National Park Service
Cultural Landscapes Inventory

2012

Revised: 9/2025



Nelson House

Colonial National Historical Park

Table of Contents

Introduction

General Information

Concurrence Information

Geographic Information and Location Map

Management Information

National Register Information

Chronology & Physical History

Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

Uses

Condition

Treatment

Bibliography & Supplemental Information

Introduction

The Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI)

The Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) is a comprehensive inventory of all cultural landscapes in the National Park System. Landscapes that are listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places, or are otherwise managed as cultural resources and in which the National Park Service has, or plans to acquire, legal interest are included in the inventory. The CLI identifies and documents each landscape's location, size, physical development, landscape characteristics, character-defining features, and condition. Cultural landscapes have approved CLIs when concurrence with the findings is obtained from the park superintendent and all required data fields are entered into the Cultural Resources Information System (CRIS-CL) database. In addition, for landscapes not currently listed on the National Register and/or without adequate documentation, concurrence is required from the State Historic Preservation Officer, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, or the Keeper of the National Register.

Scope of the CLI

The information contained within the CLI is compiled from primary and secondary sources and through on-site surveys of the landscape. The level of investigation is dependent upon scoping the need for information. The baseline information collected provides a comprehensive look at the historical development and significance of the landscape. Documentation and analysis of the existing landscape identifies character-defining characteristics and features and allows for an evaluation of the landscape's integrity and an assessment of the landscape's condition. The CLI also includes historic maps, drawings, and images; photographs of existing conditions; and a site plan that indicates major features. The CLI documents the existing condition of park landscape resources and identifies impacts, threats, and measures to stabilize condition. This information can be used to develop strategies for improved stewardship. Unlike a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), the CLI does not provide management recommendations or treatment guidelines for the cultural landscape, but it may identify stabilization measures.

The Cultural Resources Information System (CRIS)

CRIS is the National Park Service's database of cultural resources on its lands, consisting of archeological sites, historic structures, ethnographic resources, and cultural landscapes. Cultural Resources Inventory System (CRIS) replaces three legacy inventory systems: ASMIS (archeology), CLI (cultural landscapes), and LCS (historic structures); and it reinstates the former ERI (ethnographic resources). This Cultural Landscape Inventory document reflects the information in a corresponding CRIS Cultural Landscape record.

Statutory and Regulatory Foundation

The legislative, regulatory, and policy directives for conducting and maintaining the CLI within CRIS are:

- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (16 USC 470h-2(a)(1)) Sec. 110
- Executive Order 13287: Preserve America, 2003. Sec. 3 (a and c)
- Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Federal Agency Historic Preservation Programs
- Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, 1998. Std. 2
- Cultural Resource Management Guideline, 1997, Release No. 5, page 22; issued pursuant to Director's Order #28 (DO-28)

The NHPA requires the identification, evaluation, and nomination of historic properties to the National Register of Historic Places and the maintenance and expansion of an inventory of cultural resources. DO-28 requires a cyclic assessment of the current condition of cultural landscapes based on an assessment interval, with a default of six years.

Use

Beyond fulfilling legal and policy requirements, park staff can use the Cultural Landscape Inventory in the following ways:

- To learn about park cultural landscapes (all staff)
- To inform management decisions (park managers)
- To inform project planning and development (park managers, facility managers, project managers, compliance specialists)
- To monitor the condition of the cultural landscape and take measures to protect its significance and integrity (cultural resource managers, facility managers)
- To recognize the stabilization and treatment needs of landscape features and plan work within cultural landscapes to address the needs (facility managers, cultural resource managers)
- To understand the cultural value of natural systems in a cultural landscape (natural resource managers)
- To create programming and educational materials based on site history (interpretation and education specialists)
- To recognize impacts within cultural landscapes and enforce protection measures (visitor and resources protection staff)

General Information

Property Level and CLI Numbers

Inventory Unit Name: Nelson House

Resource Classification: Component Landscape

CLI Identification Number: 975707

Parent Landscape: 300085

Inventory Status: Complete

Park Information

Park Name: Colonial National Historical Park

Alpha Code: COLO

Park Organization Code: 4290

Park District: COLO

Region: Northeast

Restricted: Yes

Landscape Description:

The Nelson House is located in Yorktown, a small unincorporated village at the lower Chesapeake Bay estuary between Williamsburg and Hampton in the Virginia Tidewater region. Also known as Historic Yorktown, the village is on the south side of the York River near the eastern end of the Colonial Parkway, a limited-access road connecting Yorktown Battlefield with Colonial Williamsburg and Jamestown. The village is a part of the Yorktown Battlefield unit of Colonial National Historical Park that also includes the units of Jamestown, Cape Henry Memorial, and the Colonial Parkway. The Yorktown Battlefield unit features a visitor center and park headquarters east of the village, across a wooded ravine historically known as Tobacco Road, adjoining the Revolutionary War battlefield.

Along Yorktown's quiet Main Street of mostly small colonial buildings, the Nelson House and its two-acre walled grounds occupy a prominent place. Initially acquired in 1706 by Thomas "Scotch Tom" Nelson, the property reflects the village's eighteenth century prosperity and its early twentieth century revival. Scotch Tom built the existing Georgian-style two-story brick house in ca.1730, and during the 1781 Siege of Yorktown, the Revolutionary War's final major battle, it was the home of Governor Thomas Nelson Jr. His descendants remained through the nineteenth century during a period of marked decline in Yorktown. In 1914, the property was purchased by wealthy industrialist George Preston Blow and renovated into a Colonial Revival-style country place known as York Hall. Charles Gillette, one of Virginia's most prominent early landscape architects, designed the grounds.

After acquiring the York Hall estate in 1968, the National Park Service restored the Nelson House to its colonial appearance in the 1970s. Due to a lack of historic documentation and desire to retain some York Hall estate features, the park did not complete a corresponding restoration of the colonial landscape. Instead, it removed features that were overtly twentieth century in character, leaving the major structures, organization, and plantings of the Colonial Revival landscape.

Today, the landscape is dominated by the Nelson House, located at the northeast corner of the grounds, and brick walls that extend along Main and Read streets. Incorporated into the perimeter wall along Read Street are two Colonial Revival-style York Hall estate outbuildings, the carriage house (garage) and Wisteria Cottage (gardener's cottage), which date to ca.1916. Lawns defined by hedges and fences surround the front and back of the house, while

a lawn terrace overlooks a formal garden dating to 1922 lined with grass paths and wood and brick edging. Lawns with scattered trees, shrubs, and hedges comprise the remainder of the property, and screen a ca.1916 stable that is part of a service area.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Pre-1706:
Prior to the arrival of Europeans in the seventeenth century, the Nelson House grounds and surrounding area were part of the homeland of the Powhatan people, who lived in numerous villages throughout the region. The site was most likely part of a hardwoods forest, although the Powhatan people may have made clearings for agriculture and to attract wildlife. Following the first permanent European settlement at nearby Jamestown in 1607, the lands of the Virginia Peninsula were granted to settlers who established plantations, primarily for the tobacco trade. In 1631, Nicholas Martiau received a patent for 1,300 acres of land on the south side of the York River, including the future Nelson House site. In 1691, the village of Yorktown was laid out on a part of Martiau's plantation, then owned by his descendants, the Read family, as eighty-five half-acre lots, with a strip of common land along the York River. The Nelson House grounds corresponded with lots 48, 49, 50, and 52 on the south side of Main Street. By 1706, no buildings were on these lots, although several houses existed nearby.

Early Nelson Period, 1706–1789:
Thomas "Scotch Tom" Nelson, a native of England, purchased lot 52 in 1706, and as stipulated in his deed, built a house there within a year. He also acquired adjoining lots 48, 49, and 50 as a place for his gardens. Scotch Tom also bought a number of other village lots, including those across Main Street, where he built stores for his mercantile business. He amassed enough wealth by the 1720s to construct a prominent brick house on lot 52 (present Nelson House), which was completed in ca.1730. Along with the new house, he maintained a number of outbuildings that enclosed a service yard on the west side of the house. These included a kitchen–wash house, servant (slave) quarters, smokehouse, spinning house, and a dairy. There may have been secondary houses on lots 48, 49, and 50 built to satisfy the same stipulations as contained in the deed for lot 52. A board fence enclosed the property along Main Street and most likely extended along the other street boundaries as well.

Upon his death in 1745, Scotch Tom left his property along Main Street, including the Nelson House, to his oldest son, William, known as President Nelson. Around this time, William built a large, 'H'-shaped brick house on the north side of Main Street (present field northwest of the Nelson House). Scotch Tom's younger son, Thomas, known as Secretary Nelson, built another large house at the east side of the village (on Zwybrucken Road near the Victory Monument). In ca.1766, William's son, Thomas Nelson Jr. (the suffix was to distinguish him from his uncle, the Secretary), moved into the old Nelson House built by Scotch Tom. Upon William Nelson's death in 1772, he left his 'H'-shaped brick house to his younger son, Hugh, and the old Nelson House to Thomas Nelson Jr.

Thomas Nelson Jr. was a prominent figure in colonial Virginia and the young United States who signed the Declaration of Independence and served as governor of Virginia in 1780–1781. It was during his ownership of the Nelson House that American patriots won the final major battle of the Revolution, the Siege of Yorktown, in 1781. This battle resulted in heavy damage to Yorktown, including destruction of the Secretary Nelson House, but relatively minor damage to the Nelson House. Thomas Nelson Jr. repaired the house and continued to live there occasionally until his death in 1789. There is little record that he made significant changes to the landscape, which may have included a boxwood hedge enclosing the front court, presumably a formal garden at the rear of the house, and domestic gardens on the lots bordering Read Street.

Late Nelson Period, 1789–1914:
The Nelson House and its four lots passed to successive generations of the Nelson family after the death of Thomas Nelson Jr. in 1789. In 1814, a widespread fire in Yorktown destroyed the William Nelson House and Nelson stores, but spared the Nelson House and its outbuildings. The Marquis de Lafayette stayed at the Nelson House during his triumphal return visit to the United States in 1824. Nelson family occupancy was briefly interrupted during the Civil War, when Confederate and Union forces occupied Yorktown and used the Nelson House as a field hospital.

Shortly after the Civil War, a brick retaining wall was built around the front court, and a tenant house was erected along Main Street on lot 48. The family subsequently made few other improvements over the course of the next five decades, and continued to use the garden and open lots (lots 48, 49, and 50) for cultivation and pasture, lined by a variety of wood and wire fences. In the yard, the servant quarters and poultry house may have been removed during or soon after the Civil War, while the others came down by 1900, except for the kitchen–wash house. In 1896,

ownership of the Nelson House passed to Mary and Elizabeth Bryan, whose stepmother, Martha Bryan, was a Nelson by her first marriage. In 1908, the Bryans sold lot 52 that included the Nelson House to R.A. Lancaster, but retained ownership of the garden lots. For much of the next six years, the house stood vacant. Only the brick foundation and massive chimney of the kitchen–wash house remained from the group of colonial outbuildings that defined the service yard. By 1914, the house was in poor condition with broken windows, peeling paint, and ivy covering much of the front.

York Hall Estate Period, 1914–1968:
In 1914, wealthy business executive and retired Navy officer George Preston Blow, a resident of LaSalle, Illinois and a native of Norfolk, Virginia, purchased lot 52 with the Nelson House as his family's country place. This became the center of an estate named York Hall that included the Nelson garden lots, the eighteenth century Smith and Ballard Houses, the lots across Main Street where the William Nelson House and Nelson stores had stood, and lots 44 and 45 on Read Street, among other nearby properties.

Greatly interested in history and preservation, Blow undertook a thorough renovation of the house according to the design of architects Griffin and Wynkoop of New York City, in which he retained much of the historic fabric and concealed modern utilities. On the outside, the only major change was the addition of dormers. Blow commissioned the architects to design three Colonial Revival-style outbuildings on the Read Street side of the Nelson garden lots, including a garage (carriage house), gardener's cottage (Wisteria Cottage), and stable. Blow also renovated the Smith House as a guest cottage and moved its entrance to face the interior of the property, and updated the Ballard House, known as Pearl Cottage, into a staff residence. A high brick wall was built around the perimeter of the old Nelson, Smith, and Ballard lots, replacing a variety of fences that existed in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

George Preston Blow carried his interest in historic preservation to the landscape surrounding the Nelson House. He retained the old overgrown boxwood hedges around the front court and rear property line, an old stone walkway at the front entrance, and a number of aged specimen trees, including a decrepit laurel tree in the front court that stood during the 1824 visit of the Marquis de Lafayette. At the rear of the Smith House, Blow retained an old boxwood allee as well as a line of linden trees along Nelson Street, then known as Pearl Street. With little else remaining, in 1915 he commissioned landscape architect Charles Gillette, of Richmond, to redesign the landscape in the Colonial Revival style. Gillette united the original Nelson property with the Smith and Ballard lots around a central open lawn framed by trees and shrubs. The lawn was crossed by stepping-stone paths that connected the buildings. He designed an entrance drive loop in the back court, and two terraces stepping down from the west side of the house where the service yard had stood.

With the overall form of the landscape complete, Blow commissioned Gillette to design a number of new features in the landscape beginning in 1921. Some of these features were completed after Blow's death in September 1922 under the oversight of his wife, Adele. The front court was redesigned into a garden with a brick patio and reflecting pool, requiring the removal of the Lafayette tree and old stone entrance walk with its entrance from Main Street, making the front court into a private garden. The Blows did, however, retain the aged boxwood hedge. Three formal flower gardens were added to the landscape, based on the design of eighteenth-century gardens at Groombridge Place in Kent, England. The largest was a foursquare garden occupying most of lot 48 west of the house that featured clipped boxwood borders, grass walks, figural sculptures, Chinese-style covered benches, piers with urns, and an antique English column at the center, with a screen of evergreen trees and mixed shrubs along the perimeter brick wall. To provide room for the garden, the slope adjacent to the house was rebuilt as a raised terrace with a brick wall and paired flight of stairs facing the garden. In 1923, after George P. Blow's death, Gillette designed two gardens between the Smith and Ballard Houses, the larger of which was a rose garden that was laid out as half of the foursquare garden and was lined by an arbor along the perimeter wall. Adjacent to the Ballard House, Gillette designed a small flower garden named the Garden of Pleasant Associations. In 1927 Mrs. Blow commissioned architect William Bottomley to redesign the west entrances of the Nelson House facing the formal garden.

Upon Adele Blow's death in September 1929, the family established the York Hall Memorial Trust to maintain the Nelson House as a museum. After five years, the four Blow children dissolved the trust and in ca.1936, George W. Blow bought out his siblings' interest in the property. For the next thirty years, he maintained York Hall as his family's permanent year-round residence. He commissioned Charles Gillette to make several minor changes to the landscape, including a tennis court built behind the stable in 1936, a small swimming pool, patio, and fireplace built adjoining the formal garden in ca.1946, and a pansy garden laid out next to the Smith House around the same time.

After George W. Blow's death in 1960 and his wife Katherine's death in 1965, York Hall passed to the couple's

children, who maintained the estate for two years despite limited resources. This led them to offer the estate to the National Park Service for incorporation into Colonial National Historical Park, established in 1930. Prior to the sale, the family removed most of the site's garden furnishings.

National Park Service Period, 1968–Present:
In 1968, the National Park Service purchased York Hall for incorporation into Colonial National Historical Park, and began planning for restoration of the estate to its colonial character. This required dividing York Hall back into its colonial parcels consisting of the Nelson House grounds, the Smith lot, the Ballard lot, and the William Nelson lots. In preparation for opening as a house museum during the national Bicentennial, the park restored the Nelson House to its colonial appearance. Restoration of the Smith and Ballard Houses as staff residences was undertaken shortly thereafter. Due to inadequate historical documentation, costs, and public interest in retaining the estate outbuildings and walls, the park service did not restore the landscape. Instead, it removed features that were overtly twentieth-century or required high maintenance, including the oval drive, flowerbeds, foundation shrubs, stepping-stone paths, swimming pool, and pool in the front court. Features that evoked a colonial character or served a contemporary park purpose were retained or replaced in-kind, including the perimeter brick wall along Main and Read Streets, boxwood hedges in the formal garden, outbuildings, and trees. The park also replaced the aged boxwood hedge around the front court. Most of this work in the landscape was completed by 1981 in time for the Bicentennial of the Siege of Yorktown. After this time, the park maintained the Nelson House grounds with few changes aside from removal and replacement of vegetation and fences, and removal of the ca.1921 top courses on the front court perimeter wall in ca.1983. South of the site, the park built a new shelter building over the Poor Potter site in 2003.

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Nelson House property lies within Yorktown Village, which includes historic resources that the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) determined as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places on September 7, 2006. The 129.50-acre historic district possesses historic significance under Criterion A for its association with the Revolutionary War and Civil War, the early historic preservation movement, commerce, and the early efforts of the National Park Service's Mission 66 program to further preserve and restore the historic site. The district is significant under Criterion B for its association with Revolutionary War General George Washington who led the American forces, General Lord Cornwallis who led the British troops during the Siege of 1781, and John D. Rockefeller whose financial support and vision led to the creation of the Colonial National Historical Park in the 1930s. The Virginia SHPO also identified the district's significant association with Governor Thomas Nelson, Jr., a signer of the Declaration of Independence who organized a Revolutionary militia. The district is significant under Criterion C as an early example of town planning in Virginia, for its collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth- century buildings, and for its association with architect/landscape architect Charles E. Peterson, a leader in the field of historic preservation. Finally, under Criterion D, the district is significant for its archeological sites and its potential to yield additional information about the village. The district's period of significance begins in 1691when the town of York was officially laid out, and extends to 1960 when various preservation and reconstruction projects were completed as part of the Mission 66 program.

On August 7, 2012, the Virginia SHPO concurred with the NPS's recommended areas and periods of significance and the contributing and non-contributing evaluation of cultural landscape features listed in the 2011 "Cultural Landscape Report for the Nelson House Grounds, Colonial National Historical Park." For the Nelson House, the landscape is significant under Criterion A for its association with the Revolutionary War and Civil War, under Criterion B for association with Governor Thomas Nelson, Jr., and under Criterion C for Georgian and Colonial Revival styles of architecture and the distinctive characteristics of Colonial Revival-style landscape architecture during the Country Place Era and specifically the Virginia garden style as practiced by Charles Gillette. The period of significance for the Nelson House landscape, as represented by existing resources, falls into three individual periods: the colonial and Revolutionary War period, ca.1730 (construction of Nelson House) to 1781 (Siege of Yorktown); the Civil War period, 1861–1865; and the York Hall estate period, 1914 (acquisition of Nelson House by George P. Blow) to 1930 (height of development of the York Hall landscape). Significant dates include 1781, the Siege of Yorktown, and 1862, the Battle of Yorktown. Except for the front court perimeter wall (ca.1870), there are no extant landscape features that date to the intervening years. Therefore, the overall period of significance for the Nelson House landscape is ca.1730-1930.

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION SUMMARY AND CONDITION

The existing character of the Nelson House grounds reflects layers of historic development and non-historic National Park Service rehabilitation. The character from the historic period of the colonial and Revolutionary War period

(ca.1730–1781) is evident in the spatial organization created by the house and its front and back courts, the architecture of the Nelson House, and the setting defined by the open-space of lots 48–50; boundary with Main, Nelson, and Read Streets; view of the York River; and setting of adjoining colonial buildings including the Smith, Ballard, Sessions, and Cole Digges Houses, and the Custom House. Circulation, vegetation, and small-scale feature characteristics from the Revolutionary War era have largely been lost. The character of the landscape remained largely unchanged through the Civil War (1861–1865), although the surrounding setting changed due to the loss of buildings, notably the William Nelson House and Nelson stores across Main Street.

From the historic period of the York Hall estate (1914-1930), the cultural landscape retains its overall spatial organization created by the house and its front and back courts, terrace, formal garden, lawn, and service area; buildings and structures including the Nelson House, three outbuildings, and the perimeter brick wall; and layout of the formal garden. Some of the circulation and vegetation characteristics of the landscape remain, especially in the formal garden. The front and back courts, and the terrace received the bulk of the National Park Service rehabilitation and thereby lost much of their historic character from the York Hall estate period.

Overall, the historic character of the landscape from the Revolutionary War period is dominant in the front and back courts. This is the result of National Park Service rehabilitation in the 1970s that removed most of the York Hall estate features from these areas. The historic character from the York Hall estate period is dominant in the terrace, formal garden, lawn, and service area, except for the south half of the service area, which is now managed as part of the Poor Potter Site.

The Nelson House grounds are overall in fair condition based on the health of the vegetation and repair of the built structures including the building exteriors, brick walls, and walks. All of the wood fences were replaced in 2008, and the outbuildings have relatively new wood shingle roofs. Limited maintenance staffing and funding during the growing season, however, has led to a poorly maintained appearance at times due to growth of weeds and inadequate pruning, especially in the formal garden and on the brick walks and service drive.

Landscape Hierarchy Description:

The Nelson House, along with the Yorktown Victory Monument, are two component landscapes of the larger Yorktown cultural landscape. The park includes seven other cultural landscapes: Colonial National Park Landscape, Cape Henry, Jamestown Island Area, Green Spring, Yorktown Battlefield (includes the Moore House component landscape), Colonial Parkway, and Yorktown National Cemetery.

Landscape Type:

Historic Designed Landscape

Historic Site

Other Names:

Other Name:	Nelson House	**Other Name Type:**	Both Current And Historic
Other Name:	York Hall	**Other Name Type:**	Historic

Site Plan



Existing conditions plan for the Nelson House, 2011.

