



Bound in a Brilliant Tide

The History of Mulberry Island, Virginia



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On the north shore of the James River, 20 miles west of the Chesapeake Bay, the marshy plains of Mulberry Island rise above the gentle tide. Actually a peninsula bound by the James and Warwick Rivers, Mulberry Island is a picturesque fixture of Virginia's Tidewater region whose natural beauty is enriched by thousands of years of human history. More than 230 known archaeological sites on Mulberry Island speak to its storied past, revealing the traces of those who have called its shores home throughout the millennia. Tales of war, rebellion, and conquest stand alongside those of peace, cohesion, and innovation. But to start at the beginning requires a trip far, far back in time, nearly 10,000 years before Europeans ever so much as dreamed of Virginia.





The Original Settlers

Native Americans migrated to Mulberry Island 8,500 to 10,000 years ago during what archaeologists call the Early Archaic Period. During this time, the planet's warming climate transformed the Chesapeake's tidal rivers into flourishing estuaries rich with plant and animal life. Mulberry Island's earliest inhabitants were likely drawn to its marshes during the times of year when resources were most abundant. Moving according to the seasons was a common practice among Early Archaic people, who established multi-family base camps near reliable water



Native American projectile points, ceramics, and stone tools found on Mulberry Island.

Image courtesy Fort Eustis Cultural Resources Management Program.

sources in areas where food and raw materials could be procured and processed before moving on. These seasonal occupations were often surrounded by smaller outlying procurement camps from which a greater variety and quantity of materials could be

acquired more efficiently (Custer 1990; Opperman and Polk 1989). To date, only a few Early Archaic camps have been discovered on Mulberry Island, serving as the only known testaments to the men and women who first called it home (Brown et al. 1986; Higgins et al. 1989; Hodges and Hodges 1994).

Only some of the stone projectile points archaeologists find are actually arrowheads. The bow and arrow did not reach this area until a little over a thousand years ago, and many of the artifacts commonly called arrowheads are actually spear tips or knife blades.

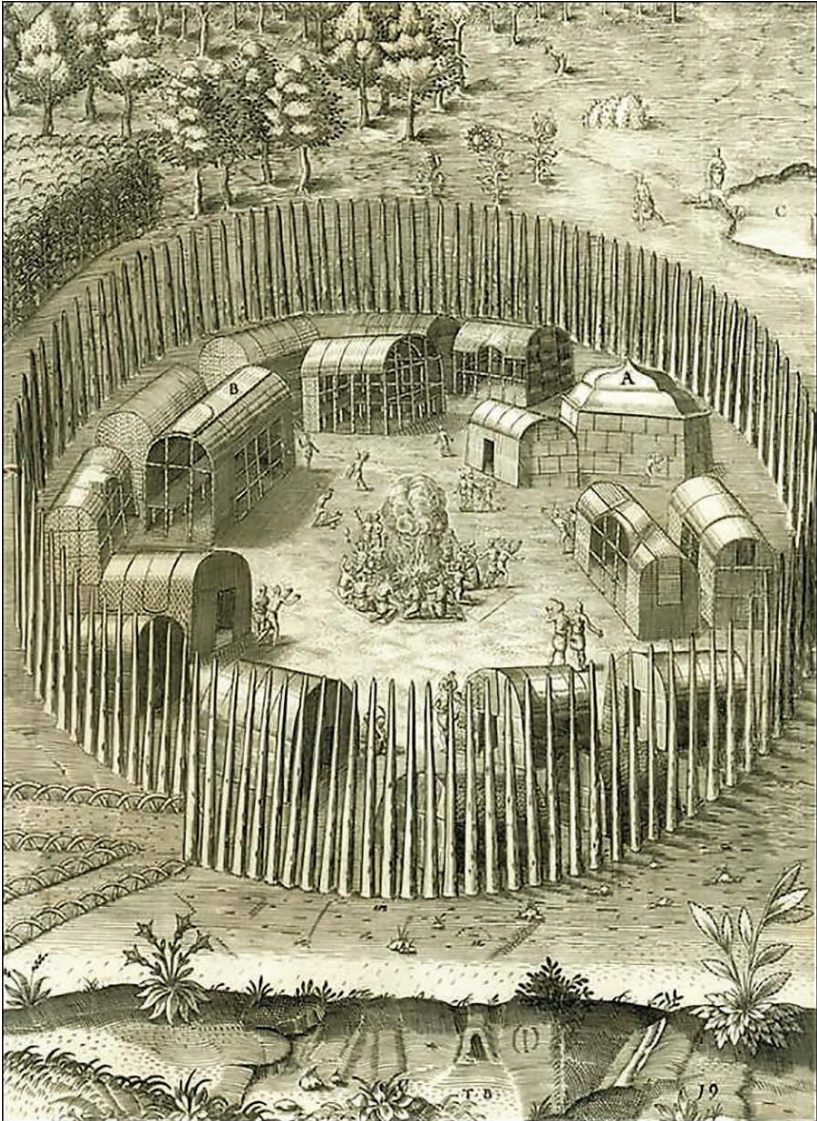
The Early Archaic Period ushered in millennia of human activity on Mulberry Island. The use of base and procurement camps continued to be the mainstay of Native American settlement during the Middle Archaic Period, which lasted between 8,500 and 5,000 years ago. As talented innovators, Middle Archaic peoples crafted new tools for hunting and fishing as well as creative instruments for processing plants (Egloff and McAvoy 1989). While game, fish, and plant foods remained reliable sources of nutrition, seasonal harvests of shellfish and hickory nuts became increasingly important to feed the growing populations (Egloff and McAvoy 1989). Archaeologists have uncovered several Middle Archaic campsites on Mulberry Island so far, all of which gave their inhabitants easy access to the island's rich marshlands.

Perhaps as a result of an increasing food supply, populations continued to grow into the Late Archaic Period between 5,000 and 3,200 years ago. Groups of families still occupied seasonal base camps where fish and shellfish could be readily taken, but the number of men, women, and children within these camps steadily rose. With greater population density, social life may have become more complex as political leaders stepped forward to help direct group activities (Dent 1995; Mouer 1991). Archaeological evidence suggests early forms of horticulture may have developed to bolster food supplies, and the discovery of storage pits hints that some foods were being stockpiled to safeguard against scarcity (Dent 1995; Egloff and McAvoy 1989). Nearly a dozen Late Archaic sites have been found so far on Mulberry Island, including numerous procurement and base camps.

Populations continued to thrive as shellfish and plants grew more important as dietary staples during the Early Woodland Period from 3,200 to 1,700 years ago. With more people able to obtain and store more food, societies gradually became more sedentary, occupying particular areas for longer periods of time. The development of ceramic technology is a hallmark of this period, heralding a great enhancement from the hide, plant, and stone cooking and storage vessels from earlier periods. Over 20 Early Woodland sites have been identified on Mulberry Island to date, including procurement camps and the larger base camps where massive piles of discarded oyster shells still stand as evidence of the estuaries' importance and the Native American talents for harvesting them.

The use of central base camps and procurement camps remained the model for settlement during the Middle Woodland Period from 1,700 to 1,000 years ago, but growing populations and food surpluses probably made social life at those camps more complex. Hunting, fishing, and plant gathering continued to be the primary methods of obtaining food, though horticulture was practiced to a limited extent as well. While authority figures probably arose before this period, some individuals likely found new power in the emerging trade networks that linked distant Middle Woodland societies to one another. Goods from remote settlements began to pour into the Chesapeake region along developing trade routes spanning hundreds or even thousands of miles. Copper was imported from as far away as the Upper Great Lakes region, and cargos of exotic stone materials were acquired from Ohio's famed Adena culture (Dent 1995; McLearen 1992; Potter 1982). At least two dozen Middle Woodland sites have been found on Mulberry Island, most of which are base camps into which some of this trade may have flowed.

