

Chapter Seven: Sotterley – Sites Unseen

Copyright, 2015, by Samuel C.P. Baldwin, Jr.

Contents

Clicking on each title will take you directly to the section.

George Plater III	5
George III's Death	5
The Chapel of Ease, or the "Four Mile Run" Church.....	7
A Garden Burial Site?	10
A Field Site for the Governor's Grave?	14
Having Located the Grave of Governor Plater	19
Pirates Raid Sotterley.....	22
Lore: George Plater V Loses Sotterley and Haunts the Mansion.....	25
Other Sotterley Ghost Stories	28
Michael Humphries' Archeological Work at Sotterley.....	29
Archeological Studies at Sotterley	33
Further Investigations in 2001	39
Is there a Hidden Tunnel Leaving Sotterley?	40
Other Underground Structures at Sotterley	41
Secret Passage in the Red Room.....	41
Photo Album	44

Pictures:

Figure 1 1926 Map by Philip Kappel, a gift from Mabel Satterlee Ingalls to her father.	4
Figure 2 Governor George Plater III	5
Figure 3 Sotterley Docent posing as Plater, 12/28/08.....	6
Figure 4 Sotterley Docents dressed as the Platers.	7
Figure 5 Distance from likely location of the Chapel of Ease to Sotterley.....	8
Figure 6 Sotterley Docents posing as the Platers	9
Figure 7 Sundial in Sotterley garden and likely grave of Governor Plater	11
Figure 8 Sotterley Docents posing as the Platers	12
Figure 9 Richard C. Plater, Sr. at Sotterley with sundial, circa 1930.....	12
Figure 10 Deed from William C. Somerville to Thomas Barber	13

Figure 11 The old country road is to the right of the trees and the suspected graveyard is to the left. Sotterley's gardens are in the far left corner of the photo.....	17
Figure 12 Ground view of suspected grave site.....	18
Figure 13 Ground view of suspected grave site.....	18
Figure 14 The original county road running past Sotterley Gatehouse towards the site of the Governor's Grave.....	20
Figure 15 1997 Militia Muster.....	23
Figure 16 Sotterley docents posing as the Plater family, 12/08/08.	23
Figure 17 George Plater V Courtesy of Historic Sotterley.....	25
Figure 18 Red Room, George V's Gaming Table.	26
Figure 19 Collapsed tree at Sotterley, Its root ball could uncover buried artifacts. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley.....	32
Figure 20 Sotterley Boundary Stone.	33
Figure 21 Sotterley docents posing as the Platers.....	35
Figure 22 Sotterley Archeological Site	37
Figure 23 Secret Tunnel Basement Wall Repairs	40
Figure 24 Secret Tunnel, garden path.....	41
Figure 25 Note ladder from 2 nd floor bedroom "closet" down to the 1 st floor.	42
Figure 26 Climbing out of secret passage from the first floor.	43
Figure 27 Letter from Herbert Satterlee to Richard Plater, June 19, 1925.....	44
Figure 28 Letter to Plater descendents from Richard Plater, July 18, 1925.	48
Figure 29 Letter from Arthur "Buck" Briscoe to Herbert Satterlee, March 28, 1930.....	49
Figure 30 Letter from Herbert Satterlee to Richard Plater, March 2, 1934.....	50
Figure 31 Letter from Herbert Satterlee to Richard Plater, December 31, 1934	51
Figure 32 Richard C. Plater Jr. and Martha G. Robinson of New Orleans, 1954.....	52
Figure 33 Letter from Daughters of the American Revolution to Mabel Ingalls, May 25, 1974.	53
Figure 34 Letter from Mabel Ingalls to Daughters of the American Revolution	54
Figure 35 Tribute from the Daughters of the American Revolution to Herbert Satterlee and Mabel Ingalls	55
Figure 36 Three descendents of former owners of Sotterley.....	56
Figure 37 In Memory of George Plater III	56
Figure 38 Plater Reunion outside of mansion.....	57
Figure 39 Plater Reunion at sundial.	57
Figure 40 Plater Reunion by side arched gate.	58
Figure 41 Plater Reunion on lawn.....	58
Figure 42 Plater Reunion outside of "New Room".	59
Figure 43 Plater Reunion by ivy covered brick.....	59
Figure 44 Mabel Ingalls with the Platers and Bowles in the Red Room.	60
Figure 45 Interview by John Horton of James Scriber on the possible gravesite of Governor Plater III. ...	61

Audios:

Audio 1.	Burt Kummerow on locating the Governor’s burial site.	6
Audio 2.	Joe Goldsmith on the Satterlee painting	14
Audio 3.	Donald Barber on Sotterley “legends and lore”	28

George Plater III

Governor George Plater, only son of Hon. George Plater, was born in 1736 in St. Mary's County and was educated at William and Mary College. His services to the State extended over a period of nearly 40 years. He was first a member of the House of Delegates in 1758; he was afterward naval officer of the Patuxent, judge of the Provincial Court, member of the Governor's Council, member of the Council of Safety of Maryland, member of the Constitutional Convention of Maryland (1776), member of the Maryland Senate and president of that body, delegate to the Continental Congress, member of the convention for the ratification of the Constitution of the United States and president of that body, Presidential Elector in 1789 and Governor of Maryland in 1792. He died at Annapolis February 10, 1792.



Figure 2 Governor George Plater III
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Besides being so closely identified with Maryland in her struggle for independence and in laying the foundations of free government, his name conspicuously appears upon the pages of his country's history, during a period of half a century, in nearly every important move made by her people.¹

George Plater III inherited over 6,000 acres comprised of the property that he subsequently named Sotterley and adjacent parcels. This land provided the core of the family's successful tobacco business. In addition, he owned about 7,000 acres elsewhere in Maryland. As such, George Plater was one of the largest landowners in colonial Maryland and thereby a member of the gentry elite that dominated the social and political life of the colony.²

George III's Death

Plater was not destined to serve a long term as Maryland's governor. Ill health handicapped him all through his administration which was cut short by his untimely death after scarcely more than a year of service. He died at Annapolis on February 10, 1792, where he had been attending to his official duties.

In his public character which began with his earliest manhood, and terminated with his death, he was the firm advocate of rights of man, and was distinguished by warm and zealous adherence to the principles of the American Revolution.

His remains were attended the next day by the honorable members of the council, the officers of state, and a numerous company of citizens to South River, on the way to Sotterley, his seat in St. Mary's County.³

¹ James Walter Thomas, *Chronicles of Colonial Maryland* (Cumberland: The Eddy Press Corporation), 1913.

² David Brown, "George Plater: Getting ahead in Colonial Maryland," *Chronicles of St. Mary's: Quarterly Magazine of the St. Mary's County Historical Society*, Vol. 54, No. 2., Spring 2007.

³ History of Annapolis, "The Ancient City," 1887, p. 223.

What became of Governor Plater's body after his death is one of the great remaining mysteries of St. Mary's County. No one has been able to definitively state where George Plater III was buried following his body's return to the county.



Figure 3 Sotterley Docent posing as Plater, 12/28/08.

Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

BurtKummerow: *There's no harm in looking [for the governor's burial site], and the benefit in looking is, well, I think if you approach the Maryland State Archives or the Maryland State Trust and say, "I think he is buried here," you can probably get a lot of interest in what you are doing. Especially if you bring in one of these fancy pieces of technology like ground penetrating radar. You might not find anything but you're looking.*

Unless you're talking about a place he was buried, like a crypt, you won't see anything significant unless he had a metal coffin, which is unlikely. If he had a wooden coffin it would be long gone, and he would be long gone, too, because they have other burials from that era and there's nothing left to speak of. It's the doing of it.

The doing of it is what you get publicity for. People would remember that a Colonial governor was buried at Sotterley. That is very interesting.

Audio 1. Burt Kummerow on locating the Governor's burial site.





Figure 4 Sotterley Docents dressed as the Platers.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

The Chapel of Ease, or the “Four Mile Run” Church

The Platers did have a family plot in the graveyard near the Episcopalian Chapel of Ease located at Sandy Bottom on old Route 235 in Hollywood, MD, a precursor to the present day St. Andrew’s Parish.

An article in the St. Mary’s County Historical Society Magazine stated:

The chapel site was said to be about 25 miles from the Parish Church of All Faiths. It was on the east side of MD Route 235, on the edge of Four Mile Run in Sandy Bottom, at the top of a ravine on the north side of Thompson’s Furniture Store. In 1985 Regina Combs Hammett (County Historian) visited the site looking for some confirmation of the site, tombstones or remains of a structure, and found it to be overgrown with saplings and underbrush, the run being too deep to cross. Although it is almost certain that burials took place there, no tombstones were found [not necessarily meaning none were there].

It has been thought by some persons that Gov. George Plater, a Vestryman of St. Andrew’s, was buried first at the Chapel and then later removed to Sotterley.⁴

* * * * *

It appears as if the father of Governor Plater was buried at the Chapel of Ease:

A tradition prevails in the parish, that when the question of where the Parish Church should be located was first before the congregation, some years before it was built, there was a strong sentiment, headed by the Hon. George Plater (father of Governor Plater) the

⁴ “Four Mile Run Chapel Sandy Bottom,” *St. Mary’s County Historical Society*, ca. 1699- 1745.

most prominent man, perhaps, in the parish, in favor of building it on the site of the little Sandy Bottom Chapel. So pronounced were Mr. Plater's feelings in favor of that location, and so decided his convictions that his views would be carried out and his wishes granted, that he requested to be buried in the chapel yard there, which was accordingly done.⁵

* * * * *

A St. Andrew's Church Bulletin claims:

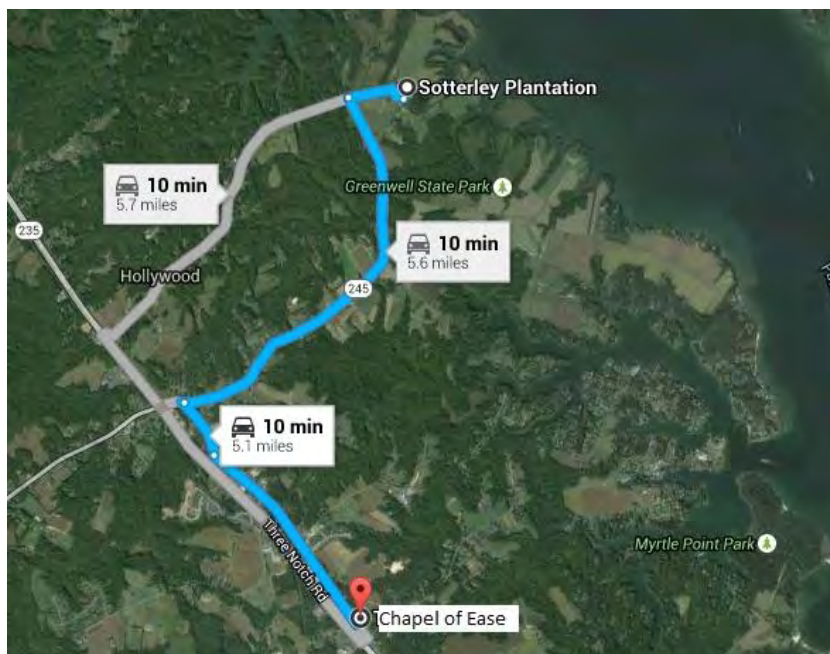


Figure 5 Distance from likely location of the Chapel of Ease to Sotterley

The present St. Andrew's Parish was created in 1744 from parts of All Faith and William and Mary parishes. It appears to have been formally organized in 1764 when a vestry was elected for the entire Parish, the congregation prior to that time worshipping in the "Four Mile Run" Church, located on what is now known as "Three Notch Road." The "Four Mile Run" Church apparently went out of existence when the present St. Andrew's Church was built. In 1765 the General Assembly authorized a levy of 200,000 pounds of tobacco for the erection of St. Andrew's.

Governor Plater of Maryland was on the building committee and his remains are supposedly interred near the site of the "Four Mile Run" Church.⁶

* * * * *

Saint Andrews Church was completed in 1767. After the completion of Saint Andrews Church, the little chapel at Sandy Bottom, having survived its usefulness, soon went to ruin. It appears for the last time upon parish records, as having been the place of meeting of the vestry on September 6th, 1764, which met and determined upon the erection of the present parish church. No traces of it are now to be found, even in the recollection of the oldest inhabitants, except as imperfectly indicated by its old grave yard, which though neglected, and even plundered, it is said, of its once substantial brick enclosures, and left a barren and forsaken spot, it is still susceptible of identification, and relatively points out the site once occupied by this early church- the first Chapel of Ease of All Faith, and the first place of Protestant worship in Saint Andrews Parish.⁷

* * * * *

⁵ James Walter Thomas, *Chronicles of Colonial Maryland* (Cumberland: The Eddy Press Corporation), 1913.

⁶ "Old St. Andrew's," St. Andrew's Church Bulletin.