Concurrence Information

Concurrence Status:

Park Superintendent Concurrence: Yes

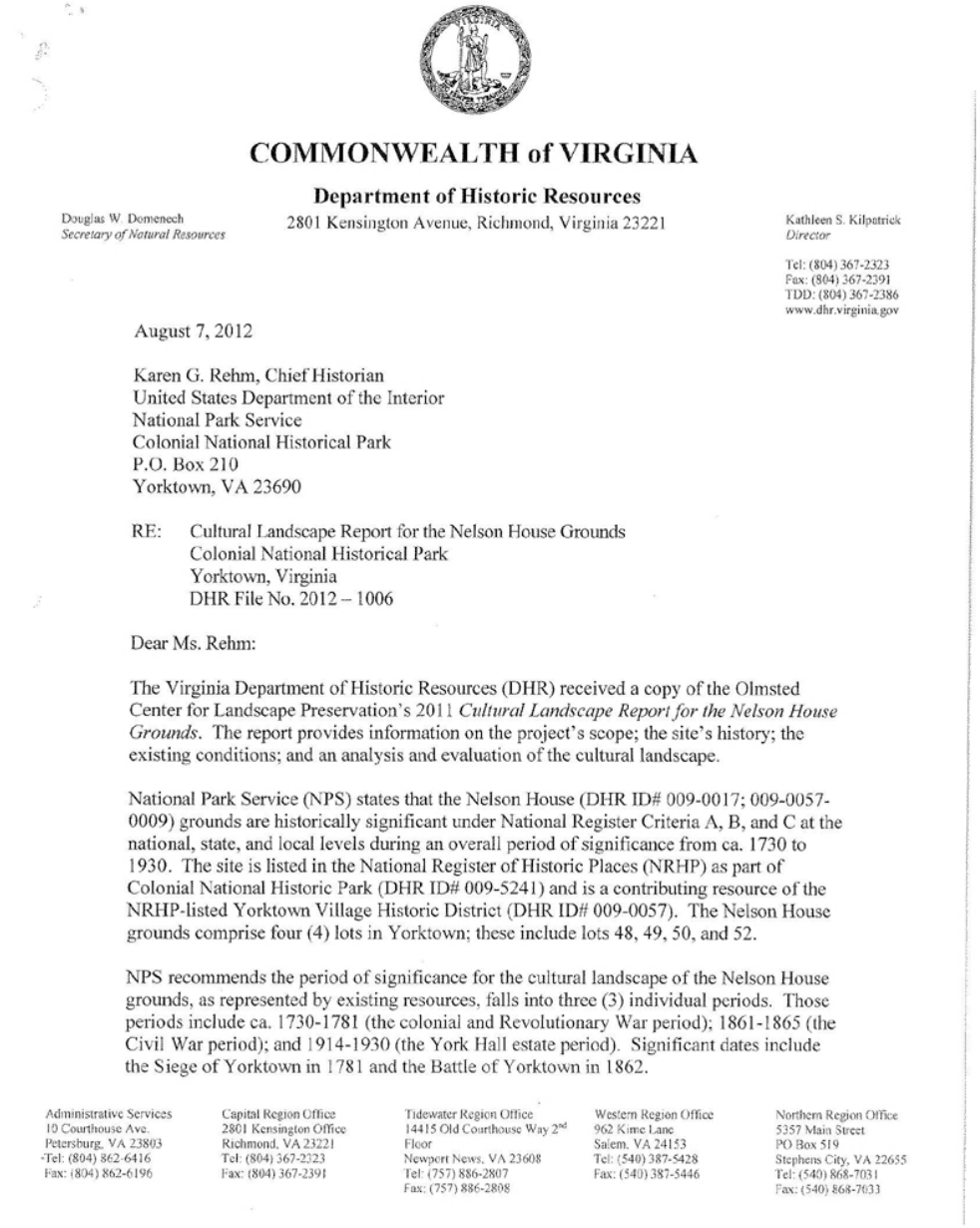
Park Superintendent Date of Concurrence: 07/24/2012

Completion Status Explanatory Narrative:

The “Cultural Landscape Report for the Nelson House Grounds” was written by Bryne D. Riley, John Auwaerter, and Paul Fritz of the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry in cooperation with the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, in 2011. Based on the findings of the Cultural Landscape Report, this CLI was developed by Christopher Beagan, Historical Landscape Architect with the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, in 2012. Colonial National Historical Park’s cultural resources contact is Karen Rehm, Chief of Interpretation, who can be reached by telephone at (757) 898-2416 or by email at karen_rehm@nps. gov.

Concurrence Graphic Information:

Attachment File Path



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Historic Resources

Douglas W. Domenech
Secretary of Natural Resources

2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221

Kathleen S. Kilpatrick
Director

Tel: (804) 367-2323
Fax: (804) 367-2391
TDD: (804) 367-2386
www.dhr.virginia.gov

August 7, 2012

Karen G. Rehm, Chief Historian
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Colonial National Historical Park
P.O. Box 210
Yorktown, VA 23690

RE: Cultural Landscape Report for the Nelson House Grounds
Colonial National Historical Park
Yorktown, Virginia
DHR File No. 2012 – 1006

Dear Ms. Rehm:

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) received a copy of the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation's 2011 *Cultural Landscape Report for the Nelson House Grounds*. The report provides information on the project's scope; the site's history; the existing conditions; and an analysis and evaluation of the cultural landscape.

National Park Service (NPS) states that the Nelson House (DHR ID# 009-0017; 009-0057-0009) grounds are historically significant under National Register Criteria A, B, and C at the national, state, and local levels during an overall period of significance from ca. 1730 to 1930. The site is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as part of Colonial National Historic Park (DHR ID# 009-5241) and is a contributing resource of the NRHP-listed Yorktown Village Historic District (DHR ID# 009-0057). The Nelson House grounds comprise four (4) lots in Yorktown; these include lots 48, 49, 50, and 52.

NPS recommends the period of significance for the cultural landscape of the Nelson House grounds, as represented by existing resources, falls into three (3) individual periods. Those periods include ca. 1730-1781 (the colonial and Revolutionary War period); 1861-1865 (the Civil War period); and 1914-1930 (the York Hall estate period). Significant dates include the Siege of Yorktown in 1781 and the Battle of Yorktown in 1862.

Administrative Services
10 Courthouse Ave.
Petersburg, VA 23803
Tel: (804) 862-6416
Fax: (804) 862-6196

Capital Region Office
2801 Kensington Office
Richmond, VA 23221
Tel: (804) 367-2223
Fax: (804) 367-2391

Tidewater Region Office
14415 Old Courthouse Way 2nd Floor
Newport News, VA 23608
Tel: (757) 886-2807
Fax: (757) 886-2808

Western Region Office
962 Kime Lane
Salem, VA 24153
Tel: (540) 387-5428
Fax: (540) 387-5446

Northern Region Office
5357 Main Street
PO Box 519
Stephens City, VA 22655
Tel: (540) 868-7031
Fax: (540) 868-7033

SHPO concurrence letter, August 7, 2012 (5 pages).

NPS recommends that all resources within the Nelson House grounds that existed during the period of significance are contributing. Table 3.2 Landscape Feature Evaluation Summary located on pages 167-169 of the report lists the cultural landscape features, their evaluation, and their historic context. The DHR concurs with NPS's recommended periods of significance for the Nelson House grounds and the contributing and non-contributing evaluation of cultural landscape features as listed in Table 3.2 (*attached*).

Thank you for offering us the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions, or if we may provide any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at (804) 482-6088; fax (804) 367-2391; e-mail ethel.eaton@dhr.virginia.gov or M. Amanda Lee at (804) 482-6092; amanda.lee@dhr.virginia.gov.

Sincerely,

Ethel R Eaton

Ethel R. Eaton, Ph.D., Senior Policy Analyst
Division of Resource Services and Review

Administrative Services
10 Courthouse Ave.
Petersburg, VA 23803
Tel: (804) 862-6416
Fax: (804) 862-6196

Capital Region Office
2801 Kensington Office
Richmond, VA 23221
Tel: (804) 367-2323
Fax: (804) 367-2391

Tidewater Region Office
14415 Old Courthouse Way 2nd Floor
Newport News, VA 23608
Tel: (757) 886-2807
Fax: (757) 886-2808

Western Region Office
962 Kime Lane
Salem, VA 24153
Tel: (540) 387-5428
Fax: (540) 387-5446

Northern Region Office
5357 Main Street
PO Box 519
Stephens City, VA 22655
Tel: (540) 868-7031
Fax: (540) 868-7033

FEATURE KEY (DRAWING 3), NAME, DATE OF ORIGIN	EVALUATION	HISTORIC CONTEXT
V-2. Front Court Tulip Tree (pre-1914, ca. 1995)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
V-3. Back Court Trees and Shrubs (pre-1968, ca. 1976)	Non-contributing	
V-4. Terrace Trees and Shrubs (ca. 1976)	Non-Contributing	
V-5. Formal Garden Boxwood Hedges (ca. 1976)	Non-Contributing	
V-6. Formal Garden Specimen Boxwoods and Rose of Sharon (ca. 1985)	Non-Contributing	
V-7. Formal Garden Herbaceous Beds (remnants, ca.1922)	Non-Contributing	
V-8. Formal Garden Perimeter Plantings (ca. 1922)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
V-9. Formal Garden South Entrance Plantings (ca. 1922)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
V-10. Formal Garden South Entrance Hedge (ca. 1946)	Non-Contributing	
V-11. Lawn Specimen Trees (ca. 1916, 1922)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
V-12. Stable Courtyard Screen (ca. 1916)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
V-13. Stable Yards Vines and Groundcover (post-1945)	Non-contributing	
Buildings and Structures		
BS-1. Nelson House (ca. 1730)	Contributing	Architecture, Revolution and Siege of 1781, Civil War
BS-2. Carriage House (Garage) (ca. 1916)	Contributing	Architecture (York Hall Estate)
BS-3. Wisteria Cottage (ca. 1916)	Contributing	Architecture (York Hall Estate)
BS-4. Stable (ca. 1916)	Contributing	Architecture (York Hall Estate)
BS-5. Front Court Retaining Wall (ca. 1870)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
BS-6. Perimeter Walls (ca. 1916)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
BS-7. Formal Garden Walls and Stairs (1922)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
BS-8. Formal Garden Perimeter Bed Walls (1922)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
BS-9. Formal Garden Tree Well (ca. 1922)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
BS-10. Serpentine Walls (ca. 1916)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
BS-11. Stable Yard Walls (ca. 1945)	Non-Contributing	
BS-12. AC Utility Screen Wall (1976)	Non-Contributing	

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES INVENTORY
CONCURRENCE FORM

Nelson House
Colonial National Historical Park

Colonial National Historical Park concurs with the findings of the Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) for Nelson House including the following specific components:

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY: Must Be Preserved and Maintained

CONDITION ASSESSMENT: Fair

Good: indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit's cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

Fair: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the character defining elements will cause the inventory unit to degrade to a poor condition.

Poor: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required to protect and preserve the remaining historical and natural values.

The Cultural Landscape Inventory for Nelson House is hereby approved and accepted.

Superintendent, Colonial National Historical Park — Date 07/24/12

Park concurrence form, July 24, 2012.

Table 3.2, Landscape Feature Evaluation Summary
NELSON HOUSE GROUNDS, HISTORIC YORKTOWN, COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

FEATURE KEY (DRAWING 3), NAME, DATE OF ORIGIN	EVALUATION	HISTORIC CONTEXT
Natural Systems and Features		
No associated features		
Spatial Organization		
SO-1. Front Court Space (ca. 1730)	Contributing	Revolution and Siege of 1781, Civil War
SO-2. Back Court Space (ca. 1730)	Contributing	Revolution and Siege of 1781
SO-3. Terrace Space (1922)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
SO-4. Formal Garden Space (1922)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
SO-5. Lawn Space (ca. 1922)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
SO-6. Stable Courtyard (ca. 1916)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
SO-7. Original Service Yard (ca. 1916)	Non-Contributing	
SO-8. Stable Yards (ca. 1945)	Non-Contributing	
Land Use		
No associated features.		
Circulation		
C-1. Front Court Landing and Walk (ca. 1976)	Non-Contributing	
C-2. Back Court Walk (ca. 1976)	Non-Contributing	
C-3. Terrace Walks (ca. 1976)	Non-Contributing	
C-4. Main Street Entrance (ca. 1922)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
C-5. Formal Garden Walks (1922)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
C-6. Forma Garden Brick Pads (ca. 1922)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
C-7. Formal Garden Circular Patio (ca. 1946)	Non-Contributing	
C-8. Carriage House Driveway (ca. 1916)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
C-9. Carriage House Side Walk and Stairs (ca. 1973)	Non-Contributing	
C-10. Service Drive (ca. 1916)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
C-11. Poor Potter Walks (2006)	Non-Contributing	
Topography		
No associated features.		
Constructed Water Features		
No associated features.		
Vegetation		
V-1. Front Court Boxwood Hedge (ca. 1730, ca. 1976)	Contributing	Civil War; Possible colonial origin

FEATURE KEY (DRAWING 3), NAME, DATE OF ORIGIN	EVALUATION	HISTORIC CONTEXT
Views and Vistas		
VV-1. York River View (ca. 1730)	Contributing	Revolution and Siege of 1781, Civil War)
VV-2. Formal Garden View (1922)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
Small-Scale Features		
SSF-1. Formal Garden Brick Edging (ca. 1922)	Contributing	Landscape Architecture (York Hall Estate)
SSF-2. Formal Garden Irrigation Fixtures (ca. 1922)	Unevaluated	
SSF-3. Cornwallis Plaque (1931)	Unevaluated	Memorialization and Preservation
SSF-4. Wood Fences (c.1976, 2009)	Non-Contributing	
SSF-5. NPS Furnishings (Benches, Signs, Picnic Tables) (ca. 1980-2010)	Non-Contributing	
SSF-6. Nelson House Floodlights (ca. 1976)	Non-Contributing	
SSF-7. AC Units (1976, ca.2000)	Non-Contributing	
Archeological Landscape Features		
A-1. Formal Garden Fireplace Base (ca. 1946)	Non-Contributing	

Cultural Landscapes Inventory
CLI Updates Certification Form
2025

Colonial National Historical Park
Green Spring
Moore House
Nelson House
Yorktown Village

Colonial National Historical Park certifies the CLI updates for Green Spring, Moore House, Nelson House, and Yorktown Village, including:

CONDITION ASSESSMENT:
Good – Green Spring
Fair – Moore House
Fair – Nelson House
Good –Yorktown Village

Good: indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit's cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

Fair: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the character defining elements, will cause the inventory unit to degrade to a poor condition.

Poor: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required to protect and preserve the remaining historical and natural values.

The CLI updates for Green Spring, Moore House, Nelson House, and Yorktown Village at Colonial National Historical Park are hereby approved and accepted.

JERRI MARR Digitally signed by JERRI MARR
Date: 2025.09.30 15:36:57 -04'00'

Superintendent, Colonial National Historical Park Date

Park concurrence form, September 30, 2025.

Revision:

Revised By	Type of Revision	Revision Date	Revision Narrative
Jeff Killion	CLI Update	09/30/2025	Three levels of effort have been developed for CLI Updates: A, B, and C. Level C is limited to a condition reassessment of the landscape; Level B includes C and is a targeted update of select data fields; Level A includes C and is a comprehensive update of all data fields. This 2025 update to the Nelson House CLI has been conducted at a Level C effort. See Landscape Documents in CRIS-CL for correspondences with park.

Geographic Information

State and County:

State	County
Virginia	York County

Size (Acres): 2

Land Tract Number(s)

Yorktown village lots 48, 49, 50, and 52

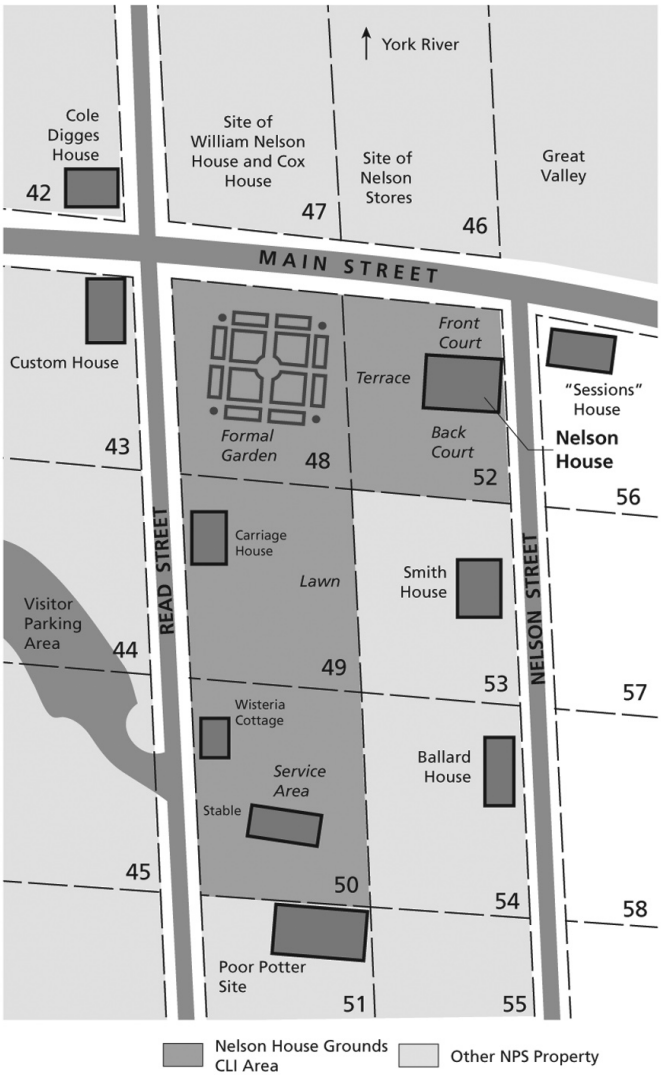
Boundary Description:

The Nelson House grounds are comprised of the two acres surrounding the Nelson House that are contained within Yorktown village lots 48, 49, 50, and 52. These lots formed the core of Thomas Nelson Jr.'s home during the colonial period through the Siege of Yorktown in 1781, an era that forms the park's interpretive period. Adjoining properties, including the Smith and Ballard Houses on lots 53 and 54, and lots 46 and 47 across Main Street historically occupied by the William Nelson House and Nelson stores, are addressed to the extent they inform the history, setting, and management of the Nelson House grounds. These and other lots were part of the Blow family's York Hall estate during the twentieth century. The property is bounded by Read Street to the west, Main Street to the north, Nelson Street to the east, and lots 51, 53, and 54 to the south.

Boundary Coordinates

Source	Type of Point	Latitude	Longitude	Narrative
	Area	2.8383469159291	105.971603697123	
	Area	2.8378773254734	105.972007444021	
	Area	2.8372239138433	105.971051675384	
	Area	2.8367554443137	105.994030197226	
	Area	2.8378929494691	105.971489518207	
	Area	2.8381165931919	105.971271835099	

Location Map:



Map of the Nelson House grounds area showing adjoining Yorktown lots and NPS property (SUNY ESF).



Aerial photograph of Yorktown showing the setting of the Nelson House property (outlined in red) and its relationship to surrounding sites (Commonwealth of VA, 2010, annotated by SUNY ESF and OCLP).

Regional Landscape Contexts:

Type of Context: Physiographic

Description:

The Nelson House is located in Yorktown, a small unincorporated village at the lower Chesapeake Bay estuary between Williamsburg and Hampton in the Virginia Tidewater region. Located along the York River, the village's location makes it a strategic location for control of upstream portions of the York River and its tributaries, as well as the greater Chesapeake Bay to the north. The high banks of the river near Yorktown make easy access for large vessels. Yorktown area topography, classified as Coastal Plains Uplands, is gently sloping with some steep ravines. Predominately clayey soils, classified as Emporia-Bohicket-Slage soil series, dominate Yorktown (see Regional Landscape Context graphic).

Type of Context: Cultural

Description:

Yorktown is laid out in a grid of half-acre lots aligned along Main Street, with detached houses, house museums, commercial buildings, and civic buildings. To the south of Main Street are single-family houses dating from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries, where most of Yorktown's residents live. North of Main Street, the side streets descend to Water Street and the York River, where there is a long public beach, retail businesses, piers, and a recently developed commercial area, Riverwalk Landing, with shops and restaurants.

Although the area surrounding the village retains a largely rural setting consisting of fields and woods, suburban development occupies a large part of the county. Much of the county's growth has been from the region's military and tourism economy that includes the so-called Historic Triangle comprised of Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Yorktown, and the Naval Weapons Station Yorktown, which stretches almost fourteen miles along the York River to the north and west of Yorktown.

Type of Context: Political

Description:

Yorktown is the county seat of York, one of the eight original shires formed in colonial Virginia. The Nelson House is located within the Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News metropolitan area, which also includes the cities of Williamsburg and Hampton. As of 2010, the population of Yorktown was 195, and York County, 65,464. Nearly three quarters of York County were classified as urban in 1990, with a relatively affluent population. The region's economy is diverse. Defense-related jobs and other federal expenditures provide a solid economic base. Tourism-related industries are also primary employers.

