

VLR 9/6/06  
NRHP 11/3/06

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

OMB No. 1024-4018

U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Town of Bermuda Hundred Historic District  
Chesterfield Co., VA

### 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: Town of Bermuda Hundred Historic District  
other names/site number VDHR #020-0064

#### 2. Location

street & number Both sides of Bermuda Hundred and Allied Roads not for publication             
city or town Chester vicinity X  
state Virginia code VA county Chesterfield code 041 Zip 23821

#### 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.

*M. C. Hesser* September 21, 2006  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
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 \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

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 the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Town of Bermuda Hundred Historic District  
Chesterfield Co., VA

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>14</u>	<u>14</u>	buildings (mostly outbuildings)
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>16</u>	<u>15</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

Prehistoric and Historic Archaeological Resources and Architectural Resources at Bermuda Hundred

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Village  
Commerce/Trade Trade (Archaeology)

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Dwellings  
Vacant Not in Use

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century  
Late 19th and 20th Century

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick, concrete block, brick piers, concrete piers  
roof metal, asphalt shingle, composition shingle  
walls wood weatherboard, brick  
other brick chimneys  
stone – cemetery headstones and historical marker

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

U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Town of Bermuda Hundred Historic District  
Chesterfield Co., VA

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### 8. Statement of Significance

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**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.
- 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.
- 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.

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**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions) Agriculture, Archaeology, Commerce

**Period of Significance** ca. 1613 to 1940

**Significant Dates** 1613; 1688; 1856

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** Euro-American; African American

**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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**Bibliography**

(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.
- 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**

U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Town of Bermuda Hundred Historic District  
Chesterfield Co., VA

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** 16.2 acres

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18 298453	4135235	B	18 298938	4135194
C	18 298768	4134879	D	18 298430	4135100

**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.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Christopher M. Stevenson  
 Organization: Virginia Department of Historic Resources date 15 June 2006  
 street & number: 2801 Kensington Avenue telephone 804-367-2323, Ext. 132  
 city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23221

**Additional Documentation**

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 Multiple Owners  
 street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
 city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

=====  
**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.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**National Register of Historic Places  
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**Summary Description**

The Town of Bermuda Hundred is comprised of seven houses and their associated outbuildings, as well as a church, a schoolhouse, a cemetery, a historic marker, and one excavated archaeological site. The 16-acre village is located where Bermuda Hundred Road (State Route 827) terminates at the James River in Chesterfield County. Its once-busy steamboat wharfs along the east have rotted away, and today, rather than a crossroads, the village is a quiet backwater well off the major routes of transportation. Bermuda Hundred's setting is more evocative of the past than that of perhaps any community in the county and, as such, is associated with many prehistoric and historic cultural remains in the immediate region. Additional, and unrecorded, remains are likely underneath and between the existing standing structures and in adjacent agricultural fields which spread out from the river. Only one of the archaeological sites within the town district has been excavated to date.

**Architectural Resources**

These buildings are described in the order in which they appear along Bermuda Hundred Road, from east to west.<sup>1</sup> The first three resources are on the north side of the road and the rest are on the south side.

**1. Modern ranch-style house, #020-0064-0001.**

At 4618 Bermuda Hundred Road, this house is not considered to be a contributing element; however, the scale and set-back are consistent with other houses in the village, so this building can be considered as non-intrusive infill.

**1 NC building**

**2. Bermuda Hundred School House, #020-0064-0002.**

At 4612 Bermuda Hundred Road stands a derelict, early 20th-century schoolhouse (Figure 3). This was the local school attended by African-American children. Its facade is a 3-bay gable end. The building is frame with weatherboards, partially covered with asphalt or asbestos shingles. The sills rest on cement block piers which apparently replaced original brick or wood block piers. The chimney is a brick stove flue located near the center rear of the building. The roof is presently covered with asphalt shingles apparently applied over the original metal roof. The side eaves have exposed rafter ends. As is common in school houses of the period, the windows are raised higher than the door. Windows are hung with original 6/6 sash. Three pairs of doubled windows are found along each side of the building. The building was probably constructed in the 1910s or 1920s. The school, which has recently been used as a dwelling, is presently abandoned.

**1 Contributing building**

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<sup>1</sup> The preparer has associated names with some of these structures. Family names were taken from mail boxes. Some of these houses have been given descriptive names.

