

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1065

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received	LISTED ON:
date of entry	VLR 10/21/1980 NRHP 02/03/1981

1. Name

historic Fort Clifton Archaeological Site (preferred)
and/or common Fort Clifton

2. Location

street & number Conduit Road not for publication
city, town Colonial Heights vicinity of 4th, Robert W. Daniel, Jr.
state Virginia code 51 county in City 570 code

3. Classification

Category <input type="checkbox"/> district <input type="checkbox"/> building(s) <input type="checkbox"/> structure <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site <input type="checkbox"/> object	Ownership <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public <input type="checkbox"/> private <input type="checkbox"/> both Public Acquisition <input type="checkbox"/> in process <input type="checkbox"/> being considered	Status <input type="checkbox"/> occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress Accessible <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> no	Present Use <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> museum <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park <input type="checkbox"/> private residence <input type="checkbox"/> religious <input type="checkbox"/> scientific <input type="checkbox"/> transportation <input type="checkbox"/> other:
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4. Owner of Property

name City of Colonial Heights c/o Mayor
street & number Municipal Building
city, town Colonial Heights vicinity of Virginia state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Colonial Heights Court House
street & number Municipal Building
city, town Colonial Heights state Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Virginia Research Center for Archaeology
title Site Survey Form (44CF73) has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1976 federal state county local
depository for survey records Virginia Research Center for Archaeology
city, town College of William and Mary, Wren Kitchen Williamsburg, state Virginia 23186

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>1864</u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Fort Clifton Archaeological Site, a Confederate fortification in Colonial Heights, Virginia, is located on the western bluffs of the Appomattox River near its junction with Swift's Creek. Fort Clifton is encompassed by a city-owned recreational and educational facility, the Fort Clifton Historic Park. The Fort Clifton tract was part of Chesterfield County until 1948, at which time it was part of the land annexed by the independent city of Colonial Heights.

In 1978 the VRCA conducted an archaeological survey of the Fort Clifton Historic Park. Several archaeological components were identified. These included two battery emplacements aligned along a northwest-southeast axis and overlooking the river and a 19th century domestic site (44CF73, Figure 1).

The northern battery of Fort Clifton consists of a two section parapet. One section is ten feet high, 250 feet long and curvilinear. A second, lower parapet section is only two feet in height and extends in a southwesterly direction for 250 feet, terminating near the 19th century house foundation.

Nearer the river, the southern battery sweeps a 420 foot arc, interrupted by a circular gun emplacement which protrudes to the east. Gaps in the parapet suggest the presence of six embrasures, whereas four earthen mounds directly behind the parapet appear to be powder magazines. A low parapet section, comparable in height to the one in the northern battery, extends 220 feet, curving to the southeast. The L-shaped brick foundation of a 19th century domestic structure lies to the west of the Fort Clifton batteries, the remains of the Clifton house shown on several late 19th century maps.

The archaeological remains of Fort Clifton and the Clifton house have survived intact and are presently preserved within the confines of the park property. The property is presently covered with pine and hardwood forestation, interrupted with nature trails (Figure 2)

According to local informants, immediately off shore in the Appomattox River are the submerged remains of a Union gunboat, sunk by gunfire emanating from Fort Clifton on May 9, 1864. As the exact location of this shipwreck has not been verified by a nautical archaeological survey, its presumed location is not included within the nominated acreage.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) public
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention			

Specific dates May, June 1864 **Builder/Architect** Confederate Army

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Fort Clifton Archaeological Site in Colonial Heights, Virginia, includes the intact archaeological remains on Confederate Fort Clifton, as well as those of a 19th century domestic site, the house traditionally known as Clifton. Fort Clifton was the site of three major confrontations between Union and Confederate forces in 1864 during the Petersburg campaign. The remains of Fort Clifton are representative of Civil War military fortifications and therefore have inherent research value. The Fort Clifton site has great public significance to the people of Colonial Heights for whom the fort is an important local landmark and a source of local pride. Interpretive facilities at the park fulfill a public educational mission by informing tourists and local residents about Fort Clifton's role in Civil War history. Thus the Fort Clifton Historic Park makes a significant contribution to public education and enjoyment and contributes greatly to community enhancement.

