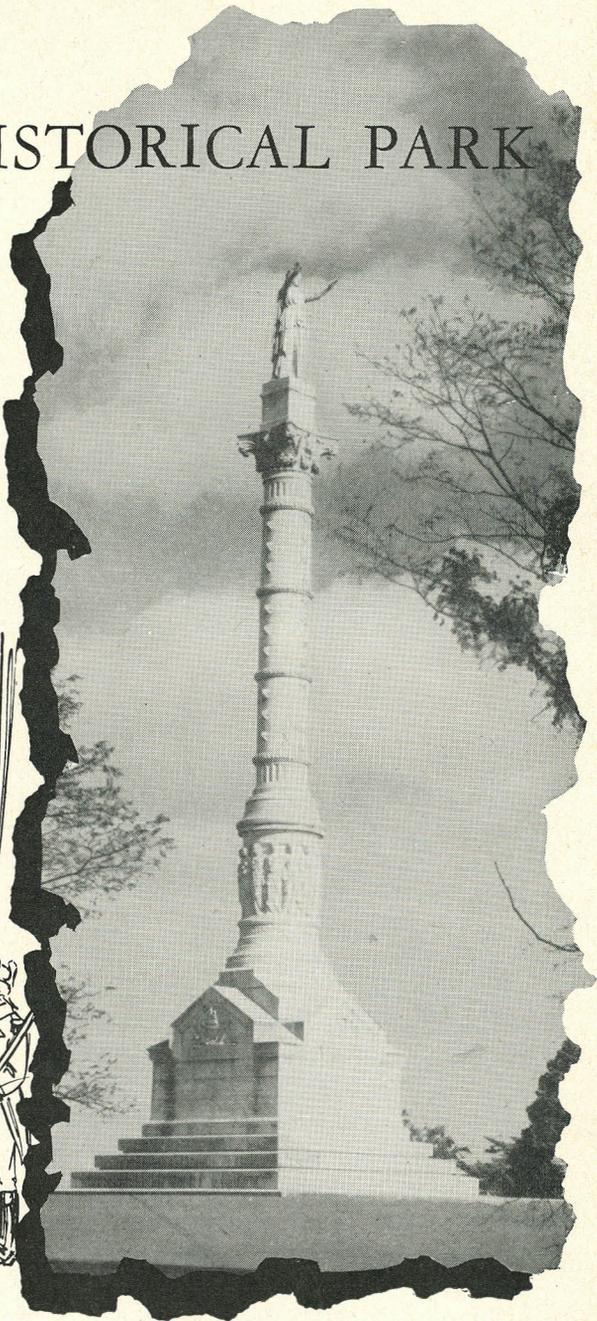
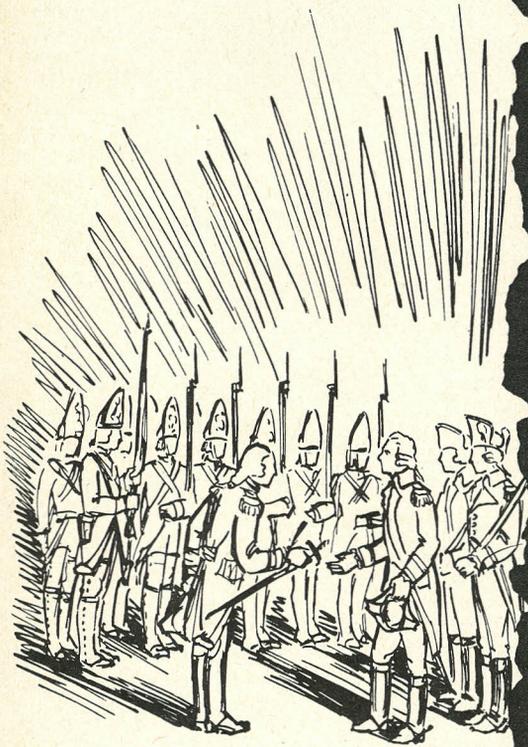


