HISTORIC YORKTOWN BEACH TRAIL

Summary of an Application to be submitted by the County of York

Virginia Transportation Enhancement Program

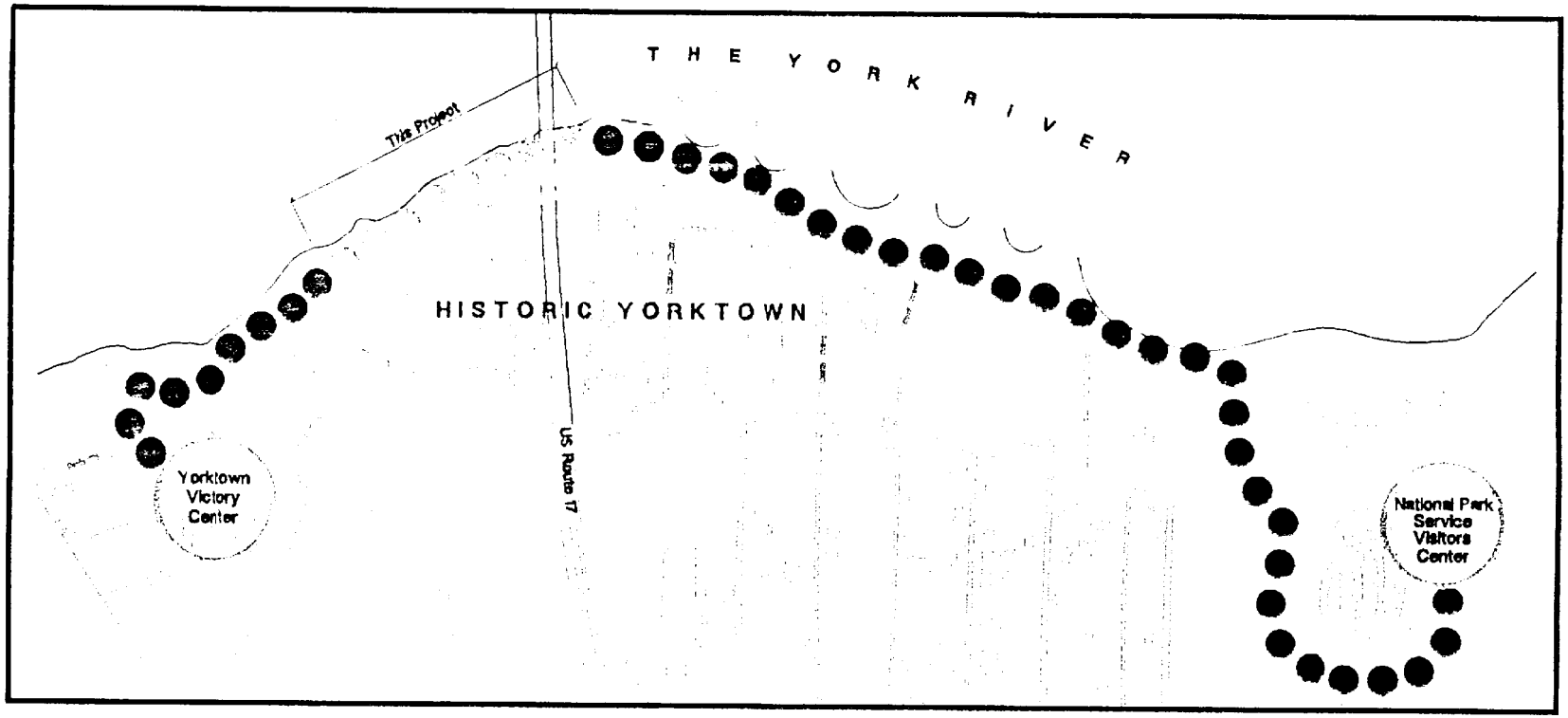
December 7, 2000

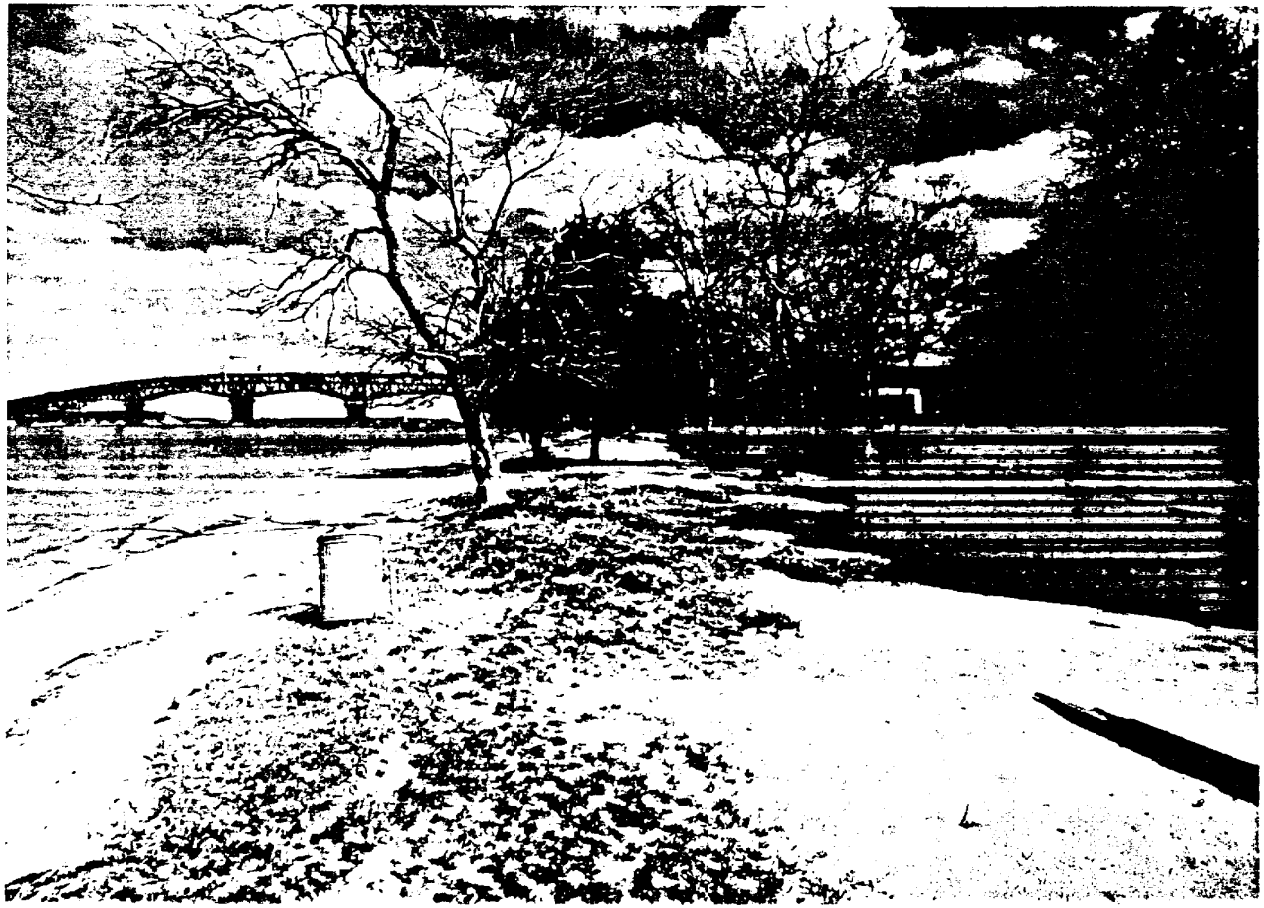
For further information contact:
Robert S. Kraus
Director of General Services
County of York
PO Box 532
Yorktown, Virginia
Phone 757-890-5200

Project Location and Description

The proposed *Historic Yorktown Beach Trail* is a major part of a comprehensive river walk project that provides a continuous pedestrian linkage extending along the York River in historic Yorktown, Virginia. The project will enhance access to and between the two major visitor attractions in Yorktown, the Colonial National Historical Park on the eastern side of the village and the Yorktown Visitor Center on the western side. The project will highlight numerous other waterfront attractions. In addition, it will provide new access to beach areas along the York River as well as providing a safe, pleasant, and educational walking experience along the Yorktown waterfront.

The *Historic Yorktown Beach Trail* is planned in conjunction with and to complement other enhancements being undertaken by York County as part of the overall Yorktown revitalization efforts proposed in the adopted Yorktown Master Plan.

