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OLD SOUTH QUAY IN SOUTHAMPTON COUNTY

Its Location, Early Ownership, and History

by JOHN CRUMP PARKER*

THERE are two South Quays in southeastern Virginia. One is a roadside community in Nansemond County; the other is Old South Quay in Southampton County. Both are on the Blackwater River, the first on the east bank, the second on the west. They are only a mile or so from each other but leagues apart in historical interest.

In 1863 some of General Longstreet's men going east to begin the siege of Suffolk crossed the river at South Quay on pontoon bridges.¹ At the end of that unfortunate campaign they retraced their steps on the way to join Lee's army for the invasion of Pennsylvania.² On those two passages of Confederate troops hangs all the significant history of the present South Quay. It is today a subsiding roadside community, with a few substantial residences which were once the seats of prominent families, some warehouses for local produce, and a filling station, all located near the present bridge where the ancient trade route which has become State Highway No. 189 crosses the river.

Old South Quay is another matter. It was the South Quay of Virginia's colonial days, a rendezvous for militia as early as 1712. In that year it was the site designated for a conference between Governor Alexander Spotswood and President Thomas Pollock of North Carolina to make plans for war against the Indians, but Pollock did not attend.³ Before the Revolution it had developed into a trading hamlet and had become a port of entry

* Mr. Parker, an attorney, lives in Franklin, Virginia.

¹ Richard Irby, *Historical Sketch of the Nottoway Grays, Afterwards Company G, Eighteenth Virginia Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia* (Richmond, 1878). Maps, grants, title records, present physical conditions, local traditions, and the incident of Tembte Fisher's marriage, all have been researched by me using primary sources. The rest of the material used is extracted from secondary sources.

² "Travels and Scenes," an account by Henry Kinchen Williams, member of the Southampton Greys, Company D, 3d Virginia Infantry, C.S.A. Williams's account is undated but was written long after 1865. A copy in possession of the author of this article was supplied by Joseph H. Sturts, Franklin, Virginia.

³ *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, edited by H. R. McIlwaine et al. (Richmond, 1925-1966), III, 331; Wilbur Earnest MacClenny, "Cargo of the Spanish Ship *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*," typewritten article prepared after 1928, W. E. MacClenny manuscript collection, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

with a customhouse.⁴ During the Revolution, when the British closed Chesapeake Bay, the Blackwater port, opening as it did on Albemarle Sound, became an important supply center for the Southern armies, so much so that the British finally sought it out and destroyed it.⁵

Old South Quay is now merely an identifiable spot of land where many things happened whose traces have long since disappeared. No buildings are near the ancient landing place, no signs of man's activities are in evidence except on the highway, which skirts close to the riverbank, and in the well-tilled fields beyond it.⁶ No noises are heard except the hum of passing automobiles and the clatter of distant farm machinery. It is a peaceful spot, with no vestige of the transactions and events it once witnessed.

The reaches of the Blackwater River where both South Quays later developed were almost certainly seen by the colonists settled by Sir Walter Raleigh on Roanoke Island. These Englishmen were the first Europeans to ascend the river. Spanish ships earlier discerned the coast of the country they called Ajacán from Florida to the Chesapeake Bay, but if their explorers ventured inland across the North Carolina sounds, no charts or other records of their discoveries have been found. Nor did the French under Verrazzano in 1524 see anything beyond the sounds.⁷

It was left to the English to chart Albemarle Sound and its tributaries. The Chowan River, the principal stream entering the sound from the north, is formed by the confluence of the Blackwater and the Nottoway Rivers near the boundary of Virginia and North Carolina. One of John White's maps made in 1585 or 1586 unmistakably depicts what is now the Chowan. It does not extend that stream quite so far northward as its head, but it was from White's charts and the information he was able to give that Theodore de Bry engraved a map, published in 1590, which shows two rivers flowing into the Chowan, which can hardly be taken for any but the Blackwater

⁴ Wilbur Earnest MacClenny, "Nansemond County in the American Revolution," undated typewritten article, MacClenny Mss. In an undated memorandum book found in a box labeled "Materials for History of Nansemond County II," with a notation "from tradition only," Mr. MacClenny states that customs officers at South Quay were William M. Jones, Colonel R. H. Baker, ——— Milner, and ——— Baker (MacClenny Mss.).

⁵ David Stick, *The Outer Banks of North Carolina, 1584-1958* (Chapel Hill, 1958), p. 50; MacClenny, "Nansemond County in the American Revolution."

⁶ Personal inspections by the author, including one in 1970 in company of Colonel Howard E. McCord, of the Archaeological Society of Virginia.

⁷ Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages A. D. 500-1600* (New York, 1971), p. 296.

and the Nottoway. Thus it seems definite that the English about 1585 went up those rivers and were the first white men to do so.⁸

Explorations from the Jamestown colony were made to the southward, as John Smith called it, when in 1608 he sent Michael Sicklemore to look for traces of Raleigh's Lost Colony and to make contact, if he could, with the Chowanocks⁹—a name in itself indicating that Smith in all probability had a copy of John White's map or possibly de Bry's engraving to guide the expedition, since both bore tribe names having the sound of Chowanock.

Whether or not Sicklemore's investigations led to contact with the Indians he sought, many settlements in the country south of the James were made before the seventeenth century closed. Apparently no grants were desired for the southwest part of Nansemond County, however, until well after the land along the more convenient waterways which flowed into the James was occupied.

No maps with the name South Quay have been found predating that of Nicholas Comberford in 1657,¹⁰ although the Nottoway and Blackwater Rivers, without names, appear on Mercator's map published in Amsterdam in 1619.¹¹ Even Comberford erroneously places the words "South Key" on

⁸ This conclusion is accepted as no more than a possibility by some eminent historians and challenged by others. "Your Blackwater hypothesis seems reasonable" (Samuel Eliot Morison to the author, August 15, 1971). On the other hand, "I think it would be unwarranted to conclude that White or any other European had been into the Blackwater River by 1590 The Europeans probably got no further north than the mouth of Wiccacon Creek in 1584" (Thomas C. Parramore to the author, June 25, 1971). Yet the conclusion in the text seems more logical than any other thus far advanced. Morison, who relied principally on David B. Quinn, editor, *The Roanoke Voyages, 1584-1590: Documents to Illustrate the English Voyages to North America Under the Patent Granted to Walter Raleigh in 1584* (London, 1955), says that in March 1586 Ralph Lane (John White was his artist and explorer) went to a native village near the "headquarters" [*sic*, headwaters?] of the Chowan (Morison, *European Discovery of America*, p. 646). The de Bry engraving of 1590, which is known to be based on White's maps and perhaps on additional particulars furnished by White and Thomas Hariot, who was with Lane and White, shows the distance from the mouth of the Chowan to its head as more than twice the distance from the north end of Roanoke Island to the Chowan, whereas by modern maps it is slightly less than one and one-half times the latter. De Bry was a careful cartographer, and his engraving is based on the best information available. The length of the Chowan River in the engraving indicates that it extends to the Blackwater and the Nottoway, thence a short distance up each of these streams. A journey yielding this information on these streams would have taken one well into what is now Virginia.

⁹ William Stith, *The History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia: Being an Essay towards a General History of this Colony* (Williamsburg, 1747; reprint New York, 1865), p. 99.

¹⁰ William P. Cumming, *North Carolina in Maps* (Raleigh, 1966), plate IV.

¹¹ Gerardus Mercator, [*Map of*] *Virginiae item et Floridae Americae provinciarum, nova descriptio* (Amsterdam, 1619).

the east bank of Blackwater River, denominated by him Blackwater Branch. Many years later, however, sites along the rivers become more definitely named and located, and settlements on the Blackwater grew sufficiently for map makers to differentiate between "New South Quay" and "Old South Quay." Herman Böyë in his maps of 1826 and 1827 gives the locations more exactly than any earlier cartographer. He places Old South Quay by name where it actually was and "New South Quay" where the present South Quay is.¹²

Written records, however, differentiated the two places long before Böyë. Deeds recorded as early as 1725 called the older site "South Key,"¹³ and by 1798 the "Old Quay,"¹⁴ and from 1804 to 1835 specifically "Old South Quay"¹⁵ to distinguish that place from the New South Quay, which had been settled before the end of the eighteenth century. The word "New" has long since been dropped.

Worthwhile as they are for place names, the early deeds are nevertheless difficult to follow. The land adjacent to the lower part of Blackwater River was in Elizabeth City County when the Virginia shires were first formed in 1634. It was next in New Norfolk County, which was set off from Elizabeth City in 1636; but a year later when New Norfolk was divided, the southern part became Upper Norfolk County, which was later renamed Nansimum or Nansemond County. It so continued until Nansemond's southwest corner, cut off by the Blackwater River, was added in 1786 to thirty-seven-year-old Southampton County.

Since then ownership of the land in Old South Quay is easily traced through the intact records of Southampton, but prior to that there are gaps

¹² Herman Böyë, *A Map of the State of Virginia, Constructed in Conformity to Law from the Late Surveys Authorized by the Legislature and Other Original and Authentic Documents* (1827); Herman Böyë, *A Map of the State of Virginia, Reduced from the Nine-Sheet Map of the State in Conformity to Law* (1828).

¹³ Deed from William Shivers to his son Thomas Shivers in 1725 for land adjoining South Quay. This deed is not found of record but is referred to in "a list of deeds and wills proved and recorded after the fire in the clerk's office in 1734 in Nansemond County and made lawful by Act of House of Burgesses in 1736," undated typed list in box labeled "Materials for History of Nansemond County I," MacClenny Mss.

¹⁴ William H. Baker to David Eley, Sr., January 20, 1798, Southampton County, Virginia, Deed Book 8, p. 663.

¹⁵ Shadrack Griffin to John Lee, December 17, 1804, Southampton County, Deed Book 11, p. 460; deed of trust Shadrack Griffin to Jacob Darden, trustee, July 5, 1808, Southampton County, Deed Book 11, p. 599; William M. Jones, commissioner for the heirs of Isaac O. Holland, deceased, to Wiley W. Jenkins, September 20, 1829, Southampton County, Deed Book 21, p. 199; Jesse Parker and others, commissioners for the heirs of Wiley W. Jenkins, deceased, September 19, 1835, Southampton County, Deed Book 24, p. 492. The name Old South Quay does not appear in deeds for the tract after the last citation.

in the records. Land grants from the beginning of the colony furnish valuable information, but the early records of Nansemond County have been destroyed in three successive fires, in 1734, again in 1779 when the British burned Suffolk, and finally in 1866. There is a great void from the establishment of Nansemond County in 1642 to 1786, when Old South Quay became a part of Southampton County. The jump from the colonial grants to the Southampton deed and will books may be made with safety, however, if dependence is placed on unofficial records of families and family-owned businesses, and by that reasonable method ownership of Old South Quay can be traced from 1713 to the present day.

The first identifiable grant for the site of Old South Quay itself was in 1713, the second in 1764. The earlier one was to Edmond Godwin. The latter was to Thomas Fisher, who in some undisclosed manner had acquired Godwin's interest. It is true that a grant previous to Fisher's mentioned the place. In 1673 John Blake patented 2,000 acres on "Wickham," and his papers are said to have identified the area granted him as "hard by South Key,"¹⁶ but that would imply that the grant itself did not include the Quay.

The Godwin and Fisher grants furnish an irrefutable clue to the exact location of Old South Quay.¹⁷ As will be seen, Godwin's grant was for 114 acres by survey with two points on the Blackwater River. Fisher's was for the land previously granted to Godwin plus 18 acres "never before granted" and established by another survey a third point on the river. Neither grant employs the name South Quay, but the deeds for the tract after Fisher's death referred to it in 1798 as the Old Quay and in 1804 as Old South Quay. Thus Old South Quay is definitely known to be the exact 132 acres granted to Fisher, including the 114-acre parcel earlier granted to Godwin.

¹⁶ G. B. [Grant Book?] 6, p. 501, cited in undated manuscript in unlabeled loose-leaf binder in "Materials for History of Nansemond County I," and "Cargo of the Spanish Ship *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*," MacClenny Mss.

¹⁷ The Godwin grant: Lieutenant Governor Alexander Spotswood to Edmond Godwin, November 13, 1713, Patent Book 10 (1710-1719), p. 119, Virginia State Library. One certain tract or parcel of land containing one hundred and fourteen acres lying and being in the upper parish of Nansemond County on the southwest [*sic*] side of Blackwater & bounded as followeth, to wit, beginning at a red oak standing on the River side it being a corner tree of the land of Thomas Daughtrey and running thence bounding in yard on his line northwesterly twenty six degrees seventy seven poles to a pine thence southwesterly sixty one degrees two hundred thirty eight poles to a pine thence southeasterly twenty nine degrees one hundred forty six poles to a pine standing by the side of a small branch thence down the same northeasterly fifty four degrees forty poles to the River side thence up the River the several courses thereof and bounding thereon to the first mentioned station.

The Fisher grant: Lieutenant Governor Francis Fauquier to Thomas Fisher, August 15, 1764, Patent Book 36 (1764-1767), p. 615, Virginia State Library. One certain tract or parcel

The three points on the river are a researcher's treasure-trove and a surveyor's delight. A plat reconstructed from the survey lines recited in the two grants, like a missing piece in a jigsaw puzzle, fits into the only possible place along the west bank of the meandering river in its southerly twelve-mile course ending at the North Carolina line. The site so fixed conforms precisely to all local tradition as to where Old South Quay was.¹⁸

The tract is an irregular trapezoid, with one mile of waterfront on the river and reaching back from the river more than a quarter-mile. It is four air-line miles south of the present city of Franklin and four and a half miles on a direct line north of Virginia's southern border. It remained an undivided tract until 1947; since then, in separate parcels, it has been acquired by several owners.¹⁹

Fisher's tract of 132 acres, with a mile of river frontage, enjoys a wide and sloping approach to the river's edge, where the water is fairly deep and the banks on either side of the approach high enough to be safe from inundation during frequent freshets. It was an ideal place to conduct the water-borne trade which developed there as early as 1713,²⁰ well before Fisher acquired the tract.

The Fisher enterprises at the site were extensive and were utilized for at least twenty-five years and inferably longer. It is positive that Fisher in partnership with his father-in-law, Henning Tembte, was active there as

of land containing one hundred and thirty two acres lying and being in the county of Nansemond in the upper Parish of the said county on the West side of Blackwater River and bounded as followeth [to wit] Beginning at a Hickory on the river Bank thence bounding on James Garner north twenty nine Degrees West seventy six poles to a stake corner to James Garner and Joshua Garner and binding on the said Joshua South sixty one degrees West two hundred and twenty eight poles to a stake on the westward side of Foxtrap Branch thence South twenty two degrees and a half West thirty two poles to a Pine thence South seventy nine Degrees West eighteen Poles to a Hickory corner to Holland Darden thence binding on the said Darden south thirty two Degrees East sixty six poles thence South forty four Degrees East twelve Poles to a Maple then South sixty five Degrees East ten poles to a Pine south sixty nine Degrees East one hundred and two Poles to a Pine on the edge of Pocosen [*sic*] thence South eighty two Degrees East twenty two Poles to a Cypress on the river bank thence up the said River as it meanders to to [*sic*] the Beginning. One hundred and fourteen acres part thereof being formerly granted to Edmond Godwin by letters Patent bearing date the thirteenth day of November one thousand seven hundred and thirteen the right and Title whereof is since become vested in the said Thomas Fisher and eighteen Acres the residue never before granted.

¹⁸ Statement to the writer by his father, John Crafford Parker, circa 1908; statements to the writer in 1964 by Wayland F. Jones, Sol W. Rawls, and by others who were residents of the general area.

¹⁹ Among the owners are Sol W. Rawls, William M. Bradshaw, Jr., and Union Camp Corporation.

²⁰ MacClenny, "Nansemond County in the American Revolution," MacClenny Mss.

early as 1757.²¹ No business conducted by Godwin has been traced, but it will be remembered that when Fisher obtained the 1764 grant, he had already acquired the rights granted to Godwin in 1713. These successive grantees and partners, with Fisher as the emerging resident owner and manager, built up the import, export, storage, ship-building, and transportation business which attained such prominence. Fisher's residence there was important enough to be mentioned as a tarrying place by at least one traveler of those days.²²

Why Fisher, in possession and full swing, should have wanted to sell the property is an open guess. Perhaps like his father-in-law and business partner, he desired to move to North Carolina. Perhaps it was because of failing health, for he died before June 1772.²³ Whatever the reasons, in January 1769 the entire holdings were advertised to be sold February 4. They were advertised again in February for a sale in March. The language of these notices indicates, even with allowance for natural enthusiasm on the part of a would-be vendor, the extent and importance of the place and of its activities.

A Plantation in Nansemond county, at *South Key* bridge, on *Blackwater*, containing about 130 acres, on which is a dwelling-house 32 by 24, with four rooms on a floor and a brick cellar, suitable outhouses, a young thriving orchard, and every thing in good repair; also a storehouse and two new warehouses 30 by 20 each, with ten feet sheds on every side, being the land and plantation whereon *Thomas Fisher* now lives. The situation is well known to be convenient for trade, being on a publick road, and contiguous to a very considerable scope of well settled country. There are nine feet water up to the warehouses, and as the landing is within 20 miles land carriage, and the most convenient to navigation on *Nansemond* river, considerable advantage will be yearly made by storing pork, tobacco, &c. intended from *Roanoke* and the other rivers in *North Carolina* for *Virginia*.²⁴

After Fisher's death his heirs again tried to sell, this time in June 1772.²⁵ No purchaser was found, however, and Mary Tembte Fisher, the widow,

²¹ Mary Dean Clement, "Henning Tembte," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, LXV (1957), 93-94, including references to Southampton Order Books 2 to 8, particularly Order Book 6, p. 494, and Order Book 8, p. 42.

²² Ridsen Tyler Bennett, editor, "The Journal of James Auld, 1765-1770," *Publications of the Southern History Association*, VIII (1904), 259.

²³ An advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), June 11, 1772; Clement, "Henning Tembte," *VMHB*, LXV, 97.

²⁴ *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), January 26, 1769.

²⁵ *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), June 11, 1772.

was fated to occupy the spot and operate its facilities through the most significant and prominent part of its history—the years of the American Revolution.

Warehouses and wharves were in existence at South Quay well before the Revolution began and to them was added a shipyard.²⁶ At the shipyard at least two vessels were built for the state forces while Patrick Henry was governor. They drew eight or nine feet of water and each carried about eighteen small cannon.²⁷ After being launched and manned at South Quay, these row galleys were used to defend North Carolina and Virginia waters from deprivations by the British naval and land forces. One vessel, the *Caswell*, was named for Richard Caswell, then governor of North Carolina, in what would seem to be open flattery designed to induce his support for the building and equipping of both ships. The other was the *Washington*, commissioned shortly after the *Caswell* and named obviously for a more prominent person. The careers of both galleys were brief and ignominious.

The *Caswell*, ready in 1777, was ordered in July to take up station at Ocracoke Inlet in North Carolina, going out by Edenton to get her armament of cannon. Her captain, Willis Wilson, commanded a crew of 145 men.²⁸ The *Washington* was completed later. Under her captain, Goodrich Boush, she joined the *Caswell* in the North Carolina sounds. Governor Henry reported to Congress in 1778 that Virginia had finished the two galleys, but a year later Thomas Jefferson, who had succeeded Henry, complained to Governor Caswell that the two ships, built at Virginia's expense, were ineffective and that their lack of value to the states was due in large part to North Carolina's failure to live up to its compact for duplicating Virginia's effort. A week later Jefferson reported that the *Caswell's* bottom had been eaten out and she had sunk at her station.²⁹ The *Washington* at least remained afloat somewhat longer.³⁰

As the war unfolded, South Quay was one of the few ports left open for the patriots' use. It and other points approached by ships through the inlets

²⁶ Robert Armistead Stewart, *The History of Virginia's Navy of the Revolution* (Richmond, 1933), pp. 20, 53, 135.

²⁷ *Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia—Vol. I, The Letters of Patrick Henry*, edited by H. R. McIlwaine (Richmond, 1926), p. 328.

²⁸ Stewart, *History of Virginia's Navy*, pp. 20, 269; *The State Records of North Carolina . . .*, edited by Walter Clark, XI (Winston, 1895), 314, 315, 442.

²⁹ *Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia—Patrick Henry*, p. 328; *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, edited by Julian P. Boyd (Princeton, N.J., 1950-), III, 9, 20.

³⁰ The story of the *Caswell* and the *Washington* is told in Stewart, *The History of Virginia's Navy of the Revolution*, *passim*, and in Stick, *The Outer Banks of North Carolina, 1584-1958*, chapter 4.

of the Outer Banks of North Carolina though dangerously located were not completely blockaded by the British Navy as were the major ports of Wilmington and Norfolk and the harbors to the north of them. Jefferson was intent on keeping open his backdoor waterway through North Carolina. He well knew how remote and unsuitable South Quay with its long and slow approach from the sea was for those shipments which did arrive, and how laborious was the transport by wagon train over twenty-five miles of road to Suffolk, which has been called the chief depot of military supplies in Virginia during the late months of the war.³¹ Admittedly South Quay was inconvenient for trade, he said, but it had the advantage of being hard for the enemy to get at.³²

Visits by foreign ships to unload their cargoes and take on stores were not infrequent and did not go unnoticed. For example, in December 1778 the Spanish brig *El Sagrado Corazon de Jesus* sailed up to South Quay's wharves. Its name, translated *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*, may well have affronted the strongly Baptist and Quaker neighborhood,³³ but its cargo must have been most welcome. She unloaded twenty-two cannon made of Swedish iron, purchased in France, having already delivered an equal number at Edenton. The guns, however, were never of much use; most of those arriving in Virginia stayed at South Quay until the end of the war. The captain of the ship stayed on as a temporary, perhaps a permanent, resident of Edenton.³⁴

As the war approached its end, the British threat grew, and the imminence of attack on South Quay gave rise to much movement to and fro by opposing forces. In 1781 the widow of Thomas Fisher realized that the British intended to destroy the port and end its usefulness to the patriots. The widow's teenage daughter, Tembte Fisher, was engaged to be married, but as the day for the wedding approached the mother became alarmed for her daughter's safety and as well, no doubt, for her own. She sent the girl to lodge with friends in nearby Southampton County (the Fisher place was then in Nansemond), where she might in safety be married.

A difficulty arose in obtaining a license. The Southampton clerk, Sam-

³¹ *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, IV, 502-503.

³² MacClenny, "Cargo of the Spanish Ship *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*" and "Nansemond County in the American Revolution," MacClenny Mss.

³³ South Quay Baptist Church, now standing in Nansemond County three miles east of Old South Quay, was founded in 1775 (*Proceedings of the Blackwater Baptist Association of Virginia*, 1970, p. 57).

³⁴ MacClenny, "Cargo of the Spanish Ship *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*" and Nansemond County in the American Revolution," MacClenny Mss.

uel Kello, was a stickler for the law; the bride did not reside in the county and no member of her family was there to give consent to her marriage. So Redmond Hackett, the prospective groom, hastened to Mrs. Fisher, who wrote in her own hand a letter which tells much of the circumstances of the moment.

So. Quay the 13th March, 1781

Collonel Kello,
Sir,

The Bearer Mr. Hackett came this Night from your house to mine & Informed of the reason of your not granting license for his marrying my daughter Tembte Fisher, was first because she did not live in Southampton County & secondly that she had no Guardian.

I am sorry Sir that he was not acquainted with some Particulars that past here in his Absence as it might be a Motive of saving both you and him trouble. It is currently Reported here that Coll: Parker has had an Engagement & was Oblidged to Retreat with some loss, the Consequence that May Ensue we can Not foresee; however I thought it prudent to Remove my Daughter from this public place to a friends house one Mr. Hardy Cobbs in So. Hampton where I expect she will live untill she is Married or the Enemy's Departure.

He likewise informs me of your Requesting a Certificate of Consent from me as [there] being neither a Parent or Guardian; I have been chosen Guardian by her & her Brother the Children of Mr. Fisher for some time past therefore hope this will Remove every Obstacle.

I should be happy you wou'd Settle matters Agreeable on both sides. And Am Sir with Respect

Your most obt. Servnt.

MARY FISHER

I certify to All to whom these presents shall come and all whom it may Concern that I give My Consent that Redmond Hackett May Marry my Daughter Tembte Fisher. In Witness whereof I have fixed my hand & seal this 13 day of March 1781.

MARY FISHER Guardian

Test. HOLLAND DARDEN
JOHN CARR³⁵

The incident had a happy ending for the young couple. They were married, in Southampton, March 25, 1781,³⁶ but there was no happy ending for

³⁵ Southampton County Loose Marriage Bonds, 1776-1785, Nos. 69-784, Virginia State Library.

³⁶ Southampton County Marriage Register, 1750-1783, p. 630. The index to this book has "Temble" instead of Tembte.

the mother who had remained at South Quay. Mary Fisher's alarm turned out to be all too well founded.

Colonel Josiah Parker of Macclesfield, Isle of Wight County, commanded all the militia in southeast Virginia. He was ordered by Major General Friedrich von Steuben, then at Petersburg, to give particular attention to the safety of all artillery and ammunition stored at South Quay.³⁷ The repulse of Parker's forces, mentioned in Mrs. Fisher's letter, led to the complete disappearance of South Quay. The British forces under Colonel Banastre Tarleton came from Portsmouth, seven hundred strong and on July 16, 1781, destroyed by fire all they considered useful.³⁸ Nothing ever rose from the ashes.

Nevertheless one episode in the drama of war remained to be played. Four months after Yorktown, but before the peace treaty was signed, the ship *Three Friends*, bound from British-occupied Charleston, South Carolina, under a flag of truce, dropped anchor at Edenton. Seized by two privateers because she carried commercial cargo in violation of her flag, the ship was moved up the rivers to South Quay. The choice of that place, which then was devoid of shipping facilities, may logically be attributed, in view of what happened later, to a desire on the part of the principal privateer to flee Edenton for Virginia waters where the prize would beyond question be condemned. The seizure and subsequent transfer of the ship with its valuable cargo subjected relations between the two states involved to great strain. Governor Thomas Burke of North Carolina, a petulant Irishman, demanded that Governor Benjamin Harrison of Virginia return the *Three Friends* to Edenton, and threatened to use force to regain the ship if his request was refused. Since the Virginia court of admiralty had condemned the ship before it learned of Burke's demand, Harrison was powerless. He was, nevertheless, able to placate Burke, and the two privateers divided the prize.³⁹

Mary Fisher lived on at South Quay and died not long before June 1795.⁴⁰ Since her husband Thomas left no will, the property was inherited under the

³⁷ Robert M. Hughes, editor, "Revolutionary Correspondence of Col. Josiah Parker, of Isle of Wight County, Va.," *VMHB*, XXII (1914), 259; MacClenny, "Nansemond County in the American Revolution," MacClenny Mss.

³⁸ Floyd McKnight, "The County of Southampton, 1749-1957," in Rogers Dey Wichard, *The History of Lower Tidewater Virginia* (New York, 1959), II, 289-290; article by Edgar B. Jackson, *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, October 10, 1954, part 5, page 8; MacClenny, "Nansemond County in the American Revolution," and "Cargo of the Spanish Ship *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*," MacClenny Mss.

³⁹ Randolph B. Campbell, "The Case of the 'Three Friends': An Incident in Maritime Regulation During the Revolutionary War," *VMHB*, LXXIV (1966), 190-209.

⁴⁰ Clement, "Henning Tembre," *VMHB*, LXV, 97.

law of those days by his son Robert to the exclusion of the daughter Tembte Fisher Hackett, who died shortly after her marriage. Dr. Robert H. Fisher, a physician, emerged as the sole owner with the termination of his mother's dower rights.⁴¹

Whether Dr. Fisher then lived at South Quay is undetermined, but he obviously wished to sell and probably wanted to forget. Certainly the community could not support a physician, and he established himself in Suffolk where he died in 1815 at forty-nine.⁴² In the very year of his mother's death he found a purchaser; William H. Baker bought the entire tract on July 7, 1795, for £200. The deed executed in December of that year conveys 132 acres to Baker, saying it was the same land described in the 1764 "patent granted by Fran Fauquire to Thomas Fisher."⁴³ Excepted is the "family burying ground" of 400 square feet, which now defies location, although it has been assumed that Dr. Fisher's mother was buried there.⁴⁴ The deed mentions no warehouses, wharves, or anything else relating to business. Indeed, none of the subsequent title documents allude to any buildings whatever, with the exception of an 1804 deed in which Shadrack Griffin mentions an old house which he occupied and agreed to move off the property.⁴⁵ He calls it "the dividing house," which might mean an office formerly used as a counting house. It may have been passed over by Tarleton's torch-bearing troopers as of no importance, but it has now disappeared.

If, as is unlikely, Dr. Fisher or those to whom he sold had dreams of reviving South Quay as a port, those dreams were doomed.⁴⁶ In 1805 the Dismal Swamp Canal from Norfolk to Elizabeth City, North Carolina, was opened⁴⁷ and that in turn was followed in 1859 by the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal from Norfolk to Currituck Sound. These waterways

⁴¹ Inventory, Southampton County, Will Book 4, p. 717.

⁴² *Norfolk Gazette and Public Ledger*, May 29, 1815.

⁴³ Dated July 7, 1795, recorded December 10, 1795, Southampton County, Deed Book 8, p. 236.

⁴⁴ Clement, "Henning Tembte," *VMHB*, LXV, 97-98.

⁴⁵ Shadrack Griffin to John Lee, December 17, 1804, Southampton County, Deed Book 11, p. 460.

⁴⁶ Dr. Fisher was nevertheless in 1804 one of a group which contemplated opening a canal from Nansemond River to Roanoke River (Samuel Shepherd, editor, *The Statutes at Large of Virginia, from October Session 1792, to December Session 1806, inclusive* [Richmond, 1834-1836], III, 110, 135, 185). As late as March 3, 1831, Virginia's General Assembly ordered the Board of Public Works to survey the Blackwater River to see if canals could be built to Pagan River (near Smithfield) or to Appomattox River (near Petersburg). The surveys were made but the canals were never constructed (Earl G. Swem, *Maps Relating to Virginia in the Virginia State Library and other Departments of the Commonwealth . . .* in *Bulletin of the Virginia State Library*, VII [Richmond, 1914], 111, 127).

⁴⁷ Alexander Crosby Brown, *The Dismal Swamp Canal* (Chesapeake, 1970).

gave access from the North Carolina inlets to Virginia along routes much shorter than the natural channels of the Chowan and Blackwater Rivers and did not require the long overland haul to the Nansemond River at Suffolk.

Old South Quay's usefulness for shipping faded from reality, for those days and doubtless forever. Its former significance can hardly be imagined by a visitor today, however inquisitive he may be. There is not even a historical highway marker to proclaim what was once there. One sees only the quiet, narrow river and the farms and woods on either bank. Old South Quay was never a military post or a fort, and the patriot colors may never have waved there. If they did, they were never seen in the dawn's early light after the British incursion, nor at any time since.