliver, January 1832, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 18.

⁶⁹ 1827-1836 Personal Property Tax Records for Edwin Shelton, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, 1825-1840, Reel 161, The Library of Virginia. A coachee is an American style carriage with an open front.

At the time Shelton started the School for Young Ladies in 1839, he and Sarah had six small children, with son John Southall an infant. The school offered: "... instruction in every department of study usually taught in the best female seminaries, excepting Music." Shelton would accept some "scholars as boarders in his family." Tuition and board cost \$100 for ten months of instruction "including lights, washing, &c."⁷⁰ See below for further information on the school.

The 1840 Census records 55 people in the household, which included the Shelton family, enslaved workers, school employees, students, and others. The school itself was recorded in the census under the heading "Academies and grammar schools." In June 1840 there were 14 scholars attending.⁷¹

Shelton was involved in local education as early as 1835, when he was a trustee of the Washington Henry Academy in Hanover County.⁷² He remained engaged with the academy, serving as president of the Board of Trustees in 1866, when the "flourishing day school" would open new buildings, hire a new principal and take on a dozen boarders.⁷³

At the time of the 1850 census, Shelton owned property worth \$10,000. He and Sarah lived with their seven children, ranging in age from 21 (Harriet) to an infant, Walter, who was born in 1849.⁷⁴ Their daughter Rosa Isabella, born in 1841, had died in February 1843. Their youngest daughter Emma was born later that year. The Shelton's son John Southall died in September 1848 at the age of ten.

This census shows only members of the immediate family living at the house, suggesting that the School for Young Ladies had closed. Shelton owned 42 slaves, whose names were not recorded in the slave schedule.⁷⁵

By the 1860 census only three of the children remained at home with their parents: Frances, aged 26; Emma, aged 16, and Walter, aged 10. Emma and Walter had attended school that year. Shelton held real estate worth \$18,800 and a personal estate worth \$42,830.⁷⁶ He owned 37 enslaved workers and eight slave houses.⁷⁷ The large number of slaves owned

⁷⁰ *Richmond Enquirer*, December 30, 1837, in Yocum, HSR, p. 31.

⁷¹ *1840 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. Images reproduced by FamilySearch, accessed August 2019.

⁷² *Richmond Enquirer*, November 20, 1835, in Yocum, HSR, p. 31.

⁷³ *Richmond Enquirer*, 28 September 1866, vol. 1, no. 5, virginiachronicle.com, accessed August 1, 2019.

⁷⁴ *1850 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. Images reproduced by FamilySearch, accessed August 2019.

⁷⁵ *1850 U.S. Federal Census - Slave Schedules* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2004, accessed September 2018.

⁷⁶ *1860 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. Images reproduced by FamilySearch, accessed August 2019.

⁷⁷ *1860 U.S. Federal Census - Slave Schedules* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2004, accessed August 2019.

(almost four times the average number owned in Hanover County) indicates that Shelton was one of the wealthier landowners in 1860.⁷⁸

Personal Property Tax records indicate that in 1860 Shelton's household furnishings were valued at \$500. He owned a clock, a watch worth \$100, and held \$75 worth of gold, silver plate or jewelry. He also had two carriages worth a total of \$325. Personal property recorded for 1861 remained the same.⁷⁹

George H. Williams worked as Shelton's overseer in 1861.⁸⁰ Although little information has been located about overseers at Rural Plains, it is likely that Shelton routinely employed them to manage the plantation.

During the Civil War Edwin Shelton was in his early 60s and supported the Confederacy by supplying the army from the crops grown at Rural Plains. His property was damaged by both Union and Confederate forces, and he filed claims for losses of fodder, crops in the ground, wheat, hogs, carriages, tack, fencing at the plantation, and two enslaved workers.⁸¹

Shelton's claims in the autumn of 1862 totaled \$6,294. In May 1863 he submitted claims for the loss of three horses and a mule. He claimed two horses were valued at \$3,000, a work horse was valued at \$550, and a mule at \$800.⁸² Property tax records for 1863 show that he owned 32 enslaved people valued at \$23,000 and other personal property valued at \$36,210. His nine horses, mules, colts, etc. were valued at \$1,800,⁸³ suggesting that Edwin Shelton placed a higher estimate on his livestock than the local tax assessor did.

Rural Plains was at the center of the Battle of Totopotomoy Creek, which took place from May 29 through May 31, 1864. A brief discussion of the people on the property during the conflict is provided in a separate section, below. Colonel Edwin Shelton was offered transportation behind Confederate battle lines, and left the plantation on May 29, according to the following account:

... Misses Fannie and Emma and Mrs. Shelton were unwilling to leave their home but urged that colonel Shelton should go. Preparations were promptly

⁷⁸ Joseph C.G. Kennedy, *Preliminary Report on the Eighth Census. 1860*. (Washington: GPO, 1862), p. 287.

⁷⁹ 1860-1861 Personal Property Tax Records for Edwin Shelton, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, Reel 559, The Library of Virginia.

⁸⁰ Ledger, page 28, Account with G. H. Williams, 1861, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873.

⁸¹ "Confederate Papers, 1861-1865," RG 109, National Archives, and "Claims for Damages by Federal Troops, 1862, 1864," Shelton-Winn-Oliver Family Papers, Box 8, Folder 30, The Library of Virginia, in Yocum, HSR, p. 33-34.

⁸² Claims for Damages by Federal Troops, 1862, 1864," Shelton-Winn-Oliver Family Papers, Box 8, Folder 30, The Library of Virginia, in Yocum, HSR, p. 33-34.

⁸³ 1862-1863 Personal Property Tax Records for Edwin Shelton, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, Reel 560, The Library of Virginia.

made for his departure, and having kissed his wife and daughters a sad goodbye, he entered the ambulance and was driven off.⁸⁴

It is not clear where he stayed during the battle.

After the war the value of Shelton's property plummeted. In 1866 he paid \$1.68 in state taxes, with his property assessed at \$1,000 in total value. His livestock consisted of five horses or mules, ten cattle, and seven hogs. He still had a carriage, an expensive watch (or one that held some value at \$50) and a clock. His household furniture was assessed at \$200 in aggregate, and he had kept some plated ware and jewelry. He was the only person taxed by the commonwealth in the household, although his son Walter was over 16 years old, and taxed by the county.⁸⁵ Much of Shelton's wealth had been in enslaved workers, which he no longer held. In the new post-war economy he had to pay workers for labor he had formerly received for free.

Shelton's net worth remained nearly the same from 1866 to 1867. It is possible that Wesley King, James Scott, Jacob Pryor, and Joseph Pryor lived on his property during 1867. The 1867 property tax records include the residence, employer, or type of employment for black males over 16, and show that these men either worked for Shelton, lived at Rural Plains, or both.⁸⁶

The 1870 Census shows Edwin living at home with his wife and his children Emma, Frances, and Walter. Walter is employed as a farmer like his father. The Shelton's had a black domestic servant named William Rogers, aged 12. The document mistakenly records Edwin Shelton's race as black, like the family in the dwelling listed before his. Shelton's fortunes had improved, and he owned \$7,000 in real estate with a personal estate worth \$2,500.

The next dwelling listed by the census-taker was the Shelton's son, Dr. Edwin Turner Shelton, one and one-half miles away by road. E.T. Shelton lived with his wife, four children, and a young black woman servant. Next to him was James Scott and his family, followed by Sperry and Cloe Shine, who worked for Shelton. Shelton owned the Shine's house. (See the section on paid labor, below.) Joseph Pryor lived with the Shine family.⁸⁷

Edwin Shelton died on November 4, 1874 and left his wife Sarah the use of the Rural Plains property for life. He included his livestock, farming tools, and "household kitchen furniture" with the property. The will required that their two daughters, Frances and Emma, and son Walter were allowed to remain living at Rural Plains without charge as long as they remained

⁸⁴ George William Beale, *A Lieutenant of Cavalry in Lee's Army*, (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1918), p. 159-160.

⁸⁵ 1866 Personal Property Tax Records for Edwin Shelton, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, Reel 559, The Library of Virginia.

⁸⁶ 1867 Personal Property Tax Records, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, Reel 559, The Library of Virginia.

⁸⁷ 1870 *United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. Images reproduced by FamilySearch.

single.⁸⁸ When Sarah Shelton's taxes were assessed the following year, there were no male tithables (white or black men over the age of 21) living at Rural Plains.⁸⁹

Sarah's son Walter married Roberta Winn in 1876, and became responsible for the taxes on the property. Sarah Shelton remained at Rural Plains until her death in 1887.

Students and others (1838 - c.1844)

Edwin Shelton advertised a new "School for Young Ladies" in the *Richmond Enquirer* of December 30, 1837. The school was to begin January 15, 1838, with Abigail M. Converse as teacher.⁹⁰

Records have not been located for the school in 1838, but an account book provides names and attendance dates for students attending the school in 1839. The students include:

Miss Margaret I. Oliver commenced school, January 23, 1839
Miss Betty Thelman commenced school, October 7th, 1839
Miss Maria & [Ella] Temple commenced school, October 7th, 1839
Cornelia Werth commenced school March 17th, 1839
Miss Overtons commenced school January 21, 1839
Miss Sarah M. Gardner commenced school January 22nd, 1839, Left School
Miss Sarah M. Gardner commenced school again October 14th, 1839
Miss Martha Green commenced school April 2 [no year]
Miss Sarah E. Simpson commenced school April 9, 1839
Miss Margaret Thomas commenced school April 22, 1839
Miss Mary Clough commenced school May 1, 1839⁹¹

Margaret Isabella Oliver was Sarah Shelton's youngest sister, but no information has been located about the other students attending the school. Some of them returned in 1840, including Margaret Oliver, Maria Temple, and Sarah E. Simpson. Henrietta Jones and Thomasina Winston also attended the academy sometime during 1839-1840.⁹²

Shelton kept lists of the school supplies, clothing, and other expenses that the students incurred while at his school. See the Historic Furnishings section, below, for additional information.

On November 5, 1839, Shelton noted that "Dick Howard and family commenced boarding."⁹³ Nothing further is known about the family, or how long they stayed at Rural Plains.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Hanover County Will Book 3, p. 486-88, in Yocum, HSR, p. 47.

⁸⁹ 1875 Personal Property Tax Records, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, Reel 998, The Library of Virginia.

⁹⁰ *Richmond Enquirer*, December 30, 1837, in Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 21. See also *Richmond Enquirer*, 5 January, 1839, vol. 35, no. 69, virginiachronicle.com, accessed August 1, 2019.

⁹¹ Account Book, 1839-1840, catalog #3666, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 31.

⁹² Account Book, 1839-1840, catalog #3666, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 31.

⁹³ Account Book, 1839-1840, catalog #3666, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 31.

The 1840 census records a total of 55 people in the Shelton household. There were 34 enslaved individuals, ranging in age from children under the age of ten to a woman over age 55.⁹⁵ There was also a free black woman in the household, aged 24-35.⁹⁶

The twenty white people in the household included Edwin and Sarah Shelton, with their six children. The remaining twelve people were:

- 1 white male under 5
- 1 white male 20-29
- 3 white females 5-9
- 1 white female 10-14
- 3 white females 15-19
- 3 white females 20-29

Two people were employed in professions, which may have been two white women teaching at the school. The census was taken in June, so the 10-month school was in session at that time, and there were as many as 7 female scholars. The additional white woman, and the white man and boy may have been visiting friends or relatives, or an overseer and family. Twenty-two people in the household were employed in agriculture.⁹⁷

For the year beginning in January 1842, the school was “under the direction of Miss Betsey A. Parsons,” with instruction covering “every department of study usually taught in the best female schools.” Latin, French and music lessons were available for an additional charge. Shelton would “receive a few additional scholars as boarders in his family.”⁹⁸

Edwin Shelton advertised in the *Richmond Enquirer* beginning in late 1842 for the school year beginning in January 1843:

The School for Young Ladies, at my residence in the county of Hanover, about 11 miles from the city of Richmond, will be continued the ensuing year under the direction of Miss A. F. Barnard an approved Teacher who is well qualified to give instruction in the various departments of study usually taught in the best Female Schools. The subscriber will receive a few additional scholars as boarders in his

⁹⁴ The 1840 Census records a Richard Howard living in Hanover County with three children and 18 slaves at his residence, but this may not be the same Howard family. See *1840 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Images reproduced by FamilySearch. Accessed April 2019.

⁹⁵ Edwin Shelton was responsible for an older woman named Judy, but it is not certain that she lived on his property. In 1834 he paid James Oliver [his brother-in-law?] \$25 “in full for the support of an old negro woman named Judy the last year belonging to the estate of Isaac Oliver decd.” See Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 18.

⁹⁶ *1840 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Images reproduced by FamilySearch. Accessed April 2019.

⁹⁷ *1840 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Images reproduced by FamilySearch. Accessed April 2019.

⁹⁸ *Richmond Enquirer*, 16 December 1841, vol. 38, no. 65, <https://virginiachronicle.com>, accessed August 1, 2019.

family [,] strict attention will be paid to their moral as well as their intellectual improvement. The health, character and state of society in his neighborhood render his situation an eligible one for those parents or guardians who wish to educate their daughters or wards abroad. The scholastic term will embrace 10 months commencing the 10th of January and closing the 15th of December with a months vacation in the summer. Terms – Board and Tuition including lights, washing &c \$105 for the scholastic year of ten months. There will be an extra charge for French \$5, drawing \$5, Worsted and Wax flowers \$1.50 and Needle work \$5.

If it should be the wish of the patrons of the School that Music should be taught, a competent Teacher will be obtained.⁹⁹

Miss Barnard stayed on to teach in 1844, when the school's offerings and tuition rates remained essentially the same.¹⁰⁰

Individual enslaved workers (c.1830-1865)

Before her marriage, Sarah Oliver owned Mehala, Daniel, Zekiel and Edmond, who were given to her by her father. If Mehala had children, Sarah Oliver would own them as well.¹⁰¹

At his marriage to Sarah Oliver, Shelton's father-in-law gave him "a negro woman named Delphia and her three children, Charles, Frank & Easter [,] & a negro man named Davy." Shelton also received "a negro girl named Mahala that was given to Sarah by her Grandfather Benjamin Oliver."¹⁰² It is not clear whether "Mahala" is the same woman as "Mehala" given to Sarah by her father.

Edwin Shelton also owned "a negro Girl named Matilda," whom he hired out to John Barker for the year 1828. At the end of the year Barker agreed to return Matilda "Well clothed with a Blankett [sic]."¹⁰³

In 1831, Sarah's father died, and the following spring his property was divided among his heirs. Isaac Oliver had owned slaves with a total value of \$9,030. The primary heirs were Oliver's wife, Ann, his oldest son John, and Edwin Shelton, who was also made guardian of Sarah's six younger siblings. The slaves were divided as equally as possible between them, with cash paid to make up the difference where necessary.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Advertisement for Female School by Edwin Shelton, Nov. 15, 1842, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 33. See also *Richmond Enquirer*, 24 January 1843, vol. 39, no. 81, <https://virginiachronicle.com>, accessed August 1, 2019.

¹⁰⁰ *Richmond Enquirer*, 2 January 1844, vol. 40, no. 71, <https://virginiachronicle.com>, accessed August 1, 2019.

¹⁰¹ Will, no date, Isaac Oliver, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 18.

¹⁰² Receipt, September 24, 1827, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 23.

¹⁰³ John Barker and Elisha Jones to Edwin Shelton, March 8, 1828, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 21.

¹⁰⁴ Hanover County Court document, April 25, 1832, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 18.

Edwin and Sarah had been advanced five enslaved workers while Oliver was alive: Davy (\$200), Delphy (\$175), Charles (\$175), Frank (\$100) and Hester (\$35). At this distribution, they received Tom (\$75) and Daniel (\$50) to bring their portion to \$810.¹⁰⁵

On December 14, 1850 an enslaved man named Richard ran away from Rural Plains. Edwin Shelton advertised for his return in the *Richmond Enquirer*, giving the following description:

He is about 26 years of age, of a dark brown complexion, five feet ten or eleven inches high. When he left he had his face tied up, and his right jaw swollen. He is an intelligent Negro, and a very likely one.

Richard may have been Patty's child, whom Ann Shelton left to Edwin in her 1829 will. Shelton offered \$100 dollars for his capture out of state, or a \$20 reward if Richard was taken in state and jailed or returned to him.¹⁰⁶ The description provided by Shelton suggests that Richard was injured when he left the plantation. It is not known whether he returned.

Richard was one of 42 slaves Edwin Shelton owned as of the November 23rd slave census in 1850. The enslaved at Rural Plains ranged in age from 70 years to 1 month old, with ten adult men, eight women, five teenagers, and the remainder children and infants.¹⁰⁷

Shelton recorded a payment to a woman named Delphia in his account book in July, 1858. This may have been "Delphy" who Sarah Oliver Shelton's father had given the Sheltons when they married in 1827.¹⁰⁸ It is not clear whether Delphia was enslaved or free. Although the 1840 census recorded a free black woman living in the household, the woman was not included in the 1850 census.¹⁰⁹

Shelton also owned a woman named Ursula, "also called Lizzie," whom he sold sometime prior to October 1863. She ran away from the new owner who wrote this description of her: "She is of medium height, dark complexion, and had on when she left a gingham dress, with small brown checks, much faded."¹¹⁰

Edwin Shelton paid some of his slaves, though he did not record the reason he did so. An 1862 ledger entry records the "Amount of money given to the negroes" – Joe, Lewis, Dick,

¹⁰⁵ Hanover County Court document, April 25, 1832, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 18. "Hester" may also have been identified as "Easter", one of Delphia's children named above.

¹⁰⁶ *Richmond Enquirer*, 31 December, 1850, vol. 47, no. 70, virginianchronicle.com, accessed August 1, 2019.

¹⁰⁷ 1850 U.S. Federal Census - Slave Schedules [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2004, accessed September 2018.

¹⁰⁸ "Delphia Acct /July 1st settled with Delphia due her to this date \$2.90," Ledger, page 4, no date, though probably 1858, as suggested by internal evidence, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873.

¹⁰⁹ 1840 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Images reproduced by FamilySearch, accessed April 2019, and 1850 U.S. Federal Census - Slave Schedules [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2004, accessed September 2018.

¹¹⁰ Transcription of advertisement, *Richmond Dispatch*, December 4, 1863, page 2, in Shelton Oral History & Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS. Also, <https://dispatch.richmond.edu/view/secondary-section-view>, accessed August 2019.

Charles, Abram, and Woodson. The payments were made in November, December and July, and varied from \$2.00 to \$5.50.¹¹¹ Charles may have been Delphia's son, also given to the Sheltons in 1827.

Enslaved workers named Frank and Billy left Rural Plains when the Federal forces were in the area during 1862; Shelton claimed them as losses on October 3.¹¹² Frank may have been Delphia's son, given to the Sheltons as a child. Walter Shelton recalled that Jo, the Shelton's enslaved butler, left for good when the Federal troops arrived on May 29, 1864.¹¹³

Shelton sent "my man Leigh" to pick up a delivery in January 1865.¹¹⁴ Leigh Vincent worked for Shelton for pay from May until August 12, 1865, when "Leigh left."¹¹⁵

Federal forces (May 29-May 31, 1864)

The battle that took place at Rural Plains on May 29 and 30, 1864, part of the Overland Campaign, is described in detail in many sources, including the site's Cultural Landscape Report and Historic Structures Report (see pages 35-45). The use of the house and the furnishings affected by the battle are addressed in the section on Evidence and Room Use, below.