Management Information

General Management Information

Management Category: Must be Preserved and Maintained

Management Category Date: 07/24/2012

Management Category Explanatory Narrative:

The Nelson House meets the criteria of the management category “Must Be Preserved and Maintained” because the site is related to the park’s legislated significance. In the enabling legislation of July 3, 1930, the park was established under the name Colonial National Monument “for the preservation of the historical structures and remains thereon and for the benefit and enjoyment of the people, sufficient of the areas of Jamestown Island, parts of the city of Williamsburg, and the Yorktown battlefield, all in the State of Virginia,” The Nelson House is within the original park boundaries set out in 1930, and was acquired in 1968 (http://www. nps. gov/legal/parklaws/PROCLAMATIONS_1946. pdf).

Management Agreements:

Legal Interests:

Type of Interest: Fee Simple

Narrative:

Located in managed wilderness?: Unknown

Adjacent Lands Information

Do Adjacent Lands Contribute? Yes

Adjacent Lands Narrative:

Adjacent lands are those lands outside of park property. The village of Yorktown serves as the setting for the Nelson House property, which occupies four lots in the village. The Nelson House property is adjoined by National Park Service property on the north, west and south sides, while portions of the east side abut private land (Yorktown village lot 56). The extension of the village grid, and associated privately owned residences, contribute to the setting of the Nelson House.

National Register Information

National Register of Historic Places

Documentation Status: SHPO/THPO - Documented

Documentation Narrative Description:

Colonial National Monument was authorized on July 3, 1930, established on December 30, 1930, and redesignated Colonial National Historical Park on June 5, 1936. With the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, all property within Colonial National Historical Park was administratively listed in the National Register of Historic Places. When it was acquired by the National Park Service in 1968, the Nelson House property (lots 48-50, 52) was also administratively listed in the National Register. The listing in the NRIS database identifies significance for the park as a whole in the areas of military and maritime history, architecture, engineering, and archeology, but no comprehensive park-wide documentation has been completed to date.

In 1973, the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission prepared a draft National Register nomination for the Yorktown Historic District that encompassed both private and National Park Service properties within Yorktown, including the Nelson House. The areas of significance were identified as architecture, commerce, military, and other (history) for the eighteenth century (no specific dates given). The nomination was forwarded to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (SHPO) and was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register on April 17, 1973. However, the district was not listed on the National Register. Since that time, three private properties within the district—the "Sessions: House (Sessions-Pope-Shield House), Old Customs House, and Grace Episcopal Church—have been individually listed in the National Register. In 2004, the York County zoning ordinance was amended to include the larger Yorktown Historic District to protect the historic and architectural character of the entire village.

On September 7, 2006, the Virginia SHPO concurred with the National Park Service on the eligibility of individual park resources for listing in the National Register, through the Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) for the 129-acre Yorktown Village. For the Nelson House property, resources included the Nelson House, Carriage House, Stables, Wisteria Cottage, Garden Wall, Formal Garden Walls, Fences, and the Lord Cornwallis Tablet. Additional resources included the formal garden; lawns, trees, and shrubs surrounding the Nelson House; and views down Main, Nelson, and Read streets. The Virginia SHPO also concurred with the period of significance for Yorktown Village—1691 to 1960—and areas of national significance under Criterion A (association with the Revolutionary War, Civil War, commerce, and historic preservation efforts during the 1930s and 1950s); Criterion B (association with General George Washington, General Lord Cornwallis, and John D. Rockefeller); Criterion C (early example of town planning in Virginia and the collection of 18th and 19th-century buildings); and Criterion D (information potential). In their concurrence letter, the SHPO recommended adding Thomas Nelson to the list of important persons associated with the village.

In a letter dated August 7, 2012, the SHPO provided review comments on the 2011 "Cultural Landscape Report for the Nelson House Grounds, Colonial National Historical Park" and concurred with the NPS's recommended areas and periods of significance and the contributing and non-contributing evaluation of cultural landscape features listed in the report (Table 3.2 of the CLR). The letter summarized the findings of the CLR, stating that the Nelson House grounds were historically significant under National Register Criteria A, B, and C at the national, state, and local levels. The overall period of significance was ca.1730 to 1930, encompassing three individual periods: ca.1730-1781 (the colonial and Revolutionary War period); 1861-1865 (the Civil War period); and 1914-1930 (the York Hall estate period). Significant dates included the Siege of Yorktown in 1781 and the Battle of Yorktown in 1862. The letter also noted that the site was listed in the National Register as part of Colonial National Historic Park and was a contributing resource of the Yorktown Village Historic District.

According to research conducted for this CLI and the categories of National Register documentation outlined in the "CLI Professional Procedures Guide," the areas and periods of significance for the Nelson House have been adequately documented in previous consultations with the Virginia SHPO. The existing documentation adequately describes the site's numerous historic resources that contribute to its significance. Therefore, for purposes of the CLI, the Nelson House is considered "SHPO-Documented."

Eligibility: Eligible - SHPO/THPO Consensus Determination

Concurrence Eligibility Date: 08/07/2012

Concurrence Narrative:

Significance Level: National

Contributing: Contributing

Classification: District

Statement of Significance for National Register of Historic Places:

The Nelson House property lies within Yorktown Village, which includes historic resources that the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) determined as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places on September 7, 2006. The 129.50-acre historic district possesses historic significance under Criterion A for its association with the Revolutionary War and Civil War, the early historic preservation movement, commerce, and the early efforts of the National Park Service's Mission 66 program to further preserve and restore the historic site. The district is significant under Criterion B for its association with Revolutionary War General George Washington who led the American forces, General Lord Cornwallis who led the British troops during the Siege of 1781, and John D. Rockefeller whose financial support and vision led to the creation of the Colonial National Historical Park in the 1930s. The Virginia SHPO also identified the district's significant association with Governor Thomas Nelson, Jr., a signer of the Declaration of Independence who organized a Revolutionary militia. The district is significant under Criterion C as an early example of town planning in Virginia, for its collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth- century buildings, and for its association with architect/landscape architect Charles E. Peterson, a leader in the field of historic preservation. Finally, under Criterion D, the district is significant for its archeological sites and its potential to yield additional information about the village. The district's period of significance begins in 1691 when the town of York was officially laid out, and extends to 1960 when various preservation and reconstruction projects were completed as part of the Mission 66 program.

For the Nelson House, the landscape is significant under Criterion A for its association with the Revolutionary War and Civil War, under Criterion B for association with Governor Thomas Nelson, Jr., and under Criterion C for Georgian and Colonial Revival styles of architecture and the distinctive characteristics of Colonial Revival-style landscape architecture during the Country Place Era and specifically the Virginia garden style as practiced by Charles Gillette. The period of significance for the Nelson House landscape, as represented by existing resources, falls into three individual periods: the colonial and Revolutionary War period, ca.1730 (construction of Nelson House) to 1781 (Siege of Yorktown); the Civil War period, 1861–1865; and the York Hall estate period, 1914 (acquisition of Nelson House by George P. Blow) to 1930 (height of development of the York Hall landscape). Significant dates include 1781, the Siege of Yorktown, and 1862, the Battle of Yorktown. Except for the front court perimeter wall (ca.1870), there are no extant landscape features that date to the intervening years. Therefore, the overall period of significance for the Nelson House landscape is ca.1730-1930.

The following text is excerpted from the 2011 "Cultural Landscape Report for the Nelson House Grounds," pages 121-125. It is intended to inform National Register documentation for the entire Colonial National Historical Park that is now being planned.

CRITERION A

American Revolution and the Siege of 1781 (1776–1781):
The Nelson House grounds are primarily significant at the national level under National Register Criterion A for association with the American Revolution and the Siege of Yorktown (September–October 1781), the last major battle of the war prior to British surrender of Yorktown Battlefield. The two-acre, four-lot landscape was a prominent part of the village during the Revolution and was depicted in war-period paintings and maps. The Nelson House was shelled during the war.

The Nelson House grounds reflect their significance associated with the American Revolution and Siege of 1781 through the Nelson House and the four lots that were historically associated with it. Except for the loss of a cluster of outbuildings on the west side of the house and the addition of a brick perimeter wall, the grounds maintain a setting similar to what existed during the Revolution. The grounds retain much of their open space on lots 48, 49, and 50, as well as their historic orientation to Main Street and perimeter along two cross streets known today as Read and Nelson Streets.

Civil War (1861–1865):
The Nelson House grounds are nationally significant under National Register Criterion A for their association with the Civil War, when Yorktown was occupied by both Confederate and Union armies and was the scene of the Battle of Yorktown, April 5 to May 4, 1862. The Nelson House was utilized by both armies as a hospital. The landscape retains the Nelson House and four-lot site that existed during the Civil War, but has lost the outbuildings that stood west of the house. The boxwood hedge in the front court that existing during the Civil War remains, but the individual plants have been replaced.

CRITERION B

Governor Thomas Nelson, Jr. (1767–1781):
The Nelson House grounds are nationally significant under National Register Criterion B for association with Governor Thomas Nelson, Jr. He was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, organized a Revolutionary militia, was a member of the Continental Congress, and served as the third governor of Virginia, succeeding Thomas Jefferson in 1781. The property was the primary family home of Governor Nelson, the grandson of the builder, Thomas “Scotch Tom” Nelson, from 1767 until before the British occupation of the town during the Siege of 1781, when the family relocated to one of the their plantations in Hanover County named Offley Hoo. After the siege, Governor Nelson probably lived only intermittently at Yorktown.

CRITERION C

Architecture (ca.1730, ca.1916):
The Nelson House grounds are significant at the state and local levels under National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture for the Nelson House (built ca.1730) as a distinguished example of Georgian-style colonial architecture, and for the three York Hall estate outbuildings (carriage house, Wisteria Cottage, and stable built ca.1916) as representative examples of early twentieth-century Colonial Revival-style architecture.

Landscape Architecture (1916–1930):
The Nelson House grounds, redeveloped as a country estate known as York Hall in the early twentieth century, are significant at the state and local levels under National Register Criterion C for embodying the distinctive characteristics of Colonial Revival landscape design during the Country Place Era. This was the period between 1880 and 1930 when the design of large country estates dominated the American landscape architecture profession. Spurred by the national centennial in 1876, the Colonial Revival was a movement that looked for inspiration to the colonial and early Federal periods in American design. In landscape architecture, the Colonial Revival is a broad term that reflects a number of influences, including neoclassical styles popularized during the 1892 Chicago World’s Fair; old-fashioned cottage gardens interpreted by Arts & Crafts designers such as Gertrude Jekyll in Britain and Ellen Shipman in the United States; and academic approaches to landscape restoration undertaken at Mount Vernon in the 1910s and at Colonial Williamsburg beginning in the 1920s.

The Nelson House grounds are the work of Charles Gillette (1886–1969), a Fellow of the Society of American Landscape Architects (elected in 1933) and among the foremost landscape architects in Virginia between the 1910s and 1960s. He was a student of Warren Manning (1860-1938), one of America’s pioneering landscape architects who began his career under Frederick Law Olmsted and is best known for designing country estates, college campuses, and park and open-space systems in many American cities. In his own work, Charles Gillette became widely known as the interpreter of Southern gardens and developer of the so-called Virginia Garden style, as well as a garden restoration expert. He worked on the restoration of the colonial gardens at Kenmore in Fredericksburg beginning in the late 1920s and the

Victorian gardens at the birthplace of Woodrow Wilson in Staunton, Virginia, in the 1930s.

Gillette adopted the integration of natural and formal styles favored in the Manning office, but also drew heavily on eighteenth-century English and colonial American precedent. His designs were noted for their classical design, attention to detail, and use of informal herbaceous plantings based upon study of English and European Beaux-Arts gardens. Axial walks, brick walls, boxwood borders, and garden ornamentation including sculpture, piers, urns, and shelters were also characteristic of Gillette's work.

In 1914, wealthy industrialist George Preston Blow acquired lot 52 with the Nelson House as the first parcel in his country place named York Hall (a name also used by the Nelson family as early as the 1870s). Beginning in 1916, Blow commissioned Charles Gillette to redesign and improve the grounds. The York Hall estate was one of Gillette's first independent commissions following his arrival in Richmond in 1913, where he would practice for the next five decades.

The wealthy Blows, owners of the Western Clock Company (Westclox) and other industries in LaSalle, Illinois, were typical of Gillette's early clientele. Working around the main house and five outbuildings built or designed by the New York architectural firm of Griffin and Wynkoop, Gillette planned a landscape of formal and informal elements that, after several years of evolution, were organized around a central lawn in the middle of the property that incorporated the adjoining Smith and Ballard lots. The landscape was largely focused inward away from the streets, with tall brick walls and buildings lining the perimeter. Reflecting Blow's interest in historic preservation, Gillette retained an old stone walk to the front of the Nelson House, an old boxwood hedge around the front court, and aged trees including a laurel in the front court that purportedly existed during a visit by the Marquis de Lafayette in 1824. Gillette employed materials used locally during the colonial period, including red brick and marl (a marine sediment composed of clay and calcium carbonate) for the walks and drives. He designed an oval entrance drive at the back court of the house off Nelson Street, and a service drive at the south end of the property. The house retained views of the York River to the north across open lawn (outside of project area).

In 1922, Gillette designed a Colonial Revival quincunx-plan formal garden at the northwest corner of the property that he modeled after seventeenth-century gardens at Groombridge Place in Kent, England. The garden featured grass walks edged by brick, and herbaceous beds bordered by clipped dwarf boxwood hedges and accented by groups of yews in the centers. Around the perimeter of the garden were trees and shrubs that, together with the perimeter brick wall, sheltered the garden from the outside. The garden was outfitted with an antique English sundial column at the center, statuary, and Chinese-style roofed benches. A double flight of brick steps led from the adjoining terrace next to the house, with the east entrance on axis with the garden's central walk. To the south, the formal garden opened onto the lawn, which was designed in the informal style of English landscape gardens, with irregular beds of groundcover, winding walks, and scattered specimen trees.

Charles Gillette continued to provide design services for the second generation of the Blow family into the 1960s, well after the end of the Country Place Era. The last major new additions to the York Hall landscape occurred during the mid-1930s and shortly after World War II, when George W. Blow had Gillette design several new features within the Nelson House grounds, including a tennis court, small circular brick patio in the formal garden, and a swimming pool. Gillette most likely also made other changes to the plantings at York Hall in the two decades after the war, but little record of these remains. These post-1930 features, most of which no longer exist, are not significant because they represented a marked change in use toward active recreation and outdoor living after the end of the Country Place Era. Although designed by Gillette, they were discreet additions and were not part of an overall design for the landscape.

Between the park service acquisition of the Nelson House grounds in 1968 and completion of rehabilitation work in ca.1980, several major elements of the York Hall landscape were removed, including walks, the front court garden, and the oval entrance drive in the back court. However, the buildings, perimeter walls, terrace, formal garden, service area, and overall organization of landscape were retained. The park built a fence along the colonial boundary at the Smith and Ballard lots, but the overall space of the lawn remained intact. The formal garden lost all of its furnishings and most of its herbaceous plantings, but retained the perimeter shrubs and trees, layout of the beds, and walks. While overall the Nelson House grounds do not have the character of an early twentieth-century country place, the formal garden, terrace, lawn, service

yard, and perimeter wall and outbuildings retain integrity to convey their significance as an example of Colonial Revival landscape design during the Country Place Era.

FUTURE AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE

Memorialization and Preservation (1931):
The Nelson House grounds contain a single object related to the context of Memorialization and Preservation, as documented in the Yorktown Cultural Landscape Inventory: the Cornwallis plaque installed in 1931 by the Virginia Yorktown Sesquicentennial Commission and now located in the formal garden. The plaque was moved from its original location on the east side of the Nelson House in ca.1976. Further research is needed to evaluate the plaque's significance in the context of preservation and memorialization in Yorktown, including the effect of relocation on its integrity.

The Nelson House grounds do not otherwise appear significant within the context of Memorialization and Preservation as documented in the "Cultural Landscape Inventory for Yorktown" for either the Gillette-designed alterations (ca.1916–1930) or for the park-service rehabilitation (ca.1974–1980). The Gillette design was not an attempt to restore or recreate the colonial landscape of the Nelson House, although George P. Blow did preserve several aged features in the landscape. The park rehabilitation occurred after the documented period of significance for this context. The park simplified the York Hall landscape through removal of gardens, walks, pools, and furnishings, and added new brick walks and fences. As part of a largely subtractive rehabilitation of an existing landscape, these features do not appear to be significant under other contexts pertaining to park planning, historic preservation, or landscape design.

National Register Significance Criteria:

Significance Criteria A - Associated with events significant to broad patterns of our history

Significance Criteria B - Associated with lives of persons significant in our past

Significance Criteria C - Embodies distinctive construction, work of master, or high artistic values

Area of Significance:

Area of Significance Category: Military

Area of Significance Subcategory:

Explanatory Narrative:

Area of Significance Category: Architecture

Area of Significance Subcategory:

Explanatory Narrative:

Area of Significance Category: Landscape Architecture

Area of Significance Subcategory:

Explanatory Narrative:

National Register Criteria Consideration:

National Register Periods of Significance (with Historic Context Themes):

Time Period: CE 1730 - CE 1930

Historic Context Theme	Subtheme	Facet	Other Facet
Expressing Cultural Values	Architecture	Georgian (1730-1780)	
Expressing Cultural Values	Architecture	Period Revivals (1870-1940)	
Expressing Cultural Values	Landscape Architecture	Colonial Revival Landscape Design	
Shaping the Political Landscape	The American Revolution	War in the South	
Shaping the Political Landscape	The Civil War	Battles In The North And South	

NRIS Information:

NRIS ID:	66000839
Primary Certification Date:	10/16/1966

State Register Documentation:

Identification Number:	099-0057
Name:	Yorktown Historic District (within Colonial National Historical Park)
Listed Date:	04/17/1973

National Historic Landmarks:

National Historic Landmark? No

Theme:

Contributing:

NHL ID:

NHL URL:

Date:

Statement of Significance for National Historic Landmark:

World Heritage Site:

World Heritage Site? No

Category:

WHS ID:

WHS URL:

Date:

Is Resource within a designated National Natural Landscape: No

Chronology and Physical History

Chronology:

Year	Event	Major Event Narrative
BCE 700	Settled	Village sites are located along the floodplain of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.
CE 1607	Established	The first permanent English Colony founded at Jamestown, Virginia. Captain John Smith explores the region, identifying an Indian village, Kiskiack, near Yorktown. Tribes in the region are primarily affiliated with the Chiefdom of the Powhatan.
CE 1631	Settled	Captain Nicholas Martiau becomes the first settler in the present area of Yorktown, receiving a patent for 1,300 acres on the south side of the York River.
CE 1634	Established	York County established as one of the eight original shires of Virginia.
CE 1691	Established	The town of York (later renamed Yorktown) is establishes under the Port Act of 1691, which specified the size of towns at fifty acres, and each lot at a half-acre. Each lot purchaser is required to begin construction of one house, to contain “twenty foot square at the least” within a year.
CE 1705	Settled	Thomas “Scotch Tom” Nelson immigrates to Virginia and settles at Yorktown.
CE 1706	Land Transfer	Scotch Tom buys lot 52 from the Yorktown Trustees after forfeiture by James Darbishire and builds a house within a year.
CE 1706 - 1730	Built	Scotch Tom constructs a terraced landscape with a stone retaining wall and steps on lot 52.
CE 1707	Land Transfer	Scotch Tom acquires lot 48 and presumably builds a house there within a year. Lot 50 acquired by John Dunbar.
CE 1709	Land Transfer	Lot 50 acquired by Edward Powers, who presumably builds a house there within a year.
CE 1712	Land Transfer	Scotch Tom acquires lot 49 and presumably builds a house there within a year.
CE 1715	Land Transfer	Scotch Tom acquires lot 50, presumably containing a house built by Edward Powers.
CE 1730	Built	Around this time, Scotch Tom constructs his second home located on lot 52, the present Nelson House. A complex of service buildings is developed on the west side of the house, including a kitchen–washhouse, servants’ quarters, dairy, spinning house, and smoke house. Lots 48, 49, and 50 reserved primarily for domestic gardens.
CE 1738	Planted	Scotch Tom is growing green/white cucumbers in his garden.
CE 1745	Land Transfer	Scotch Tom Nelson dies and leaves the Nelson House to his son, William, subject to the life estate of his widow, Frances.
CE 1766	Land Transfer	Thomas Nelson, Jr., the grandson of Scotch Tom, is given use of the Nelson House by his father, William.

