

# Colonial

NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK • VIRGINIA

*Jamestown and Yorktown, although separated by 14 miles of land and 175 years of history, are linked by bonds as concrete as the 23-mile Colonial Parkway that connects them. Both Jamestown and Yorktown have stories of their own. Yet they are related stories, for events that happened at Jamestown led eventually to events that unfolded at Yorktown.*

At Jamestown, the first lasting English settlement in America, a seed from the mighty oak of English tradition took root in the establishment of the first representative form of government in America. Nourished by the hopes, aspirations, and the blood of generations, the tree grew and slowly bore fruit in the "rights of Englishmen"—the right to representative government, the right to trial by one's peers, and other rights, written and unwritten. At Williamsburg, which saw the flowering of colonial culture, the tree grew to maturity. When the Englishman's rights were threatened, a seed of revolution spread from Williamsburg to Yorktown, where American independence was finally won.

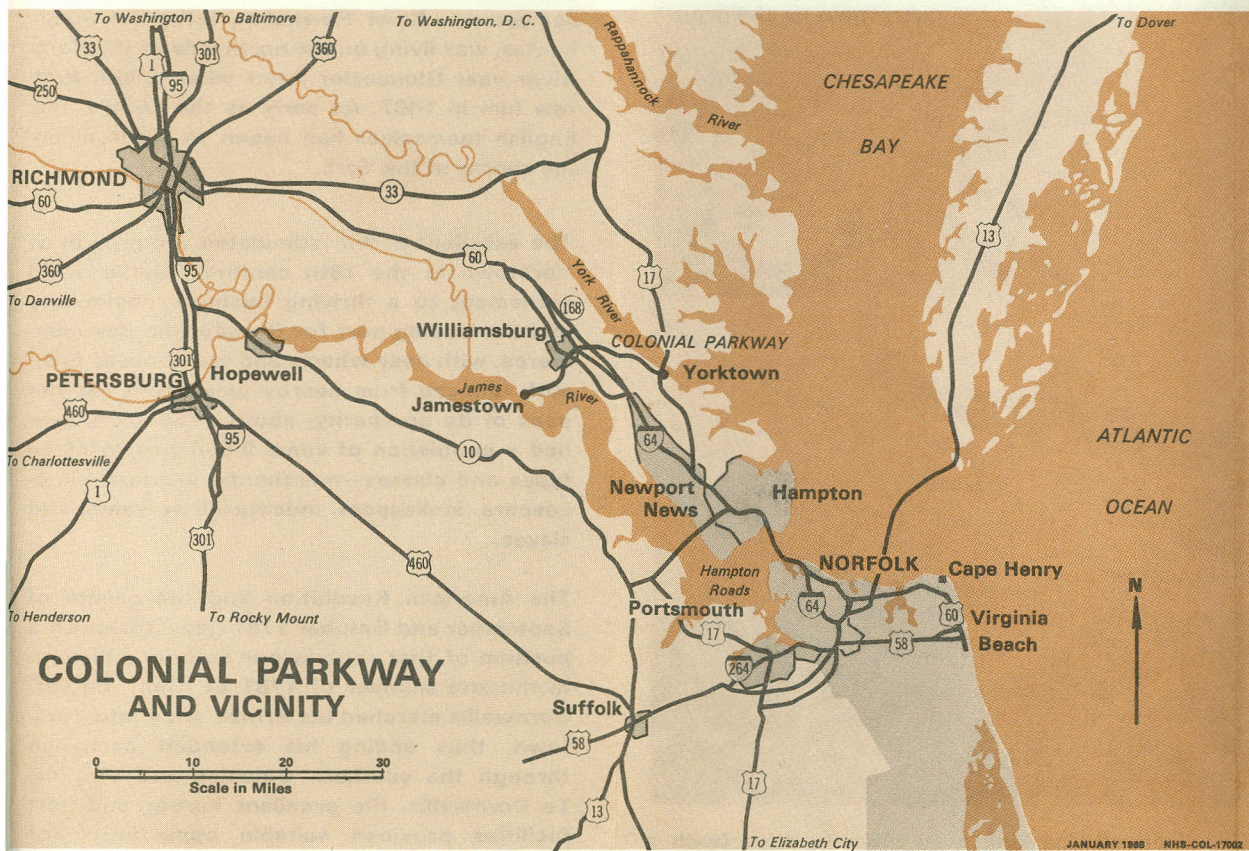
As you drive the Colonial Parkway—from the old townsite of Jamestown to the trenches of Yorktown—our entire colonial period unfolds before you, a period of struggle, heartbreak, pleasant living, war, and finally, triumph.

## **THE JAMESTOWN STORY**

On May 13, 1607, three small, storm-wracked ships, 4 months out of England by way of the West Indies, were moored to trees on the shore of this then peninsula on the James River about 45 miles up from Chesapeake Bay. The ships carried an expedition of 105 men whose purpose was to settle in the New World. The leaders of the expedition decided to make this the site of "James Fort," or Jamestown as it came to be called, their first home in the wilderness and the English toehold on the North American continent.

England came late into the colonizing field. Her efforts of the 1580's to establish a settlement on North Carolina's Roanoke Island failed, as did early efforts along the New England coast. But Jamestown succeeded and, until the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth in 1620, it was England's only settlement along the Atlantic seaboard. Within a century it grew from a rude palisaded fort into a busy community as the capital of the Colony of Virginia.

The colonists of 1607 first touched the American mainland on April 26 at Cape Henry, Va., where they lingered 4 days to search out the land, claim it for King and country, and erect a cross giving thanks to Almighty God for a safe arrival. When they sailed up the James River to establish their settlement, the land looked good. But the land proved deceptive, and many surprises, much suffering, starvation, and death awaited them.



The first few years, during which more settlers arrived, were a continuing struggle to overcome hunger, sickness, the ever-present wilderness, and the Indians. These troubles were compounded by the squabbles and inexperience of the governing councilors. Even Capt. John Smith, the settlement's ablest and most forceful leader, had much to learn.

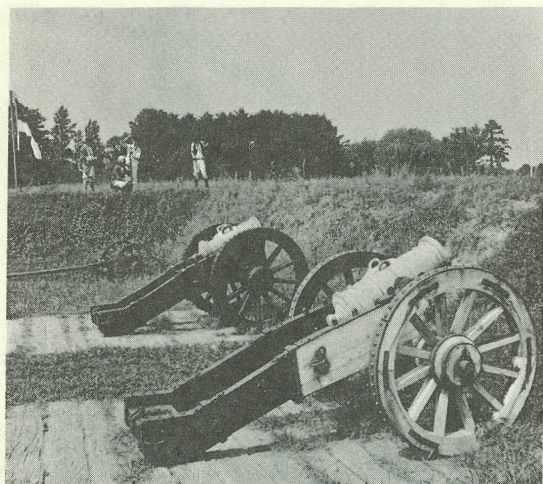
Jamestown reached its lowest ebb in the winter of 1609-10—the "Starving Time," during which 440 of the 500 inhabitants died. Yet the belief that the settlement would succeed sustained not only the colonists but the joint-stock Virginia Company of London, which financed them, and the Royal authorities. The fort was maintained, crops were planted, and the hard lessons of frontier living were learned. Gradually the new land became home to the settlers.

Stronger, more orderly government came after 1610 following the arrival of Lord Delaware and his deputies, Sir Thomas Dale and Sir Thomas Gates. The church and a number of other institutions had already taken root. Representative, legislative government, called for in "The Great Charter" of 1618, began when the First Assembly met at Jamestown in 1619. English common law, which guaranteed individual rights, was also firmly established. By 1700, when Jamestown was no longer the capital, the Assembly had become a well-organized institution.

By 1614 "James Cittie," as the town was often called, had "two faire rowes" of houses and a street. The settlers built homes outside the fort proper, and farms occupied all of the high ground of the peninsula. Tobacco was already becoming the Colony's major source of wealth.

Jamestown never became a town of appreciable size, but it served for nearly a century (1607-99) as the principal town and seat of government of Virginia. The courts and the Assembly met here. It was the official residence of the Colony's governors, although Sir William Berkeley developed his plantation, "Greenspring," about 3 miles to the north. But Jamestown did not keep pace with the rest of the Colony and in 1699 the Virginia House of Burgesses initiated action that led to the removal of the seat of government to Williamsburg in 1700.

Jamestown, declined sharply and was eventually abandoned. By the time of the American Revolution the area had become farmland; subsequently it was reclaimed by the wilderness. In 1893 some 20 acres became a historic shrine through gift to the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities. With assistance from the Commonwealth of Virginia, the remaining 1,500 acres became part of Colonial National Historical Park in 1934.



**GRAND FRENCH BATTERY AT YORKTOWN**



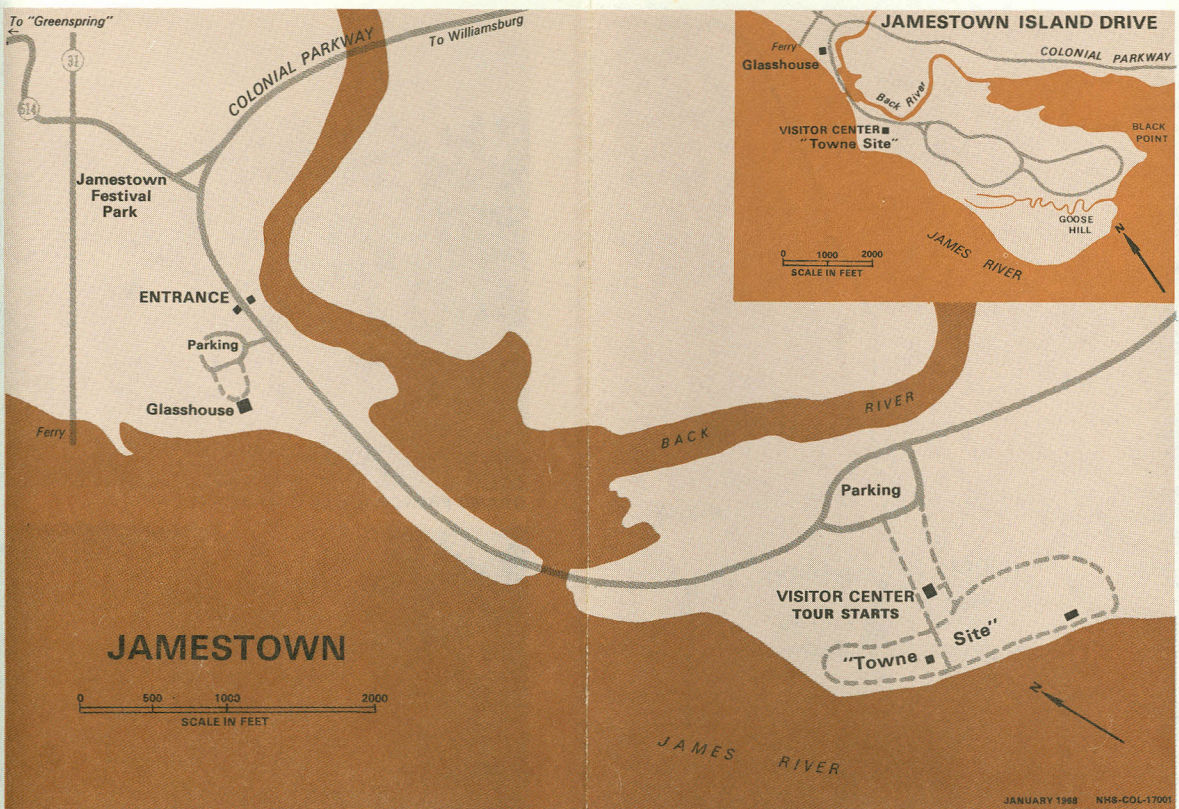
**RECONSTRUCTED "GLASSHOUSE" AT JAMESTOWN**



**OLD CAPE HENRY LIGHTHOUSE**



**OLD JAMESTOWN CHURCH TOWER**



JANUARY 1988 NPS-COL-17001

## SEEING JAMESTOWN

The basic parts of the self-guided tour of Jamestown include a stop at the visitor center (across the footbridge from the central parking area), a walk over the townsite of the old "Cittie," a drive around the island, and a visit to the Glasshouse of 1608.

The visitor center offers a 17-minute audio-visual program every half hour. Park personnel are on duty to answer your questions. You can also purchase more detailed folders and booklets. The museum features a model of James Fort, and the story of Jamestown is traced through exhibits and dioramas. Many items excavated from the original site, such as the earliest dated piece of American pewter, are used in the displays. The visitor center also contains the Jamestown Gift Shop, operated by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities.

A walkway leads from the visitor center to the principal features and exhibits of the townsite. The foundations of three Jamestown statehouses recall the beginning of representative government in America. Traces of houses, taverns, shops, and industries are a reminder of the Englishman's efforts to bring his way of life to the new continent, while the Old Church Tower of 1639 and the remains of an earlier church speak of the settlers' religious heritage. Statues and memorials commemorate bold leaders and important events in the struggle to conquer the untamed new land. Many of these features are within the Association grounds at the western end of the townsite.

From the parking area a 5-mile drive (with a shorter circuit of 3 miles) loops the island, where natural wilderness, suggestive of that encountered by the first colonists, is slowly reclaiming the land. A series of oil paintings and story markers along the route help recount the historic events that took place here. You may stop at various points for a brief walk to such interesting spots as the Travis family graveyard and the sweeping Black Point vista.

