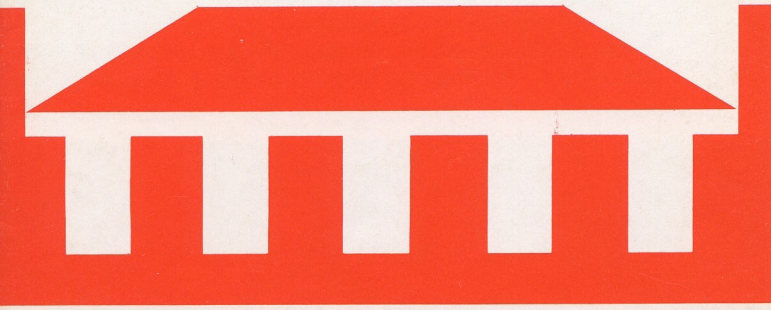


MOORE HOUSE

THE BRITISH SURRENDER

At 10 o'clock on the morning of October 17, 1781, a drummer boy, and a British officer with a flag of truce, mounted a parapet south of Yorktown. The drummer beat the "parley," and the officer lifted the truce flag. The allies saw the signal, and soon the incessant, devastating artillery fire ceased. A hushed stillness fell over the field.

Lord Cornwallis, realizing the defeat of his army was inevitable, sent a message to Gen. George Washington:

"Sir, I propose a cessation of hostilities for twenty-four hours, and that two officers may be appointed by each side, to meet at Mr. Moore's house, to settle terms for the surrender of the posts of York and Gloucester."

General Washington was willing to negotiate, but granted Cornwallis only 2 hours to submit general terms.

On the afternoon of October 18, the two British commissioners, Col. Thomas Dundas and Maj. Alexander Ross met in "Mr. Moore's house" with the Allied officers, Col. John Laurens, for the Americans, and the Viscount de Noailles, representing the French.

Negotiation continued until late in the evening. Sharp argument and heated discussions characterized the meeting. The British Commissioners hesitated about certain terms contained in Article III, which required the British to march out "with shouldered arms, colors cased, and drums beating a British or German march."

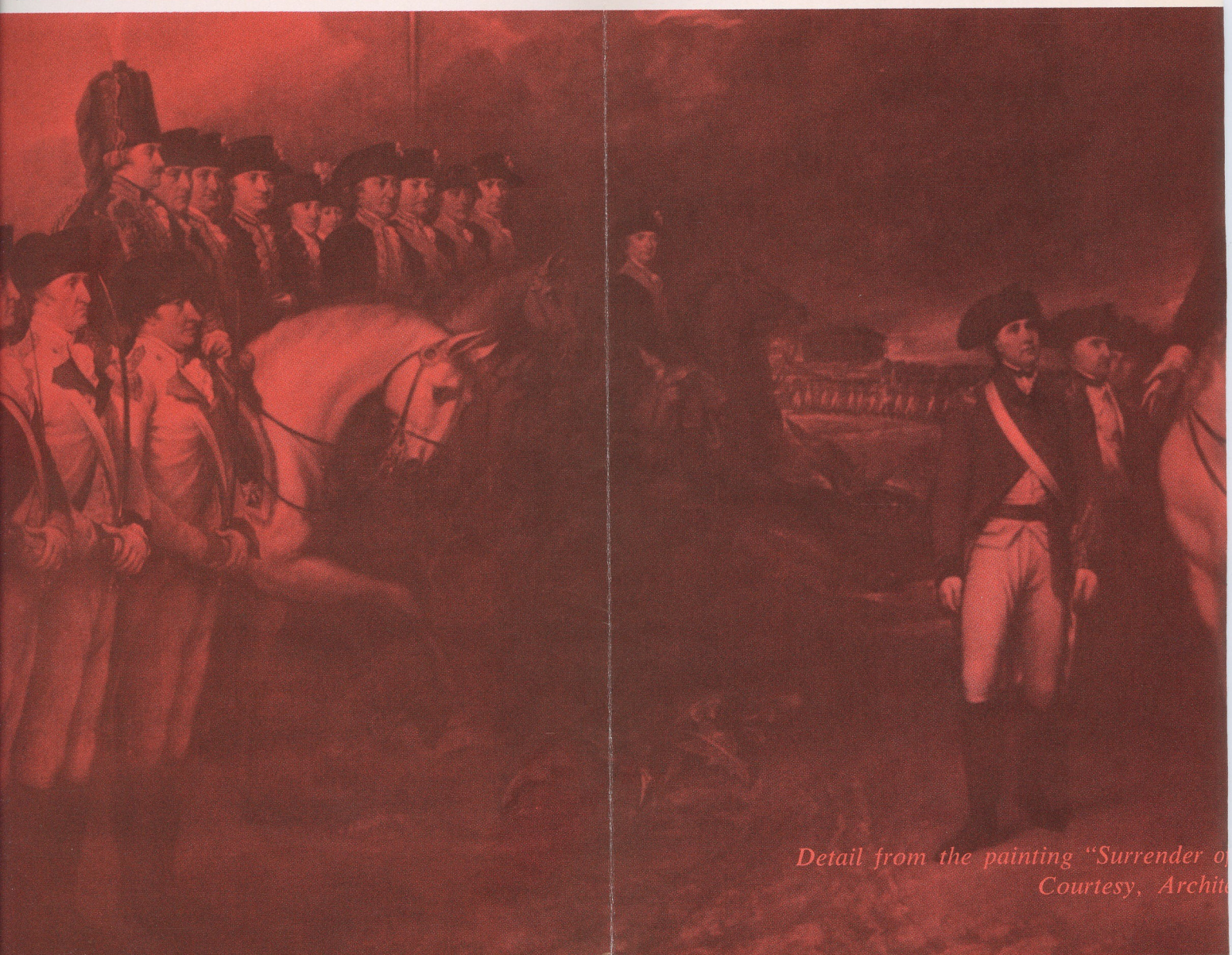
Major Ross protested: "This is a harsh article."

