



NEWSLETTER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOX 632, SHALLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. II, No. 1

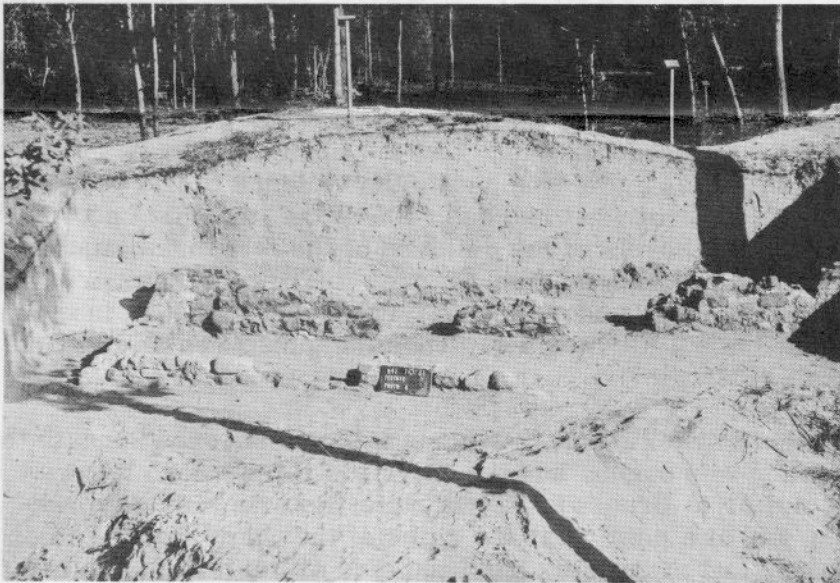
January, 1962

St. Phillips Parish House in Southport will be the meeting place for the January 23 meeting at 8 P. M. Our speaker will be Mr. R. V. Asbury, Jr., who will discuss the new place mats which will be ready for distribution.

IN MEMORIAM
Mrs. Jessie Stevens Taylor

NEWSLETTER NEEDS YOUR HELP

This newsletter is your letter as a member of the Society. Anyone who has information for photographs concerning our local history which might be used in this newsletter, please do not hesitate to send them to "Newsletter, P. O. Box 632, Shallotte, N. C."



Foundation of Captain Newman's Home

THE HOME OF CAPTAIN STEPHEN PARKER NEWMAN IN BRUNSWICK TOWN

Stanley South, Archaeologist
Brunswick Town State Historic Site
N. C. Dept. of Archives and History

About the time of the Stamp Act disturbance in Brunswick Town in 1766 a two story house measuring sixteen by twenty-four feet was probably being built in Brunswick Town on lot 77, just across the street from the Brunswick County Court House. We do not know who built the house, but it was a sturdy brick house resting on a firm foundation made of ballast stones carried to the lot from the harbor, where many ships had dumped their load of stones before taking on a heavy cargo of barrels of tar, which

was one of the chief exports of the town. The ground floor was used as a store room, with the second floor divided into two rooms measuring twelve by sixteen feet each. One of these rooms was a sitting room with a fireplace, and the other was a bedroom. A short distance behind the house was a small one room kitchen, with a loft overhead, where the servant slept.

A few years after the house was built a map maker, C. J. Sauthier, came to Brunswick and stayed for a short time taking measurements of the buildings and lots, and included the house and kitchen on lot 77 in his map of the town. A few months later, in the fall of 1769, a violent hurricane hit Brunswick Town and blew down many of the houses, and destroyed the Court House. Since the house on lot 77, across the street, was of brick, it survived the storm with

minor damage. The 1770s brought a decrease in the size of the population at Brunswick Town, since many people had moved away after their homes were destroyed by the hurricane. Also with the coming of the Revolution, and the presence of the British fleet off Fort Johnston, many people in Brunswick began to fear that their town would be destroyed by the British, and more moved away. On the 12th of January, 1775, Christopher Cains sold to Prudence McIlhenny a portion of lot 77, joining that part on which the brick house and kitchen stood. In the description of this portion of the lot we discover that the brick house is owned by Captain Stephen Parker Newman.

The next year the fears that the town would be burned were realized, and a number of the houses in Brunswick were burned by the British, probably sailors under command of Captain Collett. The brick house of Captain Newman was not burned, however, and this may have been because of his politics, since we know that Sheriff John Cains handled the forced sale of Newman's property in 1785, possibly indicating it was confiscated. At any rate, N. Taylor bought the property at that time for one hundred pounds.

