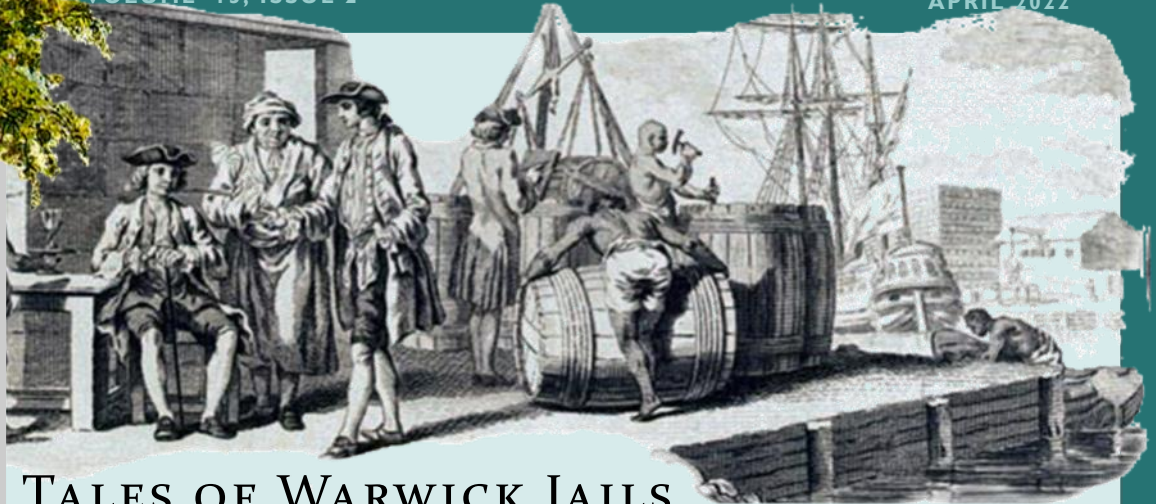


# Mulberry Island Notes

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 2

APRIL 2022



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## TALES OF WARWICK JAILS

“If Men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and the next place, oblige it to control itself.”

James Madison

The lands that were eventually to become Warwick County were settled in early times by English colonists and their headrights coming to the new world. As the population and commerce swelled, so did the conflicts of the competing interests and they began to butt against each other, growing these matters into something that required a legal apparatus to plead their grievances to. Some of the newly arrived took matters into their own hands. Justice was mixed with an old-world chivalric code of honor that sometimes devolved into brutality. It was recognized that court houses were indispensable and inseparable from them were jails.

In the 1680s, the Virginia House of Burgesses began passing acts establishing port towns in the several counties.

Warwicktown was established on the east bank of the James River at Deep Creek, and indeed, a modest town including a courthouse and jail were constructed and put into use there. Not a lot is known of this first Warwick jail. Its ancient footprint may still lie under the old barracks building of the Newport News city prison farm as old foundations were in fact turned up during its construction.

There was for a time a flourishing community bustling at Warwicktown. Travelers by water found easy access to the town which now included residential and mercantile houses, a tobacco warehouse and a public tavern which, in later years was run by Richard Young. In the blink of an historical eye however, the facilities at Warwicktown lay in ruins; certainly from neglect and possibly from fire as well.

\$5

NON-MEMBERS  
Donations Appreciated

Cont. Page 6

# THE PEDESTRIAN

MEMBER NEWS AT ITS BEST

## Sittin' Pretty

Although it's the inverse of the "pedestrian" title of this page, the WCHS, in concert with the Tidewater Genealogical Society, went together to take care of a mutual need in our meeting space in the 1884 Warwick Courthouse by purchasing new chairs for our combined membership.

The old school cafeteria chairs were both an eyesore and on occasion have been a safety issue as their stability and condition have grown suspect. This purchase was approved by the board and made possible by our members generosity of late and the cooperation of the TGS who also uses the courthouse space and saw the need as well. So, thank you to everyone. If anyone has a need for some of the old chairs, they are available for a limited time before they meet their ultimate fate at the landfill.



Out with the old and in with the new. Thanks to Alan and Sharon Minter for their efforts—and thanks to the TGS.

## A LAWYER PEDESTRIAN

Oriana Station at Denbigh, VA. courtesy C&O Historical Society  
*Daily Press*, Volume 3, 1 December 1898

### F. S. Collier Sets the Pace in Thirteen Mile Walking Matinee



Mr. F. S. Collier (Fayette Smith *Fay* Collier, 1854-1931), prosecuting attorney of Elizabeth City County, in addition to abilities as a lawyer, has now budded forth as a candidate for pedestrian honors. While at Oriana yesterday waiting for a train, he became tired of the delay and, accompanied by several court witnesses, stout, hardy men, he concluded to walk to Newport News.

His companions advised against it telling him he could not stand it, but he had made up his mind, and the party began to trudge the thirteen weary miles intervening between Oriana and Newport News. Most of the distance was over railway cross-ties;

and Mr. Collier was handicapped by his 200 pounds of corpulence and a pair of new shoes, but he set the pace for his companions and a speedy one it was, distance and difficulties considered.

He was the pacemaker all the way and at one time had to stop and wait for his fellow-pedestrians to catch up. The thirteen miles over cross-ties were traversed at an average rate of four miles an hour, and the lawyer seemed good for another half dozen miles. Such exercise is good training, but Mr. Collier is not an aspirant for pugilistic or football honors, he was probably training for the race for commonwealth's attorney at the spring meeting on the Elizabeth City course.