"Which article?" said Colonel Laurens.

"The troops shall march out with colors cased and drums beating a British or German march."

"Yes, sir," replied Col. Laurens, "it is a harsh article."

"Then, Colonel Laurens, if that is your opinion, why is it here?"



Detail from the painting "Surrender o
Courtesy, Archit

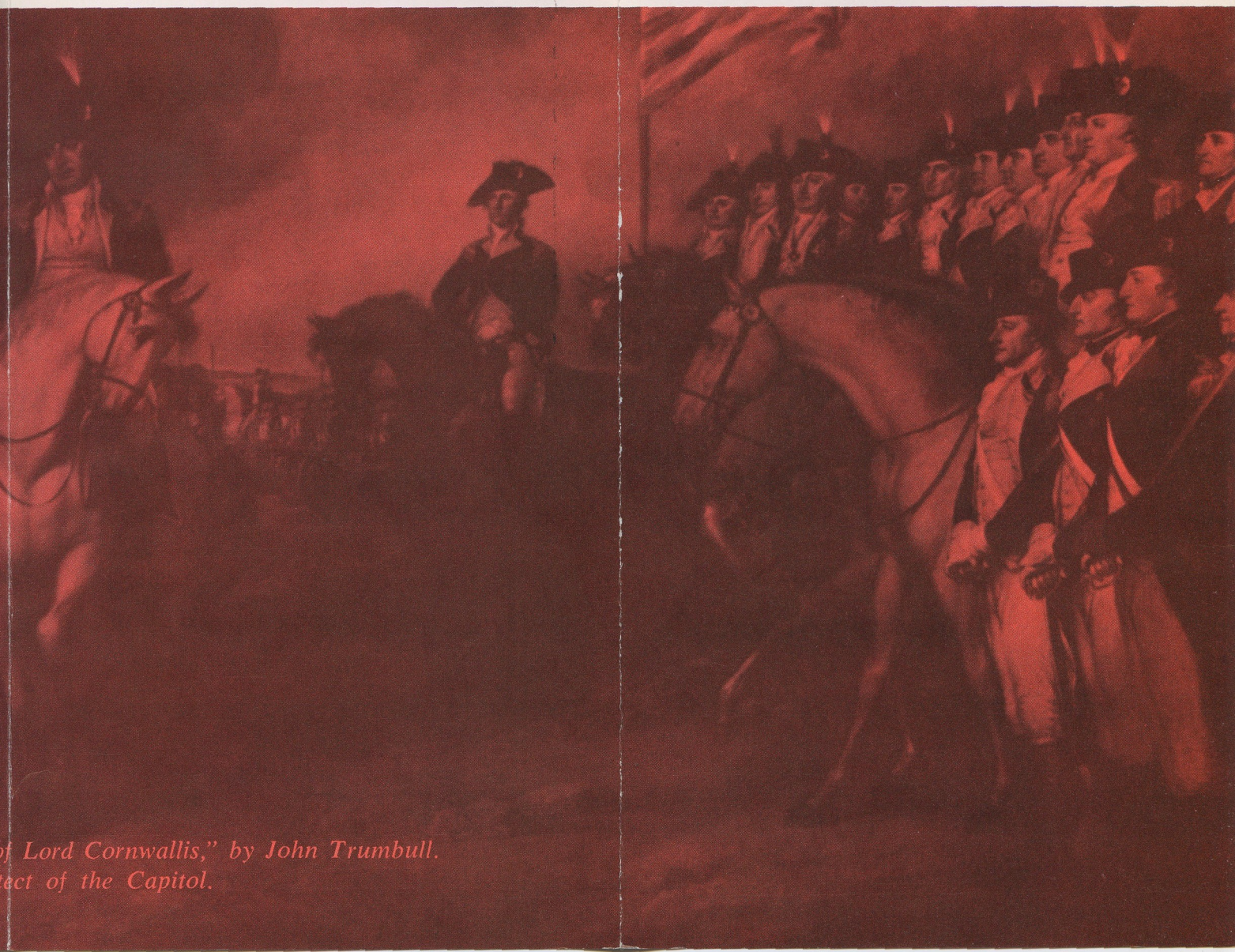
"Your question, Major Ross, compels an observation which I would have gladly suppressed. You seem to forget, sir, that I was a capitulant at Charleston, where General Lincoln after a brave defense of six weeks [in] open trenches by a very inconsiderable garrison against the British army and fleet . . . and when your lines of approach were within pistol shot of our field works, was refused any other terms for his gallant garrison than marching out with colors cased and drums *not* beating a German or a British march."

