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Introduction

Mary C. Beaudry

Historical archaeologists readily acknowledge the advantage that documentary evidence gives them over prehistorians. Yet often, in many ways they seem puzzled over how to handle the historical record. Many view archival material as a control lacking in prehistory. They tend to follow one of two paths in their research: they may use historical sites as test cases for models developed in prehistory; or they set out to discover whether archaeological evidence properly reflects the documentary record or *vice versa*. Neither of these approaches can be viewed as highly productive, for the questions answered through such studies bear little interest for serious students of the New World past. Perhaps the tautological nature of much research in historical archaeology is part of the reason that historians often find little merit in the field.

Historical archaeologists clearly do not have a *direct* link in their own research to the questions posed of the documentary record by historians, primarily because archaeologists necessarily tend to focus upon material culture – in the ground as well as in the documents. Most historians would still view such material as merely illustrative to what they consider the major issues in historical inquiry.

Likewise prehistorians probably care very little whether their theories are proved or not by historical archaeologists, despite the latter groups' purported edge through the use of documentary controls. Most prehistorians deal with totally different categories of phenomena than do historical

archaeologists; the historical period in the New World presents the researcher with an elaborate array of complex pre-industrial and industrial cultures whose transportation, communication, and exchange networks were global in scope. Even the most large and complex prehistoric societies could not be described in such terms. Although many ideas can profitably be adapted from prehistory to historical archaeology, the two disciplines require, for the most part, different research strategies. In other words, historical archaeologists must devise research problems of their own and decide for themselves the issues and questions that require their attention, if they are to contribute anything of worth through their efforts. To do so, historical archaeologists must develop an approach towards documentary analysis that is uniquely their own.

Such an approach is presented in this reader through a series of essays that go from documents to archaeology or from archaeology to documents in order to provide data relevant to research problems that were developed by scholars trained in the field of historical archaeology. It is unlikely that researchers trained in other fields would pursue the same topics in quite the same manner. Historians are quick to point out that history is not 'what happened in the past'; rather, it is *the act of selecting, analyzing, and writing about the past*' (Davidson and Lytle 1986, xix). The historical archaeologists who authored these essays came to the documents with new notions of what could be gleaned from them, notions arising from a materialist

perspective on the past dictated by the nature of archaeological evidence. These essays aim to demonstrate to historical archaeologists that the historical record, far from being a finite body of specialized information, is rather a bountiful trove of fresh insight into the past.

These readings are in part case studies and in part 'how-to' essays. That is, a few are in themselves historical, as they were, within the field of historical archaeology, groundbreaking early examples of how an historical archaeologist might formulate a proposal for incorporating probate inventories or account books into archaeological analysis. Other essays are specific case studies that illustrate innovative uses of documentary evidence in solving archaeological problems.

The essays are grouped into four broadly defined sections. The five chapters included in Part I are vivid examples of the role of documentary analysis in archaeological interpretation. Chapter 1, 'Legends, houses, families, and myths: relationships between material culture and American ideology', by Anne Yentsch, reveals that in early America, when women inherited land or houses, their property was less likely to be accorded the same significance in local history and legend as were land or homes that passed through the male line. Anne Yentsch illustrates how filiopietistic local histories produced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries consistently ignored females and other minorities. Such histories have become reified in local oral tradition about historic houses, resulting in a highly selective process of remembrance that memorializes houses that were built or owned by prominent male citizens and 'forgets' houses owned by women. This selective memory creates difficulties for the archaeologist in terms of locating and identifying historical homesites as well as in interpreting the remains of those they excavate, for their conclusions are often at variance with the lore to which local inhabitants cling tenaciously. Yentsch points out common elements in house histories and shows that when viewed as origin myths, stories about old houses become not so much inaccurate histories as reflections of Americans' beliefs about their past.

Julia Curtis, in Chapter 2, 'Perceptions of an artifact: Chinese porcelain in colonial Tidewater Virginia', examines a single artifact type – Chinese export porcelain – found in abundance on seventeenth-century sites in the Chesapeake. She uses artifactual analysis, documentary evidence from shipping records and shipwrecks, probate inventories, and dated historical collections of porcelain in order to delineate the significance of Chinese export porcelain in international trade. Curtis argues that the rigorous use of documents to disclose these relationships can be applied to other artifact groups as well.

In Chapter 3, Peter Schmidt and Stephen Mrozowski examine Revolutionary War-era tactics developed by colonial merchants for smuggling contraband goods into the colonies; shipping records and secret account books are used to illustrate the prevalence of smuggling as well as its acceptance as a deliberate strategy of resistance against British authority. This study sheds new light on the significance of smuggled goods found on eighteenth-century colonial sites and provides intriguing suggestions of the ways in which the archaeology of eighteenth-century shipwrecks can contribute to our knowledge of how smuggling was accomplished.

Chapter 4, 'Words for things: linguistic analysis of probate inventories', by Mary C. Beaudry, shows how a linguistically based analysis of documentary sources, in this case probate inventories, can provide a means of interpreting the cultural significance of specific items of material culture in colonial America. This method provided the impetus for the typology developed in Chapter 5, 'A vessel typology for early Chesapeake ceramics: the Potomac Typological System'. Here the authors use documentary data as a means of developing a functional archaeological typology that, so far as possible, reflects the folk classifications of the people who used the objects found on historical sites.