Alfred R. Waud (c. May 29-30, 1864)

Waud was an illustrator for *Harper's Weekly*, and sketched the Shelton House at the time of the battle. His drawing, titled "at Totopotomoy Creek, Va." shows the south and east fronts of the house, and is the earliest known depiction of Rural Plains.¹¹⁶ See figure 1.

Waud made a second drawing illustrating "General Barlow in front of the rebel works. 12 miles from Richmond," sketched from in or around the house itself. This drawing was published in *Harper's Weekly* on June 25, 1864, with Waud's description: "The sketch was taken from the Sheldon [sic] House, a mansion nearly two hundred years old, built of imported glazed brick, and occupied by a lot of women and children, who refused to leave, although fifty or sixty rebel cannon-shot passed through the building. They sought refuge in the cellar."¹¹⁷ See figure 2.

Members of the Shelton household (May 29-May 31, 1864)

¹¹¹ Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873. Note that the July payment was probably made in 1863.

¹¹² Claims for Damages by Federal Troops, 1862, 1864," Shelton-Winn-Oliver Family Papers, Box 8, Folder 30, The Library of Virginia, in Yocum, HSR, p. 33-34.

¹¹³ "A Mansion Rich in Virginia's History," William H. Shelton, August 19, 1928, *The New York Times Magazine*, copy in Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850.

¹¹⁴ Note, January 15, 1865, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 36.

¹¹⁵ Ledger, not paginated, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873.

¹¹⁶ DRWG/US - Waud, no. 563 (A size) [P&P], LC-DIG-ppmsca-21486, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

¹¹⁷ "General Grant's Great Campaign," *Harper's Weekly*, June 25, 1864, p. 410, illustration on p. 405, Shelton Oral History and Notebook. See DRWG/US - Waud, no. 260 (A size) [P&P], LC-DIG-ppmsca-21122, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.

In an effort to divert Federal forces from fighting around Rural Plains, Sarah Shelton wrote to Major General Winfield Scott Hancock telling him that she and her family needed to stay in their home. She said that aside from one of her daughters, who was ill (or pregnant) and visiting from North Carolina, there was also “the rest of my family (which consists of seven or eight females & three or four children)” sheltering in the house.¹¹⁸ Her letter suggests that in addition to the women in the Shelton family, there were several enslaved women with them. Walter Shelton, who as a young teen may have been considered a child by his mother, was also there, plus other children or infants.

It is unclear who exactly was in the basement during the battle, aside from Sarah Oliver Shelton, Walter Shelton, and Frances Shelton. Col. Edwin Shelton had been at home with his family, but at the women’s urging he accepted a lift from the regimental ambulance sent to remove them and was transported behind the Confederate lines. Lieutenant George W. Beale “followed the ambulance, leaving these dear women and their servant girl to a defenseless home and a gathering night of horrors.”¹¹⁹

In recalling the battle in 1926, Walter Shelton said he looked out the back basement door with his sister Frances, and mentioned his mother and “five sisters” sheltering in the lower level of the house. He said that at the time his “married sister from Smithfield”, was “about to be confined. She lay on a couch in the dining room and that was why my mother would not leave the house.”¹²⁰ Harriett Shelton Southall was Walter’s oldest sister and had married Dr. William D. Southall in 1854. She died at her home in Smithfield, Isle of Wight County, Virginia in October 1864, suggesting that she may have been very ill in late May.¹²¹

It is possible that Harriett Southall had travelled from North Carolina to stay with her parents in Rural Plains. It is also possible that Sarah Shelton’s married daughter, Sarah Ellen Shelton Southall, was the daughter confined at Rural Plains during the battle.

A second hand-written account of Walter Shelton’s experience, titled “Some facts given by our father” provides a slightly different version of the incident, stating: “My mother [,] my sisters Fannie [Frances], Ellen, Emma and myself were in the basement. We stayed in the dining room.”¹²² “Ellen” was Sarah Ellen Shelton Southall, who married Turner H. Southall in 1860.¹²³

¹¹⁸ Sarah Shelton to Major General Hancock, Headquarters, Second Army Corps, May 29, 1864, copy in Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 42.

¹¹⁹ George William Beale, *A Lieutenant of Cavalry in Lee’s Army*, (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1918), p. 159-160, Shelton Oral History and Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS. It appears that Shelton was driven away in an ambulance because the vehicle was available, not because he was ill or wounded.

¹²⁰ “A Mansion Rich in Virginia’s History,” *The New York Times Magazine*, August 19, 1928, Shelton Oral History and Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS.

¹²¹ Toms, “Brief Genealogy of the Shelton Family,” Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7532.

¹²² “Some Facts Given by our Father,” original account by Walter Shelton, transcript made by park, in Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 2, Folder 14.

¹²³ Toms, “Brief Genealogy of the Shelton Family,” Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7532.

When Lt. George W. Beale accompanied the ambulance sent to take the Shelton women behind the lines before the fighting began on May 29, he recalled only “Misses Fannie and Emma and Mrs. Shelton” at the house. They were “unwilling to leave their home.”¹²⁴

In a final account, the authors of the *History of the Ninety-Third Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry* described “the matronly Mrs. Shelton, her three daughters, one of whom was married, and some children and servants ... One mother had a baby.”¹²⁵

At least one enslaved woman was with the Shelton women and Walter in the basement. During the battle she left the house with a shovel of hot coals, which she threw on a nearby ammunition chest. Accounts of the incident vary widely as to the intent of the woman, the location of the chest and the explosion, and the resulting injuries. These accounts are included in Appendix A.

Paid labor (May 1865 – November 1874)

It is likely that African American families at the plantation lived in slavery until the war ended in April 1865, regardless of the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation.¹²⁶ Edwin Shelton began keeping a record of labor payments at Rural Plains in May 1865. In adapting to the new economy after the war, he began recording workers’ names and length of service in a ledger, now included in the park collection.

In his accounts for the summer of 1865, Shelton refers to most of his workers by their first names. Gilbert, Burton, Joe, Betty, Cloe, Abram, Peter, Robert, Charles, Edmond, Richard, Grange, and Russel may have been people known to him. But as the months passed, Shelton’s records indicate first and last names. The following men are recorded in Shelton’s ledger through the end of 1865:

Leigh Vincent
John Cook
Flerry [?] Scott
William Hott
Robert Burruss
Landon Brown
John Wesley
John Spurlock
John Green
James Oliver¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Beale, *A Lieutenant of Cavalry in Lee’s Army*, p. 159-160, Shelton Oral History and Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS.

¹²⁵ *History of the Ninety-Third Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry, 1861-1865*, compiled by David H. King, A. Judson Gibbs and Jay H. Northrup, (Milwaukee: Swain & Tate Company, printers, 1895), p. 459, Shelton Oral History and Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS. The statement that one daughter was married may imply that she was pregnant.

¹²⁶ See Brent Tarter, “The Abolition of Slavery in Virginia.” *Encyclopedia Virginia*. Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, 26 Oct. 2015 for more information on emancipation in the Commonwealth of Virginia. (accessed 29 Oct. 2019.)

¹²⁷ Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873.

Shelton's ledger ended with his death in 1874. It is not clear that all of the people that worked for him over the period 1865 through 1874 were formerly enslaved by him, but some of them were. Shelton charged his workers board, advanced them cash, and provided them with clothing and food which went on their accounts. In some cases, after months of work, the workers owed Shelton money.

Shelton consistently records the length of time laborers worked for him, but rarely refers to the type of work they did. Burton was paid \$4.50 "for cutting wheat" in the summer of 1865, and in February of 1866 Robert, Henry, and William were paid for getting 2,000 rails and ten cords of wood.¹²⁸ Shelton owned hogs, horses, mules and cattle and continued to grow crops at Rural Plains, so it is likely his paid laborers did the same type of work his enslaved workers had done.

Some workers stayed for only days, and others worked for Shelton for years. A woman named Agnes worked from June 29 through July 8, 1866. She began work "and got supper" and "Disengaged Sunday morning" when she was paid.¹²⁹ Billy James is recorded as working for one day in June 1866, after which he left, owing Shelton \$2.78.¹³⁰ Anna, Joe, and Solomon Pryor were hired as a family in 1866, and were paid together.¹³¹ Joe and Solomon were working at Rural Plains as late as 1873, although they may not have been continuously employed there.

Shelton eventually started recording the yearly or monthly wages he paid, and also kept track of days his workers missed, as well as money he loaned, or goods he provided. Some workers left to go to Richmond for a day or two, some took off to go to the courthouse, some could not work because of illness, and some took time to work for themselves. If employees did not work, they were not paid, and in at least one case they lost wages due to snow and hail.¹³²

Workers borrowed cash to pay for expenses such as wax and pegs (for shoemaking), a knife, trips to Richmond, boots, sugar, shoe mending, tooth extraction, combs, socks, fish – especially shad and herring, butter, flour, whiskey, potatoes, bacon, meal, leather, a coat, pantaloons, a jacket, a hat, and medical expenses owed to Shelton's son, Dr. Edwin T.

¹²⁸ Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873.

¹²⁹ Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873. See account for Agnes, June-July 1866.

¹³⁰ Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873. See account for Bill James, June 14-15, 1866.

¹³¹ Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873. See account for Anna, Joe, and Solomon, January-December, 1866. Joseph Pryor was 20 years old in 1870, according to the 1870 Census, making him around 16 in 1866. It is possible that Joseph and Solomon were Anna's sons, which might account for them being paid together as a unit.

¹³² Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873. See account for James Scott and Caroline, February 1867.

Shelton. Shelton sold his workers dresses, shirts, tobacco, a bucket, eggs, bacon, socks, shoe thread, awls, stamps and paper, hens, shoe leather, flour, and turnips.¹³³

When workers were sick, Shelton provided quinine, calomel and soda, and salts, all of which he noted in his ledger, though he did not charge for the remedies.¹³⁴

Personal Property Tax Records for Hanover County after the war record the residence, employer, or type of employment for all black men in the county. James Scott, who started working for Shelton in April 1866, is documented in the 1867 tax records as working for Shelton. He paid 60 cents in taxes. In Shelton's ledger, Scott is listed with a woman named Caroline, who Shelton also paid in 1866 and 1867.¹³⁵

Scott worked at Rural Plains in 1868, earning \$97.75 for the year. He continued working in 1869, renting a house and garden for \$2.50 per month. In 1870 he paid \$25 per year in rent. He is listed in the ledger in 1873 and 1874, when he worked for a salary of \$100 for the year.¹³⁶ The 1870 Census records Scott and his family living in the dwelling enumerated next to Dr. Edwin T. Shelton, Edwin and Sarah's son. Scott was 35 years old and a farm laborer. He lived with Polley Scott, age 25, who kept house, and two children, Isabella, aged ten, and Sarah, born in April, 1870. None of the family could read or write.¹³⁷

As described above, Joseph Pryor, Wesley King, and Jacob Pitman were also employed by Shelton in 1867, and are recorded in the Hanover County property tax records. They paid 60 cents in tax on themselves only, indicating that there were no other men in their households over the age of 16.¹³⁸

Pitman and King both worked for Shelton in 1866, along with James Scott, and Green Tiller. Jacob Pitman worked at Rural Plains on and off until at least 1872. Wesley King does not appear in the ledger after the end of 1867.¹³⁹

Spring Shine and his wife Cloe (or Cloy) started working at Rural Plains in May 1868. He worked for \$5 per month, and Shelton "furnish[ed] a house for his wife." The Shines continued working at least until 1870.¹⁴⁰ At the time of the census in July 1870, Shine was a 40-year old farm laborer and Cloe kept house. Joseph Pryor, aged 20 and also a farm laborer,

¹³³ Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873.

¹³⁴ Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873.

¹³⁵ Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, 1862-1863; 1865-1867, Reel 559, and Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873. Note that women were not assessed for county taxes in these records.

¹³⁶ Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873.

¹³⁷ Ancestry.com. *1870 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. Images reproduced by FamilySearch.

¹³⁸ Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, 1862-1863; 1865-1867, Reel 559.

¹³⁹ Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873.

¹⁴⁰ Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873.

lived with them. They lived near or next to the Scott household.¹⁴¹ Joseph Pryor knew the Shines as early as 1868, when he paid Cloe to do his washing.¹⁴²

By 1873, Solomon and Joseph Pryor had opened accounts at the store kept by Walter M. Shelton, Edwin's youngest son. Solomon purchased shot, powder, caps, suspenders, shoes, collars, pantaloons, matches, tobacco, flour, whiskey, [something for \$1.80] and a watch chain, for a total of \$8.83 on his account. Joseph bought syrup, flour, candy, sugar, lard, whiskey, crackers, meat, matches, a stamp, cigars, a bar of soap, a handkerchief, a bottle of cologne, and collars.¹⁴³

At the same time, Edwin Shelton paid for additional purchases for both men, which were charged to their yearly account with him. Some payments went to Walter Shelton's store, and some went to repay loans or for other services. For Solomon, Shelton covered purchases of a shirt, wine, cakes, candy, whiskey, cologne, sugar, cigars, and a blanket. He also paid a woman named Sarah for making clothes for Solomon. For Joe he advanced payment for socks, a shirt, shoes, and other clothes. Sarah made pantaloons for Joe, which cost 50 cents.¹⁴⁴

There were at least 31 other people who worked at Rural Plains between the end of the war and Edwin Shelton's death in November 1874, when the ledger ends. They include:

Robert Burruss
Betty Johnson, see below
Billy James
John King (also called John Brooks)
John Anderson
Ben Scott
James Hill
Adaline
Ginny Williams
Jane
Franklin Lipscomb
Thornton Peyton, see below
Garland
William Kemp
Frank
Harrison
Frank Wyatt

¹⁴¹ Ancestry.com. *1870 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. Images reproduced by FamilySearch.

¹⁴² Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873. See account for Joe Pryor, 1868.

¹⁴³ Accounts for store kept by Walter M. Shelton, 1873, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series V, Box 3, Folder 5. Solomon Pryor account, August-December 1873; Joseph Pryor account, March-July 1873.

¹⁴⁴ Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873. See account for Joe Pryor, 1873 and account for Solomon Pryor, 1873.

Robert Munday
Austin
Delphia
James Banks
Joe Johnson
Edmund Nelson
Cyrus Carter
England Nelson
Abram Nelson
Wilson Brown
Andrew Chamberlayne
William Roller [sp?]
William Carter
Edward Johnson¹⁴⁵

In 1870 Betty Johnson was 16, living with family in the same census district as the Sheltons, and working as a farm laborer.¹⁴⁶ She had worked for Edwin Shelton throughout 1866, for the wage of \$25.00 per year. In August, Shelton gave \$2.00 of her pay to her father, Richard.¹⁴⁷

Thornton Peyton, who worked at Rural Plains from January through April 1868, also lived nearby. He was described as mulatto, and would have been 21 when he worked for Shelton. He lived with the Jefferson family and others in a dwelling near James Lipscomb, a 22-year old white overseer.¹⁴⁸

Walter M. Shelton (resided June 1849 -- unknown; owned July 1887 - January 1903) – d. Jan. 30, 1932

Walter Mitchell Shelton was born at Rural Plains on June 1, 1849, the youngest child of Sarah and Edwin Shelton. He was just shy of his fifteenth birthday at the Battle of Totopotomoy Creek, which he witnessed from the house with his mother, sisters, and enslaved women and children. By the time he was 25 he was operating a store at nearby Rural Point. The store was independent of his father's business concerns, as Edwin Shelton testified a couple of months before his death in 1874: "I ... certify that the store that is kept

¹⁴⁵ Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873. Note that Sarah Oliver Shelton owned a woman named Delphia who she brought to her marriage in 1830. It is just possible that this is the same woman who Shelton "paid in full for her services" in May 1869.

¹⁴⁶ Year: 1870; Census Place: *Lower Revenue District, Hanover, Virginia*; Roll: M593_1651; Page: 34B; Family History Library Film: 553150, Ancestry.com. 1870 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. Images reproduced by FamilySearch. Accessed October 2019.

¹⁴⁷ Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873. Richard does not appear in the 1870 Census record.

¹⁴⁸ Year: 1870; Census Place: *Lower Revenue District, Hanover, Virginia*; Roll: M593_1651; Page: 34A; Family History Library Film: 553150, Ancestry.com. 1870 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. Images reproduced by FamilySearch, accessed October 2019. A man named Franklin Lipscomb worked for Shelton periodically during 1868 and 1869. See Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873.

by my son Walter M. Shelton ... all the stocks of goods of every kind in the store house belong to my son Walter ... and that I have no interest in the goods that is in the store house.”¹⁴⁹ The section above on Solomon and Joe Pryor lists the type of goods Walter sold at this store.

Walter Shelton married Roberta (“Bertie”) Winn in February 1876, and they had their first son, William Robert, the following year. Walter and his family lived at Rural Plains with his sisters, mother, and other family members. After Edwin’s death, his property was eventually partitioned into five separate tracts; Walter Shelton retained the land with the main house, and his sisters received the other properties.¹⁵⁰

At the time of the June 1880 Census, Walter Shelton was listed as a 31-year old farmer and head of the household. His wife, Birdy (Bertie) was 25, and they had three children: William, age 4; Olive, age 1, and Birdy, born in April. Sarah Shelton (age 70) lived with them, as did Walter’s sister Frances (Fanny, age 46); his widowed aunt, Mary Taliaferro (age 55); his niece Hattie Southall (age 21); his married sister Emma (age 35), and her husband, John B. Oliver (age 26).¹⁵¹

Three black servants lived with the family: William Barkeley, a 14-year old laborer; Martha Spearman, a 14-year old nurse; and Lucy Colts, a 25-year old domestic worker. Martha, who may have looked after the small children in the family, could read and write.¹⁵²

Abram Nelson and his family were enumerated in the dwelling listed after the Shelton House. Nelson had worked for Edwin Shelton in 1865, 1871, and 1872, and he may have been enslaved by Shelton prior to that time.¹⁵³

Next to them lived Joseph Pryor with his wife and child. Julia Colts, Joseph’s unmarried sister, lived with them, along with his one-year old nephew. Julia was probably related to Lucy Colts, who worked for the Shelton family.¹⁵⁴

Census information is not available for Hanover County, Virginia for 1890, so the configuration of the Shelton family living at Rural Plains is not known. During that year, however, Walter Shelton, of “Atlee’s Station, Virginia” applied for and received U.S. Patent

¹⁴⁹ Affidavit, September 4, 1874, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 49.

¹⁵⁰ Hanover County Deed Book 8, p. 264-67 and Hanover County Deed Book 12, p. 87-89, in Yocum, HSR, p. 47.

¹⁵¹ Year: 1880; Census Place: Henry, Hanover, Virginia; Roll: 1370; Page: 189A; Enumeration District: 067Ancestry.com and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 1880 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010, accessed November 2019.

¹⁵² Year: 1880; Census Place: Henry, Hanover, Virginia; Roll: 1370; Page: 189A; Enumeration District: 067Ancestry.com and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 1880 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010, accessed November 2019.

¹⁵³ Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873. See 1862 entry: “Amount of money given to the negroes”.

¹⁵⁴ Year: 1880; Census Place: Henry, Hanover, Virginia; Roll: 1370; Page: 189A; Enumeration District: 067Ancestry.com and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 1880 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010, accessed November 2019.

