

historic resource study

COLONIAL YORKTOWN'S MAIN STREET



NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK / VIRGINIA

HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY

YORKTOWN'S MAIN STREET
(FROM SECRETARY NELSON'S TO THE WINDMILL)

AND

MILITARY ENTRENCHMENTS CLOSE IN
AND AROUND THE TOWN OF YORK

COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

VIRGINIA

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ABSTRACT

This report deals in depth with a number of phases of the Yorktown story and the sites and areas associated with them. It is not a chronological presentation of the story of the town. There is some new material here and there and some new conclusions and modifications of others, particularly in regard to:

1. The British inner line built around Yorktown in 1781, its modification by the French in the winter of 1781-1782, and the ultimate disappearance of these earthworks from view. (Appendix G contains information on the wintering of the French in Yorktown).
2. The Main Street of Yorktown, its nature and the development that stood along it in colonial, revolutionary, and into later times, considered lot by lot.
3. The windmill that overlooked Yorktown Creek through much of the 18th and into the 19th centuries.
4. The Secretary Thomas Nelson Town Mansion (where Cornwallis first established headquarters) — its nature, disappearance, and first commemorative marking.

There is a plan of Yorktown that shows its original form along with the additions that were made to it from time to time. The 27 illustrations grouped at the back represent an assembly that is not found elsewhere containing several items difficult to see, such as Nos. 5, 6A, 8, 11, and especially 21.

FOREWORD

This project represents a consideration of a number of sites, areas, and structures in Yorktown which are key to the development and interpretation of the town as a fundamental part of the battlegrounds of 1781 as well as the town's role as an 18th century port and an important center of local government. It will, it is believed, allow an expansion and some modification of the park's historical base map for this area. Two of its themes are: (1) a detailed and rather comprehensive treatment of the town's principal street, Main Street, and the development that existed along it; and (2) a closer study of the British inner (main) line, that was built close about the town, along with consideration of what happened to the earthworks that were erected. There is also a study of the Civil War works of 1862 and the mark they left on Yorktown together with some consideration of what happened in the town in the several years just after Cornwallis' surrender.

It is hoped that this study will satisfy the needs expressed in the project described for Main Street (formerly noted as Resource Study Proposal H-68) and that it will, at least in large part, accommodate the project calling for data to allow revision of the historical base map for the town area (formerly noted as RSP H-20). It is believed, too, that there is sufficient historical data here for management to make sound decisions relative to the Secretary Thomas Nelson House site and ruins where Cornwallis initially established his headquarters (RSP H-39) and Windmill Point (H-40) as well as town lots No. 19 (H-44), No. 20 (H-103), and the Burcher House (Shop) and Lot 37 (H-29). Also it is hoped that there is enough data here to satisfy the needs, at least for the Part I section, of the historic structure reports on the Cox House on Lot 47 (H-67) and the Sessions House on Lot 56 (H-42).

In the pursuit of the various facets of this study the author is deeply grateful to the many who had labored earlier in the pursuit of data and analyses of many parts of the Colonial story. The considerable raw material that had been assembled over the last four decades since the establishment of the park greatly facilitated the work and hopefully the soundness of conclusions here.

In order to organize the material and put the report into good, useful typed draft form, Mrs. Frances McLawhorn of the Colonial staff worked long, hard, and cheerfully — often with material that left much to be desired. And without the valued services of Linda Wedel of the Historic Preservation Team this report would not have the finished form that it has here.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
FOREWORD	v
PART ONE: YORKTOWN'S MAIN STREET (FROM SECRETARY NELSON'S TO THE WINDMILL)	1
CHAPTER I. YORKTOWN STREETS AND WAYS	3
CHAPTER II. THE WINDMILL AND WINDMILL POINT	9
CHAPTER III. THE SECRETARY NELSON MANSION	12
CHAPTER IV. DEVELOPMENT ALONG MAIN STREET (LOT BY LOT)	18
Lot:	
3 and 6	19
7	22
12	24
13	25
18	27
19	32
20	34
24: The Courthouse Lot	35
The First Courthouse: 1697-c. 1733	37
The Second Courthouse: 1733-1814	38
The Third Courthouse: 1818-1863	40
The Fourth Courthouse: 1876-1940	41
The Fifth (Present) Courthouse:	
Dedicated in 1955	41
Other Development on Lot 24	42
A. Prisons	42
The First Prison: 1698-1737	42
The Second Prison: 1737-1863	43
The Third Prison: 1889-c. 1955	43
B. Clerk's Offices	43
The First Clerk's Office: 1708-1808	43
The Second Clerk's Office: 1808-1863	43
The Third Clerk's Office	44
C. Other "necessary instruments of justice"	44

Lot:	
25	45
30	51
31	56
36	61
37	67
42	70
43: The "Old Courthouse" Lot	71
46 and 47	79
48	83
52	84
56	85
60	89
64	92
68	94
72	95
77	97
79	99
81 and 82	101
 PART TWO: MILITARY ENTRENCHMENTS CLOSE IN AND AROUND THE TOWN OF YORK	 103
CHAPTER I. THE BRITISH INNER LINE AS BUILT AND USED	105
Redoubts	107
Batteries	109
Water Batteries	111
CHAPTER II. THE FRENCH OCCUPY YORKTOWN AND ALTER THE BRITISH LINE	119
CHAPTER III. AMERICAN TROOPS FOLLOWED THE FRENCH INTO YORKTOWN FOR A TIME	125
CHAPTER IV. EFFORTS TO LEVEL THE WORKS AROUND YORKTOWN FAIL	129
CHAPTER V. THE OLD WORKS AT YORKTOWN BECOME LANDMARKS AND SLOWLY FADE	135
CHAPTER VI. THE CIVIL WAR WORKS OBSCURED OTHERS THAT REMAINED	143

APPENDIXES	147
A. Notes on Some Archeological Finds along Main Street	149
B. Chastellux on Secretary Nelson	150
C. The APVA Engineers the Acquisition and Marking of the Secretary Nelson Home Site	152
D. Lot 20	157
E. Yorktown: Size and Population	160
F. Some Archeology along the British-Confederate Line	168
G. Yorktown People Have Some Unpleasantness with the French	171
BIBLIOGRAPHY	177
ILLUSTRATIONS	191

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration	
1. Berthier billeting plan of Yorktown, 1781	192
2. Main Street east from Church Street prior to siege of 1781	194
3. Main Street west from Church Street prior to siege of 1781	196
4. Yorktown as viewed from river, 1755	198
5. James Peale painting, "Meeting of the Generals at Yorktown"	200
6A. 1850 land plat	202
6B. Old windmill tower at Yorktown prior to 1840	202
7. Secretary Thomas Nelson mansion	204
8. Early photograph of Main Street, 1870's	206
9. Main Street, 1880's	208
10. Main Street, c. 1900	210
11. Main Street, c. 1903	212
12. Main Street, c. 1905	214
13. Main Street, c. 1907	216
14. Burcher Spinning Wheel Antique Shop, 1931	218
15. Hills (British) siege plan	220
16. Fage (British) siege plan	222
17. Hayman (British) siege plan	224

18. Bauman (American) siege plan	226
19. Gouvion (American) siege plan	228
20. La Combe (French) siege plan	230
21. How the French shortened the British line — a siege plan	232
22. Plan of Confederate line around Yorktown	234
23. Yorktown area detail, 1931 U.S. Geological Survey	236
24. Section, 1931 battlefield topographical map, U.S. Geological Survey	238
25. Cross sections, two types of British works at Yorktown, French siege plan	240
26. Yorktown before siege of 1781	242
Plan: "Yorktown and Its Additions," (with street names and lot numbers)	244

PART ONE

**YORKTOWN'S MAIN STREET
(FROM SECRETARY NELSON'S TO THE WINDMILL)**

CHAPTER I

YORKTOWN STREETS AND WAYS

When Yorktown was laid out in 1691, the specified 50 acres acquired for the port was surveyed into 85 half-acre lots, each measuring 132 by 165 feet.¹ This left some 7½ acres which (excepting the steeply sloping sides of the Great Valley, not surveyed into lots at this time) was reserved for streets and ways. The axis of the town was a main street that generally bisected the 50 acres from its southeast to its northwest boundaries. This street, some 2,500 feet long, roughly parallel with the river bank, evidently was allotted a width of 33 feet. It was a straight line except for one bend at the spot where Read Street crossed it.² Several vales, or ravines, cut up from the waterfront and there was, unlike today, some rise and fall of the street level at various points. This was particularly true at the head of the Great Valley and also where the rising grade of the Read Street vale cut across the street. Both dips are largely obscured now by road grading though the old grades could be established.³

On the survey plan, cross streets led off the Main Street giving access to each of the half-acre town lots except Nos. 2 and 3. There were six of these ways on the riverside and seven on the inland side. All were shown as straight lines and evidently (except for the Great Valley) had a width of some 28 feet. This resulted in five direct crossings of Main Street with an additional three entries not producing direct crossings.

Though outside of the survey, the five-acre waterfront that separated the town proper from the York River was generally considered to be a functional part

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 9* (1691-1694), pp. 42-43, 64, 69-70. (Unless otherwise specified, all court records cited are from the York County Records in the Clerk of Court's Office in Yorktown).
2. From the northwest limits of the town to Read Street, the compass bearing was Southeast; from Read Street to the southeastern limit, it was South 38° East. See the plan at the end of this study: "Yorktown and Its Additions," (with street names and lot numbers).
3. In the case of the Read Street vale, it was noted in 1924 that, earlier, when the improved highway was put along Main Street, the road level here was raised some 2½ feet above the first floor level of the old Thomas Pate House. In the absence of a sewer, this created some problems in the restoration of the house that followed. Charles E. Hatch, Jr., *The Thomas Pate House and Lot 42 in Yorktown* (Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, N.P.S., October, 1969), p. 34, hereafter cited as Hatch, *The Thomas Pate House*.

of the town, being referred to at an early time as a common shore.⁴ The maintenance of good connecting ways between the beach and the town was recognized as fundamental and a public function from the very beginning. As early as October 10, 1661, Thomas Mountfort was named surveyor of the town's roads and directed to take "Immediate care to see that there be soe mainy good and Convenient Landings made for Rolling or Carrying upp to the said Towne any sort of goods whatsoever that any person or persons shall or may hereafter have occasions to send them by water, and to be Landed and laid in the Towne, as he shall thinks Fitt and necessary."⁵

Repair of roads and ways was a continuing problem and at one point, in 1757, it was necessary to declare an emergency and get special legislation and funding to "widen and support" Yorktown streets even to the extent of using brick walls where necessary to keep them from "being washed away by the hasty showers of rain."⁶ But soon more repairs were in order and the court specified that the surveyor get the work done. This was in January 1760, and late in the year Surveyor Patrick Matthews was paid £ 8.8.9 "for the hire of carts &c to repair the Streets in York Town."

There is nothing in any of this to indicate that any structures such as "Bridges and Causeways," which were funded for Williamsburg's "main Street,"⁷ were ever built or needed in Yorktown where the Main Street topography was less severe. Neither has research produced any reference to pavement, or to any

4. Charles E. Hatch, Jr., *"York Under the Hill": Yorktown's Waterfront* (Denver Service Center, N.P.S., March, 1973) hereafter cited as "Hatch, *"York Under the Hill."*

5. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 9*, p. 71.

6. William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at Large Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619*, 7 (Richmond, New York or Philadelphia, 1809-1923), pp. 138-39, hereafter cited as Hening, *The Statutes at Large of Virginia; Judgements and Orders, No. 3* (1759-1763/1772-1774), pp. 5, 189.

7. John W. Reps, *Tidewater Towns: City Planning in Colonial Virginia and Maryland* (Williamsburg-Charlottesville, Va., 1972), p. 177.

In 1720 the inhabitants of Williamsburg petitioned for grading and draining, "complaining of the Irregularitys" in the street alignment and grade. The House of Burgesses authorized £ 150 for the work. Later Hugh Jones wrote of the "considerable sum, which was expended in removing earth in some places, and building a bridge over a low channel; so that it is now a pleasant, long dry walk, broad, and almost level from the College to the Capitol." Hugh Jones, *The Present State of Virginia* (1724), edited by Richard L. Morton (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1956), p. 70.

special kind of street surface, or even to the existence of sidewalks, or any form of curbs and gutters in Yorktown in the Colonial and later periods.⁸

In due course Main Street's southeastern terminus curved southwestward along the southeastern edge of the town⁹ and then southward for connection with the road down the peninsula to Hampton. At the other end of town, Main Street soon extended beyond the town limits, curving around what became known as Windmill Point, to Yorktown Creek where it formed a connection with the road to Williamsburg. William Buckner was directed, as early as June 24, 1710, to construct a "Good and substantial Bridge" over this creek. Later his son, John, who inherited his Yorktown property interests after his older brother, William, died, continued to keep this bridge in repair as in 1726 when the court awarded him 1,000 pounds of tobacco "for the bridge." Again in 1746 there is the entry "To Majr John Buckner for keeping the Bridge over the Creek," 800 pounds of tobacco.

It is quite clear that not all of the cross streets in Yorktown were opened through to the water even when the town was at its busiest. This is still true of Church Street today. In colonial times there was no street where Comte de Grasse now runs.¹⁰ The opening of Ballard Street evidently was a mid-19th century development.¹¹

The first cross streets in use were that down the Read Street vale and that along the Great Valley, with that along the line of Buckner Street coming shortly thereafter. It is of record under date of July 15, 1745, that a court order specified "that the public Landings from York Town down to the River side be for the future that by Thos Nelson [Great Valley], by Richard Amblers [Read Street]

8. At the time of the Revolution, Barron von Cloisen did mention that in Williamsburg "Not all the streets are paved, but there are some sidewalks (kept in good repair) along the main ones." Jane Carson, *We Were There: Descriptions of Williamsburg 1699-1859* (Williamsburg, Va., c. 1965), p. 49.
9. In later years, this extension which skirted the edge of the town along Lots 72-75 became known, after the construction of the Yorktown Monument to the Alliance and Victory, as "Monument Avenue." Now it is considered an extension of Main Street.
10. This seems to have been first street opened through to the water at the time of the Centennial in 1881.
11. It seems that the opening of Ballard Street had to await the time of the Civil War activity in Yorktown.

down to the Ware house [Buckner Street] and no others."¹² This latter followed down "Tobacco Warehouse Hill" to "Buckners Landing" it was noted in 1783.¹³

In 1781 these same three streets appear to have been the chief, and only, connections between Main and Water Streets. Alexandre Berthier shows them prominently and even sketches their route. That down Great Valley had a turnaround at its river end and Read Street was shown as not on a straight line but rather with the slight "S" curve that it still retains today.¹⁴

When the Gwyn Read "subdivision," or addition to the town, on its inland side was laid out after 1738 it evidently was separated from the original lots, at least southeastward from Read Street, by a street behind the town parallel to Main, which came to be known as "back-street."¹⁵ Of course the regular "cross streets" perpendicular to Main crossed this back street and led into the Gwyn Read development.¹⁶

In colonial times, even beyond the period of the Revolution, none of the Yorktown streets seems to have had an established name except Main (this on occasion also being called "Broad Street," at least in the vicinity of the courthouse)¹⁷ and possibly Church Street. Even Church Street was generally used in the sense of the street by, or to, the church (meaning York-Hampton Parish Church on Lot 35). In one instance however, in 1770, there was specific reference to "A Street called Church Street" which formed one boundary of Lot No. 35, the Church Lot.¹⁸ The side streets leading into, or across, Main Street were most often simply noted in deeds and descriptions by the term "cross street." In the

12. *Wills and Inventories, No. 19* (1740-1746), p. 383.

13. *Deed Book, No. 6* (1777-1791), p. 202.

14. See Illustration No. 1.

15. Such is the import of a 1784 deed description evidently for town Lot 51 which was described as being against a lot of Thomas Nelson, Jr. (Lot 50), against one of William Cary (Lot 55), "a cross street leading to the river side" (Read Street), and "a back street." *Deed Book, No. 6*, p. 200.

16. A deed in 1748 specifically mentions "the Street [streets implied] laid off by Gwyn Read." *Deeds, No. 5* (1741-1754), p. 248.

17. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 8* (1687-1691), pp. 362, 372.

18. *Deeds, No. 8* (1769-1777), p. 49.

early decades there was reference to the "Great Valley"; however, this evidently was more in reference to the topographic feature than to the street that followed it.¹⁹

In at least one instance in the first half of the 19th century, present Ballard Street was denoted as "Court house street." At this same time Church Street was specifically given as such and presumably "Hill Road to River" was another reference to the Great Valley, with "Street by Rows" seemingly a reference to present Buckner Street.²⁰

On a survey document of 1848 a full set of cross street names was given – Buckner, Ballard, Church, Read, Pearl (now Nelson), Smith, and Bacon – and at this time Read Street extended directly south to a crossing of Yorktown Creek.²¹ When Benson J. Lossing visited Yorktown in 1866 he commented: "We observe that the names of the few streets in Yorktown have changed, and have those of 'McClellan,' 'Keyes,' 'Ellsworth,' and others."²² Names continued to fluctuate, however, and in a handbook issued at the time of the Centennial in 1881 only three street names were given in Yorktown – Main, Church, and Keyes.²³ The latter (evidently named for Major General Erasmus D.

19. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 1* (1633-1657 / 1691-1694), pp. 376, 377, 388, 400, and 421.

Water Street along the shore paralleling the York River, although it obviously existed informally from the beginning, was not delineated or named until the Common was surveyed in 1778. Even its width fluctuated with the washing shoreline until it was fixed at 40 feet by court action in 1927. *Cases Decided by the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia*, (March-June Terms, 1926, and January-March Terms, 1927), 147, 736-37.

20. Robert Anderson, "Account Book of Legal Transactions, 1804-1858," in the collections of the Virginia Historical Society.

21. Thomas M. Ladd, "A Survey of lands in a disputed ownership case between William Nelson and Robert Anderson as ordered by the Circuit Superior Court of Law and Chancery," July 20, 1848. Copy traced for the Investment Corporation by the American Cement and Engineering Company (No. 161-B) on November 29, 1909, in files of Colonial NHP, hereafter cited as Ladd, "A Survey of Lands." See also park photograph No. 16,741.

22. Benson J. Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book of the Civil War in the United States of America* (New York, 1868), 2, 440, hereafter cited as Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book of the Civil War*.

He did not specify which of these related to specific streets. They all represent names of Union officers prominent in the Civil War battle events around Yorktown in 1862.

23. John Austin Stevens, *Yorktown Centennial Handbook* (New York, 1881), pp. 98, 104.

Though the name Keyes replaced that of Pearl, noted in 1848, it would be replaced by Pearl again later in the century, at the same time that the Ballard House was known for an as yet unestablished reason as "Pearl Cottage." Charles E. Hatch, Jr., *The Ballard House and Family* (Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, N.P.S., September, 1969), p. 21.

Keyes who commanded the Fourth Corps in the Union Army that moved up the peninsula in 1862) is now Nelson Street. Most present-day cross street names seem to have been assigned, or reassigned, "officially" at the time of the Sesquicentennial in 1931.

CHAPTER II

THE WINDMILL AND WINDMILL POINT

One of the more prominent features of the 18th century "skyline" of Yorktown as seen from the York River, or from the west side of the Yorktown Creek, was the windmill. This structure, built about 1711, was a landmark in the area for nearly 150 years. It, seemingly from the beginning, gave the name Windmill Point to that steep marl bluff that projects toward Yorktown Creek a little distance from the initial western boundary of Yorktown. It was adjacent, but up the hill, from the road that extended Main Street westward to its crossing (by bridge) of Yorktown Creek.

The tract of land here adjacent to the west side of the town, in 1711 was owned by John Lewis, Esquire, and his wife, "Madam Elizabeth." On July 16 of that year they agreed with William Buckner, a prominent merchant in Yorktown and a town trustee, to allow him the use of one acre of ground "for to build a Windmill upon."¹ The tract was bounded thusly: "beginning at a point on York River side Just below a Small Creek formerly known by the name of Townshens [Townshend's] Creek & Sometime it is called in the Ancient Patents Martues [Martiau's] Creek but now it is Called Yorktown Creek from the sd point South 61d East Eight Chain & one half to a Ston [stone] Sett Just on the Edge of the bank & from the said Stone South West by a Cedar tree five & one half Chains to the old Road thence down the old Road to the Small Creek before mencond thence down the said Creek to the beginning place."

Evidently William Buckner's intent was to build a merchant, or custom (toll), mill which he would operate as another of his business enterprises. Mills for grinding corn into meal and/or wheat into flour (whether powered by wind or water) constituted an important part of the Virginia economy both on the plantations, or at points well suited to trade, as Yorktown. In the case of the merchant, mill grinding for export or ship supply was perhaps of more concern than for local consumption. Profit came from grinding one's own grain as well as grinding that brought in by others in the vicinity. In the latter case a toll, as fixed by law and custom, was exacted by the mill operator.²

1. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2 (1701-1713)*, p. 374; see also *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 2nd ser., 10, 274.
2. There is a good discussion of the mechanics and economy of milling and windmills in Horace J. Sheely, "Windmills and Milling in the Eighteenth Century," a Colonial Williamsburg Foundation typewritten research report datelined Williamsburg, 1956, hereafter cited as Sheely, "*Windmills and Milling*."

In the case of Buckner, he agreed with Lewis that he would build a mill and keep it in good repair for a period of at least seven years or forfeit any right in the acre of land. A further consideration, the principal one in fact, was that he obligated himself to grind 12 barrels of Indian corn each year for Lewis free of toll or other charge.³ Presumably William Buckner performed all of the requirements of the agreement in good order and eventually came into full possession of the mill development. At his death it passed to his son, John, and when John Buckner died in 1748 he bequeathed this "wind Mill with the Lot of Ground it stands on" to his nephew, Griffin Stith.⁴

No account of the actual construction of the Buckner windmill seems to have survived and it is not possible to be specific about its initial type. When John Gauntlett in 1755 sketched Yorktown from shipboard in the river he did clearly show a windmill on the proper site.⁵ Though he pinched his perspective on each end of his "View of the Town of York" (and the windmill was on the right extremity) he seems to have detailed a "smock" mill, a variant of the earlier post mill design.⁶ Some of the 1781 siege maps also suggest this type.⁷ It may be significant, however, that when James Willson Peale painted *The Generals at Yorktown* he sketched in some detail what seems clearly to have been a full tower windmill of some size.⁸ A half century after Peale and when in ruins, the full tower is clearly shown with its wood construction and its octagonal shape.⁹ In

3. The specific condition for tenure was given in the deed of agreement:

if the sd William his heirs or Executors Should not build a Mill on the sd Land within the Space or time of Seven year or not maintain & keep the said Mill that Should be built thereon in Repair & wholly neglect the sd Mill during the life time of sd William the sd term of Seven, or if at any time after the death of the sd William the heirs of the said William being at full age the said Mill shall be holy neglected for the Space or term of Seven years, then & in such Case it shall & may be Lawfull for the sd John & Eliza or their heirs to enter the said Land & possess themselves thereof.

Deeds and Bonds, No. 2, p. 374.

4. Stafford County, Virginia, Records, *Will Book M* (1729-1748), p. 537.
5. See Illustration No. 4.
6. As Sheely noted in his discussion of the post mill, "Another variation was the smock mill used by Dutch engineers for land drainage in the seventeenth century. This was a tapering tower mill, usually octagonal in cross section, whose sails were suspended from a movable cap turned by means of the tail pole. Its resemblance to a waggoner's smock gave it its name." "Windmills and Milling," pp. 7-8.
7. See Illustration No. 18.
8. See Illustration No. 5.
9. Peale shows it as round in plan, though this may be due to artistic license.

1801 it was specifically referred to as the "old Tower Windmill." This language may suggest that the mill was even then inoperative.¹⁰

In an analysis of a body of 1781 siege maps and map variants, it was noted that six of them have a sketch of a windmill as standing here at the time of the battle.¹¹ Some 20 others give the more simple building symbol, some using a circular shaped symbol rather than the more conventional square or rectangular block. At the time of the siege, the mill came to have company on the point.

Evidently the British erected an earthwork here, presumably a battery, on the very tip of the bluff. In some instances the work was delineated alone, sometimes in association with the windmill. This point militarily was a strategic one overlooking Yorktown Creek. It was close enough to offer some artillery cover to the otherwise exposed and detached Fusiliers Redoubt just across the creek.

There are at least two engraved views of the old Yorktown Windmill Tower as it stood as a decaying landmark into the 19th century. Both seem to have a common ancestry and may in truth stem from a single plate or sketch. One appeared as part of a scene, "Yorktown Virginia," in *The Family Magazine*.¹² The other was a plate in Robert Sears, *A Pictorial Description of the United States* which appeared in 1857.¹³ It was captioned "View of Yorktown, from the old Windmill at Yorktown, Standing about 1850." Actually it seems the 1850 date is a little too late in time for the old tower to have still been standing. When a survey of the "Lands of Washington Rowe Esq called Wind Mill point" was made in 1850, it delineated, among other things, the "Site of Old Wind Mill" showing it on the high ground overlooking the York River a little distance downriver from the tip of the point.¹⁴ Evidently the life of the Yorktown windmill, or windmills (if it was rebuilt), on this site had run its course, but its name stayed on.¹⁵

10. *Deed Book, No. 7* (1790-1809), pp. 386-87.

This was noted in a deed which conveyed "four Lotts of Land in the town of York being the square of Lots on which the old Tower Windmill stands." Eliza Richardson of Richmond purchased this property from William Duval of Gloucester County for £10, a very modest price.

11. Maps and plans in the files of Colonial NHP. See Illustrations Nos. 15 and 18.

12. (New York edition), 7, 221. See Illustration No. 6B.

13. (New York), p. 347.

14. See Illustration No. 6A.

15. This windmill lasted a good deal longer than some others. The one at Gloucester Point across the river, for example, was "blown down" by the hurricane of 1769. *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), September 14, 1769.

CHAPTER III

THE SECRETARY NELSON MANSION

Secretary Thomas Nelson (1716-1782), the younger of the two sons of Thomas ("Scotch Tom") Nelson who founded the family in Yorktown, became a noted colonial Virginian. Like his brother, William, he came to serve on the colonial Virginia Council for more than a quarter century prior to the Revolution. William became the Council's president (hence the appellation "President Nelson") and Thomas became the colony's secretary of state (thus the designation "Secretary Nelson"), a post he held for thirty-three years.¹ He was not destined to serve in any prominent capacity in the new state government; though his name was in nomination to be its first chief executive, he lost to Patrick Henry. Then he largely withdrew from public service being considered too much of an aging conservative. Some have doubted his patriotism, yet there are no grounds to consider him a Tory. Perhaps the Marquis de Chastellux was not far from the mark when he described the Secretary as "Too far advanced in age to desire a revolution, too prudent to check this great event, if necessary, and too faithful to his countrymen to separate his interest from theirs, he chose the crisis of this alteration, to retire from public affairs."² Besides, having inherited and amassed considerable property and wealth in Yorktown and in outlying counties, he could now more fully enjoy this as long as wartime conditions would allow. In Yorktown, or rather contiguous to its southeast boundary, he had built a substantial mansion and was in residence here when the British came to Yorktown in the late summer of 1781. It has been duly noted:

True it is that Lord Cornwallis and the British officers used his home on the eastern edge of Yorktown, the largest and finest mansion thereabouts, as their headquarters during the opening days of the siege. . . . Whether the redcoats were his guests by invitation or against his will, however, is not ascertainable.

We do know that both the host and his guests tried to stick it out in that house despite accurate, intense artillery fire from several batteries, that

1. In this position he served as keeper of the colonial seal and ex officio clerk of the Council and General Court. He issued all patents and other executive papers and appointed all county clerks.
2. Marquis de Chastellux *Travels in North-America in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782* (London, 1787, second edition as reprinted by Arno Press in 1968), 2, 25-26, hereafter cited as Chastellux, *Travels in North-America*. See also Appendix B, "Chastellux on Secretary Nelson."

a servant was killed in their midst, and that at last their stubbornness was overcome, and that they vacated the house. . . .³

This was on October 10, the day that Secretary Nelson was permitted to come out from Yorktown under a flag of truce and "not restricted by a parole." The next day St. George Tucker dined with Nelson who gave him a report on the effectiveness of the allied bombardment.⁴

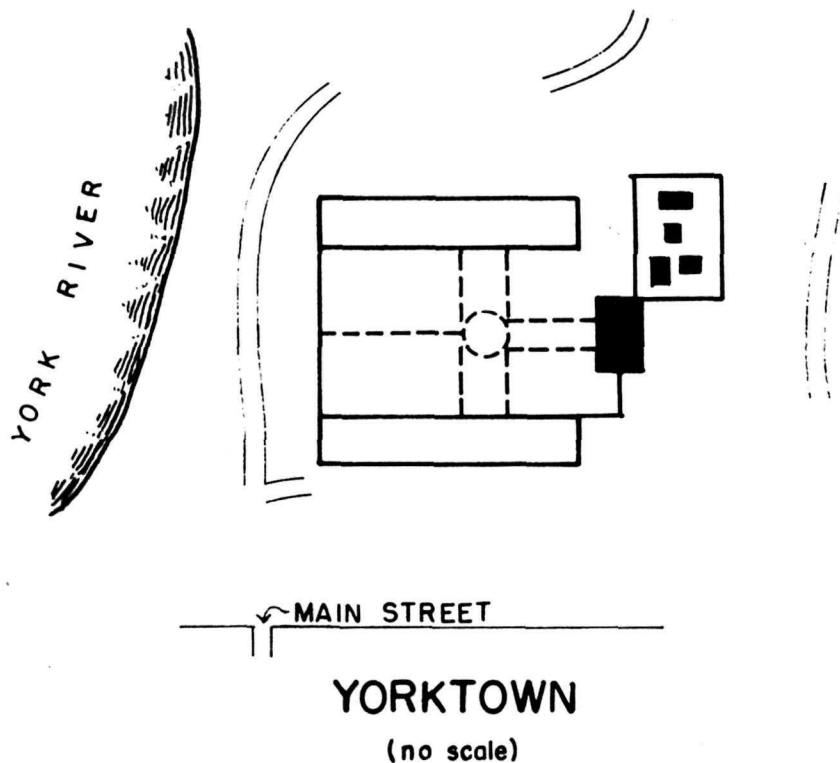
He says our Bombardment produced great Effects in annoying the Enemy & destroying their Works – Two Officers were killed & one wounded by a Bomb, the Evening we opened [October 9] – Lord Shuten's [likely Lt. Col. Lord Chewton, aide-de-camp to Lord Cornwallis] Cane was struck out of his Hand by a Cannon Ball – Lord Cornwallis has built a kind of Grotto at the foot of the secretary's Garden where he lives under Ground – A negroe of the Secretary's was kill'd in his House.⁵

On October 18, with the cannon silent, many mounted the parapets to look around. Among them was St. George Tucker. From "the top of our Works" he, among other things, saw the Secretary Nelson mansion, reporting – "the Secretary's house with one of the Corners broke off, & many large holes thro the Roof & Walls part of which seem'd tottering with their Weight afforded a striking Instance of the Destruction occasioned by War – Many other houses in the vicinity contributed to accomplish the Scene."⁶

It was indeed an imposing mansion that Secretary Nelson built and enjoyed at Yorktown sometime after 1744 on land that had been recently given him by his father.⁷ It was a substantial and roomy two-story dormered structure, with a

3. Elizabeth Coleman and John Hemphill, "View at Little York in Virginia," *Virginia Cavalcade*, 1(No. 2 – Autumn 1951), 44.
4. "St. George Tucker's Journal of the Siege of Yorktown, 1781," edited by Edward M. Riley, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 5 (1948), 386-87, hereafter cited as "St. George Tucker's Journal."
5. This story of a servant being killed would receive some embellishment in its retelling, as the narrative which follows here indicates.
6. "St. George Tucker's Journal," p. 391.
7. "Scotch Tom" Nelson had bought this property from Dr. John Dixon in the fall of 1744 and transferred it to his son prior to his death on October 7, 1745. York County Records, *Deeds*, No. 5, p. 337; *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., 6 (1898), p. 327; Charles E. Hatch, Jr., *Grace Church: General Study* (Office of History and Historic Architecture, Eastern Service Center, N.P.S., Washington, D.C., May, 1970), p. 81.

double-hipped roof and four massive chimneys pointing skyward.⁸ The house is said to have measured some 56 by 48 feet.⁹ It was supported by a cluster of at least four dependencies and there were gardens extending riverward seemingly in the general form indicated below.¹⁰



8. See Illustration No. 7 for an interpretation of how the mansion itself probably appeared.
9. These dimensions were given when the matter of capping the brick foundations was being studied in 1928. "Minutes Book" (February 18, 1921 – December 19, 1934) of the Yorktown Branch, Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, minutes of meeting for February 23, 1928. See also Appendix C.
10. This is a composite based on the Berthier drawing (see Illustration No. 1) and on various siege plans (British, French, and American) and their variants in the Colonial NHP collection. More than 40 items depict the house in some form, making it one of the best documented sites in the battlefield. More than a half dozen of these sources label it "Head Quarters" or "British Hd Qrs." Most plans denote it simply with a building symbol or two; some provide more details which have all been incorporated in the diagrammatic sketch above. A study of the maps indicates quite clearly that the details of the British works in this area were designed to afford some protection for the site and to give ready access to the main line. But it proved to be too little and too late.

The Secretary Nelson mansion and the quality of living that it supported was suggested by Marquis de Chastellux¹¹ who was with Rochambeau and the French army during the siege in 1781: "He [Secretary Nelson] lived at York, where he had built a very handsome house, from which neither European taste nor luxury was excluded; a chimney-piece and some bass reliefs of very fine marble, exquisitely sculptured, were particularly admired. . . . [The house] was built on an eminence, near the most important fortifications, and in the most agreeable situation in town . . . it soon drew the attention of our bombardiers and cannoniers and was almost entirely destroyed." Chastellux continued: "Mr. Nelson lived in it at the time our batteries tried their first shot and killed one of his negroes at a little distance from him; so that Lord Cornwallis was soon obliged to seek another asylum."

Though in ruins, the Secretary Nelson House continued to be an impressive structure. Isaac Weld, who saw it in 1796, had this to report in commenting on the "evident marks of the siege":¹²

There is one house in particular, which stands in the skirt of the town, that is in a most shattered condition. It was the habitation of a Mr. Neilson, a secretary under the regal government, and was made the head quarters of Lord Cornwallis when he first came to the town; but it stood so much exposed, and afforded so good a mark to the enemy, that he was soon forced to quit it. Neilson, however, it seems, was determined to stay there till the last, and absolutely remained till his negro servant, the only person that would live with him in such a house, had his brains dashed out by a cannon shot while he stood by his side; he then thought it time to retire, but the house was still continually fired at, as if it had been headquarters. The walls and roof are pierced in innumerable places, and at one corner a large piece of the wall is torn away; in this state, however, it is still inhabited in one room by some person or other equally fanciful as the old secretary. There are trenches thrown up around it, and on every side are deep hollows made by the bombs that fell near it.

The Benjamin Latrobe color sketch of the Secretary Nelson House, made about 1796, confirms graphically the damage to the house done by the allied artillery during the siege. It was an impressive structure even when in ruins some

11. *Travels in North-America*, pp. 25-26.

12. Isaac Weld, Jr., *Travels Through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, During the Years 1795, 1796 and 1797* (London, 1807), I, 164-65, hereafter cited as Weld, *Travels Through the States*.

fifteen years after the damage was inflicted.¹³ A French traveler, the Duke de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, also in 1796, found the mansion "pierced in every direction with cannon-shot and bomb-shells." He saw it as the chief monument of the memorable siege, adding that Yorktown "does not present any other object of curiosity."¹⁴

The old ruins of the house stood for a long time. Henry Howe noted prior to 1845¹⁵ that: "Cornwallis's head-quarters were originally in a splendid brick house, belonging to Secretary Nelson, the ruins of which are not visible in the large and continuous redoubt constructed by the British at the E. end of the town. He remained there until a servant was killed, and the building much injured by the American artillery, when he removed into the town."

In 1849 there was further reference to the ruins when another visitor to Yorktown, David Hunter Strother,¹⁶ saw it: "In the village were the ruins of Gov. Nelson's house¹⁷ and other houses still bearing the marks of cannon shot, the perforated walls unrepaired and the brick and mortar rubbish lying where it fell." Evidently Charles Campbell fell victim to the same mistaken identity for the Secretary Nelson House in 1837: "The house of Governor Nelson stood just within the British lines; it was riddled by the American shot. Nothing remains of it but some scattered brick bats."¹⁸

13. Coleman and Hemphill, "View at Little York in Virginia," pp. 45-46.

14. Francois Alexandre Frederic La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels Through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797; With an Authentic Account of Lower Canada* (London, 1799), as quoted in Coleman and Hemphill, "View at Little York in Virginia," p. 46.

15. *Historical Collections of Virginia* (Charleston, S.C., 1845), p. 530.

16. David H. Strother, " 'Porte Crayon' [Strother] in the Tidewater," edited by Cecil D. Eby, *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 67 (1959), 443, hereafter cited as " 'Porte Crayon' in the Tidewater."

17. This obviously was a case of mislabeling the ruins of the Secretary Nelson House, since the Governor Nelson House was in good repair and occupied when Lossing was in Yorktown in 1848.

18. "Notes (by an itinerant, Charles Campbell, the historian)," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., 27, 138, hereafter cited as "Notes (by an itinerant)."

In due course the visible ruins would melt from view; however, the below ground foundations would remain to attract attention from time to time. They are still partly visible under concrete cap. Identifying and marking them became a special project of the Yorktown Branch of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, a project brought to fruition in 1933.¹⁹

19. See Appendix C, "The APVA Engineers the Acquisition and Marking of the Secretary Nelson Home Site."

CHAPTER IV

DEVELOPMENT ALONG MAIN STREET (LOT BY LOT)

Development in Yorktown proper focused along Main Street, as would be expected since it was the principal axis of the town. This was true even when Berthier made his billeting plan after the damage wrought by the British and the allied artillery. He delineated 79 structures in the upper town (another 45 on the waterfront) with 34 of them on, or almost directly on, the Main Street. They were about evenly divided on the two sides of the street – 19 on the water side and 15 on the land side.¹

There follows below a brief discussion of town development by lot insofar as possible, with references to detailed studies where they have been made. The direction is southeastward from Lot No. 3.²

1. See Illustration No. 1.
2. See plan at end of report: "Yorktown and Its Additions," (with street names and lot numbers).

Lots 3 and 6:

Town Lots 3 and 6 on the river side of Main Street early in Yorktown's history came to be included in a significantly large block of property put together by William Buckner, one of the town's first leading citizens and developers. He acquired his first two lots in November 1691 and increased his holdings to six (Lots 1-6) by 1700. Lot 3 was one of his first purchases¹ and evidently he satisfied the building requirements since it remained in his possession. Buckner went on to acquire adjacent lots and to use the Yorktown waterfront "Common" area between his lots and the river. Here he had warehouses and a wharf. There was also his windmill for grinding grain not far away on Windmill Point overlooking Yorktown Creek and York River.

William Buckner died in 1716 and bequeathed to his "Eldest sun William all my Houses & Land in York Town."² William survived his father by only six years and the Yorktown property then passed to his younger brother, John, who proceeded to occupy and use it for a quarter century.³ When he died in 1748 these holdings went to John's "beloved Nephew Griffin Stith of the Eastern Shore in Virginia." This included the "Six Lotts in York Town my wind Mill with the Lot of Ground it stands on and my warehouses under the Hill to him and his Heirs forever."⁴

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 8*, p. 369.

Lot 6 seems to have been assigned initially to one John Sedgwick in June 1692. In a matter of a few days, however, John transferred his interest in the lot to Isaac Sedgwick. There seems to be no further reference to a Sedgwick in connection with the lot. Perhaps Isaac failed to develop it and forfeited the half acre which was then picked up by Buckner. No record of this conveyance has been noted. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 9*, pp. 408-09; *Deeds, No. 7* (1763-1769), p. 391.

2. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 14* (1709-1716), p. 513.

3. *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., 14, 158-59.

It was a general transfer in which William simply stated that "I give unto my Loving brother John Buckner all ye estate I die possessed of real and personal and I do appoint my said Loving brother my whole and sole exr of this my last will and testament."

4. Stafford County, Virginia, *Will Book M* (1729-1748), p. 537.

Griffin Stith also received a "parcel of Land in the County of York," negroes in town and county, as well as livestock. John Buckner did, however, reserve "all my Books in my house in Yorktown" for John Stith, another nephew, who also was willed the Buckner holdings in Stafford County.

Two dwelling houses and other construction were noted as on the property in 1781 and probably existed in Buckner times. Since he was well established on the Eastern Shore, Stith elected not to occupy his Yorktown property. It is on record that he leased a part of the six-lot holding to Seymour Powell, who was already in occupancy, in November 1751, for a yearly stipend of £10 Virginia currency. The lease covered "One Dwelling House lying and being in the Town of York together with the Outhouses, Lotts and Garden to the said Dwelling House belonging." Powell's lease was independent of a lease for another part of the property involving "the Houses with the appurtenances in the Possession of Benjamin Moss."⁵

In November 1767, (as shown on record five months later), Stith elected to sell his Yorktown property. For the sum of £375 he sold to Nathaniel Littleton Savage his "Six lots of Land lying in the Town of York with appurtenances," excepting only "about 12 or 15 feet square part thereof inclosed with a Brick Wall in Possession of the Hon. William Nelson Esq."⁶

Savage retained the property only two years, selling in 1770 to "Thomas Lilly mariner." Lilly, with "Lucy his wife," found it necessary in July 1772 to place a mortgage on his holdings.⁷ The two year mortgage was drawn for £837.11.1 sterling in favor of "Francis Ceal, Merchant of London." It covered the "six Lotts of Land with the appurtenances . . . whereon the said Thomas Lilly now lives." There is no record that this deed of trust was discharged, though evidently it was since it was subsequently sold by Lilly to Corbin Griffin in October 1793, with the usual and customary warranties of title.⁸ Evidently Lilly had moved to newly formed Mathews County across the York River and on the other side of Gloucester County. Lilly's losses on these six lots in 1781 were heavy, including:⁹

1. "A new dwelling House 40 by 20 brick chimneys & Cellar flush." — £300
2. "A Kitchen 22 by 18 brick chimney" — £50

5. *Deeds, No. 5*, p. 479.

6. *Deeds, No. 7*, p. 391.

7. *Deeds, No. 8*, p. 257.

8. *Deed Book, No. 7*, p. 83.

9. *Claims for Losses of York County Citizens in British Invasion of 1781*, No. 31, pp. 35 - 36, hereafter cited as *Claims for Losses*.

3. "A stable for 6 Horses with a Chair House" – £50
4. "A dwelling house 24 by 16 wth a shed & 2 fire places" – £60
5. "damage done the lotts all the enclosure destroyed and the well fill'd up" – £50

The placement of the various structures on the six lots is not known; however, it would seem most likely that at least one dwelling unit would have faced on Main Street. With the siege over, this formerly visible part of Yorktown was all gone. Consequently Berthier made no note of it on his billeting plan of the town.

