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HISTORICAL INFORMATION

COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA

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COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA

GENERAL INFORMATION

The 7,000-acre Park includes:

- Jamestown - site of the first permanent English settlement in America.
- Yorktown - scene of the final and climatic battle of the American Revolution.
- Colonial Parkway - a 23-mile scenic and historically rich road which connects Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Yorktown.
- Cape Henry Memorial - a quarter acre area which marks the approximate site of the first landing of the Jamestown settlers. It is located within the Fort Story Military Reservation.

Facilities at Jamestown

- Visitor Center - a museum, 17-minute theater program and information services are available here. Theater seats 211.
- Townsite - the Old Church Tower, Statehouse remains, and the excavated ruins of early houses, taverns, and shops may be seen on a one-mile self-guided walking tour.
- Island Drive - a five-mile drive (or a shorter loop of three miles) winds through the Island's 1,500 acres of woodland and marsh. Exhibits interpret both the land and its people.
- Glasshouse - glassblowing demonstrations by costumed workmen are conducted daily in a period-type Glasshouse near the ruins of the original glass furnace of 1608.
- Admission - \$1.25 per car. Fifty cents per person for bus groups. Children under 16 years of age and educational groups are admitted free.
- Hours - 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. during the fall and winter with lengthened hours in the spring and summer.

Facilities at Yorktown

Visitor Center - an observation deck, museum, 17-minute theater program, ship exhibit, and information service are available here. The theater seats 192.

Battlefield and Town Tour - a self-guided drive of five, ten, or fifteen miles includes Redoubts #9 and #10, the Moore House (open mid-April through October), American, French and British fortifications, Surrender Field, Washington's Headquarters, and American and French camping areas and the National Cemetery. The "Town of York" portion of the tour includes the Yorktown Victory Monument, Cornwallis Cave, Grace Church, and a number of 18th century houses and buildings.

Admission - the only charge is a 50¢ per person fee at the Moore House for those 16 years of age and over. Educational groups are admitted free.

Hours - the Visitor Center hours are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the fall and winter with lengthened hours in the spring and summer. Much of the battlefield and town tour drive remains open 24 hours a day.

Guided tours are available for educational groups which make advance arrangements.

Picnic Areas

Yorktown Beach Picnic Area complete with restroom facilities, water fountains, and 30 tables is located behind the Victory Monument.

Ringfield Picnic Area is about 6 miles from Yorktown on the Colonial Parkway. The site contains 130 picnic tables, restroom facilities, and water fountains.

Great Neck Picnic Area is on the Colonial Parkway between Williamsburg and Jamestown. Restroom facilities, water fountains, and 100 tables are provided.

Cooking facilities are not provided in the picnic areas but charcoal grills may be used. Open camp fires are prohibited.

The Colonial National Historical Park was established by an Act of Congress in December 1930. It is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Jamestown is administered jointly by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities and the National Park Service. Address: Superintendent, Colonial National Historical Park, Post Office Box 210, Yorktown, Virginia 23490. Telephone 703-887-2241.

The Narrative Script

for

JAMESTOWN: Where a Nation Began

An introductory (orientation) program shown regularly on a daily basis in the Jamestown Visitor Center of Colonial National Historical Park.

Written by: Phyllis A. Roberts

Supervised by: Arthur L. Smith

Photography by: Thomas L. Williams
& John Crane

Voiced by: Guy Sothern

Produced by: National Park Service
(through staff of
Colonial National
Historical Park)

INTRODUCTION

Although Jamestown as a modern city does not exist today, the site and ruins of the Jamestown of history do remain for you to see and ponder. They are in the care of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities and the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior who welcome you. Out of beginnings here, starting with the arrival of the first settlers in 1607, has come our Nation of today.

The Visitor Center, where you are now, is but the introduction to Jamestown. Before leaving you may find the museum exhibits of interest. They are directly across the lobby. If you move to the right on entry, the story will follow chronologically. A National Park Service attendant is at the desk to help you.

From the raised terrace around the base of the monument you can view much of the site of old "James Towne." A marked path leads from the terrace to the Old Church Tower, the Memorial Cross, old foundations, Statehouse remains, monuments and memorials. You will walk

over reopened and redefined streets. There are oil paintings, recorded labels and markers to help you. This is where old Jamestown stood as Virginia's capital for a century.

The reaches of the Island can be seen from a motor drive which begins at the parking area where you left your car. It is but a five mile drive. On leaving Jamestown and upon recrossing the isthmus, there is the "Glasshouse" and beyond it Festival Park with its full scale reconstruction of "James Fort," the 3 ships, the Indian Lodge and other displays. Refreshments, too, are available at Festival Park.

But this, ladies and gentlemen, is Jamestown - and now for your enjoyment, the program "Where a Nation Began."

England spoke the words.

Go! she said.

Go and establish and gain.

Unlock the treasury of the New World and secure the glittering path to the Orient. Kindle your religion in the savage heart. Gather fruits of the teeming frontiers before they spill into other hands.

One hundred and forty-four Englishmen with names like Brooks, Archer, Ford, Midwinter, Webbe, Smith became the voice of the words. The words were translated into the act, translated into three ships the Susan Constant, the Godspeed, the Discovery. Translated into a voyage over the shadowy seas. Into Jamestown. Into the country whose name we are still saying. The time was 1606. The great frontiers spun like an ornament before the eyes of the Old World. The age of opening horizons. Ideas and bold deeds were partners in the search. One hundred and forty-four Englishmen were being drawn into this fierce orbit of history.

They came to a new continent where the track of the white man could be rubbed out as though he had never been there at all. Sir Walter Raleigh's little Roanoke Island Colony of 20 years before kept forever the secret for their disappearance. The voyage of the one hundred and forty-four Englishmen brought them to the Virginia Capes in April of 1607. After a fearful trip their three ships rode gaily on the waters of the Chesapeake. The first sight of land was dazzling to the sea weary eyes.

One of their party, a Captain Percy, wrote of "Fairemeddowes and goodly tall Trees with such Fresh-waters running through the woods, as I was ravished at the first sight thereof."

They planted a cross; called the site Cape Henry; decided it unsuited to their designs and for two weeks they probed the wilderness. And then, having found the place that was to become the site of the first permanent English settlement in the New World, they rode the spacious aisle of the James to their destination, and went ashore. "Here is the place," they said. Jamestown. None of their kind met them. The trees grew into a high, silent barrier. Beyond that lay the mysterious shape of the new continent.

A few red men watched; unseen but felt, from the thick arbors of vine and twisted foliage. A bird called from deep in the forest. Even that Englishman whose head was crowded with a dream of easy riches must have felt a sense of awe. Of Genesis.

They set to work to build, for an Englishman must have a roof over his head. The material was at hand, but the hand was unpracticed. Notwithstanding

they built a fort. The fort was shaped like a wedge, a threesided thing with bulwarks at each corner. Inside the bulwarks were the stout English cannon from off the ships.

A man, they had discovered, could stop forever with an arrow in his back. Like a giant picket fence the palisades enclosed their rude huts, the storehouse, the chapel. This was their home in the New World, the first pioneer stockade.

As the frontiers unlocked and another room opened, this was part of the heritage. The fort would move westward, be replaced, move on.

Forty of the Englishmen sailed away to carry the news of Jamestown home. The one hundred and four began their trials. This new land passed a harsh sentence. Unpredictable elements scattered plans, shattered hopes. Industries, such as glass making, lumbering, silk culture, wine making remained a potential. The artisans complained of their tools. The gentlemen drifted from one grand illusion to another. Where were the streets lined with gold, the easy riches? The London Company under whose banner they traveled,

would wonder too. By autumn the shadow of disease began to fall upon them, long and sharp as a needle. The water was bad, the marshes had been alive all summer with an unholy song. Mosquitoes, Fevers. They quarreled among themselves. It took a strong man to rule them. George Percy was one. John Smith, part buccaneer, part leader, a bold man, sometimes vain and boastful, was another.

In January of their first year, their number reduced to fifty, our first citizens watched a fire go down. Smoke from the expiring fort drifted over the marshes. Reverend Hunt's few and beloved books were an ash. So was Ford's mattress. The fire fizzled out under a grieving January sky.

More than one haggard, bone weary, heart-sick, homesick Englishman must have suppressed an image of night drawn snugly down over London town, the flares coming up to light his way, remembered lanes, gardens, firesides, faces, and would have walked away from this Jamestown without a backward look. But -- they found the spirit to rebuild the fort. Went back to the business of

survival. The winter of 1609-1610, a classic. The starving time. Cruel to the bone, beyond power of telling, each man an experiment in endurance. Each man a grave digger. Sir Thomas Gates and his company, came from England over a slow route of shipwreck, hardship, found a cheerless welcome. The streets of Jamestown motionless, derelict. Stores gone. Hope gone. Abandon, Gates decides. The riddled band went aboard the ships. The voice goes out of Jamestown. There intervenes then one of those communications with destiny that seem larger than the affairs of a few lost men. Lord Delaware and his company sail into the Chesapeake. . . meet Gates and his survivors of the Jamestown ordeal. They turn back. The pulse of Jamestown begins to beat, more steadily now. By 1612 there is a town in miniature sitting on the edge of a fabulous continent. Fabulous beyond the reach of their imaginations. The words that had sent the first Englishmen were echoing a little stronger now. There was a feeling a permanency in the air.

Our colonial architects of representative government met in the Jamestown Church in 1619. A new stitch in the fabric of American Democracy.

A town is a living thing, reflects the stages of its inhabitant's growth or decay. Jamestown is growing. By 1620 there is a town such as might attract newcomers. The land is still an uneasy beast in his ever narrowing cage. But it is possible to have a day in which the crises do not landslide. There is a hearth before which you may sit quietly at day's end with your family and your friends. Cargoes arrive and leave for England. Life is no longer geared to the strictest necessities. Tobacco is the spur that's riding the time to a better pace. They came searching gold and found a yellow weed.

Tobacco was the ladder to fame. Tobacco was silk and satin, glass panes for your windows, brick for your house, a gleam of silver on your table, the first glimmer of long denied luxury. Tobacco laid the foundation of the southern character. John Rolfe's little experimental station, his tiny cottage was the forerunner of the great plantations, to be built on slave labor, broad acres and the weed. Tidewater Virginia, that bright particular star, on the American continent, was coming into being. But how many names had gone through

the wildly swinging door to death before a man could say "Tomorrow," and not wonder seriously if he would be here tomorrow. There are more anonymous names than famous names in the earth of Jamestown. And Jamestown lives.

Events, however, never moved at an even pace. One step forward; one back. In 1622 the step back wore soft moccasins on his woodland feet. The Indian. The Indian sees the frontiers moving outward, sees the land tagged with English names. The Indian's anger gathers like a storm. The storm breaks on March 22, 1622. There are 347 English names missing that night. The Massacre. The massacre tore into the flesh but did not stop the heart of the new colony. We will soon be speaking of the Virginia Colony, a land spreading westward even beyond the mountains. Jamestown is a small place population speaking, but a capital, a port and a terminal for the spreading frontier. Of all the men at Jamestown there is one that seems to walk twice. Once, with the face of a benevolent representative of the Crown. Once, as a man grown older, his ideas fixed in another time. Sir William Berkeley,

twice Royal Governor, builder of a palatial residence at Green Spring.

It has been sometime since Captain Smith called order in his ragged soldier suit. The Fort is a memory. The legislature meets in a State House. The architecture of government is turning on its foundations toward a more liberal era. Sir William could not grasp the trend and it came to meet him in the person of Nathaniel Bacon and his followers. A rebellion flares briefly, goes out, during which time Jamestown becomes host to another fire, burns to the ground Rebuilds. Perhaps in the ash of this burning lay the design of the New Capital. But it took more fire, the destruction of the Statehouse in 1698, to make the design a reality.

In 1700 the roots of Jamestown were planted in a new place, in Middle Plantation now called Williamsburg. This was no frontier town but a little city that seemed borne on a ray of light. Intellectual vitality is captured, dispersed given new meanings By the College of William and Mary. Here is a brilliance, a meeting place of such men as Thomas Jefferson, George Wythe, Patrick Henry,

The House of Burgesses now convenes in
Williamsburg. The arts awaken. Here as
Jamestown fell into a long sleep came the
noon time in Virginia. The Colonial Era
ended in 1781 when the British marched to a
field in the shadow of battle scarred
Yorktown and surrendered a dream that had
begun twenty miles away at Jamestown.
Jamestown, gradually abandoned over the
years, became the plantation fields of the
Ambler's and the Travis's. The roots of tall
trees threaded the bones of Brookes, Archer,
Ford, Midwinter, Webbe, Smith . . . English-
men born to become Americans.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Colonial National Historical Park
Yorktown, Virginia

INSCRIPTIONS - JAMESTOWN TRICENTENARY MONUMENT
JAMESTOWN, VIRGINIA

South (river) side; on shaft:

JAMESTOWN
THE FIRST PERMANENT
COLONY OF THE
ENGLISH PEOPLE
THE BIRTHPLACE OF
VIRGINIA
AND OF
THE UNITED STATES
MAY 13, 1607

South side; on base of monument:

"LASTLY AND CHIEFLY THE WAY TO PROSPER AND ACHIEVE
GOOD SUCCESS IS TO MAKE YOURSELVES ALL OF ONE MIND
FOR THE GOOD OF YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR OWN, AND
TO SERVE AND FEAR GOD THE GIVER OF ALL GOODNESS,
FOR EVERY PLANTATION WHICH OUR HEAVENLY FATHER
HATH NOT PLANTED SHALL BE ROOTED OUT."

ADVICE OF LONDON COUNCIL FOR VIRGINIA TO THE COLONY, 1606

West side; on shaft:

THIS MONUMENT
WAS ERECTED BY
THE UNITED STATES
A. D. 1907
TO COMMEMORATE
THE THREE HUNDREDTH
ANNIVERSARY OF
THE SETTLEMENT HERE.

North side; on shaft:

VIRGINIA COMPANY
OF LONDON
CHARTERED APRIL 10, 1606
FOUNDED
JAMESTOWN
AND SUSTAINED
VIRGINIA
1607-1624.

East side; on shaft:

REPRESENTATIVE
GOVERNMENT IN
AMERICA
BEGAN IN THE
FIRST HOUSE OF
BURGESSES
ASSEMBLED HERE
JULY 30, 1619.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE THREE SHIPS?

A persistent question arising in this Park from visitors as well as correspondents is "what happened to the three Jamestown ships"? An attempt to answer this simple but intriguing question has led to the small amount of information available from the limited sources. The individual ship most inquired after is the Discovery, the smallest and the one that stayed behind in Virginia when the other two, the Susan Constant and the Godspeed went back to England on a re-supply mission.

The first reference to what may be the Discovery of Jamestown fame is dated 1602. At that time, two small vessels were sent out by the East Indian Company, the Discovery under Captain George Waymouth and the Godspeed under Captain John Drew. Their orders were to find a Northwest Passage to China. It was a non-productive trip with Waymouth crediting the failure to a mutiny by the crew in the latter part of July. The ship returned to Dartmouth, August 5, 1602.¹ Their description as small ships and their names could well make them the two smaller Jamestown ships.

There is also a reference in E.K. Chatterton, English Seamen and the Colonization of America, to a Discovery of twenty-six tons with a crew of thirteen men and boys under command of Master William Brown which sailed in company with the Speedwell in 1603 for an exploration voyage in the new world. Their course took them by the Azores. June found them in the islands south of Cape Cod working their way down to Long Island Sound. By September, they were back in Bristol with a load of sassafras.²

Brown, in his Genesis of the United States believes that these two ships "were the same vessels which returned from Cherry Island, August 15, 1606. . . . It is possible that the Discovery was the Discovery of Pring's voyage to our northern coast in 1603."³

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1. Justin Winsor, Narrative and Critical History of America, Vol. III. Boston: 1886, pp. 91-92.
 2. London: Arrowsmith, 1930, pp. 99-100.
 3. Boston, 1890, Vol. 1, n. p. 76.

The Discovery of our concern is the one of twenty tons burden left behind at Jamestown Colony when the Susan Constant and the Godspeed sailed for England on June 22, 1607. Captain John Smith used this Discovery to trade with the Indians when he was not strong enough to raid them. In a council held on June 13, 1610, "Sir George Summers proposed to lead a two ship expedition to the Bermuda's to obtain six months provisions for Jamestown."⁴ Six days later Summers in the Patience, a Bermuda built pinnace of thirty tons,⁵ and Captain Argall in the Discovery "fell with the tide" and left Cape Henry astern.⁶ Contrary winds separated them and Argall made for Cape Cod where he fished for several days. With a fairly good catch, Argall made a landfall off the Virginia Capes on June 30, 1610, at 7:00 p.m.⁷

Argall is also found trading in the Oquicho River in the same year when he obtains nearly four hundred bushels of grain from the King of Patawomeck.⁸ The winter of 1610-1611 found Argall, still in command of the Discovery but under the orders of Lord de La Warr, "on a trading voyage up the Potomac where he is said to have found some mines of antimony and lead, and a very profitable trade with the Indians."⁹ This seems to be last definitive trace of our Discovery.

In 1612, however, Sir Thomas Bulton led two ships to explore in the Northwest, the Resolution and the Discovery. They spent the winter in the northland and returned to England in the Autumn of 1613.¹⁰ It is doubtful if this is the subject Discovery. Also, in June of 1622, Captain Ralph Fanoor was operating in the Potomac in a pinnace of unknown identity in company with the "Barque Elizabeth" which was under command of a Captain Spelman.¹¹ From 1622 onward, there is frequent mention of ships with the name of Discovery but they are all listed as forty tons or larger. The majority of these references are to a sixty tone Discovery under a Captain Thomas Jones. This ship belonged to the Advernturers of Southampton Hundred.¹²

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4. Purchase His Pilgrims, Vol. XIX, p. 61.
 5. Cerinda W. Evans, Some Notes on Shipbuilding . . . In Colonial Virginia. Williamsburg, Va.: Va. 350th Anniv. Celebration Corp., 1957, pp. 8-9.
 6. Purchase His Pilgrims, Vol. XIX, p. 61.
 7. "Voyage of Samuel Argall", Purchase His Pilgrims, Vol. XIX.
 8. Strachey, The Histoire of Travell into Virginia Britania (1612). p. 46.
 9. Alexander Brown, The First Republic in America. p. 137.
 10. Winsor, p. 93.
 11. Brown, The First Republic in America. p. 472.
 12. Ibid, pp. 469-470.

Robert G. C. Fee, the Naval Architect for the Newport News Shipbuilding Company, in his study for the construction of the full scale replicas of the three Jamestown ships, states that:¹³

The Susan Constant and the Godspeed, made seven roundtrip passages from England to Jamestown. Their services, after leaving the charter of the Virginia Company, is unknown. However, as they served as colliers before, it may be presumed they returned to this duty. The Discovery was purchased from the Muscovy Company and remained in Virginia waters after her arrival in 1607. It is confirmed in records that this small vessel sailed up many bays and rivers along the coast. It was from this vessel that the area of Cape Cod was charted in 1609. It is believed these charts, later obtained in England, assisted the Mayflower upon her arrival in the Cape Cod area in 1620. The ultimate disposal of the Discovery is unknown.

This summation seems to be the definitive answer, at least as far as we can now determine, as to "What Happened to the Three Ships?"

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13. Robert G.C. Fee, Design and Construction of the Jamestown Ships, No. 1, New York: The Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers, 1958.

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THE FIRST RESIDENTS OF JAMESTOWN

Those who remained when the ships returned to England after
the settlement had been established

Adling (or Adding), Henry - Gentleman	Kingston (or Kinistone), Ellis-Gentleman
Alicock, Jeremy (or Jérôme) - Gentleman	Laxton, William -----Carpenter
Archer, Gabriel - Captain, - Gentleman	Laydon, John -----Laborer,Carpenter
Asbie John	Loue (or Love),William -Tailor,Soldier
Beast, Benjamin ----- Gentleman	Martin, John ----- Gentleman
Behethland (or Betheland)Robert-Gentleman	Martin, George ----- Gentleman
Brinto (or Brinton), Edward -Mason,Soldier	Martin, John -----Captain,Councilor
Brookes, Edward ----- Gentleman	Midwinter, Francis ----- Gentleman
Brookes, John ----- Gentleman	Morish (or Moris),Edward Gentleman,
Browne, Edward ----- Gentleman	Corporal
Brumfield, James ----- Boy	Morton, Mathew ----- Sailor
Bruster (or Brewster), William -Gentleman	Mounslic, Thomas
Buckler, Andrew	Mouton, Thomas
Capper, John	Mutton, Richard ----- Boy
Cassen (or Cawsen),George - Laborer	Pecock (or Peacocke),Nathaniel, Boy
Cassen, Thomas ----- Laborer	Sailor, Soldier
Cassen, William ----- Laborer	Penington, John ----- Gentleman
Clovill, Ustis (or Eustace)-Gentleman	Percy, George - Master ----- Gentleman
Collier, Samuel -----Boy	Pickhouse (or Piggase, Dru - Gentleman
Cooke, Roger ----- Gentleman	Pising, Edward ----- Carpenter
Couper (or Cowper), Thomas - Barber	Powell, Nathaniell ----- Gentleman
Crofts, Richard ----- Gentleman	Profit,Jonas - Sailer, Fisher,Soldier
Dier (or Dye), William	Ratcliffe, John ---Captain, Councilor
Dixon, Richard ----- Gentleman	Read, James -----Blacksmith,Soldier
Dods, John -----Laborer-Soldier	Robinson, John (or Jehu) ---Gentleman
Edward, Ould ----- Laborer	Rods (or Rodes), William ---Laborer
Emry, Thomas ----- Carpenter	Sands, Thomas ----- Gentleman
Fenton, Robert ----- Gentleman	Short, John ----- Gentleman
Flower, George ----- Gentleman	Simons, Richard ----- Gentleman
Ford, Robert ----- Gentleman	Skot (or Scot), Nicholas -- Drummer
Frith, Richard ----- Gentleman	Small, Robert ----- Carpenter
Galthorpe, Stephen ----- Gentleman	Smetbes, William ----- Gentleman
Garret, William ----- Bricklayer	Smith, John ----- Captain,Councilor
Golding (or Goulding),George-Laborer	Snarsbrough, Francis ----- Gentleman
Gore, Thomas ----- Gentleman	Stevenson, John ----- Gentleman
Gosnold, Anthony ----- Gentleman	Studley (or Stoodie),Thomas-Gentleman
Gosnoll, Anthony ----- Gentleman	Tankard, William ----- Gentleman
Gosnold, Bartholomew -Councilor,Captain	Tavin (or Tauin) Henry ----- Laborer
Gower, Thomas ----- Gentleman	Throgmorton, Kellam ----- Gentleman
Halthrop, Stephen ----- Gentleman	Tockill, Anas ----- Soldier
Harrington, Edward ----- Gentleman	Vnger (or Unger), William - Laborer
Herd, John ----- Bricklayer	Waller, John ----- Gentleman
Houlgrave, Nicholas ----- Gentleman	Walker, George ----- Gentleman
Hunt,Robert-Master,Preacher -Gentleman	Webbe, Thomas ----- Gentleman
Jacob, Thomas ----- Sergeant	White, William ----- Laborer
Johnson, William -----Laborer	Wilkinson, William ----- Surgeon
Kendall, George -----Captain,Councilor	Wingfield,Edward Marie,Master
	Councilor, President
	Wotton, Thomas ----Gentleman,Surgeon
	Dutchman

"with diverse others, to the number of 105"

Mariners and Others Known to Have Been With the Expedition
That
Established Jamestown on May 13, 1607

Browne, Olyver	Markham, Robert
Clarke, Charles	Nellson, Francys
Collson, John -----Mariner	Poole, Jonas
Cotson, John -----Mariner	Skynner, Thomas
Crookdeck, John	Turnbrydge (or Turbridge), Thomas
Deale, Jeremy	Newport, Christopher, Captain, Councilor
Fytch, Mathew -----Mariner	Tyndall, Robert -----Mariner, Gunner
Genoway, Richard	White, Benjamyn
Godword, Thomas	Danyell
Jackson, Robert	Stephen

There were 111 persons in the expedition including those (105
who remained in Virginia

The Narrative Script

For

YORKTOWN: Where the American Revolution
Reached Its Climax

An introductory (orientation) program
shown regularly on a daily basis for the
Yorktown Visitor Center of Colonial
National Historical Park.

Program:

Written by: Phyllis A. Roberts
Supervised by: Arthur L. Smith
Photography by: Thomas L. Williams
& John Crane
Produced by: National Park Service
(Through Staff of Colonial
National Historical Park.)

March 21, 1961

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Yorktown where, in 1781, the final and decisive battle of the American Revolution was fought. The Battlefield, including parts of the old Town of York, are being preserved by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. This historic site, therefore, belongs to all of us and to those who will inherit our country and the American way of life.

We hope that you will find this program an invitation to see the Park thoroughly. We recommend that you inspect the exhibits across the lobby, as well as the Ship Exhibit downstairs. On the roof of this building you can get an excellent view of the Battlefield from the Siege Line Lookout.

We invite you to take the self-guiding tour of the Battlegrounds where you can see Surrender Field, the Moore House, the fortifications, Washington's Headquarters site and various troop encampment positions. The tour begins at the parking area. Special markers will show you the way. These markers feature the Yorktown symbol displayed outside on the front wall of this building. The tour can be 5, 10, or 14 miles -- depending on your choice of routes. Free guide leaflets are available at the desk in the lobby and a National Park Service attendant is there to help you.

And now for your enjoyment, the Story of Yorktown.

YORKTOWN

Where the American Revolution
Reached its Climax

Yorktown, Virginia

The year - 1776

The town lies in a neat pattern

overlooking the wide,

blue York River.

Main Street travels about a half mile,

is crossed by a series of lanes.

There are many trees. Set deep in their

lawns and gardens are the houses, fine

homes, many of them portraying the spacious
art of Colonial Virginia.

Yorktown is a summery place. Even in

winter there is a luminous quality to the air.

The high banks of Gloucester across the river
have a sun drenched Mediterranean look.

In Yorktown the carriages move down

Main Street and the dust blows and settles
around the wheels.

But this is not a place asleep on its
verdant lawns and views.

Yorktown speaks the language of commerce, not
as strongly as in a decade past.

Still, the waterfront echoes the staccato beat
of cargoes arriving and departing.

Echoes the far sounds of the then
known world.

A square, stalwart building on Main Street
plays its role; this is the Custom House,
auditor of the fortunes of Yorktown and
barometer of trade.

There is also an Apothecary Shop and the
Swan Tavern.

The blacksmith's forge sends off
bright needles of fire, the carpenter plies
his trade.

There are perhaps 2,000 people in Yorktown,
and Yorktown has its distinguished patriots.

One is Mr. Thomas Nelson, Jr., a member of
the prosperous agrarian society which has
developed around the rich, tobacco growing lands
of the South.

His life seems very much like that of an English
gentlemen of the time, with a certain unique and
adventurous character of its own.

Mr. Nelson is a citizen of a new country where
something speaks of vitality and space and
independent thinking.

In 1776 Mr. Nelson was a delegate to the
Continental Congress Meeting in Philadelphia
Pennsylvania.

He signed his name boldly to a paper called
the Declaration of Independence....

Signed away at the same time his allegiance
to the British Empire.

It is doubtful whether Mr. Nelson read into the
brave words on this paper
the destruction of his town, his personal
fortune, and a way of life.

It is a matter of surmise whether he
envisioned the faint tracery of the
United States of America.

Perhaps Mr. Nelson, the patriot, heard
only a call to arms joining the thirteen
Colonies in a revolt against British
domination, and thought that, even yet,
the Crown might be brought, by such threats,
to a more liberal policy.

The British flag had almost blown to
tatters over the struggling settlement at
Jamestown. Now that the story was beginning
to open on more glittering chapters the British
would not lower the flag without struggle.

Here in the New World is for the Empire a
great potential source of riches and a market
for the singular British talent of turning raw
material into the finished product.

George III and his administrators of the Empire
read the Declaration of Independence as an
article of war.

An episode on the Lexington Green in 1775
becomes
the warning of the American Revolution to
follow.

Now the controversy, the words on paper fan
up the smoke of battle.

The frontier American takes down his
squirrel rifle, joins the local militia.

The merchant becomes an officer in the
Continental Army.

The planter, like some ancient prince, takes
leave of his kingdom and rides out into
the turbulent world.

Innkeeper, smithy, physician, cabinetmaker....
the American Continental Army of individuals.

Commander-in-chief, General George
Washington,
of Mount Vernon on the Potomac.

The war begins and enlarges its fury in the
North, and the American ordeal is a cruel one.

For one victory there are ten defeats....
the spirit of Liberty almost ebbing away,
always reviving.

Benjamin Franklin is in France now, nimbly
bridging any diplomatic gaps.

The alliance goes through.

France is in the action.

The Frenchman, Lafayette, has been in America
for several years, moving as in the house of
a close kin, always in command of American
troops.

French soldiers begin to arrive in America,
from their homeland.

Rochambeau is their commander.

They are encamped at Newport, Rhode Island.

In 1780 British General Cornwallis
began to wind his forces through the Southern
States, drawing a network of seeming victories, costly
victories linked together on a constantly weakening
chain.

If you put down the Continentals in one place,
they drew together and fought back in another.

The years of war lengthen into six.

It is 1781.

History stands on the brink at Yorktown.

Cornwallis had moved his forces in late May
from Wilmington, North Carolina, to Portsmouth
at the foot of the Chesapeake Bay.

The true impact of the American victory at
Saratoga in 1777 begins to reveal itself as
a probable impulse behind the British move
Southward... and the future American alliance with French.

The British hold New York City.

Washington's Army keeps vigil on the
Hudson River.

For a moment in mid-summer of 1781
the clock seems to measure time in
suspended moments.

By late August the pace is changing.

Cornwallis occupies the small town on
the banks of the York River.

The allied forces in the North
maneuver around Staten Island, a ruse
to cover the true intent of their movement outward,
the march South.

Meanwhile the siege of Yorktown opens off
the wide reach of Chesapeake Bay
on September 5, 1781.

The twenty-four battleships of French
Admiral de Grasse send a confused
British fleet in withdrawal toward New York.

With the departure of his fleet the all
important Allied blockade of Yorktown
remained intact.

Cornwallis is like a man in a burning house whose main exit has been closed. Coinciding with the blockade, the Allied Armies travel steadily southward, are embarked on boats at the head of the Elk, Maryland, move on to add weight to Lafayette's advance guard. Lafayette has been in Virginia for five months, snapping at the heels of Cornwallis, pursuing, feinting, never making contact until the engagement at Green Spring near Jamestown. A strategic retreat here had saved the Continentals from a head-on collision with the entire British Army of the South.