⁷ James Walter Thomas, *Chronicles of Colonial Maryland* (Cumberland: The Eddy Press Corporation), 1913.

As for the Chapel of Ease, also known as the “Red Church” its importance dwindled away very soon after 1755, the year in which the Honorable George Plater II was gathered to his fathers.

On May 11, 1769, a sale was held at the church by the vestry to dispose of the pews. Col. George Plater, of Sotterley, later governor of Maryland, and Col. Abraham Barnes, of Tudor Hall in Leonardtown, bought pew number 1 jointly. [The vestry decided to sell the pews at public auction again in 1839. All pews were to be sold. Dr. Walter H. S. Briscoe bought pews number 1 and 2 for \$35.00.]⁸

Note: Repeated requests to review St. Andrew's church burial records from 1792 were made, leading the writer to conclude that there are no church records of Governor Plater's burial on church grounds.



Figure 6 Sotterley Docents posing as the Platers
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

George Plater III, dying in February, 1792 during his term as governor Annapolis, was said by Maria Devereux to be buried alongside his ancestors in the now destroyed church yard of the Chapel of Ease:

Mrs. Plater died at Sotterley some years before her husband and was buried with him [the Governor] and his family in a graveyard belonging to an Episcopal Church nearby. Subsequently a road was run through the churchyard, leaving the graves exposed on highway, and as none of their descendants had sufficient veneration to have their remains removed or otherwise cared for, the place of their interment is now unknown (to me certainly); the church also fell from neglect to ruin and forgetfulness.⁹

* * * * *

My own conclusion is that Governor Plater is not buried at the Chapel of Ease. I weigh the evidence this way:

- There is nothing to say that he is more likely or less likely buried at the Chapel of Ease than on the ground of Sotterley. Legend goes both ways, as I will soon lay out.
- It is established that the Chapel of Ease was falling into disuse soon after 1744 when the present St. Andrew's Parish was created. In 1765 the erection of St. Andrew's Church on St. Andrew's Church Road was authorized; the Chapel of Ease was abandoned two

⁸ “Four Mile Chapel Sandy Bottom (ca. 1688-1745)” *St. Mary's County Historical Society*.

⁹ Maria Green Devereux, *Sotterley Archives*, unpublished, 1881.

years later, in 1767, when St. Andrew's Church was fully constructed. Governor Plater would not die for another 25 years. One has to seriously question why Governor Plater would want to be buried in an abandoned and disused graveyard.

- As will be noted later, Dr. Walter Hanson Stone Briscoe told his grandchildren not to play under a cherry tree at Sotterley, because "Governor Plater was buried there." Dr. Briscoe would certainly be presumed to know who was buried where on his property.
- As has already been noted, Dr. Walter Hanson Stone Briscoe was a significant vestryman at St. Andrew's Church. As such, presumably he would have known who was and was not buried in the church graveyard.

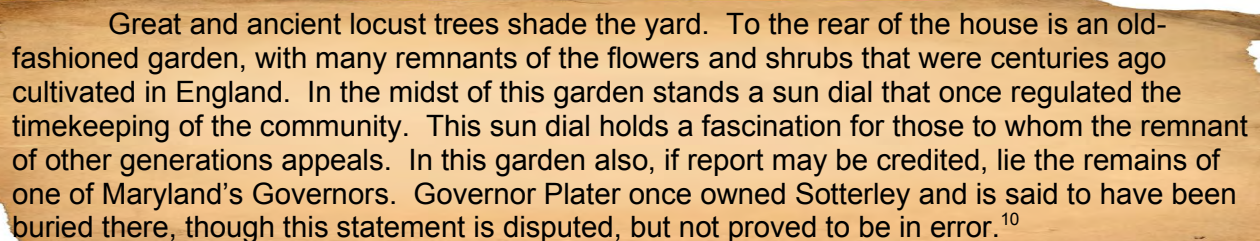
That then brings me to the belief that Governor Plater is buried somewhere on the Sotterley property. As we explore further, keep in mind that Mabel Ingalls sold portions of Sotterley during her period of ownership. While it is possible the Governor is buried in or very close to the current gardens at Sotterley, it is possible that the Governor is buried just over the garden wall, approximately 40 yards to the north of that wall, on property that is currently owned by another.

The review of the available evidence now follows:

A Garden Burial Site?

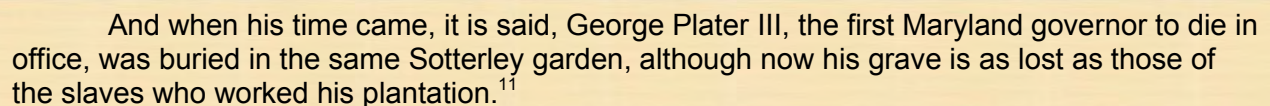
Other than the Chapel of Ease, Sotterley is offered by many as the only other likely resting place of George Plater III. Where on Sotterley's grounds in particular, though, would be unknown. There are several possibilities, among them the garden.

Soon after H.L. Satterlee purchased Sotterley, this article appeared in *The New York Times*:



Great and ancient locust trees shade the yard. To the rear of the house is an old-fashioned garden, with many remnants of the flowers and shrubs that were centuries ago cultivated in England. In the midst of this garden stands a sun dial that once regulated the timekeeping of the community. This sun dial holds a fascination for those to whom the remnant of other generations appeals. In this garden also, if report may be credited, lie the remains of one of Maryland's Governors. Governor Plater once owned Sotterley and is said to have been buried there, though this statement is disputed, but not proved to be in error.¹⁰

Another article claimed:



And when his time came, it is said, George Plater III, the first Maryland governor to die in office, was buried in the same Sotterley garden, although now his grave is as lost as those of the slaves who worked his plantation.¹¹

¹⁰ The Morgans at the Plymouth Rock of the South, *The New York Times* (New York, NY), February 12, 1911.

¹¹ Carl Schoettler, "Sotterley Plantation Holds Rich Soil for Human Roots," *The Evening Sun* (Baltimore, MD), July 10, 1990.

And still another article:

The rose garden was another of its glories, where the sun-dial stands with its inscription in many tongues, from many lands, the only monument which marks the place where lies today, somewhere in its mazes, the mortal remains of the Governor of Maryland. The old traditions were that if one were detained late at night on the country roads he could hear sometimes the wheels of the Governor's chariot and four as he drove up with his out-riders from the capital of the Province, or the slow and mournful sounds of the funeral cortege, which had brought him home, by way of the South River, across the ferry to his last resting place.¹²



Figure 7 Sundial in Sotterley garden and likely grave of Governor Plater

* * * * *

Dr. Briscoe's granddaughter is quoted thusly:

More local tradition has it that the Governor was buried in open ground in the rose garden of Sotterley. Within recent years Mrs. J. H. Lilburn remembered that her grandfather, Dr. [Walter Hanson Stone] Briscoe, who was then owner of Sotterley, would not allow his children or grandchildren to play under the cherry tree near the garden because Governor Plater was supposedly buried there.¹³

¹² Annie Leakin Siossat, "Old Manors in the Colony of Maryland, Second Series," (Lord Baltimore Press; Baltimore, 1913), 20.

¹³ Miss Maria Briscoe Croker recounts this memoir in her *Tales and Traditions of Old St. Mary's*, p. 36.

* * * * *

Many others have weighed in:

*A*gnes Callum: *They had a spot out in front of the mansion they say Plater was buried in – one of the governors. I think they still say that; maybe he is, who knows.*¹⁴

He was buried in the garden overlooking the Patuxent.¹⁵

* * * * *

Michael Humphries is a current anthropology professor at Troy University in Montgomery, Alabama. Prior to relocating to Alabama, Humphries taught at Chopticon High School where he and his class conducted archeological excavations at Sotterley.



**Figure 8 Sotterley Docents posing as the Platers
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**



**Figure 9 Richard C. Plater, Sr. at Sotterley with
sundial, circa 1930
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**

Michael Humphries: *It has been more than 40 years since I was involved with Sotterley. Having said that if my memory is correct, there was a gentleman, a Mr. Sommerville, who was quite ancient when I knew him, who worked at Sotterley tending the gardens, I think he said that the burial sites were on the land side of the plantation near where the gardens are today. So it would be on the northwest side of the building.*¹⁶

* * * * *

Donald Barber: *I knew the graves weren't in the garden because I assisted Mike Humphries with some probing in that area. We didn't do anything too extensive because Mrs. Ingalls was sensitive about that kind of activity around the mansion.*¹⁷

* * * * *

One possible clue for the burial site is the location of the garden sundial.

¹⁴ Agnes Kane Callum, Transcribed Interview. *The John Hanson Briscoe Historical Project*. By Samuel C.P. Baldwin Jr., March 25, 2015.

¹⁵ "Sotterley Mansion St. Mary's County Maryland: Notes on Its History and Architecture to Accompany Its Measured Drawings," *The Historic American Buildings Survey Library of Congress* (New York: The Sotterley Mansion Foundation, Inc.), 1961.

¹⁶ Michael Humphries, e-mail message to the author, June 1, 2015.

¹⁷ Donald Barber, *Sotterley Oral History Project*, By Lynn Fitrell, July 12, 2010.

Samuel Baldwin: Now there's a coat of arms on the [sundial] support. Do we know whose coat of arms that is?

Bob Aldridge: I think the Plater was put there because Herbert Satterlee was fascinated with the Platers. He was in contact with the Platers, with the Barnes family who were at Sotterley Hall in Suffolk. They did a lot of research on the Plater descent because he was certain that he was related to the original family that had owned Sotterley Hall.

Samuel Baldwin: You've never heard anything about Governor Plater being buried here have you?

Bob Aldridge: I heard, I was told there was a contemporary account from when he died that he was brought back to Sotterley and buried in the rose garden wherever the rose garden may have been.

* * * * *

the fifth boundary of Sotterley: the new running and binding with the dead creek, (Plateron River and Hog Neck Creek log) beginning containing one thousand two hundred and fifty six and except the present garden yard lying north of the mansion house on the said land which is hereby reserved to be taken and deemed as the burial ground of the Plater family - To Have and to Hold the said tract or parcel of land (save and except as before excepted) to and for the said described (also called Separation and lying within the new Manor and Resurrection Manor and come only called and known by the name of Sotterley or by whichsoever name the same may be called

Lest there be any doubt about a graveyard on Sotterley's grounds, local historian Peter Himmelheber points to this deed reference:

William C. Somerville to Thomas Barber

Deed dated the fourth day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty-three. By this Deed William C. Somerville of Saint Mary's County in the State of Maryland for and in consideration of the sum of fourteen thousand dollars...

Save and accepting the ancient graveyard lying north of the mansion house which is hereby reserved to be taken and deemed to be reserved as the burial ground of the Plater family.¹⁸

* * * * *

Figure 10 Deed from William C. Somerville to Thomas Barber
Courtesy of Peter Himmelheber

¹⁸ "Deed", courtesy of Peter Himmelheber.

The question remains, just how far north of the mansion was the graveyard?

Samuel Baldwin: *Let me shift gears a little; where's Governor Plater buried?*

Joe Goldsmith: *In the garden somewhere. Governor Plater, from the research of our people, is maybe underneath the sundial.*

Samuel Baldwin: *What clues do you yourself have? You were talking about this painting.*

Joe Goldsmith: *The painting is amazing. We were moving the painting of Mr. Satterlee (in Sotterley's library) and when we were moving it someone caught a glimpse of the sundial. We were nervous about moving it anyways because we have this thing about saluting Mr. Satterlee every time we're in the house because that's why we're here. But in the backdrop of the painting is the sundial just as plain as day. You've got to look for it but once you find it it's there. The mansion is in one corner of the painting and the sundial is in the other corner of the painting. Well there are 100 things in Sotterley that you could put in that picture but the sundial is in it.*

Audio 2. Joe Goldsmith on the Satterlee painting



Samuel Baldwin: *Tell me about anything you've heard. You have some experience in locating graves.*

Joe Goldsmith: *Sotterley is so much smaller now than what it was. But your typical sites like this and the one I grew up on, and we also sharecropped John Hanson's place, down in Southern Maryland and it runs about the same time as this.*

Samuel Baldwin: *And you're talking about John Hanson the first president?*

Joe Goldsmith: *Right, the first president, which was Mulberry Grove farm. They all have a very similar thing. They have a gated, wrought-iron cemetery. Except for the family graveyard which is typically in the gardens. John Hanson's is not 100 feet from the house.*

Samuel Baldwin: *You talked about Deep Falls [in Chaptico], where the cemetery where Governor Thomas is buried is probably not even 100 feet away from the mansion.*

Joe Goldsmith: *Yup, absolutely. They build them real close and they were a maintained and cherished thing as a part of the estate*

A Field Site for the Governor's Grave?