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**3. Bishop-Johnson House, #020-0484 and #020-0064-0003.**

At 4701 Bermuda Hundred Road, this house was surveyed by O'Dell in the 1970s, and an extensive description has been published (O'Dell 1983: 17-18).<sup>2</sup> As it presently stands, the house is a 2-story frame dwelling covered with weatherboards, set on a raised basement of 3-course American bond brick (Figure 4). The front facade is symmetrical, with three bays. The house has a central-passage plan, gable roof covered with standing-seam metal, and two end chimneys set in 5-course American bond brickwork. The two-story front porch is probably a late 19th-century or early 20th-century addition. It is constructed over an early stoop, under which is a barrel-vaulted "wine cellar." The windows are plain 6/6 double-hung sash. The paneled front door is surrounded by side and transom lights. Interior details include plain Greek mantels, picture molding and open-string stair with square newel and balusters and an oval rail.

O'Dell gives a date of 1856 for construction, although the source for this date is not given. The house was built--in its present configuration--by William Bishop, a merchant and postmaster whose store stood adjacent to the house in the south yard. It appears to have been constructed on the base of an existing early 19th-century 1-story or 1-1/2-story house.

The foundation and lower chimney are constructed of unusual hard-fired, undersized bricks. Similar bricks, which are clearly not of local origin, are sometimes found in archaeological sites. Because of their occurrence at the John Hallows House, Loth (cited in O'Dell 1983: 18n.) suggests they signal 17th-century construction. Noël Hume (1970) suggests they are more commonly found in mid-18th century contexts. Mouer (1992) recovered a portion of a building in Richmond's Rocketts Port constructed of identical bricks on a stone foundation. This building was probably destroyed in the 1770s. More to the point, however, was Mouer's excavation of the store which stood adjacent to the Bishop-Johnson House (see discussion of archaeological site 44CF201, above). The earliest store on the site was a small building built on a stone foundation with walls of identical undersized bricks. Archaeology provided a *terminus post quem* date for construction of 1785. This building may have originally been constructed as a Virginia state customhouse at about that time. Perhaps more likely, it was built by Patrick Hendron, a merchant who acquired this and several adjacent waterfront lots and made numerous improvements to the wharves and docks around the year 1800. It is likely that the original portions of the house and this brick store building were constructed at the same time (Heite 1984).

The Bishop-Johnson House served as the dwelling of Bermuda Hundred's principal merchants from the time of its construction until the last village store was dismantled around 1940 (O'Dell 1983).

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<sup>2</sup> O'Dell called the Bishop-Johnson House after one mid-19th-century owner and one early 20th-century owner. The present owner, Evelyn Johnson Gray, is the daughter of William Johnson and the widow of long-timer state senator Frederick T. Gray.

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Perhaps the most remarkable of its many occupants was Achibald Batte, Bermuda Hundred's merchant and postmaster between 1820 and 1831. Batte was a freed son of a white planter and his slave mistress. Batte himself was a slave-owner, keeping as many as 10 or 11 slaves to serve him in his waterfront enterprise at Bermuda Hundred (Schwarz 1987). DHR File #020-0484 contains O'Dell's photographic documentation of this structure.

There are four secondary resources associated with this property. To the northwest corner of the main house is a one-story, wood-frame weatherboard shed with single wood door and front-gable roof with wood rafters under the eaves. Adjacent to this is a one-story, front-gable roofed, wood-frame garage building with the roof flaring out over either side to cover open equipment storage areas. The double-leaf front entry has two wood paneled, three-light doors. There is also a front window with a six-over-six, double-hung sash and louvered shutters. The original roof material has been replaced with asphalt shingles.

To the southwest is a 1 ½-story, wood-frame barn building with side-gable roof that extends over a single story rear section making the footprint a complete square. The vertical wood siding has a seam between the upper and lower levels. The front has an open-bay entry with a six-over-six, double-hung window to the right. The side facing north has another open-bay entry that has been infilled with a modern garage door. There is another six-over-six, double-hung window to the left of this entry. To the east is a front-gable two-car garage which has a new garage door and asphalt roofing. It is a wood-frame weatherboard building and has a single multi-light wood door along the north side. Though some roofs and doors have been replaced, all these secondary resources are historic to the property.

