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## The Amblers of Virginia: A Family's Rise to Prominence.

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THE AMBLERS OF VIRGINIA: A FAMILY'S  
RISE TO PROMINENCE

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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by

Hope M. Hockenberry

1973

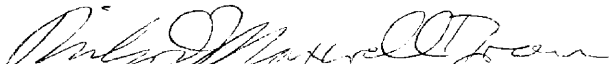
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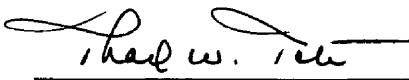
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Master of Arts

  
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Approved, August 1973

  
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## PREFACE

A family study requires somewhat different research techniques than a subject study. The Amblers, active as they were in commerce, politics, agriculture, and society, led me to sample scholarly offerings in many fields. My most difficult research problem, however, was the lack of information either by or about the family. Several times fire and age erased them from the colonial records. Their name appeared in many places, but a direct discussion of their activities was rare. Therefore, much of what I have been able to glean has been through inference or through a compilation of seemingly unrelated data. I am naturally skeptical of genealogical tributes but have resorted to them when necessary; particularly useful was Louise Pecquet du Bellet's Some Prominent Virginia Families, Vols. I and II (1907). The two collections of letters, those of Elizabeth Barbour Ambler and Eliza Jaquelin Ambler, provided personal insights into this often elusive family.

My historical research led me to some of the most important repositories of Virginia history in the country: the William and Mary College Library and Rare Book Room, the York County Courthouse, the Colonial National Historical Park Headquarters at Yorktown, and especially the Colonial Williamsburg Research Library. I wish to thank everyone connected with these institutions for their help and cooperation. To Professor John J. McCusker, a specialist in the

economics of the British colonial system, I owe my appreciation for his judicious criticism. Dr. Edward M. Riley of the Colonial Williamsburg Research Library offered helpful suggestions during the early stages of the paper and gave me greater insights into the Amblers through his own research of colonial Yorktown. Dr. Thad Tate's good-natured enthusiasm was an inspiration through some of the trying moments of the past year. To my research director, Professor Richard Maxwell Brown, I owe special thanks. For his scholarly guidance and understanding at a critical time I will always be indebted. Finally, for reasons too varied and numerous to mention, I want to thank J. Frederick Fausz, to whom this thesis is dedicated.

Williamsburg, Virginia

H.M.H.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the successful development of one of Virginia's leading colonial families, the Amblers, primarily in the period 1716 to 1780. It focuses on the activities of Richard Ambler and his three sons, John, Edward, and Jaquelin, and attempts to analyze their activities and contributions in the spheres of commerce, agriculture, politics, and society.

Richard Ambler was a leading Yorktown merchant and collector of the port during its busiest era, a post later occupied by his sons, John and Jaquelin. Because of his respected position in the town, a number of civic duties devolved upon him.

Through his marriage in 1729 Richard connected with one of the wealthiest families in the colony. Successful marriages with aristocratic families was a common means of social and monetary advancement, and within a few generations an Ambler had married into practically every leading family in Virginia.

Much of their wealth was represented by land. Besides dominating Jamestown Island and owning several lots in Yorktown, the Amblers had holdings in at least eight other counties by 1800 and owned numerous estates and plantations.

All three sons took an active role in politics, John and Edward as members of the House of Burgesses and Jaquelin as Treasurer of the State of Virginia. Clearly, in less than half a century, the Ambler family had achieved a position of wealth, respect, and influence in Virginia.

THE AMBLERS OF VIRGINIA: A FAMILY'S  
RISE TO PROMINENCE

## CHAPTER I

### GENEALOGICAL BACKGROUND

#### Introduction

When Richard Ambler arrived in Virginia in 1716, he encountered a land that "equals, if not exceeds, all others in goodness of climate, soil, health, rivers, plenty, and all necessaries, and conveniences of life."<sup>1</sup> This land was good to him; boasting no wealth or privilege he established himself as a commercial and agricultural leader and succeeded in making his grandson one of the one hundred richest men in the colony.<sup>2</sup> Before Richard's death he and his family had already made substantial contributions to the political, economic, and social spheres of Virginia society.

In the two and a half centuries since Richard landed in Virginia, the Ambler family has become large and diffused, but mainly through the records kept by Jaquelin Ambler (1742-1798), his nephew, Colonel John Jaquelin Ambler (1762-1836), and his nephew, Dr. James Dunlop Moncure (1842-1898), it is possible to reconstruct the Ambler genealogy. Particularly valuable has been the work of Louise Pecquet

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<sup>1</sup>Hugh Jones, The Present State of Virginia, from Whence Is Inferred a Short View of Maryland and North Carolina (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1956 [ orig. publ. 1724 ] ), 83.

<sup>2</sup>Jackson T. Main, "The One Hundred," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., XI (1954), 368.

du Bellet, great granddaughter of Colonel John Jaquelin Ambler, who assembled all the records and anecdotes of her family in Some Prominent Virginia Families.

#### English Amblers

The Ambler family (sometimes spelled "Ombler" or "Aumbler")<sup>3</sup> originated in Yorkshire, England, and, with a few exceptions, lived quite as well-to-do country gentry.<sup>4</sup> After substantial sleuthing Moncure and others unearthed glimpses of some early English Amblers: in 1533 the name "Ambler" appeared on a list of malefactors prepared by a commission set up by Henry VIII to deal with refractory weavers.<sup>5</sup> One William Ambler led a rebellion in 1548 near Scarborough against Edward VI. The rebels were protesting religious abuses and were easily crushed. William refused the general pardon; he and others were executed in 1549.<sup>6</sup> Another relative, Charles, was a solicitor to Queen Anne and composed a book of Law Reports.<sup>7</sup> Proof of the family's financial status can be seen in Captain Thomas Ambler's donation of £30 to the poor of Leeds in 1715.<sup>8</sup> The first Ambler to be mentioned as a member of the landed gentry is John Ambler of

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<sup>3</sup>Louise Pecquet du Bellet, Some Prominent Virginia Families (Lynchburg, Va., 1907), II, 6.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>5</sup>William Page, ed., The Victoria History of the County of York (London, 1912), II, 411.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., III, 415. For a complete account of this rebellion see Francis Drake, Eboracum; or the History and Antiquities of the City of York . . . (London, 1736), 2 vols.

<sup>7</sup>du Bellet, Virginia Families, II, 9.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 10.

Baildon, Yorkshire, who was married in 1712;<sup>9</sup> presumably he was Richard's brother. Richard also had a brother, George, and a sister, Mary, who married William Shaw and cared for Richard's sons when they were sent to school in England.<sup>10</sup> John Norman Ambler (1889- ) of Lawkland Hall, Austwick, Yorkshire, is the present head of the family.<sup>11</sup>

#### American Amblers

Richard Ambler was the first of that name to settle in Virginia. A letter written by the Reverend George Ambler of Wakefield, Yorkshire, about 1840, to Philip St. George Ambler, confirms Richard's ancestry:

I . . . am descended from John Ambler, of the city of York, who was sheriff of the county in 1721. My great grandfather, the aforesaid John Ambler, had a son, Richard, who followed the fortunes of a relative in Virginia. That son had nine children. . . .<sup>12</sup>

John Ambler must have held this post for some time: William Beverley on a trip to England in 1750, mentions in his diary that John Ambler was sheriff of York.<sup>13</sup>

The previous information agrees with what is known about

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<sup>9</sup>Sir Bernard Burke, ed., Burke's Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry, Including American Families with British Ancestry (London, 1939), 29.

<sup>10</sup>Elizabeth Barbour Ambler Papers, 1748-1777, Alderman Library, University of Virginia (microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Research Library).

<sup>11</sup>Burke, ed., Burke's Genealogical and Heraldic History, 29.

<sup>12</sup>Bishop William Meade, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia (Philadelphia, 1857), I, 103.

<sup>13</sup>"Diary of William Beverley of 'Blandfield' During a Visit to England, 1750," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXXVI (1928), 32n.

Richard Ambler. Although very little has been written of his beginnings, it is fairly certain that he settled in Yorktown upon his arrival. The relative mentioned previously was his maternal uncle, Arthur Burkadike (or Bickardike), who came to Virginia in 1694. According to the Reverend George Ambler, Burkadike was probably a general merchant in Yorktown from whom Richard inherited both property and vocation.<sup>14</sup> One Michael Dewick, who died in Yorktown early in the eighteenth century, requested that "the ring on his finger be given to Arthur Bickardike to be conveyed to his wife, then in the city of York."<sup>15</sup> Further, Richard filed bond in York County Court, May 16, 1720, as executor for Burkadike. Apparently his uncle died suddenly without leaving a will. Margaret Wise of Coulton, "the only sister and heir of Arthur Bickardike," and her husband, John, granted Richard power of attorney to sell what he could of Burkadike's possessions. Among them were slaves, horses, cattle, hogs, land (no specific amount mentioned), and "all other goods and chattels."<sup>16</sup> It is unclear how much of the estate Richard acquired, but Reverend George Ambler's assumption that he was sole heir was certainly false.

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<sup>14</sup>du Bellet, Virginia Families, II, 15.

<sup>15</sup>Lyon G. Tyler, ed., "The Smiths of Virginia," WMQ, 1st Ser., V (1896), 53.

<sup>16</sup>York County, Orders and Wills, Vol. 15 (1716-1720), 552; Vol. 16 (1720-1729), 173. All county records used are on microfilm at the Colonial Williamsburg Research Library. See also "Charges Against Spotswood," VMHB, IV (1897), 357n.

In 1729 Richard married Elizabeth Jaquelin<sup>17</sup> (1709-1756) of Jamestown. Through this marriage he connected with one of the wealthiest families in the colony.<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth was the oldest daughter of Edward Jaquelin (1668-1730) and Martha Cary (1686-1738). Edward had come from County Kent, England, in 1697 and become a prominent merchant at Jamestown.<sup>19</sup> He was of French Huguenot extraction, "descending immediately in a right line from one of those unfortunate banished Hugenots [ sic ] whose zeal in the good protestant cause has made their history remarkable. . . ."<sup>20</sup> His family, La Roche Jaquelin, fled to England at the time of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572. Before they left they wisely converted their fortune to gold and silver and brought it safely to England.<sup>21</sup> When Edward arrived in Virginia, therefore, he was already wealthy. An indenture in the Ambler Manuscripts dated 1704 refers to Edward Jaquelin as "merchant." Presumably this was the

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<sup>17</sup>The name "Jaquelin" has been spelled various ways in reference to this family, notably "Jacquelin" and "Jacqueline." Because it is spelled "Jaquelin" in most contemporary accounts, the writer will follow this spelling.

<sup>18</sup>For a fuller study of the Jaquelin family, see du Bellet, Virginia Families, I. See also R. A. Brock, Documents, Chiefly Unpublished, Relating to the Huguenot Emigration to Virginia, and to the Settlement at Manakin-Town (Baltimore, 1966), xiv-xv. [ Neade, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families, I, 96-105; Tyler, "The Smiths of Virginia," WMQ, 1st Ser., V (1896), 50-53; Frances Norton Mason, My Dearest Polly (Richmond, Va. 1961), passim. ]

<sup>19</sup>Lyon G. Tyler, ed., "The Smiths of Virginia," WMQ, 1st Ser., IV (1895), 50.

<sup>20</sup>Eliza Jaquelin Ambler to -- ?, Oct. 10, 1796, Eliza Jaquelin Ambler Papers, 1780-1823 (microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Research Library).

<sup>21</sup>Meade, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families, I, 104.



basis for his livelihood in the colony.<sup>22</sup> He married first the widow of William Sherwood and vastly increased his holdings in this way.

Sherwood, for his part, had served at the bar in London. For some reason he embezzled from his patron and, although pardoned, came to Virginia in 1668 determined to live in dignity and honor.<sup>23</sup> For five years he served as deputy sheriff of Surry County and then moved to Jamestown where he practiced law and married Rachel James in 1674. He rose in prominence and at various times was attorney general of the colony, coroner and justice of James City County, and representative in the House of Burgesses. By the time of his death in 1697, he owned substantial acreage on the western end of Jamestown Island.<sup>24</sup> His will specifically mentions monetary gifts of approximately £330, as well as numerous parcels of land and many dwellings. He asks that his Indian slave be freed and that his tombstone read "here lies William Sherwood . . . a great sinner waiting for a Joyfull Resurrection."<sup>25</sup>

Heir to all this through marriage and purchase, then, was Richard Ambler, since his wife's father, Edward Jaquelin, had inherited the Sherwood holdings at Rachel's death. There were no children by this first marriage, so the children of Edward's second

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<sup>22</sup>Ambler Manuscripts, 73, Library of Congress. Typescript at the Colonial National Historical Park Headquarters, Yorktown.

<sup>23</sup>"Will of William Sherwood," WMQ, 1st Ser., XVII (1909), 269.

<sup>24</sup>Lyon G. Tyler, Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography (New York, 1915), I, 323. See also Lyon G. Tyler, The Cradle of the Republic: Jamestown and James River (Richmond, Va., 1906), 82-87.

<sup>25</sup>Ambler MS, 65, "Will of William Sherwood."

marriage to Martha Cary inherited the estate.

Richard and Elizabeth Ambler had nine children, only three of whom grew to maturity: John (1734-1766), Edward (1733-1768), and Jaquelin (1742-1798). It is the activities of Richard and his three sons that will be the subject of this study.

John never married, but Edward married Mary Cary, and Jaquelin married Rebecca Burwell. It is indicative of the Ambler's social standing that they married into some of the most prominent families in Virginia: the Carys, the Burwells, the Armisteads, and the Marshalls (see Appendix A). In fact, Jaquelin's daughter, Mary, or "Polly," married John Marshall, who later became Chief Justice.<sup>26</sup> The family did not restrict itself to the tidewater area but established homes throughout Virginia, Richard's holdings in many counties facilitated this diffusion.

The Ambler family has figured in many professions. At least five nineteenth-century members of the family were ministers: Thomas Marshall Ambler (1793-1875), Charles Fenton Mercer Fisher (1813-1848), John Ambler (1821-1891), Charles Edward Ambler (1827-1876), and Francis Willis Ambler (1867- ?).<sup>27</sup> Edward's son, John Jaquelin (1762-1836), served in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 and became a colonel. He was one of the richest men in the state with numerous influential friends and served on the jury that

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<sup>26</sup>For a full account of Polly and John Marshall see Mason, My Dearest Polly.

<sup>27</sup>Meade, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families, I, 101; du Bellet, Virginia Families, I, 231; W. M. Paxton, The Marshall Family (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1885), 262-263.

tried Aaron Burr.<sup>28</sup> Another John Ambler served in the Civil War, having been given a recommendation to the governor for Assistant Quarter Master in the Army of Virginia (May 1861).<sup>29</sup> James Markham Marshall Ambler (1848-1881) was a surgeon in the Navy. He was persuaded to sail with the Jeanette to the Arctic in 1879. The ship became frozen in the ice, was crushed and sank. He recorded in his journal the suffering of his party and, although some men were saved, he was not.<sup>30</sup> Charles H. Ambler (1876-1957) was a respected historian who wrote Sectionalism in Virginia (1910), Life and Diary of John Floyd (1918), and George Washington and the West (1936), among other books.

The Amblers have become so diffused it is hard to trace them into the twentieth century.<sup>31</sup> No member has gained sufficient prominence to be listed in Who's Who or Who Was Who since 1897. Presumably they remain solid citizens of the Virginia community in the manner of their earlier ancestors.

Louise Pecquet du Bellet includes in Some Prominent Virginia Families an interesting letter by David J. Ambler of Ambler, Pennsylvania, written in 1904. He claims that in addition to Richard

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<sup>28</sup>du Bellet, Virginia Families, I, 35-39.

<sup>29</sup>William P. Palmer, ed., Calendar of Virginia State Papers, and Other Manuscripts, 1836-1869 (Richmond, Va., 1875), XI, 127.

<sup>30</sup>Allen Johnson, ed., Dictionary of American Biography (New York, 1928), I, 240. See also Philip Alexander Bruce et al., Virginia Biography, Vol. VI of History of Virginia (Chicago, 1924), 205; du Bellet, Virginia Families, I, 137-138; Paxton, Marshall Family, 251-252.

<sup>31</sup>For an outline of the diffusion of the family in the nineteenth century, see Paxton, Marshall Family.

who arrived in 1716, an earlier Richard Ambler, born in 1609, settled in Stamford, Connecticut, and left descendants, among whom are three quarters of all the Amblers in the United States. He goes on to say that a John Ambler of Barbados settled in eastern Massachusetts during the American Revolution and that his descendants still live there. An English sea captain named Ambler came to Maryland in the early nineteenth century and later moved to Ohio where his descendants now live. He also claims that Joseph Ambler, a Welshman, came to Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, in 1723, and from him sprang the Pennsylvania Amblers.<sup>32</sup> Another correspondent, D. Ambler Leedom, verifies this last, remarking that Joseph was Richard's brother.<sup>33</sup> These are the only references the writer has seen to colonization by other members of the family, and their accuracy is debatable.

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<sup>32</sup>du Bellet, Virginia Families, II, 6.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 7.

## CHAPTER II

### THE VIRGINIA SETTING: JAMESTOWN

#### Efforts to Stimulate Growth

Of Richard's introduction to Jamestown we know very little. He does not seem to have had any particular connection with it before his marriage. However, since Richard figures so prominently in the future of the island, it is useful to trace the development of America's oldest colony and the land of which this first Ambler became proprietor.

Although Jamestown had always been called an island, it was actually a peninsula until sometime around the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the eroding waves of the James River cut Jamestown off from the mainland.<sup>34</sup> The island covers about 1,400 acres, is about two and a half miles long, and from five hundred yards to a mile and a half wide. The James River encircles three sides of it, the Back River the fourth. The northern parts of the island are cut by the Pitch and Tar Swamp and its southern by Passmore's Creek.<sup>35</sup> Much of the island is marshy, yielding a fertile soil and an unhealthy climate.

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<sup>34</sup>Lyon G. Tyler, The Cradle of the Republic: Jamestown and James River (Richmond, Va., 1906), 23.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 22.

In March 1673 it was decided that all unclaimed marsh land in Jamestown Island would be made available to the public for use as a common for livestock.<sup>36</sup> In 1712 the General Assembly under Governor Spotswood passed an act giving anyone absolute title to land reclaimed from the marshes and made arable. Apparently not many people took advantage of the act, such a procedure being both difficult and expensive.<sup>37</sup>

Even though Jamestown was the only settlement in Virginia before 1700 that could be called a town, it was by no means a bustling community. Cooperation and town life did not accommodate the increasing desires of settlers to separate themselves on self-sufficient and isolated plantations. Still, there were several attempts by the crown throughout the seventeenth century to revive the dwindling metropolis and encourage new towns. Obviously, control was easier if the people were not spread out.

