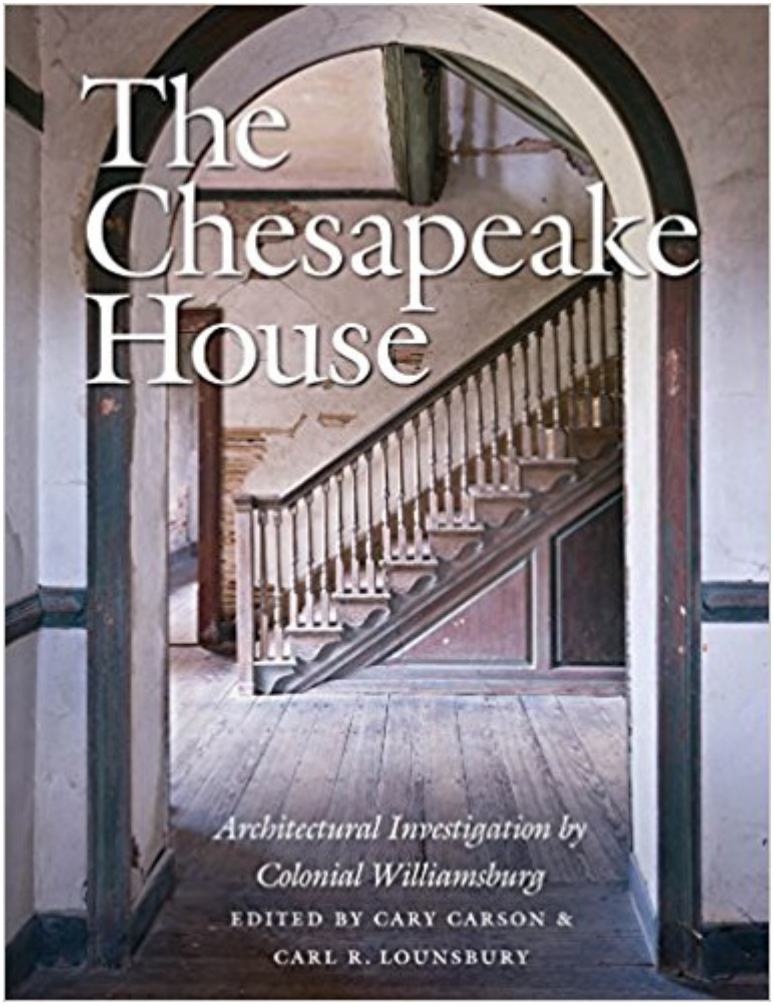
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The Chesapeake House: Architectural Investigation By Colonial Williamsburg



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Synopsis

For more than thirty years, the architectural research department at Colonial Williamsburg has engaged in comprehensive study of early buildings, landscapes, and social history in the Chesapeake region. Its painstaking work has transformed our understanding of building practices in the colonial and early national periods and thereby greatly enriched the experience of visiting historic sites. In this beautifully illustrated volume, a team of historians, curators, and conservators draw on their far-reaching knowledge of historic structures in Virginia and Maryland to illuminate the formation, development, and spread of one of the hallmark building traditions in American architecture. The essays describe how building design, hardware, wall coverings, furniture, and even paint colors telegraphed social signals about the status of builders and owners and choreographed social interactions among everyone who lived or worked in gentry houses, modest farmsteads, and slave quarters. The analyses of materials, finishes, and carpentry work will fascinate old-house buffs, preservationists, and historians alike. The lavish color photography is a delight to behold, and the detailed catalogues of architectural elements provide a reliable guide to the form, style, and chronology of the region’s distinctive historic architecture.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Chesapeake House is an important addition to the literature of the period and region and should be considered for both public and academic libraries.--Arts Libraries Society of North AmericaThis important volume. . . is richly illustrated with measured floor plans, paintings, and

photographs. . . . Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above; general readers.--ChoiceThis volume will serve as a valuable tool for historians who want to broaden their use of evidence and perhaps uncover a new perspective on the past.--Journal of Southern HistorySure to inform, move, and delight.--Winterthur PortfolioThis magisterial volume delights on many levels. . . . For anyone planning a trip to Virginia or Maryland, this book would be essential background reading.--Vernacular Architecture[This] book transforms our understanding of Chesapeake region buildings . . . [It] should become an essential reference for anyone interested in early American architecture.--Colonial WilliamsburgThis collection of essays is a milestone for architectural historians. While it will appeal to historians in any field, meeting rigorous expectations of scholarship, it will delight and inform a much wider audience beyond academe, just as the editors hope.--Journal of American HistoryA tour de force of fieldwork, analysis, and synthesis, providing the most thorough and nuanced understanding of Chesapeake buildings available.--Pennsylvania Magazine of History and BiographyPerhaps once in a generation there appears a published architectural history that achieves landmark status at the onset. The Chesapeake House deserves that status and more. . . . This work can truly be called a paradigm shift for how we should see and understand a significant regional development of American architecture.--Southeastern Society of Architectural Historians 2013 Book AwardAn important handbook to curators, scholars, and students in the field. . . . It is a seminal work in the field and will be referred to for years to come.--Virginia Magazine

A remarkable book. Cary Carson and his colleagues have transformed the way architectural history fieldwork is performed and in the process have also changed our understanding of the early architecture of the Chesapeake.--Carter L. Hudgins, Clemson UniversityThe Chesapeake House is the fruit of a generation’s labors and captures a revolution in the study of early American architecture. The authors adroitly combine field documentation with the most recent research as they explore the region’s architecture--from the smallest details of construction and decoration to the broadest issues of social ritual and social prestige. This is the great work we have been waiting for.--Dell Upton, University of California, Los Angeles

With others I agree the Kindle edition does this otherwise fine book a disservice. Too many illustrations from the printed edition are absent in the Kindle edition, replaced with "Illustration deleted. To view this illustration, please refer to the print edition of this book."I fault for two reasons: (1) omitting the illustrations, and (2) failing to alert prospective buyers of their omission. I consider

the second fault worse than the first.If I were able to ask for a refund I would.