Lot 7:

This half acre just across Main Street from Lot 6 was not initially conveyed, it seems, until May 1708. It went then to Joseph Walker who evidently did not meet the building requirements and forfeited his interest. Ten years later the town trustees disposed of it again, this time to Philip Lightfoot on November 17, 1718.¹ Presumably he did the necessary building since, except for a "fourty foot Square at the West Corner of the said Lott,"² the property remained in his hands.

Philip Lightfoot devised his part of the lot to his son, Armistead, in June 1748. Later, however, in 1778 and again in 1801 there is reference to the lot (with the exception of a parcel) as belonging to Armistead Lightfoot's estate.³ The lot passed as a single parcel in 1806 when Mathew and William Gibbs of Gloucester sold it to Charles Harris, who then owned adjacent Lot 13 which was described as where "the house of the said Charles Harris now stands."⁴

No specific reference seems to mention a house on Lot 7, though as previously mentioned, evidently Philip Lightfoot did erect at least the minimum here.⁵ Berthier did not indicate a structure here though probably the British

1. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 279; *Deeds and Bonds, No. 3* (1729), pp. 255, 280.

2. Lightfoot sold this 40-foot square to William Anthony in 1719. In 1730 Anthony died intestate and without heirs, so his plot reverted to the trustees. Three years later (May 1734) the trustees disposed of it by sale to Richard Pate. A month later Pate sold it to Irwin Jones. There seems to be no record of Jones' disposition of it; a later record, however, deals with the conveyance of the whole of the lot. *Deeds, No. 4* (1729-1740), p. 300.

3. *Deed Book, No. 6*, p. 10 and *No. 7*, p. 356.

4. *Deed Book, No. 7*, p. 504.

It is not clear how the Gibbises acquired the lot. Armistead Lightfoot left no will and there is no known list of his heirs. The year before, John Gibbs, also of Gloucester, had sold Lot 8, adjacent to Lot 7 on the southwest, to the same Charles Harris. *Deed Book, No. 7*, p. 480.

5. An early park master plan sheet does show a house, or building, though there is no precise reference supporting it. It is placed in the north corner of the lot and is dated 1734. "Map of the Structural Development of the Town of York 1691-1800: From Documentary Evidence on Lots 1 to 85 (the original town) as collected to August 1940," in the Master Plan, Colonial National Historical Park, September 1940 (Plan NHP Col. 2160).

would have destroyed it had there been one. It would have interfered with their works due to its position in front of the main line.⁶

6. The 40-foot square at the west corner of the lot is also intriguing, even though its function and significance are not clear. It evidently did not touch on Main Street.

Lot 12:

This half-acre parcel facing on Main Street, though earlier assigned to one Jeffery Overstreet, was seemingly not developed prior to 1706. Overstreet lost the lot because of failure to develop it. It was reassigned by the town trustees on May 12, 1706, (a transaction recorded on September 24 of the same year), to Miles Cary.¹ At the same time, Cary acquired adjacent Lot 18, which, though first taken up in 1691, had also been forfeited. These two lots were destined to have a common history for the next century, especially after they descended from Miles Cary to his son, Wilson, who sold them to William Nelson, a nephew of "Scotch Tom."

In 1781 the British line went along the "cross street" (Buckner) edge of Lot 12. It did not destroy any development there since this part of the lot at that time very likely was a garden. (For a more detailed account of the continuing history of this particular lot, see Lot 18 described later.)

1. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 184a.

Lot 13:

One Owen Davis, "Planter," obtained a deed to Lot 13 from the town trustees in 1691 and evidently built a house upon it, for he retained possession of it until he sold it to William Buckner on February 25, 1695. Buckner, however, did not hold it long, disposing of it in May 1698. He sold this half acre, with "all that his cottage or tenement in Yorke Towne known by the name of the Smith Shopp," to Thomas Bowcher, "Merchant." Just three years later, in December 1701, Bowcher, "Merchant of Warwick county," in turn sold it to Miles Cary, "Gent^l of Warwick county." The deed repeated "all that his house and Seller or Tenement in Yorke Town known by the name of Smyths Shopp."¹

The property descended from Miles to his son, Wilson Cary, who in July 1728 sold it to Robert Ballard for £40 sterling.² Ballard, it seems, made his home here and when he died prior to July 1740 he died intestate and his various properties passed to his three daughters — Jane, Henrietta, and Charlotte. The home lot (No. 13) evidently went for life to his widow, Jane, who soon remarried and continued to live on the property with her husband, Matthew Hubbard.³ Eventually this home lot fell under the joint ownership of the three daughters.

One of the daughters, Charlotte (the youngest), married Nicholas Dickson who joined her in residence on Lot 13. It was in June 1756 that Dickson bought the one-third interest that resided with Henrietta, Charlotte's sister, who now was the wife of William Powell, a planter.⁴ It was stated that the home and lot was "in the Tenure and Occupation of the said Nicholas Dickson who hath lived on the same for some years."

Presumably Dickson also went on to acquire the interest belonging to the third sister, Jane, though the transaction seems not to be on record. It would

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 8*, p. 387 and *No. 10* (1694-1697), p. 106; *Deeds and Bonds, No. 1* (1694-1701), pp. 2, 152 and *No. 2*, p. 20.

2. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 3*, p. 503.

3. The "Settlement of Estate" (July 1740) and "Division of His Estate" (March 1741) were filed in *Wills and Inventories, No. 18* (1732-1740), pp. 626-27 and *No. 19*, pp. 36-39.

In March 1741 "the Lott whereon he dwelt was assign'd his wido^e now the wife of Mr. Matthew Hubard."

4. *Deeds, No. 6* (1755-1763), p. 61.

appear that at death he passed ownership of the lot to his son Beverley Dickson. It is of special note that when Beverley offered the property for sale in May 1773 he described it as the site of "A Dwelling house in the said Town [of York], pleasantly situated on the Main Street, Where Mrs. Robinson now lives, with convenient Outhouses, and two lots adjoining." In any case, in 1778 Beverley Dickson, then a resident of Williamsburg, sold Lot 13 and adjacent Lot 14 with general warranty for a sizeable £300 to Robert Gibbons of Yorktown.⁵ The same was true as well when Gibbons sold the two lots to Charles Harris in 1801.⁶

From the foregoing it is clear that Lot 13 was developed early in the town's history as the site first of a "Smyths [likely blacksmith's] Shopp" complete with cellar. Later it was more residential in character, serving as the site of the home of Robert Ballard and his family, and was in use in the decades prior to the Revolution. It is evident from the sale price that buildings still existed here in 1778. After the siege, however, it appears that the structures on the property were all gone, or of little value, since Berthier showed nothing here at that time. This lot was in close proximity to the British line and any buildings there may have been sacrificed. If so, there was new construction afterward, since it is of record that the house of Charles Harris was standing here in 1806.⁷

Evidently a section of the main British line went along and curved across the northwest side of this lot as it came along the southeast side of what became Buckner Street and crossed Main Street from Lot 12. The Civil War works followed a similar course and the Confederate gate in this end of town was at this point. This is shown in a Brady photograph looking through the gate toward the south.⁸ This view shows a building just within the gate on the inland side of Main Street, a building that may exhibit something of a colonial character.

5. *Deed Book, No. 6*, p. 10.

6. *Deed Book, No. 7*, p. 356; *Virginia Gazette*, May 6, 1773.

7. *Deed Book, No. 7*, p. 504.

8. See Colonial NHP photograph No. 3561, which is a copy of this Brady photo.

Lot 18:

This section was originally purchased by Ralph Flowers, a planter, in November 1691, but when he failed to develop it he forfeited title. It was not owned again until 1706 when the trustees awarded it to Miles Cary. Cary developed it sufficiently to retain title, and when he died it passed to his son, Wilson.¹ In July 1728 Wilson Cary, gentleman, sold this and adjoining Lot 12 to William Nelson, merchant, for £100 Virginia money. This William was a nephew of "Scotch Tom" Nelson and consequently a cousin of "Secretary Thomas" and "President William" Nelson, "Scotch Tom's" sons. Presumably the two lots already supported a single development which was to continue for almost a century.²

William Nelson, the nephew, according to the records, became known as the "Elder," or Senior, to distinguish himself from his cousin, William.³ He had come to Yorktown some time in the 1720's from the Barbadoes with the intent of pursuing his mercantile interests.⁴ In the deed to Lots 12 and 18, in 1728, he is listed as a merchant.

Evidently he ran into financial difficulties and was forced to mortgage his Yorktown properties, the mortgage going to his uncle, Thomas, and his cousin, William, who became sizeably indebted for nearly £500 sterling to the London merchant firm of Messrs. Haswell and Hunt.⁵ The mortgage specified that it included "The dwelling house of said Wm Nelson the Elder in the town of York

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 8*, p. 362; *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 182.

2. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 3*, p. 505; Emory Evans, *The Nelsons: A Biographical Study of a Virginia Family*, a 1957 University of Virginia Dissertation, a facsimile produced by microfilm, xerography by University Microfilms, a Xerox Company (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1969), p. 27, hereafter cited as Evans, *The Nelsons*.

3. Such differentiation was clearly necessary as in the case of a court entry in September 1743. Quash, a negro slave belonging to "Wm Nelson, Senr" had been accused under a warrant "under the hand of Wm Nelson junr Gent" of "taking away money out of the shop of Doctr John Payras." Incidentally, Quash was found not guilty. *Wills and Inventories, No. 19*, p. 217.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 3*, p. 505.

together with all outhouses, Kitchen, Milkhouse, Storehouse, Stable, Gardens, Orchards, Tenements & Lotts of Land together with certain slaves."⁶ This mortgage was evidently discharged in February 1747. However, William, Senior, was unable to recoup his losses, leaving only a small estate when he died in Yorktown in 1749.⁷

From all indications, his cousin, William, took over the management of his affairs and undertook the care of his children.⁸ It was in the fall of 1755 that "William Nelson, Jun." advertised Lots 12 and 18 and the development on them for sale. Previously the property had been under lease. The announcement read:⁹

To be sold at Public Sale, on the 24th of this Instant October, before Mr. Doncastle's Door, in Williamsburg, Two convenient Lots and Houses, in York-Town, whereon Doctor George Riddell lately lived, near the Court House: There is a large Dwelling-House, store-House, Kitchen, Stable, all convenient Out-Houses, and a very good garden on the same.

It was noted also that the "above Lots and Houses have rented for Thirty-two Pounds for several years past." This advertisement may have been successful, as a sale did occur within six months.

William Nelson, in April 1756, sold the lots and development to Robert Burwell and his wife, Elizabeth, "in Joint tenancy." When Elizabeth died, Robert Burwell became "seized of the whole by reason of survivorship." Quite clearly this property "in the Town of York near the Courthouse" continued to be developed and to increase in value. When the Hon. Robert Burwell, Esq., came to dispose of it in May 1773, it brought £1000 current money of Virginia. The purchaser was Corbin Griffin, "Doctor of Physic."¹⁰ Earlier, Griffin had

6. *Deeds, No. 5*, pp. 202, 205.

7. *Deeds, No. 5*, pp. 202, 204; Evans, *The Nelsons*, p. 27.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Virginia Gazette*, October 10, 1755.

10. *Deeds, No. 8*, p. 333.

announced his intention to dispose of Yorktown property, which by description seems to have been Lots 12 and 18 with their developments:¹¹

To be Sold, my Houses and Lots in the Town of York, which formerly belonged to the Honorable Robert Burwell, together with a large and well furnished medicinal shop. The houses are in very good repair, with all convenient outhouses, and in every respect well fitted for a family.

Dr. Griffin would remain in ownership and residence for almost a quarter century through the period of the Revolution and postwar years. He sold it in October 1795 to Thomas Griffin. The deed, in the amount of a token five shillings, specified that it covered the lots and the "Houses and Tenements in the town of York, which the said Corbin Griffin purchased of Robert Burwell and on which he now lives . . . reserving a full, free, and uninterrupted use of the said Tenement for his natural life."¹²

It is significant that Corbin Griffin elected to insure this property in the newly formed "Mutual Assurance Society against Fire on Buildings of the State of Virginia" in April 1796. It described the buildings on the property and gave their general relationship to each other on a plot plan sketch which was a part of the policy.¹³

1. The dwelling house, constructed of wood and covered with a wooden roof, measured 60 by 27 feet. It had three chimneys, two small and one large, and was valued at \$2,600. The long axis was along the cross street (now Ballard) which separated it from the courthouse property.
2. The kitchen, also of wood and covered with a wooden roof, measured 34 by 20 feet and was valued at \$200. It had a large chimney and stood 26 feet from the north corner of the residence.

11. *Virginia Gazette*, July 30, 1772.

Perhaps private arrangements between Griffin and the Burwells existed prior to the Griffin purchase. In any case, as is clear, Griffin did not sell at this time.

12. *Deed Book, No. 7*, p. 163.

13. Policy No. 97 (photostatic copy in files of Colonial NHP).

Evidently most of the development was confined to Lot 18. At least some of Lot 12 seemingly functioned as a garden. "Map of the Structural Development of the Town of York" (Plan NHP Col. 2160).

3. Some 27 feet beyond the north corner of the kitchen stood a 26- by 24-foot structure designated as "Quarters." Built of "wood cover'd with wood," it also had a chimney. It was valued at \$100.
4. There was another small structure some 15 feet off the kitchen's northeast end referred to as the "Smoke House." Measurements for it were not given, though it seems to scale perhaps 12 by 15 feet. No estimate of value was given.
5. About 30 feet northwest of the dwelling house on Main Street was Griffin's Medical Shop. Again this structure, which measured 24 by 20 feet, was wood covered with wood. Its value was placed at \$100.¹⁴

These evaluations placed on the building development on Lots 12 and 18 in 1796 totaled \$3,000.¹⁵

It seems highly significant that the buildings shown on the 1796 insurance plot plan (in number, location, and arrangement) are essentially the same as those shown fifteen years earlier on the Berthier billeting plan of 1781.¹⁶ Having survived the siege, these developments on Lots 12 and 18 would continue for several decades.

14. When a "Medical Shop" was reconstructed on Lot 30 in 1936 it was initially thought that it would represent Corbin Griffin's medical shop. This would now seem to be in error, since Griffin's major activities centered instead on Lots 12 and 18. There was a "medicinal shop" here in 1773 when he acquired the property and there may have been one here prior to 1755 when Dr. George Riddell had the use of the property. Griffin had no interest in Lot 30 prior to 1790 when he bought a small part of it.
15. There is one other insurance policy (No. 184 referenced back to this No. 97 policy) covering this property. It was drawn up for Lawrence Gibbons, the owner, in 1808. It lists the "Wooden dwelling house" as two stories high, measuring 60 by 28 feet, and valued at \$2,400. There are also listings for a "Wooden Kitchen" (39 by 21 feet) and the "Wooden Medical Shop" (21 by 27 feet), each a one-story building valued at \$200 and \$100 respectively. The total policy evaluation was \$2,700. There was no mention of the smokehouse or quarters in this policy. It should be noted that the plot plan on this policy is very sketchily drawn and the difference in measurements seems not to be significant since the distances were paced rather than measured.
16. See Illustration No. 1.

The principal structure, the dwelling, also shows on two of the British siege plans. See Illustrations Nos. 15 and 16.

In 1812 deeds the houses and lots had come to be called the "White House."¹⁷ In all likelihood the residence and principal structures were gone before August 1821, as the deed drawn at that time for a sale specified: "Two Lots or half acres of Land lying in the Town of York near the courthouse denoted in the plan of said Town by the figures 12 and 18 and known by the name of the white house Lot."¹⁸ Even though there was the perfunctory legal clause "Together with the buildings, &c," the sale price of \$110 would rule out anything of substance.

The property (particularly Lot 18) would see more construction, and it is now the site of the First National Bank of Yorktown which replaced a large two-story frame store-apartment complex of more recent (c. 1900) times.¹⁹ In Civil War years, according to a Brady photograph, a slight frame structure stood on the corner of the lot.

17. *Deed Book, No. 8* (1819-1825), pp. 196, 200.

18. *Deed Book, No. 9* (1819-1825), pp. 110, 164.

19. See Colonial NHP photograph No. 16,281.

Lot 19:

This lot on the west corner of the intersection of Main Street and the cross street that became Ballard Street was initially taken up by Thomas Collier, a planter, in November 1691. He failed to build on the lot, however, and forfeited his title.¹ It was not until May 1706 that the trustees assigned it to Miles Cary who evidently performed what was required of him in regard to this as well as two adjacent lots (Nos. 13 and 20) acquired at the same time. They remained a part of his estate and he willed them to his son, Wilson Cary. Wilson, described as a gentleman of Elizabeth City County, sold them to Robert Ballard, a carpenter, in 1731.²

Evidently Robert Ballard further developed the lot since it was adjacent to his home on Lot 13. When he died intestate prior to July 1740, it appears that Lot 19 descended to his daughter, Jane (Mrs. William Dudley). In 1741 the lot was in "the Tenure of W^m Harwood" on a rental basis, indicating that the property constituted a developed home site. Its annual rental then was £16 as compared with £20 for Lot 13, the Ballard home site.³

In due course, upon the death of Jane Dudley, Lot 19 went to Charlotte Dixon and her brother, John Dixon, and remained in their possession until 1812.⁴ At that point, Charlotte Dixon and John Dixon and Anne, his wife, sold the property to Charles Harris. Harris in turn sold to John R. Fox in 1823.⁵

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 8*, p. 386; *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 184.

2. *Deeds, No. 4*, p. 94.

3. *Deeds, No. 5*, p. 433; *Wills and Inventories, No. 19*, pp. 36-39.

Adjacent Lot 20 which went to Henrietta Ballard, John's second daughter, evidently was also developed in 1741. It was described then as "in the Occupation of Elizabeth Williamson" and rented for "£6 p. Ann."

4. *Deed Book, No. 8*, p. 228.

5. *Deed Book, No. 9*, p. 380.

This lot seemingly was developed and in use for several decades prior to the Revolution. Since Berthier shows no structures in the area of Lot 19, the inference is that nothing useful was standing here after the siege. It may be significant that in the property transfers in 1812 and 1823, mention is made of the lot without the customary language about structures, and the price was only \$100 and \$90 respectively.

The large two-story frame house that was dismantled here within the last several years had the characteristics of a middle or post-19th century dwelling.⁶

6. See Illustration No. 8.

Lot 20:

Though it is not located on Main Street, the story of Lot 20 has been summarized and is included in this report as an Appendix to make the data available to meet an urgent need. Its ownership does have some relationship in the 18th century to Lots 13 and 19 on Main.¹

1. See Appendix D.

Lot 24: The Courthouse Lot

This half-acre plot on the east corner of the intersection of Main ("Broad") and the cross street that became Ballard was not initially dedicated to county purposes, having first been sold to one Thomas Jefferson, a planter, in November 1691. Jefferson either surrendered the land for some reason, or had to forfeit it through failure to develop. It seems significant that on the original lot "platt" of the town (which carries the names of the first grantees) only two structural symbols are sketched. One is on Lot 35 (originally assigned to Col. Edmond Jennings) where York Parish (Grace) Church was built about 1697, and the other is on Lot 24 where the Courthouse was constructed in this same year. The position of the sketches on the lots seems to suggest that they were added some time after the plan was prepared.¹ In any case, it was six years after the town was established that the York County Court met for the first time in its new courthouse on Lot 24, having been meeting regularly for some 65 years in various places.

The first court session for the county was convened on July 12, 1633 at Utimaria, the residence of Capt. John Utie,² which is situated near the York, up the river above King Creek, and now within the confines of the Naval Cheatham Annex (previously old Penniman). For a number of years the court meetings continued to be held at the homes of the different justices who composed the court. In due course York settlement concentrated on the point of land formed where Wormley Creek and the river join (now the Coast Guard Training Center). In 1658 the house of Capt. Robert Baldrey was rented for courthouse purposes and a county prison, stocks, pillory, and ducking stool were built close by.³

Some twenty years later, in 1677, the court was moved to the Handsford House at the head of Felgate's Creek for a three-year stay. Early in 1681 the court bought a house belonging to Andrew Reader, which was located not far away at the French Ordinary near the Halfway House. A short time later a prison was built near the courthouse.

Even though the town of York was laid out in 1691, the courthouse facilities at the French Ordinary continued in use. It took a petition signed by the

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 9*, p. 70 and *No. 8*, p. 372.

2. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 1*, p. 4.

3. Lyon G. Tyler, "A History of York County in the Seventeenth Century," *Tylers Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, I, No. 4 (April 1920), 237, 255.

inhabitants of the county to force a move. The Virginia Assembly, in September 1696, directed that "the justices or members of the said court [of York County] take care that an house suitable and fitt to hold courts in and as bigg in dimension att least as the present court house now is be erected built and finished at the charge of the county upon some certain place within the said limitts of York Towne" prior to October 31, 1697.⁴ The deadline was met and presumably Governor Francis Nicholson made his promised "£5 sterling" contribution toward the cost of the structure.⁵ On March 24, 1698 (after the courthouse had been established), the county court ordered the sheriff to remove to York "ye Standard of this County and all other implements & materialls yt are moveable & belonging to this County, from ye Old Corthouse, ye prison stocks & pillory And yt ye Same be duly performed sometime betwixt this and ye next Cort."

This was the first courthouse building in Yorktown and it stood on Lot 24. Since that date Yorktown has been the center of county government except for those intervals of time between courthouses. In the course of the years, and including the structure now in use, there have been five courthouse buildings constructed on this lot.⁶

4. *Ibid.*; *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 4* (1665-1672), p. 112; Hening, *The Statutes at Large of Virginia*, 3 (Philadelphia, 1823), p. 147.
5. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 11* (1698-1702), part 1, p. 4.
6. There are three summaries or studies of the lot, each with an increasing degree of completeness. They are not fully duplicative of each other. They are: (1) William D. Meade, "Memorandum to Mr. [Malcolm] Gardner, Subject: The Court House Lot" dated June 13, 1935, a part of the library files of Colonial NHP, hereafter cited as Meade, "The Courthouse Lot"; (2) Edward M. Riley, "The Colonial Courthouses of York County, Virginia," April 21, 1941, a National Park Service report, hereafter cited as Riley, "The Colonial Courthouses"; (3) Conrad B. Bentzen and Edward M. Riley, "Lot 24, Yorktown, Virginia (The Courthouse Lot). Historical Data and Report of Archeological Excavations in 1941," a National Park Service report dated 1941, hereafter cited as Bentzen and Riley, "Lot 24, Yorktown (The Courthouse Lot)." All are in typewritten form, the latter with ample illustrations.

The First Courthouse: 1697-c. 1733

Following the Assembly action in 1696, the York County justices met in the home of Capt. William Buckner in December of that year to make arrangements for building the new courthouse. Lot 24 was the selected site. The contractor was William Cary who agreed to build it for 28,000 pounds of tobacco (or a total of 30,240 pounds including cask). Cary completed the building in the specified time and on September 24, 1697, in a meeting at the French Ordinary, the court adjourned to meet two months later at the new courthouse.⁷

Presumably the new structure was a simple framed one, possibly built of marl.⁸ It did have a "Shingle" roof and when it was newly covered in 1703 it took only 6,000 shingles to do the job.⁹ There is one item of particular interest regarding this structure and its associated buildings and facilities. It is a memorandum of February 12, 1707, which notes that Maj. William Buckner had agreed for 6,000 pounds of tobacco "to build a good substantial office of 16 feet Square to be weatherboarded with featheredged plank or good Oak boards Larthed & Plastered to be Sealed with the Same wth good windows well glaized to be Set in Such place as the Court Shall be appointed as also good Stocks & Pillory & other necessarys thereto with a Porch to the Court house Door of Seven foot Square & to joyn to the House wch he doth hereby promise to perform as soon as nails and Other Necessarys may be had to order thereto."¹⁰

Repairs and alterations were needed regularly at the Yorktown Courthouse. For instance, in 1713 William Buckner was paid more than 15,000 pounds of tobacco for building additions to the courthouse, tarring them, and mending the windows.¹¹ After more than three decades of use a move was instigated to replace the structure with a new one. Reasons for this action are not given, but since in these years the county, and especially Yorktown, was increasing in business and population, probably the old building was outgrown and there was

7. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 10*, pp. 341, 350, 468, 486.

8. Bentzen and Riley, "Lot 24, Yorktown (The Courthouse Lot)," pp. 3, 58-60.

9. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 12* (1702-1706), pp. 137, 153.

10. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 13* (1706-1710), p. 121 in the memorandum from Meade, "The Court House Lot."

11. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 14*, p. 295.

simply a need for better quarters. In any case, the question of a new courthouse was raised late in 1730.¹²

The Second Courthouse: 1733-1814

The initial move to replace the first courthouse with a new structure came in December 1730 when the county court selected a committee from among its members to "receive Proposals" for erecting the new building. Some months later this committee was reconstituted with directions to contract for the construction of a "brick Courthouse" to measure 40 feet long and 24 feet wide "in the clear." However, this plan was abandoned in favor of a building rectangular in shape and it was decided to adapt "a new draught for the same" calling for a T-shaped structure. This was contracted to Robert Ballard and he completed the new courthouse about mid-July 1733.¹³ When the site was excavated in 1941 it was found that the cross of the T was approximately 60 feet and the stem measured 52 feet in length.¹⁴

Though the contract price was a considerable £600, it was actually paid for in tobacco with the county court making three annual levies for the purpose. The total amount collected exceeded £122,000.¹⁵ This would indicate an imposing structure, and in 1742 one English visitor did describe it in such terms: "The Court-House is the only considerable publick Building, and is no unhandsome Structure."¹⁶

12. Riley, "The Colonial Courthouses," p. 4.

13. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 17* (1729-1732), pp. 151, 158; *Wills and Inventories, No. 18*, p. 60.

14. Bentzen and Riley, "Lot 24, Yorktown (The Courthouse Lot)," pp. 60 ff.

This report also carries a "ground plan of the second courthouse as it probably appeared during the eighteenth century" (p. 63), and a "sketch showing the location of principal historic structures found on the Courthouse Lot" (p. 59).

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

16. *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., 15 (1907), 222.

Bentzen and Riley in "Lot 24, Yorktown (The Courthouse Lot)," p. 5, speculated: "This new plan [the T] followed the example of a number of the county courthouses of Tidewater Virginia built at about the same period. It presumably employed the classical lines so popular in England and the colonies at the time."

Evidently the first floor in the new courthouse was of wood, later replaced with stone. An order was placed in July 1739 in "England for Stone to lay the floor of the Court house and of the two offices and for one Yard and one Ell according to the standard of England."¹⁷

From all indications the courthouse was a sturdy structure and, except for the floor, no major repairs were needed until after the Revolution and after the siege of 1781. The seat of local county government continued here through this period and consequently many significant area events and meetings of the war years (1775-1781) were associated with Lot 24 and the second courthouse that stood here for more than 80 years.

It is not known to what use the British put the structure during their occupation before and during the siege. Quite possibly it could have been a hospital. It served as such when the French troops were quartered here in the winter of 1781-1782.¹⁸ In any case, British damage to the structure was severe, especially to the interior, all the windows being destroyed by the troops with damages estimated at £100.¹⁹

When the French departed there was thought toward repair of the courthouse and its associated structures on Lot 24. This required some time due to lack of funds, community disruption, and for a time, perhaps, even lack of will. Efforts would continue until 1794. The detailed listing of materials and work for the repairs, especially on the inside, revealed much information about the interior details and furnishings of the structure.²⁰

There is no reason to suppose that this repair work changed the major lines of the building. It continued to present its T-shape with a body of brick (including a "brick gable end") and was covered with wood shingles.²¹ The only structural alteration found on record came in 1807 when arrangements were made "to let the enclosure of the Piazza of the Courthouse of this County and the

17. *Wills and Inventories, No. 18*, p. 503.

18. See Part Two, Chapter II, and Appendix G of this report.

19. *Claims for Losses*

20. The contemporary documents covering this constitute Appendix A in Bentzen and Riley, "Lot 24, Yorktown (The Courthouse Lot)," pp. 84-88.

21. Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Policy No. 184 (covering Lot 30 nearby) in 1808.

whitewashing of the said Courthouse."²² The courthouse continued in use for another seven years until it was destroyed on March 3, 1814, by a fire that devastated a considerable part of Yorktown.²³

The Third Courthouse: 1818-1863

After the destruction of the second courthouse building, the county resorted to meeting again in private homes, that of Matthew Wills and Willoughby Jordan.²⁴ There was action toward the construction of a third courthouse when in March 1816 the court named commissioners to contract for a new structure. On April 20, 1818, it was noted that the commissioners had reported the building's completion to the court.²⁵

The contractor had been Richard Garrett, Jr., and the cost about \$2,000. It was a brick building, two stories high, covered with wood shingles. The insurance policy taken out in 1818 described it as rectangular, measuring 44 feet long by 24 feet wide. The plot plan of the policy gave the relationship of the courthouse to the jail and clerk's office then standing.²⁶ It is known from two Matthew Brady photographs made in 1862 that the Main Street front of the courthouse had a shallow portico, or porch, and full-height columns on the front.²⁷

This courthouse served Yorktown and the county until the night of December 16, 1863, during the period of Union Army occupancy of Yorktown, when a gunpowder explosion demolished the structure along with the record office and jail and the Swan Tavern just across Main Street. This is established in a court entry for May 1868:²⁸

22. *Judgements and Orders, No. 8* (1803-1814), p. 219.

23. See Appendix M in Hatch, *"York Under the Hill,"* pp. 189-92.

24. Bentzen and Riley, "Lot 24, Yorktown (The Courthouse Lot)," pp. 10-11.

25. *Order Book, No. 9* (1815-1820) p. 85.

26. Policy No. 1178 (photostatic copy in files of Colonial NHP). This Policy No. 1178 is one of a series of eight policies over the period 1818-1860.

27. See Colonial NHP photographs Nos. 3560 and 3563 which are copies of these Brady photos.

28. "York County Courthouse," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., 13 (1904), 143.

Ordered that the Clerk of the County Court make application to the proper authorities for the wooden unoccupied tenement erected in 1864, and formerly used as Military barracks, for a Court House for this county to replace the county Court-House which with the Record office, Jail, &c., while being used as Ordnance Storehouse by the United States forces, were destroyed by an explosion on the night of the 16th December, 1863."

Archeological excavations in 1941 found evidence in the ground of an impact strong enough to have moved below-ground foundations, amply sufficient for recording, thus indicating a considerable explosion.²⁹ The foundations of the third courthouse were not found but the evidence indicated that those of the second courthouse were in part utilized for the third.³⁰

The Fourth Courthouse: 1876-1940

It was in August, 1875, that the Board of Supervisors for York County ordered that the bid of W. G. Smithers to construct a new courthouse for \$5,865 be accepted. The new courthouse was ordered to be completed in February 1876.³¹ A two-story brick structure in the shape of a rectangle, the building was dominated by high but small chimneys arranged on each side of the building. It served the county until an accidental chimney fire from the stack on the east corner gutted it on December 31, 1940, leaving the local government again without a home.³²

The Fifth (Present) Courthouse: Dedicated in 1955

Though not identical in overall dimension (being larger), this courthouse is suggestive in shape and design of the second courthouse that existed in colonial and Revolutionary times. Information gleaned through the archeological and

29. Bentzen and Riley, "Lot 24, Yorktown (The Courthouse Lot)," Plate 6, p. 37.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 64 ff.

31. Meade, "The Court House Lot," p. 9, citing the Supervisors Minutes Books.

32. There is a view of the fourth courthouse (after the fire) in Colonial NHP photograph No. 8757. There is also a view that shows the courthouse, clerk's office, and jail entrance in an earlier time (photo No. 2350).

historical investigations performed by the National Park Service was made available to the architects.³³

Other Development on Lot 24

This lot was usually rather full of buildings and structures closely linked with the functions of the county court. Like the courthouse, most had to be replaced from time to time.³⁴ In summary they were:

A. Prisons:

The First Prison: 1698-1737

Built in 1698 by Robert Harrison, it was criticized in the next year for its "insufficiency" and was often in need of repair. Even so it served for almost 40 years. It evidently was of wood and located in that part of the lot where later jails stood.

33. There is a dedicatory plaque within the foyer of the fifth courthouse. It reads:

York County
Court House
Erected 1955
Board of Supervisors
E. S. Bingley Bruton
R. Nelson Smith Nelson
Coleman A. Green Grafton
Rodgers A. Smith Bethel
E. Mitchell Rollins Poquoson
Judge of the Circuit Court
Conway A. Sheild, Jr.
Architects
Williams, Coile & Blanchard
Builder
McCartney & Banks, Inc.

34. Bentzen and Riley, "Lot 24, Yorktown (The Courthouse Lot)," pp. 12 ff and 66 ff.

Shortly after the first courthouse was in use there was an order to provide a prison "Adjacent to ye Said Cort house and such other ye instruments of Justice as will then [be] found necessary." *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 10*, p. 480.

The Second Prison: 1737-1863

The second jail on Lot 24 was built by William Rogers for £160 in the summer of 1737. This particular building was to have a long life and to survive both the siege of Yorktown and the fire of 1814 (though repairs followed each disaster), only to be destroyed in the Civil War explosion in 1863 previously mentioned. Evidence points to the assumption that it was of wood frame construction around which in 1823 a brick wall enclosure was erected two stories high to allow exercise space for prisoners.³⁵

The Third Prison: 1889-c. 1955

Lot 24 was without a jail during the next quarter century until the Board of Supervisors in January 1889 accepted the new "Jail Building and also the cages for the Jail." The brick structure stood until it was removed in connection with the construction of the present courthouse. This was to be the last jail on Lot 24.³⁶

B. Clerk's Offices:

The First Clerk's Office: 1708-1808

As previously noted, the first such office called for in February 1708 was a 16-foot square frame structure. Prior to this it appears that the court records were kept at the home of the clerk of the county court. The new office, built by William Buckner, seems to have been ready before the end of 1708. Though small and of frame construction, there are no records to even suggest that it was replaced before 1808. If this is true, it had a century of use for record and office purposes.

The Second Clerk's Office: 1808-1863

This office was accepted for use in September 1808, at a cost of \$540. It was a brick building with a slate roof and window shutters and was located near the northwest corner of the courthouse lot. It was described in insurance records of 1838 as a two-story building, 15 by 29 feet. It continued to stand until destroyed by the explosion in 1863.

35. There is a helpful detailed description of the jail in 1830 giving information on rooms, accommodations, etc., quoted in Meade, "The Court House Lot," p. 9, citing the York County Loose Paper Files.

36. There is a view of it in Colonial NHP photograph No. 8,179.

The Third Clerk's Office

There was a considerable lapse of time between the second and third clerk's offices. The latter was a small brick building covered with stucco and it served until the construction of the present courthouse which includes office and record space for the clerk of court.³⁷

C. Other "necessary instruments of justice":

Instruments for administering justice included a pillory and stocks, a whipping post, branding irons, and a ducking stool – the latter conveniently located not on Lot 24 but "on the waterside." The first of these items were brought over from the old courthouse near the Halfway House soon after the first courthouse on Lot 24 was built, as previously noted. By 1701 and again in 1707, it was necessary to replace them; in 1735 new stocks and pillories were ordered built. The last reference to items of this sort apparently was a court order of September 15, 1806, directing that the committee of justices appointed to rebuild the jail also "cause to be immediately erected near the said Jail a good and sufficient whipping post, stocks and pillory at the expense of the this County."³⁸

37. There is a view of these structures in Colonial NHP photograph No. 8,759.

38. *Judgments and Orders*, No. 8, p. 170.

Lot 25:

This strategically located half acre on Main Street directly across the street from the courthouse, was initially assigned to Charles Hansford, "Gent.," by the town trustees in November 1691. He, however, did nothing to develop it and when it was reassigned to Daniel Taylor, "Gent.," in January 1706, it was noted that the "Said lot was formerly taken up by Charles Hansford and by him deserted." Taylor held the lot only 18 months, then disposed of it to James Sclater. Evidently it was Sclater and his wife, Mary, who satisfied the building requirements, since they retained possession until they sold it to Benjamin Clifton almost 10 years later (September 1716). It was in August 1719 that Clifton disposed of it to Thomas Nelson and Joseph Walker.¹

Nelson and Walker proceeded to build the Swan Tavern sometime within the next three years. It was noted on March 18, 1722, that they "have built a Tenement commonly called the *Swan* of which lot and tenement they are now joint tenants." This language is from a deed which dissolved the "joint tenancy and vest in Thomas Nelson and Joseph Walker each, one moiety of said lot and all buildings there on a severalty."² The Thomas Nelson half descended to his son, William, who also acquired the remaining portion from the heirs of Walker.³ In due course William Nelson, in March 1761, deeded the entire property to his son "Thomas Nelson, the younger son and Heir apparent of said William Nelson." At the time, the "Swan Tavern" was in the occupation of James Mitchell.⁴

The Swan Tavern was for 130 years the leading hostelry of Yorktown. With its desirable location near the capital of the colony and in a port of considerable commercial enterprise, people came here from all parts of Virginia and elsewhere. Thus the Swan Tavern was meeting the needs of travelers twenty years before the Raleigh Tavern of Williamsburg had opened its doors for a like service to the

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 8*, p. 279; *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, pp. 210, 240, 241; *No. 3*, pp. 133, 303.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 394.

3. Charles E. Hatch, Jr., *Ringfield Plantation: Special Report* (Office of History and Historic Architecture, Eastern Service Center, N.P.S., Washington, September, 1970), pp. 39, 44; *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 31,60.

4. *Deeds, No. 6*, p. 318.

public. All during its existence the Swan remained to Yorktown what the Raleigh was to Williamsburg, a noted place of public entertainment and accommodations.⁵

As one author has noted:

The original Swan Tavern, serving the needs of man and beast in Yorktown from 1722 until 1863 was, perhaps, the scene of more pertinent activities directly touching and shaping the lives of the local colonists than any other building in the thriving river port with the possible exception of the Court House, occupying the opposite street corner. Here, at the crossing of Main and Ballard streets news and events from Gloucester, the Eastern Shore, England and the northern colonies paused for comment and speculation in its swing up from the river before spreading over the peninsula and on through Virginia by way of the Capitol at Williamsburg. At the sign of the Swan, seafarers, tobacco traders, merchants and all the varied types and classes of traveling eighteenth century found rest and refreshment.⁶

The Swan Tavern also had its role in the development of Freemasonry in Virginia. It has been noted that "The Lodge at Swan's Tavern Yorktown, Virginia was warranted on the 1st of August, 1755 with the number 205. . . . It paid its two guineas as Constitution fee at the meeting of the Grand Lodge [of England] of the 4th of December, 1755."⁷ There are no records specifically for this lodge, not even a roll of members. It is listed in Albert F. Calvert, *Old Engraved Lists of Masonic Lodges*, which includes a page from the 1764 list. There is the number 205 next to a sketch of a swan with the word "Tavern" above it. Then there are columns carrying the notations "In York Town Virginia," "1st & 3^d Wednesd," and "August 1, 1755." It is not known how long this lodge continued; seemingly

5. Charles E. Hatch, Jr., "Final Historical Reports on Developed Sites in the Town of Yorktown: I Swan Tavern Group – Lot #25; II Corbin Griffin Medical Shop – Lot #30; III Reynolds House-Museum Unit – Lot #31," a typewritten Colonial NHP report, dated February 21, 1939, pp. 7-9, hereafter cited as Hatch, "Historical Reports on Developed Sites. . . ."
6. Clyde F. Trudell, "Final Construction Report on the Swan Tavern, Stable and Smokehouse at Colonial National Monument," a typewritten report dated May 21, 1935.
7. Quoted from the Librarian of the Grand Lodge of England in Albert W. Banton, Jr., *A Primer of Freemasonry in York Town, Virginia 1755-1955* (Yorktown Lodge No. 353, A.F.&A.M., Yorktown, Virginia, August 1, 1955), pp. 4-5.

it was a casualty of the Revolution. In any case, it was defunct by 1780. A new Yorktown Lodge was granted a charter by the Grand Lodge of Virginia in February of that year.⁸

During the course of its history the old tavern changed hands and management numerous times. Among those who owned and operated it were Thomas Nelson, Scervant Jones, Lawrence Gibbons, Matthew Wills, William Nelson, and lastly Robert Anderson.⁹ Of all these owners, none is quite so picturesque, perhaps, as the Rev. Scervant Jones who for a quarter century preached at the Powder Horn in Williamsburg.

An old Swan Tavern Ledger Book¹⁰ gives interesting sidelights into the accounts and business of the tavern during the last quarter of the 18th and the first three decades of the 19th century. From it we learn that bills quite frequently ran up into large figures and, even when paid, were not always settled for in cash. Planks, brown sugar, butter, rum, and all manner of farm produce, as well as the hiring of slaves, the freighting of articles by ship, and the schooling of children were received in payment along with some actual cash. Methods of accounting were not always exact, judging from a number of entries listing ferriage paid by the keeper and other items of purely personal interest.¹¹ A notation of prices gives an insight into the economic condition of the times, for

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.

One of its early acts (December 1780) was to donate \$500 to the Grand Lodge's "general fund for charitable purposes," the money being transmitted by Thomas Wyld, Sr., the "Right Worshipful Master" of the Yorktown Lodge.

9. Property deeds often have interesting detail. It was recited, for example, in a deed of December 26, 1817, when Scervant Jones sold the Swan to Matthew Wills, that the property included that "One certain House and Lott lying and being in the Town and County of York called and known by the name of the Swan Tavern, it being the said House and Lott in which and upon which Lawrence Gibbons decd late of York Town resided and in which he kept a public House." *Deed Book, No. 8*, p. 439.

10. In 1939 this ledger was the property of D. Newton Davidson of Newport News, Va.

11. Typical entries are:

"Harwood, Col. Edward

1779 — August 3 — Piker money — 900 walnuts — 12s 6d

1782 — Cash lent at Thos. Lucas's cock fight 3L 6s 8d

1782 — Aug. 27 — to grog at Court 1s 3d

1784 — May 14 — To your proportion in the Sturgeon match 9s

Partially paid in cash, salt, porter and powder."

the fluctuation of paper money during the Revolution is seen in the listed price of brandy. In 1776 it was sold at 4 shillings per gallon, in 1778 it had risen to 32 shillings; a year later it was £8, yet by 1786 the price had returned nearer its normal level, being entered in the books at 6 s.¹²

According to notes compiled from the ledger, from 1813 to 1825 the total tavern accounts amounted to \$4,623.01. The most prosperous period for the Swan, in all probability, was before the Revolution when Yorktown was at its peak. After the turn of the century the records show that its owners on occasion gave mortgages and deeds of trust against the establishment. It was in the execution of a deed of trust that William Nelson acquired the property in 1826 from the estate of Matthew Wills.

In connection with the operation of the Swan in 1828 by Lucy, wife of Matthew Mills, an interesting document has been uncovered in the York County Records. The document is a bond for a tavern license and throws some light on the requirements for keeping a tavern almost 150 years ago:

Know all Men by these presents that we Lucy Wills and Folmer M. Hubbard are held and firmly bound unto William B. Giles esquire Governor or chief Magistrate of the Commonwealth of Virginia in the just and full sum of \$150, to which payment well and truly to be made to the said Governor and his successors we bind ourselves and each of us and each of our heirs exors and admors jointly and severally, firmly by these presents, sealed with our seals and dated this 10th day of March 1826. . . .