James Gordon Madison (1900-1981) graduation photo from Denbigh High School in 1917 and named as President of his class.

# Former assistant AG Madison Dead at 80

TUSCALOOSA (AP) -Oct 19, 1981

J. Gordon Madison, who spent 22 years as an assistant attorney general for the state of Alabama, died Monday in a Tuscaloosa hospital after an extensive illness. He was 80.

Madison was born in Warwick County, Va. He was a descendent of the country's fourth president, James Madison.

Madison received his law degree from the University of Alabama in 1925, after which he practiced law in Tuscaloosa for 27 years. He was elected to the state Senate in 1942 and became an assistant attorney general in 1952. He retired in that post in March of 1974 after serving under five attorneys general.

At the time of his retirement, then-Attorney General Bill Baxley called Madison "one of the most brilliant and distinguished attorneys in the history of our state."

He had been living in Tuscaloosa for the past five years.

Montgomery Advertiser, Montgomery, Alabama, Tuesday, October 20, 1981

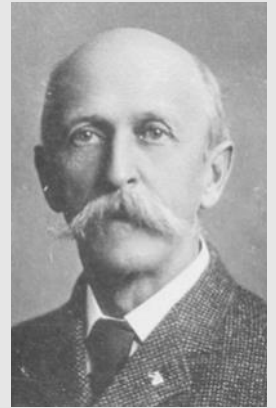
Suffolk News-Herald, Volume 5, Number 148, 12 September 1927

## HOLD EXERCISES IN NEWPORT NEWS.

Sept. 12. — Memorial exercises for the late Judge D. G. Tyler will be held at Warwick courthouse this afternoon. Judge Tyler presided over the Warwick court for many years while judge of the Fourteenth judicial circuit. Warwick court will be convened this afternoon by Judge C. Vernon Spratley of Hampton.

A US Congressman, the son of President John Tyler, David Gardiner Tyler served in the Confederate Army as a private in the Rockbridge Artillery which was part of the Army of Northern Virginia's First Virginia Battalion.

He served from 1863 until the surrender at Appomattox in 1865. He was elected as a Democrat to represent Virginia's 2nd District in the United States House of Representatives, serving from March 4, 1893 to March 3, 1897.



David Gardiner Tyler (1846-1927)

Built by Levin Smith and once the center of Denbigh's social and political gatherings, the "Smith Hotel" stood from 1883 to 1985.



## DEATH OF L. J. SMITH

Prominent Warwick County Citizen Passes Away After a Long Illness.

Mr. L. J. Smith, proprietor of the hotel and general store at Denbigh and one of the most prominent citizens of Warwick County, died at his home Sunday morning after a lingering illness. He is survived by a widow and seven children.

Mr. Smith was born in York County 55 years ago, and had spent practically all of his life on the peninsula. Many of his friends in this city went to Denbigh to attend the funeral, which was held from the residence yesterday morning

at 11 o'clock, services being conducted by Rev. W. H. Allen, rector of St Paul's Episcopal Church. The active pall bearers were E. B., A P., Robert and Harry Smith, brothers, and Edward Sinclair and Nat. Clark, brothers-in-law of the deceased.

The honorary pall-bearers were S. S. Curtis, B. P. Smith, Dr. H. W. Curtis, C. F. Tignor, Sidney Smith, J. C. Curtis, J. N. Stubbs, J. W. Clements, J. W. Hooper, Hudson Mench, and G. L. Smith. The body was laid to rest at the old Smith burying ground at Smithville in York County (now Smith-Hopkins-Cooke Cemetery).



Levin James Smith (1852-1909)

Daily Press, Volume 14, Number 107, 11 May 1909.

# Elizabeth Garrow McFall

Looking Back, *Denbigh Gazette*, Newport News, VA., Dec 7-13, 1995



Elizabeth Nelson Garrow McFall (1911-1995) Photo from Morrison High School annual, "The Warwick," ca. 1927

There are some people that you meet and know for only a short while, but in retrospect you feel that you have known them all of your life. Such is the case with Elizabeth Garrow McFall. Good friend Squire Harry Atkinson always told me that a true southern lady only appears in the paper twice in her life -when she is married and when she is buried. Unfortunately, and I am sad to report that the latter is the case for my good friend, the late Elizabeth Garrow McFall, who passed on two weeks ago.

She was part pixie, part elf with a dash of impishness and sprinkled with gracious southern charm all revealed by that twinkle in her eyes when she related her 84 years of life centered in Denbigh. Many a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, I sat in her "office," better known as her kitchen table, listening in awe as she related days of Denbigh gone by.

Oh, how her eyes would sparkle as she recalled the past. She had what I can best describe as a muted Tidewater accent. It was not a hard "ute" and "about," but a gentle, softened Tidewater "uute," and "aboote." Anyhow, it just tickled me and

she knew it as she chuckled along with me as she talked.

Elizabeth had the "Who was Who in Warwick County" blood in her veins: the Garrows, Carys, Curtises, Crawfords, Joneses, Wrights and so on. She was proud of her heritage. Her great-grandfather, John Toomer Garrow, and his (cousin) James Toomer Garrow, made the supreme sacrifice with the Warwick Beauregards in the Civil War. Her grandfather, J. T. Garrow, owned a store in the heart of Denbigh next to the 1884 courthouse.