In the final centuries before European contact, local societies flourished. During the Late Woodland Period from about 1,000 to 400 years ago, Native American focus on horticulture and agriculture grew. Crops such as corn, beans, gourds, and squash were farmed, allowing communities to expand and become more sedentary instead of relocating with the seasons. Large settlements, shielded by imposing palisades from the increasing threat of warfare, sprang up throughout the sprawling wilderness. Behind the palisade's sharpened shafts, keen political leaders orchestrated trade, governed daily life, and expanded their influence. Centered near present-day West Point and stretching between the Rappahannock and James rivers, the Powhatan chiefdom was almost certainly the most influential political force



Theodore de Bry's 1590 engraving, "The Town of Pomeiooc," after a John White watercolor.

Image courtesy the Virginia Historical Society.

within the vicinity of Mulberry Island (Feest 1978; Turner 1992). Though no palisaded villages have been found on the island, at least eight camps from this time period have been discovered and show earlier forms of settlement persisted, while large villages and political networks coalesced elsewhere.

Such was the picture of Native American life when Europeans began exploring the Chesapeake in the late 1500s. Peaceful coexistence between Europeans and Native Americans was put to the test when Jamestown was established in 1607. Though one of the maiden ships was attacked before ever making landfall, hostility gave way to hospitality under Powhatan chief Wahunsonacock, who may have hoped to absorb the English into his society.



Theodor De Bry's 1590 engraving, "The Arrival of the English."

Image courtesy Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

During the next two years, it became obvious the English did not intend to leave or make an effort to build native alliances through intermarriage. They exploited Powhatans' lands and pressed farther into their territory, and in turn, the colonists' livestock and crops were destroyed. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the English responded

in kind. A period of peace only came when John Rolfe, early Mulberry Island landowner and father of Virginia tobacco, married Wahunsonacock's captured daughter Pocahontas.



Powhatan sitting in state. Detail from John Smith's 1624 [1612] "Map of Virginia."

Image courtesy Library of Congress.

However, peace was frail as these cultures confronted one another in the Virginia wilderness. After Wahunsonacock died, Opechancanough (likely Wahunsonacock's brother) became chief and had little regard for the increasingly offensive English and their claims on Native American territory. Opechancanough was patient, crafting his revenge with care and tact (Library of Congress 2015). When at last his vengeance blossomed, terror poured across the colony, and even the fields of Mulberry Island were spattered with blood.



Colonists, Crops, and Catastrophes

At the time of the colonists' arrival, Mulberry Island was part of the Powhatan chiefdom's Kecoughtan territory and may have been occasionally visited by some of the local Algonquians (Linebaugh 1991). The English simply called it Mulberry Island for the vast numbers of mulberry trees pressing against its banks, and included it as part of the James City Corporation by 1624/5 and by 1634 as part of Warwick River County (later shortened to Warwick County; Richter 2000).

On June 7, 1610, after three discouraging years of starvation, disease, and death in Jamestown, Governor Thomas Gates ordered the colony to be abandoned in favor of returning to England. Drifting on the James River tide, they reached Land's End at Mulberry Island's southern point the

Sidney King's "Arrival of Lord Delaware."

Image courtesy
National Park
Service, Colonial
National Historical
Park, Jamestown
Collection.



following day. It was there they spied Captain Edward Brewster's longboat bringing word that Lord De La Warr was close behind with new colonists and fresh provisions. They returned to Jamestown on June 10 with De La Warr as their new governor after literally pivoting Virginia's history off Mulberry Island's sandy coast (Richter 2000; Smoke Screen 1929).

Before there was tobacco, there was silk. Colonial Virginia was eventually dominated by tobacco farms, but only after repeated attempts to create silk plantations failed. Mulberry Island's importance for the colonial silk industry stemmed from the vast numbers of mulberry trees already growing there. Silk worms will only eat the leaves of mulberry trees, and their abundance on the island made it an attractive place for plantations. However, tobacco proved less labor-intensive and more profitable, and the tide turned from silk to smoke.

We do not know when colonists first came to Mulberry Island, though it is possible that some arrived in hopes of establishing silk plantations as early as 1614, taking advantage of the island's plentiful mulberry trees (Smoke Screen 1929). Mulberry

Captain William Peirce left England for Virginia aboard the *Seaventure*, but a violent hurricane wrecked the vessel off Bermuda in July 1609, inspiring William Shakespeare to write *The Tempest*. After nine months, the survivors had constructed two small ships, *Patience* and *Deliverance*, from salvaged material and island cedar. Miraculously, they successfully sailed to Virginia, arriving in Jamestown in 1610 (Vollertsen and Vollertsen 1970).



THE TEMPEST.

ABOVE: Header from the *First Folio* version of *The Tempest*, 1623.
Image courtesy of the Folger Library.

trees are essential to silk production, and Tidewater's abundant supply strongly appealed to colonial powers. Virginians were legally forbidden from destroying the trees, and by 1619, the Virginia General Assembly required all colonists to plant at least six of them by 1626. However, the industry did not flourish, and vast fields of tobacco soon plowed under the ancient mulberry groves (Porter 1936).

The earliest known English settlement came in 1617 or 1618 when indentured servants arrived on the Stanley Hundred plantation's 1,000 sprawling acres. We know little about these men and women, other than that they were bound into service for a number of years during which they labored intensively for freedom and survival. Despite the plantation's vastness, its population was small enough to have no representative at the House of Burgesses' first session in 1619 (Richter 2000).

During that year, William Spencer, John Rolfe, and William Peirce all patented several hundred acres on the island under the Great Charter's headright system, which allowed individuals to claim a certain amount of land in exchange for bringing colonists to Virginia (Morton 1960; Richter 2000). Wealthy landowners probably did not live on the island initially, instead sending servants to work their immense tracts. Isolated from power and protection in the pressing, alien wilds of Virginia, these men and women were vulnerable. How the Native Americans initially responded to their presence is not known, but whatever peace may have lingered in the marshy lowlands vanished one horrifying Friday morning.

After recruiting Native Americans from among the Powhatan, Chickahominy, Wicocomoco, Piscataway, and Macotchtank groups (Feest 1978), Opechancanough organized an unprecedented attack. For several relatively peaceful years, Native Americans were considered trusted neighbors, often freely entering colonial homes throughout the approximately 80 contemporary English settlements. Opechancanough used this to his advantage to screen his desire to expel the colonists and force their return to England.

On March 22, 1622, Opechancanough's recruits entered colonists' homes and fields with counterfeit good will. Once they were among the colonists, an attack unfurled. Men, women, and children were slaughtered where they stood, and within an hour, nearly 350 colonists lay battered and lifeless (Morton 1960). Among the slain were six Mulberry Island residents: Thomas



Matthaeus Merian's 1628 engraving, "Indian Massacre of 1622."

Peirce, his wife and child, two men, and a French boy, all killed at Thomas' house that morning (Hatch 1957). Terror-stricken, Mulberry Islanders abandoned their fields, and the English indiscriminately assaulted any Native Americans they could find (Morton 1960; Richter 2000). Even as late as 1629, those who resettled Mulberry Island were ordered to attack nearby Native American groups throughout the summer of 1630 (Jester 1987 [1956]). Peaceful cohabitation on the cohabitation on the Virginia Peninsula (hereafter the Peninsula), it seemed, was evaporating like the river fogs.