441,710 for a whip shield used to “protect from wear at the points where the usual socket comes in contact with it.”¹⁵⁵

The 1900 Census shows Walter and Bertie, by now married 24 years, living with their six children: William R. (age 23), Birdy W. (Bertie, age 19), Frances E. (age 16), Walter (age 14), Turner S. (age 12), and Emma R. (age 10). No servants or other relatives are recorded as living with the family. The younger children were in school, while William worked on the farm, and daughter Bertie no longer attended school.¹⁵⁶

Walter and Bertie were the remaining owners of the property after Sarah Shelton died in July 1887. The 1900 census indicates that Walter Shelton owned the property without a mortgage, but as outlined in the HSR, Shelton had used the property to secure a loan in 1886, on which he eventually defaulted.¹⁵⁷

Rural Plains was auctioned in January 1903 and purchased by Walter and Bertie’s oldest son, William Robert Shelton, for \$1,500.48.¹⁵⁸ It is not clear how William could afford the property, or where Walter lived after the sale. Walter’s wife, Bertie, died in July 1903 and Walter Shelton died in January, 1932.¹⁵⁹

Before his death, Walter Shelton, Sr. recorded memories of his experiences during the Battle of Totopotomoy Creek, including an account of events at Rural Plains titled “Some facts given by our father,” and a handwritten and unsigned description of the Battles of Haw’s Creek and Totopotomoy Creek, both found at the Shelton House in 2009. He also shared his memories in a 1928 interview published in *The New York Times Magazine* in August, 1928.¹⁶⁰

William Robert Shelton (resided 1877 – 1958; owned January 1903 – September 8, 1958)

William R. Shelton was born at Rural Plains in 1877 and lived there all his life. He purchased the property at auction in January 1903, at the age of 25 or 26. As noted above, the 1900 Census records him living at home with his parents, three younger sisters, and two younger brothers.

¹⁵⁵ United States Patent Office. Walter Mitchell Shelton, of Atlee’s Station, Virginia. “SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 441,710, dated December 2, 1890. Application filed March 5, 1890, Serial No. 342,775, (No model.)”

¹⁵⁶ Ancestry.com. *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2004, accessed November 2019.

¹⁵⁷ Yocum, HSR, p. 49.

¹⁵⁸ Deed dated January 22, 1903, Deed Book 42, p. 38-42, in Yocum, HSR, p. 50.

¹⁵⁹ Yocum HSR, p. 50. See also Shelton Oral History and Notebook, Edwin Shelton genealogy based on Bible entries.

¹⁶⁰ “Some Facts Given by our Father,” Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series V, Box 2, Folder 14; Walter M. Shelton account of war at Rural Plains (Untitled, no date), Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series V, Box 2, Folder 15, and “A Mansion Rich in Virginia’s History,” William H. Shelton, August 19, 1928, *The New York Times Magazine*, Shelton Oral History and Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS.

By 1910, Shelton's mother was deceased, his father and brothers had moved away, and he lived at Rural Plains with his three sisters and several farm hands. His age was recorded erroneously as 22 in the 1910 Census; he was actually 33. His oldest sister, Birdy (or Bertie) age 27 or 29, was a teacher in the public school system, and his two younger sisters, Fannie (26), and Emma (18) were not employed outside the home.¹⁶¹

There were three young black farm hands also in the household – Buck Underwood, aged 23; Leroy Appleton, aged 14, and Mancha Napper [sp?], aged 18. All the residents at Rural Plains were English speakers, and all were born in Virginia.¹⁶²

William Shelton married Maud Greenlee in June 1915, and their daughter Mary Winn was born in 1916. William Robert Shelton, Jr. was born in 1920.¹⁶³

The 1920 Census, taken in early January, records William R. Shelton, age 43, as a “general farmer” and head of the household. The household includes only his wife Maud, age 34, and their three-year old daughter, Mary Winn. William Junior was born later that year. There were no household servants or farm workers living at Rural Plains at the time of the census.¹⁶⁴

William's sisters Bertie, Frances, and Emma had moved to East Franklin Street in Richmond by January 1920. Bertie Shelton worked as a stenographer, and Frances worked retouching photographs.¹⁶⁵

William R. Shelton served as Chairman of the Hanover County Board of Supervisors as early as 1914 and continued to serve at least until 1923. He was involved with his community, holding memberships in the Farm Bureau and Ruritan Club, and the Virginia Nursery Association. He also served as the chairman of the Democratic committee for his precinct.¹⁶⁶

Shelton farmed the Rural Plains property through the mid-1920s, but records of any employees or hired workers have not been located. William Shelton, Jr. recalled: “My father

¹⁶¹ Ancestry.com. *1910 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2006, accessed November 2019.

¹⁶² Ancestry.com. *1910 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2006, accessed November 2019.

¹⁶³ “A Guide to the Shelton-Winn-Oliver Family Papers, 1764-1965”, Accession number 42149, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

¹⁶⁴ Year: 1920; Census Place: *Henry, Hanover, Virginia*; Roll: *T625_1889*; Page: *2B*; Enumeration District: 35, in Ancestry.com. *1920 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Images reproduced by FamilySearch. Accessed November 2019.

¹⁶⁵ Year: 1920; Census Place: *Richmond Madison Ward, Richmond (Independent City), Virginia*; Roll: *T625_1911*; Page: *6B*; Enumeration District: *148*, Ancestry.com. *1920 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Images reproduced by FamilySearch. Accessed November 2019.

¹⁶⁶ “2,500 Witness Unveiling of Hanover's Monument ‘To Her Confederate soldiers and to her noble women who loved them,’” *Hanover Progress*, Ashland, VA, August 28, 2914, Shelton Family Papers, Newspapers 1882-1931, and William R. Shelton obituary, Shelton Family Papers, Newspapers XXXX

used to be a farmer, a truck farmer, before he went in the nursery business. And I've helped put as many as three thousand bushels of potatoes in the basement."¹⁶⁷

In 1927, William and Maud Shelton started a commercial nursery at Rural Plains, specializing in holly and boxwoods. They were successful in their business, working with eminent landscape designers Arthur Shurcliff and Charles Gillette.¹⁶⁸ During their ownership of the property they also made significant improvements to the house, including replacing the roof, installing electricity and a furnace, and adding a bathroom.¹⁶⁹

William and Maud's ownership came during a period of increased interest in and commemoration of Virginia history. Rural Plains became a destination for visitors interested in the history of the house, and in the family connection to Patrick Henry. The Sheltons typically welcomed the tourists. According to their son, "The highest number in one day was 50, before the [second world] war."¹⁷⁰

Maud Shelton died at Rural Plains in 1949, and William R. Shelton, Sr. died in 1958. According to an undated article in the Shelton Family papers "... the funeral of William Robert Shelton (1877-1958) named for a Civil War colonel and relative, was preached in the same parlor [at Shelton House] according to his last wishes."¹⁷¹ William R. and Maud Shelton left the house and the nursery business to their two children, who were unmarried at the time of William Shelton's death.

Mary Winn Shelton (resided 1916-1967; owned 1958-1967) and William R. Shelton, Jr. (resided 1920-2006; owned 1958-2000)

Mary Winn Shelton lived at Rural Plains all her life, although according to the 1940 census, she had attended two years of college. She did not work outside the home, and was classified as an "unpaid family worker" in the census.¹⁷² She was interested in family and local history and was active in history and genealogical organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, the Colonial Dames, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy. She died at home in February 1967.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁷ Transcript of oral history conducted with Mr. William Shelton, June 24, 2005, by David Ruth and Robert E. L. Krick, Richmond National Battlefield Park, in Shelton Oral History and Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS.

¹⁶⁸ Shurcliff was the landscape architect for Colonial Williamsburg. See John Hammond, Cultural Landscape Report for Rural Plains, Richmond National Battlefield Park, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, 2016.

¹⁶⁹ Yocum, HSR, p. 52, and 119-120.

¹⁷⁰ "300 Years in One House," Evelyn Hughes, *Richmond Times-Dispatch Magazine*, September 10, 1950, p. 6, Shelton Family Papers.

¹⁷¹ "'No Time' to Answer the Numerous Requests," undated article, publication unknown, Shelton Family Papers – Newspapers 1960-1985.

¹⁷² Year: 1940; Census Place: Henry, Hanover, Virginia; Roll: m-t0627-04268; Page: 22B; Enumeration District: 43-14. Ancestry.com. 1940 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012, accessed November 2019.

¹⁷³ *Herald Progress*, Ashland, Virginia, February 16, 1967, Shelton Family Papers – Newspapers 1960-1985..

During Mary Winn and William R. Shelton's ownership, public interest in Rural Plains remained high with visitors coming "almost every day."¹⁷⁴

Mary Winn's brother, William Jr., also lived at Rural Plains all his life. He married Hollie Bailey Enroughty in 1961, and they continued to reside at the Shelton House. Hollie Shelton died in 2004, and William R. Shelton, Jr., known as "Bill," died at his home in 2006.

Totopotomoy Battlefield at Rural Plains Foundation (owned 2000-2005)

In 2000 William R. Shelton Jr, and Hollie Enroughty Shelton sold most of the Rural Plains property to the Totopotomoy Battlefield at Rural Plains Foundation for \$1.2 million. They reserved the use of the house and twenty acres of the property during their lifetimes.

According to the HSR, the Foundation was supported by the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, the Civil War Preservation Trust, the American Battlefield Protection Program, and Hanover County, as well as by Andy Shield, a local developer.¹⁷⁵

National Park Service (owned 2005 – present)

The Foundation transferred the Shelton House to the National Park Service in November 2005, with William R. Shelton retaining a life estate in the house and twenty acres of the property. Shelton died the following May. On June 1, 2006 the house and 124-acre property were added to Richmond National Battlefield Park. Some furnishings original to the house were purchased at this time, in addition to books and papers from the Shelton family. Following a number of special events, the site was officially opened to the public in September 2011.

Under NPS stewardship, research into construction and building materials was conducted, and the house has been stabilized. Shelton family furnishings and associated objects acquired by the park have been cataloged and stored. The Shelton Family Papers have been processed by the NPS' Northeast Museum Services Center and a finding aid was prepared in 2015. Research and restoration is ongoing.

Cultural resource reports listed in the Prior Planning Documents section on page 14 have also been completed.

¹⁷⁴ "300 Years in One House," Evelyn Hughes, *Richmond Times-Dispatch Magazine*, September 10, 1950, p. 6, Shelton Family Papers.

¹⁷⁵ Yocum, HSR, p. 65.

Evidence of Room Use and Furnishings

Wills, inventories, ledger entries, articles, and personal property tax records from the 18th century through William and Hollie Shelton's residency provide information about furnishings used at Rural Plains over the years. Accounts of the Battle of Totopotomoy Creek in May 1864 also include details about activities in the basement dining room and kitchen and the first floor parlor during the conflict. Excerpts from these documents, which include specific furnishings evidence are included below.

Joseph Shelton Will and Inventory

Joseph Shelton owned the Shelton House and property, though he did not live there. He bequeathed the property to his nephew, John Shelton, who moved into the house around 1786. He also left his nephew a third of his household furniture, which would have included furnishings at Joseph's "Home house" in Louisa County.

1784 – Will of Joseph Shelton, Louisa County, Virginia

Will of Joseph Shelton 1780 and 1785, Louisa County Will Book 3, p. 29-32, Louisa County Microfilm, Reel No. 21, The Library of Virginia

In the name of God amen I Joseph Shelton of Louisa County being in health and good understanding at present considering the uncertainty of human life make this my last Will and testament to dispose of my estate in manner following; ...

Item – I give to my brother John's son, John Shelton, Jr., after my decease and the decease of my sister Mary Truehart my tract of land in Hanover County on Tolapolamoy [sic] creek to him and to his heirs forever with all the cattle, horses, hogs and all other utensils and appurtenances thereto belonging.

Item – I give Sister Mary Truehart the last above mentioned tract of land in Hanover during her widowhood or during her natural life with twenty head of cattle, and twenty head of hogs, two good plough horses and the following Negroes; Viz. Henry Wh [--] and his wife Sary and her increase Bristol Parker a young fellow, Jane Solamon [--] [--] Moses, and the children of Sarah above named. But if my sister Truehart shall marry then immediately the above tract of land with all the cattle, horses, hogs and other appurtenances thereto belonging shall belong to my brothers' son, John and to his heirs forever.

Item – I give household furniture to be equally divided between my brother William Shelton and John Shelton and my brother John's son.

...

Item – It is my will also that in case my brothers sons, John and William Shelton Jr., should either of them die before marriage or without issue then the above legacy left

to one shall fall to the other brother. And should both die without such lawful issue of marriage then the legacy left them shall be equally divided between my 3 brothers David, Samuel and William Shelton and their heirs forever.

...

In witness whereof I have her unto set my hand and seal this 20th day of September 1784

Joseph Shelton

1785 – Inventory of Joseph Shelton, Louisa County, Virginia

Inventory of Joseph Shelton 1780 and 1785, Louisa County Will Book 3, p. 95-101, Louisa County Microfilm, Reel No. 21, The Library of Virginia

Inventory of that part of the Estate of Joseph Shelton deceased Which is in the County of Hanover

Negros Dick £80 Frank £70

Charles £65 Milley £75 Jenny £75

Shadrach £37:10 Nat £40

Billey £25 David £30

1 Bay Horse £9: 1 Sorrel Mare £8

2 Sows & pigs 6 [shillings] 7 Hogs £8:15

8 Shoats 30 [shillings] 1 Cow & Calf 60 [shillings]

8 Cows £ 20 4 Steers [?] £12

1 Bull 60 11 Yearlings Cattle £5:10

1 Wheat fan

1 pr Cart wheels & Gear [?] 1 pr do & Harness 100/

1 Grind Stone 6/ 1 pot & 2 pr Hooks 5/

a parcel plantation Tools 28/

2 Cow Hides [?]/ 6 Casks 18/

2 Brass Locks 12/

1 Walnut Table 12/

9 Pictures Gilted Frames 45/

16 ditto Common d^o 48

6 Maps different Kinds 18/

123 lb of Seed Cotton at 4/ ea [?]

133 Barrels of Corn at 12/

104 feet of Tops [?] @ 1/

4 Large Casks [?] fodder 2400 lb @ 3/

2 Small ditto 800 lb @ 3/

A Quantity of Shocks

Total 650 [pounds] 16 [shillings] 6 [pence]

Shelton's furniture is listed in the inventory section titled "At Home house," which was located on "the part of the Estate of Joseph Shelton dec^d which Is in the County of Louisa."

Household furniture etc

1 Desk £5 1 ditto & Case £10

2 Oval Tables 60/ 1 Square ditto 15/
 1 Looking Glass with a draw 25/ 1 d° 30/ 1 d° 3/
 1 Bed & furniture £8 1 ditto £9 2 ditto 20
 1 Doz Walnut Chairs £9:10 ½ doz ditto 25/
 10 flag bottom^d ditto 20/ 1 painted chest 35
 1 Chest 7/6 1 ditto 7/6 2 ditto 12/ 1 d° 3/
 1 Cupboard 60/ 1 Spice Morter 6/ 1 ditto 10/
 4 Butter pots 21/ 7 Jugs 25/ 1 pitcher 2/
 2 Jugs 6/ 2 Sugar dishes 3/ 2 China Bowls 12/
 2 Mugs & a wash bole 4/
 6 China Coffee Cups 6/ ½ doz Tea Cups &c (China) 9/
 6 Silver tea Spoons 20/ 6 large & 4 Small pie [?] d° 3/
 2 Glass Cons [?] & 2 Tumbler 3/ 1 Tea pot &c 2/6
 2 pepper boxes Salt Cellar & 1 Milk pot 2/
 6 Delph Boles & 1 Sugar pot 7/6
 2 doz Q.C. plates 12/ 5 Q.C. Dishes Sorted 15/
 1 Milk & Tea pot 5 Saucers & 1 Mug 9/6
 parcel of Glass Tumblers & flower pot 6/
 3 Tumblers 4/ parcel of [?] 2/ 2 Tucklers [?] 1/3
 6 Bottles & 1 Flask 3/ 2 Tin Canisters 5/ 2 d° 2/
 1 Tin Cullender 2/6 1 pewter funnel 2/
 3 pewter Chamber pots 2/ 1 Slate 1/
 4 Tobacco boxes 6/ ½ doz knives & 9 forks 4/
 2 Spectacles & cases 7/ 2 p^r Shoves & Tongs 10/
 2 Sets Razors Strop & Hone 18/ 1 Back Iron 16/8
 1 p^r and Irons 7/6 6 Candlesticks & p^r Snuffers 3/
 Chaffin dishes 7/6 1 Skillet 10/
 1 Copper Tea Kettle & Coffee pot 18/
 1 Copper Kettle 90/ 1 p^r Shares [Shear] s& 2 pr Suzars [Scissors] 3/
 1 large Iron pot 24/ 1 Smaller d° 12/ 1 d° 3/
 1 Dutch oven 8/ 2 Iron pot racks 20/
 1 frying pan ladle & flesh fork 5/
 1 Box Iron & Heaters 10/ 1 Tub Churn & pales 5/
 4 Large pewter dishes 24/ 5 Smaller d° 12/6
 2 Basons & old plates 5/ 11 Hard M[?] 25/
 1 1 Gallon & 1 1Q^t pewter Measures 15/
 Shot & Bag 3/ 2 Brushes 4/ 1 Horse ditto 1/6
 1 Mans Hat 35/ (new) 1 whip 6/ 1 Slay 5/
 3 ½ Yds Broad cloth @ 18/
 3 Yds drab ditto @ 20/ 2 [ditto?] Shins [chintz?] 10/
 2 Yds Shaloon 4/ 2 Yds Sheeting 4/8
 3 ¾ Yds Virginia Cotton @ 1/9 @ Quantity pipes 1/
 1 Bag feathers 15/ ¼ Yds plains 3/
 6 Yds U [?] Bedtick 21/ a Box with medicine 5/
 6 ^{lg} Castles [?] Soap 7/6 a parcel Books 50/

...

[Total of Plantation Utensils, Household furniture, Crops] £4143:6:6 January 10, 1785

Mary Shelton Truehart Inventory

Mary Shelton Raine Truehart was Joseph Shelton's sister, and as noted above, he made provision in his will for her to live at Rural Plains while she was a widow. It is not clear whether she ever lived there, and she died at her home in nearby Goochland County, Virginia in December 1779. The inventory of her estate provides comparative evidence regarding the type of furnishings held by members of the Shelton family during this period.