By September 27 the shape of battle is ready for the action.

Cornwallis is entrenched at Yorktown.

The Allied Armies, French and American, are assembled in Williamsburg.

Williamsburg is a small city that has joined and embellished the beginning spirit of Jamestown. It was the capital of the Virginia Colony for eighty years.....until 1780.

Now Williamsburg is that steep ledge from which

the avalanche of battle forms.....

Begins, on the 28th, to roll...

The march of 16,000 French and American
soldiers toward Yorktown.

They move in the shadows of the tall pines
through a land that suddenly knifes into ravines
and drifts into marshes -

16,000 men are moving in the deep
suspense of oncoming battle.

The luggage of this trip
side arms
cannon
mystery.

What of the British?

Do they wait in ambush or do they people
the shadows and thickets along the line of
march?

By nightfall the Allied Army is before the British
outer lines around Yorktown, having felt only a
few token shots on the twelve mile journey.

The British, it seems are drawing close to
the town, falling back from their outer
redoubts like a spider dragging
in his net.

There is a small gate between the
creeks leading into Yorktown and when
the British retired in those first days

of the siege, they closed the gate on themselves and let the enemy in.

Had Cornwallis some word of rescue by his Navy

which allowed this desperate measure?

To this the Allies did not know the answer?__

They began with furious energy to build the first siege lines, and prepare for total onslaught.

From the 6th of October until the 9th the work of attaching these entrenchments to the natural features of the land progresses.

There is constant harrassment of British fire. Across the River in Gloucester, the cavalry of British and French meet and clash.

By the time the Allied guns are ready to open fire the British situation may be observed with some clarity.

Battlewise they are caught in a small room.

The advantages of the terrain are empty without sea support.

On October 9 the pick and shovel work that drew blisters on allied hands is over and the constricted cloud of war begins to open.

After the opening barrage the guns
are never quiet.

The pendulum of destruction goes back and
forth relentlessly.

Men rush pell mell into war
and some closed their eyes forever on this lovely
land,
and forgot why they fought.

Guns roar
and fire sweeps the targets.

Yorktown is the victim of savage, shattering
crossfire. At night the harbor is a blazing
gorge with the fires of British ships.

The warships Charon sinks first,
then the Guadaloupe.

A fire ship moves like a fitful torch
in the holocaust.

Men forgot time, but it moved, and the
day turned October 11. The accomplishments
of the first siege line allow Washington to
shift the weight of his lines closer upon
the British. The ridge of the
second siege line begins to project itself
not more than 400 yards from the British.
work advances through the nettles
of their fire.

Now only Redoubts 9 and 10 remain as heavily armed obstacles to the continuation of the line. Here is an arena which stages in miniature the full drama of war.

The storming of these redoubts takes place on the night of October 14.

400 Americans, under Alexander Hamilton,

are assigned to Redoubt 10.

400 Frenchmen to Redoubt 9.

They move like prowlers into that grim area of battle where they can be no turning back.

No one has time to think much, to select a policy of battle.

It is hand to hand.

It is savage and personal.

The Americans and the French are victorious and the deadly trap is sprung.

Now the second siege line is closed to the York.

There is a constant rolling disc of fire around Yorktown.

The British are stricken with incurable defeat.

They try an escape to Gloucester, are turned back upon the Yorktown shores by a sudden storm.

Resources dwindle.

Gallant, but enfeebled, counterattacks are only a postponement.

The curtain is falling on the final act of the battle of Yorktown.

At 10:00 on the morning of October 17 a drummer boy in crimson steps to the parapet and beats the parley.

The guns are silent.

On October 18 the farmhouse of Augustine Moore

becomes the scene of a debate between representatives of the Allies and the British.

This meeting produced a document known as the Articles of Capitulation. . . . the terms of surrender.

There remains now only the ceremony of surrender,

the October 19 pageant of the bright Redcoats moving down an aisle of American and French, the band piping an ironic little tune called

"The World Turned Upside Down."

The exchange of swords, the presentation of the encased flags, the march back to Yorktown.

There is no one to inform us of the precise emotion which the victory at Yorktown brought to our early patriots.

Yorktown was a landmark in the war.

This they knew.

But was it also decisive, a sharp turn
in the world affairs?

This they did not know at the time.

History carries the full conviction
of the Yorktown victory.

But history does not report General Thomas
Nelson, Jr's'

thoughts as he recrossed the threshold of his
spared,

but damaged, mansion.

History forgets the name of a certain New
England

soldier-farmer gladly going home;

the name of a Frenchman who rests forever
in a quiet glade of York County, Virginia;

forgets the solo heroism of one man in battle;

the heartbeat of a young Englishman marching

out to Surrender Field; forgets the face of the
girl in Newport, Rhode Island, as

she receives the glad news.

History cannot preserve detail of such nature,
but keeps for us to cherish,

the name.....Yorktown

The year.....1781.

The results, a free and independent nation,
the future to be designed by free men.

INFORMATION ABOUT CANNONS ON THE BRITISH LINE WALK

13-INCH MORTAR

This is the oldest piece in the park, having been cast in 1681 - 100 years old at the time of the siege, though still capable today of being fired. The mortar was cast by a man named Keller at Douai (spelled Duaci on the mortar) and contains the prophetic statement in Latin - "I send not the rays of the sun but the thunderbolts of Jupiter." The weight of the piece, 2,240 pounds, is stamped on the right trunnion. There were two Kellers - brothers - named John Jacques and Balthazar, and they practiced their art first in Zurich and then at Douai which is in France. In 1667, Louis XIV captured the town from Spain after a 5 day siege, and under the terms of the treaty of Aix-La-Chapelle it remained the possession of France, its ownership being confirmed by the treaty of Utrecht in 1713. The foundry at Douai was first housed in the Abbey of St. Suplice, under the direction of the Kellers, who were in charge of the operation there from 1669 to 1696. At the outbreak of the Revolution, and for several years thereafter, French guns were brought in to assist the American cause. But France, like any other nation was not willing to risk its newest and latest equipment in someone else's war, so at first the French guns that arrived were of antiquated design. After France formally entered the war, in

1779, then newer equipment began to arrive. Apparently many 17th century French pieces were sent over - ten cannon of the French siege train were dumped into the Pamunkey to avoid capture, and they were recovered after the war. The guns, seven of which are still extant, all bear dates of manufacture between 1693 and 1698. Another French gun was recovered from the York River in 1817 - made by Keller in 1680. This particular piece is a type of mortar known as a stone mortar. It is not designed to fire explosive iron shells as most mortars are. This piece will fire a large stone cannon ball or else a large wicker basket full of small rocks. Being mounted along the river, it would probably fire large smooth stone balls against enemy shipping. A heavy stone, weighing several hundred pounds and falling from a considerable height will generally crash through a ship from top to bottom. Even as late as the Crimean War in 1854, old bombards firing stone shot were pressed into service, and a large British frigate was cut through with one at a considerable loss of life to the crew. The chamber on this piece is pear shaped. This generated considerable pressure on the shot, but for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, and the recoil was terrific. Note that the trunnions, as heavy as they are, are noticeably bent and bowed. Also, the chamber, having, a sharp shoulder at its front end, was subject to considerable wear, and it would not take too long before the chamber

had blown itself out, thus rendering the gun useless. Being a French mortar, the piece can be elevated and depressed by means of the wedge in front. English mortars were fixed at a constant 45 degrees. The iron studs protruding from the base are for handspikes so the mortar may be traversed from one side to the other.

THE FOX

This is a 6 pdr. field gun, and would not have been used for siege work. Only heavy mortars, howitzers and 18 and 24 pdr. guns would be used in a siege. Field guns accompanied the troops on a march and were used for engagements fought in the open. Guns of this size would be kept in reserve during a siege and in the event the enemy made a sortie, the siege guns would be rolled back and the rapid firing field guns put in their place. This gun is capable of firing a 6 pound iron ball approximately a mile, although accuracy at that range is somewhat limited. However, it is quite accurate at 1/2 mile. It can also fire explosive shells, grape or canister. With grape it is good for 900 yards (1/2 mile) but with canister it is limited to about 400 yards. To move the gun, it would be attached to a limber and pulled by about 4 horses. The handles on top of the barrel are called dolphins, for obvious reasons. These were used for lifting the gun off and on the carriage when necessary. A Gin would be erected over the gun, a pulley arrangement would

be hooked through the dolphins, and the gun lifted up. The damaged carriage would be removed, a new one run in, and the gun lowered down again. This was a lot faster than stopping and trying to repair the broken carriage. The name LE RENARD (The Fox) appears near the muzzle. The French still carried on the old tradition of naming their cannon. The barrel weighs 641 pounds, and was the 17th gun of its type cast. It was cast at Strasbourg in 1762 by Jean Baptiste Dartein, Commissioner of the Foundries. There are no 6 pdrs. listed as having been in the French artillery at Yorktown, but six bronze 6 pdrs. are listed as having accompanied the Americans to Yorktown, and these may very well have been French pieces.

5.8 INCH HOWITZER

This was also considered a field piece, but was very handy to the British in countering the approach of the siege. When Redoubt Nine was captured it contained two 5.3" howitzers. General Washington was so impressed with the bravery displayed by the French Regiments involved in the attack, that he presented one howitzer to each of the regiments participating. The British Army surrendered six of these little howitzers at Yorktown. Howitzers could be fired at high angles of elevation like a mortar or they could be fired flat like a gun. They were also quite effective for ricochet shooting, or bouncing the shell across the ground in the face of an enemy advance. When loaded

with grape or canister, they performed like a gigantic sawed off shotgun. This piece was cast by R. Gilpin in 1758, and is the 27th gun of the series. The crowned M is the cypher for the Duke of Marlborough who was Master General of Ordnance from May 10, 1755 to November 30, 1757. Although the piece was dated after his term had expired, the coronet and monogram markings are justified when the length of time to cast, finish, prove, and mark a gun is considered. It was undoubtedly begun during his reign and completed the following year. The weight of the piece is given on the breech as 4-0-12 which is 460 pounds. The piece was normally fired with a shell (explosive) that weighted 16 pounds. The powder charge would generally be 2 pounds, although lighter charges were used with grape and canister so the shot would not be scattered too much. Maximum range would be in the neighborhood of 1500 yards.

THE LAFAYETTE GUN

This is 12 pdr. field gun which was actually present at Yorktown. It was cast by W. Bowen in 1759 and fires a 12 pdr. shot 4,089 yards with 8 pounds of powder and 45 degrees elevation. However, in firing for accuracy, 4 pounds of powder are used with 3 degrees elevation which provides a range of 1,189 yards. Nineteen men were required to handle the gun in the field and half that number were required to serve it in a permanent battery. Ten horses would be required to move the gun. In addition to solid

shot, the gun would also handle shells, grape and canister. Grape consisted of ten 1.9" balls. Canister consisted of 107.96" balls. The Gun bears the usual royal coat of arms plus the ducal coat of arms of Lord George Sackville (same family as Lord Germain) who was Lt. Gen. of Ordnance from Nov. 30, 1757 to Sept. 10, 1759. The gun was supposedly identified by Lafayette in 1824 upon his visit to Watervliet Arsenal, as one surrendered to him by the British. He is supposed to have been so moved by his discovery that he "approached and embraced the gun as the companion of his youth." This is probably legend and cannot be proven. The identification was supposedly possible because of the shot dent on the right side of the gun near the breech. On July 25, 1834, in Albany, N. Y. there was a memorial funeral procession for Lafayette and it appears that this gun was drawn in it. The weight of the gun is given as 211=24 which is 2,404 pounds.

AMERICAN IRON 6 PDR.

This is one of the few iron guns in the park, and it appears to be of American make but of post war period. It was probably cast in the 1790's. Two more identical guns are in the utility area, and the large 18 pdr. at the hornwork appears to be of the same pattern. This is unusually large and heavy for a 6 pdr. The regular iron 6 pdr. field guns were 4 1/2 feet long. This one measures 6 feet 7 1/2 inches, which would make it either

a naval or garrison gun and one well suited for siege work.

Not too much more can be said of it because of the complete lack of markings.

SURRENDER FIELD FLAGS

The following eight flags are those that fly daily, weather permitting, at Surrender Field:

1. U. S. - 1781 Flag (5' x 8')
2. French - Bourbon (3 gold fleur-de-lis, 6' x 6')
3. British - Grand Union (6' x 6')
4. U. S. - 1st Pennsylvania Regiment (basically green)
5. U. S. - 1st Rhode Island Regiment (basically blue and white)
6. French - Metz Artillery Regiment (fleur-de-lis in white cross)
7. French - Tourains Infantry Regiment (with plain white cross)
8. British - Royal Welch Fusileers Regiment (three feathers)

The first three should fly on the overlook mound in the order listed above, starting with the pole on the top of the mound and descending. The other five should fly on the poles in the parking lot in the order listed above, starting at the pole nearest the overlook.

A paragraph explaining each flag is attached and should help in identifying each one and tell something of its story.

Colonial National Historical Park
Yorktown, Virginia

August 19, 1968

1.

U. S. NATIONAL FLAG OF 1781

This flag was officially flown by George Washington here at Yorktown. Its exact birthdate is not known but probably dates back to 1775. The American Flag with an arrangement of stars and stripes was known even earlier, but no definite information as to number, design or color arrangement was mentioned. This flag is depicted in Major Sebastian Bauman's map of the Siege and Battle of Yorktown, he being an artillery officer here at the time. Also, Lieutenant Colonel Simcoe, commander of the British troops on the Gloucester side of the York River, found time to do a watercolor painting of the siege and battle and he depicts an American flag with the stars arranged in a linear design. It was definitely not in a circle as the Betsy Ross flag supposedly was.

2.

FRENCH NATIONAL FLAG

The 3-gold fleur-de-lis on a white field was the cornette blanche of the Bourbon monarchy. In this form it dates from 1589 when Henry IV came to the throne. The fleur-de-lis device goes back into antiquity. As early as 1376, Charles V of the House of Valois decreed that their number be reduced to three on the royal device. The cornette blanche was used until the French Revolution when it was banned. This flag, though still banned, evokes nostalgic memories in the breasts of Frenchmen to this day.

3.

BRITISH UNION FLAG

This flag dates from 1606 with the accession of James the First to the throne. It had the red cross of Saint George of England and the white cross of Saint Andrew of Scotland. This remained the flag until 1801 when the union with Ireland added red cross of Saint Patrick to produce the modern "Union Jack."

4.

FIRST PENNSYLVANIA REGIMENT

Continental Line

A deep green field with a crimson square in the center, bearing on the square as a device, a hunter in the attitude of striking a lion enclosed in a net, with a spear. The motto below, 'Domari Nolo' (I refuse to be subjugated). It was carried by the regiment through all their battles in the Revolutionary War, from Boston in 1775 to James Island in South Carolina in 1783. It was also at Yorktown. The original flag is now in the State Library in Harrisburg.

5.

FIRST RHODE ISLAND REGIMENT

Continental Line

The flag is still preserved at the State House, Providence. This regiment was formed early in the war and served with distinction at several battles, the most famous being the defense of Fort Mercer, New Jersey, in October 1777.

Flag description: White silk field. Light blue canton containing 13 five-pointed stars, gold; each star outlined with a deeper blue and having a shadow on the left side. The stars are arranged 3-2-3-2-3. In the field is a light blue fowl anchor with a dark blue rope, sewed on. Above the anchor is a motto, HOPE, in dark blue.

6.

METZ ARTILLERY REGIMENT

All of this regiment (organized in 1765) served with Rochambeau in America, 1780-1783, under the command of Colonel the Count d'Aboville. The artillery was well managed here at Yorktown, especially by this regiment. The regiment was probably landed at Jamestown along with most of the other cannon. A few of the heavier ones were unloaded at Trebell's Landing, on the James River, and hauled overland to Yorktown. Metz was one of the three ancient bishoprics which were annexed to France in 1552. In 1871 part of this Metz region went to Germany, but was recovered by France in 1919.

Flag description: White Greek Cross. 1st and 4th cantons, yellow; 2nd and 3rd cantons, gorge de pigeon (an iridescent green and reddish purple). There are golden fleur-de-lis on each arm of the white cross.

7.

TOURAINÉ REGIMENT

Organized in Tours, the capital of Touraine Province in the western central part of France. The regiment itself dates back to 1625. It was at the siege of La Rochelle, and also at Minden, 1759, where Lafayette's father was killed. It came from the West Indies on De Grasse's ships, and was brigaded on the left of the French line, between the Gatinois and Agenais Regiments, under Major-General Marquis de Saint Simon. It faced the British right, on the high bluff along the York River, opposite the Royal Welch Fusiliers, across a swampy stream. It also made a feint, or false demonstration, under orders, on the night of October 14, during the storming of Redoubts 9 and 10. The Regiment was commanded by the Baron de Saint Simon, brother of the General.

Flag description: White Greek Cross. 1st canton, auroa (a yellowish red); 2nd canton, blue; 3rd canton, green; 4th canton, red.

8.

ROYAL WELCH FUSILIERS REGIMENT

First organized in 1688 during the Glorious Revolution. It has served in all of England's wars with distinction and is still in existence. It fought in almost every battle in the American Revolution. It did not surrender its colors as the Articles of Capitulation called for but, by report, a Captain Peter and another officer wrapped the colors around their bodies under their clothes and carried them back to England.

Flag description: The British Grand Union with three feathers and a scroll underneath with the inscription, ICH DIEN. The feathers and the motto belong to the Prince of Wales, hereditary Colonel of the regiment. The motto is in German and means, "I serve."

THE CANADIANS WHO FOUGHT AT YORKTOWN

When Washington's allied army encamped at Yorktown in late September 1781 encircling the British Army of Cornwallis, he commanded a superior force, predominantly French and American. There were, however, men (individuals and units) of other countries present on the scene who had contributed substantially to the American revolutionary struggle often, and usually, as freewill volunteers, each perhaps with a variety of reasons, personal as well as philosophical. One such unit at Yorktown was the Second Canadian ("Congress's Own") Regiment which had been in the field fighting side by side with the regular forces of the "United Colonies" and its allies since early in 1776. It was headed by Moses Hazen, now a Brigadier General, who had been with this unit as commanding officer since its formation.

As Washington brigaded his forces just prior to the investment of Yorktown, Hazen was given command of the 800-man 2nd Brigade in Lafayette's Light Infantry Division. Field command of his own regiment (now reduced to some 200 men after heavy campaigning over the past six years), a part of the Brigade, went to its lieutenant colonel (Edward Antil) and major (Tarleton Woodson), officers who had been with the regiment since 1776 and 1777 respectively.

Participation by Canadians in the American Revolutionary force in sufficient numbers to merit unit designation stemmed, in part, from the ill-fated campaign into the Montreal-Quebec area of Canada in the fall and winter of 1775 and 1776. Hopefully Washington, Continental Congress, and the Country at that time saw a possibility, especially with military victory, of the people of this area joining the American cause. On November 27, 1775, Washington gave expression to this in a letter to Richard Henry Lee, just after the successful reduction of St. John's, in General Richard Montgomery's drive toward Montreal:

I heartily congratulate you and the Congress on the reduction of St. John's. I hope all Canada is in our possession before this. No accounts from [General Benedict] Arnold since those mentioned in my last letter to the Congress. Would it not be politic to invite them to send members to Congress? Would it not be also politic to raise a regiment or two of Canadians, and bring them out of the Country? They are good troops and this would be entering them heartily in the cause.

Actually Congress had already provided for these measures in instructions to a committee going north to confer with General Philip Schuyler on affairs in his, the northern department.

The two-prong drive of the Americans lead by Schuyler (then Montgomery) and Annold respectively ended militarily in disaster at Quebec on December 31, to be followed eventually by an agonizing withdrawal and then by a marked change in feeling in the Canadian countryside. This latter was described graphically by Moses Hazen in a letter of April 1, 1776 to General Schuyler:

You are not unacquainted with the friendly disposition of the Canadians, when General Montgomery first penetrated into the country; the ready assistance which they gave on all occasions, by men, carriages, and provisions, was most remarkable. Even when we were before Quebec, many parishes offered their services in the reduction of that fortress, which were at that time thought unnecessary. But this most fortunate fate, added to other incidents, has caused such a change in their disposition, that we no longer look upon them as friends, but on the contrary waiting an opportunity to join our enemies . . .

There were, however, those who thought differently and enlisted with some fervor, in the American cause. The regiments mentioned by Washington did take form - two of them, the First and Second Canadian Regiments whose identity was long and battle scarred.

The First was from the beginning under the command of Colonel James Livingston who was probably born in Montreal where his father John had settled soon after his marriage to Catryna Ten Broeck, but returned to New York at the outbreak of hostilities. James, as did two of his brothers, joined Montgomery's invading army. Late in 1775 he raised and commanded a regiment of Canadian refugees which fought at St. John's. His 300 Canadians and 50 Americans were instrumental in the fall of Fort Chambly. Likewise he was in the action at Quebec but, at its conclusion, his command dissipated. Congress, however, on January 8, 1776, commissioned him as colonel of the First Canadian to which was added a little later a unit from the New York Line. The First Canadian went on to fight at Fort Stanwix, at Stony Point and at Veiplanck's Point as well as in both battles of Saratoga. The regiment, depleted, was reduced on January 1, 1781, and the Canadian elements of it seemingly went then to the Second Canadian Regiment. Livingston retired to settle in the New York area where he died in 1832.

The Second Canadian Regiment took form on January 22, 1776, when Moses Hazen, a retired British Army officer, was made its commander. Hazen had seen service in the French and Indian Wars (Crown Point, Louisburg, Quebec) winning commendation from General Wolfe himself. He retired in 1763 from the 44th Regiment with the rank of lieutenant. It was at this time that he settled in the St. John's (Quebec) area (in 1770 marrying Charlotte de La Saussage of Montreal) to develop a successful farming establishment. Here he was in the path of Montgomery's drive into Canada and found himself in the midst of fighting once again. He joined Montgomery, participating in the siege of Montreal and in the attack on Quebec.

In the early months of 1776 he recruited his regiment partly in Canada and among Canadian refugees and later had authority to recruit in any of the states. Not being connected with any state, this unit came to be known as "Congress's Own," or "Hazen's Own," as well as the Second Canadian. As reported by Hazen in a memorial to Washington in 1779, he had been directed to form a unit "to be raised in Canada for one year or during the then present Disputes." He proceeded to "enlist for the Term of the War" and "mustered and carried into the Service" some 477 men being stopped only by the "Want of Money to pay the Bounty." Otherwise, by his report, the regiment would have been "completely filled up at that Time, and in that Country."

For the opening campaign in 1777 he brought 720 into the field. He further related that his "Regiment has been employed on hard services in the Course of this Contest" - the blockade and assault of Quebec, Staten Island, Brandywine and Germantown. In the last three actions he lost 15 commissioned officers and 133 non-commissioned officers and privates in "killed, wounded and taken Prisoners." At Germantown Washington gave him his "Public thanks." In his return of March 15, 1779, some "sixteen officers and One Hundred and eleven Non-commissioned Officers and Soldiers are returned Volunteers from Canada." He continued: "However hard their Case, their Services are deserving of Notice: That the Canadian Soldiers are not inferior to any in the Regiment, in Point of Morality, Bravery, and attachment to the Cause and Service in which they are engaged; A Proof of which, one Canadian only has deserted since the Regiment retreated out of Canada."

When the American Army was being regrouped as of January 1, 1781, and various units were being reduced, Hazen's Canadian Regiment was the lone one of the sixteen "Additional Regiments" retained, this to embrace "all volunteers from foreign states, who are now in the service" among the regiments and corps being reduced.

This was the Regiment that Hazen brought to Yorktown in Washington's Army and that fought here as an integral part of the American and allied besieging force. As such it was among the recipients of victory - at last.

By way of footnote, it might be added that on April 23, 1783, Continental Congress did, in reply to another memorial of Moses Hazen, express its gratitude for the Canadian contribution in the American struggle. This was in reply to a request for a "certain tract of land bounded on the Lakes Huron and Erie." It was duly:

Resolved, That the memorialist be informed, that Congress retain a lively sense of the services the Canadian officers and men have rendered the United States, and that they are seriously disposed to reward them for their virtuous sufferings in the cause of liberty: That they be further informed that wherever Congress can consistently make grants of land, they will be rewarded in this way, as far as may be consistent, the officers, men and others, refugees from Canada."

Prepared at:
Colonial National Historical Park
Yorktown, Virginia
July 6, 1966

Civil War Action
In the Yorktown Area

The Siege of Yorktown in 1781, the climactic battle of the American Revolution, is the event that gave Yorktown its mark of great historic interest in our national story. It was for this reason that the area was made a National Historical Park in 1930. In most respects the events of 1781 far overshadow the Civil War operations in this same area. These latter, in 1862, while of considerable interest, are actually minor when viewed against the backdrop of the tragic struggle between the Confederacy and the Union.

A map, especially one of eastern Virginia, and a beginning knowledge of the Civil War, are requisites to the study of the Peninsular Campaign of 1862 of which Yorktown was a part. The Peninsula, embraced by the York and James, was and still is a major approach to Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy. The dawn of the war's second year found the Peninsula, except Fort Monroe at its tip, in Confederate hands. President Lincoln's government believed that the fall of Richmond would mean the collapse of the Confederacy and the preservation of the Union. There was, however, dissension in the selection of an invasion route. Lincoln favored a direct attack from the vicinity of Washington, but he was persuaded by General George B. McClellan to use the Peninsula approach. Accordingly, McClellan was given a portion of the Army of the Potomac, which he had helped create. The first troops arrived at Fort Monroe in March 1862, with McClellan joining them on April 2.

The Confederate leaders, too, had vision and foresight. In the war's first year General John B. Magruder was given the responsibility of defending this region which he saw as an invasion route. He could perform a major service to the southern cause by blocking this route, and for this purpose extended a defensive line across the Peninsula.

One of the early engagements of the War, the Battle of Big Bethel, had already been fought some 15 miles southeast of Yorktown. On April 10, 1861, Confederate troops successfully challenged a Union force operating from Fort Monroe (City of Hampton) at the cost of 76 casualties for the North and 8 for the South.

Later, when Magruder was building his first Peninsula line, he anchored his left flank at Yorktown making use of existing Revolutionary war embankments which he improved and strengthened. The line spanned the Peninsula, uniting with and using the Warwick River, then following its course past Mulberry Island to the James. Magruder knew the terrain and how to utilize it. In strengthening his defenses he made use of existing dams and built others to back the water up in small streams to flood the low lands and offer more impassable barriers between the dams. The dams he fortified with earthworks and troops. These defenses, some contended, would have been stronger if Magruder had had more and better engineers.

Initially, Magruder had only 11,000 men to hold the entire line of twelve miles and the situation was already provoking heated discussion in Richmond. General Robert E. Lee saw the need to reinforce Magruder's line while General Joseph E. Johnston insisted that this line be abandoned and the troops concentrated with others in a closer defense of Richmond. President Davis sat as an arbiter. Lee's ideas prevailed and by May 1, Confederate strength was 36,000. Ironically, Johnston was given command of the Yorktown line, replacing Magruder, on the 14th of April. The latter was given the command of the right sector of the line.

McClellan, lacking the dash of so many of his contemporaries, first made a thorough reconnaissance of the Yorktown line and then deemed a siege preferable to penetration and exploitation despite his 112,000 men. General Fitz-John Porter was designated director of siege operations and work on fortifications began immediately. Meanwhile, Magruder, and later Johnston, kept improving the Confederate defenses. Confederate organization, with Johnston in command placed Magruder on the right, James Longstreet in the center, and Daniel H. Hill on the left at Yorktown. The reserve near Williamsburg was commanded by Gustavus W. Smith. Most of these were names destined to become more famous as the Civil War progressed. McClellan had Samuel P. Heintzelman on his right, Erasmus D. Keyes on the left and a composite of artillery and cavalry in reserve.

The rainy weather, frequently the case in war, favored the defenders. Magruder's dams turned small streams into major barriers. Despite the weather and southern opposition the Union troops made advances, and prepared more positions. Minor forays served no greater purpose than giving men combat experience and breaking the monotony of the siege. The most serious Union threat came on April 16 when an effort was made to force the Confederates to halt their work on the defenses, to silence their fire, and to gain control of Dam No. 1 near Lee's Mill. The major result here was merely a more stubborn defense.

At one point, in a balloon operated by Professor Thaddeus Lowe, General Fitz-John Porter made a flight for observation purposes and when the moorings broke, drifted over the Confederate lines. Before Confederate fire could be brought to bear the Union observers were favored by a changing wind carrying them to the safety of their own lines. This was another early step in the development of aerial reconnaissance.

Despite harassing fire, McClellan's troops slowly advanced their works. For artillery to be most effective, even today, it is generally massed for firing in order to get the most shells on the target in the least time possible. McClellan withheld his fire as much as the tactical situation permitted, hoping to follow heavy barrages with infantry advances. Scheduling a full scale attack for May 6, McClellan planned his

major effort in the area between Yorktown and the headwaters of the Warwick River. The plan called for Union gunboats to give supporting fire from the York River. Also, a feint was to be made at Lee Hall (to the west) and, if the opportunity presented itself, this was to develop into major action.

McClellan, to the irritation of some, always insisted on thoroughness in planning and preparation, and the Peninsular Campaign was no exception. But he overestimated his foe's strength and suddenly Johnston forfeited the ground as untenable. As early as April 30, Johnston had planned a withdrawal to take effect May 3, but muddy roads delayed the action a day. Around midnight of May 3 the heavy guns ceased their diverting fire, were spiked and left behind by the retreating soldiers. By dawn of the 4th, Yorktown was ready for Union occupation.

The Confederate withdrawal was well planned and executed. A mile east of Williamsburg, Magruder had previously prepared another line with positions, hinging for the most part on larger Fort Magruder. Johnston elected to delay the Union pursuit here. In the afternoon of the 4th the epilogue to the Peninsular Campaign began as the Battle of Williamsburg which lasted into the following day. This was a pitched battle, intense in its latter stages. At the end of the 5th there were 1,600 Confederate, and 2,300 Union, casualties. The following day Johnston declined to resume the action but marched toward Richmond as had been his original intention. McClellan did not mount a pursuit. The time bought during the Siege on Yorktown and at Williamsburg undoubtedly delayed the assault on Richmond and gave the Confederates a needed interval to assemble and organize the forces that beat McClellan back from the gates of the city and thwarted the Union's Peninsular Campaign.

