

Bollingbrook
Petersburg, Virginia
DINWIDDIE CO.

HABS No. VA-79

HABS
VA
27-PET
8

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Philip N. Stern, District Officer
21 Law Building
Fredericksburg, Virginia

HABS
VA
27-PET
8

BOLLINGBROOK
Petersburg, Virginia

Owner: Unknown.

Date of Erection: 3rd quarter, 18 century.

Builder: Unknown.

Present Condition: Demolished.

Number of Stories: $1\frac{1}{2}$

Materials of Construction: Frame with brick foundation.

Other Existing Records: As noted in text.

Additional Data: See following pages, also

Lossing's Fictorial Field Book of the Revolution, Picture of houses, p. 339, v. 2; is $2\frac{1}{4}$ x $1\frac{1}{4}$ " wide. Description largely copied from S. L. Messenger.

Lancaster, Historic Virginia Homes and Churches p. 94. Picture evidently enlarged and retouched from Lossing. Text practically all from Lossing.

BOLLINGBROOK

PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA

"Bollingbrook", which was sometimes called "East Hill" from its location on a knoll of that name on the banks of the Appomattox, was a place of distinction due to its association with the influential Bolling family. Colonel Robert Bolling (1682-1749) who added the site of "Bollingbrook" to his many holdings in 1720,¹ was a man of prominence in Prince George County, being a colonel in the Colonial Militia, justice of the court, vestryman of Bristol Parish, and in addition to his land holdings was proprietor of a trading post which was likely located at the Falls of the Appomattox.² At the time Colonel Bolling bought the "East Hill" tract the Falls of Appomattox was a very small but important trading settlement serving the not far distant frontier. Petersburg was eventually built up in part upon Robert Bolling's land adjacent to "Bollingbrook."³ He and his son and grandson, were prominent in guiding and promoting the growth of the tobacco shipping and trading center. From the time when Petersburg was laid out in 1733 at the direction of Colonel Bolling's friend William Byrd of Westover⁴ until Civil War times, the Bollings participated in practically every civic and commercial undertaking of the community, and indeed this powerful family owned a considerable portion of the business and residential section of town.⁵ Up until Revolutionary War times the palace was more generally known as Bolling's Point rather than Petersburg, the name bestowed upon it by William Byrd.⁶

Revolutionary war events of more specific historic interest are associated with "Bollingbrook." When on April 25, 1781 a British force under Phillips and Benedict Arnold descended upon Petersburg the American militia made a final unsuccessful stand before Mrs. Bolling's front gate, her son, a captain of cavalry, taking part in the engagement.⁷

On May 9, 1781 the British returned to Petersburg. Phillips now ill and forced to ride in a post

chaise, established headquarters with Arnold at "Bollingbrook." On the 10th LaFayette shelled the city from the heights across the Appomattox making "Bollingbrook" a particular object of the fire of his light field pieces. Phillips, complaining "won't they let me die in peace", was removed to the cellar for safety. The house was reported to have been struck at least once, killing a negro cook. On May 13th Phillips died in the west room of the "east house" and was buried, according to tradition, in Blandford churchyard.⁸

In 1782, the Marquis de Chastellux, a general in the French army who had participated in the defeat of Cornwallis at Yorktown, visited Mrs. Bolling. His entertaining description of "Bollingbrook" and its occupants is recorded in the published account of the Marquis' travels in America.⁹

From the existing public records it is impossible to assign a definite date to the building of "Bollingbrook." Our facts are these: The site of the place was bought by the Bollings in 1720, at a price that indicates that there were no buildings of considerable value on the land.¹⁰ In 1782 Colonel William Byrd wrote that Robert Bolling was living within hearing of the falls of the Appomattox.¹¹ This could easily apply to the site of "Bollingbrook." However, Colonel Bolling's will dated 1747 calls the plantation which he owned in Amelia County "Bollingbrook", but he gives no name for his dwelling at Petersburg.¹² The earliest documentary mention of the "Bollingbrook" in Petersburg is dated 1775.¹³ From this it is apparent that "Bollingbrook" with which we are concerned was certainly built sometime between 1720 and 1775, but more likely was constructed sometime subsequent to Colonel Bolling's will of 1747, the date of the will mentioned above.

From the writings of the Marquis de Chastellux we learn that "Bollingbrook" was an establishment consisting of two houses of similar appearance, which Mrs. Bolling proposed to join together.¹⁴ Excavations conducted in 1934 under the supervision of the Junior Historian of the Petersburg National Military Park indicated that the buildings were located on the same axis. Benson Lossing made a sketch showing the two

buildings in 1848, which is reproduced in his Field Book of the Revolution.¹⁵ The east building burned to the foundations in 1855.¹⁶ The plans which have been submitted are, therefore, of the west house which was recently torn down. A photograph of this house taken shortly before its destruction is published in a Petersburg guide book.¹⁷

Prepared by

Manning C. Voorhis,
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Petersburg National Military Park.