Pvt. John Toomer Garrow (1820-1862)



John Toomer "J. T." Garrow (1879-1938) in front of his Warwick C.H. general store.

There was a smidgeon of rivalry between him and Simon Curtis as to who was the most adept "horse-trader" in the Denbigh area - sort of who could buy the most with the least. The Scottish blood that ran in J.T.'s veins gave him the edge in many a deal.



Simon Reid Curtis (1863-1949)

As far as horses go, Elizabeth would get that Cheshire cat grin as she related that she could ride before she could walk. This was easy to believe, as her mother was none other than Jesse Crafford Garrow, the Annie Oakley of Denbigh. Miss Jesse was a gifted horse woman and with her husband Pat Garrow, raised and raced sulky horses. At a very early age, Elizabeth had a pony to ride about the wilds of Denbigh, Mulberry Island and the Garrow farm which stood on present-day Denbigh Boulevard where Saint Jerome's Church stands.



A rider in the 1963 Denbigh Day Parade

She wove stories of fox hunts and jousting tournaments. Her nephew, Pat Garrow, had to relate to me that one year she was crowned Queen of the jousting tournament. When I confronted her with this, I will never forget her answer: "Yes, I was, but who told you that lie?" she just chuckled as she explained how it happened.

Elizabeth taught school all the way from a one room school house that she would say "was cold in the winter and hotter in the summer," to modern schools. She laughed when she defined for me that a modern school was one with indoor plumbing. She had that sense of humor garnished with old Warwick Free State sense of pride and independence.

As far as Warwick County/City consolidating with Newport News was concerned, her views were old-line Warwick County: "We were sold out," and she meant it. In certain matters, Elizabeth did not mince words. What she thought of those "Johnny-come-latelys," well, enough said.



**ELIZABETH NELSON GARROW**  
**“Liz”**

“A perfect woman nobly planned to warn,  
to comfort and command.”

Hail, to our Editor-in-Chief! Elizabeth has done more toward making our annual a success than anyone else. She has been president of the class of '29 for three years and has shown a great deal of executive ability. But in spite of all this work, “Liz” always has time to laugh with us over our little private jokes. Morrison will have to look hard to find another that can compare in any way with her.

During my “office visits” with her, she’d tell tales about certain folks and laugh as she related them, with her vivid recollections of her own descriptive vocabulary. Anyone who committed a boo-boo was a “goose,” and that included her. She would laugh at herself with some of the faux-pas she encountered.

At times, we both wound up with tears in our eyes from laughing so much. She used one phrase that floored me the first time I heard it.

Did you ever hear someone being defined as drunk in a muted Tidewater accent? It comes out as “drew-unc.” Hear that from her when you least expect it; I just had a fit.

The United Memorial Methodist Church on Hoopes Road lost an active parishioner when she moved to Richmond several years ago. She had the gift of the green thumb and could make anything grow. Weeds knew better than try to invade Elizabeth Garrow McFall’s garden.

Now she’s gone. Her children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and friends all have cherished memories. At her graveside service, it was befitting that so many old-line Warwick Countians came to pay their last respects to one of their own.

I’m sure that when she passed on, St. Peter merely said, “Lord, it’s Elizabeth. She’s from Denbigh.”

John J. Curry



Morrison High School ca. 1926, image William Schneider

## Obituary for Elizabeth Nelson Garrow McFall

Elizabeth G. McFall, 84, of Richmond (born April 11, 1911), departed this life on November 16, 1995. She married Wilbur Riley McFall on January 16, 1937. She was a native of Warwick County, the daughter of the late Patrick Henry Garrow and Jesse Crafford Garrow and widow of W. R. McFall.

She was a graduate of the College of William and Mary where she was a member of Kappa Delta sorority. A longtime resident of Warwick, she was an active member of the Riverside Garden Club and a charter member of Warwick United Methodist Church, where she served as church historian.

She taught at Riverside School and initiated the first French language program for elementary schools.

She moved to Richmond in 1992 and joined Reveille United Methodist Church where she was active in the church garden committee.

Mrs. McFall is survived by her daughters, Amy N. McFall and Elizabeth Bowmer; her son-in-law, Carl F. Bowmer; and three grandchildren, John D. Bowmer, Amy E. Bowmer and Cary M. Bowmer. Graveside services will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, November 18, in Peninsula Memorial Park.

# TALES OF WARWICK JAILS

Cont. from Cover

In October of 1807, Governor William H. Cabell, in a proclamation declared,

“the Court-house of the County of Warwick is in so ruinous a situation as to be unfit for the accommodation of the court in the execution of its duties.”<sup>1</sup>



William H. Cabell (1772-1853)

With an offer of an “out house” (or out-building) offered by Richard Young of Warwicktown advanced for conducting court services there, the governor again stepped in with a March 1808 proclamation stating,

“that until the courthouse for the county of Warwick aforesaid shall be repaired or rebuilt, and made fit for their accommodation, the said court for the County of Warwick shall be holden in the aforesaid house of the said Wade Mountfortt at Rich Neck within the said county of Warwick.”<sup>2</sup>

As the well-trodden history of Warwick County tells, court in Warwick was sometimes held under an elm at Rich Neck. This history, however, refers to times before the American Revolution by men such as the influential Miles Cary II, of Rich Neck who was a long serving clerk of the Warwick Court. In this order, we see the use of Rich



Miles Cary II (1655-1708)

Neck for court services ordered by the governor’s proclamation a hundred years after Cary’s death; an old tradition revived which would not have gone unnoticed at the time.