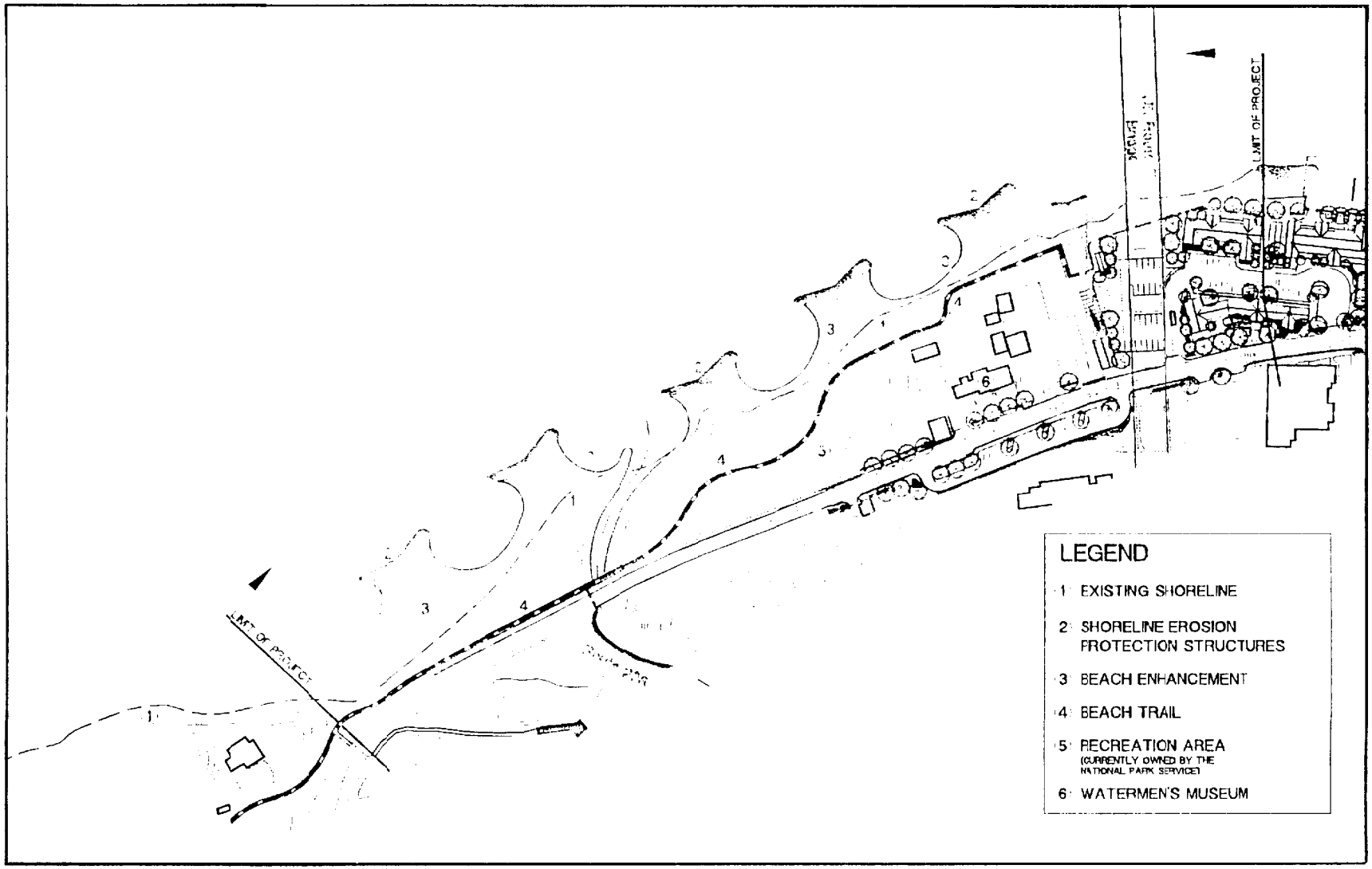




This views looks eastward along the project site toward the Coleman Bridge (U.S. Route 17). The Chesapeake Bay lies beyond. This waterfront has been the staging area for many historic events. In 1781, the British, French, and American armies occupied this space. In 1862, the Confederate and Union armies were here, and in 1917, the American Expeditionary Force was in the fleet in the river.