Within three years of the attack, settlers returned to Mulberry Island armed with 42 swords, 27 guns, and 22 pieces of armor (Dorman 2004). The 1624/5 Muster noted 30 people among 13 households, including 13 of William Peirce's servants, and the population slowly grew. The new arrivals lived much as their predecessors did, although they may have taken some solace in the island's new religious presence. Before September 1627, a church was erected at Stanley Hundred on Baker's Neck near Mulberry Point (Mason 1945). Likely a modest timber chapel, it probably fell victim

to a fearsome 1667 hurricane (Nugent 1934-1998). A larger brick church was built at the north end of the island following a 1661/2 act requiring each parish to have a decent church, and this chapel stood into the 20th century (Curry 2007; Ivy 1997a; Mason 1945). If religious comforts helped ease fears of living in so defenseless a place, they may also have helped cope with the conditions such a life entailed.

Those who resettled Mulberry Island largely consisted of servants and slaves who worked the fields and lived rustic, modest lives. They had to contend with labor-intensive tobacco crops, impoverished living conditions, and dim hopes for improvement. Little about their lives is known, although one account attests to the occasional harshness of their treatment. In 1640, six of William Peirce's servants were convicted of attempting to escape to the Dutch plantations, suggesting their lives on Mulberry Island were strenuous. Their punishments were severe; some were whipped, others had their cheeks branded, and some were forced to work in shackles for a number of years (Vollertsen and Vollertsen 1970).

Though Mulberry Island's population was large enough by 1629 to send two representatives to the House of Burgesses, its society did not significantly change until the 1630s and 1640s (Jester 1987 [1956]; Morgan 1975). Heralded by Council member William Peirce's move around 1635, wealthy landowners began settling on their Mulberry Island tracts (Morgan 1975). Indentured servants and slaves were joined by elite planters, and gaps between social classes rapidly widened. Such a society was founded on a need for inexpensive labor, and that need was born out of an obsession with tobacco.

Indeed, tobacco was the foundation of Virginia's success, but relying on it came with risks. As the colony's primary export, volatile markets or poor harvests could severely threaten the base of Virginia's wealth. In one wretched year, a series of disasters would prove just how quickly the colony's economic lifeblood could be poisoned.

In 1651 and 1660, the English Crown passed the Navigation Acts, dissolving trade with Dutch merchants and threatening Virginia's fortunes. By 1664, the Dutch began retaliating, and the General Assembly ordered 25 Warwick County men to construct a fort at Point Comfort to protect against a Dutch naval assault. Defensive earthworks and accommodations for 115 men were built under the supervision of Miles Cary and his son Thomas, both with



CULTIVATION OF TOBACCO.

“Cultivation of Tobacco,” a 19th century engraving from David B. Scott’s 1878 A School History of the United States.

landholding ties to Mulberry Island (Morgan 1975). When they were at last put to the test in 1667, Virginia was already in the grip of disaster.

In April 1667, a catastrophic hailstorm wreaked havoc on tobacco and corn crops, and most of what survived the icy bombardment succumbed to an ensuing 40 straight days of rain. Their economy weakened, Virginians already faced a bleak year exporting what little they could. When at last the rainclouds cleared, violence loomed on the horizon.

In June 1667, the Dutch sailed into the James River, attacking the newly constructed fort at Point Comfort. They burned six Virginian ships and captured the British frigate *Elizabeth* while deceptively flying British colors. The assault left Miles Cary, one of Virginia’s wealthiest landholders, dead. With the loss of the ships, crop export became even more difficult, but the year was only half through. One final demoralizing blow came in August when a destructive hurricane descended upon the James River, leaving settlements in ruin and spirits discouraged (McKnight 1959; Morgan 1975).



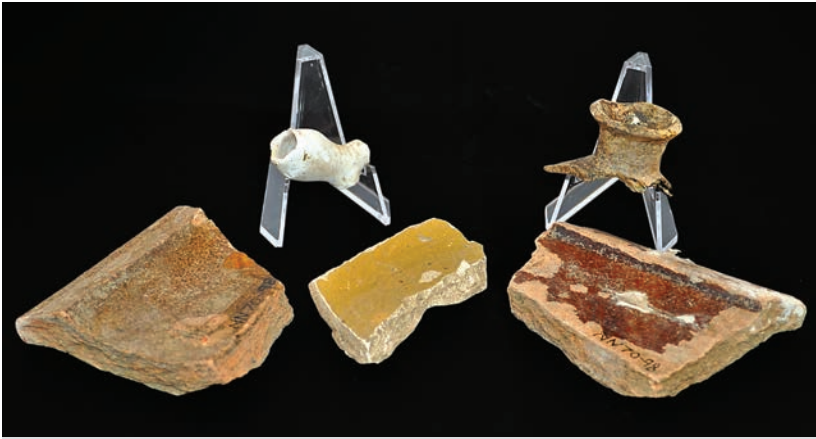
**Sidney King's,
"Bacon's
Rebellion."**

Image courtesy
National Park
Service, Colonial
National Historical
Park, Jamestown
Collection.

Troubles in the colony continued in the next decade, most notably during Nathaniel Bacon's 1676 rebellion against Virginia authority. Even after Governor Berkeley refused to commission him to attack Native Americans, Bacon defiantly launched a series of assaults. Though he was declared a rebel, he was acquitted. This gained him some popularity, and when he challenged Royal political policies, he was again labeled a rebel. He and his supporters captured and burned Jamestown to the ground, but the rebellion quickly collapsed after Bacon's sudden death.

While Warwick County played little role in these activities given its distance from Jamestown, a petition was sent to Governor Berkeley begging pardon for any wrongdoing on the county's part (McKnight 1959). One Mulberry Island resident did not get off so easily. Christopher Muschamp likewise requested a pardon for his role in the rebellion, but the written request was not enough. Muschamp had to appear before the General Court, fall to his knees, and beg forgiveness with a rope tied around his neck (Richter 2000). His plea was successful and he remained a Mulberry Island resident (Richter 2000).

As the 17th century drew to a close, a rise in the use of slave labor probably changed Mulberry Island's demographics, as it did elsewhere in the colony. It is estimated that Virginia's African-American population ranged between 1,000 and 3,000 in 1674, but rocketed to between 6,000 and 10,000 by century's end (Morgan 2003). Nearly all of these individuals came to Virginia



17th century artifacts from Mulberry Island.

Image courtesy Fort Eustis Cultural Resources Management Program.

enslaved, as had their predecessors, but the slave trade owed its growing momentum to new social and economic changes in the British Empire.

Indentured servants, who comprised much of Virginia's labor, were less inclined to immigrate to the New World given an improved political atmosphere in England and a declining reputation for the harsh, dangerous life in the Virginia colony. The enslaved labor pool had also declined by mid-century, as most Virginian slaves were acquired from the Dutch, whom the Navigation Acts excluded from British trade. Under these conditions, the Crown sponsored the Royal African Company in 1672 to monopolize the slave trade, and many Virginians took advantage of the brutal enterprise. With land both cheap and plentiful, and life expectancy rising, purchasing enslaved Africans became an attractive option rather than recruiting indentured servants (Morgan 2003). In the final decades of the 17th century, slaves were simply seen as the better choice for farm labor, and this perspective grew steadily throughout the 18th century.