Colonial

NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

YORKTOWN
BATTLEFIELD



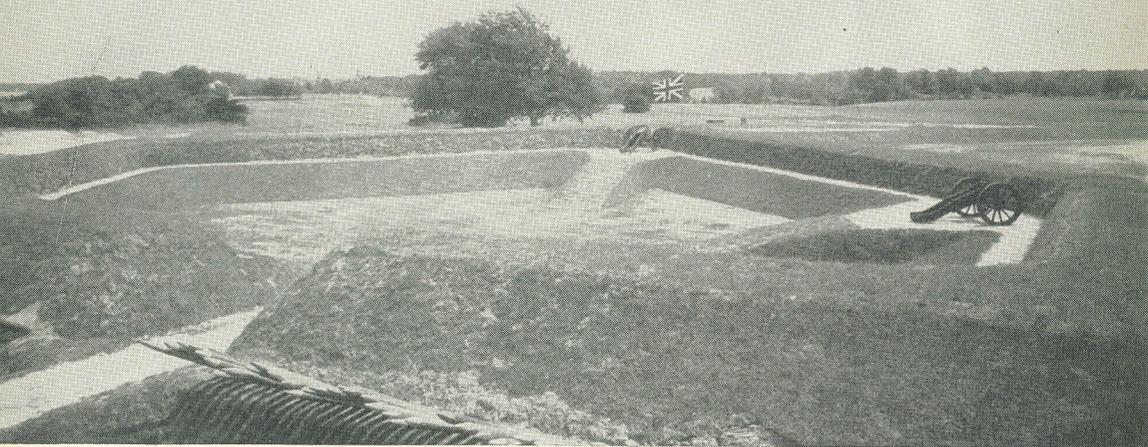
V I R G I N I A

COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

YORKTOWN BATTLEFIELD

Scene of the American victory over Cornwallis, 1781

Culmination of the American Revolution



Redoubt No. 9.

COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK, established in 1930, includes Jamestown and Yorktown, a parkway connecting these areas by way of Williamsburg, and the Cape Henry Memorial. Cape Henry and Jamestown illustrate the first landing of the Virginia colonists and the century of colonial beginnings. Williamsburg represents the full development of colonial civilization. Yorktown is associated with the end of the colonial period and the beginning of independent national life.

At Yorktown, October 19, 1781, the surrender of the British Army under Lord Cornwallis to the allied French and American forces under General Washington marked the virtual close of the American Revolution. While the final treaty of peace was not signed until 2 years later,

the victory at Yorktown was the decisive event in the struggle to make the United States an independent nation.

The Colonial Town of York

Yorktown was established by the Act of Ports of 1691, which looked to the founding of port towns in Virginia. During the earlier 1700's the town grew and prospered because of the rich tobacco trade which passed through its harbor and warehouses. Its prosperity reached its peak about 1750, when there was a population of about 2,500, including a number of wealthy merchant families with fine homes. With the gradual decline of the colonial Virginia tobacco trade the importance of the town and port of York dwindled.

The Siege of 1781

In 1781, the American War of Independence reached its seventh year. The British had practically abandoned efforts to reconquer the Northern States, but still had hopes of regaining the Southern part of the country. Cornwallis, in the spring of the year, marched into Virginia from North Carolina at the head of a British Army. He believed that if Virginia could be subdued the States to the south of it would readily return to the British allegiance.

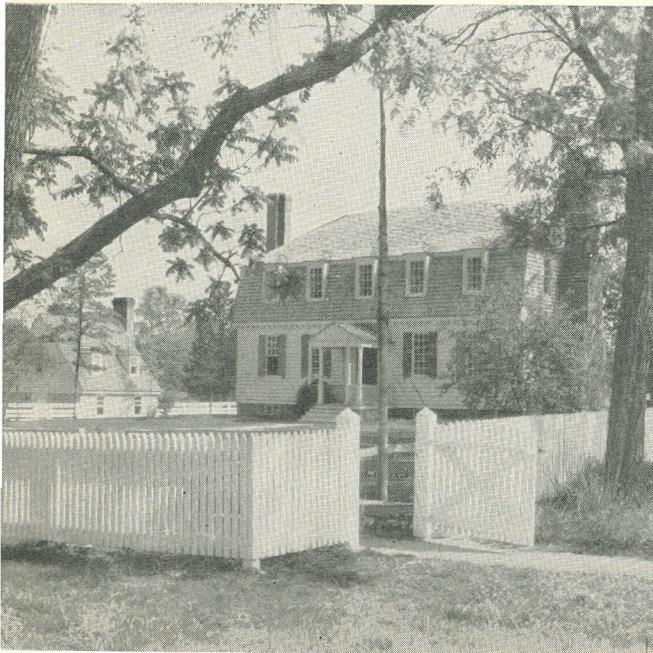
The Marquis de Lafayette, with a small American force, was operating in Virginia, but was unable to meet Cornwallis in open battle. The British Army marched up and down the State almost at will, but failed to break the resistance of the people. In July, in response to orders from his superior officer in New York, Cornwallis moved down the James River to Portsmouth, in preparation for sending part of his army to New York, which Washington was threatening. Countermanding orders soon reached him, however, directing him to for-