On the return trip, the road crosses the reconstructed isthmus, which originally linked Jamestown Island to the mainland. The road also leads to the *Glasshouse*, where you can see daily demonstrations of glassblowing as it was done in 1608. Two miles beyond the Glasshouse, via Va. 614 and 5, is the site of "Greenspring," Berkeley's plantation. The site was acquired by the National Park Service in 1967.

The landing site at *Cape Henry*, marked by a Memorial Cross, is in the city of Virginia Beach. It can be reached by U.S. 60 through Fort Story Military Reservation. The old Cape Henry lighthouse, the first lighthouse authorized and built by the Federal Government and in operation by 1792, is nearby.

## THE YORKTOWN STORY

Yorktown's history began as Jamestown's was ending. Established by the Virginia Port Act of 1691, Yorktown was variously called Port of York, Borough of York, York, and Town of York. The area around the town had long been known to Englishmen and was frequently visited by Capt. John Smith and his fellow settlers at

Jamestown. Chief Powhatan, father of Pocahontas, was living on the north side of the York River near Gloucester Point when Smith first saw him in 1607. As early as the 1630's, the English themselves had begun to settle along the shores of the York.

The excellent harbor stimulated the growth of Yorktown in the 18th century from a small settlement to a thriving business community and the leading port for Chesapeake Bay commerce, with busy wharfs and warehouses filled with tobacco from nearby plantations. At the peak of its prosperity, about 1750, Yorktown had a population of some 2,500 people of all types and classes—merchants, planters, shopkeepers, innkeepers, indentured servants, and slaves.

The American Revolution and the events of September and October 1781 gave Yorktown a position of first rank in our country's history. In the late summer of 1781 Lt. Gen. the Earl Cornwallis marched his British army into Yorktown, thus ending his extended campaign through the southern Colonies and Virginia. To Cornwallis, the excellent harbor and port facilities provided suitable opportunity for either reinforcement or withdrawal with aid from the British Navy, which at that time controlled the sealanes. The Franco-American alliance, however, would soon alter Britain's naval supremacy.

While Gen. George Washington marched south from New York with a large French and American army, a sizable French fleet carrying 3,000 troops sailed from the West Indies to blockade Chesapeake Bay. In a battle off the Virginia Capes on September 5, the British fleet failed to break the French blockade, leaving Cornwallis without the naval support he so desperately needed. In the meantime, Washington had assembled his army of 16,000 at Williamsburg. At the end of September he moved it to Yorktown, where the British were encamped in homes, public buildings, and open fields behind well-built earthen defenses.

Washington's army maneuvered for 3 weeks, digging formal siege lines around the town, particularly on the southeast side, thus drawing the noose tighter about Cornwallis' forces. The superior manpower and artillery of the allied army, the futile British counterattacks, and (in the night fighting of October 14) the loss of strategic Redoubts 9 and 10, convinced Cornwallis that he could hold out no longer. Surrender terms were drawn up by British, French, and American officers at the home of Augustine Moore on October 18. The following day the formal surrender took place in a large open field just beyond the battlelines, along the road from Yorktown to Hampton. The surrender ended the siege, and, to all purposes, the entire American Revolution.



## SEEING YORKTOWN

The visitor center is at the eastern end of Colonial Parkway. A 17-minute audiovisual program and a series of exhibits, which include Washington's military tents and a ship display, are designed to acquaint you with Yorktown and the battlefield. More detailed folders and booklets can be purchased and National Park Service personnel are on duty to answer your questions. Atop the visitor center is a lookout which commands a sweeping view of the river, town, and siege lines.

Follow the historical tour marker to enjoy the self-guided battlefield tour which begins at the visitor center and leads to various key points, such as reconstructed Redoubts 9 and 10 and the Grand French Battery. Many cannon of the period, some surrendered by the British, are again in place.

