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Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

047-0078

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Chickahominy Shipyard
AND/OR COMMON Chickahominy Shipyard Archaeological Site (Preferred)

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER [REDACTED]
CITY, TOWN Toano VICINITY OF 1st, Paul S. Tribble
STATE Virginia CODE 51 COUNTY James City CODE 95

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME J. Gary Menzel
STREET & NUMBER Box 386
CITY, TOWN Toano VICINITY OF STATE Virginia 23168

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. James City County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER Court Street
CITY, TOWN Williamsburg, STATE Virginia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Virginia Research Center for Archaeology Site Survey File and The Toano Report, a student thesis by Dennis Short
DATE VRCA survey, 1971; Short, 1977
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Virginia Research Center for Archaeology, Wren Kitchen, College of William and Mary
CITY, TOWN 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 DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Chickahominy Shipyard site, at which many ships were constructed for the Virginia Navy between 1777 and 1781, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Although the shipyard tract originally consisted of 119 acres of land, much of the property was purchased for timber supply. Consequently archaeological remains are confined to the acreage immediately adjacent to the river bank. Beneath the surface of the river lie the remains of at least two colonial shipwrecks. (Figure 1)

Test excavations at the Chickahominy Shipyard [REDACTED] revealed the foundation remains of a structure measuring twelve feet by eighteen feet, which artifactually dates to the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century. At the shoreline 336 feet away, the remains of a ship slip were located and found to be directly in front of the test excavated structure. Three timber skids, submerged beneath the water, are in an excellent state of preservation. The modern day property owner has indicated that in 1956 several timbers were removed from this area to facilitate the construction of a pier. (Figure 2)

[REDACTED] a skid ramp for the launching of ships. [REDACTED]; it measures fifty-two feet wide [REDACTED] and narrows to twenty-six feet [REDACTED]. Nine slip timbers, measuring twelve inches by twelve feet extend thirty-seven feet out into the Chickahominy River. The total width of the timbered ship area is twenty-six feet. This skid ramp and boat slip appear to be unaltered since their original construction, although winter ice in the river has eroded some of the slip timbers. An additional brick foundation [REDACTED] has been located and superficially tested. (Figure 3)

Just beyond the shipyard launching area lies the remains of two shipwrecks dating to the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century. A detailed underwater survey of one of these wrecks indicates that the ship is 100 feet in length by thirty-five feet in width. Ribs, measuring eight inches in width and five inches in thickness are placed fourteen inches apart, six to eight feet from the base of the wreck. A second shipwreck, lying adjacent, awaits further investigation.

Artifactual remains found during the underwater survey at the sites included wrought nails, cannon balls, barred shot, charred bone, stone ballast, and a rigging block. Sport divers, who have frequently visited the site over the years by paying the landowner a small fee for permission to dive, are said to have removed eighteenth century wine bottles, cannon balls, and many other artifacts.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The area nominated to the National Register includes the actual shipyard area and land containing two prehistoric sites as defined by archaeological survey, as well the adjacent portion of the Chickahominy River [REDACTED]. Natural boundaries were selected where practicable.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1777-1781

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Builder: W. Pointer

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

[REDACTED] are the substantial archaeological remains of the Chickahominy Shipyard, the site of the state shipyard of the Virginia Navy during the Revolutionary War. This site consists of nautical and dry land components and represents the only known, essentially intact archaeological site of its type in the state of Virginia. Shipbuilding activities at this site are well documented in several primary resources.

Early in 1776 the Virginia Committee of Safety decided to establish a small navy for the protection of the Colony during the impending war. To implement this plan, on May 6, 1776 they created a Board of Naval Commissioners who were instructed to superintend and direct the building and repairing of all vessels, to provide the ordnance, provisions, naval stores and timber necessary to the construction of all State Navy vessels and to supervise all public ropewalks, dockyards and shipyards.

As part of their duties, the Naval Board was to procure several armed vessels from owners of the merchant fleet and to seek out suitable locations for the construction of state shipyards. Several men were dispatched to search for suitable riverine locations accessible to iron and timber.

On June 1, 1776, John Herbert, Master Shipbuilder, "was empowered to engage ship carpenters to examine and view all such places on James River or its branches as he may think proper and convenient for erecting shipyards." ¹ He selected a site [REDACTED] on the Chickahominy River, [REDACTED]

On April 3, 1777, a warrant was issued by the Naval Board for 595 £ to be paid to Phillip Johnson, James Bray Johnson, and Willian Johnson, for a 119 acre tract in James City County "in behalf of the Commonwealth, for the use of a shipyard on the Chickahominy River." ² Virginia Gazette advertisements for adjacent property offered for sale by the same Messers Johnson indicate that the area as well timbered and convenient to saw and gristmills. As well, the land lay in a relatively sheltered location [REDACTED]. The river water at that point, although brackish, would have had a reduced saline level, a natural deterrent to the teredo worm incursion which plagued the colonial shipping industry.