tify a naval base in the lower Chesapeake.

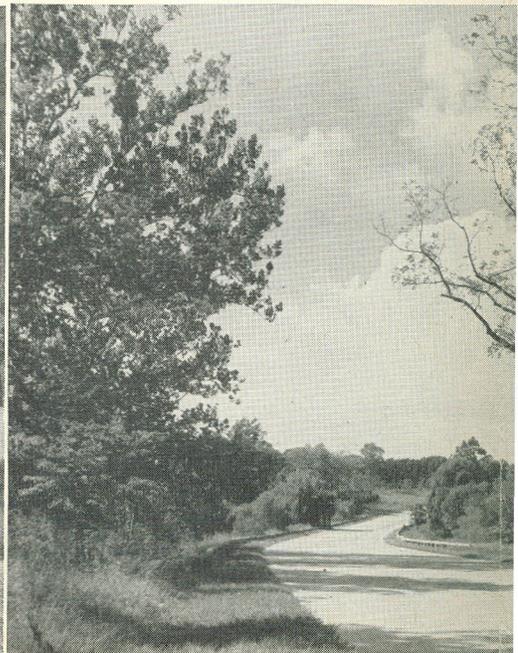
Cornwallis, on the advice of his engineers, chose Yorktown for the base and transferred his whole army there early in August. He began fortifying the town and Gloucester Point opposite. Meanwhile, a large French fleet, under the Comte de Grasse, was moving up from the West Indies for combined operations with the allied French and American Armies. Washington directed De Grasse to blockade the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, to cut off Cornwallis from help by sea. He set in motion his own forces, including part of the main American Army which had been operating on the Hudson River and the French Army under Comte de Rochambeau, toward Virginia, to attack Cornwallis by land.

While De Grasse maintained a strict blockade by sea, the combined armies, numbering over 16,000 men, gathered at Williamsburg during the middle of September. On the 28th they marched down the Peninsula and laid siege to Yorktown, with its British garrison of 7,500. Cornwallis almost immediately abandoned his

The Moore House.



View Along Colonial



outer line and retired within the town. On the night of October 6, the allied armies opened intrenchments and a few days later, with their batteries in position, they began a heavy bombardment of the British position. Their fire soon subdued that of Cornwallis' guns, and they were able to close in at shorter range. Two outlying British redoubts were stormed on the evening of October 14, and the position of the British Army became desperate. Cornwallis made an attempt to escape by way of Gloucester, but his boats were scattered by a storm. On the morning of October 17 he sent out a flag of truce and asked Washington for a discussion of terms of surrender.

On the following day commissioners met at the Moore House, just behind the American lines, and drafted articles of capitulation. In accordance with these articles, the British Army marched out of Yorktown at 2 o'clock on the afternoon of the 19th, between the French and American Armies drawn up to receive them, and laid down their arms. The long war was

practically over and American independence had become a reality.