It was probably at this time that additions were made to the house by Mr. Taylor. An eight foot wide room was attached to the back of the house, and another to the front, providing much more room upstairs and down. When the workmen were building these additions they obtained sand for mortar by digging a hole inside the area of the new addition. As they ate their lunch of boiled eggs, they threw the shells into this hole, along with some of the bones from their lunch. They also accidentally dropped a hatchet and a claw hammer in the hole, that became covered with sand. They threw scrap pieces of wood from the construction into the hole, and later filled it in with sand. It may have been one of the workers who lost a half penny of George III dated 1775 in the basement about this time.

We do not know how long Mr. Taylor lived in the house on lot 77, but it stood until about the turn of the century, when it was torn down and the bricks and lumber salvaged. One of the workers salvaging the bricks dropped an American penny dated 1798 among the fragments of brick and mortar from the ruined house. This is the only American coin found so far at Brunswick Town.

The ruins of Capt. Newman's house began to be covered with vines, as did many of the ruins of the town during the next half century, until the nation was again engaged in the violence of war. Confederate soldiers came to build a fort across the center of what had been one of the important port towns in the British Empire before the Revolution. The shovels of the builders of the fort threw sand over the ruins of Capt. Newman's home, and a cannon was placed directly over the ruins of the north room, near the ruins of the Court House. The battle for Fort Anderson was fought, and men died in the gun emplacement above the ruins of what had once been a warm home. Then the guns were silent, and once again men left the ruins in peace.

In the fall of 1961, the ruins of Captain Stephen Parker Newman's home were discovered beneath the high sand mound of Fort Anderson. Excavation was begun, and the story the ruins had to tell was discovered by the archaeologist. Now the visitor to Brunswick Town State Historic Site can walk along the top of the ridge of Fort Anderson, and at a point near the ruins of the Court House he can look down near the base of the mound of earth, and protruding from the side of the fort he can see the stone foundation wall of Captain Newman's home, and in his imagination he can reconstruct the warm home that once stood on that spot, and looking around, he can see the ruins of the kitchen and the court house, and if he will pause for a minute to reflect and imagine, he may be able to visualize a town that many called home two hundred years ago.

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BLOCKADE RUNNERS OF THE CAPE FEAR

By Mr. Ray Wyche

A portion of the longest and perhaps the most important battle of the Civil War took place off the shores of Brunswick County. It was a strange battle; gunfire was rarely heard and the battle lacked the dramatic sweep of lines of men across a bloody field as at Gettysburg and Bull Run. The foe was

seldom seen but men and ships were on the alert for four years. When this battle was finished, the cause of the South was irrevocably lost.

This strange, cat-and-mouse operation was blockade running, a constant game between supply ships feeding the Confederacy and the blockading vessels of the U. S. Navy. Seldom a week passed during the entire Civil War that an arms-laden ship did not enter or attempt to enter the beleaguered South, and the Cape Fear River was the main target of these attempts. From the summer of 1861 until even after the fall of Forts Fisher and Caswell in 1865 the sleek grey blockade runners slipped around and through the death-dealing blockaders to bring in goods which enabled the Confederacy to carry on a little longer.

It was an eerie, dangerous game; it combined all the normal dangers of the sea with the man-made horrors of war. It was a supreme test of ships and seamanship and bravery.

The Confederacy was made to order for blockading and for blockade running. The South had few factories which could produce the tools of war and the manufactured necessities of life. Industry of all kinds had given way to cotton growing. Cotton was aptly called the White Gold. Europe needed the South's cotton, the South needed Europe's arms, and the twain met to produce blockade running.

The U. S. was quick to recognize the value of the South's cotton to Europe. (Five-sixths of the cotton used in England and France came from Dixie.) Union strategists figured that to cut off this supply of cotton would starve the South and shorten the war. So the blockade was declared with high hopes by the North and, strangely enough, also received with high hopes by the South. For the South's thinking was that stopping the cotton shipments to Europe would force Europe into the war on the side of the South. This was King Cotton diplomacy, the diplomacy of error, as the Yankee hope of starving the South was erroneous.

Thus was the stage set for blockade running. Profits were enormous, all based on the inflated price of cotton in Europe.