1780 – Inventory of Mary Truehart, Goochland County, Virginia

Inventory of Mary Truehart, 1779, Goochland County Will Book 13, p. 228, Goochland County Microfilm, Reel No. 5, The Library of Virginia

Inventory of the Estate of Mary Truheart [sic] dec'd taken and appraised this 14th day of Jan^y 1780

1 Horse 76 2 Mare Colts 145 6 Hogs 150 6 Sheep 60£
6 Cows 220 6 Yearlings 140 A parcel Blades & nubbings 55
Quantity & Shucks 67 945 Barrels Corn @ 25 per Barr^l 235
a parcel leather 5 23 plates & 2 dishes 52 5 Basones 32.10
6 Dishes 25.10 19 Spoons 60/ 15 Bottles 8 parcel Glass 30
2 p^r Spectacles 60/ a Box 2 p^r Studs & snuff Box &c 8
1 Box coperass & logwood 30/ 2 p^r Shears & 1 p^r Sezars 60/
1 Gilt Trunk 15/ 2 potts with 2 [?] Salt [?] 26 2 ditto 80/
3 Jugs 8 1 Coffee Pott old Reap Hook &c 26/ 1 candle box 14/
1 Stove & 4 Cannisters 30/ 1 Bar Iron 25 2 Caskes Tallow 12
1 p^r Scales 18/ 1 tub churn & some salt 8 1 Trunk & 2 chests 50
1 Chest Drawers 40 5 p^r Cards 23 a parcel Books 12 1 Tea Kettle 6
a parcel Earthen Ware pepper box &c 60/ 2 knives & 3 forks 30/
5 [?] flax 90/ 1 Chamber pott Flesh fork & 2 Ladles 100/
1 bag Hope [?] 12/ 2 ¼ Thread Knitting Needles & Cloth Brush 120/
1 Box Iron & Heaters 1 p^r Sad Irons 1 Candle Stick & Snuffers
6 Leath^{er} & 3 Rush Chairs [?] 1 P^r Rings [Tongs?] & Grid Iron 40/
1 Sive & Table 52/ 1 portmanteau 30/ 3 Cow Hides 28
2 Axes 7 Hose & 1 p^r Wedges 25 1 Side Saddle 25 [illegible item]
1 Tin Bail [sic] &c 25/ 1 Frying Pann [ill] 1 Curry Comb 60/
1 Pott & Skillet 60 2 Potts 120/ 1 Pott Rack 160/ 4 Trays & Sif 30/
3 piggons 1 pail 160/ 2 Powdering Tubbs & 288 [weight?] pork 172.16
2 Spinning Wheels 160/ 2 Barrels 1 Sifter & bag 50/ 2 Towels 80/
2 Table Cloths 30 1 Sett Bed Curtains 50 1 Feather Bed 80
2 Feather beds & furniture 365 1 Rugg Blanket & small Bed 30
1 Negro man Cook 1000 1 Woman Hannah 250 1 Girl Pegg 1500£
1 pewter Bed pann & 2 Old Books £60 440 Tobacco @ 25
[Total] 5449 [pounds] 1 [shilling]

Personal Property Tax Records

The Commonwealth of Virginia began assessing and collecting personal property tax in 1782, and collected yearly with a few exceptions until 1927. From 1930 through 1975 property taxes were collected every five years. Eighteenth and nineteenth century Personal Property Tax Records include the name of the person responsible for the tax, names of white male tithables (or those who were taxed) over age 21; the number of white male tithables between 16 and 21; the number of male and female slaves over 16 and the number under 16; the number of different types of livestock, and the number of carriages and other forms of transportation.

In 1815 the categories of taxable property were expanded, and the new categories included specific pieces of furniture, window treatments, silver, mirrors, prints and paintings, and glassware. According to The Library of Virginia Research Notes Number 3, this change was made to increase funding to the Commonwealth after the War of 1812. The detailed assessment lasted only one year.¹⁷⁶

By the 1850s a limited number of specific household furnishings were assessed. These included watches, clocks, pianos and harps, gold and silver plate and jewelry, and household and kitchen furniture, which was a single category.

1815 – Personal Property Tax Record, Peter Foster

Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, 1782-1875, The Library of Virginia

The 1815 property tax covered the following categories of furnishings:

Clocks

Made of mahogany:

- Bureau, Secretary or Book-case
- Chest-drawers, with or without desk
- Celeret or Sideboard
- Wardrobe or Clothespress
- Dining, Tea and Card Tables
- Bedsteads

Made of other woods:

- Bureau, Secretary or book-case
- Chest-drawers, with or without desk
- Wardrobe or Clothespress

Settees or Sophas [sic]

Chairs

Carpets

Curtains

Venetian Blinds

¹⁷⁶ The Library of Virginia, "Research Notes Number 3, Using Personal Property Tax Records in the Archives at The Library of Virginia," compiled by Minor T. Weisiger, rev. 2010.

Portraits in Oil and in Crayon
Pictures, prints or engravings
Mirrors or Looking glasses
Piano-forte, harpsicord, organ, or harp
Silver, gilt or pinchbeck Watches
Gold Watches
Made of silver:
 Urn or Coffee pot
 Tea pot
 Candlestick, lamp, Chandelier, epergne or girandole
 Pitcher, Tankard, Cup, Salver or Waiter
[Silver] Plated:
 Urn, Coffee or Tea pot
 Candlestick
Cut Glass:
 Candlestick, lamp, chandelier, epergne, or girandole
 Decanter, pitcher, bowl, goblet, wash-basin, stand or salver

At the time of the 1815 tax assessment Ann Shelton's second husband, Peter Foster, was chargeable with the tax for the Shelton property in Hanover. The Fosters owned two tables "whole or in part mahogany;" one mirror "one & not 2 feet" [in size]; two prints under 12 inches; two bookcases made of wood other than mahogany; two chests of drawers made of wood other than mahogany, and one clothes press made of wood other than mahogany.¹⁷⁷

Ann Shelton Foster Will

At her death in 1830, Ann Shelton Foster was living with her son Edwin and his family at Rural Plains. In her 1829 will, she left him enslaved workers, in addition to household furnishings.

1829 – Will of Ann Southall Shelton Foster

Transcript of "Last Will and Testament of Ann Foster," by Virginia Toms, "Brief Genealogy of the Shelton Family," Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7532, Maggie L. Walker NHS.

I also give to my son Edwin ... one featherbed & furniture in addition to the one already given him, nine table and nine teaspoons and one ladle all of silver to him and his heirs forever.

¹⁷⁷ 1815 Personal Property Tax Records for Peter Foster, Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Hanover County, Reel 160, The Library of Virginia.

Items acquired for students at the School for Young Ladies,

Edwin Shelton recorded charges for school supplies, shoes, accessories, and sewing notions he acquired for students living at the Shelton House during the term. He also advanced some of the pupils cash, especially when they travelled to Richmond. Shelton probably kept these records so that he could bill the families of the students at the end of the term.

1839-1840 Ledger

Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873.

Miss Margaret I. Oliver ...

Smith's Grammar

1 Bunch Quills

Miss Betty Thelman ...

Quire paper

1 Bunch Quills

Comstock Philosophy

½ Quire paper

Miss Maria & E. Temple ...

Bunch Quills

Quire paper

Child's History for Ella

Bunch Quills

Quire blue letter paper

Walker Dictionary

1 Exposition for Ella

Cornelia Werth ...

4 pair yarn socks

1 pair shoes

1 pair shoes

1 pair shoes

1 pair d°

Memorandum of articles furnished Miss Betty Thelman ...

One pair shoes

½ quire paper, ½ letter paper

Box wafers & pencils

Cash [.50]

¼ quire paper

1 bunch quills

One pair shoes

Cash [.40]

Bunch quills

Cash in Richmond [5.00]

1 yd cotton cloth
½ Quire letter paper
1 pair shoes
1 Feather Fan
6 yd calico
1 yd cloth
1 spool cotton & silk
Cash (sent to Richmond)
½ quire letter paper
1 nankeen apron
¾ yd black silk
1 ¼ yd Mull Muslin
1 hank silk
1 pair shoes
Cash in Richmond [.38]
1 Box Hook & eyes
Cash [lent?]
1 Mon[?] Breast pin
1 silver thimble
Swiss muslin [?] and spool cotton
½ quire letter paper
1 comb
1 Bunch quills
Pen knife and pencil
½ quire letter paper
1 pair shoes
Watts on the Mind
1 bunch quills
½ quire paper
Cash [.25]

Miss Henrietta Jones ...
½ quire common paper
½ do letter paper
1 Bunch Quills
1 Philosophy
Arithmetic
One slate
2 pair shoes
½ quire letter paper
1 pair shoes
2 collars
Cash in Richmond [3.00]
3 yds brown satin ribbon
1 pair shoes
½ quire letter paper

1 Botany for Beginners
1 Feather Fan
Part of roll of white satin ribbon
3 yd cotton
1 box hooks & eyes
2 yd [?] ing
2 yd ladder stich [?]
[?] pencil and leads
1 pair seal skin shoes
1 nankeen apron

Miss Maria L. Temple ...

½ quire paper
1 Bunch Quills
1 Phylosophy
1 Arithmetic
1 slate
Cash [1.00]
½ quire paper
One pair shoes
Cash loan in Richmond [4.00]
8 yd buff calico
2 ½ yd cotton cloth
2 pair shoes
Botany for Beginners
Cash
1 Quire paper
2 spool cotton
2 Bunches tape
1 paper pins
1 Fan (Feather)
1 box hooks & eyes
3 ½ yds ribbon
1 pair shoes
Cash [.25]

Ella Temple ...

Pair shoes
5 yds pink lawn
Cash in Richmond [.25]
1 Pair shoes
1 Bunch Quills
1 pink Bag
1 Pair Shoes
1 Pair shoes
1 pencil lead

½ Quire Paper
1 pair shoes
1 Arithmetic
1 slate
1 pair shoes
Hook & eyes
½ Quire paper

M. I. Oliver ...
Phylosophy
1 pair shoes
Watts on the Mind

Miss H. Jones ...
1 net redicule [sic - reticule]
Miss Williamson account for making my dresses
Cash paid Betty Thelman for you
1 pair sl[?] shoes
Miss Williamson account
1 pair shoes
1 copy book
1 pair shoes
1 Lead pencil
½ Quire letter paper
Watts on the Mind
Bunch Quills

Miss Maria L. Temple ...
Cash in Richmond [.38]
Copy book
1 Bunch Quills
1 pair shoes
Half quire paper
½ Quire letter paper
1 paper pins
Watts on the Mind
One pair shoes

Miss Thomasina Winston ...
Worcester History
2 ½ Quire letter paper
Bunch Quills
1 pair shoes
½ Quire paper
3 ½ yds cloth
1 pair leather shoes

1 strengthening plaster
1 Quire paper
1 pair shoes
1 Lead pencil
½ Quire letter paper
Watts on the Mind
Cash in Richmond

The textbooks Shelton provided for the students probably included these works, based on his notes in the ledger:

Walker's Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language, by John Walker and Thomas Smith, published in 1834
Comstock's Common School Philosophy, by J.L. Comstock, published in 1839
The Child's History of the United States; designed as a first book of history for schools, by Charles A. Goodrich, published in 1834
Smith's New Grammar. English grammar, on the productive system: a method of instruction recently adopted in Germany and Switzerland by Roswell C. Smith, published in 1834
The Improvement of the Mind: to which is added a discourse on the education of children and youth: and short essays on various subjects, by Isaac Watts, published in 1832
Botany for Beginners: An introduction to Mrs. Lincoln's Lectures on Botany, by Mrs. Phelps Lincoln, published in 1833
Elements of History, Ancient and Modern, by Joseph E. Worcester, published in 1836

Linen Lists

Two hand-written and unsigned linen lists are included in the Shelton-Winn-Oliver Family Papers at the Library of Virginia. It is not clear whether these lists were made by a Shelton family member, or by a woman related to the Shelton family by blood or marriage. The documents provide detailed information about household linens owned by a family of the Shelton's status during the mid-1850s.

Lists, dated 1855 and 1852

Shelton-Winn-Oliver Family Papers, Acc. 42149, The Library of Virginia

The account of Pillers [sic] sheets &c that Dear Mother made in 1855
December 4th 1855
Sheets on hand
 Fine
 6 wide Bleach Sheets without a seam
 4 with a seam
 4 that Ma gave me
 2 unbleached Domestic
 4 Trunnel Sheets
 5 homespun Cotton Sheets

8 old Sheets
2 Flax Sheets

Pillow Slips

Fine

5 pair of plane [sic]
3 pair of ruffle
3 old ruffel [sic]
2 pair of plane old ones

Bolster caces [sic]

1 fine

5 pair of cours [sic] / odd
3 old ones

On hand September 6th 1852

A List of Sheets

Pillow Slips Bolster Caces

Towels & Table Cloths

Bleached Sheets	10
Unbleached Sheets	19
Pillow Slips Bleached	12
Pillow Slips unbleached	15
Cut up 1 No 3 [?]	6
Bolster Caces unbleached	6
Towels Diaper	14
Towels Single S Cotton	6
Table Cloths Diaper	13
Table Cloths Single S Cotton	3
Home spun Sheets	5
Bolster Caces	3
Towels Single slayed Flax	8
Old worn out Sheets	17
Cut [?] & cut up	3
Old Pillow Slips	

A List of Bed close, Towels & Table Cloths made after the 12 of September 1852

1 Quilt quilted made of old calico
6 Bolster Caces of unbleached Domestic
1 callico Bed bollin [?]

November

2 cours [sic] cotton Towels

December
4 Flax Sheets
4 Flax Towels

February 1853
1 Quilt quilted cotton

March
1 Quilt quilted faces [?] old cloth

May
4 Sheets unbleached for Trunel Bed

June
Gave Mrs. Paxton 2 half Linnen [?]
7 Diaper Towels
3 Linnen Diaper Towels red border Bought

October
2 Twill cotton Towels
1 Foot Towel Tow
2 Cours Cotton Towels

December 1853
Made a feather Bed had 39^{lb} of Feathers in it

January 1854
2 unbleached sheets
2 Pillow slips unbleached
1 Bolster case unbleached

February
2 Twilled Flax Towels
2 Plane Flax Towels/gave Mrs. Paxton one

March
2 pair of Bleached pillow slips

July
4 Flax Diaper Table cloths homespun
1 Factory Towel

January 1855
4 Twill Blankets

March bought
2 Irish Linnen Table cloths

June
2 flax and cotton Towels
1 all flax bought Twill
1 twill cotton Towel
1 plane cotton Towel

September
8 unbleached Domestic Sheets
8 do Pillow Slips
3 bolstter ticks
2 Pillow Ticks
8 Bolster Caces

October
30th made up a feather bed put 42^{lb} Feathers in it had 4 bolster Ticks & 2 Pillows filled up

November
6 Flax Towels home spun

December
2 pair of Window curtains/White/Large
1 pair of Bleach pillow slips

March 1856
7 Twill Domestic Towels
3 picher Towels Diaper

June
2 bought White linen Table Cloths
2 pair of dimity Window Curtains Yellow Striped

August
1 White dimity bed bollin
1 underbed Tic

November
1 Quilt Callico new

December
2 new BedTicks filled put 37 ½^{lb} in one 26 ½ in the other
2 pillow Ticks filled new

1 feather bed Tick not filled
2 Pillow Ticks
2 Bolster Ticks

January 1857
2 Quilts 1 new & one old one
1 Comefort new
2 Flax & Cotton Sheets
8 do Towels
1 new Comfort
2 Callico quilts old cloth

February
2 Tow under Bed Ticks

March
1 White dimity Bed bollin
2 ditto colored, red & purple
6 sheets unbleached without seam

May 1864 Battle Accounts

During the Battle of Totopotomoy Creek, the Shelton House served as headquarters for Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock. Confederate artillery fire struck the house many times, and a shell went through a wall, exploding in the northeast first floor chamber. The following accounts include references to the use of the house during the battle, and evidence regarding some of the Shelton family's belongings.

“Some Facts Given by our Father”

Unsigned and undated account determined to be by Walter Shelton (Walter Mitchell Shelton 1849-1932), transcript by Park Historian Robert E. L. Krick; Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series V, Box 2, Folder 14

... Three shells went through the same place leaving an opening about twelve inches in diameter, one exploded in the room and a good many in the house during the battle. When the house was on fire the officers sent men to extinguish it.

My mother had a large chest filled with linen and blankets. It was struck by a shell at one end and went through the other and leaving the linen and blankets twisted as by hand. ...

General Hancock's head quarters under the front porch in the entry leading from the front of the house to the dining room.

The front yard at times was covered with dead and wounded. Also many in the back yard.

My mother, my sisters Fannie, Ellen, Emma and myself were in the basement. We stayed in the dining room. ...

Account of Battles of Haw's Shop and Totopotomoy Creek

Unsigned and undated account determined to be by Walter Shelton (Walter Mitchell Shelton 1849-1932), transcript by Park Historian Robert Krick, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series V, Box 2, Folder 14

... That night the cannonading was heavy at times. My Mother Sisters Fannie Ellen and Emma + my self were in the basement we staid in the dining room. The federal officers maid my mother have supper for them that night. I think there were 20 or 25 of them. The next morning when I looked out I did not know the place. ... The fighting commenced early the next morning and continued most of the day. The cannonading was very heavy most of the day + night. The house was struck by a good many shells + right many exploded in the house when a shell would strike the chimney or near by it the dust + soot would be so great that we could hardly breathe. Could not see their hands two inches off. Three shells went through one hole. The Three three [sic] shells only maid one hole about the sise of a pick [peck] measure. Could see in the room where each shell went in [ill] of them exploded in the room. A good many exploded in the house. My Mother had a large clothes chest abot [sic] 4 feet wide 6 feet long. It was full of sheets blankets & a shell struck it at one end & went through the other end. It wound the clothing like one had twisted them with the hand. The officers were very kind to us during the hardest part of the fighting they would send their men in the house when shells exploded to put out the fire. The house and things in it was on fire several times. Gen. Hancock was in command of the forces at Rural Plains. He was very kind to us. Tried to get my mother & all of us to leave the house. Sent [ill] to move us during the hardest part of the fight. But my mother would not move. Gen. Hancock Head Quarters was in the Entry leading from the front [of] the house to the dinning [sic] room. ... Sister Fannie + my self was standing in the door of the back entry one day whilst there were no firing going on. [account of enslaved woman and limber chest] ... The federals took all of our corn wheat + meat except a little meat we had in the dining room with us....

I do not remember the names of the men who garded [sic] the house. I do not remember what day of the week the battle was fought at Rural Plains. I do not think it was on a Sunday. ...

"A Mansion Rich in Virginia's History," William H. Shelton, August 19, 1928, *The New York Times Magazine*, copy in Shelton Oral History and Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS

'... My mother and my five sisters were in the house during the shelling – part of three days. My married sister from Smithfield was about to be confined. She lay on a couch in the dining room and that was why my mother would not leave the house. I saw General Hancock talking to my mother, urging her to go back to a safer place,

but my mother wouldn't listen to him. Befo' you-all came General Beal sent two Confederate ambulances to carry us back of General Lee's headquarters, but my mother would not hear of moving my sister. We were all in the basement dining room. The first I saw of the Yankees was the General's couriers racin over the strawberry beds in the garden. They brought the berries in to my mother who had them prepared before the officers came into supper. ...

'It was terrible on that second day. Shells were striking the house, bricks were falling from the chimneys. The house caught fire three times and General Hancock sent couriers up to put the fire out. One shell went through a cedar chest of bedding befor' it exploded. The roar of the guns was deafening; we could hardly breathe for the smoke. There were lulls in the cannonading. I was looking out of the south window just as a courier rode around the corna' of the house and a shell struck him The two parlors above us were used by the surgeons for amputations, and the yard in front of the house was crowded with ambulances coming and going with the wounded. One day the front porch was full of staff officers eating their dinner when a shell struck the roof of the porch and the shower of plaster drove them away. 'At one time General Hancock made his headquarters and issued his orders from the little brick passage three feet wide by eight feet long, under the front steps, instead of taking the dining room away from five ladies. ...

'All the books, the library, and papers, as well as all the family records and deeds at Hanover Court House were lost in the war.

History of the Ninety-Third Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry, 1861-1865, Swain & Tate Company, printers, 1895, pp. 455-465

"On reaching the Shelton House, a fine southern mansion situated on and overlooking Totopotomy [sic] creek, our skirmish line came under fire ... Several of us dismounted and passed through the spacious hall to the rear of the house While we were taking in the situation our attention was attracted by the wails of women and children, to the family, whose house we had invaded, consisting of the matronly Mrs. Shelton, her three daughters, one of whom was married, and some children and servants, all of whom had fled for refuge to the basement, and were now grouped terror-stricken, in the area way below the porch we occupied.