We can be grateful today that these operations left the Peninsula, Yorktown especially, with so few physical scars. The town escaped heavy destruction and posterity has been, and will continue to be, the benefactor. The reminders of those trying times are the earthworks that remain scattered over the Peninsula and are in abundance around Yorktown.

Today there are numerous existing Civil War fortifications, some very well preserved in the Park area, especially at Yorktown. There is, too, a National Cemetery, established in 1866, with some 2,200 interments, mostly of Union dead. Nearby there is the site of a small Confederate burial ground of undetermined size. At Jamestown and along Colonial Parkway in the Jamestown area are a number of Confederate positions built largely in 1861 when the line of the James River was being fortified with the thought that Union forces might drive on Richmond using this natural water route. These positions saw little or no action in the war.

Suggested Readings:

1. Douglas Southall Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, Vol. 1.
2. R. U. Johnson and C. C. Buel, (eds), Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Vol. II.
3. W. S. Myers, A Study in Personality, General George Brinton McClellan.
4. J. H. Eckenrode, George B. McClellan, The Man Who Saved the Union.
5. T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and His Generals.
6. Artillery Through the Ages, National Park Service Interpretive Series, History No. 3, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1949. This has data on Civil War Ordnance. It is available from the Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C. The price is 35¢ per copy.

Notes:

1. Richmond National Battlefield Park includes parts of the areas over which the Peninsular Campaign was decided and information on the park is available. Inquiries should be directed to the Superintendent, Richmond National Battlefield Park, 3215 East Broad Street, Richmond 23, Virginia.
2. The State of Virginia, for the duration of the Civil War Centennial, is operating a Centennial Center in Richmond. Brochures are available and the address is Virginia Civil War Centennial Center, 641 North 8th Street, Richmond 19, Virginia.

Revised February 28, 1963

THE YORKTOWN NATIONAL CEMETERY

This site was selected in 1866 as a good cemetery location in the general vicinity of various Civil War battlefields and scenes of action related particularly to the Peninsular Campaign of 1862 when General George B. McClellan was moving toward Richmond, the Confederate capital. The cemetery lay close to, and south of, the Confederate line about Yorktown and in the immediate area of the battleground of 1781 where American and French troops won the climactic struggle in the American Revolution.

There are 1,596 marked graves in the cemetery. Of the total of 2,183 burials 747 are of known persons and 1,436 unknown. Those buried here were for the most part Union Army soldiers although 10 Confederate soldiers and 3 wives are also identified. In an inspection made in 1868, it was then reported that:

The interments number twenty-one hundred and eighty (2,180) of which number eleven (11) officers, seven hundred and sixteen (716) white soldiers, four (4) sailors, six (6) colored soldiers, and eight (8) citizens are known and two (2) officers, fourteen hundred and twenty-two (1,422) white soldiers, five (5) colored soldiers, and six (6) citizens are unknown. Besides the burials at the cemetery, bodies were removed from Williamsburg in James City County, and altogether from twenty-seven different places in the surrounding country, within a distance of fifty miles.

Those nearby points included White House Landing, King and Queen Courthouse, Cumberland Landing, West Point, and Warwick Courthouse.

Tour of Yorktown's Historic Main Street

Prepared by Historian Trainee Kathleen Kirby, 1968

- A. Introduction
 - 1. Welcome
 - 2. Type and length of tour
 - 3. Brief history of Yorktown
 - (a) Founding and development
 - (b) Growth and decline
- B. Victory Monument
 - 1. History
 - 2. Symbolism
- C. Dudley Digges or West House
 - 1. Digges family
 - 2. Siege and resulting damage
- D. Sessions or Sheild House
 - 1. Oldest house in Yorktown (1697)
 - 2. Architecture
- E. Nelson House (York Hall)
 - 1. Nelson family
 - 2. Siege and resulting damage
- F. Customhouse (Ambler's Storehouse)
 - 1. Built by Richard Ambler
 - 2. Description
- G. Thomas Pate or Cole Digges House
 - 1. Built by Thomas Pate
 - 2. Owned by Digges family during Siege
 - 3. Description

H. Sommerwell House

1. Occupied by Lightfoot family for 67 years
2. Also known as "Old Yorktown Hotel"
3. Description

I. Grace Church

1. One of the most attractive posts in the colony
2. Marl walls standing since 1697
3. Siege damage

J. Medical Shop

1. Owned by Dr. Corbin Griffin - ardent patriot
2. Burned in the fire of 1814

K. Courthouse

1. Fifth courthouse building to stand on this site
2. Siege and resulting damage
3. Records date back to 1633

L. Swan Tavern

1. Leading place of entertainment for over 140 years
2. Built by "Scotch" Tom Nelson and Joseph Walker - 1722

M. Swan Tavern Kitchen Demonstrations

1. Spinning and weaving
2. Costumed Interpreters

Tour of Yorktown's Historic Main Street

In front of the Monument

On behalf of the National Park Service, I welcome you to Colonial National Historical Park. For the next hour or so I would like for you to place yourselves in the 18th century. As we walk up Main Street and see some of the buildings that were most prominent during Yorktown's "heyday," you will be able to understand these people a little better. To help you go back in time let me briefly tell you about Yorktown's beginnings.

A. The Town of York

1. Founding - Point to river

- a. Origin in the Virginia Act of Port, 1691 - one of the measures by which British Colonial officials and Virginia leaders sought to force urban development.
- b. Part of an old land grant to Captain Nicholas Martiau, the earliest known American ancestor of Washington, and was, in 1691, in the hands of his grandson, Benjamin Read
- c. This area frequently explored by John Smith and fellow settlers from Jamestown
- d. Town surveyed by Lawrence Smith and laid out in 35 lots along Main Street and 7 side streets overlooking the York River from the bluff.
 - (1) Waterfront area described "as of little value."
 - (2) Waterfront did, however, house the main growth and importance of the town

2. Growth and Decline

- a. Excellent harbor plus restrictive legislation on trade stimulated the growth of the town.
- b. Of major importance was the tobacco trade.
- c. Town became a miniature England in terms of fashions and social life.

- d. Peak of growth around 1750 when the town had 3,000 inhabitants - today, only 315
 - (1) Fortunes made in tobacco trade
 - (2) Apprentices, like Augustine Moore, rose to become partners in merchant firms
- e. Started to decline before the Revolution, though the war helped it along
 - (1) Rival ports sprang up
 - (2) Soil wore thin - tobacco moved further south and west

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- 1. Olive Bailey, "Two Virginia Towns, 1755," pp. 272-274
 - 2. Yorktown Historical Handbook, pp. 32-39

B. Monument to Alliance and Victory

1. Authorized by a grateful Congress in 1781, but, because of lack of funds could do nothing then.

2. Finally built - 1881-1884.

3. Symbolism.

a). Base and Inscriptions.

1). Dedicated as a memorial to Victory.

2). Presents Narrative of the Siege.

3). Commemorates treaty of Alliance with France.

4). Presents resulting peace Treaty with Britain.

b). Thirteen Dancing Girls.

1). Symbol of Birth of Freedom.

2). Girls stood for the unity of the 13 original states.

3). Inscription beneath girl's feet--
One Country; One Constitution, One Destiny.

c). Column with stars (38).

1). Symbol of greatness and prosperity.

2). Each star represents a state in the Union in 1881.

d). Liberty - destroyed by lightning in 1942; replaced in 1956.

1. Hatch, "The Symbolism of the Yorktown Victory Monument", pp. 1-5.

C. Dudley Digges (or West) House - IN THE DRIVEWAY

1. Built in 1706 by Miles and Emanuel Wills, the house is typical of Tidewater Virginia homes in its simplicity of lines.
2. The house was framed with mulberry trees planted by the Digges family over 200 years ago, some of which still remain.
3. House and lot purchased by Cole Digges (father).
 - a). Digges family didn't build any homes in town, but purchased lots with houses already on them.
 - b). Dudley received this house and lot along with several others, including the Cole Digges House, in his father's will in 1745.
 - 1). Dudley, a lawyer and Burgess for 25 years, served as a member of all the conventions and as a member of the Committee of Correspondence during the Revolution.
 - 2). In 1781 he was Lt. Governor of Virginia.
 - 3). Retained the property until 1787, when he willed it to his daughter, Elizabeth.
4. Siege.
 - a). Dudley and family not at home when the British called in 1781.
 - b). House served as quarters for British officers.
 - c). Considerably damaged during the Siege.
 - 1). At least 20 distinct hits, 3 of which came while the Allies were trying to dislodge Cornwallis from Secretary Nelson's House near-by.
 - 2). Greatest damage was to the roof rafters, shattering most of them - not repaired by family.
 - 3). Obvious damages - shingles, plaster, panelling, etc. were repaired by family.
5. Damaged again in 1862 it survived to be restored by the National Park Service to its original appearance as a town house.
 - a). Probably used as General McClellan's headquarters during the Union occupation.

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1. Hatch, "Yorktown", p. 14.
 2. Lee Nelson, "Restoration of the Dudley Digges House", Part I, p. 9.
 3. Lee Nelson, "Restoration of the Dudley Digges House", Part II, p. 2.
 4. Riley, "History of the Founding and Development of Yorktown, Virginia, 1691-1781", p. 105.
 5. Emmie Ferguson Farrar, Old Virginia Houses Along the James, p. 213.
 6. Clyde F. Trudell, Colonial Yorktown, pp. 85-88.

D. Sessions House - GREAT VALLEY SIGN (Point out that there are 7 original 18th century homes - Sommerwell, Pate, Ballard, Smith, Nelson, Sessions, & Dudley Digges.)

1. Yorktown's oldest house, was built before 1699 in the days when Jamestown was still Virginia's Capital.
2. Built by Thomas Sessions, carpenter, and is now owned and occupied by the Shild family (since 1901).
 - a). Sessions owned the lot for 9 years and sold it, in 1701, to Robert Snead.
 - b). In 1766 it was purchased by Dr. Matthew Pope who had been personal physician to the Royal Governor in Williamsburg.
 - 1). The good doctor's sympathies were, nevertheless, with the revolting colonies and during the Revolution he twice served as mayor of Yorktown.
3. During the Civil War it was occupied by the Union, serving as headquarters for General Negley who was with McClellan.
4. It is one of the most picturesque homes in all Tidewater.
 - a). Has a jerkin-head roof, 5 dormer windows in front which are typical of colonial days, 2 outside chimneys.
 - b). Bricks are laid in Flemish Bond pattern.
 - c). Basement is high above the ground making the house appear 3 stories instead of 2.
5. Has been visited by many distinguished people including:
 - a). President and Mrs. Woodrow Wilson.
 - b). President and Mrs. Warren G. Harding.
 - c). Lady Astar.
 - d). Franklin Rocsevelt.
 - e). President Herbert Hoover.

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1. Latch, "Yorktown", p. 14.
 2. Emmie Ferguson Farrar, Old Virginia Houses Along the James, p. 206.
 3. Clyde F. Trudell, Colonial Yorktown, pp. 75-81.

E. Nelson House or (York Hall) - GREAT VALLEY SIGN

1. "Seated" Tom, founder of family and fortune in Virginia acquired the property and built the house sometime before 1745.
 - a). Tom's son, William, inherited the lot and house at his father's death.
 - b). The house was made famous by General Thomas Nelson Jr., Williams' son, who occupied it after the death of his grandfather.
 - c). The massive door and small windows, with the solid shutters, look as if the house had been constructed more with a view toward defense than toward architectural grace.

2. Nelson family.

- a). "Seated" Tom arrived in 1705 from England and set up a merchant business.
- b). From 1745 to 1776 at least one family member and usually more than one on the Council of the Colony.
- c). Secretary of the Colony position held by a Nelson from 1745 to 1776.
- d). From 1760 to 1776 a Nelson in the House of Burgess and until 1789 one was almost continuously in the House of Delegates.

3. Siege.

- a). After Secretary Nelson's house was destroyed by the Allied cannons, Cornwallis probably moved his headquarters to the Nelson House.
- b). Believing that Cornwallis was occupying his house, Thomas Nelson Jr. ordered the house shelled and offered a reward to the first gunner who could score a direct hit.
 - 1). Thomas Nelson Jr. was a Signer of the Declaration of Independence.
 - 2). At the time of the siege he was Governor of the state of Virginia and Commander of the militia.
- c). Two cannonballs imbedded in the east wall.

4. House purchased and restored by George Preston Blow in 1915.

1. Hatch, "Yorktown", p. 14.
2. "Nelson Family", mimeographed handout.
3. Scribner's Magazine, "Old Yorktown"; vol. 22, pp. 803-805.
4. Emmie Ferguson Farrar, Old Virginia Houses Along the James, pp. 215-19.
5. Clyde R. Trudell, Colonial Yorktown, pp. 135-140.

F. Custom house - AT THE FENCE NEAR THE CCX HOUSE SITE

1. Next to the Capitol and the Governor's palace in Williamsburg it was perhaps the best known public building in all Virginia throughout the hey-day of the early 18th century tobacco trade.
 - a). Yorktown was port of entry for the area and ships and goods bound for Philadelphia, New York, Boston or Britain were forced to clear through the Yorktown Customhouse.
2. It was built by Richard Ambler around 1720 and used as his storehouse.
 - a). Ambler was Collector of Customs for many years and probably used the storehouse for this purpose too.
3. In the colonial period it was the fashionable rendezvous for the gentlemen of the town and surrounding country.
 - a). Talk centered around affairs of the heart and Tom Jefferson's progress with Becky Burwell.
 - b). Discussed the political news - whether Britain had a right to a monopoly of colonial trade; what was Blackbeard and his band of pirates up to.
4. Until the Confederate withdrawal from Yorktown in May, 1862, the building served as General John Magruder's headquarters.
5. After the Civil War it was used as a store, a school and a bank.
6. Like the Nelson House, the Customhouse has the look of defense.
 - a). It is a two-story brick building with a hipped or jerkin-head roof and a tall, thick chimney.
 - b). At second floor level there is a brick belt course around the wall.
 - c). The doors and windows are slightly arched, there are wooden blinds on the windows and 18 panes of glass to each window.
7. In 1924, the Comte de Grasse Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution bought the Customhouse and now used it as their headquarters.

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1. Hatch, "Yorktown", p. 13.
 2. Hatch, "Storehouse and Customhouse", pp. 12-18.
 3. Scribner's Magazine, "Old Yorktown", vol. 22, pp. 805-806.
 4. Emmie Ferguson Farrar, Old Virginia Houses Along the James, p. 209.
 5. Clyde R. Trudell, Colonial Yorktown, pp. 91-93.

G. Thomas Pate (or Cole Digges) House

1. Built around 1703 by Thomas Pate.
2. Passed to Cole Digges in 1713.
 - a). Cole, first of the Digges family to forsake the "E. D. " Plantation (Bellefield) for the town life where he became a merchant.
 - b). Dudley Digges was born in the house and later inherited it along with the property down the street.
 - c). The Digges family retained the property until 1784 when they sold it to David Jameson.
3. The house is a story and a half, has a deep, slanting roof, dormer windows, huge chimneys and small posed windows.

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1. Hatch, "Yorktown", p. 13.
 2. Riley, "The History of the Founding and Development of Yorktown, Virginia, 1691-1781", p. 105.
 3. Emile Ferguson Ferrer, Old Virginia Houses Along the James, p. 211.

E. Sommerwell or Lightfoot House - ACROSS THE STREET NEAR THE SWAN TAVERN FENCE (CHURCH STREET)

1. Property bought from the town trustees by William Digges in 1691.
 - a). Digges forfeited title to the property after failing to build on it a year after purchase.
 - b). Around 1707, Elizabeth Powers received title to it.
 - 1). Lot was bought by Robert Lighthouse, her first husband who died before building on it.
 - 2). Her second husband, Mungo Sommerwell, probably built the house around 1706.
 - 3). After Sommerwell's death, she married Powers and received title to the lot in that name.
 2. Phillip Lightfoot bought the house and lot around 1716 and retained possession for 67 years.
 - a). The family witnessed the peak of growth of Yorktown as well as the Siege of 1781 from the house.
 - b). Lightfoot sold the house to John Moss who built a store on one half of the lot and so, for a time the lot was divided.
 - 1). Moss kept the store and sold the half of the lot with the house to Peyton Southall.
 - 2). Around 1812 the two halves were united, but, in 1885 were once more divided and remain so to this day.
 3. At the time of the Civil War, the house, considerably enlarged by the addition of a wooden wing was used as a hospital.
 4. It later became a hotel, known as the Old Yorktown Hotel.
 5. Architecture.
 - a). Brick with dormer windows, a steep slanting roof and huge end chimneys.
 - 1). Chimneys break and slope, then straighten out for a short distance, then break and slope again.
 - 2). The chimneys are in attractive proportion to the gables, the many-paned arched windows and the sloping roof with its madillioned cornice.
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1. Hatch, "Yorktown", p. 12.
2. Emmie Ferguson Farrar, Old Virginia Houses Along the James, p. 213.
3. Clyde F. Trudell, Colonial Yorktown, pp. 109-114.

I. Grace Church - PARKING LOT ACROSS THE STREET

1. When the survey of the town had been completed, the town treaties set aside lot 35 for religious purposes.
 - a). In 1697, 6 years after the founding of Yorktown, the church was built of native marl.
 - b). Grace became, then, the parish church for York parish which had been established in 1632.
 - c). York parish later merged with Hampton parish and the church was known as the York-Hampton church. It wasn't until the later part of the 19th century that the name was changed to Grace Episcopal Church.
2. Prior to the Revolution, the parish was one of the most attractive posts in the colony.
 - a). Not a financially prosperous parish.
 - b). Parishoners were interested in religion and very active in the Church.
 - c). Housing for the pastor was furnished by the parishoners.
 - d). Several of the clergy served on the faculty of William and Mary.
3. Siege
 - a). The British used it as a magazine and most of the pews and windows were broken.
 - b). Damaged to the extent of 150 £ Sterling.
4. With the Revolution over and the Episcopal Church disestablished as the official church, a period of lean times and small congregations ensued.
5. Except for its marl walls, the church was badly burned in the "Great Fire" of 1814.
6. It was used again for military purposes during the Federal occupation of Yorktown in 1862.
 - a). They created a signal tower on the roof.
 - b). Building was partly dismantled and the grounds were robbed of the colonial churchyard wall.
7. The graveyard has been in existence from colonial day.
 - a). The earliest known burial - Capt. Edward Neville in 1701.
 - b). Among the graves in the churchyard are represented 6 generations of Nelsons including "Seated" Tom and Thomas Jr., the Signer of

the Declaration of Independence, whose tombstone is the most stately.

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1. Hatch, "Yorktown", p. 12.
 2. Hatch, "Notes on Grace Church", pp. 1-6.
 3. Clyde F. Trudell, Colonial Yorktown, pp. 65-72.

J. Medical Shop - UP ON FRONT LAWN

1. This reconstructed building stands on lot 30 where Dr. Corbin Griffins Medical Shop stood 175 years ago.
2. Griffin, an ardent patriot, practiced medicine and politics here.
 - a). Served on the Committee of Safety for two years.
 - b). Served as surgeon in the Virginia line.
 - c). Taken prisoner by the British for the duration of the Siege.
3. After the successful termination of the Siege, he was released and lived to serve as Justice and member of the State Senate from York County for many years after the war.
 - a). Perhaps he turned to politics after the Siege because of the ruinous condition of the town.
 - 1). Yorktown shops and warehouses had been well-stocked before Cornwallis came, but what the British did not steal, the Americans and French "bought" after the surrender with practically worthless Continental Script.
 - 2). Besides the damage of the bombardment done to the town buildings, the wares of the merchants were exhausted by the opposing armies and it is very likely that Dr. Griffin found his medical shop clean as a bone when the town finally rid itself of the military, for the army's medical supplies were always low.
4. In 1807 the shop was owned by Lawrence Gibbons who probably took it over when Dr. Griffin went into politics.
5. Griffin died in 1813 and a year later, the "Great Fire" that swept through the town burned the shop to the ground. The fire, it is believed, started in Gibbon's house next to the shop.

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1. Hatch, "Yorktown", p. 12.
 2. Clyde F. Trudell, Colonial Yorktown, pp. 151-156.

K. Courthouse - ON FRONT LAWN

1. The present building, constructed in 1955 and suggestive in shape to the Courthouse that existed during the Siege is the 5th courthouse to stand on this lot (#24) which was reserved for the public use of the county in the survey of 1691.

2. Second Courthouse - 1733-1814

a). Design followed the example of a number of the county courthouses of Tidewater Virginia built at about the same time.

1). Robert Ballard - contractor.

2). Cost defrayed by a series of annual levies.

3). Very imposing structure.

c b). Siege

1). The courthouse was held by the British.

2). Although the structure did not intercept any of the Allied cannonballs, considerable damage was done to the interior wood-work by the British soldiers.

a. Every window in the building must have been broken by the British soldiers or the French who later used it as a hospital.

c). The structure was used until March 3, 1814, when the most disastrous fire in the history of Yorktown wiped out practically all of the town along the waterfront and destroyed several of the buildings in the town proper, among them the Courthouse which was almost completely consumed.

3. The county records in the Courthouse reach back to 1633.

a). The records were saved from destruction during the Civil War by the Clerk of the Court, Bolinar Shield, who hid them in an icehouse rather than taking them to Richmond.

4. The Courthouse (3rd) was blown to pieces during the Civil War, when, used as a magazine by the Union, the ammunition exploded.

1. Hatch, "Yorktown", p. 11.

2. Hatch, "A Packet of Information Dealing with the Second Courthouse, 1733-1814", pp. 1-23.

3. Clyde F. Trudell, Colonial Yorktown, pp. 143-148.

L. Swan Tavern - ON COURTHOUSE LAWN

1. Built before 1722, the Tavern was the leading place of public entertainment for over 140 years.

2. Situated directly across from the Courthouse and at the intersection of Main Street and Ballard Street. The principle approach to the river, the Swan enjoyed a most favorable location, drawing trade from the ship masters, traders and inspectors of the wharf, the sessions of court, and the merchants of the town. Being also on the stage route to Williamsburg, it was patronized by travellers the year round.

3. "Seated" Tom Nelson and Joseph Walker bought the lot in 1719 and built the Swan which was "first opened as a House of Entertainment on the 18th of March, 1722", almost 20 years before the Raleigh was opened in Williamsburg.

a). The building is a large, story and a half, frame structure built above the sturdy brick walls of a full basement.

b). The first floor contains a side central hall off of which open four large rooms. The plan is repeated on the second floor.

c). Guests seeking accommodations must first apply to the bar-keeper who was generally also the host.

1). This custom was, no doubt, designed to entice the wharf guest into the Tap-room where he was immediately prevailed upon to sample the wares of the bar.

2). A weary traveller could get a complete meal for one shilling; lodging for seven and a half pence a night and be able to drink his fill of rum or Virginia brandy for two shillings a quart.

4. Here, at the Swan, news and events from Gloucester, the Eastern Shore, England, and the northern colonies paused for comment and speculation before spreading over the peninsula and on through Virginia.

a). Newspapers made available to the public.

b). Outstanding events of a general or social nature were put on the tavern's bulletin board or posted on the walls of the Tap-room.

5. The old Courthouse across the street that, for almost 150 years had provided such a constant source of patronage for the Swan, was finally the means of its destruction.

a). The ammunition stored in the Courthouse exploded, setting fire to the Swan which, with its stable, kitchen, and the other out buildings were all completely destroyed.

6. In 1934, while the reconstruction of the Swan and some of its out buildings was being done, an ancient skeleton was found in the stable. There

was no identification, and it was recovered.

a). Position of the body suggests a hasty burial.

b). Could it be that the old Swan Tavern ford long ago served as a secret field of honor--that once rapiers crossed at early dawn, resulting in the fate of the unknown who now lies buried at the stable corner?

c). Or--was this hurried burial the outcome of skulking figures in the dark of night, a surprise assault, the flash of moonlight on eaked steel--and the silence of the grave?

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1. Hatch, "Yorktown", p. 12.
 2. "The Nelson Family", mimeographed handout.
 3. Trudell, "Final Construction Report, 1934; pp. 1-4.
 4. Riley, "History of the Founding and Development of Yorktown, 1691-1781", pp. 150-157.
 5. Clyde F. Trudell, Colonial Yorktown, pp. 117-131.

M. Swan Tavern Kitchen Demonstration - AT FRONT DOOR

The kitchen of the Swan Tavern is once more busy with the hum of spinning and weaving. This type of work was carried on in the large kitchen of the more prominent homes and taverns during the colonial period. The craftsman inside will describe his crafts to you.

I will be returning to the monument parking lot in a few minutes for those of you who wish to accompany me.

I have enjoyed this opportunity to take you into the past and show you the people and how they lived. If there are any questions please do not hesitate to ask them.

We invite you to take the historic driving tour of the Battlefield to see where our Independence was secured.

YORKTOWN MONUMENT

To the Alliance and Victory

On October 24, 1781, when Lt. Col. Tench Tilghman, Washington's aide-de-camp, reached Philadelphia with the "glorious" news of the surrender of Cornwallis' army at Yorktown, on October 19, there was joy and thanksgiving on every hand. It was on Monday, October 29, that Congress officially recognized this great victory and by resolution directed:

That the United States in Congress assembled, will cause to be erected at York, in Virginia, a marble column, adorned with emblems of the alliance between the United States and his Most Christian Majesty; and inscribed with a succinct narrative of the surrender of Earl Cornwallis to his excellency General Washington, Commander in Chief of the combined forces of American and France; to his excellency the Count de Rochambeau, commanding the auxiliary troops of his Most Christian Majesty in America, and his excellency the Count de Grasse, commanding in chief the naval army of France in the Chesapeake.

Due to the press of the times this, the basic authority for the Yorktown Monument, was not implemented and no positive action was taken for a century. It is true that in 1834 the citizens of Yorktown in a memorial to Congress asked that the monument be erected as specified in 1781 since, as the favorable Congressional committee report indicated, it would emphasize "an event that terminated the struggle of our fathers for liberty and independence" and that "no event in our history is more worthy of commemoration than that which crowned the American revolution with success and triumph." The resulting bill anticipated the purchase of grounds and "a railing" around them.

There was no follow up in 1834, however, nor in 1836 when the proposal was again active. When in 1876 a memorial from the Common Council of Fredericksburg, Virginia, was before Congress, the desirability of the project was recognized.

The Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds nonetheless, felt that it needed to be postponed "...considering the financial condition of the country, and the fact that Congress, at the present session, has assumed the completion of the Washington National Monument...." A memorial from the City of Boston in 1876 suffered the same indecisive fate. The Centennial of Yorktown, however, was approaching and this would be instrumental in generating the necessary interest.

The matter of implementing the basic authority was raised in 1875 by Historian George Bancroft who, in a letter to the Mayor of Newport, Rhode Island, in June of that year, pointed out that in 1781 "Congress had pledged to the victorious army, to France, to America, to the world, that the nation should build at Yorktown a monument of marble, with emblems of our great alliance, to keep fresh in memory the all decisive successes which had been achieved." This letter and various memorials, although ineffective immediately, were a part of the initial move that led to the erection of the present shaft in the years from 1881 to 1885. A study group was authorized by Congress in 1879 and positive action came a year later as the citizens of Chicago, the legislature of North Carolina and others added their voices to the increasing public swell.

The cornerstone of the Monument was laid by "the order of the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons" on October 18, 1881, "as the appropriate opening" for the Yorktown Centennial Celebration. Congress, on June 7, 1880, had passed an act "to carry into effect the resolution" of 1781. At the same time it had appropriated money for this purpose, authorized a commission to carry the responsibility, including the selection of a site, and provided for the celebration to

commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Yorktown victory.

The 1880 act reiterated the earlier resolution and stipulated that as much as \$100,000 could be expended under the direction of the Secretary of War "in erecting at Yorktown, in Virginia, the monument referred to in the aforesaid resolution of Congress." In the section of the act that provided for the appointment of a commission "to recommend a suitable design," it was specified that it should contain "emblems of the alliance" between France and America and "a succinct narrative" of Cornwallis' surrender. The design was to be subject to the approval of a committee of thirteen Representatives and thirteen Senators. The artists commissioned for the purpose by the Secretary of War were Mr. R. M. Hunt (Chairman) and Mr. J. C. A. Ward (Architect) of New York and Mr. Henry Van Brunt (Sculptor) of Boston.

The Monument was duly erected, using Hallowell Maine granite in its shaft, according to the design of the commissioned artists who followed the directions relative to emblems, inscriptions, and symbols. A first phase had been a model completed in December, 1880. Architecturally it was planned and constructed in three parts with a base ("with its stylobate and its pediments"), a sculptured podium (in the form of a drum), and a column. The whole "is intended to convey, in architectural language, the idea, set forth in the dedicatory inscription, that, by the victory at Yorktown, the independence of the United States of America was achieved, or brought to final accomplishment."

In design it embodied the symbolic theme originally specified by the Congress in 1781 and repeated in 1880. This is described in the official report and can be summarized in the outline as given below:

I. The base carries an inscription on each of its four sides:

- A. One dedicates the monument as a memorial of victory.
- B. A second presents a succinct narrative of the Siege.
- C. A third commemorates the treaty of alliance with France.
- D. The fourth tells of the resulting treaty of peace with England.

II. The pediments just over the inscriptions carry:

- A. Emblems of nationality.
- B. Emblems of War.
- C. Emblems of the alliance.
- D. Emblems of peace.

"The base is thus devoted to the historical statement."

III. The podium is a "symbol of the birth of freedom."

It carries in sculpture thirteen "female figures" hand in hand in a solemn dance to denote the unity of the thirteen colonies. Beneath their feet is the inscription "One country, one constitution, one destiny."

IV. The column, which springs from the podium, is a "symbol of the greatness and prosperity of the nation after a century of various experience, when thirty-eight free and independent states are shining together in mighty constellation." There is a star for each state which was in the Union at the time the monument was designed. On the field of the shaft and among the stars, as a reminder of the past, is the "shield of Yorktown covering the branch of peace."

V. Atop the shaft is the sculptured figure of "Liberty herself"—attesting to the existence of the nation as "a proof of the possibility of a government of the people, by the people, for the people."

The Monument was begun in 1881, the crowning figure set on August 12, 1884, and it was officially reported as complete, with a 12 foot wide granite pavement around it, all enclosed by a simple iron fence "to keep meddlesome people at a distance," by Lt. Col. William F. Craighill, Corps of U. S. Engineers, in a communication, dated January 5, 1885, to the Secretary of War. This in turn was transmitted to Congress. It was not until June 1890 that the Monument was officially inspected by a designated group who reported on the work that had been consummated. A special edition of a report on the construction of the Monument was authorized by concurrent resolution of Congress in 1892. Of the specified five thousand copies, some two thousand, bound "in full leather," were to be earmarked for distribution to descendents of the French who fought at Yorktown. Lt. Col. William F. Craighill of the Army Engineers wrote in his completion report that: "The monument at Yorktown having been completed, it seems necessary to make provision for the accommodation of a watchman, as the location is isolated, and without some oversight this beautiful structure would soon be marred by relic hunters and other mischievous or inconsiderate persons." For some time an enlisted man from the Army was detailed as "keeper of the monument" but measures to secure a regular position for a watchman together with a keeper's house were not successful.