There are comparable family graveyards further away from the main house than the location of the current gardens at Sotterley. The Thomas family's home at Deep Falls in Chaptico, in northern St. Mary's, has the grave of James Thomas, governor of Maryland during the 1830s, in a family plot about 150 yards' distance from the mansion.¹⁹ Mulberry Grove

¹⁹ Deep Falls Historical Site Survey

in Port Tobacco, the birthplace of Revolutionary War Patriot and statesman John Hanson, has a graveyard 200 yards away from the main house.²⁰ And at Wye House out on the Eastern Shore, owned during George Plater III's time by the wealthy Lloyd family, the family graveyard is located 250 yards out from the main plantation house.²¹ All are distances that, if applied to Sotterley, put a hypothetical gravesite much farther out than from the current garden.

Other accounts of the Governor George Plater III's burial directly place it in one of the fields at Sotterley.

"His remains, attended by the Council and State officials, were taken to Sotterley, where they are now buried in an open field, without even a simple slab to mark his last resting place."²²

* * * * *

He died at Annapolis, February 10th, 1792. His remains were carried the next day, by the way of the South River, to Sotterley, where he is buried in what is now an open field, and without even a simple slab to mark the last resting place of a son of Maryland, whose statesmanship and zeal are so closely interwoven with her government, and whose whole life, from the dawn of early manhood to the grave, was conspicuous for disinterested devotion and distinguished service to the State and to the Nation.²³

* * * * *

"Oh! Spirit of Liberty, where sleeps your thunder!"

My interview of former longtime Groundskeeper:

Samuel Baldwin: *We were talking about Governor Plater and where he might be buried. And I mentioned to you that there was a reference in a book that he might be buried under a tree in the orchard. Where was that orchard?*

Richard Knott: *The orchard was right in the back of the brick wall going towards like when you look down at the Scriber House. It's right on that hill.*

During another interview conducted by John Horton with brothers Richard and Herbert Knott:

Richard Knott: *They claimed that's where he was buried. But my father had the men in the winter time they dug trenches all through that area- where the orchard used to be. And all they found was a little black earth and a few rusted, cut nails. Now why that land, was there a corpse there and it died and whether that caused it I don't know. Well I say they had to get there one way or the other.*

John Horton: *"I mentioned the time Mrs. Mabel Ingalls had James Scriber come by Sotterley. We stood along the road that runs north from the mansion with James Scriber. He told of*

²⁰ Mulberry Grove Historical Site Survey

²¹ Wye House write-up.

²² "Monument to Governor Plater to be erected at Sotterley, on the Patuxent," *St. Mary's Beacon* (Lexington Park, MD), March 15, 1906.

²³ James Walter Thomas, *Chronicles of Colonial Maryland* (Cumberland: The Eddy Press Corporation), 1913.

plowing there one time and coming on what seemed to be a grave with some buttons. Had you ever heard of that?"

Charles Herbert Knott: *"No. I believe I'm the only one knows where Plater was buried on Sotterley. Edward Scriber, him and I was the onliest ones that knows just where Governor Plater was buried at. Where Mr. Satterlee got it from, I don't know, he dug trenches this way and dug trenches over here and struck two graves. About that much of black earth and some old handmade nails and a plate but they couldn't make out what was on the plate."*

Herbert continued, *"Here's the brick wall coming down here, the road going down to your (Horton's) house, and it goes down the hill. Well, there's a fence line there and those cedar trees. When you got to the top of the hill, you turn in on that line, and went down that way, there was a fence, there was a wire fence. Well, we dug trenches this way and then trenches that way and that's where we struck the graves."*

Herbert turns our attention to the field to the northeast of that house, probably the Middle Field on the map. *"And at one time, about two thirds the way across that field, there was two wild cherry trees, they was, I guess they was four or five feet in diameter, and that was the line, an old fence line years ago went across there, and the Hutchins owned that part down there."*²⁴

* * * * *

In another interview with Linda Cooksey, Charles Knott had more to say about the Governor's gravesite.

Charles Herbert Knott: *Well, has anyone told you where Plater was buried?*

Linda W. Cooksey: *I have heard different accounts. Where do you think?*

Charles Herbert Knott: *Well, I might not be right on it, but if you go down on the brick wall. You start down the hill there going down the road you will see the trees and a hill will come up right side that hill. I don't remember it well I was too small but where Mr. Satterlee got it from I don't know or found out where he was buried. He got this old black man James that lived in the house down before you get into Mr. Horton's. James Scriber. And the old man lived to be 103 years old. Well, he got him to go on that hill side there and started on the right hand side there and he dug trenches this way. He struck two graves. And he thought it might be a brass plate but the only thing found was old handmade nails and a black plate about an inch or an inch and a half thick. Worth two days work. Well you know. A black plate right where the old casket had been laid down."*²⁵

* * * * *

²⁴ Charles Herbert and Richard Knott, By John Horton, *Sotterley Archives*, March 6, 1993.

²⁵ Charles Herbert Knott, *St. Mary's College of Maryland Slackwater Oral History Project*, By Linda W. Cooksey, March 17, 1993.

Actually this explanation came nearest the truth for in plowing up earth just beyond the garden wall near the said cherry tree, the overseer and field workers of Sotterley have recently uncovered the four corners of a coffin joined with the nails in common use in early 19th century. A careful search of the surrounding earth was made but yielded no other clue. It seems safe to conclude, however, from the evidence at hand in addition to the weight of traditional accounts, that this was the burial place of one of Maryland's early Governors.²⁶



Figure 11 The old country road is to the right of the trees and the suspected graveyard is to the left. Sotterley's gardens are in the far left corner of the photo.

²⁶ "Notes and Queries," Marian McKenna, Sotterley Archives.



Figure 12 Ground view of suspected grave site.



Figure 13 Ground view of suspected grave site.

* * * * *

Is it likely that the fieldworker was plowing land at the direction of Herbert L. Satterlee, the new owner of Sotterley? If so, it is possible that this field hand was plowing land that Dr. Walter Hanson Briscoe would never have plowed because of his own knowledge of the Governor's burial site?

Having Located the Grave of Governor Plater

Richard Knott: "Who in the hell would have heard that a governor didn't even have a stone or something put down for a marker?"

IN SOUTHERN MARYLAND WITH GOVERNOR CROTHERS

Just now Mr. Satterlee is most interested in the discovery of the grave of Governor Plater, which is found here on the farm. The Maryland legislature has made an appropriation for a monument to mark the site of the grave as soon as located.²⁷

This article from The Baltimore Sun also elaborates on the need to mark Governor George Plater III's burial site:

IN MEMORY OF GOV. PLATER
\$500 Asked For A Monument To Go Over His Unmarked Grave.
[Special Dispatch to the Baltimore Sun.]
THE SUN Bureau, Annapolis, Feb. 14.—
Dr. Hayden, of St. Mary's county, today introduced a bill in the House to appropriate \$500 to be expended in erecting a monument to the memory of Gov. George Plater. The enacting clause of the bill is preceded by the following preamble and resolution:
"Whereas the body of the late Governor George Platen, of Maryland, now lies in St. Mary's county wholly unmarked.
"And whereas by reason of the great public service rendered by him as a member of the Continental Congress, the Committee of Safety, the first Constitutional Convention of Maryland, the convention for the ratification of the Constitution of the United States and as Governor of Maryland, it is fitting that this State should accord him its appreciation of a long delayed, but merited, tribute."

²⁷ With Governor Crothers in Southern Maryland, Sotterley Archives

Monument to Gov. Plater.
To be Erected at Sotterley, on the Patuxent.

The bill introduced in the House to erect a monument to Gov. George Plater in St. Mary's county by Dr. Hayden, of that county, was favorably reported last Friday by the Ways and Means Committee. The plan of erecting such a monument is strongly indorsed by Governor Warfield.

Gov. George Plater, only son of Hon. George Plater, was born in 1736 in St. Mary's county and was educated at William and Mary College. He inherited from his father the estate of Sotterley, situated on the Patuxent river, in St. Mary's county. His services to the State extended over a period of nearly 40 years. He was first a member of the House of Delegates in 1758; he was afterward naval officer of the Patuxent, judge of the Provincial Court, member of the Council, member of the Council of Safety of Maryland, member of the Constitutional Convention of Maryland (1776), member of the Maryland Senate and president of that body, delegate to the Continental Congress, member of the convention for the ratification of the Constitution of the United States and president of that body, Presidential Elector in 1789 and Governor of Maryland in 1792. He died at Annapolis February 10, 1792. His remains, attended by the Council and State officials, were taken to Sotterley, where they are now buried in an open field, without even a simple slab to mark his last resting place.

The bill introduced in the House to erect a monument to Gov. George Plater in St. Mary's County by Dr. Hayden, of that county, was favorably reported last Friday by the Ways and Means Committee. The plan of erecting such a monument is strongly indorsed [sic] by Governor Warfield.²⁸

* * * * *

If the legislature was going to put a monument up, why is there no monument at Sotterley today? What, or who, stopped it from going up?

Mr. Morgan has been asked by the people of Southern Maryland to join them in the enterprise of building a railroad into St. Mary's County. Mr. Morgan has, however, turned a deaf ear to their entreaties. This is the last thing in the world that Mr. Morgan and Mr. Satterlee want done.

They want the solitude of the region into which they plan to retreat occasionally undisturbed. They want it as different as may be from the intense activity of New York in which they mingle when pursuing their business lives. They hold that Southern Maryland is the most accessible and at the same time the most attractive solitude that the United States boasts to-day.²⁹

Charles Herbert Knott: *And, I often wondered where Mr. Satterlee, when he found out where Governor Plater was buried. Which I told you before just where he was buried at. He was going to put up a monument there, but at that time he didn't want all the traffic going around Sotterley Mansion. Just like when Mrs. Ingalls put that road across there. That was before it was*

*opened up to the public, she didn't want it coming down that, what they call Vista Road, around there. She wanted that traffic away from Sotterley Mansion.*³⁰

* * * * *

Edward Knott: And he was about to put a monument out there but then he didn't want no, all the traffic going by Sotterley mansion and so he just forgot all about that. Now, where he found out, I don't know, about Plater being buried there.³¹



Figure 14 The original county road running past Sotterley Gatehouse towards the site of the Governor's Grave. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

²⁸ "Monument to Governor Plater to be erected at Sotterley, on the Patuxent." *St. Mary's Beacon* (Lexington Park, MD), March 15, 1906.

²⁹ "The Morgans at the Plymouth Rock of the South," *The New York Times*, (New York, NY), Feb. 12, 1911.

³⁰ Charles Herbert Knott, *St. Mary's College of Maryland Slackwater Oral History Project*, By Linda W. Cooksey, March 17, 1993.

* * * * *

Charles Herbert Knott: *And, Mr. Satterlee he was going to put up a monument there, but he got thinking he didn't want all that traffic at that time going through the southern mansion. Just like the road going into Sotterley now. It came down you know the line of trees that's where the old road came down that way. Now that was before it was open to the public. And, he built the road, he didn't want that traffic coming down by southern mansion ville. And it was a little pampered and lively at the mansion.*³²

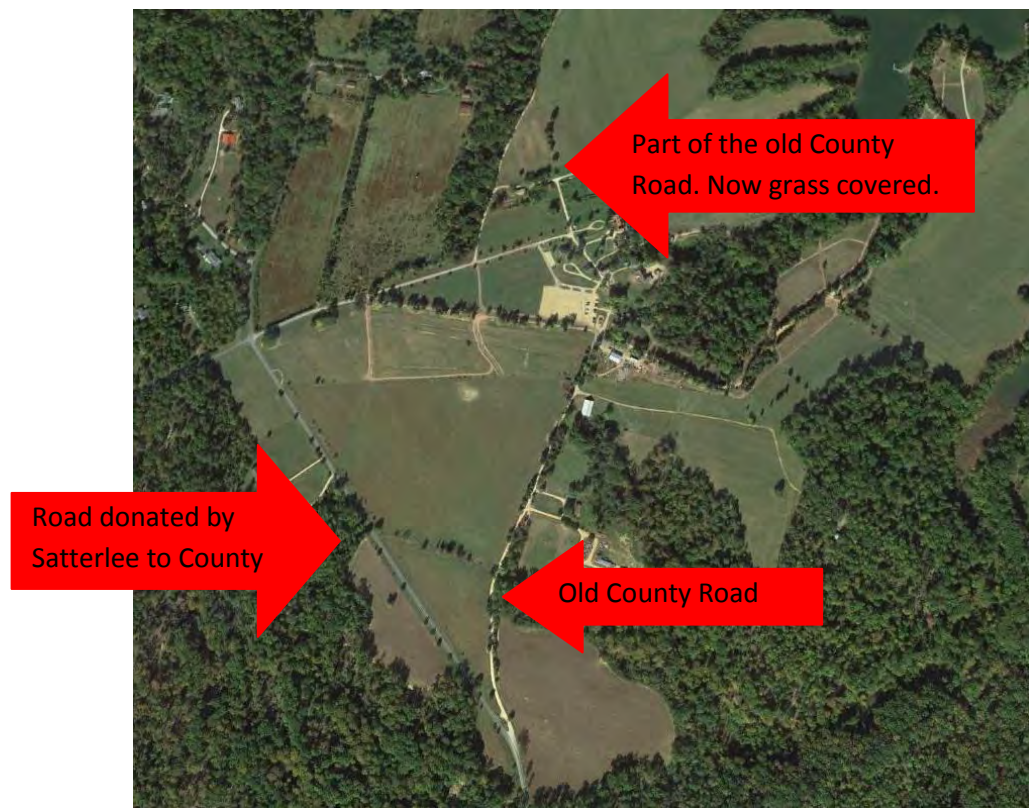
My personal thoughts on the subject:

The public road approaching Sotterley is similar in some respects to the road currently approaching Sotterley from Hollywood. You follow the blacktop, known as Sotterley Road, to just past the right-hand turn to Steer Horn Neck Road. As you get further to Sotterley, the paved road veers to the left and a gravel road continues straight. That gravel road is now a private road, but in the days of Herbert L. Satterlee and earlier, that gravel road was the public road, and the paved road simply did not exist. That paved road was put on land donated by the Satterlee Family to the county so that the public would drive further away from Sotterley.

