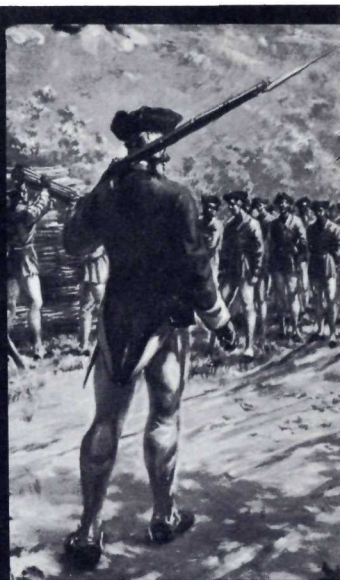
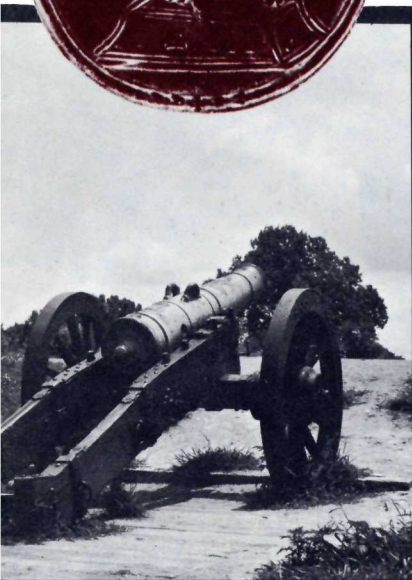


YORKTOWN BATTLEFIELD

Colonial National
Historical Park

VIRGINIA



YORKTOWN BATTLEFIELD

Scene of the allied French and American victory over Cornwallis in 1781, climax of the American Revolution, and a decisive victory in world history.

The surrender of the British Army at Yorktown on October 19, 1781, marked the virtual close of the American Revolution. It ended almost 7 years of war. While the 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 siege of 1781

In 1781, the seventh year of the American War of Independence, the British had practically abandoned efforts to reconquer the Northern States, but still had hopes of regaining the South. That spring Lt. Gen. Earl Cornwallis marched into Virginia from North Carolina. He believed that if Virginia could be subdued, the States to the south would readily return to British allegiance.

The Marquis de Lafayette, operating in Virginia with a small American force, 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, responding to orders from his superior in New York, Cornwallis moved across the James River to Portsmouth in preparation for sending part of his army to New York, threatened by Gen. George Washington. Countermanding orders soon reached him, however, directing him to fortify 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 across the river. Meanwhile, a large French fleet under Count de Grasse was moving up from the West Indies for combined operations with the allied French and American armies. De Grasse blockaded the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, cutting off Cornwallis from help by sea. Washington moved his forces toward Virginia to attack by land. These forces included part of the main American Army operating on the Hudson and the French Army under Count de Rochambeau.

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 outer line and retired within the town. During the night of October 6, the allied armies opened entrenchments and a few days later, with their batteries in position, began a heavy bombardment of the British position. Their fire soon subdued Cornwallis guns, and the allies were able to close in at shorter range. Two outlying British redoubts (Nos. 9 and 10) 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.

Cornwallis surrenders

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 p.m. on 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 was becoming a reality.

The colonial town of York

Yorktown was established by the Act of Ports of 1691, which looked to the founding of trade centers in Virginia. During the early 1700's the town grew and prospered because of the rich tobacco trade that passed through its harbor and warehouses. Its prosperity reached a peak around 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 tidewater Virginia tobacco trade, the importance of the town and port of York dwindled.