NOTES

1. Bolling Deed Book, MSS. in McKenney Library, Petersburg, Virginia, p. 1. Hereafter cited as Bolling Deeds.
2. Prince George County, Virginia, Order Book, 1714-20, pp. 29, 42, 59, 81, 157, 226, 318. Nimmo Notes Vols. 4, p. 143; 5 p. 75; 6, pp. 6, 16, MSS. in McKenney Library, Petersburg, Virginia. History of Bristol Parish, Virginia, Phillip Slaughter (Richmond 1879). The quotations from the parish records contain frequent references to Colonel Bolling's services as vestryman.
Statutes at Large: A Collection of the Laws of Virginia, W.W. Henning, editor, (Richmond, 1820) Vol. 4, p. 267. Bolling Deeds pp. 1, 51-54.
Calendar of Virginia State Papers. W.P. Palmer, editor, (Richmond 1875) Vol. 1, p. 217.
Prince George County, Virginia, Deed Book, Vol. 1, p. 584.
Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Vol. 29, p. 497.
3. Bolling Deeds, p. 1.
4. Writings of William Byrd of Westover, J.S. Bassett, editor, pp. 250-253, 292.
5. Bolling Deed Book shows the business like way in which the Bollingbrook property was developed.
6. A Tour of the U.S.A., J.F.D. Smyth, Esq. (London 1784) pp. 60-64.
7. Bland Papers Charles Campbell, editor, (Petersburg, 1840) Vol. 2, p. 68.
8. Concerning the British stay at Bollingbrook see the article by Charles Campbell on "The British at Bollingbrook" in the January, 1840 issue of the Southern Literary Messenger. In regard to the shelling see Memoirs of General LaFayette, (prepared by his family, English edition published

- New York 1837) p. 513. This quotes a letter from LaFayette to Washington dated May 18, 1781. See also Journals of the Campaigns in the American Revolution, J. Simcoe, (New York, 1884) p. 206.
9. Travels in North America, Marquis de Chastellux, pp. 267-268.
 10. Bolling Deeds, p. 34.
 11. The Writings of Colonel William Byrd of Westover, J.S. Bassett, editor, (New York, 1901) pp. 25, 253.
 12. Bolling Deeds, p. 1.
 13. Ibid, p. 1.
 14. Chastellux, op.cit., p. 268
 15. Field Book of the American Revolution, Benson Lossing.
 16. Southside Democrat, Newspaper published in Petersburg, Virginia, edition of August 12, 1855. Copy in the files of the McAnenney Library.
 17. Guide Book of the City of Petersburg, L.M. Kernodle, (Richmond, 1916) p. 8.

REMINISCENCES
of the British at Bollingbrook.
Inscribed to the Lady there.

There is, perhaps, no house in Virginia connected with a greater number of military revolutionary recollections, than Bollingbrook in the town of Petersburg. The Marquis of Chastellux who visited the place, not long after it had been occupied by the British army, mentions this mansion thus— "We thought it time to pay our respects to Mrs. Bolling, and begged Mr. Victor to conduct us to her. Her house, or rather houses, for she has two on the same line resembling each other, which she proposes to join together, are situated on the summit of a considerable slope, which rises from the level of the town of Petersburg, and corresponds so exactly with the course of the river, that there is no doubt of its having formerly formed one of its banks. The slope and the vast platform, on which the house is built, are covered with grass (which affords excellent pasturage) and are also her property."

April 25th, 1781, at five o'clock P. M., the enemy appeared in Blandford. A battalion of American militia posted between the gate of Bollingbrook house and the Bollingbrook warehouses, resisted, until, flanked by four pieces of artillery,* they were compelled to retreat, and the town was taken possession of by the invaders.†

On the approach of the enemy, a large portion of the people of the town made their escape. General Phillips took up his residence at Bollingbrook. He and the officers of his family are said to have treated Mrs. Bolling with a good deal of courtesy, and (some add) addressed her always as Lady Bolling. Arnold is recollected as a handsome man, that limped in his gait.‡ He was fond of caressing the children of the family, and dandled them on his knee. He mentioned to the two girls then there, that he had at home two sons, one of them a Whig, the other a Tory, whom he proposed to match with them, in accordance with their particular political predilections. The kindness of Major Butler is likewise matter of tradition.

*When the firing commenced, a negro woman of Mrs. Bolling's came running in exclaiming, "Mistis de British is bulleting."

†The late Robert Bolling, Sr., was present in this skirmish, with a party of horse under his command.

‡From a wound received at Saratoga, where Phillips was made captive with Burgoyne's army.

Both the houses on Bollingbrook hill were occupied by British officers. § Mrs. Bolling was allowed the use of a room in the rear of the east building. Two sentinels were planted at each door of the house with crossed bayonets. The British soldiery repeatedly set on fire the fences about Bollingbrook, and frequently 'all around was in a light blaze.' || Upon these occasions, Mrs. Bolling was obliged to send her servants to arrest the flames, and she was thus kept in a state of continual apprehension and alarm. Before the arrival of the enemy, carriages were daily passing by, with families from the lower country, repairing to a place of refuge. Mrs. Bolling was strongly tempted to follow their example, but remained for the purpose of shielding her property, as well as she could, from destruction.

On the next day after his arrival, (to wit, the 26th of April) General Phillips (according to Arnold's letter to Sir Harry Clinton,) burned 4000 bhds. of tobacco. The warehouses which belonged to Mrs. Bolling, at her solicitation, were spared on condition that the inhabitants should remove the tobacco from them, which was accordingly done, by extraordinary exertions, during the night of the 25th. This conflagration must have presented a striking and picturesque spectacle. The scarlet-dressed soldiers moving about amidst the flames, scattering the fire-brands, and officiating in the work of destruction--the burning of the shipping on the river, reflecting its lurid glare on Pocahontas and Blandford--heightened the effect of the scene.

The combustion of such an enormous quantity of tobacco, no doubt must have impregnated the air with its odors for a considerable distance around; and the most inveterate smoker in the town, must for once have been fully satisfied that a conjuncture had arrived, when these "collateral sweets" rendered any further use of the individual pipe, a matter wholly uncalled for, pleonastic, and supererogatory. The burning commenced at 2 o'clock in the day, and continued during the entire night. The British troops marched out of town early next morning. How far this movement was attributable to the excessively fumigated condition of the atmosphere of the place, history has left as mere matter of conjecture. It is said, that the British troops at that time

§ There was then a tavern somewhere near the corner of Old and Market streets, called the 'Golden Ball,' at which a number of the British quartered.

|| Chastellux says, speaking of the enclosure, "It was formerly surrounded by rails, and she raised a number of fine horses there, but the English burned the fences, and carried away a great number of the horses."

3.9

in Petersburg were afflicted with the small-pox. Possibly, (as "it is an ill-wind that blows nobody any good,") this extraordinary nicotian fumigation, may have proven serviceable to such as labored under that malsady.

Among the incidents that have floated down the uncertain current of tradition, is one of a deserter from the British army having been shot at the spring near Bollingbrook. General Phillips is reported to have ordered the execution with a high degree of military "sang froid."

Arnold, on dit, cautioned Mrs. Bolling to be careful in her intercourse with General Phillips, not to irritate him, as he was a man of an ungovernable temper. This lady, during that period of terror, suffered an intense solicitude and anxiety, which discovered itself in her unconsciously darning the needles with which she was knitting into the bed by which she sat. Her conduct during this trying crisis, displayed a heroism which doubtless won the respect of the British officers; who are in general "men of honor and cavaliers."

After committing devastations at Osborne's, Manchester, Warwick, &c., the enemy set sail, and proceeded down James River, until receiving (near Hog Island) countermanding orders, they returned up the river. On the 7th of May, they landed in a gale of wind at Brandon; and on the 9th, marched thirty miles, and entered Petersburg late in the night. They came so unexpectedly as to surprise ten American officers, who were there for the purpose of collecting boats, to convey the army of the Marquis La Fayette across the James River. Among these officers was a Lieutenant Bowyer, who happened to be at Bollingbrook when the British arrived at the door. He however made his escape, and took up a position in a bamboo thicket, perhaps near Battersea, where, securely ensconced, he amused himself cursing the party of soldiers in pursuit of him, who upon reconnoitering his sanctuary found it impenetrable, and retired.

General Phillips entered Petersburg this second time, sick of a bilious fever;--he arrived on the 9th of May, and breathed his last, on the 13th, at Bollingbrook. He lay sick in the west room front of the east building. During the illness of General Phillips, the town was cannonaded by La Fayette from Archer's hill,* and it is commonly reported that he died while the cannonade was going on. It seems however more probable, that this cannonade occurred on the 10th, when

* On the north side of the river opposite the town.

La Fayette (according to Arnold's letter) "appeared with a strong escort, on the opposite side of the river,† and having staid some time to reconnoitre, returned to Osborne's." Cannon-balls fired upon that occasion, were preserved in the town some years ago, and may be yet extant. The Americans being aware that Bollingbrook was head-quarters, directed their shot particularly at that house,‡ a measure which, considering the sickness of General Phillips, would hardly have been justifiable, but for the horrid series of devastations in which he had just been engaged, in company of that odious traitor Arnold. This officer in the early part of the cannonade was walking across the yard, until a ball having passed very near him, he hastened into the house, and directed all the inmates to go down into the cellar for shelter.¶ General Phillips was removed down there. Mrs. Bolling also took refuge there, with one or two ladies who were with her. Anburey ¶(if memory serves) mentions that during the firing of the American artillery, Phillips being then at the point of death, exclaimed--"wont they let me die in peace?"

† The Appomattox.

‡ Two balls struck the house, one of which being spent, lodged in the front wall of the house; the other passed through the house, and killed a negro woman (old Molly) who was standing by the kitchen door, in the act of reviling the American troops.

¶ On the approach of the enemy, Old Tom, a house servant, was provident enough to bury certain silver plate, money, &c., in the cellar; there is also a vague rumor of an earthenware teapot, full of gold. While Arnold was down in the cellar, he was not aware that he was in such desirable company. There is still in preservation in the town, a set of China-ware, which was interred at this time.

¶ In his travels in the interior of North America.

On the 20th of May, 1781, just one week after the death of Phillips, Lord Cornwallis entered Petersburg, on his route from Wilmington, North Carolina. The march from that place occupied nearly a month. The battle at Guilford Courthouse, (that disastrous victory,) occurred on the 15th day of March, after which Cornwallis retired to Wilmington, which he reached April 7th, and having left on the 25th of the same month, arrived at Petersburg, May 20th. To favor the passage of the many rivers with which the country is intersected, two boats were mounted upon wheeled carriages and taken along with his army. His Lordship on his arrival at Petersburg, united his forces with those of Arnold, upon whom at the death of Phillips the command had devolved. The force Cornwallis brought with him amounted to 2000, that of Arnold to 2500, making the total force under the command of his Lordship then encamped in and near Petersburg, 4,500--enough to make the streets of the town lively with red-coats..

It is difficult to ascertain the spot where the British camp stood; there seems to be some reason to suppose it was pitched somewhere in the vicinity of where is now the Basin of the canal, but the point is involved in a good deal of doubt. Chastellux speaks of it as follows--"Mr. Victor conducted me to the camp formerly occupied by the enemy, and testified his regret that I could not take a nearer view of Mr. Banister's handsome country-house,† which was in sight, there being no other obstacle however than the distance, about a mile and a half," &c. It is hard to conceive at what point of view the Marquis stood, to see Battersea at such a distance; it would not be easy to find such a point even now, when certainly the prospect of the environs is less obstructed by woods than it then was.

Cornwallis remained in Petersburg only three or four days, and, as is understood, made his head-quarters at Bollingbrook. General O'Hara, it appears, was quartered at what is commonly styled the 'Long Ormary,'--about a mile to the west of Petersburg, on the main road. Mrs. Bolling found it necessary to visit this officer at that place, for the purpose of recovering certain negroes, and horses, which had been taken from her and were then there. The general consented to restore the slaves, but with respect to the horses proved quite inexorable. He is described as a harsh, uncouth person. He was wounded at the battle of Guilford, and surrendered Lord Cornwallis's sword at York-town.

† Battersea.

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At the siege of Toulon, in a sortie made by the youthful Napoleon, a grenadier in the darkness of the night drew a wounded prisoner down into a ditch; that prisoner, was Major General O'Hara of 'Long Ornary' memory, commander in chief of the British forces.

The following letter is from Earl Cornwallis to Tarleton:

"Byrd's Plantation, Westover, }
May 25th, 1781. }

Dear Tarleton:--The swimming* has succeeded very well, notwithstanding the high wind; the wagons are the most tedious part of the business. I trust however that every thing will be ready for your passing early to-morrow morning. In the meantime you will patrol towards the Appomattox, and do every thing you can to procure intelligence."

Such are some of the revolutionary recollections associated with Bollingbrook house; that they may serve to amuse the lady there, is the wish of
Petersburg, Va., Dec. 1839. C. C.

* If this refers to the horses of the British army, the swimming must have been effected by the assistance of boats, the James River being very wide there.

(On page 87, column 1 is a sentence referring to "the eastern gate of Bollingbrook,).

Rev. Aug. 6. 36, T.W.

BOLLINGBROOK

By MANNING C. VOORHIS

"Bollingbrook," which stood on East Hill overlooking the Appomattox at Petersburg, Virginia, was a place of distinction due to its association with the influential Bolling family. From the time when "Falls of Appomattox" was simply a frontier trading post until a flourishing city grew up on the site, members of this family have been prominent in practically every enterprise of public importance.

Colonel Robert Bolling (1682-1749), son of the original Bolling immigrant to Virginia, purchased lands within the present area of Petersburg as early as 1706.¹ He was extremely active in the pursuit of his ambitions, yet typical of his family, he was equally zealous in the exercise of the many public responsibilities with which he was entrusted. In addition to his commission in the Colonial Militia, Colonel Bolling was justice and surveyor in Prince George County, and member of the Bristol Parish Vestry.² He acquired extensive lands in Amelia County, owned a mill on the Appomattox and a trading store which was very likely located near the falls of the Appomattox.³

It is not altogether clear when Colonel Bolling moved from his Nottoway River Plantation (called Bollingbrook)⁴ to his lands on the Appomattox. Indeed it is by no means certain that Colonel Bolling ever actually lived on his Nottoway River Plantation. At any rate he was married at Kippax in 1706,⁵ and the same year, as already mentioned, he

¹ Bolling Deed Book, p. 1. MSS. in McKenney Library, Petersburg, Va. Hereafter cited as Bolling Deeds.

² Prince George County, Virginia, Order Book, 1714-20, pp. 29, 42, 59, 81, 318. Hereafter cited as Prince George Order Book. Nimmo Notes, Vol. 6, p. 6. MSS. in McKenney Library, Petersburg, Va. Slaughter, Phillip, *History of Bristol Parish, Virginia*, (Richmond, 1879).

³ Prince George Order Book, 1714-20, pp. 157, 236; *Statutes at Large, A Collection of the Laws of Virginia*, W. W. Hening, editor, (Richmond, 1820), Vol. 4, p. 267.

Bolling Deeds, pp. 1, 51, 54.

Nimmo Notes, Vols. 4, p. 143, Vol. 5, p. 75, Vol. 6, p. 16.

Calendar of Virginia State Papers, W. P. Palmer, editor (Richmond, 1875), Vol. I, p. 217.

Prince George County, Virginia, Deed Book, Vol. I, p. 584. Hereafter cited as Prince George Deeds.

Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Vol. 29, p. 497.

⁴ Bolling Deeds, p. 1.