Under an act of the General Assembly in 1636 (renewed in 1638), a lot big enough to hold a house and garden was given to anyone settling in Jamestown; the annual rent was "one copper."<sup>38</sup> Further, when Governor Berkeley arrived in 1642 he stipulated that each house was to be built of brick, be at least sixteen-feet wide and twenty-four-feet long, and include a cellar. He hoped that this

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<sup>36</sup>Philip Alexander Bruce, The Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century (New York, 1907), I, 432.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 431.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., II, 534.

would inhibit the fires that occasionally ravaged the town.<sup>39</sup> Speculation was prevented by the requirement that owners begin construction before a certain length of time; if they did not, they forfeited the land and the purchase price.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, many lots were never taken, and because of their situation interfered with the natural extension of the town.

An act pushed through the General Assembly by Berkeley in 1662 was important not only for Jamestown but for Yorktown and, indirectly, for Richard Ambler. This act was met with reluctance by the colonists and home government, who felt it did not reflect practical experience. A town was to be built on every important river, and for the first time a method for creating towns was included. On paper anyway, the act was a boost to Jamestown. Each of the counties was to build one brick house in the capital. For those individuals who chose to build stores there, they got free land on which to build them. Town dwellers were free from arrest for two years after their arrival, except for debts and capital offenses.<sup>41</sup> To encourage centralization the following was added:

And because these preparations of houses and stores will be altogether useless unless the towns be made the marts of all the adjoining places, bee it therefore enacted that all the tobacco made in the three counties of James Citty, Charles Citty, and Surrey shall the next yeare when the stores be built be brought by the inhabitants to towne and putt in the stores

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 535.

<sup>40</sup>John W. Reps, Tidewater Towns: City Planning in Colonial Virginia and Maryland (Charlottesville, Va., 1972), 66.

<sup>41</sup>William W. Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia . . ., II (Richmond, Va., 1809), 172-176.

there built.<sup>42</sup>

In 1680 another act was passed to encourage town development. This one showed no preference to Jamestown. It was a far-seeing act, and everything that could possibly entice people into towns was included. However, it was not popular with the home government or the English merchant class, and the act was suspended in December 1681.<sup>43</sup>

Despite various attempts by the crown to stimulate town growth, at least in the case of Jamestown these attempts failed. Philip A. Bruce writes that only twelve or fourteen families lived in Jamestown in 1675, and that they made a living primarily by operating houses of entertainment.<sup>44</sup> The king's attempt to encourage influential people to build homes in the towns as an example to others was not very successful. However, William Sherwood was one of the few who did, increasing his holdings by buying up what others did not want.<sup>45</sup> Other landholders on the island included Robert Beverley, William Edwards, Henry Hartwell, and John Page. The conditions in Jamestown were described best in the writings of contemporaries. The following three passages illustrate the material decline of the island.

Writing in February 1699/1700 from Boston, the Earl of

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 175.

<sup>43</sup>Edward M. Riley, "The Founding and Development of Yorktown" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1942), 20-26.

<sup>44</sup>Bruce, Economic History, II, 545.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 553.



Bellomont reported on Indian troubles to the Lords of Trade. He was concerned about the decentralization of Virginia society:

Now if the French can so reduce those Nations [ of Indians ] as to turn them against us, Virginia and Maryland will be quite destroyed, and with the greatest ease imaginable, 300 of those Indians . . . would not leave a planter or plantation in those two Provinces in two months, for the planters live scatter'd, and there is not a town in either of them. James Towne which is the only place called a town in Virginia has not above 20 Houses. . . .<sup>46</sup>

About twenty years later the observant Hugh Jones remarked that:

The first Metropolis, James Town, . . . often received much Damage, being twice burnt down; after which it never recovered its Perfection, consisting at present of nothing but Abundance of Brick Rubbish, and three or four good inhabited Houses. . . .<sup>47</sup>

Finally, in "The Journal of the Chesapeake Campaign," written in the Revolutionary War by the Chevalier D'Ancteville on his way to join Washington in Yorktown, Jamestown was given a dismal description:

The enemy [ the British ] a short time before had quitted this post, and had left there ineffacable vestiges of his presence. The little town, one of the oldest in America, had been destroyed for the most part. One finds there ruins, the debris of conflagrations, tombs overturned, other fine monuments broken [ and ], a church partly thrown down. . . .<sup>48</sup>

#### Ambler Holdings

While Jamestown was declining in prosperity and importance, a few families on the island were rising in prosperity and importance. The evolutionary process of consolidation is outlined in the Ambler

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<sup>46</sup>E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York (Albany, N.Y., 1854), IV, 609.

<sup>47</sup>Hugh Jones, The Present State of Virginia, from Whence Is Inferred a Short View of Maryland and North Carolina (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1956 [ orig. publ. 1724 ] ), 25

<sup>48</sup>Edward M. Riley and Charles E. Hatch, Jr., eds., James Towne in the Words of Contemporaries (Washington, D.C., 1955), 34.

Manuscripts. This collection includes about 140 manuscripts, primarily original patents, deeds and leases, survey charts, and copies of three wills, all showing the chain of ownership of Jamestown lands up to 1809. Some of the illustrations have proved vitally significant in modern archeological research. The plats show two bridges and drawings of eight Jamestown buildings, including the residence of John Knowles. This is the only picture available of a Jamestown governor's house.<sup>49</sup> In a study of the Amblers this collection is invaluable, because it shows exactly how Sherwood consolidated his holdings, where they were, and under what circumstances they passed first to the Jaquelins and then to the Amblers.

The first mention of William Sherwood is in a deed dated February 7, 1675/1676. David Newell sold a certain amount of land to Colonel William Claiborne; to Sherwood was sold ". . . Land & howse, or ye ruins of ye said howse . . . and one Acre of land lyeing next & adjoyning to ye sd. howse. . . ."50

In 1681<sup>51</sup> Sherwood received twenty-eight and one-half acres through a land patent. The land was located "at the mouth of James Citty Island."<sup>52</sup> In addition, he was granted one acre "scituate

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<sup>49</sup>Henry C. Forman, Jamestown and St. Mary's: Buried Cities of Romance (Baltimore, 1938), 116.

<sup>50</sup>Ambler Manuscripts, 26, Library of Congress. Typescript at the Colonial National Historical Park Headquarters, Yorktown.

<sup>51</sup>The deed itself was dated 1677 but was not recorded until 1681. Unless otherwise specified, the dates given will be those when the document was officially recorded.

<sup>52</sup>Ambler MS 31.

lying and being in James Citty on which formerly stood the brick howse formerly called the Country howse . . . Mr. William Sherwood hath since new built a faire howse. . . ."53 Throughout these documents there are constant references to ruins, certainly indicating that Jamestown was not a growing center.

Later in that year Sherwood acquired 133 acres, including all houses and appurtenances, for 6,000 pounds of tobacco and £20.<sup>54</sup> Nine years later Governor Francis Nicholson granted him 150 acres according to the headright system.<sup>55</sup> In 1694 his nephew, John Jarrett, received a gift of twenty-eight and one-half acres from him.<sup>56</sup> Sherwood also received in that year a patent for 308 acres which he sold to William Edwards in 1695.<sup>57</sup> In 1693/1694 he sold two acres to Francis Bullivant for £5,<sup>58</sup> and received 308 acres from Governor Andros "att the head of a branch of Pitch and Tarr Swamp nigh about the state howse and runing alson the North side thereof to a ditch dividing the land of the said William Sherwood . . ." with others, including a three and one-half acre tract adjoining it which he had bought from John Page.<sup>59</sup>

Sherwood also bought a plantation known as Island House,

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 64.

including all houses and appurtenances, covering eighty acres, for 40s and a promise of £54. This he got from Francis Meriwether in 1695.<sup>60</sup> The next year he sold an unspecified parcel of land to John Harriss for £35<sup>61</sup> and bought a half-acre tract containing a ruined brick house from George Marable for £5.<sup>62</sup> Sherwood is mentioned throughout these documents in many different contexts, indicating, undoubtedly, his active role in community affairs.

December 11, 1704, is the earliest that Edward Jaquelin is mentioned in the manuscripts. At that time Jaquelin purchased an indenture from Sir Jeffrey Jeffreys.<sup>63</sup> In 1718 Phillip Ludwell sold Jaquelin twenty-seven acres of land for £25.<sup>64</sup> There are no more references in the manuscripts to purchases made by Jaquelin.

When Richard Ambler, through his wife, took possession of a great part of Jamestown, he received not only the original Sherwood holdings but the later Jaquelin acquisitions as well. Richard further acquired 110 acres of the "Governor's Land," 102 of which Edward Jaquelin had purchased from Phillip Ludwell, and eight of which he had bought from Edward Ross. It is indicative that the recipient is called "Richard Ambler of York Town," because it shows with what community Richard was associated in official transactions.<sup>65</sup> A year

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 56.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 59.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 99.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 103.

later, in 1745, Richard bought 127-1/2 acres from Christopher and Elizabeth Perkins for £680. In addition, he received everything on the land, and one male slave.<sup>66</sup> That same year he purchased 500 acres from Robert and Frances Anderson.<sup>67</sup> By lease, he acquired 105 acres in 1750.<sup>68</sup> Richard paid Edward Travis £8 12s for a one-half-acre tract in 1753;<sup>69</sup> perhaps these small purchases were efforts to consolidate his growing estate.

This Travis family became the other important family on the island and, with the Amblers, possessed most of the island. Edward Travis is known to have been in Jamestown as early as 1637, and he served as a Burgess in 1644. In time the Travis holdings encompassed about 838 acres, located on the eastern part of the island (the Amblers dominated the western end). Neither family deserted the island until 1831, when each sold its holdings to David Bullock of Richmond who became its sole proprietor.<sup>70</sup> However, in the James City County Land Tax Records, land belonging to John Ambler continues in the records until 1840; there is no listing of a David Bullock.<sup>71</sup> (See Tables 1 and 2.)

Later, Richard's sons, Edward and Jaquelin, bought land in

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 108, 109, 110.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 112.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 115.

<sup>70</sup>"Travis Family," WMQ, 1st Ser., IV (1910), 141. See also Tyler, Cradle of the Republic, 94.

<sup>71</sup>James City County Land Tax Records 1782-1832 (microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Research Library).

TABLE 1

THE AMBLER'S LAND TAX RECORD FOR JAMES CITY COUNTY,  
1782 TO 1840 [ FOR JOHN AMBLER (1762-1836) AND  
HIS SON EDWARD (1783-1846), GRANDSON AND  
GREAT GRANDSON OF RICHARD AMBLER ]

Date	Quantity of Land in Acres	Value per Acre	Total Value	Tax
1782	727	15s	£ 906.5.0	. .
1783	1,275	18s 2d	1,158.2.6	£17.7.6
1787	1,275	18s 2d	1,158.2.6	17.7.6
1788	1,275	18s 2d	1,158.2.6	17.7.6
1789	1,275	18s 2d	1,158.2.6	17.7.6
1790	1,275	18s 2d	1,158.2.6	17.7.6
1795	1,275	18s 2d	1,158.2.6	17.7.6
1800	1,275	\$3.03	\$3,863.25	\$18.54
1805	1,275	3.03	3,863.25	18.54
1810	1,275	3.03	3,863.25	18.54
1815	375 <sup>a</sup> 900 <sup>b</sup>	3.03 3.03	1,136.25 2,727.00	9.66 23.18
1818	375 <sup>a</sup> 900 <sup>b</sup>	3.03 3.03	1,136.25 2,727.00	8.53 20.40
1825	375 <sup>a</sup>	5.53	2,063.75 <sup>c</sup>	1.66
1830	375	5.77	2,163.75 <sup>d</sup>	1.70
1832	375	5.77	2,163.75	1.74
1833	375	5.77	2,163.75	1.74
1834	375	5.77	2,163.75	1.74
1835	375	5.77	2,163.75	1.74

TABLE 1--Continued

Date	Quantity of Land in Acres	Value per Acre	Total Value	Tax
1836	375 <sup>e</sup>	5.77	2,163.75	1.74
1837	375	5.77	2,163.75	2.16
1838	375	5.77	2,163.75	2.16
1839	375	5.77	2,163.75	2.16
1840 <sup>f</sup>	. .	. .	. .	. .

<sup>a</sup>John

<sup>b</sup>Edward (deeded by John Ambler)

<sup>c</sup>\$300.00 added on account of buildings

<sup>d</sup>\$400.00 added on account of buildings

<sup>e</sup>Estate of John Ambler

<sup>f</sup>"Ambler" no longer represented after this date

Source: James City County Land Tax Records, 1782-1832. Colonial  
Williamsburg Research Library (M-1-56).

TABLE 2

THE AMBLER'S PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX RECORD FOR JAMES CITY  
 COUNTY, 1782 TO 1814 [ FOR JOHN AMBLER (1762-1836),  
 SON OF EDWARD, GRANDSON OF RICHARD AMBLER ]

Date	White Males Over 21	Slaves Over 16	Slaves Under 16	Horses	Cattle	Other	Tax Recorded (\$)
1782	0	22	..	0	20	..	..
1783	14	8	..	0	30		..
1785	1	29	..	..	..		..
1786	2	30	15	5	54		..
1787	2	32	20	11	70		..
1788		37		11		..	
1789		36		8		1 chariot, 1 stud horse	
1790		39		8		1 chariot, 1 stud horse	
1794		38	2			1 chariot, 1 stud horse	



TABLE 2--Continued

Date	White Males Over 21	Slaves Over 16	Slaves Under 16	Horses	Cattle	Other	Tax Recorded (\$)
1795	1	34	1	7	. .	1 chariot, 1 two-wheel carriage, 1 stud horse	
1800		39	6	9		1 chariot, 1 stud horse	41.88
1805	2	17	6	6		1 stud horse	22.84
1808 <sup>a</sup>							
1810	1	27	5	7		1 two-wheel carriage	15.78
1814	1	18	5	8	. .	. .	19.85

<sup>a</sup>After 1808 the records are in the name of Edward Ambler (1783-1846), John's son.

Source: James City County Personal Property Tax Records, 1782-1824. Colonial Williamsburg Research Library (M-1-53).

Jamestown. In 1767 Edward bought 120 acres from William Warburton for £60.<sup>72</sup> An agreement between Mary Ambler, Edward's widow, and Edward Travis, was drawn up in 1779 whereby Mary rented her farm to Travis (except a nursery by the house used for the Ferry) for a yearly rent of three hogsheads of inspected tobacco containing at least three hundred pounds. There are interesting provisions in this transaction which show the Amblers to be interested in more than just immediate returns. Travis is forbidden to cut down any woodland and is instructed to divide the land into three parts, using only one part per year and employing methods of crop rotation.<sup>73</sup> By an act in 1787 John Ambler (Edward's son) bought 367 acres in Jamestown from the College of William and Mary.<sup>74</sup> At that time his holdings in James City County totaled 1,642 acres.<sup>75</sup>

Most of Jamestown's early distinction had long since passed, however, and land there was probably not in demand. Politically, Jamestown was a "rotten borough" as far back as 1760 when an Ambler or a Travis almost always represented the few constituents in the House of Burgesses.<sup>76</sup> Efforts by the citizens of Jamestown to have a public warehouse for tobacco inspection was quickly discouraged by the

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<sup>72</sup>Ambler MS 125.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 129.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 131.

<sup>75</sup>Jackson T. Main, "The One Hundred," WMQ, 3d Ser., XI (1954), 368.

<sup>76</sup>H. R. McIlwaine, ed., Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1758-1761 (Richmond, Va., 1908), viiin.

House of Burgesses in 1762.<sup>77</sup>

### The House

Of the family house at Jamestown something should be said. As early as 1721, Edward Jaquelin's house was called "a Mansion house."<sup>78</sup> Throughout the manuscripts the Ambler house is always called a mansion, understandably, since it was an elaboration of Jaquelin's efforts. Jaquelin built the house around 1710 along Back Street, about 350 yards east of the church tower. Its location is in one of the best parts of "New Towne"<sup>79</sup> (see Figure 1). Jaquelin was somewhat unusual in building his home in town, because most successful men, despite official encouragement to the contrary, preferred living away from the capital.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps his mercantile pursuits required him to do so.

The Jaquelin-Ambler house, as it is called, was architecturally a typical early Georgian river plantation with central hall and two rooms on each side on the first floor, and an identical layout on the second. It was built of brick and laid in stylish Flemish bond. Walkways connected many of the dependencies. A full basement lay under the house with two sets of stairways leading down to it. Extensive excavations of the site have unearthed evidence of numerous problematical structures which must have been slave quarters

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 223, 231; 1761-1765, 72, 97.

<sup>78</sup>Ambler MS 101.

<sup>79</sup>Tyler, Cradle of the Republic, 23.

<sup>80</sup>John L. Cotter and J. Paul Hudson, New Discoveries at Jamestown (Washington, D.C., 1957), 5.



Source: Colonial National Historical Park Headquarters at Yorktown. Photograph number 12,524. [ Photograph taken Apr. 1956 by John Cotter and published in Cotter, John L., and Hudson, J. Paul. New Discoveries at Jamestown. Washington, D.C., 1958, 40-41. ]

Fig. 1--Sidney King's Perspective Drawing of Jamestown in the Seventeenth Century (Projects 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 194)

and other plantation structures.<sup>81</sup> (See Figure 2.) Over the years the house was embellished with a hipped roof (replacing the original gambrel roof), dormer windows, a rectangular transom over the front door, and other "improvements."<sup>82</sup> Evidence of elaborate garden walks associated with the house have also been uncovered.<sup>83</sup> The house burned in the Revolutionary War and was restored by Colonel John Ambler. It burned a second time during the Civil War and was restored. When it accidentally burned again in 1895, the owner decided not to tempt fate and did not restore it.<sup>84</sup> Today the Jaquelin-Ambler house stands in ruin, one of the most conspicuous features of the island. (See Figures 3 and 4.)