Imagine yourself following that gravel road straight up to Sotterley back in the day of Herbert L. Satterlee and earlier. As you approach Sotterley on the county road, you first have the sheep barn on your right; then the corn crib on your left; then the two gatehouses on your right. That was the path of the county road, and it continued past the gatehouses down to the water. The road going straight down to the water is no longer there; it has been shifted about one hundred yards to the left, but if you look, you will see the road bed going straight in a line as you walk with the current garden on your right. There is a row of cedar trees there eventually. As the plowman indicated, the plow hit a coffin lid at the intersection of that road and those cedar trees. This land was sold by Mabel Ingalls to Mr. Liu sometime after she herself bought Sotterley from her father's estate. The site is an easy and short walk from the garden. Sotterley mansion is within sight of this location. It is on the crest of the hill and has a wonderful view of the river. But, with the county road immediately behind you as you stand looking at the river, this portion of the hill is just wide enough for a graveyard before it drops away to become a slope. In other words, it is not in the center of what would otherwise be tillable land. It is conveniently located to the mansion; it is a beautiful setting; it seems to be the right size and in the right location. On the other hand, it is close enough to the fields at Sotterley that, if you did not know any better, you would plow this land just like any other field. In other words, you can understand how, when Hebert L. Satterlee bought this property, he directed his plowman to till this soil.

³¹ Knotts, Horton, *Sotterley Archives*.

³² Charles Herbert Knott, *St. Mary's College of Maryland Slackwater Oral History Project*, By Linda W. Cooksey, March 17, 1993.



Time will tell...

Pirates Raid Sotterley

Note: The following is based on lore. It is an interesting tale- might even be true.

Sotterley, during the Platers' ownership, was also a Port of Entry, and the head of the household was the Customs Officer. Tall ships sailed from England laden with many fine goods. Often these ships were chased from the Chesapeake Bay to Sotterley by pirates. Then the otherwise peaceful Sotterley would resemble a battle field as the householders fired on the pirates.³³

One such story of invaders at Sotterley, as told by Mrs. Richard Plater of New York City, a descendant of the Governor Plater alive in the early 1900s, runs in this fashion:

George Plater was one of the wealthiest of the colonial planters of the Maryland Colony. The Plater household used crested tableware which had been brought over from England's finest silversmiths.

Naturally, when the story of this great wealth was spread abroad, many covetous eyes were cast toward Sotterley. When the tales reached the ears of the pirate chieftain, Long Arm, in one of his rendezvous along the Atlantic Coast, he made up his mind that he would pay a visit to Sotterley and attempt to loot it of these treasures.

³³ "Sotterley – Where England and America Meld," Mary G. Blackwelder, *Sotterley Archives*.

Long Arm bided his time and entered the Chesapeake Bay unmolested. Sailing up the Patuxent River, he sighted Sotterley, snugly peeping out of a thicket of trees. Long Arm thought all was going well for his scheme. He sailed the pirate craft in near the shore, and with a large band of his crew, put off toward Sotterley. When they landed, the band crept up the hill, hoping to take the plantation before any alarm

could be sent out and the men summoned for help. The pirates would be off with their loot long before help could arrive.



Figure 15 1997 Militia Muster.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Only the women would be at the manor at this early morning hour. It would be easy, Long Arm said, to frighten the women and help themselves to Plater's expensive silver plate and they could be gone in less than thirty minutes.

Just as the pirate band, in their picturesque garb, mounted the small hill rising from the water, they were spied by a slave who ran in and gave the alarm.



Figure 16 Sotterley docents posing as the Plater family, 12/08/08.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

It so happened that Plater, with some thirty of the young bloods of St. Mary's County, had just returned from a fox hunting expedition. The hunters were just about to sit down to a field breakfast, when the slave came dashing in with the startling news of Long Arm and his brigands. Plater and his guests armed themselves with their blunder busses and guns and prepared to defend Sotterley.

When Long Arm was nearing the house, he was surprised by a volley of shots from the defenders and two of his men fell mortally wounded.

Realizing that his surprise attack had not worked out as cleverly as planned, Long Arm dashed back toward his ship. He recognized the firing of a gun aboard his vessel which warned of approaching danger by sea, in the form of a merchant-ship.

Another moment's delay and his ship might be captured and the plundering on the seas be over. It did not take the pirate chief and his motley crew long to scamper into their skiffs and get to their ship, hoist anchor and sail away from Sotterley.

The dreams of seizing Plater's famous crested silver and his money bags had vanished.

The two dead pirates were buried, it is said, near the spot where they had fallen. Today their graves remain unmarked.³⁴

³⁴ "Intimate Glimpses of Old Saint Mary's," George Morgan Knight, Jr, 1938, page 106-106.

Lore: George Plater V Loses Sotterley and Haunts the Mansion

There are several versions of how George Plater V lost Sotterley. The more sober, well-researched version comes first; the more interesting [i.e. factually loose] versions follow.

The heir of George Plater IV and Cecelia Brown Bond was George V; born 1797 at Sotterley. He was orphaned at age five and raised by his uncle, John Rousby Plater.³⁵

The sober version of how he left Sotterley is this:

George Plater V began selling parcels of Sotterley as soon as he inherited the property. He sold 4,000 acres to William Clark Sommerville, his step-uncle, in 1822.³⁶

Another version goes like this:

George Plater V was only five years old when he was left an orphan. The entire personal estate of his father, George Plater IV, was used up to pay debts. Consequently the lad, although heir to Sotterley, went more and more into debt each year to his uncle and guardian, John Rousby Plater, and at age 21 gave his uncle a mortgage on Sotterley. In spite of the acquisition of additional land following the death of his sister Anne, George V continued to get deeper and deeper into debt and finally, in 1822, sold Sotterley and the rest of his property. He died in 1846.³⁷

There is little trace of George Plater V after the unfortunate sale of his birthright. We do know that he spent some time at Charlotte Hall with Philip Briscoe, his cousin. The tales concerning the last of the Sotterley Platers are farfetched and incredible, including the lurid account of the last George's death. Intoxicated and half crazed with fever from pneumonia, he is said to have dragged himself through a rainy night the long distance from Charlotte Hall to Sotterley, in order to die under the roof of his old home. He is said to have been found dead from exhaustion and exposure, in the shelter of one of the slave cabins, just a stone's throw from the mansion. So ends the dismal tale.³⁸

A more interesting version of how George Plater V lost Sotterley is this:

“In 1802, five-year-old George Plater V inherited Sotterley. His father, George IV, left the plantation encumbered by debt. By the time the creditors took their share, the plantation wasn't worth much.



Figure 17 George Plater V
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

³⁵ Richard Lloyd, *The Satterlees and Playters in England and North America*, London: Woodcote Communications, 2004.

³⁶ Jeanne Pirtle, e-mail message to the author, August 24, 2015.

³⁷ “George Plater V,” Sotterley Archives.

³⁸ *Maryland Gazette*, May 22, 1755.

The plantation was managed by young George's guardian uncle, John Rousby, until George turned twenty-one. By that time, George was not very good with money. What he had he spent on lavish parties and gambling. The only way he had to erase his debt to his uncle was by gambling.

One night, George V was hosting a small party at Sotterley. Everyone was drinking and having a good time. It wasn't long before someone pulled out a pair of dice, and the games began. The stakes rose as the liquor diminished. George was in over his head; he had lost more money to his uncle than he could afford. His eyes shot around the room as he wondered what he could wager next. Someone suggested he stake the manor on the next roll. George sat back and reviewed the situation. He was deeply in debt, the plantation was in desperate need of renovation, and tobacco prices were falling. George agreed to hand over the plantation if he lost the roll, but if he won, his debt would be erased. Sure enough, George lost the roll, and Sotterely was handed over to his late step-mother's brother, Colonel William Clarke Somerville, into whose name the estate was transferred.”³⁹

Richard C. Plater, Jr. writes:

“When George Plater V sobered up after gambling away Sotterley to his stepmother's (Elizabeth Somerville) brother, he was horrified and repentant. His family did not forgive him. He went off to Annapolis and continued to drink to excess. Finally he realized he was killing himself, so he took the stagecoach during February back to Sotterley. He got out at the road that led 3 miles into Sotterley and began to walk in the cold. When he reached the first Sotterley cabin, the slaves took him in and sent word to the big house. But George died there before they could get a doctor.”⁴⁰

A similar tale is this one told by a reporter who was at the house as a guest of H.L. Satterlee:

George Plater, last of the Platers to occupy Sotterley, believing himself invincible with a dice box, celebrated his majority and the taking over of his estates by rolling the bones with Col. Somerville, his relative by marriage. The game, which was played in the Governor's Room of the old mansion, began with small stakes, swelled to a few hundred pounds, thoroughbred horses and personal affects, progressing to acreage, houses, river frontage, &c., finally to slaves, and at last to the grand manor house with all its priceless contents. With the final throw George Plater, beggared by fate, deserted by Lady Luck, casting the dice box from him, repaired to his bedroom, signed over all that was his when the game opened and vanished forthwith from the haunts of his equals to become a wanderer and an outcast, finally to die from illness and exposure, according to tradition, while on his way back to the scene of his losing tilt with fortune.



Figure 18 Red Room, George V's Gaming Table.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

³⁹ Marina Lindquist, "Folklore as a Means of Cultural Expression," St. Mary's College of Maryland, 1997.

⁴⁰ Richard C. Plater, Courtesy of Historic Sotterley.

While more than a hundred years have elapsed since that ill-fated game of chance, there are people still living along the Patuxent River who will tell you that while visiting Sotterley they have heard in the stillness of the night the rattle of dice in the old Governor's Room where the game was staged and the footsteps of George Plater ascending to his bedroom, there to sign away his all before wandering away to oblivion.⁴¹

* * * * *

We have been told we have a ghost by some who have stayed the night and that this ghost is George Plater V walking our halls at night, rattling the dice with which he lost the plantation.⁴²

There are indications that Sotterley, like all old houses, has a ghost. The behavior of the ghost has led everyone to believe it is George trying to win back Sotterley.⁴³

His ghost is a tradition and George Plater V is said to stalk across the Sotterley dining room from the inner door at the N-W corner to the inner door at the S-E corner 38 feet in 13 booted steps on the bare wooden floor. He is not affected by rugs, chairs, or dining table...⁴⁴

* * * * *

“People who have lived in Sotterley after say that George Plater V's spirit still lingers in the house. If you sleep in the mansion, you will hear George's horse galloping up the driveway to the hitching post where the rider dismounts. You can hear this footsteps march up the gravel walkway towards the house.

If you lie very still in bed, you will still hear George pacing the halls, rattling the dice that lost him the estate.⁴⁵

* * * * *

At a celebration of the 200th anniversary of the house, in 1930, Anna G. Butler Plater was sleeping in a room above the dining room. According to her daughter:

“My mother heard Herbert Satterlee come into the dining room to lock the outside doors, then climb the stairs to his room. All was quiet, but something kept my mother awake. Then, suddenly, she heard 13 booming steps striding through the dining room at the bottom of the stairs that led to her room. It was June and her door to the stairs was open. She wondered if someone had come to use the bathroom there, but there were no other sounds at all. She waited, wondering. And then she suddenly realized that she was the one who had heard the ghost of George Plater V transverse the dining room at Sotterley.”⁴⁶

⁴¹“Bob Davis Reveals: Strange Tales of the Patuxent River. No. 1 – The Dice Game,” *The Baltimore Sun*, January 7, 1936.

⁴² “The Sotterley Story.”

⁴³ “Sotterley, Where England and America Meld,” 3.