Although various French cartographers who carefully mapped the Williamsburg vicinity failed to specifically designate the shipyard site, an 1823 plat of adjacent property labels the area "shipyard" and defines its southern and eastern boundaries. Two maps of James City County, executed in 1863 and 1864 by Confederate cartographer J.F. Gilmer, identify the area as "Shipyard Landing."

(see Continuation Sheet #1)

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On March 22, 1777, Naval Board Commissioner Thomas Whiting notified John Herbert that the Board has "agreed with W. Pointer...to give him 6 £ 5 shillingsff month for himself and his Negro men, who are assisting in building the necessary houses at the Shipyard on the Chickahominy." ³ Although extant records do not describe precisely what sort of structures stood at the Shipyard, test excavations have revealed the foundation remains of two buildings associated with the site, artifactually dating to the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century and structurally examples of eighteenth century architecture. A sawpit, the residences of the Shipyard superintendent and the paymaster, and two boatslips are known to be at the Shipyard. Warehouses, which would have housed naval stores, would be expected to have been located nearby.

Based upon the invoices contained in the Navy Account Book, 1776-1781, shipbuilding and repair activity at the Chickahominy Shipyard commenced at some point prior to June 3, 1777. Records for that date indicate that numerous coils of rope, intended for the Scorpion and cable for the Experiment, were sent to the "Shipyard at Chickahominy." By August 1777 mainsail, careening-fall, skeens of mountline, leadlines, cordage, and hemp were dispatched to the Shipyard. Much of it was supplied by the public ropewalk at Warwick. One hundred bushels of coal were purchased for the smithing operations essential to shipbuilding. Six crosscut saws and eighteen whipsaw files were also purchased for the shipyard. Expenditures for various types of materiel, set down in the Navy Account Book, span the shipyard's entire history and reflect the scope of its operations.

In an effort to attract shipyard workers, the Virginia Assembly, on March 7, 1778, decided to exempt from military service all ships carpenters and blacksmiths and the joiners and clerks associated with the shipbuilding industry. Although extant records for the Chickahominy Shipyard fail to disclose the identity of the laborers working at the Shipyard, a November 8, 1780 order to the Commissary of Stores directs that "a sufficiency of Winter Clothing for fifteen negro fellows and 2 wenches employed at the Chickahominy Shipyard" be provided. ⁴ A December 7, 1780 letter written by James Maxwell to the Governor requested clothing "for 26 men, 52 shirts, 26 jackets and breeches-stockings, hats, or caps." ⁵ As well, 18,679 £ 14 shillings 6 pence was said to be due to the same workmen for their labors of October 1780.

In addition to being furnished their clothing, Chickahominy Shipyard workers were provided with food. State Navy records indicate that staples such as flour and corn were regularly supplied to them by the Naval Commissary. Occasional hogheads of rum were also earmarked for the use of shipyard employees. A November 8, 1780 record indicates that a stove was sent from King George Magazine for the use of the Shipyard. Because both food and clothing were supplied to these workers, it is quite probable that many of them resided on the premises.

(see Continuation Sheet #2)

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From its beginning, the Chickahominy Shipyard was under the direction of Captain James Maxwell, a post which, according to the diary of his daughter, Mary, he accepted at the personal request of General George Washington. The Maxwell family resided there until the shipyard was destroyed by fire in 1781. Maxwell corresponded frequently with the Naval Board and the Governor regarding conditions and production at the shipyard, thus reflecting its significance in the Virginia military theatre.

Other supervisory personnel associated with the Chickahominy Shipyard who appear in Naval records are Johnathan Browne, who served as clerk and paymaster during the initial years of operation and Issac Smith who succeeded Browne in September 1780. The agreement between Smith and the Navy Commissioners stated that he would willingly live at the Shipyard and accept one rations per day for sustenance.

Although John Herbert served as master shipbuilder in 1777 when the shipyard was established, by 1780, a "William Cole, Builder" was directing vessel construction. However an April 4, 1781 letter from James Maxwell to the Governor states that "we have lost our builder by Death and have employed another who seems equally capable." 6

State Navy records indicate that the Chickahominy Shipyard was a very active military installation. The ships Thetis and Jefferson were constructed there as were many other naval vessels. Numerous Virginia naval craft were also repaired and outfitted at the Chickahominy Shipyard. Virginia Gazette advertisements for deserters indicate that in October 1778 the galley Safe Guard was docked there and in September 1779 the ship Tartar was at that locale. During the summer of 1779 the Dragon, the brig Jefferson, and the galley Manly were located at the Shipyard.

In October 1779 the Assembly decided to dispose of several ships including the Tartar and the Dragon. A July 15, 1780 advertisement in the Virginia Gazette offers "for ready money the Ships Tartar and Dragon, the said Ships are in very good repair and tolerably well found." 7 Correspondence between James Maxwell and the Governor on October 1780 indicates that several state vessels were lying in readiness for mobilization at the Shipyard.