It was a scene that compelled sympathy, and awakened all the humanity in our natures. The young mother with eyes filled with tears held out a bright and smiling babe ... with the assurance that we made no war on women and children, urged them to go back out of danger, as occasional shots were spattering against the side of the house.

From them we learned that Breckenridge's Division was in our front, that Mr. Shelton who knew the general, had gone to ask protection for his family, shortly before our arrival on the scene, and of course, he was unable to return and rejoin his wife, daughters, and grandchild, who were now filled with the utmost

apprehensions, but refused peremptorily to accept our offer to escort them to some place of safety, in our rear. We carried beds and other necessities for their comfort into the basement, and barricaded the windows with logs completing a fair extempore fortification for the beleaguered family, which now began to look upon us as friends and defenders, instead of enemies. ...

On going to the basement to look after the welfare of our new found friends, Mrs. Shelton, with true Southern hospitality, offered to prepare supper for our staff, if we were content to accept what she had, and expressed regret for the absence of tea, coffee, and sugar. Sincere was her pleasure when we accepted the invitation [to supper] and produced from our haversacks, a supply of these luxuries. The garden had not suffered much as yet and we gathered strawberries, the cows having come up from the bottoms were milked, and we enjoyed heartily a dinner *en famille* the table covered with snowy linen and other garnishments to which we had long been unaccustomed. ... The dinner and after visit being over, we saw the family placed as comfortably as possible and withdrew to the shelter of the trees for the night. ...

[Shots fired at the house] but fortunately for the family, the range was above [the] floor, and none struck as low as the basement, where they were sheltered. One shell exploded in the “best room,” shattering everything breakable, and tearing into shreds the silk curtains of an old-fashioned canopied bed, but without setting it on fire. The women and children down stairs were completely unnerved by fright, and were alternately shrieking and praying. ...

In this engagement, Lieut. Hunt, of Ames’ battery, had his heel torn off by a fragment of a shell. Being carried to the porch of the Shelton house, he narrowly escaped being crushed by the falling of a pillar knocked out of place by one of the enemy’s shots. [He soon died.] ...

[The next day] A large group of officers was gathered at the Shelton house awaiting the baskets containing our breakfast, and wondering what the day would bring forth. The breakfast arrived and was uncovered, but at an unfortunate moment, for the rebel batteries again opened with a furious cannonade, and shot and shell again came tearing through the house, one shell with seeming malice coming out through the wall and casing of a window, almost burying our breakfast in lime, bricks and shattered glass.

[Author’s note: “The writer visited the Shelton family in the autumn of 1865, and was received most kindly and hospitably.”]

History of Battery G, First Regiment, New York Light Artillery, Nelson Ames, Marshalltown, Iowa: Marshall Printing Co, 1900, page 111.

Just as the battery was about to open fire, Captain [Nelson] Ames noticed that three ladies were sitting upon the porch of Dr. [sic] Shelton’s house, just in the rear of the battery. He rode up to the porch and informed them he was about to open fire,

advising them at the same time to retire to the cellar or to the rear, and thus be out of harm's way. [The women refused to leave.]

Rural Plains expenses, 1868 and 1873

Edwin Shelton kept track of expenses sporadically in the ledger that survives in the park collection. He documented purchases of food, clothing, farming supplies, subscriptions, and window shades in his 1868 accounting. In a later list, he records food, supplies, repairs, and payments made to his workers.

“Amount of money spent 1868” January – March 6

Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873

½ Barrel Sugar	9.00
Sundries	6.00
Shirts & draws	10.00
Waistcoat, trimmings for coat	5.00
Coffee, Tea & Cheese Kerosene oil	6.75
For stove \$1 shoeing mules 1.25	2.25
One hundred and thirty one pounds bacon @ 15	20.15
½ Gal Whiskey	1.75
Nails pepper Spanish brown baskets	3.90
Thread bolts shoeing horse	1.25
Beef kerosene &c shoeing mule	3.50
Cash cloth & nails [?]	1.25
190 ^{lb} Bacon @ 14 ½	27.55
Wm N Bell ac ^t	19.25
Do	6.25
Dodo	[blank?]
Window shades	5.50
Subscription Enquirer & Central Presbyterian	9.00
Butter and Sundries	2.00
Plow & Plow [pints?]	7.50
Back band holter	3.00
Keg sugar & Fish	12.50
Paid D ^r Lumpkin single t[?] &c	3.50
Mending Breast pin &c	1.50
Rope & Bucket &c	3.60
1 pair Shoes	9.00
Paid Fleshman for cart wheels	5.50
Leather rains for wagon curry comb Tack &c	2.25
Cash paid for cutting wood	5.60
Cash paid 32 pounds coffee @ 30	9.60
Cash paid 50 ^{lb} Sugar powders &c	8.40

“Cash paid for Expenses 1873” July 28 - November 11

Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873

10 ^{yd} cotton @ 25 ct (2 spool cotton)	2.60
Sewing/Lining [?] for Girls	.67
Horse shoeing	1.50
Sack Salt	2.50
Turnip Seed 50 cts 1 Galon Whiskey 1.25 Guanno 5	[unclear]
Lamps 60 Horse shoeing 50 pd day hand 5.00	6.10
[ill] Greene 60 1 Gal Lamp oil 20	.90
Cash for cart saddle 2.50 shoeing mules 2	4.50
Cash paid for day labor	8.50
Cash pd Walter for groceries	8.70
Cash p ^d Jas Scott	5.00
Cash p ^d Andrew Chamberlayne	5.00
20 ^{lb} sugar \$2.66 10 ^{lb} coffee \$2.50	5.16
Cash paid for Bacon	6.17
Cash paid Solomon	1.00
Cash p ^d 4 ^{lb} sugar 12 ct 48 1 ^{lb} soda 9 ct	.57
Cash paid James Scott \$5 paid Andrew 6	11.00
Cash paid Soap 25 for shoeing 75	1.00
Cash paid Walter for old bill for groceries	10.00
Cash paid for Tea Mending tin 25 putting on shoe	1.00
Cash p ^d James Scott \$5.00 p ^d Andrew \$5.00	10.00
10 ^{lb} flour 55 shoeing mule 50 Kerosene oil 35 match[?] 8	1.48
1 Dozen Fish 15 cts To shoeing mule 75	.90
25 ½ sugar 14 cts 37 “ 6 ^{lb} Bacon sugar 12 cts 72	4.29
Tining [sic] stove 2.70 Shoeing Boston 50	2.20 [sic]
One S[ill] 60 25 ^{lb} sugar 1 Gallon Whiskey 1 Gal Molassas	5.45
Cash paid to go King W ^m for Mary	.53
Cash Hooving 113 ^{lb} bacon 11 ¾ 13.28 Alkahol	13.48
Cash paid Solomon soda 14	4.14
Cash paid Charles Cook	2.00
To Barrel Flour 8.50 Ham 4.86	13.36
Sherriff fee 2.90 Clerks fee 50	3.40
Cash p ^d James Scott	10.00
Cash pd at the store	6.00
Cash paid Walter for William Dolly [ill]	1.09
Kerosene oil 14 cts paid Joe \$5.00	5.14
20 ^{lb} sugar 12 \$2.40 Mary Ellen 3.00	5.40
Molassas Kerosene oil Ginn [?]	6.00
	191.03 [New page below]
Cash for flour 8.25 Watch \$3.00 Groceries \$7.00	18.25
Cash paid Boran 40 cts Alspice 20 12 ⁷⁵ Bacon	4.80

Cash pd Walter for groceries & meat	12.05
Cash p ^d Solomon	5.00
Cash p ^d Joe	5.00
Cash pd for labour to get out wheat	9.00
Cash Ellen for Joe	3.00
Cash p ^d Jim for Solomon	1.50
Cash p ^d Jas Scott	5.00
Cash paid for flour & bacon	19.40

Edwin Shelton Estate Inventory

Edwin Shelton made his will on November 1, 1874 and died on November 4th. An inventory and appraisal of his estate was made on November 24th of the same year. The executors were his wife, Sarah E. Shelton, and two sons, Edwin T. Shelton and Walter M. Shelton. The inventory is described as: “the real estate directed to be sold by will of Edwin Shelton also of the personal estate of said Shelton, made by” his executors.

A sale of Shelton’s personal estate was held in early January, 1875. At the sale Sarah E. Shelton purchased items from the estate. The record of the sale is transcribed below.

1874 – Inventory and Appraisal of Edwin Shelton Estate

Edwin Shelton Inventory and Appraisement, Hanover County Will Book, 3, pp. 504-508, Hanover County Microfilm, Reel No. 56, The Library of Virginia

Land directed to be sold by will of Testator 3562 acres	1435.
Wagon & chain	5.
Silver ware	20.
Crockery	15.
Safes	2.20
Dining table	5.
Wash stand	.25
Washing Machine	2.00
Refrigerator	2.00
Churn	3.00
Candle sticks & lamps	1.50
Contents of store room jars tin ware &c	8.00
Old sideboard	.50
Kitchen tables	.50
“ dress	.25
Stove & cooking utensils	2.00
...	
Furniture in room No. 1	2.00
Book case	2.50
Table & Medical desk	.25
3 Tables in passage	2.00
Map	.50
Wardrobe	5.00

Bureau	2.50
Wash stand & contents	1.50
Bed & Furniture in room No. 2	15.00
Mantle glass	.50
Bed, bedstead & mattress	7.00
2 Carpets	5.00
Old furniture in store room No. 2	1.00
Washstand &c in room No. 3	1.00
Bed & 2 carpets in room No. 4	5.00
Bed & furniture in room No. 5	15.00
Sewing Machine	8.00
...	
1 Bureau & glass	2.00
Writing desk	2.00
Wash stand bowl, table & writing desk	2.00
Clock	1.00
18 Chairs (old)	4.50
Parlor Furniture viz.	
12 Chairs	10.00
2 Marble top tables	5.00
3 Stands	3.00
1 Sofa	6.00
Curtains	1.50
Shovel tongs &c	5.00
Pitcher waiter &c	2.00
Lot of miscellaneous books	2.00
.....	

1875 – Sale of items from Edwin Shelton estate

Edwin Shelton Inventory and Appraisement, Hanover County Will Book, 3, pp. 527,
Hanover County Microfilm, Reel No. 56, The Library of Virginia

“An A/c of Sales of the personal estate of Edwin Shelton, deceased, made by Sarah E. Shelton executrix and Walter M. Shelton and Edwin T. Shelton executors of said Edwin Shelton dec^d, on the 5th day of January 1875, on a credit of six months.”

...		
<u>Name of Purchaser</u>	<u>Article</u>	<u>Price</u>
Mrs. Sarah E. Shelton	Washing Machine	1.00
“”	Sewing Machine	5.00
“”	1 Bedstead bed & furniture	10.00
“”	1 wardrobe	2.00
“”	1 Bureau and glass	1.00
“”	1 writing desk	1.00
“”	1 Rocking chair	1.75
“”	2 Marble slab tables	1.00
....		

1899 -- Gift of bed, mirror, stand

Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series V, Box 16

This brief note from Frances Foster Shelton, Edwin and Sarah Shelton's third daughter, suggests that she may have been living at Rural Plains at the time it was written.

Alternatively, she may have left these furnishings at the house when she moved away. Fannie Shelton died in May 1904, at the age of 72.

May 29th, 1899

This is to certify that I have given to my nephew William R. Shelton, my tall bedstead and large feather bed [,] my invalid stand in the Parlor, my looking glass in his room.

Fannie F. Shelton

20th century -- Accounts of relics in the Shelton House

Many journalists visited Rural Plains in the 20th century and interviewed the Shelton family members living in the house. Certain family relics such as the early Shako helmet, swords, pistols, a sewing machine, and a large bed were frequently mentioned in articles about the house. Note that the age and provenance of the bed said to have come from England in the 1600s has been disproven.¹⁷⁸

RICH 7850, Shelton Family Papers, Series XIII. Newspapers and Periodicals, 1826-1993

"British and Federal Bullets Scar Historic 'Rural Plains'," Vera Palmer, no date, no publication, c. 1924

The sword and helmet of this gallant young [Colonial-era] Shelton used later by him throughout the Revolutionary War, may be seen any day at "Rural Plains." ... There are other swords and other helmets

"A Mansion Rich in Virginia's History," William H. Shelton, August 19, 1928, *The New York Times Magazine*.

The basement dining room was a centre of Virginia hospitality. Winding stairs came down to it from the hall above and here was a front entrance under the front porch down four triangular stone steps and along a bricked-in passage eight feet long by three feet wide, which led to the door of the dining room. The protecting wall of this narrow passage was four feet high, affording a view of the yard, looking out under the steps. ...

Colonel Shelton was one of the three wealthiest planters in Hanover County ... It was in the Colonel's time that the brick walls were opened for larger windows and

¹⁷⁸ "Family tradition has always stated that the bed was brought from England by the original Shelton family. I am sorry to dispel that tradition, but the bed is clearly not English and is an American style of Sheraton interpretation. The date is likely 1790-1810," Personal Property Appraisal, "Rural Plains," Hanover County, Virginia, for RICH 947, February 28, 2005, RICH Curatorial Files.

the woodwork was changed in the south parlor. A new mantelpiece was added then, a respectable one, but not so fine as some of the originals in the other rooms, with their dainty capitals to the slender supports of the overmantel. It was not a large house. There were thirteen rooms. The room behind the south parlor was the library and the front room across the hall was the state bedroom ...

‘I was looking out the back basement do’ with my sister, Frances, when that explosion took place. It didn’t do anything to me but it singed off Frances’s eyebrows. ‘My mother and my five sisters were in the house during the shelling – part of three days. My married sister from Smithfield was about to be confined. She lay on a couch in the dining room and that was why my mother would not leave the house. I saw General Hancock talking to my mother, urging her to go back to a safer place, but my mother wouldn’t listen to him. Befo’ you-all came General Beal sent two Confederate ambulances to carry us back of General Lee’s headquarters, but my mother would not hear of moving my sister. We were all in the basement dining room. The first I saw of the Yankees was the General’s couriers racing over the strawberry beds in the garden. They brought the berries in to my mother who had them prepared before the officers came into supper. ...

‘It was terrible on that second day. Shells were striking the house, bricks were falling from the chimneys. The house caught fire three times and General Hancock sent couriers up to put the fire out. One shell went through a cedar chest of bedding befo’ it exploded. The roar of the guns was deafening; we could hardly breathe for the smoke. There were lulls in the cannonading. I was looking out of the south window just as a courier rode around the corna’ of the house and a shell struck him ... The two parlors above us were used by the surgeons for amputations, and the yard in front of the house was crowded with ambulances coming and going with the wounded. One day the front porch was full of staff officers eating their dinner when a shell struck the roof of the porch and the shower of plaster drove them away. ‘At one time General Hancock made his headquarters and issued his orders from the little brick passage three feet wide by eight feet long, under the front steps, instead of taking the dining room away from five ladies. ... ‘At one time General Hancock made his headquarters and issued his orders from the little brick passage three feet wide by eight feet long, under the front steps, instead of taking the dining room away from five ladies... ‘All the books, the library, and papers, as well as all the family records and deeds at Hanover Court House were lost in the war.’

RICH 7850, Shelton Family Papers, Series XIII. Newspapers and periodicals 1826-1993
Article, no publication, post-1949 [after death of Maud Greenlee Shelton]

“On the walls of the parlor hangs a picture of Sir Ralph Shelton painted during the trial of Mary Queen of Scots by Queen Elizabeth. ... Souvenirs of all eras, including the modern, fill this house which is still owned by Sheltons, William R. Shelton, and his daughter, Mary Winn Shelton. For amidst the portrait of Elizabethan times, the Indian arrowheads from the Indian wars fought at the house, a bed made in 1635, a Queen Anne press and table, the table made by a Shelton who

was a student at Washington College (now Washington and Lee) and bullets and canteens from the War Between the states, stands a modern, wide-screen television set.”

RICH 7850, Shelton Family Papers, Series XIII. Newspapers and periodicals 1826-1993. Photocopies of news clippings

“300 years in One House” by Evelyn Hughes, *Richmond Times-Dispatch Magazine*, Sept. 10, 1950, p. 6-7.

“...it is full of many curious and interesting objects, along with some of the furniture which had survived the centuries.

A British officer’s helmet, captured by an ancestor of Shelton at Yorktown is among the prized possessions. There are a cavalry sword also from the American Revolution; old fox horns, cannon balls; old keys; swords, canes among other curious weapons; Revolutionary artillery; Colonel William R. Winn’s dress sword, used in the War Between the States; an old flint-lock dueling pistol; an old cedar canteen used in the Revolution and in which the odor of cedar is still noticeable; a sperm oil lamp in the form of a little five-inch lead figure (the man’s cap comes off in order to fill the lamp); an old ink bottle worn on the coat lapel; countless bullets and Indian relics; an old 1791 account book; a communicant card from Pole Green Presbyterian Church, destroyed on June 1, 1864 A valuable relic, Thomas Jefferson’s ‘Notes on Virginia,’ in his own handwriting, mysteriously disappeared from the top of the piano some years ago, Shelton said. ...

Pistols that [General] Hancock gave Shelton’s grandmother for her safety are in his [Shelton’s] possession now. ...”

RICH 7850, Shelton Family Papers, Series XIII. Newspapers and periodicals 1826-1993

“Rural Plains – The Home & Its Family,” Dan Norman, senior thesis for University of Richmond, in, *Ashland, Va. Herald-Progress*, March 10 and March 17, 1966

“Perhaps one of the most intriguing aspects of Rural Plains is the old bed located in one of the first floor rooms. This magnificent and extremely large four-poster was brought to America in 1635 from the ancestral family estate, Shelton Castle, in Norfolk, England. The age of the bed, however, can be traced back much further than 1635. Indeed, it is this same bed that is listed in the Domesday Book of the eleventh century. [The information about the family bed has been disproved.] Also in the home is found a Queen Anne Press which is very old. In the main parlor hangs the death mask of one Benjamin Oliver who was a great grandfather some five generations back. The parlor also contains a large grand piano which originally belonged to Dolly Madison, a cousin of Patrick Henry. Much of the other furniture in the house is Victorian although a few other items such as a Pre-civil War portable organ add to the list of memorable events connected with Rural Plains.”

RICH 7850, Shelton Family Papers, Series XIII. Newspapers and periodicals 1826-1993

“Family Home in Hanover Boasts 300-Year Tenancy” by Louise Ellyson, no publication, no date

“The living room, which for a while was a hospital for Union troops, holds mementoes of earlier times. A portrait of Sarah Shelton, 1754, a spinet played by

Dolley Payne of Scotchtown, later Dolley Madison of the White House, and an old family Bible are there. An account book with sums in pounds, shillings and pence is reproduced because the original, written with a quill pen, was given the State Library. ...

The Sheltons still have some of those cannon balls [from May 1864]. ... There are handsome pieces of furniture throughout the house, a Queen Anne press of walnut, a cherry press-desk, a 200-year-old table. ...

Shelton's mother's paintings and decorated china are set beside pictures carrying the date of 1791. One of the first sewing machines is in a room with guns and muskets, horn fox horns, an inkwell for quill pens and the leather helmet of an officer of the Revolutionary War. Spread on a 19th century bed is an unfinished quilt of unknown date ...

Swords from three wars, a man's cane with its concealed blade, a Colt 44, a boot pistol bespeak of varied forms of combat, as do uniform buckles, buttons and epaulettes. ..."