The present monument in its origin, in its design, and in its associations, is symbolic of the great victory which was achieved at Yorktown through the French-American alliance. Today, complete with its "emblems" and "inscriptions," as specified by the Congress in 1781 and again in 1880, it still stands after some three-quarters of a century occupying a vantage point in Yorktown. It is "within the line of defense of Cornwallis" and, with its grounds, covers four

original Yorktown lots, Nos. 80-83. Some 98 feet high, it overlooks the wide harbor of the York River, from which it is visible, and forms a part of a familiar scene that is remembered by many of the thousands who have seen it in the passing years. In this long span it has stood undisturbed and unchanged except for the severe damage to the figure of "Liberty" that came during an electrical storm on July 29, 1942.

It was necessary to replace "Liberty" and a commission for the new figure was given to Sculptor Oskar J. W. Hansen. The completed work was placed in 1956. At the same time lightning protection was added to the shaft which was thoroughly cleaned and repointed. This work on the Monument to the Alliance and Victory was completed in time for the annual Yorktown Day exercises in 1957.

Charles E. Hatch, Jr.
Chief Park Historian
Colonial National Historical Park

NOTE:

A copy of the inscriptions on the Monument is appended.

INSCRIPTIONS -- VICTORY MONUMENT
YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA

South side:

AT YORK ON OCTOBER 19, 1781 AFTER A SIEGE OF NINETEEN DAYS
BY 3500 AMERICAN AND 7000 FRENCH TROOPS OF THE LINE 3500 VIRGINIA MILITIA
UNDER COMMAND OF GENERAL THOMAS NELSON AND 36 FRENCH SHIPS OF WAR
EARL CORNWALLIS COMMANDER OF THE BRITISH FORCES AT YORK
AND GLOUCESTER SURRENDERED HIS ARMY 7251 OFFICERS AND MEN
840 SEAMEN 244 CANNON AND 24 STANDARDS
TO HIS EXCELLENCY GEORGE WASHINGTON
COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE COMBINED FORCES OF AMERICAN AND FRANCE
TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE COMTE DE ROCHAMBEAU
COMMANDING THE AUXILIARY TROOPS OF HIS MOST CHRISTIAN MAJESTY IN AMERICA
AND TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE COMTE DE GRASSE
COMMANDING IN CHIEF THE NAVAL ARMY OF FRANCE IN CHESAPEAKE

East side:

THE TREATY CONCLUDED FEBRUARY 6 1778
BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND LOUIS XVI KING OF FRANCE
DECLARES
THE ESSENTIAL AND DIRECT END OF THE PRESENT DEFENSIVE ALLIANCE
IS TO MAINTAIN EFFECTUALLY
THE LIBERTY AND SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE
ABSOLUTE AND UNLIMITED OF THE SAID UNITED STATES
AS WELL IN MATTERS OF GOVERNMENT AS OF COMMERCE

North side:

ERECTED
IN PURSUANCE OF
A RESOLUTION OF CONGRESS ADOPTED OCTOBER 29 1781
AND AN ACT OF CONGRESS APPROVED JUNE 7 1880
TO COMMEMORATE THE VICTORY
BY WHICH
THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
WAS ACHIEVED

West side:

THE PROVISIONAL ARTICLES OF PEACE CONCLUDED NOVEMBER 30 1782
AND THE DEFINITIVE TREATY OF PEACE CONCLUDED SEPTEMBER 3 1783
BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
AND GEORGE III KING OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
DECLARE
HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY ACKNOWLEDGES THE SAID UNITED STATES
VIZ NEW HAMPSHIRE MASSACHUSETTS BAY RHODE ISLAND AND
PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS CONNECTICUT NEW YORK
NEW JERSEY PENNSYLVANIA DELAWARE MARYLAND VIRGINIA NORTH CAROLINA
SOUTH CAROLINA AND GEORGIA TO BE FREE SOVERIGN AND INDEPENDENT STATES

Around shaft:

ONE DESTINY -- ONE COUNTRY -- ONE CONSTITUTION

On shaft:

YORKTOWN

On base:

MONUMENT TO THE ALLIANCE AND VICTORY
YORKTOWN MONUMENT COMMISSIONERS, 1881
R. M. HUNT, ARCHITECT, CHAIRMAN
HENRY VAN BRUNT, ARCHITECT
J. Q. A. WARD, SCULPTOR

OSKAR J. W. HANSEN, SCULPTOR OF LIBERTY, 1957

YORKTOWN

(Variously known as Port of York, York, Town of York, Yorktown)

Yorktown has not always been the little village that it is today although it has been this since major commerce and business faded after the American Revolution and the tidewater countryside hereabouts (the land exhausted and people shifting westward) entered a long period of decline and quiet and, then, status quo. This of course was before the twentieth century urban boom that now engulfs us.

The Town of York officially came into being as a result of the Port Act of 1691, a piece of legislation passed by the General Assembly then meeting at Jamestown (the seat of government for Virginia for almost a century). The Act was but another in a succession of disputed efforts by the colonial government to encourage the growth of towns in the very rural tidewater country. Most of these general legislative acts for encouragement of towns at specified locations failed. In the case of Yorktown, however, it succeeded despite delays and frustrations after the initial launching. The area was high and the harbor was excellent. And perhaps the time was ripe with sufficient population in the area to need more exporting and importing from a central point. Be that as it may, the town's story begins at this point, 1691.

Some 50 acres of land on the site of Yorktown were purchased from the owner Benjamin Read of Gloucester County. This land had been first patented 60 years earlier by Nicholas Martiau whose daughter Benjamin's father had married. It was Martiau who first lived here carving his home and plantation from what, in his time, was forested frontier wilderness. (Have you noted the Martiau marker on Ballard Street opposite the courthouse parking area?)

Read's price to York County for the 50 acres was 10,000 pounds of "merchantable sweet scented tobacco and cask." Tobacco was money then. York County surveyor Lawrence Smith, a resident of Gloucester, laid off the tract and subdivided it into 85 numbered lots which the County Court appointed town trustees ("feoffees" they were called) offered for sale.

Smith left the area between the bluff line and the York River (the waterfront) outside of the town limits and called it a "Common Shore." Lot prices were 180 pounds of tobacco but carried provisions of forfeit if not developed. The first day of sale was November 24, 1691 and deeds for 36 lots were duly recorded that day. Within a year 61 had been disposed of and the rush eased off.

In a few years, especially after the status of the 1691 Ports Act was clarified, momentum began to gather and the town, from a slow start, began to take root as the founders and the first residents hoped. The York County Courthouse was built on Lot 24 (where county business has been centered ever since) about 1697 and the York Parish (later York-Hampton Parish)

Church was built on Lot 35 after 1696 to become the area's religious center. Both were key institutions in the new community.

Yorktown was destined soon to become a tobacco port of first importance as it drew on the crops grown on the plantations round about, none better known, perhaps, than the famous "E. D." brand produced on the Bellfield acres (Digges estate) some 4 miles above Yorktown. (Have you visited the mansion site and seen the old tombs here?) Ships came singly and in fleets to get hogsheads of tobacco which had been duly examined by inspectors provided through the colonial government. Tobacco, and later in the 1700's more diversified cargoes, went out from the warehouses and over the wharves. Incoming freight for the town residents, plantation owners, merchants, shopkeepers and others, included clothing of latest fashion, wines and liquor, furniture jewelry and silver plate, riding gear and coaches, swords, fire-arms and books and slaves for the fields and kitchens. This was the trade that made Yorktown a thriving business center in the eighteenth century - a port that led in Chesapeake commerce for a number of important decades.

The "Comon Shore" (waterfront) soon became highly valuable and strategic property. By Assembly action it was acquired as a part of the town in 1738 and functioned for public and private business even though managed in the status of a "Town Commons" until formally surveyed into lots and sold in 1788 after the port had passed its peak. Here, early in the town's history, Water Street took form as the second street paralleling the river. Along it were wharves, loading places, ships, stores, shops, and various lodging accommodations.

At about the same time that the town was enlarged to the water's edge there was expansion, too, on the inland side as new acreage adjacent to the original lots was surveyed and offered for sale in what may be called the Gwyn Read development since it was owner Gwyn Read who sparked it.

The wealthy gentry, the merchants, the craftsmen, indentured servants and slaves all went to make up the citizenry of Yorktown. There was, too, a large group of ordinary and tavern keepers since the seaport town had need for numerous houses of public entertainment and travelers were not an uncommon group in Yorktown.

Yorktown stood on the bluff overlooking the York with the better homes, inns and public buildings in the town proper and "York under the hill" (as the waterfront was sometimes called then) featured wharves, warehouses, small stores and drinking places. There were then only three streets connecting Main and Water Streets. One was Buckner (known as "Tobacco Warehouse Hill"), one was Read and the other the "Great Valley" where there is no street at all today. Other streets then did not extend through to the river. The Comte de Grasse is a relative newcomer and even still Church Street is a deadend roadway.

When fully extended and at peak prosperity, perhaps in the 1740-1770 years with a possible several hundred homes (large and small), Yorktown must have been a rather pleasant town. Even then it was small by our standards but

significant by the measure of that day. At its largest the population probably never exceeded several thousands. An English visitor in 1736 wrote thusly about what he was:

You perceive a great Air of Opulence amongst the Inhabitants, who have some of them built themselves Houses, equal in Magnificence to many of our superb ones at St. James's . . . Almost every considerable Man keeps an Equipage . . . The Taverns are many here and much frequented . . . The Court House is the only considerable publick Building, and is no unhandsome structure . . . The most considerable Houses are of Brick; some handsome ones of Wood, all built in the modern Taste; and the lesser Sort, of Plaister. There are some very pretty Garden spots in the Town; and the Avenues leading to Williamsburg, Norfolk, &c., are prodigiously agreeable.

Between 1691 and 1781 fortunes were made at Yorktown in the tobacco trade. But it was not all wealthy merchant and prosperous planter. There were men of all types and classes along the streets and on the wharves--merchants, planters, planter-merchants, propertied yeoman, unsuccessful merchants, shopkeepers and innkeepers in large number, indentured servants and slaves, travelers and seamen. Apprentices rose to become partners as in the case of Augustine Moore (in 1781 owner of the Moore House) in the Nelson firm. The more prominent families were united by birth and marriage with all of the noted ones of tidewater. The great son of Yorktown rose from the Nelson family in the person of Thomas Nelson, Junior, signer of the Declaration of Independence, Governor of Virginia, and Commander of the Militia at the Siege of 1781. His body rests in the churchyard of Grace Church.

From the point of view of growth and prosperity Yorktown was riding the crest of the wave about 1750. The shops continued busy and the wharves full, perhaps, for another quarter of a century, yet even before the Revolution evidence of decline were discernible. Whatever commercial good fortune was in store for the town was wiped out by the destruction and waste that came with the Siege of 1781 and followed by the "Great Fire" of 1814. It may be, however, that the forces of decline were inevitable. The rivers ceased to be the principal arteries of commerce, other points of trade (because of location) took much of that which might have come to Yorktown, the soil of the surrounding country was worn thin, and the center of tobacco culture moved southwest. All in all it meant that Yorktown would not grow. It continued to decline commercially and lost in size and prosperity. It became, in fact, a rural village. Because of this, much of the charm of the site, the picturesque streets, old buildings, and historical remains have been preserved for the enjoyment of the present generation.

In all of its prosperous colonial days Yorktown never obtained, or sought, incorporation as did a number of the newer, faster growing and developing

towns as Richmond, Norfolk, Petersburg and the like. It continued a part of the County but with county court appointed trustees managing the sale of lots and insuring compliance with development provisions. In 1786, however, incorporation was achieved following an act by the Virginia Assembly. It gave Yorktown a mayor, four aldermen, a common-council and a court of hustings with a recorder. (Its seal, noted Borough of York, is displayed now in the Yorktown Visitor Center.) But this was insufficient to generate new growth and the fast accelerating decline of the town continued.

This corporate organization of Yorktown seemed spent after some ten years and was allowed to lapse, seemingly both in the matter of incorporation and in trustee responsibility. Trustees did reappear, about 1926, when the Circuit Court of York County made new appointments, following some court action, to cover the holding of certain street and Yorktown commons property. Appointments continue to be by the York County Circuit Court Judge and are for two year terms.

There would have been many visual highlights in the Yorktown scene of Colonial and Revolutionary War days. Some are now gone, but others, fortunately, remain. Among those gone is the windmill that was long a point of reference on the high cliff overlooking Yorktown Creek. This projection still today is known as Windmill Point. The windmill seems to have seen service throughout much of the eighteenth century. Then, too, there was the Colonial Fort that in mid-century presided over the waterfront from the vantage point of "Fort Hill." "Fort Hill" was the term applied to the bluff extending riverward beyond Grace Church on the right side of Read Street as you come up to Main from the waterfront. The British flag flew here in colonial days and the cannon pointed toward the water to protect town and harbor. The old town pier (of timber and crib construction) of later colonial times was located just down river between the Archer House - Cornwallis Cave area and Read Street. Its clearly defined existing remains can be seen now only at extreme low tide.

Many of the prominent homes have disappeared. One was the huge Lightfoot Mansion, speaking of the affluence of Philip Lightfoot and his family. It stood about where the Duke of York Motor Lodge now stands. Of the three large Nelson homes only one is left. That of Secretary Thomas Nelson (son of "Scotch Tom") stood across the street from Crooks Memorial Church. Some of its foundation are marked and there is a tablet here. A painting on the site pictures what it was like when Cornwallis had his headquarters in it. The home of William Nelson (another son of "Scotch Tom" and father of Thomas Nelson, Jr.) was a large H-shaped structure which stood across Main Street from the existing Nelson mansion. The home of Richard Ambler (a successful merchant, who by marriage acquired extensive Jamestown holdings) stood about where the Customhouse garden is now. The Customhouse, in fact, began as his stonehouse. And there were others of note (both large and small), this being but a partial listing.

But not all is past, or gone. Many reminders are still with us. There is the town, the original lines, streets and grounds. Circling, too, around much of the old town are still existing fortifications. For the most part

what you see are Civil War works thrown up by the Confederates and held by them in the Siege of 1862 until evacuated in the face of the stronger Union Army that readied for attack. The Confederate, in the main, had built over the existing remains of the British inner line of 1781 and consequently these old works have double meaning. They are visible at a number of points in the town as well as on the southeast side where the Park features them, especially at the gated entrance to, and in the vicinity of, the National Park Service Visitor Center.

Perhaps these works should cause us to pause. They are tokens of the military, of war and of occupation by the enemy. For weeks in 1781 Englishmen, Scotsmen, Welchmen, Hessians and American Loyalities lived and fought here. The streets, homes, gardens, public buildings, church and grounds were full of them - more than 5,000. After victory had come, a French regiment (our allies) wintered here pre-empting much of the useful, protected, area and housing. This all seems difficult to grasp these days but it is of record. It did happen here. Have you read these marker messages in Yorktown? One is just south of Main Street, on Church (near the parking area), and one is at the Monument parking area:

Two Mercenary Units

Two battalions at Yorktown were from Anspach and Bayreuth, tiny independent kingdoms in southwest Germany. Their ruler, deeply in debt, had let these troops for hire to the British for some 45,000 pounds. Their camp covered several blocks in this vicinity.

(A flag carried by the Anspach-Bayreuth Regiment is exhibited in the Visitor Center).

Von Bose Regiment

This was the hardest hit of all "British" units. Encamped here in the heart of the village, they lost 1/4 of their men from the "bombshell" and solid shot. These Hessians had fought with Cornwallis from Guilford Courthouse to Yorktown.

There are a number of vantage points along Main Street in Yorktown. Among them are:

1. The Courthouse - Church Street Area

This was a busy segment in Colonial days and much of it is written in the York County Records which still exist in the Clerk's Office. They reach back to about 1633 and are a rich historical resource. There are two paintings at the corner of

Church and Main (a view west and another east) that picture the scene (as we conjecture) about the time of opening of hostilities in 1781. Dominating the scene in this area today are the Courthouse, the Medical Shop, Grace Church, Somerwell House and the Swan Tavern. A number of the brief messages below exist as markers near the particular structures they identify.

York County Courthouse

This building, constructed in the year 1955, is the fifth Courthouse to stand here since 1691. Though not identical in dimensions, it is suggestive in shape and design of the second courthouse that existed during the Siege of Yorktown in 1781.

(The courthouse of 1781 burned in the "Great Fire of 1814." The County Court Records were saved in the Civil War when the Clerk of Court, Bolivar Shield, hid them in an icehouse on the Pamunkey River rather than take them to Richmond).

The Swan Tavern

For 133 years, the Swan Tavern was a leading place of public entertainment in the busy seaport "Town of York." Built before 1722, it was destroyed when a nearby ammunition magazine exploded in Civil War days. Tavern, kitchen, stable, smokehouse and dairy have been reconstructed.

(It was the Union Army magazine in the Courthouse across the street that blew up on a December night in 1863 that wrecked the Tavern and its dependencies).

Medical Shop

This reconstructed building, now a private residence, stands on Lot 30 in Yorktown where Dr. Corbin Griffin's "Medical Shop" stood some 175 years ago. Griffin, a practicing Yorktown physician, served during the Revolution as a surgeon among the Virginia troops.

Somerwell House

Although 67 years (1716-1783) in the Lightfoot family, this residence is thought to have been built by Mungo Somerwell before 1707. The house has been restored, is privately occupied and normally not open to visitors.

Grace Church

The sturdy mair walls of this church have been standing since 1697 despite the ravage of war during the two sieges of Yorktown (1781 and 1862) and despite the "great fire" of 1814. It continues, as it has for generations, to serve York-Hampton Parish in the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia.

2. The Read Street Corner

Read Street was a major connection between Main and Water Streets. The "Customhouse", when in use, must have generated a considerable volume of seafaring business. The Thomas Pate House (directly across the street) was a landmark throughout the period. On the opposite corner, across Read, Charles Cox built his home. The latter is that pictured on the site in an oil painting with explanatory label. It stood until early in this century.

The "Old Customhouse"

Believed to have been constructed about 1720 as Richard Ambler's "large brick storehouse," this building was in use when he was Collector of Customs at Yorktown. It was strategically located on Main Street just a block away from the busy waterfront "under the hill."

(This, now restored, is the Chapter House of the Comte de Grasse Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution).

Thomas Pate House (Cole Digges House)

In 1703 Thomas Pate deeded this property, "my House & Lott," to Joane Lawson, a gift in "Restitution & Satisfaction of Seven Years Service." Shortly it passed to John Martin and, in a decade,

to Cole Digges, both merchants, who built warehouse facilities close by at the waterside. Restored, the house is a private residence.

Charles Cox House

The "Trustees to the Portland of York Towne" deeded this corner lot to Charles Cox, "Inholder" and "Planter", in 1706. Cox probably built the house pictured here before selling the property in 1729 to Thomas Nelson, in whose family it remained for the next 75 years. The painting is based on photographs of the 20' x 40' dwelling and store," with smokehouse behind, made before it was destroyed a half century ago.

3. The Great Valley Intersection

At this point near the spot where Nelson and Main Streets join, there is a cluster of the old surviving homes, all close at hand-- Sessions (Sheild), Nelson, and Dudley Digges house. Then just down Nelson are the Edmund Smith and Ballard houses. Turning riverward and down the Great Valley, where a major roadway went in colonial and revolutionary days, is the Archer House. Near it, but not in view, is Cornwallis Cave. The Cave is but recently opened to visitation and, as you view it, a press of a button will give you a recorded message and more information than can be crowded here. East up Main is the white shaft of the Monument to the Alliance and Victory. Near the shaft are tablets that record the names of those who died at Yorktown in the Siege of 1781 (both the French and the Americans).

Yorktown's Oldest House

Thomas Sessions built this home before 1699 in the days when Jamestown was still Virginia's Capital. It overlooked the "Great Valley" at the foot of which he had a river "landing." The Sheild family has owned and occupied this property since 1901.

(The records tell us that the next owner, Robert Snead, built a pumphouse and still at the waterside below, adjacent to "Sessions Landing").

Nelson House—York Hall

"Scotch Tom" (1677-1745), founder of the Nelson family and fortune in Yorktown, built this mansion some years prior to his death. The house was restored in 1915 by George Preston Blow of Norfolk, Virginia, and is still owned and operated by his family.

Dudley Digges House (about 1760)

Dudley Digges, lawyer and burgess for 25 years, built this home. Damaged by cannon fire in 1781 and again in 1862, it survived to be restored to its original appearance as a town house.

Edmund Smith House

By will, dated 1750, Edmund Smith directed that this house, then "now building," be finished. Later it belonged to David Jameson who served as Lieutenant-Governor of Virginia when Thomas Nelson, a next door neighbor, was Governor. Today it is a part of York Hall.

Ballard House

Captain John Ballard, a prominent Yorktown merchant, was living in his home on this lot in 1744. We believe this to be the very house. It now forms a part of York Hall.

An Archer House

Yorktown had a "great fire" in 1814. This destroyed all but the foundations of this house, thought to be one of Thomas Archer's Houses "under the Hill". The present restoration is the nineteenth century dwelling built on the older stone foundations.

"Cornwallis's Cave"

The "rooms" in this marl cliff very likely proved valuable to the British for safe storage. This, too, may have been the "grotto" that Cornwallis found convenient for conferences as destruction swept Yorktown above the hill.

Yorktown Victory Monument

This monument was authorized by the Continental Congress, October 29, 1781, just after the news of Cornwallis's surrender reached Philadelphia. Actual construction began 100 years later and was completed in 1884. The original figure of Liberty atop the Victory shaft was severely damaged by lightning. A new work replaced it in 1956. The shaft of Maine granite is 84 feet in height to which Liberty adds another 14 feet.

Yorktown Victory Monument Plaque

This monument was designed by Henry Van Brunt, J. Q. A. Ward, and R. H. Hunt, and its cornerstone was laid on October 18, 1881. The original figure of "Liberty" atop the shaft was destroyed by lightning and was replaced by the present sculpture, the work of Oskar J. W. Hansen, dedicated on October 19, 1957.

Charles E. Hatch, Jr.
Colonial National Historical Park

October, 1966

THE DUDLEY DIGGES HOUSE
(Information Digest)

I. Land Area and Ownership 1691-1791

The Dudley Digges House and its five outbuildings occupied Yorktown lots 76, 77, and 79. The main house occupied lot 77, granted by the Trustees of Yorktown to David Stoner in 1691. In 1706 the property was acquired by Miles and Emanuel Wills, who removed to Warwick County circa 1721. In that year they sold the lot to the merchant, William Stark. In 1730 the property was ac-
(1)
quired by Cole Digges, owner of Bellfield Plantation and Yorktown lots 39, 42, and 76. Cole Digges died circa 1744, leaving to his youngest son, Dudley Digges, all of his landholdings in Yorktown proper (lots 39, 42, 76, and 77) as well as two lots in Williamsburg. In 1755 Dudley Digges purchased lot 79. The present house, on lot 77, has been dated at 1755-60 by National Park Service research personnel. In 1787 the house was deeded to Digges' daughter, Elizabeth Nicholson.

II. Biographical Sketch of Dudley Digges

Dudley Digges was born in 1728. He was, in 1744, the youngest surviving son of Cole Digges, owner of Bellfield Plantation in York

(1) The graves of Cole Digges, his grandfather Edward Digges, Governor 1655-56, his uncle Dudley Digges and Dudley's wife, Susanne are at the Bellfield site, which is part of Colonial National Historical Park. Bellfield is some six miles west of Yorktown, on the Colonial Parkway.

County, Denbigh Plantation in Warwick County, four lots in Yorktown and two in Williamsburg. Cole Digges maintained a small brick townhouse, still standing on lot 42, directly across from the Customhouse in Yorktown. Although Cole Digges died in 1744, Dudley Digges did not come into his inheritance until 1747, at the time of his marriage to Martha Armistead.

In 1748 Digges was appointed colonel of the York County Militia. In 1750 he became Justice of the Peace for York County. From 1752 to 1776 he served as Burgess from York County. During 1770-76 he served as Comptroller of Customs in Yorktown. During 1775-76 he was a member of the Committee of Safety for the Colony of Virginia. In 1776 he became a member of the Council of the State of Virginia, serving until 1781. He probably resided in Williamsburg from 1780 until his death June 3, 1790. During 1782-84 he was Rector of the College of William and Mary. In 1787 he was Justice of the Peace for James City County. In 1790 he was Sheriff of James City County.

In 1747 Dudley Digges married Martha Armistead. From that marriage he had a son Cole (born 1748, died 1768), and a daughter, Patsey, born in 1757. Martha Armistead Digges died in 1757, possibly in childbirth. In 1759 Digges married Elizabeth Wormley. From that marriage he had a daughter, Elizabeth, born in 1761 (later married to Robert Nicholson, she was deeded the Dudley

Digges House in 1787); a daughter Mary, born 1763; a son Dudley, born 1765; a daughter Lucy, born 1771, and a daughter Judith, born 1777.

III. Physical Description and Architectural Data

This one and one-half story frame dwelling was built according to a floor plan commonly used in 18th century Virginia houses. The downstairs section has two large rooms on either side of a central hallway. The Dudley Digges House is larger than typical frame dwellings of its time. The overall dimensions of the house are 32 feet 3 inches by 52 feet 3 inches. Front and rear cornices are of the modillion type. The roof is a gable roof with five front dormer windows. There are twelve sash-type windows and nine cellar windows, originally in grill-frame. Some window sashes of the Dudley Digges House are operated by the original 18th century sash device of a small wooden pulley mounted in a block of walnut. The house has a full cellar, with four separate and distinct rooms, each originally with its own door. One room, with vaulted roof, was probably the wine cellar. Much of the original framework remains intact; even pieces bearing siege damage remain in the inner fabric of the structure.

The central hallway is 12 feet 6 inches wide. First floor ceilings are 11 feet high. The flooring, much of it original,

is yellow pine, with planks one and one-quarter inches thick, 5 to 9 inches wide. The house has interior chimneys with corner fireplaces. Most of the paneling is original. To determine the composition of the original paint, wood fragments were subjected to microscopic analysis. From these tests, the exact chemical formula of the original paint was determined and reproduced for use in the restoration of the Dudley Digges House. The inner walls of the house were plastered with a mixture of shell, lime, and hair (used as a binding agent). Plaster walls were not uncommon in the 18th century. A fraternal, if not identical twin to the Dudley Digges House is the Phillip Barraud House at the intersection of Francis and Botetourt Streets in Williamsburg.

IV. Damages from the Sieges of 1781 and 1862

Damage during the Civil War Siege of Yorktown was comparatively minor. Far more substantial was the damage of the Siege of 1781, when there were at least twenty direct hits on the house. The most extensive damage was to the roof. The front cornice at the west corner and the rear cornice at the north end were among the damaged areas.

(1) Floor plan, overall dimensions, heating system, type of roof, paneling and type of windows are nearly identical or identical in both houses. Although there is no concrete evidence that Digges was the builder or occupant of the Barraud House, the possibility exists that Dudley Digges was associated with it.

It is probable that the Dudley Digges House was occupied by Union troops during the Civil War Siege. Some writers have suggested that the house was McClellan's Headquarters in Yorktown, but no specific evidence to establish this claim has been seen.

V. Outbuildings

The Dudley Digges House had five outbuildings: a kitchen, a stable, a smokehouse, a wellhouse and a granary. The kitchen, granary and smokehouse were about six feet from one another in a row thirty-four feet east of the main house. The wellhouse was midway between the kitchen and the main house, and the stable was approximately fifty feet east of the kitchen. The drawing below, taken from an insurance plan of 1796, gives the relative location of the outbuildings to the main house.

VI. The Older Dwelling on Lot 77

Archaeological excavation uncovered the remains of a one and one-half story frame dwelling 36 feet 2 inches by 18 feet 3 inches on lot 77, directly in front of the Dudley Digges House. This dwelling has been dated at circa 1706, which would indicate that it was built by Miles and Emanuel Wills. The remains of a small outbuilding, probably a smokehouse belonging to the 1706 house, were also discovered. It is probable that this older house was removed just before, or at the beginning of the construction of the Dudley Digges House, circa 1755. It probably explains why the

Dudley Digges House is recessed from the Main Street line which is not true of the Sessions (Sheild), Cole Digges, and Somerwell Houses.

VII. Recommended Readings

This digest is based on research reports in the library in the Visitor Center at Yorktown.

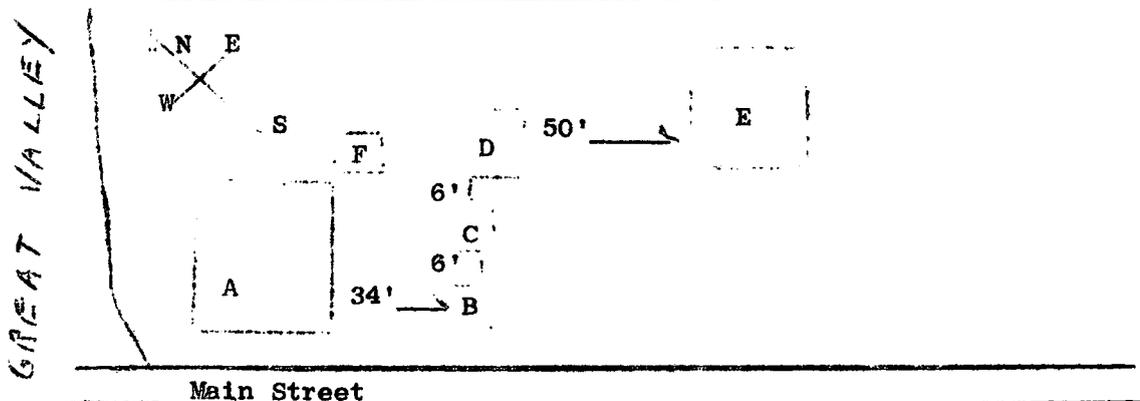
1. Nelson, Lee H., Historic Structures Report: Architectural Data, Part I. Preparatory to the Reconstruction of the Dudley Digges (West) House Outbuildings. (December, 1960)
2. Nelson, L. H., Historic Structures Report: Architectural, Part II: Restoration of the Dudley Digges House (June, 1960)
3. Nelson, L. H., Historic Structures Report: Architectural Data, Part I: Restoration of the Dudley Digges House (December, 1959).
4. Smith, G. Hubert, Report of Archaeological Investigations on Lot 77 in Yorktown (April-May 1960).

Materials in the Colonial National Historical Park library are arranged according to subject matter. The above reference works may be obtained most conveniently by asking for them by their catalog numbers: Y-97; Y-100; Y-101; Y-102. For general knowledge of Yorktown during the time of Dudley Digges, we recommend -

Trudell, Clyde F., Colonial Yorktown (Richmond, 1938).

This book is available at the Park library in Yorktown.

VIII. The Dudley Digges House and Its Outbuildings (drawing)



A - Main Dwelling

B - Smokehouse

C - Granary

D - Kitchen

E - Stable

F - Wellhouse

Note:

This digest was prepared by:

S. Michael Hubbell

March, 1963.

Old Houses of the Blow Estate

1. NELSON HOUSE - YORK HALL

"Scotch Tom" (1677-1745), founder of the Nelson family and fortune in Yorktown, built this mansion some years prior to his death. The house was restored in 1915 by George Preston Blow of Norfolk, Virginia, and is still occupied by his family.

2. EDMUND SMITH HOUSE

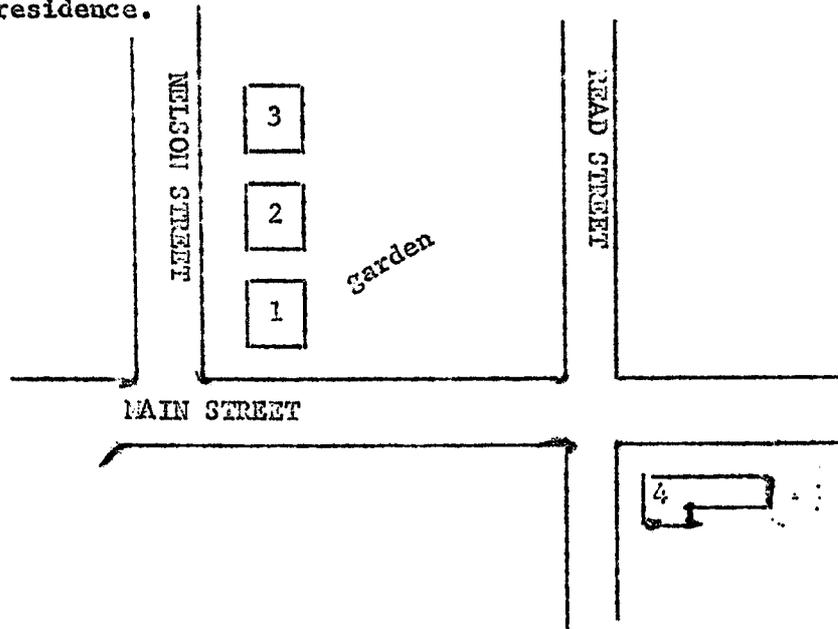
By will, dated 1750, Edmund Smith directed that this house, then "now building," be finished. Later it belonged to David Jameson who served as Lieutenant-Governor of Virginia when Thomas Nelson, a next door neighbor, was Governor. Today it is a part of York Hall.

3. BALLARD HOUSE

Captain John Ballard, a prominent Yorktown merchant, was living in his house on this lot in 1744. We believe this to be the very house. It now forms a part of York Hall.

4. THOMAS PATE HOUSE

In 1703 Thomas Pate deeded this property, "my House & Lott," to Joane Lawson, a gift in "Restitution & Satisfaction of Seven Years Service." Shortly it passed to John Martin and, in a decade, to Cole Digges, both merchants, who built warehouse facilities close by at the waterside. Restored, the house is a private residence.



THE "OLD CUSTOMHOUSE"

by

Charles E. Hatch, Jr.

At the outset it is well to note that colonial Virginia had no publicly owned and operated customhouses in the present day sense. Appointments for district customs collectors (there were six districts in colonial Virginia in this time) usually went to well-to-do planters, or merchants. A collector normally established his office in his residence, or store, if these were convenient for ship masters to reach. If not, he opened an office some distance from his home and named a deputy to run it. Thus, the "custom house," or "office," of the period was a privately owned facility. It was the place where the collector kept the seal and district records and where he issued clearances and other official papers. Its location could, and did, vary with the individual collectors. So it was that Richard Ambler and then his sons, Edward and Jaqueline, found it necessary to establish and maintain a district office when they were named, successively, to the post of customs collector for the York River District. This they did in Yorktown.

Richard Ambler was a successful merchant and became a well established Virginian. He married Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward Jaqueline of Jamestown and in the time (1739) inherited a sizable estate there including the mansion whose ruins still dominate the east end of the site of old Jamestown. In the time he became the Collector of Customs for the York River District, an office that was financially worthwhile as well as a post that carried some honor and distinction.

Yorktown was a busy port with considerable trade and as collector, a post which he held for a number of years prior to his death in 1766, Ambler was well situated to keep a finger on its pulse. Undoubtedly his office was a news exchange point of considerable proportion not only as it related to local conditions but to world affairs as well. It undoubtedly reverberated with the salty talk of the sea as well as the vernacular of the Virginia gentry and tradesmen. He knew ship captains and ship owners and was familiar with their cargos and their destinations.

Richard was the first of the Ambler family to live in Yorktown where he came about 1720. He rather rapidly became a leading merchant. On January 11, 1721, he purchased Lot 43 in Yorktown and gradually added to his holdings. In 1726 he bought a part of adjoining Lot 44 as well as Lot 45. Three years later, he added Lot 34. All of these included houses, buildings which had served as ordinaries in the past. Other property acquisitions and adjustments followed including a ten acre tract adjoining Yorktown and an area on the Yorktown waterfront, then technically a Town Commons. His waterfront holding, acquired in 1728, was to accommodate a warehouse and possible a wharf. It adjoined "Church landing."

At his death in 1766, Richard divided his holdings between his sons Edward, Jaqueline and John. His Yorktown residence "wherein I now live" went to Edward who succeeded him as collector. Jaqueline, however, made an adjustment with Edward before his death in 1767, and came into possession of Lot

43 with its residence and storehouse ("Customhouse"). Evidently Jaqueline planned to continue his fathers merchantile business and wanted to acquire a proper establishment. John died in 1766, the same year as his father, and the evidence indicates that Edward, who now succeeded to the Jamestown estate, moved to Jamestown. At least he took his deceased brother John's Jamestown seat in the Virginia Assembly. Jaqueline went on to serve as the sheriff of York County and for a number of years was the Collector and Naval Officer of York River. He was a revolutionary leader who was recognized with Council of State membership in 1780. He was, also, named Treasurer of Virginia, an office he held until his death in 1798.

The Ambler holdings and improvements on Lots 43, 44 and 45 were described in 1773 as containing a dwelling house, "a very commodious one, with four rooms above and four below" as well as "a large brick storehouse," a kitchen, stables, washhouse and necessary houses, all in good repair. There was also a well cultivated garden. Despite this, when the Revolution broke, Jaqueline moved his family into the interior of the State for safety reasons.

His property was taken over for troop use and the buildings served as barracks. The result was the complete destruction of his garden, fences and outbuildings and his house was damaged to the point that it "put it out of his power to make it a comfortable residence for his family." Consequently, in 1778, he sold the property to Thomas Wyld, Jr., who, after extensive repairs, operated an ordinary in the dwelling until he was forced out by the British in 1781. The sale to Wyld was never consummated. When he sought to pay in depreciated currency, a law suit ensued and it was not resolved until 1793. The decision was for Ambler who recovered the property to sell it, in 1797, to Alexander Maccaulay, a merchant of Yorktown. In 1818 an insurance record for the property described the residence as a wooden dwelling, two stories high and 46 feet square and the brick store was listed as two stories, measuring 46 by 24 feet.

The date of construction of the "Old Customhouse" is like that of many old buildings of the period, it is difficult to fix with exactness. There are several possibilities, yet that most logical seems to be that it was built by Richard Ambler soon after he purchased the property (Lot 43) in January, 1721. The architectural style, the substance of the building and the needs of Ambler all indicate this. It was strategically placed for trade and storehouse purposes on Main Street at its intersection with Read, a primary connection between the upper and lower levels of Yorktown.

This particular town lot had been assigned initially to a Captain Daniel Taylor who forfeited it when he failed to build the required minimum "twenty foot" structure. On September 24, 1706, it went for 180 pounds of tobacco, to George Burton of Mulberry Island. It was inherited by Ann, daughter of Burton, and it was she and her husband, Christopher Haynes, also of Mulberry Island, who conveyed it to "Richard Ambler of the Parish of Yorkhampton, County of York, merchant."

Richard Ambler's principal Yorktown residence adjoined his storehouse and it actually stood in the area of the present "Customhouse" garden and faced

on Main Street. A view of this house, in ruins, was among those photographed by the ever present Civil War photographer Mathew Brady. This view shows, too, the solid old storehouse which still survives together with the ruins of the passage that connected home and storehouse. It is reported that the storehouse served, at least for a time, as Confederate General John B. ("Prince John") Magruder's headquarters prior to the withdrawal of the Southern Army from Yorktown in early May, 1862. In post Civil War years, the old building was used for various purposes at different times. It was a store during at least two separate periods, a private school for Negro children and, later, a bank, the Yorktown Branch of the Peninsula Bank of Williamsburg. This last was about the time of World War I.

Yorktown was without a Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution until 1922 when, in February, Mrs. George Durbin Chenoweth completed her work as Organizing Regent and went on to serve as Regent of the new Chapter, a post which she held for the next quarter century. It was Mrs. Chenoweth who presented the project of acquiring and preserving the colonial brick building in Yorktown known as the "Old Customhouse." This was in October, 1922.

Funds were pledged by various individuals and society chapters toward the purchase price. Interest grew in Virginia and there were contributions, too, from other chapters and states. She was aided materially in the drive by Captain George Preston Blow who had made the initial contribution. It was he who had already acquired and restored the Nelson House only a block away. The purchase of the "Old Customhouse" came on April 29, 1924, and now thought turned to the restoration of the building.

Mrs. Arthur Kelly Evans (Letitia Pate Evans) of Hot Springs, Virginia, came to the rescue at this juncture. She had already become a Chapter member and had contributed generously toward the purchase. Now she financed the entire restoration project including the brick wall enclosing the lawn and the adjacent dependencies (a utility building and necessary, both in period design). With Mr. Duncan Lee of Richmond as architect and Mr. E. C. Wilkinson, also of Richmond, as contractor, work began on June 1, 1929 and was completed in November of the next year. Virginia's Governor John Garland Pollard made the dedicatory address in exercises on November 15, 1930. It now became the Comte de Grasse Chapter headquarters and continues as such today having been described "as one of the first and oldest structures of its kind in this county."

Clyde Trudell has given a pithy and meaningful thumbnail sketch of the architecture of the building.

The thick brick walls are laid up in a careful pattern of Flemish bond with a checkered field of glazed headers broken at mid-height by a shallow, projecting brick belt-course. A neat cornice of graceful mouldings and wood modillions lends elegant embellishment to the eaves. At the corners the roof is framed with hips that pitch

away to the ridge at a pleasing angle providing a most happily proportioned crown for the mass of the building. Fenestration of both stories is provided by large, eighteen-light windows with heavy shutters while access to the interior is gained through handsome panelled doors of the period. The pine woodwork of the interior has been left unpainted in its natural color, a practice not uncommon during the early eighteenth century, for both pine and walnut.

It is of note that all of the extensive interior woodwork, while not original, is of old material and that even the bricks in the garden wall are of very old manufacture and are laid in harmonizing flemish bond.

* * * * *

Notes on Grace Church

Grace Church was originally built, it is believed, shortly after Governor Francis Nicholson on October 26, 1696 pledged to give 20 pounds sterling with the proviso, "if within two years they build a brick church . . ." at Yorktown. There was specific, though incidental reference to "the new Church" in 1701. Evidently marl, of which the Church is built, was considered as durable and as satisfactory as brick. It became the Parish church for York Parish established in 1632. The earlier churches of York were at the York settlement at the mouth of Wormley Creek, a community that preceded Yorktown.

The Parish to the south of York was Charles Parish and that to the north Chiskiack, later Hampton. In 1706 York and Hampton parishes were combined to form York-Hampton and so continued. Consequently, with no surviving church in the old Hampton Parish area, it was appropriate that the ancient Hampton Parish communion silver be placed at Grace Church where it remains in use. This consists of a chalice and flagon of hammered silver made in London in 1649. This is the second oldest set in Virginia.

The Church occupies Lot 35 as delineated on the original 1691 survey of Yorktown. It was built as a rectangular structure facing east and west (thus being diagonal on its lot). In the mid-eighteenth century with the town prospering and the congregation growing, a north wing was added and the marl

foundations can be traced there today. After the Revolution the fortunes of the Church declined and in 1814 a disastrous fire swept through Yorktown and consumed the Church (except its sturdy marl walls) and many other buildings. It stood in ruins until rebuilt within its old walls in 1848. At this time it was dedicated as Grace Church. Earlier it had been known as York, York-Hampton or Yorktown Church.

The original Church measured 28' x 55' and its north wing 28' x 29' with 27 inch thick walls. There are no surviving pictorial representation, or word descriptions, of the building before 1814 although its shape is shown on a building plan of Yorktown drawn by a French officer in 1781 and two sketches of Yorktown (1775 and 1781) indicate a steeple at these dates.

The bell in the steeple is inscribed "York Virginia 1725." It may not be particularly significant whether this was originally mounted in the Courthouse cupola (as seems most likely) or in the Church belfry. In any case its fragments were found in Philadelphia in 1882 and recast to be mounted, in 1889, for Church use. It still calls to worship with its loud, clear ring.

The burial ground around the Church has been in use all through the years even though many of the earlier graves are no longer marked. There are very few remaining tombstones of the colonial period. The most stately perhaps is that of Thomas ("Scotch Tom")

Nelson, Jr., who signed the Declaration of Independence, was Governor of Virginia and commanded the Virginia militia at the Siege of Yorktown. The Nelson family was a prominent one in Yorktown for many years and always interested in the affairs of York-Hampton Parish doing much to keep the congregation together in the lean years following the American Revolution.

The earliest known burial at the Church was that of Capt. Edward Nevill on September 15, 1701 and that seemingly was inside the Church. In 1713 another town lot (No. 41) was added to the burial ground on the southeast giving the Church a block-wide section between Church and Read Streets. At least some of this, in colonial days, was enclosed within a brick wall. The colonial brick churchyard wall was destroyed in the Civil War and the present wall came early in the 1930s.

There is no surviving church listing of cemetery burials except for recent times. Unfortunately no official church records (Vestry Books, or otherwise) exist prior to 1933 although there are some fragments to 1920. Consequently, church history has to be gleaned from other sources and these are not abundant.

Although not, in financial terms, a prosperous parish early in the eighteenth century, the Yorktown Church prior to the American Revolution became a very attractive post, perhaps, one of the most attractive in the colony. This was when Yorktown was a

bustling port and an active town with an estimated 2,000 inhabitants. Several of the Church's clergy served on the faculty of William and Mary College.

With the Revolution over and the Episcopal Church disestablished as an official church, a period of lean times and small congregations ensued. But the work went on and even after the Church burned in 1814 services continued with some regularity in homes and in the courthouse. The damages to the Church during the Siege of Yorktown in 1781 were extensive (150 pounds sterling) but repairs were made. It was used by the British as a magazine and most panes and windows were broken.

During the Federal occupation of Yorktown in the Civil War the Church was again used for military purposes. A signal tower was erected on its roof, the building was partly dismantled and the grounds robbed of the colonial churchyard wall. These damages were righted, however, and evidently the Church, though continuing weak in congregation and funds, was soon back in service through the hands of a faithful few. Growth was slow.

It is possible to get a glimpse of the small Church operation in 1888 when The Reverend William B. Lee of Gloucester Courthouse is listed as "Minister" and D. Striker as "Treasurer," a post held by Miss Fannie B. Nelson in 1884. There were then 15 communicants and a Sunday School of 18 (3 teachers and 15

"scholars"). Seven were reported as having been confirmed and of these 3 were "scholars."

Very slowly the Grace Church congregation developed strength. Eventually this manifested itself in improvements in the Church building. In the late 1920s and early 1930s the belfry, a new doorway and "rose window" and interior alterations and additions did much to bring the structure to its present appearance and to relieve the stark and unadorned simplicity that marked it from 1850 to 1925. It was in 1951 that the "Utility Wing" at the rear was added replacing the very small vestry room that preceded it.

In 1947 there was a special donation to study the fabric of the building and to determine the feasibility of restoring it to its colonial appearance. It was at this time that squares of stucco (added, perhaps, in 1849 to remove the unsightly stain left by the fire of 1814) were removed. On the south side the positive evidence of an entrance was found and can still be seen. The year 1947 was, also, the year of the Church's 250th anniversary and there was special observance of the occasion as a part of the Yorktown Day, October 19, activities of that year.

It was in 1953 that Grace Church became a fully independent Church unit with a full time rector and an expanding church program. Prior to that time, in more recent decades, there

had been assistance from the Diocese and other sources. For much of the time in the 1920-1950 period the Rector of Bruton Parish in Williamsburg had special responsibilities for the administration of services at Grace Church. The rectory, the present one, was acquired in 1948 and the Parish House came into use on July 7, 1960.

In 1958 the Church and its graveyard was declared a national historic shrine and an interest, "a right of use and easement," was granted to the United States of America with mutually agreed control for "the preservation of the edifice and grounds of the said Grace Episcopal Church in this historical character." The deed related that:

". . . it is in the public interest to preserve for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States this landmark which is recognized as possessing national significance through its close association with the founding and growth of our Country, as well as its role in two great wars."

It was assumed, however, and stated that the Church and its grounds (Lots 35 and 41) will continue in use "for divine worship, for the conduct of religious ceremonies, and for other activities usually incident to the conduct of church affairs, and for the burial of the dead."

Charles E. Hatch, Jr.
September 19, 1965

THE SWAN TAVERN and ITS KITCHEN

In colonial days, in fact until Civil War times, the sign of the Swan was a familiar one for travelers to Yorktown who were seeking rest and refreshment. Occupying a prominent and central location at the corner of Ballard and Main Streets, then as well as now, it was perhaps the most noted tavern in a town that had a variety of such facilities. Yorktown in the 1700's was a busy place with the hustle and bustle of trade attracted here by the excellent York River harbor, and by the facilities that developed after the town was established in 1691.

The Swan Tavern was constructed sometime after 1719, and it is known to have been open for business by March 18, 1722. It seemingly was a joint venture of Joseph Walker and Thomas ("Scotch Tom") Nelson, who founded that family in Virginia and later built the still existing town home some three blocks east on Main Street. In 1722 Nelson and Walker dissolved their joint occupancy with Nelson becoming the full owner. An original deed relating to this property can be seen in the Yorktown Visitor Center where it is on display.

The tavern remained in the Nelson family for some years and unquestionably saw its most prosperous and its busiest days before the Revolution. It was destroyed on a December night in 1863 when a Union Army magazine in the Courthouse, directly across the street, blew up and demolished the Courthouse and the tavern with a number of its dependencies including the kitchen, an integral part of the unit.

In the 1930's after careful research in manuscript and record sources (especially the York County Records still available in the Courthouse) and after archeological exploration and architectural study of the remains, the National Park Service moved to reconstruct the Swan Tavern Group as you see it today utilizing the old foundations. This included the tavern itself (now open under concession permit as an antique shop), the kitchen (normally closed but now being exhibited for this special occasion), and the stable, smokehouse, and privy (not now open to visitors).

The kitchen is rather typical in construction with a cooking and food preparation area of some extent, reflecting its tavern association, and with a living area (privately occupied) above. Original foundation walls can be seen at various points within the building. Some architectural details and furnishings are mentioned below:

SOUTH ROOM

Note the spacious fireplace and interesting accessories, especially the SWINGING CRANE, LONG-HANDLED SKILLETS, DUTCH OVEN, COPPER TEA KETTLE, BRASS KETTLES and WAFFLE IRONS.

The MUSKET over the fireplace is a FLINTLOCK and was made by an English gunsmith named Martin. Lighter than a military musket and often used to kill small game. It was commonly called a "fowling piece."

The 10-drawer hanging SPICE BOX held spices, salt, pepper, and other seasonings for foods.

The iron MORTAR and PESTLE were used for grinding spices, peppers, herbs, and other food seasonings.

The three TABLES in the room are made of pine. The round-topped TABLE in the center of the room is a DROP-LEAF TABLE with "butterfly" supports.

The CHAIRS are known as LADDER-BACK CHAIRS. Each one has a splint seat.

Each of the two WOODEN BOWLS is carved out of a single piece of wood. Wooden bowls were used for many purposes: for chopping vegetables, for kneading dough, storage of foods, and similar purposes.

One CANDLE MOULD is made of pewter, the other of tin.

EARTHENWARE and STONEWARE of the period may be seen on the tables and on shelves in the HANGING CUPBOARD in the corner of the room.

Other items of interest: HANGING SPOON RACK, WOODEN CANTEEN, KNIFE RACK, 3-LEGGED PINE STOOL, and CUTLERY of the period.

NORTH ROOM

Grouped around the fireplace are accessories of the period, including TONGS, POKER, and SHOVEL. Note the hand-wrought ANDIRONS and IRON STAND for holding POTS and PANS.

Note the brick OVEN to the right of the fireplace. When its brick-walls were hot, it was used for baking, with food being put in, or removed, a flat shovel like "peel" or "slice" which had a long handle.

The PINE SETTLE with high back is another unique item. American SETTLES were usually made with high backs and wing pieces at ends to ward off drafts. Under the seat is a large storage compartment.

To the left of the SETTLE is a unique CANDLESTAND. The horizontal arm is adjustable and may be raised, or lowered, at will.

The HUTCH TABLE in the center of the room is an interesting item. It could be used as either a TABLE or CHAIR. Under the seat is a spacious storage compartment.

The large SPINNING WHEEL was used for spinning woolen yarn. Nearby is a REEL for holding the spun yarn.

Note the hanging WALL CUPBOARD with panelled doors. Across the room, under the window, stands a DOUGH TRAY, supported by four turned legs.

On the open shelves are POTTERY, UTENSILS, and a GLASS WINE BOTTLE of the Revolutionary War period.

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THE ARCHER HOUSE

Restoration of a Typical Dock-side Building in Colonial Yorktown

Colonial National Historical Park, Yorktown, Virginia

This little frame house is the only surviving above ground structure along Colonial Yorktown's once busy waterfront area. During the Siege of 1781, some 45 buildings were crowded together along the beach, serving the port's needs--shops, store-houses, warehouses, ordinaries, etc. Most were typical waterfront or dock-side structures, that is, small buildings, shacks, bakeovens and lean-tos, architecturally quite plain, occupying public land known as "The Commons," but in the main, devoted to private use. The heaviest concentration was in the general area of the Archer House, between present Comte de Grasse and Read Streets.

Abraham and Thomas Archer, brothers, owned several such buildings "under the hill," this house among them. They continued in the occupancy, business and use established by their grandfather Abraham in 1729 and taken in due course by their father, Thomas. This structure probably was a "store-house" a building with a dual function. The river end may have served as a shop and loft, unplastered and unheated, while the other half served as a dwelling.

The original house was probably built in the mid-18th century but, except for most of its sturdy stone cellar walls and its chimney stack, was destroyed in the "great fire" of 1814, which also swept away other buildings along the waterfront. The stone foundation walls and the brick chimney survived and are preserved here.

About 1820 the present frame house was built atop the old foundations, using the old chimney. Leveling courses of brick were laid over the stone walls to correct settlement caused by the sandy sub-soil. The restoration faithfully follows the early 19th century fabric, which was probably similar to the colonial building that originally rested on these old foundations. The clues to later construction are the use of early 19th century cut nails and of early 19th century profiles and mouldings in door and window trim. The early 19th century framing has been preserved, being replaced in part where the original was rotted or destroyed. However, the pegged-braced frame follows the 18th century mode of construction. Contrary to the modern concept of rugged pioneer construction, this building was not well built. Details mark the house as architecturally second-rate. The variable spacing of the weatherboarding, the unconventional use of mouldings in the cornice may be noted. Close study has revealed that the carpenter's moulding-planes were worn and that repeated sharpening left him with tools that were inadequate for producing the crisp profiles usually encountered in 18th and early 19th century details. The naivete of these mouldings has been carefully reproduced.

Measured drawings and photographs have been made to record conditions existing before restoration was begun. Suitable interior alterations and adjustments were made to adapt this building for residential use. The house is privately occupied and not open for public inspection.

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This exterior restoration is interesting because it preserves the appearance of a plain building as compared with the more elegant and refined architectural examples which by virtue of their substance and better construction, more often survive to the present day.

The colonial foundation is interesting for its use of "ballast stone," stones cast off by masters of incoming ships. The latter were frequently laden with finished goods, thus requiring a ballast, whereas outbound ships were usually loaded with heavier raw materials. Befouling of the harbors with ballast rock led to laws which prohibited ship masters from dumping ballast into the harbor, under penalty of fine. Later, ships brought more useful building materials as ballast, to be sold at dockside. The small quantities of brick thus brought, however, made no appreciable impact on the local building scene and most building materials continued to be locally manufactured.

Among the stone types noted are foreign river rock, granite of several varieties, coral, slate, and local marlstone. This house is the only local example that utilizes such ballast stone.

The original chimney retains its old "bonnet," which was intended to eliminate possible downdraft. The chimney is interesting for its several brick sizes, especially the larger, which are similar in size to those found in the Sessions House, still standing along Main Street and visible up the "Greate Valley" from this house.

The roof is covered with cedar shingles matching examples of original shingles found sealed in the plastered walls, where they had been used as shims in the framework. It may be noted that the shingles are "swirled" in the dormer "valleys," a colonial practice which eliminated the need for flashing. The exterior white-washing follows that found on existing examples of the original weatherboarding. Doors and windows are painted iron-oxide red, known in Colonial times as Spanish brown.

To visualize this house in its waterfront environment, one must imagine many such structures, closely crowded upon each other, with narrow alleys between, in a scene of apparent confusion, busy with the activity of merchants, keepers of ordinaries, sea-faring men, and mechanics of all trades, with the public wharf close by as a focal point of this activity.

Fire, time, and town decline have all combined to change that scene. Even the shoreline has changed to some extent as the waters of York River have encroached on it. This building remains to remind us that Yorktown was once a busy port.

The Archer House has been restored by the National Park Service.

THE MOORE HOUSE ARCHITECTURE

By Historian Trainee Alec Gould, 1963

Pinning an architectural label on the general design of the Moore House is difficult. Architects use different terms and criteria to denote the various styles. H. L. Williams and O. K. Williams would use the term Southern Colonial to describe the Moore House.¹ T. T. Waterman might call the design Chesapeake Bay Colonial.² Dutch Colonial has been used to label the Moore House for some years by National Park Service personnel.

Orville Carroll, a National Park Service architect, has suggested the term Georgian Colonial.³ This term takes its name from the Kings of England, George I through George IV, who reigned from 1714-1830. We suggest that our historians use this designation (Georgian Colonial).

Georgian Colonial is a generic phase applied to many houses in America from the 1720's of varying design built to about 1780.⁴ The Moore House may be regarded as an early example of a Virginia house incorporating some of the features which became prominent in the Georgian style: rectangular shape, balanced facade, narrow domers, high foundation, cornice with modillions and molding, paneled door, and hipped roof (the hipped gambrel of the Moore House may be regarded as transitional).

The unknown architect who designed the Moore House did not set out to construct a house of Georgian design. Neither the term nor the style had been defined at that early date (the house was built about 1725). The architect probably used past experience, present needs and contemporary handbooks on carpentry and architecture. The Moore House, like most houses in America, was the product of evolutionary change initiated in England and altered by Americans to meet existing conditions. One such development which probably affected the Moore House design was

"the rectangular plan with a double depth of rooms as it was developed in England in the latter half of the seventeenth century. This scheme was first adopted in the Southern colonies about 1725, after which it became the typical plan of the larger houses. The Nicholson house [which closely resembles the Moore House] in Williamsburg is an early example, of frame, one story high below a steep gambrel roof. In the use of this plan there was considerable variation in the placement of chimneys. This example has one chimney in each end wall, which provides corner fireplaces in the two adjoining rooms ... This was the normal development of English colonial domestic architecture in the Southern colonies, from Maryland to North Carolina."⁵

The story and half frame structure of the Moore House is rectangular in shape with balanced elevation. The wood frame sets high on a full brick-walled basement which has a sheltered outside entrance. Six grilled

1. A Guide to Old American Houses, pp. 53-62, 145-146

2. The Dwellings of Colonial America, p. 31

3. A Memorandum to Paul Hudson, January 15, 1963

4. The Federal Style came into vogue during the Revolutionary Period

5. Waterman, pp. 23, 31

openings in the brick walls above ground allow air to enter the basement. A brick gutter runs around the outside. Two T-shaped end chimneys of flemish bond rising outside the house serve corner fireplaces on the west side and single fireplaces on the east side. Sloping flues connect the outside chimneys to the fireplaces inside. The original bricks, most of which still remain, were handmade, probably near the site of the house.

Round butt cypress shingles cover the hipped gambrel roof allowing good ceiling space on the second floor.⁶ A double ogee molding runs around the building where the roof plane breaks. Five hipped dormers with 15 lights each are shingled with swiveled valleys. The size and shape of the window lights, muntins, sash and solid panel shutters are typical of the period in Tidewater Virginia. The roof's second slope overhangs slightly permitting modillions below the cornice. Beaded clapboards constitute the outside walls.

The small, pedimented porch sheltering the front entrance adds depth to the rectangular symmetry of the exterior. A simple tread and stringer arrangement serves the rear entrance in the style that probably prevailed in 1781.

The Moore House has a typical Virginia central hall plan giving maximum space, economy of construction, and good air circulation. Balustrades, mantels, chair rails and woodwork are attractively fashioned after known Colonial patterns. Doors "on the first floor have slightly raised panels, a quarter round on the outside and an ogee panel mould on the inside. The second floor doors are flush paneled and show a quarter round mould on the outside only, there being no mould on the interior."⁷ H-L hinges are attached to the doors with wrought iron "ship" nails with hammered heads to produce the old effect. Surface type black "rim" locks with brass knobs are screwed to some doors. The plaster cheeks of the fireplaces follow Colonial precedent in being painted black. Many of the original boards remain in the random-width pine flooring.