There are few references to life on this plantation, and no mention of the family's farming activities on it. However, one does get a few glimpses of life there from the Virginia Gazette. In the December 29, 1768 issue:

Last Saturday an outhouse of Mrs. Ambler's at Jamestown by some accident took fire, and was burnt to the ground. A valuable Negro man, attempting to save some of his effects, perished in the flames.<sup>85</sup>

Two months later, February 23, 1769, there

Strayed, some time ago, from Mrs. Ambler's at Jamestown, a very large brown mule, belonging to a plantation of the late Mr. Edward Ambler, in the county of Louisa. Whoever will convey

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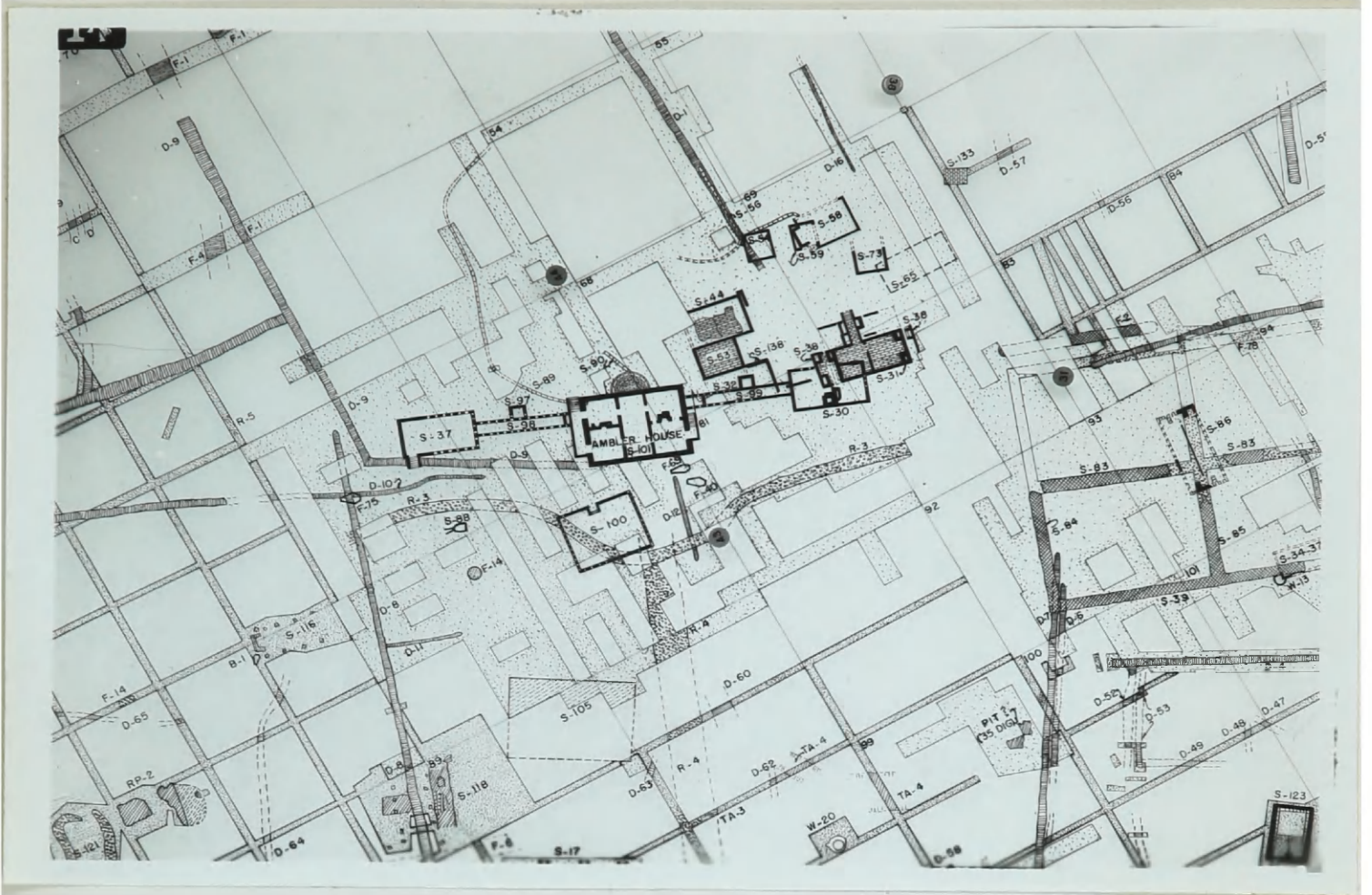
<sup>81</sup>John L. Cotter, Archeological Excavations at Jamestown (Washington, D.C., 1958), 28-31.

<sup>82</sup>Forman, Jamestown and St. Mary's, 326.

<sup>83</sup>Cotter, Archeological Excavations, 70.

<sup>84</sup>Tyler, Cradle of the Republic, 23.

<sup>85</sup>Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, Dec. 29, 1768.



Source: Colonial National Historical Park Headquarters at Yorktown. Photograph number 17,073.

Fig. 2--Plan of "New Towne" Site Showing the Ambler House Complex

Ruins of the Jaquelin Ambler House



Source: Colonial National Historical Park Headquarters at Yorktown. Photograph number 16,375. [ This is a copy of a photo print purchased from Cavalier Pictures, 306 West Grace Street, Richmond. The photograph was taken in 1948. ]

Fig. 3--Jamestown Area--Aerial View



Source: Colonial National Historical Park Headquarters at Yorktown. Photograph number 9,391. [ Photograph was taken June 19, 1947, by Banton and Hatch. ]

Fig. 4--Jaquelin-Ambler House Ruins,  
Front and West End View,  
Jamestown, Virginia



him either to Jamestown, to Mr. Charles Dabney in Louisa, or to the subscriber in Williamsburg, shall have 20s reward.

--Ro. C. Nicholas<sup>86</sup>

This must have been a trying time for Mrs. Ambler (Mary Cary) whose husband, Edward, had died just a few months before.

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid., Feb. 23, 1769.

## CHAPTER III

### THE VIRGINIA SETTING: YORKTOWN

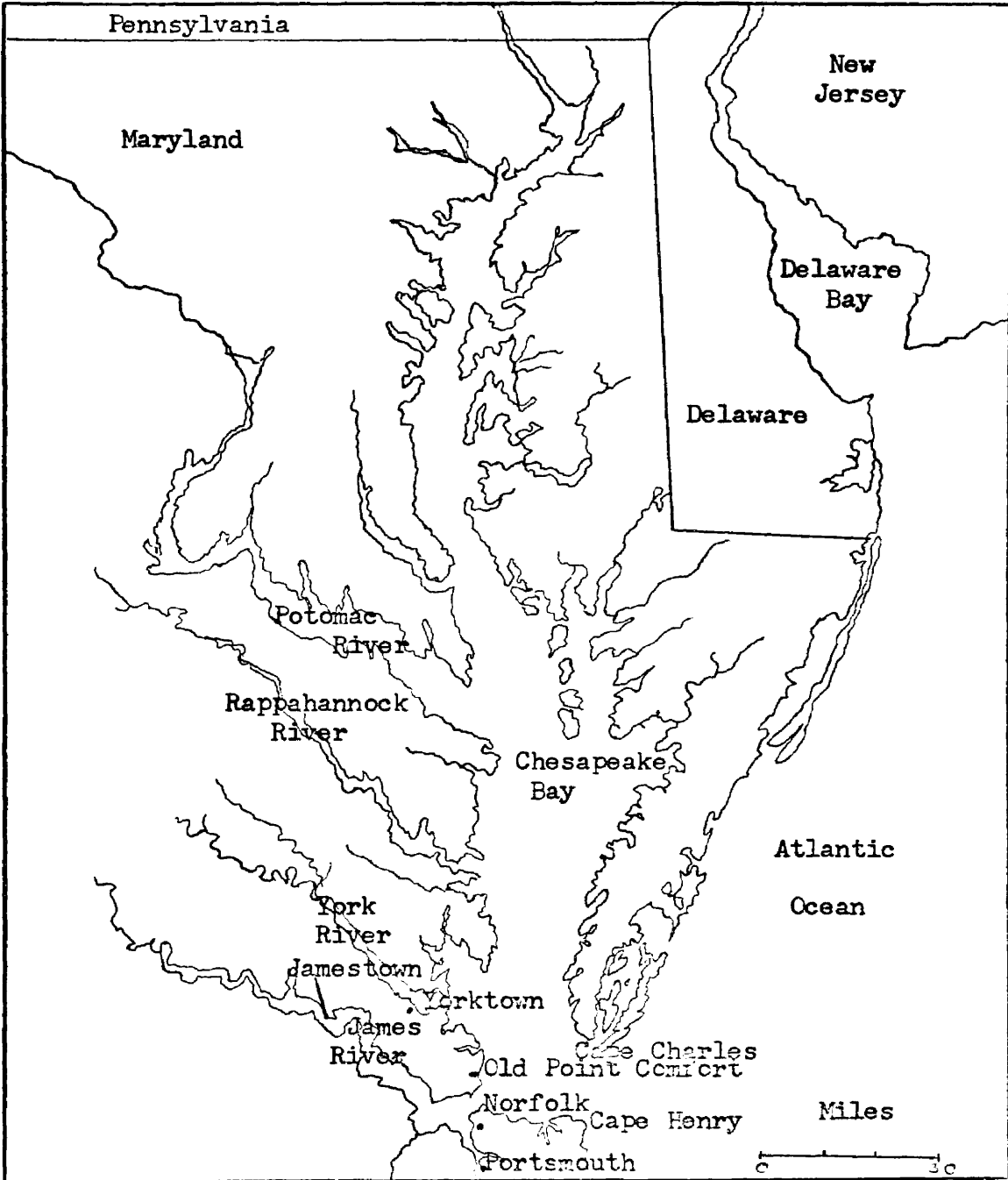
#### Description and Early Development

Richard and his family also figure in the development of Yorktown but in a much different context. He and his sons, Edward and Jaquelin, were collectors of the port of Yorktown during its most prosperous years. Whereas legislative efforts to encourage Jamestown's growth failed, these efforts were strikingly successful in the case of Yorktown.

Yorktown lies twelve miles north of Jamestown on the York River, the shortest of the major rivers leading into Chesapeake Bay (see Figure 5). It is ten miles in from the bay at one of the narrowest and deepest parts of the river.<sup>87</sup> The first white settlement near the present site of the town was a direct result of the Indian massacre of 1622. Fear of further attack provoked the settlers to build outposts and fortifications. A log palisade was built across the peninsula from the James to the York River; a fort was erected a few miles from modern Yorktown. A settlement, York, grew up around the fort, and about 1630 it was chosen as a receiving

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<sup>87</sup>Paul Wilstach, Tidewater Virginia (Indianapolis, 1929), 206.



Adapted from: Arthur Pierce Middleton, Tobacco Coast: A Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era (Newport News, 1953), 37.

Fig. 5--Chesapeake Bay Area

port, thus establishing it as a commercial center at the outset.<sup>88</sup> However, this village was extremely small and provincial. The Tidewater area provides so many natural harbors that most seventeenth-century planters had their own wharves, and York remained small.

As a major commercial center, Yorktown had its conception in the Act for Ports in 1691. This act, passed by the General Assembly under the enthusiastic sponsorship of Governor Francis Nicholson, was detailed and precise. In order to please colonial officials in England, the Assembly emphasized the efficiency and reputability such a measure would give to the collecting of customs.<sup>89</sup> Fifteen sites were designated as future port towns, and five areas were set aside as places to buy and sell goods. In each county the justices were to decide on a fifty-acre tract to be divided into lots as a county port. After October 1692 all imports and exports of the colony had to pass through one of these ports. Customs collectors were to be appointed to distribute certificates of authorization to this effect.<sup>90</sup> As a special boost to the new town of York, the General Assembly ordered a courthouse be erected there; failure to do so would result in a £50 fine for each justice.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Clyde F. Trudell, Colonial Yorktown (Old Greenwich, Conn., 1971), 38.

<sup>89</sup>John W. Reps, Tidewater Towns: City Planning in Colonial Virginia and Maryland (Charlottesville, Va., 1972), 76.

<sup>90</sup>Edward M. Riley, "The Founding and Development of Yorktown" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1942), 29-32. See also Reps, Tidewater Towns, 76-84.

<sup>91</sup>Reps, Tidewater Towns, 84.

Yorktown's fifty-acre tract was divided into eighty-five one-half acre lots according to a simple gridiron pattern. Edward Riley has calculated that, of the first lot owners, almost all were members of local or colonial government or were influential in the colony in some way: six were members of the colonial government, fourteen were "gentlemen," nine were planters (large land owners), and ten had military or naval titles.<sup>92</sup> The governor's inconsistent attitude toward the Port Act impeded the progress of the town, but in 1699 an act was passed confirming titles to these lots. Yorktown now began to attract men not of the gentry but men who would benefit most by commercial activities. The period 1699 to 1705 saw great growth in the town through population and building, and by 1705 Yorktown was already thriving. None of the other port towns was nearly as prosperous. The General Assembly passed another town law in 1706 very similar to that passed in 1691. Although it was repealed shortly thereafter, it stimulated the sale of lots, this time to many members of the working classes. By 1709 the best lots were taken up, and by 1719 all the lots were in the hands of private citizens.<sup>93</sup> (See Figure 6.) The repeal of the Act for Ports in 1710 had little effect on Yorktown, its future importance already established.

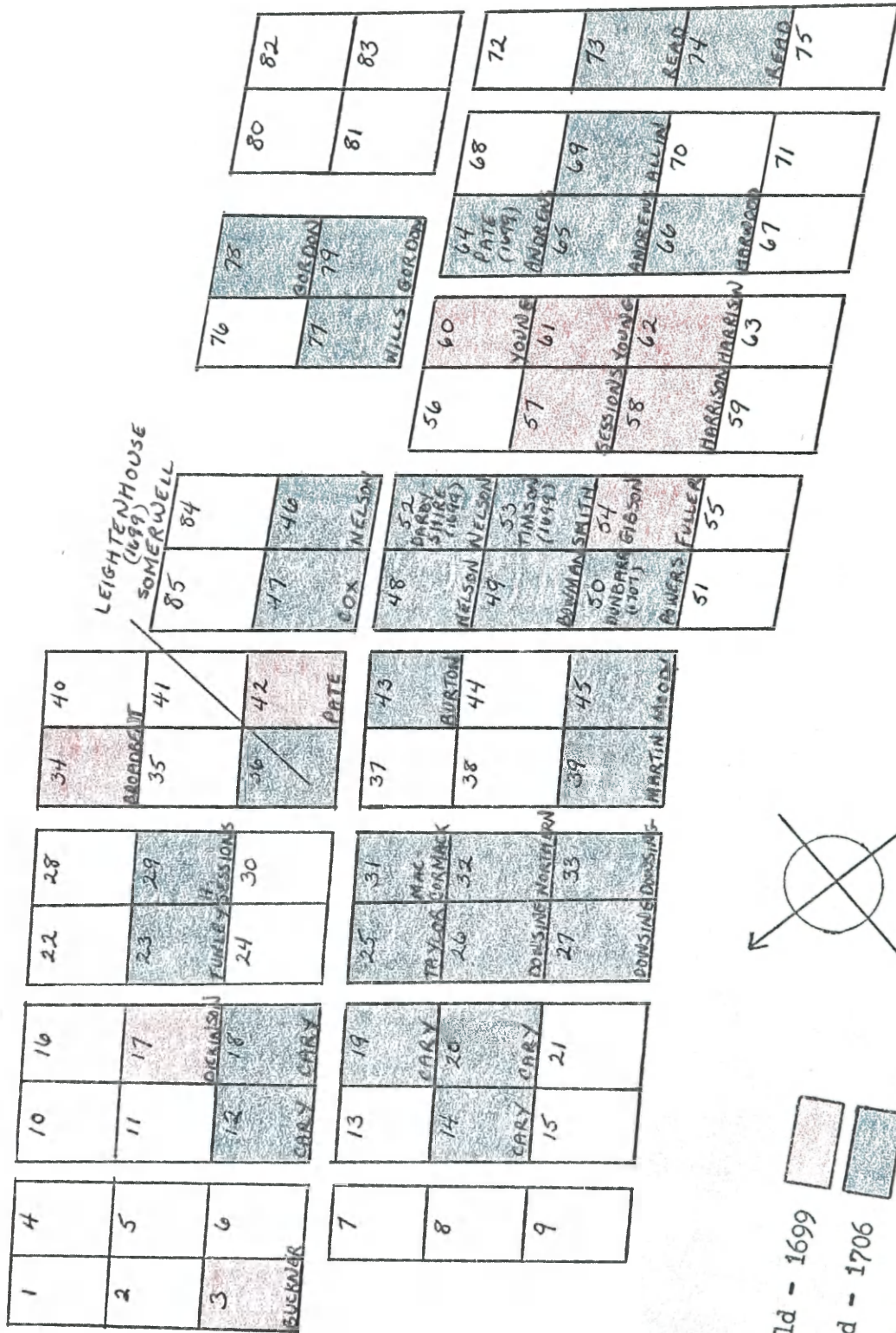
#### Leading Families

Commercial prosperity meant the rise of a wealthy

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<sup>92</sup>Riley, "Founding and Development of Yorktown," 42.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 45-58.



DEVELOPMENT OF YORKTOWN  
1699 to 1710

LEGEND:

- Lots sold - 1699
- Lots sold - 1706
- Lots forfeited - Name  
Date

From Edward Miles Riley, "The Founding and Development of Yorktown, Virginia, 1691-1781"  
(Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1942), 56.

merchant-planter class which soon took over leadership of the community. Most of the merchants had extensive land holdings elsewhere, but many chose to display their prosperity in townhouses. One of the loveliest of these is the Nelson house, which still stands today. Thomas Nelson, who settled in Yorktown in 1705, arrived from England with a good supply of capital and went immediately into the mercantile business. His father had been a merchant and had trained his son accordingly. Nelson rose in position very quickly; after only six years in Yorktown he was made a justice in the Court of York County. He is known to have bought a 215-acre farm near Yorktown at this time, and in 1719 he possessed 3,273 acres and twenty-one indentured servants in what is now Hanover County.<sup>94</sup> His activities and assets were diversified: he was an investor in the Virginia Indian Company; the west Indian trade sloop, Martha; an iron mine; a mill; and the Swan Tavern in Yorktown; he operated a ferry and engaged in the slave trade in addition to his commercial activities in Yorktown.<sup>95</sup> In a relatively short time after his arrival, then, Nelson was a man of wealth and political influence. Throughout the eighteenth century his was unquestionably the leading family in Yorktown. This example shows the extent of social mobility which existed even into the eighteenth century, a fact of which

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<sup>94</sup>Emory Evans, "The Nelsons: A Biographical Study of a Virginia Family in the Eighteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1957), 3-10. For a short biography of his son, William Nelson, "the most prominent merchant in Virginia," see "Virginia Council Journals," VMHB, XXXIII (1925), 189.

<sup>95</sup>Emory Evans, "The Rise and Decline of the Virginia Aristocracy in the Eighteenth Century: the Nelsons," in The Old Dominion, ed. Darrett B. Rutman (Charlottesville, Va., 1964), 63-66.

Richard took full advantage.

Another leading Yorktown family was the Digges family. Colonel Edward Digges had arrived in Virginia about 1650. His father was Sir Dudley Digges, Master of the Rolls, ambassador to Russia, and a manager of the London Company.<sup>96</sup> In Virginia Edward Digges served on the Council in 1654 and 1670, was appointed governor 1656 to 1658, and was later sent to England as one of the agents of the colony.<sup>97</sup> He owned a large plantation in York County and made his fortune mainly from tobacco cultivation. The Digges family continued to be both wealthy and influential. Dudley Digges, his son, is mentioned in the Rent Roll of York County in 1704, having one of the largest valuations--£1350.<sup>98</sup> By the time the family came to Yorktown, then, it was already a leading one in the colony.

Richard arrived some years after Nelson, Digges, and other men who became leaders in the town. Although he figured prominently in its history, Richard never achieved the same level of prestige as Nelson or Digges. Perhaps this can partly be explained by the fact that they had firmly entrenched themselves in Yorktown at its very beginning when it was easier to do so, before Richard's arrival in the colony.

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<sup>96</sup>Philip Alexander Bruce, Social Life of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century (Richmond, Va., 1907), 58.