In December of 1809, after much controversy, public petitions and rebuttals, the Committee of Propositions and Grievances declared it,

“Resolved, as the opinion of this committee, that the petition of sundry inhabitants of the county of Warwick, praying that a law may pass removing the seat of justice for the said county to Stony Run, is reasonable.”<sup>3</sup>

So finally work began on a suitable courthouse and jail at Stony Run which was along the main Warwick road and was more convenient for its use by citizens and travelers as roads improved.

November of 1810 marked the completion of Warwick’s second court house at Stony Run, also known as Denbigh. The jail at Stony Run was completed around the same time and a third building, added for use as a clerk’s office, was constructed about 1820. These three brick structures were set out in a row along the Great Warwick Road.

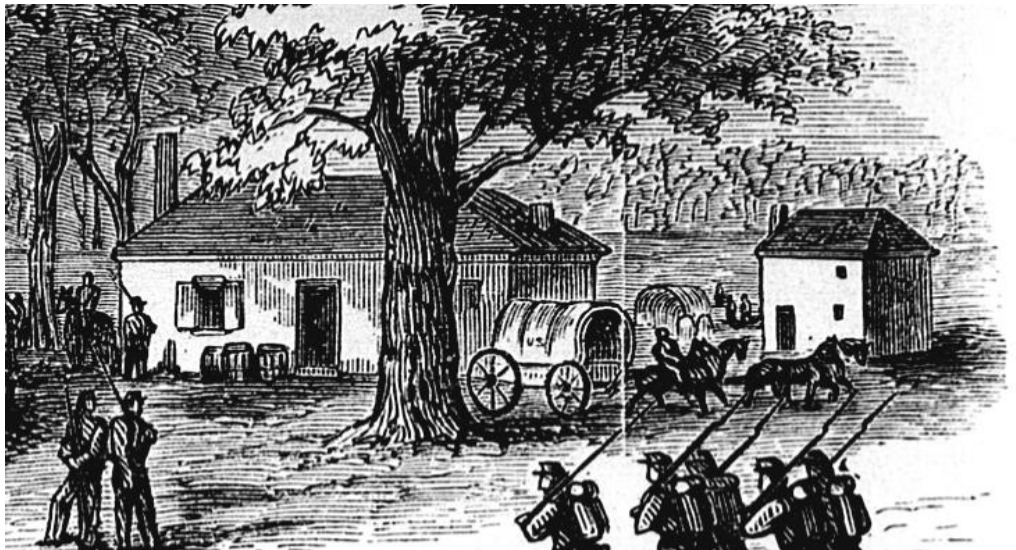
An 1825 “Jail Report,”<sup>4</sup> signed by William F. Mintree, Bassett M. Calvert, John Patrick and William Young, described the jail and its conditions:

The jail contains two rooms below and one above. The rooms below are each thirteen and a half feet long, and about eight feet wide. In regard to the number of apartments we are of the opinion the jail is adequate to the convenient accommodation of the prisoners who may be confined therein from time to time.

The jail is not in good repair. The jail is not capable of being sufficiently aired and ventilated in the summer and kept warm and comfortable during the winter months, because there is no back window and the wall in front obstructs the air.

It is not adequately supplied with fire places or stoves, there being but one fire place in the jail and that in the room above, and the hearth is quite too narrow; there is no stove. The jail is not properly secured with latch and locks, there are bars to the two out doors but no locks to them.

An undated jail report showed these conditions to have been improved at some point and gave a more favorable report on conditions.<sup>5</sup>



This April 1862 sketch by Union Sgt. Peterman shows a diminutive jail building (right) of two stories such as described in an 1825 report.

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia Argus*, Volume 15, Number 1400, 23 October 1807

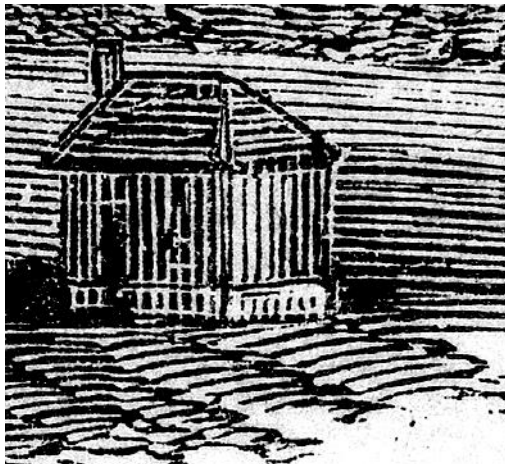
<sup>2</sup> *Virginia Argus*, Volume 15, Number 1440, 11 March 1808

<sup>3</sup> *Enquirer*, Volume 6, Number 68, 23 December 1809 <sup>4</sup> Lost Records Localities Digital Collection, Warwick County, 1825 Jail Report, Library of Virginia.

<sup>5</sup> Lost Records Localities Digital Collection, Warwick County, undated Jail Report, Library of Virginia.