The license stated that Lucy Wills had permission to keep an Ordinary, and proceeded to outline the conditions under which she might keep it open:

"If therefore the said Lucy Wills doth constantly find and provide in her said Ordinary good wholesome and clean lodging and diet for Travellers and Stableage, fodder and provender or pasterage and provender as the season shall require for their horses, until the next May term of the County of York, and shall not suffer or permit any unlawful gaming in her house nor suffer any person to tipple and drink more than is necessary then the above obligation is void or else to remain in full force and virtue."¹³

12. This and much that follows is from Hatch, "Historical Reports on Developed Sites . . . Lot #25," pp. 7 ff.

13. York County Records, Wills to the Governor, March 20, 1828.

The last owner of the old Swan Tavern was Robert Anderson, a man well known in lower Virginia. His advertising card posted on the front of the tavern fixed him as a man of business with not too much toleration, for it read:¹⁴

... visitors are to state their names and residences and be prepared to pay their fare in specie change, without regard to age. . . . Rooms for public meetings, court martials, taking depositions, and such like assemblages, will be charged for by the day. As the house is not intended to be a place of lazy, unprofitable resort, mere loungers are requested to keep away, and all who come only to idle their time at the fire in winter, or to gulph down ice water in summer, will be charged 25 cents each. Rude, noisy or intoxicating persons will not be tolerated on any terms.

In spite of his attempt to put the tavern on a paying basis, evidently he failed, for in July 1852 it was closed as a place of public entertainment. Eleven years later, in December 1863, the building was wrecked by the explosion of the Union Army magazine in the courthouse across the street, thus ending the story of one of Virginia's fine historic taverns.¹⁵

Evidently Lot 25 stood vacant until it was acquired by Samuel A. Bent in September 1873. Some time prior to 1880 he built another house of public entertainment on the lot which became known as the "Bent Hotel Lot." Bent died about 1889 and the property descended to his children.¹⁶ The Bent Hotel burned in 1915 and a "mercantile establishment" that followed it had disappeared before 1929.¹⁷ It was thus an empty site when the National Park Service began its work in Yorktown in 1930. It became one of the first sites to be studied in depth historically, archeologically, and architecturally. Some excavating was done in 1932 but in the main this archeological search was chiefly from 1933-1934.

14. *Daily Republican*, Richmond, Va., March 2, 1852.

The account also indicated that Anderson was "a wealthy old gentleman well known throughout lower Virginia."

15. *The War of the Rebellion*: A compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies prepared under the Direction of the Secretary of War, Series I, XXIX, 568.

16. *Deed Book*, No. 22 (1881-1894), p. 81; No. 26 (1902-1904), p. 16.

For a view of Bent's Tavern see Illustration No. 8.

17. J. Luther Kibler, "The Story of the Swan Tavern Told at the December Meeting of the Comte de Grasse Chapter, D.A.R., Yorktown, Virginia, by Dr. Clarence Porter Jones, of Newport News, December 6, 1929," a typewritten paper in files of Colonial NHP.

It was reported that:

Six main foundations were excavated on the Swan Tavern lot – those of the second tavern, built in 1880; the first tavern; the kitchen; stable; smokehouse; and a sixth building that would appear to have been the dairy. These were identified from the Insurance records and drawings, which in the case of this lot are extensive and consistent on the number and location of the main buildings and dependencies.¹⁸

The results of the archeological study¹⁹ and the historical data from wills and inventories (particularly that of James Mitchell in 1777), some contemporary accounts and descriptions, and limited pictorial references led to the decision to reconstruct this tavern group.²⁰ Construction followed in 1934, with the work largely under the supervision of Clyde F. Trudell who worked from plans drawn by William H. Haussman. The Peters Construction Company of Norfolk, Va., did the contract building.²¹

18. Virginia Sutton Harrington, "Final Archeological Reports on Developed Units in the Town of Yorktown: I Swan Tavern Group – Lot #25; II Reynolds House-Museum Unit – Lot #31; III Corbin Griffin Medical Shop – Lot #30," a typewritten Colonial NHP report, dated March 14, 1939, pp. 6-7, hereafter cited as Harrington, "Final Archeological Reports on Developed Units. . . ."
19. An interesting detail noted in the excavation was that the tavern's "front foundation wall was 'bent' several inches" by the blast in 1863 which destroyed the courthouse across the street and the original Swan itself.
20. Hatch, "Historical Reports on Developed Sites . . . Lot #25"; Harrington, "Final Archeological Reports on Developed Units . . . Lot #25." Both reports are fully illustrated.
21. Colonial NHP photograph No. 6484 is a contemporary completion photo of the fully reconstructed Swan Tavern Group.

Lot 30:

This half acre of land on the north corner of the intersection of Church and Main Streets¹ had a good location next to the courthouse and very near the parish church in Yorktown. It evidently saw busy times in colonial days and into the Revolution. When Alexandre Berthier detailed the buildings in Yorktown late in 1781 he noted five, possibly six, structures that were then standing here.²

This lot went initially, in 1691, to John Rogers, "Gent.," who evidently developed it since he was still in ownership in 1706 when he sold it to Thomas Mountfort. It then was described as a lot "wth all Housing & Utillences" and as a "lot and its appurtencies."³ In some way Rogers regained possession of the property and in September 1710 he sold it once more, this time to John Wills. This was lot "number 30 together with the messuage or tenement thereon and appurtences."⁴

Wills retained Lot 30 only three years, subsequently selling it to Edward Powers. Powers died in 1719 and by will bequeathed "the house & Lott in York Town whereon I now live to my loving wife Elizabeth Powers." It was intended, too, that in due course it would go to "Elizabeth Moody & Ishmael Moody children of my sd wife." And this is the way that it descended.⁵

When Ishmael Moody died in 1748 his will was found to read: "I give and bequeath to my son Edward Moody my Houses and Land in Yorktown whereon I now live." This was Lot 30 and evidently he had acquired his sister's rights in this

1. In a deed for this property in 1710, Main Street was again described as Broad Street. Its bounds were given as "on the broad Street Southerly & abutting on the East upon the Land of Edward Powers West upon the courthouse Lott." *Deeds and Bonds No. 2*, p. 362. Also, in a deed of November 1691 it was noted as "Broad Street." *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 8*, p. 363 and *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 174.
2. See Illustration No. 1.
3. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 174; *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 12*, pp. 398, 403.
4. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 362.
5. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 3*, pp. 25, 49; *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 14*, p. 378 and *No. 15* (1716-1720), p. 452.

Powers' inventory is quite detailed and tells something of his home. It mentions "the new house up Stairs," "below Stairs New house," "Rooms up Stairs Over the Hall," and "Below Stairs."

and had full ownership. Ishmael's estate inventory for his Lot 30 development was rather extensive and established that his half acre was full of buildings.⁶ There was an ordinary, two stories high, that had at least 5 rooms in addition to a "Bar Room," a "Billiard Room" with a "Loft," and a "Cellar." There was mention of the (1) "back House" which had an upstairs; (2) "Lower House" which had a "Large Room" as well as an "Up Stairs" and a cellar; and (3) "the New House." This totaled four major structures and in addition there was a kitchen, a washhouse, an old and a new dairy, and evidently two meat houses.

In December 1767, Edward Moody and his wife, Elizabeth (now of Chesterfield County), sold Lot 30 and its development for a handsome £500 to John Gibbons who would continue the operation on the lot. When he died (his will was filed in October 1783) he bequeathed his Yorktown property ultimately to a cousin, Robert Gibbons, and his heirs.⁷ Within three years these heirs sold it to Samuel Eddens with this description of the houses then standing:

Houses, Viz that part or parcel of Building known by the name of the new House and formerly occupied by Messrs Cabarrus & Co. as a Store house, also two old houses on the same Lot opposite to the Courthouse with that part of the Kitchen occupied at present by Monsieur Guenette.⁸

This deed to Eddens in 1786 concerned only five-eighths of Lot 30, the west corner of the lot having come under separate ownership some time prior to December 1786. In November 1789 Eddens sold the five-eighths of Lot 30 to Francis Moss. There was reference again to the "new house" which the Cabarrus Company had formerly occupied as a storehouse, and to "one old house on the lott opposite to the Courthouse, with that half of the Kitchen to the same belonging."⁹ Evidently time was taking its toll of the buildings on Lot 30, for none of the colonial and Revolutionary structures would survive into modern times.

6. *Wills and Inventories, No. 20* (1746-1759), pp. 122, 134-38.

7. *Deeds, No. 7*, p. 432; *Wills and Inventories, No. 23* (1783-1811), p. 33.

8. *Deed Book, No. 6*, p. 368.

Evidently the six Gibbons male heirs had sold the Lot 30 property to Cabarrus Brothers and Company of Yorktown. Apparently the company failed to meet their mortgage and the Gibbons heirs repossessed. *Deed Book, No. 6*, p. 289.

9. *Deed Book, No. 6*, p. 421.

The west corner of Lot 30 holds a particular interest since it was involved with the reconstruction of what was thought to be the site of the Corbin Griffin Medical Shop.¹⁰ It is known now that this shop was not here, but was located down the street beyond the courthouse. The basic error came in assuming that two insurance policies related to Lot 30 when in truth they were coverage for structures on Lot 18. The suggestion came, too, from the fact that Corbin Griffin acquired this corner section with a house on it, but not until he was well established on Lots 12 and 18.¹¹ He acquired this corner plot from Francis Moss and his wife, Sarah, for £50 "current money."¹²

All that parcel of land or part of a lot lying in the Town of York adjoining the Courthouse lot and denoted in the plan of the said Town by the No. [30] containing 31 feet in front on the main Street beginning at the Courthouse lot and 44¾ feet back which said Lot was sold to Francis Moss by Samuel Eddens in 1789 together with the house standing on the aforesaid parcel or part of lot.

The purchase price would indicate a sound, smaller structure but there is no mention here of two medical shops nor was it mentioned in later deeds of record. This parcel, 31 by 44¾ feet, continued for some time to have a separate identity. In 1850 when it was sold by Washington Rowe to James L. Walker it was described as "a certain House and lot in the Town of York contiguous to and adjoining the Courthouse lot, which said House and lot the said Washington Rowe derived by Deed from Nathaniel Taylor."¹³ Rowe had bought it in March 1847

10. This reconstruction seemed appropriate since Corbin Griffin had served the needs of his community as a physician (having studied at the University of Edinburgh) for several decades, and had also become a man of influence and political inclination. He was a justice of York County for a number of years, from 1775-1776 was a member of the York County Committee of Safety, and later was a member of the State Senate. His life span carried him through the Revolution and the early National period to the year 1813. During the Revolutionary War, Griffin was a surgeon in the Virginia Line, and was taken into custody by the British at Yorktown. On September 25, 1781, General Nelson, disturbed by the situation, wrote Cornwallis requesting that he inform him "of the Reason for Doctor Griffin's Confinement on Board of one of your Prison Ships." Hatch, "Historical Reports on Developed Sites . . . Lot #30," p. 72.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Deed Book, No. 6*, p. 445.

13. *Deed Book, No. 15* (1849-1854), pp. 138-39.

from Taylor, who for some time resided on the larger part of Lot 30. Taylor had purchased the parcel, "said house and Lot," from Thomas, the son of Corbin Griffin.¹⁴ It is not known just how long the house stood on this parcel. A small frame structure does show here in one of the Brady photographs and it seems to be in some disrepair.¹⁵ Also in an insurance policy of 1850 covering the courthouse property a structure is noted on the site 50 feet from the courthouse itself and is described as "Rowe's wood building."¹⁶

It was in January 1935 that the first archeological work was done on Lot 30, on the Griffin west corner of the half acre. It continued with some interruption until September, having been extended to cover the northwestern two-thirds of the lot.¹⁷ In total a good many foundations and fragments and numerous artifacts were uncovered. However, findings in the Griffin corner of the lot were rather unfruitful and confusing and "the archeological evidence for this location is very poor."¹⁸

After considerable discussion [of where precisely to locate a reconstruction] it was finally decided to erect the Shop by centering it on a . . . fireplace foundation . . . and laying it out from there, a location which, it was admitted by all concerned, at best only approximated the original location.¹⁹

It is obvious from this and the various data that the site selected was arbitrary.

14. *Deed Book, No. 14* (1843-1849), pp. 251-52.

15. See Colonial NHP photograph No. 3,560.

16. Photostatic copy in Colonial NHP files.

17. The remainder of the lot, the one-third along Church Street, was then still privately owned.

18. Harrington, "Final Archeological Reports on Developed Units . . . Lot #30," pp. 13-18.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

The Harrington report is as thoroughly illustrated as possible, objectively analyzes the archeological reports and drawings, and includes a number of pertinent and related documents.

With no insurance drawings; no help to be gleaned from wills, inventories, contemporary drawings, or descriptions of the original; and with little information provided by foundations or artifacts found during archeological research, it was necessary that the new structure be of period type only. It would draw for comparative data on survivals elsewhere and contemporary inventories and descriptions of other shops of this time period.

Plans were drawn for a typical medical shop of the 1781 period and a contract was let to E. C. Nuckels of Richmond in November 1935. Completion came in March 1936 and the first occupant of the building was the Yorktown Post Office.

Lot 31:

This nicely located lot on the west corner of Main and Church streets had to wait some 15 years for development, although it was initially awarded in 1691 to one William Patison. Due to failure to develop the land, Patison forfeited it. In May 1706 the trustees assigned it to Michael MacCormack for the customary 180 pounds of tobacco.¹ A year and a half later, when he sold the northwest half of the lot to John Brooks, it was detailed that his "now Dwelling house" was standing on the half which he retained. Later in 1708 MacCormack sold the remaining half of the lot to Brooks including the "one Messuage or tenement thereon."²

It is of some interest that Elizabeth Brooks in a verbal will expressed the desire to have Mr. Thomas Nelson, or some other person, "Endeavour to Secure ye Lott & houses for her Child & that all her Estate should be kept together for her Child [John] till he come of Age." Seemingly this did happen as John Brooks, "Marriner," disposed of Lot 31 to Thomas Nelson in 1724 through his attorney, John Gibbons.³

A decade later, in 1735, Thomas Nelson deeded this lot and its improvements for a token 15 shillings to William Nelson, Jr., his "Son and Heir apparent." A quarter century later (1761), William Nelson deeded this same property (along with Lot 25 and the Swan Tavern) on the same terms to his "Son and Heir," "Thomas Nelson the Younger." At the time of this transfer of Lot 31, it was stated that it was then "in the occupation of William Stevenson and Alexander Maitland." This could well indicate two businesses in operation on the half acre and likely two structures to accommodate them.⁴ Thomas Nelson, Jr., retained ownership of Lot 31 for more than a decade and in May 1773 disposed of it by sale for a substantial £ 550 to William Reynolds.⁵

1. *Deeds and Bonds*, No. 2, p. 169.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 266, 299.

3. *Deeds, Orders, Wills*, No. 15, pp. 49, 186-87 and No. 16 (1720-1729), part 1, p. 287; *Deeds and Bonds*, No. 3, p. 245.

4. *Deeds*, No. 4, p. 353; *Deeds*, No. 6.

5. *Deeds*, No. 8, p. 302.

William Reynolds seems to have been a native of Yorktown who received his business education in offices of the London firm of John Norton and Sons. It was late in 1771, or early in 1772, that he returned to Yorktown and set himself up as a merchant.⁶ In May 1772 he rented a storehouse from John Hatley Norton in Yorktown. Then he began to acquire property in various parts of the town. Three months after taking title to Lot 31 he wrote: "I have made a purchase of a lott & Houses more conveniently situated for business & for less money & am now commenced Housekeeper. . . ."⁷ It seems significant that he noted "a lott & Houses."

William Reynolds had returned to Virginia with a tidy sum to invest in trade and it is reasonable to assume that he bought a storehouse in keeping with his means and needs. It is a fact that, soon after his purchase of Lot 31, a building on that lot became known as the Reynolds Brick Storehouse.

For a number of years, Reynolds tried his fortune in trade. In the beginning, his chief connection was with London, but gradually he shifted the emphasis to the West Indian commerce and even bought interest in a number of trading ships. His correspondence indicates that he contemplated an extensive business based on wide trade relations. He toured Virginia seeking freight for his ships and sale of his goods. At the same time, he remained in the circle of social and political Virginia enjoying the theatrical performances of the day, the lotteries, court meetings, and Assembly meetings. In spite of his capital, his influence, and his position, the records indicate that he was not really successful commercially. Whether it was a result of the Revolution, lack of ability, poor management, or due to some unknown cause, Reynolds gradually withdrew from his large business, selling his ships and even his storehouse on Lot 31. He himself indicates that the Revolution was in large part the determining factor.

Early in 1779 William Reynolds, Merchant, and Mary, his wife, sold a part of the Lot 31 holding: "all that House and Ground whereon it stands commonly called and known by the name of William Reynolds's brick store house situate on the main street and on the Lott now in the occupation of the said Reynolds." This sale was to James Eyma & Company for "£1200 current money of Virginia" and included only the north corner of Lot 31. The east corner and the rear part of

6. Hatch, "Historical Reports on Developed Sites . . . Lot #31," pp. 52 ff.

7. William Reynolds, "Letter Book 1 and 2: Yorktown: 1771-1783," p. 45, typescript copy in Colonial NHP library, hereafter cited as "Letter Book 1 and 2."

the lot remained in the ownership of Reynolds who evidently resided in a home on it.⁸ The storehouse would be sold by James Eyma of Martinique through Reynolds in 1783 to John Moss, and by Moss to John C. Gunther in 1784, in each instance being noted as "Mr Reynolds's Brick store."⁹ One of the bounds of the house and site continued to be the part of Lot 31 which "continued in the occupation of the said Reynolds." Reynolds remained in ownership of this, the larger part of Lot 31, until he sold it in 1792 to John Hatley Norton, then of Winchester in Frederick County, for £600. The Norton purchase included Lot 29 as well.¹⁰

The housing here owned by Reynolds and by James Eyma and Company suffered little damage from the siege in 1781 although the storehouse was used in the months following as a French barracks. In 1783 Reynolds wrote to Arthur Lee seeking compensation for eight months of French occupation. When Berthier made his survey of existing housing in Yorktown he located two buildings of substance on Lot 31 facing Main Street and a small structure just behind the inside one. He also located another large L-shaped structure on Church Street with two smaller units behind it in the south corner portion of the lot.

Insurance records relating to Lot 31 cover only the Reynolds Storehouse.¹¹ The first was issued to James Belvin in 1838 and covered a two-story brick dwelling 40 by 20 feet contiguous to four wooden buildings. In later policies it was normally described as a "Dwelling of Brick and covered with wood, one and a half stories high," except that in 1853 and 1860 it was noted as a "Dwelling and Storehouse." There is no doubt that this all related to the same single structure. An 1865 reference noted the building was "Reported to be destroyed probably in December, 1863 by enemy." Probably it was another casualty of the courthouse explosion.

8. *Deed Book, No. 6*, p. 22.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 185, 199.

10. *Yorktown's Hustings Court Records, 1787-1793*, p. 35, hereafter cited as *Yorktown's Hustings Court Records*.

11. Photocopies of pertinent insurance plot sketches are in Harrington, "Final Archeological Reports on Developed Units . . . Lot #31."

James Belvin bought "the Brick house in the said Town of York adjoining the Swan Tavern" in 1829 and retained ownership until 1850 when he sold it to Jesse M. Warden who immediately sold it to Robert Anderson. *Deed Book, No. 11* (1828-1834), p. 140; *No. 15*, pp. 129, 130.

There is only a meager historical record or description of the house erected by MacCormack on the east corner of Lot 31, although the building clearly was there and stood a long time. It is not known when it disappeared, but it was gone by 1886, since it is not present in a photograph made about that time showing the full extent of the Main Street frontage of Lot 31. At this time two slighter structures stood here. On the east corner was a "Bar Room" and on the north corner two small frame structures in considerable disrepair stood between it and Brent's Hotel on the Swan Tavern site.¹² Prior to the establishment of Colonial National Historical Park, the Chandler Building with Carters Drug Store¹³ had replaced these on the Main Street front of Lot 31. These gave way to an open lot and Park acquisition allowing archeological study here early in the 1930's.

The archeological study of Lot 31 began in 1933 following the establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Most of the half acre was explored, although the southeast corner of the lot had to await the removal of a building. This then housed the Yorktown Post Office which was moved to the period type Medical Shop across Main Street early in 1936. In the archeological exploration:

Foundations of two brick buildings were excavated, one of them on the northeast corner of the lot, at the corner of Main and Church Streets, identified by the historical records as the MacCormack House; the other on the northwest corner of the lot, adjacent to the Swan Tavern, and identified from the historical records as the Reynolds brick storehouse. . . . Portions of two small buildings were also uncovered, but not identified. The excavations in the fall of 1936 served only to relocate the foundation extending under the old post office . . . to locate an old well; and an unusual cache of an early type of glass wine bottle.¹⁴

With the fruits of the historical and archeological research in hand, thought went to the possible reconstruction of the Reynolds Brick Storehouse. Lack of

12. See Illustration No. 9.

13. This structure is pictured in Colonial NHP photograph No. 16,283.

14. Harrington, "Final Archeological Reports on Developed Units . . . Lot #31," pp. 10-12.

"If the two types of evidence [historical and archeological] are considered equally, there can be little question but that the western foundation, #31A, was originally used as a storehouse, and was the Reynolds brick storehouse referred to in the records. It was later used as a residence from time to time, and occupied until 1863. Of the other half of the lot, less is known, but it could well have been erected by MacCormack and later used as a store and warehouse."

full agreement on the architectural detail and interpretation of some of the findings caused the matter to be shelved for the moment and it has not been reactivated.¹⁵ Later in the 1930's the east corner of the lot became the site of a National Park Service temporary museum and information center which was open until the exigencies of World War II led to its closing.

15. The matter did reach the point of producing some elevation drawings. (See Colonial NHP photographs Nos. 12,870 and 12,871.)

Lot 36:

This half-acre parcel on the east corner of Church and Main streets, directly in front of the lot on which York Parish Church was built, was among those lots assigned by the town trustees in November 1691.¹ It was deeded to William Digges of Bellfield Plantation fame, but he failed to develop it and forfeited his title. It remained unoccupied for another eight years before it was reassigned to Robert Leightenhouse, a one-time schoolteacher, provided "said Robert should within twelve months after said grant build and finish on said Lott a good house to containe at least 20 foot square and he failing so to do said lott should be lyable to ye choice of any other but said Robert failed to build such house said grant became void and said lott lyable to the choice of any other."²

Now a new element entered the picture. Leightenhouse's widow, Elizabeth, married Mungo Somerwell and evidently he began to develop the lot.³ But he also died within several years, whereupon Elizabeth successfully sought to get title to the lot from the town trustees. This was in payment of the usual 180 pounds of tobacco but "in consideration also of the several buildings and improvements on ye said Lott made by Mungo Somerwell decd late husband of said Elizabeth." Now, in May 1707, she had title to "Lot 36 with the buildings."

Elizabeth soon married again, this time to Edward Powers.⁴ When Elizabeth herself died, however, the property went not to Powers but to "Joseph Mountfort as heir at Law of ye said Elizabeth." It was Mountfort who sold the property in June 1716 to Phillip Lightfoot for £80 sterling. At the time it was a rental property "in ye tenure and occupation of Mary Smith" who evidently operated an ordinary here as she had obtained the proper license the year before.⁵ It would remain in the Lightfoot family as a property parcel for almost seven decades. It is interesting that Philip Lightfoot, after his death in 1748, left in his will Lot 36

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 8*, p. 368.

2. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 233.

3. *Ibid.*

It would appear that Elizabeth was born Elizabeth Spencer and had at least one sister, Margaret, who married Thomas May. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 3*, p. 218.

4. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 3*, p. 130.

5. Edward M. Riley, "History of the Founding and Development of Yorktown Virginia 1691-1781," a National Park Service typewritten report, dated March 20, 1942, p. 77.

and other properties to his son, William, including the storehouse which he had bought from Joseph Mountfort.⁶ Quite clearly the Somerwell House had varying uses even in Colonial times and would have others.

The Lightfoot ownership ended in 1783 with the sale of the property to John Moss for a tidy £300.⁷ Berthier, on his plan of 1781, delineated three structures on the Main Street edge of Lot 36 – the T-shaped Somerwell House, a small structure east of it, and a larger one beyond that. No outbuildings were shown even for the Somerwell House, so perhaps there were none that were considered usable.

John Moss proceeded to build a store on the eastern half of the lot and in 1798, since he was now a resident of Richmond, he sold to John Moss of Yorktown:

a certain Store house with the Ground (only) it stands on lying in the Town of York and Called and known by the name of Moss's store lying on the main Street with the appurtenances.⁸

John Moss of Richmond retained the remainder of the lot except for the storehouse and site plus "a small passage between the said Store house as far as it extends and no further." This he sold to Peyton Southall in July 1804. Southall restored a single ownership to Lot 36 when he purchased "Moss'es store together with the reversions" in December 1812.⁹

In the first half of the 19th century a number of fire insurance policies were taken out to cover the property, the earliest of them being taken out in 1817.¹⁰ At that time the dependencies shown on the western part of the lot in association

6. *Wills and Inventories, No. 20*, p. 103.

7. *Deed Book, No. 6*, p. 181.

At this time Lot 36 was described as bounded "on the northeast by the Church [yard] Walls, on the Southeast by a lot [42] of Cole Digges [at this time Dudley Digges], on the Southwest by the Main Street and on the Northwest by a cross [Church] street."

8. *Deed Book, No. 7*, p. 273.

9. *Deed Book, No. 7*, p. 470; *No. 8*, pp. 208, 217.

10. Photostatic copies of policies in the files of Colonial NHP for the years 1817 (Policy No. 846), 1823 (5046), 1830 (7609), 1838 (10763), 1846 (14286), 1853 (17659), and 1860 (21353).

with the Somerwell House were of the type normally associated with dwellings of the Somerwell House style and period. In 1817 they were noted on the plot sketch of the lot as:

- "Dwelling," brick covered with wood — 39 by 42 feet
(Though listed as one story, later policies are consistent at one and one-half stories.)
- "Kitchen," wood covered with wood — one story, 18 by 24 feet
- "Stable," wood covered with wood — one story, 16 by 16 feet
- "Dairy" — shown in symbol block but not described
- "Smoke House" — shown in symbol block but not described

These structures continued to appear on most later policies through 1853, as did a "store-wood covered with wood" 25 by 44 feet (given as one and one-half stories except in 1817). Likely this was the store that Moss built in the southwest corner of the lot prior to 1798. Except for the year 1817, the store was noted as "Store and Dwelling." In 1846 the Somerwell House was shown as then unoccupied. It is of particular note that a policy of 1823 indicated that at that time both the east and west sides of the rear wing of the Somerwell House had porches. "This is the earliest and only known documentary evidence of either of these spaces having been covered."¹¹

Though all aboveground traces of the Somerwell House dependencies had long ago disappeared from the scene prior to the acquisition of this portion of the lot by the National Park Service, it was possible in the 1930's to make a search for underground remains. There is this thumbnail report of the archeological investigation to locate and identify Somerwell House dependency sites:¹²

Using the available insurance data as source material the rear of the Lightfoot [Somerwell] lot was investigated by excavations starting July 8, 1935. . . . After but four days of exploratory endeavors the chimney of the kitchen (or a chimney #2,860-#2,859¹³ that was found at the site supposedly occupied by the former kitchen building) was discovered and uncovered, also during the same four days the foundation of the smokehouse was located and uncovered (No. 2,851 — No. 2,854) and the site of the

11. Clyde F. Trudell, "Report on the Restoration of the Lightfoot [Somerwell] House," a typewritten and well illustrated N.P.S. (Colonial NHP) report dated November 23, 1937, pp. 25 ff.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 26 ff.

13. These are Colonial NHP photograph numbers.

stable (No. 2,849) was located and cleared revealing the brick rubble floor. The evidences of the stable yard were clearly discernible in trenching revealing the soil strata.

The Somerwell House itself did survive its vicissitudes and continues into the present time in its restored form. It is one of the earlier Yorktown survivals and evidently, as we have seen, was initially the work of Mungo Somerwell sometime in the very first years of the 18th century. It has been speculated because of its architectural characteristics that the Somerwell House may represent two stages of construction, the leg of the T being built first, and the top of the T, close along Main Street, representing an addition, although both were rather close to each other in point of time. "The character of brick masonry displayed on the rear wing certainly presents many earlier details than that of the front wing."¹⁴ Clyde F. Trudell also concluded that "it is possible that the dwelling was struck during the bombardment of the town that came with the Siege." This, he points out, "may explain many of the puzzling patches in the brick walls that show decided evidence of very early repair that may have been necessary by the passage of cannon balls."¹⁵

Though the fabric of the house remained reasonably intact, its visible exterior form came to be lost after later additions which included a full-length porch on the front and a long extension of the back extending toward Grace Church. It has been reported¹⁶ that:

During the Civil War, a stable was moved behind and joined to the rear wing and the structure thus enlarged was used as a hospital for the Federal Troops.¹⁷ After the Civil War the entire structure was made into a hotel and in quite recent years (about 1870) the stable addition was added to by a long, rambling, two story frame structure of bedrooms and an additional full story was added over the stable portion which was originally but one story in height.

14. Trudell, "Report on the Restoration of the Lightfoot [Somerwell] House," p. 4.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

17. If so, this was in addition to the Nelson House which functioned as the principal Union hospital.

Actually the 1870 date is too early for the realization of the long, full two-story extension on the rear, though there was a sizeable addition here in 1881 at the time of the Yorktown Siege of 1781 Centennial observance. This was then a relatively long and low dormered (not a full two-story) extension with a porch trailing behind it. At this time, too, the structure already had a porch across the front. This same situation was true about 1903 when a postal card view was published. The extensive rear section had, however, been fully extended and raised to its full two stories prior to the winter of 1917-1918 when a sailor in Yorktown (Everett R. Gardner) photographed it.¹⁸

From all indications, the Somerwell House and its appendages, in good repair, were able to serve some of the visiting public during the Centennial celebration in 1881. The same was true of another structure built about this time – a large two-story frame building which was erected parallel to Main Street on that part of Lot 36 southeast of the Somerwell House.¹⁹ The Somerwell House continued for some time to be a principal Yorktown hotel, being known at the turn of the century as the “Old English Tavern” and then as the Yorktown Hotel. In 1881 it had been known as Dawson’s Hotel.²⁰

In 1918 during World War I, an artilleryman in the area, Charles H. Runyun, noted that “ye Olde Yorktown Inn,” as the structure was then called, was “doing a flourishing business due to the influx of Sailors from the Atlantic Fleet anchored in the York River (in sight of Yorktown).”²¹

18. Harry R. Houston, *The Peninsula of Virginia* (1934); Mrs. Sydney Smith, *Old Yorktown and Its History* (Yorktown, Va., 1920), p. 18, hereafter cited as Smith, *Old Yorktown*. Colonial NHP photographs Nos. 16,287 and 16,288.

19. Sometimes called the “Dadds Building,” and pictured in Colonial NHP photograph No. 2,366. On acquisition of the property the building was demolished.

20. Stevens, *Yorktown Centennial Handbook*, p. 98; Smith, *Old Yorktown*, pp. 12, 18.

Both the Somerwell House and the adjacent frame structure appear in Centennial graphic material such as *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, issues of November 1, 1879 and October 1, 1881.

21. *Daily Press*, Newport News-Hampton, November 10, 1968.

Runyun also added a new note on “Cornwallis’s Cave”: “At the foot of the Bluff below Yorktown was a small Cave which was boarded up with rough lumber, for a Dime a Lady at a nearby House would unlock the Door and let one peer inside to see where Gen. Cornwallis slept, according to legend.”

The old brick house, with its later multiple frame additions, was still functioning as a hotel when taken over by the National Park Service. It was used by Colonial NHP initially as an administration building and also as dormitory quarters for the staff until the completion of the reconstructed Swan Tavern in 1934. There were repairs to the structure in 1932; however, its full restoration did not come until 1935-1936.²² At this time it again became Park Headquarters, and it continued to serve in this capacity for some 20 years.²³

22. Trudell, "Report on the Restoration of the Lightfoot [Somerwell] House," pp. 5 ff. and 9 ff.

23. The only dependency restoration that has been undertaken was that of a period type stable to house the then Yorktown telephone exchange. This was located off-site to avoid blocking the view of Grace Church. The archeological and historical data indicated that the stable was in the extreme north corner of Lot 36.

Lot 37:

In August 1692, Capt. Thomas Mountfort was granted a license to keep an ordinary "Att Yorke Town for the ensuing year."¹ This evidently was a stand on Lot 37, probably the first ordinary to be established within the limits of the town. Mountfort had been assigned Lot 37 in November 1691 under the name Thomas Mumford, and obviously proceeded with his development without delay.² He seemingly continued to operate here until November 1707 when his petition for a license was denied, the county court deeming his development "insufficient."³ It appears that after prospering for a time his fortunes then declined. There was mounting competition during this period, as is shown by the fact that Mountfort in November 1694 sued Thomas Sessions, now an innkeeper, for £50 damages for "illegally contriveing invegeling of ye plts Servant named Walter Turner from his Service being then book keeper att his Ordinary Att Yorke Towne."⁴ To have had a bookkeeping business must have been profitable at this time.

A court appearance on the part of Mountfort's wife, Rebecca, may suggest some decline in business standards at the Mountfort place. In January 1709, after Capt. Thomas Mountfort's death, she had been indited by a Grand Jury "for keeping Tipling on the Sabbath day & Entertaining evill persons in her house." In her court appearance "being very Penitent & Submissive & assuring the Court She would not offend in the like nature," the case was dismissed.⁵

Lot 37 descended to Joseph Mountfort, "son and heir at law" to Captain Thomas.⁶ In June 1711, Joseph Mountfort disposed of the half acre with its development to Micajah Perry of London, who a year later, through his attorney in Yorktown, William Buckner, sold it to Edward Powers, an innkeeper.⁷ Three years later some legal involvement surfaced, though in the end Powers received a clear title.

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 9*, p. 299.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

3. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 13*, p. 94.

4. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 10*, p. 58.

5. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 13*, p. 187.

6. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 299.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 371, 395.

John Dozwell and his wife, Rebecca, formerly Mrs. Thomas Mountfort, sought a one-third part "of one Messuage two Cottages & half an Acre of Land with the appurtenances." Rebecca's claim was based on this being "her dowry by the Endowment" of her former husband now deceased. It developed in the case also that Powers, after his purchase of the lot, had "expended considerable Sums of money in building" on Lot 37.⁸

After seven years, in February 1719, Powers sold the half acre for £110 "with the buildings" to Phillip Lightfoot who added it to his growing list of holdings. When he died near mid-century, this parcel was devised to his son, Armistead Lightfoot.⁹ There is no record of Armistead Lightfoot's disposition of the lot and its development; however, it does appear that it had become a part of the estate of Seymour Powell prior to 1789.¹⁰

At the time of the siege of Yorktown, or just after the surrender of the British, Berthier detailed two large structures, and possibly a third, on Lot 37. One was on the extreme north corner of the half acre and one was near the east corner. Between these and facing on Main Street was the larger building, a T-shaped structure.¹¹

These structures did not survive for long, if at all, into the 19th century, though other structures did follow on their sites. On acquisition of this property the National Park Service removed all structures except two which are still standing. One (which may be all, or in part, on adjacent Lot 43) was built in quite recent times as a private law office and now (1973) is under a use permit and houses a pewter and gift shop. The second is also a gift shop, emphasizing pottery and brass.

8. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 14*, pp. 404, 412-13.

This case involved a judgement for indebtedness against Joseph Mountfort and an award of some of Capt. Thomas Mountfort's lands to John and Rebecca Dozwell to satisfy her "endowment."

9. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 3*, p. 273; *Wills and Inventories, No. 22* (1771-1783), p. 103.

10. *Deed Book, No. 6*, p. 404.

11. See Illustration No. 1.

It is this second shop, "The Yorktown Shoppe," that is of some passing interest.¹² Seemingly it took form sometime in the last half of the 19th century. It was not standing when Brady did his Civil War photography in Yorktown. It was, however, in being and already a bit aged when a photograph that included it was made in the late 1870's.¹³ Old-timers recollect that it may have been erected by some member of the Halstead family. For the next forty years it operated as a store and/or office as need arose. In the early 1930's it was acquired by Mrs. A. Y. Burcher,¹⁴ and was given new underpinnings and a new roof which replaced the original shingles. From then until 1965 it housed Mrs. Burcher's "The Spinning Wheel Antique Shop." The rear portion of the building was added to the shop sometime in the 1950's to provide more space. On the exterior this lacks some of the atmosphere inherent in the original two-story section.

12. Writing on April 15, 1940, Albert H. Good in his "Architectural Report on the Old Town of Yorktown: Being an Exploration of Its Potentialities for Historical-Architectural Restoration-Reconstruction-Clearance" had this to say about "The Spinning Wheel Antique Shop" on Lot 37 in Yorktown:

On the middle section of the Main Street frontage . . . stands this building, probably built long after the Surrender Period, but still, by reason of its simplicity, somehow not inharmonious in the Main Street scene . . . in that it has an ancient look despite a probable comparatively recent date, and because its roof line and whitewashed walls, casually observed, recall the commonplace early structure that must have existed in the Old Town.

13. See Illustration No. 8.

14. Illustration No. 14 shows it as it was about 1931.

Lot 42:

Thomas Pate became the first person to develop Lot 42 located on the north corner of Main and the cross street that later became Read Street, although it was initially granted to one John Seabourn, a carpenter. Pate, a ferryman and sometime ordinary-keeper at the site of Yorktown even before the town was laid out in 1691, acquired Lot 42 from the town trustees in 1699, and when he disposed of the half acre in April 1703 through "Deed of Guift" it was described as "my House & Lott in Yorktown."¹

It is believed that the house standing here today is the house that Thomas Pate built, though all dependencies and other structures on the lot have disappeared. Berthier in 1781 showed the L-shaped form of the Pate House along with three small structures facing Main Street some little distance to the northwest. It may be that two of these are the "two Shops" that stood here in 1799 along with the Pate House itself, then described as "the Brick Store house."² Through the years this veteran structure saw a variety of uses and was privately restored as a residence in 1925.³

1. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 100.
2. *Deed Book, No. 17* (1867-1871), p. 298.
3. The story of Lot 42, its owners, and the buildings on it is told in some detail in Hatch, *The Thomas Pate House*.

Prior to the acquisition of the Pate House and its immediate surroundings as a part of the Blow Estate in Yorktown in 1966, the larger part of Lot 42 had been acquired and made a part of Colonial NHP. Also, the large two-story store and dwelling, as well as the sizable barn of John S. Deneufville dating back some 60 years, had been demolished. Colonial NHP photograph No. 16,293 shows the Deneufville House and store prior to its demolition.

Lot 43: The "Old Customhouse" Lot

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 at 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 from which he issued clearances and other official papers. Its location could, and did, vary with the individual collectors.¹ Richard Ambler and then his sons, John, Edward, and Jaquelin, 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. They chose a location in Yorktown.

Richard Ambler was a successful merchant and became a well-established Virginian. He married Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward Jaquelin of Jamestown, and in time (1739) inherited a sizable estate there including the mansion whose ruins still dominate the east end of the site of old Jamestown. He also became the Collector of Customs for the York River District, an office that was financially worthwhile and that carried some honor and distinction.²

Yorktown was a busy port with considerable trade, reaching its peak prosperity in the decades prior to the Revolution, and as Collector, a post which he held for many 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 must have reverberated with the salty talk of the sea as well as the vernacular of the Virginia gentry and tradesmen. He knew ship captains and shipowners and was familiar with their cargoes and destinations.

The Yorktown station served a relatively large area and was one of the most important customs districts in colonial Virginia. Its extent was more or less

1. Sarah C. Armistead; "DAR Devotion and a Unique Chapter House," a typewritten manuscript dated July 17, 1951 in the Colonial NHP library, pp. 8-9, hereafter cited as Armistead, "A Unique Chapter House," quoting a letter of Arthur Pierce Middleton.
2. *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 33, 187; Armistead, "A Unique Chapter House," pp. 8-9.

described and defined about 1770 in a document that is preserved in the British Museum.³

This District in Width about 35 Miles and reaches Inland about 75 Miles, Navigable for Large Vessels not more than 45 or 50 Miles. A good and Safe harbour the Whole way up, How the boundaries of this District were Originally Settled not able to say, but from long usage it Comprehend to the Southd a Small River Pocosin, York River, Mockjack Bay with 4 Small rivers or Creeks, which empty themselves into that Bay – To the Northd the little River Peankatunk – Pocosin to York 5 Miles Milford Haven, is another River Peankatunk is 30 Miles from the office, 12 only from Urbanna on Rappahanock.

In all the Rivers are many harbours Bays & Creeks, and landing places at almost every door – Great part of the Navigation of this Port is employed to the Several foreign Ports in Europe, with Cargoes of Wheat & flower [flour] &c Lumber to the West Indies, from all which places their is no doubt that large Quantities of foreign Manufacture & produce are introduced – The principle place is York Town where the Custom House is Established; In every harbour Vessels from 50 to 100 tons load – The Oppertunities for Smuggling Cannot be interrupted but by a Water Guard.

Richard Ambler, born in York, England, in 1690, was the son of John Ambler, one-time sheriff of Yorkshire, and Elizabeth Burkadike. He migrated to Virginia as a relatively young man and within a short time, by 1720, had settled in Yorktown and entered the mercantile field. He prospered in this business and soon was building property holdings in Yorktown and elsewhere. His first purchase in Yorktown, on January 11, 1721, for £30 current money, was the strategically located Lot 43 at the intersection of Main and Read streets which had good access to the waterfront and harbor.⁴ This lot came to be the location of both his residence and his still-surviving storehouse.

Needing additional space, Ambler purchased in 1726 a part of adjoining Lot 44 as well as Lot 45 just beyond. Three years later he acquired Lot 34 on the bluff overlooking the river. Other property acquisitions and adjustments followed, including a ten-acre tract adjoining Yorktown on the west side and, more particularly, the use of an area on the Yorktown waterfront. This later was adjacent to his Lot 34 holding and was in the beach area that separated the

3. British Museum Additional Manuscripts No. 15484, London, England.

4. *Deeds and Bonds*, No. 3, p. 340.

original town lots from the river. This being a "Town Commons" area, it was necessary that a special patent be obtained from the Virginia Council. This, along with the right to survey the land, was granted to him on August 15, 1728, in this language:⁵

Richard Ambler of York Town Esqr by his petition setting forth that between the land appropriated for the said Town & the River there lies a beach of sand which at high tide is overflowed, but nevertheless may with some expense & labour be made convenient for building warehouses for the securing merchandizes of great bulk and weight, which through the steepness and height of the bank cannot easily be conveyed into the town that the petr is desirous to erect a warehouse on the said Beach adjoining to that place called the Church landing, & praying that eighty foot square of the said beach may be granted him by patent for the purpose aforesaid, with power to enlarge the same by making a wharf into the river wch may be of great benefit to the trade of that Town. . . .

