

# COLONIAL PARKWAY



Jamestown



Williamsburg



Yorktown

*Colonial National Historical Park*

*VIRGINIA*

# Colonial Parkway

*A triple memorial of history is here made accessible by a scenic and historically rich parkway*

ON THE Virginia Peninsula three famous places—Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Yorktown—form a triangle only 14 miles at the base. Here, between the James and York Rivers, is compressed a great deal of American history. The founding of the first permanent English settlement in 1607 at Jamestown, Va.; the establishment there of the first representative form of government in the New World; the flowering of colonial culture and growth of revolutionary sentiment at Williamsburg; and the winning of American independence at Yorktown are historical milestones.

Each place has a thrilling story of its own. Yet, they are connected stories, for things that happened at Jamestown led directly to Williamsburg, and events in Williamsburg in part led to the story unfolded at Yorktown. Because of their proximity and because of Colonial Parkway, it is easy to follow the sequence of the history-making, from our colonial beginnings at Jamestown to our Nation's independence at Yorktown.

## *Colonial Parkway*

The motorway you drive today, for the most part, does not trace the paths of old colonial routes. The present route was chosen not only to give access to the many historic spots, but also to take advantage of the natural beauty of this tidewater country. A broad right-of-way of woodlands and shoreline assures the preservation of the scene.

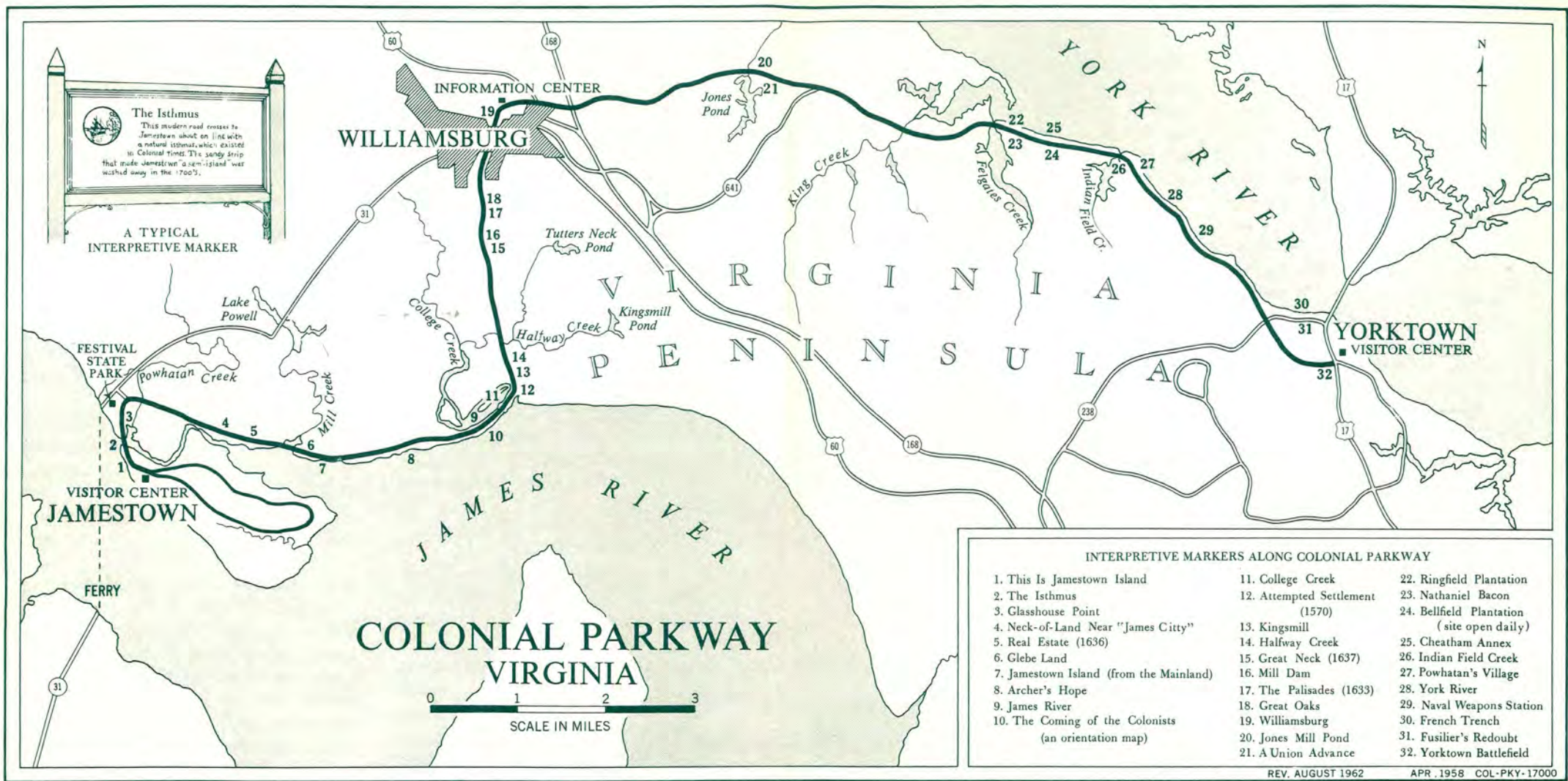
The parkway starts at the Jamestown Visitor Center and ends at the Yorktown Visitor Center—passing near the door of the