The Fort Clifton Historic Park is part of a tract patented in December 1620 by Charles Magnor, whose great encompassed 650 acres bounded on the north by the marshes of Swift's Creek and on the east by the Appomattox River. At that time the upland portion of Magnor's grant was known as the Conjuror's Field. Throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries the land near the mouth of Swift's Creek and the Appomattox River was in continuous agricultural use.

By the 1850's the property, which by then had become known as the Clifton tract, was owned by Ottoway and Elizabeth Hare. The Hares sold it to Alexander Jones, whose 1860 will conveyed it to his brother, James Jones. Immediately prior to the Civil War, James Jones sold Clifton to William H. Crow, who owned the property at the time Fort Clifton was built. Crow's name appears on an 1867 Union map of the area, which also depicts Fort Clifton, whereas an 1863 map by a Confederate cartographer attributes the property to its former owners, the Hares.

In 1864, when the Civil War was drawing to a close, the Confederate army built a line of defenses protecting Petersburg and, ultimately, Richmond. Confederate Brigadier General Robert E. Colton described the eight mile semi-circle of defenses covering the Appomattox River as being of such low profile that they were only slightly noticeable. He contended that a horseman could ride over any portion of the defense without difficulty, with the exception of the lunettes and redoubts constructed in the more commanding positions, one of which was Fort Clifton.

The battle at nearby Port Walthall Junction led up to the fighting at Fort Clifton (Figure 3). On May 7, 1864 Confederate Major General G.E. Pickett ordered General Johnson to fall back to Swift's Creek and make an entrenchment. Receiving the order at 10 P.M. that night, Johnson acted upon it immediately. By 3 A.M. of May 8th, his artillery and infantry had crossed the creek and begun fortifying their position. During the day and evening of May 8th Johnson's men collected arms and supplies from nearby Port Walthall Junction, while other troops under Colonel Harris set about construction a good line of

9. Major Bibliographical References

Chesterfield County Deed Books.

Colonial Heights Deed Books.

Colston, R.E. The Way to Appomattox, ed. R.N. Johnson, (New York, 1966).

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 7.4 acres

Quadrangle name Hopewell

Quadrangle scale 7.5', 1:24,000

UMT References

A 18 290260 4128450
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification Bounded on the east and southeast by the bank of the Appomattox River, Due west along a small ravine to the terminus of the access road at the southwest corner of the park, north along the park boundaries, east along a small ravine and the park boundary to intersection with the Appomattox River.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Martha McCartney and Keith Egloff, Research Specialist and Staff Archaeologist

organization Virginia Research Center for Archaeology date October 8, 1980

street & number Wren Kitchen, College of William and Mary telephone 804-253-4836

city or town Williamsburg, state Virginia 23186

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date OCT 21 1980

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
Keeper of the National Register	date
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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Fort Clifton Archaeological Site, Colonial Heights, Virginia

CONTINUATION SHEET 1

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rifle pits and batteries while additional detachments occupied the adjacent vicinity, covering the bridges and access roads. Eighteen pieces of artillery were deployed at the fort. Three sergeants and twenty-two soldiers under Lt. F.M. Kelso were detached to man the heavy artillery at Fort Clifton, where Captain S.T. Martin was in command.

An undated plan of Fort Clifton depicts its layout, showing the configuration of its two batteries and magazine, details which have been verified by VRCA archaeological survey work (Figure 4). A watercolor sketch of Fort Clifton done by a Union artist located on an opposing bluff across the Appomattox River shows the fort as well as the Clifton house (Figure 5). He indicated that the fort and house were surrounded by agricultural land.

Fort Clifton had hardly been completed when a battle ensued. According to the report of Confederate General Johnson, "at 9 A.M. on May 9 a small boat appeared in the Appomattox below Fort Clifton, which was fired on and driven off. At about 11 A.M., five gunboats advanced and engaged the battery at Fort Clifton. The fire was continued from the fort until after 2 P.M., when four gunboats retired and the fifth one found to be crippled. A party was organized to board the boat but the enemy set fire to it, abandoned and burned it."¹

The Union army's account of the battle is very similar. According to the statement of Lt. Sylvester B. Partridge of the U.S. Signal Corps, when Union General Graham brought his gunboats up the Appomattox River, they came under fire from Fort Clifton. Partridge noted that although the gunboats returned the fire, they were at a considerable disadvantage due to the elevated position of the Confederate fort.