2005 Oral history with William Shelton, Jr.

Shelton Oral History and Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS

"Transcript of oral history conducted with Mr. William Shelton, last private owner of "Rural Plains," the Shelton House on the Totopotomoy Creek battlefield. The interview occurred on June 24, 2005. David Ruth and Robert E. L. Krick of the staff at Richmond NBP conducted the session at the Shelton House."

The first room on the left as you come in the front door [is called the parlor]. ...

Can I ask you just a quick question about the English basement? ...

[Shelton replies] My father said they ate in the basement. ...My father said his family ate in the basement. ...

Shelton family objects in park collection

The following objects appropriate to the park's interpretive period were acquired by the park from the Shelton family estate:

Catalog #	Object, Object(NOM)	Manufact. Date (when known)
RICH 6414	ANDIRON	
RICH 6415	ANDIRON	
RICH 6256	BASKET	
RICH 6278	BASKET	
RICH 947	BED, FOUR-POSTER	Circa 1840
RICH 6279	BELL	
RICH 6240	BOOKCASE	1800-1830
RICH 6297	BOOKLET	

RICH 6249	BOWL	
RICH 6257	BOWL	
RICH 6258	BOWL	
RICH 6260	BOWL	
RICH 6269	BOWL	
RICH 3672	WAGON STORAGE BOX, plantation-made	c. 1750
RICH 6255	BOX	
RICH 6332	BOX	
RICH 6277	BRUSH	
RICH 6280	CANDLESTICK	
RICH 6281	CANDLESTICK	
RICH 3663	CANE	
RICH 3570	CANTEEN	
RICH 6352	CAP, BOTTLE	
RICH 6288	CARD, TRADE	
RICH 6301	CARD, TRADE	
RICH 6302	CARD, TRADE	
RICH 6303	CARD, TRADE	
RICH 6292	CASE, BINOCULARS	
RICH 6354	CASTER	
RICH 6362	CHANDELIER	
RICH 3677	CHEST	
RICH 3680	CHEST	
RICH 3692	CHEST	LATE 18TH - EARLY 19TH C.
RICH 3687	CHEST OF DRAWERS	C. 1790-1800
RICH 6273	CLOTHES, DOLL	
RICH 6430	COMMISSION	6/7/1833
RICH 3685	CUPBOARD	C. 1790-1800
RICH 3574	CURRENCY	19th century
RICH 3571	DAGUERREOTYPE	19th century
RICH 3575	DAGUERREOTYPE	1869
RICH 3576	DAGUERREOTYPE	1869
RICH 6241	DESK	1800
RICH 3684	DESK, DROP-FRONT	C. 1840-1850
RICH 6272	DOLL	
RICH 6421	DRAWING	
RICH 3688	DRESSER	
RICH 3689	DRESSER	
RICH 6270	DUMBBELL	
RICH 6422	ENGRAVING	1791

RICH 6423	ENGRAVING	1791
RICH 6283	EYEGLASSES --EYEGLASSES -- CASE, EYEGLASSES --TEXTILE FRAGMENT	
RICH 6251	FAN	
RICH 6252	FAN	
RICH 6253	FAN	
RICH 6274	FAN	
RICH 6433	FRAME, PICTURE	
RICH 6434	FRAME, PICTURE	
RICH 6435	FRAME, PICTURE	
RICH 6293	GAUGE	
RICH 6201	GLASS, COCKTAIL	
RICH 6202	GLASS, COCKTAIL	
RICH 6203	GLASS, COCKTAIL	
RICH 6204	GLASS, COCKTAIL	
RICH 6205	GLASS, COCKTAIL	
RICH 6206	GLASS, COCKTAIL	
RICH 6207	GLASS, COCKTAIL	
RICH 6208	GLASS, COCKTAIL	
RICH 6217	GLASS, CORDIAL	
RICH 6218	GLASS, CORDIAL	
RICH 6214	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6215	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6216	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6219	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6220	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6221	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6222	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6223	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6224	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6225	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6226	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6227	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6228	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6229	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6230	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6231	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6232	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6233	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6237	GLASS, JUICE	

RICH 6238	GLASS, JUICE	
RICH 6234	GLASS, WATER	
RICH 6235	GLASS, WATER	
RICH 6236	GLASS, WATER	
RICH 6209	GLASS, WINE	
RICH 6210	GLASS, WINE	
RICH 6211	GLASS, WINE	
RICH 6212	GLASS, WINE	
RICH 7535	GLASS, WINE	1760-1840
RICH 6296	HANDBILL	1955
RICH 6299	HANGING	
RICH 6431	HORN, HUNTING	
RICH 6276	INKWELL	
RICH 6259	JAR	
RICH 6263	JAR	
RICH 6267	JAR	
RICH 6247	JAR, FOOD-STORAGE	
RICH 6254	JAR, FOOD-STORAGE	
RICH 6284	KEY	
RICH 6286	KEY	
RICH 6337	KEY	
RICH 6349	KEY	
RICH 6357	KEY	
RICH 6304	KEY, CLOCK	
RICH 6291	LOCK	
RICH 6289	MATCHBOOK	
RICH 6213	MIRROR	
RICH 6265	MIRROR	
RICH 6248	MUG	
RICH 6305	NAIL	
RICH 6359	NAIL	
RICH 6361	NECKLACE	
RICH 6300	NOTEBOOK	Circa 1916
RICH 9681	Painting	1835-1845
RICH 9682	Painting	1815-1825
RICH 9683	Painting	1815-1825
RICH 9684	Painting	1814-1824
RICH 6239	PAINTING	C. 1820-1830
RICH 6418	PAINTING	
RICH 6343	PEN	
RICH 6285	PETTICOAT	

RICH 6271	PIN, BOWLING	
RICH 3572	PISTOL	1851
RICH 3675	PITCHER	
RICH 6261	PITCHER	
RICH 6262	PITCHER	
RICH 6264	PITCHER	
RICH 6282	PITCHER	
RICH 6243	PLATE	
RICH 6244	PLATE	
RICH 6245	PLATE	
RICH 7894	Portfolio	Circa 1845-Circa 1875
RICH 3690	PRINT	Circa 1910
RICH 6419	PRINT	
RICH 6420	PRINT, PHOTOGRAPHIC	
RICH 6275	PURSE	
RICH 6287	PUZZLE	
RICH 6329	RECEPTACLE	
RICH 3569	SAMPLER made by Sarah E. Oliver [Shelton]	c. 1810
RICH 2400	SCABBARD	
RICH 2410	SCABBARD	
RICH 3674	SETTEE	
RICH 6439	SHAKO	
RICH 6356	SHEATH	
RICH 7850	SHELTON FAMILY PAPERS	
RICH 6363	SHOT, CASE	
RICH 3683	SIDEBORD	
RICH 3673	STAND, BOOK	
RICH 6290	STENCIL	
RICH 6424	STOOL	
RICH 6425	STOOL	
RICH 2401	SWORD	
RICH 2409	SWORD	
RICH 3662	SWORD	
RICH 2402	TABLE	1740's
RICH 2403	TABLE	1740's
RICH 3678	TABLE	C. 1840
RICH 3679	TABLE	C. 1840
RICH 3686	TABLE	
RICH 3682	TABLE, DINING	C. 1820-1830
RICH 3681	TABLE, SEWING	

RICH 7536	TABLESPOON	1780-1840
RICH 6246	TANKARD	
RICH 6250	TRAY, SERVING	
RICH 3691	TRUNK	Circa A.D. 1850
RICH 6266	TRUNK	
RICH 6242	VASE	
RICH 6268	VASE	
RICH 3693	WASHSTAND	
Not accessioned	LADDER-BACK SIDE CHAIRS, 4	1810-1880

Archeology Assessment, Shelton House and Slave Quarters, Kitchen and Outbuildings

“In late 2008, Dutton +Associates, LLC (D+A) archeologists performed an archeological overview and assessment/archeological identification study of the Shelton House Precinct (historically referred to as Rural Plains) of the Totopotomoy Creek Battlefield Unit of the Richmond National Battlefield Park in Hanover County, Virginia. D+A conducted archeological investigations at the Shelton House Precinct of the Totopotomoy Creek Battlefield Unit to identify the presence of archeological remains associated with the following activities or activity areas: Slave Quarters, Kitchen, Outbuildings; Fencelines; Circulation Patterns, the Shelton House; and Civil War Earthworks. ... Fifty two shovel tests and ten test units were excavated within the Slave Quarters, Kitchen, and Outbuildings Area. ... Four test units were excavated adjacent to the Shelton House. Two test units were excavated adjacent to the south side of the house and two test units were excavated adjacent to the west side of the house. Each of the four units abutted the main house structure. ...” p. ii-iii, *Archeological Overview*, cited below.

2008 Archeological Investigation

Archeological Overview and Assessment/Archeological Identification Study of the Shelton House Precinct, Totopotomoy Creek Battlefield Unit, Richmond National Battlefield Park, Hanover County, Virginia, Volumes I and II, Dutton and Associates, for the National Park Service, 2010.

Architecture artifacts made up 85.31% of the 3,145 artifacts found in all Outbuilding Test Units (Table 3). This category includes items consistent with the presence of buildings and structures, such as brick and nail fragments, window glass shards, and mortar fragments. Kitchen artifacts comprised 10.62% of the total number, and included glass vessel and ceramic fragments. Artifacts categorized as Other made up 3.69% of the total and included mostly unidentifiable metal fragments.

Although not numerous enough to appear statistically significant, five tobacco pipe fragments were recovered from the Outbuilding area test units, while none were recovered from any other area investigated. This indicates an increased domestic element present in this area which is not found in the other areas examined. [p. 107]

... A total of 2,862 artifacts were recovered from the four test units at the Shelton House Area. The recovered artifacts consisted of domestic and architectural materials as expected. The domestic and architectural refuse dated from the late eighteenth century through the twentieth century and included varying types of cultural material. Of particular interest was the recovery of Colonoware vessel fragments at TU 3 which revealed a bulkhead entrance feature. ...

A total of 317 artifacts were recovered during the investigation of Test Unit 3 within the Shelton House Area. One hundred thirty seven artifacts were recovered from Stratum I, and consisted of one decorated pearlware (post-1775) rim fragment, one green pearlware (post-1775) rim fragment, one decorated pearlware (post-1775) fragment, one undecorated rim fragment, one creamware (post-1759) rim fragment, four plaster molding fragments, one metal bottle cap, three nail fragments, seven thin window glass fragments, three painted window glass fragments, one machined glass bottle bottom, one clear vessel glass fragment, 13 window glass fragments, one clear glass rim fragment, one aqua glass vessel body fragment, two light green glass vessel fragments, 44 mortar fragments, as well as shell mortar and brick fragments. [p. 130]

... One hundred eighty artifacts were recovered from Stratum II, and consisted of one colonoware (third quarter of the seventeenth century through the eighteenth century) body fragment, one colonoware (third quarter of the seventeenth century through the eighteenth century) rim fragment, one decorated pearlware (post-1775) rim fragment, two wine bottle glass fragments, one solarized glass rim fragment, two shell fragments, one nail head fragment, two iron tack head fragments, two iron cut nail head fragments, one metal hook holder, one iron wire nail, one lead artifact, 124 brick fragments, as well as window glass and shell mortar fragments. [p. 133]

... A total of 318 artifacts were recovered during the investigation of Test Unit 6 within the Shelton House Area. One hundred fifty seven artifacts were recovered from Stratum I and consisted of one green bottle glass fragment, one sand mortar fragment, one aqua vessel glass fragment, one iron nail fragment, one nail head fragment, one shell valve half, eight iron metal fragments, one shell valve fragment, one shell fragment, one clear glass basal fragment, one decorated aqua glass fragment, one clear glass vessel fragment, one yellowing glass vessel fragment, one window glass fragment, and 136 brick fragments. Seventy three artifacts were recovered from Stratum II and consisted of one pearlware (post-1775) fragment, two window glass fragments, one aqua glass basal fragment, one decorated clear bottle vessel fragment, burned mortar fragments, sand mortar fragments, one shell valve, shell mortar fragments, one iron cut nail, two iron cut nail fragments, one iron nail fragment, one iron nail head fragment, and 58 brick fragments. Sixty four artifacts were recovered from Stratum III and consisted of two window glass fragments, two glazed brick fragments, two burned brick fragments, four iron nail fragments, two iron nail body fragments, three iron fragments, one iron spike fragment, two cut iron nails, 39 brick fragments, two shell mortar fragments, and one red brick fragment with mortar. Twenty four artifacts were recovered from Stratum IV and consisted of

one upholstery tack, twelve brick fragments, four green bottle glass fragments, one metal fragment, one copper alloy flywheel, two bent iron wire nails, one cut nail, one nail head fragment, and one nail fragment. [p. 134]

... The four test units excavated around the foundation of the Shelton House all revealed the presence of a builder's trench feature associated with the original construction of the house. Additional features indicated repair and fill episodes associated with construction of the rear porch, possible destruction of a bulkhead entrance to the basement, and installation of utilities. Artifacts recovered from these test units were mostly categorized as domestic or architectural in nature, and indicated prolonged historic domestic use of the area in general starting from the early to mid-eighteenth century. As colonoware, such as that recovered from Test Unit 3, is generally associated with slave culture, it is likely that the bulkhead entrance identified here was used by slaves in the performance of domestic duties within the main house. It could not be determined when the bulkhead entrance was sealed, however future excavation of the feature's fill will give an accurate date. Precisely 84.3% of the 2,860 artifacts recovered from the Shelton House area were categorized as Architecture, which appears low when compared to the other surveyed areas and considering the proximity of these test units to the Shelton House ... However, because the house was fired upon during the Civil War, a disproportionate amount of architectural debris would have collected near the house foundation. Kitchen artifacts comprised 6.26% of all artifacts recovered from this area, and 8.43% were categorized as Other. This last category primarily included unidentifiable metal fragments and coal refuse. It is not surprising that kitchen artifacts are minimal because there was a detached kitchen where the meals were prepared. [p. 140]

Furnishings Plans

List of Recommended Furnishings

Historic Furnishings Recommendations

The amount of rehabilitation to be undertaken at Rural Plains and the timeline for its completion were uncertain at the time this report was written. The park plans to begin work on a new Long Range Interpretive Plan in FY 2021. This Furnishings Plan therefore provides limited recommendations for historic furnishings and suggests that these recommendations be reassessed after rehabilitation is complete, in order to take into account future operating conditions.

Original Shelton furniture in the park collection could be used in the house if environmental and security standards are maintained. However, if it is decided that collections cannot be safely and securely displayed, original furnishings could be reproduced, or in limited instances, a period object could be substituted for the original.

The evidence of ledgers, personal property tax records, and inventories indicates that the Shelton House was furnished with many possessions. A limited number of small objects such as kitchen and dining utensils, textiles, and desk accessories are included in the lists of recommended furnishings. These should be reproductions or in certain cases period objects, and must be secured within the exhibit.

Smaller items are an integral part of the furnished interior and should be included in the installation, though positioned away from barriers as much as possible. Installing large pieces of furniture without the smaller furnishings creates a misleading impression of furnished spaces. Installing no furnishings at all is preferable to presenting a partially furnished room, implying to visitors that the inhabitants used, made, and owned a limited amount and variety of goods.

Kitchen and Dining Room (Cellar)

Room Use: The kitchen and dining room, located on the east side of the cellar, are original to the construction of the house. The kitchen was originally divided by a center passage, which was removed c. 1835.

As noted above, it is possible that a stove was installed in a separate room – the “Stove rume” which was paved in 1838.¹⁷⁹ The kitchen room was expanded when the passage was removed, and at this point the space was probably used as a dining room. The fireplace was

¹⁷⁹ Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 21.

reconfigured to make it smaller, since it was no longer used exclusively for cooking. A decorative mantel shelf with supporting columns was also installed in the 1830s, as was a wooden column in the center of the room.¹⁸⁰

It is clear that at the time of the 1864 battle the family used the large cellar area as a dining room. Walter M. Shelton recalled when the house was under siege: “My mother, my sisters Fannie, Ellen, Emma and myself were in the basement. We stayed in the dining room ...”¹⁸¹ Shelton gave a similar recounting in a 1928 article in the *New York Times* magazine, stating: “We were all in the basement dining room.”¹⁸²

An account of the battle written by members of a New York infantry unit describes a meal shared with Sarah Shelton and her family in the basement: “Sincere was her pleasure when we accepted the invitation [to supper] and produced from our haversacks, a supply of these luxuries [tea, coffee and sugar]. The garden had not suffered much as yet and we gathered strawberries, the cows having come up from the bottoms were milked, and we enjoyed heartily a dinner *en famille*.”¹⁸³

The family stayed in the cellar throughout the battle, and although the house was struck by shells many times, “none struck as low as the basement, where they were sheltered.”¹⁸⁴

Officers and men from the Union forces occupying the property also used the cellar, in particular the entryway under the east stairs. In the *New York Times* magazine article Walter Shelton described the arrangement: ““At one time General Hancock made his headquarters and issued his orders from the little brick passage three feet wide by eight feet long, under the front steps, instead of taking the dining room away from five ladies.””¹⁸⁵ Shelton later said that Hancock had his “head quarters under the front porch in the entry leading from the front of the house to the dining room ...”¹⁸⁶

William R. Shelton, Jr., Walter’s grandson, recollected that his father’s family ate in the cellar, so the use of the cellar dining area may have continued into the early 20th century. His father, William R. Shelton, Sr., was born in 1877 and purchased the property in 1903. William Shelton, Jr. was born in 1920, and said that during his lifetime the cellar was used for storage. “My father used to be a farmer, a truck farmer, before he went in the nursery

¹⁸⁰ HSR, p. 195-6.

¹⁸¹ “Some facts given by our father,” Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series V, Box 2, Folder 14.

¹⁸² “A Mansion Rich in Virginia’s History,” William H. Shelton, August 19, 1928, *The New York Times Magazine*, Shelton Oral History and Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS.

¹⁸³ *History of the Ninety-Third Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry, 1861-1865*, compiled by David H. King, A. Judson Gibbs and Jay H. Northrup, (The Association of the 93d N. Y. S. V. Volunteers. Milwaukee: Swain & Tate Company, printers, 1895), p. 459.

¹⁸⁴ *History of the Ninety-Third Regiment*, p. 459.

¹⁸⁵ “A Mansion Rich in Virginia’s History,” William H. Shelton, August 19, 1928, *The New York Times Magazine*, Shelton Oral History and Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS.

¹⁸⁶ “Some facts given by our father,” Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series V, Box 2, Folder 14.

business. And I've helped put as many as three thousand bushels of potatoes in the basement."¹⁸⁷

Physical Evidence:

According to the HSR, when the house was built there was an exterior entrance to the kitchen on the south wall. The original fireplace was constructed for cooking, and was larger, containing a bake oven or smoke chamber. Both of these features were modified in the 1830s.

The walls are brick with applied plaster. Early finishes include white paint over brick on the walls, and black paint on the ceiling joists and the underside of the first-floor floorboards. The room includes baseboards and chair rails dating to the 1830s.¹⁸⁸

Furnishings:

John Shelton III inherited part of his uncle Joseph Shelton's household furnishings, in addition to the estate on Totopotomoy Creek in 1784. He may have had items such as the following in the interior kitchen at the Shelton House: tin canisters, a tin colander, a pewter funnel, knives and forks, andirons, chaffing dishes, a skillet, copper tea kettle and coffee pot, a copper kettle, iron pots, a dutch oven, iron pot racks, a frying pan, a ladle and a flesh fork, large and small pewter dishes, basins and old plates, one gallon and one quart pewter measures.¹⁸⁹

Note that there was also a kitchen in an outbuilding, and it cannot be determined which equipment would have been used in which spaces.

