99-19 VLR 9-11-02
NR 6/23/03

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name ___Sessions-Pope-Sheild House

other names/site number: Sheild House, Sessions House_____#99-0019

2. Location

street & number __600 Main Street_____ not for publication N/A
city or town _____Yorktown_____ vicinity ___
state __Virginia_____ code _VA___ county ___York_____ code 199
zip code ____23690_

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official Date 9/22/03

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

_____ _____
Signature of commenting or other official Date

_____
State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ entered in the National Register _____ _____
___ See continuation sheet.

____ determined eligible for the _____ _____
National Register
___ See continuation sheet.

____ determined not eligible for the _____ _____
National Register
____ removed from the National Register _____ _____

____ other (explain): _____

_____ _____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

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5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)
_X_ private
___ public-local
___ public-State
___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)
_X_ building(s)
___ district
___ site
___ structure
___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
___1_	__1__	buildings
___1_	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
_____	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register __1_

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
_Yorktown Historic District_____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: __Domestic_____ Sub: _Single Dwelling_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: ___Domestic_____ Sub: ___Single Dwelling_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
__Colonial–Southern Colonial/Georgian_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
foundation ____brick_____
roof _____stone_____
walls _____ brick_____
other _____wood_____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

____ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

____ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

_X_ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

_X_ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

____ B removed from its original location.

____ C a birthplace or a grave.

____ D a cemetery.

____ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

____ F a commemorative property.

____ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture_____
Archaeology–Historic Non-Aboriginal
Exploration/Settlement_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Period of Significance __c. 1691–1775__
_____
_____

Significant Dates c. 1691-1775

_____

_____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
_____N/A_____

Cultural Affiliation ___N/A_____

_____

_____

Architect/Builder ___N/A_____

_____

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)
___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data
_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other
Name of repository: ___Virginia Department of Historic Resources_____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property __.5_____

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	216600	2166720	3	__	_____	_____
2	__	_____	_____	4	__	_____	_____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title___Meg Greene Malvasi_____

organization_____ date__June 2002_____

street & number_13803 Sterlings Bridge Rd_____ telephone_804-763-3595_____

city or town__Midlothian_____ state_VA_ zip code __23112_____

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Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name ___Mr. Conway H. Sheild III_____

street & number___22 Paula Maria Drive_____ telephone__757-596-5373_____

city or town___Newport News_____ state__VA___ zip code _23606_____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.0. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Architectural Description

Summary Description

Standing on a half-acre lot at the corner of Nelson and Main Streets in Yorktown, Virginia is the one-and-a-half-story, brick Southern Colonial-styled dwelling known as the Sessions-Pope-Sheild House. Commonly known as the Sheild House, the structure is also an excellent example of a mid-eighteenth century masonry dwelling, with its Flemish bond brickwork and ornate north end chimney. The structure and its grounds have remained virtually untouched for almost three hundred years. One architectural historian has identified the home as being among the earliest southern colonial dwellings with a jerkin-head roof. Also notable are the large exterior entrance door and a handsomely carved central hall entrance in the interior of the house. The Sheild House has been continuously occupied as a single family dwelling since it was first built. Members of the current owner's family have occupied the home for one hundred years.

Detailed Description
Exterior

Positioned on an east-west axis and facing northeast toward the York River, the Sheild House is a rectangular-shaped block, five bays wide, two bays deep, and standing one-and-a-half-stories high. It rests on an English basement foundation. Command a view of Main Street, the home provides an interesting contrast to its neighbor, the stately Nelson House, located to the north. Across the street is are open green spaces. The home is situated on one half-acre and the grounds are filled with a number of trees and bushes native to the region. A small boxwood garden located in the rear yard is original to the lot.

The Sheild House is constructed of brick and laid in a Flemish bond that has been whitewashed. It provides an example of the brick produced in the vicinity of Yorktown during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The construction is distinctive for the use a mortar made from local oyster shells and coarse sand, often white or yellow in color. The joints on the exterior of the Sheild House still bear its "struck" joints, in which the exposed face joints were incised or "struck," with a tool or trowel point to give the appearance of a shadow line along the joints. This line also helped maintain the overall symmetry of the brickwork on the exterior. Articulating the first story and the English basement is a molded brick water table. The basement foundation is also constructed of brick, but laid in an English bond pattern.

The roof line is distinguished by its original modillion cornice and features a clipped-gable or jerkin-head roof. Covered with slate tiles, the roof eaves show evidence of eighteenth-century nails. Five clipped-gable roof dormers with slate tiles punctuate the front roof slope of the exterior facade; three similar dormers mark the rear, or south, slope. The home has two end T-shaped chimneys. Of the two, the west-end chimney displays a more masterful use of brick construction and is one of the dominant elements of the exterior design. The chimney is composed of a series of stepped masonry projections that climb toward the top; near the first-story level, the chimney is shouldered with a

Architectural Description (continued)

parapeted pent found on the south wall. Pent levels on each side of the chimney are found near the top, which is marked by corbeled brick caps. The east-wall chimney, although not as elaborate, is shouldered and topped with a similar corbelled brick cap.