Yorktown today

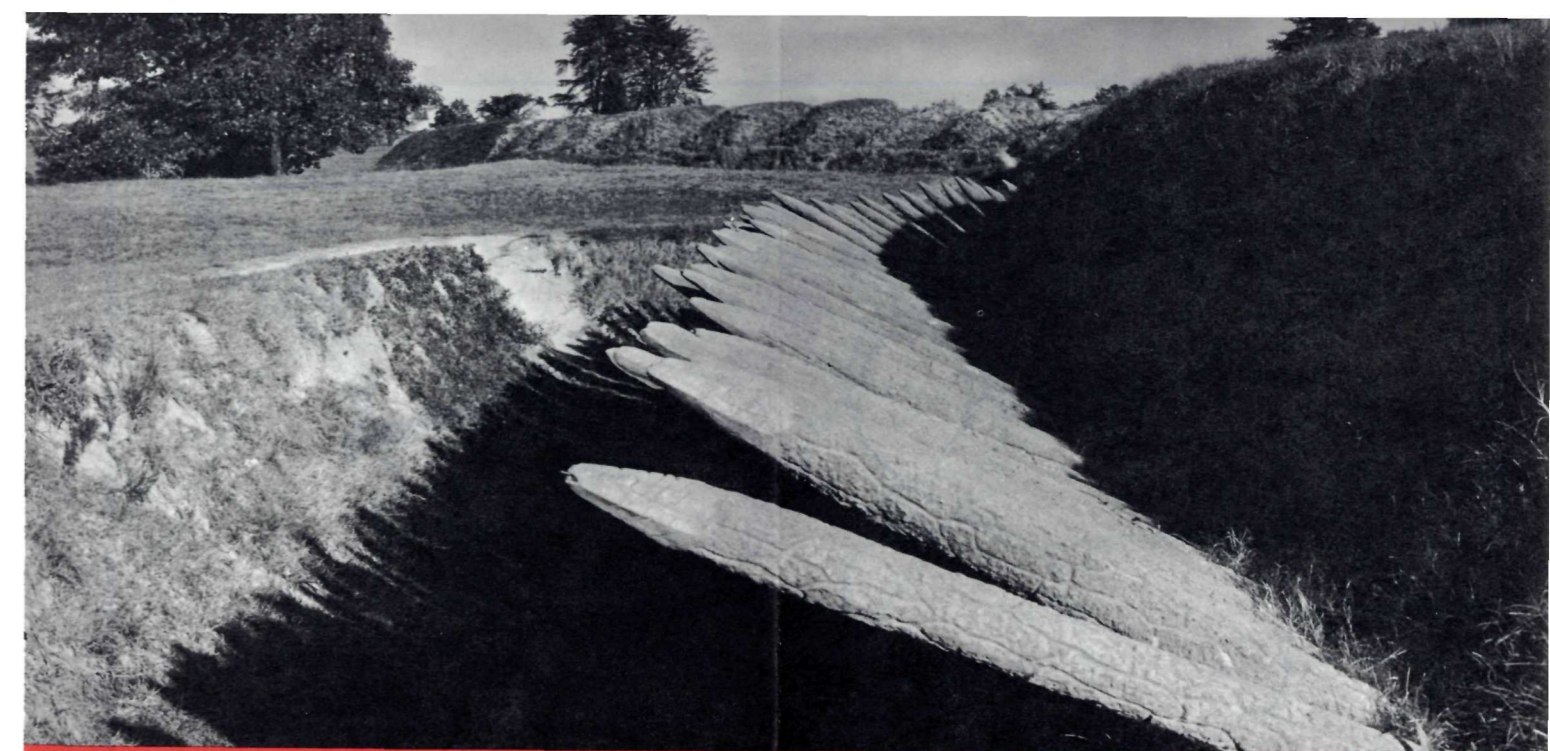
Yorktown, though smaller than in colonial days, continues

as an active community. 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, the Nelson House (part of York Hall), two Digges homes, and the Somerwell and Session houses, all dating from the 18th century or earlier. Within a block of Main Street are Grace Episcopal Church, originally built in 1697, and two other colonial buildings—the Smith and Ballard houses. The Swan Tavern group of buildings has been reconstructed by the National Park Service on original foundations, and an effort is being made to have new construction in the town harmonize with the existing colonial types. Near the east end of Main Street is the Yorktown Victory Monument, erected by the United States 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 Civil War. A few hundred yards beyond them are reconstructed parts of the French and American lines. The original allied works were leveled on Washington's orders immediately after the siege, but reconstruction of the more significant parts has been possible through careful archeological investigation and documentary research. In several of the reconstructed batteries and redoubts are 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 triple memorial