⁵ MSS. belonging to Mrs. Elizabeth Bolling Cameron, Petersburg, Virginia.

made his first purchase of land within the modern limits of Petersburg.⁶ However this tract did not include the site of "Bollingbrook," which was not acquired until 1720.⁷ William Byrd of Westover assures us that by 1728 his friend, Colonel Bolling, had established a comfortable home within hearing of the falls of the Appomattox.⁸ No evidence has been discovered to show whether or not this house was located on East Hill. Tradition has it that the original Bolling home stood somewhat further from the river, and the deed-books seem to suggest this possibility.⁹

The second Robert Bolling (1720-1775)¹⁰ of this immediate vicinity (also a Colonel) was in all probability the builder of "Bollingbrook." At any event, on his death in 1775 he left the place for the use of wife, Mary M. Bolling,¹¹ the widow whom the Marquis de Chastellux found so clever and handsome. During the life time of this member of the Bolling family, the Bolling's Point¹² settlement became a town and grew to be one of the foremost communities of colonial Virginia. Robert Bolling shared in this prosperity, adding considerably to the estate which his father had left him. Besides his plantations in Dinwiddie County and his extensive property in Petersburg and Blanford, Colonel Bolling owned two very profitable flour mills (one of which was located on the Appomattox in the neighborhood of Brickhouse Run), and four public tobacco warehouses.¹³ For a number of years he represented Dinwiddie County in the House of Burgesses. Along with George Washington he was among the members of this body which met in the Apollo Room of Raleigh Tavern after Lord Dunmore had dissolved the Burgesses in anger at their insubordination. There he joined the distinguished company in a toast to the King and Royal Family, but the pledge was accompanied with a solemn

⁶ Bolling Deeds, p. 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁸ *The Writings of Col. William Byrd of Westover*, J. S. Bassett, editor, (New York, 1901), pp. 25, 253.

⁹ Prince George Deeds, p. 584.

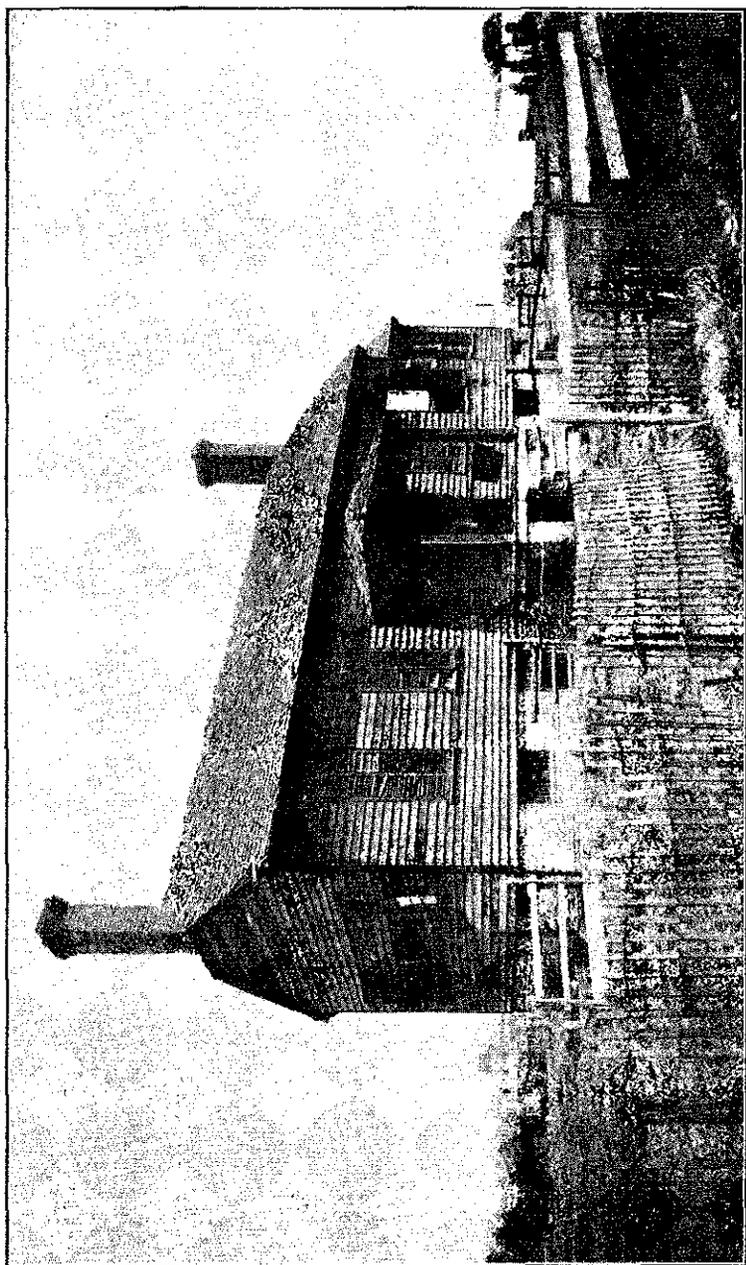
¹⁰ Slaughter, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-146.

¹¹ Bolling Deeds, p. 6.

¹² *Statutes at Large*, Vol. 4, p. 143; Petersburg was commonly called Bolling's Point until as late as 1776. See: *Statutes at Large*, Vol. 8, p. 78, also, *Tour of the United States of America*, by J. F. D. Smyth, Vol. 2, p. 62.

¹³ Bolling Deeds, p. 5, pp. 56-58.

Chastellux, Marquis de, *Travels in North America*, (New York, 1827), Vol. 4, pp. 267, 268.