The central entrance door of the Sheild House is marked by a one-story wood porch, an addition completed sometime during the middle to late nineteenth century. The porch rests on a brick base constructed of Flemish bond; a series of brick steps located to the west lead to the porch. The one-bay porch has a low hipped roof covered with composition shingles, a simple molded wood cornice, and is supported by four wood square columns resting on bases; a simple wood balustrade runs along the north and east side of the porch. The porch floor is vertical wood plank. Flanking either side of the central entrance door are wood pilasters that mirror the porch columns supporting the roof. The large wood eight-bevel paneled entrance door, measuring approximately eight feet high and forty-three inches wide, has a molded wood surround, and still has its original hardware and lockbox. A rear door is similar in size and decoration to the front.

The majority of the windows in the Sheild House are original to the home. The front facade openings are wood, 9/9 lights with molded wood surrounds and sills. Similar windows are also found on the first story gable ends of the home on either side of the chimney, and are topped with brick segmental arches. The windows in the gable ends themselves are wood, 2/2 lights; the dormer windows on both sides of the roof slopes are wood, 6/6 lights. All these windows have molded wood surrounds and sills. The basement windows located near the corners of the front facade are paired 2/2 lights with wood surrounds and sills. The two window openings directly on either side of the porch have been bricked over. All the basement windows are topped with brick segmental arches. At one time, the first story windows had paired wood shutters which have been removed.

Interior Description

The interior of the Sheild House is based on a central hall plan, a common house plan of eighteenth-century Virginia homes. This plan entailed a central passage with a single room on either side of the hallway. A staircase leading to the upper floor was also located in the central hall, usually toward the rear. In the Sheild House, however, certain modifications were made to this basic floor plan.

The central hall of the Sheild House is a large, spacious area measuring approximately 17 x 9 feet. At the end of the hall is a large central arched opening, clearly the home's most striking feature. This round-arched opening displays a fluted keystone and pilasters and a paneled spandrel, and leads to a small hallway that runs perpendicular to the central hall. The central hall has molded wood chair rails, which are also found in the dining room, located east of the hall.

Architectural Description (continued)

Two wood six-paneled doorways with H and L hinges lead to large rooms on the east and the west sides of the central hall. The windows in each of the front rooms are set back in deep reveals with paneled inner window shuts. These blinds fold back into deep-paneled jambs when not in use. Each blind consists of raised beveled wood panels with an architrave surround. In the dining room, the panel pattern is repeated underneath the chair railings. Directly underneath each of the front room windows are wood window seats.

The west room, now used as a living room, measures approximately 20 feet in length and 18 feet in width. It contains a fireplace with a simple molded wood surround, a stone hearth, and a brick chimney back. Directly above the surround is a patched area where the original mantle was once attached. The east room, now used as a dining room, is the same size. It also contains a fireplace, with a simple molded wood surround and mantle, which are not original to the house, a brick hearth, and a brick chimney back. A wood six-paneled door with H and L hinges is located along the south wall; this entrance leads to the small hall passage and the back stairs to the upper story. To the west of this small hallway is another room, considerably smaller and narrower than the front rooms. Occupants may once have used it as a parlor or sitting room. At the other end of the hall is the kitchen addition; a wood paneled door with a three-light transom marks the entrance. Directly to the south of the entrance is a small pantry/cupboard with paired wood doors. Another smaller closet with a wood plank door has been converted to a half-bathroom. The ceilings throughout the first floor are twelve feet in height and floors are oak plank throughout the house.

The stairway leading to the second floor consists of a slightly rounded series of wood steps that end in a small hallway at the top of the second floor. A simple wood railing with a square capped newel post and molded bannister distinguish the steps. The newel post, styled after a similar post found in the Nelson House, is particularly noteworthy. Two large bedrooms are located to the east and the west of the staircase. What were once two smaller rooms located in between the larger bedrooms have been converted to a storage closet and a bathroom. The west bedroom fireplace has a simple wood surround and mantle; the fireplace in the east room is similar.

The minimal changes made to the interior of the house reflect the need to update the dwelling as time passed. In addition to altering the use of space, the house also had been outfitted with radiators. Finally, the Sheild House contains a diverse mix of hardware ranging from the older colonial hinges to porcelain doorknobs, from and lock boxes on the doors to more recent brass hardware and early twentieth-century push-button switches for electricity. None of these changes in any way detract from or compromise the original appearance, which remains intact.

Architectural Description (continued)

Alterations/Additions

Like many older homes, the Sheild House has undergone a few alterations, each of which illustrates the manner in which the then-current owners used the living space and modified it to suit their needs.

Located in the southeast corner of the original house block is a one-story, wood kitchen addition, resting on a brick foundation. Constructed sometime in the mid-nineteenth century, the wood frame addition is covered with German siding painted white with corner boards. The slightly overhanging side-gable roof has a simple molded wood cornice with cornice returns, and is covered with composition shingles. The east wall openings consist of wood windows, 2/2 lights with simple wood surrounds and sills. On the north gable side is a single opening, also 2./2 with simple wood surrounds and sills. A small brick chimney with a corbeled cap pierces the northwest corner of the addition. Attached to the addition on the south wall is a smaller frame shed roof porch addition, also constructed of wood and covered with German siding, and resting on small brick piers. The roof is made of composition shingles. A side entrance on the east wall consists of a wood, four paneled door with a single transom light overhead. Next to this door facing the south is a small 6/6 window with wood surround. Located on the south wall of the shed addition are two 6/6 windows, also with simple wood surrounds.