### **5 Contributing buildings**

#### **4. Frame Ranch Style House, #020-0064-0004.**

At 4609 Bermuda Hundred Road, this house is a rectangular structure covered in vinyl siding. The roof is covered with asphalt shingle and a modern brick chimney is positioned at the west end. A large window with a central picture window and flanking double hung sash dominates the west end of the structure. The foundation of the house is cinder block. It is estimated that this Ranch style house was built in the 1960s.

Behind the house are two outbuildings which are covered with an overgrowth of shrubbery and are therefore not described, but are presumed along with the main house to be non-historic.

### **3 NC buildings**

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### **5. Tuggle House, #020-0064-0005.**

At 4605 Bermuda Hundred Road, the Tuggle House is a 1-story frame dwelling with three-part pyramidal roof. The building appears to have been altered from a bungalow form. The original full-facade porch has been partially enclosed to form a room addition, while the remainder of the porch has been screened. The dwelling is covered with composition shingles. The foundation is concrete block. A brick stove flue chimney is situated at the rear center of the structure. Behind the house at the end of the drive is a pre-fabricated shed with a front-gambrel roof and a double-leaf barn style entry door.

**1 Contributing building, 1 NC building**

### **6. First Baptist Church of Bermuda Hundred, #020-0064-0006.**

At 4601 Bermuda Hundred Road, the Bermuda Hundred church contains an original central cell with recent additions at the front and rear (Figure 5). The original church was built in the Greek Revival style with a symmetrical three-bay, gable-front facade. The gable has a plain pediment with partial returns. The building is frame on a foundation of brick piers which have been filled in with concrete block. The original weatherboard exterior has been covered with vinyl siding, and the original roof has been sheathed in composition shingles. A 20th-century 1-story brick addition covers the original front of the church, and, at the rear, there is a long, 1-story addition constructed of concrete blocks.

The First Baptist Church was founded in 1850 when the extant mixed-race Baptist congregation divided along racial lines. White members formed the Enon Baptist Church, while African-American members retained the First Baptist. The central cell of the church was probably constructed at about that time. The present building was remodeled in 1914, according to church records (Anon., n.d.b). The earlier church, according to an anonymous church history, was said to have been a log building. First Baptist Church stands on lots that once formed the central plaza of the Market Square of Bermuda Hundred town, and it is the most likely spot for the "southside" chapel of the 17th-century Varina Parish and the main church of Bristol Parish (Heite 1967a). Heite believes that place names in land patents and deeds suggest that an early 17th-century chapel stood several hundred yards to the southwest on property now occupied by the Allied plant. First Baptist has served as the visual center of the village, and the spiritual center for its African-American community, for nearly a century and a half.

On the other side of the drive along the west of the church is a corrugated metal utility building with a front-gable metal roof, metal framed windows, and a hollow metal door.

**1 Contributing building, 1 NC building**



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**7. Ranch House, #020-0064-0007.**

Adjacent to the west side of the church, at 4513 Bermuda Hundred Road, this house is not considered to be a contributing element; however, the scale and set-back are consistent with other houses in the village, so this building can be considered as non-intrusive infill.

There three secondary resources associated with this property. One is a wood trellis that stands to the northeast of the house. The other two are storage buildings which stand one behind the other to the southeast of the house and are only visible along the back and one side. One of these is a vertical wood sided building with a front-gambrel roof covered in asphalt shingles. There is one visible three-light window on the opposite end of the entry door. The other building has wood siding and a front-gable, corrugated metal roof with a visible fixed window on the opposite end of the entry.

**3 NC buildings, 1 NC structure**

**8. Frame Dwelling, #020-0064-0008.**

At 4509 Bermuda Hundred Road, this building is a 1-story, vernacular, side-gable frame dwelling. The weatherboards have been covered with asphalt shingles, as has the original metal roof. The foundation is brick piers filled in with concrete blocks. The front stoop appears to be a replacement. Windows are 2/2 double-hung sash, and these may not be original. The house has a shed addition at rear, with a brick stove flue chimney in the shed. A more recent addition, constructed of concrete blocks, has been added behind the shed.

There are four secondary resources associated with this property. One is a pre-fabricated wood shed with a front-gambrel, asphalt roof located to the southeast of the house. Directly west and next to the main house, is a concrete block shed roof utility building with a wood slat door. Farther back on the property, to the southwest, are two metal buildings. The first is standing-seam metal with a side-gable roof and single wood door. The second is a corrugated metal building with a side-gable roof, and a single door centered between two single windows with shutters.

