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Bloomsbury Site Plan



This site plan includes all the identified features of the Bloomsbury house site, together with some conjectural locations of original features.

A probable house location in the northeast corner of the site is indicated by several clues: a burnt patch that may have been the fireplace location; a relative lack of features inside the outline; the presence of blue beads in the topsoil in the vicinity of four corners. A second building, closer to the western well, may have been the earlier house that was associated with that well. Neither structure stood the entire time when the site was occupied, because features inside the spaces would have been dug in the open ground. A probable wash house is likewise indicated by an area devoid of features. Fence lines are suggested by linear clusters of postmolds.

In 1767, Agness Sappington was destitute. Her husband had died. She was trying to support four daughters. Even her right to occupy her ramshackle cabin was disputed. Her deceased second husband, William Sappington, had claimed title in a muddy patch of clay where he cut timber during his last years, but his title in the land had never been recognized.

The well-connected widow Axell, who held good title, sent her son-in-law to rip off the roof. Agness tried to stay, but soon it became obvious that she couldn't inhabit a roofless house. She and the girls took refuge in a neighbor's garret.

Desperate, she called on Samuel Whitman, who had helped settle her first husband's estate. He now helped Agness press her claim to the ruined house and woodyard. With court permission, she was able to sell William Sappington's shaky claim to Mrs. Axell for a pittance.

Then she married Whitman, for whom she bore two children who survived to adulthood. Life was good, at last, several rungs up the economic and social ladder.

1814 was not a good year for Thomas Conselor. He fell behind on his store account at Benjamin Coombe's in Smyrna; the storekeeper sued and sent the constable to collect. On April 16, his landlord, Abraham Allee, grabbed the bridle of his horse and stopped his plowing. Conselor went to the magistrate in Dover and filed suit in Common Pleas. He moved to New Jersey and started over.

Two centuries later, an agency with no prior interest in Agness Sappington or Thomas Conselor came on the scene, and their stories unfolded for archaeologists and historians. The property was called Bloomsbury, and the purpose of this project was to tell their story.