As the supply of captured Federal arms in the South soon dwindled away, a move to get European arms by cotton credits was undertaken, and soon ships began calling at the Southern ports. The blockade for most of 1861 was more proclamation than fact; very little difficulty was experienced in entering the harbors of Dixie. But this situation was short-lived. The blockade soon became strict and increased in intensity until the end of the war.

In the summer of 1861 the U. S. steam warship Daylight anchored off Cape Fear and proclaimed the port of Wilmington blockaded. One ship was hardly sufficient, as the Yankees were to find out, to intercept cotton - and arms-laden vessels of the Cape Fear. More U. S. ships were added to the blockade and by the end of the war, there were more Union vessels at Cape Fear than at any other Southern harbor.

The blockade grew stronger, other Confederacy ports fell to the Union, and Wilmington became the chief supply port of the South - and for good reasons. One was the difficulty in effectively blockading the port, because of the two-inlet geography of the Cape Fear. Western Bar, between Southport (then Smithville) and Baldhead Island, and New Inlet, just south of Fort Fisher, both opened into the river, making two channels the Yankees had to guard. These inlets were separated by Baldhead Island and Frying Pan Shoals, forcing the U. S. ships to cruise about 70 miles to reach one inlet from the other.

The runners favored Cape Fear also because of the gradual slope of the coast, enabling the shallow draft runners to steam in close ashore while the deep draft Yankee ships were forced to remain in deeper water. The presence of smaller inlets around Cape Fear -- Shallotte, Masonboro, Lockwoods Folly, Tubbs, and Little River -- offered emergency havens to hard-pressed runners.

The two forts guarding the river, Fisher and Caswell, were among the strongest in the world and served well to aid the blockade runners in their final run-ins.

The runner captains, for the most part Englishmen and Confederate Naval officers, soon reduced

blockade running to a system. The voyages for Dixie started from the Sea Islands of Nassau, Bermuda, and Havana. The runner left these places to time his landfall in the South at the dark of the moon and from 10 to 40 miles north or south of Cape Fear, depending on which inlet he had chosen for his entry into the river. Craig's Hill near Masonboro Inlet was used as the landfall for ships aiming for New Inlet, and Lockwood's Folly was the target for those attempting to enter Western Bar.

The cruise became more intense after the runner master had made his landfall. All lights were extinguished; steam was blown off underwater to prevent tell-tale noises. Gravel samples were taken from the sea bottom to ascertain the position and on some occasions the ships were stopped and a boat sent ashore to learn the surroundings. The glow of saltwork fires were used as landmarks in the featureless darkness that was the shore.

The runner crept slowly close inshore toward the Cape Fear and the excitement aboard the ship rose to new heights. On one side were the ever-alert Yankee warships, ready to fire first and then order the strange steamer to stop. On the other side was the pounding surf, waiting to crush the timid or careless pilot and his ship.

One absolutely indispensable factor in running the blockade was a local pilot. About 60 of these men, who received about \$2,000 for a round trip to Nassau, lived at Smithville.

After 1863, the runners carried a faint light shaded on three sides to signal the waiting forts of their arrival. Troops stationed on the beaches picked up these signals and relayed them to the forts. The runners' message always ended with a plaintive, "Protect me."

And the forts were able and ready to protect the runner. When the Yankees discovered a runner along the beach, guns were fired, signal flares sent up, and the warships moved in for the kill. But if the U. S. ships came in range of the forts, they were met with a hail of steel which usually persuaded them to withdraw. The runner master, when the situation for getting in safely looked hopeless, normally grounded his ship on the beach to avoid capture, and C. S. A. troops on shore salvaged what they could of the cargo.

Blockade running advanced marine engineering faster than normal, since the enterprise required a special kind of ship. Built in England, the average blockade runner after 1862 ranged in size from 250 to 1,000 tons and was long and lean. There was ample cargo space, at the expense of the ship's strength, and several were broken up and lost in rough seas. The blockade runner was thin-skinned and unarmed and depended on speed and stealth for her safety. She was also built with shallow draft which enabled her to steam close in shore, between the blockaders and the beach. These ships carried special folding masts and telescoping funnels and were painted a dull grey to camouflage the vessel against the colorless sand dunes during the hair-raising last stage of the voyage. Smokeless coal was used for fuel when available.