Williamsburg Information Center. These are the best points of departure for seeing the areas.

The parkway route is outward from Jamestown Island over a sandbar to Glasshouse Point. An isthmus existed there in colonial times. For the colonists, it was the way to unoccupied lands awaiting beyond. In the vicinity of the Glasshouse and Virginia's Festival Park, Colonial Parkway bends sharply to cross Powhatan Creek and then courses eastward along Back River and the Thoroughfare, which separate Jamestown Island from the mainland. After following the James River for 3 miles, the parkway at College Creek turns inland through the woods toward Williamsburg.

There the parkway passes under the restored city by means of a tunnel—a device to reduce the number of automobiles on the colonial streets. Just beyond the tunnel is the Williamsburg Information Center. Headed for Yorktown, the parkway takes you past the Cheatham Annex and U.S. Naval Weapons Station, whose piers can be seen jutting into a blue-watered harbor. This is the York River, which here is less a river than an estuary of Chesapeake Bay. The parkway follows the riverbanks for 6 miles—terminating in the battlefield on the cliffs above Yorktown where "port facilities and good harbor" attracted Cornwallis in 1781.

Parking turnouts or overlooks have been provided at various points of interest along Colonial Parkway so that you may drive to the side and pause in safety. At each point, signs tell of the history and legends of the



countryside, or explain its natural features. Another parkway facility is the Ringfield Picnic Area where free restrooms, drinking water, and picnic tables are provided. Also near Jamestown is the Festival Park Picnic Area.

Jamestown, founded May 13, 1607, was the first permanent English settlement in the New World. Out of stockaded "James Fort," built close on the shore of the James River, grew "James City." For 92 years (1607-99) this was the capital city of Virginia. For 13 of those years it constituted the lone English toehold along the Atlantic seaboard. The

concept of representative government, one of our proudest institutions, first took root here at Jamestown in 1619, on transplant from the mother country.

After the turn of the 18th century, "James City" slowly disappeared as the center of life, for the colony moved inland. Even though there is no longer a living town at Jamestown, there are many reminders of its first century. Today, the island in its entirety is jointly preserved by the National Park Service and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities.

The first point to visit at Jamestown is the modern visitor center just across the footbridge from the parking area. There you will find information to orient you and help make your visit more meaningful. Exhibits in this building trace the story of Jamestown—its life and times. Many objects, once used by the settlers, have been unearthed from the Jamestown ruins and are on display.