Year	Event	Major Event Narrative
CE 1772	Land Transfer	William Nelson dies and leaves the Nelson House to Thomas Nelson, Jr.
CE 1781	Damaged	Siege of Yorktown; the Nelson House is damaged. British surrender to Allied American and French forces.
CE 1830	Land Transfer	Thomas Nelson (William Nelson's eldest son) dies around this time; Nelson House and grounds transfer to William Jr. (William's second son). By this date, the Nelson spinning house is reused or rebuilt as the "lower dairy."
CE 1848	Land Transfer	William Nelson Jr. dies, leaving the house and grounds to his son William with life estate to his widow Martha.
CE 1853	Altered	By this date, the Nelson smoke house is reused or rebuilt as a lumber house.
CE 1855	Inhabited	Around this time, Martha Nelson marries George W. Bryan, a middling farmer of York County who has at least four children of his own. The combined family lives in the Nelson House.
CE 1861 - 1865	Built	The Civil War; Confederate Army constructs earthworks in Yorktown.
CE 1862	Inhabited	Peninsular Campaign; the Confederate Army uses the Nelson House as a hospital. The Union Army later occupies Yorktown, continues use of the Nelson House as a hospital.
CE 1870	Built	Around this time, a brick retaining wall is built around the front court of the Nelson House, along with a two-story frame house (tenant House) on lot 48 facing Main Street.
CE 1877	Land Transfer	William Nelson dies in St. Louis, leaving the Nelson House and the four lots to his sister, Kate.
CE 1890	Inhabited	Around this time, Kate Nelson dies, leaving the house and grounds to her Bryan sisters who rent out the Nelson House.
CE 1893 - 1898	Inhabited	The Cruikshank family rents the Nelson House from the Bryans.
CE 1900	Demolished	All outbuildings in the yard, except for the kitchen–washhouse, and the tenant house on lot 48 are removed by this time.
CE 1908	Land Transfer	The Bryan sisters sell the Nelson House to R.A. Lancaster of Richmond, Virginia; sisters retain title to the Nelson garden and open lots (lots 48–50).
CE 1910	Destroyed	Around this time, the kitchen–washhouse burns, leaving ruins of the brick chimney and foundation.
CE 1914	Land Transfer	George Preston Blow acquires lot 52 including the Nelson House from R.A. Lancaster as the core of his planned York Hall country estate. Blow hires Griffin & Wynkoop Architects to renovate the Nelson House.

Year	Event	Major Event Narrative
CE 1915	Designed	George P. Blow acquires lot 48, 49, and 50 from the Bryan sisters; construction of outbuildings and perimeter wall begins. Blow hires Charles Gillette to design the grounds of the Nelson House. Initial landscape features built between now and 1920 include the oval entrance drive, sloped grass terrace, stepping stone paths, marl walks, serpentine brick stable walls, and border and foundation plantings; front court landscape with aged boxwood hedge is kept intact.
CE 1916	Built	Stable, garage (carriage house), and gardener's house (Wisteria Cottage) are completed.
CE 1921	Designed	Charles Gillette redesigns the front court into a formal garden with a pool.
CE 1922	Built	Construction of the terrace, formal garden, and lawn.
CE 1923	Built	The gardens around the Smith and Ballard Houses are constructed.
CE 1930	Established	Colonial National Monument is established; the Nelson House and gardens are opened to the public as a museum and managed by a trust held by the Blow children.
CE 1931	Memorialized	General Lord Cornwallis bronze plaque dedicated and installed on the eastern façade of the Nelson House during the Sesquicentennial of the Siege of Yorktown.
CE 1935	Inhabited	The Blow children dissolve the trust and cease operation of Nelson House as a museum; George W. Blow buys out his sibling's interests in the York Hall estate and maintains it as a year-round residence. A garage is built for Mrs. Blow in the back court off Nelson Street.
CE 1936	Built	A tennis court is built in the original service yard south of the stable according to plans by Charles Gillette. Colonial National Monument is redesignated Colonial National Historical Park.
CE 1945	Built	Around this time, brick walls are built to enclose small service yards to either side of the stable.
CE 1946	Built	A swimming pool and patio are constructed along the south side of the formal garden; artist Pierre Bourdelle paints murals on inside walls of the pool.
CE 1967	Established	Congress amends the 1931 appropriation fund for Colonial National Historical Park to enable acquisition of the York Hall estate.
CE 1968	Land Transfer	By this time, the Blow family removes garden statuary, urns, vases, sundial, and other furnishings from the York Hall estate; Charles Gillette correspondence with the Blow family ends. The National Park Service purchases the York Hall estate from the Blow family on September 24.
CE 1968 - 1975	Demolished	During this time, the National Park Service removes the front court garden with the old boxwood hedge, oval entrance drive, Mrs. Blow's garage, stepping stone paths, swimming pool and patio, and tennis court.
CE 1973	Rehabilitated	Garage (carriage house) is remodeled by the National Park Service as a ranger station.

Year	Event	Major Event Narrative
CE 1973 - 1974	Excavated	Archaeological and architectural studies are undertaken on the Nelson House and terrace.
CE 1974 - 1976	Rehabilitated	Restoration and rehabilitation of the Nelson House, and front and back courts; planting of new boxwood hedges in formal garden; addition of fences along colonial boundaries with Smith and Ballard Houses; relocation of Cornwallis plaque to the formal garden.
CE 1985	Planted	Around this time, rose of sharon shrubs are planted in the center formal garden beds, where groups of yews existed during the Blow period.
CE 2006	Built	New walks are built south of the stable to connect with the new shelter for the Poor Potter Site.
CE 2009	Reconstructed	Wood fences on the grounds are replaced.

Physical History:

The following section provides information on the physical development and evolution of the site, organized by time periods. Graphics associated with this section are located at the end of this report. The following narrative has been extracted from the 2011 “Cultural Landscape Report for the Nelson House Grounds.”

The five historic periods of the Nelson House grounds include the years prior to settlement by the Nelson family in 1706; the early period of Nelson ownership from 1706 until Thomas Nelson Jr. ’s death in 1789; the late period of Nelson ownership to 1914 (including ownership by the Bryan family and R.A. Lancaster); Blow family ownership from 1914 through 1967; and the period of National Park Service ownership from 1968 until the present.

Overall, available documentation provides rich detail on the development of the Nelson House grounds as the York Hall estate during the early twentieth century, but relatively little on the character of the landscape during the colonial period through the Siege of Yorktown in 1781. While photographs and accounts from the nineteenth century and more recent archeological investigations provide documentation on a number of eighteenth-century features, many details of the colonial landscape of the Nelson House grounds remain unknown.

BEFORE THE NELSONS, PRE-1706

The natural setting of the Nelson House grounds prior to European settlement, consisting of plains, rivers, and bays, was shaped largely in the post-glacial period beginning around 12,000 years ago. Meltwaters deposited sediments across a vast area, creating a coastal plain known as the Tidewater. A widely branching network of river channels were flooded as melting glaciers raised sea levels, creating the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries, including the York River. These waterways divided the Virginia Tidewater into four major peninsulas, with Yorktown on the so-called Virginia Peninsula defined by the York River on the north and James River on the south. The landscape was initially dominated by conifers, but with warming transitioned to a mix of hardwood species that included oak, cypress, maple, and hickory. (Egloff and Woodward, 2006: 44–45)

Humans arrived in this moderating environment and initially lived by hunting and gathering in nomadic tribes. At the time of European contact in the sixteenth century, the region was the home of the Powhatan Chiefdom, a large alliance of Algonquian-speaking people with a population of between 14,000 and 21,000. Most lived in an estimated 150 villages clustered along the rivers. The Virginia Peninsula, between the Powhatan (James River) and Pamunkey (York River), was the homeland of the Kiskiak (also spelled Chiskiak) people, one of the over 32 Powhatan sub-chiefdoms. (Egloff and Woodward, 2006: 44–45)

The first permanent European settlement at Jamestown in 1607 led to a mostly hostile relationship with the Powhatan over competition for land and resources, and introduced diseases to which the Powhatan had no natural resistance. Eventually, the determination of the colonists to stay forced the weakened Powhatan Chiefdom to reach a peace agreement with the colonists and seek protection from outlying tribes. The Powhatan, however, continued to weaken and lost control of all of their Tidewater lands to the Virginia colonists by 1677, when they succumbed to a treaty that required forfeiture of their lands along the coast and relocation to small inland reservations. (Grumet, 2002)

With this relocation, colonial settlements increased and the landscape was transformed with the development of large-scale agriculture based on the tobacco trade and slave labor. Tobacco led to amassing of great wealth in vast farms known as plantations that were served by port villages established along the rivers through the Act for Ports of 1691. One of these ports was York (later Yorktown), acquired by the Virginia colony from a 1,300-acre plantation patented by Nicolas Martiau 60 years earlier. The Yorktown village tract was laid out on a protected bluff above the York River in a prime site for commerce, at the farthest point upriver for deep-water navigation, yet easily accessible from the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean. As surveyed, the village was approximately one-half mile east to west and consisted of 85 half-acre lots laid out in a grid on the top of the bluff, parallel to the river, and the shoreline was initially reserved as public space for commercial use (Figure 1). Sale of each lot required the owner to construct a building upon it within one year. If the owner did not build, the lot was forfeited back to the town. (Riley, 1948: 10)

Yorktown's earliest development included residential, commercial, and civic buildings. Many of the village lots remained undeveloped at the turn of the eighteenth century, including the future site of the Nelson House grounds that comprised lots 48, 49, 50, and 52. Village trustees first conveyed Lot 52, the lot that would later contain the Nelson House, to James Darbishire in July 1699. He failed to build on the lot in the required one-year timeframe and ultimately forfeited his title back to the village. None of the other three lots had been built upon by 1705. (Hatch, 1969: 61–64)

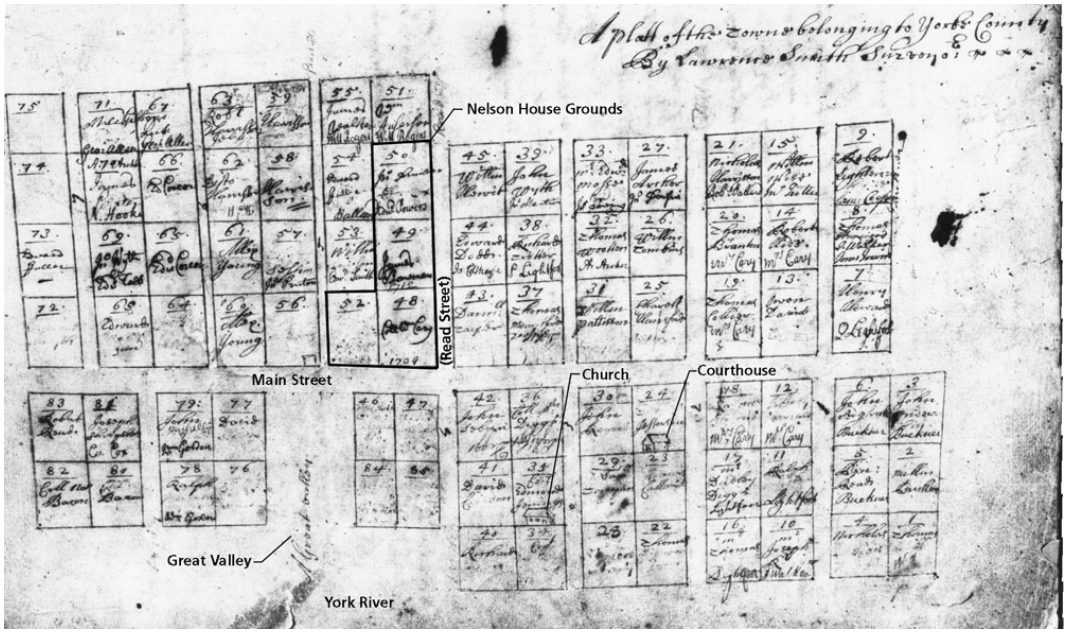


Figure 1. A ca. 1705 plat of Yorktown by Lawrence Smith, showing the 1691 subdivision into half-acre lots and annotated to ca. 1712 (Colonial National Historical Park Archives, map 2261, annotated by SUNY ESF).

EARLY NELSON PERIOD, 1706–1789

During the early to mid-eighteenth century, Yorktown prospered as one of the major ports in the southern English colonies. British domestic goods, sugar, and African slaves arrived through Yorktown, and tobacco from the region's plantations fueled a strong export trade. These port activities attracted tradesmen, artisans, merchants, and established planters to set up businesses and build homes in the village. It was into this growing village that Scotch Tom Nelson arrived in 1705. Shortly after arriving, he established a successful mercantile business and by 1720 was engaged in the West India trade.

Scotch Tom's success in commerce provided him the means to purchase significant land holdings in and around Yorktown. Within the existing Nelson House grounds, his first purchase was lot 52, the lot presently containing the Nelson House, on August 2, 1706 from Colonel Thomas Ballard and Major William Buckner, trustees of the town, for 180 pounds of tobacco (Figure 2). A year later, he acquired lot 48, the lot with the existing formal garden, from the town trustees after their owners forfeited the properties, suggesting that neither had the required buildings on their lots. In 1712, Scotch Tom purchased lot 49, the lot with the carriage house, another forfeited lot. In 1715, he purchased the next lot to the south, lot 50, the lot presently containing Wisteria Cottage and the stable, which, unlike the others, had been owned for five and a half years by Edward Powers, a Yorktown carpenter. The property must therefore have included a building. Scotch Tom also purchased other property around his house, including the land north of Main Street extending to the edge of the bluff overlooking the York River. (Hatch, 1969: 63; York County Records)

According to the stipulations of the deed for Lot 52, Scotch Tom agreed within twelve months of his purchase in July 1706 "to build and finish on ye sd Lott . . . a good house to Contain at Least Twenty foot Square. " (Quoted in Wenger, 2003: 46) This house was on the west half of the lot with its long side parallel to Main Street (Figure 3). At the rear of the house was a stone retaining wall that created two terraces, stepping down toward lot 48. Two sets of stone steps at the wall provided access between the terraces, which most likely contained outbuildings such as a kitchen, dairy, and

smokehouse. By 1716, Scotch Tom presumably had three other houses, one each on lots 48 and 49 to satisfy the deed stipulations, and the presumed house on lot 50 built by the previous owner, Edward Powers. A well near the main house along Main Street was another early feature of the site. (Barka, 1978; Evans, 1958, 1ff; Rogers, 1979, 13–17; "Plan d'York," 1781)

Scotch Tom Nelson established gardens soon after his purchase of his Main Street property to provide vegetables, fruits, and other produce. The gardens were probably initially close to the house on lot 52 and gradually expanded west and south as Scotch Tom acquired the adjoining lots 48, 49, and 50 between 1707 and 1715. He most likely planted a variety of vegetables, herbs, and flowering perennials. Scotch Tom would have enclosed the entire property with fences to protect his gardens from stray livestock and wild animals. (Barka, 1978; Brinkley and Chappel, 1996: 4)

By the late 1720s, Scotch Tom embarked on construction of a prominent new house that was a reflection of his growing wealth and prestige. Completed in ca.1730, the two-story Georgian-style brick house, with timbers cut from native old-growth tulip trees and fine brick purportedly shipped from England, was positioned east of the old frame house at the corner of Main Street and the cross street (Nelson Street), where it held a commanding position on elevated ground facing north toward the York River. The new house was set back 30 feet from Main Street, creating a shallow front court that was most likely bordered on the east and west sides by low retaining walls. There was also a defined space at the rear of the house, known as the back court, which was surveyed in 1796 as being 60 feet from north to south. The back court may have been the site of the Nelson formal garden. (Dendrochronology, Inc., 1995; Harper, 1989: 8–9; Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, 1796)

After completing his new residence, Scotch Tom removed the old frame house and the stone retaining wall, which provided room for a larger single terrace and service yard on the west half of lot 52. Accessed from a short drive off Main Street, the marl-surfaced yard contained six outbuildings: a kitchen-wash house (the largest building), servants' quarters, and a poultry house on the north side; and a dairy, spinning house, and smoke house on the south. All were frame except for the brick servants' quarters. These buildings were not arranged with the formal symmetry that characterized the new house, but rather reflected their utilitarian purposes. (Barka, 1978: 34–39, 46–48)

Scotch Tom's property was part of growing village that included buildings up and down Main Street and the side streets. Directly south of the Nelson House was a frame house built by the Smith family on lot 53 in ca.1706. Next door on lot 54 was a frame house built by the Fuller family in ca.1709 that was acquired by John Ballard in 1727. South of the Ballard lot and Nelson lot 50 was a pottery operation on lots 51 and 55 developed by William Rogers in ca.1720. Across Main Street from the Nelson House were the stores for Nelson's mercantile business, and to the west was a large brick house built by Nelson's son, William Nelson, in ca.1745. It adjoined the old Cox House at the corner of Read Street built in ca.1700 and acquired by Scotch Tom in 1729. Across the side street to the east was the second "Sessions" house built in ca.1750, and to the west, the Custom House built in ca.1720 (Hatch, Edmund Smith House, 1969, 1–7; Riley, 1942, 97–102, 121–122; Barka, 97–102, 121–122)

When Scotch Tom died in October 1745, he left most of his estate to his son William, including the Nelson House. However, Scotch Tom gave his second wife, Frances, the right to life estate in the house, where she continued to live for the next two decades. William lived in his new house across the street. Following Frances Nelson's death in 1766, William Nelson arranged to have his eldest son, Thomas Jr. (the suffix was used to distinguish him from his uncle, Secretary Thomas Nelson), move with his wife Lucy Grymes into the Nelson House. Upon his death in 1772 at the age of 61, William Nelson left his Yorktown property to his sons Thomas Jr. and Hugh. Thomas received the Nelson House, where he had been living with his family for the past six years, and lots 48, 49, 50, and 52. Hugh received his father's H-shaped house across Main Street and the adjoining lots. Each of the sons inherited equal share of the Nelson stores, and jointly assumed control of the Nelson family mercantile business. (Hatch, The Nelson House, 1969: 74; Evans, 1957: 258)

Thomas Nelson, Jr. was gaining political prominence at the time he and his family lived in the Nelson House. He had been elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses, was active in Yorktown civic affairs,

and joined the first convention that met in Williamsburg in 1774 to consider the matter of England's taxation on the American colonies. That same year, he was appointed colonel in the Virginia colonial militia. As a prominent figure, Nelson certainly maintained the family home to a high standard. He and his wife Lucy had renovated the interior of the house prior to moving there in ca.1766. While the extent of changes to the exterior of the house and grounds is unknown, the Nelsons certainly maintained the back and front courts, group of service buildings, domestic gardens on lot 48, 49, and 50, and perhaps ornamental gardens begun by Thomas's grandfather. (Sundberg, 2011; Hatch, the Nelson House, 1969: 76)

Following the outbreak of hostilities with Great Britain, Yorktown witnessed war preparations, but it was not until six years later that the area fell to British control under General Lord Cornwallis. The village and most of its prominent homes were occupied or scavenged by troops and defensive earthworks encircled the town. The British occupation ended with the 1781 Siege of Yorktown by the allied French and American forces. Between October 9 and 17, General George Washington and French commander General Comte de Rochambeau led an intense, round-the-clock bombardment on the village, which resulted in the widespread destruction. After a failed attempt to escape across the York River, General Cornwallis requested a cease-fire to discuss surrender terms. Two days later, on October 19, 1781, he formally surrendered his army, thereby ending the American Revolution. Yorktown remained occupied by French military forces two years after the British surrender. Private residences throughout the village served as billeting posts for the French garrison until August 1782.

Throughout the war, Thomas Nelson, Jr. served in important positions. From 1775 to 1777 and again in 1779, he was a delegate to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia where he was an outspoken proponent of severing ties with England. Representing York County in the Virginia Convention of 1776, he presented resolutions to the Continental Congress to declare the colonies free and independent from Britain, and signed the Declaration of Independence. He achieved the rank of brigadier general in the Virginia militia and won election to the lower house of the legislature. In 1780, Nelson was elected governor of Virginia and granted military powers, which he used to command Virginia's defense in the Siege of Yorktown, overseeing approximately one-third of the American troops. Overwhelmed by the war and the burdens of the office, Nelson resigned the governorship in November 1781. (National Park Service, online Nelson biography)

The Nelson House remained standing throughout the Siege, although damaged by cannon fire. The warfare and subsequent months of billeting by French troops also battered the landscape. Over the next few years, Nelson repaired the house and grounds, but with financial problems and failing health, most likely invested in few enhancements. Work most likely included repair of the buildings, replanting of the domestic gardens, and filling in cannon ball craters. The planting of trees and ornamental vegetation likely occurred to a limited extent, as well as repairs to fencing. ("Plan d'York," 1781; Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, 1796)

In 1789, eight years after the Siege of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson Jr. died at the age of fifty. His family buried him in Yorktown at the York Parish (Grace) Church graveyard, a few hundred feet northwest of the Nelson House.



Figure 2. Map of Yorktown during the early Nelson period showing the expansion of village lots in the Gwyn Read Subdivision, and development neighboring the Nelson House grounds (SUNY ESF).

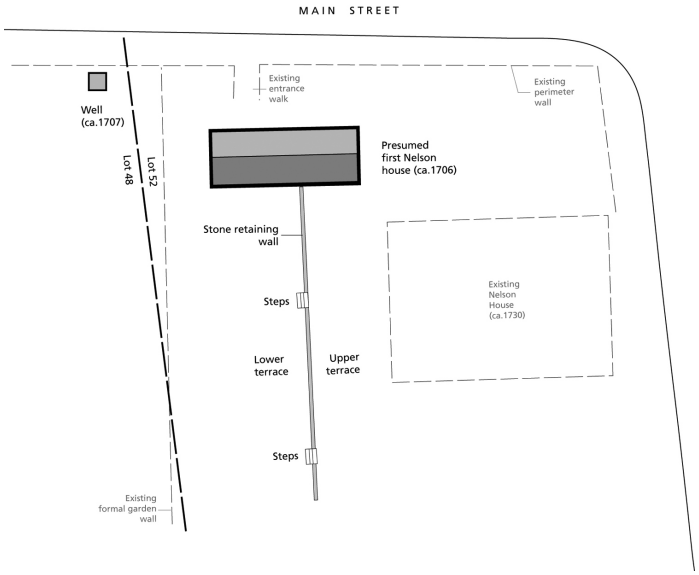


Figure 3. Plan showing presumed location of Scotch Tom's first house built in ca. 1706 in relation to the existing Nelson House, perimeter wall, and lot line (SUNY ESF based on Barka, 1978).