**1 Contributing building, 4 NC buildings**

**9. Johnson House, #020-0064-0009.**

At 4505 Bermuda Hundred Road, this is a 1-story, frame, side-gable dwelling set on brick piers which have been filled in with concrete block. The original roof has been covered with asphalt shingles, and the original weatherboarding has been clad in asbestos siding. There are brick flue chimneys in the rear center of the main portion of the houses, and in a rear addition, or original shed. Windows have been replaced, and the original front stoop has been enclosed to form a vestibule.

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To the southwest of the main house is a combined garage and workshop building. The front façade has a front-gable roof with a newly added garage door and brick-tex covering a wood frame. Attached to the east side is a shed roofed, corrugated metal portion with a one-over-one, double-hung window facing north.

**1 Contributing building, 1 NC building**

**10. Hewlett House, #020-0064-0010.**

At 4501 Bermuda Hundred Road this is the first house encountered on entering the village. It is a 1-story, side-gable, frame dwelling with a full-length rear shed. The original weatherboards have been covered with aluminum siding, and the roof has modern composition shingles. The original stoop has been replaced by an enclosed vestibule.

There are three outbuildings associated with this property. Two of these appear to be very small dwellings, each of which have been modified in ways similar to the house. Tiny one-room-plan dwellings like these often appear in association with railroads, and are typically called "railroad shanties." These small houses may be associated in some way with the Tidewater and Western Railroad, which terminated at Bermuda Hundred until 1917. Both are wood frame buildings with side-gable roofs, single front doors, and exterior brick chimneys. One has a covered stoop while both have a single window along the front and a single window on the west side. The third dependency appears to be a privy. It is a vertical wood slat, frame building with a front-gable roof and single wood door facing north.

**4 Contributing buildings**

**11. Cemetery, #020-0064-0011.** At least five known graveyards are associated with Bermuda Hundred vicinity. One of these is found within the limits of the village. It lies along the trace of the former "lower street" at the rear of the Bishop-Johnson House yard (4701 Bermuda Hundred Road). This cemetery includes early-19th-century inscribed stones which were recorded by the WPA during the 1930s. It was a common custom for English and American ports to have a public cemetery for burial of those who died at sea, and this appears to be such a cemetery.

**1 Contributing Site**

**12. Historic Marker, #020-0064-0012.** Standing in the southwest corner of Water Street and Bermuda Hundred Road, surrounded by a low masonry wall and small stone corner pillars, is a carved stone monument to Bermuda Hundred erected in 1938 by the Bermuda Hundred Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution (Figure 6). This monument commemorating the long and substantial history of Bermuda Hundred is, itself, now a significant part of that history, and is considered to be a contributing element to the district. Under the D.A.R. wheel symbol is the following inscription:

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BERMUDA HUNDRED  
ESTABLISHED 1613 BY SIR THOMAS  
DALE. FIRST INCORPORATED  
VIRGINIA TOWN 1614  
HOME OF JOHN ROLFE, COLONY  
RECORDER WHO MARRIED  
POCAHONTAS  
REV. ALEXANDER WHITAKER  
MINISTERED HERE.  
EARLY PORT OF RICHMOND  
ERECTED ... 1938  
BY  
BERMUDA HUNDRED CHAPTER  
D.A.R.

**1 Contributing Object**

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**Archaeological Resources**

**44CF201: The Gray-Johnson Site, #020-0064-0013.** This site, in the side yard of the Bishop-Johnson House (4701 Bermuda Hundred Road), was recorded, surveyed, and partially excavated in 1984 by Dan Mouer with a field school from Virginia Commonwealth University. Extensive excavation uncovered perhaps 1/10th of the site, which covers four contiguous original town lots, lots 6-9 (2 acres). The most prominent feature uncovered was the stone-lined cellar of a brick store that was constructed in the late 18th century or early 19th century. The store was constructed of the same very small bricks used to construct the foundation and chimneys of the Bishop-Johnson House, and the two structures were probably constructed at the same time. O'Dell has dated the house to the early 19th century, and the archaeologically-determined *terminus post quem* for construction of the store foundation is post-1785.