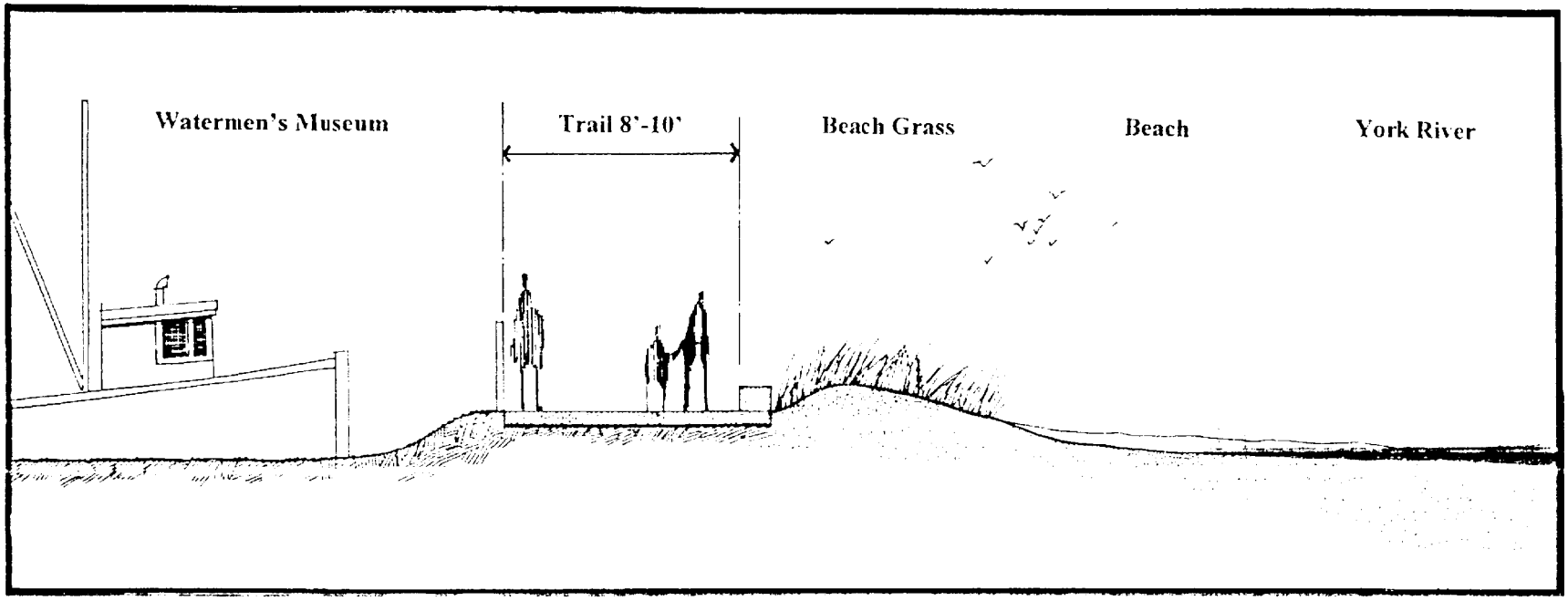
Description of Site Proposed Historic Yorktown Beach Trail

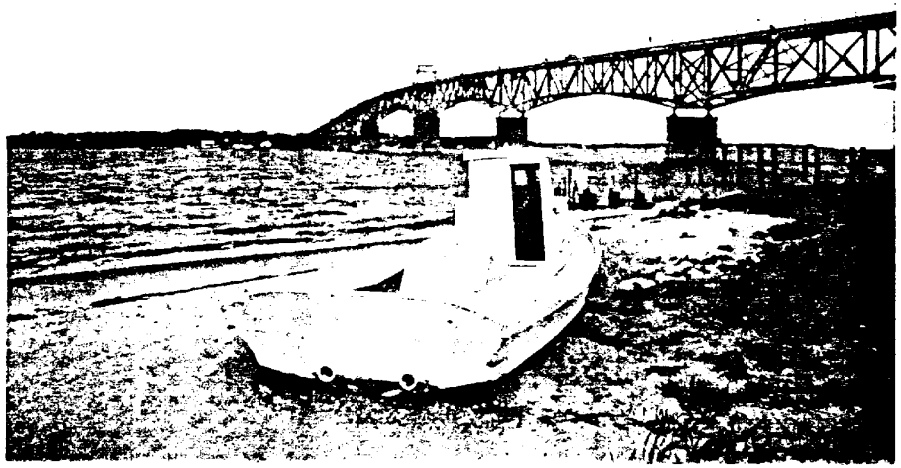
The site is approximately 1,480 feet long and its width varies from 25 feet near the Coleman Bridge to 150 feet upstream near Yorktown Creek. The site is bounded by the York River on the north and historic Water Street (right side of photograph) on the south. The river's edge is a sand beach, which is a popular place for sunbathers, fishermen, and beach walkers. As late as the 1950's, this area of the waterfront was occupied by light industry. A lumberyard and fish house characterized this waterfront.



Historic Yorktown Beach Trail – Site Plan

Note: Some of the shoreline erosion protection structures and beach enhancement will be performed outside of this grant proposal.





Proposed Trail at the Watermen's Museum

The proposed project includes improving this section of frontage between the Watermen's Museum and the York River. The museum is an important institution that preserves and interprets the history of Virginia's fading fishing culture. The proposed trail will provide an important linkage along the river and will bring more visitor exposure to Watermen's Museum.