On Mulberry Island, there were at least 15 plantations by the late 17th century, and settlements may have changed from a scatter of slave and servant houses to more centralized and self-contained plantations. Denbigh Plantation, across the Warwick River from Mulberry Island, was an example

of self-sufficiency, replete with a tannery, dairy, cobbler shop, weaving and spinning house, barns, and servants' quarters (Whichard 1959).

Since most people lived on dispersed farms, towns did not thrive in the area. During the late 17th century, the General Assembly tried to ensure towns were established in each county, but with limited success. In Warwick County, Warwick Town had a general store, tobacco warehouse, courthouse, tavern, and some houses during this period, but it never thrived. The settlement failed simply because it did not fit with the lifestyles of the people it was meant to attract (Diffenderfer 1937; McKnight 1959). It was tobacco—not towns—that united people.

Mulberry Island has at least 46 archaeological sites occupied during the 17th and early 18th centuries. Most of Mulberry Island's 17th century sites tend to be small clusters of domestic artifacts as opposed to structural remains. Because most dwellings of the time were constructed by driving large wooden posts into the ground for support, the only traces often remaining are the dark stains these posts and their pits have left in the soil. These archaeological features are well represented at a site that may be associated with William Peirce's servants. At least one wealthier homestead has been identified, a finding in support of historic maps which suggest that Mulberry Island's elites preferred to situate their homes near the shoreline (Alblinger and Keffert 2000). This not only placed them next to the waterways that served as primary transportation and economic routes, but also allowed them to associate with the symbols of power, control, and connection such routes represented. Many of Mulberry Island's other homes, in the possession of economically disadvantaged people, were located farther inland, away from the power and connectivity that came with living along the James River. Some impoverished homesteads were located near the shore, but these are exceptions to the general settlement trend (Gilmore 1999; Polk et al. 1998).



A New View of the World

Throughout most of the 18th century, Mulberry Island remained largely agrarian. Small and mid-sized farms turned to grain crops and animal husbandry, leaving costly tobacco cultivation to the elite planters (Fesler 1993). By the early 18th century, some residents even owned lots in Yorktown on the opposite side of the Peninsula, including merchants and bricklayers, suggesting that the area's growing population and economy allowed some to pursue interests beyond the farmlands (Richter 2000).

A visitor to Mulberry Island at this time would have seen scattered farms and plantations, many of which clustered around the waterways. As the primary transportation routes, rivers and streams were the initial sites of settlement. But throughout the 18th century, roadways began snaking through the peninsular wilderness, opening new areas for agriculture (Albinger and Keffert 2000). Many of Mulberry Island's eighteenth century archaeological sites are located farther inland toward the fledgling network of colonial roads, which brought greater connectivity to formerly remote places. Mulberry Island Road is one of the surviving colonial thoroughfares, and, more or less, follows its original alignment (Dunn and Emigholz 2012).

Waterways, however, still dominated. Public ferries operated on Mulberry Island, connecting it to Isle of Wight County on the James River's south shore. Miles Wills petitioned the House of Burgesses in 1727 to keep such a ferry, taking up a similar petition again in 1742 before being appointed the ferry's keeper with permission to operate a tavern at his home near the landing (Dunn 2002; Richter 2000). Operation of the ferry passed to his son, John George Wills, whose stepson, Carter Crafford, took over in the 1780s and 1790s. After the capitol moved to Richmond, the ferry's use

declined, and in 1792 the General Assembly agreed with Crafford that it should be discontinued (Hening 2014 [1823]).

Mulberry Island's 18th century residents likely reflected larger trends visible throughout Warwick County. As populations increased, so did the ratio of enslaved African Americans to whites. In 1699, Warwick County's 1,362 residents included approximately 200 slaves. By 1775, more than 60 percent of the population was of African descent, and in 1782, 84 percent of Warwick households owned at least one slave (Fesler 1993; Richter 2000). Such a sharp increase in its enslaved populace turned race into a defining feature of Warwick County society.

But social distinctions were not just ethnic, they were economic as well. Land ownership played a large part in a family's prosperity and social mobility, but on Mulberry Island, land was generally unavailable at this time. Many 17th century landowners entailed their tracts, meaning their land passed to subsequent generations who were legally forbidden to sell it. Though several 18th century descendants petitioned for the right to sell entailed land in pursuit of more fertile plantations elsewhere, much of Mulberry Island's land remained with its original owner's descendants. (Richter 2000). In 1713, Warwick had only 124 landowners; by 1782, there were 113 (Richter 2000). The lack of available land stalled many islanders' hopes of becoming landowners, and some simply left to chase their dreams in other lands.

It is clear that Mulberry Island's population continued to consist largely of tenant farmers, small freeholders, and slaves. Differentiating enslaved households from poor farmsteads in Tidewater can be difficult archaeologically, given the similar material culture available to these groups. However, the presence of small sub-floor pits with a dirt base has been offered as a way to distinguish the domestic sites of the enslaved from impoverished free people (Samford 2007). Often used for storage, these household features are also visible on European-American domestic sites, but they are generally larger and have artificial floors. Enslaved Africans transported their own versions of the pit to the New World, and this may be one of the few ways to come close to discerning their homes from free, but poor, families.

Dozens of 18th century domestic sites have been documented on Mulberry Island, most of which represent the modest homes of tenant farmers and/or

**18th century
artifacts from
Mulberry Island.**

Image courtesy
Fort Eustis
Cultural Resources
Management
Program.



the enslaved. Because documentary evidence for Mulberry Island is scarce, archaeological sites provide one of the only means for investigating the lives of its residents. For example, how do the lifestyles of free and enslaved groups differ, and what shared conditions did they face? Alternatively, these sites could be used to determine how the escalating differences between the elite and poor on Mulberry Island are reflected in their material culture.

Questions like these are important to ask because the social character of Tidewater underwent interesting changes during the 18th century. During the 17th century, most individuals possessed similar kinds of material goods, and social status was reflected by the quantity of these goods rather than the variety. Eventually the wealthy sought to materially distinguish themselves from their disadvantaged counterparts by acquiring more luxurious items, creating a starker classist distinction between the elite and the common planters (Hudgins 1996).

This process coincided with a larger shift in social ideals, replacing medieval notions of communalism with more modern ideals of individualism. This new perspective emphasized order and reason, categorizing people and space into neat divisions. Gaps between genders, races, and classes began to widen and domestic space became increasingly symmetrical, specialized, and segregated (Deetz 1993; Johnson 1998).



Matthew Jones house.

Image courtesy Fort Eustis Cultural Resources Management Program.

Mulberry Island's Matthew Jones House embodies this shift in worldview. Constructed on land originally patented by William Peirce in 1619, it was initially a post-in-ground timber structure with two large, surviving brick chimneys built by Matthew Jones (Dunn 2008; FEHAA 1996). Extant timbers from the original structure were analyzed using dendrochronology (tree ring dating) and found to have been cut in 1725, giving an approximate date for the building's construction (Dunn 2008).

Around the time of Matthew's death in 1727 or 1728, most of the timbers were replaced with brick, a detached brick kitchen was built, the fireplaces made smaller, and a square entrance tower was added to the front (Linebaugh 1991; Porter 1936). These changes reflected new ideas of social order permeating the Chesapeake. The detached kitchen and smaller fireplaces meant that servant activities were physically separated from the owner's home, and the space repurposed for entertaining. The tower allowed the owner to greet guests in a purpose-built space, bringing order to the home's use and access (Dunn 2008; Linebaugh 1991). Though the kitchen was demolished and a second story added in 1893, structural reflections of 18th century social ideals are still visible.



Early 18th century timbers in the Matthew Jones house.