Confederate Colonel Abraham Fulkerson described the May 9th landside fighting in the vicinity of Fort Clifton which accompanied the naval confrontation. He wrote that early in the morning Federal troops appeared on the bluff opposite the fort and intense skirmishing commenced at once and lasted throughout the day. Confederate troops returned the Union fire from a defense line extending from Fort Clifton to a point two and one half miles southward. During the night of May 9th the Union troops crossed the river near the Dunlap house, south of Fort Clifton, and got a piece of artillery as far as the water's edge. They were driven back, however, and the Fort Clifton area continued to be held by the Confederates. Two men were killed in the encounter and several others were slightly wounded.

In June 1864 Fort Clifton came under attack a second time. At 8:30 A.M. on June 10th, Lt. Commander Amos P. Foster of the U.S. Steamer Commodore Peery opened fire on Fort Clifton, bombarding it with his 100 pound Parrott guns. Shots fired by the Confederates in retaliation fell short of their target as Foster dropped downriver out of range after his attack. After three hours shelling by the Union armed steamer, one of Confederate guns had been dismantled and another struck. Although Foster reported that

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the Confederates had left the fort by 2 P.M., he noted that they were, at the time of his writing, working diligently to repair it. He continued to fire upon Fort Clifton until 5 P.M. The armed steamer was not without casualties, for one of its Parrott guns exploded killing several men who were buried at nearby Point of Rocks.

On June 16th at 9:30 A.M. Union General B.F. Butler reported that his army's gunboats were again firing on Fort Clifton. At 4:45 P.M. Union artillery Captain W.F. Osborne communicated to his superior officers that there had been no responsive fire from Fort Clifton for two hours. At 7 P.M., General Graham sent two boats within 150 yards of the fort which, upon drawing close, were fired upon several times from the fort. The documentary record does not reveal whether federal efforts to capture the fort were successful or whether the Confederates made any attempt to restore it to service.

After the close of the Civil War, William H. Crow lost his battle-ravaged farm in an 1869 chancery suit. The Clifton tract subsequently was acquired by Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Donnan in 1871. It was re-sold several times in quick succession. In 1888 when J.E. La Prade drew his map of Chesterfield County, he identified the "Clifton" house and a small building nearby (Figure 6). Several other residences were shown in the general area.

In the early part of the 20th century the Clifton tract changed hands several times until 1947 when it was acquired by Frederick and Sophia Tussing, from whom Robert L. Berberich purchased it in 1968. On August 22, 1973 the property was bought by the city of Colonial Heights and was subsequently developed into a park.

The Fort Clifton Archaeological Site warrants inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register because it symbolizes for the people of Colonial Heights a major event in their local history. It is also significant as a representative example of Civil War military architecture. Moreover, Fort Clifton is of public significance at the present time because it is an educational and recreational facility and tourist attraction. Although the fort is not particularly unique architecturally, its location within a public recreational facility provides an unusually good opportunity for public educational and appreciation

M.W.M.

Footnote:

1. War of the Rebellion, Series, Vol. 36, 243.

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	9	1

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Gilmer, J.F., "Chesterfield County," 1863.

