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

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Fredericksburg Gun Manufactory

AND/OR COMMON

Fredericksburg Gun Manufactory

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Fredericksburg

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

7 J. Kenneth Robinson

STATE

Virginia

VICINITY OF

CODE

51

COUNTY

City of Fredericksburg

CODE

630

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

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

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

City of Fredericksburg, Superintendent of Schools, Fredericksburg City Schools

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Fredericksburg

STATE

Virginia 22401

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

City of Fredericksburg

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Fredericksburg

STATE

Virginia 22401

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Untitled Survey by Dr. Clyde Carter

DATE

1975/1976

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Mary Washington College

CITY, TOWN

Fredericksburg

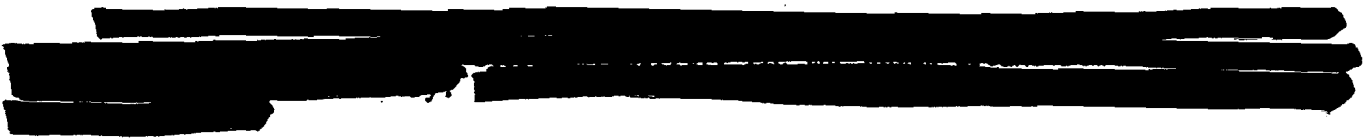
STATE

Virginia 22401

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE



There is extensive documentary evidence available on the site covering the years of its utilization as a manufactory for arms for the Revolutionary War. In addition to the main gunnery building, the gunnery complex included a two story magazine with an upper room measuring 28 feet by 28 feet, with a room below vaulted for storage. The manufactory also included a storehouse and coal house with a shed. A millhouse, adapted to gun manufacture, and structures used as an overseer's house and kitchen were located on an adjacent piece of property which functioned as an extension of the gun manufactory land.

In 1783 when the gunnery was no longer functioning, the gunnery complex was converted into an educational facility, Fredericksburg Academy. In 1788 Fredericksburg Academy sold some low-lying acreage and a stone foundation situated thereon. Although Academy Trustees obtained permission for the foundation to be dismantled and sold separately, records are unclear whether such an independent sale took place.

In 1786 the main building at the gunnery was converted into a temporary hospital and repairs were ordered to be made to other existing buildings. A plat dating from 1793 when the manufactory again was an educational institution shows a garden, bath, spring, stable, and academy. Six additional buildings are indicated on that map (map 1).

In subsequent years a successful tannery was in operation on lands adjoining the academy property. One structure modified in the 19th century survived until at least as late as 1866. The property was then variously subdivided and any remaining buildings were removed eventually or went into decay.

Today, no buildings survive above ground. A modern road separates the spring from a stand of trees wherein lie the remains of the gun manufactory.

In 1975, with the aid of the 1793 survey plat and with the known location of the spring, the suspected location of one of the buildings on that plat was staked off (drawing 1).

Scattered brick rubble and stone lay above ground in this area. Subsurface testing revealed substantial brick remains over an area 60 feet by 50 feet. Brick walls defined one building at least 35 feet in length and at least 15 feet wide. A reused sandstone sill nearly 4 feet in width is centered on the E wall of this building (photo 1). Part of this foundation cuts through an earlier brick pier from another building (photo 2). A section of stones at least three feet wide and 25 feet long was uncovered with what appears to be a possible hearth near the center of that section. This stone section is oriented parallel to the walls of the structure to the north and 50 feet south of that building's north wall (dwg.1). On the west end of this line of stones and perpendicular to it, is a section of brick at least 4½ feet wide, extending 42 feet northward. This is flat and constructed of brick bats. A section of fallen wall was discovered to the east of these ruins with bonding characteristic of the 19th century.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION	
__1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE	
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE	
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER	
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION	
__1900	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		__INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1775-1783

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In July 1775 the Convention of Delegates passed an ordinance which established "a manufactory...to be erected at or near Fredericksburg under the direction of commissioners"<sup>1</sup> for the purpose of repairing and manufacturing small arms for the Revolution. The Fredericksburg Gun Manufactory functioned in this strategic role until 1783, supplying arms to the Regiments of numerous Virginia counties.

Five men, Mann Page, Jr., Samuel Selden, William Fitzhugh, Charles Dick and Fielding Lewis, were appointed to serve as Commissioners, although the ordinance stated that any three of them could function as a Commission. Fielding Lewis and Charles Dick immediately assumed the leadership of this enterprise, acquiring a tract of Richard Brooke's land on the edge of Fredericksburg. They supplemented this acreage with the rental of an adjacent two acres which included a mill, belonging to Loyalist Roger Dixon.