"WEST HOUSE" PORTION OF "BOLLINGBROOK"—PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN ABOUT 1900.

resolve to buy no British goods until constitutional rights were respected.¹⁴

Colonel Bolling did not live to contribute his services in the defense of liberty. However, his son Robert Bolling, a youth in his teens at the outbreak of the conflict, became a captain of cavalry in the Virginia Militia.¹⁵ In 1781 the young man was elected a member of the Virginia House of Delegates.¹⁶ After the war he was principally engaged in the development of the property which his father had left him. Before the Revolution Petersburg and Blanford had been separated by the lands attached to "Bollingbrook"—that is to say, the tract between modern Sycamore Street and Lieutenant Run. Except for "Bollingbrook" and the Bolling tobacco warehouse and shipping wharves there were few other buildings on this tract, it being partly used as pasture for the fine horses belonging to Mr. Bolling's mother.¹⁷ In 1783 Robert Bolling began to lay out this land into lots, selling some of them outright and leasing others on ninety-nine year terms.¹⁸ Within this area he donated lands for a market place and a site for the court house where he served as alderman, recorder, and finally as mayor of the town which expanded to a great extent on his lands, and according to his planning.¹⁹

We are prone to think of our own times as surpassing all others in the changes wrought by industry and inventive genius. Yet Robert Bolling witnessed and took an active part in a social revolution that was relatively greater. In his youth, from the pasture surrounding "Bollingbrook," he watched the leisurely comings and goings of a Colonial tobacco port where schooners lay patiently at anchor waiting for a westerly breeze to start the long voyage to England. From the same vantage point in his later days Robert Bolling might have looked upon a scene in which steamships, railroads, cotton mills, and similar accessories to the bustle and prosperity of our republic, were prominent. And in al-

¹⁴ William and Mary Quarterly, Vol. 13, p. 65. *Journal of the House of Burgesses, 1770-1775.*

¹⁵ *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 22, p. 110.

¹⁶ *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 5, p. 217.

¹⁷ *Journal of the Virginia House of Delegates*. 1781. Chastellux, *op. cit.*, p. 268-269.

¹⁸ Chastellux, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

¹⁹ Plat Book, Vol. I, Plat 21. City Clerk's Office, Petersburg, Virginia.

¹⁸ Bolling Deeds, pp. 133-142, 238.

¹⁹ Minutes of the Hustings Court, Petersburg, Virginia, Vol. 2, p. 195.

most all these enterprises Mr. Bolling was a leading promoter.²⁰

In 1785 or thereabouts, Robert Bolling and his first wife, Mary, moved to "West Hill,"²¹ a house still standing which was built, so it is said, as a home for the stewards of the Bolling estate.²² In 1832 he deeded "West Hill" to his son George,²³ and shortly thereafter built "Center Hill" where he died in 1838.

Meanwhile Mary M. Bolling, Robert's mother, continued to live with her daughters at "Bollingbrook." She died in 1814 and thereafter her youngest daughter, Marianna, appears to have occupied the smaller of the Bollingbrook houses (West house) until her death in 1852.²⁴ Robert Bolling now of "West Hill" gave "Bollingbrook" to his son Robert Buckner Bolling in 1828.²⁵ The son married some three years later, but whether or not he moved into "Bollingbrook" has not been established. East Hill and such buildings as remained upon it continued in the possession of the Bolling family until 1902 when Anna D. Bolling sold the property to Messrs. Charles Hall Davis and W. R. McKenney.²⁶ In 1925 the last portion of "Bollingbrook" (mentioned later as the "east house") was torn down. Before wrecking operations were begun, measured drawings were prepared which have since been filed with the Historic American Buildings Survey.

From the existing public records it is impossible to assign a definite date to the building of "Bollingbrook." Our facts are these: The East Hill property was bought by Colonel Bolling in 1720,²⁷ who was living within hearing of the falls of Appomattox at least as early as 1728.²⁸ Colonel Bolling's will dated 1747 calls his plantation on Deep Creek in Amelia County "Bollingbrook," but he gives no name for his dwell-

²⁰ Bolling Rent Rolls, MSS., McKenney Library, Petersburg, Virginia. Entry of November, 1839.

²¹ *Statutes at Large*, Vol. 12, p. 42. Minutes of the Hustings Court, Petersburg, Virginia, Vol. 1, pp. 337-340.

²² Davis, A. K., *Three Centuries of an Old Virginia Town*, p. 68.

²³ Petersburg Deeds, Vol. 7, p. 410.

²⁴ Petersburg Wills, Vol. 2, pp. 102, 122-128.

Bolling Rent Rolls.

²⁵ Petersburg Deeds, Vol. 8, p. 123.

²⁶ Petersburg Deeds, Vol. 81, p. 101.

Petersburg Wills, Vol. 8, p. 637.

²⁷ Bolling Deeds, p. 34.

²⁸ *Writings of Col. William Byrd*, pp. 250-253.

ings at Petersburg.²⁹ It is generally said that the first Bolling residence in this neighborhood was somewhat further from the Appomattox than East Hill. Some are so specific as to state that the original homestead stood near the corner of modern Wythe and Adams Streets.³⁰ All in all it is reasonable to conjecture that "Bollingbrook" was built in about 1750 by Robert Bolling, grandson of Robert Bolling, the immigrant to Virginia. The fact that Bollingbrook house was an establishment composed of two houses, suggests the theory that one part was built and used as a dwelling before the other section was erected. At least this is the evolutionary history of many Colonial homes.

We are inclined to associate powdered wigs and silver buckles with spacious halls, but unfortunately the facts will not entirely support our fancy. The Virginia gentleman of the 18th century seems to have been able to live with grace and dignity in surprisingly small quarters. To be sure there were a number of plantation houses of impressive proportions, but many wealthy and influential people enjoyed comfort and entertained extensively in homes of modest size. In reading the accounts of travelers one is impressed by the cheerfulness with which the Virginia host was wont to share not only his bed-chamber but even his bed with a seemingly unlimited number of guests.

"Bollingbrook" was far from being a large residence. However, it should be understood that "Bollingbrook" properly speaking was composed of two separate houses, which together formed a single dwelling establishment. The two houses were built on the same axis facing south and were so nearly uniform in design as to give the buildings, seen together, a balanced effect. They were single story and of frame construction, faced with weather board. Both were rectangular in plan with small square wings at either end.

The Marquis de Chastellux gives us our earliest description of "Bollingbrook." After Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown Chastellux traveled extensively in America and shortly afterward prepared an account of his adventures for private circulation. Fortunately for us, he passed the better part of a day at "Bollingbrook" and has left the following account of his visit:

²⁹ Bolling Deeds, p. 1.

³⁰ No documentary denial or support of this statement has been discovered.

"Having continued our walk in the town, where we saw a number of shops, many of which were well stocked, we thought it time to pay our respects to Mrs. Bowling [sic], and begged Mr. Victor to conduct us to her. Her house, or rather houses, for she has two on the same line resembling each other, which she proposes to join together, are situated on the summit of a considerable slope, which rises from the level of the town of Petersburg, and corresponds so exactly with the source of the river, that there is no doubt of its having formerly formed one of its banks. This slope and the vast platform on which the house is built, are covered with grass, which affords excellent pasturage, and are also her property. It was formerly surrounded with rails, and she raised a number of fine horses there; but the English burned the fences, and carried away a number of the horses. On our arrival we were saluted by Miss Bowling, a young lady of fifteen, possessing all the freshness of her age; she was followed by her mother, brother and sister-in-law. The mother, a lady of fifty, has but little resemblance to her countrywomen; she is lively, active, and intelligent; knows perfectly well how to manage her immense fortune, and what is yet more rare, knows how to make good use of it."

"Her son and daughter-in-law, I had already seen in Williamsburg. The young gentleman appears mild and polite, but his wife, of only seventeen years of age, is a most interesting acquaintance, not only from her face and form, which are exquisitely delicate, and quite European, but from her being also descended from the Indian Princess, Pocahontas, daughter of King Powhatan, of whom I have already spoken. We may presume that it is rather the disposition of that amiable American woman, than her exterior beauty, which Mrs. Bowling inherited."³¹

Concerning the interior arrangement at "Bollingbrook" we are fortunate in having the inventory³² taken shortly after Mrs. Bolling's death in 1814, which lists in great detail the contents of each room at "Bollingbrook." From this document we learn that Mrs. Bolling did not carry out her plan of joining the two houses on East Hill. The furnishings of east house clearly indicate that it was being used as a main dwelling. It contained four rooms; one for dining, two bed-chambers, and a drawing room. In addition there was a large hallway, which we may be reasonably certain ran from

³¹ Chastellux, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-269.

³² Petersburg Wills, Vol. 2, p. 122-128.

the centrally located front entrance through the house to the rear door. Apparently one of the chambers was used as a dressing room, while the other, containing four beds, served as a dormitory for Mrs. Bolling and her daughters. Our information concerning the utilization of what the inventory calls west house, which was the building that stood until recent times, is somewhat less complete. It is clear, however, that there was at least a bed-chamber, a drawing room and a dining room in that building. The bed room was equipped for use, but the excessive amount of furniture in the other rooms suggests that they may have been used for storage purposes. A detailed blue print plan made before west house was torn down is at present loaned to the Francis Bland Randolph Chapter of the D. A. R.

The inventory of 1814, and the Bolling Rent Rolls³³ give some idea of the outbuildings of "Bollingbrook." There were at least five buildings on East Hill besides the two houses previously discussed. There is a reference to a school house, which was doubtless used exclusively by the numerous children of the Bolling household. Near west house there was a building generally referred to as the red kitchen. A dairy stood near the east house. There were also several cottages which were likely the quarters of the numerous servants.

The only existing sketch of "Bollingbrook" showing both east and west house was drawn by Benson Lossing on the occasion of his visit to Petersburg in 1848. An engraving from this drawing reproduced in *Lossing's Field Book of Revolution*, confirms in every respect the remarks of Chastellux and the information contained in the inventory of Mrs. Bolling's estate.

There can be no reasonable doubt that the building in the foreground of the drawing is the east house, which as we have observed was the main residence. The sketch indicates the simplicity of the design, the only ornate feature being modillions under the cornice. Lossing's small sketch does not show west house in any detail, but we may see a photograph of this building in the *Petersburg Guide Book* published in 1916.³⁵

³³ MSS. in the McKenney Library, Petersburg, Virginia.

³⁴ Lossing, Benson, *Field Book of the American Revolution*. Plate in section dealing with Petersburg.

³⁵ Kernodle, L. N., *Guide Book of the City of Petersburg*. (Richmond, 1916), p. 8.

It is fortunate that Lossing made his drawing in 1848, for a few years later, east house was completely destroyed by fire. To be exact the fire occurred, so contemporary newspaper accounts tell us, at eleven o'clock on the night of August 16, 1855. The house was occupied at that time by Mrs. Montague, and the family of her son-in-law, Mr. Octavius Coleman, who were aroused from their beds by the alarm of those who had observed the flames already issuing from the center of the roof. The lack of a sufficient supply of water made it impossible for the firemen to do anything more than save the adjacent buildings.⁸⁶

As already mentioned, west house and the buildings continued as rental tenements until some twenty years ago when west house had fallen into such ruin that it was torn down.