The second section of the book contains seven essays that are more strictly methodological in nature, and introduces the reader to a variety of document classes that are useful to archaeologists. Chapter 6, Garry Wheeler Stone's 'Artifacts are not enough' is a convincing argument for an approach to documentary analysis that encompasses the entire spectrum of material goods that inventories itemize, not merely those likely to be unearthed from archaeological sites. Stone argues that archaeologists who attempt to excavate from documents only the sorts of data they obtain from the archaeological record limit their ability both to interpret the cultural significance of excavated remains and to make those remains relevant to the interpretation of broad historical questions.

Chapter 7, Marley R. Brown's discussion of the behavioral correlates of seventeenth-century Plymouth Colony probate inventories, was first written in 1975. Although it has not been previously published, it served as a springboard for a number of probate inventory studies, including those presented in Chapters 8 and 13. Brown's essay points out that inventories, because they are detailed lists of household items, should offer seemingly limitless opportunities for archaeologically oriented studies; the fact that inventory studies have been very common in historical archaeology is ample testimony to the accuracy of this statement. Kathleen Bragdon, in Chapter 8, takes an innovative approach to the use of probate inventories; her direct comparison of inventory data with excavated assemblages from different types of sites was the first published study that combined quantified data from both documentary and archaeological sources.

The first three chapters in the second portion of the book focus on the use of probate inventories as aids to archaeological interpretation; the remaining chapters of Part II explore a variety of documentary sources useful for historical archaeologists conducting site-specific or regional studies. Chapter 9, by Nancy Seasholes, provides a comprehensive review of cartographic sources relevant to historical archaeological research. The cases discussed are all from

Massachusetts and were, for the most part, background studies for cultural resource management surveys of portions of downtown Boston and outlying areas; the types of maps employed in these examples are widely available elsewhere, however, and the caveats about their use and interpretation are applicable to any cartographic research.

In Chapter 10, Lawrence Babits discusses the ways in which military records may be employed for interpretation of military sites in addition to their application to regional population makeup and hence to regional surveys. Chapter 11 deals primarily with probate inventory data; in this essay, Bragdon uses an ethnohistorical approach to examine the ways in which the material possessions of the Christian Indians of New England reveal the degree to which the Indians had, by the eighteenth century, become acculturated to Anglo-American culture. Such a study is especially useful to archaeologists attempting to interpret the archaeological evidence for 'Praying Indian' towns as well as for other Contact Period or historical native American sites.

Deed research forms the basis for the study of Rockbridge County, Virginia, population and land transfer practices presented by Langhorne and Babits in Chapter 12; this preliminary case study revealed that information on inheritance patterns also reveals kinship linkages that provided women with landholding opportunities not otherwise available.

Ecological questions are increasingly of interest to historical archaeologists, who realize that the beliefs and technologies of European Americans caused them to adapt to the New World environment very differently than did native Americans. It is this realization that prompts historical archaeologists to question whether models used to study the prehistoric past are useful for understanding historical cultures. Anne Yentsch, in her analysis of the relationship between subsistence strategies and local environment on colonial Cape Cod, Massachusetts (Chapter 13), addresses the broad issue of how inventory entries reflect the ways in which individuals perceive and organize their world. She examines at length the close relationship early Cape Codders had with the environment and the ways in which a seasonal round of activities shaped daily life. Yentsch is able to demonstrate that the classification of goods and animals in probate inventories is a direct reflection of their cultural significance in terms of traditional subsistence patterns and the organization of labor.

Accounts books as well as probate data provide the basis for Joanne Bowen's discussion, in Chapter 14, of the application of the concept of seasonality to faunal remains on historical sites. In 'Seasonality: an agricultural construct', Bowen stresses the importance of interpreting early American subsistence patterns in their proper context through developing models based upon historical agricultural practices and points out the pitfalls of an unquestioned use of prehistoric subsistence models that are based upon exploitation of wild food sources.

The final section of the book contains three chapters that address issues of consumerism, status, gender, and ethnicity, all topics of recent interest to historical archaeologists working in the New World. Each indicates how rigorous use of documentary data can provide a sound footing for archaeological analysis and interpretation. Chapter 15, by George Miller, uses information drawn from nineteenth-century price lists and catalogs to develop a scale that measures the degree to which individuals invested in ceramics as opposed to other goods. This landmark study provides an index for other archaeologists to use in interpreting their own materials and paves the way for further research into marketing and consumer practices as important factors in the formation of the nineteenth-century archaeological record.

Stephen Mrozowski, in Chapter 16, considers two types of sources available in historical newspapers: letters from readers and advertisements. Newspaper ads provide information on pricing and availability of ceramics and other goods; such information helps the archaeologist to refine dating techniques as well as to account for local variations in product availability. Both ads and anecdotal letters in local papers reveal a great deal about the role of women as consumers in the post-Revolutionary era as well as changing attitudes about the role of women in general. Mrozowski points out that many of the deposits excavated from early nineteenth-century sites may be in part a result of the development of marketing strategies aimed at women, who assumed a prominent role as consumers in the years leading up to the Industrial Revolution in America.

Praetzellis, Praetzellis, and Brown recommend the use of sources such as exhibition catalogs and newspaper ads to establish a baseline of nineteenth-century middle-class consumerism as the foundation for delineation of ethnicity in the archaeological record. Their study promotes the novel yet utterly sensible concept that historical archaeologists must understand what comprised the norm for consumer behavior in nineteenth-century America before they can properly interpret anomalies that may reflect choices based on class and ethnic distinctions.

This book reflects the increased sophistication that historical archaeologists have, over time, brought to the study of the documentary past in the interpretation of historical sites in the New World. What is more, the essays reflect the development of research interest in topics such as women's roles, consumer behavior, ethnicity, and urbanization. Although the theoretical perspectives are drawn primarily from anthropology, these essays reveal that historical archaeologists must use historical sources critically in order to offer insight into the recent past. It is the innovative combination of archaeological and historical analysis that makes these essays contributions to documentary archaeology.

Part I

Archaeology is not enough

Chapter 1

Legends, houses, families, and myths: relationships between material culture and American ideology

Anne Yentsch

Peter Schmidt describes landscape 'as a series of images in which history is held' and notes how physical objects situated in the landscape call to mind the oral traditions of a people (Schmidt, personal communication). This paper explores these images through a discussion of legends about old American houses. The internal structure of these legends, or house histories, is considered first in terms of historical evidence about family and property and second as embodying myths of kinship and social structure, reflecting a world view in microcosm. What appears in a structural analysis of these tales is a common theme. It matters little whether a house was forgotten or remembered; the content of the message is similar. The content conveys information about relationships among individuals in American society and is a form of ideology that utilizes the medium of physical objects as the mechanism for its conveyance. Material culture, the core of archaeology, is thus an active agent through which a people's mytho-history is held and told to succeeding generations.[1]

1.1 Introduction

Myths and legends serve to express certain ways of thinking and feeling about the society and its relation to the world of nature, and thereby to maintain these ways of thought and feeling and pass them on to succeeding generations.

(Radcliffe-Brown 1933, 405)

Condensed with the passage of time, local lore and legends are inextricably interwoven with the material fabric of old houses. Seemingly riddled with inaccuracies, the genre appears inconsistent. Analytical problems affect its use by scholars as an information source. Earlier in this century, some prehistorians considered the relationship between oral tradition and archaeology, but with the exception of a few individuals such as Henry Glassie (1975, 1982), Peter Schmidt (1978), and Dell Upton (n.d.), historical archaeologists and architectural historians have been reluctant to confront oral tradition about old houses; they have rarely examined thoroughly the legends incorporated into written local or family history of the sites they excavated or the dwellings they record. The situation is thus: on the one hand, oral tradition often seems inaccurate when viewed in the light of the precise time measurements by archaeologists. Yet, on the other hand, oral tradition indisputably embodies folk history.[2]

With respect to this issue, one question is whether stories about old houses might be a form of American mythology? If legends about old houses are an expression of American mythology, then encoded within them is ethnographic information on social values and folk ideas about kinship, community identity, society, history, culture, and nature. For myths, as discussed by Firth (1967, 284), 'form a moral system and a cosmology as well as a history,' embodying a set of folk beliefs expressing social ideas and values and situating people within society.

Most people are familiar with legends about old houses. Enter almost any town along the Atlantic seaboard and still standing will be an old house identified as the home of an original settler. Folk dates of such historic houses usually fall

between 1670 and 1740. The actual date varies from one community to another, corresponding to the approximate date of actual settlement. Those on the seacoast are earliest and those in the interior lands settled later are more recent. At the same time it is not uncommon for archaeological evidence to confirm later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century occupations for the historic house.

In part this occurs because of the sparse representation in the archaeological record of deposits associated with earlier periods on continuously occupied sites (cf. Starbuck 1980). When present the frequencies of earlier artifact types are far lower than those of artifact types common in the later eighteenth century (cf. Deetz 1973, 36–7). The effect of the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century landscaping activity also destroys evidence of earlier occupations. Sometimes archaeologists conclude the folk dates assigned to houses in legend are at best questionable or false and unusable. Architectural features sometimes resolve the contradiction, and analysis by architectural historians often plays a crucial role in establishing the construction date and hence the dwelling's actual age. If no other data are available, a prudent archaeologist must take the archaeological evidence as primary. Yet this does not explain the contradiction posed by the seeming inaccuracies in the stories told about the house. Nor does it necessarily help the archaeologist work out the details of the site's occupation vis-à-vis town or local histories where the folk date may be presented as established fact.

My experience suggests that dates assigned houses in oral tradition are rarely accurate. This alone may not mean that they should be disregarded. An initial consideration of the issue discloses that there are houses remembered and houses forgotten. Three questions become focal and are discussed within this chapter:

1. Is there a pattern to house histories or are houses randomly remembered or forgotten?
2. Are there ethnographic clues contained within these bits of false information about old homes?
3. Can one explain the existence of legends about houses and, with anthropological techniques, use these to learn about American historiography as a process at the community, or folk, level? In doing so, what era is highlighted?

With these three questions in mind, information is provided on examples of houses and house histories in rural communities of New England and in Maryland. Initially these examples are viewed from a historical frame of reference, that is to say, they are considered to embody information about individuals and, specifically, about family men who built houses. I will consider what family reconstitution, deed research, probate records, and other historical documents reveal about these individuals, paying attention to their kinship ties to other occupants of the house. This is in accord with customary archaeological procedures for investigating the history of a given site; but I will also consider the form of legends to see if perhaps the individual who built the house is transformed in the stories that are told. It is the consideration of transformation that introduces a structural frame of reference to this study.

At the same time, there is also an implicit concern in this paper with function, and specifically with the ways in which kinship relationships were related to property ownership. The actual configuration of events (conveyed in the documentary record) that regulated the passage of ownership of a dwelling from one individual to another reflects normative social values of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century individuals. How ownership was transferred is reflective of the real world and is of direct relevance to historical archaeology.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, people also held beliefs about what should happen to houses (i.e., 'ideal' sets of values about property), not of concern here. In the nineteenth-century legends told about houses, ideal values were at the fore and are highlighted. In particular, these values related to social structure, displaying hierarchical relationships between men and women, and between Anglo-Americans and people with differing ethnic identities such as Afro-Americans or European immigrants. These legends conveyed social boundaries, told of categories of people, and situated family members within these. They transmuted certain men into founding personages, certain women into phantasmagorical creatures, and black Americans into non-entities. The legends also provided a cultural map of the natural world and situated a legendary person and his family within it. An example of this is the local lore that created a map placing Elizabeth Blachford, a reputed witch, and her home, at the fringe of the community. This is but one example of how, in their role as a social ordering mechanism, house histories provided cultural boundaries for persons and events together with a frame of reference for daily life. In a Durkheimian sense, they were a mechanism promoting social cohesion situated within the home.

It should be emphasized that the oral traditions discussed here, while linking houses to the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in terms of their purported age, are traditions whose origins probably lie in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century family knowledge. While the traditions appear to be a product of a later time period imposed on an earlier one, their cultural importance is indicated by the fact that although the content itself differs, the traditions are structurally similar over a wide geographic area. The same transformation occurs, the same values are emphasized (i.e., continuity of family, the ability to overcome hardship, participation in the first wave of settlement in a town, service to the community, military leadership and valor, courage, a Christian world view), and time and time again, they are linked to a mnemonic entity or extant building located in the community.

This occurs because, like tombstones, houses serve as historical records set in the landscape. The history of a house is the history of a family or sequence of families. No matter that the culture itself differed, and that if the inhabitants of the house during a later period were to suddenly find themselves

encountering the harsh reality of seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century life, they would experience culture shock: the existence of an old house gave the illusion of continuity and an alignment between past and present, between the nineteenth-century inhabitants and their antecedents. Created as mythology, the legends wrapped around houses operated according to principles of mythological thought, obeying a logic (encountered cross-culturally) wherein normal boundaries of time and space, the real and the non-real, were differently manipulated than in the rational thought guiding day-to-day activity (cf. Godelier 1977).

In the examples presented below, folk history sometimes collapses time and space to link a house with an earlier era, negates or dissolves the existence of individuals, well remembers others, particularly those associated with sacred space, but also those men who serve as folk heroes. In doing so, it conveys the values of the community and the belief system of the culture. It is able to do this because it is not only local history, but mytho-history.

Myths are illusory representations of man and the world, inexact explanations of the order of things, culturally construed, a way of speaking and a way of thinking about the world in which things are transmuted. To be specific, in folk history, houses undergo a transmutation and substitute for human experience; they stand for family members and kinship ties. When one speaks of houses, in folk history, one is also, despite the fact that an inexact analogy is used, making explicit relationships between family, society, and history through the medium of a house by associating the behavior of the person who built it or controlled it with the physical fabric of the house. House-linked myths exist in our society and will do so as long as they are functional in terms of contemporary ideology.

1.2 Houses remembered

1.2.1 The Vincent House, Edgartown, Massachusetts

Faced with archaeological evidence that the site of the Vincent House was first occupied c. 1720–40, with architectural evidence that the Vincent House was built later than 1656, and with documentary evidence of an earlier Vincent residence inside the nucleated portion of the town itself, family members affirmed their version of the house's past. Thus, in the summer of 1977, while doing deed research on Martha's Vineyard in conjunction with the removal of the Vincent House from its rural location to Edgartown, where it could serve more easily as a local museum, the strength of legends about houses was brought home to me with remarkable clarity. Reprinted in the *Dukes County Intelligencer* in 1978, Mabel Keniston Baker's earlier narrative reiterated the oral tradition: 'the William Vincent house, built about 1656, is one of the oldest in Edgartown' (Baker 1978, 61). An editor's footnote on the same page explained that 'there is now doubt about precisely when the house we think of as the Vincent House enters the tale she tells; she was a Vincent through her father.' Elsewhere, the director of the Vincent House Project, C. Stuart Avery, acknowledged the 'age' problem created by the deed research

and the archaeological investigation of the property done under the direction of Myron Stachiw, while also accurately recognizing that these in no way diminished the value of the house as a historic property or the feasibility of using it as an architectural resource center on the island (Avery 1978).