He was not, however, "to encroach upon the publick landings, or the Streets leading through the said Town to the River side." In this Ambler was following the pattern of other leading Yorktown merchants such as Phillip Lightfoot, Thomas Nelson, Cole Digges, and John Ballard because the five-acre "Comon Shore of noe value" (so designated on the 1691 survey) represented useable ground and the only access to the river, shore, and harbor.⁶

That he was a leading merchant undoubtedly influenced the selection of Richard Ambler as Customs Officer. It would indicate, too, that he had attained an influential, or at least a very substantial, position in this port town. His property buildup reached beyond Yorktown to a "Plantation in Caroline," to another in Hanover County, still another in Warwick County, and a fourth on "Pohatan swamp" in James City. There was, too, the sizable inheritance at Jamestown that came to him through his wife, an inheritance that five years later, in 1744, he substantially increased by purchase to embrace the western half of the Jamestown peninsula. Perhaps his granddaughter, Elizabeth Jaquelin Ambler, writing in 1798, did have good insight into his personality.⁷ She described him in these terms:

5. *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, edited by H. R. McIlwaine (Richmond, 1930), 4, 183-84.

6. See Hatch, "York Under the Hill."

7. From the note files of Colonial NHP.

An *honest* Yorkshireman amongst the English is proverbial; for what reason I cannot undertake to say; whether, because they abound, or that they are rare, is of little consequence; that our Grandfather Richard Ambler was one, is a fact that his whole neighborhood could testify. He was saving, and thrifty, this perhaps was another characteristic of his Country, nevertheless he was a painstaking, money getting man; and at the age of 43 [34] discretely married our Grandmother the inheritor of the ancient seat of Jamestown. . . ."

His marriage in 1724 to Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward Jaquelin and his second wife, Martha Cary, brought him into an estate at Jamestown that had been built up for several decades by two owners – Richard James and William Sherwood. Richard Ambler's marriage was a fruitful one in family matters as well and nine children (six boys and three girls) followed in the years between 1731-1750 although only three were to survive him, all sons – Edward, John, and Jacquelin. There must have been stress and high value on education in the Ambler family. John was educated at Wakefield Grammar School in Yorkshire, at Cambridge, and at Inner and Middle Temple, joining the English bar in 1757. Edward also attended Cambridge, while Jaquelin pursued his studies closer to home, at William and Mary.

Richard Ambler was assured of prodigy through Edward who married Mary, the daughter of William Cary of Ceeley's in Elizabeth City County, and Jaquelin who married Rebecca, the daughter of Lewis Burwell. It was she whom Jefferson called his Belinda.⁸

John, in 1766, died unmarried of "consumption the hereditary weakness of his family" while seeking a cure in the Barbadoes, though his body was brought back for interment at Jamestown. According to his niece, Elizabeth Jaquelin, John Ambler was "a man of most erudition and elegance . . . he was not only a great scholar, but a Gentleman of great refinement."⁹ Such is indicated, too, from his lengthy and laudatory epitaph. He had succeeded his father as Collector for the York River District, but death cut his tenure short as it did his attendance in the House of Burgesses where he had been through several sessions.

Richard Ambler died early in 1766 and his somewhat detailed will tells something of the man and his concern for, and his fairness in providing for, the

8. Armistead, "A Unique Chapter House," pp. 8 ff; *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 33, 187.

9. From the note files of Colonial NHP.

security of his surviving sons.¹⁰ To John went the larger share of the Jamestown properties and to Jaquelin various Yorktown, Jamestown, and outlying properties; to Edward fell the family seat on Main Street in Yorktown and the business-related properties as well as others in the country. A specific provision was: "I give my said son Edward and his Heirs forever my dwelling house wherein I now live together with the Lots of Land whereon that and my Out houses and Stable stands also the Garden ground adjoining. I give him likewise my Storehouse situate on the bank near the River." This bequest included, too, "all the furniture of my said dwelling house, that is to say my Plate Beds Bedding Tables Chairs and all other Utensils belonging to my said dwelling house Kitchen and Stable My Stock in trade I mean all the Goods and Merchandise in the Store on hand and also the Goods and Merchandise now sent for and expected in at the time of my death likewise all the Debts due to me by my Store book a list of which shall be taken. . . ." Richard had been hopeful and requested that Edward and Jaquelin would "carry on Trade in partnership." To this end he gave "all my Bonds and Obligations which are not Entered in my Storehouse" to them equally.

The joint trading arrangement did not materialize. With John Ambler's early death, Edward inherited his brother's interest at Jamestown. He moved from Yorktown to Jamestown and took John's seat in the House of Burgesses. He was, however, destined to an early death, at 35, but his widow and children continued on at Jamestown until the Revolution.

Jaquelin remained Yorktown-oriented, however, and evidently laid plans to continue his father's mercantile business with a proper establishment. He made an adjustment with Edward, the year after their father's death, that put him in ownership of the family residence and the brick storehouse ("Customhouse") on Lot 43 as well as related properties.¹¹ He served as county sheriff and succeeded to the Collector's post after the demise of Edward, who followed John's short tenure, and in time he became the Naval Officer of York River as well. Jaquelin was a recognized revolutionary leader who attained Council of State membership in 1780. He was also named Treasurer of Virginia, an office he held until his death in 1798.¹²

Although the Ambler residential complex in Yorktown did not match the elegance of that of some of their neighbors, notably the Lightfoots and the

10. *Wills and Inventories, No. 21* (1760-1771), p. 278.

11. *Deeds, No. 7*, p. 275.

12. *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 33, 187.

Nelsons, it did rank as one of the finer establishments in town. The improvements on Lots 43, 44, and 45, as described in the *Virginia Gazette* in 1773,¹³ clearly indicate this, embracing as they did a dwelling house, "a very commodious one, with four room 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.

When the Revolution broke, Jaquelin felt insecure in this port town and 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, for £1000 sterling he sold the property in 1778 to Thomas Wyld, Jr., who, after extensive repairs, operated an ordinary in the dwelling until he was forced out by the British in 1781.¹⁴

After the British came the French who wintered in Yorktown after the decisive victory culminating on October 19, 1781. The billeting officer for the unit that remained after the allied American and French armies departed, surveyed the town and carefully noted its housing. The "Customhouse" featured prominently on his plan, undoubtedly reflecting good housing for troops at that time. The brick storehouse got more favorable attention than did the Ambler residence which was also duly delineated.¹⁵

The sale from Jaquelin to Wyld was never consummated. When the purchaser sought to pay in depreciated currency, a law suit ensued and it was not resolved until 1793. The decision was made by Ambler, who recovered the property, to sell it again, in 1797, to Alexander Macaulay, a merchant of Yorktown.¹⁶ 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. Also listed were a kitchen of wood (16 by 20 feet), another brick one-story kitchen covered with wood (20 by 22 feet), a stable

13. (Purdie and Dixon), December 2 and 9.

14. Extracts from a court suit in 1792, *Thomas Wyld, Jr., v. Jaquelin Ambler*, York County Records Loose Paper File.

15. In addition, a smaller structure is shown on Lot 37 (perhaps a dependency). Four other units are shown on the lot behind. (See Illustration No. 1.)

16. *Deed Book, No. 7*, p. 305.

(28 by 22 feet), and an undimensioned smokehouse.¹⁷

The date of construction of the "Old Customhouse" is like that of many old buildings of the period, difficult to fix with exactness. There are several possibilities, yet the 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 Capt. Daniell 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 who must have satisfied the minimum building requirements for the property. It descended to his daughter, Ann, and her husband, Christopher Haynes, of Mulberry Island, who conveyed it to "Richard Ambler of the Parish of Yorkhampton, County of York, merchant."¹⁸

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. This house, in ruins, was photographed by the ever-present Civil War photographer Mathew Brady. This view shows also the solid old storehouse which still survives together with the ruins of the "covered way connecting House & Store." 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, about the time of World War I, a bank — the Yorktown Branch of the Peninsula Bank of Williamsburg.

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 in October 1922, presented the project of acquiring and preserving the colonial brick building in Yorktown known as the "Old

17. Mutual Assurance Society Policy No. 1036 issued to Elizabeth Macaulay.

18. *Deeds and Bonds*, No. 2, p. 176; No. 3, p. 340.

Customhouse." Funds were pledged by various individuals and society chapters toward the purchase price. Interest grew in Virginia and there were contributions from other chapters and states. The "Old Customhouse" was purchased on April 29, 1924, and thought then turned to the restoration of the building.¹⁹

Funds came to hand for the entire restoration project which also embraced the brick wall enclosing the lawn and the adjacent dependencies (a utility building and necessary house, 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 became, and continues as, the Comte de Grasse Chapter headquarters.²⁰

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 18th century, for both pine and walnut.²¹

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. Ambler's storehouse is the only colonial and Revolutionary survivor on Lot 43.²²

19. Armistead, "A Unique Chapter House," pp. 4-5; the files of the Comte de Grasse Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Colonial Yorktown* (Richmond, 1938), p. 92.

22. An abbreviated account of the "Storehouse and Customhouse," with helpful illustrations by the author appeared in *Virginia Cavalcade*, 16 (Autumn 1966 issue), 12-18.

Lots 46 and 47:

It remained for Thomas Nelson to first develop Lot 46, probably immediately after it had been assigned to him by the town trustees on March 4, 1707/8. Two earlier holders of the lot, Thomas Chisman in 1691 and John Owen, a "Prince George County merchant," in 1705, had failed to meet the building requirements and thus forfeited ownership.¹ It was a strategic location for Nelson since it was at the head of the "Great Valley," a principal connection between the town proper and the waterfront where he quickly developed interests. It was also directly across Main Street from Lot 52 on which he built his home, the Nelson House, that still stands. Lot 46 would remain in the Nelson family for well over a century. This parcel became part of a larger block of property that embraced Lots 47 (also on Main Street) and Lots 84 and 85, behind the two on the river side of Main. This became the home seat of Thomas's oldest son, William.

Adjacent Lot 47 on the east corner of the intersection of Main and the cross street that became Read Street was also strategically placed, since this cross street was another principal connection between the upper town and the waterfront. The first to receive this lot from the town trustees was Daniel Parke, in 1691. He forfeited it because he failed to develop the half acre. Fifteen years later the town trustees reassigned it, this time to Charles Cox, an "Inholder of Bruton Parish."² Evidently he proceeded to develop the lot since he remained in ownership for almost a quarter century and realized a good price in its sale, £110 "current money." It was purchased in March 1729 by Thomas Nelson, "Merchant," and was described as "on the northeast side of Main Street and next adjoining to the Storehouse of said Thomas Nelson" which he had built on Lot 46.³ Thus the Cox development was integrated into the growing Nelson estate and the main house and some of its dependencies would survive into this century until about 1910 when fire destroyed them.⁴

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 9*, pp. 82, 377; *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, pp. 141, 271.

2. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 179.

3. *Deeds, No. 4*, p. 33.

In this deed Cox was named as a "Planter."

4. From a number of photographs of the Cox House, made over several decades before its disappearance, it has been possible to sketch the exterior of the house (its Main Street front and southeast end). From these and other data sources a painting of the house was done by Sidney E. King, and is now exhibited at the site.

With Lots 46 and 47 now in hand, Thomas Nelson added Lots 84 and 85 to his holdings in 1731. On the death of Nelson in 1745 this two-acre block of property in the middle of Yorktown passed to his oldest son, William, who built his home here. It faced Main Street in the ample space between the storehouses which his father had built on Lot 46 and the former Cox development on the northwest side of Lot 47. William would live here the rest of his life, highly successful in the continuation and expansion of his father's business and in political and related affairs. A long-time member of the Council of Virginia, which he sometimes headed, he became known as "President Nelson" and his home as the "President Nelson House."⁵

It was William that inherited his father's home across the street on Lot 52, subject to a life interest by his stepmother who lived on until 1766. It was at this point that William wrote of his own home "which I have built I have lately added to" and concluded that it was best for his needs "being more roomy & fit for my family."⁶ Consequently he established his oldest son, Thomas Nelson, Jr., in the home his father had built. When William died in 1772 he bequeathed his property on the river side of Main Street to his son, Hugh. This included "the House I now live in" ["likewise all the furniture of my House"], "the lots and Gardens thereto belonging together with the store garden, but not the storehouses." These last were left to Hugh and his brother, Thomas Nelson, Jr.: "as tenants in common and not as joint Tennants, my Store Houses in York Town and at the Water Side."⁷

Alexandre Berthier detailed development on this property to the extent of describing the "President" William Nelson home, a large H-shaped structure midway between Read Street and the Great Valley. East of it were two rather large structures, evidently the Nelson storehouses. To the west on the corner was the old Cox House plus a small dependency behind, and even farther back was a larger structure aligned with the cross street.⁸

5. For a more detailed, but brief, account of "President Nelson" see Charles E. Hatch, Jr., *The Nelson House and the Nelsons: General Study* (Office of History and Historic Architecture, Eastern Service Center, N.P.S., U.S.D.I., Washington, D.C., August, 1969), pp. 11 ff. and 68 ff., hereafter cited as Hatch, *The Nelson House and the Nelsons*.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

7. *Wills and Inventories*, No. 22, p. 132.

8. See Illustration No. 1.

Insurance policies of 1796 and 1810⁹ give more structural data. The Nelson home with its H-shape had a front section on Main measuring 51 by 30 feet and a section behind measuring 51 by 33 feet. The two sections were connected by the cross of the H which measured 27 by 9 feet. The home was a "Dwelling" of "Brick Covered with wood two stories high." There was no reference to the Nelson store, or stores, to the east; perhaps they were excluded from coverage and were not close enough to the home to be sketched on the insurance plat. The only structure shown to the east is a small wooden building noted as being some 10 feet from the cross of the H and as having a "brick floor & underpinning." Near it was a "Constant well." Only fifteen feet away to the west was the old Cox House, built of brick covered with wood. Behind it and mostly along the cross street were four smaller structures, all one story, three of them brick covered with wood, and one wood covered with wood.

There are no additional insurance policies covering this property until 1838 and by this date the William Nelson home, which Hugh had inherited, was gone – a casualty of the 1814 fire in Yorktown. It had been reported then that "the houses belonging to my Uncle Hughs estate the old Store and Grannery near it are all burnt."¹⁰ These later insurance policies do continue the story of the Cox House and the buildings behind it.¹¹

The first of the dependencies is given as a "Smoke house" measuring 15 by 15 feet; the second as a 15 by 15 foot Kitchen (noted as "Store house & Kitchen" in 1846); the third as a 30 by 16 foot "Lumber house" (but as "Kitchen" in 1846, as "Store house and U.S. Collectotors office" in 1853 and as "Office" in 1860); and the fourth as a "Stable" of wood. At various dates other small structures appeared within the lot – a "Dairy," "Wood house," "Fowl House," "Corn Crib," and "Carriage House." Throughout these years the main unit, the old Cox House itself, is described as a one and one-half story brick "Dwelling & Store" measuring 20 by 40 feet.¹²

9. Mutual Assurance Society Policies Nos. 95 and 197.

10. Hatch, *"York Under the Hill,"* Appendix M, pp. 189-192.

11. Mutual Assurance Society Policies Nos. 8619, 14289, 17664, and 21359.

12. Since the Cox House stood until about 1910, a number of existing photographs show it. One of these is a Mathew Brady and another, which shows the rear of the house, appeared in Harold Ebelein, *The Architecture of Colonial America*. (See Colonial NHP photographs Nos. 3,567 and 10,641.)

Lots 46 and 47 along with 84 and 85 today stand empty. The last structure to stand here, except for a Blow family gazebo, was a First National Bank building of 20th century origin which was demolished by the National Park Service following the Bank's removal to its new quarters at the corner of Main and Ballard streets.¹³

This vital block of property was also related to fortification in the Civil War, though it apparently had not been during the Revolution.¹⁴ The tract would need serious archeological study,¹⁵ in the opinion of the writer, before any development should be attempted here. It is also his view that the historical treatment in this report does not exhaust all elements of the story, but is only a brief, though substantive, survey.

13. For a view of this bank building, see Colonial NHP photograph No. 2,358.

14. See Part Two, Chapter I.

15. There has been some limited amateur pothunting here and there on these lots, though hopefully it has not been too destructive. In spite of this activity, what must be a corner section of the William Nelson House foundation has been encountered. Toward the rear of the two-acre tract and near the center of the line that joins Lots 84 and 85 some sort of oven, likely of a military nature, and a cache of cannon balls were found in 1969. In the park files are some color snapshots of these taken when Anthony Blow of Yorktown was exploring. He was one of the owners of the property from whom the Blow Estate was purchased.

When the old bank building, which obviously occupied a part of the Cox House site, was being demolished, limited observation and notation were possible on the part of park Museum Curator J. Paul Hudson. Architectural and artifactual material findings were, however, very meager as bank construction had been highly disruptive here.

Lot 48:

This half-acre parcel, the south corner of the intersection of Main and Read Streets, was acquired by Thomas Nelson in 1709 just three years after he secured Lot 52 on which he built his home. The half-acre had, in 1707, first gone to William Cary who forfeited it when he failed to build on the lot.¹ It would remain in the Nelson family for a number of generations in association with the home that Thomas Nelson built and that came to be the home of his grandson, Thomas Nelson, Jr.

It appears that the southeast side of the half acre became involved with some of the Nelson House dependencies and the well and the northwestern side served in part for garden use all through its historic period.²

1. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, pp. 225, 326.

2. This is covered more fully in Hatch, *The Nelson House and the Nelsons*.

Lot 52:

Evidently Lot 52, strategically located near the head of the Great Valley that gave easy access to the waterfront, was first conveyed by the town trustees to James Darbisheire in July 1699. He, however, left no mark on the property since, failing to build on it, he forfeited his title. Thomas Nelson obtained a deed from the trustees on August 2, 1706, and in 1711 or just before, he built on the site a stately brick home that still stands today. This residence also became the home of his noted grandson, Thomas Nelson, Jr., and later generations of the family. It remained Nelson property into the early part of this century.¹

1. This is the story told in Hatch, *The Nelson House and the Nelsons*.

Lot 56:

This half-acre lot on the land side of Main Street was at the head of the Great Valley which led directly down to the waterfront and to the York River. In March 1692 it was assigned by the trustees to Thomas Sessions, a carpenter. He satisfied the construction requirements and retained ownership by building, it is believed, the brick home that still stands today.¹ Presumably he also opened an ordinary in his house in due course. When, in August 1699, he secured adjacent Lot 57 from the trustees, it was noted that it adjoined "upon ye lott he now dwelleth upon" and in the deed he was identified as an "Inholder."² However, when he and his wife, Hester, disposed of the lots and development by sale in January 1702, he was again listed as a carpenter.³

Sessions sold to Robert Snead, Gentleman, and there was reference to Snead's House (formerly that of Sessions) three months later. Snead added on a store and storehouse under the hill on the waterfront at the mouth of the Great Valley adjacent to the landing here which was already "Comonley Called Sessions Landing."⁴ Snead did not remain in ownership long, selling to John Penton, merchant, in October 1703. He in turn sold to John Martin, another merchant, just a month later. Then in June 1705, Martin sold it back to Penton. In each instance the conveyance was for Lots 56 and 57 and "the Store and Store house and Still house" under the hill. In September 1708, it was Penton's turn to sell again. Through his power of attorney vested in Michael Archer, the sale went to Nicholas Phillips. It involved Lot 56 where Thomas Sessions had built his home either in 1692 or no later than 1693. This also included the storehouses "under the hill" but not Lot 57.⁵

The property remained in the Phillips family for nearly 40 years. When Nicholas died in 1715 it passed to his son, William, in these words: "I give & bequeath to my Son Wm. Phillips & ye male heirs of his body lawfully begotten for Ever that my Lott or half acre of Land & warehouse under ye bank situate in York Town lately in ye tenure & occupation of Jno. Penton & his under tenants."⁶

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 9*, p. 402.

2. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 1*, p. 220.

3. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 15.

4. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 11*, part 2, p. 565; *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 124.

5. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, pp. 81, 84, 91, 94; *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 12*, p. 332 and *No. 13*, p. 184.

6. *Wills and Inventories, No. 14*, p. 485.

It was not William Phillips, however, but Thomas, his brother, who in March 1746 sold Lot 56 for £140 to John Norton of King William County, a merchant.⁷ And so another merchant was based here. After almost 20 years he disposed of half of his lot to still another merchant, George Wilson, for £125 current money of Virginia. It was the inland half of the lot and had no face on Main Street.⁸ It would appear that John Norton went on to regain the ownership of all of Lot 56 and that George Wilson⁹ came in some way into possession of Lot 57 just behind it. John Norton then sold his lot (No. 56 – noted in 1763 as his “Store Lott”) and its improvements to Matthew Pope in 1766 and he, in turn, bequeathed it to Mary, the wife of Robert Carter, by will probated in 1792. It was in 1796 that Robert Carter and his wife sold it to Thomas Nelson for £500.¹⁰

Alexandre Berthier noted a building of some substance in the Session House location with a smaller one behind having some kind of little appendage. And behind this, facing the cross street, there was another structure of substance, all within an enclosure of some type. By interpretation all were seemingly on Lot 56 which remained in Nelson hands until May 1821. At that time the property was sold along with adjacent Lot 60 to Dr. Frederick B. Power. It was then described as “A house and lot in the Town of York situate as follows, the house on the NW corner of the square next to Thomas Nelson’s house. . . .”¹¹

7. *Deeds, No. 5*, p. 166.

8. *Deeds, No. 7*, p. 55.

9. Evidently George Wilson had good family and/or working relationships with the Nortons since he mentioned them favorably in his will when he died in 1793.

My House I leave to be rented out and the rent to be paid to Dick and in the case of the death of Dick, then the House to be sold and the money to be divided betwixt the three sons of John Norton aforesaid [John, George, and Daniel] and the two sons of William Stevenson decd say Thos. and John or their Heirs.

Dick was Wilson’s “boy” whom he gave “his absolute freedom free from all slavery, bondage or subordination whatsoever.” He also left him “an indubitable right to the room that he sleeps in and in the privilege of the Kitchen as he had in my Life time.” He also wanted £500 to go out at interest and Dick to receive interest from it twice a year. It was in July 1817, a quarter century later, that the executor of Wilson’s estate sold “A certain House and Lot” in Yorktown to Joseph Nothingham giving bounds that satisfy Lot 57. *Wills and Inventories, No. 23*, p. 382; *Deed Book, No. 8*, p. 462.

10. “Chain of Title to Lot #56 (from Mrs. Conway H. Sheild),” dated April 8, 1940, a list of owner names and dates (but without documentation) in Colonial NHP historical files, hereafter cited as “Claim of Title to Lot 56”; *Deeds, No. 6*, p. 512; *Wills and Inventories, No. 23*, p. 263.

11. *Deed Book, No. 9*, p. 153; “Chain of Title to Lot #56.”

Parties to the sale were Thomas Nelson; George W. Nelson; C. Berkeley and his wife, Frances; William Meade (Bishop); and Thomasia Nelson, his wife.

It was Power who took out the first insurance coverage now of record on the property. This was in 1838 and the plot plan and description showed the "Dwelling of Brick" to be one and one-half stories covered with wood. Its measurements were 46 by 26 feet and its value was placed at \$1,700. At that time it was occupied by William S. Malecote who was still living there in 1846. There was, in addition to the dwelling, a kitchen entirely of wood beyond the south corner of the dwelling, and near it a smokehouse. Opposite the kitchen and smokehouse on the cross street was a larger structure "of wood entire" noted as a "School House."¹²

The policy issued in 1846 repeated in most respects the data that was given in 1838, though by 1853 the dwelling (cited as measuring 50 by 27 feet) was now occupied by Frederick W. Power as heir of Frederick B. Power. He was still in residence in 1860. In 1853 the building formerly noted as a "School House" was shown to have measured 20 by 14 feet.¹³ There is no data here or elsewhere before this date suggesting appendages to the Sessions House such as the now existing rear porch and the additions on the south corner of the house as well as the front entrance. It is true, however, that the front entrance porch is shown in a Brady photograph made in 1862¹⁴ and looks much as it does today.

After the Civil War, evidently to clarify the title, the court ordered the sale of the property to W. D. Shurtz, who in 1879 conveyed it to Fanny B. Nelson. This same woman, Fanny B. Nelson Mercer, sold it to her first cousin, Conway Howard Sheild, in 1901.¹⁵ It remains in that family at the present time and this is why the Sheild House name has come to replace Session House in some quarters in more recent times.

12. Mutual Assurance Society Policy No. 8649.

13. *Ibid.*, and policies for the years 1846 (14294), 1853 (17663), and 1860 (21358).

14. See Colonial NHP photograph No. 16,602.

15. "Chain of Title to Lot #56."

In a little folder published in 1931¹⁶ it was noted:

When the town was garrisoned during the War Between the States, this house was the headquarters of the Federal General Negley [Brig. Gen. Henry M. Naglee] who used the parlor for his office. Neither history nor tradition can recall the story of the part the Sheild House took in the siege of 1781.

In the register kept in the Sheild House are recorded the autographs of many distinguished visitors including those of President and Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, President and Mrs. Warren G. Harding, Lady Astor, Franklin Roosevelt, and President Herbert Hoover.

16. *The Sheild House 1692-1931*. A folder published c. 1931, copy in Colonial NHP library. See also Trudell, *Colonial Yorktown*, p. 81.

Lot 60:

The little brick house standing between the Session House and Smith Street today was put here in more recent times and presumably is on Lot 60, the only structure on this half acre. Actually this house of colonial type was built from material brought to Yorktown from "Dewsville" which was built about 1792 in King and Queen County. This was the home of Thomas Frederick Dew, a president of the College of William and Mary, who later died in France. It was put together in Yorktown by the late Admiral and Mrs. John J. Ballentine and is sometimes called "Captain Ballentine's Dwelling."¹

Berthier, on his billeting plan done late in 1781, shows this lot as empty space at that time. Insurance policies covering adjacent Lot 56 indicate that this same condition pertained in the two decades prior to the Civil War. It was not always thus, however, though the story is a bit unclear.

In September 1699 the town trustees conveyed Lot 60 to Alexander Young, who at the same time took title to adjacent Lot 61.² It would follow that he satisfied the building requirements for each of the two lots since when he died two years later he disposed of his developed property:

I Give to my son Andrew all my Houses and other appurtenances thereunto belonging in York Town to him and his Heirs forever Lawfully Begotten of his body But in default of such Heirs to come to Jno Young and his Heirs for want of such Heirs to Jane Young and Her Heirs for ever Lawfully begotten of her Body.

It was also his wish that:

my House in York Town bee Rented out untill such tyme that my son Andrew comes of age and ye Rents to be disposed of Towards Double covering this house and what Remains overplus to come to my Daughter Jane.³

1. Virginia's [3rd] Annual Autumn Pilgrimage sponsored by the Colonial Churches of Tidewater, Va., 1963 folder.

The house has some fine interior woodwork. "Tradition says that an English woodworker was brought over to do the woodwork and that he was responsible for the mantle side of the house. Brick, woodwork, doors and windows are original." *Ibid*.

2. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 1*, p. 191.

3. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 11*, part 2, p. 521.

Evidently Jane did come to enjoy some financial remuneration as her guardian, Maj. William Buckner, sued and received a judgement in May 1707 covering her "ye Rent of a certain House and Lot in York Towne."⁴

Evidently Andrew died before coming of age and his brother, John, second in line, received the Alexander Young estate. When in February 1720 John died, his will directed that his "Estate" go to his own "beloved Daughter Jane Young." It was his further wish that "my whole Estate be appraised & Sold & the produce kept for my sd Daughter" until she came of age.⁵

Lot 60 along with Lot 61 came into the ownership of Thomas Frayser by conveyance from John Martin and Jean, his wife, in 1735. Thomas died "seized in Fee" of the two lots which came to Frayser's two daughters, Mary (who married Thomas Tomer of Charles Parish), and Rebecca (who married Daniel Presson). In the division of Frayser's estate there is specific mention of his "Lots including the Houses" and his "Lots and Houses." A partition was arranged, with Lot 61 going to Rebecca and Lot 60 to Mary.⁶ This partition was in April 1763, and in the next month Thomas Tomer and Mary sold Lot 60 to John Norton for £100. This sale price surely suggests developed property at that date, even though the half acre on Main Street was "adjoining the Store Lott" (Lot 56) of Norton.⁷

It would appear that John Norton sold Lot 60 as well as Lot 56 to Matthew Pope in 1766, in which case he would have been in ownership during the Revolution, including the year 1781. By will dated in October 1791 (recorded on June 18, 1792)⁸ Pope bequeathed "my dwelling House and Houses, and all the Lotts of Land also my Household and Kitchen furniture except the furniture of the bed chamber below Stairs what little plate I have, and a Glass Epern" to "Mary Nelson second Daughter of the late General Nelson of York Town." His "surgical Instruments" he willed to "Doctor Augustine Smith" who later located across the street on Lot 64.

4. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 13*, p. 63.

5. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 15*, p. 558.

6. *Deeds, No. 6*, pp. 509, 513; *Wills and Inventories, No. 20*, p. 135.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Wills and Inventories, No. 23*, p. 263.

In 1796, Mary (now Mary Nelson Carter) and her husband, Robert, conveyed the lot to Thomas Nelson, Jr., it being "all that messuage or Tenement situate in the Town of York with the houses," etc., for £500.⁹ Thomas died seized of the lot prior to 1810 leaving no will. His heirs sold it in May 1821 to Frederick B. Power.¹⁰

9. *Deed Book, No. 7*, p. 216.

10. *Deed Book, No. 9*, p. 153.

Lot 64:

This half-acre parcel at the corner of Main and present-day Smith Street near the head of the "Valley" down which Comte de Grasse Street now runs is dominated by Hornsby House. This three-story brick home of colonial Georgian style was designed by Joseph Geddy and built in 1933 for the late J. W. Hornsby. It is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Willets H. Bowditch. Mrs. Bowditch (formerly Marion Hornsby) is the daughter of the builder.¹

In March 1692, Edward Hill of James City County took title from the town trustees to Lot 64 on Main Street at the corner of Main and the cross street now named Smith. When he failed to develop it, however, he forfeited title. It was awarded again in August 1699, this time to Thomas Pate, a planter. He too seemingly lost title since there appears to be no further record of this. But in October 1705 the trustees reassigned it once again, this time to John Andrews "of Kikotan in Elizabeth City [County]," a "Brazier."² He evidently satisfied the building requirements.

When John Andrews's will was probated in March 1718, it was found that he had left his Yorktown property to his brother, William Andrews, and to his sister, Elizabeth Smith. There was the "desire & intent" that William should come here (from "Cote near Deirses in Wilkshire") and sell all of his estate, dividing the proceeds between his sister and himself. This included "my houses Lots Negroes & all other my Goods [and] Chattles."³

William Andrews, Nansemond county clerk, in September 1719 performed what had been requested of him by selling to John Gibbons, a planter, Lot 64 along with Lot 65 and the development on them. The price was not a large one, only £72, indicating lesser development.⁴ John Gibbons in his will dated in March 1727, and proved two months later, left to his "Son John my two lots in Yorktown which I bought of Parson Andrews (64 & 65) to him and his heirs." Should John die without heirs, Gibbons wished to have the lots sold, with "the produce" to be equally divided between three other children.⁵

1. Virginia's Annual Autumn Pilgrimage, 1966 and 1967 folders.

2. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 9*, p. 395; *Deeds and Bonds, No. 1*, p. 221, and *No. 2*, p. 172.

3. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 15*, p. 474.

4. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 3*, p. 309.

5. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 16*, part 2, p. 458.

Gibbons also disposed of several other Yorktown properties including "my Ordinary."

In January 1771, John Gibbons and his wife, Mary, sold Lot 64 along with Lot 65 just behind it "with the appurtenances" to Richard Brown. The purchase price of £350 indicates that a great deal in the way of improvements must have been involved.⁶ Brown was in ownership at the time of the siege, after which Berthier drafted his billeting plan which shows a larger house here with a smaller one near it. Since, however, the structure was aligned with the cross street (now Smith Street) and was back from Main, the likelihood seems to be that it was on Lot 65, rather than Lot 64, although it may have been partly on each lot. It is true that Berthier shows little in this end of town except the Secretary Nelson development. It should be kept in mind that this was the section, the southeast end of town, that took the heaviest shelling from allied cannon. Perhaps few useable buildings were left. Berthier crowded his scale here and was not as careful with the street plan, omitting one of the cross streets (present Bacon Street).⁷

Despite the Berthier plan, when Richard Brown drew up his will in August 1792, a will that was probated in April 1795, he bequeathed to his son, James Pride Brown, his "Houses and Lotts in the Town of York." Evidently James Pride died intestate and his interest descended to his brother, Bennett Brown. It was in January 1800 that Bennett and his wife, Mary C., of Amelia County, sold Lots 64 and 65 to Doctor Augustine Smith, for the relatively low price of £100 "lawful money of Virginia." In another deed which conveyed to Smith the dower interest still remaining to Rachel, the widow of Richard Brown, another £25 was involved. In this deed it was stated that the property, Lots 64 and 65, included "a Dwelling House Out Houses and lots."⁸ It is not clear just when this development disappeared. In any case, the construction of the Hornsby House complex probably destroyed any remains, even those that may have existed below ground.

6. *Deeds, No. 8*, p. 137.

7. See Illustration No. 1.

8. *Wills and Inventories, No. 23*, p. 435; *Deed Book, No. 7*, pp. 311, 314.

Lot 68:

This half-acre parcel was assigned to Edward Moss, Jr., in November 1691. Evidently he satisfied the building requirements since he remained in ownership and it descended to his son, John Moss, with a dower interest going to his widow, Elizabeth. It was in January 1722 that John and his wife, Elizabeth, along with his mother sold the parcel to John Trotter.¹ Trotter died seized of Lot 68 which he by will bequeathed to his daughter, Elizabeth. Elizabeth married Maurice Langhorne, a gentleman of Warwick County. In November 1759 the Langhorne sold the lot to Thomas Trotter, merchant. The purchase price was low, only £21 10s, although the property was described as consisting of "One Certain Messuage Tenement and Lott." Thus it continued to be a developed property.²

Berthier shows nothing on this site on his billeting plan. There is also seemingly a hiatus in its chain of title in this period. At some point prior to 1799, however, it became the property of Abraham Archer who mortgaged it along with Lots 81 and 83 to William Cary acting for William Arthurs of London who held a £71 indebtedness against Archer. In September 1801, Thomas Archer (to whom Lots 68 and 69 had descended), sold two-sevenths of these lots to Augustine Smith. The low price of £6 would suggest that this acre (two lots) was at this time essentially undeveloped property. This Archer-Smith deed probably was voided since there was more debt involvement.³

William Arthurs of London challenged Archer in court and the court ordered that the property be sold. Arthurs purchased it, and in December 1817 conveyed it through his attorney, Thomas Griffin, to Samuel Stuart Griffin.⁴

Today Lot 68 is dominated by a framed colonial type designed home. This was built by L. R. O'Hara of Yorktown sometime after his acquisition of the lot in October 1917.⁵

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 9*, p. 385; *Deeds and Bonds, No. 3*, p. 374.

These entries carry the lot as No. 65 rather than 68, but the original bounds clearly show it to have been 68. It was stated to be on Main Street and to be abutted by Lots 64 and 69.

2. *Deeds, No. 6*, p. 238.

3. *Deed Book, No. 7*, pp. 294, 385; *No. 8*, p. 437.

4. *Deed Book, No. 8*, p. 437.

5. *Deed Book, No. 35* (1916-1917), p. 584.

Lot 72:

This half-acre parcel was the southeasternmost lot on the land side of Main Street and was initially allotted to Col. Lawrence Smith who surveyed Yorktown in 1691. This is shown in a deed of November 1709 when the trustees gave Colonel Smith's son, Lawrence, a title to it with no monetary consideration being recited. The deed related that Lot 72 had been "built upon by him [Colonel Smith] as required by law hence this deed is made to Lawrence Smith son of Col. Lawrence Smith."¹ This second Lawrence also had a son, Lawrence, to whom he willed the property in March 1737 (probated one year later in March 1738), this parcel being: "one Lott or half acre of Land lying in York Town joining upon Mr. Robert Reades Lotts upon the South side of the Main Street."² It would remain in the Smith family for another 35 years and then see a succession of owners.

It was in June 1772 that Lawrence Smith, merchant, and Demaris, his wife, sold Lot 72 along with adjacent No. 73, to John Hatley Norton, Gentleman, for £100, suggesting that housing was present. Three years later Norton disposed of these two lots along with No. 74, which he had also acquired, to Nathaniel Littleton Savage of Northhampton County for a substantial £1,000. This clearly indicates that the heaviest development, certainly the most valuable, was on Lot 74, while the other two lots were probably satellite parcels. All three were located along the southeast edge of the town. The deed for Lot 74 specified that it included "all houses thereon" which formerly were owned by Edward Cary "late merchant of this said Town."³ The Berthier plan is not at all helpful in this instance.

N. L. Savage retained ownership only two years, selling the property in November 1777 for the amount of purchase — £1,000. The sale was to Robert Nelson of King William County. A decade later, September 1786, Robert Nelson sold the three lots and their improvements to Thomas Nelson, Jr.⁴ There is no record of later disposition of these properties, though William Nelson, who died prior to 1850, was seized of Lot 72. In some litigation that grew out of the settlement of his estate there was a court order naming a special commissioner to

1. *Deeds and Bonds*, No. 2, p. 309.

2. *Wills and Inventories*, No. 18, p. 487.

3. *Deeds*, No. 8, pp. 247, 483.

4. *Deed Book*, No. 6, p. 3.

sell this lot. In January 1852, it was sold by conveyance to Robert Anderson who added it to his growing holdings in and about Yorktown.⁵

At the time of the acquisition of Lot 72 by the National Park Service in 1958, the parcel was totally devoid of development and was used as a garden plot.⁶ It now serves as a parking area for people visiting the Yorktown Monument to the Alliance and Victory directly across the street.

5. *Deed Book, No. 15*, p. 242.

6. *Deed Book, No. 124* (May 9 - June 25, 1958), pp. 119 ff.

Lot 77:

This half-acre parcel on Main Street on the east side of the Great Valley was initially, in November 1691, conveyed to David Stoner, a planter, by the town trustees. But since he did not build on the land, his title lapsed. Perhaps this had something to do with his public notice of May 24, 1692, that he intended to leave Virginia "for ould England."¹

It was not until June 1706 that Lot 77 was reassigned, going by action of the town trustees to Miles and Emanuel Wills who presumably proceeded to erect the required housing. They retained possession until they sold it to William Stark, a merchant, for £30.² A decade later, in January 1731, Stark and his wife, Mary, sold it to Cole Digges and it later descended to his son, Dudley, the builder of the restored house that stands on the lot today.³ When Dudley Digges built this house it seems that he dismantled the earlier 36 by 18 foot frame house with cellar which was evidently built by Miles and Emanuel Wills soon after they were assigned the lot in 1706. This had stood in the space that now exists between the Dudley Digges House and Main Street.⁴

Alexandre Berthier shows the Digges House facing on Main Street. It is one of the few structures which he delineated in the southeast end of town. Near it on the east side, presumably on adjacent Lot 79, another structure of about the same size is shown. This building is difficult to interpret since there appears to have

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 9*, pp. 138, 388.
2. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 178; *No. 3*, p. 368.
3. The story of Dudley Digges and his home on Lot 77 is told in some detail in Charles E. Hatch, Jr., *Dependencies (Outbuildings) of the Dudley Digges House in Yorktown* (Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, N.P.S., April 1969), and in Lee H. Nelson, "Dudley Digges House: Historic Structures Report, Parts I and II" (National Park Service), typewritten reports dated December 1959 and May 1960.
4. G. Hubert Smith, "Report of Archeological Investigations on Lot 77 in Yorktown," April-May 1960, a typewritten report prepared for the National Park Service.

been no house here at that time except the Digges House outbuildings,⁵ of which there were five – kitchen, granary, smokehouse, stable, and well house.⁶ These were on Lot 79 and would have to have been erected after Dudley Digges acquired this adjacent half acre in 1755.⁷ None of these outbuildings survived into modern times; only the main dwelling itself remains.

This Dudley Digges Main Street residential property descended to Dudley's daughter, Elizabeth, by deed in 1787. She (then Mrs. Elizabeth Nicholson) did not dispose of it until 1821,⁸ when in June she sold it to Maj. John R. West of Yorktown. He subsequently made his home here and for some time the house was known as the West House. In the following years other names were associated with the house as well.⁹

5. Conceivably this is the house that is known to have stood at this time on Lot 78, directly behind Lot 79. In this case he simply moved it forward to the Main Street line.
6. John L. Cotter, "West House Archeological Investigations, April 2 through 13, 1956," a typewritten report dated April 23, 1956.
7. *Deeds, No. 6*, p. 17.
8. *Deed Book, No. 6*, p. 353; *Deed Book, No. 9*, p. 121A.
9. When Benson J. Lossing visited Yorktown in the summer of 1866, he had this to say about the house: "The town appeared desolate indeed, the only house in it that seems not to have felt the ravages of war being that of Mrs. [Robert] Anderson, of Williamsburg, in which McClellan and all the Union commanders at Yorktown had their quarters. It was still used for the same purpose [in 1866], there being a small military force there." *Pictorial Field Book of the Civil War*, 440.

Lot 79:

This half acre faced on Main Street, its southeast side against the ravine down which later Comte de Grasse Street would lead to the waterfront. In November 1691 the trustees conveyed it to John Myhill, Gentleman, though he would forfeit it. The next assignment of it by the town trustees was to William Gordon in June 1706.¹ He built a home here to which there is specific reference in 1719 in a deed involving Lot 64 directly across Main Street from it, "Lot 64 being opposite to the Lott & now dwelling house of W^m Gordon."² Earlier, in July 1714, Gordon had entered into a partnership with some of his neighbors³ along Main Street "for digging & stoning a Well to be placed in ye Lott of Wm Gordon." It was to be "on ye South side of ye sd Lott adjoyning to ye Main Street" and involved only the small area "where the well is to be digged containing by estimation Ten foot Square."⁴

When Gordon died in 1730 he left his Yorktown property to his daughter, now Mrs. Mary Dowsing, but with a life interest going to his wife: "I give unto my well beloved wife Margaret Gordon the use and possession of my Town Lott and Houses and Storehouses at the River side . . . for her better support and maintenance during her natural life."⁵

In the next quarter century this lot evidently remained rather active, as is recited in the deed by which Dudley Digges purchased it in April 1755.⁶

All that Lott or half acre of Land with a Well thereon Dug which formerly belonged to one Robert Dowsing and was purchased by one Mordecai Booth of one John Daily and afterwards purchased by James Pride aforesaid of the said Mordacai Booth.

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 9*, p. 359; *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 207.

2. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 3*, p. 309.

3. John Andrews (Lot 64), Charles Cox (Lot 81), and Nicholas Phillips.

4. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 3*, p. 78.

5. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 17*, p. 130.

6. *Deeds, No. 6*, p. 17.