Quite naturally, the presence of the blockade fleet off Brunswick County had a great effect on the populace of the area. Small fishing schooners and inland water traders were in constant danger from raiding parties from the blockade ships. Salt works were frequently shelled and on some occasions were wrecked by Union landing parties. The presence of the Yankees so close to shore led many slaves to escape in small boats to the blockaders. These slaves were carried north or to the slave resettlement colony on Roanoke Island.

During the four years of the war there were an estimated 8,250 violations of the Yankee blockade of the South and the Cape Fear Region had its full share of these incidents, some sad, some amusing, and all exciting. Until the fall of Forts Caswell and Fisher in February of 1865, the shores of Brunswick offered a welcome haven to the blockade runners - the greyhounds of the seas which brought life to the Confederacy.

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NATHANIEL RICE - PROMINENT COLONIAL FIGURE

By Mrs. Edwin W. Taylor

Nathaniel Rice was one of the most prominent men who settled on Town Creek in colonial days. As far as I have been able to find, history does not record the date of his birth or his birthplace, and there is no given date as to when he settled on Town Creek. However, it is a historical fact that he was the son-in-law of Colonel Martin Bladen, one of the Lords of Trades and Plantations of London.

Some historians list him as coming to the Town Creek section along with John Baptista Ashe and a number of other men who became prominent in the colonial life of the lower Cape Fear area, and Ashe is said to have come to America from England in about 1727. According to local tradition, Nathaniel Rice and his brother John were from Bathe, England. One historian writes of a number of persons from the Albemarle section coming to settle on Town Creek before 1730, and John Baptista Ashe and John and Nathaniel Rice were listed in that number. On the other hand, it may be that Rice came to the Town Creek section from South Carolina, because there is on record a comment to the effect that in 1731 Rice was absent from the colony as he had gone to South Carolina to "fetch" his family.

Information found in the Colonial Records indicate that Nathaniel Rice was appointed Secretary of the Province in 1729. In 1734 he was justice of the peace for the New Hanover Precinct. He was justice for the Court of Oyer and Terminator from 1735 to 1738. He was a member of Governor Burrington's Council of which he was president. It appears that Rice received a salary as Secretary of the Province and as clerk of the crown and for holding nine courts of Oyer and Terminator. He served by appointment as a vestryman in St. Philips Parish. He was a member of the board of commissioners appointed by the Assembly of North Carolina in 1745 to erect a fort which was named Ft. Johnston.

Nathaniel Rice, along with some other members of the Governor's Council, had many stormy sessions with Gov. Burrington, so much so that a list of complaints were compiled against Burrington and sent to England. Later when Gabriel Johnston was governor, there arose a struggle between Brunswick and Wilmington, then called Newton. The struggle for supremacy culminated on the 25th of February, 1740, at a meeting of the council. A bill passed in 1736 had made Newton a township to be called Wilmington, in honor of Johnston's influential friend, Spencer Compton, the Earl of Wilmington, who was the speaker of the House of Commons. Johnston had received his appointment as Governor through this Earl of Wilmington.

This action was bitterly assailed by Eleazer Allen, Edward Moseley, Roger Moore and Nathaniel Rice, on the ground that by the Act of 1729, Brunswick was made a township and was empowered to build a court house, jail and church. It was stated that good houses had been built there before Newton was established, and that the Custom's house, if moved from Brunswick, would be too far up the river. One historian lists Johnston's trick to obtain the establishment of Wilmington as the first sample of "machine politics" in North Carolina history.

According to deeds in New Hanover County courthouse, Rice owned a large amount of land, on a "fork" of Town Creek. This "fork" is now known as Rice's Creek. The Rice home was along this creek for some deeds mention, "the land on which he now lives" and also "the land on which I now live." In addition, Rice owned land at the head of Town Creek, and a thousand acres or more in Bladen County.

Colonel Alfred Waddell stated that the Hon. George Davis, who was born in 1820, reported in his youth he saw the remains of the fine old Rice residence. It has been handed down that D. L. Russell, Sr., used a great deal of the Rice house which stood on the fork of Town Creek, in the building of his plantation home, less than a mile away, around the 1840's. Mr. Russell incorporated all of the

NEW OFFICERS

The Society has elected new officers for this year and they are as follows:

Mrs. M. H. Rourk, President
Mrs. Gertrude McNeill, Vice President
Rev. H. Arthur Phillips, Jr.,
Secretary
Miss Helen F. Taylor, Treasurer
Mrs. Harry Mintz, Jr., and
Mrs. Edwin W. Taylor,
Program Committee

Nathaniel Rice holdings on the fork of Town Creek into his plantation. Several interesting features about this house which still stands today are some of the mantels, five colonial locks, bearing the seal of England and depicting the Lion and the Unicorn.

The traditional site of Rice's home is 300 feet from the creek and on a bluff approximately 25 feet high, and is located at a bend in the creek. This was a brick house of which the foundation is still beneath cultivated fields existing there today.

To the west of the Rice house site 200 feet is a brick vault which has come down through the years as Rice's tomb. There is no marker or slab at the tomb which might be due to the fact that treasure hunters have raided this place from time to time since the 1850's. Due to this activity, many colorful tales have been told.

At the death of Gov. Burrington in 1734, Nathaniel Rice, who was Secretary of the Council, became governor and took his oath of office at Edenton on the 17th of April, 1734, which office he held until Gabriel Johnston was sworn in as Governor at the town of Brunswick in November of 1734. On the death of Gov. Johnston, July 17, 1752, Rice again became acting Governor of North Carolina (due to the fact that he was first Councillor named in the King Commission) and held this office until his death in January 1753. Nathaniel Rice died in Wilmington, N. C., January 29, 1753, "old and feeble".

Nathaniel made a will on December 6, 1752, which is on record in Raleigh. The will tells of his son John, his sisters-in-law Hannah and Penny Bursey; wife's niece, Elizabeth Dale; niece, Elizabeth Twiner of Rumsey in Hampshire. Wife and Executrix: Mary; executors: James Hasell, Samuel and John Swann. Witnesses: James Porterfield, David Lindsay, Archibald MacLaine. Clerk of the court: Isaac Faries. Proved February 27, 1753.

It seems that Mary Rice did not live but about a year longer. Her will was made on July 9, 1753. Executors: Thomas Camber and Penny Bussey (sister). Proven before Matthew Rowan on February 21, 1754.

John Rice was register of Deeds for years. After the death of his father, John moved to New Bern. His daughter, Sarah, married John Hawkes. Hawkes was the architect for William Tryon's palace in 1767.

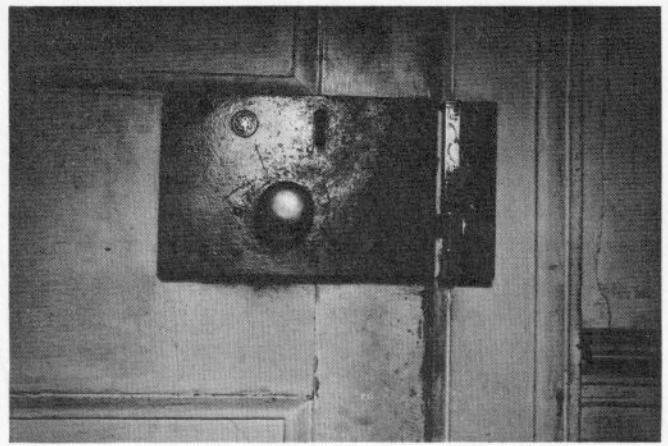
Over on the next page, photographs show the brick work of the arch of the tomb which was uncovered in May, 1959. The other pictures show the colonial lock and artifacts which were picked up by R. V. Asbury, Jr., who works for the firm of Leslie N. Boney, Architect. He also is associated with the work at Brunswick Town State Historic Site, in the capacity of guide and has absorbed some knowledge of the time span connected with the artifacts. He is a young man quite interested in the History of the Cape Fear area. It is interesting to note Mr. Asbury's comments on these artifacts which he found on this site. In studying the pipe stems it seems that they were made in the first two quarters of the 18th century and that evidently Nathaniel Rice was the one smoking. The mottled ware and creamware are found in the 3rd quarter of the 18th century. This would show then that someone lived in the house after Nathaniel's family moved away and did so up until 1776. There were no artifacts to indicate existence after that period. The oriental porcelain and white salt-glazed ware, the blue and gray stoneware were in the 1750's. The handmade flint is of early origin, and the delft ware and the combed slipware are of the early part of the 18th century.

We would like to extend grateful appreciation to the Covil family and Mr. Kenny Lewis for their cooperation in letting us explore around the Rice site at the time when the crops were not growing in the fields.