At Ann Shelton Foster's death in 1830, she left her son Edwin "nine table and nine teaspoons and one ladle all of silver" which would have been used in a dining room.¹⁹⁰

Linen lists drawn up in 1852 and 1855 by a Shelton woman or near relative include tablecloths for the dining table, woven in a diaper pattern, homespun flax tablecloths, and "single S cotton" tablecloths. They also show that the homemaker purchased "Irish linnen [sic]" and "white linen" tablecloths.¹⁹¹ When Federal officers dined with the Shelton family on the night before the battle, one of the officers remarked on "the table covered with snowy linen and other garnishments to which we had long been unaccustomed".¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ Transcript of oral history conducted with Mr. William Shelton, by David Ruth and Robert E. L. Krick, June 24, 2005, Shelton Oral History & Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS.

¹⁸⁸ HSR, p. 195-196.

¹⁸⁹ Inventory of Joseph Shelton 1780 and 1785, Louisa County Will Book 3, p. 95-101, Louisa County Microfilm, Reel No. 21, The Library of Virginia.

¹⁹⁰ Transcript of "Last Will and Testament of Ann Foster," by Virginia Toms, "Brief Genealogy of the Shelton Family," Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7532.

¹⁹¹ Shelton-Winn-Oliver Family Papers, Acc. 42149, The Library of Virginia.

¹⁹² *History of the Ninety-Third Regiment*, p. 459, in Shelton Oral History and Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS.

The Federal troops also “carried beds and other necessities for their comfort into the basement, and barricaded the windows with logs completing a fair extempore fortification for the beleaguered family ...”.¹⁹³ Walter M. Shelton recalled ““My mother and my five sisters were in the house during the shelling – part of three days. My married sister from Smithfield was about to be confined. She lay on a couch in the dining room and that was why my mother would not leave the house.”¹⁹⁴

After the war, Edwin Shelton’s expense ledger records two instances of repair or re-tinning for the stove, which was presumably still located in the cellar. It cost \$2.70 to tin the stove in 1873.¹⁹⁵

The household inventory taken after Edwin Shelton’s death in 1874 lists silverware, crockery, a dining table, wash stand, washing machine, refrigerator, a churn, a lot of candle sticks and lamps, an old sideboard, kitchen tables, a kitchen “dress” or dresser, a stove and cooking utensils. The entries, listed in this order, suggest that the appraisers assessed the cellar first.

Shelton’s silverware was valued at \$20, perhaps indicating that the silver table spoons, tea spoons, and ladle left to Edwin by his mother were included in that category. There was also a valuation of \$8 given to “the Contents of store room jars tin ware &c,” which may have referred to one of the rooms on the west side of the cellar. Safes valued at \$2.20 also appear on the list.¹⁹⁶

A spoon with an engraved “s” on the handle (RICH 7536) was found in the basement, as well as a wine glass (RICH 7535). Archeological investigations showed fragments of domestic ceramics such as pearlware and creamware, as well as glass vessel fragments. Fragments of colonoware, a ceramic associated with slave culture, indicate the presence of enslaved workers near the cellar as early as the late 17th century.¹⁹⁷

The proposed furnishings plan recommends limited furnishings to be installed in the south section of the dining room, in the area around the fireplace. An additional option would be to use a large-scale illustration – either a scrim or full scale panel – to interpret a cooking or heating stove just visible in the southwest corner room. Site staff could also consider using an illustration to highlight the area under the east stairs that General Hancock used during the battle.

¹⁹³ *History of the Ninety-Third Regiment*, p. 459, in Shelton Oral History and Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS.

¹⁹⁴ “A Mansion Rich in Virginia’s History,” Shelton Oral History and Notebook, Maggie L. Walker NHS

¹⁹⁵ Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873.

¹⁹⁶ Edwin Shelton Inventory and Appraisal, Hanover County Will Book, 3, pp. 504-508, Hanover County Microfilm, Reel No. 56, The Library of Virginia.

¹⁹⁷ *Archeological Overview and Assessment/Archeological Identification Study of the Shelton House Precinct, Totopotomoy Creek Battlefield Unit, Richmond National Battlefield Park, Hanover County, Virginia*, Volumes I and II, Dutton and Associates for the National Park Service, 2010, p. 130, 140.

Object and Location	Documentation	Recommendation
Stove, for cooking and heating; in southeast corner room	“Stove rume”, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 21 Stove repair in Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 12, Ledger 1858-1873 Edwin Shelton inventory, 1874	Install period stove or use a custom scrim to illustrate the stove in this space. Include kettle on stove showing water being heated for coffee and tea.
Dining table, rectangular, with rectangular hinged leaves; parallel to fireplace, south section of room	Edwin Shelton inventory, 1874	Reproduce RICH 3682, two of three sections of the original Shelton table.
Tablecloth, white linen or cotton; on table	Mary Truehart Inventory, 1780 Linen Lists, 1852 and 1855 “the table covered with snowy linen and other garnishments to which we had long been unaccustomed,” <i>History of the Ninety-Third Regiment</i>, p. 459	Acquire reproduction.
Bowl, ceramic or stoneware, with strawberries; on table	Mary Truehart Inventory, 1780 Joseph Shelton Inventory, 1785 “The garden had not suffered much as yet and we gathered strawberries ...,” <i>History of the Ninety-Third Regiment</i>, p. 459 <i>Archeological Overview and Assessment</i>, 2008	Acquire reproduction bowl. Reference original Shelton ceramics in collection. Acquire reproduction strawberries.
Coffee and tea cups, ceramic, eight; on table	Joseph Shelton Inventory, 1785 <i>History of the Ninety-Third Regiment</i>, p. 459 <i>Archeological Overview and Assessment</i>, 2008	Acquire period or reproduction cups. Reference original Shelton ceramics in collection.
Tea, coffee, and sugar, in packaging; on table	“Mrs. Shelton, with true Southern hospitality, offered to prepare supper for our staff, if we were content to accept what she had, and expressed regret for the absence of tea, coffee, and sugar. Sincere was her pleasure when we accepted the invitation [to supper] and produced from our haversacks, a supply of these luxuries,” <i>History of the Ninety-Third Regiment</i>, p. 459	Reproduce.

Sugar bowl; on table	Joseph Shelton Inventory, 1785 <i>History of the Ninety-Third Regiment</i> , p. 459 <i>Archeological Overview and Assessment</i> , 2008	Acquire period or reproduction sugar bowl or dish. Reference original Shelton ceramics in collection.
Milk pitcher; on table	“the cows having come up from the bottoms were milked, and we enjoyed heartily a dinner <i>en famille</i> ,” <i>History of the Ninety-Third Regiment</i> , p. 459 <i>Archeological Overview and Assessment</i> , 2008	Acquire period or reproduction sugar bowl or dish. Pitcher. Reference original Shelton ceramics in collection.
Tumblers or mugs, six; on table	Joseph Shelton Inventory, 1785	Acquire period or reproduction.
Coffee pot, ceramic or copper; on table	Joseph Shelton Inventory, 1785 <i>Archeological Overview and Assessment</i> , 2008	Acquire period or reproduction.
Tea pot, ceramic; on table	Joseph Shelton Inventory, 1785 <i>Archeological Overview and Assessment</i> , 2008	Acquire period or reproduction.
Plates, eight, ceramic; on table	<i>Archeological Overview and Assessment</i> , 2008	Acquire period or reproduction.
Ham, sliced; on plates	Edwin Shelton received hams from his son-in-law in the summer of 1863. T. W. Southall to C ^o Edwin Shelton, 1863, Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series IV, Box 1, Folder 19 “The federals took all of our corn wheat + meat except a little meat we had in the dining room with us....,” “Account of Battles of Haw’s Shop and Totopotomoy Creek” by Walter Shelton.	Acquire reproduction ham slices.
Cornbread; on plates	Common food that could be made during the occupation.	Acquire reproduction with slices cut out.
Knives, eight, and forks, eight; on table	Joseph Shelton Inventory, 1785 Mary Truehart Inventory, 1780 Edwin Shelton Inventory, 1874	Acquire reproductions.
Chairs, ladder-back side chairs, six; at table	“18 Chairs (old),” Inventory and Appraisal of Edwin Shelton Estate, 1874	Reproduce. Use pair of non-accessioned ladder-back side chairs (1810-1840)

		at park as prototypes.
Haversacks, two; on backs of chairs	“Sincere was her pleasure when we accepted the invitation [to supper] and produced from our haversacks, a supply of these luxuries,” <i>History of the Ninety-Third Regiment</i> , p. 459	Acquire reproductions.
Shawl, woman’s; on back of chair	To emphasize the women present in the cellar.	Acquire reproduction.
Candle sticks, two, and lamp; on mantelpiece	Joseph Shelton Inventory, 1785 Edwin Shelton inventory, 1874	Acquire reproduction japanned candle holders. Acquire period or reproduction hand lamp.
Crockery, including pitcher, crock, and jar; on mantelpiece	Edwin Shelton inventory, 1874	Acquire reproduction jars and crocks. Reference original Shelton ceramics in collection.
Key basket, leather or woven; on mantelpiece	Common in Virginia. There is a key basket original to the Shelton family in the collection.	Reproduce. Reference original in collection.
Andirons, pair, iron; in fireplace	Joseph Shelton inventory, 1785	Acquire period andirons.

Northeast Room (First Floor)

Room Use:

Although the northeast room on the first floor has been described as being used as the dining room prior to Edwin Shelton’s 1835 renovations, there is no specific evidence indicating that the Shelton family used it for this purpose.¹⁹⁸ It is clear, however, that at the time of the 1864 battle (and the interpretive period) the dining room was located in the cellar. Given the size and situation of room at the east front of the house, the space may have served as the best bedchamber or as a parlor after 1835.

When Walter Shelton married in 1915, he and his wife Maud converted the adjacent west chamber to a kitchen and used the northeast room as their dining room. From that point on, the family continued to use the space as a dining room.

¹⁹⁸ See Yocum, HSR, p. 260.

At the time this report was developed, park management had determined to interpret this room as the room containing the tall post bed, which was hit by an exploding shell during the May 1864 battle.

Physical Evidence:

According to the HSR no changes to the configuration of the room have been made since the original construction, with the exception of the repositioning of the doorway in the south wall. A window in the north wall was installed around 1915 but was bricked up in June 2021. The east windows date to 1785. The existing mantel, picture molding, and chair rail were installed around 1835. Floorboards installed around 1785 are covered by 20th century wood flooring.¹⁹⁹

Finishes analysis indicates that in the mid-19th century the baseboards and mantel were painted dark gray or black, and the chair rail, doorway, and windows were painted light gray and varnished.²⁰⁰

Furnishings:

The account of a Confederate shell exploding in the Shelton's "best room" indicates the trauma to the family and devastation to their house and prized belongings. However, the description does not detail exactly where the room was located: "One shell exploded in the 'best room,' shattering everything breakable, and tearing into shreds the silk curtains of an old-fashioned canopied bed, but without setting it on fire."²⁰¹

The bed referred to may have been the Sheraton-style mahogany tall post bed (RICH 947) owned for many years by the Shelton family until purchased from the estate by the NPS. In his reminiscences about the war, Walter Shelton does not mention the damage to the bed, but recalled: "The house caught fire three times and General Hancock sent couriers up to put the fire out. One shell went through a cedar chest of bedding befo' it exploded."²⁰²

While the 1785 inventory of Joseph Shelton's furnishings at the Totopotomoy Creek estate does not include a bed and bedding, he owned four expensive beds at his Louisa County home, which may have been passed on to his nephew John Shelton in Hanover County after his death.²⁰³

In the 19th century, Edwin Shelton's mother, Ann Shelton Foster, gave him two feather beds "and furniture." The term "furniture" refers to other bedding, such as mattresses and bolsters,

¹⁹⁹ Yocum, HSR, p. 260-261.

²⁰⁰ Yocum, HSR, B-26.

²⁰¹ *History of the Ninety-Third Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry, 1861-1865*, (Swain & Tate Company, printers, 1895), p. 461.

²⁰² "A Mansion Rich in Virginia's History," William H. Shelton, August 19, 1928, *The New York Times Magazine*.

²⁰³ "1 Bed & furniture £8 1 ditto £9 2 ditto 20" in Joseph Shelton estate inventory, 1785, Louisa County Will Book 3, p. 95-101, Louisa County Microfilm, Reel No. 21, The Library of Virginia.

but not the bedstead itself.²⁰⁴ At Edwin Shelton's death in 1874, the inventory of his estate records that he owned four beds:

Bed & Furniture in room No. 2	15.00
Bed, bedstead & mattress	7.00
Bed & 2 carpets in room No. 4	5.00
Bed & furniture in room No. 5	15.00 ²⁰⁵

At the sale of his estate, Edwin Shelton's widow purchased a lot that included a "Bedstead, bed and furniture" for \$10.00.²⁰⁶

The 1852/1855 linen lists preserved in the Shelton Family Papers at the Library of Virginia document the range of bed linens owned by the Sheltons or their close contemporaries. Feather beds were valuable and described by the weight of the filling: "feather Bed had 39^{lb} of Feathers in it ... made up a feather bed put 42^{lb} Feathers in it ... 2 new BedTicks filled put 37 ½^{lb} in one 26 ½ in the other." Other bedding included feather pillows and bolsters, pillow cases, linen and cotton sheets for beds and trundles, bolster cases, quilts, blankets and ticks for bolsters and "under beds" which would support the softer feather ticks.²⁰⁷ The list does not include bed curtains or bed hangings, which may not have been considered part of the household linens.

It is not known where the chest hit by a shell and described several times by Walter Shelton was located, or whether it was in the same room as the damaged bed. As recorded above, Shelton recalled the chaos caused by the shelling:

... Three shells went through the same place leaving an opening about twelve inches in diameter, one exploded in the room and a good many in the house during the battle. When the house was on fire the officers sent men to extinguish it.

My mother had a large chest filled with linen and blankets. It was struck by a shell at one end and went through the other and leaving the linen and blankets twisted as by hand. ...²⁰⁸

The following abbreviated list of recommended furnishings, or "furnishings vignette," includes only the bed itself, with limited additional objects included so that the bed does not appear to be standing alone in the room.

²⁰⁴ Transcript of "Last Will and Testament of Ann Foster," Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7532: "I also give to my son Edwin ... one featherbed & furniture in addition to the one already given to him..."

²⁰⁵ Edwin Shelton Inventory and Appraisement, Hanover County Will Book, 3, pp. 504-508, Hanover County Microfilm, Reel No. 56, The Library of Virginia.

²⁰⁶ Edwin Shelton Inventory and Appraisement, Hanover County Will Book, 3, pp. 527, Hanover County Microfilm, Reel No. 56, The Library of Virginia.

²⁰⁷ Linen Lists, 1852 and 1855, Shelton-Winn-Oliver Family Papers, Acc. 42149, The Library of Virginia.

²⁰⁸ "Some Facts Given by our Father," Shelton Family Papers, RICH 7850, Series V, Box 2, Folder 14.

Object(s) and Location	Documentation	Recommendation
Bed, four poster, with tester, c. 1790-1810; head against north or south wall.	<i>History of the Ninety-Third Regiment</i> , p. 461.	Use or reproduce RICH 947.
Bed hangings, silk	<i>History of the Ninety-Third Regiment</i> , p. 461.	Acquire reproductions.
Bedding: Pillows, two Pillow cases, two Bolster Bolster case Mattress Feather bed Sheets, two Quilt or coverlet	Linen Lists 1852/1855	Acquire reproductions.
Engravings, 1791		Reproduce and frame RICH 6422 & 6423.
Mirror, rectangular, mahogany frame; hung over the fireplace	Joseph Shelton Inventory, 1785 One mirror “one & not 2 feet” [in size]; Peter Foster Property Tax Assessment, 1815	Acquire period mirror or reproduce. Reference original in collection.
Andirons, in fireplace	Required for use of fireplace.	Use RICH 6414

Southwest Room (First Floor)

Room Use:

The Civil War period use of the southwest or “back” room on the first floor has not been established. The park has decided to interpret this room as an office.

Physical Evidence:

The southwest room measures 6’ 9 ½” wide by 18’ 1 ½” long and was accessed only from the hall during the Civil War period. The current double doorway to the parlor was installed ca 1915. The room was last used by the Shelton family as a den and bedroom.²⁰⁹

The window sashes in this room were replaced after 1835, which suggests that this room may have been damaged by shell fire in 1864. The location of the Confederate gun batteries to the south supports that theory.

²⁰⁹ Yocum, HSR, p. 242.

A gun rack is installed above the north door to the hall. The HSR states that “this rack is contemporary with other woodwork installed in the room circa 1835.”²¹⁰

Furnishings:

The list of furnishings for this room is based on the 1874 Edwin Shelton Estate inventory supplemented by objects in the collection that would be appropriate for an office.

Object(s) and Location	Documentation	Recommendation
Gun rack, on north wall above door to hall.	HSR p. 244.	Use rack in situ.
Musket, 1, and shotgun, 1; in gun rack on north wall.	The original gun rack was installed circa 1835 and would have held long arms. Muskets and shotguns are found in comparative inventories.	Acquire non-working reproductions.
Certificate, Virginia Central Agricultural Society dated 1858-9; on north wall to right of desk and bookcase.	Original in Shelton Family Papers, box 1, folder 37.	Reproduce and frame
Desk and bookcase, mahogany veneer, writing surface extended, against north wall.	Inventory and Appraisal of Edwin Shelton Estate, 1874, “Writing desk.”	Use RICH 3684
Books, 70, on shelves in bookcase portion of desk and bookcase.	Inventory and Appraisal of Edwin Shelton Estate, 1874, “Lot of miscellaneous books.” 1839-40 Ledger, Shelton Family Papers, various entries.	Use 70 pre-1860 books from RICH collection (RICH 2457-2493, RICH 2495-2499; RICH 3628-3631; RICH 3635-3660; RICH 3667 -3671; RICH 7864-7892) and acquire <i>Walker's Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language</i> , by John Walker and Thomas Smith, 1834; <i>Comstock's</i>

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 244.