Whatever the style and development of the Moore House, its lovely form rests in quiet beauty on the south bank of the York River. A recognition of the historic significance of the Moore House adds to the visitors historical experience at Colonial National Historical Park; an appreciation of the Moore House architecture and furnishings, although secondary, also enhances the park experience of many visitors.

6. The roof is not a mansard or jerkin-head as some visitors seem to think. A mansard roof has two slopes on all four sides; the Moore House roof has two slopes on only two sides. A jerkin-head does not have two slopes on two sides (the gambrel does), but is hipped for a part of its height. The Shield House and Swan Tavern in Yorktown have jerkin-head roofs.

7. See a report by W. M. Haussmann in Charles E. Peterson's A Physical History of the Moore House, 1930-1934, Appendix No. 8

THE LIGHTFOOT FAMILY IN YORKTOWN

A branch of the original Lightfoot family in Virginia lived in Yorktown throughout most of the eighteenth century, and occupied a prominent position in the life, wealth, and activities of the town. Philip Lightfoot (1689-1748) moved to Yorktown about 1707 and his widow, Mary, died there in 1775. For those almost 70 years, the name Lightfoot was usually mentioned along with the name Nelson as being one of the "first families of Yorktown." The Lightfoot mansion, overlooking the harbor of Yorktown, must have presented an imposing picture to a ship sailing up the York River from the Bay.

Progenitors of the Yorktown Lightfoots:

It appears that two Lightfoot brothers, John and Philip, came from England to Gloucester County, Virginia, sometime during the second half of the seventeenth century. In 1670 John received the King's grant as Auditor-General of Virginia, but this grant was suspended the next year.¹ The brothers were the sons of John Lightfoot, a barrister at law in Northamptonshire, England.²

Not much is known about the elder Philip Lightfoot, who was the father of the Philip Lightfoot of Yorktown, but there is enough to identify him as active in local colonial affairs. In 1671 he was a resident of Gloucester County, later serving as lieutenant-colonel of the county militia and as justice of the peace. In 1676 he was a Surveyor-General. Apparently Lightfoot either moved from the York River to the James River, or maintained more than one residence, for he became justice of James City, and collector for the Upper District of the James River. Official reports mention that during Nathaniel Bacon's rebellion in 1676, "Mr. Philip Lightfoot was a great Looser and sufferer both in Estate and person being both Plundered and Imprisoned by the Rebels."³

1. "Lightfoot Family," William and Mary College Quarterly, 1st Series, II (January, 1894), 204.

2. On Philip Lightfoot's tomb at "Sandy Point" in Charles City County, it states that he was the son of John Lightfoot, "Barrister at Law Minister at Stoke Bruain." As a listing of Northamptonshire ministers gives only a Richard Lightfoot, it is felt that John was only a Barrister. (William and Mary College Quarterly, 1st Series, II (October, 1893), 92-93.)

3. Ibid., III (October, 1894), 104-105 and "Persons who Suffered by Bacon's Rebellion. The Commissioner's Report," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography. V (1893), 67.

Philip Lightfoot married Alice Corbin, the daughter of Henry Corbin of "Buckingham House" in Middlesex County. Both of their tombs at "Sandy Point" bear the Lightfoot arms (a griffin's head) impaling the Corbin arms. Philip Lightfoot's will, dated 1708, left three tracts of land at "Sandy Point" (then in Wallingford parish, James City County, but after 1720 in Westover parish) to his son Francis. The will stipulated that if Francis died without children, the land would go to his brother, Philip (the Yorktown Lightfoot). Francis had two children, a son who died in childhood, and a daughter, Elizabeth, who married Beverly Randolph. According to her grandfather's will, the "Sandy Point" land would be hers. However, her father left it to Philip, who paid Elizabeth £2,500 for compensation. This was later officially settled by an act of the legislature in 1740, and Philip became legal owner of the land.⁴

The Lightfoots in Yorktown:

The younger Philip Lightfoot established the family name and its social and economic standing in Yorktown. He was born in 1689, and died May 30, 1748. In 1707 he was appointed clerk of York County and shortly thereafter moved to the town. Lightfoot bought one of the only two town lots sold in 1709, Thomas Nelson buying the other. Both lots had been taken up under the Port Act of 1706 and deserted. Lightfoot purchased Lot 38 from the town trustees for 180 pounds of tobacco, with the stipulation that within 12 months he build and furnish "one good house to contain at least Twenty foot wherein if he fail then this present grant to be void."⁵ Apparently Lightfoot built a house on the lot, for he kept title to the land.

Between 1709 and 1742, Lightfoot bought many lots in Yorktown and much plantation land in various Virginia counties. In 1715, he purchased Lot 16, and the houses, other buildings, and gardens on it, from Matthew Ballard for £30 of Virginia money. On this lot he built one of two town houses, probably shortly after he purchased it. This was later improved by the acquisition of the two adjoining lots (Lot 11 in 1733 and Lot 17 in 1732) for gardens and outhouses.⁶

4. "Lightfoot Family," William and Mary College Quarterly, 1st Series, III (October, 1894), 104-105 and William Waller Hening, Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia From the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619, (Richmond, Franklin Press, 1819) V, 112-114.

5. Edward M. Riley, The History of the Founding and Development of Yorktown, Virginia, 1691-1781 (a typed manuscript in the library of Colonial National Historical Park, Yorktown, Virginia), p. 75: York County Records, Deeds and Bonds, No. 2 (1701-1713), pp. 334-335.

6. York County Records, Deeds and Bonds, No. 3 (1713-1729), pp. 81-83: Riley, History of ... Yorktown, p. 77: York County Records, Deeds and Bonds, No. 4 (1729-1740), pp. 121, 130.

Lightfoot purchased Lot 36 (on which the restored Somerwell House now stands) from Joseph Mountford in 1716 for £80. It is not known how Lightfoot used this property. Lot 7 and Lot 37 were purchased in 1718, Lot 7 from the town trustees for 180 pounds of tobacco and Lot 37 from Edward Powers, an innkeeper, for 5 shillings of English currency. Not only did he buy land in town, but also in nearby counties. In 1717 he acquired the Washington lease on the upper side of Martins Creek in York County. In 1723 land in James City County was purchased from David Morce. At the time of his death in 1748, Philip Lightfoot owned not only the lots in Yorktown, but property in Williamsburg, and in the following counties: York, Charles City, Surry, Brunswick, New Kent, Hanover, Prince George, and Goochland.⁸

Lightfoot's second town house, and probably the one occupied by the family, was built after he purchased Lot 22 from Warren Cary for £150 of English currency in 1724. It was a large brick mansion on a high bluff overlooking the harbor of Yorktown. The house was bounded on its river side, after 1732, by the defending water battery, and on the other side by the county courthouse. Later Lightfoot purchased adjoining lots for gardens and other purposes. He owned enough land in the immediate area that his house and grounds could be considered ostentious and befitting a wealthy merchant and planter.⁹ No doubt this house was one of the most elegant in Yorktown. In a description of the town by a traveller in 1736, we read these words:

You perceive a great Air of Opulence amongst the Inhabitants, who have some of them built themselves Houses, equal in Magnificence to many of our superb ones at St. James's; as those of Mr. Lightfoot, Nelson, & c. Almost every considerable Man Keeps an Equipage ... The most considerable Houses are of Brick; some handsome ones of Wood, all built in the modern Taste ...¹⁰

Lightfoot also had use of an area in the town "Commons" of Yorktown, the area along the waterfront below the cliffs. A number of abutting owners, and others, used this area, by one arrangement of the other, for wharves, warehouses, shops, storehouses and related purposes. Very probably he used all, or part, of the ground here fronting on Lots 22, 28, and, possibly

7. York County Records, Deeds and Bonds, No. 3 (1713-1729), pp. 130- : 131, 255, 273, 395.

8. York County Records, Wills and Inventories, No. 20 (1746-1759), pp. 1-3-106.

9. York County Records, Deeds and Bonds, No. 3 (1713-1729), p. 438 and Riley, p. 78.

10. "Observations in Several Voyages and Travels in America in the year 1736," William and Mary College Quarterly, 1st Series, XV (April, 1907), 222.

16. This seemingly was the location of "Col. Lightfoot's Landing" of mention in 1735.¹¹

Philip Lightfoot was a leading citizen of the Colony. Besides serving as clerk of York County for 26 years (1707-1733), in 1715 he was agent for the public store-house at Yorktown. His tenure as county clerk ended only when he was appointed to the Council of Colonial Virginia, in 1733. He served on the Council until 1747, the year before his death.¹²

In 1720 Lightfoot was called before the Virginia House of Burgesses for "Insulting their Speaker at the door ... in a haughty manner--uttering indecent and reproachfull Language to him and this without any Previous discourse with him." The Speaker at the time was John Holloway, a Burgess from York County, Lightfoot had to beg the Speaker's pardon and pay a fine.¹³

Apparently Lightfoot and Nelson controlled a large part of the commercial interests of Yorktown. In 1739 Richard Chapman wrote to Edward Athawes:

Since my being in Virginia Col. Lightfoot was Clerk of York Court and one of our most Considerable Merchants at one and the same time, and every man, who has sense enough to judge right, is convinced that near to that Gentlemans' own Genius, and the Friends which that merited and procured him on your side of the water, the Business of the Office concurred to the Increase and Establishment of the other; of which he was so sensible, that he would never give it up till the King, by his Letter, called him up to the Council.¹⁴

Francis Jerdone, who came to Virginia in 1746 as part owner of a cargo of goods, and as the representative of some London merchants, wrote home that

11. Charles E. Hatch Jr., An Historical Report on "Archer Cottage" and the Yorktown Waterfront, (a mimeographed report in the Library of Colonial National Historical Park, Yorktown, Virginia, December 15, 1957), p. 70.

12. "Lightfoot Family," William and Mary College Quarterly, 1st Series, III (October, 1894), 105-108 and Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia, edited by H. R. McIlwaine and Wilmer L. Hall (Richmond: Virginia State Library), IV (1930), 307 and V (1945), 239.

13. Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, edited by H. R. McIlwaine (Richmond: Virginia State Library), V, (1912), 286-287.

14. "Letters from the Letter Book of Richard Chapman," William and Mary College Quarterly, 1st Series, XXI (October, 1912), 91-92.

both Lightfoot and Nelson preferred Bristol and Liverpool to London for many staple articles. His advice to the London merchants after Lightfoot's death was indicative of Lightfoot's proficiency in commercial matters:

Col. Philip Lightfoot is now dead, so that you can never have so fair a way open'd to you for establishing a store, as at this present time; his great riches while he continued in health deterred everybody from settling here, none being of ability to vie with him but Mr. Nelson, who always had an equal share of trade with him....¹⁵

Philip Lightfoot's Family

Sometime after 1718 Philip Lightfoot married Mary Armistead, the daughter of William Armistead (1671-1711) of Eastmost River in Matthews County and Anna Lee (daughter of Hancock and Mary Lee) of Northampton County. Mary was one of seven children. She first married James Burwell of King's Creek, who died in 1718.¹⁶ Philip and Mary Lightfoot had four children:

- (1) William, who married Mildred Howell. He lived in Charles City County at Tedington.
- (2) Philip, who married Susannah. Philip died before his father, and as his son, Francis, was not mentioned in Mary Lightfoot's will, he no doubt died before 1773.
- (3) John, who died before 1769, with no children.
- (4) Armistead, who died at his home in Yorktown in 1771, with a personal estate valued at \$1340.18.6. He married Anne, daughter of Lewis Burwell. Armistead and Ann had one daughter, Mary, who married John Tayloe Griffin. In 1774, Armistead's widow, Anne, married Charles Grymes of Gloucester.

All four Lightfoot children died before their mother, Mary, who died in 1775.¹⁷

Disposition of the Lightfoot Estate

Philip Lightfoot died in 1748, leaving a rather large estate.¹⁸ In his will of 1747, he names John Grymes, Thomas Lee, William Nelson, Anthony

15. "Letter Book of Francis Jerdone," William and Mary College Quarterly, 1st Series, XI (January, 1903), 154-155.

16. William and Mary College Quarterly, 1st Series, XXV (October, 1916), 118.

17. "Lightfoot Family," William and Mary College Quarterly, 1st Series, III (October, 1894), 105-108.

18. Inscription on his tomb is appended.

Walke, and William Lightfoot as executors. The extent of Lightfoot's wealth can be seen in the manner in which he so adequately provided for his widow, his three remaining sons, and his philanthropic interests.¹⁹

To his widow, Mary Lightfoot, he left their dwelling house and the 3-1/3 adjoining lots (Lots 22, 23, 28, and 1/3 of 29), the use of the household slaves and coachmen, the household and kitchen furnishings, the coach and horses as well as the use of the stock, fire wood, and pasturage. He also bequeathed her the slaves of the King's Creek plantation, the wine and liquor in the town houses and £400 sterling and £400 current money to be paid to her each year for the remainder of her life. He asked that "my friends, Thomas Nelson and Thomas Lee," be appointed to see that these provisions were carried out.

A sizable amount of Lightfoot's fortune was left to each of his three sons, with the added provisions that they would each receive one-third of their mother's estate when she died. William received the lot and buildings he occupied in Yorktown (probably Lots 16, 17, and 11) with the money and household goods he possessed. Also he was willed four lots on the edge of town (in the Gwin Reade development), the storehouse and lot which had been Joseph Mountfort's (possibly Lot 36), the warehouse under the bank with the mill and land adjoining, most of the land and rental property and some of the stock and household goods in Charles City and Surry counties as well as £200 for repair of the Sandy Point House.

To John, Lightfoot left land and 60 slaves in Brunswick County, the lots, houses and furnishings in Williamsburg. Also, John received the lots at Blandford in Prince George, stock from Sandy Point, several horses (evidently favorites, as they were mentioned by name) and enough cattle from King's Creek to make 100 at Blandford plus £2,000 sterling.

Armistead received all lots and houses not already disposed of as well as the pasture and land in Goochland and 60 slaves, the town house in Yorktown after his mother's death and lands in New Kent and Hanover counties together with £2,000 sterling.

Grandson Francis (Philip's son) received two Negroes (Lucy and Jacob) and £300 to be his when he became 21. Philip's widow was to be paid £1,000 of any dower she might expect from lands designated to the sons. Elizabeth Burwell (a grandchild of his wife through her first marriage) was to receive £300 when she reached 21, or married, with her grandmother's approval.

Philip Lightfoot remembered not only his family in his will, but also his church and educational causes. He left £50 to the Parish of Yorkhampton

19. Provisions of the will are given in York County Records, Wills and Inventories, No. 20 (1746-1759), pp. 103-106.

for "purchase of a handsome Flaggon and Challace with my Arms Engraven thereon for the Use of York Church," and £40 to William Nelson and William Lightfoot to be distributed to the poor of the parish. The College of William and Mary received £200 for a foundation for two scholars, one of the first nominations to go to William Lightfoot. Several other minor items were taken care of in the will, and anything not otherwise disposed of was to be equally divided between the three sons.

Mary Lightfoot died in 1775, apparently occupying the large town house until then, and outliving all of her children. In her will she mentioned two of her daughters-in-law--Mildred (William's wife) and Anne (Armistead's wife), grandsons William and Philip Lightfoot and James Burwell (and his daughter Anne). There was reference, too, to granddaughters Mary Allen, Anne Lightfoot, Elizabeth Hewitt, and Mildred and Elizabeth Coles as well as to Lewis Burwell, William Allen, and Richard Hewitt. Reference was also made to the poor people of Yorktown.²⁰

Armistead's family inherited the town house in Yorktown. It became the residence of the Griffins, for Armistead's daughter Mary had married into that family. In 1777 the home was mentioned by Thomas Wyld, Junior, in The Virginia Gazette:

I take this method to inform the publick in general, and the gentlemen who have favoured me with their custom hitherto, that I have removed ... to the large brick house behind the court house, the property of Dr. John Griffin, and formerly belonging to Mrs. Lightfoot²¹

The Lightfoot house withstood the siege of 1781, for it was still referred to even in the next century. In 1814, after the fire, the ladies of the town, families whose property was destroyed, were cared for "under the spacious and hospitable roof of Major Griffin's house" At the time of Lafayette's visit in 1824 "Major Griffin's romantic house" served as headquarters for the invited guests.²²

It is possible that the house described in the fire insurance policy taken out in 1832 by Thomas Griffin covered the home of Colonel Lightfoot, for the house described stood between the courthouse and the river. If so,

20. "Lightfoot Family," William and Mary College Quarterly, 1st Series, III (October, 1894), 105-108.

21. The Virginia Gazette, August 22, 1777, in Riley, History of ... Yorktown, p. 79.

22. The Richmond Enquirer, March 9, 1814, and October 20, 1824, in Riley's, History of ... Yorktown, p. 79.

The description is partly faulty as regards height. It was described in the policy as a one-story, brick structure (70' x 40') with a wooden roof. Behind it stood a one-story brick "kitchen, office, & c." (70' x 20') with a wooden roof, a small brick dairy and wooden smokehouse.²³

The tenure of the Lightfoot influence in Yorktown lasted only from 1707, when Philip Lightfoot was appointed county clerk and moved to the town, to 1775 when his widow died, all four children having previously died. During this period the family established itself prominently in the life of Yorktown as civic and political leaders, as controllers of commerce, and surely in the social activities. Their town house occupied one of the most beautiful spots in town, on a high bluff overlooking the York River. Perhaps second only to the Nelsons, the Lightfoots were the most noted Yorktown family of the 18th century.

Barbara A. Sorrill,
Historian
Colonial National Historical
Park
May, 1964

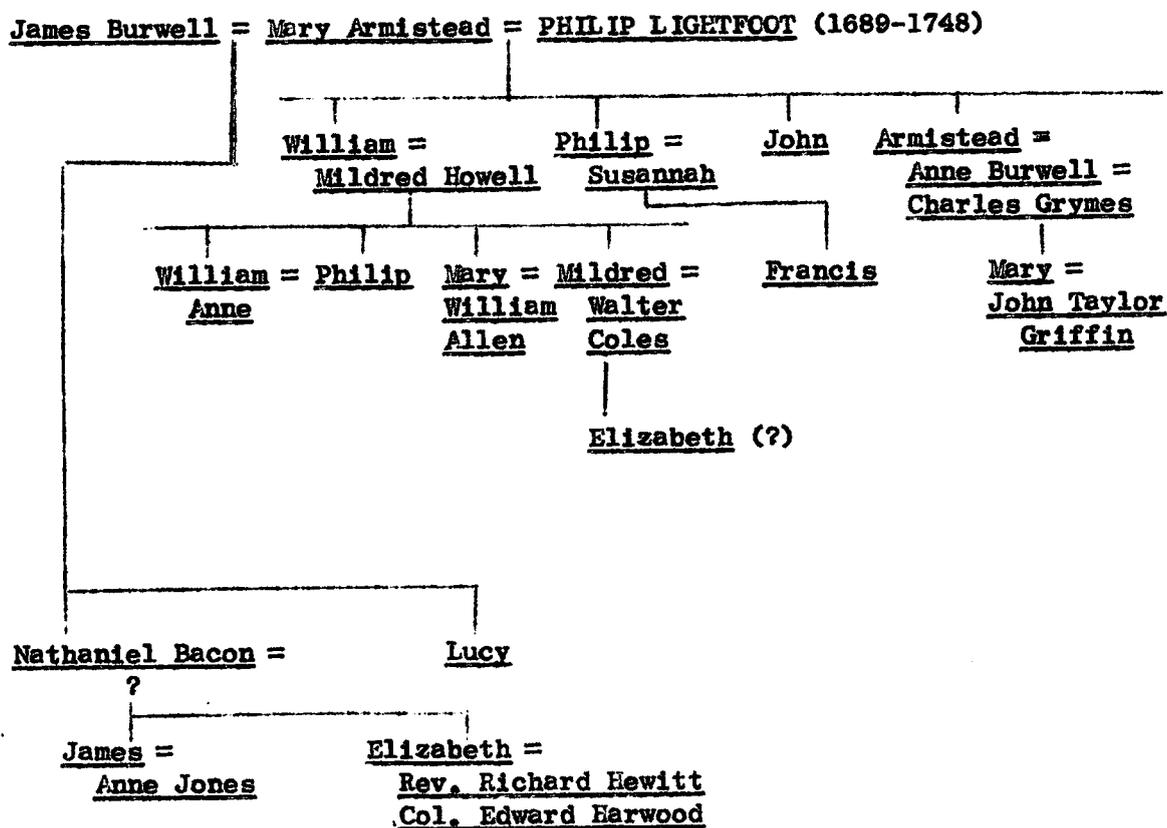
23. From Policy No. 7940, Mutual Assurance Society, Richmond, Virginia, photostat in files of Colonial National Historical Park, Yorktown, Virginia.

CNHP Photo
No. 13,111

A View of Yorktown in 1755
(Sketched by John Gauntlett
of HMS Norwich, courtesy of
the Mariners Museum)

The Lightfoot Mansion is the
large two story structure just
to the right of the British
flag.

YORKTOWN LIGHTFOOT GENEALOGY



Philip Lightfoot's tomb at "Sandy Point" (Charles City County) bears this inscription:

This Tomb is Sacred to the Memory
Of the Honourable Philip Lightfoot Esquire.
In various Employments of Public Trust
An Example
Of Loyalty to his King, of Affection to his Country
In the several Regards of Private Life
A Pattern
Worthy of Imitation
An Equanimity which few are (cap)able of
Conducted him with success
Through the [Less] elevated Scenes of Life
And continued to be the Ornament
of the Most Exalted.
Not arrogant with Prosperity
He graced a superior Fortune.
Acquired by his own Industry, and honesty,
Not imperious with advancement
He rose to almost the highest honours of his Country
His Rank & Fortune made him more Extensively**
He was descended from an Ancient Family in England
Which came over to Virginia in a Genteel and Honble Character
On the 30th Day of May, 1748, in the 59th Year of his [Age]
His Spirit returned to God who gave it
And his Body reposes Here
In sure and certain Hopes of a joyful resurrection.¹

1. "Old Tombstones in Charles City County," William and Mary College Quarterly, 1st Series, IX (October, 1900), 122.

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THE NELSON FAMILY
(A Synopsis)

In 1705 a young Englishman stood on the beach under the town of York in the colony of Virginia and contemplated his future as he walked up the hill to Main Street. He had made a decision which must have been difficult for him. This young man would no longer sail the oceans of the world; he would instead depart forever from the deep and establish himself a thousand leagues from his homeland in a small town on the banks of the York River and take up his father's business of merchant. Today, you can stand on this same beach and walk up this same hill, gaze about and see the results of the decision and think about your nation and your liberty, for Thomas Nelson became in a few short years the sire of a dynasty which had far reaching effects, not only on the history of Virginia but also, not many years later, on the newly created United States of America.

Thomas Nelson, merchant of Yorktown who was born in 1677, the son of Hugh and Sarah Nelson of Penrith, England, near the Scotch border, made three voyages to Virginia before he settled here and began his rise to a position of wealth and influence in the colony. Within two years Thomas, or "Scotch Tom," as he came to be known, had acquired two lots in York along with a number of slaves and a house which he probably built on one of the two half-acre lots. "Scotch Tom" must have established himself well, for by 1710 he was married to Margaret Reade, daughter of John Reade, a resident of York County. A year later Thomas was sworn in as county court justice, his son William was born that summer, and he was in a position to furnish supplies to the fort which was built at York.

The years between 1711 and 1723 were fruitful for "Scotch Tom" both in wealth and family. He obtained title to several more lots in York, became co-operator of a ferry, a builder of a tavern known as the Swan, owner of slaves, charter member of a trading company, trustee of York's port land, and a large-scale farmland owner. His daughter, Mary, and son, Thomas, were born in 1713 and 1716, respectively.

The Nelson household was saddened between 1719 and 1723, for "Scotch Tom's" wife died. In February of 1723 Thomas once again was married, this time to Frances Tucker, a widow who bore him one daughter, Sarah, in 1724. Tom's business successes continued. By 1725 he had added over six hundred acres to his holdings and had built his own warehouse and wharf on the beach. In 1728 another mill was added to his growing list of possessions.

Thomas' son William, who had been sent to England in 1722 for schooling, returned to York in 1732 and was, like his father, appointed justice of the county court. By 1728 William had himself grown wealthy, and he married Elizabeth Carter Burwell of Gloucester County in a ceremony held at Rosewell, the Page family mansion. William now owned two lots in York located across from his father's house, the present Nelson house, which had been built between 1706 and 1732. 1738 was to be a busy year for the Nelsons of York County, Virginia. In that twelve-month period, "Scotch Tom's" second son, Thomas, returned from England, having completed his law training, William was appointed sheriff, and a son, Thomas, was born to William and Elizabeth. William entered politics at this time, and in 1742 he was elected to Burgesses. A year later Thomas, a promising young lawyer, was appointed Deputy Secretary of the Colony. This was a most important position as he acted in place of the Secretary who remained

in England. All of the Colony's business passed through this office, and the Deputy Secretary also sat as judge of the General Court. In addition to this position, Thomas was appointed county judge which meant that all three Nelsons, the father and two sons, sat as judges in the court of York County at the same time.

Age had forced "Scotch Tom" to take a less active role in his business. In 1743 he retired to enjoy his remaining years in the comfort of his home and watch his sons carry on the business which he had so successfully developed over the years. In 1745 Thomas, known to us as Secretary Thomas, married Lucy Amistead and probably moved to Williamsburg so he could be near the office. "Scotch Tom," on October 7, 1745, died, leaving a large estate. The house he left to his wife and after her death to William. Thomas Nelson (1677-1745), sea captain, merchant, husband, father, judge, land holder, mill operator, tavern owner, and ferry owner, died respected and remembered. The Virginia Gazette expressed the feelings of those who knew him when on October 10 the following eulogy appeared:

As he lived just, so was he blessed not only in the Increase of his Wealth but in the comfort of his children whom he lived to see . . . enjoying the greatest Honours and Preferments. As he lived truly revere'd and respected so he died greatly lamented.

Shortly after his father's death, William was appointed to the Council, a body of twelve men who were advisors to the governor. This body functioned as the legislative upper House in the Colony, and members were appointed for life terms. Secretary Thomas was appointed to Burgesses to take William's place.

As time passed Thomas and William felt the need to be located near the political center of the Colony in Williamsburg. In 1749, therefore, they

bought a house near the Capital for their use when they were in Williamsburg. William's son, Thomas, was sent to England for his education in 1753; upon his return to Virginia in 1761 he was promptly elected to Burgesses and made a county court judge. At this time he met and soon wed Lucy Grymes, daughter of a member of the Council. The newlyweds moved to York and within four years had moved into "Scotch Tom's" house on Main Street.

The ensuing years saw families raised, property acquired, crops planted and harvested, and relations with the mother country growing more strained. In 1769, in opposition to revenue raising taxes imposed by England, sixty-eight persons, including Thomas Nelson (the son of William), Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington, signed a pact refusing to import any English product taxed for revenue purposes. William, probably due to his position, did not sign this pact, but he did feel that the relations between England and the Colonies would be broken unless something were done. In 1772 William, president of the Council, died leaving his two sons to carry on the family business. Operating a big business was difficult for Thomas and Hugh so they promoted an experienced long-time employee, Augustine Moore, to partner in the firm to ease this situation. Thomas was elected to the Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia in 1776 where he signed the Declaration of Independence as a member of the Virginia delegation. However, due to poor health, he returned to Virginia in the latter part of 1777. In March of 1776 Thomas returned to Philadelphia but almost immediately suffered a slight stroke and was forced to come home. Simultaneously the family business was closed, the result of both bad times and the war.

The Revolution wore on, and Thomas continued to play an important role in the newly-born nation's struggle to be free. He raised militia forces and pledged his personal property to obtain money for the war effort. Thomas Jefferson's term as governor of Virginia expired in 1781, and Thomas Nelson, son of the President of Council, was sworn in as governor of the state on June 18, 1781. Later in that year the War moved into the Peninsula and then to York where the final decisive battle was fought. On October 19, 1781, Cornwallis surrendered nearly 7,500 troops to George Washington. Thomas, as Commander of the Virginia militia at York, must have felt a sense of relief for many reasons including the fact that he saw his home, though damaged, spared unlike that of his uncle Secretary Thomas whose home behind the British lines had been destroyed.

After the battle peace returned to Tidewater, and normal life was resumed. About this time murmurings were heard against the governor, accusing him of misappropriating funds and spending money without proper authorization. These charges were never brought to court, and eventually an investigating committee cleared him. Thomas, however, resigned from office in November of 1781 and retired to his 12,000 acre plantation ~~"Offley Ho"~~ ^{Mountain} in Hanover County. Since he had pledged his personal property for money to continue the War and had not been repaid by the State, Thomas was now forced to sell some of his property to repay his debts.

1789 dawned anew; it was to be the year that the United States adopted a new Constitution to replace the Articles of Confederation and the year in which Thomas Nelson died at ^{Mountain} ~~"Offley Ho."~~ Thomas Nelson had opposed the new Constitution, perhaps, because of its federal character, or because it lacked a bill of rights. Today, however, we do not remember Thomas

Nelson of York for his conscientious dissention at this hour in 1789.

Instead, we remember him as a man who sincerely pledged his life, his fortune, and his sacred honor to a cause he felt was right - to his and our country's independence.