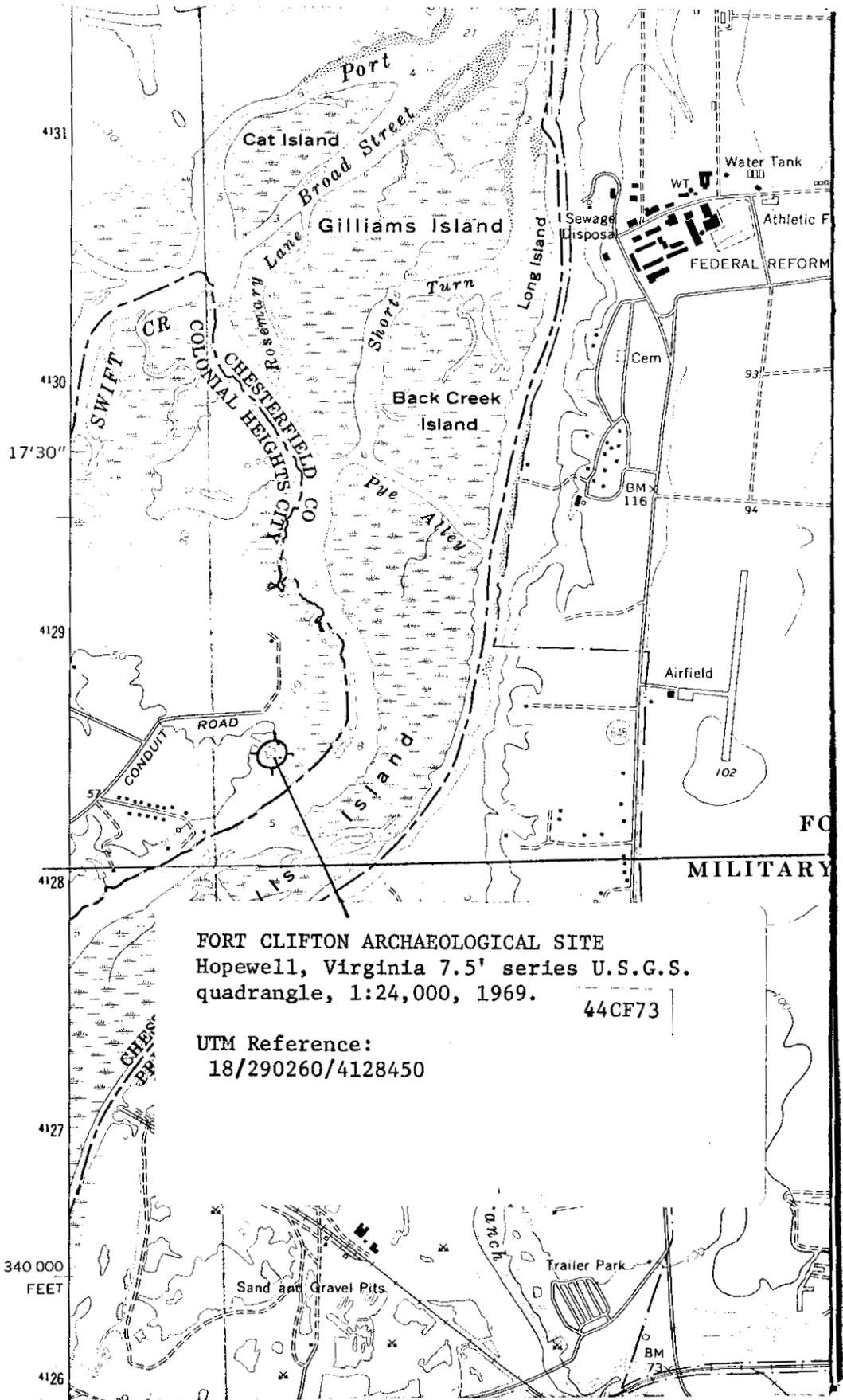
LaPrade, J.E., "Chesterfield County," 1888.

Lutz, Francis E., Chesterfield, An Old Virginia County, (Richmond, 1954).

Michler, N. and A.A. Humphreys, "Bermuda Hundred Map," 1867.

Nugent, Nell M., Cavaliers and Pioneers, Vol. I, (Baltimore, 1969).