History of the Project

Since 1988, the York County Board of Supervisors, through the Yorktown Steering Committee, has been working to promote and facilitate the enhancement of Yorktown. These concerted efforts began in response to a number of identified community concerns including a deteriorating commercial area, an eroding beachfront, a dwindling resident population, and an uncertainty about the future of several major landholdings in the village. With these problems, the tourism potential of the village was not being realized, public and private infrastructure was deteriorating, and public and private investments were being withheld.

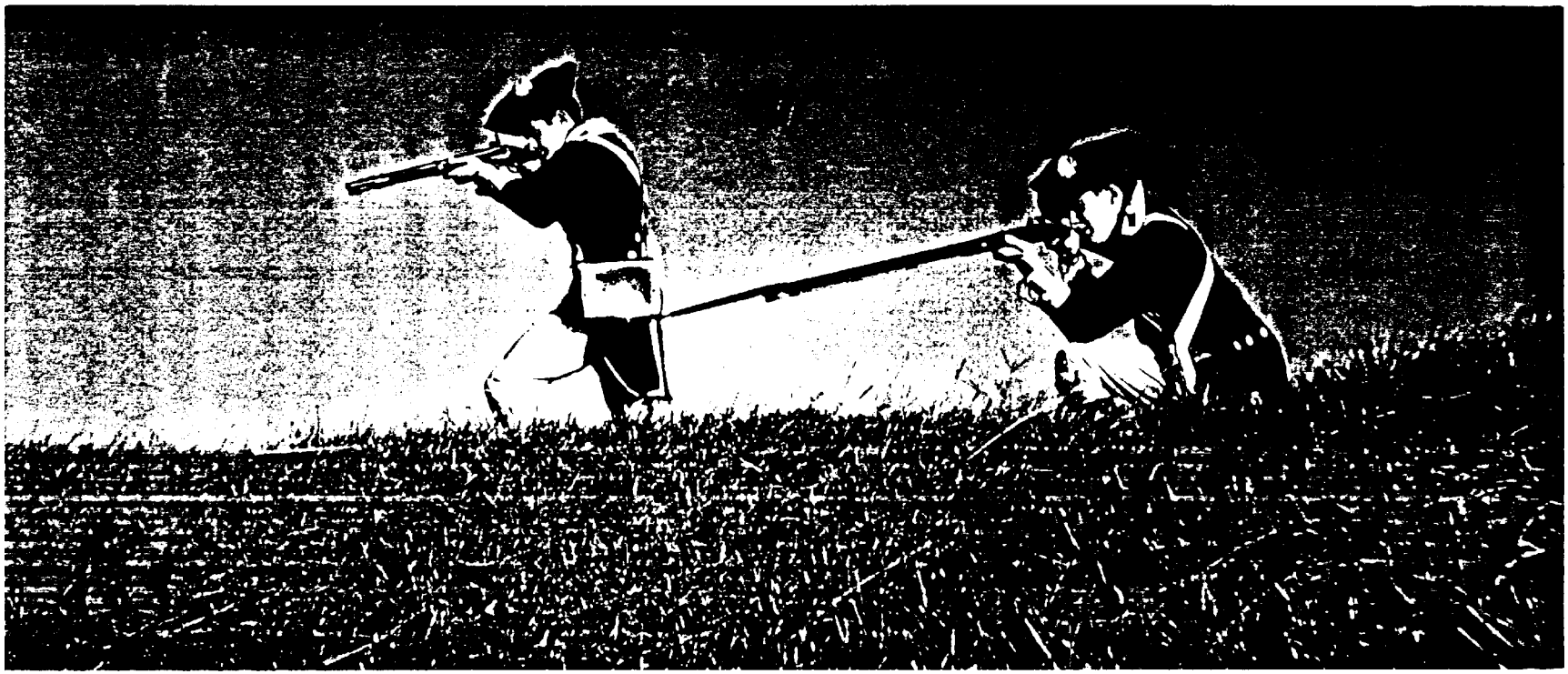
The Yorktown Steering Committee was formed to discuss these issues and to coordinate the articulation of a vision for the future of the village and a plan for the achievement of that vision. The Committee is composed of representatives of the major constituencies in the village -- two members from the Board of Supervisors, two members of the Yorktown Trustees, the Superintendent of the Colonial National Historical Park, the Director of the state-operated Yorktown Victory Center, a representative of the Watermen's Museum, and a village resident. The Steering Committee decided early on that the vision development process should include a great deal of public participation. To ensure that, it sponsored a weekend workshop in April 1989, which was attended by approximately 70 interested citizens and facilitated by the internationally-known Waterfront Center. During that workshop the participants divided into three separate discussion groups and each was charged with identifying and expressing its vision for Yorktown.