Albeit disappointing to some family members, the discovery of deeds to a house situated elsewhere in the town pointed out the inaccuracy of the belief that William Vincent moved to his home on Long Pond in 1656 when he married Susanna Browning. William had only one son, Thomas, whom he disinherited in his will of 1697 because of Thomas' unacceptable demeanor towards his parents (Baker 1978, 62). Thomas lived off the island away from his family for a while, married a Connecticut woman, but returned to Martha's Vineyard and lived on Long Pond, where he died in 1740. The family belief is that Thomas inherited the family homestead from his mother, with whom he was reconciled after his father's death. Deeds reveal that Thomas Vincent *purchased* the family homestead from his mother in 1710–12 and did not receive it as a family legacy. The archaeological evidence indicated that the purported William Vincent site was occupied at the earliest during the 1720s or 1730s. The preliminary documentary research suggested that the house was probably the residence of Thomas Jr, dating to 1723/4 (summarized in Stachiw 1978, 25–6).

As mythology, what does the family tradition accomplish? First, it transforms the actual individual, Thomas Jr, who built the house, into an ancestral person, William Vincent. Next it links the Vincent House to the first male Vincent to live on the island and to the origin of Edgartown. Then it gives William Vincent, in his role as the Vincent progenitor, a well-built, durable home demonstrated by its survival over three centuries. Finally it implies that the prodigal son, Thomas, repented his earlier demeanor and was forgiven by his mother for this behavior, receiving in turn a house as his Biblical share of the family estate. To do this, the tradition collapses time and violates spatial boundaries. It also ignores the role of Thomas Jr, namesake of the prodigal son, thus visiting the sins of his father on a subsequent generation. In essence, the tradition sets out a series of ideal relationships that mask the real-world experiences of the Vincent family.

The house in question was built by Vincent men during the era in our past when communities were tightly knit networks of individuals consisting of multiple, often large, kin-based household units within which economic activity occurred. Each person and family group fitted into a niche of the hierarchically based social order. The social order within the family served as metaphor for social order within the community. Focused on farming, fields, and cultivated soil, members of society required land; the most valuable land was tamed and plowable, i.e., cultural land, not natural land. In addition to inheritance, a judicious marriage offered one alternative for procuring land, but the primary means for achieving upward social mobility was through migration westward to the frontier with its promise of abundant, available

Fig. 1.1. Hancock's Resolution showing house, wing, and stone outbuilding

land. In any given community, among those who remained at home, not all inhabitants were prosperous, not all individual family units would survive unbroken until the children reached maturity, nor would all patronymic kin networks persist through time in a given locale. Death was ever present, dissolving basic family units (primarily nuclear), reducing the larger kin networks, altering the structure of a household, and creating social situations that gave rise to serial monogamy. The family rather than the community had the primary obligation to serve as caretakers of the young, the old, widowed men and women. Within this social context houses functioned as signs for family units; clusters of houses signified community. The Vincent House conveyed both the identity of the family and their placement in the community as enduring and successful farmers. A similar situation existed at Hancock's Resolution.

1.2.2 Hancock's Resolution, Anne Arundel County, Maryland

In Maryland, members of the Hancock family looked back in time and established a link with the early settlers of the province in the stories they told of their home. They sustained a link to the seventeenth century by claiming that the Susquehannocks labored to move the stone that Stephen Hancock used to build his house in 1668. The Susquehannocks helped Hancock build the house because of Hancock's military prowess, his ability to protect both English and Indian from Seneca raids extending south to the Magothy River. A Northumbrian, Hancock received his military training when he fought in the army under Cromwell, a fitting military heritage for someone who signed a pledge of loyalty to King William of England in 1694.

Built of rough-hewn ironstone, the Hancock house is durable and solid in appearance (see fig. 1.1). The native stone building material places the building midway on a continuum between nature and culture and roots the house to its region of the Chesapeake. The site itself hints of seventeenth-century origins, for, like many seventeenth-century domestic sites in the Chesapeake (Smolek and Clark 1982), it stands on a low sandy knoll approximately 800 feet from the head of Old House Cover on Bodkin Creek where the Patapsco River meets the Bay. Within its surrounding fields lies a small family burial ground where many members of the Hancock family are at rest. Visually, the house and its surroundings convey an image of past time, of control imposed on the land, of Indian alliances, of successive generations of Marylanders involved in peaceful, successful settlement in a new world. As the family sees it:

> Life at Hancock's Resolution changed very little in the almost 300 years it sheltered the Hancock family. Each day brought its problems, its hardships, and its satisfactions; the problems were solved, the hardships endured and the satisfactions remembered. The Hancocks and their neighbors were resolute people, working, saving, wasting nothing; by such as these was our America created. (Calvert 1965, 10)
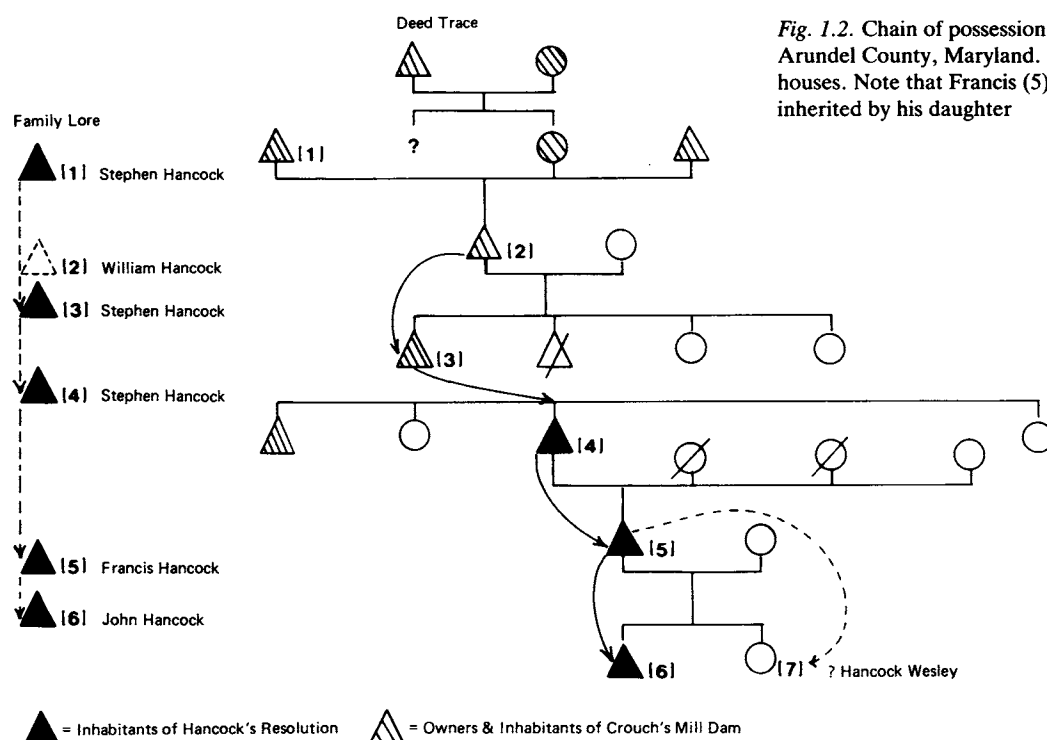
Fig. 1.2. Chain of possession, Hancock's Resolution, Anne Arundel County, Maryland. Arrows denote conveyance of houses. Note that Francis (5) built a new home which was inherited by his daughter

Despite the oral tradition handed down over the generations in the Hancock family, an analysis of kinship charts and deeds reveals this was not the original Stephen Hancock's dwelling house, while simultaneously disclosing evidence of a frequently practiced land acquisition strategy. Hancock came to Maryland landless if not penniless, and he acquired property through marriage to a sixteen-year-old heiress, Rebecca Crouch. Rebecca's father William died in 1675, leaving her a legacy of land at Crouch's Mill Dam and two other parcels, all located on the Broadneck peninsula, south of the Magothy River, in Anne Arundel County (Wright and Baker 1980). These lands, acquired by marriage, were inherited by Hancock's eldest son, William (see fig. 1.2). His mother remarried.

Later, William leased a right to land near the Patapsco. While retaining the family home at Crouch's Mill Dam, he also became a tenant farmer, renting property on Homewood's Range (a parcel known as Fair Jerusalem), near Bodkin Creek. He probably did so to procure additional lands for his younger son, Stephen, the namesake of the original Hancock. The family established a home of sorts and, by analogy with other Maryland homes of the period, it was probably a wooden structure, possibly of post-hole construction, small, with a dirt floor; it would not have been an elaborate home.[3] If, like many of its Chesapeake counterparts, it left only ephemeral traces on the land and was of log or roughly framed, one might even consider that it lay closer to nature than houses of stone or brick construction.

The stone house known as Hancock's Resolution is now a national landmark. Ownership was transferred to Historic Annapolis, Inc., in 1964; the property is undergoing renovation to become a county museum with an interpretive program focused on rural farming in the nineteenth-century Chesapeake. As part of the background research on the property, a history of the family and an architectural analysis of the structure was undertaken by Nancy Baker and Russell Wright, A.I.A. (Wright and Baker 1980). Both researchers agree that the building was constructed sometime after 1760. Archaeological testing by Henry T. Wright (1971) produced similar findings. There is no date, no physical evidence that the house dates to the second quarter of the eighteenth century, although a smaller building lying slightly north has not been thoroughly tested and evaluated.[4]

As with the Vincent House, the family history of Hancock's Resolution explicitly contradicts the findings of experts in local history, in architectural history, and in historical archaeology. The Hancock family history also collapses time, thereby associating the original Stephen Hancock with his eighteenth-century descendent, and also dissolves spatial boundaries, thereby substituting the present house site for that of the earlier seventeenth-century farm at Crouch's Mill Dam located approximately twenty miles further south; it 'overlooks' the tenure of tenant farming. A similar situation with another permutation exists with the Mowry-Smith house and its oral tradition.