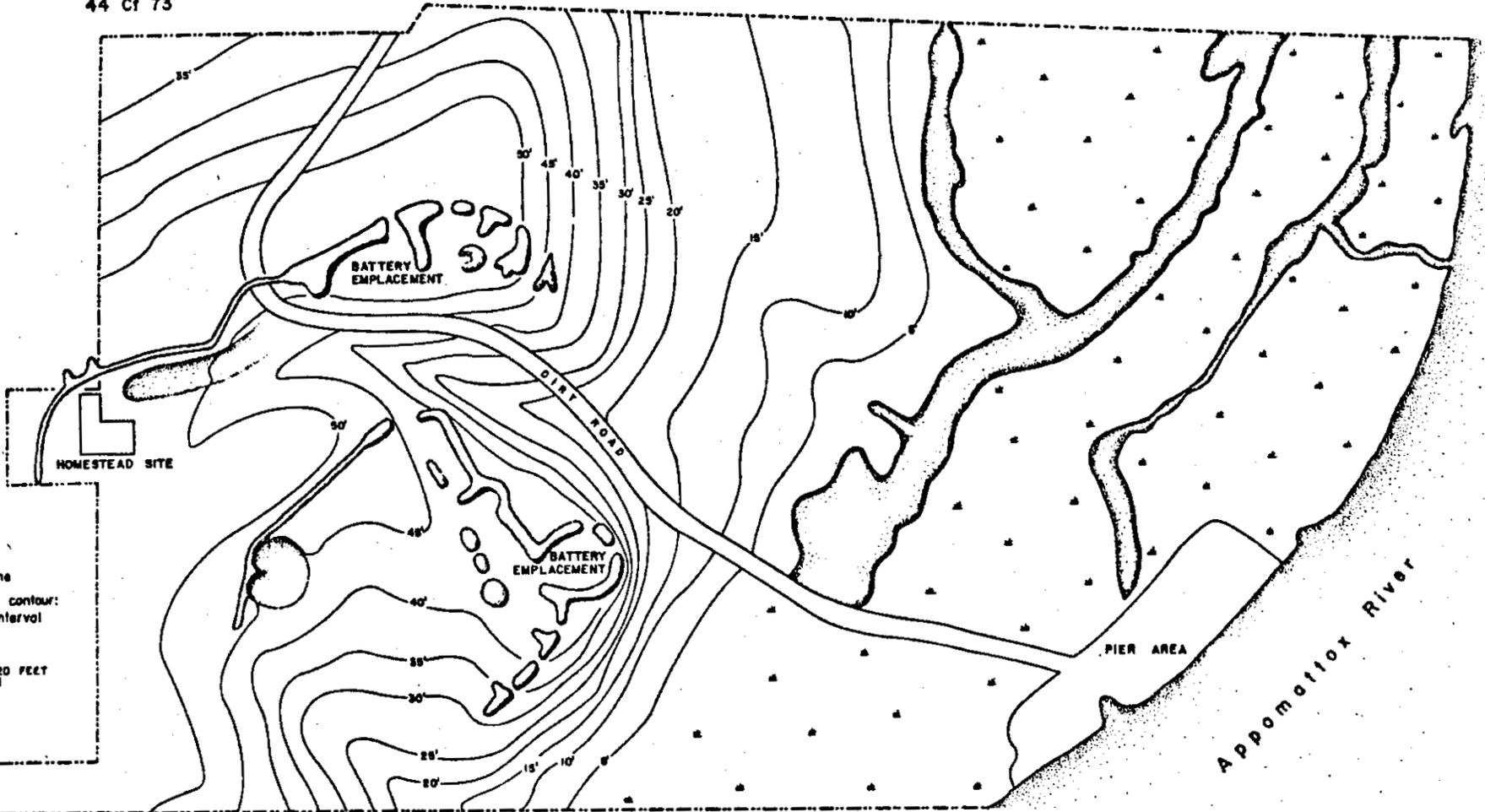
Secretary of War, War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series 1, Volume 3, Part 2, "Correspondence and Operations in Southeastern Virginia and North Carolina, May and June 1864," (United States Government Printing Office: Washington 1880 and 1907).



FORT CLIFTON ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE
 Hopewell, Virginia 7.5' series U.S.G.S.
 quadrangle, 1:24,000, 1969. 44CF73

UTM Reference:
 18/290260/4128450

FORT CLIFTON HISTORICAL PARK
CIVIL WAR EARTHWORKS
COLONIAL HEIGHTS, VIRGINIA
44 CF 73



KEY

- property line
 - topographic contour:
five foot interval
 - ▲▲ marshland
- 0 60 120 FEET