Evidently the Gordon home on Main Street had disappeared even before Pride made his purchase from Booth in 1749. There was reference to the lot "with a Well thereon Dug" but no mention of housing on it.⁷

Having acquired Lot 79, Dudley Digges proceeded to develop it in conjunction with his Yorktown residence which he built on adjacent Lot 77. From this point, in the main, these two lots have a common story.⁸

7. *Deeds, No. 5*, p. 314.

There was, however, comment on associated structures: "Also a warehouse & Dwelling House adjoining thereto and a Pump Pumphouse and Shop at the River side." Having sold Lot 79 to Digges, some three years later Pride disposed of the remainder of his purchase from Booth by sale to Edmund Tabb, a merchant. It included "All that one Dwelling House and Pump House at the River side." *Deeds, No. 6*, p. 146.

8. See section on Lot 77.

Lots 81 and 82:

These half-acre parcels on the river side of Main Street, together with Lots 80 and 82 behind them, constitute the two-acre tract on which the Yorktown Monument to the Alliance and Victory was built, its cornerstone having been laid in 1881 at the time of the Yorktown Centennial. Each lot did have its earlier separate history, though surviving data is meager indeed.

Initially Lot 81 was assigned by the town trustees to Joseph Shropshire, "Batcheler," in November 1691, but the transaction was not made of record until September 1692. However, for failure to improve the land, it was "by him Lapsed." In May 1707 it was assigned again, this time to William Tunley.¹ Almost a year later (March 1708) Tunley transferred it to Charles Cox, "Inholder," for "10 £ Sterling money of England." The deed of transfer from the trustees was made a part of the "deed assignment assigning said lot to Charles Cox." This unusual arrangement may indicate that Tunley had begun to build here as required and consequently merited some reimbursement.² After this there seems to be no further court record dealing with this property until 1799 when it was in the possession of Abraham Archer.

Lot 83 was the last half-acre parcel on the river side of Main Street and its southeast side bounded "upon the old field" adjacent to the town in this quarter. In November 1691, the trustees assigned it to Robert Read, "Gent."³

The next record dealing with Lot 83 appears to be that drawn on July 18, 1763. At this time Augustine Moore, "Merchant," and Lucy, his wife, sold it to another merchant, Lawrence Smith, for £68. It was detailed that this half acre "at the lower end" of Yorktown had been devised to "Lucy Moore by her Mother the late Mrs. Mildred Smith decd" by her will of December 1753.⁴

In May 1784 Lawrence Smith disposed of it by sale to Abraham Archer for £100 "current money of Virginia." Both the £68 in 1763 and the £100 in 1784 suggest a value of more than a half acre of ground. The Berthier plan, however,

1. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 8*, p. 424; *No. 9*, p. 170; *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 238.

2. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 13*, p. 71; *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 282.

3. *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 8*, p. 375; *No. 9*, p. 82.

4. *Deeds, No. 6*, p. 535.

shows no development in the vicinity of Lots 81 and 83.⁵ When Archer filed his claim for damages done by the British, one entry was for £12 10s. to cover "1 Lot Ground on the Hill about 1/3 of it very much Cut there being a Battery erected on it."⁶ He made no reference to a house here, whereas he did deal with damage to his "Houses under the Hill."⁷

On July 1, 1799, Abraham Archer gave a deed of trust to William Cary to cover his £71 indebtedness to William Arthurs of London. It covered Lot 81 and also Lots 83 and 68 including "all that messuage, tenement and buildings together with all the grounds, gardens and lots thereto belonging and all houses and improvements thereon situate in the Town of York being the same whereon the said Abraham Archer now lives." Archer's dwelling seems likely to have been on Lot 81, though adjacent Lot 83 is also a possibility.⁸

In any case, Cary planned to advertise "the time and place" for the public sale of this Archer property. It was agreed that "out of the proceeds" he would "first pay all reasonable charges attending such sale and the debt above mentioned (£71) Virginia currency to William Arthurs of the city of London and the residue thereof to the said Abraham Archer."⁹ Archer died early in 1801 and there is no indication that a sale took place at this time, though there is a record of one some 15 years later. In a deed for the property in December 1817 from Thomas Griffin, attorney for William Arthurs, to Samuel Stuart Griffin it was noted that the court had ordered a sale and that William Arthurs had bought the property himself. The value of the property is not given, but it was sold to Griffin for \$600.¹⁰

5. Berthier's single small symbol to the east obviously is associated with the Secretary Nelson estate just outside the town limits.
6. There was also reference to his loss of "Saw'd Posts pales & rales of a Garden abt 35 pannels."
7. *Claims for Losses*, p. 3.
8. Since Berthier showed no structure here, and Archer claimed no damages on one, it could very well be that he did not build a dwelling here until after the siege.
9. *Deed Book, No. 7*, p. 294.
10. *Deed Book, No. 8*, p. 437.

PART TWO

MILITARY ENTRENCHMENTS CLOSE IN
AND AROUND THE TOWN OF YORK

CHAPTER I

THE BRITISH INNER LINE AS BUILT AND USED

The British defenses about Yorktown were designed by Lt. Alexander Sutherland and approved by Cornwallis. These plans called for redoubts and batteries connected by trenches and parapets in a line encircling the town. They also called for sufficient water batteries on the heights overlooking the waterfront to cover the anchorage where the British shipping was moored. In advance of this main line, which was buttressed by the Fusilier's Redoubt across Yorktown Creek and Redoubts Nos. 9 and 10 in the plain on the southeast side of Yorktown, there was an outer line designed to delay the allied advance.

In describing the outer line about Yorktown, Banastre Tarleton wrote:¹

The right rested on a swamp [Yorktown Creek] which covered the right of the town: A large redoubt [Fusiliers Redoubt] was constructed beyond it, close to the river road from Williamsburg, and completed with fraizing and abbatis. The Charon, Guadaloupe, and other armed vessels, were moved opposite to the swamp; and the town batteries commanded all the roads and causeways which approached it. On the right, at the head of a morass, two redoubts [outerworks] were placed, one on each side of the Williamsburg road. The center was protected by a thin wood, whose front was cut down, with the branches facing outwards. A field work, mounted with cannon, was erected on the left of the center, to command the Hampton road. A deep ravine, and a Creek [Wormley], which increased till it reached the York river, covered the left. Trees were felled, fleches were thrown up, and batteries were constructed, at the points which were deemed most vulnerable. The distance between the heads of the swamp and creek, which embraced the flanks of the town, did not exceed half a mile. The face of the country, in front of this line, was cut near the center by a morass, and, excepting this break, the ground was plain and open for near two thousand

1. *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Provinces of North America* (London, 1787), pp. 382-83, hereafter cited as Tarleton, *Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*.

yards. An excellent field artillery was placed to the greatest advantage by Captain Rocheford, who commanded in that department.²

Tarleton also deals with the British principal line about the town and offers some significant details:

The works erected for the protection of Yorktown, consisted, on the right of redoubts and batteries with a line of stockade in the rear, which supported a high parapet of earth. The redoubts were furnished with fraizing and abbatis. A marshy ravine [Yorktown Creek] lay in front of the right, over which was placed a large redoubt [Fusiliers], with a good ditch, fraizing, and abbatis: The morass extended along the center, which was defended by a line of stockade, and by batteries that looked upon all the avenues to the swamp: On the left of the center, was a horn work, with a ditch, a row of fraise, and an abbatis: Some embrasures for cannon were at present open in this work. The left was fortified by redoubts, communications of earth, and batteries, which were all furnished with fraizing, but without stockade or abbatis. Two redoubts [No. 9 and No. 10] were advanced before the left, which were small, and not so well finished as that in front of the right. The ground in front of the left was in some parts on a level with the works, in others cut by ravines, and altogether very convenient for the besiegers. The space within the works was exceedingly

2. There is also a helpful French thumbnail sketch written by Baron Von Closen in his journal and dated September 30:

The city of York is built on the summit and slopes of a plateau, intersected by ravines which terminate precipitately at the river's edge. This plateau is bounded on the [British] right by a deep and marshy ravine, through which runs a creek [Yorktown Creek] which empties into the York River above the city. Beyond this ravine, the enemy occupied a great star redoubt, fraised and fortified with a double row of abattis, connected by frequent counter-forts. This fortification was on the steep bank of the river; on the left, the plateau ends at the river. This position which was nearly 6,400 feet in extent, was fortified by some redoubts and batteries, closed at the gorge and connected by some curtains. All of these works were fraised and provided with abattis. In some places there was a second line of trees, placed end to end and joined, and filled in from behind with earth-works. Within toward the center, the besieged had opened a trench, designed to cover part of his camps. On his left, he had placed a small redoubt [No. 10], fraised and surrounded with abattis, on an advantageous point on the steep bank, 768 feet from the main line of defense and beyond open ground. This redoubt was protected on the right by another [No. 9] more considerable one with a moat, fraises and abattis. These two works were not connected with each other at all, nor with the main stronghold.

The Revolutionary Journal of Baron Von Closen 1780-1783, translated and edited by Evelyn M. Acomb (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1958), pp. 140-41, hereafter cited as *Journal of Baron Von Closen*.

narrow, not large enough for retrenchments, and, except under the cliff, exposed to enfilade.³

It was the inner line that directly involved the immediate town. It is rather carefully detailed on the various siege plans and particularly on two British plans, that by Lieutenant John Hills of the 23rd Regiment, an assistant engineer,⁴ and that by Captain Fage of the Royal Artillery.⁵ These, it should be mentioned, like most plans detailing the works were done to actually cover the situation that existed at the end of the siege and included any changes made in the fortifications as the fighting progressed in the three weeks operation. There had been much activity to strengthen and improve the works as well as to repair them as the siege unfolded.

In the line immediately about Yorktown the British had eight redoubts plus the "Horn Work."

Redoubts:

- No. 1 This was just in advance of the line from which it was detached and pointed to the northwest. It seems to have involved town Lots 1 and 4 and possibly 2 and 5 as well.
- No. 2 This, another five-sided redoubt like No. 1, was some distance in front of the line and to the south of Main Street. It probably did not directly involve the town proper, although the line behind it seems to have been across Lots 9, 8, and 15.
- No. 3 This was at the peak of the line as it bulged southward at a point outward from Church Street and had a V-shaped front. It was beyond

3. *Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, pp. 384-385.

4. See Illustration No. 15: "A Plan of York Town and Gloucester in the Province of Virginia, Shewing the Works constructed for the Defense of those Posts by the British Army . . . from an actual Survey in the Possession of Jno Hills late Lieut in the 23d Regt & Asst Engr," London, 1785.

5. See Illustration No. 16: "A Plan of the Posts of York and Gloucester in the Province of Virginia, Established by His Majesty's Army under the Command of Lieut General Earl Cornwallis, together with the Attacks and Operations of the American & French Forces . . . Which Terminated in the Surrender of the said Posts and Army on the 19th of October 1781. Surveyed by Capt Fage of the Royal Artillery. Published according to Act of Parliament the 4th June 1782." London, 1782.

the original town limits, but it and the works on either side occupied strategic ground in what had become the Gwyn Read development, an addition made to the town after 1738. The supporting line, behind this Redoubt and its bulging flanks, could well have touched Lots 21, 27, 33, 39, 45, 50-51, 54-55, 58-59 and 62-63.

- No. 4 This redoubt, like No. 3, was an integral part of the continuing line opposite the area between present-day Read and Nelson streets. Also like No. 3, it was beyond the original town limits but in the area of the Gwyn Read development.

Between Redoubts Nos. 4 and 5 the main line bent inward toward the river following the topography and crossing present Smith and Bacon streets. In this area, in addition to Gwyn Read lots, the line likely crossed Nos. 66-67. Also, as it curved back away from the river to become involved in the complex constructed around the British headquarters, it surely seems to have had effect on Lots 70-71 and 74-75.

- No. 5 Placed just beyond the south corner of the town limits, this was an irregular shaped position, a part of the earthworks immediately adjacent to and around British Headquarters (the Secretary Nelson House) and near the base of the Hornwork which projected out along the York-Hampton Road to the south.

- No. 6 Redoubt No. 6 occupied a prominent position to the east of the Hornwork. A larger five-sided position it, at least at one stage, had several mounted cannon. As were Redoubts No. 7 and No. 8, No. 6 was beyond the town limits and in the relatively even topography to the southeast across "Tobacco Road" ravine.

Behind the main line from a point about midway between the Hornwork and No. 8, and curving behind No. 7 almost to No. 8, was a supplementary entrenchment to give additional cover to supporting troops.

- No. 7 This with its two-pronged front was farther east along the curve toward the river and pointed toward detached Redoubts No. 9 and No. 10 to the southeast.

- No. 8 A square-shaped redoubt, this terminated the main line on the southeast at the high bluff overlooking the sandy beach and the river.

In the circle between Redoubts No. 1 and No. 8 the British established some nine batteries. Four other batteries covered the waterside from the vantage point

of the Yorktown cliffs, and there were a number of redan positions placed as outposts along the ravines.

The Hills delineation, as did some others, gave some data on fire power by recording lines of fire. There is also data on the number of artillery pieces in the plan drawn by John Hayman.⁶ All figures found do not agree on the number and location of these pieces of military equipment, but this need not be disturbing since the number fluctuated as the siege progressed.

Thor Borresen, in discussing the siege works and artillery when he was studying them a quarter century ago, had a cogent comment on the ever-changing aspect of the siege:

No accurate account of the guns mounted in any one battery, nor their dimensions, can be given due to the constant change which took place during the siege. In Tarleton and in Cornwallis's General Orders many statements are made of certain embrasures, being closed and others cut through. This was necessary. Cornwallis's first choice of positions for batteries was theoretical; not until the French and Americans opened fire from their batteries could he discover how his own could be most effective. Therefore both sides often made changes to outwit the enemy. Another convincing proof of this is the many maps of the siege. Scarcely two agree on the number and type of guns placed in a particular battery.⁷

Batteries:

No. 1 The first battery above Yorktown (unless the first one was located on Windmill Point as discussed later) was a V-shaped position in front of the line about midway between Redoubt No. 2 and Main Street. It covered the area over Yorktown Creek toward the shipping area and

6. Hayman was "Lieut" in the British "17th Infy" and dated his untitled plan June 12, 1782, though obviously he had earlier survey data. Though his treatment is obviously exaggerated (perhaps to some degree for effect) it makes a good many pertinent points. There is a good deal of similarity between the Hayman plan and one done by the French, "Plan du Siege D'York par l'Armee Combinee Commandee par les Generaux Washington et Cte. de Rochambeau." A photostatic copy of each of these plans is in the Colonial NHP library.

7. Thor Borresen, "Orientation Report on the Yorktown Battlefield Area," a typewritten Colonial NHP report dated February 21, 1940, pp. 8-9.

the Fusilier's Redoubt. Hills shows this work with three lines of fire emanating from it, although John Hayman shows it as built to hold four pieces of artillery.

- No. 2 This battery was a part of the line north of Redoubt No. 3 and was situated about where Ballard Street would cross if extended inland in a straight line. Hills again shows three lines of fire; the Hayman and French plan list three pieces.

This unit was just to the east of Redoubt No. 3 about opposite the area between Read and Church streets. Again Hills delineates three lines of fire over Yorktown Creek toward the outer line redoubts, whereas Hayman attributes six positions to this battery.

- No. 4 This was close to, and just north of, the well-trenched British Headquarters area. It is drawn with four lines of fire, again facing westward over Yorktown Creek. The number of pieces shown by Hayman is 10, whereas Fage noted a "Battery of five 18 prs." This was near, but just a little beyond, the southwest limits of town.

- No. 5 The four faces in the two shallow Vs forming the front of the "Hornwork" were mounted with artillery from which Hills showed seven lines of fire. This covered the area of the French operations along the first and second siege lines. Hayman omitted reference to cannon here.

- Nos. 6, 7 This battery was adjacent to Redoubt No. 6 on its west side and carried three lines of fire, while another four lines came from the redoubt itself. The two together had a good range along the allied siege lines. Hayman lists six for this, or these, positions (battery and redoubt).

- No. 8 This position was just to the east and close to Redoubt No. 7. Four lines of fire (six pieces according to Hayman) were aimed against the American sector of the allied lines and two were along the riverbank and over the water.

- No. 9 Though neither Hills nor Fage seemingly show a battery on Windmill Point⁸ above the town, there are other plans that do show a work

8. Hills shows a V-shaped structure more suggestive of a building symbol than an earthwork, and Fage seems to indicate a round structure of rather small proportions, perhaps the windmill.

here. One is the map drawn by Jean Baptiste Obrey de Gouvian, a Lieutenant Colonel in the Engineers, who was serving in the American Army and who is generally reliable in his delineation of the British works. He would seem to indicate three gun positions on the brow of the point.⁹

Water Batteries:

Along the bluff within the encircling main line the British erected four batteries to protect the waterside. Evidently much of the naval ordnance brought ashore from the ships in the harbor went into these positions which were manned by "seamen" from these same vessels.¹⁰

No. 1w The largest of these was along the edge of the bluffs on either side of the area crossing Church Street in front of (and likely involving) town Lots 22, 28, 34, and 40. On the Hills map it carried 13 lines of fire; Hayman rated it at 26 pieces, iron 12-pounders.

No. 2w Another water battery was on the eminence on which the present Yorktown Monument was later erected. This was the area between the present Comte de Grasse Street ravine and that down which "Tobacco Road" (shown on maps but not named at this time) had come to run. Four lines of fire are shown on the Hill map, but Hayman notes 12 iron pieces, all 12-pounders.

9. "Plan of the Attacks of York in Virginia by the Allied Armies of America and France," published as *Washington's Official Map of Yorktown* (Washington, 1952), National Archives Facsimile No. 21.

10. Conrad Doehla, a German mercenary, wrote on August 31: "I was on unloading duty. All the munitions and provisions were unloaded from the ships riding in the harbour, the lower tiers of guns from the warships and frigates were brought into the earthworks and all the ships completely emptied." "The Doehla Journal," translated and edited by Robert J. Tilden, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 2nd ser., 22 (1942), 244.

On the same day another German, Stephen Popp, made a similar comment: "Our ships landed all their stores, — their guns put on our lines." *Popp's Journal 1777-1783*, translated and edited by Joseph G. Rosengarten, reprint *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (Philadelphia, 1902), p. 17, hereafter cited as *Popp's Journal*. Also the deployment of the "Seamen" is shown on Lt. Alexander Sutherland's, "Sketch of the Posts of York Town and Gloucester Point shewing the french and rebel attacks upon the former in October, 1781," a manuscript map, photostat in the Colonial NHP library.

- No. 3w This battery, also with four lines of fire (Hayman noted four iron 12-pounders) was on the high point on the southeast side of the mouth of the "Tobacco Road" ravine.
- No. 4w This position in one sense was but a continuation of the British main line curving along the edge of the cliff just beyond, actually adjacent to, Redoubt No. 8. It carried four lines of fire over the stockade that ran from the base of the cliff across the flat beach area to the line of sunken vessels that followed an arc-shaped course around to the other end of town to block any allied approach by water. Hill gave it four lines of fire whereas Hayman listed seven pieces here.

Evidence would seem to show that no water batteries occupied the prominent bluffs between Read Street and the Great Valley and between the Great Valley and the ravine (valley) down which Comte de Grasse now runs. Nor does it seem that the French, when they shortened the British line and strengthened the inner works as they went into winter quarters, placed any works here.¹¹ However, in the Civil War both spaces became water battery sites.

As for other artillery, none was shown by Hills in the redan¹² in front of Redoubt No. 3, nor did Hayman show any in the four such little works which he delineated between British Redoubt No. 3 and Main Street at the Yorktown Creek end of little fingers of raised land. Hayman did show two cannon on the beach just behind the stockade here on the downriver end of the waterfront. Altogether Hills would seem to show 75, or less, gun positions in Yorktown whereas the Hayman total would show deployment of almost 100 pieces including the 10 at Gloucester and the "several pieces to use as occasion required." Both of these totals fall way short of the British cannon surrendered, which according to Tarleton numbered "seventy-five pieces of brass ordnance, sixty-nine iron ditto."¹³

11. See Illustrations Nos. 15-17 and 21 and also Part Two, Chapter II.

The Gouvion plan generally agreed with this; however, another American plan, that by Sebastian Bauman, seemed to disagree although the Bauman topography was faulty here. See Illustrations Nos. 18-21 for French interpretations.

12. Redans were slight works, V-shaped or semi-circular, where small artillery pieces were, or could be, employed to annoy advancing forces.

13. *Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, p. 402.

Sebastian Bauman on his plan noted 81 pieces in the works including 16 at Gloucester Point.

Though the major military action in 1781 came on the southeast side of Yorktown where physical damages to the town were heavy, the British made significant changes all around the town, actually reducing its size as they built their inner line of trenches, batteries, and redoubts. A part of this required the destruction (elimination) of obstructions in front of their line, whether the obstructions were houses, trees, or other objects with vertical dimension.¹⁴ This was necessary to give the infantry, and more particularly the artillery men, an open clear field of fire.

Conrad Doehla, one of the German mercenaries in the British force, noted in his journal under the date September 19 that "many houses were torn down in the little city of Yorktown because they were a hindrance outside of our lines." He had noted earlier, on the 14th, that "All the trees in front of our line have been cut down; and all the roads guarded and fortified with a strong abattis."¹⁵ Another German, Stephan Popp, wrote in a similar vein: "Many houses torn down to strengthen our lines. Palisades and deep trenches put in front."¹⁶

This physical loss and damage on the periphery of Yorktown proved to be highly significant. There is no better example of this than in the clearing of developments on Lots 1-6 on the northwest side of the port town, since they were just beyond the British line, which in this quarter followed along the route of Buckner Street. The parcel here (three acres in contiguous lots plus at least a part of the beach area between the lots and the river) came to be one of the more highly developed and earliest establishments under single ownership in Yorktown and was held together through most of the 18th century though there were transfers in ownership.

In 1781 this property was owned by Capt. Thomas Lilly, a sea captain of local note. He lost through demolition here a new dwelling, a kitchen, a stable for

14. Banastre Tarleton wrote that "After some consideration, the [fortifications] plan was approved of, and the troops, after levelling some houses, proceeded to construct the fortifications." *Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, pp. 372-75.

15. "The Doehla Journal," p. 246.

On the 16th Doehla recorded: "This afternoon I went where they were cutting trees, carried and also helped load some on wagons. Palisades made of these strong trees which are placed in the entrenchments of our line around our whole camp."

16. *Popp's Journal*, pp. 17-18.

six horses with a "Chair House," as well as another dwelling with a shed. There was also damage to his lots and all of "the enclosure" (fences) were "destroy'd and the well fill'd up." These items represented £635 of the total account (£725) for "damages done by the British to Captain Lilly."¹⁷

There were substantial losses to Lawrence Smith who had holdings in the town and to the southeast of it.¹⁸ His structural losses included: (1) a "9 panel door taken from a Dwelling House with locks & hinges"; (2) "5 windows with 18 lights 8 pr shutters"; (3) "the Wether Bords & Gable ends of Dweling House 44 by 20 feete"; (4) "the casing of all the Windows"; (5) "greatest part of the plastering Brokedown"; (6) "6 planks of the Floor taken up"; (7) "Ten Steps of the Stairs & Stair Case"; (8) "2 Porches 8 feet by 6"; (9) "one Clabord House with 3 Roomes 24 x 16"; (10) one barn 24 by 20 and "6000 Fence Rales"; (11) "1/3 of a Griss Mill (stone's saved)"; (12) "Framing for a Dwellg House (ready fram'd) 32 by 18 and a 9 foot Shed" (this also involved "Featherage Plank," "Flooring Plank" and "2500 Bricks," and "Damage done the [other] Houses").¹⁹ There was, too, this notation, "Damages done the Land near the Town in Making Intrenchmts."

William Stevenson was another case in point.²⁰ He lost a large dwelling with "4 Rooms below 2 upstairs & 4 brick chimneys" as well as "a Kitchen with two fireplaces" and a dairy 10 feet square, a "Smoak House" which was "doubled studded," a 20 by 16 foot stable, a "Large Hen House 10 feet square," and "2 Lotts render'd allmost useless by the works & 100 panls pales." Included also in the losses, Abraham Archer's "Lot of Ground on the Hill"²¹ about 1/3 of it very much Cut there being a Battery erected on it."²²

17. *Claims for Losses*, pp. 35-36.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

19. At this point the phrase "by 6 or 7 Balls" was lined out in the claim.

20. *Claims for Losses*, p. 70.

21. This presumably refers to Lot 83 on the very edge of town.

22. *Claims for Losses*, p. 3.

William Cary was another heavy loser in the physical development area.²³ His losses included (1) a 32 by 16 foot stable "double shedded," 10 feet each, which served as stable, "Chair House" and "Grainery" with "a Room for Harness Saddles & Bridles, & a Loft for Hay"; (2) A "Kitchen 24 by 20 with Brick Chimney & Oven, the floor laid with Brick & Tile Sash windows, lathed & plastered, Drepers & lodging rooms upstairs"; (3) "A Stone House 24 by 16 Poplar frame"; (4) a smokehouse and a dairy; (5) "A Larder 8 feet Square brick floor all new"; (6) "Damage done the Dwelling House by Shot Shells & Breaking all the Glass in the Windows"; (7) "Damage done the Lott by throwing up intrenchments & Breast Works"; and also (8) the disruption of his "Garden" including some "70 Panels, Posts, Pales, & Rails."

Thomas Gibbs's losses included six smaller buildings as well as "21 pannels new paleings."²⁴ David Jameson had substantial losses in the town and just outside. His heaviest loss was "a dwelling House 5 rooms & a passage below stairs & 3 rooms and a passage above, with a brick Cellar halfway the length of the house."²⁵ Also destroyed was "a Stable 24 by 16 with a ten feet shed on each side, fitted with 7 stalls, Racks &c a Corn room, Carriage House, and Cow Shelter." There was also the "Smoak House 10 feet, double shedded & underpin'd 4 feet deep with Brick" and some 155 panels of sturdy fencing.

There were public building damages and losses of some note in addition to the heavy private losses. The courthouse and the church in town suffered extensive damage and "The Hospital, a Kitchen, dairy, & other necessary Houses, a garden well paled in, and a large Stable all pulled down & destroyed by Ld Cornwallis . . . valued at . . . £ 500."²⁶ These latter developments seemingly were outside of the British main line and between it and Yorktown Creek. They had to be destroyed in order to clear the line of fire.

William Reynolds, writing to James Eyma from Williamsburg on October 27, 1781, tells in a thumbnail sketch of some of the trials and tribulations as well as

23. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

The buildings were one 12 feet square and "shingled," one 16 by 12 feet with an eight foot shed, one 22 by 14 feet with a 10 foot shed, one 6 by 4 feet, one 24 by 16 feet with a 10 foot shed, and another 16 by 12 feet.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-28.

26. *Ibid.*, Claim No. 31.

personal losses of the private citizen in this war time.²⁷ In this case the problems concerned him and his family, residents of Yorktown:

Our State has been invaded by the British ever since 29th Decemr [1780] untill 19th of this Month, when the great and glorious capture of Cornwallis Army was compleated by the allied Army's, an event which I flatter myself will bring about Peace. You have no conception my friend the losses & uneasiness I have suffer'd for this nine months past, obliged to leave my house repeatedly, and at length was so unfortunate as to have Mr Reynolds & the Children prisoners with them near six weeks. I have lost many of my papers & your letter Book, the large trunk you left with me I have here safe, altho the Enemy have been twice where it was, I at present reside at Mr Beall's house in this Town, but I hope shortly to be settled at York once more, the British pull'd down many of the Houses in York &c those they left have been much injured by the Bombardment yours & mine have not suffer'd so much as many others.²⁸

None of the British plans of the investment of Yorktown give cross sections of the works or details of the construction. Of some help are two plans done by French cartographers which show profiles of the English parapets and redoubts, but not of the batteries.²⁹ As Thor Borresen earlier concluded:

Presumably the method of constructing batteries was so universally known and used that no details of their construction were thought necessary. We are certain that there were no sunken batteries erected by the British: all were cavalier, or raised, batteries, which type often called for a ditch both in front and to the rear of the battery.

27. Reynolds, "Letter Book 1 and 2," part 2, pp. 140-41.

28. This included particularly developments on Lots 30 and 31 in Yorktown.

29. These plans seemingly had a common origin and are (1) "Plan du Siege d'York en Virginie par l'Armee Alliee d'Amerique et de France sous les Ordres des Genaux. Washington et Cte. de Rochambeau contre l'Armee Angloise Commandee par le Lord Cornwallis en octobre 1781"; and (2) "Plan du Siege d'York, en Virginie par l'Armee alliee d'Amerique et de France sous les Ordres des Gaux. Washington et Cte. de Rochambeau, contre l'Armee Anglaise Commandee par Lord Cornwallis en Octobre 1781." Photostats of these plans are in the Colonial NHP library. See also Colonial photographs Nos. 7,312 and 8,153 and Illustration No. 25.

There were two types of parapets constructed in the English line surrounding Yorktown, according to these French maps. One line of parapets commenced at the river, on the right, facing York Creek, and went to Smith Street. This parapet was made by placing logs vertically in the ground close together. The writer says vertically, but they really had a slight slant toward the earth part of the parapet, similar to the slope of an ordinary parapet, which is usually about 3 feet horizontal to 6 feet 3 inches in height of palisade. The earth behind the palisades was 4 feet 4 inches high, with a width across the top of about 9 or 10 feet. As a rule, with this type of work, there was no front ditch; the earth for the parapet was taken from a ditch excavated to the rear of the firing step. Ordinarily this type of construction was used only where the soil was sandy and where the line of defense was protected against a heavy assault by the enemy as a result of deep ravines or any natural obstructions which would prevent an enemy from forming in a solid formation before an attack. The width of 9 or 10 feet across the top of the parapet was to prevent the enemy, if they should reach the line of defense, from having one man engage the defender with bayonets while another climbed over the palisade.

The line of parapets erected from Smith Street to York River, on the left, was of cavalier construction; it had a ditch in front and one to the rear. This was done in order to gain height; and this type was usually constructed where mass assaults could be made. This section of parapet was also protected by fraises placed on the berm, facing outward to an angle of 45 degrees.

Besides this main line of defense, the British had an inner line of defense to protect their encampment area. This line was made of trenches, parapets and palisades, with logs placed vertically – probably six to eight inches apart – and was manned by reserves.

CHAPTER II

THE FRENCH OCCUPY YORKTOWN AND ALTER THE BRITISH LINE

The breakup of the victorious allied French and American force that brought the capitulation of Cornwallis and his British army on October 19, 1781, came rather quickly after the formal surrender. After a few days rest, the captured British soldiers were assembled for removal to prison camps located, in the main, in the western parts of Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. On October 24 the French units of Saint Simon, those who had come north with De Grasse from the West Indies, left their encampments to board the transports for return. The greater part of the stores and most of the American troops were on shipboard in transports and headed up the Chesapeake to the north by November 3. On November 5 Washington and his staff left their field headquarters also to head north after a short stopover in Williamsburg. De Grasse sailed out of the Chesapeake for the Islands on November 4. The army of Rochambeau stayed behind and would winter in the area.¹ Thus Yorktown and her neighbors would not yet be free of the military. Actually, garrisoning at Yorktown would continue for two more years, first by the French and then by American units, with consequent disruption and more damage to property and general discord and disgruntlement among the inhabitants and property owners.²

While all of the departures were taking place, the French troops of Rochambeau were looking into the matter of accommodations and locations for winter quarters. Activity began as early as October 24,³ though it would be mid-November before things would be firm. It was Baron Von Closen who noted

1. Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington: A Biography*, 5 (New York, 1952), pp. 302-03; Charles Lee Lewis, *Admiral De Grasse and American Independence* (Annapolis, Md., 1944), pp. 196 ff.
2. See Appendix G, "Yorktown People Have Some Unpleasantness with the French."
3. This is according to Abbé Robin, a chaplain with the forces, who noted: "On the twenty fourth the troops began to go into winter quarters." Alfred J. Morrison, *Travels in Virginia in Revolutionary Times* (Lynchburg, Va., 1922), p. 37.

in his journal: "From the 15th to the 18th of November, the French army entered into its winter quarters" executing specific assignments.⁴

Those troops assigned to Yorktown were "The Soissonnois regiment, with the grenadiers and chasseurs of Saintonge," approximately 1,000 men. These plus the Saintonge regiment ("encamped between York and Hampton, at Halfway House and Back River") and a detachment of 50 men and an artillery company "at Gloucester" were under the command of Vicomte de Viomenil. The principal headquarters were in Williamsburg where Rochambeau and Chastellux had with them the Bourbonnais regiment, 7 companies of the Royal Deux-Ponts, and part of the artillery battalion of Auxonne. Others were at Hampton (Lanzun's Legion), Jamestown (3 companies of the Royal Deux-Ponts), and West Point (all of the siege artillery).⁵

Security for the French troops in Yorktown now became important. Since there were fewer troops, the extensive British works could not be adequately manned in case of sudden attack, which was still a possibility. Consequently it was decided to tighten the distance involved and to destroy allied and British works which were unneeded.

4. *Journal of Baron Von Closen*, pp. 161-62.

5. *Ibid.*

This is essentially as given in more general terms by Abbé Robin. "The regiments of Bourbonnais and Royal Deux-Ponts are at Williamsburg, where our head Quarters are fixed. The regiments of Soissonnois, and the grenadier companies, and Chasseurs of Saintonge are at York. The rest of the regiment of Saintonge is billeted about in the county betwixt York and Hampton; and the latter place, situated on James River, is occupied by the Legion of Lauzun." Morrison, *Travels in Virginia in Revolutionary Times*, p. 37.

"On that day [November 1 according to Baron Von Closen]⁶ we began to fill in the works in our parallels⁷ and the redoubts on Pigeon Hill. It was decided that after the departure of the general and higher officers (English), the fortifications of York would be contracted." He reported five days later:

Now that all our works around York were filled in, and the exterior fortifications (that Cornwallis had had built) were razed, we worked in great haste to finish the new walls around York, which M. de Rochambeau very much decreased in circumference. We set up two batteries of 18 pieces on the further ravine, below the city, and one battery of 12 pieces of 18 at Gloucester protected by a closed redoubt.⁸

Abbé Robin also had a comment on the attention given the works at Yorktown:

The plan of the fortifications for the defence of York and Gloucester has been entirely changed; they are drawing them into a narrower compass than before, having destroyed the English works, and are busy at constructing new ones.⁹

6. *Journal of Baron Von Closen*, p.160.

7. The Americans were engaged in the same work in their areas of the First and Second Siege Lines. Lt. William Feltman noted in his journal for October 29, for example, "This morning 9 o'clock our brigade went on fatigue to demolish the works we had the trouble to throw up when his lordship had possession of the town." "The Journal of Lieut. William Feltman," *Pennsylvania Historical Society Collections*, 1, No. 5 (May, 1853), 324-35.

There are numerous other references to this work, one in particular being that of Samuel Tallmadge who wrote from his "Camp Near York on Saturday Oct. 27th" – "the American and french troops are constantly Employed in Demolishing our works thrown up in the time of the siege." *Orderly Books of the Fourth New York Regiment, 1778-1780, The Second New York Regiment, 1780-1783, by Samuel Tallmadge and Others and Diaries of Samuel Tallmadge, 1780-1782 and John Barr, 1779-1782* (Albany, N.Y., 1932), pp. 764-65.

8. *Journal of Baron Von Closen*, pp. 161-62.

He further commented: "These 48 pieces of different calibers are the Americans'. They transported to the North all the other pieces captured from Cornwallis except for those that he had collected in Virginia."

9. Morrison, *Travels in Virginia in Revolutionary Times*, p. 37.

He continued, obviously writing a few days prior to Von Closen's description: "The traveling artillery is partly at Williamsburg and partly at York and the heavy cannon at West Point (called Delaware on the maps), a place situated between the two rivers that form that of York."

The alterations to the British works and the new ones mentioned by Von Closen represented some simplification along the line about the town. The principal change, however, came on the southeast side of Yorktown. Here the British entrenchments south and east from their Redoubt No. 5 were abandoned and razed (at least to the point of rendering them useless to a possible attacking force approaching from this direction). This eliminated all that area, perhaps a third of the ground encompassed by the British inner (main) line, which lay beyond the deep ravine that was near the southeast limits of the town – the ravine down which “Tobacco Road” (a later designation) followed to the beach.

The new line was one extending from British Redoubt No. 5 (seemingly incorporating the redoubt into a new battery) and continuing along the northwest (town) side of the ravine on the bluff overlooking it, and on to the riverbank. Then it went along the riverbank to the ravine, or valley, which now serves Comte de Grasse Street. It incorporated the British gun positions that overlooked the river here into the second of the batteries mentioned by Von Closen. About midway of the new line the French added a redoubt, or strong point. The shell-scarred structure of the Secretary Nelson House, where Cornwallis initially had his headquarters, was just within the new line.¹⁰ This line was detailed on a French siege plan drawn at the time.¹¹

It was the British line as altered by the French that was to remain after all of the troops had gone. These works were to become the most visible historic landmarks of the siege until the time of the Civil War. Whether or not the old British line south and east of Redoubt No. 5 was completely obliterated when the French razed it seems doubtful. Some later references seem to indicate that it could be traced at least in part, as the discussion which follows tends to suggest.¹² Certainly that section which was in front (south) of No. 5 including

10. When Benjamin Latrobe sketched the Secretary’s house in ruins during his visit to Yorktown in 1796, he put in the background substantial earthworks which evidently were the standing remains from this French shortened line. This is published in color in Coleman and Hemphill, “View at Little York in Virginia,” pp. 44-47.

11. See Illustration No. 21.

It can be noted that this plan seems to indicate that the French advanced the line across Smith Street a bit inland, thereby straightening it out and eliminating the dip toward the river in this sector – a strategy that the Civil War engineers also followed. (Compare Illustration No. 22 with Nos. 15 and 21.) The French plan also shows the new battery at Gloucester Point.

12. See Chapter V.

the "Horn Work" complex was too strategically located to have been left standing. This would have blocked the turn of the new French line and the battery which was formed here. The archeological investigation in more recent times at various points in and across the Confederate line, particularly in the southeast sector, did fail to locate remains of any British works above the old grade. Below grade however, finds clearly fix the location of the British line as generally under the existing Civil War embankments.¹³

13. See Appendix F, "Some Archeology Along the British-Confederate Line."

CHAPTER III

AMERICAN TROOPS FOLLOWED THE FRENCH INTO YORKTOWN FOR A TIME

It was in late June 1782 that Governor Harrison received word that the French army in the area would be withdrawn immediately except for "the convalescents and a few others." This created some consternation about the safety of the post and the country. Plans were laid to bring in some Virginia Regulars and to strengthen this force with militia. "William Robertson was named Commissary of this State for the purpose of supplying the Troops that will be in Garrison at Yorktown."¹ On June 25 Harrison wrote to General Edward Stevens:

The removal of the French Troops from this State renders it necessary that a body of troops should be sent immediately to Garrison the Town of York, and as the Post is of great consequence an Officer of distinction & merit must be fixed on to command. I have to request of you Sir to take on this important trust.²

Actually, it should be mentioned, little would come of this planning.

In a letter on June 26, Harrison brought Rochambeau up to date on the situation. Colonel Charles Dabney was to cross his Legion (except one company) "over to Hampton and to march them all but a small party of Horse to York Town, orders are also gone for four hundred Militia to march into the same place immediately. The whole will compose a body of about six hundred men which are as many as we can possibly feed for the present." Plans had been laid as well for backup militia forces from the counties of the local area (some 600 men) to be held in readiness.³

Rochambeau had initially intimated that he believed that a force of "1000 men" was needed "to garrison York & Gloucester." Harrison wrote Washington

1. *Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia (1776-1783)*, 3, edited by H. R. McIlwaine, p. 255, hereafter cited as *Official Letters of the Governors*.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

that the force he had "join'd to the French that are left," plus general precautions, were sufficient to defend these points in question "till relief can be sent."⁴

On July 12, the governor also wrote Chevalier de la Valette and outlined the plans that were being effected.⁵ Valette was in command of the French detachment that had been left to garrison Yorktown until the takeover by Virginia troops could be carried out. The departure of the French Army itself began "On July 1" with the "march towards the North in Four Divisions each a day apart from the other." This was by regiment – the Bourbonnois, the Deux-Ponts, the Soissonnois, and then the Saintonge. In addition to the troops at Yorktown, only the siege artillery at West Point with 150 of the corps of royal artillery to attend them, were left behind. Baron Von Closen described the Yorktown unit and its function:

The York garrison, which combines the detachment the army is leaving behind and the hospital corps, until they can be evacuated, will be composed of 100 men per regiment, or a total of 400 men. The militia of the surrounding area are to join this detachment and occupy several points vital to the security of the country, such as Hampton, York, and an area on Cape Henry. All will be commanded by M. de la Valette, Lieutenant-Colonel of Saintonge and Brigadier of the armies.⁶

Dabney's orders had been confirmed on July 12 to "repair Yourself with the foot to York Town and take command of the Militia that shall be assembled there till the arrival of General Stevens." The governor suggested that it might be well for the present "to encamp the Militia without the Town." Also it was Harrison's "earnest desire and request" that Dabney "harmonize with and consult the Chevalier Lavallette on all occasions."⁷

4. *Ibid.*, p. 265.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 268-69.

6. *Journal of Baron Von Closen*, pp. 207-08.

He also noted: "It was intended also to have 6 floating batteries (a kind of armed ship) constructed for the defense of the bay, which could sail where needed, but that was not carried out because of lack of workmen."

7. *Official Letters of the Governors*, 3, 269.

But despite plans, the garrison at Yorktown would remain small and the French would soon depart (before the end of August) leaving Dabney's unit and some militia. For this reason Harrison now wrote again to General Stevens. "Our force will be so reduced by the removal of all the French troops out of the State, and the works will be so contracted by the demolition of those round the Town, that I shall have no occasion for an Officer of your rank to command." He closed his letter to Stevens with thanks for his expressed willingness to serve.⁸

Also on August 3 Harrison wrote to Dabney⁹ indicating that he could "discharge the Militia if it is not disagreeable" to the French commander. With the reduction of forces: "There will now be no occasion to increase the size of the Barracks, tho; it will be necessary to rebuild them as they were." The plan was to utilize the still-standing barracks chimneys.¹⁰ Simcoe had burned the buildings, "a range of rebel barracks," when he had raided Yorktown on April 19.¹¹ Dabney was to request David Jameson and William Reynolds locally "to look out for Timber" and then to report to the governor "on what Terms it could be got." But nothing would come of this and no barracks would be built or rebuilt.

It was the lack of housing and accommodations that led to the dismissal of the limited militia that had responded to the call in November to move to Yorktown to level the siege earthworks. Concerning this matter, Harrison wrote to the local county-lieutenants on January 6:¹² "The inclement Season of the year & the want of barracks rendering the Situation of the militia at York very unhappy I have with the advice of Council directed the commandg Officer at that Post to dismiss them; should your militia not have reached there you will please to countermand their marching til further orders."¹³

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 288-89.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 288.

10. These chimneys, four of them, are probably those structures shown on a French siege plan overlooking Yorktown Creek from the end of a finger of land projecting toward the creek on a line extended from Read Street. See Illustration No. 20.