Many excellent ideas for the enhancement of Yorktown, and particularly the waterfront, were generated during the workshop. Despite being divided into three groups, the visions developed by the participants were amazingly similar and each contained a "Riverwalk" concept. These visions were later blended together to serve as the foundation for the more detailed master planning effort that would follow and also as the basis for development of the goal statement that has guided the Yorktown revitalization effort:

> *Create in Yorktown a vibrant community of people living, working, learning, visiting, and playing; while enhancing its national stature, and* ***respecting*** *and preserving its continuing history, environment and character.*

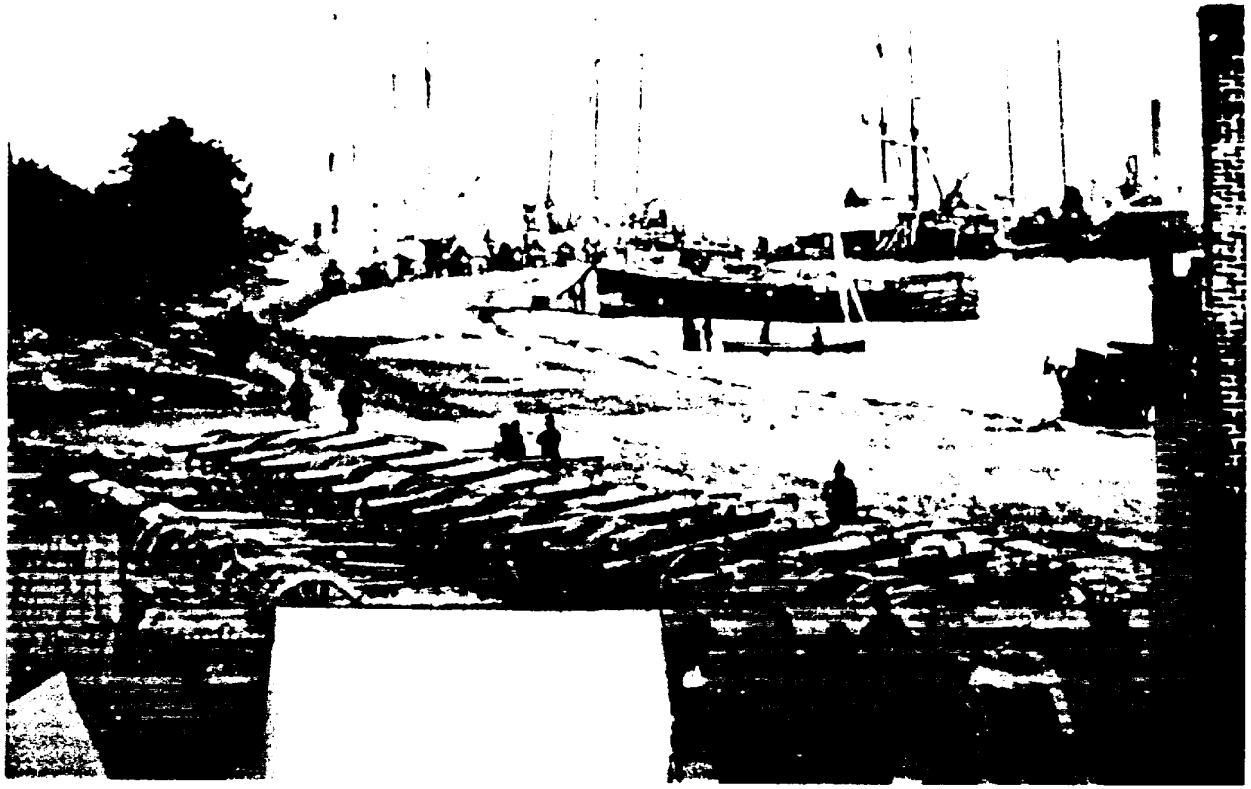
The development of consensus on the concept plan and vision statement immediately improved the sense of community and the atmosphere for both public and private investment. Nevertheless, the Committee recognized that a more detailed plan, including specific recommendations, cost estimates, and phasing proposals, would be necessary to realize the enhancements identified in concept. With funding provided through the County's Capital Improvements Program, the internationally-known consulting firm Sasaki Associates, Inc., was selected to prepare the detailed plan.

The revitalization effort gained focus and direction during the intensive two-year planning process that culminated in the adoption of the Yorktown Master Plan as an element of the County Comprehensive Plan by the York County Board of Supervisors on March 4, 1993. The Riverwalk (which includes the improvements proposed under this grant proposal) remained a key component of the planning discussion during those two years and is one of the major public infrastructure elements proposed in the adopted plan.