⁴⁴ Richard Lloyd, *The Satterlees and Playters in England and North America* (London: Woodcote Communications), 2004.

⁴⁵ Marina Lindquist, “Folklore as a Means of Cultural Expression,” St. Mary's College of Maryland, 1997.

⁴⁶ Richard Lloyd, *The Satterlees and Playters in England and North America* (London: Woodcote Communications), 2004.

Other Sotterley Ghost Stories

Whatever you think of the preceding “legends and lore”, Donald Barber is alive and among us today, and serves as a member of Sotterley’s board of trustees. He grew up on Sotterley. This is what he says about ghosts:

Donald Barber: *Ghost stories, I only have one. My mother and father used to work here at night all the time. Let’s see, the road you use to enter now was just a grassy place back then; it wasn’t a road, there wasn’t even a dirt road there, it was just grass. We used to come in up by the poplar tree up there, straight out, so I would cut across what they call poison ivy lane on my bicycle right across from the Knott house because it wasn’t full of poison ivy back then. So when I came to the mansion the outside spotlight came on so I thought my mother was here. Thought Mrs. Ingalls had called to say she was coming down, so my mother had run up here to get the place ready. So I turned up here and before I got all the way up this driveway the light went out and then I looked and the house was completely dark so I didn’t think anything of it, I just went home. So the next night I came through here and did the exact same thing except, you see, this room they used to call the library, so then a light came on in here. So I came up to that window and looked in here, and as soon as I looked in the lamp went off. So, then a light came on over in the dining room, so I figured a person had walked around there, so I went over and that lamp went off. Then lights started coming off and on all through the house. Upstairs, the kitchen, everything. So, I was just kind of fascinated. So I went home, that was the second night. Third night, I came by there was a light on so over, there was a family called the Bonhems that lived in that house that’s over there, and I said, “Paul, the lights have been coming on and going off in the mansion, do you want to come and take a look?” He was like, “Nah.” So his wife said, “I’ll go over there.” So we came over here and there were no lights on; suddenly, lights started coming on. So she was like, “let’s go,” we went over and looked; it did the same thing. So the lights are going off and on, and even a light came on over in the guest house, in the spinning cottage you call it now. So we were standing right over here and we could hear footsteps in the pantry, so she was like “we’ll catch them now” because when they come across the open part we’ll see who it is. So we were standing here and the footsteps came across that part, came right across and towards them doors, opened and closed and they went right into the kitchen. And I was just standing there transfixed because it was amazing and I went to turn towards her, like “Did you see that?” and she had her little boy under her arm and she was halfway across the yard. But it happened one more night, one light came on here in this room, and it never did it again. That was the first and the last thing, and you say ghost; I never saw anything and we heard footsteps. But don’t get me wrong; there were lights popping on and off all through this house. I don’t know what it was... I’m saying ghosts.”⁴⁷*

Audio 3. Donald Barber on Sotterley “legends and lore”



* * * * *

⁴⁷ Donald Barber, *Sotterley Oral History Project*, By Lynn Fitrell, July 12, 2010.

The Knott family has a long association with Sotterley Plantation. Donald Knott, a third-generation member of this family who resided on Sotterley, gave the following written testimony:

Edward Knott and his family moved into the Docents' House 1974 when he became supervisor of buildings and grounds and in chage of security. It was during this time, when the family was living in this house, that his son Donald had a strange but interesting experience.

Donald was vacuuming the rug in the living-room, when a strong gust of wind threw the front door open. Donald shut the door and went back to his vacuuming. Soon another strong gust of wind threw the door open. This happened a third time, and by now Donald was feeling very strange. He stopped vacuuming and went slowly to his room, trying to analyze this peculiar feeling.

He looked at the desk and there lay Robert Pogue's book, "Landmarks of St. Mary's County." Picking it up, it fell open to the page about George Plater and the date of his death, Feb. 10, 1792. Then he opened the drawer to put the book away and there lay the holy card, given at his grandfather's funeral. Immediately the date stood out, Feb. 10, 1970. As if this was not enough of a circumstance, Donald's eyes rose to the calendar and the date of the day was Feb. 10, 1975.⁴⁸

Michael Humphries' Archeological Work at Sotterley

ADVISORY COUNCIL- Public Relations Meeting

December 9, 1970

Submitted by Elizabeth K. Harman

Some archeological work could be done especially since they are in the county now, working at St. Mary's City. These people could be asked to come and look for the governor's grave. Mr. Bastion, the state archeologist's name was suggested. Mr. Bastion specializes in Indian Archeology and would be a good one to go over our artifacts found at Sotterley. At least these people could learn what is here and something interesting could come out of it.

* * * * *

Chopticon High School Students Dig Up the Past

February 15, 1973

There is a class at Chopticon High School where unusual interesting events keep the students alert and anxious to participate in practice, theory and lab work. This is the class in Archeology and American History.

The class is under the teaching direction of a youthful, keen thinking young man, Mike Humphries. He has been able to instill in his students an interest and desire to know more about American and Maryland History than is found in most history books. They have learned

⁴⁸ "A Strange Experience," Donald Knott, *Sotterley Archives*.

the value of being "on the scene" where history happened. Humphries has been named St. Mary's County Archeologist.

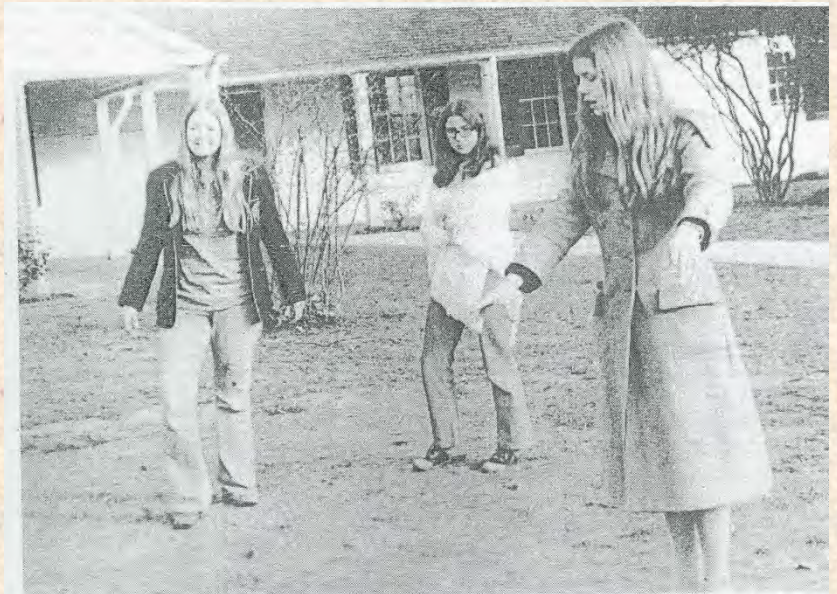
During the spring, summer and early fall, the students dig out of doors. One particular project is at Sotterley Mansion, where the celebrated Governor Plater once lived. Many of the finds uncovered in one layer of the grounds, are those connected with the governor's era.

Two students from the Chopticon High School class in history and archeology have already been accepted by other archeological groups. One is Silas Hurry, a Chopticon High School graduate, who is presently working on a State contract at Point Lookout as an archeologist.

Another student in the present class, Chris Snead, has been accepted, upon graduation, as an archeological worker on the St. Mary's City archeological project.

This particular dig is being conducted on land at the rear entrance to Sotterley, near the old kitchen area. Many of the objects found are those discarded by servants into a trash hole, which existed at the time.

During the dig here, an old wall was uncovered 14 feet from the house. It is believed to have been the foundation of a dairy house, adjacent to the back porch of Sotterley. Bones from domestic animals, including sets of animal teeth, glassware, clay pipe pieces, and many other objects were found.⁴⁹



THE SPOT -- Three students from Chopticon history-archeology class point to the area at the rear of Sotterley Mansion where the dig for artifacts was conducted in spring, summer and early fall, under the guidance of their teacher, Mike Humphries. (Staff Photo)



ADMIRING -- An unusual portion of an old wine bottle found in the "dig" is admired by two Chopticon students. Other "finds" of unusual designs are displayed nearby. (Staff Photo)

* * * * *

⁴⁹ Dorothy Shannon, "Chopticon High School Students Dig up the Past," *The Enterprise* (Lexington Park, MD), February 15, 1973.

Donald Barber: *Back in the 70s, it was after my father had passed away, they had hired Mike Humphries to take some metal detectors and go around here. There was all these myths and they were going to try to prove some of these myths. There was a myth that there was a tunnel under the place. There was a myth that someone was buried here on the site. So, he was going to get a bunch of people with metal detectors to sweep the site and they were going to put stakes in the ground wherever they had a hit and excavate it and see what was going on. Well that plan didn't work, because this place has been in operation for hundreds of years and there was metal every square inch. So that was nothing, that didn't work.*⁵⁰

* * * * *

In June of 1972 archaeological investigations concerning the Sotterley Mansion Foundation were initiated at the request of Ms. Mabel Ingalls, President of the Sotterley Mansion Foundation. The services of Mr. Michael E. Humphries were donated to Sotterley. Mr. Humphries was appointed Sotterley Archaeologist and placed in charge of all archaeological investigations on Sotterley property. Since that time, Mr. Humphries has been appointed by the St. Mary's County Board of Commissioners as the County Archeologist. The excavations at Sotterley were undertaken in the summer months by interested citizens of St. Mary's County and Sotterley summer residents. In the fall of 1972, Chopticon High School became officially involved in the excavations by providing students who conducted the excavations and laboratory functions necessary to ensure proper care of the results.

Investigations showed a brick wall buried four inches under the sod. Only one wall was discovered because only two ten foot squares were opened in order to preserve the beauty of Sotterley and its grounds.

Surrounding, covering, and underneath the wall were various artifacts of the 18th century.

Since there was only a double course of bricks the structure could only have supported a single storey building.

The artifacts recovered, thus far, are typical of the 18th century and are of generally high quality with few exceptions. Approximately 95% of all the artifacts were either pieces of bottle glass, animal bones, or hand wrought nails. The remaining 5% include such items as an iron bracelet, two shoe buckles, one tin plated button for use on a coat or vest, one wine seal with the initial "N", many pipe stems (c. 1750-1770), and pottery – such as Dwellware, saltglaze, red earthenware, creamware, and one piece of a knife. In addition, at least, three separate wine glasses were excavated.

The site is important and represents a time capsule of the years 1750-1770.⁵¹

* * * * *

⁵⁰ Donald Barber, *Sotterley Oral History Project*, By Lynn Fitrell, July 12, 2010.

⁵¹ "Sotterley Archaeological Report, 1972," Michael Humphries, *Sotterley Archives*.

"Dear Mrs. Ingalls,

... located in the back yard was a holly tree which was destroyed. I requested Mr. Bonnum to remove the stump. When this was accomplished several fragments were exposed. Analyzing these pieces I found they represented from the early to mid 18th century. This is approximately 30 feet from the "New Room." Upon excavating we discovered a brick wall composed of broken bricks with no mortar running in a westward direction. Under this wall and indeed above it is a tremendous "trash" fill of the eighteenth century representing Governor Plater's refuse.

In addition to this site I have had the Maryland National Guard survey the hill behind the brick wall towards the Barber residence. We accomplished this with metal detectors. In a very small test we unearthed an 18th century hammer of a musket!

We are successful and progressing.

I further hope that my endeavors meet with your approval and I await your return with extreme enthusiasm.

Sincerely,
Michael Humphries"⁵²

Michael Humphries: She [Mrs. Ingalls] did end everything. We were looking for the famous "tunnels" that allegedly led from the manor to the river. Needless to say, they were not there. We did find, however, that there was a circle carriage way or driveway on the land side of the plantation for buggies. That was interesting!⁵³



Figure 19 Collapsed tree at Sotterley, Its root ball could uncover buried artifacts. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

⁵² Letter to Mabel Ingalls, Michael Humphries, September 9, 1972, *Sotterley Archives*.

⁵³ Michael Humphries, e-mail message to the author, June 1, 2015.

Archeological Studies at Sotterley

From RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES AT SOTTERLEY

Julia King, 1991

Previous Archaeological Research

Limited archaeological testing was conducted at Sotterley in 1972 under the direction of Mr. Michael E. Humphries. These investigations consisted primarily of surface collections and the excavation of a buried brick wall exposed during the fall of a tree. The precise locations of the surface collection, the methods used and the results were not available at the time these recommendations were prepared. However, a short report was reviewed which discussed the findings of the excavations in the vicinity of the buried wall.

The tree fall which prompted the excavations occurred "in the back of the house and parallel to the walkway." Two ten-by-ten-foot squares were subsequently excavated to examine the nature of this feature. According to Mr. Humphries, 18th century artifacts were associated with this feature, which he interpreted as a dairy (Humphries 1972). Associated artifacts consisted predominantly of bottle glass, animal bones and wrought nails, although ceramics, table glass, buttons and other materials dating to the 18th century were also recovered. Exact artifacts counts were not available for comparison with other 18th and 19th century dairies in St. Mary's County.