Most archaeological excavations near the house have revealed only small areas of intact historic deposits. Archaeological features associated with the home's construction/remodeling were identified as well as historic artifacts such as ceramics, bricks, and nails.

The Matthew Jones House (ca. 1725) may be the oldest building under the care of the Department of Defense. The public can visit the house on Fort Eustis by contacting the Fort Eustis Cultural Resources Management Program at christopher.l.mcdaid.civ@mail.mil.

Mulberry Island saw no Revolutionary War military engagements, and Warwick County only experienced two minor clashes (McKnight 1959). Even though Mulberry Island was spared from battle, it still was not safe from the British. Throughout the war, many farming communities struggled to supply the Continental Army with food, but British appetites were also demanding. The farms on Mulberry Island were repeatedly raided by small landing parties, making life doubly difficult for those forced to feed two opposing armies (Davis 1977).

One such raid was undertaken by a dozen men under orders from Lord Dunmore, Virginia's last colonial governor. A December 2, 1775 Virginia Gazette article tells how the men landed on Mulberry Island and went to Benjamin Wells' house. Here they threatened, abused, and robbed him, carrying off "all of his most valuable effects, and...two Negro women" (Virginia Gazette 1775:3).

Lord Dunmore had been amassing loyalist forces in an effort to combat patriotic sentiments, and even promised freedom to the slaves and indentured servants who would join in his fight. Warwick County's citizenry grew fearful of such raids and their own inability to repulse them. Four days after Lord Dunmore's raid, the Warwick County Committee of Safety petitioned the Fourth Virginia Convention to send 125 militiamen to strengthen the county's guard of 100 "badly armed" men (Richter 2000; Warwick Petition 1775). A list of the losses residents suffered during the war echoes those of Benjamin Wells in which supplies, slaves, and other property were plundered from families throughout Warwick County (General Assembly 1782-1783). Such was the case for many American citizens, and even once the British left, trouble was far from over.



Pastoral Life and the Drums of War

When the Revolution finally ended, economic depression followed in its wake. Wartime pillaging and tobacco cultivation exhausted the land, and the capital's 1780 relocation from Williamsburg to Richmond pushed Mulberry Island to the social fringes. The area's wealth and political influence buckled, and many abandoned Tidewater for opportunities farther west (Davis 1977; Linebaugh 1991). Some of Mulberry Island's elite landholders followed suit, subdividing vast estates and leasing the smaller parcels to tenant farmers (Fesler 1993). These tenants spanned the socioeconomic scale, from the very wealthy to the impoverished. At the landowner's discretion, the rent could be paid in cash or through sharecropping, in which up to a third of a tenant's crop was paid to the landowner as rent. While theoretically a mutually beneficial system, sharecropping often left the tenant severely disadvantaged while the landowner profited handsomely.

A glimpse of tenant farmer life emerges from a profile of living conditions documented for neighboring Elizabeth City County (Hughes 1975). Here, more than one third of all land was owned by absentee landlords, and nearly half of all free rural households were composed of tenants. A tenant's personal wealth varied, and some lessees owned large numbers of cattle and slaves. More than half of all tenant households enslaved at least one person, suggesting some measure of disposable income, though it would have generally been modest. In many cases, tenant farming hampered social mobility, as many young people had to work their family's rented lands for longer periods before earning enough money to rent land of their own. This meant land use practices had to be economically optimized. On Mulberry Island, as elsewhere in Tidewater, the small farms tended to grow a variety

of crops and many utilized the salt marsh environs for cattle grazing (Hughes 1975).

Dozens of archaeological sites occupied during the 19th century attest to the presence of these tenant families on Mulberry Island. While their homes leave little trace archaeologically, their refuse was scattered near their homes and can tell a fuller story of residents' lives. Interestingly, regional sites of the period reveal goods that once had only been associated with elite households, indicating that items associated with genteel society became cheaper and more readily available, allowing common farmers to imitate the tastes of their wealthier counterparts. Even if the opportunity to become one of the elite was not forthcoming, the ability to emulate the wealthy, in some measure, was possible (Martin 1994).

Mulberry Island in the first half of the 19th century was home to tenants, enslaved and free African Americans, and some landowners (Fesler 1993). The small farms they occupied were largely self-sufficient, many boasting a main dwelling, barn, kitchen, meat and corn houses, and dwellings for enslaved laborers (JBLE 2013).

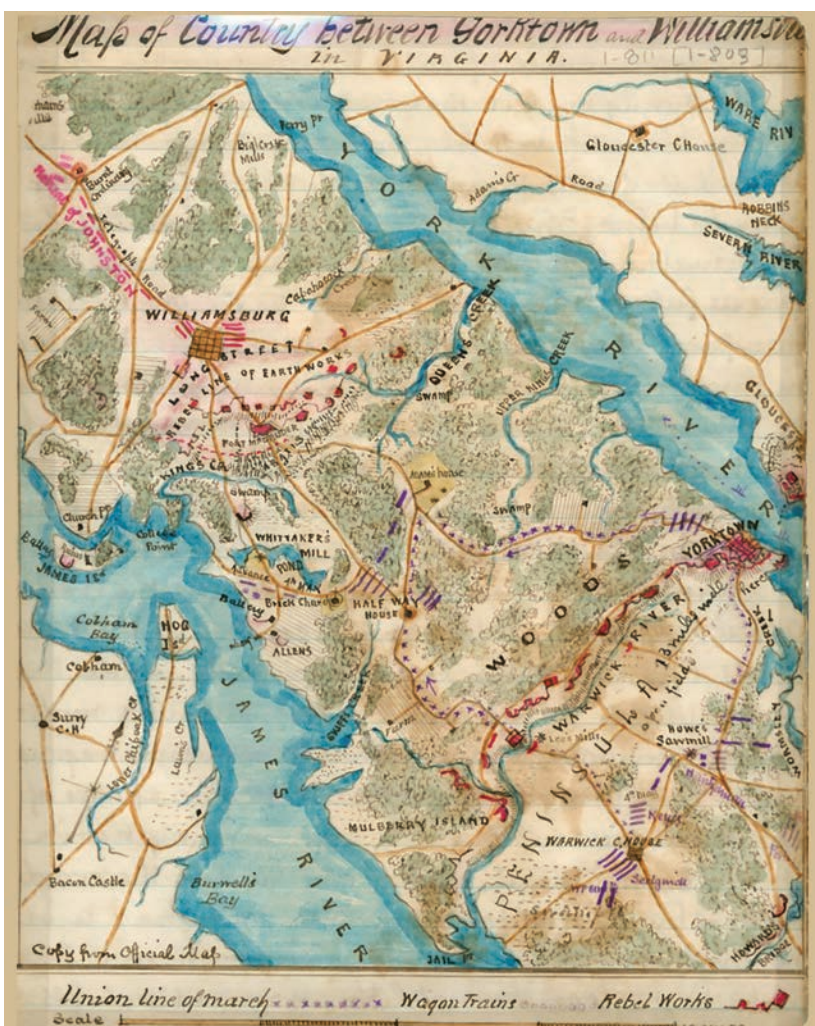


19th century artifacts from Mulberry Island.

In the decades before the Civil War, advances in agriculture revitalized the soil and, to some extent, the economy that depended on it. Soil nutrient additives and smaller farm sizes complemented the mixed crop system in use throughout much of Warwick County (Fesler 1993; Linebaugh 1991). At this time, Mulberry Island included a few large plantations surrounded by a collection of dispersed small farms. These may have included barns, outbuildings, slave quarters, and a modest farmhouse, very likely of frame or log construction (JBLE 2013).

