

Swan Tavern
Yorktown
York County
Virginia

HABS No. VA 83

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Virginia

Historic American Buildings Survey

Prepared at Washington Office

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SWAN TAVERN
Yorktown, Virginia

Owner: United States Government

Date of Erection: c.1720.

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Present Condition: Rebuilt

Number of Stories: 1½

Materials of Construction: Frame on brick basement.

Other Existing Records: (As noted in text.)

Additional Data: Deeds and Bonds III (York County Records)
pages 303 (No. 229) and 394 (No. 243.)

Insurance Records No. 21352 of the Mutual
Assurance Society, Lossing's Field Book of
the Civil War I, p. 440.

An abstract of title - 1691 to 1912 of lot
25, Yorktown (The "Swan Tavern Lot.")

A sketch entitled "The Civil War in America,
View of Yorktown, Va., Etc.", illus. London
News, Vol. XXXIX, Page 338.

The Simcoe drawing (1). Williamsburg Res-
toration Files.

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SWAN TAVERN
Yorktown, Virginia

The "Swan" Tavern, on lot 25 at the intersection of Ballard with the "Main street, opposite to the court house was probably erected by Thomas Nelson and Joseph Walker (who owned the property at that time) between 1719 and 1722. It was destroyed, as the result of an explosion originating in the court house in 1863, and reconstructed by the National Park Service in 1934 from data accumulated through extensive research.

Investigation of old ground lines showed that the basement (which was brick) of the structure must have been largely above ground. This, coupled with the manner of the destruction of the superstructure, and the fact that another structure had been built partially over the site in 1881, resulted in its almost complete demolition. Its remains were excavated in 1932 and 1933. Interpreted in the light of insurance records of 1796 and 1806 this excavation revealed an original block 52' 10" by 31' 6", to which appendages had been constructed, apparently prior to 1796. Within this main block was the vestige of a cross wall at about a third of the length. The first few courses at the base had no definite bond; above these the bond was Flemish. The bricks were $8\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2} \times 4$ in size, the joints averaged $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in thickness and the mortar employed the oyster shell lime customary in this vicinity.

For the reconstruction, the insurance record of 1796 which gave a sketch elevation, a Brady photograph taken in 1863, wills, inventories, deeds, and local precedent were relied upon.