"But," rejoined Major Ross, "my Lord Cornwallis did not command at Charleston."

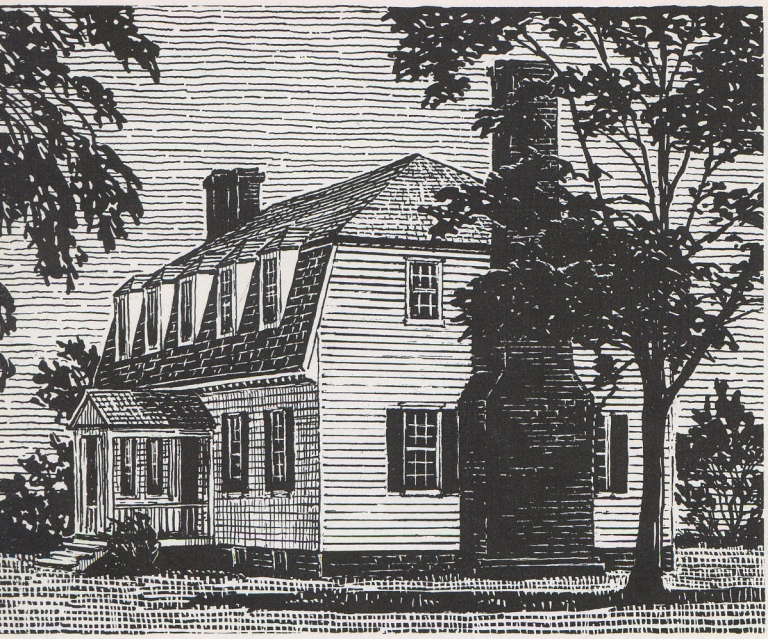
"There, sir," said Colonel Laurens, "you extort another declaration. It is not the individual that is here considered. It is the nation. This remains an article, or I cease to be a commissioner."

The negotiations ended before midnight; the truce was extended until 9 a.m. on the 19th. When he received the commissioners' report, Washington is reported to have made some minor adjustment. The completed articles were dispatched to Yorktown where they were signed by Cornwallis and Capt. Thomas Symonds, the senior naval officer. The document was then delivered to the now American-occupied British Redoubt 10, where Washington and his officers waited. There the commander in chief had another line added: "Done in the trenches before York Town in Virginia October 19, 1781." Then he signed the paper, as did Rochambeau and Barras, the latter for Comte de Grasse of the blockading French Navy.

At 2 p.m., the defeated British army marched out from Yorktown, their band playing an old British tune, "The World Turned Upside Down."



f Lord Cornwallis," by John Trumbull.
ect of the Capitol.