The county's population slumped initially following the Revolutionary War, but by 1810 had rebounded to 1,835, including 1,120 slaves and 18 free African Americans (1810 Census, Vollertsen and Vollertsen 1977). It gradually declined to 1,456 people in 1840, its lowest since the Revolutionary War, but reached 1,740 at the dawn of the Civil War (1840 and 1860 Census, Vollertsen and Vollertsen). By the time of the 1860 Census, Warwick County's population reflected increasing economic diversity. The 1850 Census listed "farmer" as the most common occupation, followed by overseer, laborer, and craftsman. The 1860 census reflects the same trend, and there are increasingly more woodcutters, carpenters, teamsters, and blacksmiths among various other cottage industries (1860 Census, Vollertsen and Vollertsen).

These Census data also reveal Warwick County's free African-American population increased during the first half of the 19th century, reaching a high of 27 at the time of the 1830 Census. Though small in number, this free community foreshadowed things to come. As early as 1831, Warwick legislators in the Assembly voted in favor of emancipation, though the motion was defeated (Rosenthal and Monroe 2008). The vote came largely in response to Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion in which several dozen enslaved and free African Americans revolted in Southampton County, Virginia. Though the violent rebellion was defeated, fear of such revolts among Virginia's citizens prompted some to consider the possibility of abolishing slavery, though in the end slavery was retained and more repressive policies were adopted for enslaved and free African Americans (Rosenthal and Monroe 2008; Virginia Historical Landmarks Commission 1973; WGBH 1998).

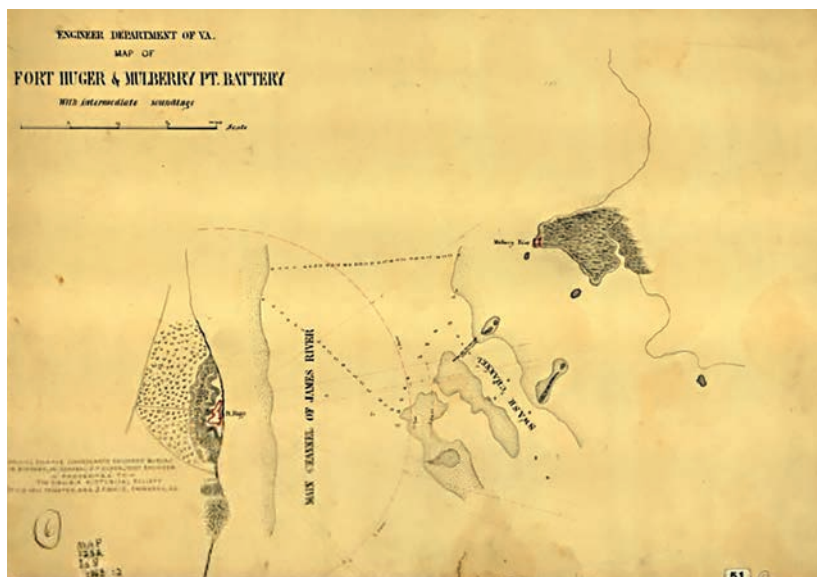


Robert Knox Sneden's 1861-1862 "Map of Country between Yorktown and Williamsburg in Virginia."

Image courtesy the Virginia Historical Society.

Mulberry Island's involvement in the Civil War was a product of its geography and the Union Army's intention to launch a massive overland assault up the Peninsula between the James and York rivers in an effort to capture Richmond. Already in possession of Fort Monroe, Union forces established Camp Butler at Newport News Point in preparation for the 80-mile march, but Confederate leaders constructed a series of large defensive earthworks (fortified linear mounds of dirt) across the Peninsula from Mulberry Island to Yorktown. When the Union troops were at last mobilized, their adversaries were ready and waiting.

Confederate General Robert E. Lee recognized the value of protecting the Peninsula from a Union overland campaign. After ordering a survey of possible defensive positions along the James River, Lee authorized Major General John Bankhead Magruder, commander of the Peninsula operations, to construct the Mulberry Island Point Water Battery. While construction was underway by August 14, 1861, Magruder remained



The Engineer Department of Virginia's 1863 "Map of Fort Huger and Mulberry Pt. Battery with Intermediate Surroundings."

Image courtesy the Virginia Historical Society.

concerned that the position was vulnerable to attacks from the Warwick River and the higher ground half a mile inland near the Crafford farm (pronounced “Crawford”). Canal boats were scuttled across the mouth of the Warwick River by October to prevent a Union naval advance, though this still left the battery open to a landed assault (Davis 1968).

Both freemen and enslaved African Americans built defensive earthworks on Mulberry Island. From August to October, Acting Paymaster James Maurice employed two to three overseers, one carpenter, two masons, and nine laborers receiving between \$0.50 and \$1.50 per day (Maurice 1861a). The number of enslaved laborers dwindled from 103 in August to only 57 by October. Each enslaved laborer cost \$0.50 per day, paid to their owners (Maurice 1861b).

In August, a regiment of the 14th Virginia Infantry under Col. James Gregory Hodges arrived to defend the Mulberry Island Point Water Battery. Confederate soldier Daniel Ross, writing to his family in Fluvanna County, described Mulberry Island at the time of his arrival as a “low lived looking place...At night we are tormented nearly to death by the Muskettters [mosquitoes] and there is no boat landing that we can hear from home occasionally” (Ross 1861). Ross and others were quickly sent to Land’s End at



The Crafford Farmhouse, unknown date. The Crafford Farmhouse stood until 1925 when it was demolished and the bricks reused for a College of William and Mary renovation project.

Image courtesy U.S. Army Transportation Museum.



Fort Crafford as depicted in this Sidney King painting.

Image courtesy Fort Eustis Cultural Resources Management Program.

the southern tip of the island to build a small defensive earthwork. Companies A and B of Major J.M. Patton's Jamestown infantry were then called up to defend the battery in advance of an attack that never came (Davis 1968).

In order to protect the battery from a land assault, Magruder constructed a pentagonal earthwork around the Crafford farmhouse in February, 1862. Known as Fort Crafford, this served as a stronghold anchoring the right flank of the vast Warwick defense line stretching across the Peninsula to Yorktown. Shortly after its construction, Magruder had the Minor's Farm defensive line built across the island 1 mile below the battery, manning it with troops recalled from Land's End (Davis 1968).

Union troops began their march from Fort Monroe early in April, 1862. Upon reaching the Warwick Line, the Union forces halted, having received scouting intelligence that Magruder's forces were very strongly positioned (Davis 1968). Union General George B. McClellan estimated the Confederate strength at 100,000 men, when in fact, Magruder's lines were held by only 13,000. This deception was owed to Magruder's ability to maneuver his troops into concentrations that gave the enemy a false impression of his strength. McClellan did not try to push through the line, but set about building earthworks at Yorktown to prepare for an all-out siege (Baxter 2009).

Shortly after the arrival of Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston, newly appointed commander of the Peninsula operations, southern forces were slowly withdrawn from Mulberry Island. The Minor's Farm Line was abandoned, though the Mulberry Island Point Battery and the covering work were not. These were manned until Johnston ordered a nighttime evacuation on May 2 or 3, 1862. When the Federal forces were finally prepared for their May 4 assault, they encountered no Confederate troops at Mulberry Island (Davis 1968). For all the preparations, the guns at the Mulberry Island Point Battery and Fort Crafford probably never fired a single shot (Davis 1968).