No account of Bollingbrook could be complete without some mention of its association with the events of the Revolutionary War. When on April 25, 1781, the British force under Phillips and Arnold advanced on Petersburg from City Point, the main body of the Virginia Militia took a position in the front of Mrs. Bolling's house. Colonel John Banister, a witness of the encounter, tells us that the militia were drawn up in a line extending from Mrs. Bolling's front gate across the road from Blandford to the Bolling warehouses. The militia confronted by a much larger force, was compelled to retreat across the Pocabontas bridge, to the north side of the Appomattox. Among the patriot forces in this engagement was Captain Robert Bolling, then a young cavalry officer. On the following day the store of tobacco in the Bolling warehouses was burned, the citizens being allowed to roll the hogsheads into the streets so that the warehouses might be spared.⁸⁷

Shortly after this when Phillips and Arnold returned to Petersburg in order to make a junction with Cornwallis' force, "Bollingbrook" was occupied as headquarters by General Phillips who was then sick with a fever. From May 9th until his death on May 13th, General Phillips lay desperately ill at Mrs. Bolling's residence.⁸⁸ The room in which he died is reported on good authority to have been the west room of

⁸⁶ *Southside Democrat*, Newspaper published in Petersburg, Virginia, Edition of Aug., 1856. Copy in files of the McKenney Library.

⁸⁷ The facts of this battle as related are verified by an eye witness, Col. John Banister, in a letter May 16, 1781, to Theodoric Bland. This letter is published in the *Bland Papers*. Chas. Campbell, editor, (Petersburg, 1840), Vol. 2, p. 68.

the east house. On May 10th LaFayette cannonaded the town from Archer's Hill. Two of the shots are said to have struck Bollingbrook, one of them killing a negro cook.

When Cornwallis arrived with his army on May 20th, it is believed that he also made "Bollingbrook" his residence and headquarters, until his departure on May 24th.

Many extremely interesting details concerning the British occupation of "Bollingbrook" are reported by the Petersburg historian, Mr. Charles Campbell, in the January, 1840, issue of the *Southern Literary Messenger*. Although the account which Mr. Campbell gives includes a great deal of tradition, his remarks are worthy of special consideration since the author was widely acquainted in this neighborhood while many people who witnessed the Revolutionary War were still living. The incidents which Mr. Campbell relates, however entertaining, will not be repeated here, for it has not been possible either to support, refute, or add to the statements made by this able historian.

⁸⁸ *Official Letters of the Governor of Virginia*, H. R. McIlwaine, editor, (Richmond, 1928), Vol. 2, p. 210.

Chastellux. *op. cit.*, pp. 238-269.

Simcoe, J. G., *Journals of the Campaign in the American Revolution*, (New York, 1844), p. 203.

³⁹ *Memoirs of LaFayette* (published by his family), p. 513. Simcoe, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

⁴⁰ Campbell, Charles, *History of the Colony and Ancient Dominion of Virginia*. (Richmond, 1847), p. 170. Campbell, Charles, "Reminiscences of the British at Bollingbrook," published in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, January, 1840.

LETTER OF A. P. UPSHUR TO J. C. CALHOUN*

Contributed by LIEUTENANT JOHN A. UPSHUR, U. S. Navy

The following letter, written by Abel Parker Upshur while Secretary of State to the Honorable John C. Calhoun, of South Carolina, was recently discovered by Lieutenant John A. Upshur, U. S. Navy, a great-nephew of the Secretary.

Washington,
Aug 14, 1843

My dear Sir,

Your letter of the 6th of August is just received. Mr. Benj. Green, son of Genl Duff Green, is going out to Mexico, immediately, as Secty of Legation and will take all the dispatches which I have occasion to send. Of course, I have no occasion to employ any other person in that service. But this does not prevent me from complying with your request in regard to the Genl Green of whom you write. As the Dept. does not *need* a bearer of despatches, it cannot *pay* any thing for that service; but it is a very common practice to give to citizens whose interests strongly require it the facilities which are afforded by being made the bearers of dispatches by simply entrusting to them a letter or jacket of papers. This is a benefit to the citizen and as he is paid nothing, it is not injurious to the Government. This is by no means a general practice, but it is always done in cases which clearly require it.

*Early mention of the name of Upshur is found repeatedly in connection with "the grandees of the county" of Northampton, Virginia, "the land of the pine and myrtle"; and the tombstone bearing the inscription—

"In memory of Arthur Upshur, born in the County of Essex in the Kingdom of England, who died January 26, 1709, in the 85th Year of his Age,"

is still to be seen, with that of Mary, his wife, at Warwick, or "Quinby's Farm," in Upshur's Neck, Eastern Shore of Virginia.

This Arthur Upshur, who came to Virginia in 1637 and settled on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, was the third great grandfather of Abel Parker Upshur, who was Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of State under President Tyler.

On February 28, 1844, Mr. Upshur, together with Mr. Gilmer, Secretary of the Navy; Commodore Kennon, Mr. Gardner, of New York, father of Mr. Tyler's second wife; Mr. Maxey, who had been United States charge at the Hague, and two seamen were killed by the explosion of a gun aboard the U. S. S. Princeton during an experimental firing in the Potomac River, below Mount Vernon. President Tyler was also aboard at this time, but fortunately, he had remained below with other guests. (See Niles' Register; also H. A. Wise, Seven Decades.)