

YORKTOWN / COUNTY OF YORK TIMELINE

When we think of Yorktown, or the County of York, Virginia, our initial thoughts turn to the great battle that solidified the independence of this great nation. No doubt the accomplishments of the Allied Forces on this hallowed ground made an irrevocable mark on the world that remains deeply embedded today. However, the recorded history of the Yorktown and the County of York, or that of this immediate area of Virginia, began approximately 200 years prior to the battle. Follow along as we review the significant events that brought us to where we are today.

- 1570 - Nine Spanish Jesuits come overland from the James River to establish a mission on the Pamunkey River.
- 1607 - Captain John Smith explores Pamunkey River, identifies Indian village as "Kiskiack."
- 1629 - Kiskiack Indians relocate from the southern bank of the Pamunkey River (later known as the Charles River and even later the York River).
- 1630 - Grants given to "adventurers who would build in the forest along the Pamunkey River, among them Governor Sir John Harvey himself, who sent people to settle his Yorke Plantation, named after the first Duke of York who would become King Charles I."
- 1633 - Yorke Village on the Wormeley Creek (now Coast Guard Training Center) declared a Virginia port by House of Burgesses.
- 1634 - Yorke and Chiskiack Parishes become Charles River Shire and the Pamunkey River renamed the Charles River.
- 1635 - Ancient planters, including York Burgess Nicolas Martiau, revolt against Gov. Harvey, deposing him April 26, Nicolas Martiau was granted 1,600 acres off of the Charles River (including what is now the area of Historic Yorktown) May 20, perhaps as a payment for building forts and palisades across the peninsula against the Indians.
- 1640 - The first Yorke Parish church built on the edge of Yorke Village.
- 1642 - Name of Charles River and shire changed to York, after the second Duke of York.
- 1667 - The second York Parish church, a brick structure, is erected near the Yorke Village.
- 1676 - Bacon's Rebellion.
- 1691 - Virginia Ports Act authorizes 15 port towns, including one on the York River for the collection of tariffs. Fifty acres of Martiau's property is purchased for the town. 85 lots laid out by a hired architect-surveyor, Lawrence Smith of Gloucester.
- 1697 - Third York Parish Church built of marl of the York River cliffs on property donated by Governor Francis Nicholson. York County Courthouse built of frame and marl, shingle roof, on what is now the site of York Hall.
- 1706 - Customhouse built by Richard Ambler. (Possibly 1720)
- 1710-1739 - Most of the tobacco shipped from Virginia was grown in the York River basin creating a great demand for labor. Therefore, 71% of all slaves came in at Yorktown. During the period 1718 to 1739, 14,218 entered here.
- 1769 - A major hurricane wreaks havoc on Yorktown and shipping in the port.
- 1774 - Yorktown's own "Tea Party" to protest Stamp Act by the Committee of Safety. (Nov 7)
- 1779 - Another major hurricane inflicts heavy damage on Yorktown.
- 1781 - Surrender of the British at Yorktown. (Oct 19)
- 1787 - Yorktown is incorporated by the General Assembly of Virginia.
- 1814 - Great fire in Yorktown, beginning below the hill, Mar 3, destroying second Courthouse built 1733.
- 1824 - Marquis de la Fayette's visit to Yorktown.
- 1861 - The Battle of Big Bethel.
- 1863 - Peninsula Campaign. Magruder had 15,000 troops at Yorktown, using Revolutionary War redoubts. Johnston evacuates Yorktown May 3.
- 1863 - Union ammunition stored in Courthouse blows up (Dec), destroying Swan Tavern, adjacent Phillip Lightfoot House.
- 1881 - Cornerstone laid for the Victory Monument (100 years after approved by Congress).
- 1901 - American Cement Company plans large factory in Hornsbyville to use local marl. Polish immigrants come for a project never realized.
- 1918 - Yorke Village becomes part of Fuel Oil Station.
- 1919 - Chiskiack becomes the Naval Mine Depot, (what is now called, Naval Weapons Station), and Penniman Munitions Works.
- 1926 - Yorktown Country Club builds golf course. A metal girder hotel begins construction. Uncompleted, hotel construction abandoned, country club fails because of Stock Market crash. Golf course remains open until WWII.
- 1930 - Colonial National Monument established. Became Colonial National Historical Park on June 5, 1936. Today's Visitor Center on country club hotel site.
- 1933 - Hurricane destroys Yorktown waterfront, damage in Seaford, Dandy, and Dare.
- 1938 - Colonial Parkway between Yorktown and Williamsburg is completed.
- 1952 - George P. Coleman Bridge opens.
- 1959 - The Naval Mine Warfare School becomes the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve Training Center.
- 1976 - The Yorktown Victory Center is opened as one of three Bicentennial visitor centers in Virginia. It is later merged with the Jamestown Settlement under the direction of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation.
- 2003 - Hurricane Isabelle causes major damage to Yorktown and surrounding area.
- 2005 - Riverwalk Landing development opens, revitalizing the Yorktown waterfront.
- 2006 - Yorktown celebrates the 225th Anniversary of the Siege at Yorktown with four days of activities, one of the signature events of America's 400th Anniversary Commemoration of the settlement of Jamestown.