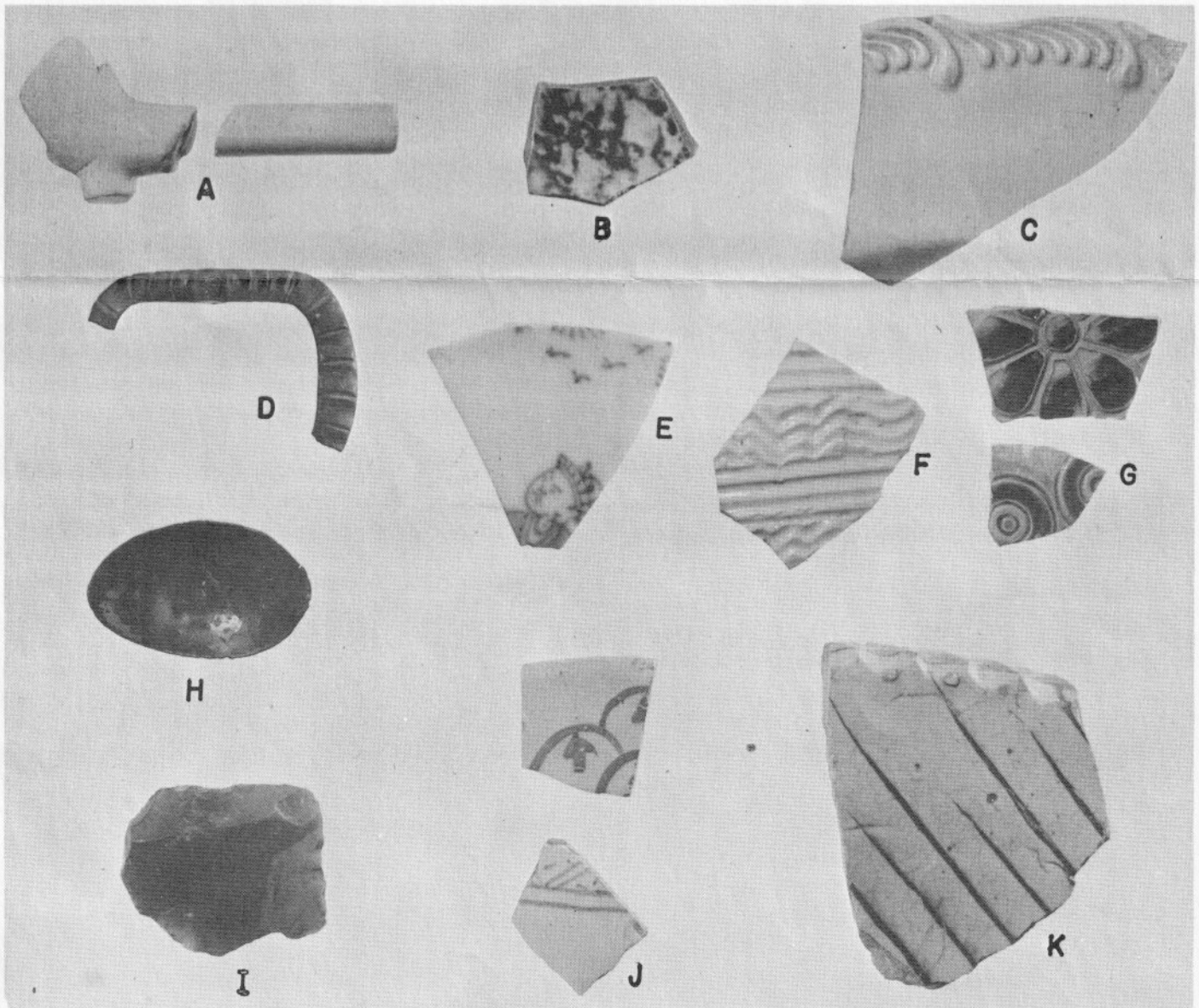
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This picture shows the brick arch work of the Rice vault and some of the jungle like growth which cover the tomb. The vault is approximately seven feet by eight feet in size.



It is interesting to note in the above picture that the Colonial lock is upside down. This shows it was adapted to fit with this later building.



Shown above, left to right; are artifacts actual size:

- A. Part of a bowl and stem; B. Mottled glazed ware; C. Creamware; D. A pewter shoe buckle; E. Oriental porcelain; F. White salt-glazed ware; G. Blue and gray stoneware; H. A brass bowl to a spoon; I. Handmade flint; J. Delftware; K. Combed slipware.