Among the more lasting effects the Civil War had for historians was the loss or destruction of the Warwick County courthouse records (e.g., grants, wills, probates, tax records), which became the spoils of war. David F. Ritchie of the 1st New York Light Artillery observed the thefts and lamented that the ancient documents were subjected to such treatment (Rogers 2012). The records had been housed at the county seat of Denbigh along Stony Run since 1810, after the original Warwick Town was abandoned in 1807 (McKnight 1959).



Civil War earthworks on Mulberry Island.

Fort Eustis administers 15 civil war sites, all of them defensive earthworks. These include portions of the Minor's Farm line, Fort Crafford, and lines on the Warwick River near Lee's Mill and Brick House Creek. The battery and the earthworks at Land's End were identified, but have since eroded into the James River. The vast assemblages of surviving earthworks are some of the most visible historic resources under Fort Eustis' protection, and archaeological investigations might be able to detect laborers' camps, soldiers' encampments, and the more substantial winter quarters, including privies and middens, which could provide a detailed glimpse of daily life.

Demographic shifts following the Civil War had lasting impacts upon the area's agricultural practices. With a reduction of the white male workforce and the loss of slave labor, many families turned to less labor-intensive crops, such as fruit, vegetables, and livestock. There simply was not enough labor to cultivate the pre-war acreage, and productivity fell by more than half while farm size declined by one-third to one-fifth (Fesler 1993; Linebaugh 1991).

Following the war, many of the former slaves who fled to Federal protection were placed in the care of the Bureau of Refugees. This agency subdivided abandoned and confiscated property, leasing it to freedmen and women as sharecroppers (Linebaugh 1991). By 1870, Warwick had 82 white homeowners compared with 11 homeowners of African descent. This created an enormous wealth gap, with the average white landholder owning \$4,295 worth of property compared to the average African-American landholder's \$782 in property (1870 Census, Vollertsen and Vollertsen). This disparity reflected larger trends in the South, in which tenancy farming gave people few opportunities to own land. African Americans, in particular, struggled to acquire property, and perhaps only a quarter of Southern African Americans were landholders by this time (Rosenthal and Monroe 2008).

With otherwise bleak economic prospects, Warwick County and much of the Peninsula welcomed Collis P. Huntington's establishment of the Chesapeake and Ohio transcontinental railroad's Atlantic terminus at Newport News. Operational by 1881, the railroad's economic stimulus was further aided in 1886 when Huntington founded what would become the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company (Davis 1977). As new prospects for work became available, Warwick County's population leaped to 6,650 by 1890, a drastic increase of 194 percent from its 1880 population of 2,258 (McKnight 1959).



Ruins of the Davis and Kimpton brickyard.

Image courtesy Fort Eustis Cultural Resources Management Program.

While most Mulberry Island residents remained engaged in truck farming during the years preceding World War I (WWI), some industrial pursuits gained a foothold in the community. The most well known is the Davis and Kimpton brickyard, opened on 36.75 acres that John W. Davis and Alexander H. Kimpton purchased in 1898. Though Kimpton sold his interest to Davis in 1904, the yard remained productive and began milling lumber as well. In 1918, the federal government purchased the land for \$8,729 and much of the brickmaking equipment was abandoned on site where it remains today (Opperman 1987). This well-preserved archaeological site is a Virginia Landmark and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and includes borrow pits, the steam engine, boiler, disintegrator, pug mill, brick machine, and kilns. It is one of 68 sites on Mulberry Island occupied during the period between the Civil War and WWI. This richly represented period includes two cemeteries, an oyster processing site, a food production site, an unidentified industrial operation, and dozens of domestic occupations.



The Military Arrives

At the turn of the 20th century, Mulberry Island was still predominantly farmland and pasture. Its African-American community had grown considerably, due in large part to the Bureau of Refugees' resettlement programs. By 1918, African-American families owned at least 61 parcels on Mulberry Island, compared to the 42 parcels held by white families. However, more parcels did not necessarily mean more land or more property value. Though whites owned fewer parcels, each parcel averaged 97.95 acres compared to the typical African-American landholding of 22.31 acres (Fesler 1993).

With the onset of WWI, Warwick County's population boomed as citizens rushed to take part in the military and industrial operations that flourished in Tidewater. Writing of the county's experiences, Elizabeth Madison noted that, in addition to raising vast sums of relief funds, many county homes...

“... were open to the soldiers as they passed to and fro, weary and footsore, seeking rest, food and water, and many a mother's son was fed from bountifully spread tables. There were many touching experiences as these boys passed to and from the camps, some of them so homesick that it made one's heart ache.” (Madison 1926:576).

This moving account no doubt includes the boys coming from the camp that would forever change Mulberry Island: Camp Abraham Eustis.

By the end of WWI, Mulberry Island's 300 years as an agricultural community came to a close. In 1918, Acting Secretary of War Benedict Crowell recommended Mulberry Island's use as a national defense installation to President Woodrow Wilson. Conceived as a training facility for aircraft and railway artillery, the camp's site was selected by a board,



Section of Camp Eustis during WWI.

Image courtesy U.S. Army Transportation Museum.

over which Major John Mathers presided, and named Camp Abraham Eustis after the nineteenth century U.S. Army officer and artilleryist for his role as nearby Fort Monroe's first commander (Long 1998; Smoke Screen 1929). Its railway facilities and geography made it an ideal location for firing practice, and the new camp was quickly approved on March 19, 1918 (Smoke Screen 1929). In total, 5,672 acres were purchased for \$538,000, and though construction continued through late 1919, it was operational when the Headquarters Company and the 2nd Trench Mortar Battalion's Battery A arrived on May 3, 1918 (Barker n.d.; The Daily Press 1966a; Fesler 1993). Batteries C and D of the 61st Artillery soon followed, and by August, accommodations for 19,000 people were built (Barker n.d.). Forty thousand workers constructed Camp Eustis at a cost of \$14 million, completing the facility following the WWI armistice (Barker n.d.; FEHAA 1996).

The rapidity of the military occupation left residents with little time to vacate. Families were given just 30 days to move whatever they could, including any burials on their property. At least nine family graveyards were known to exist at the time of the island's purchase, and many of these were not relocated, but simply lost or destroyed during the camp's construction (FEHAA 1993). Families were cast out as quickly as possible, dissolving and dispersing Mulberry Island's pre-military community. Some left behind



The Balloon School during a 1919 launch.

Image courtesy U.S. Army Transportation Museum.

deceased loved ones in their tombs, and all had to abandon the Tidewater dwellings where they had made their homes. After their departure, many of these homes became artillery targets (Fesler 1993).

Such were the casualties of the military occupation, which rapidly evolved into a bustling training facility. Three separate training schools were initially established on Mulberry Island, including the motor transport, trench mortar, and balloon observation schools (Furlow 1943; Mariners' Museum 2002). The latter was one of only three such schools in the nation by 1920 and the only to provide land and water observations (Furlow 1943). Commonly known as the Lee Hall Balloon Observers School, the Signal Corp's Army Air Service Balloon Observation School was established on 591 acres along Bailey Avenue (Lee Road) at a cost of \$1.5 million and with a capacity for 1,442 students (Ivy 1997b; USATCFE n.d.). It was operational by July 1918, remaining a distinct entity until consolidating with the camp in 1922 (Ivy 1997b). Under the command of Lt. Col. John Paegelow, participants underwent nine weeks of training, and those who excelled received an additional eight weeks in pursuit of becoming balloon observation or maneuvering officers (Ivy 1997b). Graduates provided the artillerists with observational support, and had to be well versed in telephony, meteorology, physics, and aerial photography (Ivy 1997b).