TWO CENTURIES of HISTORY

Some 20 years after the founding of Jamestown in 1607, the colonists began to settle along the shores of the York River. One of the first to acquire land along the river south of Yorktown was a governor of Virginia, Sir John Harvey, who held 752 acres known as "York Plantation," on which the Moore House now stands. The contentious Harvey soon came into conflict with the colonists and in 1635 was forced to leave Virginia temporarily. Some of Harvey's Yorktown neighbors were early members of the conspiracy, which culminated in openly threatened violence. They met in a planter's home, the site of which is now within the limits of Yorktown. Thus, curiously, Yorktown and vicinity was the scene of both an early conflict with Royal authority and, nearly a century and a half later, the last major battle against the Crown.

But for Sir John perhaps the final indignity was the foreclosing of the mortgage on his York River property. George Ludlow, for many years a member of the Virginia Council, acquired the land. Upon his death it passed to his nephew, Lt. Col. Thomas Ludwell, who in turn left it to his wife, Mary, with a sizeable herd, many servants, a large fortune for the time, some jewelry, and "three p'r of new gloves and one p'r of worn buckskin gloves."

Mary married a clergyman, sold the property, and returned to England. The new owner was Maj. Lawrence Smith, prominent lawyer, commander of a fort in 1675 on the Indian frontier near present-day Fredericksburg, a somewhat unsuccessful commander of loyalist forces in Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, and later a surveyor of Yorktown. When he died in 1700 his large estate went to his second son and namesake. The younger Lawrence Smith probably constructed the Moore House in the early 1700's. After his death in 1739, the house and lands eventually passed to Augustine Moore, who had married Lawrence's daughter, Lucy Smith. In 1768 Moore purchased 500 acres of the old Smith estate together with the house. Some time between 1768 and 1777, Augustine and Lucy Moore took up residence and continued to live here until their deaths in 1788 and 1796 respectively.

Augustine Moore descended from the Moore family of Elizabeth City County. Possibly the line began with John Moore who came to Virginia in 1620. Augustine Moore's father, Daniel Moore, lived in Charles Parish, York County. When Augustine was 14 years old, he "appeared in Court and declared himself willing to Serve the Hon'ble William Nelson Esqr. . . ." Thus began a merchant career that proved to be long and profitable. For many years he served the Nelson Company, and in 1773 he became a partner in the firm of "Thos. Nelson jr & Co." His connections with the Nelsons and his marriage to Lucy Smith allied him with the leading families of Yorktown.

When Augustine Moore died, he left to his wife his household goods and the use of the estate until her death. The house, however, he willed to his good friend, Gen. Thomas Nelson, who acquired it in 1797 after Moore's estate was finally settled. By 1821 the property passed from the Nelson family. Since then the house changed hands many times by sale, mortgage forfeiture, or for other reasons.

During McClellan's Peninsular Campaign against Richmond early in the Civil War, the prolonged military action around Yorktown caused considerable damage to the Moore House. It sat between the Confederates entrenched in Yorktown and the Union forces on Wormley Creek. Shellfire damaged the house, and foraging soldiers later stripped away siding and other usable wood for fuel. The house remained derelict until 1881 when much-needed repairs were made for the Centennial Celebration of the victory over Cornwallis. Efforts to preserve it as a national landmark at that time failed.

In 1931-34 the Park Service restored the Moore House to its original colonial appearance. It was formally dedicated on October 18-19, 1934, the 153rd anniversary of the surrender of Cornwallis and his British Army.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The Moore House is usually open every day from April to November. The refurnishing of the house has done much to bring it to life. Period pieces have been used for the most part. But some items are directly associated with the family and house. The Windsor armchair in the family parlor is believed to have been here in 1781. Original family possessions include a dressing table and mahogany tilt-top tea table as well as smaller objects including a brass candlestick, glass decanter, and wineglasses. Also there are four matching Chinese porcelain plates, a silver sugar bucket, a perforated spoon, two ladles, and two sugarspoons. Most items in the historic house, however, date between 1725 and 1775.

Today, as the work of furnishing the house continues, four organizations are helping the National Park Service acquire appropriate items. The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution is furnishing the "Surrender Room;" the Daughters of the Cincinnati, the dining room; the National Society of the Children of the American Revolution, the family parlor; and the Virginia Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the boy's bedroom.

ADMINISTRATION

Moore House is part of Colonial National Historical Park and is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Box 210, Yorktown, VA 23490, is in charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

U. S. DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR
National Park Service

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