

The Early Past

Prehistoric peoples hunted the floodplain of the Congaree river and fished its waters. Congaree Indians subsisted on the vegetation and abundant game. Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto traversed the area in the late 1500's followed by fellow Spaniard Juan Pardo in the 1600's. The Congaree Indians were decimated by a smallpox epidemic that was inadvertently introduced with the influx of European settlers in the 1700's. The new settlers obtained grants of land directly from the King of England until the American revolutionary war in 1776 won South Carolinians the right to distribute ownership of the land.

Man's Disturbances

Attempts to make the floodplain suitable for farming and livestock operations continued from the early days of the settlers through the mid 1800's with little success. Around 1905 the Santee River Cypress Lumber Company, owned by Francis Beidler, acquired much of the low lying land along the Congaree and Santee river systems. Though many other areas were harvested of their valuable timber, poor accessibility in the floodplain confined logging to tracts near the main rivers. In these areas cypress trees were killed and dried while standing, and then felled and floated down-river to the sawmills. Many of the logs sank as the dampness of the floodplain made them too heavy to float. Operations were soon halted leaving the floodplain relatively untouched.

Recent Events

In 1969, high timber prices prompted private landowners to resume logging operations, and the trees of the Congaree floodplain became threatened again.

Local citizens acting upon the ideas of Harry Hampton, an advocate for protection of the floodplain in the 1950's, launched a campaign to preserve the Congaree floodplain. As a result of an effective campaign by these local individuals and groups to protect the area's natural resources, Congress established Congaree Swamp National Monument in 1976. In 2003, Congress changed the park's name and designation and established Congaree National Park.

Inclusion in the National Park Service system as a national monument was just one of many designations that the park has received. The Congaree National Park has also been designated a:

Natural National Landmark

August 25, 1974

International Biosphere Reserve

June 30, 1983

Wilderness

October 24, 1988

Globally Important Bird Area

July 26, 2001

The continued conservation efforts of citizens like you will help to ensure that this national treasure is preserved for future generations of park visitors.

*Additional info may be obtained by visiting the Harry Hampton Visitor Center, or by calling:
(803) 776-4396*

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Congaree National Park

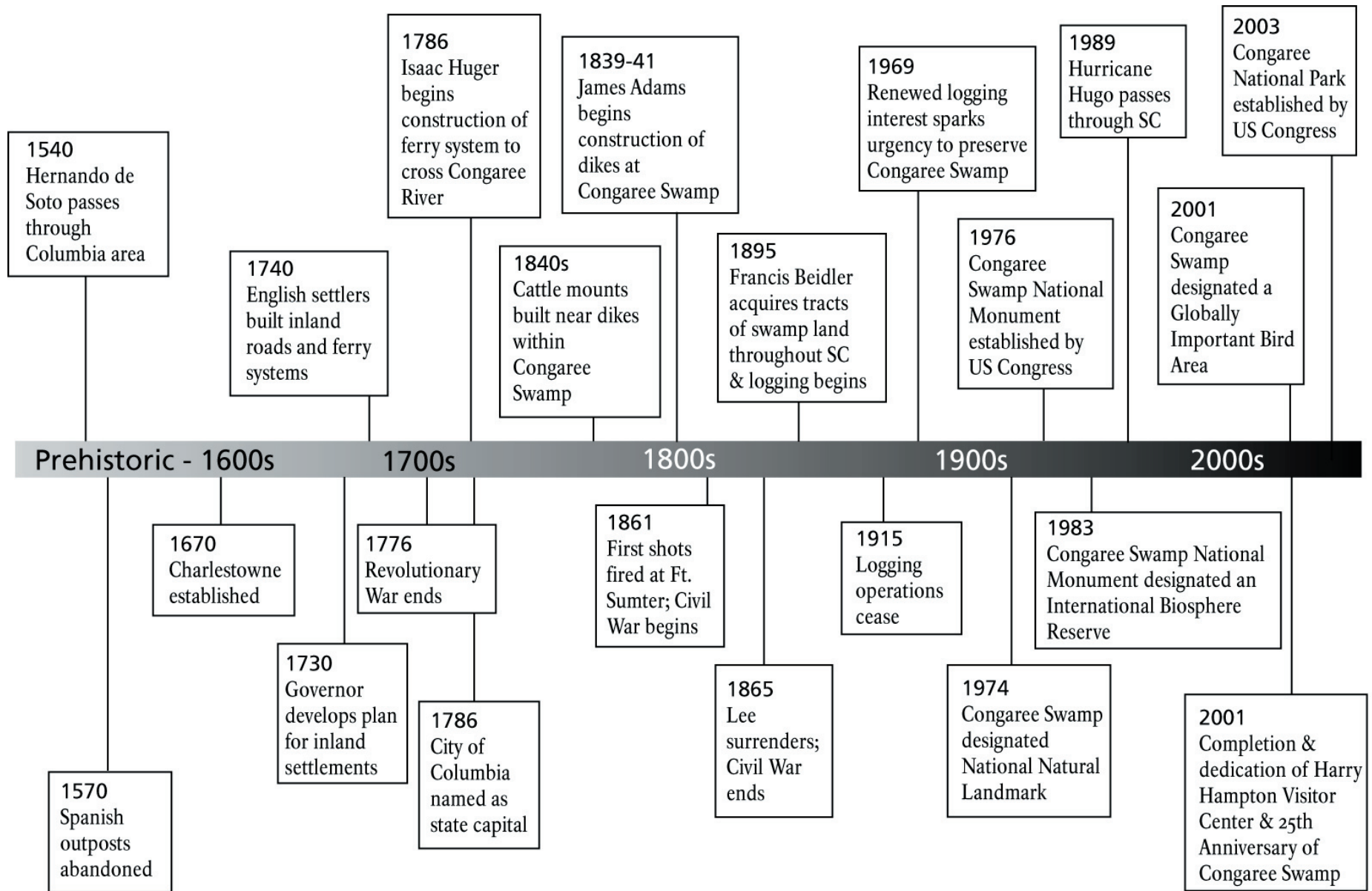
Congaree National Park History

South Carolina rivers were once bordered by over a million acres of old-growth floodplain forest; now only 12,000 acres remain and 11,000 are preserved in Congaree National Park.



History of Congaree National Park

Congaree National Park
National Park Service



The inclusion of Congaree National Park into our National Park System would not have occurred without the efforts of many individuals. Continued preservation and conservation efforts within our public lands and country are necessary to assure our natural and cultural heritage are protected in perpetuity.