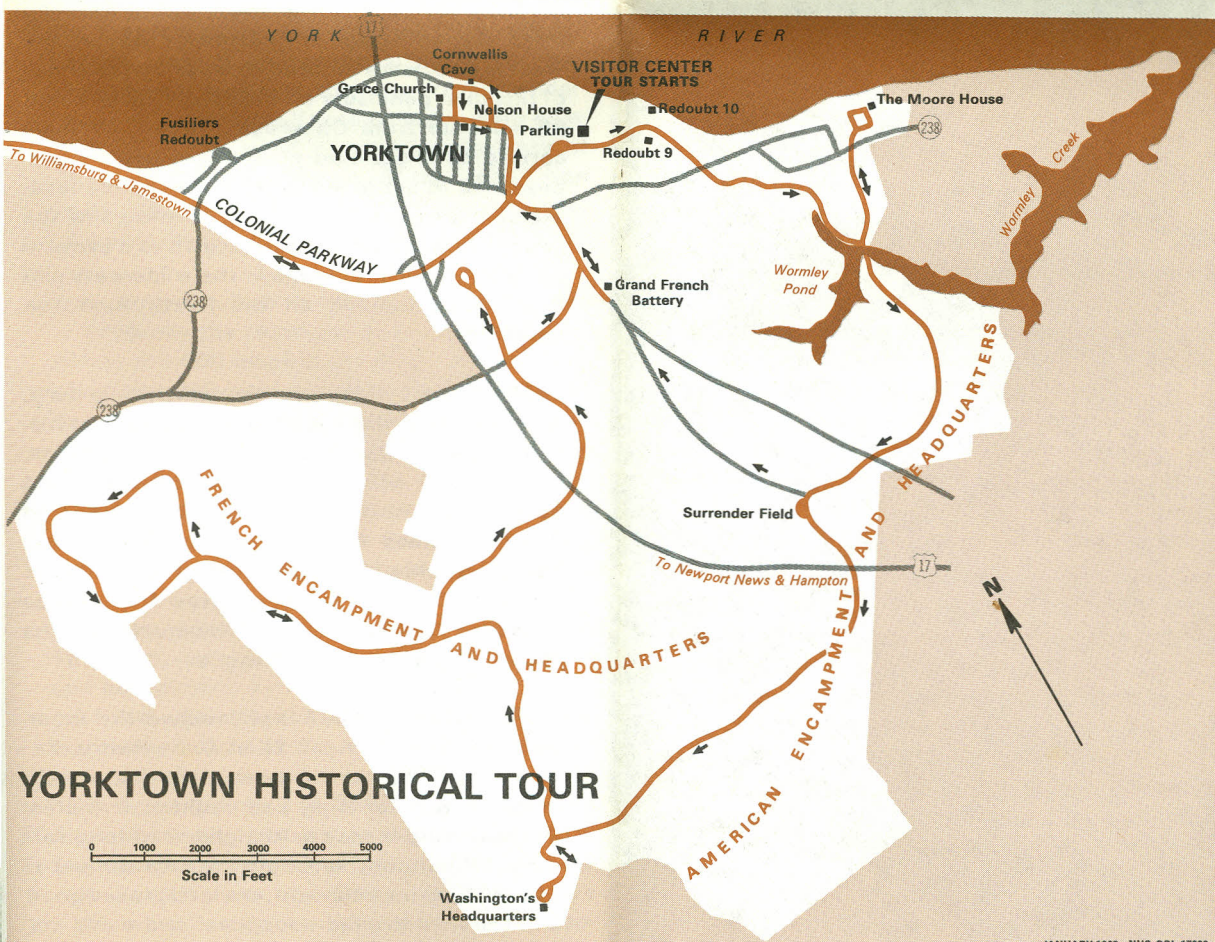
The drive also leads to the restored and furnished Moore house and to Surrender Field. It crosses the encampment area where French and American troops, united in a common cause, lived when not on siege-line duty. You will also see Washington's headquarters site where his tents were pitched, a French cemetery, and an artillery park. Markers along the drive identify other points of interest.

The final loop of the tour is through Yorktown itself, past Cornwallis' headquarters and the cave where he sought protection as the siege drew to a close. Many of the town's original homes and buildings remain, among them the "Customhouse" where Richard Ambler had his office; the Sessions (Sheild) house, standing in 1699; Grace Church with its walls built in 1697; and the spacious Nelson house.

## ABOUT YOUR VISIT

There are no eating or sleeping accommodations at Jamestown. However, at nearby Jamestown Festival Park, operated by the Jamestown Foundation for the Commonwealth of Virginia, there is a cafeteria. Williamsburg has a wide range of motel, hotel, and restaurant accommodations. There are also privately operated campgrounds near Jamestown and Williamsburg. Yorktown and its environs offer motel and restaurant facilities. There are picnic grounds, open in season, along Colonial Parkway at Great Neck, Ringfield, and Yorktown.

The speed limit on Colonial Parkway is 45 m.p.h. There are no service stations, and the roadway is closed to commercial traffic, except buses, for which permits are required.



## ADMINISTRATION

Colonial National Historical Park, which includes Jamestown, Yorktown Battlefield, Colonial Parkway, and Cape Henry Memorial, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Yorktown, Va. 23490, is in immediate charge.

**THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—has a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

U. S. Department of the Interior

National Park Service