LATE NELSON PERIOD, 1789–1914

In the years between the Revolution and the Civil War, Yorktown never revived the prosperity of its colonial years and continued to decline into a remote, sleepy Tidewater town. By 1800, only one-third of Yorktown's houses and commercial buildings that existed before the Revolution still stood. A widespread fire in March 1814 further devastated the town and claimed the William Nelson House and Nelson stores, but spared the Scotch Tom Nelson House. It passed down to generations of Nelsons following the death of Thomas Nelson Jr. in 1789. By 1849, the house and surrounding lots were inherited by four-year-old William Nelson III following the death of his father, William II. His mother, Martha took responsibility for the property. In 1855, she was remarried George W. Bryan who had four children of his own, and the combined family made the Nelson House their home. (Garret, 1934: 4; Wenger, 2003: 100, 116, 118)

The Nelson family lost much of its colonial wealth and prominence during the first half of the nineteenth century, but their house on Main Street remained a widely recognized Yorktown landmark and a symbol of the Revolution. It was known not only as the home of the Virginia governor and signer of the Declaration of Independence, but also as a war relic. For these reasons and as the most prominent remaining colonial house, it was designated as the lodging place for the Marquis de Lafayette upon his triumphal tour of the United States in 1824. Spectators purportedly broke off branches from a laurel tree (variety unknown), which the Nelson family had planted in the front court east of the entrance to the house, to weave a crown for the marquis. The laurel was later known as the Lafayette tree. (Hatch, The Nelson House, 1969: 94–95, 100; Sundberg, 2011; Lossing, 1850: 315, fn 3)

In the decades after the marquis' visit in 1824, the Nelson-Bryan family made few major changes to the house and grounds. An insurance survey made in 1830 documented the same outbuildings that were surveyed in 1796 and that most likely stood during the colonial period. The popular nineteenth-century historian Benson Lossing visited the Nelson House in 1848 for his Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution, published in 1850. He included a drawing of the Nelson House, showing the front court lined by a plank fence and a hedge that may have existed since colonial times. Although not pictured, the old service buildings to the west of the house still stood. To the south, the Smith House (rebuilt as a brick structure prior to the Revolution) and the Ballard House remained, but across Main Street were empty lots where the Nelson stores and William Nelson house had stood. Only the Cox House at the corner of Read Street remained, as well as the "Sessions" house to the east and the old Custom House to the west of the Nelson House. (Lossing, 1850: 315; Hatch, The Edmund Smith House, 1969: 22; Barka, 1978: 104)

Yorktown was again the site of major military operations with the outbreak of the Civil War. In 1861, during the preparation for a Union offensive known as the Peninsula Campaign, the Confederate Army began constructing defensive lines across the Virginia Peninsula. In Yorktown, the British earthworks built during the 1781 siege were strengthened and improved, and new ones constructed, forming a ring around the village and lining the bluff overlooking the York River in front of the Nelson House. In April 1862, one year after hostilities began with the attack on Fort Sumter, the Union Army captured Yorktown. In 1864, almost 40,000 Union troops occupied Yorktown as a staging area for the Bermuda Hundred Campaign. Later in 1864, Major General Ulysses S. Grant ordered his troops to withdraw from Yorktown, but the area remained under the army's control until 1867, when a national cemetery was completed in the battlefield east of the village. (Civilwar. com "Battle Summaries")

During the war, George and Martha Nelson Bryan left Yorktown to seek refuge from the military occupation. William Nelson Jr., Martha's son and heir to the Nelson House, was away serving in the Confederate Army. In the family's absence, the Confederate and Union Armies used the house as a military hospital (Figure 4).

After the end of the war, Yorktown returned to its quiet existence, except for a brief period in the latter 1870s and 1880s, when the national centennial raised interest the country's colonial history. At Yorktown, this led to a three-day Centennial Celebration in 1881 commemorating the 1781 siege and surrender of British forces in Yorktown. Some repairs and improvements were undertaken as part of this effort, including the construction of the Monument to Victory and Alliance that was completed in 1883. Federal acquisition and restoration of the Nelson House was considered, but plans were never

implemented. The Nelson House and many of its Yorktown neighbors continued to languish over the course of the next two decades. The village retained its desolate character, with its rutted main street lined by deteriorating colonial buildings, a picturesque landscape that became the subject of numerous postcards around the turn of the century. (Hatch, The Nelson House, 1969: 114–115; Harper, 1989: 12)

The Nelson-Bryan family continued to live at the Nelson House into the early twentieth century. During this time, they oversaw a number of changes to the property. A new brick retaining wall was constructed around the front court in ca.1870. This wall incorporated or replaced earlier low walls along the east and west sides of the court, and included new or rebuilt steps to the front entrance walk. The grade of the service yard and back court had also been lowered by this time, probably occurring during the Civil War. (Hatch, The Nelson House, 1969: frontispiece; Colonial National Historical Park: Blow Family Photographs)

Around the time the wall was constructed, the Nelson-Bryans built a house on lot 48 facing Main Street, near where Scotch Tom may have built a house in ca.1707 to satisfy his purchase requirement for the lot. The new house was a two-story, three-bay frame house with clapboard siding and a low-pitched gable roof. They may have erected this as a tenant house, or to replace the old brick servants' quarters in the service yard that was removed after the Civil War. The Nelson House retained most of its other eighteenth-century outbuildings, including the kitchen–wash house, dairy, smokehouse, and spinning house. Over the next three decades, however, these building all disappeared except for the kitchen–wash house, concurrent with the family's declining fortunes and shift toward rental uses in the late 1890s. By the turn of the century, the Nelson House and its surrounding grounds were becoming dilapidated. While the structure was sound, windows were broken, the steps to the front court were falling apart, and weed trees were growing out of the overgrown boxwood hedge (Figure 5). (Colonial National Historical Park: Blow Family Photographs)

In 1908, Mary and Elizabeth Bryan sold the Nelson House and lot 52 to R.A. Lancaster of Richmond for $3,000. He purchased the property as an agent for Thomas P. Bryan, a relative of Mary and Elizabeth, and Allmand Blow, who was the older brother of George Preston Blow, a wealthy industrialist from LaSalle, Illinois who grew up in nearby Norfolk. The reasons for Lancaster's purchase are not known for certain, but he may have been holding the property for a buyer interested in its rehabilitation. Mary and Elizabeth Bryan retained ownership of the garden lots (lots 48, 49, and 50), which they either used themselves or leased for cultivation and grazing. For the next six years, R.A. Lancaster rented the Nelson House to various individuals, including Nelson-Bryan family members. (Wenger, 2003: 124; Harper, 1989: 12)

R.A. Lancaster made an initial investment in the preservation of the Nelson House by installing a new slate roof in 1909. After this, the house was not maintained, leading to continued deterioration. In ca.1910, the last of the colonial service buildings, the kitchen-wash house, burned, leaving just the ruins of the massive center chimney and the brick foundation. The back court, which by this time was just open ground with scattered old trees and a boxwood hedge along the Smith lot, was used as pasture, with a temporary wood slat and wire fence lining the cross street. (Harper, 1989: 15)

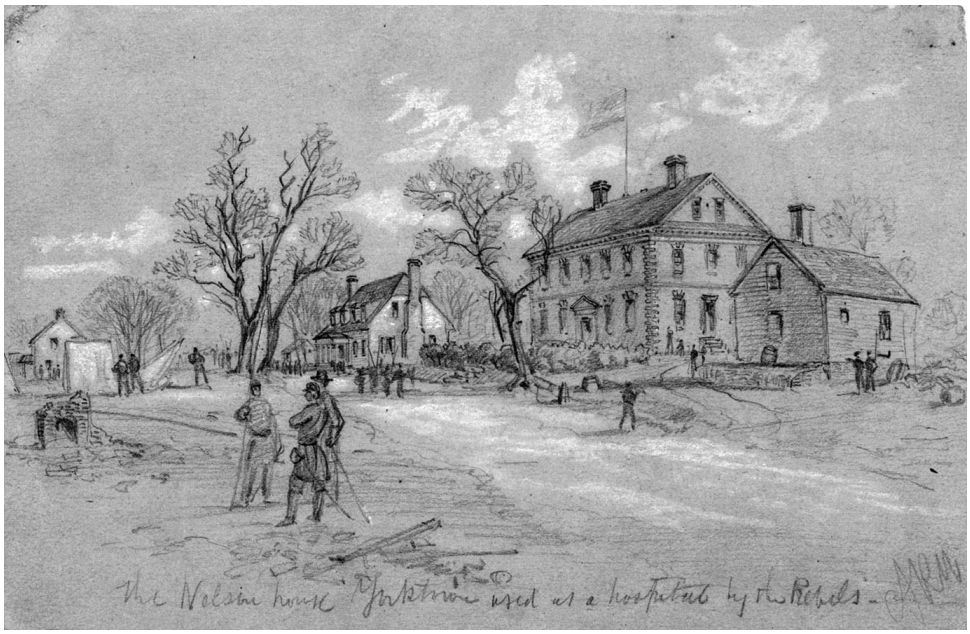


Figure 4. Sketch of the Nelson House by Alfred Waud published in "Harper's Weekly," May 24, 1862, showing its use as a field hospital (Library of Congress, digital ID 20885u).

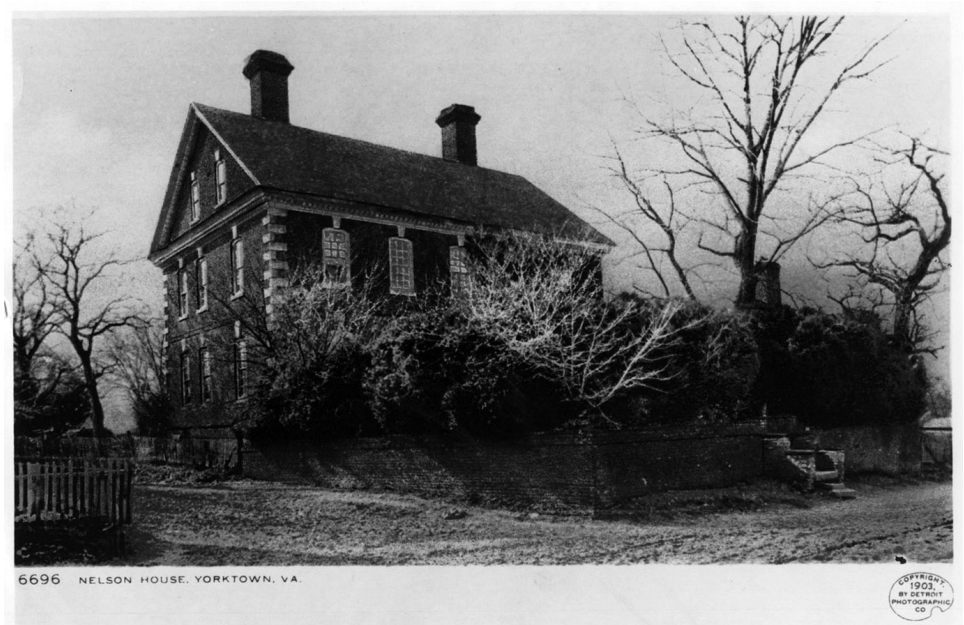


Figure 5. A 1903 postcard of the Nelson House looking southwest showing poor and overgrown conditions (Colonial National Historical Park archives, YOR_6696).

YORK HALL ESTATE PERIOD, 1914–1968

From 1914 to 1968, the derelict Nelson House grounds were transformed into a refined country place estate that incorporated a number of surrounding village lots, including the adjoining Smith and Ballard Houses and the sites of the Cox House, William Nelson House, and Nelson stores. Known as York Hall—a name also used by the Nelson family during the nineteenth century—the estate was the seasonal home of Adele and George Preston Blow, and later, the full-time residence of their son, George W. Blow. One of the first to resurrect a colonial Yorktown house, George P. Blow had a keen interest in history and preserved much of the old fabric of the property, working closely with architects Griffin and Wynkoop and landscape architect Charles Gillette.

Although a resident of the Midwest at the time of his purchase of the Nelson House, George Preston Blow's roots were in the Virginia Tidewater. In 1893, he married Adele Matthiessen of LaSalle, Illinois and went on to have an impressive career in the Navy. Following his retirement from the Navy in February 1900, he moved to LaSalle to manage the estate of his father-in-law, Frederick W. Matthiessen. In this capacity, he became the president of the Western Clock Company (later renamed Westclox), among other ventures. (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Arlington National Cemetery website, George P. Blow biography)

George P. Blow finalized his purchase of lot 52 with the Nelson House from R. A. Lancaster in 1914, and soon after, began to acquire adjoining lots to establish the designed landscape that was an essential part of country estates. These included the Nelson garden lots (lots 48, 49, and 50), which he purchased from the Bryan sisters in March 1915; the Smith lot (lot 53) in 1917 from G. and H. Smith (unrelated to the original Smith family); and the Ballard lot (lot 54) in 1919 from Losetta Beer. By the early 1920s, Blow had acquired thirteen additional lots, including lots 47, 55, 85, and waterfront lots 120 through 129. (Harper, 1989: 12; Colonial National Historical Park, Yorktown Lot Map)

Soon after his purchase of the Nelson House in 1914, Blow commissioned Griffin and Wynkoop, an architecture firm with offices at 50 Church Street in New York City, to renovate the house and design several Colonial Revival-style outbuildings, including a garage, gardener's cottage, and stables, as well as a perimeter brick wall. On the exterior of the house, major changes were limited to the roof, which was outfitted with dormers and sheathed in multi-colored slate in place of wood. The entrance porch at the back court was also modified with removal of a basement entry and addition of a new door and windows. (Harper, 1989: 17)

As work was underway on the buildings and walls in 1915, George Blow commissioned the young landscape architect Charles Freeman Gillette to design the grounds. Gillette's plan for York Hall was one of his first independent residential commissions, and one of his longest, lasting into the 1960s. Working around the previously designed buildings and perimeter wall, Gillette developed an initial plan that formalized the smaller areas closest to the house through plantings and circulation, and established an informal character to the landscape on the former Nelson open and garden lots, with winding paths and a proposed orchard. (Longest, 1992: 3–15, 27–28; Architectural Forum, vol. 35, no. 6: 212)

In the front court, Blow initially made few changes, and preserved a large tulip tree on the west side, the overgrown boxwood hedge, stone-paved entrance walk, vines on the house, and even the spindly Lafayette tree near the entrance. In contrast to the front court, the back court, which the Blows called the forecourt, was transformed from a barren pasture into a formal entrance to the estate, organized around an oval loop drive (Figure 6). The old Nelson service yard on the west side of the house was redesigned as a lawn that sloped gently toward lot 48. There, at the later site of the formal garden, Gillette designed an open lawn framed by tree and shrub plantings along the perimeter walls. In the interior of the landscape on lots 49, 50, 53, and 54, Gillette laid out stepping-stone paths linking the service buildings and cottages, but the orchard shown in his initial plan was not planted. The service area to the south of the stable was screened by serpentine brick walls built to either side of the building, with the west wall tying into the perimeter wall along Read Street. (Architectural Forum, vol. 35, no. 6: 212; Blow Family Photographs)

When the Blows acquired the Smith lot in 1917, they converted the old brick house into a guest cottage according to plans by Griffin and Wynkoop. The extensive renovation included extension of

the perimeter brick wall and reorientation of the house to face the interior of the estate, away from Pearl Street. Gillette renovated a boxwood allee at the back of the house, with its parallel rows of aged boxwood and mature deciduous tree at the end (species unknown), into an intimate garden space known as the boxwood shelter, edged in clipped boxwood borders and furnished with cast-iron benches. Acquisition of the Ballard lot in 1919 completed the core of the estate landscape. The Ballard House, which served as a staff residence known as Pearl Cottage, remained largely unchanged on the exterior with its original entrance facing the street. The two remaining outbuildings were removed, and the perimeter brick wall was extended along Pearl Street to the northeast corner of the house. The area south of the house was planted with an unclipped hedge that enclosed a small yard. (Architectural Forum, vol. 35, no. 6: 212; Blow Family Photographs)

With the overall structure of the York Hall landscape well established, George P. Blow commissioned Charles Gillette in 1921 to design a number of enhancements, including several formal flower gardens. Most of the work was completed within the short period before Blow's death in November 1922 at the age of 66. In ca.1923, Gillette prepared a new plan of the estate that showed the major improvements, which included a large formal garden on the lower terrace, two smaller formal gardens between the Smith and Ballard Houses, and redesign of the front court (Figure 7). These gardens, which included flowerbeds, sculpture, water features, and Asian and European antiques, added ornament that had been largely absent in the initial phase of improvements. The plan also showed Gillette's redesign of the open interior into an expansive lawn that unified the buildings along the periphery of the estate. (Gillette Papers, George P. Blow correspondence)

The first project to be built in Gillette's new plan was the garden in the front court, completed in 1921. The design did away with much of the old landscape, except for the boxwood hedge that was retained as a perimeter screen. The Lafayette tree, stone walk, and entrance steps from Main Street were removed. This left the entrance to the terrace as the only access from Main Street. The new garden was centered on a small reflecting pool surrounded by a brick patio edged by plantings. The secluded garden was ornamented with urns, cherubs, a cherub table, and benches of cast-iron and stone, in stark contrast to the simplicity of the earlier landscape. (Architectural Forum, vol. 35, no. 6)

In 1922, the year after completion of the front court garden, Gillette finalized his design of the formal garden, which required changes to the upper terrace into what was initially referred to as a bowling green. In its raised, expanded, and leveled configuration, the new terrace created a platform to view the formal garden. The raising of the grade required construction of a brick retaining wall dividing the two terraces. In addition to the garden wall, the grade changes to the upper terrace required the addition of a knee-high brick retaining wall around the southern and eastern perimeter. This wall extended the upper terrace to the south and protected the roots of existing shrubs and trees, including the old boxwood hedge along the Smith lot. New walks were built on the upper terrace, keeping the rectilinear layout of the earlier ones, but using a brick pavement instead of marl. (Harper, 1989: 26; Gillette Papers, George P. Blow Correspondence)

On the lower terrace, Gillette's design for the large formal garden used a classical quincunx plan consisting of symmetrically placed beds divided by two central intersecting walks and parallel secondary walks (Figure 8). Gillette based his design on the formal garden at Groombridge Place in Tonbridge, Kent, England that was the ancestral home of Mrs. Blow's family. The design required the addition of low brick retaining walls around the north and west sides to retain the pre-existing grade around the perimeter trees and shrubs that had been planted during the initial development of the landscape. The main east-west axis of the garden was aligned with the steps to the upper terrace and west entrance of the house (Figure 9). Plantings in the beds were an informal, old-fashioned mixture of flowering perennials and roses contained by borders of clipped dwarf boxwood and brick edging. The Blows obtained an extensive assortment of plants from historic places across Virginia, including Monticello, Westover and Tuckahoe Plantations, Mount Vernon, Bruton Parish Church, the President's House at the College of William and Mary, and Evelyn Byrd's Garden. The beds were also planted with a profusion of flowering spring bulbs. In the middle of the center beds were groups of four yews, and the outer corner beds each contained a single specimen tree boxwood. The other beds contained one or two deciduous shrubs in the center. (Groombridge Place Gardens and Enchanted Forest website; Gillette Papers, George P. Blow Correspondence)

In addition to the plantings in the formal garden, Gillette's design included a number of built ornamental features. In the center of the garden was an antique stone column sundial and circular bench that the Blows obtained in England. This was surrounded by circular brick and stone paving. Other ornamental furnishings included two Chinese-style covered benches at the north and west ends of the central walks, and stone cherubs on pedestals at the north and west ends of the secondary walks. Two urns on brick piers marked the wide opening to the lawn at the south side of the garden. (Gillette Papers, George P. Blow Correspondence)

The smaller formal gardens between the Smith and Ballard Houses, completed in 1923 after George P. Blow's death, included a parterre rose garden that was modeled after another garden at Groombridge Place (Figure 10). On the south side of the rose garden adjoining the Ballard House, Gillette designed a small, hedge-enclosed garden called the Garden of Pleasant Associations. (Harper, 1989: 20; Gillette Papers, George P. Blow Correspondence)

In September 1929, Adele Blow died and left the York Hall estate to the York Hall Memorial Trust held by her children Adele, George, Frederick, and Richard. For the next five years, the children operated the Nelson House as a museum open to the public, while occupying the Smith House as a seasonal residence. Under management by the trust, the York Hall landscape was maintained largely as George P. and Adele Blow had developed it over the preceding two decades. A minor change was the addition of a stepping-stone path to the terrace along the wall above the formal garden in ca.1930. (Blow Family Photographs)

The 1930s were a decade of significant change in Yorktown as the federal government joined earlier private restoration and improvement efforts. The upcoming sesquicentennial of the Siege of Yorktown in 1931 also bolstered interest in the village's historic buildings and battlefields. These developments culminated in passage of federal legislation establishing Colonial National Monument in 1930, which included the Yorktown Battlefield and village. The National Park Service originally planned to restore much of the colonial village, but due to funding constraints and limited documentation, instead focused efforts primarily on Main Street and a segment of the waterfront between Read Street and Comte de Grasse Street. During the 1930s, the park service removed nearly all structures from Main Street built after the eighteenth century, adding to the number of vacant lots. (Flickinger, 1936: 353; National Park Service, 1933: 25–26; National Park Service and Heritage Landscapes, 1999: 18–22)