The building may have been constructed around 1800 by Patrick Hendron, apparently a merchant, who made many improvements to the wharfs adjacent to the site at this time. Between 1820 and 1831 the store was owned and operated by Archibald Batte, a free African-American merchant and slave owner (Schwarz 1987). An addition had been added to the store, probably during the ownership of William Bishop (mid-19th century), or slightly earlier. This addition may have been the town's post office (see O'Dell 1983: 16). The old brick store appears to have been engulfed within a large frame country store built on piers. This latter store was operated by William Johnson until just before World War II. Excavations also uncovered portions of two privies, both filled between ca. 1750-75, and a probable root cellar, filled in the late 18th century. A remnant of the ballast bank which once dominated the river front was tested, revealing stratified deposits within the bank dating from ca. 1740-1800. Numerous artifacts were recovered from mixed contexts from the protohistoric Appomattox period, and from the early colonial period. Seventeenth-century materials include numerous early tobacco pipes, including a good assemblage of faceted "Chesapeake pipes" (Emerson 1988).

At least one, and probably two, brick-rubble floors of Civil War officers' quarters were discovered, as well. The site is crossed by the trackbed of the former Tidewater and Western narrow gauge railroad. Numerous other features were uncovered in these excavations, and many more remain to be excavated. The site remains unplowed and well stratified. Testing on lots adjacent to this site, both to the north and south, indicated that similar conditions exist there.

**1 Contributing Site**

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**Summary Statement of Significance:**

Bermuda Hundred is significant as the site of a principal town of the Appomattox Indians during the Protohistoric or early Contact Period (circa 1600 - 1611) and as the locus of a continuously occupied community that was originally established, in 1613, as one of the first settlements of the Virginia Company. Bermuda Hundred was the largest Virginia settlement between 1613 and 1617, and home to its Lieutenant Governor, Sir Thomas Dale. Other prominent early denizens included John Rolfe and Pocahontas.

It may have been at Bermuda Hundred that Rolfe developed a variety of tobacco which became the basis of Virginia's economy for nearly three centuries. Bermuda Hundred was the first incorporated community in English America, and the site of the first private land ownership by English colonists. Beginning in the mid-17th century, Bermuda Hundred became an important location of local mercantile activity. Waterfront stores operated here continuously from the second quarter of the 17th century until about 1940. After 1688, Bermuda Hundred arose as one of the few settlements in Colonial Virginia to attain the status of a town, and, in 1691, it became an official port. The port flourished, with periods of greater or lesser activity, until about 1940, when the last store, post office and ferry serving the town shut down.

**Historical Background:**

With the establishment of a tobacco inspection at Bermuda Hundred in 1731, the town entered into its first major era of growth. There arose two or three taverns and other commercial facilities to accommodate visitors on market, church and court days. Bermuda Hundred remained the "southside" seat of the county court until the formation of Chesterfield County in 1749.

Bermuda Hundred was nominated to become the new capital of Virginia, but Richmond won out. In 1780, during the height of the Revolution, the government was moved to Richmond, and the focus of much of James River's upstream commercial activity followed. As development of Richmond and Petersburg "boomed," and other local planters' ports (such as Warwick) developed, Bermuda Hundred lost its place as the primary inland tidal port on the James River. Nonetheless, it remained an important local, if not regional, port, and as a break-of-bulk point for Richmond and Petersburg. The sack of Richmond by Benedict Arnold, in 1781, led to that general's designating Bermuda Hundred as a supply base and collection point. The town's location at the confluence of the James and Appomattox proved to be of critical military and logistical importance.

The state of Virginia declared Bermuda Hundred the official port-of-entry on the James River in the year 1785, and the federal government followed suit five years later. A customhouse was

constructed

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on the waterfront, as was one of the earliest post offices in Virginia. Customs searchers were designated for the port. While Bermuda Hundred was no longer the largest regional market, its new-found identity as the break-of-bulk port of entry led to a flourishing growth along the waterfront.

How these changes affected the town are not known, but archaeological survey and testing indicates that there was considerable growth along "Water Street" at the docks, while many of the interior town lots were abandoned. Testing by Heite suggests that there are remains of the federal custom house intact on the custom house lot.

Beginning in the late 18th century, Bermuda Hundred attracted an important free African-American enclave, whereas, during the Colonial Period, the town had been one of the region's principal slave markets. The immediate area includes the lands of several plantations surrounding the town site. These were home to a number of families who also owned lots and businesses within the town. The region contains numerous archaeological sites representing a wide variety of time periods, functions, and social groups significant in the history of Bermuda Hundred, Virginia, and the nation. It also contains the archaeological remains and standing remnants of the town, now a small village, as well as certain landscape qualities suitable for memorializing and interpreting a rural, riverfront community with a very substantial history.