A notice in the September 22, 1775 Virginia Gazette advertised for gunsmiths, locksmiths and "other artists capable of managing that business in its various branches."<sup>2</sup> It stated that applicants should expect to serve for at least a year. Men employed at the gun manufactory were exempted from military service. A subsequent notice in the December 13, 1775 Virginia Gazette stated that "the Manufactory of Arms at Fredericksburg has produced some most incomparable guns, completely finished."<sup>3</sup>

The Commissioners of the Fredericksburg Gun Manufactory also were to receive and distribute arms from other manufacturers. In 1776 Richard Brooke and James Tutt were hired by Fielding Lewis to build a stone magazine on the gun manufactory lot for the reception of public arms and ammunition. The Council ordered that it be built on the same plan and dimensions of the Williamsburg powder magazine. The magazine's upper room was 28 feet square, whereas the lower room was vaulted for the storage of ammunition; it was considered fireproof, vulnerable only to lightning. Brooke and Tutt were also hired to underpin the Coal House and Storehouse at the gun factory. The mill-house on the Dixon property was adapted for grinding off gun barrels, bayonets, ramrods, and files. Structures on the Dixon property were also used as an Overseer's house and kitchen.

The major pursuit of the gun manufactory in its earliest days was the restoration of arms to a usable condition. Fielding Lewis, writing to George Washington in February 1776, stated that workers had been primarily employed in the repair of old guns. They had replaced the locks stolen by Lord Dunmore's men from the muskets at the Williamsburg powder magazine. Lewis commented that the gunnery had only one gun lockmaker who not only produced locks, but had instructed many others who had become expert.

(see continuation sheet #1)

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On October 2, 1777 an act was passed allowing the Commissioners of the Gun Manufactory to take on white apprentices. The Manufactory was to provide these apprentices with clothing, bedding, and provisions. Negroes were employed to cook, bake, fetch water and run errands. In the words of Charles Dick, factory director, workers lived "as a large family,"<sup>4</sup> taking their meals at one big table. Much of their food was derived from "a spacious garden which supplies the necessary Greens and roots"<sup>5</sup> and they were provided with water from a nearby spring. No imbibing was permitted. Workmen were furnished with osnaburg trousers and workshirts, coarse stockings and sturdy shoes.

Charles Dick practiced specialization of labor within the factory. A master workman was employed to distribute tools and work materials, receive finished work and to instruct where necessary. Certain workmen undertook specific aspects of gun manufacture and repair, Dick's commenting in a letter to the Commissioner of War that this system offered the greatest efficiency and reliability.

By May 1777 the gunnery was producing at least 20 muskets a week, complete with bayonets. They supplied the Militias of numerous counties as well as the men of the Marquis de Lafayette, whom they furnished with 600 stand of arms and 50,000 cartridges, a combination of firearms made in Fredericksburg and those received from other suppliers.

Workmen at the factory made their own tools and machinery and produced firearms from the rough materials, iron, steel, and walnut planking for gun stocks. Lead, needed to prove the gun barrels, was in short supply in September 1780 when Charles Dick wrote Col. George Muter that there was no lead to be bought and that they had even used the lead of their windows and shopweights. He requested protection from military confiscation for his two horses which he claimed were essential to the operation of the gunnery.

Charles Dick discovered that powder stored better in cartridges than in barrels. He wrote the Governor on January 4, 1781 that the men of Fredericksburg "and even the Ladys have very spiritedly attended at the Gunnery and assisted to make up...20,000 Cartridges with Bullets."<sup>6</sup>

The number of workers employed at the factory fluctuated widely over the years, primarily because of the financial problems which plagued it from the beginning. Official records contain many poignant pleas by Charles Dick for his workmen to be paid. He refers to their ragged clothing and poor provisions, likening to carrion the beef with which they were furnished. At times his workers left their jobs to earn money to support their families. Dick informed the Governor and the Commissioner of War that his personal credit had been extended to the breaking point to purchase materials and provisions for the gunnery. Col. Fielding Lweis went heavily into debt for the sake of the Fredericksburg Gun Manufactory, expenses for which he was never fully reimbursed.

The factory continued to struggle along until early in 1783. Major Alexander Dick, son of Charles Dick, who had been appointed director of the gunnery upon the death of his

(see continuation sheet #2)

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father, wrote to the Governor on February 19, 1783 that there were only three artisans and a few servants remaining at the factory and that he could not employ more because back wages were owed. He requested that any arms to be repaired be sent to Point of Fork, closing his letter with the comment that the gunnery land had appreciated considerably in value, from the 600 pounds which had gone into the purchase of the property and construction of the buildings back in 1775. The Council responded five days later by accepting Alexander Dick's recommendation that the factory be closed and deciding that "all the arms capable of repair and such of the materials as can be removed be transported to the Point of Fork" arsenal.<sup>7</sup> They also assured him that steps would be taken to pay off the laborers at the factory.