Within Yorktown, federal development of Colonial National Historical Park during the 1930s corresponded with several changes at the Nelson House, including opening to the public as a museum noted previously, and installation of a bronze plaque on the east side of the house by the Yorktown Sesquicentennial Commission. The plaque, which featured a bas-relief sculpture of Lord General Cornwallis designed by the American sculptor F. William Sievers (1872–1966), was commissioned to commemorate the house's purported use by the general during the Siege of Yorktown (a fact that has since been discounted). (National Park Service, 1933, 25–26, 100, 106; Manley, 2005: 50)

In ca.1935, the Blow children dissolved the York Hall Memorial Trust after about five years of existence, thus ending the museum use of the Nelson House. George W. Blow, the eldest son, bought out his siblings' interest in the property. He converted the estate from a seasonal country place and museum to a full-time residence for his family, and periodically rented the Smith House, Ballard House, and Wisteria Cottage to family members and friends. During their ownership, George and Katherine Blow maintained the York Hall landscape much as the elder Blows had left it, including the elaborate plantings in the formal gardens. They did, however, add a number of features that reflected the shift toward recreation and outdoor living in residential landscapes during the mid-twentieth century. These changes also related to the family's four children and year-round use of the property. The Blows retained Charles Gillette, who continued to maintain a busy Richmond practice, to design their improvements and manage seasonal plantings throughout their ownership into the 1960s. (Gillette Papers, George W. Blow Correspondence)

One of the Blows' first improvements was the construction of a one-car garage south of the main entrance on Pearl (Nelson) Street in ca.1935. The following year, plans were underway for building a

new tennis court in the service yard south of the stable. To provide a buffer to the south of the new tennis court, George W. Blow purchased the north half of lot 51 in August 1936. By September of that year, Charles Gillette had finalized his design for the tennis court, which featured a paved surface and a perimeter wire-fence backstop, with a brick curb along the east side to direct drainage. The open center bays of the stable were used as a loggia that provided a passage from the service drive and main part of the estate, and the former service drives to either side of the stable were closed off by extensions of the brick serpentine walls. As a replacement for the lost service yard, Gillette designed a smaller work yard off the east side of the stable. At a later date, two even smaller yards were created to the north and south of the stable through the addition of brick walls, creating enclosed spaces framed by the older serpentine walls to the south. The final addition to this area was two small lean-to greenhouses along the south side of the stable that were completed in ca.1950. (George and Anthony Blow to Bryne Riley, 2008; Gillette Papers, George W. Blow Correspondence; Gillette, “West Tennis Court at York Hall,” 1936; Sundberg to authors, 2011)

The Blows undertook a number of other landscape changes in the years after World War II. In ca.1945, they removed the two Chinese-style roofed benches in the formal garden and extended and expanded the brick pad from the west bench into a circular brick patio surrounding a red-cedar tree. A fireplace was installed against the perimeter wall, and there was most likely casual furniture set out. The next year, the Blows built a small rectangular swimming pool at the entrance to the formal garden from the lawn. The concrete pool walls were painted with murals and a flagstone patio was laid along the south side. A crape-myrtle hedge was planted south of the pool, blocking views from the main lawn. As one of his last garden designs on the estate, Charles Gillette laid out a small pansy garden north of the Smith House, off the south walk from the entrance drive, in ca.1946. (George and Anthony Blow to Bryne Riley, 2008)

Over the two decades following completion of the swimming pool and pansy garden, the Blow family made relatively few changes to the York Hall landscape. Charles Gillette continued to advise the family on maintenance issues and plant selection. By the 1960s, changes in family dynamics and finances portended the demise of York Hall as a private residence. In October 1960, George W. Blow died at age 70, and Katherine passed away five years later in March 1965 at 68. For the following three years, their son Tony lived at York Hall while he and his siblings made plans to sell the property to its future steward, the National Park Service. (Gillette Papers, George W. Blow Correspondence; Wenger, 2003: 124)



Figure 6. The redesigned forecourt (back court) looking west from Pearl (Nelson) Street across the marl-surfaced circular entrance drive, ca. 1918 (Colonial National Historical Park archives, Blow Family Photographs, album #13).

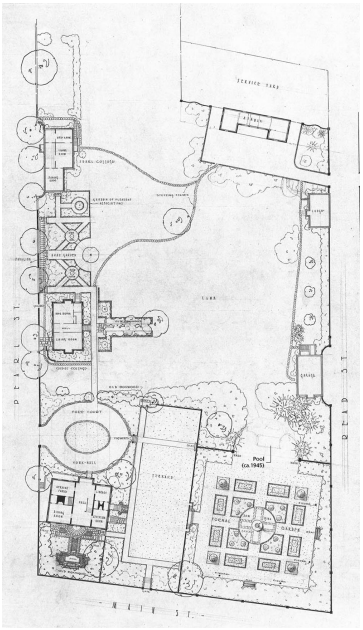


Figure 7. Plan of the York Hall estate by Charles Gillette, ca. 1923. This plan shows implementation of improvements begun in ca. 1921 (Colonial National Historical Park archives).

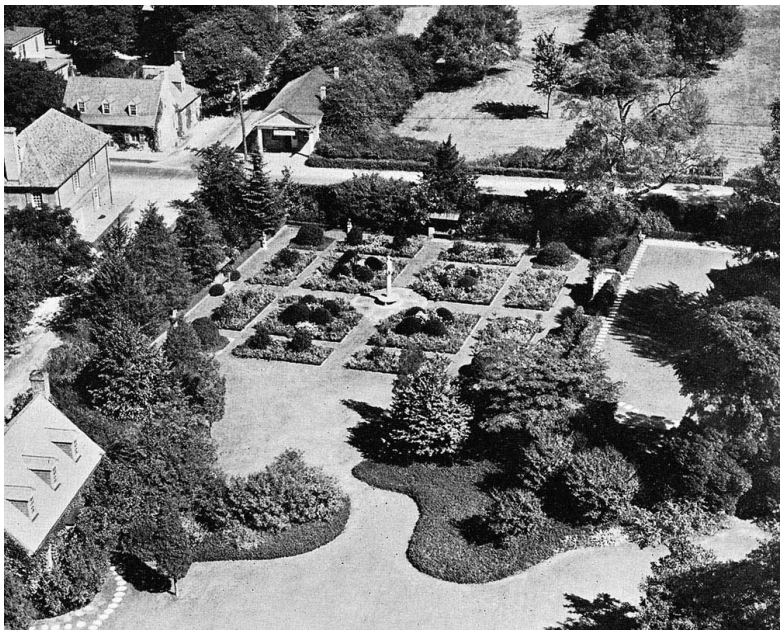


Figure 8. The York Hall formal garden, built in 1922, looking north, ca. 1930 (Yorktown Sesquicentennial Commission, "The Yorktown Sesquicentennial," 1932).



Figure 9. A ca. 1927 postcard of the formal garden showing the axial relationship with the stairs to the terrace (Courtesy of Jane Sundberg).



Figure 10. The rose garden and arbor between the Smith and Ballard houses, built in 1923, looking southeast toward the Ballard House, ca. 1925 (Colonial National Historical Park archives, YOR 10.6).

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PERIOD, 1968–PRESENT

In 1968, the National Park Service acquired the York Hall estate from the Blow family for $2,777,000.00 beginning a period of major changes to the Colonial Revival landscape in its new use as part of Colonial National Historical Park. The park purchased the entire estate, including lots 52, 48, 49, and 50, as well as the adjoining Smith and Ballard lots and property across Main Street and along the side streets. The sale did not include Blow family furnishings in the house or landscape. Prior to the closing, the Blows removed the garden ornaments and either sold them at auction or donated them. (Wenger, 2003: 124; George and Anthony Blow to Bryne Riley, 2008)

Soon after acquisition, the park studied the history of the property and developed a strategy to return the estate to its colonial-era appearance. This work involved the removal of several features installed by the Blow family and reestablished the division of the estate into its colonial components, including the Smith and Ballard lots. Work on the Nelson House property occurred in two phases that began soon after park acquisition in 1968 and were completed prior to the bicentennial celebration of the Siege of Yorktown in 1981.

The first phase, encompassing research, archeological investigation, and partial conversion to park use, occurred between 1968 and 1974. During this time, the garage (carriage house) became offices for park rangers, which involved removal of the original garage doors, paving of the apron, and installation of a steel fire escape on the south side of the building. During this time, the park maintained the landscape and made some minor changes, such as removing or pruning portions of the old boxwood hedge in the front court to open views of the house from Main Street (Figure 11). Between 1972 and 1974, the park completed several studies for the property that documented the history and existing conditions of the buildings and determined a treatment strategy to restore them to their colonial appearance. In 1974, the park completed an archeological study of the terrace to understand the colonial service yard. This study uncovered several historic building foundations, wall fragments, and traces of marl drives. No testing was undertaken in the front court, where the garden pool and walks were to be removed, or in the back court, which was designated as a contractor staging area for the restoration of the house. (Wenger, 2003: 124; National Park Service, plan of archeological research area, 1974)

Upon completion of the studies, the park developed a rehabilitation strategy for the Nelson House

grounds and the adjacent York Hall lots. In 1974, the park hired architect Eugene George, AIA, of Austin, Texas, and Southside Historical Sites at the College of William and Mary, to prepare a rehabilitation plan. The plan called for an accurate restoration of the exterior of the house, and redesign of the front court, back court, and terrace to provide a compatible, contemporary landscape setting. Due to lack of documentation, historical restoration of these areas was not considered feasible. After receiving public input, the plan recommended that the park keep most of the York Hall estate perimeter walls and outbuildings except for Mrs. Blow's ca.1935 garage; retain the formal garden and terrace, remove landscape features not overtly twentieth-century in character, and make modern infrastructure improvements. The plan also recommended that the park convert the stable into storage and park office space, and rehabilitate the Smith and Ballard Houses into residences for park staff. (George and Southside Historical Sites, Inc., 1975)

The first phase of construction involved removal of the entrance drive, Mrs. Blow's garage, wall along Nelson Street, and walks in the back court and terrace. Around the same time, the park removed much of the vegetation surrounding the house, including the remaining boxwood hedges in the front court and in the back court. At the Nelson House, the restoration removed the dormers, slate roof, and the basement door on the west side of the house. At the front court, the park removed the brick terrace and pool, and also lowered the grade to reveal the full height of the basement windows, which required removal of the circular stone steps (Figure 12). The park did not reestablish the front walk to Main Street, but instead maintained the terrace entrance as the main pedestrian access. Boxwood shrubs were planted to reestablish the hedge, and the rest of the court was sodded. (National Park Service photograph, ca.1976; Sundberg to authors, 2011)

At the back court, the park restored the steps and arched openings in the entry porch, and erected unpainted wood fences to set the area apart from Nelson Street and the terrace. On the Nelson Street side of the house, the park relocated the 1931 Cornwallis plaque to the inside of the perimeter wall in the formal garden. On the terrace, the grade was lowered, requiring removal of the top of the garden wall and steps on the walks to the back court and Main Street. New brick walks were installed in a layout similar to the York Hall design, providing access to Main Street, the front court, back court, and formal garden.

In the formal garden, the park took out plantings and some built features, but maintained the basic structure of the design. The swimming pool and flagstone patio were removed, along with the sundial base and the ca.1946 fireplace, leaving its iron base. The circular brick patio was retained as a platform to view the relocated Cornwallis plaque. In the garden beds, the park removed the boxwood borders and the overgrown yew shrubs in the center of the beds. New boxwood hedges were planted around the beds, in place of the original dwarf boxwood hedges, and the yews were replanted in the center of the beds. Perennials, including iris, peonies, and narcissus, were retained. Initially, new flowering plants were maintained in some of the beds. (National Park Service, photograph of formal garden, 1979)

In the York Hall lawn, the park divided the space by erecting colonial-style paling (picket) fences along the boundaries of the Smith and Ballard lots. The stepping-stone paths were removed along with many of the shrubs along the western side of the lawn. The ca.1946 crape-myrtle hedge was retained, presumably to screen the lawn area, which was intended as the park's utility area, from the formal garden. The park installed underground electrical conduits and sewer connections across the lawn from Read Street to the Nelson House, and air conditioning condensers and a below ground propane tank were placed south of the garage adjoining the perimeter wall. These units were screened by a new lattice brick wall. At the York Hall service area, the park retained the small brick-enclosed service yards to either side of the stable, the service drive, and the shrubs and trees that screened the area from the lawn. The passage through the stable was retained, but the 1936 tennis court and ca.1950 greenhouses were removed and the area kept as lawn as part of the adjoining Poor Potter Site. (National Park Service "Central Heating and Cooling Plant for Nelson, Smith, and Ballard Houses," 1974; Geyer to Riley, 2008; National Park Service, photograph of formal garden, 1979)

In the years after the 1981 Yorktown Bicentennial and completion of work on the Nelson House, the National Park Service faced budget cuts and staff attrition. As a result, the park cut back on

maintenance and sought the help of volunteers to complete basic needs. Over the past thirty years, these volunteers assisted with weekly lawn mowing and the monthly trimming of formal garden vegetation under the guidance of National Park Service staff. The beds retained few herbaceous plants, primarily long-lived peonies, iris, and narcissus remaining from the Blow years. The beds of flowering plants initially introduced by the park were not maintained. Volunteers instead planted some Yorktown onion and roses, but most of the beds were kept in mown cover. In ca.1985, the park replaced the boxwoods in the middle of the four central beds with single rose of sharon shrubs. Canna bulbs were relocated to the west garden beds from the nearby Cole Digges House gardens when that building was renovated for use as a restaurant. (Geyer to Riley, 2008)

Since the 1980s, most work in the Nelson House grounds has involved routine maintenance. One exception was changes to the front court perimeter wall. In ca.1983, the park removed the top courses added in ca.1915 to return the wall to its ca.1870 height. During this time, the park also added benches, signs, and exterior light fixtures to improve visitor comfort and enhance interpretation. Most were a colonial style used by the park throughout Yorktown. (Sundberg to Riley, 2011)



Figure 11. The Nelson House and lowered boxwood hedge, looking south across Main Street, June 1972 (Richard Freer, National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center).



Figure 12. The recently restored Nelson House with its front court showing the new steps, walks, and boxwood hedge, ca. 1976. The perimeter brick wall had not yet been lowered (Richard Freer, National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center).

Uses

Functions and Uses:

Major Category	Category	Use/Function	Historic	Current	Primary
Defense	Battle Site	Battle Site	Yes	No	No
Domestic (Residential)	Estate Landscape	Estate Landscape	Yes	No	No
Recreation/Culture	Museum (Exhibition Hall)	Historic Furnished Interior	No	Yes	Yes
Landscape	Leisure-Passive (Park)	Leisure-Passive (Park)	Yes	Yes	No
Defense	Military Facility (Post)	Military Facility (Post)	Yes	No	No
Domestic (Residential)	Single Family Dwelling	Single Family House	Yes	No	Yes

Public Access:

Public Access: Unrestricted

Public Access Narrative:

Informal tours of the first floor of the Nelson House are offered throughout the year. The building is open as staffing permits.

Associated Ethnographic Group

Ethnographic Study Status: No Survey Conducted

Ethnographic Narrative:

Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity Narrative Summary:

Landscape characteristics identified for the Nelson House include spatial organization, land use, topography, vegetation, circulation, buildings and structures, views and vistas, constructed water features, small-scale features, and archeological sites. Many of these characteristics have associated with them features that contribute to the site's overall historic setting significance and identity, as well as features that do not contribute. The features that do contribute were either present during the period of significance or are in-kind replacements of such historic elements.

Overall, the existing character of the Nelson House grounds reflects layers of historic development and non-historic National Park Service rehabilitation. The character from the historic period of the colonial and Revolutionary War period (ca.1730–1781) is evident in the spatial organization created by the house and its front and back courts, the architecture of the Nelson House, and the setting defined by the open-space of lots 48–50; boundary with Main, Nelson, and Read Streets; view of the York River; and setting of adjoining colonial buildings including the Smith, Ballard, Sessions, and Cole Digges Houses, and the Custom House. Circulation, vegetation, and small-scale feature characteristics from the Revolutionary War era have largely been lost. The character of the landscape remained largely unchanged through the Civil War (1861–1865), although the surrounding setting changed due to the loss of buildings, notably the William Nelson House and Nelson stores across Main Street.

From the historic period of the York Hall estate (1914-1930), the cultural landscape retains its overall spatial organization created by the house and its front and back courts, terrace, formal garden, lawn, and service area; buildings and structures including the Nelson House, three outbuildings, and the perimeter brick wall; and layout of the formal garden. Some of the circulation and vegetation characteristics of the landscape remain, especially in the formal garden. The front and back courts, and the terrace received the bulk of the National Park Service rehabilitation and thereby lost much of their historic character from the York Hall estate period.

Overall, the historic character of the landscape from the Revolutionary War period is dominant in the front and back courts. This is the result of National Park Service rehabilitation in the 1970s that removed most of the York Hall estate features from these areas. The historic character from the York Hall estate is dominant in the terrace, formal garden, lawn, and service area, except for the south half of the service area, which is now managed as part of the Poor Potter Site.

INTEGRITY

According to the National Register, integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance through physical resources. The National Register program identifies seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Retention of these qualities is necessary for a property to convey significance; however, not all seven must be present for a property to retain integrity. A basic test of integrity is whether a participant in the historic period—in this case, a colonial resident of Yorktown or George P. Blow— would recognize the Nelson House grounds as they exist today.

The following section evaluates each of the seven aspects of integrity as applied to cultural landscapes, comparing the Nelson House grounds for comparative purposes at the end of the historic periods: in 1781 at the Siege of Yorktown, in 1865 at the end of the Civil War, and in 1930 at the height of development of the York Hall estate. Overall, the landscape retains integrity of location, design, setting, and association, but has lost integrity of materials, workmanship, and feeling.

Location:
Location refers to the place where the cultural landscape was constructed or where the historic event occurred. The landscape retains integrity of location for the three historic periods.
--1781. The existing four Nelson lots (48, 49, 50, 52) formed the Nelson House grounds during the Siege of 1781, although Thomas Nelson Jr. owned interest in several adjoining lots. The Smith and Ballard lots were separately owned in 1781.
--1865. Lots 48, 49, 50, and 52 formed the core of the Nelson House property during the Civil War.

--1930. Lots 48, 49, 50, and 52 formed the core of the York Hall estate in 1930, although the estate also included the adjoining Smith and Ballard Houses (lots 53, 54) and site of the William Nelson House and Nelson stores (lots 47, 46) now managed as separate park properties.

Design:
Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a cultural landscape. The landscape retains integrity of design for the three historic periods.
--1781. Details of design lost or altered from this time include removal of the front entrance walk from Main Street, back court landscape (possibly including a formal garden), and service yard west of the house, and addition of perimeter walls, formal garden, and service buildings. Despite this, the overall design of the Nelson House grounds during the Siege of 1781, with the house and front court on lot 52 and open space (former Nelson garden and open lots) on lots 48–50, remains largely intact.
--1865. Details of design lost or altered from this time include removal of the front entrance walk from Main Street and service yard west of the house, and addition of perimeter walls, formal garden, and service buildings. Despite this, the overall design of the Nelson House grounds during the Civil War, with the house and boxwood-hedge enclosed front court on lot 52, remains largely intact.
--1930: Details of design from this time that have been lost or altered include removal of the front court garden; the oval entrance drive, plantings, perimeter wall, and entrance gates in the back court; brick walks on the terrace; herbaceous plants, shrubs, dwarf boxwood hedges, and furnishings from the formal garden; stepping-stone paths in the lawn; and service yard south of the stable. A fence has been added across the lawn, and new walks have been installed in the front court and terrace. While the design of the front and back courts has been significantly altered, the design of the majority of site comprised of the formal garden, lawn, terrace, and service area remain largely intact.

Setting:
Setting refers to the physical environment within and adjoining the cultural landscape. The landscape retains integrity of setting for the three historic periods.
--1781. The setting of the Nelson House grounds has changed since 1781 through removal of the Nelson stores, William Nelson House, and Cox House across Main Street, and the addition of the formal garden, service buildings, and perimeter wall from the York Hall estate. Growth of successional woods in the Great Valley has obscured view of the York River from the Nelson House. Former open fields along Nelson and Read Streets have been developed with houses and a parking lot, or grown into woods. The Nelson stable on Nelson Street has been lost, as have several unidentified buildings along Read Street. Despite these changes, the Nelson House grounds retain their relationship to Main, Read, and Nelson Streets, and are still flanked by three colonial-period buildings (Custom House, “Sessions” House, and Cole Digges House).
--1865. Since 1865, the setting of the Nelson House grounds has changed through the growth of successional woods in the Great Valley that have obscured view of the York River, loss of the outbuildings west of the house, and the addition of York Hall perimeter walls, formal garden, and service buildings. Former open fields along Nelson Street and Read Street have been developed with houses and parking lots or have grown into woods. Despite this, the overall setting in 1865, with the Nelson House and boxwood-hedge-enclosed front court, remains intact. The Nelson stores and William Nelson House were lost in 1814 well before the Civil War, leaving the open field that exists today, where military tents were pitched during the war.
--1930. Since 1930, the setting of the Nelson House grounds has changed through the loss of the Colonial Revival-style bank building at the corner of Read Street (built ca.1923), the addition of a parking lot on the former York Hall nursery and fields along Read Street, and construction of houses along Nelson Street and the Poor Potter Site shelter on lot 51. The setting has also changed through subdivision of the Smith and Ballard Houses into separate lots delineated by fences. Despite these changes, the setting of the Nelson House grounds within Yorktown has remained substantially intact since 1930.