As someone who is intoxicated with 18th century southern and tidewater architecture and building practices, I can’t praise this highly enough. Most "old house" (to use a slang term) books focus on exteriors - surfaces - decor, with occasionally a cross section of a door jamb or window sash thrown in. Much good work has of course been done on classical design, the orders, and how this has come down to us as the common interior and exterior mouldings seen in the "polite house" of this period. But as far as a real anatomical dissection, down to the gristle, of the building practices of the men who built these houses, you had to go begging with your hat in your hand. There are scraps here and there, as much as the intended readership would bear but no more, in books by housewright and woodworker Roy Underhill and timber framer Jack Sobon; "Get Your House Right" is the best there is on architecture and tasteful design of these houses without going into construction details, and the White Pine Series can be assembled if you want to put on your 5 power magnification goggles and squint at the beautiful tiny scale architectural drawings. So much emphasis has been placed on New England one would think there were no great houses anywhere else. (Yankees!) But here in massive, heavy glory is almost anything one could hope to know about the domestic buildings that we commonly associate with Colonial Williamsburg but in fact typified an entire culture, not just the miracle mile there in "the ’burg".Indepth work on not only the what and the how but also the WHY is what sets this apart. They don’t just show one cross section of sash muntin to show that in the 18th century they were thicker and deeper than in the 19th, the authors give us cross sections of 10 or more muntins, from different houses and different periods. I’ve never seen so many bannisters before. Paint in all its shades and meanings. How they put the brass rim locks in a house so that you would see them as you moved through it. Also how people lived in the houses - the way they laid out their posessions - the rhythm of their lives.Worth twice the price. "Grab it and growl", as we say. It’ll probably go out of print and the price will achieve fair market value.

Imagine, for a minute, in your mind’s eye, a house that comes to mind when someone shifts your attention to Annapolis or Williamsburg. If you’re like me, you’ll think of William Paca’s grand Annapolis townhouse, or perhaps George Wythe’s equally grand Williamsburg townhouse. Or perhaps you’ll be reminded of Shirley Plantation or more modest but equally beautiful Smith’s Fort.If this sounds like you, you have a fondness for houses of the Chesapeake region, a vast area with a wealth of historic architecture tied together by a common historic, economic and cultural

identity.This book is dedicated to capturing the building art of the region. By using the term "art," I mean exactly that. The book is not an architectural catalog, but is a descriptive guide to the arts and crafts employed by architects and artisans in the design and construction of these magnificent and beautiful structures.The houses featured herein were designed and built when a house served a profoundly different function than it does today. They were not only places of domicile, but also expression of a common culture and agricultural ideal. These houses, regardless of size or age, were meant to make a statement. They were also meant to make money, from the cash crops of the day. These very characteristics allow the authors to group what may otherwise be considered different styles into a common whole - the Chesapeake House.The houses featured in the book were all built before 1850 because the authors note that regional distinction in style had essentially disappeared by then. Houses built in the 1850s in Virginia looked a lot like houses built in the 1850s in Wisconsin, or California, etc...So here we have a book divided into chapters, roughly, by cultural theme (in the first half of the book) and trade (in the second half). The Design Process, Plantation Housing, Outbuildings, Woodwork, windows, doors, hardware, paint, etc... Each chapter is written by the outstanding practicing expert in his or her respective field. The book, while beautifully illustrated, is intended to be a research tool and a serious work of scholarship. It’s intended to inform further architectural investigation and history into the styles we associate with the Chesapeake. As such, it’s a pleasure to read for what it reveals about historical form, and it’s informative in what it can offer as a manual for accurate reproduction of that historical form. Here’s a book that reveals all the secrets as to why so few people can actually tell the original buildings in Williamsburg from the reconstructions, and why it’s important to reconstruct certain structures to begin with.The illustrations are outstanding. As the book is a study of style and its cultural contexts, the photographs and illustrations support that specific purpose. While it’s often beautiful, this book should not be mistaken for a volume of artistic color photographs. The graphics, cutaways, elevations, floorplans, details, etc... are numerous and superb.If you have an interest in this style, or you are a practicing architect or craftsman working in this style, this book is a must. If your interests are more casual (i.e. less technical), this book will still keep your interest. Just be aware that the text may be difficult at times.This book will quickly become the standard of its type. The editor, Carl Lounsbury, is the absolute authority in this subject of architectural history. You’re not going to find a better book.

Really good text, but would have like to see more pictures.

This is the most thorough and detailed study of buildings in the Chesapeake region that I have ever seen. The text is well-written and understandable even for the novice. It’s a lot of detail--but it’s fascinating how the authors relate small construction details or methods to the development of the society and economy at the particular time. One of the most interesting things is how the authors describe one thing and then give all the variations, anomalies, and uses of the construction detail. Another thing is that they did not concentrate on the great houses or buildings but take the vernacular buildings as examples of life in Virginia and parts of Maryland and North Carolina in the colonial and later periods.

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