The Significance of Yorktown

There are two significant anniversaries that will soon be celebrated in Virginia. In the year 2006, we will celebrate the 225th anniversary of the battle of Yorktown, and in the year 2007, the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown. Both anniversaries will be significant events that will capture national attention. The *Historic Yorktown Beach Trail* and subsequent shoreline work involved should be completed as soon as possible not only to accommodate the projected visitors, but to open up and extend the magnificent waterfront experience for the enjoyment of everyone in the years to come.



The photograph above shows the beach in May of 1862. The project area is the area in the distance.

The Yorktown Victory Monument, (above) was erected in 1881, for centennial celebration of the victory at Jamestown.

The photograph (left) is an aerial view of the waterfront in 1931, the 150th anniversary. The project area is at the top of the photograph.

Planning for the Year 2007

In the year 2007, Jamestown will commemorate the 400th anniversary of the settlement at Jamestown. It will be the United States of America's 400th birthday. As in 1957 (the 350th anniversary), many events will take place in Yorktown.

YORKTOWN WHARF AND WATERFRONT INTERPRETIVE AREA

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Yorktown Wharf and Waterfront Interpretive Area

Project Location and Description

The proposed Yorktown Wharf and Waterfront Interpretive Area improvements are designed to enhance Yorktown's accommodations for modern-day waterborne transportation (cruise boats, etc.) as well as providing a place for docking "tall-ships" and other vessels representative of the 300-year history of the Port of York (Yorktown). In addition, the project includes the restoration and adaptation of the 60-plus year old Wharf warehouse/ferry terminal building into a facility housing displays and information related to the history of the waterfront and the various types of sailing ships, steamers, ferries and other vessels that have frequented the Port of Yorktown over the course of its rich history. A conceptual plan depicting the proposed improvement is attached. The Enhancements Program award approved in 1999 ($550,000) will help to partially fund the first phases of the project. Additional Enhancements Program funding in the amount of $1.5 million is being requested to assist in fully implementing the entire concept.

Specific elements of the project will include:

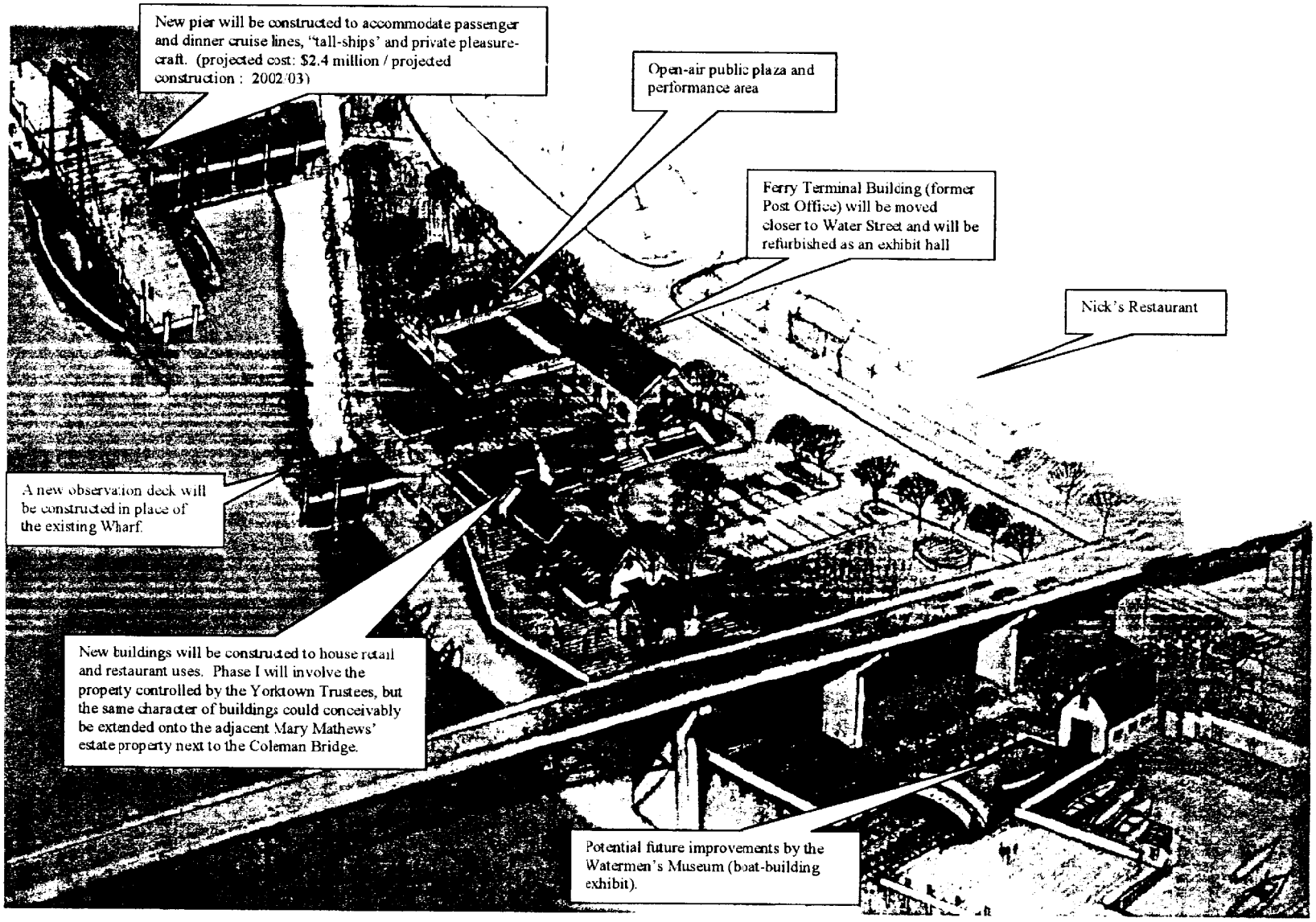
Relocated Warehouse/Ferry Terminal Building - A key component of this proposed plan is the relocation of the former freight warehouse/ferry terminal building (currently used as a Post Office) from its current position on the Yorktown Wharf to a position closer to Water Street. The current use of the building by the postal service is in the process of being discontinued. Once relocated, the building will be renovated to create an open-air public space housing historic exhibits, artifacts and interpretive material related to the Yorktown waterfront, and particularly its waterborne transportation and commerce. In preparation for its relocation and renovation, the National Park Service has prepared a report on the Character Defining Features of the building (report prepared by William D. Brookover, Historical Architect, Philadelphia Support Office). The design and implementation of the relocation and renovation effort will respect the conclusions of this report.