Attached to the rear of the main house block is a one-story wood frame screened porch. Spanning three bays, the porch appears to be an early twentieth-century addition. The shed roof is covered with composite shingles; the porch floor is made of vertical wood planks. A series of brick steps lead from the central entrance screened door to the backyard.

One last addition is found at the northeast corner of the west wall. A series of brick steps lead to a basement level entrance wood paneled door that is protected by paired narrow screen doors. The entrance is sheltered by a the later addition of a low-hipped roof porch covered with composite shingles and supported by two slender wood posts resting on small brick caps.

The basement of the house is the one area of the Sheild House that has undergone the most extensive change. This area now consists of four rooms. The ceiling has been lowered and the walls covered with plasterboard, or in one room, with horizontal plank boards. Another room to the far east of the basement appears to have at one time been an office and was paneled with bird's eye maple. This room has suffered some termite damage, which has been repaired. It is not currently in use. A small room to the northwest now serves as a laundry.

Architectural Description (continued)

Other Resources

Located to the southeast of the house is the only outbuilding on the property, a garage built by the current owner's father around 1950. The garage construction shows great awareness of the architecture of the home, mirroring specific elements found in the main house. The square-shaped block is two bays wide and one bay deep, and is one-and-half-stories high. The gable-end roof is covered with composition shingles, and has raking eaves and a simple boxed wood cornice. Piercing the west slope of the roof is a single gable-front roofed dormer. On the rear east slope are two gable front roofed dormers; all three are covered with painted weatherboard. The dormer roofs have simple wood box cornices and raking eaves similar in spirit to the main roof line of the building. Each dormer has a 6/6 window with a wood surround. The front of the garage is marked by a pair of molded wood paneled garage doors. Located at the northeast corner of the building is a single wood paneled door and a single 6/6 window. In each gable end of the garage are small 2/2 windows with wood surrounds and brick sills. Among the more distinctive features of the building is a stepped brick chimney with corbeled cap located on the east wall of the garage, similar to the one found on the south wall of the main house.. Although the garage is a mid-twentieth century addition, its style and size do not detract from the house or the grounds. The garage is a noncontributing resource.

Another noteworthy aspect of the property is the brick wall that defines the north and west boundaries. The wall consists of three rows of brick arranged in a Flemish bond pattern. Topping the wall, in what appears to be a later addition, are two rows of slightly projecting brick in a running bond pattern. The wall is crowned by a concrete cap. The front entrance to the property is marked by two brick piers topped by stepped brick and concrete caps. The west wall spans only a short distance and ends just before the gravel driveway.

Archaeological Description

Summary Statement

The grounds surrounding the Sheild House are broken only by the modern two-car garage located to the rear of the house. This belies the appearance of what the house and grounds might have looked like at any other time during its 300+ history after the establishing of Yorktown.

According to David Hazzard, state archaeologist with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, a number of factors indicated the potential for sub-surface features on the property. These include irregularities in the land surface, and a documentary history with references to various structures on the property as seen in the early Mutual Assurance Insurance policies which list at least three buildings for which no above ground evidence exists. Also to be taken into

Architectural/Archaeological Description (continued)

account are the existing remains (piers) of an earlier structure since pulled down, and the results of initial archaeological tests which have located a colonial brick wall, and a marl corner to a building. In March, 2002, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) spent two days examining the yard and excavating two units. These were done in an effort first, to determine whether the property had archaeological remains and second, to see whether those remains, if present, might hold potential for providing important information. Three colonial walls were located with this testing indicating integrity and potential for providing important information.

Brick Foundation/Marl Foundation

Two units were excavated on the property. A 2' x 3' test excavation (unit 1) was conducted 40 feet south of the south wall of the Sheild House, slightly east of an imaginary line running through the center of the house. Six inches below the modern grade of the yard, remains of two buildings were discovered. (Figure 18) The first was a brick foundation, 1-1/2 bricks wide, laid in English bond, held together with shell mortar. Both the bond and mortar are characteristic of colonial construction material. At least nine courses of brick were exposed to a depth of 2' 10" below grade, with the wall continuing further down. Abutting the south side of the brick wall was the northwest corner of another building, with a foundation was of marl. The bottom of this wall lay 1 foot 1 inch below modern grade.

Southeast of unit 1, a 3' x 3 ½' unit was excavated (Unit 2). Here the southeast corner of a building was located. The base of the corner was marl with mortar atop, upon which brick appeared to have been laid. The top of the surviving section lay 4" below grade and extend to one foot below grade. Artifacts in the soil overlying the foundation ranged from colonial to modern.

The two corners of marl discovered define a building approximately 10 feet square. Probing east and west along the brick wall discovered suggests the wall might measure at least 16 feet before turning to the south. These walls define a basement or cellar at partially backfilled with brick.

Structural Remains

To the east centered along the present-day lot line, brick piers survive obscured in the low-lying underbrush. Spaced somewhat regularly, the piers delineate a structure that would have been at a minimum of 14 ½ ' E-W by 24 ½
N-S. Oral history from the present resident indicated that there had been a shed here which her mother had taken down years ago to prevent it serving as a haven for snakes. Some concrete pads at or slightly below the grass level suggest step locations or something other to this building.

Architectural Description (continued)

Ground Irregularities

To the west of the 'shed' are two shallow low lying earthen ridges roughly 8-10 feet wide. These are parallel to one another approximately 36 feet apart, are oriented east-west and extend at least 50 feet to the west. Elsewhere on the property there are very shallow depressions in the ground surface.

Brick Configurations

On the west side of the porch which is attached to the south wall of the house, archaeologists discovered the presence of projecting brick, a segmental brick arch in the wall, and ghost paint lines. This evidence strongly suggests the possibility of the earlier presence of a bulkhead entrance to the basement of the house at this location. (Figure 19)

Landscape Observations

Among the earliest observations made about the Sheild House property was the contour of the lot to the east of the house as it fronts Main Street and as it may relate to the ground beyond, to the north. Immediately on the other side of Main Street is the Great Valley Road. The road today is traversed by a footpath connecting Water Street on the Yorktown waterfront to Main Street. A huge drop in elevation and the wide nature of the 'valley' immediately across the road from the Sheild House strongly suggests that the Sheild lot saw considerable filling to level the lot, as it would have been necessary to level Main Street at this location. If this 'valley' in some measure extended further south into the Sheild lot, perhaps the earthen ridges mentioned earlier served as baffles to the runoff that must have surely taken place here over the centuries.

Statement of Significance
Summary Statement

Located at the corner of Main and Nelson Streets in Yorktown, Virginia is the property known as the Sheild House, considered one of the finest examples of colonial architecture in the region and the state. This property is eligible for consideration for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, in that the building is an excellent example of an eighteenth-century Southern Colonial brick residence, which exhibits important examples of colonial craftsmanship, and Criterion D, that the Sheild House may have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. The Sheild House is a one-a-half-story brick home with a distinctive roof line, the likes of which was not often seen in early southern colonial architecture. The home has been continuously occupied since its construction in the mid-eighteenth century, with members of the current owner's family living in the house for more than one hundred years. As a result, the home has been maintained in such as way that the majority of the original features are intact. The significance of this property does not lie in who lived in the house or in the role the house played in the historic events that took place in and around Yorktown. Rather, the structure itself is significant, making invaluable contributions to the architectural history of Virginia. In addition, irregularities in the lot topography, the surviving historical record, references to outbuildings such as a smokehouse, kitchen and school, the identification of two buildings below modern grade and their location, orientation, construction materials, and other factors address the integrity of archaeological remains and the potential for those remains to provide important new information.

Detailed Statement

The village of Yorktown, Virginia lies twelve miles north of Jamestown and is situated on the banks of the York River, the shortest but one of the deepest of the major rivers leading into the Chesapeake Bay. Settled in 1622, Yorktown had grown into a thriving community with a population of about 3,000 persons by the early eighteenth century. During the early years of its existence Yorktown served as a major commercial center, among the largest and busiest ports between Philadelphia and Charleston. The Yorktown District encompassed the York, Poquoson, and Pankatank Rivers, as well as Mobjack Bay and other harbors. It was one of six colonial customs districts in Virginia.[1]

When the village of Yorktown was originally laid out in 1691, the port town was allocated 50 acres, which was then divided into 85 half-acre lots, each measuring 132 feet by 165 feet. On those lots a number of businesses and residences were constructed. In March 1692, the trustees of Yorktown assigned Lot 56, located on the south side of Main Street at the head of the Great Valley, which led directly to the waterfront, to Thomas Sessions. As required by law, Sessions had to build some type of residence on the lot within the year or forfeit ownership.[2]

Statement of Significance (continued)

Little is known of Thomas Sessions. According to early colonial records he was a carpenter and an active member of the community. He appears in records on a number of occasions serving as a witness to various legal proceedings. Unfortunately, Sessions was also the defendant in numerous court cases involving the nonpayment of debts.[3] Despite his precarious financial situation, Sessions built a dwelling of some sort on his property as required by law. It is doubtful, however, that the brick Sheild House was that building. (See discussion that follows). Not only did Sessions retain the ownership of Lot 56, but in 1699 he somehow managed to purchase the adjoining Lot 57, and now listed his occupation as "Inholder," suggesting that the Sessions House was not exclusively or even primarily a residence, but served as an ordinary for the town.[4]

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Sheild House and Lot 57 passed through a series of owners. In January, 1702, Sessions sold his property to a Robert Snead, listed as a "Gentleman." At this time, Sneed added a store and storehouse to the property. A little more than a year later, in October 1703, Snead sold the house to a merchant named John Penton who, in November 1703, sold the property to John Martin, another Yorktown merchant. Martin retained ownership of the property for less than two years, selling it in June 1705 back to Penton. In 1708, Penton again sold the house to a Nicholas Phillips. This time, though, Lot 57 was not part of the transaction.[5]

The Sheild House remained in the Phillips family until 1746 when the property was sold to John Norton of King William County. A merchant, Norton disposed of the back portion of Lot 56 by selling it to George Wilson, but subsequently regained ownership. Norton then sold all of Lot 56 to Dr. Matthew Pope in 1766, who most likely built the brick house which stands there today. Based on available records, Dr. Pope appears to have been a successful surgeon in Yorktown, serving in the Revolutionary War, where at one point he served as head of the Yorktown military hospital. A list of taxable articles for the area published in 1783, shows Dr. Pope to have owned 1 slave and two horses, as well as an employee in residence, suggesting a man of some means. After the war, Dr. Pope was active in local Yorktown affairs, being appointed as a trustee of the town in 1784, and later serving as mayor in 1788. In 1792, under the terms of Dr. Pope's will, Mary Carter, the wife of Robert Carter, received the property. Four years later, in 1796, the Carters sold the home and lot to Thomas Nelson for the sum of Ł500.[6]

The Nelsons owned the property until May, 1821, when they sold it to Dr. Frederick B. Power. One contemporary account notes that Lot 56 was occupied by a building "of some substance" with a "smaller one behind having some kind of little appendage," likely a reference to a kitchen outbuilding.[7] During Dr. Power's ownership, a number of mutual assurance policies were issued that provide a detailed description of the house. The first policy, issued in 1838, mentions a "Dwelling of brick," one and half-stories in height, covered with wood, measuring 46 by 26 feet. The value of the property was estimated at $1700. In addition to the house, there was a frame, wood-sided kitchen outbuilding located in the south corner of the property; near it was a smokehouse. Opposite these two buildings on the cross street was a larger wood structure described as a "School house."[8]

Statement of Significance (continued)

An 1853 insurance policy shows that the house now belonged to Frederick W. Power, the heir of Frederick B. Power. The dimensions (50 feet by 27 feet) suggest that an addition to the structure had been made at some point, though it remains uncertain when the kitchen addition and the rear and front porches were added. A photograph taken in 1862 shows a porch that looks much the same as the one currently gracing the front entrance.[9] During the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, the house changed ownership three more times. Sometime after the Civil War, ownership passed to W. D. Shurtz. In 1879, Shurtz sold the property to Fanny B. Nelson, who in turn sold it in 1901 to her first cousin, Judge Conway Howard Sheild for the sum of $500. Since that time, the property has remained in the Sheild's family. [10]

Although not its principal significance, the Sheild House has played a small role in the history of the area. During the Civil War, after Confederate forces under the command of John B. Magruder at last abandoned Yorktown, the Sheild House served as the field headquarters for Union General Henry M. Naglee, who, according to one historical account, used the front parlor as an office. During the Sheilds's ownership, a number of distinguished visitors have come to the house, including Presidents Wilson, Harding, Hoover, and Franklin D. Roosevelt.[11]

A number of local histories suggest that Thomas Sessions built the brick dwelling that now stands on Lot 56, but physical and documentary evidence fixes the date of construction of the Sheild House sometime prior to the 1770s. The style of house and the materials used in its construction suggest that the Sheild House was built early in the period of the Dr. Pope's ownership. Two additional pieces of information support this thesis. The first is an illustration of Main Street in Yorktown done in 1755 that shows no evidence of a brick house like the Sheild House occupying Lot 56. The second is an advertisement appearing in the *Virginia Gazette* in 1768, two years after Matthew Pope acquired the lot, that provides a description of building similar to that of the Sheild House.[12]

Based on style of construction, materials used. and available documentation, it also seems fairly certain that additions made to the house were completed before 1862. The result is the creation of a residence that embodies the vernacular architecture of the southern colonies, reflecting elements of formal design elements while incorporating distinctive influences that suited the means, tastes, and needs of the occupants.

This accumulation of elements makes the style of the Sheild House difficult to identify with precision. Although the symmetry and material show a marked familiarity with the Georgian style, the distinctive roof line and T-chimneys point to an earlier English postmedieval style. Combining "natural" and "artificial" materials in construction and ornament, the Sheild House further demonstrates the architectural philosophy that prevailed in the colonies during the mid-to-late-eighteenth century. The elements present in Georgian or Palladian architecture expressed concerns about social order and status that dominated much of eighteenth-century life and thought. The symmetry of plan, fenestration, and decoration signified an "imposed order." The effort to impose order also

Statement of Significance (continued)
dominated the interior design, arranging the floor plan to control movement within the house. Upon entering the Sheild House from the front, for example, the door swings inward to obstruct the hall and living room and to direct visitors' line of sight and movement toward the dining room. With the front door functioning as a barrier, the isolation of the hall and living room, considered the most formal and most important rooms in the house, was even more pronounced.

The emphasis on order, whether in architecture, government, or life, reflected concerns about the growing fluidity and potential for upheaval in colonial society. "Good order is the Strength and Beauty of the World," declared the Reverend Charles Chauncey of Boston in a characteristic statement. "The Prosperity both of Church and State depends very much upon it."[13] At the same time, architectural and design innovations such as those incorporated into the Sheild House indicated the extraordinary opportunities for upward social and economic mobility in the English, as compared to the French and Spanish, colonies. In British North America a man who made money could rise about his origins, however humble, and aspire to a higher social station. Their homes, from the plantation houses to the colonial mansions to the townhouses of the prosperous middle class are architectural metaphors of these possibilities. During the period in which the Sheild House was most likely constructed there was, for instance, a noticeable increase in the availability of architectural pattern books in the British North American colonies. These relatively inexpensive style books offered colonial builders and craftsmen an opportunity to use established styles and forms, while remolding them to fit the elevated tastes of their clients and to accommodate the materials available in their locality or region. In seventeenth- century Virginia, residents made use of traditional English house plans with little deviation from the established one-and-a-half-story residence with two rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs.

By the eighteenth century, however, a number of changes were occurring in the design of Virginia homes, particularly in the incorporation of a central passageway and the departure from a two-deep room pattern.[14] In an effort to economize space while maintaining a symmetrical exterior, many Virginians rethought the interior plan of the house. They abandoned the traditional four-room plan for reasons of economy and use, and instead relied on a three-room plan such as did the builders of the Sheild House. The smaller back or "third" chamber was not an afterthought, but rather a way for builders to incorporate a needed room, whether for sleeping, nursing, or reading, into the overall house plan without disrupting the exterior appearance of the home. Thus, although the outside of the Sheild House suggests a three bay wide, single pile deep house, the interior in reality is something very different.

In many colonial homes of the mid- to late-eighteenth century the central passage performed both a social and a service function. The central passage in the Sheild House offers a good example of this design innovation, securing both residents and visitors from the outside. In addition, as in many plantation homes built during the first half of the eighteenth century, the central passageway cut people off from the rest of the house thus making it possible for residents to control access to other rooms in the house. To provide the residents with an even greater sense of

Statement of Significance (continued)

privacy, the architect of the Sheild House located the stairway to the second floor at the rear of the house. According to architectural historian, Dell Upton, in this way the central hallway functioned as "an entry to the *first* floor" since entering the home visitors saw no evidence of a second floor.[15] This innovative placement of the staircase was often found in homes, such as the Sheild House, that were a story-and-a-half.

With its design features intact, the Sheild House remains a fine example of a mid-eighteenth-century floor plan. The hall served as a public and formal room that was not accessible to any other room on the first floor. The dining room, a semipublic space like the central passage, helped negotiate inside and outside space; its exterior door (in this case, the door opening on the south wall) led to the stairway, and later connected to the kitchen. In Upton's view, the dining room was the "heart" of family life, while the more elaborately appointed hall illustrated the family's social standing. The most private room was the rear chamber. It differed from the other rooms on the first floor in that it was not immediately accessible through the dining room; entrance to the room came only through the back passage

The Sheild House also displays an excellent use of ornament both for decorative and functional purposes. The focal point of the interior is the large portico found in the central hallway. With its fluted pilasters, keystone and spandrel, the portico indicates not only an intimate knowledge of the Georgian style, but also offers a visible symbol to visitors and guests of the culture, status, and affluence of the owner. The newel post that marks the rear stairway shows an awareness of the prevailing tastes of the upperclass, attempting to replicate the form and style of a newel post found in the Nelson House located across the street. In general, the interior decoration of eighteenth-century Virginia homes such as the Sheild House also tended to emphasize simple geometric forms in the use of chair rails and other moldings, relying on cymeas and beads as well as cavettos and ovolos, instead of the more irregular or natural forms.[16]

The builder's use of the clipped gable, or jerkin head, roof on the Sheild House, a style that appeared sporadically in southern colonial architecture, rescues the Sheild House from a more staid and formal appearance. This style may originated in the English counties of Kent and Surrey, though its origins remain somewhat uncertain. The application of these elements to the Sheild House probably derived not merely from the whims of the owner or the vision of the the builder. Instead, this roof line, when employed on masonry structures, simplified construction of the gable ends by reducing the number of bricks needed.[17]

The T-shaped chimneys of the Sheild House are a carryover from the architectural style that accompanied the Northern Renaissance and the commercial expansion of the Netherlands, which introduced the English to Dutch innovations that included towering chimneys with free-standing stacks. Although the chimneys attached to the Shield House are not so grand as those of Bacon's Castle in Surry Country, they still show a desire on the part of builder and owner to incorporate within the overall design elements that indicated affluence and respectability. The chimneys also

Statement of Significance (continued)

demonstrated the skill and craftsmanship of colonial masons in creating functional pieces of architecture with a sculptural flair. Combining artistry, economy, and engineering, chimneys were designed as tapering towers that allowed fireplaces to draw more easily. Using sloping weatherings, masons gave clues to the number of fireplaces found in a home. In the case of the Sheild House, two sets of weatherings are found on the west side chimney, indicating fireplaces on the first and second floors. The design of the chimneys was rigidly geometric, adding an even greater sense of balance to the Sheild House. [18]

Much more than a contributing resource to the historic district of Yorktown, the Sheild House offers a glimpse into the life and mentality of a prosperous mid-eighteenth-century colonial family. Although adhering to the dictates of popular Georgian style, the structure illustrates the yearnings of a provincial middle-class doctor to assert his standing in the community. By the middle of the eighteenth century genuine class distinctions had begun to appear in the British North American colonies. The emergence of the Georgian/Palladian style and its variants offered an architectural expression of this development. Indicating the aspirations of the rising bourgeoisie, Georgian/Palladian architecture suggested the ideas and outlook that increasingly challenged and ultimately unseated aristocratic and royal authority in America. Because many of these architectural, intellectual, and political trends converge in the Sheild House and are reflected in its design, the home merits distinction.