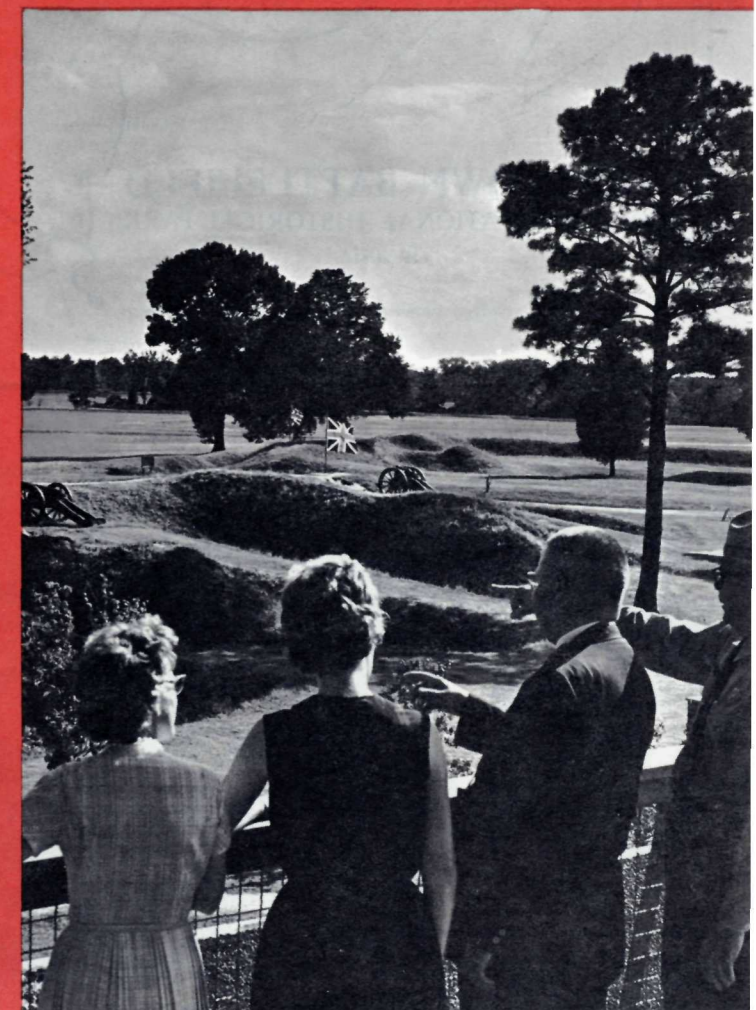
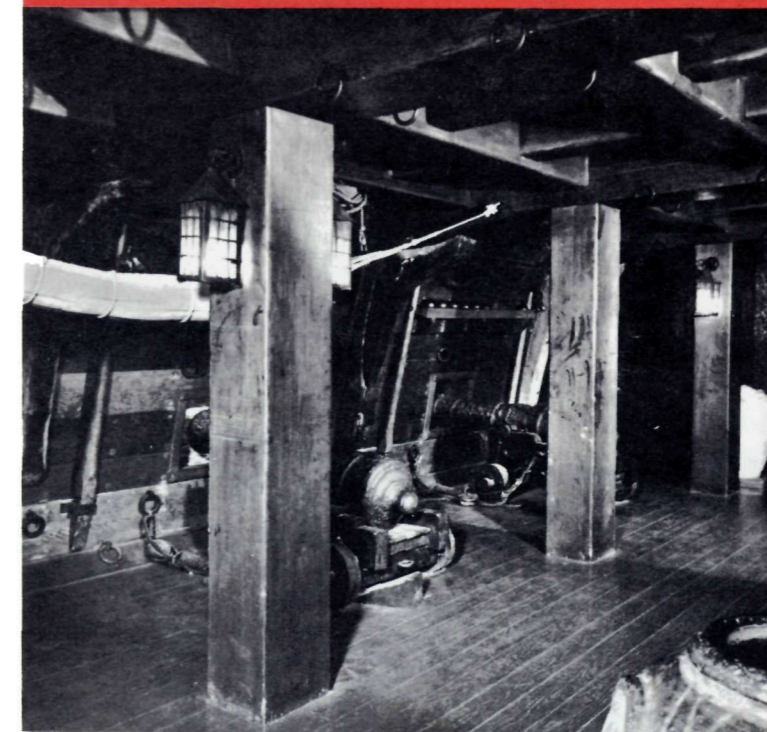
The victory at Yorktown came 174 years after the founding at Jamestown—just 23 miles away—of the first permanent English settlement in America. Midway between Yorktown and Jamestown is Williamsburg, where colonial life in the Virginia tidewater reached a peak. There, strong leadership in the quest for independence also developed.