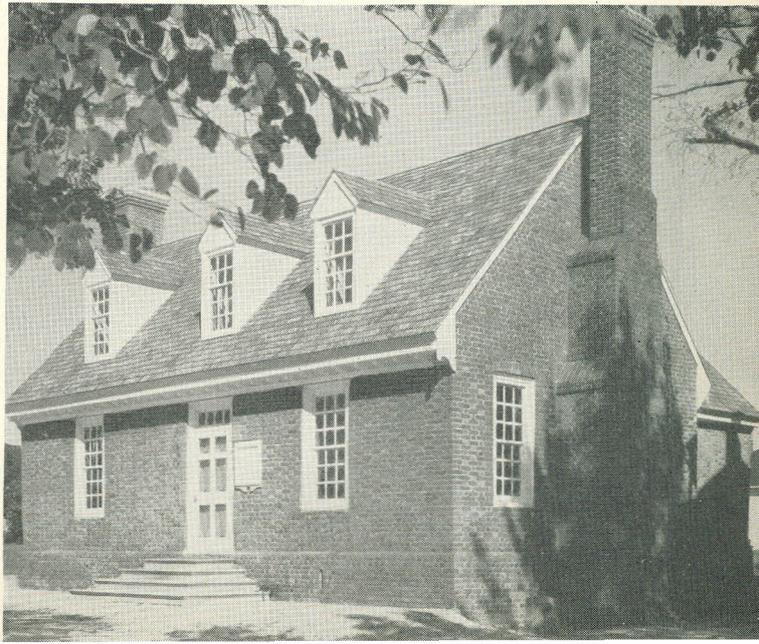
Yorktown Today

Yorktown is today included within the boundaries of Colonial National Historical Park. Several of the houses and other structures of colonial times are still standing and give the town much of the character of a long-vanished period. Along Main Street are the Customhouse, York Hall (the Thomas Nelson House), and the Digges, Somerwell, Sessions, and West Houses, all dating from the eighteenth century or earlier. Within a block of Main Street are the Grace Episcopal Church, originally built in 1697, and two other colonial buildings, the Smith House and Pearl Hall. The Swan Tavern group of buildings has been reconstructed by the National Park Service on original foundations, and effort is being made to have new construction in the town harmonize with the existing colonial types. Near the upper end of Main Street is the Yorktown Victory Monument, erected by the United States

Parkway.



Somerwell House.



to commemorate the French alliance and the victory over Cornwallis. The cornerstone of this monument was laid in 1881 at the celebration of the centennial of the surrender.

Close around Yorktown lie the remains of the British earthworks of 1781, as modified and strengthened by the Confederate forces during the War Between the States. A few hundred yards beyond them are reconstructed portions of the French and American lines. The original allied works were leveled by Washington's order immediately after the siege, but reconstruction of more significant portions has been possible through careful archeological investigation and documentary research. In several of the reconstructed batteries and redoubts have been mounted guns of the American Revolution period, including some that saw service at the siege of Yorktown. Highways and park roads through the battlefield and beyond lead to the encampment and headquarters areas of the French and American Armies. A mile outside the town, overlooking York River, stands the Moore House.

How To Reach Yorktown

Yorktown is on U. S. No. 17, 106 miles from Fredericksburg and 32 miles from Norfolk. The most interesting approach to the town, however, is over the Colonial Parkway from Williamsburg, a distance of 13 miles.

Visitor Service and Facilities

Headquarters of the Colonial National Historical Park are in Yorktown in the

Somerwell House, at the corner of Main and Church Streets. The Park Information Center in the Swan Tavern, at the corner of Main and Ballard Streets, is open daily. Here are exhibits on the history of Yorktown and the Siege of 1781. Suggestions for self-guided tours of varying length over the town and the battlefield may be obtained here. No regularly scheduled guided tours are offered, but arrangements for guide service may be made in advance for educational and other groups.

The Moore House, where the terms for the surrender of Cornwallis' army were drafted, has been restored as far as possible to its condition in 1781. It is open to the public daily from March to December. Refurnishing in keeping with the Revolutionary period has been accomplished through the cooperation of various patriotic groups. There is a small admission fee, which is waived for children and educational groups.

Throughout the battlefield and encampment areas a system of directional signs, narrative markers, and trailside exhibits assist the visitor in visualizing the events of the siege.

Administration

Colonial National Historical Park is a part of the National Park System owned by the people of the United States and administered for them by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. All communications should be addressed to the Superintendent, Colonial National Historical Park, Box 548, Yorktown, Va.

Free informational folders for Jamestown and the Moore House are available.



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, OSCAR L. CHAPMAN, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, NEWTON B. DRURY, *Director*