11. John Graves Simcoe, *A Journal of the Operations of the Queen's Rangers. From the End of the Year 1777, to the Conclusion of the late American War* (New York, 1844), pp. 131-34.

12. York, Gloucester, James City, Elizabeth City, and New Kent counties.

13. *Official Letters of the Governors*, 3, 421-22.

This left only Dabney's Legion at Yorktown and this unit apparently remained on post here until the summer of 1783.¹⁴ Thus it was that Yorktown continued to be garrisoned for almost two years after Cornwallis had surrendered, with each occupying force leaving its mark in terms of physical damage to housing and other property. It was a gloomy picture, one of accumulated destruction, that David Jameson described in a letter of July 16, 1783:

Nearly half the number of Houses in the Town were entirely destroyed by the British, and many of those they left standing were much injured by them, by the shels [sic] & Balls, by the French Army, or by our own Soldiers, so that it is with difficulty the inhabitants who remained in Town, and who have since the Siege & the departure of the French Army returned there; can be tolerably accomodated.¹⁵

Jameson felt that the works at Yorktown could best be leveled by negro labor, if funds could be made available. In no case did he believe that soldiers still in Continental pay should be sent to Yorktown for that purpose.

There is not room to Barrack or Billet the Soldiers. As soon as it was known that preliminaries of Peace were agreed on [November 30, 1782] the Soldiers then stationed at York became very licentious, and no vigilance or exertions of the officers could keep them within bounds, very few nights passed without Robbery or gross insult being committed by them. Some of the Men still in pay have already shewn that they will not obey Command what hope can the inhabitants of York have, that the little remains of their property will be safe from the spoils of a set of abandoned Men who observe no law but their brutish Will?¹⁶

14. The Legion was still here on May 1 of that year, for on that date payment in the amount of £1.18.6 was approved for "Doctor Nicolson for attending the sick at York Garrison it appearing from the Certificate of the Commandant that there was no Surgeon in the Garrison at that time." *Journals of the Council of State of Virginia, (1776-1786)*, 3, edited by H. R. McIlwaine *et al.*, p. 252, hereafter cited as *Journals of the Council*.

15. " '... to level the works at York ...': A Letter of David Jameson," edited by Donald O. Dewey, *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 71(1963), 150-53, hereafter cited as "A Letter of David Jameson."

16. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER IV

EFFORTS TO LEVEL THE WORKS AROUND YORKTOWN FAIL

Near midsummer in 1782, with the prospect of military activity diminishing in Yorktown, some concern developed about the considerable number of standing earthworks around the town. This was just prior to the departure of the French Army which got underway on July 1.

If the situation had not become confused later in the month, the British works, or most of them, may have been leveled at that time. Governor Harrison, however, intervened to save some of them, pointing out that "The forts and platforms to the Water were all built by the State, and are necessary for the defence of the river and Its Trade."¹ He wrote to Chevalier de la Valette, then in command of the Yorktown garrison, on July 29 that:

It appears extremely hasty in General [Benjamin] Lincoln to order all the fortifications at York Town to be destroy'd, those that have been thrown up round the Town either by the Enemy or your Army will be useless to us, but the Fort and the platforms were built by the State and ought to be preserved for it and you have my thanks for offering to deliver them up when you mean to evacuate them – you'l [sic] please to send Notice to Colo Dabney who has orders to take possession and they will be enclosed by such Works or pallisades [sic] as will be sufficient to defend them against a small force.²

Harrison was a little bitter about Secretary of War Benjamin Lincoln bypassing him in regard to the fortifications. It became a matter of principle with him. La Valette, however, was quite agreeable to leaving the works.³ In the meanwhile, Dabney was given further instruction:

You'l [sic] please to march the Infantry of your Legion to York Town immediately and take possession of it as soon as the French quit it, the Horse you'l [sic] station as you think most convenient to cover the Country

1. *Official Letters of the Governors*, 3, 286.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 282.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 286-87.

below you, and to give Intelligence of the approach of an Enemy; as soon as you get to York I would have you discharge the Militia if it is not disagreeable to Colo Lavelette [sic] if he should wish to retain them till he sails you'l [sic] please to employ them and your own Troops in levelling such of the out works as are to be destroy'd which I suppose will be the whole of those around the Town, we shall not have men to man them and their standing will only invite the Enemy to take possession of them when they shall be in a Condition to do it.⁴

But things were happening swiftly now and evidently the French left later in August without more attention to the leveling of the works. The remaining American garrison under Dabney was either too small to accomplish the job, not inclined to the task, or had to direct attention to more compelling duties. The matter, however, came to fore again in the fall when the Council of State considered the matter on November 11:

The Governor having suggested to the board the propriety of levelling the works around York from an apprehension that the enemy may be induced again to take possession of them if left standing. — It is advised that the Commissioner of War be desired to order five hundred men from the Counties of Elizabeth City, York, Warwick, Gloster, James City and New Kent, to be proportioned according to the number of Militia in each of the said Counties to be put under the command of Colo Dabney and with his Legion to be employed in the said work. Permission to be granted to any Militia Man ordered out for the purpose aforesaid to send an able bodied Negro Man in his stead.⁵

But nothing of substance came of this insofar as leveling the works was concerned. When the Governor laid before the Council, on January 6, 1783, "a Letter from the commanding officer at York stating the difficulty of procuring barracks of those of the Militia Ordered out by the Executive there to level the works, and one from the Magistrates refusing to give their countenance and aid for the purpose," the Council advised "that Orders be issued for discharging those

4. *Ibid.*, p. 288.

The governor continued in his letter to Dabney: "It will be advisable to have the fort enclosed with a strong palisade to secure you against a sudden Attack as we are all young at such business I beg you to consult Colo Lovelette [sic] and the French Engineers in what manner it may be most effectually done."

5. *Journals of the Council*, 3, 171-72.

of the Militia who have arrived and countermanding the march of the remainder."⁶ Harrison executed the necessary order to Col. Charles Dabney, still in command at Yorktown, the same day. "Having taken into consideration the situation of the Militia at York destitute of barracks at this inclement season of the year, you are desired to dismiss those now on duty as well as such as may arrive under the orders of the 13th of November last."⁷ And so the works remained.

The local inhabitants who resided and worked in Yorktown came to find these rather massive French-altered British entrenchments surrounding the town a serious disturbance to business operations and a nuisance to living in general. And thus the matter surfaced from time to time and even reached the central government.⁸

In mid-1783 an appeal was made to the Continental Congress by the Virginia Assembly which, by resolution, requested funds "to level the works at York."⁹ The situation was reviewed in a letter of July 16 from David Jameson, a prominent citizen of Yorktown and the state and a long-time merchant of Yorktown. He related that:

The people of that place were much distressed by the British, and really not able to do so great a work themselves. Nor do I imagine any person will think that after all their suffering, the burthen of leveling those works (kept up & much enlarged for the defence of the French Army) should fall upon them – Or that they ought to bear at their very doors Mounds of Earth which prevent a free circulation of the Air, and Ditches of stagnant putred [sic] water.¹⁰

Jameson cautioned against the suggestion that "the Soldiers for three years still in the pay of the Continent might with propriety be sent to York to level the works." He cited the lack of housing and accommodations in Yorktown due to

6. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

7. *Official Letters of the Governors*, 3, 421.

8. "A Letter of David Jameson," pp. 150-53.

9. It was reported in the *Journals of the Continental Congress* that "on July 31, was read a resolution of the Virginia Assembly, dated June 17, 1783, authorizing an application to Congress for a sum not exceeding £750, to level the works at York and Gloucester." It was then referred to committee. *Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789*, 24 (Washington, D.C., 1922), p. 483.

10. "A Letter of David Jameson," pp. 150-53.

the successive occupations of the town as well as the unreliability of the troops and the inability of officers to control them.

Jameson proposed that Congress discharge the soldiers rather than send them to Yorktown. In consequence, a considerable saving would be effected. "And with much less money than their pay and rations would amount to the work may be done by hiring Negroes who will obey Command, will require fewer conveniences And an equal number of them will finish it in less than half the time."¹¹ But in any case, this all came to naught, as Congress refused the money. On September 3, 1787, when the committee reported the matter out, it noted that other states had leveled works within their borders where necessary without help from the central government. Besides, even if Virginia's claim were fully justified, "the state of the public finances" was such that Congress could not provide the money. Thus it was that the British works at Yorktown, as modified by the French, continued to remain with little change.¹²

Six years later the old works were still a problem, one sufficient enough for the "court of hustings" for the "Borough of York" to make record of it in noting that it:

Considers the obstructions of the streets as thrown up by the British as a Nusence [sic] and presents the same as such.¹³

There seems to be no record of this producing any real action, certainly from the public sector. Travelers to Yorktown document their continued existence until they were obliterated from view by the Civil War entrenchments in 1861 and 1862.

It should be noted that even while there were local complaints about the inconveniences caused by the entrenchments, they were already becoming points of interest for travelers in the area. This was true for Robert Hunter, Jr., a young merchant from London who visited Yorktown on February 25, 1786.¹⁴ On

11. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

12. It can be assumed, it seems safe to say, that individual property owners and residents would have leveled parts of some entrenchments, especially where they constituted a critical blockage in their particular location.

13. *Yorktown's Hustings Court Records*, p. 54.

14. Robert Hunter, Jr., *Quebec to Carolina in 1785-1786: Being the Travel Diary and Observations of Robert Hunter, Jr., a Young Merchant of London*, edited by Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling (San Marino, Calif., 1943), pp. 231-32.

arrival, having crossed the York River by ferry ("in a scow"), he and his companion, another London merchant, immediately sought out Dr. Corbin Griffin to whom they had a letter of reference. After breakfast "they walked about the town," "which consists of a few scattered houses; some of them have been elegant, but a good deal battered during the Siege."

The Doctor introduced us to General Nelson [Thomas Nelson, Jr.], with whom we had some conversation about the war. He afterwards showed us the different works that were raised by the British and Americans and where the Continental Army, the French, and the militia were drawn up under General Washington.

They also visited and made special reference to Cornwallis's Cave¹⁵ and the Secretary Nelson House.¹⁶

15. "We saw Lord Cornwallis' Cave, a most curious situation under two steep banks, but very safe from the enemy." *Ibid.*, p. 232.

16. "Secretary Nelson's house has been more battered than any in town, being the most elevated situation." *Ibid.*, p. 232.

CHAPTER V

THE OLD WORKS AT YORKTOWN BECOME LANDMARKS AND SLOWLY FADE

Visitors to Yorktown in the decades after the siege of 1781 and the occupation that followed normally took note of the earthworks with comment on them. They evidently continued to constitute a sharp visible reminder of the fighting that had wracked Yorktown. Most comment, however, failed to describe the fortification remnants with any particular exactness and some people evidently saw more than others did. Isaac Weld, Jr., who visited Yorktown in 1796, had this to relate:

A few of the redoubts which were erected by each army, are still remaining, but the principal fortifications are almost quite obliterated; the plough has passed over some of them, and groves of pine trees sprang up about others, though during the siege every tree near the town was destroyed. The first and second parallels can just be traced, when pointed out by a person acquainted with them in a more perfect state.¹

Weld also noted that the shell-pocked ruins of the Secretary Nelson House "in the skirt of the town" were still standing solidly. He continued: "There are trenches thrown up round it, and on every side are deep hollows made by the bombs that fell near it."²

Benjamin Latrobe was in Yorktown about the same time as Weld and he sketched the Secretary Nelson House as has been noted earlier, and set it among the entrenchments which he drew boldly. In comment on them he wrote: "The history of the siege of York is well known to everybody. The works were badly constructed and well attacked. Those represented in the drawing were thrown up

1. *Travels Through the States*, pp. 164-65.

"In the town the houses bear evident marks of the siege; and the inhabitants will not, on any account, suffer the holes perforated by the cannon balls to be repaired on the outside."

2. *Ibid.*

He commented further that: "Till within a year or two the broken shells themselves remained; but the New England men that traded to York finding they would sell well as old iron, dug them up, and carried them away in their ships."

by the French after the town was taken, by way of keeping their army in exercise. They are now gone much to decay but still betray the design of a skillful engineer."³

During Lafayette's visit to Yorktown on October 18-20, 1824, to mark the 44th anniversary of Cornwallis' surrender, there were incidental references to the old British works but little that was particularly specific. A reporter for the *Norfolk and Portsmouth Herald*,⁴ in a story that appeared on October 23, related that Maj. Gen. Robert B. Taylor, who commanded the participating United States troops and volunteers, was headquartered "about a mile out of town, contiguous to the Hampton road." There were others to the east, some encamped "near the bank of the river" but beyond the area of the sites of British Redoubts Nos. 9 and 10 around which the festivities centered.

The field, including the town, we should judge to be about 3 miles in circuit, broken into alternate hills and vallies [sic]. The embankment thrown around the town by Cornwallis, is in some parts nearly perfect — of the second line there remain no traces,⁵ the plough-share having effectually removed them.

It had been noted in the *Herald* on October 22 that on the 19th, after the exercises and after a lengthy banquet, "the General again paid a visit to the encampment, as on the evening before, and was entertained with a brilliant

3. Coleman and Hemphill, "View at Little York in Virginia," pp. 45, 47.

When the Rev. Francis Ashbury commented on a visit to York on April 14, 1800, he mentioned neither the old works nor the Secretary Nelson House. He did have a curious comment on the surrender site: "I saw the grave where was buried the effigy of General Washington, at the probable place where Lord Cornwallis delivered up his sword to him." *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Ashbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, From August 7, 1771, to December 7, 1815* (New York, 1821), 2, 374.

4. Quoted in *Lafayette: Guest of the Nation: A Contemporary Account of the "Triumphal Tour" of General Lafayette*, 3, compiled and edited by Edgar Ewing Brandon (Oxford, O.), pp. 56-57, hereafter cited as *Brandon*, Lafayette: Guest of the Nation.

5. This evidently was in reference to the Allied Second Siege Line.

exhibition of fire works, which concluded the ceremonies of the day."⁶
There is, too, another account of this:⁷

The whole company rose from the table at 9 o'clock, and many of them, with hundreds of spectators, *attended in the open fields east of the town*,⁸ to witness the uncommonly fine fire-works, which had been prepared at public expense, for general gratification. La Fayette was present, sitting on one of the old British embankments.

In both of these instances the general import could be, though not necessarily, that the earthworks alluded to were those forming the southeast sector of the old British line beyond the deep ravine used by "Tobacco Road." In one instance, however, there is specific reference to what must have been the inner line developed and strengthened by the French on the town side of the ravine just after the siege.

A few yards beyond the edge of town to the east,⁹ you see the nearest British lines,¹⁰ the mounds of the entrenchment, and the ditch; the mound considerably sunk from the trend of cattle and the washing of the rains, and the ditch rapidly filling up.¹¹

6. Quoted in Brandon, *Lafayette: Guest of the Nation*, p. 61.

The banquet took place under canvas in the then as now open space across Main Street from the Governor Thomas Nelson home.

7. Robert D. Ward, *An Account of General La Fayette's Visit to Virginia, in the Years 1824-'25* (Richmond, Va., 1881), p. 16, hereafter cited as Ward, *An Account of General La Fayette's Visit*.

8. Underscore added.

9. Underscore added.

10. It is quite understandable that as time passed, this part of the line, a modification by the French, came to be called the British line.

11. Ward, *An Account of General La Fayette's Visit*, p. 35.

There is interesting continuation:

It is said that after the war, the Executive directed a part of the British works to be levelled, for the purpose of saving so much ground, as if we had not land enough already, and as if these works, the monuments of our glory, were not worth a million times the space of ground which they occupy.

When David Hunter Strother ("Porte Crayon" was his *nom de plume*) visited Yorktown for a day in November 1849 with his uncle, having taken "a hack" from Williamsburg, they "saw a most desolate village."¹² Even though "it was morn when we arrived, we saw no living soul on its streets." "The village is supposed to contain about 250 inhabitants, mostly asleep at the date of our visit."¹³ Consequently he and his uncle, Richard Randolph, "had their views and retrospections" all to themselves:

There were the British earthworks still complete in form and profile, a little abraded by time and weed-grown. Here we picked up bullets and bones as from a recent battlefield and saw things nearly as they were in 1781, nearly seventy years ago. In the village were the ruins of Gov. Nelson's house¹⁴ and other houses still bearing the marks of cannon shot, the perforated walls unrepaired and the brick and mortar rubbish lying where it fell.¹⁵

12. "'Porte Crayon' in the Tidewater," pp. 442-44.

13. Strother's reflections on the Swan Tavern and the county clerk's office further emphasize this inactivity:

Perceiving the smoke issuing from the kitchen chimney of a house of entertainment, we entered and stalking unchecked through the halls and public rooms penetrated at length to the kitchen where we found an old black woman, the cook. Master, she said, was at home, but asleep upstairs and she didn't dare to arouse him. Didn't like to be woke up. . . .

From the Sleepy Tavern we went to the clerk's office to see an MS plan of the town and works. There we saw a man, obese and drowsy, in slippers and shirtsleeves, sitting in an arm chair with his feet on another — asleep. Uncle Dick, who knew him, pinched him awake, calling him by name. He was civil and amiable offering to show us all the ancient deed books and gave us a sight of the plan, but evidently thinking he had something valuable, declined to allow us to copy it.

14. This obviously was reference to the Secretary Nelson House rather than the Governor Nelson House.

15. Strother continued: "On a green plateau overlooking the York River was the surgeon's headquarters where are still quantities of bones and skulls, and iron bullets. Lafayette revisiting this country in 1824 landed at this spot received by Watkins Leigh — and it was proposed to erect a monument commemorative of the surrender but like all such things in Virginia, it ended in talk." It is difficult, however, to determine a specific location from this information. Lafayette, it is known, landed in Yorktown on the beach at the point which projects into the river just below the southeast limits of the town (where the present beach picnic area is located). He lodged in the "Governor Nelson House," and most of the battlefield festivities took place in the area near the site of British Redoubt No. 10. Hatch, *The Nelson House and the Nelsons*, pp. 97-104.

When Benson J. Lossing was in Yorktown in 1848, he toured the area with William Nelson and "visited the lines of entrenchments cast up by the British on the south and east sides of the town. They extend in irregular lines from the river back to the sloping grounds in the rear of the village, toward the 'Pigeon Quarter,' as it was termed, in the form of a figure five." Evidently Lossing saw substantial parts of the line. "The mounds vary in height, from six to twelve and fifteen feet, and being covered by a sward, may remain so for half a century longer. The places of redoubts, the lines of the parallels, and other things connected with the Siege, are yet visible."¹⁶ He made specific comment on the still-existing works on the edge of the bluff near Cornwallis' Cave.¹⁷ This comment and his sketch of the works indicate that he was in large part making reference to the French modification (relocation) of the British line in the southeast sector. In this event nothing other than traces would have remained where the original British positions had been.

The angle of the works in the Lossing sketch appears more like the angle that the French would have made at British Redoubt No. 5 as they turned it sharply to the river.¹⁸ Clearly no Hornwork like the British had in this sector is shown. Then, too, if this assumption is accepted, the roof and chimneys of what obviously is the Governor Nelson House fall into a correct perspective.¹⁹

It seems highly significant that a land survey in 1848²⁰ involving this general area noted the "Old Redoubt" as extending rather closely beyond the "Eastern boundary Y. Town." This surely was on the line of the shortened French earthworks. Nothing was noted farther to the south and east to indicate anything

16. Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution* (New York, 1859), 2,303.

It could be wished that Historian Charles Campbell in notes that he made about Yorktown in 1837 could have been more descriptive regarding the earthworks. Instead he dismissed them with the single comment: "I picked up a fragment of a bombshell within the British entrenchments." "Notes (by an itinerant)," p. 138.

17. "It [the cave] is almost directly beneath the termination of the trench and breastworks of the British fortification, which are yet prominent on the bank above." Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution*, 3, 302.

18. See Illustration No. 21.

19. Lossing made his sketch from the fields to the south looking north toward the entrenchments. The sketch is in his *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution*, 2, 303.

20. "A Survey of lands."

other than existing entrenchments. This is the same survey, however, that notes four trees, about where the Second Parallel ran, on the left of the road coming south out of Yorktown, which supposedly marked the location of the "Cornwallis Surrender."

Another description of the works followed a visit to Yorktown in 1852.²¹ Yorktown itself was noted as "a small place, with some thirty-five or forty dwellings."

The battleground . . . still exhibits abundant traces of the eventful siege. The remains of British works, comprising the line which surrounded and defended the entire position, are still clearly visible. The embarkments have been considerably sunken by time, but not so much so as to prevent a clear conception of the whole line of defence. They must have been works of a very strong and formidable character. Our friend and guide pointed out to us a hollow in the earth still visible, caused by a shell thrown from the American side. The remains of the British magazine, a heap of scattered bricks, are still to be seen.

A Confederate soldier who was stationed at Yorktown in the late spring and early summer of 1861, left two suggestive references to the old works existing at that time.²² He noted that in May 1861: "Col. Hill commenced fortifying the lower line of Yorktown by retouching the old British works. Now such things would be considered as no defense at all; but then with our limited force, they were the best we could do." He also noted in reference to the Second Lawson Regiment: "Their camp was established in the field at the lower end of Yorktown, within the remains of the old works, which the French had stormed nearly a century before." This is not very helpful when trying to figure the precise location of these old works, but the French-altered British line in this sector could satisfy such implication as there is. And to call all structures "the old British works" would be a natural development. This, however, would soon become academic. The Confederate engineers would push across "Tobacco Road" ravine to the original British alignment, probably guided by the topography as the British engineers had been. It seems clear now that if there were any visible evidences of the British line here they would have been slight indeed, and nothing would have been left in view when the massive Civil War works were completed.²³

21. *Richmond Daily Republican*, March 2, 1852.

22. "Peninsular Sketches" in *Southern Literary Messenger*, 37 (July, 1863), 400, 402.

23. Compare Illustrations Nos. 15, 21, and 22.

This being true, Lossing was correct when he noted on June 3, 1866, while "visiting objects of interest in the vicinity" of Yorktown that: "The old British line of circumvallation had been covered by the modern [Civil War] works."²⁴ This was noted, too, on a "plan of Yorktown and Vicinity, Showing the Historical Sites of 1781 and the Celebration Grounds of 1881." It delineated the Confederate line around Yorktown and captioned it: "Confederate Line of Works around Yorktown in 1862 (now standing) on the site of the British 1781."²⁵ This being so, Robert Arthur, writing in 1927, could have been correct only in part when he wrote of the Civil War works: "Yorktown itself was entirely inclosed by strong earthworks which were substantially those thrown up by Lord Cornwallis in 1781, renewed and strengthened."²⁶

24. Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book of the Civil War*, p. 440.

25. See photograph of plan in the files of Colonial NHP (photo. No. 8,645).

26. *The Two Sieges of Yorktown 1781 and 1862* (Coast Artillery School Press, Fort Monroe, Va., October 17, 1927), p. 48, hereafter cited as *The Two Sieges of Yorktown*.

CHAPTER VI

THE CIVIL WAR WORKS OBSCURED OTHERS THAT REMAINED

When Union General George McClellan, in his advance up the peninsula early in April 1862, came to a halt in front of the Confederate line hinged on Yorktown, he found the town to be now only a village, tightly ringed with massive earthworks.¹ Major Robert Arthur in brief fashion later described these works:

The three bastioned fronts facing the direction of the approach [south and southeast] had parapets about fifteen feet in thickness, with ditches eight to ten feet deep and about fifteen feet in width at the top of the scarp. West of town the parapets were about eighteen feet in thickness and the ditches about ten feet in depth. About fifty-six heavy guns were mounted in the batteries along the line and along the water front, and were amply provided with traverses and magazines for their own protection and that of their ammunition.²

Due to the improvement in ordnance, it was necessary that earthworks in 1862 be more massive than in 1781. Batteries and gun positions also needed to be larger, with differing shapes and even contours. When superimposed on any existing remains from the Revolution, the latter were either in essence destroyed, or fully covered. It was not unusual at all that the Civil War line generally followed that of the British, since it was largely a matter of topography and

1. Actually Yorktown was the York River anchor to the Confederate line that extended across the peninsula from the York to the James rivers. To the southwest of Yorktown a line supported by two heavy positions (the Red and White Redoubts) continued to the headwaters of the Warwick River and then along the river. The Warwick flowed toward the James River and constituted a considerable natural obstacle. Two dams along the river, one at Wynne's Mill three miles from Yorktown, and another at Lee's Mill another two and a half miles downstream, deepened the waters and made a crossing even more difficult. In addition, the Confederates built three other dams to intensify this natural situation. Each dam (particularly that at Lee's Mill) was covered by earthworks and artillery.

2. *The Two Sieges of Yorktown*, p. 48.

advantageous position in each instance. This was true, as has been pointed out, even in that area to the southeast beyond old British Redoubt No. 5.³

In studying the overlapping of the 1781 British lines and the 1862 Confederate lines, some observations can be made.⁴

1. On the northwest side of town, both lines followed on the inner side of Buckner Street, and the 1862 line seems not to have crossed the street into the area where British Redoubt No. 1 was located. The Civil War line, however, turned the corner of the bluff and ran downstream without the break at the corner that the earlier line seemingly had. Town Lots 10-12 and 16 surely were involved, as were Lots 13-15 and possibly 9 inland from Main Street.
2. On the inland side of Main Street, the Confederates erected a sizeable position that embraced all of the site of British Redoubt No. 2 and the indented corner of the British line in this locality. It also probably encompassed the site of the British battery between No. 2 and Main Street, and possibly even the battery site to the south of No. 2. Most of this would have been beyond the original town limits, although Lots 15 and 21, and even 20, may have been involved.
3. The two lines appear to have been on like courses in that section between lines extended from Ballard Street and Nelson Street. Here the heavy Civil War works obliterated, or obscured, the sites or lines of the older British Redoubts Nos. 3 and 4 and the batteries associated with them. All would have been in the area of the Gwyn Read development.
4. In the section between lines extended from Nelson Street and the south corner of the original town survey, the Civil War line curved inland toward Main Street, but not to the same pronounced degree as did the old British line. In this area there was likely involvement with Lots 55, 59, 63, 67, and 71, as well as with more of the Gywnn Read development area. About at the edge of town there was a fortified break in the line that would allow needed egress and ingress from and to the town area. Just beyond this there was an inner trench that seemingly followed the direction of the shortened line built

3. See Part Two, Chapter II.

4. See Illustrations Nos. 23 and 24.

by the French late in 1781. It probably was this French line itself.⁵

5. From this point around the head of "Tobacco Road" ravine and on to the river, the Confederate and British lines seemed to be generally on the same line, even though the earlier line had been leveled after the siege of 1781. In 1862 the projection of the line out along the old York-Hampton Road was a stubby one, without the pronounced elongation of the old British Hornwork. There was also a pointed projection of the line about where the long west face of the Hornwork had been.
6. Curving east of this area, the Civil War line was flattened out with two battery projections, the second one probably on the site of British Redoubt No. 6 and its adjacent battery.
7. On or over the site of British Redoubt No. 7, the Confederates advanced a massive pointed projection of their line for more artillery placements. The line then curved to the cliffs above the river.
8. At the cliff edge and facing riverward, the Confederates installed another battery, which from all indications, violated the sites of British Redoubt No. 8 and its adjacent water battery.
9. All of the high bluff sites in Yorktown which overlook the York were brought into use for more Confederate artillery.⁶
 - a. The section running from the Church area upstream, toward and across where Ballard Street eventually opened to the water, was used for a large redoubt – battery complex which probably involved Lots 16, 22, 28, 34, and 40.
 - b. The cliff edge from Read Street around to the Great Valley became the site of another elongated position for four 32-pounder cannons. Here Lots 84 and 85 became involved.
 - c. The bluff between the Great Valley and that down which the Comte de Grasse now runs likewise became a battery position above a hot shot battery on the waterfront below. Lots 76 and 77 would have been partly used in this construction.

5. See Part Two, Chapter II.

6. See Illustration No. 22.

- d. Between the Comte de Grasse Street ravine and that down which "Tobacco Road" runs just beyond the town limits, was still another fortified battery position. This area, on and behind the present Yorktown Monument, surely involved Lots 80 and 82 and the high ground between them, as well as the cliff edge.

These works were abandoned by the Confederates when they evacuated Yorktown in the early days of May 1862, and there is little to suggest that the Union forces altered them in any appreciable manner while they occupied Yorktown. Fighting was moving to other areas and would not return to Yorktown. The works remained and are those that today give a besieged appearance to the town.

Two gates through which there was entry into, and passage from, Yorktown were a part of the Confederate, and then of the Union, encircling entrenchments of Yorktown. That on the west was across Main Street, just inside of where Buckner Street crosses.⁷ The other gate evidently was to the south where the highway passes today on old Main Street extended (an extension formerly called Monument Road). These gates or passages were noted as still in use several years after the Civil War had ended.

Margaret Newbold Thorpe, a teacher sent to Virginia by the Friends' Association of Philadelphia and Its Vicinity for the Relief of the Colored Freedmen, who was stationed at Fort Magruder near Williamsburg, made a visit to Fort Monroe at Christmastime in 1867. She returned by way of Yorktown, noting:

... at Slabtown we saw the Union Cemetery; we entered Yorktown by one gate, pass the old Cornwallis Headquarters, go out through the opposite gate, took McClellan's famous corduroy road and so on to Fort Magruder.⁸

7. This is the gate photographed by Mathew Brady. See Colonial NHP photograph No. 3,559.

8. "Life in Virginia by a 'Yankee Teacher,' Margaret Newbold Thorpe," edited by Richard L. Morton, *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 64 (April 1956), p. 200.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

NOTES ON SOME ARCHEOLOGICAL FINDS ALONG MAIN STREET

When in October 1956 a sewer line was being laid along the streets in Yorktown, it was necessary to open a trench, or ditch, some 2½ feet wide and averaging 5 to 6 feet in depth. Archeological surveillance was maintained, and important, or at least significant, recordings were made.¹ In the process three features were noted along, or adjacent to, the town's Main Street.

Feature No. 5 was described as "in a rich refuse deposit." It was at a depth of 3 to 6 feet and lay between the Somerwell and Pate Houses where more recent structures (now removed) stood on older colonial building sites. Here "Numerous pieces of salt glaze earthenware and sager parts were recovered."

Feature No. 3 was located "in the head of a draw, now filled with road ballast." Actually this is where the Great Valley rose inland to cross the line of Main Street to end about in front of the Sessions House. A principal road connection between Main Street and the waterfront went down this ravine. Cotter also identified this as a "Salt glaze Pottery Kiln" feature, one of four that he noted.²

Feature No. 9 was a brick wall on the northwest side of Monument Avenue just around the bend from Main Street, possibly just inside the southeastern boundary of the town proper.³

1. John L. Cotter, "Archeological Report on Yorktown Sewer, Project 203," a typewritten National Park Service (Colonial NHP) report dated May 1957.
2. The others were No. 3 and No. 1 (on the southeast side of Ballard, southwest from Main Street) and No. 2 (on the northwest side of Nelson Street southwest from the Ballard House). No. 2 would prove to be rather close to the pottery works which were found and identified in 1969. Excavation is continuing now.
3. As tersely reported in the Colonial NHP Superintendent's monthly report for November 1956 (page 5), the sewer line findings included: "parts of an old ship (probably 18th century), a bar of pig iron, fragments from a large grindstone, a foundation at the foot of Read Street, and a brick wall on Monument Avenue, additional evidences of pottery manufacture in Yorktown, and a rich collection of artifacts in front of the Sessions House."

APPENDIX B

CHASTELLUX ON SECRETARY NELSON

When the Marquis de Chastellux visited *Offly*, Thomas Nelson, Jr.'s, place in Hanover County, several months after the siege of 1781, the now aged Secretary Nelson was among those of the family there to greet him. The Marquis described the Secretary with great feeling:¹

After this little digression,² which requires some indulgence, I should be at a loss for a transition to an old magistrate, whose white locks, noble figure, and stature, which was above the common size, commanded respect and veneration. *Secretary Nelson*, to whom this character belongs, owes this title to the place he occupied under the English Government. In Virginia the Secretary, whose office it was to preserve the registers of all public acts, was, by his place, a member of the council, of which the Governor was the chief. Mr. Nelson, who held this office for thirty years, saw the morning of that bright day which began to shine upon his country; he saw too the storms arise which threatened its destruction, though he neither endeavoured to collect, or to foment them.

Too far advanced in age to desire a revolution, too prudent to check this great event, if necessary, and too faithful to his countrymen to separate his interest from theirs, he chose the crisis of this alteration, to retire from public affairs. Thus did he opportunely quit the theatre, when new pieces demanded fresh actors, and took his seat among the spectators, content to offer up his wishes for the success of the Drama, and to applaud those who acted well their part. But in the last campaign, chance produced him on the scene, and made him unfortunately famous. He lived at *York*, where he had built a very handsome house, from which neither European taste nor luxury was excluded; a chimney-piece and some bass reliefs of very fine marble, exquisitely sculptured, were particularly admired, when fate conducted Lord Cornwallis to this town to be disarmed, as well as his till then victorious troops. Secretary Nelson did not think it necessary to fly from the English, to whom his conduct could not have made him disagreeable, nor have

1. *Travels in North-America*, pp. 24-28.

2. This digression was some comment on Virginia young ladies which he called "pretty nymphs."

furnished any just motive of suspicion. He was well received by the General, who established his head-quarters in his house, which was built on an eminence, near the most important fortifications, and in the most agreeable situation of the town. It was the first object which struck the sight as you approach the town, but instead of travellers, it soon drew the attention of our bombardiers and cannoniers, and was almost entirely destroyed. Mr. Nelson lived in it at the time our batteries tried their first shot, and killed one of his negroes at a little distance from him; so that Lord Cornwallis was soon obliged to seek another asylum. But what asylum could be found for an old man, deprived of the use of his legs by the gout? But, above all, what asylum could defend him against the cruel anguish a father must feel at being besieged by his own children; for he had two in the American army. So that every shot, whether fired from the town, or from the trenches, might prove equally fatal to him; I was witness to the cruel anxiety of one of these young men, when after the flag was sent to demand his father, he kept his eyes fixed upon the gate of the town, by which it was to come out, and seemed to expect his own sentence in the answer. Lord Cornwallis had too much humanity to refuse a request so just, nor can I recollect, without emotion, the moment in which I saw this old gentleman alight at General Washington's. He was seated, the fit of the gout not having yet left him; and whilst we stood around him, he related to us, with a serene countenance, what had been the effect of our batteries, and how much his house had suffered from the first shot.

The tranquillity which has succeeded these unhappy times, by giving him leisure to reflect upon his losses, has not embittered the recollection; he lives happily in one of his plantations, where, in less than six hours, he can assemble thirty of his children, grand children, nephews, nieces, &c. amounting in all to seventy, the whole inhabiting Virginia. The rapid increase of his own family justifies what he told me of the population in general, of which, from the offices he has held all his life, he must have it in his power to form a very accurate judgment. In 1742 the people subject to pay taxes in the State of Virginia, that is to say, the white males above sixteen, and the male and female blacks of the same age, amounted only to the number of 63,000; by his account they now exceed 160,000.³

After passing two days very agreeably with this interesting family, we left them the 12th at ten in the morning, accompanied by the Secretary, and five or six other Nelsons, who conducted us to *Little River Bridge*, a small creek on the road about five miles from Offly. There we separated.

3. "This calculation is much below that given by other writers, and I have reason to believe that it is considerably below the mark." (This note is from Chastellux's translator.)

APPENDIX C

THE APVA ENGINEERS THE ACQUISITION AND MARKING OF THE SECRETARY NELSON HOME SITE

Almost from the inception of the APVA's Yorktown Branch in 1921, interest developed in the group for identifying and saving the site of the Secretary Nelson home and preserving the foundations of this historic structure. Actually in this first year there was a one dollar donation¹ to establish "a fund to mark the site." Despite this, however, there would be little continuing action for a year or two, and then it would require almost a decade to restore the house to its present form.

In 1924 there was a positive beginning following a discussion of the "advisability of uncovering [the] foundations of Secretary Nelson's home." This was at the Branch's July meeting and the action that followed is succinctly described in the annual report for the year:²

... the Directress [was] directed to write Mr. [John F.] Braun, the owner of the land in regard to the matter. The result was the uncovering of the foundation and the placing thereon a sign by Mr. Braun, at his own expense. For this service to history and the public, the Branch is most grateful, and has sent its thanks and appreciation in resolutions to Mr. Braun.

Following this, the matter was quiet for several years. Evidently Virginia State Highway Department plans in 1928 precipitated the additional consideration that led to a more permanent marking. When the Branch learned that there was a proposal for a road to be "built from the eastern limits of Yorktown down the Hampton road" it went into action. It had been noted that this roadway would pass through the foundations of the old home. There was general agreement, at a meeting called on January 17, 1928, that the Branch should move "to protest against the destruction of the sacred relic even if it interferes with progress. No amount of money could ever restore the foundation,

1. This was given by William Mayo Atkinson (Gonzales, Texas), one of the descendants of the Secretary.
2. Material in this Appendix, unless otherwise noted, is from the manuscript of the Yorktown Branch, APVA, "Minutes Book" (1921-1934).

nor make the history with which it is saturated. We want the road and by placing it a [few] feet to the side all would be well." The appeal to the State Highway Commissioner asked that he "consider the preservation of this historic record for the sake of the history of the town, and to agree with us that 'a land without ruins is a land without memories.' " Requests for help in moving the road were sent to the General Association, to the Governor, and to appropriate Congressmen.

The Commissioner, H. G. Shirly, proved very sympathetic to the idea of preservation. He suggested, in a letter of April 19, that the Branch seek to acquire the site of "the old Foundation." After this was accomplished, he believed it would be "a mighty fine proposition to have the road split and run around it and by planting some shrubs, etc., could make it very much more prominent than if we left it off to the side." He believed the Commission itself would readily agree to this, providing also that it was possible to "get the [Monument Lodge] Hotel people to give us the right to do so." This would accentuate the area's historical value very much and make it more accessible to tourists.

In the meantime, efforts to acquire the site of the foundations were successful. Actually it came as a donation through the Branch to the General Association from Judge Howard Ferris, Trustee, and the Peninsula Land Company as expressed in a resolution of thanks dated April 19. As the annual report for 1928 noted, this included "the foundation of Secretary Thomas Nelson's home, with a margin of five feet."

As the gift of the site was being negotiated with Judge Ferris, the matter of concreting the foundation was also being discussed with him.³ "A coping of cement will be placed on the top of the old foundation to make its outline more distinct and to safeguard it from weather decay and souvenir collectors." Plans and estimates were ready early in 1929, the project being undertaken by "The Rev. A. J. Renforth, chairman of the Landmark committee, [who] has the work in charge."⁴ The excavating and concreting of the foundations were completed

3. It was reported at the February meeting that Ferris estimated it would take 14 yards of concrete at \$20 per yard and that the excavation would cost another \$50. The dimensions were given as 56 by 48 feet.

4. From the 1929 Annual Report.

It should be noted that the coping still in place actually deals with only a part of the foundation, some of which is said now to be under the roadway, or street, which passes near it.

prior to the January 1930 Branch meeting. The "General Association" had agreed to finance the bronze plaque, and when it was placed in July⁵ it was considered "a beautiful gift to posterity."⁶ The initial inscription copy had been submitted by the Directress and read:

Foundations of the home of Thomas Nelson, Secretary of the Colonial Council, erected for him by his father in 1725.

Cornwallis' Headquarters during the Siege of Yorktown 1781.

Butler killed here while serving dinner. Demolished during the Siege never rebuilt.

Secretary Nelson, a Tory, was escorted within the American lines under flag of truce by his three sons.⁷

The offer made by the Comte de Grasse Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution for "a sufficient number of posts to enclose [the] Secretary Nelson lot" had been accepted by the Branch, and Judge Ferris had not objected to the proposal for "putting a fence in front of the Foundation to keep off traffic."

Almost immediately there was public objection to the language on the bronze plaque. A letter from Dr. W. G. Stannard in the July 15 issue of the *Richmond News Leader* pointed out errors and called for changes. These were discussed by the Branch in meetings in the fall of 1930, but in November it was decided "not to be in a hurry about a change if one is to be made." However, the matter persisted. At the January 1932 meeting the Directress "reported that this would necessitate either recasting of the old tablet, or a new tablet, also that the Branch would be called upon to furnish the funds necessary for this amount."

5. The initial plan had been to have the tablet placed on June 7. "This date having been appointed to be observed as 'Land-Mark Day'" was considered to be "especially appropriate."
6. To get the plot in shape, the Branch expended \$284.40. "This was for excavating, placing a coping of cement on top of the foundation to safeguard it, and for a stone for the mounting of the tablet." 1930 Annual Report.
7. February 20, 1930 "Minutes."

Nevertheless, before the year was out the bronze plaque was exchanged for one with "a new inscription" which had been financed by the Branch aided by donations.⁸

Thoughts now turned to an official unveiling. It was scheduled for May 6, 1933, and a special committee was named to make plans and arrangements. A printed program was prepared, and Dr. Lyon G. Tyler gave the principal address. The unveiling was by Miss Sally Berkeley Crenshaw (a lineal descendant of Thomas Nelson, and daughter of Capt. R. N. Crenshaw of the then Naval Mine Depot) and Mrs. Polly Crenshaw.

The new marker, still in place today, read:

Foundations of the Home of
THOMAS NELSON
President of the Council and
Secretary of State
of the Colony of Virginia
Erected in 1725⁹
First Headquarters of Lord Cornwallis
It was Destroyed During
The Siege of Yorktown
in 1781¹⁰

8. Actually the cost was \$92.63, with \$30 coming from donors, one of whom was Dr. W. G. Stannard. 1932 Annual Report.
9. This date obviously is in error, since the Nelsons did not own this property adjacent to the southeastern boundary of Yorktown prior to 1744. Presumably this land, a tract consisting of 15 acres or less, was purchased by "Scotch Tom" Nelson on September 27, 1744, from John Dixon who had bought it six years earlier from Robert Read. "Scotch Tom," before his death in 1745, transferred it to his son, Thomas. His will devised the sum of £4,000 sterling to Thomas, stating "and this is all I intend my said son Thomas, having already given him the estate in King William county, which I purchased of Colo^o Thomas Jones; and the houses, Lots, and plantations bought for him of Doctor John Dixon." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., 6 (1898), p. 144; *Deeds*, No. 4, p. 524, and No. 5, p. 327.
10. The tablet also carries this credit note: "Preserved and Marked by the Yorktown Branch Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, 1930."

The unveiling had been preceded by "a beautiful luncheon" given by the Reverend and Mrs. A. J. Renforth "at their home, Monument Lodge" in Yorktown. There was general approbation a few days later at a special meeting called on May 17. At this time the "Directress expressed her purpose of having a special book for preservation of all speeches, and programs of dedication of Nelson Tablet May 6th, 1933 for [the] perpetuation to future generations [of] this important historic event."