<sup>97</sup>Lyon G. Tyler, "Pedigree of a Representative Virginia Planter," WMQ, 1st Ser., I (1893), 140.

<sup>98</sup>Thomas J. Wertenbaker, The Planters of Colonial Virginia (New York, 1958), 210.



Ambler Holdings

Five years after his arrival, in 1721, Richard began buying property in the town. On January 11, 1720/1721, he received Lot 43 from Christopher Haynes of Warwick County for £30;<sup>99</sup> on May 14, 1726, he acquired a forty-foot strip of Lot 44 from Richard Baker and on August 21, all of Lot 45 from Elizabeth Powers, each for £30.<sup>100</sup> A few years later, November 15, 1729, he bought Lot 34 from William and Anne McWilliams for £46.<sup>101</sup> Apparently because he felt his holdings were too scattered, he exchanged the southern three-fourths of Lot 45 for three-fourths of Lot 44 in 1750.<sup>102</sup> (See Figure 7.) His holdings also included the ten-acre tract acquired from Gwyn Read<sup>103</sup> and the section he developed by the waterfront.<sup>104</sup> Lots 34, 44, and 45 already had houses on them which had previously served as ordinaries.<sup>105</sup> About a year before he died, Richard

. . . in Consideration of his Natural Affection Doth Give . . . his sons Edward and Jaquelin . . . in joint Tenancy . . . three Acres of Land with the adjoining Warf . . . being part of the ten Acres of Land purchased by Richard Ambler of Gwyn Reade, Gent . . . .<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>York County, Deeds and Bonds, III (1713-1729), 340.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 453, 462.

<sup>101</sup>York County, Deeds, IV (1729-1740), 1.

<sup>102</sup>York County, Deeds, V (1741-1754), 421-422. See also Riley, "Founding and Development of Yorktown," 92.

<sup>103</sup>See text page 59 for discussion.

<sup>104</sup>See text page 59 for discussion.

<sup>105</sup>Riley, "Founding and Development of Yorktown," 92.

<sup>106</sup>York County, Deeds, VIII (1763-1769), 144. This indenture was dated Sept. 16, 1765.



It is believed that Richard himself built the "custom house" and his own dwelling and connected them by a wooden walkway. The custom house, still standing today and owned by the Daughters of the American Revolution, was erected on Lot 43 on the corner of Main and Read Streets. The adjoining Lots 44 and 45 allowed room for the dwelling house and dependencies. The custom house recalls the fashion of the day, done in Flemish bond brick, with a projecting belt course, attractive cornice, and a hipped roof. (See Figure 8.) Little is known of the appearance of the dwelling house because it was destroyed in the Civil War. However, an advertisement in the Virginia Gazette provides some clues:

FOR SALE:

The HOUSES and LOTS, in the Town of York, where the Subscriber now lives. The Dwelling House is a very commodious One, with four Rooms above and four below, a very large Brick Storehouse, a large and well cultivated Garden, Stables, Kitchen, Wash House, &c., in good Repair. For Terms inquire of JACQUELIN AMBLER.<sup>107</sup>

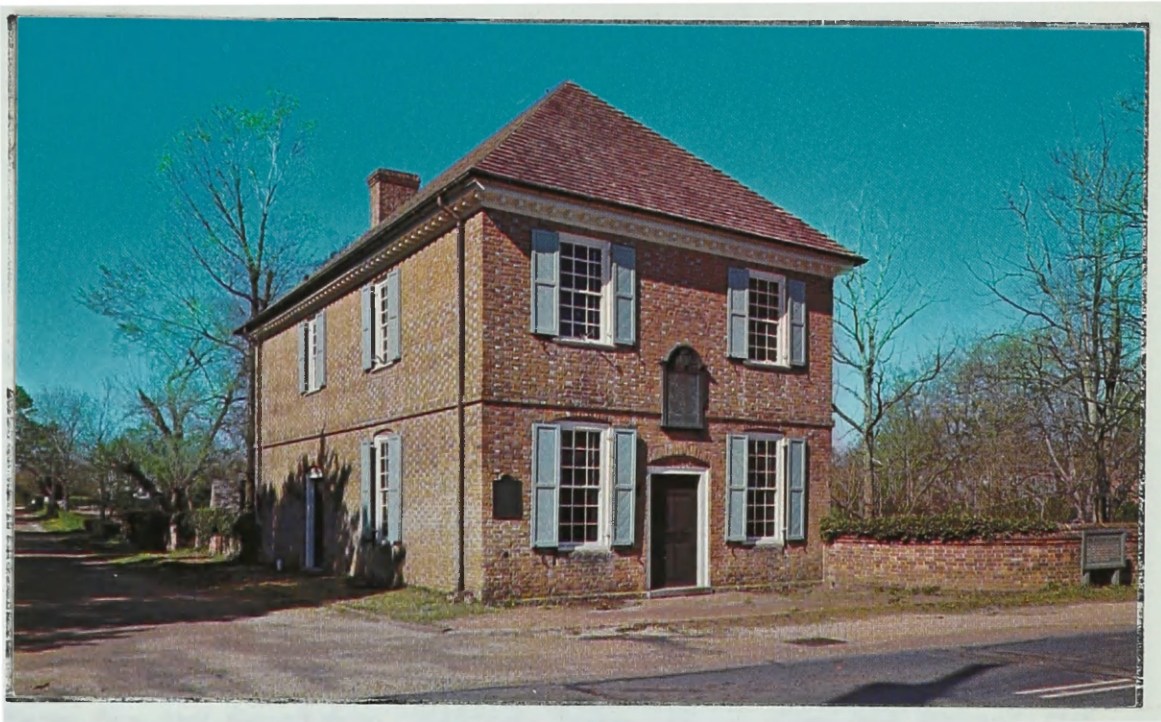
Although the house was probably not as elaborate as Nelson's or Lightfoot's, it was certainly one of the finest in Yorktown. A description of the property accompanies an insurance policy in 1818. Contained on the property are a two story wooden building 46 square feet; a two story brick storehouse, 46 by 24 square feet; a one story brick kitchen, 20 by 22 square feet; a one story wooden kitchen, 16 by 20 square feet; a stable, and a smokehouse.<sup>108</sup>

Despite history's insistence on calling the custom house the

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<sup>107</sup>Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, Dec. 2, 1773. Photostats of all Virginia Gazettes are at the Colonial Williamsburg Research Library.

<sup>108</sup>Mutual Assurance Society, Policy No. 1036, Richmond, Va.



Source: [ Postcard available at the ] Colonial National  
Historical Park Headquarters at Yorktown.

Fig. 8--The Custom House, Yorktown, Virginia

"custom house," it was really Ambler's personal storehouse. Arthur Pierce Middleton claims that custom houses as such did not exist before the Revolutionary War.<sup>109</sup> Unless a collector appointed a deputy in his stead, he usually set up his office at his residence or close by, and there kept his records and official seals. It was this office that was called commonly the "custom house."<sup>110</sup>

The Amblers gave up Lots 43, 44, and 45 in 1797 when Jaquelin sold them to merchant Alexander Macaulay.<sup>111</sup> Facing financial burdens, he apparently had put the house up for sale in 1773, rented it in 1777 but did not actually sell it for fourteen years.<sup>112</sup> Also in 1773 Jaquelin advertised the following Ambler tract, which seems to have been quite a desirable piece of land:

Also about one Hundred Acres of cleared high Land, and about sixteen Acres of exceeding good Meadow, making together a very square compact Parcel of Land, and will make a convenient little Farm for any Gentleman residing here, as it does not exceed two Miles and a Half from Town. For terms inquire of Jacquelin Ambler.<sup>113</sup>

For many years the wealthier citizens of Yorktown could keep large tracts of land nearby. About 1730 Gwyn Read laid claim to land on both sides of town by right of a land grant given to his great grandfather, Nicholas Martiau. In 1738 Read acquired the lawful title

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<sup>109</sup>Arthur Pierce Middleton, quoted in Trudell, Colonial Yorktown, 8.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid. See also Frances Norton Mason, My Dearest Polly (Richmond, Va., 1961), 2.

<sup>113</sup>Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, Dec. 9, 1773.

to a one-hundred-acre tract south of Yorktown and divided it into one-half acre lots for sale. (See Figure 9.) Of this Richard bought ten acres for a garden and built a smith's shop on them.<sup>114</sup>

The large areas around the town kept for the cultivation of tobacco gradually lost fertility, forcing their owners to move farther into the Piedmont. The loss of fertility of the soil was a major, although indirect, cause for the decline of Yorktown.<sup>115</sup> Nonetheless, when Hugh Jones visited the colony in the early eighteenth century, he found that

the land in the latitude between these rivers [ the James and the York ] seeming most nicely adapted for sweet scented, or the finest tobacco; for 'tis observed that the goodness decreaseth the farther you go to the northward of the one, and the southward of the other; . . .<sup>116</sup>

A visitor to the town in 1736 was struck with the same sight: "The Country surrounding is thickly overspread with Plantations, and the Planters live, in a Manner, equal to Men of the best Fortune; some of them being possess'd of 500 or 100 £ a Year, Sterling."<sup>117</sup>

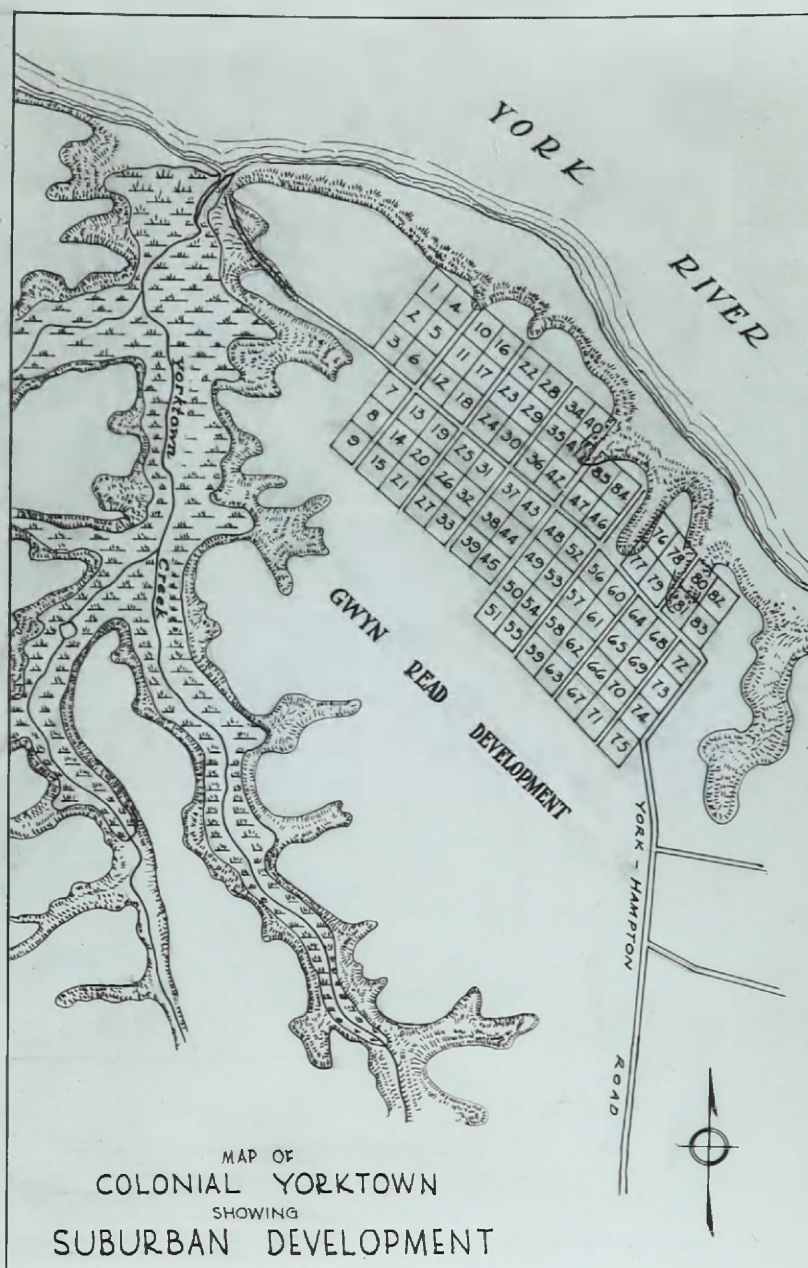
If Yorktown lost importance as a tobacco growing center, it did not lose importance as a tobacco export center. Much of the prosperity of port towns was tied up in the maintenance and protection

<sup>114</sup>Riley, "Founding and Development of Yorktown," 192-198; Repts, Tidewater Towns, 81-84.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 219.

<sup>116</sup>Hugh Jones, The Present State of Virginia, from Whence Is Inferred a Short View of Maryland and North Carolina (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1956 [ orig. publ. 1724 ] ), 72-73.

<sup>117</sup>"Observations in Several Voyages and Travels in America in the Year 1736, from the London Magazine 1746," WMQ, 1st Ser., XV (Apr. 1906), 222.



Source: Colonial National Historical Park Headquarters at Yorktown. Photograph number 9,086. [ Photograph taken for Riley, E. M. "The Founding and Development of Yorktown, Virginia, 1691-1781." Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1942. ]

Fig. 9--Map of Colonial Yorktown Showing Suburban Development

of warehouses. Especially after the act of the General Assembly in 1734 "for amending the Staple of Tobacco; and for preventing frauds in his Majesty's Customs," these warehouses were of basic and critical importance to the economy of tidewater.<sup>118</sup> At these warehouses tobacco was inspected by official inspectors who were required to keep diligent watch over them to avoid any delay in loading and unloading the ships. Nothing was to be allowed to interfere with the prosperous tobacco trade:

If at any of the warehouses . . . there shall not be sufficient room for the receiving and securing of tobacco . . . the county courts shall order other necessary houses to be built . . . and if they [ the owners ] shall refuse to do it, the same shall be done at the charge of the county.<sup>119</sup>

In addition to trading tobacco, Yorktown became a center for the sale of many imported goods. A report made to the English government about 1770 on the activities of the colonial ports gives a clear picture of Yorktown at the height of its prominence, although, somewhat strangely, tobacco is not mentioned. The York River is:

A good and safe harbour the Whole way up . . . In all the Rivers [ i.e., tributaries of the York ] are many harbours, Bays Creeks, and landing places at almost every door--Great part of the Navigation of this Port is employed to the Several foreign Ports in Europe, with Cargoes of Wheat & flower etc. Lumber to the West Indies; from all which places their is no doubt that large Quantities of foreign manufacturers & produce are introduced--The principle place is York Town where the Custom House is established; for every harbour Vessels from 60 to 100 tons load--The opportunities for Swindling Cannot be intercepted

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<sup>118</sup>Charles E. Hatch, Jr., "York Under the Hill": Yorktown's Waterfront (Washington, D.C., 1973), 33.

<sup>119</sup>William W. Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia . . ., IV (Richmond, Va., 1809), 384.



—but by a Water Guard.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup>British Museum Additional MSS, No. 15484, "Descriptions of Virginia Ports" (microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Research Library). See also Thomas C. Barrow, Trade & Empire: The British Custom Service in Colonial America: 1660-1775 (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 269-272.

## CHAPTER IV

### RICHARD AMBLER, COLLECTOR OF THE PORT

#### Obtaining the Post

When Hugh Drysdale landed in Virginia September 27, 1722, as Lieutenant Governor, he issued proclamations allowing all civil and military officers to continue in office.<sup>121</sup> Many offices, among them those of the naval officer and collector, were often the incumbent's for life.<sup>122</sup> Such was the case with the collector of the port for the York River. On April 29, 1724, Richard Ambler was named "Collector of Yorke River in Virginia in the room of Joseph Walker, deceased, at the established allowance and salary,"<sup>123</sup> that being £20 semiannually and a percentage of duties collected.<sup>124</sup> Just why Richard received the post remains unclear. Men of all capabilities were given the job. Some were appointed because they had held similar positions in England or their fathers had; some were recommended by responsible (or influential) people in England or America.<sup>125</sup> Perhaps

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<sup>121</sup>Sept. 27, Oct. 16, Nov. 3, 1722, C.O. 5/1319, Public Records Office.

<sup>122</sup>Leonidas Dodson, Alexander Spotswood: Governor of Colonial Virginia, 1710-1722 (Philadelphia, 1932), 61-62.

<sup>123</sup>Treasury Out Letters, Apr. 29, 1724, T. 11/18, P.R.O.

<sup>124</sup>Treasury Out Letters, June 29, 1724, T. 11/18, P.R.O.

<sup>125</sup>Charles M. Andrews, The Colonial Period of American History, IV (New Haven, Conn., 1938), 197.

he was Walker's deputy and simply graduated to the collectorship; perhaps through his uncle, Burkadike, he had proven himself capable in the eight years since his arrival. A more complicated thesis involves the intricacies of eighteenth-century political patronage.

Under the Duke of Newcastle, the administration of the American colonies became a prime source of political prize and privilege. During the middle years of the eighteenth century

colonial policy was determined by the blind interaction of private interests; no concerted attempt was made to administer the political life of the colonies in a purposeful way or to insure the implementation of the economic precepts embodied in mercantilist dogma and the acts of trade and navigation.<sup>126</sup>

Posts such as naval officer or collector were particularly valuable sources of patronage, and although colonial governors supposedly had the right to appoint such individuals, they increasingly lost this right under the grasping hands of Newcastle. In 1743 the naval office of York River was converted to a patent post and by 1748 only the naval offices of the Lower James River, New York, and Newfoundland were not under his control.<sup>127</sup>

Richard Ambler, in 1724, was not subject to as much widespread politicization. Yet even in the seventeenth century, many colonial offices were held by gentlemen who were motivated not only by a sense of noblesse oblige but by the opportunity to acquire more

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<sup>126</sup>James A. Henretta, "Salutary Neglect": Colonial Administration Under the Duke of Newcastle (Princeton, N.J., 1972), 347. For an earlier study of 18th-century British politics, especially for the years 1789 to 1830, see S. E. Finer, "Patronage and the Public Service: Jeffersonian Bureaucracy and the British Tradition," Public Administration, XXX (Winter 1952), 329-361.

<sup>127</sup>Henretta, "Salutary Neglect," 153-157.

land and further their business ventures.<sup>128</sup>

Alexander Spotswood became governor in 1710 and his hope was to create a "governor's party" in the House of Burgesses which would react favorably to his policies. He instituted in 1714 some tobacco reforms in an "Act for preventing frauds in tobacco payments and for the better Improving the Staple of Tobacco," the most comprehensive act ever passed by the General Assembly to that date.<sup>129</sup> Spotswood intended to create support through distribution of tobacco inspectors' posts. They were lucrative enough to be desirable at an estimated £250 a year salary.<sup>130</sup> Twenty-five members of the House of Burgesses received a post; every first-term burgess was given one except two, and they had brothers who were appointed.<sup>131</sup> From Jamestown, Edward Jaquelin was the appointee. Spotswood, however, was unsuccessful. His inspectors were accused of corruption, and the small planters were hurt by various provisions of the act. The large landowners preferred less stringent rules. Between 1715 and 1717 there was a complete turnover of Spotswood's supporters, and the tobacco act was repealed in 1717. Edward Jaquelin had lost his inspectorship in 1715 and two of the governor's close adherents, Thomas Nelson and Francis Lightfoot of Yorktown, were in disfavor. It was a time of confusion in which an ambitious man could easily advance; perhaps

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<sup>128</sup>David Alan Williams, "Political Alignments in Colonial Virginia Politics, 1698-1750" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1959), 345.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., 142.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., 144.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., 149.

Richard, recently arrived and as yet with no political enemies, did just that.

Less than a year before Richard took office the General Assembly passed an "Act for the better and more effectual improving the Staple of Tobacco." Its purpose was to control the production and quality in order to boost the price. Both had fallen to dangerous levels: ". . . the Price of Tobacco is fallen so low, that the people of this Country can no longer subsist by it."<sup>132</sup> This proposed legislation, they felt, would increase the king's custom duties because good tobacco was heavier than bad, and customs duties were based on weight.<sup>133</sup> Thus, amid recent political factionalism, growing patronage practices, and increased demand for tobacco regulation, Richard Ambler took over as collector of the customs at the port of Yorktown.

#### Duties of the Collector

It was obvious to the British government that it had a source of huge profit in the colonial tobacco trade. In 1624 the annual revenue exacted from duties paid on tobacco entering England was £90,350.<sup>134</sup> Richard Kemp proposed in 1636 that a duty be placed on tobacco before it left the colonies; this would have required

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<sup>132</sup>H. R. McIlwaine, ed., Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia (Richmond, Va., 1930), IV, 46.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., 45-51; Madeleine Curcio Kaduboski, "The Administration of Lieutenant-Governor Hugh Drysdale, 1722-1726" (M.A. thesis, College of William and Mary, 1967), 43-47.

<sup>134</sup>Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century (New York, 1910), II, 590.

-additional officers as well as custom houses. The British government rejected the idea of an export tax but instituted a system of inspection. An official known as a Register inspected tobacco ready for export for 2d per hogshead. He was appointed by the governor of the colony pending the approval of the British government.<sup>135</sup> By 1752, however, these offices had become sinecures under Newcastle.<sup>136</sup>

An act in 1673 went a long way in systematizing the commercial activities of the colonies. Supposedly its object was the regulation of trade, not increased revenue, but a "plantation duty" was instituted for incoming British ships taking on enumerated articles.<sup>137</sup> Six customs districts were designated in Virginia: Upper James, Lower James, York, Rappahannock, Potomac, and Accomac (Eastern Shore). Other provisions were included which, while providing tighter control over the economic affairs of the colonies, increased the duties and responsibilities of the existing customs officials, making new offices, including the collectorship, necessary. In 1673, 1685, and 1697 three decrees were issued from Britain directly to the collectors themselves, setting forth an exacting customs code.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 591-592.

<sup>136</sup>Andrews, Colonial Period of American History, IV, 187.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., 120.

<sup>138</sup>Andrews, Colonial Period of American History, IV, 148-149; Percy Scott Flippin, "The Financial Administration of the Colony of Virginia," Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, XXXIII, No. 2 (1915), 24-26.

The collectors' duties evolved, therefore, as the British mercantile policies evolved, both becoming more complicated and exacting. Unfortunately, more often than not the collectors and the customs board had little idea what the other was doing.<sup>139</sup> The crown frowned on absenteeism. Charles M. Andrews states that collectors could be served by a deputy only in special cases and that the collector could not be absent from his station without leave.<sup>140</sup> Philip Alexander Bruce, however, writes that sometimes the collector lived far away from his post and came only a few times a year, citing the case of Christopher Wormeley, who lived fifty miles from his job. He appointed as his deputy Colonel Griffin who did most of the work.<sup>141</sup> This custom apparently was tolerated in Virginia. The Amblers did not follow Wormeley's example.

By the late 1600s the requirements of the collector were fairly well systematized. Bruce provides an excellent summary of these duties. The collector was to

put into execution all Parliamentary measures regulating the plantation trade;  
 carry out the instructions given him . . . by the Commissioners of the English customs;  
 enforce all provisions respecting ships and crews embodied in the Navigation Acts, and report all violations and seizures under these laws;  
 see that the arrival of every sea-going vessel was reported to him, and that her cargo remained undischarged until he had secured full information as to its character, and also to the port from which the vessel had come . . . ;  
 obtain a certificate from every captain leaving for Europe that he had given bond in England, and that he would land his

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<sup>139</sup>Andrews, Colonial Period of American History, IV, 205.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., 204. See also Dodson, Alexander Spotswood, 61.

<sup>141</sup>Bruce, Institutional History, II, 594n.

-cargo there;

grant a certificate to every such captain declaring that he was taking his commodities out of Virginia in a legal way;

collect all duties payable on imported and exported goods of various kinds;

send such information as to each ship sailing for England with a cargo of tobacco as would enable the Commissioners of Customs to discover . . . whether any fraud had been committed;

transmit to the Commissioners an [ annual ] statement as to the agricultural commodities produced in his district, also as to the articles manufactured there; . . . as to the number of vessels belonging to the inhabitants and where and by whom they had been constructed.<sup>142</sup>

In regard to the government of Virginia, one of the collector's most important duties was the collection of the tax of 2s on every exported hogshead of tobacco.<sup>143</sup> Also, he was to be an informer to the vice admiralty court and act as libelant in trials for breaches of acts of trade.<sup>144</sup>

For his services the collector received ample remuneration. He was excused from jury duty, military service, and local taxes.<sup>145</sup> Besides his salary of £40 a year, he received 15s upon the entry of each vessel under twenty tons and 30s for each vessel over twenty tons. If the ship had been built in Virginia, he collected a fee of only 10s 6d in both cases. He also collected 2s 6d for every license to trade issued to a sea captain and 2s 6d for every bond he gave. He was entitled to not less than 20 percent of the entire

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<sup>142</sup>Ibid., 594-595. See also Andrews, Colonial Period of American History, IV, 204-205. For a description of how the whole colonial customs system had evolved by 1710, see Thomas C. Barrow, Trade & Empire: The British Customs Service in Colonial America: 1660-1775 (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 72-83.

<sup>143</sup>Bruce, Institutional History, II, 595.

<sup>144</sup>Andrews, Colonial Period of American History, IV, 205.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., 204.



amount of the customs paid to him in his official capacity.<sup>146</sup> These fees were somewhat reduced, however, by an act in 1699, "An act ascertaining Collectors and Navall Officers fees." Now, for each entering ship the collector was to receive 10s for every ship under fifty tons, 15s for a ship between fifty and one hundred tons, and £1 5s for each ship over one-hundred tons. For exacting more fees than were due him a collector was to be fined £100 for a first offense and loss of his job for a second. Such a fine seems rather stiff for a first offense but was undoubtedly commensurate with his estimated earnings and responsibility.

In addition, the collector was required to post a table of required fees. An indication that the system was becoming increasingly complex is the stipulation that the jobs of naval officer and collector be filled by two men. Previously, one man often assumed both duties, they being very similar.<sup>147</sup> By "An Act for preventing Frauds and regulating Abuse in the Plantation Trade" (1696), customs officials in the colonies became part of the customs organization in England, subject to the same privileges and penalties.<sup>148</sup> Hugh Jones observantly remarked that the customs officials "have some considerable perquisites besides their salaries; for which they give attendance and perform their duty after the same

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<sup>146</sup>Bruce, Institutional History, II, 596.

<sup>147</sup>William W. Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia . . ., III (Richmond, Va., 1809), 195-197.

<sup>148</sup>Andrews, Colonial Period of American History, IV, 160-164.

manner as the officers in the rivers and ports do in Great Britain.<sup>149</sup>

The most complete act passed by the General Assembly regarding customs officials was that in 1748, "An Act for preventing frauds in the customs and in clearing of ships; for ascertaining Collectors and Naval Officers fees; and to prohibit and prevent the casting ballast, or dead bodies, into rivers or creeks" (The complete act is reproduced in Appendix B.). Essentially, the duties and fees are the same as in earlier acts; this act apparently passed to regularize the system and reiterate its laws to avoid inconsistency. Many of the provisions are quoted in the January 17, 1777, issue of the Virginia Gazette and show few changes, except that the naval officers' fees are slightly higher.<sup>150</sup>

The collector was, then, the key figure in the day-to-day operation of the mercantile system. Richard Ambler held an especially responsible post because the port of Yorktown was one of the most active in the colonies. He was in a position to get first hand news from abroad and send provincial news back to the mother country. His activities in commercial trade in no way detracted from his social position. As Hugh Jones said, "This trade is carried on in the fairest and genteelest way of merchandize by a great number of gentlemen of worth and fortune. . . ." <sup>151</sup>

In his official capacity Richard was undoubtedly industrious.

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<sup>149</sup>Hugh Jones, The Present State of Virginia, from Whence Is Inferred a Short View of Maryland and North Carolina (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1956 [ orig. publ. 1724 ] ), 104.

<sup>150</sup>Dixon's Virginia Gazette, Jan. 17, 1777.

<sup>151</sup>Jones, Present State of Virginia, 88.

He (and later Jaquelin) occasionally advertised in the Virginia Gazette. A few examples help to illustrate his responsibilities:

From December 5, 1745:

Some Time in September last, there was landed from on board the Ship Friendship, Capt. Christian Holm, Master, and put into my Sore-house [ Sic ] in York-Town, a large Cake, and a small Box, mark'd FI, which are supposed to contain a Clock and its Weights: The Owner may have them deliver'd on producing the Bill of Lading, and paying the Charge of this Advertisement.

--Richard Ambler<sup>152</sup>

From the May 26, 1768, issue:

On Monday the 9th instant, came into this port, a schooner of about forty tons . . . from port Beaufort, in South-Carolina . . . The owner is desired to make speedy application for said vessel, as she may suffer great injury from the worm, if continued any length of time in this river.

--J. Ambler

Collector of the Port York.

Care is taken of the vessel and cargo.<sup>153</sup>

Finally, from January 5, 1769:

A Few Hogsheads of old Jamaica RUM to be sold cheap for ready money, at York town. Inquire of the subscriber, at Mr. Ambler's, in York.

--Cary Goosley<sup>154</sup>

In addition, Richard directly or indirectly assumed civic duties which sometimes gave him transatlantic importance. Besides being executor for his uncle Burkadike's estate, Richard was coexecutor (with William Nelson) of Virginia merchant John Michelson. Michelson had moved to London, where he died, having named executors on both sides of the ocean. In the will, proved August 19, 1750, he

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<sup>152</sup>Parks' Virginia Gazette, Dec. 5, 1745.

<sup>153</sup>Rind's Virginia Gazette, May 26, 1768.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., Jan. 5, 1769.

gave his estate to his father in Edinburgh.<sup>155</sup> A few years earlier, in 1743, Richard filed petitions to manage the estates of Robert Peters, who died without leaving a will, and John Floyd.<sup>156</sup> He appears quite often in the York County records as litigant in an official and usually unspecified capacity.<sup>157</sup>

Of necessity, Richard was interested in the upkeep of the town and the proper accommodations for his business. Because of a surveying error a strip of the beach bordering the river had been left out of the original survey. This "common land" had been used as a shore and wharf rather haphazardly by the townspeople for many years.<sup>158</sup> Eventually, both Richard and Thomas Nelson felt they needed warehouses by the bank for merchandise too heavy to transport up the steep bank. By act of the Council, August 15, 1728, they were granted eighty square feet each, with power to enlarge the tracts "provided always that the ground hereby assigned . . . be laid out so as not to encroach upon the publick landings. . . ." <sup>159</sup> They were

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<sup>155</sup>Lothrop Withington, "Virginia Gleanings in England," VMHB, XIX (1911), 398.

<sup>156</sup>York County, Orders, Wills, and Inventories, XIX (1740-1747), 184, 212.

<sup>157</sup>See, for instance, York County, Orders, Wills, and Inventories, XVIII (1732-1741), 7, 61, 80, 376, 665; XIX (1740-1747), 117, 184, 422, 429, 439, 453.

<sup>158</sup>John W. Reps, Tidewater Towns: City Planning in Colonial Virginia and Maryland (Charlottesville, Va., 1972), 81-84; Edward M. Riley, "The Founding and Development of Yorktown" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1942), 36; Clyde F. Trudell, Colonial Yorktown (Old Greenwich, Conn., 1971), 46.

<sup>159</sup>McIlwaine, ed., Executive Journals, IV, 183-184. In 1716 Charles Chiswell requested and was granted the same privilege. See Ibid., III, 430.

granted this privilege not so much for their own convenience but because it "may be of great benefit to the trade of that Town."<sup>160</sup> Richard's Lot 34 bordered his tract (see Figure 9). This common land, like the tract south of the town, was claimed by Gwyn Read. In 1738 it had to be officially purchased from him for £100, and the townspeople were required to meet the cost.<sup>161</sup>

By 1757 the government decided that the streets and landings of Yorktown were in such a deplorable state that the inhabitants should be taxed for repair and maintenance. The leading citizens (those who benefited most by this decision) were placed in charge:

The money so to be levied shall be paid to William Nelson, Thomas Nelson, Dudley Digges, John Norton, and Edward Ambler, or any three of them, who are hereby impowered and required to apply the same towards the repairing, widening, and maintaining the streets and landings of the said town.<sup>162</sup>

These acts naturally influenced the Ambler property in Yorktown.

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<sup>160</sup>Ibid., IV, 184. See also Charles E. Hatch, Jr., "York Under the Hill": Yorktown's Waterfront (Washington, D.C., 1973), 16.

<sup>161</sup>Reps, Tidewater Towns, 84; Riley, "Founding and Development of Yorktown," 204.

<sup>162</sup>Hening, Statutes at Large, VII, 138, reprinted in "Virginia Council Journals, 1726-1753," VMHB, XXXIII (1925), 181.

## CHAPTER V

### VISIBLE SIGNS OF SUCCESS

#### The Ambler's Public Image

Personal descriptions of Richard Ambler show him to have been "about five feet eleven inches high and inclined to be fat."<sup>163</sup> Every description of his character emphasizes admirable qualities: "He was a companionable man, witty, and noted for his honesty. He was gifted with a shrewd business sense."<sup>164</sup> "For many years this Richard Ambler was collector of the port of Yorktown, an office both honourable and lucrative, and which he discharged with great integrity."<sup>165</sup> "He was most particular in everything he said or did, so that when he died it was mentioned on his obituary 'that he owed no man a penny.'"<sup>166</sup> Finally, from his granddaughter, Eliza Jaquelin Ambler:

An honest Yorkshire-man amongst the English is proverbial; . . . that our Grandfather Richard Ambler was one, is a fact that

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<sup>163</sup>Louise Pecquet du Bellet, Some Prominent Virginia Families (Lynchburg, Va., 1907), II, 10. See also a letter written by Mrs. Edward Carrington (Eliza Jaquelin Ambler), in Bishop William Meade, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia (Philadelphia, 1857), I, 98.

<sup>164</sup>Robert L. Scribner, "Jaquelin and Ambler," Virginia Cavalcade, VII (Summer 1957), 26.

<sup>165</sup>Meade, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families, I, 104.

<sup>166</sup>du Bellet, Virginia Families, II, 10.

his whole neighborhood could testify. He was Saving, and thrifty, . . . he was a pains-taking, money getting man. . . .<sup>167</sup>

Richard was, of course, no miser and certainly appreciated the "great Air of Opulence amongst the Inhabitants."<sup>168</sup> Most of his personal friends, relatives, and business acquaintances were men of wealth and influence. Particularly revealing of the Ambler's status is a study of the network of business associations they established abroad.

The Amblers were served by the agents of John Norton and Sons, a prominent merchant family who had connections in Virginia and London. Twenty-three-year-old John Norton represented his father in Yorktown from 1742 to 1764, when he went to London to assume his father's post there and left his son, John Hatley Norton in Virginia. During his years in Yorktown he acquired Lot 56, was a justice of York County and a member of the House of Burgesses; when the streets of the town needed repairing in 1757, he and John Ambler were among those chosen to organize it (see text page 59).<sup>169</sup> The Amblers and the Nortons became personal friends as well as business associates.

When Edward and John attended school in England, Richard did not hesitate to put them under the charge of his agents in London whenever they traveled there. Regarding Edward's visit to the city in

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<sup>167</sup>Eliza Jaquelin Ambler to -- ?, Oct. 10, 1796, Eliza Jaquelin Ambler Papers, 1780-1823 (microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Research Library).

<sup>168</sup>"Observations in Several Voyages," WMQ, 1st Ser., XV (Apr. 1907), 222.

<sup>169</sup>Frances Norton Mason, ed., John Norton & Sons, Merchants of London and Virginia (Richmond, Va., 1937), 1-6.

1751, Richard advises him to stay with William Bowder or George Farquhar Kinloch, two of the agents, and mentions that John Norton (of Yorktown) has written Mr. Flowerdewe "to shew You his civility to which shew a proper regard." Edward is also instructed to "wait on Mr. Edward Athawes with my compliments."<sup>170</sup>

Seventeen years later Martha Gooseley, a mutual friend of the Amblers and Nortons in Yorktown, wrote to John Norton that: "My good friend Mr. Edward Ambler is too Ill to write. I greatly fear he is going into a consumption. My children will loose [ sic ] a father if that should Be the case and my Self more than a Brother."<sup>171</sup> The majority of the correspondence, of course, concerns routine commercial activities, usually the shipment of tobacco and the procurement of personal items in England.<sup>172</sup>

These agents also acted as liasons between the Amblers and the Commissioners of the Customs and took every opportunity to commend their clients. Just after Jaquelin's appointment as collector of York River, Athawes wrote Edward that:

When I went to pay my Respects to the Marquiss for the favour he had done me I expatiated on the worthyness and Ability of your Bro and the Family and I doubt not he will do me the utmost credit

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<sup>170</sup>Richard Ambler to Edward Ambler, Oct. 31, 1751. Elizabeth Barbour Ambler Papers, 1748-1777 (microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Research Library).

<sup>171</sup>Martha Gooseley to John Norton, Aug. 25, 1768, in Mason, John Norton & Sons, 63-64.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid., 25, 33, 83, 142, 196, 204, 245, 261, 332, 334, 388; Samuel Athawes to Mrs. Edward Ambler, Mar. 14, 1771, Elizabeth Barbour Ambler Papers, 1748-1777.



in my Recommendation and earnestness for him.<sup>173</sup>

When Lord Botetourt came to Virginia in 1768 he had in his possession a letter of introduction to Edward Ambler. Athawes, following the request of John Norton in London, had written Ambler asking "if you wou'd lose no time in paying your Congratulatory Compliments to him on his Arrival."<sup>174</sup> This recognition was certainly the mark of a distinguished family.