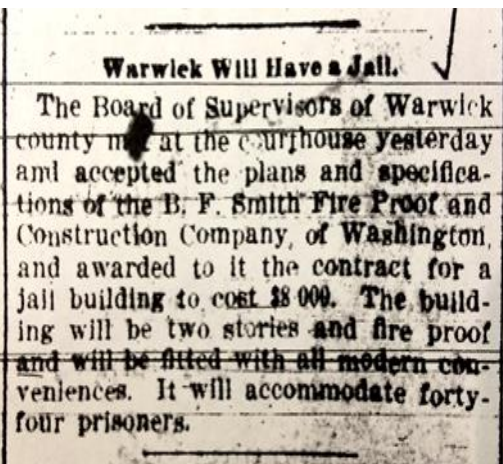
Sketched in April of 1862 by Union Sgt. Peterman, the jail was extant in the depiction and one assumes still in use. The small size of the courthouse and jail told the tale of a sleepy agricultural community without a lot of need for larger structures.<sup>6</sup>

Captured again by sketch in 1874 titled, "The Scene at Warwick Court House,"<sup>7</sup> the little jail was still there quietly serving the needs of the community. The speculation and the coming of the railroad in the 1880s would soon make it apparent that this ancient structure was wholly inadequate.



Sketched in 1874, the "Scene At Warwick C. H." printed in the *Pictorial History of the Civil War in the United States of America*, shows an early image of Warwick's second jail.

The need for a new jail was self evident by 1897 and finally the Warwick elders made a contract with B. F. Smith Fire Proof and Construction Company to build Warwick County's third jail for \$8,000.<sup>8</sup>



The 1899 Warwick County jail had an inherent flaw that kept jail keepers on their toes to prevent escape.

The 1899 Warwick County jail located behind the 1810 Warwick courthouse has a few tales to tell.

According to oral history, the jail was constructed in the dead of a cold winter, the temperatures dropping below freezing and not allowing the mortar to properly set in some parts of the walls. Several stories have been told over the years that illustrate this construction flaw.

According to former Warwick Clerk of Court George S. DeShazor, Jr.



George S. DeShazor, Jr. (1899 - 1987)

He said a bricklayer who was in jail for drunkenness one night slipped downstairs to a storeroom, found an old ball and chain and beat his way out through the wall. He left a note for the sheriff that said, 'I'm at home. I got thirsty.'

Next morning the sheriff apprehended the man, who was by then quite drunk, at his home. The jailbreak proved to be good luck for the county, however: The mason re-laid the hole he had broken out "a whole lot better than the old section,"<sup>9</sup>

Other antics were often at play. Vernon S. Briggs, Warwick County board of supervisors and Warwick City's first vice mayor, recalls that it was not the most secure of jails;



Vernon S. Briggs (1903 - 1983)

"I went by the old jailhouse one day and saw a rope hanging out a second floor window. After a while it started going up, and there was a can of beer tied to the end. (A prisoner's) friend had left it for him."<sup>10</sup>

Cont. Page 10

<sup>6</sup> danverslibrary.org.

*States of America* by Benson John Lossing. 1874.

<sup>7</sup> *Pictorial History of the Civil War in the United*

<sup>8</sup> *Daily Press*, Newport News, VA ca. 1897.

<sup>9</sup> *The Times Herald*, Newport News, Va., Thursday, July 1, 1976.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

# MULBERRY ISLAND & THE CIVIL WAR

## April 1861 - May 1862

Fort Eustis Historical and Archaeological Association March 1963

Excerpts of the work of historian Emma-Jo L. Davis

Continued from the October 2021 edition of *Mulberry Island Notes*

### WINTER QUARTERS

(3 OCTOBER 1861 - 7 JANUARY 1862):

Magruder reorganized his forces and posted them for the winter in the entrenchments across the Peninsula on 3 October. The Fourteenth Virginia Infantry Regiment under Colonel Hodges remained at Land's End and the two companies making up the infantry battalion discussed above remained to garrison the works at Mulberry Point. The troops were to be "hutted for the winter under the direction of the commanding officers of regiments and detachments; the work to be performed by details from each command."<sup>31</sup>



Maj. Gen.  
John  
Bankhead  
Magruder  
(1808-1871)

By 4 October, almost two months after Magruder's first request, Lieutenant Junius A. DeLagnel of the Navy was ordered from Jamestown Island to Mulberry Point to get canal boats and sink them at the mouth of the Warwick River.<sup>32</sup> This had been accomplished by 17 October.

On 8 October in two dispatches to Richmond, Magruder requested seven artillery companies to man the batteries already constructed or being constructed; one of these companies would be stationed at Mulberry Point.<sup>33</sup>

His second letter requested additional guns, stating,

It is a matter of great moment that the defenses at Harden's Bluff and Mulberry Point should be as strong as possible. The work at Mulberry Point can contain two more guns .... The river is better commanded at that point than at any other below Jamestown; and if it can be rendered safe there, troops as well as field guns could be used below.<sup>34</sup>

It is not known what kind of guns or how many he then had at Mulberry Island Point, but judging from a Confederate map, the water battery contained four guns, with space for six, which is compatible with his statement that the battery could "contain two more guns."