Garry Wheeler Stone and Cary Carson, both formerly of the St. Mary's City Commission, have examined the main dwelling at Sotterley as part of a larger study of colonial architecture in Southern Maryland. Stone and Carson discovered that Sotterley is one of a very few examples of surviving colonial post-in-ground structures, and the house is an excellent example of the "Virginia-style" house (Carson et al 1981; Stone 1982). The oldest part of the dwelling, dating to the early 18th century, measures 44-by-20-feet. While simply framed, Stone indicates that this first dwelling was well appointed, with brick chimneys, wood floors, large windows and plastered walls.



Figure 20 Sotterley Boundary Stone.

Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Summary of Archaeological Potential

This brief review of the project setting, historical background and previous archaeological work indicated that the Sotterley property has an extremely high potential for containing prehistoric and historic archaeological resources. This high potential for resources

includes not only the portion of land currently owned by Sotterley Mansion Foundation, but extends to include the entire parcel of land surveyed for James Bowles.

Prehistoric Native American archaeological sites are probably located around the numerous small ravines on the property where fresh water springs are expected. Archaeological surveys conducted at other properties along the lower Patuxent, including Myrtle Point (Reeve et al 1990), Patuxent Point (Otter 1987; Gardner 1988), and the Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum (Clark and Smolek 1986) suggest the high level of prehistoric site densities in the region. Intensive settlements dating from the late Archaic to the Late Woodland (c. 4000 B.C. to A.D. 1600) are expected to occur here.

Evidence of 17th century occupation is also of high probability, both on the property that is now managed by the Sotterley Mansion Foundation, as well as in areas formerly a part of Sotterley Plantation. Like the prehistoric sites, these 17th century sites are also expected to occur on the level soils located adjacent to the ravine heads and sheltered creeks (Smolek 1984). Few 17th century sites have been identified in St. Mary's County, and the overwhelming majority of these are located in St. Mary's City, site of the first capital of Maryland. Yet, most colonists lived on isolated tobacco plantations scattered along the creeks and rivers of Chesapeake Bay. Very few of these sites are known, and fewer have been investigated by archaeologists (exceptions include the King's Reach site at the Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum and the Compton and Patuxent Point sites in Solomons, also tested by JPPM).

The 18th and 19th century occupations of Sotterley are relatively well-documented in the historical record, and archaeological sites associated with these occupations almost certainly survive at Sotterley. These sites include not only the mansion and its immediate surroundings, but slave quarters, tenant dwellings and associated outbuildings, farm buildings, landings, and so on. The material culture found at these sites, including artifacts, architecture, fence lines, and other archaeological features, can provide information of unparalleled value for interpreting the lives of all the people who have lived at Sotterley.

Scope of Work

This brief review has indicated that Sotterley Plantation has an extremely high potential for containing archaeological resources of local, state and national significance. The archaeological record at Sotterley can provide important information for locating, dating, and identifying structures, fences, and other elements of the cultural landscape. More importantly, this information constitutes a valuable archive independent of and complementing the documentary record. Historical documents are often limited in the kinds of information they contain, and tend to be skewed towards the wealthy and the literate. Further, documents often do not contain the information needed to address certain questions of both anthropological and historical value. Archaeology can provide these data and it can also provide an important archive for those people not well-represented in the historical record, such as slaves, tenants, overseers, and women. Therefore, the archaeological resources at Sotterley constitute a valuable archive which should be appropriately identified and managed to insure the preservation of important data.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ "Recommendations For The Management Of Archaeological Resources At Sotterley," Julia King, February 1991.

Phase I Archaeological Investigations At Sotterley Plantation Saint Mary's County, Maryland

Abstract

The following report presents the results of a program of archaeological field survey and background research designed to support the development of an interpretive walking trail at the property of the Sotterley Foundation, Incorporated. This project was funded by a Maryland Historical Trust Non—Capital grant for fiscal years 1997—1999. The project area was comprised of an approximately 52 acre parcel located on coastal plain terraces adjacent to the Patuxent River and Sotterley Creek in Hollywood, Saint Mary's County, Maryland.

A total of 1078 shovel test pits were excavated during this project, 696 of which contained artifacts. One previously unrecorded archaeological deposit, designated the New Site (18St739), was located and recorded. Artifacts recovered from this site indicated an origin for the deposit in the Middle Woodland prehistoric period, and the site's probable function as a periodically occupied resource procurement locus.



Figure 21 Sotterley docents posing as the Platers.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Testing also revealed additional deposits associated with the historical period occupation of the Sotterley Plantation. A number of new loci were identified, these were designated the Barn Locus, the Slave Cabin Locus, East and West Yard Loci, and the West Field Locus. Artifacts recovered from these loci indicated use of the area from the late 17th through 20th centuries, and deposits were associated with a variety of agricultural and domestic functions.

1-I. Introduction

The purpose of this project was to conduct archaeological and historical research to support the Sotterley Foundation's interpretive programs at the Sotterley Plantation. In addition, a secondary goal of completion of an inventory of archaeological resources on the property for planning purposes was established. To this end, a program of archaeological testing designed to reveal the location of all potentially significant deposits located within the 52 acre property was planned.

1-V. Results of Archaeological Investigation

As indicated, artifact deposits are present in virtually all areas of the Foundation property that were tested. High densities of positive tests are present in and around the historic core, along

the southern margin of the East Field testing area, and at both the eastern and western ends of the project area as a whole.

Due to the relatively larger number of shovel test pits excavated during the course of this project, and the high density of archaeological deposits discovered, the results of this survey cannot be interpreted from the perspective of the entire project area as a single analytical unit. However, many if not most, of the deposits revealed are associated with the historic period occupations of the Sotterley Plantation.

All archaeological evidence recovered during this investigation indicates that the Slave Cabin Locus was site of an intensive and long term occupation, probably extending from the early 19th into the 20th century. The preservation of the deposits in the area is remarkable as well. One result of the testing conducted by Neuwirth in 1996 was the determination that the intact deposits in the area were significant in terms of eligibility for inclusion on the national register of Historic Places. These determination of significance should be extended to include the remainder of the locus as identified during this investigation.

-- West Yard Locus --

The West Yard Locus consists of all portions of the fenced yard located west of the Main House, and grid west of the transect of shovel test pits along the line designated E7775. This area includes the terrace beneath the formal garden that comprises the northern portion of the locus. The northern, southern, and eastern boundaries are formed by the fencelines that currently delineate the landscaped yard space around the Main House.

Figure 24 indicates the brick distribution in the West Yard area. The majority of the brick recovered is present in the southern half of the locus, and is primarily concentrated in the portion of the yard immediately west of the Main House. The 1972 Humphries investigation discussed above in Section 1-III located the remains of a probable structure in this area, and the monitoring conducted by King in 1998 also resulted in the identification of high density deposits within this area. In addition, a number of intact features were located here during the current project, these are described below.

In addition to the artifact deposits, six subsurface structural features were located in the West Yard Locus, five within the southern half of the area, and the remainder near the northern end of the Main House. The location of each of these features is indicated on Figure 16, and insofar as is possible based upon the limited exposure afforded by the shovel test pits, each is described below in order from south to north. The large garden terrace that dominates the eastern edge of this locus is described here as well.

The final feature located in the yard area that comprises the southern end of the West yard locus was discovered in stp N8100 E7650, approximately 50 feet west of the western gable end of the Main House. This pit is located in the area of the 1972 Humphries' investigation summarized in Section 1-III. The exposure afforded by the stp revealed two articulated reddish-pink bricks located approximately 7 inches beneath the ground surface. The matrix soil consisted of yellowish-brown to greyish-brown moderately compact, possibly redeposited, silty loam. The feature was not penetrated, and it is unknown if there were additional associated courses of brick or other material.



Figure 22 Sotterley Archeological Site
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

With the exception of the brick feature in stp N8175 E 7700 discussed above, no subsurface structural features were identified in the immediate area of the garden terrace located at the western edge of the locus. However, this terrace in and of itself comprises a landscape feature that is an important part of the human modification to the project area. There is, at present, a single terrace ranging between 15 and 25 feet in width that forms the eastern boundary for the formal garden that occupies much of the West Yard Locus. An approximately 3 foot drop in elevation marks the edge of the formal garden, and the East Yard slopes to the east and north away from the Main House beneath the terrace, which forms a division between the two areas. The southern end of the feature is at approximately the same elevation as the east side of the Main House, and the northern end is approximately 1-2 feet lower.

Artifacts recovered from these steps consisted primarily of brick and oyster shell fragments. Also recovered were several unidentified bone fragments, mortar fragments, several fragments of glass, a fragment of modern sewer pipe, a cut nail, several fragments of vessel glass, a kaolin pipe stem fragment, and a single hand—painted, blue underglaze decorated, pearl ware rim sherd. These artifacts are primarily non—diagnostic, although the pearl ware probably dates to the first quarter of the 19th century, and the cut nails are of 19th century origin as well. All artifacts were recovered from the fill, or were present immediately beneath it.

A precise determination of the initial date of construction for the garden terrace feature cannot be made on the basis of the limited evidence recovered from these shovel test pits. It is possible that the terrace was constructed in the early 19th century, but the mixed context of the artifact recovery is problematic. In addition, there were several sherds of late 17th to early 18th century origin that were recovered from shovel test pits excavated in the West yard locus immediately down slope from the terrace feature. These consisted of two Staffordshire Slipware sherds, and single sherds of English Brown and Rhenish Blue and Gray stonewares. These sherds were also recovered in association with more recent material, and do not comprise firm evidence for the date of construction for the terrace.

Although a determination of the initial date of construction for the terraces was not made, it is evident that they were modified or repaired in the 20th century, probably through the use of heavy equipment. The extreme compaction of the fill soils comprises the primary independent evidence for this observation, although Donald Knott, a local resident, reported remembering the use of a bobcat—type grader in the area. In addition, the modern sewer pipe fragment was incorporated into the fill as well. However, the time and purpose of this modification to the terrace remains unclear.

The concentration of artifacts located near the northwestern corner of this locus represents a possible domestic occupation distinct from that of the Main House. In addition to the 10 ceramic sherds recovered from the single located at N8300 E 7500, bone, glass, and other metal artifacts were also recovered in the area. Brick, nails, and other building material are present here in adequate quantities to indicate the possible location of a no—longer extant structure. The ceramic artifacts recovered indicate initial occupation of the area as early as the last quarter of the 18th century. In addition, the sherds of Rhenish blue—and—gray stoneware that was recovered here may date as early as the late 17th century. Based upon the location of the deposit, it appears probable that its boundaries extend outside the Sotterley Foundation property boundary to the north.

Finally, this material may also be related to deposits located in the West Field testing area that are discussed below. In any event, the density of artifactual material recovered and the relative distance from deposits around the Main House indicates a probable distinct domestic occupation as the vector for deposition of the artifacts recovered there.

-- Institutional History of the Southern Plantation—

Located in St. Mary's County, Maryland and situated on the Patuxent River, Sotterley Plantation stands as an example of an institution of American cultural history; the southern plantation. It has survived three centuries of nearly continuous usage from farm to large scale plantation to country summer home to its present status as an historic house museum. What this section is intended to do is place Sotterley within its appropriate institutional context. While no such work can ever be regarded as complete, a substantial amount of information has been obtained regarding both the property on which Sotterley was built and the families that have been associated with it.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Phase I Archaeological Investigations At Sotterley Plantation Saint Mary's County, Maryland, James M. Harmon and Jessica L. Neuwirth, July, 1999.

Further Investigations in 2001

Date: September 24, and October 3 & 4, 8 & 10, 2001

Team Member: Lynn Jones

Project/Task Location: Garden: trenches and borings.

The boring across the garden started at the boring exit in the bushes at the south side of the garden, ran north to the area north of STU 34.2, and exited without any problem. The boring machine was then placed on the base of the first terrace, northeast of STU 34.3, and the second boring ran from there westward to the area north of STU 34.2. At a point between 1 foot and 10 feet west of the west edge of the third flower bed parallel to the terrace, the borer head hit something that made it veer upward.

"There may be a buried feature or foundation."

Date: 10/12, 10/29, and 12/6, 2001

Team Member: Kerri Holland

Location: Garden (West Yard)

Results: Very few artifacts were recovered during the mechanical excavation of these four areas. However, the shovel tests in the vicinities of spigots 1, 2 and 4 exposed an intact ground surface that contained eighteenth-century artifacts. The north profiles of the trenches show that gardening activity has disturbed about 2 to 8 tenths of this surface.

Interpretation: The buried ground surface encountered in the garden area has not been destroyed.

"Archeological testing has suggested the existence of a wine cellar in the garden vicinity."

Is there a Hidden Tunnel Leaving Sotterley?

