

THE JAMES DELAIRE, 1771 MAP OF DR. ANDREW TURNBULL'S NEW SMYRNA COLONY

I purchased a copy of the James Delaire map—nine feet long—from the Dundee Archives in Scotland last year and corresponded with the archivist regarding my research. I sent him the manuscript of the book I was writing, which discussed the map and its significance to the Minorcan community. There was no objection to my account of the colony.

The following are some of the letters written concerning the Delaire map.

- Governor Grant wrote Andrew Turnbull on April 26, 1767, that Delaire was in St. Augustine,.
- Andrew Turnbull letter to Sir William Duncan from Smyrnéa, November 13, 1769. Turnbull had contracted for 1000 pair of shoes to arrange a cheaper price than was possible when smaller amounts were purchased. He also gave £12 to Mr. Delaire to settle an old debt for previous surveying work.
- Andrew Turnbull letter to Sir William Duncan from [Smyrnéa], July 1, 1770. *“Mr. Delaire, a deputy surveyor, was hired to survey what we cleared and cultivated and it will be sent to you. Mr. Funk promised to traverse the swamp and other of our land.”*
- Andrew Turnbull letter to Sir William Duncan from Smyrnéa, July 25, 1770. Turnbull enclosed a bill from Charles Delaire for £20 Sterling for a survey he did.
- Andrew Turnbull letter to Sir William Duncan from Smyrnéa, October 27, 1770. *“Mr. Delaire is just come in from measuring our cultivated lands, which has employed him for some days. He found it nine hundred and seventy acres. I shall add some hundreds to it next spring. He is now taking a plan of our Houses here.”*
- Andrew Turnbull letter to Sir William Duncan from Smyrnéa, November 12, 1770. *“My last letter acquainted you that Mr. Delaire was measuring our cultivated land, that I might send you plans of that and of our buildings. Two copies of these accompany this, they are in a box with some pieces of our Indigo. You see by the ground plan, that we have nine hundred and seventy acres cleared and cultivated.”*
- Andrew Turnbull letter to Sir William Duncan from Smyrnéa, December 3, 1770. *“When Mr. Delaire [a deputy surveyor] is at leisure another plan of the farmhouses and plantations, and of building timbers and other trees, which are intend for the River front of this land will be sent to Duncan.”*

“The map, offers an early glimpse into the landscape engineering of the Smyrne colony. Prominently depicted is a deep and fairly wide canal, a critical drainage system constructed to manage excess water from the hammock lands situated behind the indigo fields. The hand written description at the top of the map reads: *“A Drain to carry off water ye hammock back of the hammock some.” This canal empties into the Hillsborough River at a site marked “D.”*

Near this outflow are two houses close to the riverbank, protected by a retaining wall, suggesting these may have been significant residences—possibly for colony leadership. Just west of these are four additional structures, their purpose unclear but likely supporting agricultural or industrial functions. Farther north, approximately 1,400 feet away, another cluster is marked with a “D”. Five structures and a house resembling the typical wood-and-tabby style known to be used for managers and overseers.

The map’s title, *“A Geometrical Plan of the Town of Smyrne and the cultivated Land in the Environs,”* reveals the scope of cleared land—nearly 970 acres of Cultivated lands in its Environs.” The level of detail is remarkable. It shows where specific activities occurred, the layout of housing, and the full extent of the colony’s boundary—lined with huts over a stretch of seven to eight miles.

Key landmarks are labeled:

A marks the **town**, B a **garden**, C a **chapel**, D **indigo vats**, E a **road** lined with young orange trees extending nearly seven miles, and F the **wharfs**.

Structures marked with black signs are identified as already-built dwellings and storage buildings, while others are noted as under construction. The note says, "*Woods not cleared*," though it's unclear which area this refers to—perhaps indicating the incomplete or uncertain state of the surrounding land.

A more densely arranged area of housing appears on the map, with structures placed closer together than those near the town center. A group of five buildings lies inland from the Hillsborough River, near what appears to be a creek or swamp—possibly an area prone to flooding. The map identifies a "*mount*" and an "*Indian Tumulus?*"—suggesting historical or ceremonial sites. Two houses at the northern edge of the map are situated on elevated, seemingly manmade ground, indicating purposeful construction to avoid flooding or for strategic placement.

The colony appears even more compact, positioned between the Hillsborough River to the east and a creek to the west. A road runs parallel to the river, with short branch roads extending westward, each ending at individual structures. At the end of one such road is a corn mill, likely powered by the creek's flow—an early example of using natural water movement for mechanical labor. A second creek is shown east of the dwellings, enclosing this part of the colony in a peninsula-like geography. The presence of what may be Indian mounds along the creek's path from west to east suggests both archaeological interest and a deeper history predating the colony.

Another portion of the map offers the most comprehensive and refined view. Marshes, islands, and mangrove areas are colored a deep green, providing a vivid contrast to the more developed areas. The title reads:

Thirteen major clusters, numbered 1 to 13 from south to north, mark the indigo works—ten of which are double-vat systems. Residences are placed systematically, each 222 feet apart, with every tenth house designated as an overseer's dwelling. A dotted line connecting the houses is bordered on its southern side by mulberry trees, hinting at silk production or shade planning.

The map also distinctly marks the chapel's location near the river, suggesting proximity to both the town center and a likely burial ground—perhaps the final resting place for many of the 964 Minorcans known to have lived and died in Smyrnea."

I wrote the Dundee archivist and asked if the map could be made public so anyone could study it. No reply... yet.

RP Jones