There was no stigma attached to commerce in Virginia. Lucille Griffith believes this was owing to the importance of wealth in determining the new aristocracy, and certainly many merchants had as much, if not more, money than prominent planters. In fact, the situation in Virginia was such that often planters were merchants and vice versa.<sup>175</sup> In the following passage one sees Richard in both his official and his social capacities; he fulfilled both with competent ease. George Fisher, an Englishman visiting the colonies from 1750 to 1755, wrote an entertaining narrative of his experiences. He writes:

August 13, 1750. Monday the 13th. I again went on shore, delivered the certificate for my Tea to the Custom house Officer, Richard Ambler, Esq., who remembered me perfectly, as I did him. He staid me to dinner, and at his Lady's request promised to accommodate me with a Home, tho' he could not conveniently spare it; the favour was the greater as there was none other to be

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<sup>173</sup>Samuel Athawes to Edward Ambler, Oct. 8, 1766. Elizabeth Barbour Ambler Papers, 1748-1777. Jaquelin was appointed collector of the port July 22, 1766. Treasury Out Letters, July 22, 1766, T. 11/28, P.R.O.

<sup>174</sup>William Maxwell, ed., The Virginia Historical Register, and Literary Note Book, III (1850), 25-26; Mason, John Norton & Sons, 69.

<sup>175</sup>Lucille Griffith, Virginia House of Burgesses 1750-1774 (Northport, Alabama, 1963), 185-186.

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This anecdote reveals Richard's generosity and sense of genteel hospitality. He had no feelings of lower rank because of his official position; to him, he and Fisher were equals. Although the early references give Richard no social title, by the middle of the eighteenth century the term "Esquire" always follows his and his sons' names.

Whether through love, ambition, or circumstance, the Amblers certainly married into virtually all the leading families of the day (see genealogical chart, Appendix A). An entertaining collection of letters are those from Mrs. Maria Beverley (wife of Robert Beverley of "Blandfield") to Maria Carter in 1764. These are particularly valuable, not only because they reflect the unchanging nature of gossip but also the social context in which the Amblers were placed. In this paragraph alone are mentioned the Beverleys, the Carters, and the Burwells. She writes:

You doubtless expect I should give you a circumstantial account of every alteration in [ the ] Circle of Young Ladies since you left this Country . . . Miss Lucy [ Carter ] is to make Mr. Edward Berkeley one of the happiest of Mortals, that Miss Rebecca Burwell is to confer a similar favor on Mr. Jaquelin Ambler. . . .<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup>"Narrative of George Fisher from 1750 to 1755. Describing a Voyage to America and His Residence in Virginia and Pennsylvania, about Five Years," WMQ, 1st Ser., XVII (1908), 119. Interestingly, Fisher's grandson married Ambler's granddaughter. See a continuation of this narrative in WMQ, 1st Ser., XVII (1909), 147n.

<sup>177</sup>"Some Family Letters of the Eighteenth Century," VMHB, XV (1908), 433-434.

### The Ambler's Self Image

For men of status, it was common to adopt some of the accouterments of social position. There is telling evidence that the Amblers considered themselves to be socially prominent. One of the manifestations of this belief was the concern over family pride and emotional ties with England.<sup>178</sup> One popular custom was to have family portraits done during visits to England. Edward Jaquelin indulged in this practice on a visit to London in the early eighteenth century, having seven pictures done of himself and his family, with a coat of arms on each.<sup>179</sup>

Excavations have revealed some of this evidence in the Sherwood house in Jamestown which passed to the Amblers. Elaborate pargetry and fresco and moulded plaster cornices indicate aristocratic tastes; on a section of pargetry is part of the motto of the Order of the Garter.<sup>180</sup> Underneath a walkway in the Ambler garden in Jamestown was found a Venetian glass goblet dating from the last quarter of the seventeenth century.<sup>181</sup> Although these pieces are of an earlier period, they illustrate the cultural level of which the Amblers became a part.

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<sup>178</sup>Morris Talpalar, The Sociology of Colonial Virginia (New York, 1960), 214.

<sup>179</sup>Mary N. Stanard, Colonial Virginia: Its People and Customs ( [ 1917 ], Detroit, 1970), 315. See also Louis B. Wright, The First Gentlemen of Virginia (San Marino, Calif., 1940), 74.

<sup>180</sup>Henry C. Forman, Jamestown and St. Mary's: Buried Cities of Romance (Baltimore, 1938), 121.

<sup>181</sup>John L. Cotter, Archeological Excavations at Jamestown (Washington, D.C., 1958), 188.

Two other indications of social position were the family's attitude toward religion and toward education. The Amblers apparently were extremely pious, or at least Bishop Meade would have it so.<sup>182</sup> A case related in the Virginia Gazette reveals something of the Ambler's religiousness. Mrs. Ambler (probably Jaquelin's wife, Rebecca Burwell), was a witness in a personal slander suit against the Reverend Samuel Henley which involved the divine character of Christ. Mrs. Ambler testified that her sister had told her of a conversation in which the Reverend Henley said Christ was not the son of God and that she herself had heard him preach a sermon to the same effect, comparing Christ with Moses.<sup>183</sup> Richard himself served as one of the church wardens of Yorkhampton parish and is on file in the York County Court records as having informed the court of Anne Combs's misconduct in giving birth to an illegitimate child.<sup>184</sup>

Virginia families always placed great emphasis on education, if for no other reason than to safeguard their children against the crudities of the wilderness. However, the decentralized nature of Virginia communities made public education difficult. A few schools were established, including the Matthew Whaley School and The College of William and Mary in 1693, but many planters wanted to send their

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<sup>182</sup>Meade, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families, *passim*.

<sup>183</sup>Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, Feb. 24, 1774 and Mar. 10, 1774.

<sup>184</sup>York County, Orders, Wills, and Inventories, XVIII (1732-1741), 665.

children to England to be educated.<sup>185</sup>

Although the Amblers did not patronize the Matthew Whaley School, which was established for the needy children of Bruton Parish, Richard showed a good citizen's interest in its success. Regarding some technical problems of financial allocation, he wrote:

I am apt to think the donation will not be applied to its intention--rather to the repairs of the church & expense of the parish than to the instruction of poor children. Something of the kind hath already been hinted.<sup>186</sup>

Interest in education abroad was true even in the seventeenth century. However, Mary Stanard found evidence of fewer than thirty-six Virginia matriculates at Oxford and Cambridge in the period before the Revolutionary War.<sup>187</sup> These, of course, were from the most prominent families. John Ambler, Richard's son, is listed in "Virginians at Trinity College, Cambridge; Admissions 1701-1800," where he matriculated in 1753.<sup>188</sup> Jaquelin seems to have been schooled solely in America. He is listed in the records of board payment at William and Mary from 1753 to 1756.<sup>189</sup> Of the fifty-two students who paid (the rest lived off campus or had scholarships), eight had slaves to help them. Jaquelin was not one of these,

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<sup>185</sup>Louis B. Wright, The First Gentlemen of Virginia (San Marino, Calif., 1940), 112.

<sup>186</sup>Lyon G. Tyler, "Grammar and Mattee Practice and Model School," WMQ, 1st Ser., IV (1895), 9.

<sup>187</sup>Wright, First Gentlemen, 112.

<sup>188</sup>"Historical and Genealogical Notes and Queries," VMHB, XXI (1913), 82.

<sup>189</sup>"Notes Relative to Some of the Students Who Attended the College of William and Mary, 1753-1770," WMQ, 2d Ser., I (1921), 28.

indicating perhaps Richard's sense of values.<sup>190</sup> From William and Mary Jaquelin went to the College of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania), where he was one of six Virginians, out of forty-eight, to graduate in 1761.<sup>191</sup>

The two older boys, John and Edward, received their elementary education abroad, however. Partly, perhaps, to avoid "the Taverns . . . and an unbounded Licentiousness [ which ] seems to taint the Morals of the young Gentlemen of this Place,"<sup>192</sup> they were enrolled at Leeds Academy, Yorkshire, about 1747 or a little earlier, when both boys were in their early teens. The school must have been popular, because of repeated advertisements for it in the Virginia Gazette. It was especially convenient for the Amblers because Richard's relatives lived close by. His sister, Mary, and her husband, William Shaw, watched over the two boys. A typical advertisement in the Virginia Gazette attests the appeal of the school:

At the Academy in Leeds, Which is pleasantly situated in the county of York in England, Young Gentlemen are genteely boarded, and diligently instructed in English, the Classicks, Modern Languages, Penmanship, Arithmetick, Merchants Accounts, Mathematicks, Modern Geography, Experimental Philosophy, and Astronomy, for twenty guineas per annum, if under twelve years of age, by Mr. AARON GRIMSHAW, and able masters. Drawing, Musick, and Dancing, are extra charges. Due regard is paid to the young Gentlemens health, morals, and behaviour.<sup>193</sup>

Scholars are particularly fortunate because many of the

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<sup>190</sup>"Students in 1754 at William and Mary College," WMQ, 1st Ser., VI (1896), 188.

<sup>191</sup>"List of Southern Graduates of the University of Pennsylvania from 1757-1783," WMQ, 1st Ser., VI (1898), 217.

<sup>192</sup>"Observations in Several Voyages," WMQ, 1st Ser., XV (Apr. 1907), 222.

<sup>193</sup>Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, Nov. 9, 1769.

letters written by Richard to his sons still exist. They reveal not only fatherly concern, but Richard's attitude toward education and his family's social obligations. Each letter contains a wealth of advice, but especially illuminating is the following passage to "Neddy and Johnny":

Make use of the present advantage by improving your knowledge at School so as that it may be a comfort to your selves in the future part of your Life . . . an Education as may set you above the common level & drudgery of Life. . . . You are now entering into Years which will enable you to reflect, that many Children capable of learning, are condemn'd to the necessity of Labouring hard, for want of ability in their Parents to give them an Education. You cannot therefore, sufficiently Adore the Divine Providence who has placed your Parents above the lower Class and thereby enabled them to be at the expence of giving you such an Education . . . [ that ] will preserve you in the same Class and Rank among mankind.<sup>194</sup>

Of their studies, Richard advises them to pursue their own interests but suggests certain subjects, ". . . as it is likely it may fall to one of both of your lots to be concern'd in Trade and Commerce. . . ."195 He further suggests that they visit various parts of England and make acquaintance with people who will be useful to them back in Virginia. Always practical, the father advises them to talk to farmers and improve their skills in animal husbandry. The boys' duties, therefore, were the acquisition of formal knowledge, practical knowledge, and social knowledge to equip them for an active life in Virginia.

Of the two, Edward appears the more dependable. Richard wrote

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<sup>194</sup>Richard and Elizabeth Ambler to Edward and John Ambler, Aug. 1, 1748. Elizabeth Barbour Ambler Papers, 1748-1777.

<sup>195</sup>Richard Ambler to Edward and John Ambler, May 20, 1749. Elizabeth Barbour Ambler Papers, 1748-1777.

him a rather urgent note concerning John's temporary departure from school:

I am apprehensive he had not behaved well . . . before you leave . . . let me have an account of the real cause and motives of his removal together w<sup>th</sup> your opinion whether he is thought qualified to enter in the study of the Law. . . .<sup>196</sup>

It seems Richard's worries were groundless, as his sister soon wrote "Johnny [ has ] a very great character [ and ] . . . he is a very good scholar and a very ingenious young man fit for any business, and takes a great deal of pains in his study."<sup>197</sup> He went on to Cambridge, where he did extremely well, and then to London to study law.<sup>198</sup> John was considered one of the best educated men in Virginia, one of his accomplishments being the mastery of seven languages.<sup>199</sup> Edward, for all his dependability, was ordered home in 1752 because Richard felt he could no longer afford education and travel expenses for both boys.<sup>200</sup>

Their aunt, Martha Jaquelin, wrote them that "Two of Col. Lee's sons have been inoculated and are coming to Wakefield to go to

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<sup>196</sup>Richard Ambler to Edward Ambler, Oct. 31, 1751. Elizabeth Barbour Ambler Papers, 1748-1777.

<sup>197</sup>Mary Shaw to Richard Ambler, Mar. 26, 1752. Elizabeth Barbour Ambler Papers, 1748-1777.

<sup>198</sup>"Diary of William Beverley of 'Blandfield' during a visit to England, 1750," VMHB, XXXVI (1928), 32n.

<sup>199</sup>Meade, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families, I, 105. See also du Bellet, Virginia Families, I, 29.

<sup>200</sup>Richard Ambler to Edward Ambler, Feb. 28, 1752, Elizabeth Barbour Ambler Papers, 1748-1777.



your School."<sup>201</sup> The controversy over inoculation at this time is a good index to social position and progressive attitudes. The Amblers had both. The diary of Mary Ambler (wife of Edward, written three years after his death) in 1770 relates the expense and inconvenience attendant on inoculation. The diary also shows Mary Ambler to be a very independent, intelligent woman who kept an accurate and complete account of all her expenses while away. After hearing of a friend's experience, she decided to take her two children the three days' journey from Belvoir, Fauquier County, Virginia, to Baltimore to be inoculated against smallpox. There they remained for a number of weeks, receiving several injections waiting for one to "take." While doing so, she made several observations:

This mornng went to Market & was surprised to see the nubr of People there & the variety of things for Sale and the Ladys here all go to Market to supply their pantry to us it seems like the confun of Babel from the difft Languages we hear. . . .<sup>202</sup>

Nor was the family progressive only medically. A piece in the Virginia Gazette in 1772 states that Jaquelin Ambler, among others, publicly recommended a wheat machine which separates wheat from straw at 120 bushels a day. The inventor, John Hobday, hoped to put samples around the countryside by way of advertising this new device.<sup>203</sup>

In their recreation the family shared the interests of the

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<sup>201</sup>Martha Jaquelin to Edward and John Ambler, Apr. 8, 1748. Elizabeth Barbour Ambler Papers, 1748-1777.

<sup>202</sup>Mrs. Gordon B. Ambler, ed., "Diary of M. Ambler, 1770," VMHB, XLV (1937), 156.

<sup>203</sup>Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, Nov. 19, 1772.

leading families. Between 1740 to 1775 at least fifty stallions and thirty mares were imported into Virginia, forming the foundation of the thoroughbred racing stock of Virginia.<sup>204</sup> Edward seems to have been an early owner of some of these horses, although it is John who causes "To be SOLD . . . Two Valuable English Stallions . . ." <sup>205</sup> as part of his estate. Jaquelin advertised for a stolen horse, apparently quite valuable, in the August 16, 1770, issue,<sup>206</sup> and again in the May 7, 1772, issue.<sup>207</sup> Similar advertisements appear in the issues of April 6, 1739, May 9, 1745, April 11, 1755, and January 22, 1767, in which a large dark mule was missing, ". . . a very remarkable one, being perhaps the largest in the colony."

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<sup>204</sup>"Racing in Colonial Virginia," VMHB, II (1895), 301. See also Stanard, Colonial Virginia, 254-255.

<sup>205</sup>Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, Oct. 17, 1766.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid., Aug. 16, 1770.

<sup>207</sup>Ibid., May 7, 1772.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LATER YEARS

#### Material Wealth

When Richard died in 1766 he left his family a substantial legacy. An excellent index to the family's riches is Richard's will (see Appendix C). In it he subdivides his land extensively among his three sons. He mentions plantations in Caroline County, Hanover County, and Warwick County and one on "Pohatan swamp." In each case he mentions farm animals, plantation equipment, furniture, plate, slaves, and other valuables, indicating extensive operations on these holdings. In Jamestown Island he indicates various tracts of land and buildings and the ferry, which he operated. Of the instructions for continuing the business at Yorktown, he asks that Edward and Jaquelin "carry on Trade in Partnership." He named his sons executors of the will.<sup>208</sup>

Richard's personal estate was appraised and recorded in York county in 1766. Among his holdings are a total of 186 Negro slaves. The total value of his personal estate was £14940.5.1/2.<sup>209</sup> This

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<sup>208</sup>York County, Wills and Inventories, XXI (1760-1771), 278-281; Ambler MS 123. The will is reprinted in "Will of Richard Ambler of Yorktown," WMQ, 1st Ser., XIV (1904), 126-129.

<sup>209</sup>"Virginia Council Journals, 1726-1753," VMHB, XXXIII (1925), 187.

certainly placed him among the wealthiest citizens of the colony.

However, other than occasional references, very little can be found regarding the family's holdings outside of Yorktown and Jamestown other than there must have been close communication among them. Louise du Bellet does say that Richard wanted to invest money in land for his descendants and that he was particularly interested in the uninhabited western lands. The tract at Westham was the result of such an interest.<sup>210</sup> As early as 1736 Richard had acquired land and slaves in Caroline County.<sup>211</sup> There is mention of "the whole Tract containing 3000 acres more or less, and is the Tract of Land, commonly called and known by the name of Westham" in Henrico County. Edward bought this from Robert Carter Nicholas in 1765 for £1500.<sup>212</sup> In 1769 an advertisement appeared in the Virginia Gazette that there "Strayed, some time ago, from Mrs. Ambler's at Jamestown, a very large brown mule, belonging to a plantation of the late Mr. Edward Ambler, in the county of Louisa. . . ."213 The Warwick County Land Tax Lists show that between 1782 and 1790 Jaquelin Ambler was paying tax on 500 (surveyed to be 451-1/4 in 1789) acres of land and that in the same period he was taxed on one white tithable, ten blacks, about thirty cattle and from one to six

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<sup>210</sup>Louise Pecquet du Bellet, Some Prominent Virginia Families (Lynchburg, Va., 1907), II, 6.

<sup>211</sup>John Frederick Dorman, Caroline County, Virginia. Order Book (Washington, D.C., 1966-1967), Part II (1734/5-1737), 42; Part III (1737-1740), 58.

<sup>212</sup>Ambler MS 121.

<sup>213</sup>Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, Feb. 23, 1769.

horses.<sup>214</sup> "The Dell," one of the Ambler estates in Fauquier County, was in the end of the eighteenth century "an estate of 3,100 acres of timbered land and pasture."<sup>215</sup> One of the most popular estates appears to have been "The Cottage" in Hanover County. Here Eliza Jaquelin Ambler spent many childhood days as well as days in recent widowhood. Although a "little dwelling," it housed many important Ambler letters and documents during the Revolutionary War.<sup>216</sup> It also housed, for a time, Robert Carter Nicholas, Edward's brother-in-law.<sup>217</sup>

Other than glimpses like these very little can be reconstructed of the intricate network of Ambler holdings. However, Richard's grandson, Colonel John Jaquelin Ambler, was one of the hundred richest men in Virginia.<sup>218</sup> Indebted to no one, he owned the following estates: Jamestown, Powhatan, the Maine in James City County, Westham in Henrico, an estate in Surrey, The Cottage in Hanover, Mill Farm, Lakeland, and another estate in Louisa, Glen Ambler and Saint Moore in Amherst, an estate in Frederick, 1,015 acres in Piedmont Manor, 10,000 acres in Leeds, 5,000 acres in Mason County, the Mill tract in Henrico, several town lots in Little York,

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<sup>214</sup>Warwick County, Land Tax Lists, 1782-1861; Warwick County, Personal Property Tax Lists, 1782-1861.

<sup>215</sup>W. M. Paxton, The Marshall Family (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1885), 143.