Redoubt No. 9, one of two key British positions captured on the night of October 14, hastening Cornwallis' surrender.

RIGHT, the battlefield from the siege line lookout.

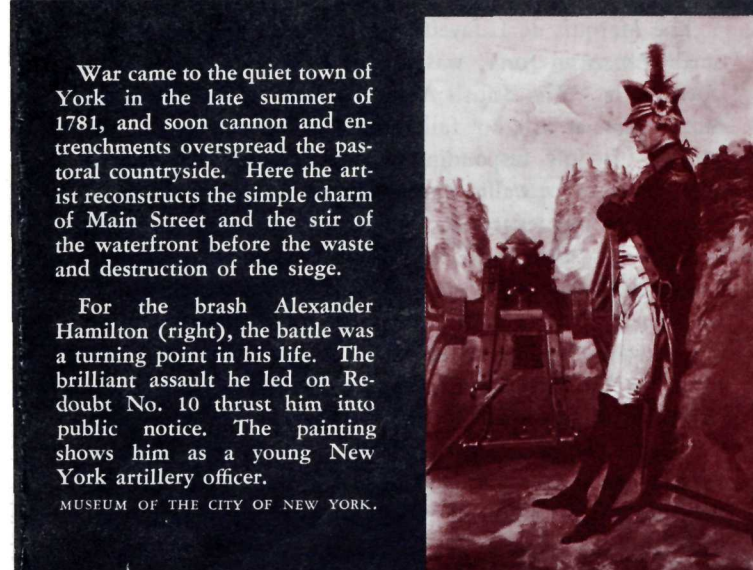
Reconstruction of a gundeck and the captain's cabin of the British 44-gun frigate, *Charon*, in the visitor center.



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War came to the quiet town of York in the late summer of 1781, and soon cannon and entrenchments overspread the pastoral countryside. Here the artist reconstructs the simple charm of Main Street and the stir of the waterfront before the waste and destruction of the siege.

For the brash Alexander Hamilton (right), the battle was a turning point in his life. The brilliant assault he led on Redoubt No. 10 thrust him into public notice. The painting shows him as a young New York artillery officer.

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

Administration

COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK, established as a National Monument in 1930 and changed to its present status in 1936, 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 scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.

A superintendent, whose address is Yorktown, Va., is in immediate charge of the park.

America's natural resources

Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.

Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Yorktown are connected by the scenic Colonial Parkway. Together, they help reveal much of the story of our colonial period in Virginia.

Williamsburg is an historic community restored by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., through Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., while the Yorktown Battlefield, Colonial Parkway, and much of Jamestown Island are included in Colonial National Historical Park. The park, too, includes the Cape Henry Memorial at the entrance to Chesapeake Bay, where the first settlers in Virginia landed in 1607.

About your visit

Yorktown, on U.S. 17, is 106 miles from Fredericksburg and 32 miles from Norfolk. The 13-mile drive from Williamsburg over the Colonial Parkway is the most interesting approach.

In the Yorktown Visitor Center (located within the earthworks just southeast of Yorktown and at the east end of the Colonial Parkway), there is information service, an introductory theater program, and exhibits relating to Yorktown and the siege. This is also the starting point for the self-guiding tour of the battlefield. This tour leads to the principal points of interest. Markers, field displays, and other aids will help you visualize the events of the siege.

Those who plan to visit in a group can obtain special service if advance arrangements are made with the superintendent.

The Moore House, where the Articles of Capitulation were drafted, has been restored and is 1 mile outside town. It is usually open every day from April to November. The small admission fee is waived for children and educational groups.

There are two publications about the events at Yorktown that are obtainable at the park and from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D.C.: *Yorktown and the Siege of 1781* (Historical Handbook Series No. 14) for 25 cents, and *Yorktown, Climax of the Revolution* (Source Book Series No. 1) for 20 cents. A third item available at the park is a reprint of Henry P. Johnson's *The Yorktown Campaign and the Surrender of Cornwallis* (1881), 206 pages, for \$2.