On 17 October Magruder wrote the Secretary of War concerning Mulberry Island and the two guns from C.S.S. *Teaser* which he had moved from Mulberry Island Point to Land's End around the first of September. He explained at some length his plans and operations to that point:

The lowest fort on James River, on the left bank, is Mulberry Island Point, opposite is Harden's Bluff fort, both strong on the water fronts. By a glance at the map it will be seen that if the enemy can land at the mouth of Warwick River, he can march to Mulberry Island Point and take the fort there in rear. The troops on my line from the mouth of Deep Creek, which is the same as that of Warwick River, to Harwood's Mill, at the head of Poquoson River, cannot go to the succor of Mulberry Island Point without making a march of some 20 miles around the head of Warwick River; besides, the right flank of my own line is below Warwick River. That flank must be secured and the fort at Mulberry Island Point, both in full sight of the enemy at Newport News, now at least 8,000 strong. I have therefore caused one regiment (500 strong) to take post at Land's End, on the right, at the mouth of Warwick River, and have thrown up an intrenchment there, but these guns of the *Teaser* are necessary for the armament of this intrenchment. I have caused rifle-pits to be made to protect the men, and sunk canal boats across the mouth of the river.<sup>35</sup>

He added that Lieutenant Robert D. Minor of the Navy had offered to exchange a heavy 32-pounder for the two light 32-pounders and Magruder felt such an exchange would be beneficial. This was reasonable since the heavy 32-pounder could take a heavier charge than the light 32-pounder and had a range of approximately 2,000 yards. Such a gun would be ideal for Land's End but unsatisfactory for a small vessel such as the *Teaser*. Magruder suggested that the *Teaser* be sent to Mulberry Island Point with the heavy gun and land it there; he would leave orders with Colonel Hodges (commanding the troops at Land's End) to





The blockade runner, C.S.S. *Teaser* off of Fort Monroe, Dec. 1864, Lib. of Congress

send for it and put it up and then send the two light guns over to the fort at Mulberry Island Point for the *Teaser* to pick up.<sup>36</sup>

In October 1861, the Mulberry Island Point battery, practically at sea level, was almost entirely destroyed by a hurricane, with most of the damage probably being caused by the high tides which frequently accompany such a storm. Reporting on this latest calamity, Magruder wrote,

The work is in sight of the enemy. Negroes have deserted from it and informed the enemy of the situation. They will attack it, I presume, as soon as they can make preparations, and, if they carry it, as they probably will, in its present state, a great disaster may happen.<sup>37</sup>

By the end of November, Magruder, in addition to his problems caused by the hurricane and shortages of units and guns, was having difficulties caused by the loss of his engineers and former naval officers who had been unable to obtain commissions in the Confederate States Army. He cited the case of Captain Callendar St. George Noland, formerly of the U. S. Navy, the commander of the water-battery at Mulberry Island who had resigned as he could not obtain the rank of major in the provisional or volunteer service and who "would have been ranked by two captains who had been under him, and, who, from the nature of the service, cannot know the duties with which Captain Noland is familiar."<sup>38</sup> Magruder asked that Captain Noland be given the rank of major and that all of the engineers employed on the Peninsula be commissioned. These included "M. Derrick, engineer, now at Mulberry Island Point."<sup>39</sup>

Throughout December the C.S.S. *Patrick Henry* and the C.S.S. *Jamestown* remained in the river between the Mulberry Point and the Harden's Bluff batteries. On 4 January 1862 Magruder requested that the *Teaser* join the other vessels at that location.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (ORA) (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Vol. IV, p. 668-670.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p. 670. <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 674.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* p. 676. <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* p. 680-681.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* p. 702.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p. 702-703.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p. 717.

<sup>41</sup> William S. White, *A Diary of the War* (Richmond: Carlton McCarthy and Company, 1883), p. 110-111.

In December 1861 there were 3 officers and 82 men present at Mulberry Island Point. In addition, the Fourteenth and detachments of the Third Company of the Richmond Howitzer Battalion were camped for the winter at Land's End. From a diary of a member of that organization, it can be seen that life for the artillery was not intolerable in that winter of 1861:

... Our Third and Fourth Detachments are camped for the winter at Land's End, under the command of Lieutenant John M. West, and supported by the Fourteenth Virginia Infantry, Colonel Hodges commanding. The third gun is stationed immediately on the James River where the Warwick empties into it, and the fourth gun one-and-a-half miles up the Warwick River, supported by Company "K," Fourteenth Virginia, Captain Claiborne of Halifax County, Va., commanding. We have comfortable log cabins, built by our own men, with glass windows, plank floors, kitchen attached, etc., and our cuisine



Captain Edward Rash Young, M. D.  
1825 - 1890

bears favorable comparison with home fare. Time does not hang very heavily on my hands, for I am now drilling a company of infantry from Halifax County, Captain Edward Young's, in artillery tactics, previous to their

making a change into that branch of the service. Then we get up an occasional game of ball, or chess, or an old hare hunt, or send reformed Bob to the York River after oysters, we preferring the flavor of York River oysters to those of Warwick River. Fortunately we have managed to scrape up quite a goodly number of books, and being in close communication with Richmond we hear from friends daily.

Soon the spring campaign will open, and then farewell to the quiet pleasures of "Rebel Hall," farewell to the old messmates, for many changes will take place upon the reorganization of our army during the spring. No more winters during the war will be spent as comfortably and carelessly as this. Soon it will be a struggle for life, and God only knows how it will all end. My health has but little improved, but I had rather die in the army than live out.<sup>41</sup>

Emma-Jo L. Davis

# TALES OF WARWICK JAILS

Cont. from Page 7

“Conditions at the jail were poor. A 1953 newspaper story said the building, designed for 30 prisoners, was operating at 500 per cent capacity. It had only four main cells.”<sup>11</sup>

During times of prohibition, the moonshiners and bootleggers were wrung-out and overflowed from the jail. Stories were told that some of them were allowed to sit out on the courthouse green or fish for their supper down the hill at catfish hole.

Often the jail was filled with detainees from the nights’ rowdy fall out from drinking establishments. When the ships came in, the jail held an extra helping of sailors having taken on too much cargo. Or, unfortunate others who found themselves on the wrong side of a patrolman’s critical eye. But, it wasn’t all so light.

There were serious crimes of all kinds in Warwick County and those accused would often spend a night or two at Sheriff Curtis’ hotel until they could be transported to Williamsburg or Richmond.

But, the major issue with the 1899 Warwick County jail was its vulnerability to escape through the weakened walls. According to DeShazor, “prisoners forced out the bricks so often that officials lined the inside walls with steel plates.”<sup>12</sup>

Still, there were plenty of incidents both early and late in its history where prisoners escaped through the walls or by some other method. In the February 28, 1897 edition of the *New York Times* was this entry:

Southern Jail Delivery.

Seven Convicts in  
Warwick County, Va.,  
Make Their Escape

RICHMOND, VA.—At midnight last night seven prisoners broke out of the Warwick County jail and made their escape. Among their number is Burdess Loda, under indictment for murder, and Frank Jackson, sentenced to eight years in the State prison. The officers are in pursuit of the fugitives. It is believed that they have concealed themselves in the swamps of that part of the State.<sup>13</sup>

In 1925, the *Richmond News Leader* reported:

Report.

Escape of Four War-  
wick Jail Prisoners

Newport News- Aug. 18, Warwick County authorities today reported the escape of four prisoners from the Warwick jail yesterday. There were three women and one man in the crowd which made a successful dash, for liberty by burrowing through the wall. They were Myrtle Tignor, Mary Glenn, W. H. Walls, Jr., and Belle Ross. None of them have been captured.<sup>14</sup>

Ten years later, another escape is reported in the April 1935 edition of the *Suffolk News-Herald*:

Two Chicken Thieves  
in Warwick Jail Break

NEWPORT NEWS, Va., April 11 -An empty cell and a gaping hole in the brick wall of the Warwick County jail were all those police had as a reminder of Joe Goodwin and Ralph

Goodwin, convicted chicken thieves, who escaped early today while waiting to be sentenced to prison. Left behind was Paul Goodwin, third of the trio, accused of complicity in a wave of chicken thefts, who was confined in another cell block.<sup>15</sup>

And, another decade later brings us from chickens thieves to armed robbers with a conscience:

Movie Convinces  
Escapees to Return

WARWICK, VA. — A motion picture about traitor Benedict Arnold produced such pangs of remorse in two jail escapees yesterday that they went straight to police and gave themselves up. Everett R. Dean, 24, and George A. Mackowan, 22, Newport News, held on charges of armed robbery in the Warwick jail at Denbigh used up several nights sawing through the bars in their cell window. Yesterday, before dawn, they crawled through the window and escaped. Police put out alarms to several states. Last night at 11 p.m. the two walked meekly into police headquarters here and surrendered. They said they’d walked from the jail to nearby Williamsburg, and there decided to hide out in the theater showing the movie depicting the life of Arnold, a Revolutionary War traitor.<sup>16</sup>

(The movie they would have seen was *The Scarlet Coat*, 1955, directed by John Sturges, with Cornel Wilde, Michael Wilding, George Sanders and Anne Francis).<sup>17</sup>



On the left is a glimpse of Warwick’s second courthouse built in 1810. In the background is a partial view of the elegant 1884 Warwick Courthouse and a sideview of the 1899 Warwick County jail (right) at Stony Run in Denbigh in 1948.  
Photo: WCHS—James L. Histand Sr Collection

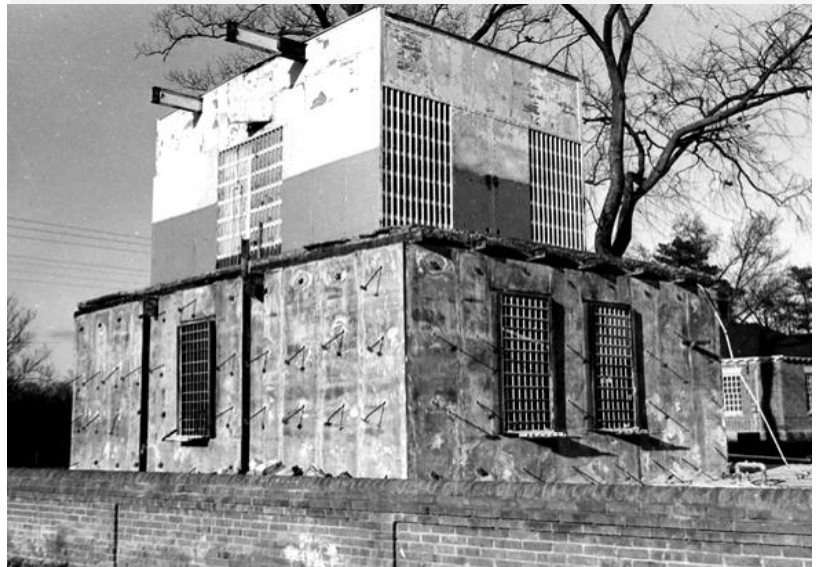
The old days were coming to a close for the obsolete old jail and soon, for the county itself. At the end of a bitterly contested consolidation with Newport News in 1958, the then-City of Warwick, carrying what was left of Old Warwick County promptly ducked into the history books to be forgotten and out came the expanded City of Newport News, now totally in charge. “The director of the state Division of Corrections said in November, 1954 that there was ‘no valid reason’ to delay condemnation of the facility.”<sup>18</sup> But it was delayed, of course. The old jail was finally ordered razed in 1959. The location of this third Warwick County jail is now a parking lot inside the walls of the courthouse green.

A late member of our historical society said that she had visited the jail as a child. She chuckled as she stated emphatically that she only went into the kitchen part with her mom as she had committed no crime. She recalled the time well because it was the first time she had ever tasted chitterlings. Just as emphatically, she declared that it was the last time as well. Her mom was on the Warwick Board of Supervisors before it was fashionable. These memories are so easily lost to time; we really should write them down. D Terry



(Above) The outer brick façade was stripped off during demolition in this October 17, 1959 *Daily Press* photograph.

(Below) The last image of the 1899 Warwick jail is shown in this January 1, 1960 *Daily Press* photograph.



<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Number 17, 11 April 1935.  
<sup>12</sup> Ibid. <sup>16</sup> *Suffolk News-Herald*, Volume 33, Number 196, 30 August 1955.  
<sup>13</sup> *New York Times*, New York, N. Y., February 28, 1897. <sup>17</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org>, The Scarlet Coat.  
<sup>14</sup> *Richmond News Leader*, Number 8776, 18 August 1925. <sup>18</sup> *The Times Herald*, Newport News, Va., Thursday, July 1, 1976.  
<sup>15</sup> *Suffolk News-Herald*, Volume 13,



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THE WARWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY WAS ORGANIZED TO FURTHER DISCOVER AND MEMORIALIZE THE HISTORY AND PEOPLES OF OLD WARWICK COUNTY, VIRGINIA, A BYGONE ORIGINAL SHIRE OF THE ENGLISH CROWN DATING TO 1634. WARWICK COUNTY, WITH ITS SEAT AT WARWICKTOWN AND DENBIGH BY 1810, PLAYED A ROLE IN THE DRAMATIC STORY OF AMERICA'S FOUNDING. THROUGH HARD TIMES AND PLENTY, THE COUNTY ENDURED FOR THREE CENTURIES AND WAS WITNESS TO TURBULENCE AND TRIUMPH IN THE GROWTH OF A YOUNG VIRGINIA.

HAIL TO THE SPRIT OF THE FREE STATE OF WARWICK!

Mulberry Island Notes is a publication of the Warwick County Historical Society (WCHS), a 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Donations are tax-deductible.

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WCHS IS LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN AND WOMEN WITH AN INTEREST IN LOCAL HISTORY, GENEALOGY OR ARCHAEOLOGY TO SEIZE THE DAY! NO DEGREES NEEDED, ONLY ENTHUSIASM.

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1810 Warwick Courthouse
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Get off the Phone!

Daily Press, Volume 4, Number 244, 14 October 1899

To the patrons of the C. T. & T. Company of Newport News:

In the future the company will have two young lady operators in charge of the night office. Misses Eloise and Mercedes Johnston. Mr. C. F. Hundley will be solicitor and collector for the present.

This change is made in the interest of the subscribers and public generally and it is hoped that the subscribers will appreciate and protect these young ladies in the Central Office at night, that they may be able to give more satisfactory service as the company realizes there is too much work for one operator, as they now have about 400 subscribers and over 200 subscribers to which they give free service to Hampton Telephone Exchange, also free service to ten phones on the Warwick Court House line, connecting with Morri- son, Menchville and Warwick Court House and arrangements about

completed to connect with Yorktown and Gloucester Court House, also Lee Hall and Williamsburg.

Any lack of attention will please be reported to the management at Newport News, or to the-chief office at Staunton, Va. The company feels compelled to call the attention of subscribers to an evil which is assuming considerable proportions and is the cause of a great deal of inconvenience to the subscribers, and consequent complaint from them.

At many stations we find it is the custom of young clerks and occasionally non-subscriber visitors to enter into lengthy conversations over the phone to the great disadvantage of the service. Often a business phone is called for as many as a dozen times while one conversation is going on. Of course, it is impossible for the operator to disconnect during such lengthy conversations and others

who wish to use the phone during that time must be put off. Sometimes a phone is used for ten or fifteen minutes at a time and upon complaint and investigation we have ascertained that the parties using it were young clerks and their lady friends.

We call the attention of our patrons to this evil, particularly physicians, as they are frequently called on the most urgent business, but their phones being in use for as much as ten or fifteen minutes at a time, other physicians have to be called. It is in the power of our subscribers to protect their own interests, while at the same time they benefit the general service.

Very respectfully,
N. C. WATTS.
General Superintendent.