Liberty Theater during WWI.

Image courtesy U.S. Army Transportation Museum.

The camp was given a more permanent status as Fort Eustis on January 10, 1923 under the War Department's General Order 1 (Barker, n.d.; Long 1998). Life on Fort Eustis during the 1920s was one of military training, of course, but soldiers had plenty of recreational opportunities as well. The camp had a theater, a nine-hole golf course, a swimming pool, and hosted weekly dances. Girls from Newport News were literally trucked into the Fort, where all could sway to the unrivaled jazz music of the Happy Six soldier orchestra (The Daily Press 1966b).



Diving tower, ca. 1920.

Image courtesy U.S. Army Transportation Museum.



Entrance to Fort Eustis, 1920s.

Image courtesy U.S. Army Transportation Museum.

Another, albeit somewhat unusual, pastime for many on base were the forays into the island's thick marshes to oust the moonshiners who distilled illegal liquor in the wetlands (Furlow 1943). Some

of these bootleggers were so dedicated to their trade "that the Post Adjutant once threatened to use heavy artillery against a particularly stubborn 'moonshiner' who refused to leave his hiding place" (Furlow 1943:45). Evidently as late as 1974, the weathering wreck of a still remained visible along the Warwick River (Curry 1991).

Part of Fort Eustis was once a National Forest. Between 1925 and 1927, Fort Eustis National Forest existed alongside more than a dozen other national forests on military land (Williams 2003).

But Mulberry Island's history of moonshiners is not without its irony. Fort Eustis was deactivated in 1931, after which the Justice Department used it as a prison camp (Baker n.d). Prohibition violators overflowed federal prisons, and alternative facilities were needed to house these low-risk offenders (Curry 1991). The former military facilities on the island offered an attractive option, and as many as 700 prisoners were incarcerated there during its four-year operation. These prisoners mostly arrived from Ohio's Industrial Reformatory and Georgia's Federal Penitentiary. The prisoners were given a variety of tasks to prepare them for social



8-inch railroad artillery gun, 52nd Coast Artillery, 1928.

Image courtesy U.S. Army Transportation Museum.

The James River Maritime Fleet often anchored near Mulberry Island, and life for the sailors was relatively quiet following WWI. But an account published in 1943 casually tells that even peacetime was not without its jarring thrills: “One afternoon in the summer of 1925, a sailor on one of these ships was lying in his bunk below decks asleep. Suddenly, there was a terrible crescendo of splintering timber as a shell crashed through the bulkhead and whizzed over the slumbering man’s stomach. The sailor awoke in bewilderment, jumped out of his bunk, and ran to the upper deck amid a bedlam of whistles and sirens. Firing practice was in progress on Mulberry Island and one of the guns had been pointed in slightly the wrong direction” (Furlow 1943:36).

reentry (Furlow 1943). They farmed, built facilities, and maintained infrastructure and equipment until the doors closed in 1934 (FEHAA 1996).

The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) established a transient camp on Mulberry Island in 1934 to provide people with marketable skills during the Great Depression. People received training at the steam plant, bakery, cannery, paint shop, telephone department, laundry, vehicle repair shop, clothing factory, shoe repair shop, salvage facility, and the farm industries facility (Quarstein and Rouse 1996). The camp’s appeal during such desperate times grew.

By December 1934, 1,556 men had enrolled, swelling to 2,397 by April the following year. Recreational opportunities were also provided, echoing the military-era diversions. They had two theaters, an organized orchestra, band, and chorus, and fielded an impressive baseball team. Even the lingering moonshiners had a role to play; men would often trade clothing for the bootlegger's spirits, despite the capture and prosecution of 14 of the rogue distillers (FEHAA 1996).

The FERA camp converted to Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers' housing in November 1935. Among their projects were mosquito eradication and the construction of Harrison Road and the Eustis Airport. Men worked 30 hours a week for \$62.50 per month, but by autumn 1936, the WPA's tenure was coming to an end (FEHAA 1996).

With the onset of Nazi aggression and mounting international tensions, Fort Eustis became a Coast Artillery Replacement Center on January 24, 1941. By November 22, 1942, after 8,000 servicemen rehabilitated the grounds and facilities, the post housed 22,814 officers and servicemen (Barker n.d.; Fesler 1993). With the need for anti-aircraft artillery declining as World War II (WWII) went on, the post largely became a prisoner of war (POW) camp with nearly 6,000 POWs by May, 1945 (Barker n.d.).

The United States established 300 POW camps housing 370,000 WWII prisoners beginning in 1944. Major General Archer L. Lerch, Provost Marshall General at the time, noticed some POWs' interest in experiencing democracy, and saw an educational opportunity. Military educator Lieutenant Colonel Edward Davison headed the initiative, inaugurating the studies in democracy curriculum and recruiting educators (Reynolds 1946).

The program was designed not only to give POWs the chance to learn democratic principles, but to practice them as well (despite the prison environment). Free presses were established at the camps, stockade leaders and judges were elected by secret ballot, and voluntary classes were offered (Reynolds 1946). POWs with the greatest interest in this education and who had no affiliation with or sympathy for the Nazi party were allowed to pursue a postgraduate education in democracy at Fort Eustis. By May 25, 1946, 23,142 POWs passed through the program, which worked to the shock of some observers (Reynolds 1946). While interviewing Fort Eustis' POWs, reporter Quentin Reynolds expressed surprise, saying "Gradually I noticed something different about these Germans at Fort Eustis. Their eyes

were clear—not sullen; they laughed at one another’s jokes; there was nothing furtive about them. They...they...well, damn it all, they were different.” (Reynolds 1946:41).

On January 10, 1946, Fort Eustis became home to the Transportation Corps under Major General Walter J. Muller (Long 1998). President Franklin Roosevelt established the Corps under Executive Order 9082 on July 31, 1942, and President Harry Truman made it a permanent branch of the Army on June 28, 1950. Thirty-six years later, it was inducted into the Army Regimental System on July 31, 1986 by former Army Secretary Honorable John O. Marsh, Jr. (United States Army Transportation Museum 2000). The Transportation Corps evolved as a military body responsible for troop and equipment transportation, and played a critical role in opening and maintaining ports of embarkation and debarkation. All training for the Corps, with the exception of driving, was consolidated as the Transportation School at Fort Eustis in 1946 (Killblane 2014). Fort Eustis remains the Army Transportation Center’s headquarters.

Members of the Transportation Corps have provided support in all major global conflicts since its creation, and have participated in relief missions for humanitarian purposes as well. The Corps’ logistical talents have made it a critical component of United States military missions. In recent years, the Corps has been reorganized and now functions primarily as a movement control branch (Killblane 2014).

Today, as part of Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Fort Eustis continues to celebrate Mulberry Island’s long and rich history, spanning the millennia from its earliest prehistoric occupants to the arrival of the modern military. Cultural resources specialists on base probe the historical and archaeological traces of the island’s occupants, and the Warwick County Historical Society provides fascinating insights into the island’s settlement, families, development, and culture. With 10,000 years of human history, over 230 recorded archaeological sites, two museums, and what may be the oldest building under the Department of Defense’s care, Mulberry Island is a showpiece of Chesapeake heritage and military stewardship. But it has not yet surrendered all of its secrets, and Fort Eustis regularly conducts excavations in pursuit of the island’s hidden past. Mulberry Island’s history is a fascinating story of encampments, plantations, wars, and people—an adventurous parable rising from the dark marshes, whispering its legends across the river’s brilliant tide.

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