In May 1783 the Legislature passed an act transferring the public land and buildings of the former gun factory to the Trustees of Fredericksburg Academy, an educational institution established for the enlightenment of youth and the advancement of science. The Trustees were empowered to hire a headmaster and instructors and any other personnel necessary to run the school; they were also to establish tuition fees.

The Trustees were authorized to raise money for the support of the school. On October 11, 1786 the Legislature passed an act authorizing the Trustees to sell a small quantity of low, or sunken, land belonging to the Academy, as well as the materials of a stone building on those lands. In a Deed dated September 22, 1788 the Trustees of Fredericksburg Academy conveyed certain land to Joseph Christy who operated a thriving tannery on the property for many years.

The Fredericksburg Virginia Gazette several times advertised lotteries held by the Trustees to raise money for the Fredericksburg Academy. On November 19, 1787 the Trustees advertised a lottery "to support the academy and repairing and making additions to the buildings."<sup>8</sup> Two years later, on October 14, 1789 they attempted to raise 4000 pounds by means of a lottery, in order to "defray the expense of erecting a building on the academy lands for the purpose of accomodating the professors and students."<sup>9</sup>

During January 1786 the Fredericksburg Council ordered that the main building of the former gunnery be turned into a hospital for the receipt of "poor people and negroes"<sup>10</sup> during the height of an epidemic of an unidentified infectious disease. They required the current occupants to move out temporarily and ordered repairs to other existing gunnery buildings, to be part of the medical facility. Council records in July 1787 state that those persons storing powder in the public magazine are ordered to remove it, the "Public Magazine being appropriated to the purpose of the Academy."<sup>11</sup>

On August 27, 1801 the Trustees of the Academy, then known as the Fredericksburg Charity School, with authorization of the General Assembly, sold the property to Richard Johnston, a Fredericksburg merchant. In subsequent years the property passed through a succession of ownerships, ultimately being subdivided into lots.

(see continuation sheet #3)

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The completeness of historical documentation on this site should provide a unique opportunity for the correlation of historical records with archaeology. Excavation and study of the Fredericksburg Gun Manufactory should also provide information on the communal life of the various types of workers employed at the factory. 

(for footnotes, see continuation sheet #4)

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Footnotes:

1. Hening, W. W. Hening's Statutes at Large, Volume 9, page 71.
2. The Virginia Gazette. Purdie: September 22, 1775.
3. The Virginia Gazette. Pinkney: December 13, 1775.
4. Palmer, W. P. Calendar of State Papers, Volume 3, page 305.
5. Ibid., Volume 3, page 305.
6. Ibid., Volume 1, page 416.
7. McIlwaine, H. R. Journals of the Council of the State of Virginia, Volume 3, page 224.
8. The Fredericksburg Virginia Gazette. November 19, 1787.
9. Hening. Op. Cit., Volume 13, pages 93, 94.
10. Fredericksburg Council Books, January 20, 1786.
11. Ibid., July 11, 1787.

### 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Hening, W. W. Hening's Statutes at Large. Franklin Press: Richmond, 1820.
- McIlwaine, H. R. Journals of the Council of the State of Virginia. Virginia State Library: Richmond, 1931.
- Palmer, W. P. Calendar of State Papers. (see continuation sheet #5)

### 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approximately 6 acres.

UTM REFERENCES

A				B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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	dkh: archaeologist
David K. Hazzard and Martha W. McCartney	mwm: historic landmarks specialist
ORGANIZATION	DATE
Virginia Research Center for Archaeology	March 2, 1977
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
Wren Kitchen, The College of William and Mary	804-253-4836
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
Williamsburg	Virginia 23186

### 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X STATE X 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

TITLE Executive Director  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE APR 19 1977

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



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Spotsylvania County Deed Book D, page 230.

The Fredericksburg Virginia Gazette. November 19, 1787.

The Virginia Gazette. Purdie: September 22, 1775.

The Virginia Gazette. Pinkney: December 13, 1775.

Virginia Magazine of History and Biography. Virginia Historical Society: Richmond.

William and Mary Quarterly, Series 1, Volume 27.

*Fredericksburg Gun Manufactory*

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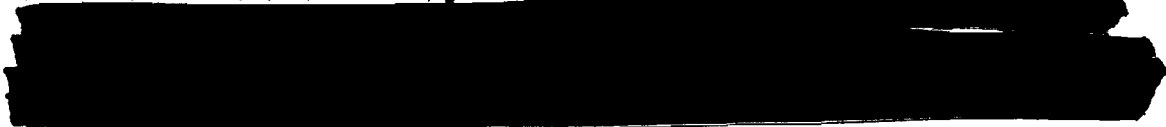
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Extent remaining: approximately seventy-five percent of the site remains  
undisturbed. Verbal Boundary Description: ~~the site of the Manufactory is~~



(Map 1).