The early archaeological work at the Sheild House done by Dave Hazzard and the DHR has both revealed, and demonstrated the potential for, otherwise unavailable research data lying below ground. The archaeological site encompasses the entire acreage of the lot as it was laid out in 1691 including the existing house. This information is pertinent to a more complete understanding of the chronology and historic development of the property, and the size, orientation, and spatial order of structures at the site. The irregularities of the ground surface and the obvious severe change in elevation of the lot to that found on the opposite side of Main Street hint at information that might be gained on landscape modifications of the love over three centuries of occupation. Coupled with the forgoing and based on results revealed at other colonial towns, archaeological remains are expected to yield considerably more information on the built environment, the regional economy, and the status of owners based on architectural construction and remodeling, material culture, and food remains.

Based on similar known sites, it is expected that the archaeological evidence for buildings and structures such as kitchens, smokehouses, dairies, privies, storage facilities, servant's quarters, stables, and wells are likely present. It is also probable that landscape features like fences, paths, hedges, plantings, and gardens may survive below ground. Answers to questions regarding dates of construction raised by the existing structures such as the house, its additions, and the bricks walls to the north and west of the house, may lie below ground. At present the existing house is considered of mid-eighteenth century date. Archaeological examination of the house, its additions and the walls might provide a more precise construction date based on the presence or absence of material remains of known

Statement of Significance (continued)

manufactured dates.

Also questions raised by the historical record may be addressed with some reasonable measure of success. Is there any below ground evidence for the three structures–the kitchen, school, and smokehouse--listed on the Sheild House Mutual Assurance policies (See Section 8, page 18) and how much earlier do they date to the earliest policy dated 1838? At least four policies survive today, dating to 1838, 1846, 1853, and 1860. The first three depict three buildings behind the house in a line parallel to the long axis of the house. In all three instances the eastern most building is identified as a wood kitchen and the middle building is identified as a wood smokehouse. The westernmost building is referred to as either wood building or wood schoolhouse. The 1860 policy does not show buildings other than the main house but does bear the inscription "Contiguity-3 Wooden Buildings."

The archaeology conducted for the nomination appears to have located the smokehouse listed above. The structure has a marl foundation, measures 10 feet square, has a shallow foundation and is located in the same general location indicated on the policies. Interestingly it is built on top of the remains of another building having a brick foundation containing a cellar or basement. Should testing be conducted to the east and west it is likely evidence of the other buildings would be found.

Numerous other maps surely exist. One known, from the many compiled during the Revolutionary War, is the *Plan of Yorktown to Be Used In Establishing the Winter Quarters of the Soissonnais Regiment; and the Grenadiers and Chausseurs of the Saintonge Regiment, 12 November 1781.* This map, one of many from the "American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army: VII, Plate 99, depicts two buildings behind the main house at Yorktown. All three align on a north-south axis along Read Street. The one immediately behind the Sheild House is rectangular, with the long axis oriented east-west and has a strange "appendage"(See Section 8, Page 17) extending east from the southeast corner of the building, extending about the distance equal to the length of the house, then turning north for a very short distance before turning back west for a short distance and terminating. The southernmost building has its long axis parallel to Read Street. The questions raised here are thought-provoking: what are these buildings? When were they built? What was the appendage?

Based on these findings, the archaeologists believe the potential for retrieval of this kind of information at the Sheild House is excellent. Testing suggests the archaeological record for this lot has not been badly altered by wholesale ground disturbance. Cultural layers survive just below the 3-4 inches of topsoil on the property. The two small test holes have already located two buildings. The walls lie close to the ground surface and are relatively intact attesting to the good integrity of this site. Based on these factors above ground and below ground, as an unique architectural form and for its potential as an archaeological site, the Sheild House merits an individual listing on the National Register of Historical Places.

Endnotes

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[1] Clyde F. Trudell, *Colonial Yorktown*, p. 38, Charles Hatch, *Colonial Yorktown's Main Street*, p. 71.

[2] *Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 9,* p. 402.

[3] Ibid., pp. 237-238, 240, 272, 300, 317, 338.

[4] *Deeds and Bonds, No. 1,* p. 220.

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

[6] *Deed Book No. 7*, p. 56, *Deed Book No. 8,* p. 462, *Wills and Inventories, No. 23,* p. 263, 382, *Deed Book, No. 6*, p. 512, *Deed Book, No. 9*, p. 153.

[7] Elmo Jones, *Yorktown 1781-1931*, p. 86.

[8] *Mutual Assurance Policy No. 8649,* 1838.

[9] Jones, p. 87.

[10] *Deed Book No. 25,* p. 320

[11] Jones, p. 88.

[12] *Virginia Gazette*, March 24, 1768.

[13] Charles Chauncey, *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England* (Boston, 1743). Quoted in Alan Gowans, *Styles and Types of North American Architecture: Social Function and Cultural Expression* (New York: HarperCollins, Publishers, 1993), p. 50.

[14] Jones,. p. 220.

[15] Ibid., p. 274.

[16] Dell Upton, “”Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia,” from Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*, (Atthens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986), p 323.

[17] Hugh Morrison, *Early American Architecture: From the First Colonial Settlements to the National Period*, (New York: Dover Books, 1987). P. 143.

[18] Dell Upton, *Early Vernacular Architecture in Southeastern Virginia*, PhD dissertation, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1980), p. 220

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Verbal Boundary Description

The legal description of the Sheild House, located in the city of Yorktown, Yorktown County, Virginia as found in Will Book 557, pages 284 is as follows:

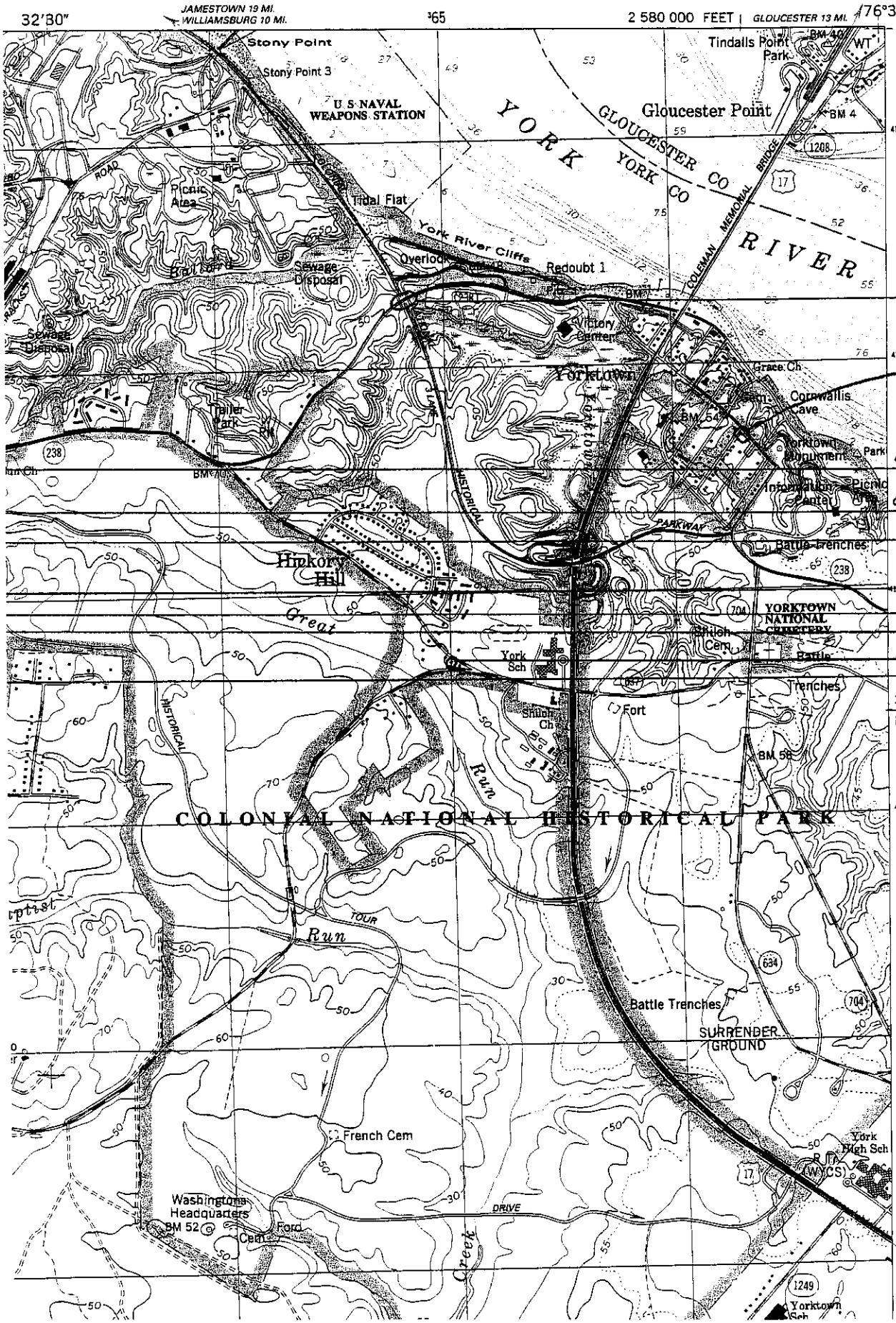
BEGINNING at a point at the intersection of the southeast right-of-way of Nelson Street (formerly Pearl Street), and the southwest right-of-way of Main Street and from the point beginning thence South 41° 45' west, a distance of 147.50 feet to a point in the southeast right-of-way of Nelson Street, and which point in 17.5 feet from the northwest corner of Lot Numbered 56, as such lot corner intersects the southeast right-of-way of Nelson Street, and from that point running thence South 34° 15' East a distance of 132 feet to a point; thence running North 41° 45' feet East a distance of 147.5 feet to a point; in the Southwest right-of-way to Main Street, and running thence in a northwesterly direction along the southwest right-of-way of Main Street a distance of 132 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

These are the original boundaries as deeded to Conway Sheild III on February 20, 1989, and included the building historically associated with the property.

YORKTOWN QUADRANGLE
VIRGINIA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

5758 IV SW (ACHILLES)



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SHEILD HOUSE YORKTOWN VIRGINIA (YORK CO.)

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99-5077
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