Materials:
Materials are the physical elements, both natural and constructed, that existed historically within the cultural landscape. The landscape retains integrity of materials only for the 1914-1930 period.
--1781. Materials within the Nelson House grounds remain similar to those that existed in 1781, but all have been replaced, except in the house. There may have been marl walks, a material that does not presently exist. Wood as a building material, found in the outbuildings, is no longer present. There is no record of tree and shrub varieties, although there were most likely boxwood hedges and native trees that exist today, such as tulip tree and Eastern red-cedar.
--1865. The materials of the landscape in 1865 were largely the same as those in 1781. A boxwood hedge that

existed around the front court during the war was replanted by the park in the 1970s. All other materials in the landscape outside of the house either post-date the Civil War or have been replaced. The existing brick retaining wall at the front court was built after the war.
--1930. Since 1930, materials within the Nelson House grounds have changed through removal of stone statuary and paths, concrete and stone in the pools, marl in the entrance drive and garden walks, and flowering plants in the gardens. Some perennials remain in the formal garden beds, including peonies, iris, and narcissus. The existing unpainted wood of the paling fences erected by the park were not characteristic of the York Hall estate. The boxwood hedges in the formal garden are replacements of dwarf boxwoods. Despite these changes, the landscape retains materials dating to the York Hall estate, including brick in the walls, walks, and bed edging; and lawn, trees and shrubs, including Eastern red-cedar, tulip tree, linden, and crape-myrtle.

Workmanship:
Workmanship refers to the physical evidence of the crafts in the construction of and use of the landscape. The landscape retains does not retain integrity of workmanship for any historic period.
--1781. Colonial-period workmanship is still evident in the Nelson House, but has been lost from the landscape. There are no above-ground built features existing from this time except for the house.
--1865. The workmanship of the landscape in 1865, which was largely the same as that in 1781, has largely been lost outside of the house. The brick wall along the front court retains its historic workmanship, but it was built shortly after the war.
--1930. Workmanship of the York Hall landscape has changed with removal of brick walks and garden furnishings, and the decline in maintenance that once characterized the well-tended landscape. The existing brick walks, fences, and signs were installed by the park after 1975. Some workmanship is still evident in the brick walls and service buildings, but overall, workmanship of the York Hall landscape has been lost.

Feeling:
Feeling is an expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time in a cultural landscape. The landscape retains integrity of feeling only for the ca.1730-1781 period.
--1781. The dominance of the restored Nelson House in the landscape imparts a strong feeling of colonial character, despite the loss of the adjoining outbuildings, marl drives, and gardens. The addition of later brick walls, service buildings, and formal garden is compatible with the overall feeling of a colonial landscape.
--1865. Although the Nelson House today appears much as it did in 1865, overall the landscape does not impart the feeling of the Civil War period due to changes in the outbuildings and Yorktown village setting.
--1930. The feeling of the landscape as a designed early twentieth-century country place, derived from its highly-maintained character with extensive ornamental plantings and garden furnishings, has been lost.

Association:
Association refers to the direct link between the important historic event or person and the cultural landscape. The landscape retains integrity of association for the three historic periods.
--1781. The Nelson House grounds retain the house and property that embody its association with the Revolution and the Siege of 1781.
--1865. The Nelson House grounds retain the house and property that embody its association with the Civil War.
--1930. The Nelson House grounds retain the major designed features—the house, terrace, lawn, formal garden, service buildings, perimeter walls, and many trees and shrubs that reflect its association with the York Hall estate.

The next section presents an analysis of landscape characteristics and their associated features and corresponding List of Classified Structures names and numbers, if applicable. It also includes an evaluation of whether the feature contributes to the property's National Register eligibility for the historic period (ca.1730-1930), contributes to the property's historic character, or if it is noncontributing, undetermined, or managed as a cultural resource. Information is derived from the "Cultural Landscape Report for the Nelson House Grounds," pages 134-165.

Landscape Characteristic: Spatial Organization

Historic Conditions:
During the Revolutionary War, the landscape was oriented to Main Street, with three-quarters of the site maintained as open fields. Small defined spaces were at the front and rear of the house on lot 52 at the front court and back court. The back court, measuring 100 feet deep (historic insurance surveys identified it as 60 feet deep), may have contained a formal garden (see Vegetation characteristic). The Nelson outbuildings, including kitchen and servants' quarters and four other buildings, formed a partially enclosed yard located apart from the house, as was typical in eighteenth century Virginia towns. The Nelson yard was approximately 30 feet west of the house at the west side of lot 52. West of the service yard, at a lower elevation, were the garden and open lots (lots 48, 49, and 50) that most likely contained kitchen gardens, with a house along the perimeter of Read Street on lot 50. Little is known about how trees and shrubs defined spaces in the landscape during this period, although there may have been a boxwood hedge around the perimeter of the front court, and another hedge along the south boundary of the back court. The grounds were most likely enclosed by fences. This spatial organization remained largely intact through the Civil War. Photographs show that a mature boxwood hedge, approximately four feet high, enclosed the front court, without a fence.

During the York Hall estate period, George Preston Blow worked with architects Griffin and Wynkoop and landscape architect Charles Gillette to redesign the Nelson House grounds into a largely enclosed, inward-oriented landscape that incorporated the adjoining Smith and Ballard lots. A perimeter brick wall was erected around the grounds, and much of the perimeter was heavily planted with trees and shrubs. The front court became enclosed to a greater extent through growth of the preexisting boxwood hedge upwards of fifteen feet tall. New spaces were defined, including an open rectangular terrace at the site of the Nelson service buildings and yard; a partly enclosed formal garden at the north end of the Nelson garden and open lots; an open lawn at the central part of the garden and open lots and the Smith and Ballard lots; and a service area at the south end of the grounds.

Post-historic and Existing Conditions:
The spatial organization of the Nelson House grounds presently reflects a layered character resulting from changes made during the National Park Service rehabilitation of the 1970s. The front court was returned to the mostly open character that probably existed during the Revolution, and the Smith and Ballard lots were set off as separate spaces with the addition of wood fences along the colonial lot lines (although the area still appears as a continuous open lawn). Despite this, the landscape overall retains the spatial organization of the York Hall estate period with the terrace, formal garden, lawn, and service area spaces remaining largely intact (Figure 13).

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Front Court Space (ca.1730)	155117	Contributing					No
Back Court Space (ca.1730)	155119	Contributing					No
Terrace Space (1922)	155121	Contributing					No
Formal Garden Space (1922)	155123	Contributing					No
Lawn Space (ca.1922)	155125	Contributing					No
Stable Courtyard (ca.1916)	155127	Contributing					No
Original Service Yard (ca.1916)	155129	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Stable Yards (ca.1945)	155131	Noncontributing – Compatible					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:

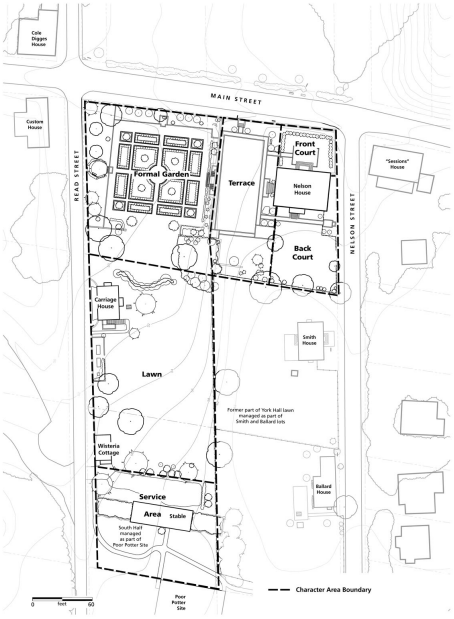


Figure 13. Map of the Nelson House grounds illustrating boundaries of six character areas used to inventory existing conditions of the cultural landscape: front court, back court, terrace, formal garden, lawn, and service area (SUNY ESF).

Landscape Characteristic: Land Use

Historic Conditions:
During the Revolutionary War period, use of the Nelson House grounds was primarily domestic and agricultural, with garden plots in lots 48, 49, and 50. The stable, constructed on lot 50 ca.1916, was utilitarian in nature with an adjacent service drive and service yard. For a brief period between ca.1930 and 1935, the York Hall estate was open to the public as a museum, but this use did not lead to significant physical changes in the landscape, which returned to private use in 1936 as the year-round home of George W. Blow.

Post-historic and Existing Conditions:
The existing primary land use of the Nelson House grounds, as a public house museum and park offices, is a contemporary change to the historic landscape. Domestic and agricultural uses during the Revolutionary period at the Nelson House and garden lots are no longer evident, but existing public uses perpetuate the York Hall estate's historic function as pleasure grounds within the terrace and formal garden.

The service yard, used by the park for maintenance storage, has a utilitarian function similar to its historic use, as does the carriage house (garage), which serves as a park ranger station (Figure 14). Despite the contemporary changes, the existing land use is generally compatible with the historic character of the landscape. An exception is at the carriage house (garage), where an exterior steel staircase, antennae, and park service vehicles along Read Street related to the building's use as a ranger station detract from the landscape's historic domestic use.

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 14. The service drive and stable looking west, June 2007 (SUNY ESF).

Landscape Characteristic: Topography

Historic Conditions:
The natural landform, with its rise along the east side of the site and lower area long the west, was modified by the Nelson family to create a building platform for the house and yard to the west. The grade at the yard was initially terraced with a cobblestone wall parallel to the house and slope, but this was most likely removed following construction of the existing house in ca.1730. The grade was subsequently made into a wider terrace that extended to the west boundary of lot 52, where it transitioned to the lower grade on lot 48 with an embankment.

Around the time of the Civil War, the grade around the front court and in the yard was lowered, revealing the foundation blocks along the west side of the Nelson House and the brick foundation of the kitchen–wash house in the yard. In response, a brick retaining wall was built around three sides of the front court in ca.1870.

During the York Hall estate period, the topography of the front court was retained, but the terrace of the service yard was raised and expanded between ca.1916 and 1922 to create a level expanse extending outward from the house, above the formal garden. The site of the formal garden was leveled, requiring the addition of low walls along three sides. The grade of the back court was also raised. Changes in grade elsewhere on the grounds were minor.

Post-historic and Existing Conditions:
In the National Park Service rehabilitation of the 1970s, the York Hall topography was retained in large part, except for lowering of the terrace that required removal of steps and sections of the surrounding retaining wall (Figure 15). The existing topography thus reflects the York Hall estate period, with little remaining from the Revolutionary War and Civil War periods.

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 15. Looking west across the formal garden from the second floor of the Nelson House, January 2010. The terrace is in the foreground (SUNY ESF).

Landscape Characteristic: Vegetation

Historic Conditions:
The Country Place Era character is evident in large-scale vegetation in the formal garden, lawn, and service area. The remaining vegetation with the exception of the front court boxwood hedge was designed by the park service as new additions in the character of the colonial period.

Little is known about vegetation during the colonial period through the Revolutionary War. Thomas Nelson Jr. maintained vegetable gardens on some portion of lots 48, 49, and 50 that were referred to in nineteenth-century deeds as the Nelson "garden and open lots." There is no record of a formal garden, but a town property of this stature most likely had one, as did similar eighteenth-century Georgian-style houses in nearby Williamsburg. Such houses typically had formal gardens at the back of the property, typically designed in the Anglo-Dutch tradition popular in England in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. These gardens were characterized by geometric symmetry, axial walks, flowerbeds, and enclosure of hedges and other plantings.

A possible location of the Nelson formal garden is the back court. The garden and open lots were probably too removed from the house for the formal garden, and the west side of the house was occupied by the service yard. The shallow front court probably had ornamental plantings as well. Some of the aged trees and shrubs evident in drawings and photographs from the Civil War and early twentieth century may date back to the Revolutionary War period. These included a tulip tree on the west side of the front court, boxwood hedges around the front court and on the south boundary of the back court (perhaps originally framing a formal garden), an unidentified specimen tree along Main Street at the boundary of lots 52 and 48, and several additional specimens in the back court.

During the York Hall estate period, George W. Blow retained the old overgrown boxwood hedges and aged specimen trees presumably for their historic character and possible colonial origin. He also kept an aged laurel tree in the front court that purportedly witnessed the 1824 visit by the Marquis de Lafayette. The remainder of the landscape was heavily planted with new trees, shrubs, vines, and herbaceous plants according to the design of Charles Gillette. Trees and shrubs were planted along the Main and Read street perimeter of the grounds, and to screen the service area from the lawn.

Species were primarily native or traditional to the South, including Eastern red-cedar, tulip tree, willow oak, European linden, Southern magnolia, American beech, boxwood, crape-myrtle, mockorange, osmanthus, and yew. Gillette also used Asian species, including Japanese maple, photinia, and gold-dust tree (acuba). These plantings were unified in many areas with groundcover, including common periwinkle, and English ivy grew on the brick walls surrounding the formal garden, where Gillette designed flowering herbaceous beds. Detailed planting plans have not been found, but records show that Gillette secured plants from a variety of historic gardens in Virginia. Photographs taken in 1930 and other documentation indicates the beds were maintained with a profusion of roses and old-fashioned perennials, including ajuga, columbine, sweet william, foxglove, coral bells, German iris, and salvia, which were framed by dwarf boxwood hedges and surrounded groups of clipped yews and deciduous shrubs. The formal garden also was planted with spring bulbs.

Post-historic and Existing Conditions:
Following its acquisition of the Nelson House grounds in 1968, the National Park Service ceased maintaining the flower beds in the formal garden and removed much of the remaining high-maintenance vegetation. In the front court, back court, and terrace, the park service removed nearly all of the York Hall estate plantings, including the aged boxwood hedges in the front and back courts. The park replanted the boxwood hedge around the front court, and introduced new plantings, including groups of dogwood trees along the walks, paired boxwoods to either side of the west entrance of the house, and scattered other shrubs and trees. Except for the boxwood hedge at the front court, these plantings were a contemporary design. A number of specimen trees remain from the York Hall estate, as well as the border of trees surrounding the formal garden. Some shrubs remain from York Hall, notably crape-myrtle and holly around the formal garden. The formal garden boxwood hedges are a park-service addition in place of the original dwarf boxwood borders. The center yews have been replaced with rose of sharon, and the herbaceous beds are maintained mostly with a mown cover, surrounding remnant bulbs and perennials (Figure 16).

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Front Court Boxwood Hedge (ca.1730, ca.1976)	155133	Contributing					No
Front Court Tulip Tree (pre-1914, ca.1995)	155135	Contributing					No
Back Court Trees and Shrubs (pre-1968, ca.1976)	155137	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Terrace Trees and Shrubs (ca.1976)	155139	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Formal Garden Boxwood Hedges (ca.1976)	155141	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Formal Garden Specimen Boxwood and Rose of Sharon (ca.1985)	155143	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Formal Garden Herbaceous Beds (remnants, ca.1922)	155145	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Formal Garden Perimeter Plantings (ca.1922)	155147	Contributing					No
Formal Garden South Entrance Plantings (ca.1922)	155149	Contributing					No
Formal Garden South Entrance Hedge (ca.1946)	155151	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Lawn Specimen Trees (ca.1916, 1922)	155153	Contributing					No
Stable Courtyard Screen (ca.1916)	155155	Contributing					No
Stable Yard Vines and Groundcover (post-1945)	155157	Noncontributing – Compatible					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 16. One of the main formal garden beds looking southwest showing center rose of sharon, perennials, and mown cover, June 2007 (SUNY ESF).

Landscape Characteristic: **Circulation**

Historic Conditions:
During the Revolutionary War and Civil War periods, formal circulation within the grounds was limited to an axial walk from the front entrance of the Nelson House to Main Street and a service drive to the yard west of the house. If the site had a formal garden (most likely in the back court), there may have been garden walks. Informal dirt paths would have crossed the landscape to access the garden and open lots and other outbuildings. During the York Hall estate period, circulation was completely redesigned according to plans by Charles Gillette. The old front entrance walk, which remained through ca.1921, was replaced by a new entrance off Main Street from the terrace, and a walk and patio were built in its place. A set of orthogonal walks bordered the terrace at the site of the old Nelson yard and led down a double flight of steps to grass walks within the formal garden. Access to the garage, Wisteria Cottage, and stables from the house and garden was by a series of informal, winding stepping-stone paths. Two drives, both designed for automobiles, were built into the property: a formal oval entrance drive at the back court off Nelson Street and a utilitarian service drive to the service area off Read Street.

Post-historic and Existing Conditions:
In the National Park Service rehabilitation of the 1970s, the York Hall estate circulation was changed through removal of the oval entrance drive, redesign of the terrace walks, and addition of a brick landing and walk at the front court (Figure 17). The park did not restore the front entrance walk that existed during the Revolution and Civil War. The grass walks in the formal garden and service drive were retained, but the stepping-stone paths were removed (Figure 18). Existing circulation thus reflects the York Hall estate only in the formal garden and service area. There is no trace of circulation from the Revolutionary War and Civil War periods.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Front Court Landing and Walk (ca.1976)	155159	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Back Court Walk (ca.1976)	155161	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Terrace Walks (ca.1976)	155163	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Main Street Entrance (ca.1922)	155165	Contributing					No
Formal Garden Walks (1922)	155167	Contributing					No
Formal Garden Brick Pads (1922)	155169	Contributing					No
Formal Garden Circular Patio (ca.1946)	155171	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Carriage House Driveway (ca.1916)	155173	Contributing					No
Carriage House Side Walk and Stairs (ca.1973)	155175	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Service Drive (ca.1916)	155177	Contributing					No
Poor Potter Walks (2006)	155179	Noncontributing – Compatible					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:

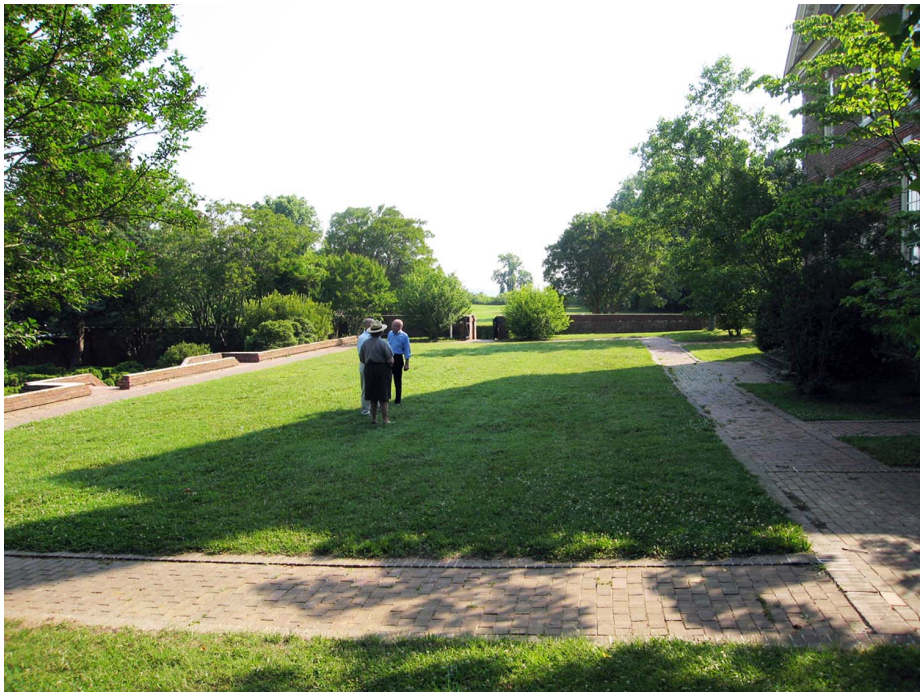


Figure 17. The terrace looking north with the Nelson House at right and steps to the formal garden at left, June 2007 (SUNY ESF).



Figure 18. The entrance to the service area looking east from Read Street with the stable at right and Wisteria Cottage at left, March 2008 (SUNY ESF).

Landscape Characteristic: Buildings and Structures

Historic Conditions:
The Nelson House, the second house on the property built in ca.1730, has remained the most prominent building in the landscape. It is a two-story, Georgian-style brick house measuring approximately 70 feet across the front and 50 feet on the sides (Figure 19). During the Revolutionary War period, it adjoined a complex of five service buildings built around the same time as the house in ca.1730. The largest of these was the combination kitchen–wash house on the north side of the yard approximately 27 feet west of the house and closer to Main Street. It was a one story frame building on a brick foundation measuring approximately 40 by 20 feet, with a gable roof and massive center chimney. Three feet west of the kitchen was the servants' quarters, a brick building measuring approximately 20 by 24 feet, and immediately to its south was a small, frame poultry house.

On the south side of the yard, 21 feet west of the house, was the dairy, a 12-foot square one-story frame building with a gable roof. Next to the dairy was the spinning house, a 12-foot square building, and west of it was the smoke house, a 16-foot square building. Along Main Street west of the service yard was a wellhouse, and to the west on lot 48 was the site of a frame dwelling that Scotch Tom may have built to satisfy deed requirements that a house be built within one year of purchase. It was most likely removed prior to the revolution. Another two such houses were on lots 49 and 50 along Read Street. The house on lot 49 was removed by 1781, and the one on lot 50 was gone by the time of the Civil War. In ca.1870, a brick retaining wall was built around the front court, and a tenant house was built along Main Street on lot 48 around the same time. This house was removed by 1900.