A few months later, on January 16, 1781, Governor Thomas Jefferson wrote to James Maxwell, enclosing plans for building portable boats as recommended by General Washington and requesting that twenty of them be built without delay. He also solicited Maxwell's advice regarding any advantageous design modifications. Jefferson ordered the construction of several bateaux to be accomplished by a specialist in bateau building; these boats were to be used in the James River above the falls.

(see Continuation Sheet #3)

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quantity of ball were at Chickahominy Shipyard and that three eighteen pounders, five swivel cannon, six six-pounders and five four pounders were at Diascund Bridge." ¹¹ The latter eleven cannon were considered damaged.

A June 4, 1804 letter from John Clarke to the Governor states that "there are several pieces of iron ordinance at the Shipyard," among which are one eighteen pounder and one twelve pounder. He adds that he was told that when the British attack commenced, "several pieces of cannon were thrown into a sawpit near the said shipyard, where they now lie buried." ¹² As well, four or five pieces remained at Diascund.

Except for late nineteenth century deed references to the shipyard tract, the Chickahominy Shipyard slipped into obscurity. The shipyard land was purchased by the Warren family, whose descendants owned it until 1894 when 100 acres, which included the shipyard construction site, was purchased by George Menzel, a German immigrant. In subsequent years Menzel family members acquired several hundred acres surrounding the original purchase of their immigrant ancestor.

The Chickahominy shipyard site is significant because it is the only intact state shipyard site in a state which uniquely had its own navy. Although Virginia navy ships were also constructed at Gosport in Norfolk, all traces of the Gosport shipyard have been destroyed by subsequent construction.

Archaeological excavation of the Chickahominy Shipyard site would be likely to yield previously unavailable information regarding shipbuilding technique in colonial Virginia within a tightly circumscribed time period. Such an excavation would provide a unique opportunity to study military maritime architecture from several perspectives, the actual construction areas as well as the sunken shipwrecks adjacent to the shipyard, which exemplify the type of ships built for the Virginia Navy. Excavations of the dry land components would also be expected to yield considerable insight into the life ways of workers in an eighteenth century shipbuilding complex.

As a military site which figured significantly in the outcome of the Revolutionary War in Tidewater Virginia, preservation of this important site, which is currently threatened by both erosion and the incursion of sport divers, would be encouraged by the placement of this property on the National Register of Historic Places. Because it lies in a remote, little developed area, it offers an excellent opportunity for in situ preservation.

(see Continuation Sheet #5)

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FOOTNOTES

1. Journal of Council of State, Vol. II, Pg. 513.
2. Journal of the Navy Board, Vol. II, April 3, 1777.
3. Virginia Papers Concerning the State Navy, 1776-1784, Vol. I-A, March 22, 1777.
4. Ibid, Vol. I-B-H, November 8, 1780.
5. Calendar of State Papers, Vol. I, pg. 396.
6. Ibid, Vol. 2, pg. 9.
7. Claibourne's Williamsburg Virginia Gazette, July 15, 1780, pg.2.
8. Calendar of State Papers, Vol. 2, pg.9.
9. Ibid, Vol. 2, pg 65.
10. Ibid, Vol 2, pg. 69.
11. Ibid, Vol. 4, pg. 106.
12. Ibid, Vol. 9, pg 400.

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Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (Richmond, 1922)

Virginia Historical Register

William and Mary Quarterly, Series 1 and 2

The Navy of the American Revolution, C.O. Paullin (New York, 1971)

Calendar of State Papers (Richmond)

Revolutionary War Records, Vol. I, Virginia, G.M. Brumbaugh (Wash., 1936)

Journal of the Council of the State of Virginia, H.R. McIlwaine (Richmond, 1931)

History of Virginia's Navy of the Revolution, R.A. Stewart (Richmond, 1923)

The Virginia Gazette

Virginia Papers Concerning the State Navy, 1776-1784, Vols. I-A and I-B-H (Mariners Museum)

Virginia Navy Account Book, 1776-1781 (Mariners Museum)

Virginia Journal of the Navy Board, Vol. I (Mariners Museum)

"Plat of a piece of the land surveyed for Robert Anderson," 1823 (Yorktown Customhouse)

"The Vicinity of Richmond and the Peninsula," J.F. Gilmer, 1863 and 1864

"The Toano Report," Dennis B. Short, n.p.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Some Notes on Shipbuilding and Shipping in Colonial Virginia, C.W. Evans, Va. Anniversary Celebration (Richmond, 1957)

Statutes at Large, W.W. Hening (Richmond, 1820)

Lower Norfolk County, Virginia Antiquary

(see Continuation Sheet #6)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 136 acres

UTM REFERENCES

			Easting			Northing		
A	[REDACTED]							
B	[REDACTED]							
C	[REDACTED]							
D	[REDACTED]							

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

[REDACTED]

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 Nick Lucchetti

January 5, 1978

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Research Center for Archaeology

DATE

804-253-4836

STREET & NUMBER

Wren Kitchen, College of William and Mary

TELEPHONE

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Tucker Hill, Executive Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

FEB 26 1979

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER