

Timson House (303 Prince George Street) (LT) Historical Report, Block 30-1 Building 4

Originally entitled: "Timson House Block 30, Building 4, Colonial Lot 323"

Mary Goodwin and Carl Lounsbury

1988,
1980

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series - 1600
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library

Williamsburg, Virginia

1990

TIMSON HOUSE Block 30, Building 4, Colonial Lot 323

The Timson House on colonial lot 323 (on the corner of Prince George and Nassau Streets) is generally credited with being one of the oldest houses in Williamsburg. On March 17, 1713/14 Captain William Timson, of Queen's Creek, was deeded lot 323 (along with lots 46 and 47 on Duke of Gloucester Street) by the Trustees of Williamsburg — with the stipulation that he "build within space of 24 months one or more good dwellings on each lot according to directions of An Act of Assembly 1705" or the lots would revert to the Trustees. [York County Records, Book III, Deeds and Bonds, March 16, 1715, pp. 109-110.] ¹(See Appendix for biographical information on William Timson.)

Evidently, Timson did build the required houses because 1) the lots did not revert and 2) the next deed for the three properties (which Timson sold to James Shields May 31, 1717) read "together with the houses thereon." [Ibid., May 31, 1717, p. 185.] Timson sold the properties to Shields, along with two hundred acres of land in York county, for £300.

James Sheilds [note the variation in spelling] held the property until his death. In his will, dated 1727, he bequeathed it to his son Matthew. [Ibid., Book 16, Orders, Wills, July 13, 1727]. On January 28, 1744, Matthew Sheilds sold lot 323 " . . . and messuage and tenements thereon erected" to William Pegram, a bricklayer, for £60. [Ibid., Book V, Deeds.] On May 16, 1745, William Pegram deeded it to James Wray, a well known carpenter and joiner, also for £60. [Ibid., Book V, Deeds.] Although Wray was known as a carpenter and joiner (in 1749 both he and Richard Taliaferro were placed in charge of repairing and enlarging the Governor's Palace), there is no indication that he was a "Master Builder." Still, we cannot positively say that the house on lot 323 is the same as the house Timson had built prior to 1717. Wray died in 1750 and left his property to his son, James. James Wray, Jr. sold the property "and all houses, buildings" to John Connelly on August 19, 1772 for £50. [Ibid., Book 8, Deeds.]

This is the last record traceable to the property. Following the Revolution, the property is marked "Ferguson" on several town plats, but it has not been possible to trace ownership to any particular Ferguson. Two lots located on Nicholson Street between Queen Street and Greenhow Street are shown on the unknown draftsman's map to be owned by "Ferguson," and Bucktrout "Furgoson." The lot under study, however, is a single lot situated on Prince George and Nassau Streets.

The late citizen of Williamsburg, Mr. John S. Charles, described the city at the time of the War Between the States. In writing of this house he said:

The house at N.W. Corner of Prince George and Nassau Streets is without doubt a very old building, and according to tradition was used by French soldiers either during, or just after, the Revolution. This old house is still standing and in good shape of preservation and repair. It is a story and a half frame building with dormer windows and a basement, and has a single story annex on the west. It is learned that many, many years ago, an old lady lived in this house, and kept cows, which in those days grazed over the ditch banks, open lots and greens of the then verdant city. She, along with many others, in order to get "chinquapin money", and perhaps money to buy other things more substantial, sold, for a long time, butter and buttermilk, and the hill on which this house is located came to be known as "Buttermilk Hill", as no milk has been sold on that hill for generations, it took the name of Minor Terrace, from the fact that Prof. Lucien B. Minor, who was professor of law at the College of William and Mary, and who for many years lived on this hill, immediately opposite to the old house described above, and died there, just preceding the Civil War...

[Charles, John S., Recollections of Williamsburg, p. 10.]

The house is not privately occupied and has not been restored.

[Retyped June 5, 1980; compiled from notes by Mary Goodwin]

Footnotes



[△] 1. It appears that although the property was first deeded to Timson on March 17, 1713/14, the deeds of lease and release are dated March 16, 1715/16. The deeds were recorded in Court on March 19, 1715/16.

APPENDIX



William Timson was a grandson of Samuel Timson, merchant of London, who came to Virginia circa 1677, married Mary Juxon, and settled on a plantation on Queen's Creek in York County. Samuel Timson became a justice for York County in 1683, and died in January, 1694/5, survived by children William, John, Smauel, and Mary. William was born in 1678 and died in 1718/19. His son, William, who died in 1726, was the first owner of the Williamsburg lot 323. Buried on the Queen's Creek plantation, the tombstone of Samuel Timson, the immigrant, was near the mouth of Queen's Creek at the turn of this century, but it is not known whether it is still there and intact. It had the coat-of-arms of the Timson family impaling Juxon on it.

The following Timson wills are in the York County Court records: Samuel Timson, Will 1695; Francis Timson, Will 1702; Samuel Timson, inventory of personal estate, 1704/5; John Timson, will 1709; William Timson, will 1719; William Timson, will 1726; John Timson, will 1738; Samuel Timson, will 1739; John Timson, will 1742; Samuel Timson, inventory 1748; William Timson, will 1757; John Timson, inventory 1777; Samuel Timson, will 1782; Mary Timson, inventory, 1783.

A brief account of the Timson family of York County appears in the William and Mary Quarterly, 1st series, Vol. III (1895) pp. 208, 273-275; Ibid., V (1896) p. 305.

ADDITIONAL NOTE:

Williamsburg Deed Book #2 pp. 599-601.

Deed between Edward P. Cole & wife and Robert B [later changed to Robert R.] Cole.

January 6, 1891.