From the center a walking tour extends over the townsite along the old streets and paths to the church, the statehouse sites, and the ruins of early houses, taverns, and shops.

Paintings, markers, and recorded messages along the way help you imagine the life in the colony. A road loops the wildwood section of the island, and the 40-minute drive on this loop completes the Jamestown visit. Glasshouse Point, scene of the Jamestown Glassworks of 1608 and its faithfully restored counterpart, lies on the tip of the mainland across the isthmus and to the left, as you leave Jamestown Island proper.

There are no eating or lodging facilities at Jamestown; however, you can lunch at the Mermaid Tavern in Festival State Park adja-

cent to Glasshouse Point. The State park, created for the 350th Jamestown anniversary, also features an off-site reproduction of "James Fort"; the reconstructed ships, *Susan Constant*, *Godspeed*, and *Discovery*; Powhatan's Indian Lodge; and other exhibits. Festival Park has its own admissions schedule.

Williamsburg was one of the important breeding grounds for ideas that led to American independence. As the successor to Jamestown, for 80 influential years (1700-1779) this town was the capital of the Virginia Colony and a leading cultural and political center. Here George Washington, Patrick Henry, George Wythe, Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, and other patriots debated the course of America's future.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., has made possible the restoration that exists today. The purpose of Colonial Williamsburg is to recreate accurately the environment of the men and women of 18th-century Williamsburg—that "the future might learn from the past."

Exhibits include the capitol, Governors' palace, Raleigh tavern, public gaol, magazine,

several craft shops, and many handsome gardens. A visit can best be planned at the information center adjacent to Colonial Parkway where there is information about special activities and accommodations. Most important is a fine introductory film, "The Story of a Patriot." Free buses operate between the Information Center and the restored area. Of particular interest in Williamsburg, too, are Bruton Parish Church and the College of William and Mary, founded in 1693.

Yorktown throughout the 1700's was a port town, busy with colonial exports and imports. In 1781 this town, built over and under the York River cliffs, became the final battleground of the American Revolution. Here Cornwallis and his British Army surrendered to George Washington's allied American and French Armies. Here our Nation's independence was assured.

The events of the siege and the story of the Town of York are set forth in special exhibits in the Yorktown Visitor Center at the eastern end of Colonial Parkway. On display are military tents used by Washing-

### A parkway vista.



ton during the campaign; part of a reconstructed British frigate with objects recovered from the river bottom; and dioramas depicting scenes in the battle. The Siege Line Lookout on the roof deck of the visitor center affords a panoramic view over the strategic areas of the famous battle. National Park Service historians are on duty to help you understand the course of events which led to victory.

A self-guided motor drive begins at the visitor center and circles the points of interest in the battlefield, encampment areas, and the old town. Along the tour are long, twisting fortifications, and the famous redoubts with old cannons in place—some of them fired at Yorktown. There is the Moore House, where terms of surrender were drawn; the site of Washington's Headquarters; the "Customhouse," a landmark on Main Street; Grace Church (1697); old townhouses; and Cornwallis' Cave.

#### *About Your Visit*

Today Yorktown is a thriving village. There are eating and lodging facilities, principally in the town, and also north and south on U.S. 17, which extends through the park and across the York River on the George P. Coleman Memorial Bridge.

There are no service stations along the Colonial Parkway and the speed limit is 45 miles per hour. There are no fees, except for commercial vehicles, and the roadway normally is open at all times. Park rangers

patrol the road for your safety. They welcome opportunities to help you enjoy your visit. Questions can be answered, too, at the Jamestown and Yorktown Visitor Centers, at the western and eastern ends of the parkway respectively.

#### *Administration*

Colonial Parkway is part of Colonial National Historical Park, which is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this park is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the great natural, historic, and recreational places of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.

Colonial National Historical Park also includes Jamestown, Yorktown Battlefield, and the Cape Henry Memorial at the entrance to Chesapeake Bay. A superintendent, whose address is Box 210, Yorktown, Va., 23490, is in immediate charge.

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