

Removed from Colonial Williamsburg. The president's report, 1961



## *Colonial Williamsburg*

WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

### A NOTE FROM THE PRESS BUREAU

It is a pleasure to send you the enclosed copy of the report of Mr. Carlisle H. Humelsine, President of Colonial Williamsburg. I hope you will find the report interesting reading and of value as a reference.

Sincerely,

*Robert W. Jeffrey*  
Robert W. Jeffrey  
Director, Press Bureau

# NEWS



from COLONIAL  
WILLIAMSBURG

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FOR USE ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28  
OR THEREAFTER.

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. -- The houses in the historic city of Williamsburg -- carefully restored along with the shops, public buildings and gardens -- are taking on even more significant perspective as more information is gathered on their early occupants.

The growing accumulation of knowledge of the activities of the residents of Williamsburg and its visitors when the city was the colonial capital of Virginia adds a luster and vibrance to graceful structures that housed many of the important figures in America's pre-Revolutionary period.

In the new annual report by Carlisle H. Humelsine, president of Colonial Williamsburg, many of the exciting but little known episodes of eighteenth-century Williamsburg life are correlated to the homes which line Market Square and Palace Green.

His report pursues a brief tour past these houses which include the George Wythe House, the home of Thomas Jefferson's law professor and which served as Washington's headquarters when he planned his Yorktown campaign; the St. George Tucker House, home of the noted jurist who was an inventor and experimenter far ahead of his time; the Peyton Randolph House where the Comte Rochambeau was quartered in 1781 and where Lafayette addressed a rain-drenched assembly of residents on his triumphant return to America in 1824; the Archibald Blair House where Royal Governor Botetourt sat on

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the steps and enjoyed an evening of songs by a group of colonial residents.

"The old homes clustered about our greens are more than museum pieces," President Humelsine declares in his report. "They are the enduring settings of exciting and important scenes in our early history.

"They housed chief actors in the Revolutionary drama, and their rooms echoed with talk of rebellion and liberty -- but also with lively everyday tales of comedy and tragedy."

These were buildings that stood when Washington and Rochambeau led their French-American Army into Williamsburg on September 14, 1781. Lafayette, already in the city but in bed with a fever, rushed out to embrace the American commander. Washington made his headquarters in the Wythe House, from which he could look out at the Norton-Cole House where a French baker was making bread for the troops. Ten years before the house had been the residence of a dentist who had done extensive work on Washington's teeth. On September 28, 1781, the main body of troops moved out of the city for Yorktown and Washington concluded his fifty-fifth and last visit to Williamsburg.

The report depicts the vitality of Williamsburg two centuries ago not only on these momentous occasions, but in episodes and activities such as these:

On Market Square, Bishop James Madison, then president of the College of William and Mary, lived for a time in the Archibald Blair House, next door to St. George Tucker. The ingenious Tucker, who had devised a means of transmitting messages in a sort of semaphore code, drafted Madison to assist in putting his "telegraph" to a test by sending a message from the Capitol to the college yard almost a mile distant. Tucker was so carried away with the success of the test he predicted a new era in the field of communications.

Tucker maintained a form of military discipline at home in which he was "commander-in-chief" and his children were his young "officers and privates." He dubbed his house Fort St. George.

George Wythe, who played a significant role in pre-Revolutionary activities and who was tutor to a great generation of law

students, including Jefferson, loved flowers and gardening. But even with the great legal reputation he held, he probably was remembered best by his fellow citizens for helping stand off a British landing party in the James River with a shotgun while he was on a hunting trip.

A stone's throw from Wythe's house is the Powder Magazine, which was seized in 1775 by a military company of the town's youngsters, forcing the Royal Governor to flee Williamsburg. Leading the company was Henry Nicholson, age 14.

From such human stories as these, says President Humelsine, the vision to restore Williamsburg to its eighteenth-century environment was summoned up with clarity and has enabled visitors to share a companionship with the past and with the men and women who once lived in the houses which have now been saved.

Increasingly, he declares, the efforts of researchers provide information which enriches the interpretation of Williamsburg so that present and future generations may more vividly appreciate the contribution of these early Americans to the ideals and culture of our country.