"Sotterley under Dr. Briscoe was a productive yet sober place. Briscoe made several architectural modifications in the house itself, including reportedly closing off a secret tunnel leading from beneath the manor house into an open field below, a tunnel meant perhaps for escape from the likes of such as Long Arm."⁵⁶

One of the enduring rumors and pieces of lore is the supposed existence of an escape tunnel running below the manor house and under the garden. On May 3, 1928, members of New England's Walpole Society were guests of the Southern Maryland Society for a trip through the counties of Southern Maryland. One of the landmarks they visited was Sotterley Plantation; in the guide prepared by the Southern Marylanders, including Dr. Henry A Wise, Dr. Walter Hanson Stone Briscoe's grandson, Sotterley was described as having "a secret archy-way from the cellar to the foot of the hill."⁵⁷

"Dear Mrs. Ingalls,

This is just a short note to keep you informed of my progress at Sotterley.

... Have found bricked up area in basement leads directly to "necessary house." Interesting! Have started a probe to locate tunnel. I am down 5'6" and am still running into fill dirt (placed by man and not nature). Maybe, just maybe, there is a tunnel. It is too early to draw any conclusions yet, but why all that fill?

Sincerely,
Michael Humphries⁵⁸

It is a frame building with brick foundations, brick gables, brick porches and a flag stone colonnade. A secret brick arch-way leads from the cellar to the foot of the hill below the house.⁵⁹

* * * * *

John Horton: I asked Herbert Knott about the secret passage or tunnel reputed to lead underground from the mansion to some point in the grounds. Herbert spoke of a place in what was once the orchard, north of the brick wall of the garden. "Well, down there, what they used to call (Middle?) field, down past the brick wall, down there, about midway of that field, years ago, every so often it would sink down, and they always thought that was where it was and they thought they'd have to fill it up. Well, after so many years, it finally stopped doing that way. That was some years back, maybe in my teenage days or maybe later than that."⁶⁰



Figure 23 Secret Tunnel Basement Wall Repairs

⁵⁶ "Phoenix on the Patuxent: A Curious House Called Sotterley," Sara Fisher, *Sotterley Archives*.

⁵⁷ The Walpole Society Note Book, the Walpole Society, Winter 1928, 11-13.

⁵⁸ Letter to Mabel Ingalls, Michael Humphries, July 11, 1972, *Sotterley Archives*.

⁵⁹ James Walter Thomas, *Chronicles of Colonial Maryland* (Cumberland: The Eddy Press Corporation), 1913.

Other Underground Structures at Sotterley

In the front yard formerly stood two small square buildings, with cone shaped roof. The one stood at the garden gate and was used as a wine and smoking room; the other stood immediately opposite and was used as the office of the Collector and Naval Officer of the Patuxent District. The former of these is now at the foot of the yard, opposite the old 'Gate Lodge'; the other is in the barn yard, flanked by a series of sheds and used as a granary. Near the center of the garden, and about thirty yards from the house, still stands in good preservation, a relic of the olden times- the Sotterley sun dial.⁶¹

Charles Herbert Knott: *It was in 1935 I believe there was four gardens in the yard down there, but one was seeded in the grass. Well in the heavy rains there would be a lot of water that would stand there. In 1935 Mr. Satterlee got a digger from the Dean Lumber Company. Not like the diggers we have now. They run a main line right up so that come down. It was a line running from east square to that main line to drain that water off. When they got to that one I say over on this side made a 45 and made one across. You notice that pipe coming out into the bank? And I have seen that pipe almost half full of water but when they come across there they both started they come up where the gate house are. They stuck a brick foundation about 20 to 80 feet long and stuck another one 9 feet long and it was no history or what it had been. But, when Mr. Satterlee bought that place one of the gate houses had burnt down and I wondered if its quarter part and burnt down all at the same time. And why there were no talk about that building I don't know.*⁶²



Figure 24 Secret Tunnel, garden path.

Secret Passage in the Red Room

Mabel Ingalls recalls: "As one faces the chimney [in the "Red Room"] to the left of it is an old door which goes into a closet. Experts claim that the woodwork in this closet is 18th century and that it was undoubtedly put in at the time the paneling was done and the room was fixed up in this way. When Mr. Satterlee was re-doing various things in the house, this chimney had to be re-done, as the bricks were in such bad condition inside the fireplace. In pulling it down, they found that there was a very definite little space between the fireplace and this closet wall and that the space went up to the floor above; I'm not sure whether there was an outlet upstairs or

⁶⁰ "Charles Herbert and Richard Knott," By John Horton, *Sotterley Archives*, March 6, 1993.

⁶¹ James Walter Thomas, *Chronicles of Colonial Maryland* (Cumberland: The Eddy Press Corporation), 1913.

⁶² Charles Herbert Knott, *St. Mary's College of Maryland Slackwater Oral History Project*, By Linda W. Cooksey, March 17, 1993.

not. At present it is possible to remove a panel in the closet and see where the passage went up. There would, indeed, have been good use for a passage because the bedroom upstairs, into which it would come, can only be entered through the bedrooms on either side of it; so this would have allowed somebody in an emergency or when one did not want to disturb people in the rooms on either side, to get up and down.

"A few minutes ago, I referred to a secret panel in the pilaster on the west window of this little parlor. When we first lived here, there was an old lady- Mrs. Bond- who was the daughter of Dr. Briscoe. Mrs. Bond [Sallie Briscoe] had been here with her parents and sisters during the Civil War and had various stories to tell us about what they did with old Dr. Briscoe, to hide him when the Union troops came by. She also mentioned one day that they kept their papers at the base of this pilaster and, sure enough, my father found that when he picked through the paint and got the panel out, it had been nicely trimmed and studded with felt around so that it wouldn't stick, and that she had definitely remembered this place. I don't think that John H.T. Briscoe, or Dr. Briscoe's grandson who was born in this particular little parlor, knew about this panel until we told him."⁶³



Figure 25 Note ladder from 2nd floor bedroom "closet" down to the 1st floor.

⁶³ "Notes on Mrs. Ingalls talk on tour of Sotterley Mansion in September 1969," *Sotterley Archives*.



Figure 26 Climbing out of secret passage from the first floor.

Photo Album

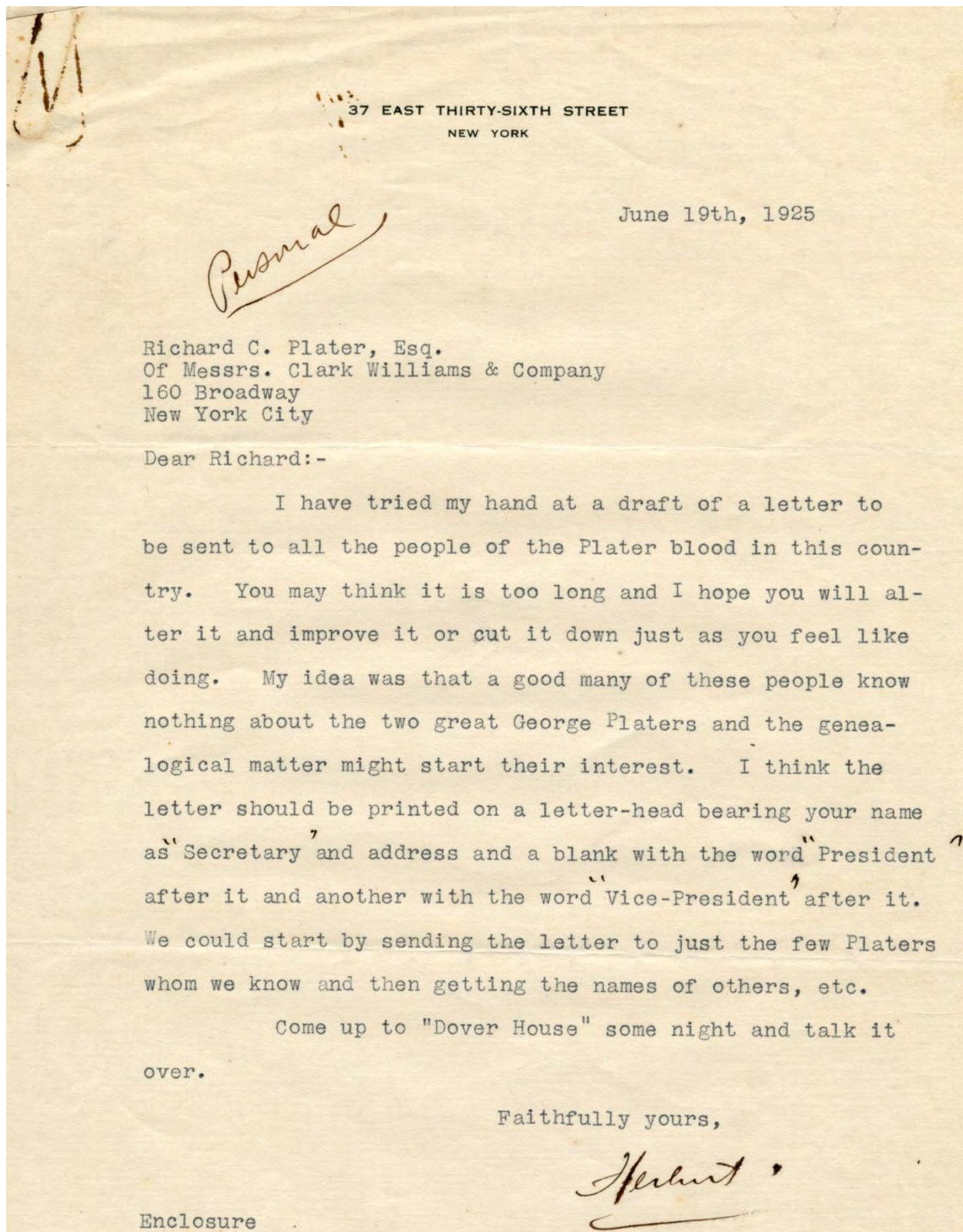


Figure 27 Letter from Herbert Satterlee to Richard Plater, June 19, 1925.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

June 18th, 1925

This is a draft of a letter to be sent to all the men and women who are descended from either one of the George Platers who lived at Sotterley.

Dear Cousin:-

It seems desirable to some of the descendants of the three George Platers, who lived in succession at ^{the estate named} Sotterley on the Patuxent River in St. Mary's County, Maryland, to form (some sort of) a family organization, no matter how informal it might be. Indeed there would not appear to be any necessity for any elaborate or expensive society whatever. The main thing is to find out who the descendants of the George Platers are and where they are living, and of keeping them informed about matters of family interest. ^{Anyone} ~~XXX~~ who has even a drop of the Plater blood should be proud of it, ^{as} the part which our ancestors played in the history of the Province and in the making of this Nation is quite as distinguished as that played by representatives of other families in states where more attention has been paid to investigating and recording the deeds of the men and women of Colonial Days.

The historical records show that ^{the house at} Sotterley was built by George Plater, who married Mrs. Rebecca Bowles (widow) June 10th, 1729. He was the son of the George Plater who was the first of the name (which was spelled Playter in England) to come out to the Colonies and was a ^{became} member of the Assembly and Attorney-General of the Colony as early as 1691 and from 1692 to 1720 was Collector of Customs for the Patuxent River District. When his son George married Mrs. Bowles, who was "a gentlewoman of considerable fortune," she owned about 2000 acres on the River. On this property in 1730 they built the house which still

stands and called the place Sotterley after Sotterley Hall in England, which had been the home of the Satterlees since the Norman Conquest and of the Platers since the Wars of the Roses. The name in England though spelled Sotterley is still pronounced Satterlee. The George Plater who built Sotterley was for many years a member of the Council, succeeding his father as Naval Officer of the Patuxent River District and from 1746 to 1755 was Secretary of the Province. His only son George was born at Sotterley in 1736 and was educated at William and Mary's College. He was a member of the House of Delegates in 1758. In 1760 he visited London where "he seems to have made an agreeable impression upon Lord Baltimore" and on July 17th, 1764 he married Ann Rousby. She was a lady of distinguished lineage, rare personal beauty and possessed of a large estate, the only child of Colonel John Rousby of "Rousby Hall" near Drum Point, Calvert County. Like his father and grandfather this George Plater was Naval Officer of the Patuxent River District 1767 - 1774. He was Judge of the Provincial Court from 1771 to 1773; Member of the Council in 1773 and 1774; Member of the Council of Safety in Maryland in 1776 and of the Constitutional Convention of Maryland in 1776. He served in the Revolutionary War and is referred to in the records of the time as "Colonel Plater." He was a member of the Senate of Maryland and President of that body in 1784; a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1788 to 1791; President of the Convention for the Ratification of the Constitution of the United States 1788; Presidential Elector in 1789 and Governor of Maryland in 1792. Surely few Americans of his time had a longer record of fine public and patriotic service than Governor Plater. He died at Annapolis while in office and is supposed to have been buried somewhere at Sotterley or in the churchyard adjacent to the neighboring Episcopal chapel. His

tomb has yet to be located and identified. The State of Maryland years ago made an appropriation to mark Governor Plater's grave and his descendants ought to interest themselves in finding it.