		<i>Common School Philosophy</i>, by J.L. Comstock, 1839; <i>The Child's History of the United States; designed as a first book of history for schools</i>, by Charles A. Goodrich, 1834; <i>Smith's New Grammar. English grammar, on the productive system: a method of instruction recently adopted in Germany and Switzerland</i> by Roswell C. Smith, 1834; <i>The Improvement of the Mind: to which is added a discourse on the education of children and youth: and short essays on various subjects</i>, by Isaac Watts, 1832; <i>Botany for Beginners: An introduction to Mrs. Lincoln's Lectures on Botany</i>, by Mrs. Phelps Lincoln, 1833; <i>Elements of History, Ancient and Modern</i>, by Joseph E. Worcester, 1836. OR acquire 70 period books instead of using
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		books in RICH collection. OR install green synthetic silk curtains on inside of glass doors of desk and bookcase.
Inkwell, steel pen and pen holder, blotter; on desk surface	Required for writing.	Use RICH 6276 (inkwell). Acquire period pen, pen holder, and blotter.
Letter paper, on desk surface.	Required for writing.	Acquire reproductions.
Ledger, on desk surface	Original ledger dated 1858-1873 in Shelton Family papers.	Reproduce original ledger, Shelton Family Papers, oversize, box 12.
Requisition for corn crop, dated 1864; on desk surface	Requisition in Shelton Family papers.	Reproduce original requisition in Shelton Family papers, box 1, folder 20.
Candlestick, with candle; on desk surface.	Required for illumination while writing.	Use RICH 6280. Acquire candle.
Wallet, with Confederate currency, on desk surface.	Shelton Family Papers contains confederate currency owned by the Sheltons.	Acquire reproduction wallet, reproduce confederate currency RICH 3574, (box 6, folders 71-73; box 7, folders 2-6).
Side chairs, set of 6, early 19 th century painted slat back with rush or plank bottoms; one in front of desk and bookcase, two in front of each window, one in front of table along east wall.	Inventory and Appraisal of Edwin Shelton Estate, 1874, "18 chairs (old)".	Acquire set of six period chairs.
Chest of drawers, with mirror, mahogany; against west wall between windows.	Inventory and Appraisal of Edwin Shelton Estate, 1874,"1 bureau & glass".	Use RICH 3689
Daguerreotype, on	Daguerreotype of young man in	Reproduce RICH

dresser	Confederate uniform is in Shelton Family Papers.	3571, put in period case.
Washstand	Inventory and Appraisal of Edwin Shelton Estate, 1874, "Wash stand bowl, table & writing desk."	Use RICH 3693
Bowl and pitcher	Inventory and Appraisal of Edwin Shelton Estate, 1874, "Wash stand bowl, table & writing desk."	RICH 6249 (washbowl), acquire period pitcher to match
Towel	Commonly used with washstands.	Acquire reproduction
Clock, on mantel	Personal property tax records, Shelton household, 1860. Inventory and Appraisal of Edwin Shelton Estate, 1874, "clock."	Acquire period mantel clock.
Horn, with engraving, on mantel	Original in collection.	Use RICH 6431 or acquire reproduction.
Virginia Militia Commission for Edwin Shelton, dated 1833, framed; hanging above fireplace.	Original in Shelton Family Papers.	Reproduce and frame RICH 6430.
Andirons, in fireplace	Required for use of fireplace.	Use 6415
Table; against east wall to left of fireplace.	Inventory and Appraisal of Edwin Shelton Estate, 1874, "Wash stand bowl, table & writing desk."	Use RICH 3678
Writing desk, portable; on table	Inventory and Appraisal of Edwin Shelton Estate, 1874, "Wash stand bowl, table & writing desk."	Acquire period piece.
Newspaper, <i>Richmond Enquirer</i> , April 26, 1864; on table	The Shelton Family papers include copies of the <i>Richmond Enquirer</i> .	Reproduce (available digitally at https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1864-04-26/ed-1/)

<i>Bible Society Record</i> , April 1864; on table	The Shelton Family papers include copies of the <i>Bible Society Record</i> .	Reproduce (available digitally at https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433089912319&view=1up&seq=55)
<i>The Southern Planter</i> , Vol. 21, no. 6; on table	The Shelton Family papers include copies of <i>The Southern Planter</i> .	Reproduce (available digitally at https://digitalarchive.wm.edu/handle/10288/17745)
Sampler made by Sarah E. Oliver [Shelton], c. 1820, on east wall above table.	Original in collection.	Reproduce (photographically) and frame RICH 3569.
Theorem painting, on east wall above table.		Reproduce (photographically) and frame RICH 6239.

Illustrations

List of Illustrations

Exterior

1. "At Totopotomay Creek, Va.," Alfred R. Waud, May 26-30, 1864, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, digital file from original item <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsca.21486>
2. "Genl. Barlow in front of the rebel works. 12 miles from Richmond," c. 1862-1865, Alfred R. Waud, May 26-30, 1864, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, digital file from original item <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsca.21122>
3. "Rural Plains, Mechanicsville Rural Point vic., Hanover County, Virginia," Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1935, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-csas-04897 (digital file from original negative)
4. "Rural Plains, Mechanicsville Rural Point vic., Hanover County, Virginia," Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1935, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-csas-04898 (digital file from original negative)
5. "William & his dog/Rural Plains," c. 1930, Shelton House Papers.
6. "Anne Lee Palmore/3235 Hawore Ave/Richmond/V^a", c. 1950, Shelton House Papers.
7. Exterior with three small fir trees, year?, Shelton House Papers, RICH 7850. [img_5350]

Interior

8. Parlor, Rural Plains, 1931, O. H. Weiss, Shelton House Papers, RICH 7850, Box 2, Folder 28a. Note the shako helmet, swords, tilt-top table, canteen, wick trimmers (on mantel), portrait, and ledgers on the center table.
9. Parlor, Rural Plains, 20th century, sofa in front of fireplace, floor is carpeted, Shelton House Papers, RICH 7850. [img_5349]
10. Interior with bed and piano, 1955, Shelton House Papers, RICH 7850.
11. Parlor, Rural Plains, May 1958, Park Collection [unprocessed]. Note sofa, matched footstools, and portrait.

12. "Rural Plains, 1971/Our dining room," Park Collection [unprocessed]. Note cupboard, server [& dining table?]
13. "Ella & Dr. Turner S. Shelton," no date (c1970s-1980s), Park Collection [unprocessed].
14. "Jenny Lind Bed," December 1971, Park Collection [unprocessed]. The style of this bed is not typically referred to as "Jenny Lind."
15. Parlor, "To Holly With our Love/Chris & Jacky Haig," March 1987, Park Collection [unprocessed].

Biographical

16. Emma Shelton, carte de visite?, tinted, RICH 3575.
17. Frances (Fannie) Shelton, carte de visite?, tinted, RICH 3576.
18. Harriet Shelton Southall, cabinet card?, Park Collection.
19. William R. Shelton, Sr., 1935, Park Collection.
20. William R. Shelton, Jr., 1930, Park Collection.
21. William R. Shelton, Jr. and Hollie Bailey Shelton, 1991, Park Collection.

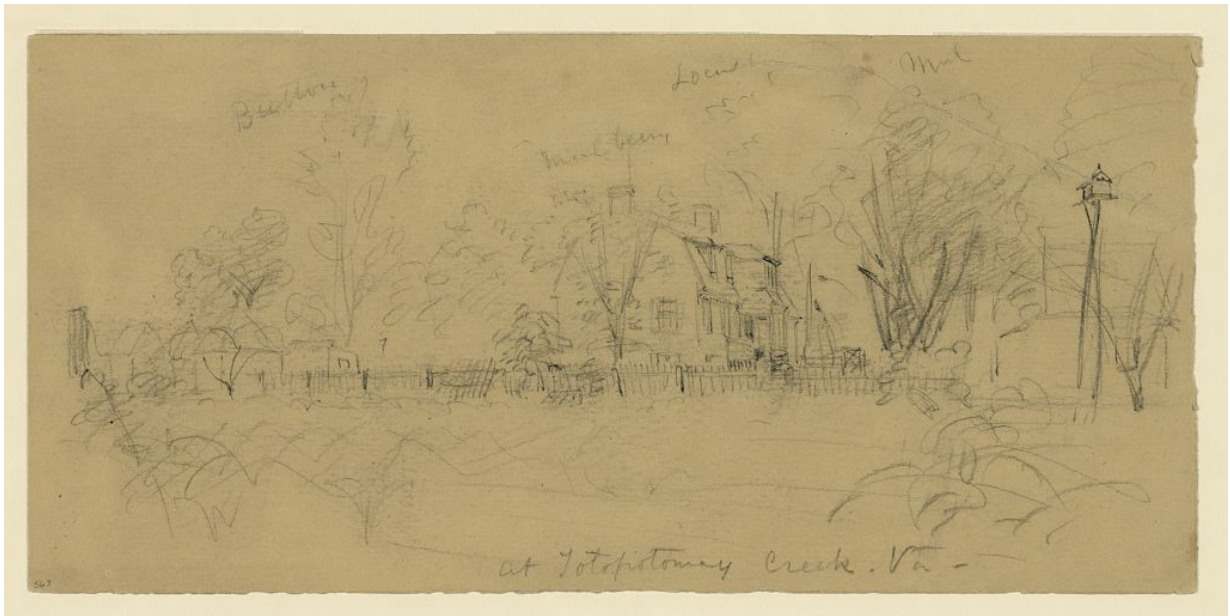


Figure 1: "At Totopotomay Creek, Va.," Alfred R. Waud, May 26-30, 1864, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, digital file from original item <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsca.21486>



Figure 2: "Genl. Barlow in front of the rebel works. 12 miles from Richmond," c. 1862-1865, Alfred R. Waud, May 26-30, 1864, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, digital file from original item <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsca.21122>



Figure 3: "Rural Plains, Mechanicsville Rural Point vic., Hanover County, Virginia," Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1935, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-csas-04897 (digital file from original negative).



Figure 4: "Rural Plains, Mechanicsville Rural Point vic., Hanover County, Virginia," Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1935, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-csas-04898 (digital file from original negative).



Figure 5: "William & his dog/Rural Plains," c. 1930, Shelton House Papers.



Figure 6: “Anne Lee Palmore/3235 Hanover Ave/Richmond/V^a”, c. 1950, Shelton House Papers.



Figure 7: Exterior with three small fir trees, date unknown, Shelton House Papers, RICH 7850. [img_5350].



Figure 8: Parlor, Rural Plains, 1931, O. H. Weiss, Shelton House Papers, RICH 7850, Box 2, Folder 28a. Note the shako helmet, swords, tilt-top table, canteen, wick trimmers (on mantel), portrait, and ledgers on the center table.



Figure 9: Parlor, Rural Plains, 20th century, sofa in front of fireplace, floor is carpeted, Shelton House Papers, RICH 7850. [img_5349].



Figure 10: Interior with bed and piano, 1955, Shelton House Papers, RICH 7850.



Figure 11: Parlor, Rural Plains, May 1958, Park Collection [unprocessed]. Note sofa, matched footstools, and portrait.



Figure 12: "Rural Plains, 1971/Our dining room," Park Collection [unprocessed]. Note cupboard, server [& dining table?].



Figure 13: "Ella & Dr. Turner S. Shelton," no date (c1970s-1980s), Park Collection [unprocessed].



Figure 14: "Jenny Lind Bed," December 1971, Park Collection [unprocessed]. The style of this bed is not typically referred to as "Jenny Lind."



Figure 15: Parlor, "To Holly With our Love/Chris & Jacky Haig," March 1987, Park Collection [unprocessed].



Figure 16: Emma Shelton, carte de visite?, tinted, RICH 3575.



Figure 17: Frances (Fannie) Shelton, carte de visite?, tinted, RICH 3576.



Figure 18: Harriet Shelton Southall, cabinet card, Park Collection.



Figure 19: William R. Shelton, Sr., 1935, Park Collection.

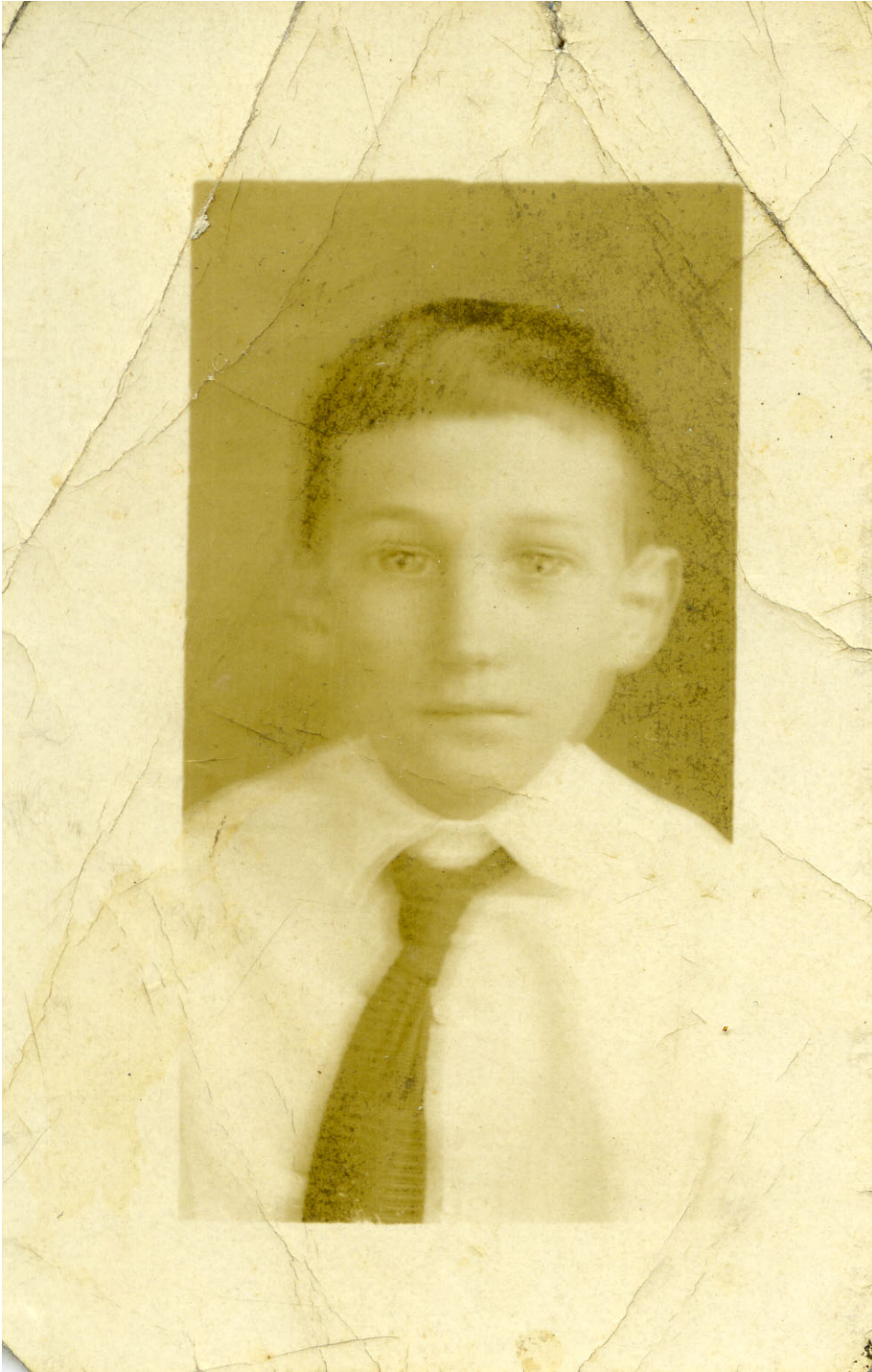


Figure 20: William R. Shelton, Jr., 1930, Park Collection.



Figure 21: William R. Shelton, Jr. and Hollie Bailey Shelton, 1991, Park Collection.

Appendix

Appendix A

There are at least five accounts of an enslaved woman throwing hot coals on an ammunition chest during the Battle of Totopotomoy Creek. The accounts vary significantly. In some, the woman is unharmed, in others she is injured or maimed. Some accounts say that Federal soldiers were killed, but in others they were untouched. The woman brought the coals from the main house in one story, and from nearby enslaved quarters in another. Taken together, the accounts show different perceptions of a single incident, as recorded by a range of observers.

General Hancock, *The War of the Rebellion*, Series I, Vol. XXXVI, Part I—Reports, 1891, p. 365.

A most singular incident occurred here to-day. We had several guns in position behind a rifle-pit which ran through the yard of the Shelton house, occupied by the troops of Brooke's brigade. These guns were firing rapidly at some batteries of the enemy placed on the other side of Swift Run [i.e., Totopotomoy Creek]. In the Shelton house were several ladies who had refused to leave, notwithstanding the danger; they had taken refuge in the cellar and had with them a negress, who, when the fire was about the hottest, became delirious from fright, and picking up a fire shovelful of live coals from the hearth, rushed out into the yard and threw the coals into one of the gun-limbers, exploding the ammunition it contained, killing 2 men I believe, and burning the eyes out of one or two others. The negress, who was unhurt, ran into the house again as if the devil was after her and nearly scared to death by what she had done. Colonel Brooke, Fifty-third Pennsylvania Volunteers, witnessed this affair with many other officers. I myself arrived on the ground just as the men whose eyes had been burned out were being taken off the field. It was not supposed that the negress had any intention of doing such mischief. She was so crazy that none believed she knew what she had done.

Robertson, Robert Stoddart; Charles N. and Rosemary Walker (eds.) "Diary of the War by Robert S. Robertson," *Old Fort News*, Vol. 28. Fort Wayne, IN: Allen County – Fort Wayne Historical Society, 1965. The original diary is in the Robert S. Robertson Collection of the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society in Fort Wayne, Indiana. One of our caissons which stood by a negro shanty exploded, by one of the negro wenches carelessly throwing out a shovelful of coals & ashes, wounding about 20 men, some seriously, and blowing the shanty in pieces.

Captain Augustus C. Brown, *The Diary of a Line Officer* (New York: Self-published, 1906), 58-59.

Immediately in the rear of my company as it was at work on the breast-works, stood a fine large brick or stone house with a slate roof, known as the Shelton House, which was said to belong to a rebel Colonel then in the works in front of us, and was occupied by some ladies of his family, who had, however, very properly taken refuge in the cellar. Between our works and the house, which stood with its rear towards us, was a semi-circle of negro quarters, and in front of these little frame and log houses the artillerymen had backed up their caissons and ammunition wagons to conceal them as much as possible from the enemy. At the door of one of these cabins was a large pile of ashes, where the old 'mammy' who lived there had emptied the contents of her stove for years, and as the men took out the ammunition from the chest on a limber, considerable powder was sprinkled on this dumping

ground. Not long after the rebels had commenced firing, and after they had sent several rifled projectiles through the main house and its roof, and had split some of the great trees standing close by, the old darkey woman came to her door, cool as a cucumber, and apparently oblivious of the danger of her act, threw a shovel full of hot ashes and coals just out of her stove squarely under the limber, and instantly the front of that shanty was taken off as cleanly as if cut down by a monster hay-knife. Two men were killed and several wounded, but the negress is said to have escaped unhurt. A tremendous cheer at once rang out from the rebel line, the occupants of which no doubt supposed that the explosion of the limber chest had been caused by one of their shells. After getting our guns in position we opened on them, and the cannonading was vigorously kept up all along the line until dark.

William C.H. Reeder, Letter dated 31 May 1864, in the William C.H. Reeder Papers, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle Barracks, PA. Transcribed copy is in the files at Richmond NBP.

[O]ur lines Run close by a house and there is one of our Batteries in the yard and yesterday there was an old wench threw a shovel of fire in one of the casons of ammunition and blue it up and like to have killed her she says her mistress told her to do it what they will do with her is more than I know but they should hang her high.

“Walter M. Shelton Remembrances,” ca. 1928. Transcription of undated, unsigned, handwritten account of the Battle of Totopotomoy Creek found in a closet of the Shelton House in 2009. Original is in the Shelton Family Papers, Maggie Walker NHS; transcription by Robert Krick and Barbara Yocum on file at Richmond NBP.

Sister Fannie & my self was standing in the door of the back entry one day whilst there were no firing going on. All at once there was a great explosion. It looked to me like the whole place was a sheet of fire. The Federals had several casehanns filled with ammunition. We thought that one of the confederate shells struck it and exploded it. But the Federals said one of our servants was smoking & drop fire in the casehann. The servant said she did not go near the ammunition that a shell struck it. Her face was badly burnt powder driven in it. She was burnt all over. I do not think she dropped the fire I think a shell struck it. If she had been very near it would have blown her all to pieces.

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