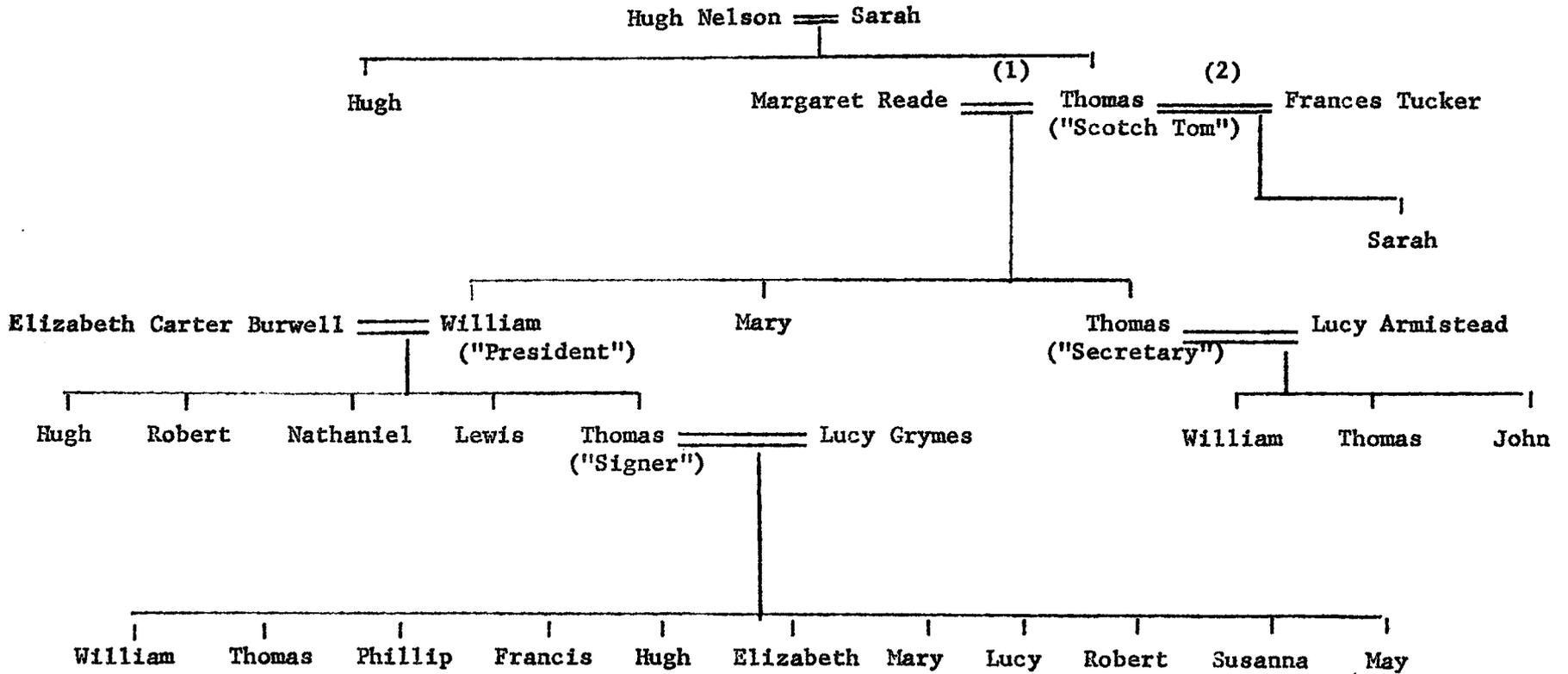
Jerome P. Forkner, Historian
Colonial National Historical Park

(Inscription on Thomas Nelson Jr.'s tombstone at Grace Church, Yorktown,
Virginia)

Gen. Thomas Nelson, Jr.
Patriot Soldier Christian-Gentleman
Born Dec. 18, 1738 Died Jan. 2, 1789
Mover of the Resolution of May 5, 1776
in the Virginia Convention
Instructing her Delegates in Congress
to Move that Body to Declare the Colonies
Free and Independent States.
Signer of the Declaration of Independence
War Governor of Virginia
Commander of Virginia's Forces

He Gave all for Liberty

ABBREVIATED FAMILY CHART



Much of the material used in this draft is from The Nelsons: A Biographical Study of a Virginia Family in the Eighteenth Century, a dissertation by Emory Gibbons Evans. The paper was written in 1957 at the University of Virginia.

THE NELSON FAMILY

From every standpoint--economically, politically or socially--the Nelsons were one of Virginia's foremost families. From the first decade of the eighteenth century until the American Revolution, their mercantile establishment in Yorktown was among the largest--if not the largest--of the firms owned and operated by Virginians. In the period from 1745 to 1775 there was always at least one member, and usually more than one of the Nelsons on the Council of the colony. In this same period, the lucrative position of Secretary of the Colony was held by a Nelson. From 1760 to 1776, a Nelson was always in the House of Burgesses, and thereafter until 1789 one was almost continuously in the House of Delegates. This family also gave Virginia an ad interim colonial governor, a delegate to the Continental Congress, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, a commander of the state militia, and another governor. General Thomas Nelson sacrificed both his health and his fortune to the cause of American Independence. Surely, the Nelsons are deserving of the same recognition as the Lees, the Randolphs, the Carters, or the Byrds.

THOMAS "SCOTCH TOM" NELSON (1677-1745)

An English visitor to Yorktown, Virginia, in 1732 described it as a "delicat village" which stood elevated on a "Sandy hill like Blackheath or Richmond Hill & like that overlooks a fine river broader than ye Thames at those places & then likewise ye prospect of a noble Bay." Another visitor, several years later spoke of what a "romantick Sight" it was to see the "red cliffs" of Yorktown in the early morning sun as he approached from down the York River. Those things probably influenced Thomas Nelson to settle there in 1705; particularly the fine broad river, which allowed ocean-going vessels to approach close to the shore. This was especially important, for his interests were mercantile and such a location was essential to receive and load tobacco, the backbone of Virginia trade in the period.

Thomas "Scotch Tom" Nelson, the first Nelson to settle in the Colonies, arrived at York in 1705. The son of Hugh and Sarah Nelson was 28 years old and veteran of three voyages to Virginia before he decided to settle there and become, like his father, a merchant. He married Margaret Reade in 1710, had two sons, William and Thomas, and a daughter, Mary. In 1723, he was married again to a Frances Tucker and she bore him a daughter, Sarah.

"Scotch Tom" became a successful entrepreneur, county judge and was involved in many business activities.

In August of 1719, he and Joseph Walker, another Yorktown merchant, acquired Lot 25 on Main Street, where they built the Swan Tavern, soon to be operated by Robert Wills. Here, at "The Swan" a weary traveller could get a complete meal for one shilling, lodging for seven and a half pence a night, and be able to drink his fill of rum or Virginia brandy for two shillings a quart.

Thomas Nelson was undeniably prospering as witnessed by the fact that when two thieves broke into his store in that same year of 1720, they were able to make off with "Two hundred pounds in Gold & Silver together with Several Rings & other things of considerable value...." The pair were apprehended and taken to the "public Goal" in Williamsburg to await trial by the General Court. Unquestionably the thieves were hanged, for in those days the theft of as little as £3 was a capital offense.

In the summer of 1728, Nelson petitioned the Council for permission to build a warehouse on the beach and a wharf from it into the river, in order to unload and house "merchandise of great bulk & weight" which could not be carried easily up the steep bank into the town. The wharf and warehouse were located directly opposite his Main Street house and store. To make his operations more convenient, Nelson within three years had acquired the waterfront lot opposite the warehouse, both lots on either side of it, and the lot adjacent to his store on Main Street. The Nelsons were unquestionably doing well for themselves.

The store in Yorktown, conveniently located diagonally across from the custom house and close to the waterfront, carried in stock almost every conceivable item. Hoes, nails, plates, dishes, linen, spices, coffee, raisins, buttons, gloves, hose, cottons, silks, cutlery, chamber pots and haberdashery made up only part of the stock from which Virginia planters could choose. Nelson also handled the tobacco crops of various Virginia planters, arranging shipment and consignment to London merchants, and procuring in exchange the supply of goods that would be needed for the coming year. Such business made it feasible to own a ship, and it is probably that Nelson began to operate a vessel called The Nelson around 1730-31.

Sometime before 1732 "Scotch Tom" built the large brick house which still stands today on the corner of Main and Nelson Streets in Yorktown. After "Scotch Tom's" death in 1745, his wife, Frances Tucker, continued to live there until her death in 1766 at which time Thomas Nelson, Jr., moved into the house. He maintained a residence there until his death in 1789.

When "Scotch Tom" died at Yorktown in 1745, the Virginia Gazette said of him:

As he lived just, so was he blessed, not only in the
Increases of his Wealth, but in the Comfort of his
children, whom he live'd to see....enjoying the greatest

Honours and Preferments. As he live'd truly revere'd and respected, so he died greatly lamented.

THOMAS NELSON (1713-), "The Secretary"

Thomas "Secretary" Nelson born in 1713, the younger son of "Scotch Tom," achieved a position of great prominence in the colony. He was a member of the House of Burgesses, a member of the Council (the upper legislative body), and a member of the York County Court.

The office of Secretary of the colony was one of the most lucrative and important. From his appointment as Deputy Secretary in 1743, (William Adair, the Secretary, remained in England), Thomas was known as The Secretary.

All of the colony's records were kept in the Secretary's office. Through the office of Secretary all judgments of the General Court were made up, and all writs, land patents and civil and military commissions were issued. The office of Clerk of the County Court was filled directly by the Secretary, a prerogative greatly envied by the Governor. The Secretary's office issued all certificates of birth, marriage, and burial, plus keeping a record of all probates of wills and administrations. These duties and a multitude of others made the Secretary's office a busy one, and required the assistance of several clerks. A further duty of the Secretary was to sit as one of the judges of the General Court. The Secretary was paid through fees charged on all business done in his office ranging from fifty pounds of tobacco for a land patent to six pounds for the recording of a deed. In 1736 it was estimated that the office was worth about £900 sterling per year. Of course, out of this sum had to be paid the Clerks' salaries and in Nelson's case a certain amount went to Adair in England.

WILLIAM NELSON (1711-1772) "President"

William "President" Nelson, born 1711, was the oldest of "Scotch Tom's" sons. After spending several years in English schools, he returned to Virginia to live in Yorktown.

The year 1738 was one of the most eventful in William's life. He was married in February to Elizabeth Carter Burwell at Rosewell, the magnificent Page mansion in Gloucester County. In June he was appointed sheriff of York County. In December his son Thomas Nelson was born, a babe who would later gain fame as a signer of the Declaration of Independence. (In later years Thomas Nelson would sometime use "Junior" after his name to denote the father-son relationship which is our useage, but rather to separate two related contemporaries having the same name.) Also, in 1738 the elder Nelson grew a cucumber measuring forty inches in length in his Yorktown garden.

Entertainment and social activities played an important part in the Nelson's lives. Like most Virginia families of their standing, they were most hospitable. A contemporary, commenting on this laudable characteristic, stated all you had to do was to ride in where two chimneys showed and there would be a spare bed, lodging and welcome. William Byrd II was a frequent partaker of the Nelsons' hospitality. Twice in 1741 he was at William's house for overnight visits, and once in February and again for several days in May while he was attending the General Court in Williamsburg. No doubt he was wined and dined in the usual Virginia fashion. The main meal was generally around two-o'clock in the afternoon, and included five courses, usually pork and greens, chicken or other tame fowl, beef, mutton, veal and lamb, pudding, and wild fowl or fish, all accompanied by Madeira wine, English beer or cider. Virginia ham, fattened on chestnuts, chinkapins, and corn was even then famous and exceeded any in England "or Even Westphalis...."

William Nelson was elected to the Virginia Burgesses in 1742 and in 1745 was appointed to the Governor's Council, the legislative upper house in the Colony. For many years he made the two-hour trip from Yorktown to Williamsburg for the sessions of the General Assembly serving with diligence and dedication. In 1744, however, he was unsuccessful in his attempt to gain passage of a bill to keep goats and hogs from running loose in Yorktown.

In addition to the meeting of the General Assembly, Council members had to be in Williamsburg four times a year for the General Court and other colony business. For those services which he was to perform William would receive 50 pounds a year, an insignificant amount, but those were the times when public service was a duty.

The Nelson brothers were now required to spend much of their time in Williamsburg on public business. It was inconvenient to have to make the trip from Yorktown so frequently, and if they stayed in the capital, it was necessary to get lodgings with friends or at a convenient inn. Probably for these reasons they acquired prior to 1749 a house and out-buildings in Williamsburg on Francis Street, just across from the Capitol. It was a pleasant, story and a half, dormered frame dwelling, which was to remain in the family well into the nineteenth century. This unpretentious town house not only had the advantage of being close to the Capitol, it was also on the road from Williamsburg to Yorktown, making it even more convenient for the Nelsons. The home has been restored by Colonial Williamsburg and is now known as the Nelson-Galt House.

Religion played a large part in the life of William Nelson. He and his wife were characterized as most uncommon people, being "strict Episcopalians" and "remarkably religious." It was said that due to the size of York-Hampton Parish, on Sundays William always had a large dinner prepared for everybody who attended Grace Church so that they would not have to go without food if they came from a distance. As might be expected, he was also a generous person. A good example of this is seen by a news item in

the Gazette which mentions his contributing five pistoles to a charity working school in Talbot County, Maryland in 1751.

Meticulous attention to business was no doubt one of the main keys to William Nelson's success. All business, no matter how small, got prompt attention. This was particularly essential when dealing with the easy-going Virginia planter. Debts in arrears were attended to immediately and not allowed to drag on, as is seen in a note to Burwell Bassett in May of 1756:

When you have considered these several acco^{un}ts & are satisfy'd that they are justly due, I shall not doubt but you will make use of the first convenient opportunity of discharging Them.

Nor did the business-like Virginian hesitate to take difficult debts to court. The Gazette gave notice in August of 1756 that William Nelson had brought suit in the General Court against the securities of Henry Friday, and having obtained a favorable judgment the court was selling land to pay him the debt, which was considerable.

THOMAS NELSON, JR. (1738-1789)

Thomas Nelson, Jr., signer of the Declaration of Independence was born in 1738 and received his early education in Gloucester at a small school operated by a Reverend William Yates of Abingdon Parish. A fellow student of Thomas at the Reverend Yates School was John Page of Rosewell, interesting because later 7 of Thomas' 11 children married into the Page family.

In 1753, Thomas was sent to England for completion of his education. William placed him in the care of two friends. Edward Hunt a merchant and Beilby Porteus future Bishop of London. A small village, Hackney, near London was the site of the school Thomas attended until 1758. Soon William was writing his friends anxiously inquiring if Tom showed "a disposition to idleness and pleasure," since he feared the "spirited character" of his son would lead him astray. To avoid temptations during vacation time, he requested that Porteus place him with some eminent scientific agriculturalist to prepare him to deal with the soils of America.

Thomas returned home in 1761 having spent his last three years in England studying at Christ College, Cambridge. Promptly elected to the House of Burgesses, he was also appointed to fill a seat on the York County Court. William regretted that Thomas had fallen into the habit of smoking that "filthy tobacco," as did most young Virginians who went to England, not to mention the fact that he had begun to eat and drink considerably, but not to excess. Evidently Thomas had not quite settled down, for later a contemporary was to remark that on his arrival he was "inclined to Juvenile Diversions." William apparently had faith in Thomas because he deeded him the Swan Tavern in Yorktown together with the lot and house which adjoined it. Thomas probably lived there during the first years he was married.

The meeting of the General Assembly took Thomas to Williamsburg and it was there he met Lucy Grymes. She was a daughter of Philip Grymes of Middlesex, who like Thomas' father and uncle was a member of the Council. Also like the Nelsons, he was resident in Williamsburg during the meetings of the Assembly and the General Court, so it was inevitable that Lucy and Thomas would meet. Lucy was the exception among Virginia women of her day and age. She had a good education for the time, having attended the school taught by the same Reverend Mr. William Yates to which Thomas had gone earlier. Here she had become proficient in arithmetic and acquired a fondness for reading. She played the harpsichord and was an "Elegant Dancer," having been taught by William Pelham, who was the organist for Bruton Parish Church. With the exception of dancing, which an observer said most Virginia women were "immoderately" fond of, Lucy was certainly apart from the generality who were described as "seldom accomplished" and "unequal to any interesting conversation" captivated Thomas Nelson, and on July 29, 1762, he married the nineteen-year-old Lucy in Williamsburg, the ceremony being performed by their old teacher William Yates.

Evidently Thomas had settled down somewhat after marriage, for he now gave more attention to the duties of Burgess, and was appointed to the Committee of Propositions and Grievances. Nevertheless, he does not seem to have had a hand in preparing any of the forty-four bills passed by the Assembly. In county affairs, he was more active and the following spring he was made Colonel of the York County militia, just under his fellow Burgess, Dudley Digges.

With the end of the Seven Year's War in 1763, England sought to tax the colonies to help pay for the war and to tighten up trade regulations for the colonies. Americans believed that both the King and the British Parliament were limited by an unwritten constitution which guaranteed to every man his natural rights to have liberty and property. A series of events occurred between 1763 and 1775 which eventually convinced many Americans including Thomas Nelson, Jr., that their liberties were being violated to such an extent that rebellion was justified. English acts which angered the colonists included the Proclamation of 1763 forbidding settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains, the Sugar Act of 1764, the Stamp Act of 1765, the Townsend Acts of 1767-1770, the Tea Act of 1773, the Coercive Act of 1774, and others.

When England repealed the Stamp Act in 1766, William Nelson expressed the feeling of many when he stated that the repeal had put him in a "good Humor," and had "taken away the hateful cause of Disgust and ill blood between the Mother Country and the Colonies; which might have brought on the ruin of both." Britains in the future might well have heeded words like these.

In 1767, Parliament passed the Townsend Acts. These new acts placed taxes on glass, lead, paper, paints, and tea and were designed to replace revenue lost by the repeal of the Stamp Act.

Resentment slowly grew toward these acts and by 1769, 68 persons, all members of Burgesses, signed a pact declaring that they would not purchase

any goods taxed for the purpose of raising revenue. Among the signers of this document were Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, George Washington, Richard Henry Lee, and Thomas Nelson.

Secretary Nelson's gout was giving him trouble at this time and gossipy Martha Goosely reported that it had him "laid up, Doing Pennace for Past folly."

With the death of Governor Botetourt in October 1770, William Nelson was elected President of the Council, and therefore, he served as acting Governor of Virginia for almost a year until the arrival of Lord Dunmore. William Nelson provided able leadership for the colony as he dealt with matters involving western lands, trade with the Indians, the shortage of money and a terrible flooding of Virginia's rivers which washed away fertile lowground and destroyed houses, tobacco, corn and livestock. William called it the most dreadful "catastrophe that has happened to Virginia since its first settlement by the English." William called a special meeting of the General Assembly which appropriated 30,000 pounds for flood relief.

Although public affairs kept them busy, the Nelson family prospered economically during the early 1770's. But money was not everything to the Nelsons, and when merchant Samuel Athawer made some derogatory remarks about Hugh Nelson's tobacco, his father William told Athawer he should have been careful in his remarks since it was "as great an offense to a Virginia planter to find fault with his Tobacco as with his Mistress."

William Nelson died in 1772 and was laid to rest at the feet of his father in the yard of Grace Church in Yorktown. In the words of his eldest son, Thomas, ".....let it suffice to say that he live'd by all belov'd & died by all lamented."

Thomas Nelson hoped that Lord Dunmore would appoint him to fill his father's place on the Council, but Dunmore appointed another. Many evidently thought that the best man had been passed over, for as Robert Carter Nicholas remarked "his Nelson's pretensions are superior, all things consider'd, to those of any other." In fact, Nicholas continued, "I believe he has as good a Heart as any Man living; his morals are sound, his Conduct steady, uniform & Exemplary; & in point of Fortune, which necessarily gives a Man an Independency of Spirit, he is inferior to very few."

Upon their father's death in November of 1772, Thomas and his brother Hugh inherited the family business which included a general merchandise store in Yorktown and an import-export business with tobacco as the main export. Unfortunately, this was a time of low tobacco prices, a poor market and tight credit. All of these factors combined to make operations difficult and Thomas and Hugh had a hard time operating the business. Very shortly the indebtedness to their British suppliers reached £2300 and these firms were reluctant to extend more credit to the two brothers. In 1773 Augustine Moore of Yorktown, an employee of the firm, was brought in as partner

in order to help the operation. In spite of heavy business and personal debts, Thomas continued to spend freely. He purchased land, slaves, and carriages. He even saw fit to venture £50 in an agricultural company which planned to raise and make wine, silk, and oil.

As the result of the May 1773 Tea Act passed by Parliament, the East India Company was able to sell tea at a lower price than colonial merchants, This greatly distressed the colonials and led to the famous Boston Tea Party. Protesting the closing of that port in reprisal for dumping the tea; the Virginia Burgesses, in sympathy with the angry Bostonians, passed a resolution which called for a day of prayer and fasting to avert "...the heavy calamity which threatens destruction of our Civil Rights...." Upon receipt of this memorial, Dunmore dissolved Burgesses.

Again, as in 1769, some eighty-nine members of the Burgesses, not to be squelched by the Governor, convened at the Raleigh Tavern on May 27. There, in the Apollo Room, they signed an Association protesting against the Boston Port Bill and calling on the Committees of Correspondence in the various colonies to consider the necessity of appointing delegates to meet in a general congress, "to deliberate on those general measures which the united interests of America may from time to time require." Thomas Nelson was among the eighty-nine signers which number included Peyton Randolph, Robert Carter Nicholas, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, George Washington, feeling that mere letters and memorials had no effect on Parliament, Thomas and others were in the front of a movement to stop importing all English goods and to cease exporting goods to England. A resolution to this effect was passed by the representatives of the people in August 1774. At the same time, delegates were appointed to represent Virginia at the first meeting of a general Colonial Congress to be held in Philadelphia in September. Thomas Nelson was not among the delegates at this time.

Business continued to be difficult for Thomas and Hugh. Prices were still down and trouble with English suppliers continued to bother the Nelson brothers. Thomas complained to one English supplier that the shoes he sent were "so unreasonably large that they will fit none but now and then a country girl who have [sic] been accustomed to go barefoot from her childhood." To another English merchant who was forever "huming and hawing" about how much tobacco Thomas should send him he replied with tongue in cheek:

You [Athawes] certainly have the Hyppo sometimes.
If you have, mount your little Chestnut Mare & gallop away to some acquaintances House where there are a parcel of pretty Girls & chat with them for an Hower or two. You old Bachelors are strange beings why don't you get a wife. The many solitary Howers you must pass. I should detest the thought of going to bed alone so often as you do. Prithee look out for some pretty Lady (& you may find one with prudence too that [will] make you pass the waves of this troublesome World with joy & satisfaction.

Family life was much more pleasant than the busy world of business and politics. Children were born, raised and educated, marriages held, and social events attended. With the Nelson's seventh child arriving in December 1774 the big house on Yorktown's Main Street must have been a lively place. Thomas hired a tutor, Jacob Hall, for his children who was paid 50 pounds a year, furnished with room and board and given the use of Nelson's library which Hall characterized as a "fine collection."

But both, Nelson's family life and his business were to suffer as his public responsibilities demanded more and more time.

To the northward in Philadelphia the Continental Congress was forming an Association modeled after that of Virginia, providing for the non-importation and non-consumption of British products. These regulations were to apply to all the Colonies and were to be enforced by committees elected in every county, town and city. Soon after this, on November 7, members of the York County Committee boarded merchant John Norton's ship, the Virginia, anchored at Yorktown and threw two half chests of tea, which were consigned to Prentis and Company of Williamsburg, into the river. Doing no other damage, the committee returned to shore and drew up remonstrances against Prentis for ordering the tea, Norton for shipping it, and the Virginia's Captain, Howard Estes, for allowing it aboard. Other county committees which had sprung up in Virginia after the Congress' recommendation were just as zealous. This was no half-way measure, the mother country must give in, the colonies would not.

Already further steps had been taken that would widen the breach between England and her colonies. If Parliament had made no effect to redress American grievances by May of 1775, a new Congress was to be held in Philadelphia in that month. For this reason, early in that year another convention had been called in Virginia, primarily to elect delegates to the Congress and to further consider what was to be done about the worsening relationship between the colonies and the mother country. The meeting was to be held in Richmond on March 20, safely away from Dunmore and turbulent Williamsburg. Late in February Thomas Nelson and Dudley Digges were unanimously elected to represent York County.

In a series of resolves Patrick Henry asked that a committee be appointed "to prepare a plan for embodying, arming, and disciplining such a number of men," as might be sufficient to put the colony "into a stage of defense...." There was immediate opposition to this move, led by such moderates as Richard Bland, Benjamin Harrison, Edmund Pendleton, and Robert Carter Nicholas. It was then that Thomas Nelson arose and supported Henry's motion in the warmest terms. He concluded his speech by calling on Almighty God to witness:

that if any British troops should be landed within the County, of which he was lieutenant, he would await for no orders, and would obey none, which should forbid him to summon the militia and repel the invaders at the water edge.

Others came to Henry's aid, the most prominent probably being Jefferson, but the resolves were not carried until Henry had risen again and given his inspired oration, ending with "give me liberty, or give me death."

At the third Virginia Convention held in July 1775, Nelson was elected as a Virginian representative to the Continental Congress. In September, Thomas and his wife Lucy travelled by carriage to Philadelphia. It was at this session of the Continental Congress that John Adams described Nelson as "a fat man," but "a speaker, and alert and lively for his weight." February of 1776 occasioned a return to Virginia which was to last much longer than planned, an event there required his presence.

For months Thomas Nelson had been behind the independence movement and on May 14 he offered the motion for independence from Great Britain at the Virginia Convention which was meeting in Williamsburg. Three days later Thomas was on his way back to Philadelphia with the Virginia resolution for independence in his custody. Soon, on July 4, 1776, Thomas Nelson, merchant of Yorktown, was to sign his name to the Declaration of Independence adopted by the Continental Congress. Thomas took an active part in business of the Congress serving on the finance committee and the committee to plan a confederation of the colonies. Poor health forced Thomas to return home in February 1777. At this time he was confronted with the closing of the Yorktown mercantile business which, founded by his grandfather, had been operating over seventy years. Thomas had known, of course, that this would probably happen when he supported the independence movement.

In April 1777 Thomas Nelson suffered a slight apoplectic stroke on the floor of Congress and was forced to resign his post and return to Virginia.

If Thomas Nelson thought his resignation from the Continental Congress and his return to Virginia was going to give him an opportunity to rest and recover his health, he was sadly mistaken. Even before he returned to Virginia, the freeholders of York County, ignoring his membership in the Congress, elected him and Joseph Prentis as their representative in the House of Delegates.

It would seem strange that he could perform these duties at a time when he did not feel capable of serving in the Congress; but neither of these positions was as exacting as congressional service and in those days devotion to state superseded devotion to nation. Thomas Nelson was no exception to this rule.

On his arrival, Thomas entered immediately into the business of the Assembly and he and Prentis prepared a bill requiring the Quartermaster to provide tents or barracks for the housing of soldiers in the state rather than quartering them in private dwellings. This was probably a direct result of the destruction of private property in Yorktown by soldiers stationed there. An English visitor in that same year, described in clearly:

This is a pleasant town situated upon the York River....Close to the town there are several very

good Gentlemen's houses built of brick and some of their gardens laid out with the greatest taste of any I have seen in America, but now almost ruined by disorderly soldiers....their own soldiers....Houses burnt down, others pulled to pieces for fuel, everything in disorder and confusion....

Beginning in August 1777, when he was appointed commander of the Virginia militia, and lasting for the duration of the Revolutionary War, military affairs consumed much of Thomas Nelson's time. Thomas Nelson, like most of his countrymen who had accepted similar positions, had little military experience. But as George Washington remarked in a congratulatory letter to the new general, "In our infant state of WAR, it cannot be expected, we should be perfect in the business of it, and....I doubt not, that your zeal and assiduity will ample supply any deficiency." Nelson did not lack for zeal and in accepting his appointment as commander of the militia he refused to receive a salary. On several occasions between 1777 and 1780 when British forces threatened the state, General Nelson organized the militia for resistance often spending his own money to supply the troops.

Between invasion threats Nelson did take time to attend sessions of the House of Delegates. On one occasion when the House was considering a bill which would virtually abrogate American debts to Englishmen, Nelson opposed it arguing that this would be gross ingratitude to British creditors who in many cases could be regarded as benefactors of Virginians whose capital was small, but on whose honor and integrity the British has relied. Then, with his voice rising, Thomas Nelson brought his argument to a close, stating that "for these reasons....I hope the bill will be rejected; but whatever its fate, by God, I will pay my debts like an honest man."

When in December 1778 Nelson was again elected to return to the Continental Congress, he was forced to sell 600 acres of his York County land to provide for his family in his absence.

Upon his return from the Continental Congress in May 1779 Nelson again entered state politics, this time running for governor. The General Assembly rather than the people elected the governors. Nelson was defeated by Thomas Jefferson and John Page with Jefferson finally winning over Page.

This same General Assembly with a preponderance of "up country" delegates voted to move the capital from Williamsburg to Richmond.

The year 1780 opened with Virginia 26,000,000 pounds in debt and with the worse weather in forty years. In mid-January it was possible to walk across the York River from Yorktown to Gloucester. At Jefferson's urging Nelson personally solicited loans from individuals to help finance the war. Nelson often pledged his own security for many of these loans.

The year also passed without a serious British invasion of Virginia, but on December 30, a fleet of 27 sails was sighted in the Chesapeake Bay carrying

a British force under the traitor Benedict Arnold. The militia was called out to defend the state under General Nelson, but proved too weak to keep Arnold's redcoats from conducting raids in the state. In May of 1781 Lord Cornwallis entered Virginia from the south with his British Army. General Nelson at this point was commanding a brigade of militia under the Frenchman Lafayette who had been sent to Virginia with his American soldiers of the Continental Line by Washington.

Nelson had been in the field with the Virginia militia almost six months when news of his election as Governor of Virginia by the General Assembly reached him.

The General now became the Governor, and as fate would have it, at one of the most crucial periods in Virginia's history. The question of whether or not he was capable of filling this demanding position must have arisen in Thomas' mind, and in the minds of others. Certainly his long legislative experience and his military service, which had brought him in close contact with the problems which now faced the state probably fitted him for the position better than any other person in the "Old Dominion." Washington on hearing the news of Nelson's appointment said that he was pleased with the choice. "He is an honest man, active, spirited and decided, and will, I daresay, suit the times as well as any other person." Four short months were to give the answer to this prediction.

On the same day that Thomas was sworn into office, the legislature passed a bill giving him extensive powers. Acting with the consent of the Council, he was empowered to call out the state militia in such numbers as he saw fit and to send them where their services were required. Similarly he could impress food and supplies; seize Loyalists and banish them without jury trial; redistribute the property of persons who opposed laws for calling up militia; discontinue the state quartermaster department and put it in the hands of continental officials; and constitute courts with the same powers as the General Court of the state; to declare martial law within a twenty-mile radius of the enemy or American camps; to strengthen militia regulations so that six months might be added to the service of those who failed to appear when originally summoned, and providing death as a maximum punishment for desertion. These laws gave Nelson and the Council almost dictatorial powers.

Governor Nelson faced staggering problems.

Inflation continued its spiral upward. In April the exchange rate had been 150 to 1, when Nelson became governor it was 200 to 1 and by late July it was 350 to 1. With harvest time drawing near the state militia began to melt away from Lafayette's army. To the south General Greene was crying for reinforcements from Virginia. To the north the state's delegates in Congress were explaining that "unless something is done to furnish us with money to bear our reasonable expenses in this place (Philadelphia) we must sell what little property we possess here or return to Virginia." And, of course, there was the always pressing problem of obtaining and transporting

food to the army, for in this land of plenty there was frequently real suffering in this respect. Farmers were hesitant to sell their produce for devalued currency and transportation was hard to come by.