The turn of the 19th century marked the end of Bermuda Hundred's tenure as the official port of entry on the James. The federal customhouse was closed and the port became an auxiliary office for state customs searchers, ballast masters and quarantine officers of the Port of Rocketts in Richmond. Nonetheless, the activities of the port did not, apparently, decline. Patrick Hendron acquired much of the former waterfront commons and developed extensive new wharf facilities at Bermuda Hundred (Heite 1984). He probably also constructed what is now the first story of the Bishop-Johnson House, as well as the adjacent waterfront store excavated by Virginia Commonwealth University (44CF201).

Apparently, the population of free African Americans in Bermuda Hundred continued to increase. In 1820 the house and store became the property of Mr. Archibald Batte, a freed mulatto son of a slave woman and a white planter of Prince George County. His history has been documented by Schwarz (1987). Batte was extraordinary in many ways. Unlike many, perhaps most, African Americans who kept slaves to protect them from slavery, Batte owned slaves as laborers and artisans for his mercantile operations. Batte was apparently very successful as a merchant; at one time he had as many as 10 or 11 slaves working for him at Bermuda Hundred. Batte also rebuilt and extended the wharf and pier facilities at Bermuda Hundred. Archibald Batte died in the year 1831, and his house and store were inherited by his son Henry. However, that was the year of Nat Turner's Rebellion, and most free African

Americans were forced to flee the state. Henry moved north to Pennsylvania.

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By the mid-century mark, Batte's former house and store were acquired by William Bishop, a failed "Forty-niner" who found prosperity easier to come by as the principal merchant of Bermuda Hundred. Bishop expanded the house with a second story and renovated the interior extensively.

In the year 1850, the Bermuda Hundred church congregation, by now more than 200 years old, divided along racial lines. The Bermuda Hundred Church, which had already become affiliated with the Baptists, was retained by the black members of the congregation. White members founded Enon Baptist Church just a few miles inland along Bermuda Hundred Road.

In March of 1864, forty thousand federal troops under the command of Major General Benjamin F. "Beast" Butler landed at Bermuda Hundred and seized the peninsula in an attempt to take Richmond. Butler's advance was halted by Confederate defenders, and his army was said to have been "corked in the bottle" of Bermuda Hundred. Butler reinforced and held Bermuda Hundred for the remainder of the Civil War. While City Point became the primary Union supply depot on the James, Bermuda Hundred was an important ancillary station. At the Bermuda Hundred town sites and several locations around the fringes of the two rivers, archaeological testing has revealed extensive material remains of the Union camps.

There is an oral tradition that Butler took over the first floor of the Bishop-Johnson House as his headquarters (O'Dell 1983). While documents suggest that Butler was generally headquartered elsewhere on the peninsula, it is very likely that field grade officers occupied the house. The port facilities were turned almost entirely to military ends. While studies remain to be completed, it seems likely that dozens, if not hundreds, of slaves freed by the occupying Union Army moved into Bermuda Hundred town at this time and became employed assisting the Union at the port. By the end of the war Bermuda Hundred was a town with a majority of African-American occupants.

While the countryside remained in a period of recession, the port was revitalized as a steamship wharf as the heyday of the steam-powered Atlantic coasting passenger and cargo ships thrived. There was apparently also a sharp rise in the local fishing industry at the time, as well. The town had reached its largest population ever during the Civil War, and war's end led not to decline, but to continued growth. In 1883, the Bright Hope (or Tidewater and Western) narrow-gauge railroad terminal was constructed at Bermuda Hundred. The Bright Hope carried lumber, coal and flower from the Piedmont to be loaded on schooners and freighters for ports throughout the world. Archaeological remains of the Bright Hope Railroad (later, Tidewater and Western Railroad) facilities are extensive and worthy of further study.

A plat of the town made in 1881 for the purpose of acquiring the rail right-of-way shows Bermuda Hundred as it appeared at the time, and in considerable detail. While the numerous

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buildings along the waterfront have subsequently disappeared, the arrangement of the houses, outbuildings and the church along Bermuda Hundred road is relatively unchanged today. It seems very likely that many of the buildings still standing in the town date to this period, or are replacements of similar scale to the buildings which stood here in 1881. The I-house that faces the river is clearly indicated on this plat, as is the church, which was remodeled later in this period. The small school which served the village's African-American children was probably built at this time. Archaeological survey has underscored the extent of the town's expansion during this period.

The rails of the Tidewater and Western were taken up during World War I. Bermuda Hundred became effectively cut off by land routes with the remainder of Chesterfield County. However, the daily ferry and mail boats continued to run to City Point and Shirley. Bermuda Hundred slowly began its decline to a backwater river village.

The waterfront store and merchants house were purchased in 1919 by William Johnson, Bermuda Hundred's last merchant and postmaster. When Johnson died in 1940, the post office closed forever. Johnson's daughter, Mrs. Evelyn Johnson Gray, still owns and occupies the Bishop-Johnson House. Virtually all of the other remaining occupants of the village are now, as they were at this period, African-Americans, many of them descended from enslaved and freed peoples who have worked the lands, fished the waters, and built and rebuilt the churches, farm houses, plantations and wharves of Bermuda Hundred for centuries.

There remain in the village, and in surrounding communities, many elders who remember Bermuda Hundred during this period, and whose stories need to be collected. If it were not for surface modifications of some of the town's buildings, one could easily turn one's back, literally, on the large plants standing to the west, see Bermuda Hundred, little changed from the village served by William Johnson. The wharves and piers have mostly rotted away, but this setting still evokes the feel of a small river port. All of Bermuda Hundred's plantation and farm houses are gone, but, standing on the riverfront at the Bishop-Johnson House, a visitor's eyes are drawn directly to Shirley, a reminder of the relationship that has existed for centuries between planters, merchants and workers at Bermuda Hundred.



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**Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The town of Bermuda Hundred coincides with the tax parcel property boundaries outlined in Figure 2 and is 16.2 acres in size. Starting in the northwestern corner, the northern town limits are defined by Bermuda Hundred Road for a distance of 750 feet. The boundary then proceeds north for a distance of 170 feet before turning to the east to intersect the shore of the James River. The district limits follow the shoreline south for a distance of 900 feet and then runs in a northwest direction back to the starting point in a stepped fashion following individual parcel boundaries.

The district encompasses the following Chesterfield County Tax parcels:

8386509707; 8396495090; 8396496692; 839648480; 8396499560; 8396500708; 8396501410; 8396502509; 8396503609; 8396504711; 8396505411; 8396506503; 8396506614; 8396507813; 8396509303; 8406491664; 8406491887; 8406500518; 8406502018; 8396507031; 8396508130; 8396509329; and 8396509630.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the town of Bermuda Hundred were drawn to include all of the resources currently associated with the community and follow the outer edge of the above listed parcels.

U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Town of Bermuda Hundred Historic District  
Chesterfield Co., VA

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**Section \_ Photo List \_ Page \_ 20 \_**

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The following information is the same for all photographs:

Property: Town of Bermuda Hundred Historic District

Location: Chesterfield County

Date of Photographs: 2006

Photographer: Ruth Snead

Digital images filed: VA Department of Historic Resources, Richmond

Photo 1 of 5: First Baptist Church, 4603 Bermuda Hundred Road

Photo 2 of 5: African-American school, 4612 Bermuda Hundred Road

Photo 3 of 5: Bishop-Johnson House (Gray House), 4701 Bermuda Hundred Road

Photo 4 of 5: DAR marker

Photo 5 of 5: House, 4505 Bermuda Hundred Road





1.1 MI. TO VA 52  
 608  
 435  
 433  
 432  
 5558 1 SW  
 (WESTOVER)

BERMUDA HUNDRED  
 HISTORIC DISTRICT  
 CHESTERFIELD, CO  
 #020-004

- A 18 298453E  
 4135235N
- B 15 298930E  
 4135194N
- C 18 298768E  
 4134979N
- 20'D 18 298430E  
 4135100N

RIVER

Tidal Flat

Tidal Flat

Tidal Flat

Light

Light

City Point

PETERSBURG NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

Eppes Island

Eppes Creek

Cem

Sandpits

Shirley

PRESQUILE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Bermuda Hundred

RADIO TOWER (WXEX)

Ferry

Light

Light

Light

Light

Light

Light

Light

Light

Light