1.2.3 Mowry-Smith Farm, North Smithfield, Rhode Island

The Mowry-Smith farm in North Smithfield, Rhode Island, is another dwelling that has been mythologized. It is identified in oral tradition, in modern local history, and in nineteenth-century family history (Yentsch 1981; Nebiker 1976;
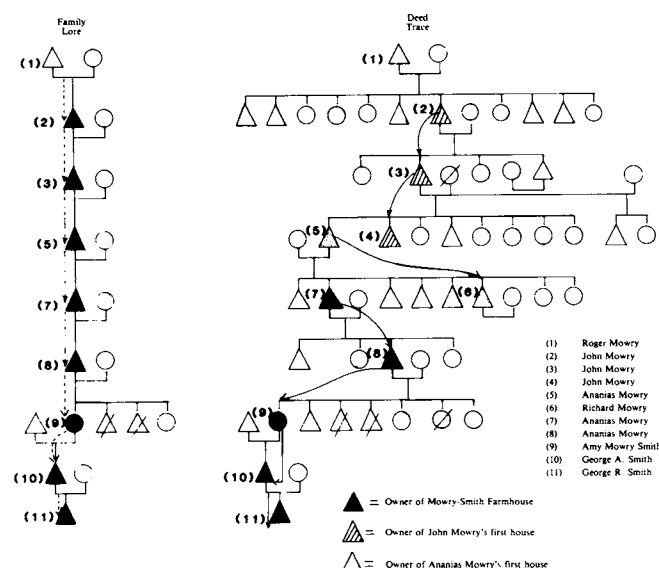
Fig. 1.3. Chain of possession for the Mowry-Smith Farmhouse in North Smithfield, Rhode Island. Arrows denote conveyance of houses through inheritance and Deed of Gift.

Mowry 1909; Steere 1881) as the home of the original John Mowry, who settled in northern Rhode Island in the late seventeenth century when the regions north of Providence were first opened to settlement. As one Mowry descendant wrote:

> Our homestead has been known for nearly two centuries as the Ananias Mowry farm ... We are not positive who built the house or in what year it was built. Tradition has it that John the 2nd built it and that it is not far from 200 years old (i.e., of late seventeenth century origin).
> (Mowry 1878)

While architectural analysis suggests that portions of the house were built in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, archaeological investigation reveals that the land on which the Mowry-Smith farm stands was not occupied until after the American Revolution. As part of the historical research, family reconstitution charts were made for each occupant of the site. These indicated that John the second and Ananias were father and son and that several intervening sons named Ananias were born before Amy Mowry in 1808 (fig. 1.3).

The farm became linked with the Smith family when Amasa Smith married Amy Mowry in the nineteenth century. Amy was born in the house in 1808 and grew up on its land. She also continued to live in the house, with Amasa, after her marriage. She could trace her lineage through earlier male ancestors directly to John Mowry the second, an Original Proprietor in the town records of Smithfield. The family link was clear, and it was worth preserving because each of the Mowry men held prestigious positions in the community, some were well educated and some were among the wealthiest men in the town. The Mowry family was linked to the house that in turn was linked to the first Smithfield Mowry; the house served as an ancestral shrine. At the same time there was also a

graveyard near the site, containing only a few Mowry graves and numerous Smith gravestones. The use of small family burial plots rather than community cemeteries in this region of New England dates to the late seventeenth century. Such graveyards are usually located in close proximity to the homestead of a significant male kinsman. Thus the Mowry dwelling was adjacent to sacred space controlled by the deceased Smiths and in proximity to a house site once possessed by the Smiths and later abandoned.

Amy Mowry's husband, Amasa Smith, worked during his childhood in the Slater cotton mills to support his widowed mother and younger siblings. He was active in town politics, served as tax collector, and, towards the end of his life, represented the town in the Rhode Island legislature. He was upwardly mobile. His son was educated and served as an officer for the Union Army in the Civil War; his grandson became the local physician. The Smith men validated their achieved rank within the town partially through their association with the Mowry family and by possession of the Mowry ancestral shrine. The folk history attached to the house linked the family to the past (i.e., to the origins of the community), suggested a continuity between past and present-day experience, and was sustained in the community over many years.

1.3 Houses in symbolic space

The Vincent, Hancock, and Mowry-Smith houses were identified with established families in their communities. The houses became mnemonic devices; memories attached to them. These memories constituted a storehouse of family associations that people used in remembering family, community, and their place within each. As successive, related kin resided in the dwelling, information was passed from one generation to the next. The dwellings served as visible bonds, expressive of continuity over time and of the kinship network that bound one generation to the next. The houses substituted for the abstract genealogical bond by serving as signs of kinship.

In any investigation of house histories, one finds that these tend to celebrate those families and individuals who dominated the political system in a community and who also, through a variety of strategies, were able to amass quantities of land. Often these were wealthy individuals, but acquiring land was not solely an economic venture. One had to be astute in other ways as well and particularly with respect to inheritance procedures. In Maryland, an inheritance system based on primogeniture prevented landholdings from fragmentation. In New England, where partible inheritance was the norm, landholdings were held together using different tactics. In both areas, family size and other demographic variables created conditions that required families to use a number of different strategies to care and maintain family members as well as to acquire and maintain land. Still, generation after generation of the fortunate remained on the land. Those with little land or opportunity often left the community. Dwellings of the former were remembered; those of the latter forgotten. The oral traditions surrounding both Hancock's Resolution and the

Mowry-Smith House show this process in operation and are permutations of the same theme visible in the family legend about the history of the Vincent House.