<sup>216</sup>Eliza Jaquelin Ambler to -- ?, Oct. 10, 1796, Eliza Jaquelin Ambler Papers, 1780-1823.

<sup>217</sup>Edmund Randolph to Robert Carter Nicholas, July 24, 1777. Elizabeth Barbour Ambler Papers, 1748-1777.

<sup>218</sup>Jackson T. Main, "The One Hundred," WMO, 3d Ser., XI (1954), 368.

Manchester, and Richmond, and shares of stock in several banks and business ventures.<sup>219</sup>

### The Three Sons

Colonel John could reap such benefits because the Ambler heirs never squandered their inheritance. John (1734-1766)<sup>220</sup> died the same year as his father. He never married. Despite his short life John was

a man of vast Erudition and elegance, held up as a very paragon;--being the Second Son, the Savings of the whole family were lavished on his education . . . it would appear from his letters written while abroad that he was not only a great Scholar, but a Gentleman of great refinement. . . .<sup>221</sup>

Upon his return from England John settled in Jamestown where he made various improvements, among them a causeway where the neck of the peninsula had once been.<sup>222</sup> In March, 1759, he superseded his father as collector of the port of Yorktown.<sup>223</sup> At that time he was representing Jamestown in the House of Burgesses. According to law anyone who accepted "an Office of Profit in this Government" had to submit to a new election. John, whose family controlled most

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<sup>219</sup>du Bellet, I, 36-37.

<sup>220</sup>There is a great discrepancy regarding several birth and death dates here. The birthdate 1734 is in du Bellet, Virginia Families, I, 28. Bishop William Meade, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia (Philadelphia, 1857), I, 105, gives it as 1735. This has been a typical problem.

<sup>221</sup>Eliza Jaquelin Ambler to -- ?, Oct. 10, 1796, Eliza Jaquelin Ambler Papers, 1780-1823.

<sup>222</sup>du Bellet, I, 5. See also Meade, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families, I, 111.

<sup>223</sup>Treasury Out Letters, Mar. 7, 1759, T. 11/25, P.R.O.

of the "rotten borough," was reelected.<sup>224</sup> Upon his death and burial in Barbados, where he had gone to fight tuberculosis, Edward inherited his holdings in Jamestown. Edward (1733-1768), in fact, lived only a few years past his brother. He had ordered a memorial tombstone for John to rest in Jamestown Churchyard<sup>225</sup> (the inscription was written by cousin George Shaw in England),<sup>226</sup> and he died on the day it was erected.

Edward also served as a burgess from Jamestown, succeeding his deceased brother until his own death. A week after his installation Edward was added to the Committee of Propositions and Grievances.<sup>227</sup>

Edward was the object of an incident involving the rights and privileges due a burgess during session time. James Pride, the naval officer for York River, ordered a writ served on Edward. This was violating Edward's right of immunity, and Pride was convicted of Edward's arrest and of a "scandalous insult" he intended to put in the Virginia Gazette. He was jailed for a year in 1767 to 1768. This is certainly proof of the power of the House of Burgesses that

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<sup>224</sup>H. R. McIlwaine, ed., Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1758-1761 (Richmond, Va., 1908), viin., 159.

<sup>225</sup>Meade, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families, I, 105.

<sup>226</sup>George Shaw to Edward Ambler, n.d., 1767, Elizabeth Barbour Ambler Papers, 1748-1777.

<sup>227</sup>John Pendleton Kennedy, ed., Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1766-1769 (Richmond, Va., 1906), 13, 25. See also William Wirt Henry, ed., "House of Burgesses, 1766 to 1775," VMHB, IV (1897), 382; Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, Nov. 20, 1766.

it could jail a royal officer for such a time for such a cause.<sup>228</sup>  
 Unfortunately, Edward also fell victim to the family's susceptibility  
 for tuberculosis, and

Last Sunday morning died at the Treasurer's in this city,  
 after a tedious illness, Edward Ambler, Esq., Representative in  
 Assembly for Jamestown, and Gentleman of a most amiable character,  
 which makes his death much lamented by all who had the pleasure  
 of knowing him.<sup>229</sup>

Despite Edward's occasional flashes of inferiority<sup>230</sup> his  
 estate was substantial. Robert Carter Nicholas, executor, shipped  
 numerous hogsheads of tobacco belonging to the estate to England in  
 the years after Edward's death.<sup>231</sup> Apparently, however, he left his  
 affairs in some disorder. Settlement of the estate was not complete  
 even in 1804.<sup>232</sup> Shortly after Edward's death the executors had  
 to advertise in the Virginia Gazette that those to whom Edward owed  
 money and those who owed money to him should make themselves known.  
 They also were selling "a very reliable full blooded English STALLION,

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<sup>228</sup>Lucille Griffith, Virginia House of Burgesses, 1750-1774  
 (Northport, Alabama, 1963), 180-181; McIlwaine, ed., Journals of the  
House of Burgesses, 1758-1761, 91, 98-100.

<sup>229</sup>Extract of a letter from Boston, dated Oct. 10, 1768, in  
 Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, Nov. 3, 1768. See also Rind's  
Virginia Gazette, Nov. 3, 1768.

<sup>230</sup>His agent, Samuel Athawes, reassured him that just "because  
 you do not make so much or are not so great a Man as your adjoining  
 Neighbours in Hanover . . . it is the quality of the Tob which  
 determines the price not the possessions of the person to whom it  
 belongs. . . ." Samuel Athawes to Edward Ambler, Oct. 8, 1766.  
 Elizabeth Barbour Ambler Papers, 1748-1777.

<sup>231</sup>Frances Norton Mason, ed., John Norton & Sons, Merchants of  
London and Virginia (Richmond, Va., 1937), 78, 83, 196, 204, 245, 261,  
 332, 388.

<sup>232</sup>Griffith, Virginia House of Burgesses, 181.



imported some years ago by John Ambler, Esq.,<sup>233</sup> probably to pay off debts.

It was left to Jaquelin (1742-1798) to advance his father's fame and fortune. To sentimentalists, perhaps, his greatest fame lies in winning Rebecca Burwell from Thomas Jefferson.<sup>234</sup>

Jaquelin shared Richard's enthusiasm for a mercantile career and, after attending the University of Pennsylvania,

was under the immediate direction of his Father so as to qualify him for business, for it was no part of the Virginia System to give a younger Son any other inheritance;--At the age of 21 he was received into partnership with his Father.<sup>235</sup>

Officially, Jaquelin became collector of the port in 1766 in place of his brother, John, who had resigned.<sup>236</sup> He held this post until the beginning of the Revolutionary War.<sup>237</sup> An article in the May 11, 1769, issue of the Virginia Gazette indicates that he was as responsible as his father. He and a few other town leaders were

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<sup>233</sup>Rind's Virginia Gazette, Dec. 15, 1768. See also Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, Dec. 15, 1768.

<sup>234</sup>For an exchange of letters between Thomas Jefferson and a friend, William Fleming, on this subject, see "The Ancestors and Descendants of John Rolfe with Notes on Some Connected Families," VMHB, XXIV (1916), 331. See also Paul Wilstach, Tidewater Virginia (Indianapolis, 1929), 214-215. The legend that Edward Ambler won Mary Cary from George Washington has no basis in fact. Wilstach, Tidewater Virginia, 183.

<sup>235</sup>Eliza Jaquelin Ambler to -- ?, Oct. 10, 1796, Eliza Jaquelin Ambler Papers, 1780-1823.

<sup>236</sup>Treasury Out Letters, July 22, 1766, T. 11/28, P.R.O.; see text page 62 for Athawes's recommendation.

<sup>237</sup>J. Neilson Barry, cont., "Virginia Officers in 1776," Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine, X (1929), 274.

directing a lottery to pay off a citizen's debts.<sup>238</sup>

A year after assuming the collectorship Jaquelin and Edward exchanged properties in Yorktown: Jaquelin gave his brother Lot 34 and £850 for Lots 43, 44, and 45, on which the custom house and other buildings stood.<sup>239</sup> Jaquelin also served as sheriff of York County during these years.<sup>240</sup>

During the Revolutionary War Jaquelin and his family left Yorktown. In 1778 he leased his property to Thomas Wyld, Jr., for £1000. Wyld operated an ordinary on part of it until he was forced out in the campaign of 1781.<sup>241</sup> Jaquelin's properties were confiscated by British troops. In a futile effort to be reimbursed from the commonwealth Jaquelin outlined his losses:

. . . a Dwelling House in good repair, with 3 Rooms and passage below & 2 Rooms above, 4 fireplaces	£200
a Kitchen	30
Smoak House	15
a Stable, 16 by 14 feet	20
a Large House built for a Shop, 32 feet square	50
a Dwelling House on another Lott, 20 by 16 feet,	
Dutch Roof	75
a good Garden well inclosed	6
a Black Walnut Desk	5
a large pine Press	2
Total	£418 <sup>242</sup>

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<sup>238</sup>Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, May 11, 1769.

<sup>239</sup>York County, Deeds, VII (1763-1769), 275, 279. See also Ambler MS 126.

<sup>240</sup>Clyde F. Trudell, Colonial Yorktown (Old Greenwich, Conn., 1971), 81-82. See also York County, Deeds, VIII (1769-1777), 152, 155.

<sup>241</sup>Edward M. Riley, "The Founding and Development of Yorktown" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1942), 97. See also Trudell, Colonial Yorktown, 82.

<sup>242</sup>York County, Claims for losses of citizens in the British Invasion of 1781, 1.

The story of Jaquelin's flight from Yorktown is told in fascinating detail by his daughter, Eliza Jaquelin Ambler, in letters to her friend, Mildred Smith, in Yorktown. Eliza's family evidently lived as fugitives between 1780 to 1782, going from one family estate to another and finally settling in Richmond. She writes to Mildred in 1781:

At the moment I was writing you, we had too certain confirmation of the British having landed and being actually on their way to town. Not a moment was to be lost, and we were off in a twinkling . . . my father seemed to think we had not a moment to lose. Such terror and confusion you have no idea of. Governor, Council, everybody scampering. . . . My much loved father is full of anxiety for us. Much have we to apprehend for him. The public office which he holds makes it absolutely necessary for him to run no risks of falling into the hands of the enemy. We, therefore, see him safely lodged in the old coach every night, with faithful old Sam as his guard. . . .<sup>243</sup>

Jaquelin had become Councillor of State under Thomas Jefferson in 1780 and Treasurer of the State in 1782.<sup>244</sup> He personally swore in John Marshall as councillor of law<sup>245</sup> and in 1783 allowed Marshall to marry his daughter, Polly.<sup>246</sup> Jaquelin fulfilled his posts so well and so honestly that he was known as "The Aristides of Virginia."<sup>247</sup> Apparently, however, the war had caused him financial

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<sup>243</sup>Eliza Jaquelin Ambler to Mildred Smith, n.d., 1781, Eliza Jaquelin Ambler Papers, 1780-1823, reprinted in "An Old Virginia Correspondence," Atlantic Monthly, LXXXIV (July-Dec. 1899), 537-538.

<sup>244</sup>R. S. Thomas, comp., "Public Officers, 1782," VMHB, V (1897), 216.

<sup>245</sup>William P. Palmer, ed., Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts Preserved in the Capitol at Richmond (Richmond, Va., 1875), III, 386.

<sup>246</sup>The definitive work of the marriage of Marshall and Polly is Frances Norton Mason, My Dearest Polly (Richmond, Va., 1961).

<sup>247</sup>Meade, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families, I, 106.

reversals, although he was certainly not ruined by it. In the 1780s he did accept financial assistance from his wealthy aunt, Martha Jaquelin.<sup>248</sup>

Jaquelin did great justice to his appointment, and even uncovered a fraud by some of his clerks.<sup>249</sup> His reports in the Calendar of Virginia State Papers show him to be conscientious and concerned and, of course, very honest.<sup>250</sup> Specific acts in which he played a conspicuous part show him to be concerned with practical problems which help simplify administrative complexities.<sup>251</sup> Jaquelin died in 1798 at the relatively young age of fifty-six, leaving behind an impressive number of descendants.

#### Concluding Remarks

The Amblers were relative "late comers" to the colony. They owe their strong foundation to the wise business practices of their founder. Associated with both mercantile and planter elites, the Amblers knew, by marriage or financial dealings, the most prominent Virginians of the eighteenth century. The collectorship of the port of Yorktown was a respectable and critically important post, one of

<sup>248</sup>Mason, My Dearest Polly, 35.

<sup>249</sup>du Bellet, Virginia Families, I, 31.

<sup>250</sup>See, for instance, Palmer, ed., Calendar of Virginia State Papers, VIII, 297, 364. See also "Virginia Legislative Papers from the Originals in the Virginia State Archives," VMHB, XVIII (1910), 378-379.

<sup>251</sup>Two examples, "An act for opening and extending the navigation of Potowmack river," and "An act giving further powers to the directors of the public buildings" can be found in William W. Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia. . . , II (Richmond, Va., 1809), 511, 496.

the few in which a man personally dealt with both merchants and planters. The public exposure this afforded the Amblers was so advantageous its importance cannot be underestimated. Before Richard's death his family had acquired commercial and planter interests, political duties, and social prestige.

The rise to prominence of the Amblers was not marred by the decline and fall that plagued many of Virginia's great families. The Byrds, Burwells, Carters, and others enjoyed unparalleled wealth and influence, but theirs was a fleeting treasure. For the Nelsons, for instance, the rise to wealth had been spectacular; their decline was equally so.<sup>252</sup> These families tragically lost their position because of the "native vice,"<sup>253</sup> the inability of succeeding generations to stay out of debt.

The Amblers never experienced the extremes either of vast wealth or of devastating debt. Richard lived well within his means and imparted to his sons his own good judgment, moral fortitude, and financial conservatism. John, Edward, and Jaquelin were scholars and talented businessmen, more interested in furthering their father's success than in destroying it.

The Amblers were by no means glamorous in the style of William Byrd II, or King Carter, but neither were they prodigal in the style of Robert Wormeley, William Byrd III, or Robert Burwell. Always in positions of "practical authority," the Amblers gave hard work, not

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<sup>252</sup>Emory Evans, "The Rise and Decline of the Virginia Aristocracy in the Eighteenth Century: the Nelsons," in The Old Dominion, ed. Darrett B. Rutman (Charlottesville, Va., 1964), 62-78.

<sup>253</sup>Ibid., 73.

charisma, to Virginia. This versatile family took advantage of the social nobility of the era to entrench itself firmly in the soil of eighteenth-century Virginia.

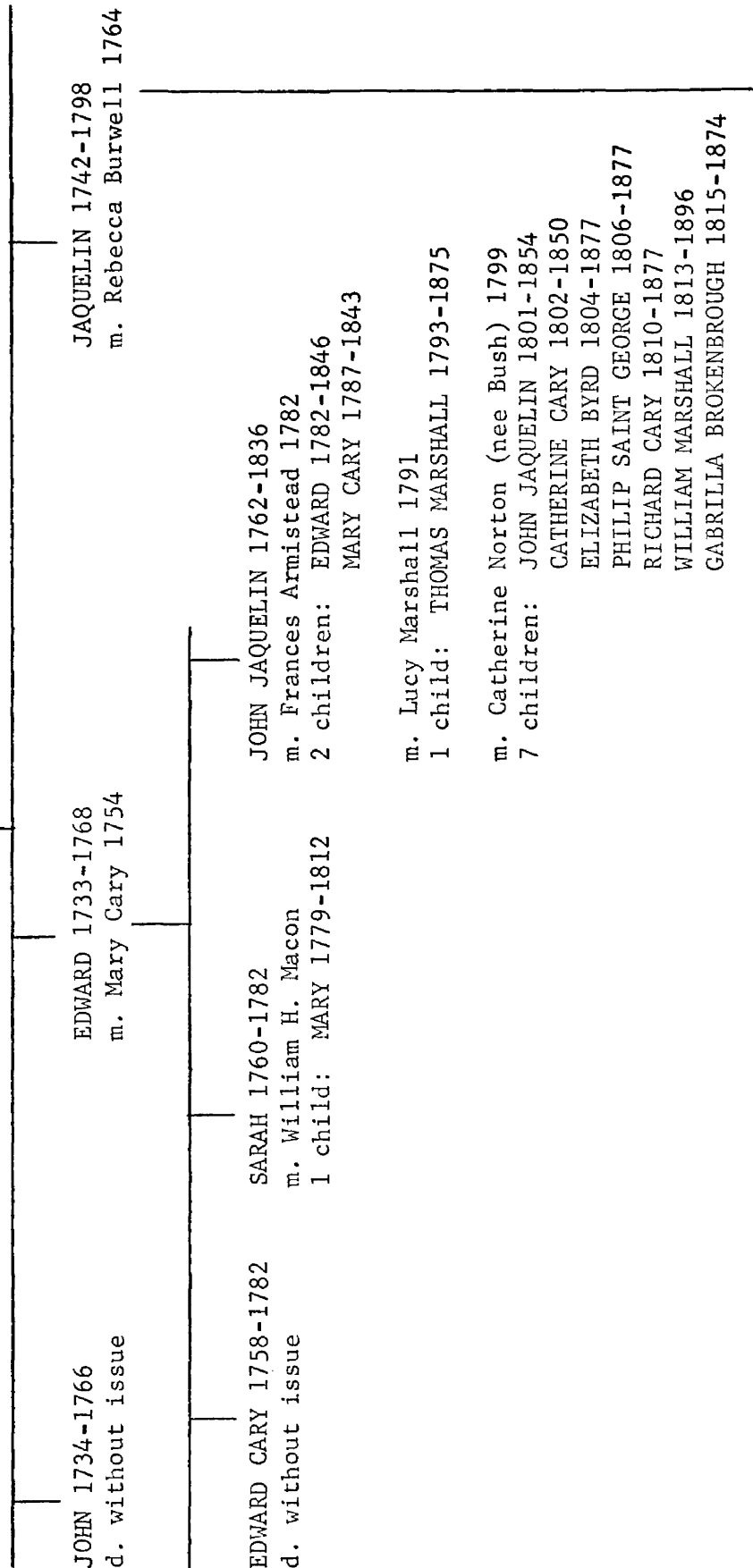
## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE AMBLER FAMILY GENEALOGY: THE FIRST FOUR GENERATIONS IN AMERICA <sup>254</sup>  
 (Does not include children who died before reaching maturity)

RICHARD AMBLER

b. Yorkshire, England, 1690, d. Yorktown, Virginia, 1766  
 m. Elizabeth, daughter of Edward Jaquelin of Jamestown, 1729



(con't.)



JAUQUELIN 1742-1798  
m. Rebecca Burwell 1764

ELIZA JAQUELIN 1765-1842  
m. William Brent 1785  
m. Edward Carrington before 1799

MARY WILLIS (Polly) 1766-1831  
m. John Marshall 1783  
6 children: THOMAS 1784-1835  
JAQUELIN AMBLER 1787-1852  
MARY 1795-1841  
JOHN 1798-1833  
JAMES KEITH 1800-1862  
EDWARD CARRINGTON 1805-1882

LUCY NELSON 1776-1799  
m. Daniel Call 1797  
1 child: ELIZABETH 1799-?