Also "Buttermilk Hill house and lot," [Prince George and Nassau Streets]

Rec: January 21, 1891

[via will of Robert F. Cole: August 31, 1886; rec. March 14, 1887]

Note-Copy of Carl Lounsbury's [handwritten] working notes on Timson House property - Pat Gibbs 14 Nov 83

[]	March 17, 1715/16 Trustees of Williamsburg [arrow] William Timson, Gent
	3 lots ½ acre each in Williamsburg incl # 323
	YCR Deeds & Bonds III, 109-110.
[]16	*May 5, 1716 Trustees of Williamsburg [arrow] Richard King
	9 lots ½ acre each [arrow] # 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 32[]
	YCR Deeds & Bonds III, 217-218.
[]17	May 31, 1717 William Timson, Gent York Co [arrow] James Shields, tailor
	Williamsburg 3 lots in Wmsbg incl 323 & 200 acres of land in York Co
	YCR Deeds & Bonds III, 185-186 for £300
[]27	July 2, 1727 probated July 17, 1727 James Shields will to son Mathew "my dwelling house in Wmsbg & the lot it stands on on the north side of the street where his lot lie.
[]28	Aug 9, 1728 Trustees of Williamsburg [arrow] Hannah Shields (widow) Lot #322 YCR Deeds & Bonds III, []
[]	January 28, 1745 Mathew Shields, planter [arrow] William Pegram, bricklayer
	½ acre lot on side of street #323 that Mathew's father bought from William Timson 1717 for £60 YCR Deeds & Bonds V 114-1[]

[]45	May 9, 1745 "The house and lot where Mrs Shields formerly lived near Mr Wray's in Williamsburg with a kitchen, meathouse, 2 stables, and other conveniences to be sold <i>Va Gazette</i>
1745	May 16, 1745 William Pegram, bricklayer [arrow] James Wray carpenter
	lot #323 ½ acre £60 YCR Deeds & Bonds V, 134-135
1756	*December 31, 1750 [] Long [arrow] James Cocke - lots 319-328
	Cocke buying Long's [] w/House called Kings as it was laid out by Pailing in lifelong of Henry Hacken . . . YCR Deeds & Bonds V, 444
1772	August 19, 1772 James Wray [arrow] John Connelly ½ lot Lot #323 that James Wray's father bought from William Pegram in 17[] for £50
1841	from 1819 to 1841 the Williamsburg Land Books list the SE corner lot in the possession of Sidney Ferguson and valued the bldgs at \$300-1 lot-Williamsburg Land Books
1842	Ferguson's bldgs revalued to \$850 due to "the buildings having been thoroughly repaired"
18[]3	lot sold to John M. Gregory - Williamsburg land book.
1843	February 7, 1843 John Gregory, Richmond [arrow] Robert [] Armistead the lot "together with all other buildings & improvements thereon which John M. Gregory bought [] Sydney Ferguson Williamsburg Deed Book I, 98-9
1879	*April 22, 1879 RF Cole V [] Armistead James City County Circuit Box 57
	Court Records List of property owned by RH Armistead incl [] Hill as well as "House & lot on Back Street in Wmsbg valued at \$500
[]81-1884	*RH Armistead was in debt to RF Cole - court ordered that Armistead sell off his assets to [] debt
1881	July [], 1881 RF Cole V RH Armistead JCCCCR Box 57 by public auction property of Armistead "the house & lot in Williamsburg on Back Street sold to RF Cole \$2[]
1882	February 13, 1882 RF Cole purchase "house & lot on Back St opposite the lot of TM Southall for \$375"
1882	October 12, 1882 EH. Lively, Mayor [arrow] Robert Cole "land known as Nassau Street lying between Prince George Street & the stream from the s[] of Col RH Armistead for \$10 Cole Papers Wm & Mary Box III, Folder 1
[]4	*May 12, 1889 Robert F Col V RH Armistead JCCCCR Box 57
	sold this day at auction before courthouse doors in Williamsburg the house & lot occupied by Col RH Armistead brought at \$1105
1886	*August 31, 1886 Robert F Cole [arrow] RR & [] P Cole
	all property Will Book I, 415
1891	January 6, 1891 EP Cole [arrow] Robt R Cole land commonly known as Buttermilk Hill" house & lot []ed on N & W by [] of [] P Cole & south by P.G. Street & past by Nassau St
1905	June 1, 1905 RR Cole estate [arrow] Eugen J Potts \$1150 Vol 4 54
1907	April 17, 1907 Eugene Potts [arrow] Charles E Bishop described 63' x 93' []
1910	December 5, 1910 Charles E Bishop husband [arrow] Alice M Bishop vol 6, p 53
1919	April 30, 1919 Bishop heirs [arrow] James Bowery vol 8, p 326
1919	October 6, 1919 James Bowery [arrow] Sadie Charles Gilliam vol 8, 391
1921	September 9, 1921 Sa[] [] L. Gilliam [arrow] Henry Charles vol 9, p 2[]4
1924	September 6, 1924 Henry E Charles [arrow] H[] M Christian vol 10, p 321
1928	July 12, 1928 Hodges M Christian [arrow] WAR Goodwin vol 13, p 26
1928	December 1, 19[]8 WAR Goodwin [arrow] Williamsburg Holding Co vol 11, p 29
1937	April 22, 1937 Hodges M Christian [arrow] Wmsbg Hold Co - life []ancy release [], p []
1937	May 17, 1937 Williamsburg Rest Inc [arrow] WAR Goodwin Deed Book 16, 589
1939	July 29, 1939 WAR Goodwin to heirs Will Book 4, 543

Footnotes



^ * neighboring lots