At the same time, the houses and house legends discussed above, from three geographically separate areas of the country, are all illusory representations of local history. Each legend transformed an individual who built a home into an ancestral personage, negating the activities of later generations by allocating responsibility to earlier men. While stressing the importance of family, local history, like family genealogy, is often subversive and serves to mask what actually transpired. The information it preserves is designed for the 'ethnographic present' that, in these cases, was the nineteenth century. Like memory, it is selective. The explanation for the disregard of traditional historical evidence lies in the nature of mythological thought. Mythological thought does not operate according to the same logic as rational thought. Leach writes that it is 'characteristic of traditional mytho-history that the real world of experience is surrounded on all sides by another world of imagination' (1982, 62). It is the world of imagination that alters time and changes space; what is really real remains the house. Information about the house is not the primary message conveyed, but rather a set of ideas and ideals about family and society, and once the real house is transmuted into a symbol of ideal family it inhabits imaginary space just as thoroughly as it does physical space.

Only a glimpse, however, is caught of the imaginative world within these legends, for they exist under a mask of normalcy that sets them apart from more exotic, fantastic origin myths. Yet that is what they are. And, as origin myths, they also touch upon man's relationship to nature. With ancestors who served as town fathers or founders because they were present in the first settlement of a region, families used legends to establish a relationship to England as their country of origin while simultaneously conveying that their ancestors were among those who 'overcame' nature in the New World, bringing it under control through settlement and conversion to agriculture. This makes it understandable that the Hancock legend includes the rather unusual claim that Indians transported the stone for their ancestor's home, for in doing so, they signified that not only did Stephen Hancock tame the land, he also militarily curbed Indian aggression and turned Indian labor to profit for his family. Many cultural values, including ideas about power relationships and social inequality, are expressed within the context of the stories surrounding houses. These use physical attributes of the house and imbue them with imaginary elements, thus strengthening their role in mythological thought.

Houses become icons of superior strength and intellect. This has been nicely described by Dell Upton (n.d.) in an article that tells of fantastic functions of simple architectural features in subduing the Indians. Under the label of 'crazy house stories', he relates folk explanations for narrow staircases, for high windows, for brick-end structures. From New England to the Chesapeake, Indians could be killed one by one as they came up, or went down, narrow staircases; high windows prevented their arrows from entering a house; other tiny openings (facing directly downwards) enabled Englishmen to more easily kill attacking Indians; brick gable ends on buildings protected inhabitants from Indians sneaking out of swamps at the sides of lots. Similarly, in explanations for other architectural features, houses demonstrated the superiority of one group of individuals over another – over pirates, servants, slaves – and, simultaneously, identified the occupants as Christians through the means of cross-and-bible doors or Holy Lord hinges.

If houses were icons, it follows that the disappearance of a house should both disrupt the mnemonic process and shatter the associated mythology. When houses disappear from the landscape, the event that caused their destruction may be remembered well, particularly if it is linked to something of more than familial interest (e.g., an Indian attack, a hurricane or tornado, a wide-spread fire). Oral tradition correctly assigned place to the site of the Eel River Massacre, as Harry Hornblower's excavation of the R.M. Site at Plimoth Plantation demonstrated (Deetz 1968). On the other hand, it seems that if a home is moved or torn down with its parts and pieces utilized elsewhere, then its mnemonic quality dissolves slowly rather than catastrophically destructing. The place where the house once stood may remain mnemonic if no one reclaims the land and builds on the site again. There are some clues that this occurs more frequently with sites linked closely to the sacred domain (e.g., churches and graveyards) or to truly heroic figures (e.g., Miles Standish), or to battlegrounds such as that at Eel River.[5]

Sometimes the link is sustained through a place name that persists over time; Brick Kiln Road, Shipwright's Street, Lambert's Cover. On Naushon Island, off the coast of Cape Cod, oral tradition clearly identified one eighteenth-century cellar foundation as 'the home of the imprudent farmer' (Yentsch 1974a) while oral tradition in Wellfleet, Massachusetts, identified a scatter of visible surface debris as the remains of Samuel Smith's tavern on Great Island, and men remembered the wording of his tavern sign (Reeser 1967). Otis, in his *Genealogical Notes on Barnstable Families* (1888), mentions more such examples.

Why are these places remembered while others are forgotten? Part of the answer emerges when one looks at those whose existence has passed from local knowledge. Family homes remembered and family homes forgotten are, in reality, two closely related elements in local historiography that tell of social structure and hierarchy within the community. They are equivalent acts; the logic behind them is the same. Superficially unrelated, remembering and forgetting factual details of home and land ownership accomplish the same ends.

1.4 Houses forgotten
One might even claim that the more thought-provoking examples revolve around those men whose homes were neglected in oral history or local lore, for these tell of people