APPENDIX D

LOT 20

This half-acre lot facing on the cross street in Yorktown that became known as Ballard Street was not developed prior to 1706. It was assigned in 1691 to one Thomas Bramton; he failed to build and thereby forfeited it. In May 1706 the trustees (Thomas Ballard and William Buckner) deeded it to Miles Cary, Senior, a gentleman of Warwick County, who evidently performed the required building since he retained possession of the lot.¹ At his death, it passed to his son, Wilson Cary.²

In June 1731 Wilson Cary, of Elizabeth City County, disposed of Lot 20 by sale to Robert Ballard, carpenter, along with two other adjoining lots (Nos. 14, 19).³ Ballard remained in ownership until his death, which came prior to July 1740. He left three daughters and died without a will. In the settlement of his estate there was a division of property among the daughters. Lot 20 fell to Henrietta, who later married William Powell. At the time of the property division in March 1741, the parcel was described as "the Lott in the occupation of Elizabeth Williamson now assign'd to Henrietta Second daughter of the sd Ballard now rented at £6 p. Ann."⁴

On May 1, 1751, William Powell, "Planter," and Henrietta, his wife, disposed of this "One certain Messuage, Tenement and Lot or half acre of Ground" to John Richardson, a carpenter. The sale price was £170 current money of Virginia.⁵ Three weeks after the sale, Richardson found it necessary to give a

1. *Deeds and Bonds, No. 2*, p. 181.
2. *Deeds, No. 4*, p. 94.
3. *Wills and Inventories, No. 19*, pp. 36-39; *Deeds, No. 5*, p. 380.
4. *Wills and Inventories, No. 19*, pp. 36-39.
5. *Deeds, No. 5*, p. 433.

At the time, the lot (No. 20) was bounded on the north by the lot of William Dudley and his wife, Jane (the oldest Ballard daughter), on the west by the lot of Nicholas Dickson and his wife, Charlotte (another Ballard daughter), on the south by the lot (No. 21) of James Mills, and on the east by a cross street.

mortgage on the property ("one certain messuage tenement and Lot") to James Mills, a tailor, in the amount of £170.⁶ Evidently Mills had advanced Richardson the money to make the purchase from the Powells. Two years later, in September 1753, Richardson found it advisable to sell the property to Mills, who paid him £110 for the "Messuage Tenement and Lott . . . and all the Premises."⁷

By his will probated in August 1762, Mills gave his wife, Hannah, a life estate in the lot with the remainder going to a niece, Martha Gunter, providing she pay his sister (Ann Dycher) "the sum of one hundred pounds Sterling." His real estate was listed as the place where "she [Hannah] now Dwells" and "2 lotts of ground purchased there with," plus "five unseated L[ots]." One of the five lots evidently was Lot 20.⁸

The next reference of record to the property seems to be in the will of John C. Gunther. Dated March 1, 1795, it was probated on April 18, 1796. It was a general conveyance to his "loving Wife Martha Christiana Gunther" of a life interest to "all my real and personal estate to hold during her life." At her death, he directed that all of his personal estate and property, "Except my Houses and Lotts" (which Martha was bequeathed "to will as she pleases"), be sold. The money from the personal estate and property sale was to go to the "Children of my loving Brother John Dycher of London" and to the "Children of my loving Sister Catharine Sampson of London."⁹

In November 1810, Martha Gunther drew up her will, which was proved in June 1812. It directed that the property be sold by her executor. Her description of it was remarkably similar to that in the Mills will of 1762.¹⁰ The sale occurred

6. *Deeds, No. 6*, p. 430.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 555.

8. *Wills and Inventories, No. 21*, p. 113.

9. *Wills and Inventories, No. 23*, p. 455.

10. *Will Book, No. 10*, pp. 32, 33, and 40.

It specified "The Dwelling House," 2 "Stable" lots, and 5 other lots, the last being valued at \$8 each, obviously indicating that these lots were undeveloped.

in 1814 when Robert Sheild, sheriff, acting for her estate, sold the lot to Willoughby Jordan.¹¹

From this discussion it seems clear that Lot 20 was developed at an early date, probably soon after its acquisition by Miles Cary in 1706. Evidently the lot was being lived on in 1741 and there was specific mention of a "Messuage" or "Tenement" standing on it in 1751. However, eleven years later James Mills mentioned it as "unseated," though no reason is given. Perhaps fire had taken a toll here.

Alexandre Berthier shows nothing surviving here after the siege. It was relatively close inside the British line and probably escaped military damage, though not necessarily so, during the construction of British works. It would have been in the encampment area of the British Brigade of Guards. Later when the more massive Confederate works were raised, this half-acre plot became involved to some extent.¹²

11. *Wills and Inventories, No. 23, p. 776; Deed Book, No. 8, p. 283.*

The purchase included all the Gunther lots and the home. It read: "the dwelling house in which the said Martha resided in her life time, situated on the main street in the Town of York, together with the lot called the stable lot which has thereon a Cow house and a stable, with two Lots thereto adjoining and five vacant or unimproved Lots."

12. See Illustrations Nos. 1, 15, 17, and 22.

APPENDIX E

YORKTOWN: SIZE AND POPULATION

It has always been rather difficult to arrive at an acceptable figure on the size of Yorktown (both in population and buildings) at its peak period of commerce and trade that came in the two decades just past the midpoint of the 18th century. The same is true in the period of the American Revolution when all was disrupted by war, and more particularly just prior to the time in September and October 1781, when the destructive forces of combat were unleashed. At its peak size it seems that the town boasted some 200 buildings, or structures, of large, medium, and modest sizes. And these, it is estimated, accommodated something less than 1,800 people of all types – white, black, or others; male and female; young and old.¹ This would have been augmented considerably in court times, at church times, and when the ships were in. Then the ordinaries, inns, taverns, and extra spaces, whatever their nature, would have been put to use.

As to geographic extent, Yorktown initially was surveyed as a town of 85 building lots within the confines of a 50-acre tract of land. In 1738 this was

1. Yorktown never was a port or town of first rank. Even in 1765 when Adam Gordon was visiting in Tidewater he noted that "Norfolk is the Port of most traffick in Virginia, it contains above four hundred houses, has depth of Water for a Forty Gun Ship, or more, and conveniencies of every kind for healing down, and fitting out large Vessels, also a very fine Rope-Walk." Even so, he admired the Yorktown location. He noted: "the pleasantest Situation [on] one of them [the Virginia rivers] I ever saw [was] York on the beautiful River of that name, which commands a full view of the River down towards the Bay of Chesapeake, and a pretty land view across to Gloucester Town and County, which contains some of the best lowlands in the Province." Gordon did not discuss size and accommodations, though some five years earlier, in 1759, the Reverend Andrew Burnaby had seen York as "a small inconsiderable town." At the same time he dismissed Williamsburg as a town of some 200 houses and not above "one thousand souls, whites and negroes; and is far from being a place of any consequence." "Journal of an Officer's [Lord Adam Gordon's] Travels in America and the West Indies, 1764-1765," in *Travels in the American Colonies*, edited by Newton D. Mereness (New York, 1916), p. 406; Andrew Burnaby, *Travels Through the Middle Settlements in North America, in the Years 1759 and 1760: With Observations Upon the State of the Colonies*, 3rd edition (London, 1798), pp. 5-6.

augmented officially by the inclusion of the 5-acre waterfront between the town and the river, which had already become, in fact, integrated into the town.²

This was about the time, too, when Gwyn Read, who had fallen heir to a hundred acres along the southwestern boundary of the town, between the town and the ravine of Yorktown Creek,³ began to develop a subdivision here.⁴ Read divided much of the area into half-acre lots and offered them for sale. Though the deed records for the lots were largely destroyed, it is clear that sales were brisk. It is not clear whether Read subdivided all of his 100 acres here, but from fragmentary data it seems safe to assume that more than half of it (more than 50 half-acre lots) was so treated. It is evident that a good deal of construction ensued and houses soon dotted this area, many of them homes of tradesmen. Some of the established families bought here as well. Richard Ambler purchased lots for a garden and also built a smith's shop. Capt. John Ballard bought six lots which he built upon and rented. But not all development was slight. Dr. John Payras, a French doctor in Yorktown, had a substantial residence in this subdivision which was described in the *Virginia Gazette* (issue of June 5, 1752) as a "large well-built Brick House, with three Rooms on a floor, all finish'd, a Kitchen, Dairy, Meat-House, Stable, and other necessary Houses." The development here was substantial, and in 1757, on petition of its inhabitants, the Virginia Assembly authorized its formal inclusion into the town.⁵

Though the record is largely silent on the matter, the high ground (more than 5 acres) between the town's northwestern boundary and Yorktown Creek at

2. Hatch, *"York Under the Hill,"* pp. 1-12.

When the waterfront was subdivided into lots in 1788, it yielded some 64 separate parcels of varying sizes, mostly business properties.

3. Baron Von Cloisen noted on September 30, 1781: "The city of York is built on the summit and slopes of a plateau, intersected by ravines which terminate precipitately at the river's edge. This plateau is bounded on the right [British right] by a deep and marshy ravine through which runs a creek [Yorktown Creek] which empties into the York River above the city."

4. Edward M. Riley, "Suburban Development of Yorktown Virginia During the Colonial Period," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 60, 522-26.

5. Hening, *The Statutes at Large of Virginia*, 7, p. 139.

Windmill Point, though privately owned, probably functioned as a part of the town,⁶ as did the property just adjacent to the southeast boundary where Secretary Nelson built his mansion.⁷ Even so, Yorktown was never large geographically, covering less than 150 acres at the most.

As for the population of Yorktown, the earliest census figures that relate specifically to the town are dated 1790. This year probably represents as much recovery from the ravages of the war years as ever was achieved here, limited though it was.⁸ Most population figures prior to 1790 were normally given for York County as a whole and usually were expressed in terms only of tithables.⁹ Consequently the breakdown by classification types in 1790 is helpful for that date and useful too, perhaps, in projecting to earlier times.

In 1790 the total population for Yorktown was given as 661 persons and for the county as a whole it was 5,233, indicating that some 11% of the people in this general area were in the town community at that time.¹⁰ The classifications were:

6. It was not surveyed into town lots until long after colonial days, in 1889.
7. See Part One, Chapter III.
8. During and just after the siege the fixed resident population dropped to a very low level. Even in 1783 Alexander Macaulay noted, on arrival in Yorktown from Louisa by way of Williamsburg: "the good folks here are very kind & the few inhabitants left in ruined York, are extremely attentive. We are more in Company than we wish." "Journal, February, 1783," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., 9 (1902-1903), p. 190.
9. A tithable (used as a basis of taxation in Virginia over a long period) was any male 16 years of age, or older, or any negro, mulatto, or Indian woman who was 16, or older. The age limit for male tithables was raised to 18; however in 1790, as will be seen, the age 16 dividing line was again in use. Also, by 1769 free negro, mulatto, and Indian women were, like white women always were, exempted as tithables. *Tylers Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, 7, 179-80; Percy Scott Flippin, *The Royal Government in Virginia, 1624-1775* (New York, 1919), pp. 243-44.
10. *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Enumerations: 1782 to 1785* (Washington, D.C., 1908), pp. 9-10.

	YORKTOWN		YORK COUNTY	
	Population	Percentage of Total	Population	Percentage of Total
Free white males, 16 and over	68	10%	530	10%
Free white males, under 16	56	9%	461	9%
Free white females	148	22%	1124	21%
All other free persons	17	3%	358	7%
Slaves	372	56%	2760	53%
	<u>661</u>		<u>5233</u>	

Although it cannot be determined specifically, this would indicate that at this time the county had some 2,200 tithables and the town about 250, using the old definitions of tithables. In each instance this represented something more than 40% of the population.

The tabulation below brings together a number of York County population figures. It is well to keep in mind that (1) the percentage of tithables to population fluctuated according to the mix of the population, and perhaps varied between 25 and 40%, averaging a third of the people; (2) Yorktown contained 10% of York County's population in 1790. In earlier times this probably was a bit higher.

York County Population

Date	Number of Tithables		County Population Totals
1644 ¹¹	609		
1666 ¹²	1,140	(this was out of a population of 3,420 "not counting long shoremen and islanders" of which "Pocoson precinct" had a large number)	3,420
1701 ¹³	1,208		3,600
1702 ¹⁴	1,180	(61,196 acres of land reported)	3,500
1714 ¹⁵	1,395	(66,709 acres of land reported)	4,200
1722 ¹⁶	1,439		4,300
1723 ¹⁷	1,525		4,600
1726 ¹⁸	1,625		4,900

11. Hening, *The Statutes at Large of Virginia*, 1, 287.

12. *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., 19, 297.

13. *Deeds Orders Wills*, No. 9, p. 72.

14. *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 1, 372-73.

15. *Ibid.*, 2, 14.

16. *The Virginia Historical Register and Literary Advertiser*, 4 (1851), 19.

17. *Ibid.*, 4, 67.

18. *Ibid.*, 4, 74.

At this date there were 45,266 tithables in the 28 Virginia counties. Gloucester led with 3,421 and the lowest was Warwick with 701.

1763 ¹⁹	1,109	(included 184 taxpayers)	3,300
1770 ²⁰	2,541		7,600
1773 ²¹	2,524		7,600
1777 ²²	2,000		6,000
1783 ²³	1,600		4,800
1790	2,200 ²⁴		5,233

On his billeting plan of Yorktown, Berthier showed a total of 124 buildings of all shapes and sizes, including the Secretary Nelson House just beyond the southeast limits of town.²⁵ This plan embraced some 45 structures on the waterfront and 79 in the town proper. Berthier was reflecting the condition that existed just after the siege had passed and after a good many houses and other structures had been destroyed by the British to clear a field of fire on the outer edges and periphery of the town, and after others had been demolished by the allied bombardment. It did not, however, reflect additional damages, and there were some that were due to the French occupation and the later presence of American military units.

When James Thacher visited York just after the siege, he reported that the town then contained "about sixty houses" some of them "elegant," and many of

19. *Tylers Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, pp. 179-80.

20. *Judgements and Orders*, No. 2 (1770-1772), p. 101.

21. *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 28, 82.

22. *Order Book*, No. 4 (1774-1784), p. 138.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 320.

24. Estimated from a County of York population total of 5,233. *Heads of Families . . . 1790*, p. 9.

25. See Illustration No. 1.

them had been “greatly damaged.”²⁶ Two years later, in 1783, David Jameson reported that “Nearly half of the number of Houses in the Town” were “entirely destroyed” by the British, “by the French Army,” and “by our own Soldiers.”²⁷ Using Thacher’s estimate of 60 standing, and Jameson’s of half destroyed, this would equal 120 before the siege. Such general estimates would probably refer to primary units and not to structures of small size, such as dependencies. This could explain the closeness of this figure to the 124 shown by Berthier, who seemingly showed all structures that survived the British demolition and allied bombardment. If his figure is doubled, on the other hand, as Jameson’s comment might suggest, then we have a total structures figure of some 250 buildings prior to the arrival of the British.

When Isaac Weld was in Yorktown in 1796, he noted that the “town of York consists of about seventy houses, an Episcopalian church, and a goal.”²⁸ It was not more than one-third the size it was before the war. This would have made it a town of something more than 200 houses before the siege. It seems to follow from the 1790 census total and the Weld estimate of houses that some 650 people were then housed in 70 units, many probably with supporting dependencies. If the same ratio were applied to a town of 200 useful houses, it would yield a population of some 1,800 people.

It was about a decade later (March 1804) that William T. Barry made an excursion to Yorktown from nearby Williamsburg and offered a statistical note.²⁹ “There did not appear to be more than ninety or a hundred houses in the place

26. Thacher, *Military Journal of the American Revolution* (Hartford, Conn., 1862), p. 282.

27. “A Letter of David Jameson,” pp. 151-52.

28. Weld, *Travels Through the States*, p. 93.

29. “Letters of William T. Barry,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., 13 (1904), 114.

His was a bleak picture of conditions and prospects, though he thought the York a beautiful river — “I had never before seen so large a river, I had also the satisfaction of seeing a vessel under sail. This was a new and charming sight.” However, he now took a pessimistic note:

The town of York, were it not famous for the capture of Cornwallis, would have nothing of interest about it. Its situation is far from being handsome; the houses inelegant, and many of them in a ruinous state. . . . There is little or no trade carried on in the place; the County Court sits there once a month.

and from what I could gather, not more than four or five hundred inhabitants." This would seem to indicate an increase in housing and a decrease in population from the Weld estimate (1796) and the census figures (1790). In any case, from this point on it was downhill all the way.

It should be noted, of course, that the resident population of Yorktown hit a temporary low while the British and the French and American armies were in contest. Just prior to the siege of 1781, as the forces converged on Yorktown, there was a mass exodus of most of the people who normally lived here. They would return slowly only after the fighting was over.

On July 31 Conrad Doehla noted of his arrival in Yorktown: "We found few inhabitants here, as they had mostly gone with bag and baggage into the country beyond. Also one could get nothing here for fresh provisions." Another German with the British army, Stephan Popp, made a similar comment: "most of the owners of the houses had left them."³⁰

30. "The Doehla Journal," p. 241; *Popp's Journal*, p. 17.

Doehla's estimate of the size of York may have been on the high side. "This Yorktown, or 'Little-York,' is a small city of approximately 300 houses."

APPENDIX F

SOME ARCHEOLOGY ALONG THE BRITISH- CONFEDERATE LINE

In March and April 1955, archeological excavations were made on the southeast side of Yorktown for the purpose of determining "whether or not the main line of the British earthworks, erected during the Revolutionary War in 1781, lay under the Confederate defenses of 1862."¹ Four sections were made through the existing Confederate line plus a number of other smaller test squares and trenches. The four sections cut through the works were: (1) at the point where relocated Virginia Highway 238 now passes through the works into Yorktown along Monument Avenue; (2) at the point where the Colonial Parkway crosses as it leads toward the Visitor Center; (3) at the point where the present tour road leaves the Visitor Center parking area and exits across the line toward British Redoubts Nos. 9 and 10 (just east of British Redoubt No. 6), and; (4) at the southeast end of the line in the vicinity of British Redoubt No. 8 some 100 feet from the edge of the bluff. Three of the four sections "disclosed trenches and other features underlying the Confederate works in such manner as to indicate that they were present when the Confederate works were constructed." The fourth section (that east of No. 6), while it "did not produce such clear-cut evidence," did "yield problematical disturbances beneath the Confederate fort [which] suggest activity of some sort at the spot prior to the Civil War."²

Archeologist Jelks concluded that in the southeast sector, the Civil War and Revolutionary War lines, while obviously of different configuration, did usually follow the same general line. He reasoned that when siege of 1781 battle plans and the existing Civil War entrenchments were checked and measured against each other, it would be found that the two lines "occupy the same positions in general, although there is considerable diversity in detail between the two — especially in the more elaborate defenses such as redoubts, wings, hornworks and the like."³

1. Edward B. Jelks, "Archeological Study of British and Confederate Earthworks on the Southeast Side of Yorktown: Final Report: Park Research Project No. 200," a Colonial NHP typewritten report dated July 18, 1955.
2. *Ibid.*, pp 1-3.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11.

The essential data are these:

1. Contemporary maps and the existing earthworks indicate clearly that the British and Confederate main lines are almost, if not entirely, coincident.

2. Three of the four sections excavated through the Confederate main line exposed underlying trenches and other features, which, on the basis of geological and typological interpretation, certainly antedate the Civil War by a number of decades.

3. Artifacts from several of the pre-Civil War features have been definitely identified with the British Army.⁴

Therefore, although no earth embankments were positively identified as British, it can be conclusively stated that, in the area tested, manifestations of the British occupation of 1781 occur beneath the Confederate works with significant consistency. This tends to corroborate the evidence found on eighteenth and nineteenth century maps that the Confederate main line of fortifications follows closely, although not in meticulous detail, the main British line of the Revolution. The absence of actual remnants of the British earthworks can be explained (perhaps in part at least) by the Confederate practice of scraping up from one to three feet of topsoil in the areas where their works were constructed.⁵

Much earlier, in August 1939, earth disturbances were noted in the slopes laid bare when Smith Street was opened, or cut, through the Confederate works by the Virginia State Highway Department in order to connect it with the road behind town (Ballard Street extended). "Though the cut made by the State Highway Commission force was rough and did not permit an accurate picture,

4. In other context: "Artifacts were found in significant quantity in the pre-1861 features, and all are of types in common usage in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Several artifacts from Test H [that on or near British Redoubt No. 8] were identified specifically with the British Army, some bearing the broad arrow mark denoting British army Ordnance." A particularly interesting find here was a buried British budge barrel containing black powder and lead musket balls. Though much was lost on exposure, the remains constitute a Yorktown Visitor Center exhibit. (See also Park photographs Nos. 11,710 and 11,715.)
5. This latter is a conclusion that Jelks drew from the findings in his various archeological trenches and test squares. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

indications of a disturbance, which appeared to have occurred before the Confederate works were constructed, were evident."⁶

Historian Thor Borresen of the Park staff was instrumental in having a short stay in the roadwork and there was opportunity to cut a cleaner profile and some time to study and record the results. Admittedly though, only part of the evidence here was seen and it was not possible to extend the study, or open new trenches, which may have been fruitful. In the writer's view, the findings here were very suggestive of those made later by Jelks in the southeast sector of the line.⁷ It was Borresen's view however, after due consideration, though the evidence here was somewhat confusing and incomplete, that at this particular point (across Smith Street) the Confederate and British lines were not on the same alignment. Even so, he concluded generally:

The question of whether or not the Confederates constructed their works on top of the English works still remains to be answered definitely. In checking all maps obtainable of both Revolutionary and Civil War periods the writer is of the opinion that with the exception of a few instances they did. The few exceptions include: [1] the British Redoubt No. 2, which was greatly enlarged and incorporated into the line instead of being a separate unit as shown on English maps; [2] the section crossing Smith Street; [3] the shortening of the hornwork; and [4] the enlargement of Redoubt No. 8, on the extreme British left.⁸

6. Borresen, "Orientation Report on the Yorktown Battlefield Area," pp. 43 ff.

7. The writer had the opportunity to view the work in progress in 1939 and 1955.

8. Borresen, "Orientation Report on the Yorktown Battlefield Area," pp. 51-52.

APPENDIX G

YORKTOWN PEOPLE HAVE SOME UNPLEASANTNESS WITH THE FRENCH

It did not take long for friction to develop between the dispossessed inhabitants and the wintering French late in 1781. William Reynolds wrote movingly from York on November 16,¹ reporting that: "The french troop's march'd in 13th inst: and have taken possession of part of some, and the whole of most of the houses in this Town. Some of the Inhabitants are turn'd out and others with their familys confin'd to a room, a situation little better than a prison." He cited a few examples for Governor Thomas Nelson to whom he was writing. "Mr. Mitchell could not obtain *part* of your house on your order. Mr. Powell let his family have two rooms at his house, but the Count Viomini, who commands at this place turn'd them out of one." Reynolds painted a rather dismal picture and then gave some of the reasons for the situation:

The inhabitants in this Neck are plunder'd and some of them left destitute of the necessary of life, corn — It gives me real concern to say our friends seem disposed to make the situation of the people more miserable than the British left them. I fear from some expressions they make use of that they have been prejudiced against us in this part of the country. They think us disaffected, & that they have a right to enjoy what they captur'd. I am afraid that you will receive letters on this disagreeable subject from the other Towns, for I am told our situation is not singular.

Reynolds continued:

Indeed my friend, this part of the Country merits the attention of the Executive, the situation of the people (distress'd you know sufficiently before) is enough to excite the compassion of the most unfeeling. Judge then my situation. Complaints hourly and without the power of remedy, and unless some measure is adopted to convince these Gentlemen that they were sent to assist not to distress us, we in this part of the country may bid adieu to liberty, property and everything dear to man. The civil power is done away, and a lock is no bar to the curiosity of a petty officer. The wisdom of your hon'ble Board, will I trust suggest some method to alleviate our

1. *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts . . . Preserved in the Capitol at Richmond*, edited by William P. Palmer *et al.*, 2, 601-02.

distresses and free us from this second Tyranny. Yr: Excellency is well acquainted with my attachment to the French nation & therefore cannot suppose I would wish to exaggerate matters. Two of my children being very Sick, and the present distress'd State of my family and constituents prevent my attending a summons from the House of delegates.

Perhaps David Ross had a more detached view when he wrote from York to Col. William Davies on November 17:

The French Troops are going into Winter Quarters as fast as they can get houses, I dare say there is a necessity for their taking up all the room they've hitherto done, but the people are far from being satisfied — there is a degree of harshness in a soldier's coming & taking a man's house, that our people have not been used to, nor can they put up with it quietly. Perhaps it would have been more agreeable to the people & more consistent with our Constitution that the civil magistrate had appropriated Quarters for the Troops — it may be prudent to begin by times, to exert the authority of the civil power, which cannot fail to make people respected by the military, although there has been some murmuring & perhaps some instances of insolence, which will be the case where there is an army. I should certainly do the French Army great injustice, if I did not say they are a set of very orderly men. I have no doubt, but that in a little time, things will go smoothly, 'tis not impossible, but they may have come here with the same prejudices the Northern Troops did at first. I hope to get away from this place in a few days now, at which I will be extremely happy.²

At least one American soldier who remained for a time in Yorktown after the surrender took note of the housing situation and the pre-emptions of the French. He was Joseph Plumb Martin, a member of a detachment from the "Corps of Sappers and Miners," which was detailed to a small schooner in the harbor loaded with 20 tons of beef. He related:

We were obliged to remain behind to deal out this beef in small quantities to the troops that remained here. I remained part of the time on board and part on shore for 18 days after all American troops were gone to the northward, and none remaining but the French. It now began to grow cold, and there were two or three cold rainstorms. We suffered exceedingly while we were

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 607-08.

compelled to stay on shore, having no tents nor any kind of fuel, the houses in the town being all occupied by the French.³

In letters which Virginia's governor, Benjamin Harrison, wrote on December 4 to Dudley Digges, Comte de Rochambeau, and Baron de Viomenil it is clear that the considerable friction between the local inhabitants and the French army forces had not subsided.⁴ Rochambeau had made application for the appointment of a person near him who could advise him "on smaller Matters of Government and who may attend to the Interests of the Inhabitants of the Country around his Incampment." The French commander had informed the Chief Executive that he had already given orders to "Mr. De Veville his Quarter Master to settle the disputes with the Inhabitants who have had their forage taken without Orders & to grant them receipts for it."

Harrison, in his request to Dudley Digges to serve as advisor in this capacity, urged him earnestly to "not decline the Task however disagreeable it may be." Showing a clear understanding of the local populace, he wrote that:

he supposes [it] a Matter of difficulty as two or three Armies have been in the neighborhood; the Board is of the same opinion & have therefore appointed you to this business and most earnestly request you to undertake it, not only for Williamsburg & its District, but for York also, from which last place there are many Complaints of the greatest oppression.

Harrison, in his letter to Rochambeau, expressed high approval of the measures the French commander had taken "to settle the Accounts of forage used by" the French troops. He also informed him of the appointment of "the Honble Dudley Digges to assist in that business, and any other small matters, that you may have to communicate."⁵ Harrison's letter to Baron Viomenil also informed him of the appointment of Digges. Actually this letter to the Baron was a tardy reply to a letter that he had written Harrison on November 6 assuring the governor that the troops would be kept in line. Harrison commented:

3. *Private Yankee Doodle: Being a Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier*, edited by George F. Sheer (Boston, c. 1962), pp. 242-43.
4. *Official Letters of the Governors*, 3, 104-05.
5. He also described Digges as a "Gentlemen" who had "served in several of the highest offices of Government, and discharged them with great Abilities & Integrity. And I beg leave to recommend him to your Attention." *Ibid.*, p. 105.

I am to thank you for myself & the rest of the Executives for your intentions of preserving the strictest Order and Discipline over the Troops under your Command. Complaints have been lodged by some of the inhabitants of York Town that too great a proportion of their houses have been taken from them. I wish you to look into this matter and have no doubt of your setting every thing right.

He added that Digges had been appointed "to assist you in this and any other difficulties as may occur." One such other difficulty was detailed later, just prior to the departure of the French army. In a letter to Rochambeau on June 26, 1782, Governor Harrison used the opportunity to raise a sensitive point insofar as the local inhabitants were concerned. "Complaints are made every day to me of Negroes being concealed in York and Williamsburg amongst the Troops." He pointed out that "the pretence that some make of their being free and of their being property of the British is without foundation and is inculcated into them to serve the purpose of detention."⁶

Digges accepted his assignment and began work soon after his appointment on December 4, 1781. He was careful in keeping his record in the form of "A List of all Claims against the French Army and the Continental Army, where no receipts or Certificates were given for the Articles mentioned therein."⁷ His list was dated January 1, 1782, indicating that he completed his consideration and endorsement of claims in less than a month. Essentially all of the approved claims had to do with forage seized in the town area and more particularly in the countryside.⁸ The majority of the claims were from Warwick, York, and Gloucester counties (in that order) though there were a few from James City and Elizabeth City counties and from Williamsburg.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

7. A manuscript record book in the Virginia State Library, photostatic copy in Colonial NHP library.

8. Perhaps a typical entry was that for "William Digges his Plantation (York)." This covered 75 barrels of corn, 90 feet of tops, "19 m:" bundles of fodder, 75 barrels of "Shocks" and 150 bushels of Barley. A total of £88 5s. was "allowed for Corn, fodder, tops and Barley."

When the French moved into Yorktown, they established a hospital in the courthouse and this led to some disruption of public business. On January 23, 1782, William Reynolds detailed this in a letter to the governor when he wrote from Yorktown:⁹

The day before our Court Day I rece'd a Commission for a sheriff for this County. I had previous to the rec't of the Commission directed the Clerk to write to the magistrates to desire their attendance, four of which with the gentlemen who was to qualifie as sheriff did attend. It was their opinion that we could not set, to do business in any other House but the Court house, which at present is used by the French as an Hospital. The variety of disorders therein, and the disagreeable smell of the House deter'd the Gentlemen from going in. I thought it proper to acquaint yr: Excellency, as perhaps by an application from you the House may be given up – the necessity for a Sheriff and Court in this County was perhaps never greater than at present, the situation of the inhabitants of this town is pecularly [sic] hard. If the French army are to stay any time, we hope Barracks will be built to the chimneys of the former.¹⁰

Civil government was moving slowly, however, and the French would remain for another six months. In May 1782 the Virginia Assembly, meeting in Richmond, did empower the "justices of the peace for the county of York" to hold their sessions "at such place in the county as they may think proper, so long as the court-house in the town of York shall be occupied by the troops of our allies."¹¹ The York County Court failed to implement this for some five months, about four months after the major part of the French troops had gone. Evidently they stuck with the courthouse despite its condition. On October 21, however, the justices did meet and adjourned "to the House of Mrs. Gibbons," a leading ordinary in town located nearby on Lot 30.¹²

9. *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, 3, 44.

10. There was another matter, too, that was troubling Reynolds: "There is I suppose upwards of a hundred Negroes in this Town & York, they are really a great nuisance – I wish something could be done with them. It would be useless for me to have them taken up, as we have no prison to confine them in, nor no guard to escort them elsewhere."

11. Hening, *The Statutes at Large of Virginia*, 2, 20.

12. York County Records, *Order Book*, No. 4, p. 308.

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I. OFFICIAL RECORDS

- A. Local
- B. State
- C. Other

II. PAPERS, CORRESPONDENCE, COLLECTIONS, RECOLLECTIONS

III. TRAVELS, JOURNALS, DIARIES, AND RELATED CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNTS

IV. SPECIAL WORKS, GENERAL STUDIES

- A. National Park Service
- B. Other

V. CARTOGRAPHIC, PHOTOGRAPHIC, AND RELATED MATERIAL

- A. 1781 Siege Plans
- B. Other

VI. NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES, PERIODICALS

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V. CARTOGRAPHIC, PHOTOGRAPHIC, AND RELATED MATERIAL

A. 1781 Siege Plans

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"Plan du Siege d'york fait par l'armee Combinee d'Amerique et de france sous les ordres du General Washington: le place fut investie le 27 7bre 1781." Photocopy in files of Colonial NHP library made available by the French Archives in 1973.

"Plan du Siege d'York en Virginie par l'Armee Alliee d'Amerique et de France sous les Ordres des Genaux. Washington et Ct. de Rochambeau contre l'Armee Angloise Commandee par le Lord Cornwallis en Octobre 1781." Photocopy of a manuscript map in Colonial NHP library. (Essentially a variant of the plan of the same title listed immediately below.)

"Plan du Siege d'York, en Virginie par l'Armee alliee d'Amerique et de France sous les Ordres des Gaux. Washington et Cte. de Rochambeau, contre l'Armee Anglaise Commandee par Lord Cornwallis en Octobre 1781." Photocopy of a manuscript map in Colonial NHP library. (Essentially a variant of the plan of the same title listed immediately above.)

Sutherland, Lt. Alexander. "Sketch of the Posts of York Town and Gloucester Point shewing the french and rebel attacks upon the former in October, 1781." A manuscript map in Clinton Papers, William L. Clements Library (Adams, *British Headquarters Maps*, No. 270), photostatic copy in Colonial NHP library.

B. Other:

Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, compiled by Capt. Calvin D. Cowles. Washington, 1891-1895.

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Peale, James. A copy of his painting of the "Meeting of the Generals at Yorktown," in the collection of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Williamsburg, Va.

Peale, James. A painting of the "Meeting of the Generals at Yorktown," in the collection of the Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Md.

VI. NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES, PERIODICALS

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The Virginia Historical Register and Literary Advertiser.

The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography.

The William and Mary Quarterly. 3 series.

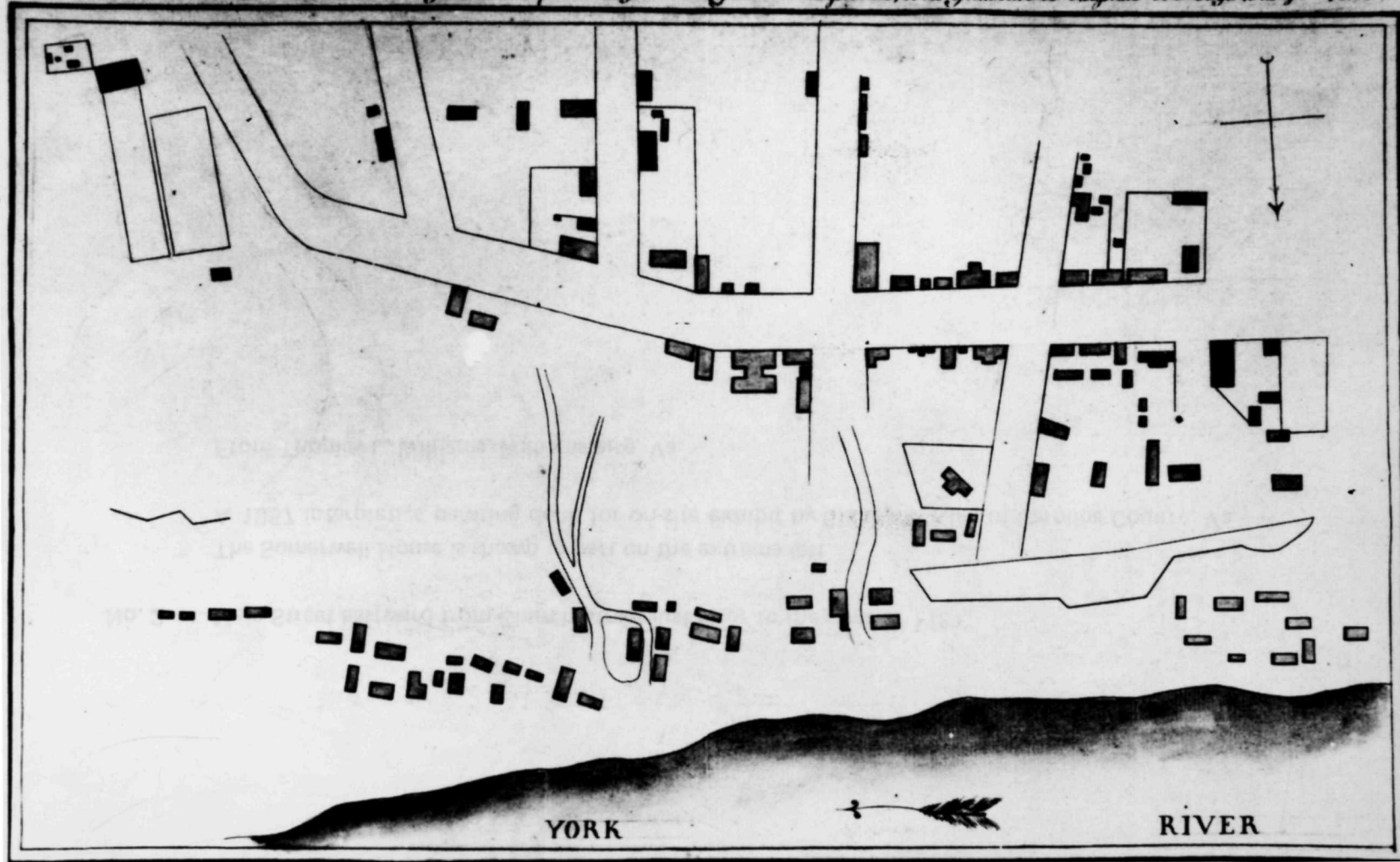
ILLUSTRATIONS

No. 1 The Berthier billeting plan of Yorktown, 1781.

"Plan d'york town pour Servier a l'Establissement du d'hyner du Regiment de Soissonnois et des Grenadiers et Chasseurs de St. Onge le 12 8 bre 1781."

From the Alexandre Berthier Papers in Princeton University library.
(16,588)

Plan York - dress pour servir à l'établissement du Quartier d'Hyver du Régiment de La Bourdonnois; et des Grenadiers et Chasseurs de S^t Onge le 12. 9^{bre} 1751.



No. 2 Main Street eastward from Church Street just prior to the siege of 1781.

The Somerwell House is shown in part on the extreme left.

A 1957 interpretive painting done for on-site exhibit by Sidney E. King of Caroline County, Va.

From Thomas L. Williams, Williamsburg, Va.



No. 3 Main Street westward from Church Street just prior to the siege of 1781.

Note windmill at far end of street overlooking the river.

A 1957 interpretive painting done for on-site exhibit by Sidney E. King of Caroline County, Va.

From Thomas L. Williams, Williamsburg, Va.

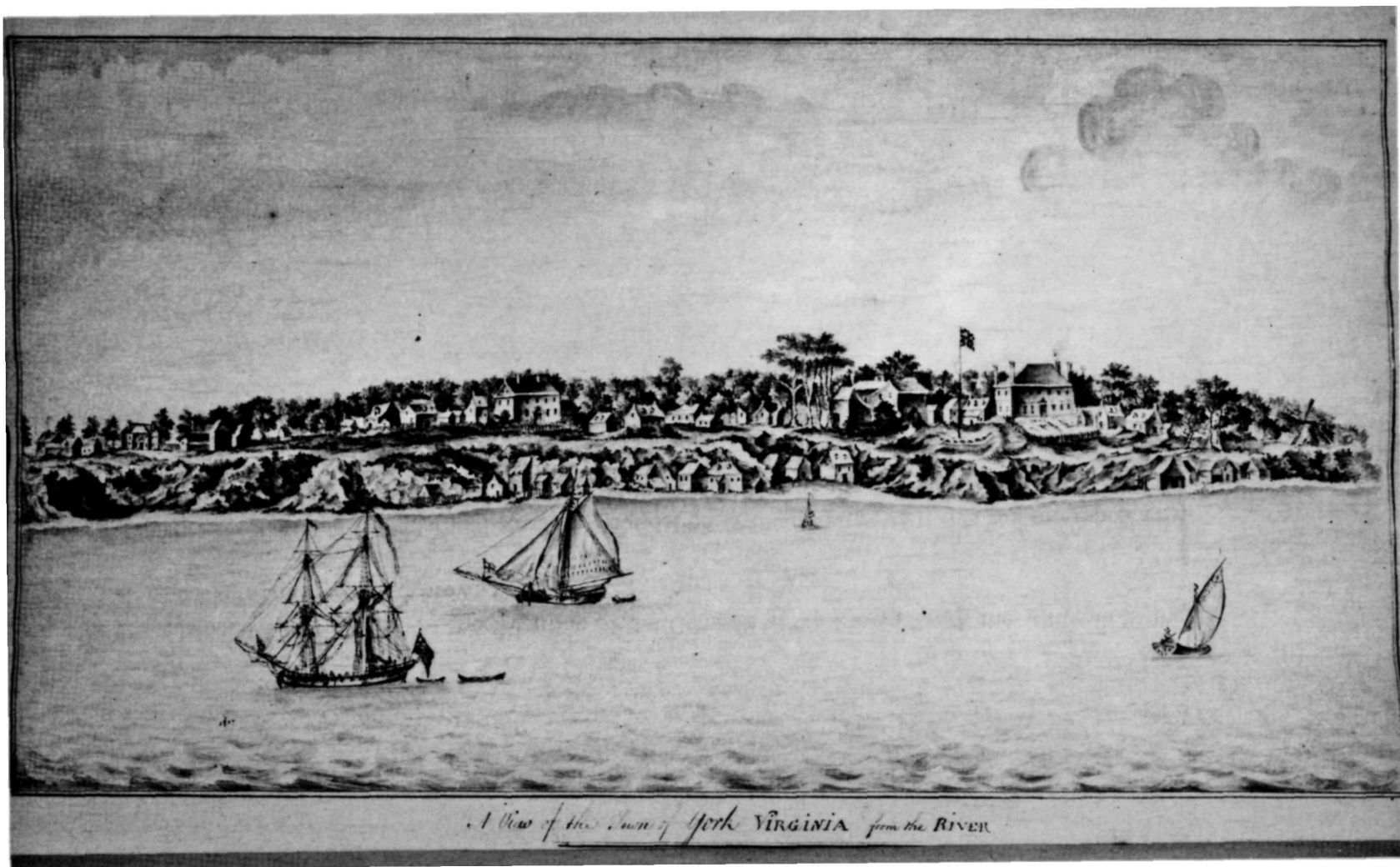


- No. 4 Yorktown as viewed from the river in 1755 (sketched by John Gauntlett aboard the HMS *Norwich* anchored in the Yorktown harbor).

It shows the full length of the town from the windmill off the northwest end of town to, and a little beyond, the Secretary Thomas Nelson House to the southeast. A bit left of center is the presently existing Nelson House and the second courthouse is directly behind the flagpole.

From the manuscript volume "Voyage of H.M.S. *Success* and H.M.S. *Norwich* to Nova Scotia and Virginia 1754-1756," in the Mariners Museum, Newport News, Va.; also published in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 54 (1946), pp. 99-105.

(13,111)



A View of the Town of York VIRGINIA from the RIVER

- No. 5 James Peale's painting of the "Meeting of the Generals at Yorktown" with the windmill in the background across Yorktown Creek.

Courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (Williamsburg, Va.); this is a more precisely executed copy of the same painting in the collection of the Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland.