Follow the historical tour marker to enjoy the self-guided battlefield tour outlined on the map. The tour, which begins at the visitor center, includes the battlefield, the encampments, and the town.

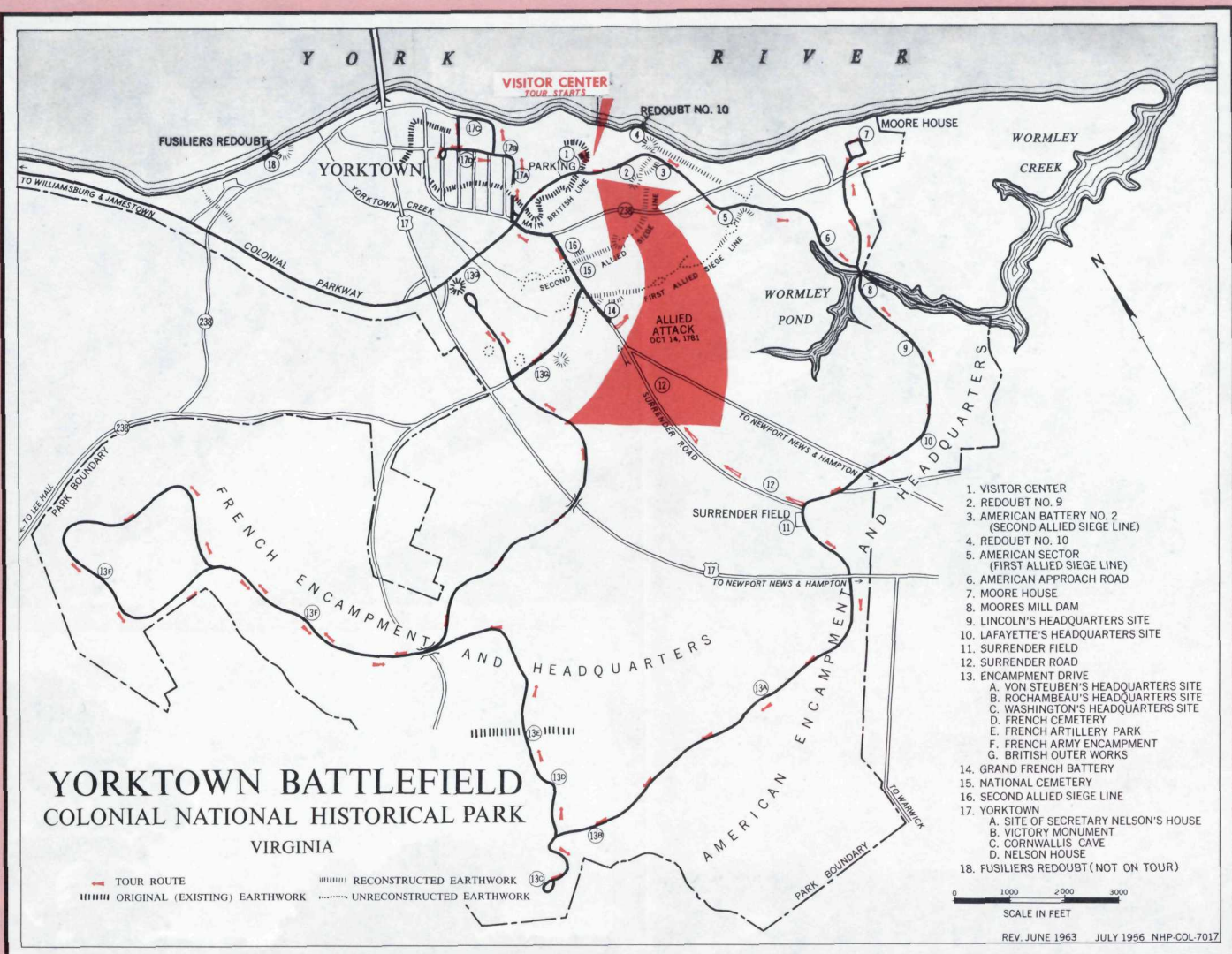


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The Moore House, where commissioners met on October 18 to draft the Articles of Capitulation.

General Washington firing one of the first shots of the siege. Diorama in the visitor center.