Reconstructed/Expanded Wharf - Once the post office building is relocated, the existing Wharf will be demolished. Current plans are for part of the concrete rubble to be used to supplement rip rap that will be installed as part of the next phase of shoreline stabilization. The shoreline stabilization element of this project is actually the third phase of

a multi-year effort to stabilize and nourish the beach along the York River. An observation deck is proposed in the location of the existing Wharf. A new Wharf/Pier is proposed to be constructed approximately 350 feet down-river. This new concrete pier will extend out into the river approximately 260 feet to provide deeper draft than the existing wharf. This improved docking facility will be designed to accommodate cruise ships (such as the Clipper Cruise Lines vessels that currently call on Yorktown approximately four times a year), dinner cruise boats, and an occasional "tall-ship" exhibit. In addition, the docking facilities will be designed to accommodate a small number of pleasure craft with the idea that Yorktown would be a popular destination for "day-sailors" on the Chesapeake Bay. No marina facilities (i.e. - fueling, servicing, permanent mooring) will be included.

Public Plaza / Commons - The area surrounding the relocated post office building and between the new observation deck and the new pier is proposed to serve as an open-air passive recreational facility and will include extensive seating and relaxation areas, a performance area (for small concerts and other cultural events), extensive walkways tying into and complementing the Riverwalk system (also funded through the Transportation Enhancement Program) and linking the area to other attractions. The area will be attractively landscaped and well-lighted.

Parking Lot/Trolley Stop - A small parking lot/service drive is proposed in the area adjacent to and west of the relocated post office building. In addition, the concept plans calls for the installation of a trolley/bus stop that will provide linkages to numerous other public parking spaces in the village as well as an opportunity for trolley or bus linkages to Williamsburg or other area destinations. This feature will be particularly beneficial at times when cruise boats dock since their passengers very often are interested in taking bus/trolley tours of the Historic Triangle area.

The Wharf and Waterfront Interpretive Area will be constructed on property that is owned by the Yorktown Trustees. The Trustees are the guardians of the Yorktown Commons, a public area along the waterfront dating back to the original platting of the village in the 1700s. The Yorktown Trustees have been active participants in the Yorktown improvement effort and have endorsed the Wharf-area design concept. Under the terms of a 1988 cooperative agreement between the Trustees and the Board of Supervisors, the County has assumed planning, maintenance and improvement responsibility for the Trustee's property and the proposed improvements will be undertaken in accordance with the Transportation Enhancement Program agreement.

Yorktown Waterfront Improvements