ANN 1772-1832

m. George Fisher 1795

7 children: ELIZABETH JAQUELIN 1798-1845  
JANE RAVENSCROFT 1802-1886  
GEORGE DANIEL 1804-1891  
LUCY MARSHALL 1807-1874  
EDWARD CARRINGTON 1809-1890  
MARY ANN AMBLER 1811-1863  
CHARLES FENTON MERCER 1813-1848

254 Compiled from: Letter dated Oct. 10, 1796 by Eliza Jaquelin Ambler, Eliza Jaquelin Ambler Papers, 1780-1823 (microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Research Library), M-1120; Louise Pecquet du Bellet, Some Prominent Virginia Families, I, II (Lynchburg, Va., 1907), passim; George D. Fisher, Descendants of Jaquelin Ambler (Richmond, Va., 1890); Joyce H. Lindsay, comp., Marriages of Henrico County, Virginia, 1680-1808 (n.p., 1960), 14, 31, 57; Frances Norton Mason, My Dearest Polly (Richmond, Va., 1961), 348.

APPENDIX B

EXCERPTS FROM THE STATUTES AT LARGE . . . 255

An Act for preventing frauds in the customs and in clearing of ships; for ascertaining Collectors and Naval Officers fees; and to prohibit and prevent the casting ballast, or dead bodies, into rivers or creeks.

I. FOR preventing frauds and concealments in clearing ships and vessels, and in payment of customs, duties, or impositions, laid upon tobacco, skins, furs, or any other goods, or merchandizes whatsoever, exported out of this colony and dominion.

II. BE it enacted, by the Lieutenant-Governor, Council and Burgesses of this present General Assembly, and it is hereby enacted, by the authority of the same, That the master of every ship or vessel, entering into this colony for trade, or being here, is designed to take on board and lade any tobacco, skins, furs, or other goods or merchandizes whatsoever, in order to export and carry the same out of this dominion, at his entry, and before he be permitted to break bulk, and trade, or to lade and take on board any goods, or merchandizes whatsoever, shall give bond to the naval officer, with one surety, to our sovereign lord the king, his heirs and successors, that he will not depart with his said ship or vessel, from the district or port where she is entered, until payment be made of the several duties, customs, impositions, and fees, accruing due from the said ship or vessel, or for, or by reason of any tobacco, skins, furs, or other goods and merchandizes, shipped and laden in her, not until the said ship or vessel be duly cleared by the collector and naval officer of the said district or port.

III. And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That if the ship or vessel be under fifty tons, the said bond shall be for fifty pounds; if above fifty tons, and under one hundred tons, for one hundred pounds; and if one hundred tons, or more, for two hundred pounds; and shall be delivered back upon due clearing with the officers aforesaid, but wholly forfeited, without relief in equity, in case the condition thereof be broken.

IV. And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That the master of every ship or vessel, upon clearing, shall make

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<sup>255</sup>William W. Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia . . . , VI (Richmond, Va., 1809), 94-101.

oath before the officer with whom he clears (which oath the said officer is hereby impowered and required to administer,) what tobacco, skins, furs, or other goods, or merchandizes, are then shipped and laden on board his ship or vessel, and that he will not afterwards lade or take on board any more tobacco, skins, furs, or other goods, or merchandizes whatsoever, for which any custom, duty, or imposition, is to be paid, or which the law requires to be entered, without a lawful permit for his so doing, from any officer of the district, or port, wherein the said tobacco, skins, furs, goods, or merchandizes, are to be so laden and taken in.

V. And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That the customs, duties, or impositions accruing due, for any tobacco, skins, furs, or other goods, or merchandizes whatsoever, which shall be shipped or laden on board any ship or vessel, in order to be exported out of this colony, shall be answered and paid to the collector, or receiver, of the said customs, duties, or impositions, in the district, or port, where the said ship or vessel rides, when the said tobaccos, skins, furs, goods, or merchandizes, are laden and taken in, and to no other collector, or receiver whatsoever, notwithstanding the same be brought thither from another district or port.

VI. And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That upon any suspicion of fraud, or concealment, or that the master of any ship or vessel doth make a false report of his lading, it shall be lawful for the naval officer, and collector of the district, or port, or either of them, for discovery of the said fraud, or concealment, and for the better finding out the truth of the matter, to examine upon oath, the mate, boatswain or any other of the seamen, belonging to the said ship or vessel, as also, any other person, or persons whatsoever, concerning the lading of the said ship or vessel, as to the said collector, and naval officer, or either of them, shall seem fit and convenient.

VII. And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That the collectors fees shall be as followeth, that is to say,

	l.	s.	d.
For entering and clearing any ship or vessel of fifty tons, or under, all vessels transporting goods, or commodities, from one district to another excepted, and all fees thereunto incident,	0	10	0
For entering and clearing any ship or vessel, above fifty tons, and under one hundred tons, and all fees thereunto incident,	0	15	0
For entering and clearing any ship or vessel of one hundred tons, or above, and all fees thereunto incident,	1	5	0
For taking a plantation bond, pursuant to the act of trade, and navigation,	0	2	6
For a certificate of duties paid upon goods, shipped to the plantations,	0	2	6

And that the naval officers fees be as followeth, that is to say,

	l.	s.	d.
For entering and clearing any ship or vessel of fifty tons or under, except as is before excepted,	0	7	6
For entering and clearing any ship or vessel above fifty and under one hundred tons,	0	10	0
For entering and clearing any ship or vessel of one hundred tons, or above,	1	5	0
For taking a bond,	0	2	6
For a permit to trade,	0	2	6
For every loading cocquet here,	0	0	6
For a permit to load a ship or vessel for exportation,	0	2	6
For a certificate for all imported goods that shall be removed out of one district or river, into another, after they are once landed, to be paid to the officer of the district from whence the said goods are brought,	0	2	6

All which fees shall be paid in sterling, or current money, at five and twenty per cent.

VIII. And that the naval officers, and collectors, for any of the services before mentioned, shall charge no more than half of the fees aforesaid, for any ship or vessel wholly belonging to the inhabitants of this country.

IX. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That it shall not be lawful for any collector or naval officer, within this colony and dominion, to demand and take any fee or fees, for any other business, matter, or thing, by him done and performed, as collector, or naval officer, or as collector, or receiver of any Virginia duties, than the particulars before enumerated in this act, or to demand and take any greater fee, for any of the particulars before enumerated, than the fee given and allowed by this act for the same: And if any collector, or naval officer, shall offend in either of the premises, and be thereof lawfully convicted, he shall for the first offence, forfeit and pay one hundred pounds; one moiety to our sovereign lord the king, his heirs and successors, for and towards the better support of this government, and the contingent charges thereof, and the other moiety to the party injured, to be recovered with costs, in any court of record within this dominion, by action of debt, or information, wherein no essoin, protection, or wager of law, privilege, or more than one imparlance shall be allowed: And if the collector, or naval officer, shall offend a second time, and be thereof lawfully convicted, he shall be thereby disabled in law, and made utterly incapable to hold, execute, and enjoy his place, and office of collector, or naval officer, or any profit or advantage arising therefrom, for ever, and the said place, and office shall, immediately after such conviction, be void to all intents and purposes, as if the said collector or naval officer had been naturally dead, and moreover, shall forfeit and pay to the informer, the sum of twenty pounds, to be recovered with costs,

as aforesaid.

X. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That if any person injured by any collector, or naval officer, demanding and taking any fee or fees, contrary to this act, shall fail to inform against the said collector, or naval officer, for the said offence, within three months after the offence committed, it shall be thereafter lawful for any other person, or persons whatsoever, to prosecute the offender, and recover, any thing in this act before contained, to the contrary, notwithstanding.

XI. Provided always, That no collector, or naval officer whatsoever shall be impeached, or questioned, for or concerning any offence aforesaid, unless he be prosecuted within one year ensuing such offence committed.

XII. And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That every collector, or naval officer, within this colony, shall be, and is hereby strictly enjoined and required, to set up, or cause to be set up in his office, a fair written table, or copy of his fees, according to this act, and from time to time to continue the same, by setting up a new or fresh table, or copy as occasion requires.

XIII. And whereas casting stones, gravel, or other ballast, into rivers, or creeks, must prove dangerous and destructive to navigation, for prevention thereof, Be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That immediately after the commencement of this act, the court of every county adjacent to any navigable river, or creek, within this colony, shall nominate and appoint one or more fit and able person, or persons, residing near or convenient to the place or places where ships, or other vessels usually ride, in such river or creek, to be overseers and directors of the delivery, and bringing on shore, from on board every ship or vessel within their respective districts, all ballast whatsoever, intended to be unladen or delivered; and the clerk of such court shall forthwith issue, and deliver to the sheriff of his county, an attested copy of every such nomination, and appointment, to be by him served upon every person and persons so appointed, or left at his, or their place of abode, of which the sheriff shall make due return; and thereupon every such person shall appear before the court next thereafter held for his county, and there make oath and swear, that he will, when required, diligently attend the delivery of ballast from on board any ship or vessel within his district, and will not knowingly permit the same, or any part thereof, to be cast into the water, where navigable, but will direct, and to the best of his power, cause all such ballast to be brought and laid on shore, according to law, and that he will truly and faithfully execute his office, without favour, partiality, or malice: And if any person so nominated, and having notice thereof as aforesaid, unless hindered by sickness, or other legal disability, shall fail to appear before the said court, or being there shall refuse to be sworn, he shall be fined twenty pounds: And such court shall, upon every such failure, or refusal, or upon the death, removal, or other legal disability, or any person appointed and sworn as aforesaid, forthwith proceed to nominate and appoint, from time to time, another in his room, who shall take the same oath, and upon

failure or refusal, shall pay the like fine; which every such court respectively is hereby authorized and required to cause to be levied by the sheriff, and shall be by him accounted for and paid to the treasurer of this colony for the time being, to be applied towards the charge of clearing rivers, and creeks, or as the general assembly shall think fit to direct.

XIV. And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That every person so appointed and sworn, upon notice given him by the master of any ship or vessel, when he intends to discharge ballast, shall forthwith go on board and attend, till the same be delivered, which he shall see brought and laid on shore, at such convenient place or places near the vessel where it may not obstruct navigation, nor be washed into the channel; and thereupon shall give the master a certificate, that the ballast on board his vessel has been duly unladen and brought on shore, according to law; and for his attendance may demand and receive five shillings, for every day he shall attend as aforesaid, to be paid by the master before certificate given: And if any such officer shall neglect or fail to perform his duty, as by this act directed, he shall forfeit and pay twenty pounds for every neglect or failure.

XV. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That every master of a ship or vessel within this colony, having ballast to unlade, shall give notice thereof in writing, to some officer appointed in the district where the vessel rides, pursuant to this act, and appoint the time of such officer's attendance, and at the time of his clearing out, shall produce to the officer of the customs by whom he shall be cleared, a certificate of his having unladen and brought on shore his ballast, as by this act required; and if any such master shall presume to unload any ballast, before notice given as aforesaid, or cast, or suffer the same to be put on shore, at any other place, or in any other manner, than shall be directed by the proper officer appointed, by virtue of this act, he shall forfeit and pay fifty pounds for every such offence: And if, at the time of his clearing out, he shall fail to produce and deliver to the officer of the customs, by whom he shall be cleared, such certificate as is herein before required, such failure shall amount to a conviction, and he shall be adjudged guilty of breach of this act, and liable to the said penalty of fifty pounds.

XVI. Provided always, That nothing herein contained shall be construed to prohibit or restrain the master of any ship or other vessel, bringing limestone, chalk, bricks, or stone for building, to lade or put the same on board any other vessel, in order to be carried or transported to any place he shall think fit; and the person appointed to see ballast unladen is hereby required to permit the same to be done, any thing in this act to the contrary, or seeming to the contrary, notwithstanding.

XVII. And whereas the masters of ships or vessels importing negroes, frequently cause such as die on board, to be cast into the water, to the great annoyance of the adjacent inhabitants, Be it therefore further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That when any negroe, or other person whatsoever, shall die on board any ship or vessel, within this dominion, the master of such ship or

vessel, shall cause the dead body to be brought on shore, and there buried, above high water mark, four feet deep at the least, upon penalty of forfeiting for his neglect herein, or suffering such dead body to be cast into the water, fifty pounds for every such offence: And that all forfeitures and penalties arising by this act, and not before appropriated, shall be one moiety to the king, his heirs and successors, to be paid to the treasurer, and applied to the uses last mentioned, the other moiety to the informer, recoverable with costs, by action of debt or information, in any court of record of this dominion.

XVIII. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That one act made in the fourth year of the reign of Queen Anne, intituled, An Act for preventing frauds in the customs, and in clearing of ships; for ascertaining collectors and naval officers fees; and to prohibit and prevent the casting of ballast and dead bodies into rivers and creeks: And every other act and acts, clause and clauses, heretofore made for or concerning any matter or thing within the purview of this act, shall be, and are hereby repealed.

XIX. And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That this act shall commence and be in force, from and immediately after the tenth day of June, which shall be in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and fifty-one.

APPENDIX C

WILL OF RICHARD AMBLER OF YORKTOWN<sup>256</sup>

In the name of God Amen I Richard Ambler of the Town & County of York in Virginia Merchant being of sound mind and disposing memory this twenty third day of January in the Year of our Lord Christ One thousand Seven hundred and Sixty five Do make and Declare this writing contained on one sheet of paper to be my last Will and Testament hereby revoking all other former Wills

I give my son Edward all those my Negroe Slaves and their encrease which were employed on my Plantation in Caroline County which Plantation was lately sold to Col<sup>o</sup> John Baylor being Thirty seven Slaves old and young. And I give him all the Stocks of Cattle Horses Sheep and Hogs and the Plantation utensils--I give my said son Edward all my Negroe Slaves & their encrease which were employed on my Plantation on Taylor's Creek in Hanover County being Thirteen slaves old and young together with the Stock of Cattle and Plantation utensils the money for which the said Plantation was sold I have already given him

I give my said son Edward and to his Heirs forever my Plantation on Black Swamp in Warwick County and all my labouring Slaves usually employed thereon together with their encrease and also the Stocks of Cattle Horses Mules and Hogs with the Plantation Utensils

I give my said son Edward and his Heirs forever my dwelling house wherein I now live together with the Lots of Land whereon that and my Out houses and Stable stands also the Garden ground adjoining I give him likewise my Storehouse situate on the bank near the River

I give my son John One Acre of Land whereon is a Smith's Shop being part of Ten Acres which I bought of Capt<sup>n</sup> Gwyn Reade

I give my son Jaquelin the remaining nine acres of said Land to him and his Heirs forever and alsoe the One Acre after my son John's decease

I give to my son John and to his Heirs forever all my Lands in James Town Island which I purchased of Christopher Purkins also the Ferry house and Land belonging to it; out of the Rent of said Ferry he shall pay my son Jaquelin Twenty pounds Yearly during the Space of Ten years to commence from the time of my death, I give my

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<sup>256</sup>Ambler Manuscripts, 123, Library of Congress. Typescript at the Colonial National Historical Park Headquarters, Yorktown.



said son John and to his Heirs for ever a small piece of Land near his House which I purchased of M<sup>r</sup> Edw<sup>d</sup> Travis who bought the same of M<sup>r</sup> Drummond it formerly belonged to John Harris to whom M<sup>r</sup> Sherrard sold it being part of three acres and an half which the said Sherrard bought of John Page Esquire

I give my said son John and to his Heirs forever my Plantation on Pohatan swamp which I purchased from his aunt M<sup>rs</sup> Martha Jaquelin I give him also all the Negroe Slaves employed thereon with the Stocks of Cattle

I give my Said Son John Three Leases of three hundred and ten Acres of Land situate in the Maine near James Town which I hold of the Gover<sup>r</sup> at the yearly rent of Sixty two bushels of Corn I give my said son John all my Negroe Slaves which are employ'd at James Town Island and the Main and also all their Negroe and Mulatta Children together with all the Stocks of Cattle Sheep Horses Mules and Hogs and Plantation utensils I give my said son John all the House furniture left in my House at James Town together with the Dairey Woman named Moll Cook, Negroe Hannah, Jupiter, Phillis, boy Cupil The three Carpenters viz<sup>t</sup> Old Ben Mark and John I give my Son Jaquelin One thousand pounds Sterling in the hands of Mass<sup>rs</sup> Athawes and Company of London I give my Son Jaquelin and to his Heirs for ever my Lot of Land and the Houses erected thereon situate between the Fort hill and Church yard now in the tenure of John Gibbons

I give my Son Jaquelin and to his Heirs forever One Acre of Land which joines to York Town part of the Acre is a garden on the other part are houses in the occupation of John Davis I give my Son Jaquelin two Negroe boys now on the Black swamp Plantation named Ned and George also two boys at York Town named George and Guy and old Ediths two Girles named Grace and Venis also my Negroe woman named Grace who is now sick I give my Son Edward all the furniture of my dwelling house He acquitting my promise of the House and Lot now in the tenure of John Gibbons which by this will I give my Son Jaquelin but if Son Edward insists on my said promise then I give my son Jaquelin all the furniture of my said Dwelling house, that is to say my Plate Beds Bedding Tables Chairs and all other Utensils belonging to my said dwelling house Kitchen and Stable My Stock in trade I mean all the Goods and Merchandise in the Store on hand and also all the Goods and Merchandise now sent for and expected in at the time of my death likewise all the Debts due to me by my Store book a List of which shall be taken and therein shall be included the balances due from my Son Edward and my Son John the amount of all which I give my Son Edward and Son Jaquelin to be equally divided between them and it is my request they carry on Trade in partnership I give all my Bonds and Obligations which are not Entered in my Storebook to my said Sons Edward and Jaquelin to be equally divided between them. . . .

I give my Son John and to his Heirs for ever Two Acres of Land in James Town Isleland bounded to the South by the River to the north by the main road to the east by a small Marsh which divides it from the ferry house Land which two Acres was given me by M<sup>r</sup> Edw<sup>d</sup> Jaquelin's Will Now I have given M<sup>r</sup> John Smith and my Son Edward by Deed their Lives in the said two Acres. I give my Son

Edward my Slaves under mentioned, to wit Old Edith, Peg Abel Will America, Sawney, Polly Jerry James Genney and the Carpenter named Sharper and His Son Named Ben I give to my Grandsons Edward and John Two boys named Ned and Scip [ io? ] also I give them little Edith and Pegs boy named Billy

I give my Grand daughters Sally & Molly Pegs youngest child named Hannah and Polly's child named Tamo

It is my desire that Mrs Martha Gooseley be paid out of my Store Goods the value of Twenty pounds in consideration of her care in attending my dear daughter in her last sickness if Mrs Gooseley should die then the twenty pounds be paid to her Children

As I have given my Estate amongst my Children (except a small Legacy) and as I make them my Executors I desire they may not be compeled to give Security for the Administration of it Lastly I appoint my three Sons Edward, John, and Jaquelin Ambler Executors of this my last Will and Testament

/s/ Richard Ambler

Endorsed: Copy of my Will

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