While Nelson wrestled with the problems of administering the government of war-torn Virginia, military events took a turn for the better. Cornwallis in August had established his headquarters, ironically enough, in Governor Nelson's home town, Yorktown. By September American and French forces were converging upon Cornwallis. Down from the north came Washington's Continental Army and an allied French Army commanded by Count de Rochambeau. A French navy under Comte de Grasse blockaded the Chesapeake Bay.

In September Nelson left Richmond to take personal command of the Virginia militia and to aid in supplying all of the armies.

Thomas was convinced that he could serve the state best in this capacity. Yet, by leaving the Council in Richmond, he put himself in a position which was to cause him to act unconstitutionally in the future. All the additional powers which had been granted to the Governor could be exercised only with the consent of the Council; and through the month of September and part of October Nelson was to act frequently without this consent. The fact is that often in this period prior to Yorktown there was not a quorum of the Council present in Richmond, but some argued that if the Governor himself had been present in Richmond the Council members would have attended.

The ensuing events indicate that Nelson's presence was desperately needed to keep food and supplies flowing to the American and French soldiers.

By the end of September the American and French armies had assembled in Williamsburg and soon were on the road to Yorktown. Of the 16,000 allied troops, 3,000 were Virginia militia commanded by Thomas Nelson. Thomas Nelson must have harbored strange and mixed feelings as he watched preparations proceed for the siege of the town of his birth. These feelings were intensified by the fact that in Yorktown sat old Secretary Nelson, who had refused to be moved from his home, even by the arrival of the British.

By October 9 the allied artillery was in place and on that day the bombardment of Yorktown was begun at three o'clock in the afternoon. As the firing began, down on the American right General Nelson was asked to point out a good target toward which the artillerists could direct their fire. Thomas indicated a large house which he suggested was probably Cornwallis' headquarters. The house was his own. Through this act of patriotic self-sacrifice, which was so typical of the man, Thomas did much to wipe out Lafayette's feeling of irritation toward the Virginia government.

Actually the Governor's home was not the most prominent one in the town. The Secretary's house was the first which caught the eye, for it sat on an eminence near some of the most important British fortifications. It was the Secretary's house in which Cornwallis actually made his headquarters, and because of its location it drew much of the fire from the allied

cannon. The cannonade continued on through the night and into the next day. At noon a flag of truce appeared on the British lines. At first the thought occurred that Cornwallis was going to ask for terms, but it was soon revealed that it was Secretary Nelson, whom the British commander was allowing to leave the beleaguered village. The old gentleman could not walk because he was undergoing a bad attack of the gout and his two sons in the American Army, Colonel William Nelson and Major John Nelson, went across and brought their father back to General Washington's headquarters. There the Secretary recounted that the bombardment was producing great damage and had forced Cornwallis to seek safety in a "grotto" at the foot of his garden. It was his opinion "that the British were a good deal dispirited altho'....they affect to say they have no apprehensions of the Garrison's falling."

But by October 17, the allied army had forced Cornwallis to ask for surrender terms and on October 19, the British Army laid down their arms at a place outside of Yorktown now called surrender field.

Nelson in a letter dated October 17, 1781 wrote: "This blow I think must be a decisive one, it being out of the power of G. reat B. ritain to replace such a number of good troops."

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Thomas was right. The victory at Yorktown proved to be the final and climatic battle of the American War for Independence.

The surrender of Yorktown did not ease the load on Thomas Nelson's shoulders. The healthy British prisoners had to be moved to prison camps, while the sick and wounded had to be cared for, and all had to be fed. Washington was urging that the Virginia military establishment be kept on a firm footing, while the tendency was for all to go home. The French who were remaining in the state were creating something of a problem, particularly in Yorktown, where in some cases they were actually ousting people from their homes so that they could use them for winter quarters. There were accounts to be settled between the French and the state and between the state and the Continental Congress. Large numbers of cattle which had been collected had to be disposed of and other provisions stored. The problem of Virginia's western land claims had to be dealt with and there was still civil strife in the lower Tidewater. These and many other problems weighed heavily on Governor Nelson.

Unfortunately Thomas was not a well man. He had been in ill health intermittently since 1777 and for the past year his spells of sickness had increased as public service became more demanding and onerous. In addition to this he was now undergoing severe condemnation from certain areas for his actions in obtaining supplies--actions which were entirely well meaning. He had held on through the Yorktown campaign, but now the burden was too much and late in October he retired, dangerously ill, to "Offley Hoo" in Hanover County.

Through the first part of November, Thomas tried to carry on the business of the state through his secretary, Robert Andrews. But as the month wore

on it became increasingly evident that he was not going to recover quickly. Consequently, when the Assembly convened late in the month, he wrote the Speaker of the House that "The very low state of health to which I am reduced, and from which I have little expectation of soon recovering, makes it my duty to resign the government, that the state may not suffer for want of an executive." On November 30, Benjamin Harrison was elected over John Page and Richard Henry Lee to succeed Nelson.

The very next month Thomas felt compelled to travel to Richmond to defend himself before the General Assembly against charges of misconduct while Governor. What he said in his own defense must have been effective because both the House and Senate unanimously passed a bill stating that Nelson's acts were "productive of general good and warranted by necessity" and that they should be "held of the same validity...as if they had been executed by and with the advice of the Council, and with all formalities prescribed by law."

Thomas must have been heartened by the approval of his conduct by the legislature, but he had passed the zenith of his career. Broken physically and financially, the remainder of his life was to be marked by frustration. He was never to recoup his business losses or his health and in 1789, fifty years of age, Thomas Nelson died at his plantation Montair in Hanover County. His doctor Augustine Smith who attended Thomas during his last week conveyed some idea of the despair which filled Nelson's last days.

From his unexampled patriotick exertions during the late war he had exhausted a fortune....& at the time I mention saw his property arrested, & a prospect of sinking from affluence, almost to absolute poverty. Mr. Friend! you can easily conceive the poignant distress of a man in this situation, with an amiable wife & a dozen children around him. He cou'd not bear it. I attended him in his last illness & saw that the equisite tortures of the mind were the disease that destroyed his body.

Was not Thomas Nelson a victim of the Revolution as much as any man who lost his life in battle?

The newspapers carrying accounts of his death were edged in black and one obituary closed with Shakespeare's matchless tribute:

His life was gentle, and the elements So mixed in him,
that nature might stand up,
And say to all the world, this was a man.

Nelson's body was brought back to Yorktown and buried in the Grace Church graveyard.

This epitaph may still be seen on the tomb.

Gen. Thomas Nelson, Jr.

Patriot Soldier Christian-Gentleman

Born Dec. 18, 1738

Died Jan. 2, 1789

Mover of the Resolution of May 5, 1776

in the Virginia Convention

Instructing her Delegates in Congress
to Move that Body to Declare the Colonies

Free and Independent States

Signer of the Declaration of Independence

War Governor of Virginia

Commander of Virginia's Forces

He Gave all for Liberty

An Interpreter's Preface

It would seem that history is viable enough to accommodate any interpreter who would like to "tell a story" as long as he regards the truth of things. I have found that this Yorktown walking visit hangs together pretty well on historic architecture. Admitting a strong predisposition to old buildings doesn't blind me to the fact that every interpreter is not going to agree it is the only, or ever the best, way to reach the visitor who comes to be entertained rather than educated. I will be satisfied well enough if these suggestions are simply helpful.

Footnotes have not been included, but all primary and secondary sources on Yorktown and house histories as well as verification of architectural information may be found in one or more of the volumes listed in the bibliography. The appended glossary of terms may also be helpful.

I am grateful to Mr. James N. Haskett, Chief Park Historian; Mr. F. A. Gould, Assistant Chief Park Historian; and particularly to Mr. Charles E. Hatch, Jr. for much patient assistance. Because it is expected makes it no less necessary to say that these individuals are not responsible for any errors of fact or opinion.

In 1966, a grant from the Ford Foundation made possible a report of a special committee on historic preservation under the auspices of the United States Conference of Mayors. What is important to me was pretty well summed up in a thought shared by the committee,

"It is not ^{alone} ~~along~~ what we save from the past, but how, and with what dignity."

This interpreting business is one of dignity.

R. Brien Varnado
Historian

Yorktown, 1968

A Suggested Yorktown Walking Visit

VICTORY MONUMENT

Yorktown was surveyed and laid out in 85 lots along Main Street as a result of an Act of Port passed by the Virginia Assembly, sitting at Jamestown, in 1691. The Act was intended to encourage growth of urban and commercial port centers in the colony. Virginia had already developed a rural plantation economy based predominantly upon tobacco culture; and by its nature, the system did not necessitate communities such as developed in the Middle and New England Colonies. However, many in Great Britain and Virginia believed that continued prosperity, at least partially, depended upon the development of certain ports from which tobacco might be conveniently shipped and needed items from abroad imported. There was also the need of collecting trade revenues from which the colony and Mother Country derived substantial income.

Yorktown was an ideal choice for a port, possessing one of the finest natural harbors in Virginia. There was a 50 foot water depth next to shoreline on the York River below us, and the waterfront was the scene of considerable activity throughout much of the 18th century. There were wharves, warehouses, merchantile businesses, and an extraordinary number of taverns.

Yorktown, however, reached the peak of its prosperity about 1750. At that time, there were almost 3,000 inhabitants living in and near the town. Although this seems a small number by our standards, it was considered a fair sized community in the Colonial period.

In the years following 1750, Yorktown began a slow decline, almost imperceptible at first. Historians attribute this to two principal reasons. First, the York River is not so much a river as it is a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay, which is some eight miles below us. Sailing vessels of the time, carrying tobacco to overseas ports; even though of relatively shallow draft, could not navigate much further than West Point, Virginia, about 25 miles upstream. This becomes significant when we consider the second reason for Yorktown's decline---tobacco itself. Growing tobacco is very hard on the soil. The plant demands much of natural chemicals that provide fertility. There was very little, if any, scientific farming in the 18th century. Crop rotation was unknown, for the most part, and natural fertilizers were not used. The once fertile soil in this area inevitably wore out with constant replanting; and since good land was easily obtainable to the West, large and small planters alike picked up and moved on. Inasmuch as the trade ships could not follow this migration but a short distance upstream, the port declined and the town along with it.

In August of 1781, the British, commanded by Cornwallis, occupied Yorktown with an army of 7,500 regulars, Hessians, and Tories, setting in motion events that were to lead to the final major battle of the American Revolution. Cornwallis constructed an inner-defense line surrounding the city

from the North, on Yorktown Creek, all the way to the York River, behind the Visitor Center. He also fortified Gloucester Point on the North bank of the river. All roads were blocked and Yorktown reluctantly played host to the British. We should point out that the citizens of Yorktown overwhelmingly supported the revolution. This is rather interesting when we stop to consider one salient fact--Yorktown's prosperity as a port depended almost totally upon trade with Great Britain. General Washington, with some 16,000 American and French troops, began an all out siege of Yorktown on September 28, ending with Cornwallis' surrender on October 17. As time would prove, American independence was finally achieved here.

On our tour, we will see some of the effects of the siege upon the homes and other structures.

Yorktown again saw military action, although limited, in the War Between the States when Union troops attempted to capture the Confederate Capitol at Richmond, in 1862, by moving up the peninsula lying between the James and York Rivers.

Today, Yorktown is home to about 300 inhabitants and still retains much of its 18th century charm and atmosphere.

The Monument was authorized by Congress shortly after the American victory. However, it was not completed because of insufficient funds until 1884, a little over 100 years later. The base contains inscriptions dedicating the monument as a memorial to victory, a narrative of the siege, commemorating the Treaty of Alliance with France of 1778, and the peace treaty with Great Britain. There are thirteen young women locked arm and arm around the base of the column, representing the unity of the thirteen colonies. The column carries 38 stars, representing the number of states in the Union in 1881, at which time the monument was dedicated. The figure on top represents the genius of liberty. The original was destroyed by lightning in 1942 and was replaced in 1956. The monument is constructed of Maine granite and stands 84 feet high, with the liberty statue adding another 14 feet.

Down Main Street, before us lies the fascinating life of the 18th century as expressed in its singular architecture. Lets begin our visit.

DUDLEY DIGGES HOUSE

We have records of a structure on this lot as early as 1706. This house, however, was built around 1760. It has been restored by the National Park Service, but it is an original. It was occupied by Dudley Digges, a member of the very prominent Digges family, in colonial Virginia. If you have visited the reconstructed Capitol at Colonial Williamsburg, you have perhaps seen the House of Burgesses and the Council Chamber. Dudley Digges sat as a member of the House of Burgesses for some 25 years. His father, Cole Digges, was at one time President of the Governor's Council. This body sat as an upper house in much the same manner as the House of Lords in Great Britain, and our Senate of today. Dudley Digges later served as Lt. Governor of the State of Virginia in 1781, during the revolution.

The house was occupied by the British during the siege and severely damaged by allied artillery. It took some 20 distinct hits from French and American batteries. The most extensive damage was to the roof and many of the rafters and other framing members have been left in their damaged condition.

Having visited Colonial Williamsburg, you will notice a great many architectural similarities between the Digges House and those of Williamsburg. This is no coincidence. In order to truly understand 18th century architecture, we should realize that the English did not come to Virginia and begin constructing log cabins. They were a Swedish contribution. Following the early, difficult years at Jamestown, the colonists attempted to duplicate the aesthetic environment they had left behind in Great Britain. This was especially true of their public and private buildings although such structures were necessarily altered somewhat to suit the conditions of this new land in Virginia. It is also important that we understand the 18th century enlightenment which exalted reason and logic, was also vastly concerned with achieving architectural order and balance which perhaps may be summed up in one word--symmetry. The result was architectural harmony, continuity and visual unity. Yet, in spite of 18th century use of similar design principals there is to be found, as you will see, a remarkable variety. Although utility was sometimes sacrificed for the sake of formality, the total effect was often stunning in its beautiful simplicity. Symmetry, then, found expression in one form or another in all of the 18th century art forms--art, music, and literature.

Let us illustrate what we mean by architectural symmetry. A house such as this one would most likely never have been designed with a chimney at one end without a balancing chimney at the opposite end. As we pass by the front of the house, you will see four windows evenly spaced, two on either side of the doorway. Also, look at the projections framed into the roof, resembling dog houses. They are called Dormer Windows and are typically found in 18th century frame and brick structures. Notice, however, as we pass by, each is placed directly over the window below with the middle dormer situated directly above the doorway. The angle of the dormer roof will always match the slope of the house roof. Under the eaves along the front of the house you may have noticed regularly spaced blocks projecting a short distance. Together they comprise what is known as a modillion cornice. At one time the modillion cornice may have had structural significance, perhaps as an extension of the second floor joists, but in time it came to be an applied decoration. If you have the opportunity, look for this in Colonial Williamsburg; you will see it repeated many times.

Now, the key to 18th century architectural symmetry was geometry. The circle, square, and triangle were the basic building units. Although the proportions sometimes got rather complicated, the basic idea was a simple one. The George Wythe House in Williamsburg is a good example of how geometry was effectively used. The house design utilized an equilateral triangle, one in which all sides are equal. The base, or bottom of the triangle was the exact width of the front of the house, 54' 6". The apex, or top, of the triangle determined the exact height of the chimneys. This was only one of the means by which pleasing horizontal and vertical relationships could be achieved using geometry.

THE GREAT VALLEY

This wide depression was known to 18th century Yorktown inhabitants as the Great Valley. It was one of three principal streets connecting Main Street with Water Street on the York River below us. These were most important to the merchants of Yorktown, many of whom maintained dwellings up here. Such thoroughfares provided direct an easy access to places of business below.

THOMAS SESSIONS HOUSE

This is Yorktown's oldest standing house, constructed we believe, about 1697 by Thomas Sessions, a carpenter. It was purchased in 1766 by Dr. Matthew Pope who, before the revolution, had been personal physician to the Royal Governor in Williamsburg. Dr. Pope supported the revolution and during the war twice served as Mayor of Yorktown.

Architecturally, the house is rather unique in that it has a jerkin-head roof. Looking at the roof hips near the chimneys, you will notice they are truncated (they terminate abruptly). This feature is what architectural historians call a jerkin-head, and it is not often found in this part of Virginia. We have another example in Yorktown, a little further down Main Street in the reconstructed Swan Tavern. You may also see an excellent example in the restored Mr. Wetherburn's Tavern in Colonial Williamsburg.

The dormer windows are carefully placed, and you will note a modillion cornice. Also, please take a good look at the brick pattern in the walls of this house. We will discuss it later. The chimney stacks are rather tall and narrow. This is a fairly good indication that the house is older than many of its neighbors.

THE NELSON HOUSE

The fruition of symmetry perhaps may be found in the 18th century architectural style known as Georgian. As medieval building traditions in England and Virginia gave way from functional considerations to those of pure form, one of the earliest English proponents of the new style stated that architecture should be "solid, proportionable according to rule, masculine and unaffected." However, one man above all others breathed life and vitality into Georgian architecture. He was Sir Christopher Wren, Surveyor of His Majesty's Office of Works. It was Wren who rebuilt London after a great fire in 1666. He directly or indirectly influenced what were to be the predominant characteristics of the style in England and in Virginia. Most of the 18th century public and private structures we see today in Yorktown and Williamsburg may be considered as Georgian and the style is beautifully executed in the Nelson House. Its proportions are striking. Window placement, or fenestration, is neatly balanced and you will note the presence of dormers and modillion cornice. Just above the doorway, you may see a molded brick pediment in the form of a triangle, a common treatment applied to entryways. The chimneys are perfectly balanced, although not at the gable ends. Each is capped with molded brick.

The Nelson House was constructed sometime before 1732 by "Scotch Tom" Nelson, founder of the Nelson family in Virginia, which was one of the most prominent and wealthy families in the colony. "Scotch Tom" came to Yorktown in 1705 and quickly prospered as a merchant. However, it is his grandson, Thomas Nelson, Jr., that we especially remember today. Thomas Nelson, Jr. occupied the house in 1766 following the death of his grandmother. His adult life was one of distinguished service to the colony. In 1776 at the Virginia Convention held at the capitol in Williamsburg, he offered the motion to instruct Virginia's delegation to the Continental Congress to vote for independence. He was one of Virginia's seven signers of the Declaration of Independence, twice a member of the Continental Congress, Wartime governor of the State and a Brigadier-General of Militia. In the last capacity, he was with General Washington at the Siege of Yorktown.

We pay what is seemingly a great deal of empty tribute to those men who in 1776, pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred honor to a conception, of liberty as they understood it. Few realize, however, the consequences of such a declaration. During the siege, General Nelson had reason to believe that General Cornwallis had moved his headquarters to the Nelson House. General Nelson directed artillery fire against this house--his own. In a moment, we will cross Main Street and examine the damage to the East wall. One further word about Thomas Nelson, Jr. During the course of the revolution, he signed many personal notes to finance the war effort. Much of this debt was never repaid and he died penniless in Hanover County, Virginia in 1789.

(near East Wall on Nelson Street)

Throughout most of the 18th century there were no professional architects as we think of them today. The adoption of the Georgian style came about in America by making its forms accessible to intelligent workmen, or even laymen, by means of books. The individual often responsible for design and construction was referred to as an undertaker or contractor. His design was usually taken from one of many architecture books and executed by joiners, or carpenters, and brickmasons, whom the undertaker would supervise.

On this side, you can see the modillion cornice carries around the entire house, also forming a triangular pediment by following the roof slope in front and back. Looking at the flat keystone arches above each window you will see a different color light red brick. These bricks have been hand rubbed to give them this distinguishing appearance. Rubbed bricks were frequently used, as here, to accent windows and doorways. Above the first floor windows is a band of rubbed brick running almost the entire length of this side. It is called a belt-course and maybe found on many Georgian frame and brick structures. It was primarily a decorative feature to relieve the vertical dimension of the wall. As the 18th century progressed, belt-courses ran unbroken, around the structure. At the wall angles are stone quoins, regularly used as decoration on larger structures of the 18th century. Like the belt-course, quoins were used on frame and brick buildings.

THOMAS PATE HOUSE

This is another very old dwelling, constructed about 1703 by Thomas Pate. It was acquired in 1713 as a townhouse by Cole Digges, the father of Dudley Digges. Dudley Digges, you will remember, was the owner of the first house at which we stopped on our tour. Although it is a modest structure, you may still see the 18th century concept of symmetry expressed in it, perhaps not as perfectly as in others, but nonetheless it conforms to the pattern. The exterior has seen very little restoration and we are seeing the house very much as it looked throughout the 18th century. Again, you will note the modillion cornice and dormer windows, although the dormers are not evenly centered over the windows below.

THE CUSTOM HOUSE

This was a very important building in Yorktown's public life. It served as the Custom House and was constructed about 1720 by Richard Ambler, Customs Collector for the Port of York. There were certain duties and fees required of ships in the 18th century carrying trade. These external ~~taxes~~ ^{taxes}, as they were called, in time became a constant source of irritation between the colonies and Great Britain. However, it was the job of the Customs Collector to insure such taxes were paid on ships entering and clearing the harbor. The Custom House is conveniently situated on Read Street, which was one of the three principal arteries connecting Main and Water Streets. It was a simple matter for the ship's master to walk up here and transact his business.

Ambler was obliged to build the Custom House out of his own pocket. His post was a lucrative one and the colony would not bear the cost of erecting such a structure.

The modillion cornice carries completely around the building as does the belt-course. The technical name for a plain or unmolded belt-course such as this one is platband. Now, examine the roof. It is a very good example of what is called a hip-roof. You will recall we have already discussed the jerkin-head roof. The hip-roof was quite popular in the 18th century and is easily recognizable in that it slopes back evenly from each side of the building forming a triangle.

The Custom House was acquired by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1924, restored, and is used by the local chapter as a meeting house.

THE SOMMERWELL HOUSE

This house was constructed sometime before 1707 by Mongo Sommerwell. It was subsequently acquired by the Lightfoot family who lived in it for 67 years. The house was used as a hospital during the War Between the States, and for many years in the 19th century was a hotel. Restored by the National Park Service, for a time it served as park headquarters of Colonial National Historical Park.

We have stopped in front for a very good reason. It is an excellent place to point out some of the interesting characteristics of 18th century brick-

work. Remember that we asked you to notice the brick pattern of the Thomas Sessions House. Take a careful look at this wall. You will see there is a definite pattern of alternating long and short bricks. The long bricks are called stretchers and the short ones, headers. Such an arrangement in a brick course is called Flemish Bond, and there is perhaps no more outstanding and fascinating feature of 18th century brickwork. It was used in nearly all of the colonies. As with just about every other architectural refinement of the 18th century there was an intended purpose in using this type of bond. It broke up the monotony of the wall by providing pleasing geometric contrast. Possibly you have noticed the headers have a different glossy green texture. They have been glazed. Usually, when a brick building was constructed, bricks were molded and fired in a kiln on the site using local clay and burned oyster shell mortar. Headers were placed nearest the fire along with oak or hickory logs which imported the glazing. Glazed headers further enhanced the beauty of the wall by reflecting sunlight in a beautiful sparkling effect. You may have also noticed the headers are not placed at random in this house. They are regularly spaced to create a harmonious diamond pattern. Flemish bond executed in this manner may also be seen in many Williamsburg buildings.

There was another type of brick bond used in Colonial Virginia, English Bond. Rather than alternating stretchers and headers in a course, there were alternating courses of all stretchers and all headers. English bond was used above and below the water table in earlier brick structures of the 17th century. In the 18th century, it was used primarily below the water table. Now, the water table we refer to is not the geologic water table, but a masonry projection usually about waist high at the first floor line, such as we see here at the Sommerwell House.

Just around the corner on Church Street, I would like to point out some additional features of this house. Exterior chimneys offered the colonial builder a unique opportunity to combine ingenuity and beauty. They were a dominant design element and were embellished with sloping shoulders, thrusting stacks and varied caps of molded brick. Rather than sending smoke up through separate flues as in English houses, the colonists functionally improved the old models by funnelling two or more flues into a huge stack, increasing efficiency and reducing cost. Notice how the chimney stands apart from the house beginning at the second floor. This was a precaution against fire that you will see repeated a great deal in Yorktown and Williamsburg.

You may see still another example of how glazed headers were used in exterior decoration. Notice how the headers follow the slope of the roof to the ridge line. There would seem to be no end to variety of detail if one is observant.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace Episcopal Church, known to colonial Virginians as York Parish and later York-Hampton Parish, was constructed in 1697 just six years after Yorktown was laid out.

There was only one officially recognized or established church in the colony as in Great Britain, the Church of England, or Anglican Church. Although most Virginians of the time were members by reason of personal conviction, actually they had no alternative. The church was supported by public taxes and to hold office, it was necessary to be recognized communicant. Following the American Revolution, Virginia announced complete separation of church and government in its Declaration of Rights. Under Thomas Jefferson's leadership as governor, the concept was translated into fundamental law with passage of the Statute of Religious Liberty in 1786.

There was very little hard money in Virginia throughout the colonial period because of an unfavorable balance of trade with Great Britain. The colony bought more goods than it sold and the inevitable result drained off hard currency. Consequently, the minister's salary was paid in tobacco, which you will recall was the foundation of Virginia's economic prosperity.

When the British occupied Yorktown, they appropriated the church for use as a magazine and it was extensively damaged. In 1814, a great fire started on the waterfront below and spread to some of the buildings on the bluff. The church was burned out to its walls, which were incorporated in the repairs. Union troops occupied the church in 1862, constructing a signal tower on the roof.

To the left of the entrance, near the top, you may see a portion of the original building material exposed beneath a 19th century coat of stucco. This rough textured shell-like stone is Red Marl which was cut on the banks of the York River. Once dried, it is practically impervious to weather and very durable.

You may have observed the church sits at an angle upon its lot. How do we square this with 18th century love of architectural order and balance? Well, even in that period, they distinguished between things of God and Caesar; and Anglican ~~Canon~~ Law required all churches be constructed East-West on the site. Graves were also required to be dug in this manner. In Williamsburg, you will see that Bruton Parish Church sits East-West on its lot on Duke of Gloucester Street and the graves were dug accordingly.

We will not have an opportunity to visit the church at this time. However, following the end of our tour, you are welcome to step inside and visit the graveyard. Among the burials, you will find six generations of the Nelson family, including the grave of Thomas Nelson Jr. and his ~~father~~ ^{grandfather}, "Scotch Tom" Nelson. We remind you that Grace Church is an active house of worship.

THE MEDICAL SHOP

This is a representative example of an 18th century medical shop such as the one that stood on this site and was occupied by Dr. Corbin Griffin, an ardent supporter of the American Revolution. He served as surgeon to the Virginia troops prior to the siege and was confined by General Cornwallis to prisonship on the York during the battle and was not released until the British surrender. Dr. Griffin managed to combine an active

practice of medicine and politics. Following the war, he served as a Justice of York County and as State Senator representative this district. The original shop was destroyed in the great fire of 1814.

Frequently in the 18th century the doctor combined his practice with that of an apothecary or pharmacist. Medical knowledge had made some strides, but was still primitive by our standards. Until a medical school was opened in Philadelphia in 1765 there was no opportunity to obtain any training on this side of the Atlantic. Most practicing physicians had no medical degrees. Many served an internship with an older practitioner and others look up the calling entirely on their own.

In such a small utilitarian structure as this we may still see the elements of symmetry. The chimney is an interior one. Now, look at the cornice; it is not a modillion, but a dentil cornice, characterized by small evenly spaced teeth. The dentil cornice was frequently used in interior decorative wood work.

COURTHOUSE

The present York County Courthouse constructed in 1955, is the fifth such building to stand on the same site since the 17th century. It is important to us principally because it contains one of the most complete sets of colonial records in Virginia. York County archives are intact to 1633. Without the detailed information obtained here it is doubtful if Colonial Williamsburg could have accomplished its restoration. In the 18th century, Williamsburg was divided between James City County and York County. Unfortunately, all James City County records were burned by Union troops in the War Between the States. However, the York County Clerk managed to save his files. This was especially significant to the restorers of Williamsburg since they relied heavily upon public records such as wills, deeds, marriage certificates, and with death certificates.

SWAN TAVERN

The Swan Tavern was looked upon by many residents of Yorktown as a social center rivaling the Church around the corner. It has been reconstructed on its original location by the National Park Service. Completed about 1722 by "Scotch Tom" Nelson and a partner, Joseph Warren, it stood until destroyed by an explosion in the courthouse across the street during the War Between the States.

The Swan Tavern served Yorktown's merchant and land owning gentry much as did the Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg built some 20 years later. The more common sort of people frequented the ale houses and grog shops down on Water Street, of which it was complained there were a prodigious number. For the 18th century, however, this was not uncommon. A famous historian of the period, William Maitland, wrote a History of London in 1739. His research indicated London then had a population of about 726,000; around 96,000 houses of all kinds, of which approximately 15,000 were ale houses. It is not necessary to be a mathematical genius to figure out that there was one alehouse to every six structures; or better yet, one alehouse for every forty-seven people.

Prices for bed and board were set by the House of Burgesses and were required to be conspicuously posted. No doubt they were considered outrageously high. A complete meal cost a shilling; lodging went for seven and a half pence a night with no more than three in a bed; and a thirsty traveller could drown himself in rum or good Virginia brandy at two shillings the quart.

Architecturally we can see a good many of the features in the Swan Tavern we have already discussed. At either end you will notice the truncated gable, characteristic of the jerkin-head roof. Like the Medical Shop, the chimneys are within the frame rather than external. Looking at the dormers, you will notice each has its individual hip roof. One last point about dormers. In this part of Virginia, the weatherboarding on their sides usually follows the roof slope diagonally; still another feature to look for in Williamsburg.

THE SWAN TAVERN KITCHEN

This is the last stop on our visit, the Swan Tavern Kitchen. In the 18th century and for much of the 19th, it was customary in the South to construct a separate building for the kitchen. There were three principal reasons for this: the hazard of fire, the extremely hot Virginia summer, and cooking odors. Once again, the Swan Tavern Kitchen is an active place. Inside you will meet an interpreter who will explain the kitchen and its uses. Also, you will see a spinning and weaving exhibition in the 18th century manner.

However, before we let you go, there are a couple more details we think you will find interesting. We are standing next to a smokehouse, with a fine modillion cornice. Also, if you look closely at the weatherboarding, you will see an incised line and a convex molding along the bottom of each board. This is called "beading." Its sole purpose is to cast a shadow in sunlight and accentuate the horizontal lines of the frame house.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit and will return again soon. What we have attempted to illustrate is only a small portion of our cultural heritage as seen in historic structures. They are the visible remains of our past, but like an iceberg, there is a great deal more beneath the surface-- we call the whole thing American History.