At the beginning of the York Hall estate period in 1914, only the Nelson House and brick retaining wall remained, along with the ruins of the kitchen–wash house. By ca.1916, three new outbuildings had been completed: the garage (carriage house), Wisteria Cottage (gardener's cottage, Figure 20), and the stable (Figure 21), along with a brick perimeter wall. Improvements in the 1920s resulted in the addition of another brick wall in the garden.

Post-historic and Existing Conditions:
A garage for Mrs. Blow was built in the back court in ca.1935, after the end of the historic period. In its rehabilitation of the grounds, the National Park Service removed Mrs. Blow's garage and the perimeter wall along Nelson Street, and lowered the front court wall and garden wall between the terrace and formal garden. The restoration of the Nelson House, completed in 1976, returned the house to its appearance during the Revolutionary War period. None of the colonial outbuildings in the yard were reconstructed.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Nelson House (ca.1730)	155181	Contributing	000223		Location	54762	Yes
Carriage House (Garage) (ca.1916)	155183	Contributing	006883		Location	54764	Yes
Wisteria Cottage (ca.1916)	155185	Contributing	006881		Location	54766	Yes
Stable (ca.1916)	155187	Contributing	006882		Location	54765	Yes
Front Court Retaining Wall (ca.1870)	155189	Contributing	006879		Asset	494911	Yes
Perimeter Walls (ca.1916)	155191	Contributing	006879		Asset	494911	Yes
Formal Garden Walls and Stairs (1922)	155193	Contributing	006880				No
Formal Garden Perimeter Bed Walls (1922)	155195	Contributing					No
Formal Garden Tree Well (ca.1922)	155197	Contributing					No
Serpentine Walls (ca.1916)	155199	Contributing					No
Stable Yard Walls (ca.1945)	155201	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
AC Utility Screen Wall (1976)	155203	Noncontributing – Compatible					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 19. The front court of the Nelson House looking southwest from Main Street, showing the perimeter wall and boxwood hedge, June 2007 (SUNY ESF).



Figure 20. The front of Wisteria Cottage looking southwest from the lawn, June 2007. The large tree is a willow oak, dating to the York hall estate period (SUNY ESF).



Figure 21. The stable looking north from the Poor Potter Site, June 2007 (SUNY ESF).

Landscape Characteristic: Views and Vistas

Historic Conditions:
During the Revolutionary War, the open landscape surrounding the house, including the garden lots, provided views across the site and surrounding village landscape, except where blocked by adjoining service buildings, William Nelson House, and the "Sessions" House. From the front court, there was a panoramic view of the York River to the north. The Nelson stores on the north side of Main Street on lot 48 may not have obscured the river view due to their elevation that was lower than the house. During the Civil War, the river view became more expansive with loss of the adjoining William Nelson House and Nelson stores during the fire of 1814. The same views existed during the Civil War.

During the York Hall estate period, the York River view was blocked by the tall boxwood hedge around the front court, which reached the second floor of the house. Views of the river were only through the second floor windows, and looking from the terrace at the Main Street entrance. A vista along the east-west axis of the formal garden, from the elevated position on the terrace, was introduced during this time, along with a view looking south across the lawn. Within the garden, there were vistas of the central sundial along each of the axial walks.

Post-historic and Existing Conditions:
In the park service rehabilitation of the grounds during the 1970s, the boxwood hedge around the front court was replaced with small plants that reopened the view to the outside. However, the growth of woods and specimen trees in the Great Valley and on lots 46 and 47 north of Main Street blocked most of the York River view. The view of the formal garden was retained, but the view across the lawn was blocked by shrubs planted during late Blow ownership. The internal garden vistas along the axial walks were lost due to removal of the focal point, the sundial column (Figure 22).

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
York River View (ca.1730)	155205	Contributing					No
Formal Garden View (1922)	155207	Contributing					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 22. The formal garden looking east showing axis with the terrace steps and entrance to the Nelson House, June 2007 (SUNY ESF).

Landscape Characteristic: Constructed Water Features

Historic, Post-historic, and Existing Conditions:
During the Revolutionary War and Civil War periods, there is no documentation of constructed water features in the landscape, although there was a well house on lot 48 along Main Street (the water was not visible in the landscape). Constructed water features, designed by Charles Gillette, were characteristic of the York Hall landscape. At the front court, a small reflecting pool constructed in ca.1921 formed the centerpiece of the surrounding forecourt garden, and a lion's head fountain was installed in ca.1930 on the formal garden wall at the landing of the stairs from the terrace. A swimming pool was built at the south entrance to the formal garden in ca.1946 after the end of the Country Place Era. These water features were all removed during the National Park Service rehabilitation of the landscape in the 1970s.

Landscape Characteristic: Small Scale Features

Historic Conditions:
There is little documentation on small-scale features during the Revolutionary War. Wood fences most likely existed along the boundaries of the Nelson property on Main, Read, and Nelson Streets, and along the Smith and Ballard lots. During the Civil War period, there was no fence around the front court, but there were most likely fences around the back court and the garden and open lots (lots 48, 49, and 50).

During the York Hall estate period, a large number of small-scale features were added to the landscape as part of plans by Charles Gillette. These generally reflected European Renaissance and Chinese styles. In the front court, a cherub statue overlooked the reflecting pool, the corners of the surrounding patio were flanked by urns on piers, and masonry benches were positioned close to the house. The entrance to the terrace from the back court was flanked by goddess statues on pedestals. In the formal garden, the center was marked with a prominent antique English sundial column and bench, and Chinese-style roofed benches were placed at the ends of the center axis walks. Four cherub statues on pedestals were along the west and north sides of the garden, and urns flanked the south opening of the garden onto the lawn. At the north end of the carriage house (garage), there was a Chinese temple bell.

Post-historic and Existing Conditions:
In 1931, when the Nelson House was open as a public museum, a bronze plaque honoring Lord Cornwallis was placed on the east side of the Nelson House. When the National Park Service acquired the Nelson House in 1968, the Blow family removed most of the garden ornaments (the Chinese benches had been replaced in the 1930s with masonry benches). Over the course of the next three decades, the park service added a variety of small-scale features, including signs, interpretive waysides, wood benches, a picnic table, and mechanical systems. The only remaining historic small scale feature is the Lord Cornwallis plaque, which was relocated to the perimeter wall in the formal garden in ca.1975 (Figure 23).

Note: The evaluations of the General Cornwallis Tablet and the Nelson House Fences have been changed in this CLI due to subsequent research. The Cornwallis Tablet was installed in 1931 on the east side of the Nelson House and moved in ca.1974 to the formal garden. It has been evaluated as undetermined pending future research to evaluate the effect of relocation on its integrity and its significance in the context of preservation and memorialization. The fences date to the park's rehabilitation projects in the 1970s and were recently replaced. They have been evaluated as non-contributing.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Formal Garden Brick Edging (ca.1922)	155209	Contributing					No
Formal Garden Irrigation Fixtures (ca.1922)	155211	Undetermined					No
Cornwallis Plaque (1931)	155213	Undetermined	081949		Asset	496603	Yes
Wood Fences (ca.1976, 2009)	155215	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Benches, Signs, Picnic Tables (ca.1980 – 2010)	155217	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Nelson House Floodlights (ca.1976)	155219	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
AC Units (1976, ca.2000)	155221	Noncontributing – Compatible					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:

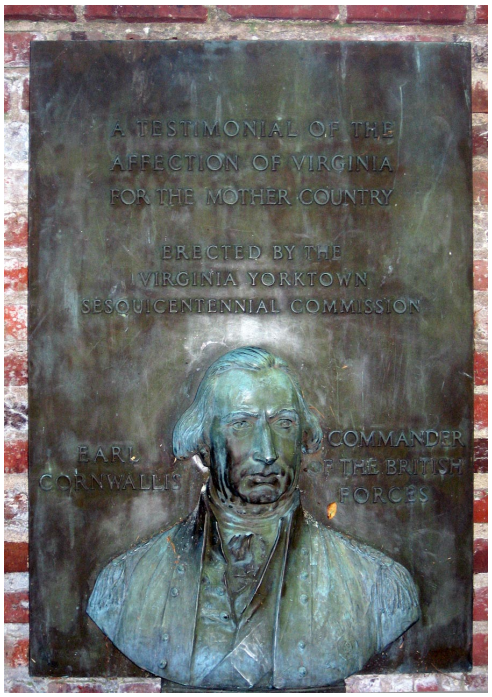


Figure 23. The Cornwallis plaque on the perimeter wall in the formal garden, October 2007 (SUNY ESF).

Landscape Characteristic: **Archeological Sites**

Historic Conditions:
As a well-maintained landscape around the time of Revolutionary War (prior to hostilities) and during the York Hall estate period, archeological sites were not characteristic of the landscape. Above-ground remnants of buildings and structures were generally removed from the landscape.

Post-historic and Existing Conditions:
The park service also followed this approach during its rehabilitation of the landscape in the 1970s. The only above-ground remnant in the landscape is the iron base of a fireplace added in the formal garden in ca.1946.

The entire site has not been evaluated for archeological resources. Archeological investigations during the restoration of the Nelson House in the early 1970s documented below-ground building remnants from the Nelson yard in the terrace. It is likely that there are other archeological resources that may provide important information about the history of the site.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Formal Garden Fireplace Base (ca.1946)	155223	Noncontributing – Compatible					No

Condition

Assessment Interval (Years): 8

Next Assessment Due Date: 09/30/2033

Condition Assessment and Impacts

Condition Assessment: Fair

Assessment Date: 09/30/2025

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

Development of a Landscape Treatment Plan is underway. Once implemented, projects will reestablish walks/paths, plant vegetation as prescribed by the treatment plan, rehabilitate benches, install mulching/ground cover, and clean/rehab plaques and statuaries to provide a better visitor experience.

Condition Assessment: Fair

Assessment Date: 09/25/2023

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

Provisional. The condition reassessment for this CLI has been delayed due to the effects of Covid-19 travel restrictions and staffing shortages. In the meantime, the most recent condition assessment will remain in place until it is reassessed. Planning and scheduling for this update will occur in FYs 2023-2024.

Condition Assessment: Fair

Assessment Date: 07/24/2012

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

The Nelson House grounds are overall in fair condition based on the health of the vegetation and repair of the built structures including the building exteriors, brick walls, and walks. All of the wood fences were replaced in 2008, and the outbuildings have relatively new wood shingle roofs. Limited maintenance staffing and funding during the growing season, however, has led to a poorly maintained appearance at times due to growth of weeds and inadequate pruning, especially in the formal garden and on the brick walks and service drive.

Impacts

Type of Impact: Deferred Maintenance

Other Impact: n/a

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Wood benches in the formal garden are missing slats and are covered in biological growth

Date Identified: 08/22/2012

Type of Impact: Deferred Maintenance

Other Impact: n/a

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Brick edging around beds in the formal garden is missing or covered

Date Identified: 08/22/2012

Type of Impact: Deferred Maintenance

Other Impact: n/a

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: The brick pad at north–south central walk of the formal garden is heaved

Date Identified: 08/22/2012

Type of Impact: Deferred Maintenance

Other Impact: n/a

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Boxwood borders in the formal garden are overgrown, damaged from snow load, missing individual plants, and suffering from die-back

Date Identified: 08/22/2012

Type of Impact: Deferred Maintenance

Other Impact: n/a

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Portions of the walk on the terrace are uneven and have broken bricks and weeds

Date Identified: 08/22/2012

Type of Impact: Deferred Maintenance

Other Impact: n/a

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Floodlights in the front court are in poor condition

Date Identified: 08/22/2012

Type of Impact: Erosion

Other Impact: n/a

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Grass on the terrace is worn or thin along sections of the walks and beneath trees

Date Identified: 08/22/2012

Type of Impact: Erosion

Other Impact: n/a

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: A desireway cuts through the hedge from Nelson Street

Date Identified: 08/22/2012

Type of Impact: Release To Succession

Other Impact: n/a

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Work yards are overgrown

Date Identified: 08/22/2012

Type of Impact: Removal/Replacement

Other Impact: n/a

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Boxwood hedge surrounding the front court is missing individual plants

Date Identified: 08/22/2012

Type of Impact: Structural Deterioration

Other Impact: n/a

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Garden (terrace) wall needs repointing and repair of parged top

Date Identified: 08/22/2012

Type of Impact: Structural Deterioration

Other Impact: n/a

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Bottom tread of the front steps is cracked

Date Identified: 08/22/2012

Type of Impact: Structural Deterioration

Other Impact: n/a

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Bricks in the retaining wall surrounding the front court are spalling

Date Identified: 08/22/2012

Type of Impact: Vegetation/Invasive Plants

Other Impact: n/a

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Service drive surface is weed-covered

Date Identified: 08/22/2012

Treatment

Stabilization Measures

Treatment Documents

Treatment Type: Undetermined

Treatment Completed: No

Title:

IRMA Link:

Narrative:

No approved landscape treatment for the Nelson House grounds is prescribed by park planning documents. The “General Management Plan for Colonial National Historical Park” (1993) indicates that historic structures and archeological sites of the colonial and revolutionary periods will be researched, preserved, and restored. Interpretation will be focused on the siege of Yorktown, with a secondary interpretive theme of colonial commerce.

Approved Treatment Costs

Cost Narrative:

Treatment Type: See CLR

Treatment Completed: No

Document Type: Cultural Landscape Report

Document Date: 2011-01-01

Title: Cultural Landscape Report for the Nelson House Grounds, Colonial National Historical Park

IRMA Link: https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2184757

Narrative:

Approved Treatment Costs

Cost Narrative:

Bibliography and Supplemental Information

Bibliography:

Citation Author	Citation Title	Year of Publication	Citation Publisher	Citation Type	Citation Location	Citation Number
Yorktown Sesquicentennial Commission	The Yorktown Sesquicentennial	1932	Washington, D. C. : U. S. Government Printing Office			
	Yorktown Historic District and Design Guidelines	2003	Report prepared for the York County Board of Supervisors			
Withington, Lothrop	Virginia Gleanings in England : Abstracts of 17th and 18thcentury English Wills and Administrations Relating to Virginia and Virginians : A Consolidation of Articles from The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography	1980	Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company			
Whittington, Gordon	Nelson House Restoration	1980	Unpublished National Park Service report			
Wenger, Mark, ed.	Architectural Analysis of the Nelson House Yorktown, Virginia, Volume III: Research Assessment	2003	Draft report prepared for the National Park Service			
Weld, Isaac	Travels through the States of North America	1968	New York: Johnson Reprint Corp. , reprint of 1799 edition			
Tischler, William H. , ed.	American Landscape Architecture: Designers and Places	1989	Washington, D. C. : Preservation Press			

Thompson, Erwin N.	Historic Resource Study: The British Defenses of Yorktown, 1781	1976	Washington, D. C. : National Park Service			
Saurdy, Barbara Wells	Gardens and Gardening in the Chesapeake 1700–1805	1998	Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press			
Rogers, Rebecca M.	Historic Structure Report Architectural Data Section, the Dependencies of the Nelson, Smith and Ballard Houses, Colonial National Historical Park Yorktown Virginia	1979	Denver: National Park Service Denver Service Center			
Riley, Edward M.	Yorktown During the Revolution.	1948	Unpublished manuscript, Colonial National Historical Park archives			
Riley, Edward M.	The Founding and Development of Yorktown, Virginia 1691–1781	1942	Ph. D. dissertation, University of Southern California			
Riley, Bryne D., John Auwaerter and Paul Fritz	Cultural Landscape Report for the Nelson House Grounds, Colonial National Historical Park	2011	National Park Service, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation			
	Restoration of a Southern Colonial Estate ‘York Hall,’ the Residence of Captain George P. Blow, Yorktown, Virginia	1921	Architectural Forum, vol. 35, no 6			

Rainey, Reuben M. and R. M. Lilly	The Country Place Era in Virginia: The Residential Site Planning of Charles F. Gillette	1992	Landscape Journal, vol. 11, no. 2, 99–115.			
Percy, George and David B. Quinn, eds.	A Discourse of the Plantation of the Southerne Colony in Virginia by the English' 1606. Written by that honorable gentleman, Master George Percy	1967	Charlottesville, VA: Published for the Association for the Preservation of Virgi			
Page, Robert, Cathy Gilbert, and Susan Dolan	Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques	1998	Washington D. C. : U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cul			
Page, Richard Channing Moore	Genealogy of the Page Family in Virginia Condensed Account of the Nelson, Walker, Pendleton, and Randolph Families	1983	Harrisonburg, VA: C. J. Carrier Company			
Parks, W.	Virginia Gazette, September 1, 1738	1738	Colonial Williamsburg Rockefeller Digital Library			
O'Hara, Lucy Hudgins	Yorktown, As I Remember	1981	Verona, VA: McClure Print Company			
National Park Service	Outline of Development, Colonial National Monument, Yorktown, Virginia	1933	Unpublished National Park Service report			
National Park Service	NPS-28: Cultural Resource Management	1998				

National Park Service	National Register Bulletin 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation	1997	Washington, D. C. : Government Printing Office			
National Park Service	List of Classified Structures, Colonial National Historical Park		National Park Service database.			
National Park Service	Draft National Register Nomination, Yorktown Historic District, Sections 7 and 8	2008	Unpublished report, Colonial National Historical Park			
National Park Service and Heritage Landscapes, Inc.	Cultural Landscape Inventory, Yorktown, Colonial National Historical Park	2006	National Park Service database and unpublished report			
Moore, Richard	Genealogy of the Page Family in Virginia	1893	New York, NY: Publishers' Print Company			
Martin, Peter	The Pleasure Gardens of Virginia From Jamestown to Jefferson	2001	Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia			
Manley, Kathleen	History of Yorktown and its Victory Celebrations	2005	Charleston, SC: The History Press			
Lossing, Benson J.	Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution: or, Illustrations of Pen and Pencil, of the History, Scenery, Biography, Relics and Traditions of the War of Independence	1850	New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers			
Longest, George C.	Genius in the Garden, Charles F. Gillette & Landscape Architecture in Virginia	1992	Richmond: Virginia State Library and Archives			

Leighton, Ann	American Gardens in the Eighteenth Century	1986	Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press			
Hatch, Charles E. , Jr.	The Nelson House and the Nelsons, General Study	1969	Washington, D. C. : National Park Service Office of History and Historic Archite			
Hatch, Charles E. , Jr.	Historic Resource Study, “York Under the Hill,” Yorktown’s Waterfront, Colonial National Historical Park, Virginia	1973	Denver, CO: National Park Service			
Hatch, Charles E. , Jr.	Historic Resource Study, Yorktown’s Main Street (from Secretary Nelson’s to the Windmill) and Military Entrenchments Close In and Around the Town of York, Colonial National Historical Park, Virginia	1974	Denver, CO: National Park Service			
Hatch, Charles E. , Jr.	The Edmund Smith House: A History	1969	Unpublished report, Colonial National Historical Park Division of History			
Hass, Paul H. , ed.	A Volunteer Nurse in the Civil War: The Letters of Harriet Douglas Whetten	1965	Wisconsin Magazine of History, vol. 48, no. 3, 205–221			
Harper, Marilyn M, and John Blow, eds.	What it Ought to Have Been: Three Case Studies of Early Restoration Work in Virginia	1989	Abridged M. A. Thesis, The George Washington University			

Grumet, Robert S.	Bay, Plain, and Piedmont: A Landscape History of the Chesapeake Heartland from 1. 3 Billion Years Ago to 2000	2002	Annapolis, Maryland: The Chesapeake Bay Heritage Context Project, National Park			
Gillette, Charles F.	Papers, ca.1880–1985. Accession 34472, Business Records Collection	1985	The Library of Virginia, Richmond			
Garrett, H. L.	Colonial National Historical Park, War of 1812	1934	Unpublished report, National Park Service			
Flickenger, B. Floyd	Historical Methods Used in the Development of Colonial National Monument.	1936	William and Mary Quarterly Historical Magazine, 2nd Series, vol. 16, no. 3			
Fischer, Lisa	Yorktown Archaeological/ Historical Overview and Assessment	2004	Unpublished report, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Department of Archaeologic			
Evans, Emory G.	The Nelsons: A Biographical Study of a Virginia Family in the Eighteenth Century	1957	Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia			
Egloff, Keith and Deborah Woodward	First People: The Early Indians of Virginia, 2nd edition	2006	Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press in association with the Virginia D			
Dendrochronology Inc.	Final Report: The Last Year of Tree Growth for Selected Timbers Within The Nelson House As Derived By Key-Year Dendrochronology	1995	Unpublished report prepared for the National Park Service			

Chappell, Edward A, with Mark R. Winger, Willie Graham, and Peter B. Sandbeck	Cole–Digges House Historic Structure Report	1993	the Colonial Williamsburg foundation for the National Park Service			
Brock, Robert Alonzo	The Nelson House, Yorktown, Virginia	1881	Magazine of American History, vol. 7, 46–58			
Brinkley, M. Kent and Gordon W. Chappell	The Gardens of Colonial Williamsburg	1996	Colonial Williamsburg Foundation			
Barka, Norman F.	Archeology of the Nelson, Smith and Ballard Houses, Yorktown, Virginia	1978	Unpublished report prepared for the National Park Service by Southside Historica			
Acomb, Evelyn M. , ed.	The Journal of Baron Von Closen	1953	The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series, vol. 10, no. 2, 196–236			

Landscape Documents:

File Name	Date	Attachment Type
COLO_GreenSp-Moore-Nelson-Village_CLI Updates Notes_2025.pdf		

Source