Governor Plater's eldest son, George, inherited Sotterley and married first Cecilia B. Bond and in 1798 Elizabeth Somerville. He died in 1802, leaving by his first marriage his son, George, who inherited Sotterley but lost it about 1821.

Over 15 years ago the property was acquired by Herbert L. Satterlee of New York (a cousin of the late Bishop Henry Y. Satterlee of Washington, D. C.), one of the descendants of the Satterlees of Sotterley Hall in Suffolk. After years of study and slow restoration ^{the} the old Plater homestead (has been put back) substantially in shape and condition in which it was when Governor George Plater lived in it. Mr. Satterlee has always welcomed there the Governor's descendants ^{the} and has suggested that in the spring of 1926 a week be set apart for the Plater family to revisit Sotterley. The exact date and plans for this family reunion will depend entirely upon the response to this invitation to join "The Plater Family Society", which is hereby extended to you and your kin of Plater blood.

Membership in the Society will entail no financial obligation whatever. There will be no dues, the expenses of printing and postage being borne by a few of the family who believe in getting in touch with one another to perpetuate the names and services of their illustrious ancestors in this country and to show their appreciation of the restoration of the old family home and its preservation as one of the historic residences of Maryland. The beauty of the site of "the big house" at Sotterley, the unusual character of its interior woodwork and panels and the simplicity and sincerity with which it has been restored are all well worth seeing. The officers of the Society will

be chosen at the reunion and thereafter from time to time at any gathering that may be held at Sotterley.

Please send to the undersigned the names and addresses of any of the descendants of the George Platers, who lived at Sotterley, with whom you may be acquainted and the names and ages of your own children. Please also briefly indicate the line of your descent and give date of your marriage.

Very sincerely yours,

RICHARD C. PLATER

Secretary

Special
Note: It will be of interest if you will send a description of any Plater family portraits or heirlooms that you may have in your possession or may know about. Please notify the Secretary at the above address if you know of anyone who wants to part with any such articles, *now or at any future time* so that the members of the family may have the first opportunity to acquire them.

Figure 28 Letter to Plater descendants from Richard Plater, July 18, 1925.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Copy

March 28. 1930.

My Dear Satterlee.

It is most courteous and thoughtful in yourself and Mrs Satterlee to permit the descendants of George Plater to visit " Sotterlee", a place of so much interest to ue all.

Mrs Brice is the great, great, great granddaughter of Mr. Plater; and you will see from the enclosed my own personal interest; as James Brice, brother of my ancestor, became governor of Maryland, upon the decease of Mr. Plater.

We shall be greatly pleased to make the visit some day between May 5th; and 12th, by Bus from Washington ,and spend one night at " Sotterlee", or the hotel at Leonardtown; of which we will later give due notice, *as arranged from you.*

Mrs. Brice joins me in kind regards to yourself and Mrs. Satterlee.

Very sincerely yours

Mr. Herbert L. Satterlee

37. East 36. St.

New York N.Y.

Arthur J. Brice

Figure 29 Letter from Arthur "Buck" Briscoe to Herbert Satterlee, March 28, 1930
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

HERBERT L. SATTERLEE
1 BEEKMAN PLACE
NEW YORK

March 2, 1934

Richard C. Plater, Esq
1148 Fifth Avenue
New York City

Dear Richard:

In a recent letter, Mr. J. Hall Pleasants, Corresponding Secretary of the Maryland Historical Society, writes me -

"If you wish to consult the Maryland Historical Magazine in the New York Public Library we suggest that you will find references to George Plater in Vols. 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16, 19-21, 24-27; the Plater Family in Vol. 2; miscellaneous Plater references in Vols. 2, 6, 14, 15, 17, 18; and a reference to "Sotterley" in Vol. 15. No doubt we have in our library some manuscripts which would have references to the Platers and Sotterley."

I send you this because sometime it might interest you to look up these references. I have the three copies of the Magazine containing references to Sotterley or the Plater family, which are always at your disposal. I think that Dick saw them when he was collecting data for the Plater Family Week. I am afraid now that he is a married man, he will not be able to give much more time to collecting genealogical information, nor to prosecuting the hunt for the Governor's grave. If you want to undertake this quest this spring, I hope that you and Nan will come down to Sotterley and really prosecute it, because I am sure the tomb can be found. It is undoubtedly either on the knoll outside of our garden wall or within the confines of the old "brick burying ground" which adjoined the "Chapel of Ease" on the Three Notch Road, south of Hollywood.

With love to you all from us both, I am,

Faithfully yours,

Herbert

Figure 30 Letter from Herbert Satterlee to Richard Plater, March 2, 1934.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

HERBERT L. SATTERLEE
1 BEEKMAN PLACE
NEW YORK

December 31, 1934

Richard A. Plater, Jr., Esq
Hawthorne Beach
Port Chester, N.Y.

Dear Dick:

I am enclosing a card which Cousin Charlotte Plater Rogers Smith Mustard sent to me about Mr. George R. Plater's death. Please note this in the files of the Plater Family Association.

I think that we made old Mr. Plater the nominal President of the Association. If this is so, there is a vacancy in this important office and I think your Father ought to fill it.

I am always in hopes that sometime someone of you Platers will be long enough in St. Mary's County to identify and stake out the boundaries of the old "Brick Burial Ground" that surrounded the "Chapel of Ease" on the "Three Notch Road" where Governor Plater is supposed to be buried. I trust that you will also find the Governor's grave and be able to take over the Burial Ground, or as much of it as contains the grave, in the name of the Association, so that we can have it respectfully treated forever hereafter.

Affectionately yours,

H. L. S.

Figure 31 Letter from Herbert Satterlee to Richard Plater, December 31, 1934
Courtesy of Historic Satterley



**Figure 32 Richard C. Plater Jr. and Martha G. Robinson of New Orleans, 1954.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**



Major William Thomas Chapter

Daughters of the American Revolution

May 25, 1974

My dear Mrs. Ingalls,

When I visit beautiful Sotterley I always get feelings of nostalgia and that I am being taken back into history.

The gift that you have given for all of America to see is greatly appreciated by me because I can see what effort and sacrifice you must be making to provide and maintain a perfect setting of the past.

The Major Wm. Thomas Chapter, D.A.R. of St. Mary's County has a deep feeling of love for Sotterley and wants to know if you would consider allowing a bronze house marker to be placed there with historical data denoting that Colonial Governor George Plater III lived there. If you think that this will be acceptable, arrangements as to wording, size of plaque, etc., can be arranged at a later date.

It will be very nice to hear from you, Mrs. Ingalls, and thank you for all of your kindnesses.

Sincerely yours,

Grace L. Sisson, Regent
(Mrs. Clinton C.)

1419 Crestridge Drive
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Figure 33 Letter from Daughters of the American Revolution to Mabel Ingalls, May 25, 1974.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Sotterley

Sotterley Mansion Foundation, Inc.
Mrs. Mabel Satterlee Ingalls
President

Hollywood, St. Mary's Co.
Maryland 20636
Telephone: 301.373-2280
December 18, 1975

Mrs. Clinton C. Sisson
Regent
Major William Thomas Chapter
Daughters of the American Revolution

Dear Mrs. Sisson:

It is with great pleasure that I write you, in behalf of the Trustees of Sotterley Mansion, formally accepting the splendid offer of the Major William Thomas Chapter of the DAR to place a memorial plaque, to Governor George Plater on Sotterley, the house where he lived all his life.

The wording which you suggested in your last communication has been carefully studied by Charles Fenwick, former President of St. Mary's County Historical Society and the member of the Board of Trustees of Sotterley, who is most knowledgeable on matters to do with the history of St. Mary's County. Mr. Fenwick agrees with the wording completely and the rest of us also approve. We hope, therefore, that with this acceptance from us you will go ahead with the casting and engraving of the plaque. We understand that it will be the traditional size of your plaques, namely 18"x15", and that you concur with our idea of placing it about eye height in the brick end of the house, facing north. In this position, it will be seen by everyone who walks around the house, from the garden to the front portico.

We hope that you are still planning to unveil the plaque in the latter part of May at a date that is mutually convenient.

We look forward to this with pleasant anticipation.

Very sincerely,

Mabel Satterlee Ingalls

Copy of wording enclosed.

A tax exempt educational Foundation
Open to the public June through September

Figure 34 Letter from Mabel Ingalls to Daughters of the American Revolution
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

A TRIBUTE

THE MAJOR WILLIAM THOMAS CHAPTER, DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, COMMENDS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF SOTTERLEY MANSION FOUNDATION, INC. FOR ITS OUTSTANDING AND DEVOTED SERVICE IN DIRECTING THE ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION OF SOTTERLEY MANSION.

THE FAMILY OF GEORGE PLATER III, SIXTH GOVERNOR OF MARYLAND, WHOSE BRONZE PLAQUE WE ARE UNVEILING TODAY, LIVED IN THIS MANSION FOR ABOUT ONE HUNDRED YEARS.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION GOES TO THE LATE HONORABLE HERBERT L. SATTERLEE, WHO HAD GREAT FORESIGHT, AND TO HIS DAUGHTER MABEL SATTERLEE INGALLS, WHO ESTABLISHED SOTTERLEY MANSION FOUNDATION, INC., MAKING THIS HISTORIC LANDMARK, ONE OF THE FINEST EXAMPLES OF EARLY AMERICA, AVAILABLE NOT ONLY TO AMERICANS BUT TO PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.

MAY 22, 1976

Mrs. Clinton Carroll Sisson,
Regent 1973-1976

Figure 35 Tribute from the Daughters of the American Revolution to Herbert Satterlee and Mabel Ingalls
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



Figure 37 In Memory of George Plater III
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



Figure 36 Three descendents of former owners of Sotterley.
Presentation by Francis Marbury of the Society of Colonial Wars of the Plater Coat of Arms to Sotterley
From left to right: Richard Plater, Francis Marbury, Society of Colonial Wars, Unknown, and Grace Sisson,
Regent, Major Wilson Thomas Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



Figure 38 Plater Reunion outside of mansion.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



Figure 39 Plater Reunion at sundial.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



Figure 40 Plater Reunion by side arched gate.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



Figure 41 Plater Reunion on lawn.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



**Figure 42 Plater Reunion outside of “New Room”.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**



**Figure 43 Plater Reunion by ivy covered brick.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**



**Figure 44 Mabel Ingalls with the Platers and Bowles in the Red Room.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**

24 November 1976

Interview with James Scriber, 22 November 1976 (Partial, at best, in content.)(?-doubtful)

Mr James Scriber, who was brought to call on Mrs. Ingalls by his daughter, Anna, is 98 years old. He was living at Sotterley Plantation when it was owned by Mr. Cashner who sold it to Mr. Satterlee in 1910.

At that time he lived in the double quarters (foundation bricks to be seen now at bend in road to wharf.) Mr Satterlee had built the white house (later Barbour, now Stone) where the Scribers lived and raised their children until he left the plantation c. 1947. (Edward Knott says that there was another double quarters down below the remaining quarters and which double quarters burned. N.B. Check with EK on locating that. Also re marking site of first d.q.)

There was a house and barn in the Point Field. He remembers their being built. (?) N.B. Who occupied them? Several times Mr Scriber spoke of how things had grown up: when he was in the old (Stone) house it was clear all around it. He and his daughter, Anna, spoke of Mr Satterlee's having put a fence around some trees near their house. (This not clear: cypresses mentioned but not conclusively.) Mr Scriber spoke to Mrs Ingalls of how "stylish" - was that the word? - Mr Satterlee always was.

Of some other buildings, there was a store on Sotterley Point run by Edward (?) Gatton. N.B. Locate.

In looking at some photographs Mrs Ingalls has, he remembered Alfred Edwards, born a slave. (Mrs Ingalls places Edward's house as across the ravine (toward Saamadi) from then Scriber house. Has fallen down now.)

In response to my question, he knows of no building on site of present Horton place. Speaking of buildings, he is the source of the report of a family of 14 people living in one of the gate houses: "...like hogs," he told Edward Knott.)

He and his daughter, Mrs Ingalls, Mr Knott, and JHorton went to point on road to Stone house where plow had uncovered part of casket. He had ditched there to search for graveyard. At that time there were cherry trees between the fence and the road. This point is best described by the brow and slope of the hill which runs down toward the Stone house from the triangle formed by the road and the old fence line. This old fence line is remembered by the cedars marching down the side of the slope. N.B. Make attempts to locate Gov. Plater's grave and mark it. (Mrs Ingalls says to check with Mrs Veitch re graveyard in Sandy Bottom. Plater there?)

JH

Figure 45 Interview by John Horton of James Scriber on the possible gravesite of Governor Plater III.