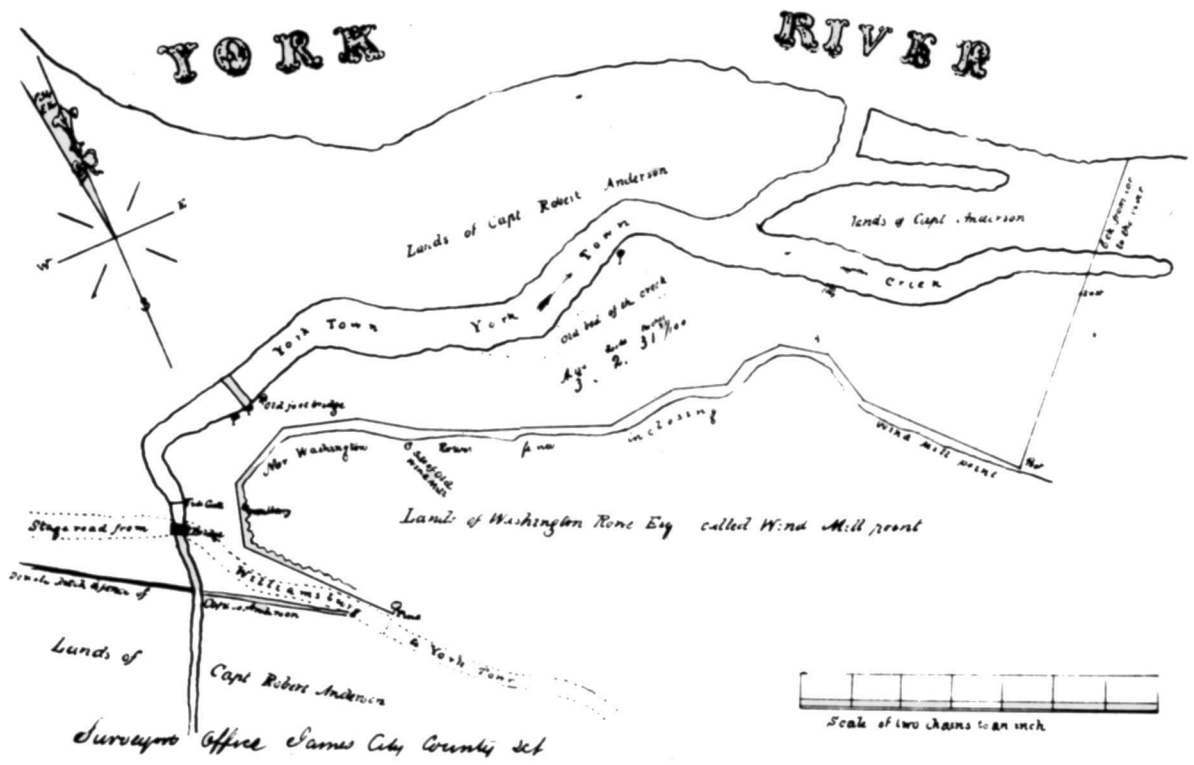


No. 6A An 1850 land plat showing the old windmill site and the meanderings of the mouth of Yorktown Creek.

From a copy of the plat in the files of Colonial NHP.
(8,561)

No. 6B The old windmill tower at Yorktown much in disrepair prior to 1840.

From *The Family Magazine* (New York edition), 7 (1840), 221.
(12,900).



No. 7 The Secretary Thomas Nelson mansion.

The siege opened with British headquarters in this building.

An interpretive painting done about 1957 for on-site exhibit by Sidney E. King of Caroline County, Va.

(13,128)



No. 8 A revealing early photograph of Main Street in the late 1870's.

The old brick storehouse ("customhouse") of Richard Ambler is in the left foreground, and the Cox House, with dependencies behind it, is across the street in the immediate right foreground. This photograph obviously was that used for the sketch of Main Street prepared for Stevens's *Yorktown Centennial Handbook* issued in 1881 (p. 105). See park photograph No. 10,913.

This view is a 1958 photocopy of an item then in the collection of the late Mrs. Katherine Blow.
(13,253)



No. 9 Main Street in the 1880's.

This is westward from the Church Street crossing of Main. The three larger structures would be on Lots 31 (Bar Room), 25 (Brent's Tavern), and 19 (a residence).

From Harry R. Houston, *The Peninsula of Virginia* (1934), by courtesy of John Mitchell, Director of the Syms Eaton Museum, Hampton, Va.

(16,744 — a similar view, but dated 1886, from Robert Arthur, *The Two Sieges of Yorktown*, Fort Monroe, Va, 1927.)

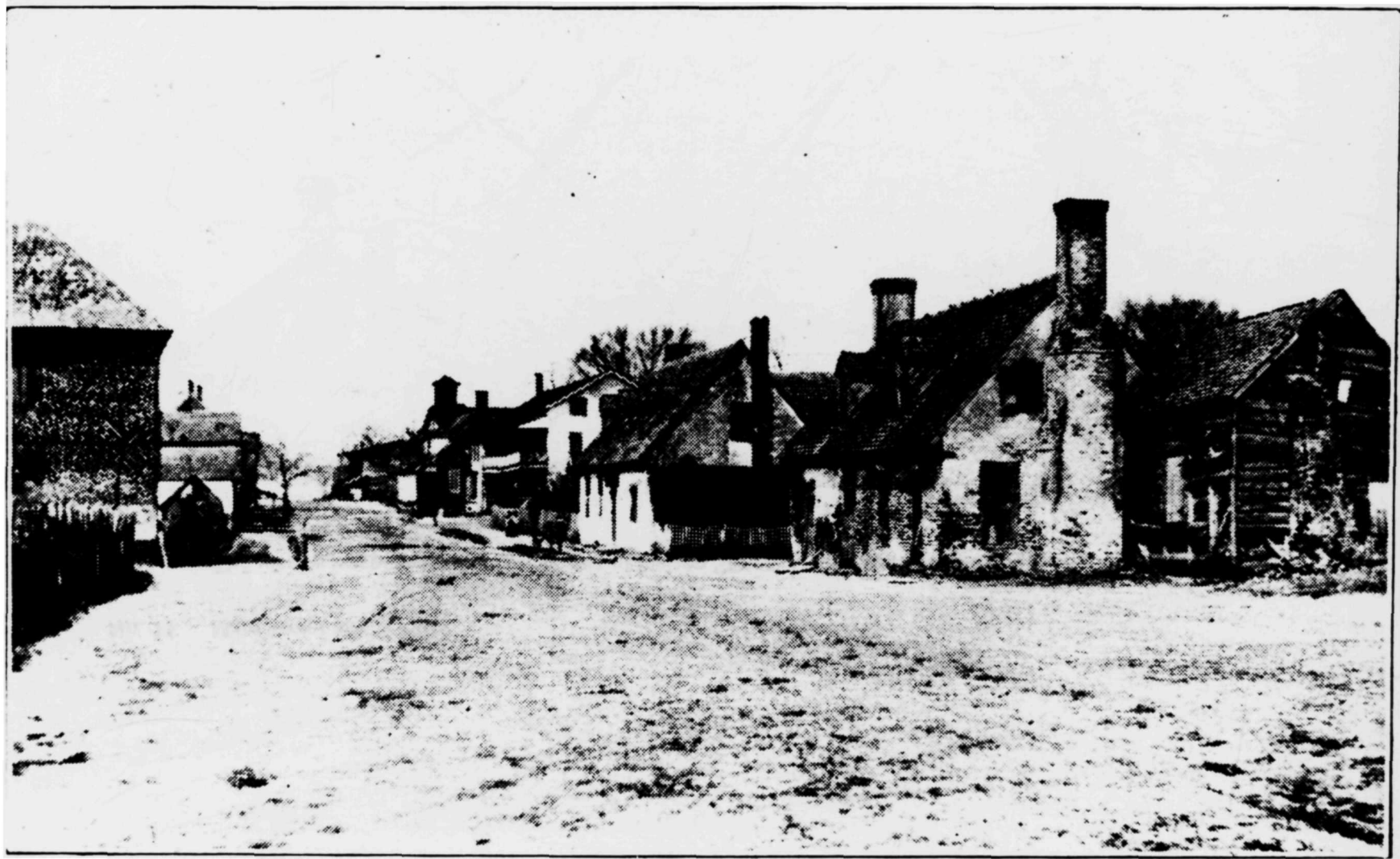


Street scene Yorktown (1881) time of Centennial. York River in distance at right

No. 10 Main Street about 1900.

The view is westward from a point east beyond Read Street.

From Mrs Sydney Smith, *Old Yorktown and Its History*, c. 1920.
(14,142)



MAIN STREET—LOOKING WEST

No. 11 Main Street about 1903.

The view is westward from a point east of Nelson Street. The Sessions House and then the Nelson House show on the left.

Photocopy of an old postal card copyrighted in 1903.
(16,749)

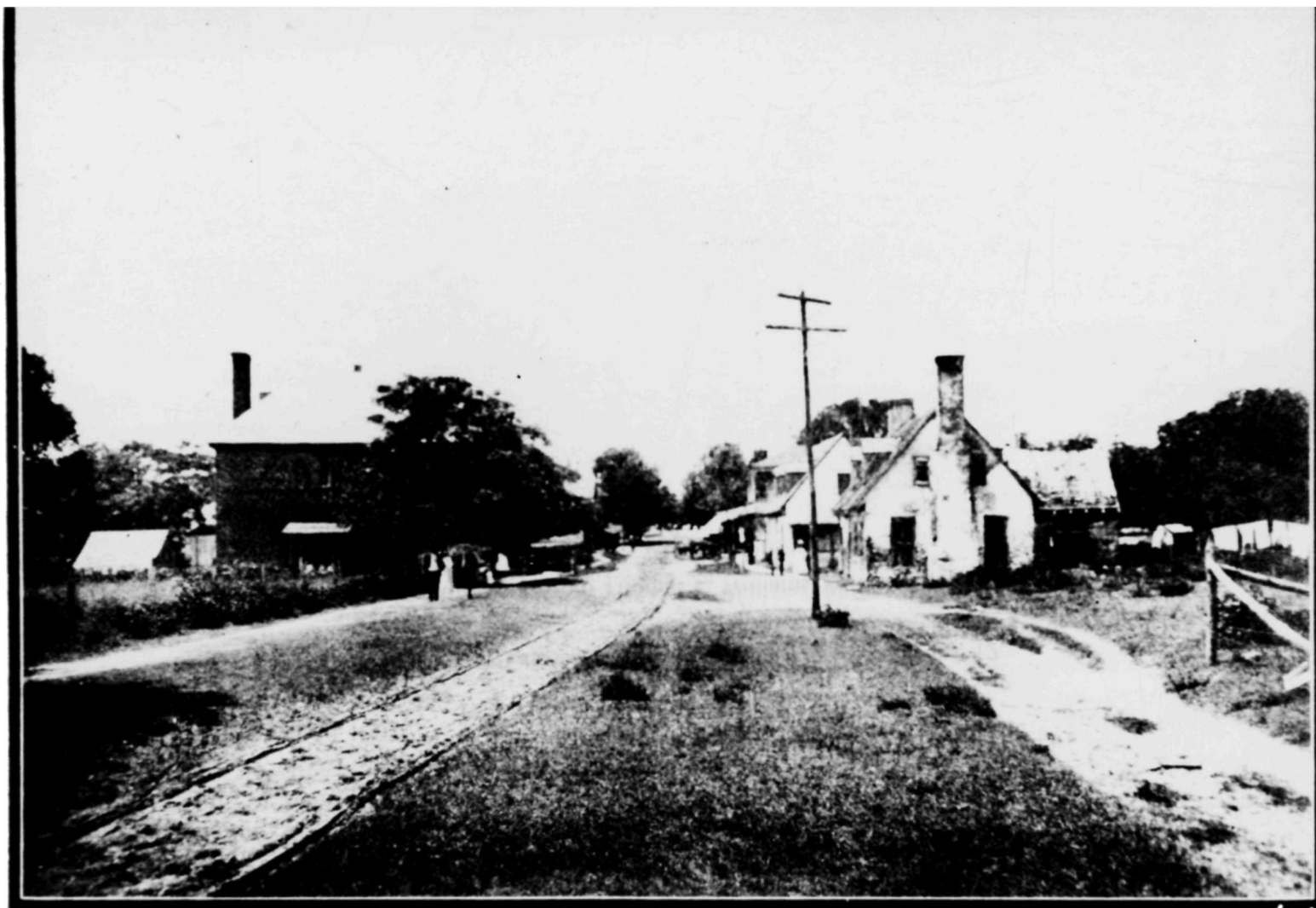


10512 A STREET IN YORKTOWN, VA.

No. 12 Main Street about 1905.

This is westward from a point east of Read Street.

From a Jamestown Exposition Peninsula guidebook.



Yorktown, Va.— As it is to-day, and almost as it was one hundred and twenty-five years ago, when Geo. Washington's victorious army marched through its quiet streets. Only the telegraph poles mark the existence of the strenuous life that, so far, has left the historic little village to its dreams of past glories. No other American campaign has been fraught with so many significant results as that of Yorktown.

No. 13 Main Street about 1907.

The view is westward from a point closer to Read Street than Illustration No. 12.

From an old postal card; photograph from Thomas L. Williams, Williamsburg, Va.



MAIN STREET YORKTOWN VA

No. 14 The Burcher Spinning Wheel Antique Shop in 1931.

 This white two-story shop is flanked by two late structures on Lot 37 that no longer stand.
(2,346)



No. 15 The Hills (British) siege plan.

A section from "A Plan of York Town and Gloucester, Shewing the Works constructed for the Defense of those Posts by the British Army . . . from an actual Survey in the Possession of Jno Hills late Lieut in the 23d Regt & Asst Engr .

From a copy of the plan engraved and printed for William Faden, London, October 7, 1785.
(16,738)

R I V

1000

Guadaloupe

Charon

SUNKEN
VESSELS

Redoubt N°1

Redoubt N°2

YORK
TOWN

Redoubt N°3

33 Log

Redoubt N°7

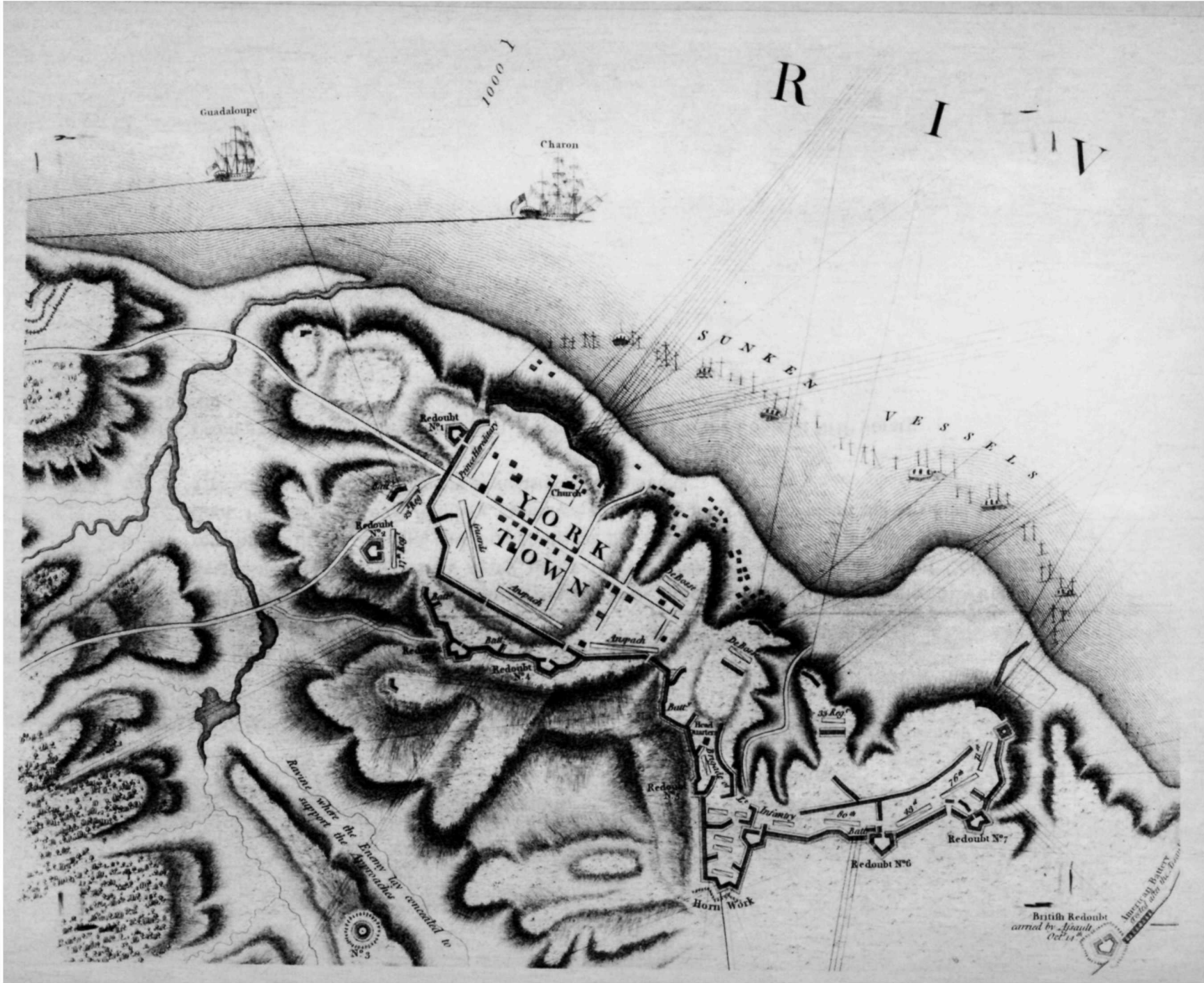
Redoubt N°6

Horn Work

British Redoubt
carried by Assault
Oct 14

Artillery Battery
from the River

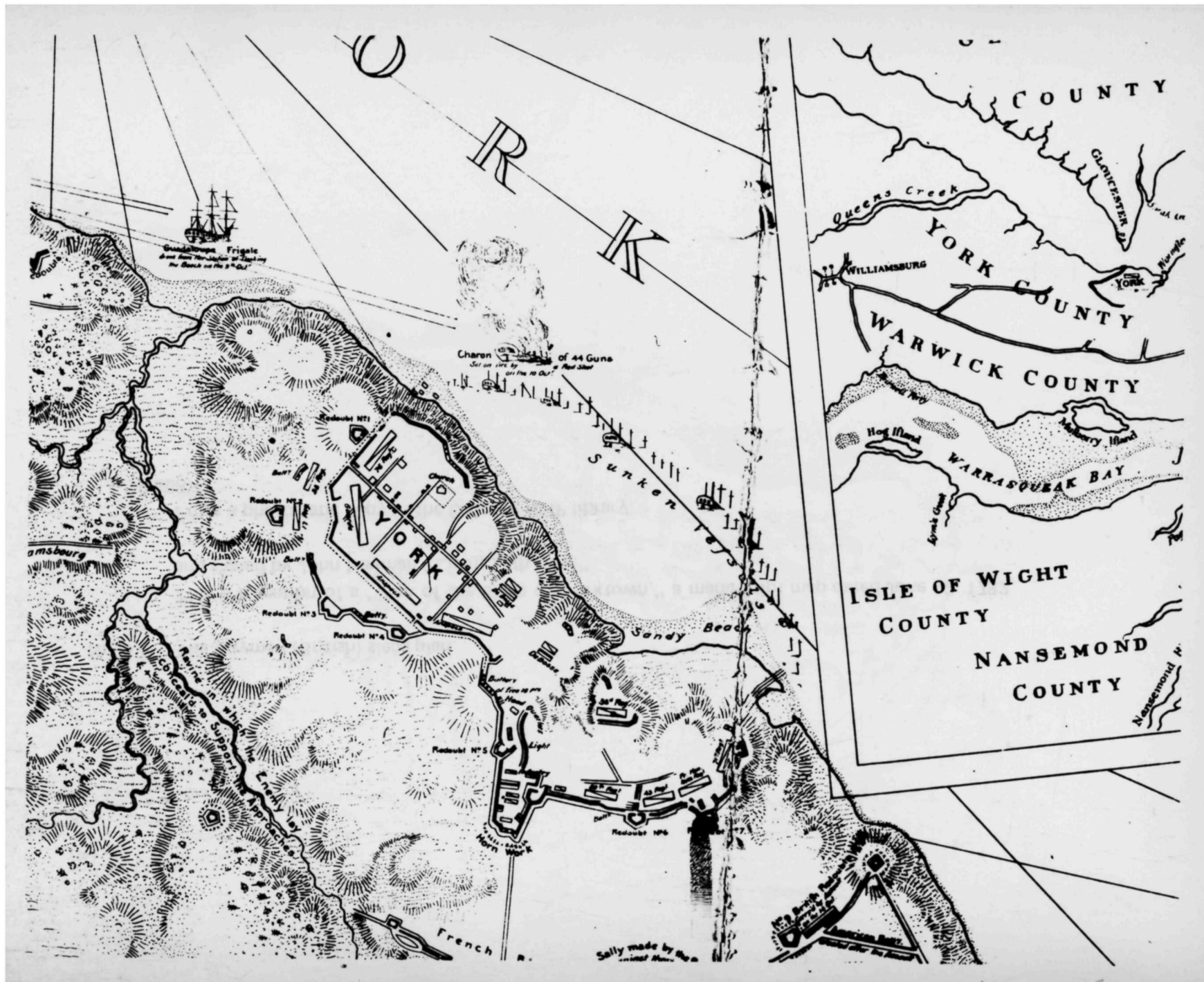
River where the Enemy lay concealed to
support the approaches



No. 16 The Fage (British) siege plan.

This is a section from "A Plan of the Post of York and Gloucester in the Province of Virginia, Established by His Majesty's Army under the Command of Lieut. General Earl Cornwallis together with the Attacks and Operations of the American & French Forces . . . Surveyed by Capt. Fage of the Royal Artillery. Published according to Act of Parliament the 4th June 1782." This and the John Hills plan are obviously closely related.

From a reproduced copy of the plan, a copy of which is in the Colonial NHP library.
(16,745)



No. 17 The Hayman (British) siege plan.

This is a section of a "Plan of the Siege of Yorktown," a manuscript map dated June 12, 1782, and signed by John Hayman "Lieut. 17th Infy."

From a photostatic copy in the Colonial NHP library.
(9,858)



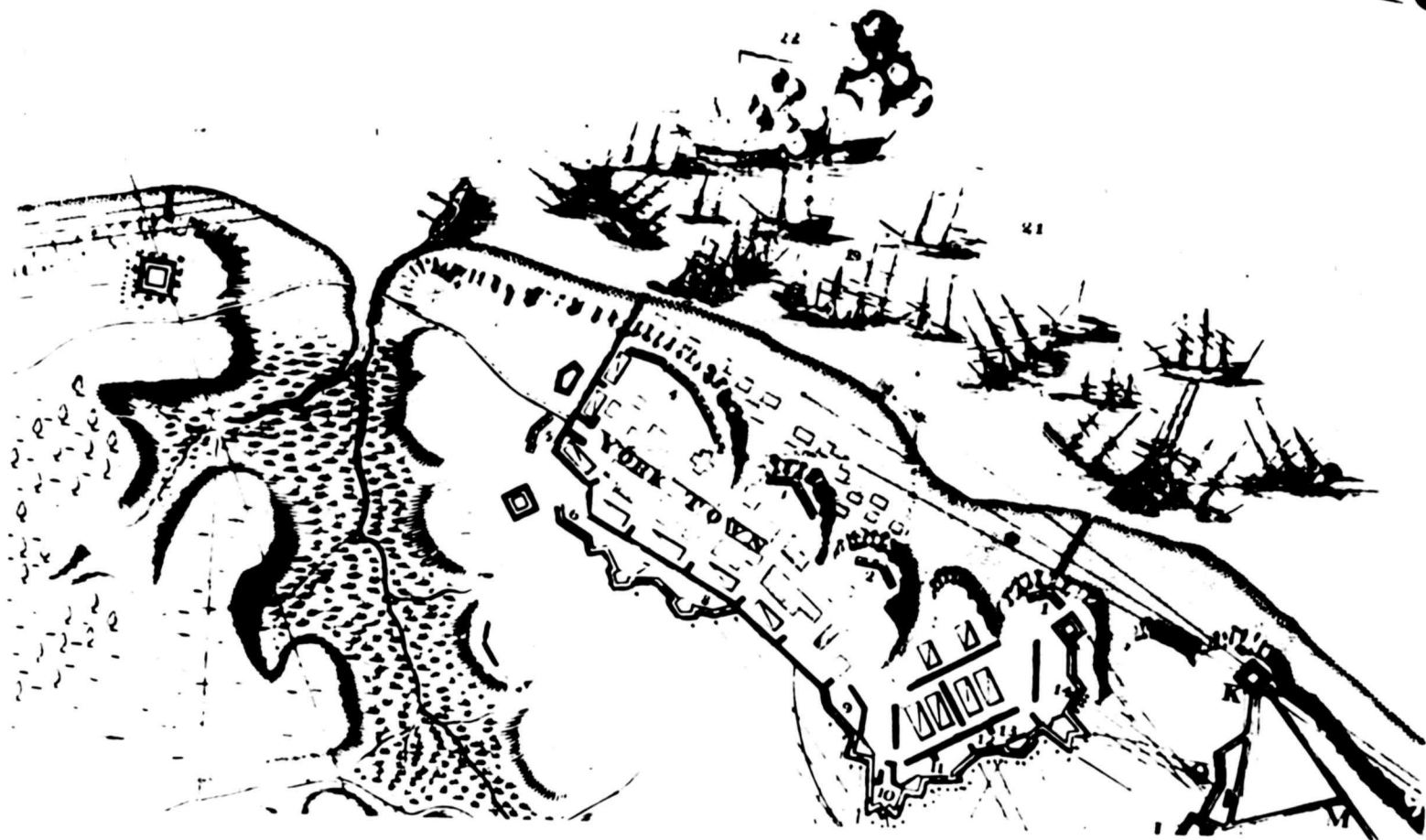
RIV

No. 18 The Bauman (American) siege plan.

A section of Maj. Sebastian Bauman's "Plan of the investment of York and Gloucester . . . taken between the 22d and the 28th of Oct. 1781."

From a photostatic copy of the map as engraved and printed in Philadelphia in 1782.
(9,862)

Y O R K R I V E R



No. 19 The Gouvion (American) siege plan.

A section from the "Plan of the Attaques of York in Virginia . . ." by Lt. Col. of Engineers Gouvion and dated "before york," October 29, 1781.

From a copy of the plan as published by the National Archives (Facsimile No. 21) under the title "Washington's Official Map of Yorktown," Washington, 1952.

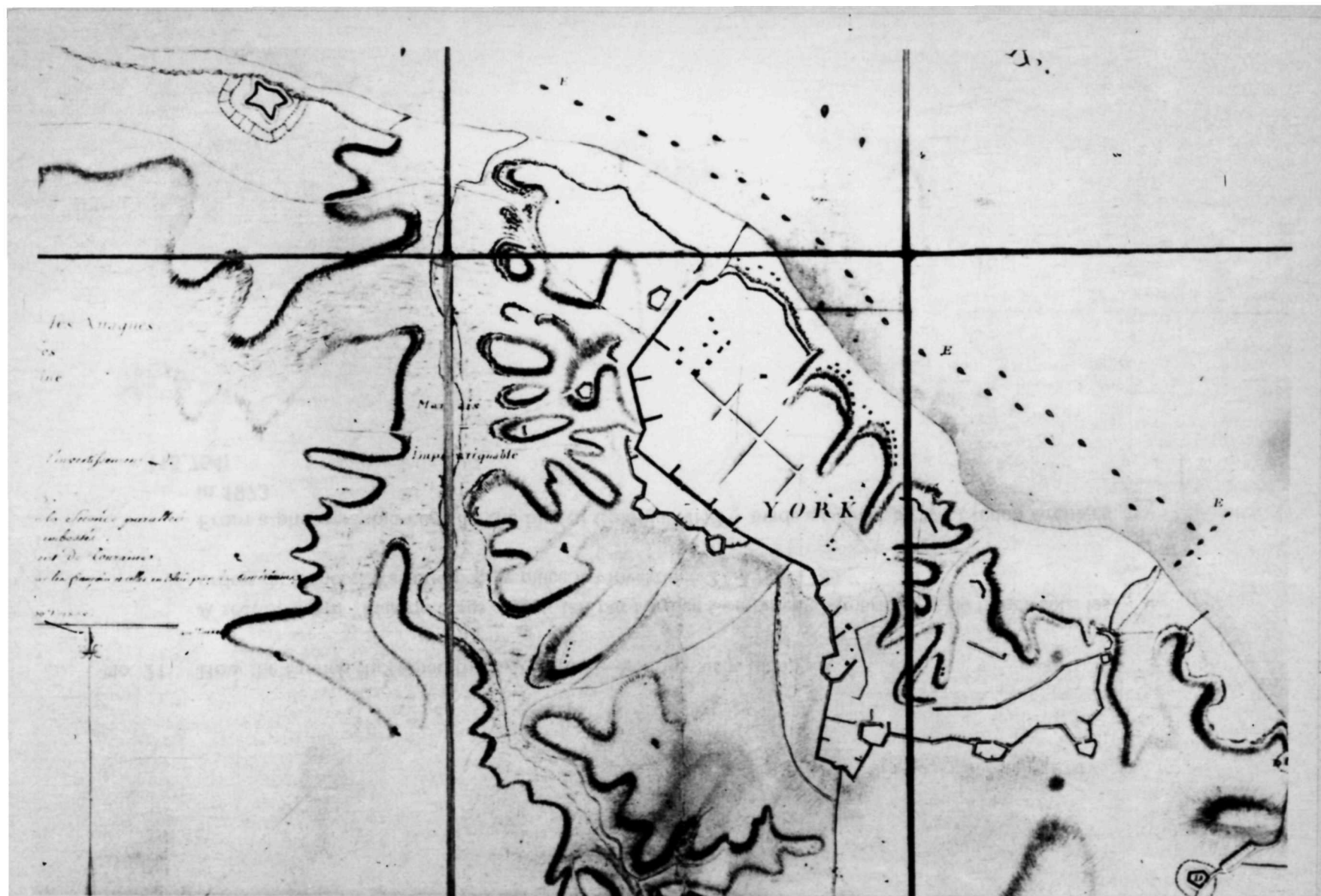
(16,737)



No. 20 The La Combe (French) siege plan.

A section from Querenet de La Combe's "Plan d'York en Virginie avec les attaques faites par les armees Francoise et Americaine en 8 bre 1781."

A manuscript map in the Map Division, Library of Congress, photostat in Colonial NHP library.
(9,859)



No. 21 How the French shortened the British line — another siege plan.

A section from “Plan du Siege d’york fait par l’armee Combinee d’Amerique et de france sous les ordres du General Washington: le place fut investie le 27 7 bre 1781.”

From a photographic copy in the files of Colonial NHP — made available by the French Archives in 1973.

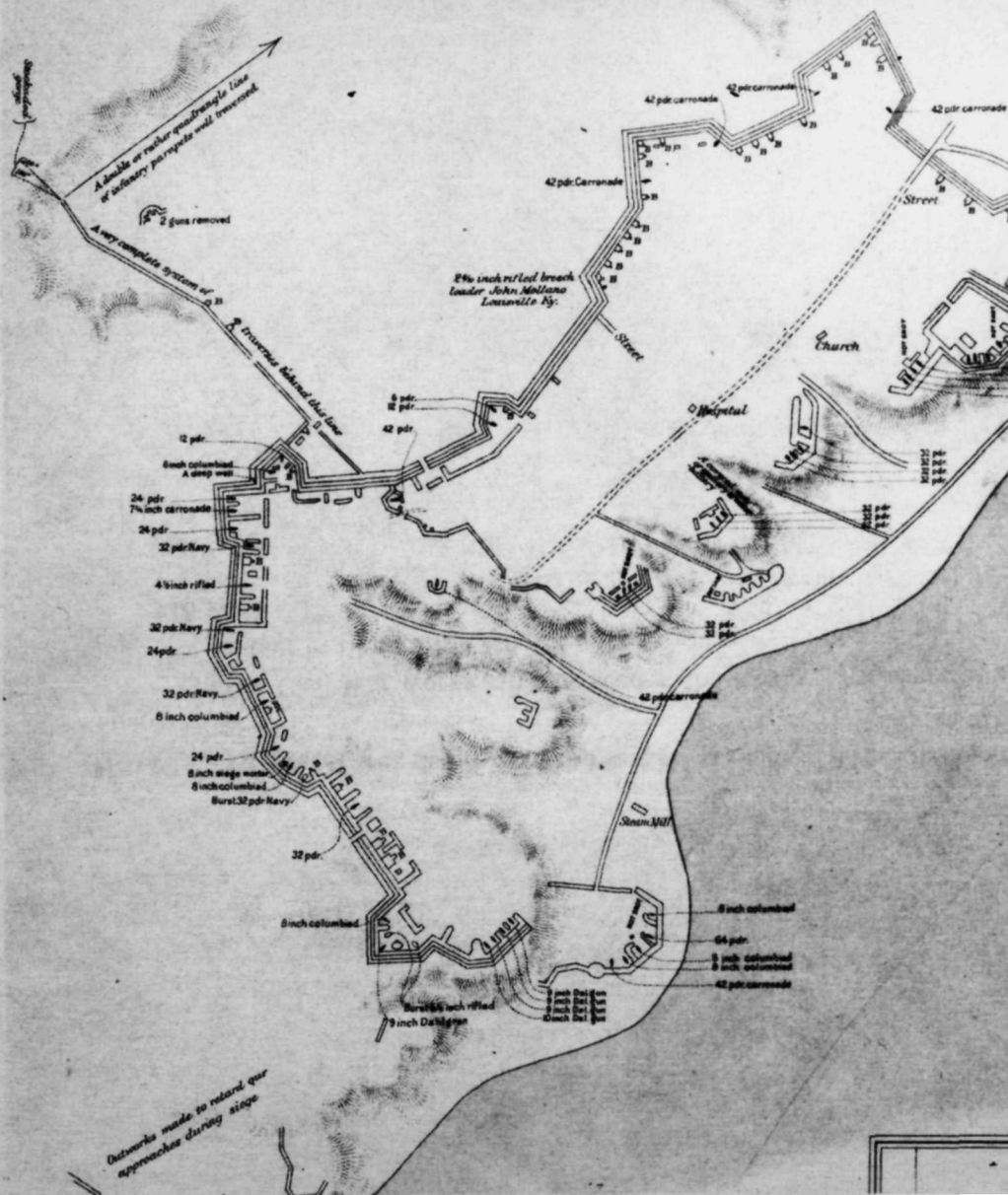
(16,754)



No. 22 A plan of the Confederate line built around Yorktown.

From the *Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*
(Washington, 1891-1895), plate 15, part 1.

(16,671)



For
Gen. J. G. BARNARD
 Chief Engineer Army of Potomac.

**RECONNAISSANCE
 OF THE
 SECESSION WORKS
 AT
 YORKTOWN, VA.**

MADE BY
 Lieut. ABBOT, Top! Engrs.
 AND AT
GLOUCESTER, VA.

MADE BY
 Lieut. COMSTOCK, Engrs.
 May 4 1862

Scale of former 1 inch = 500 feet.
 Scale of latter 1 inch = 600 feet.

This tracing not reduced to same Scale from want of time.

No. 23 Yorktown area detail from the east sheet of the 1931 U.S. Geological Survey.

The Civil War works can be traced in the topography, especially when this plan is compared to the details in Illustration No. 22.

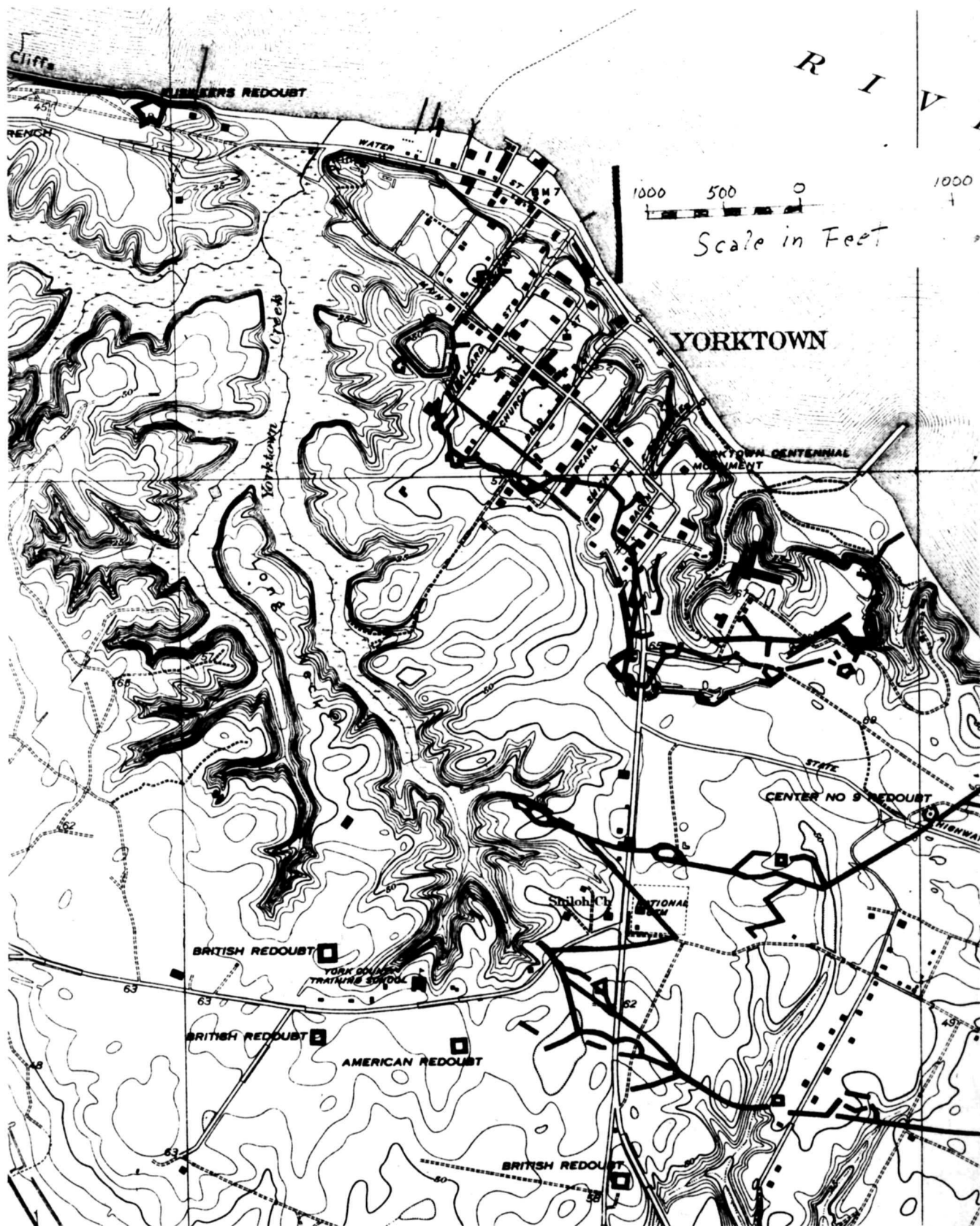
(16,746)



No. 24 Section from a special 1931 battlefield topographical map done by the U.S. Geological Survey.

The British line of 1781 has been overlaid and the conformity of the Civil War works, or the lack of it at several points, can be seen from the topography of these works. See also Illustrations Nos. 22 and 23.

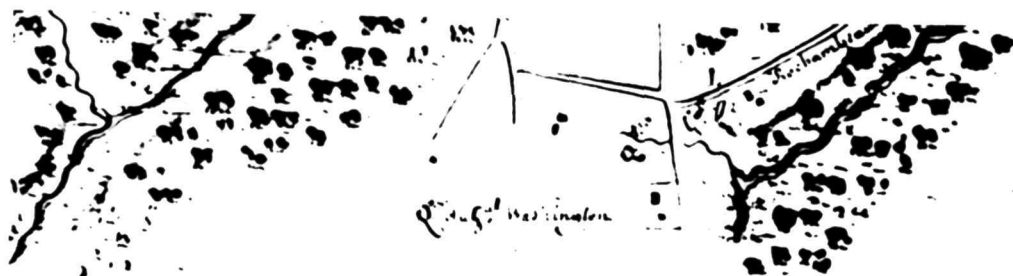
(16,747)



No. 25 Cross sections of two types of British works at Yorktown from a French siege plan.

"Plan du Siege d'York, en Virginie par l'Armee alliee d'Amerique et de france Sous les Ordres des
Gaux Washington et Cte de Rochambeau: contre l'Armee Anglaise Commandee par Lord
Cornwallis en Octobre 1781," photostat in Colonial NHP library.

(7,312)



Legende

Les fortifications de la ville de Paris sont divisées en deux classes : les fortifications de la ville et les fortifications de la campagne. Les fortifications de la ville sont celles qui sont situées dans la ville elle-même, et les fortifications de la campagne sont celles qui sont situées hors de la ville.

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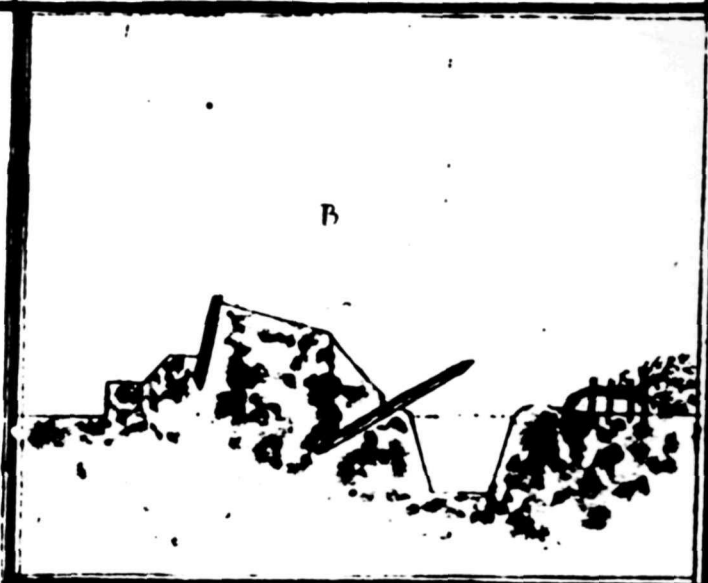
Les fortifications de la ville de Paris sont divisées en deux classes : les fortifications de la ville et les fortifications de la campagne.

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Les fortifications de la ville de Paris sont divisées en deux classes : les fortifications de la ville et les fortifications de la campagne.

Chelle A. 100 Toises



No. 26 Yorktown before the damage of the siege in 1781.

A reflection on the nature of colonial Yorktown. It does not (because of the limited scope of surviving records) purport to be a full picture of all physical development and then visible aspects of the town. Main Street runs diagonally through the view from the Windmill (upper right corner) to the Secretary Thomas Nelson Home (just up from center in the left margin).

An interpretive painting for Yorktown Visitor Center use done by the Branch of Museums in 1956.

(12,899)



Plan: "Yorktown and Its Additions,"
(with street names and lot numbers)

YORKTOWN and its ADDITIONS

-  Original Survey
-  Gwyn Read Development
- after 1738
-  Yorktown Waterfront
- 1738 (a common) - Survey in 1788
-  Addition of 1889

