

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 long before the battle. Follow along as we review the significant events that brought us to where we are today.

- 15,000 B.C.: Human activity in Virginia dates back 17,000 years. Over time, Virginia Indians change from nomadic hunters to settled village farmers living in elaborately organized chiefdoms.
- 1570: Spanish Jesuits establish what becomes a temporary mission on the Pamunkey (later York) River.
- 1607: Captain John Smith explores much of the Chesapeake, including the Pamunkey River.
- 1629: Chiskiack Indians relocate from the southern bank of the Pamunkey River.
- 1630: Grants given to adventurers to build along the Pamunkey River and Governor Harvey himself sends people to settle Yorke Plantation.
- 1633: Yorke Village on Wormeley Creek (now the U.S. Coast Guard Training Center) declared a Virginia port by the House of Burgesses.
- 1634: Yorke and Chiskiack Parishes become Charles River Shire; York County is established.
- 1634: The Pamunkey River is renamed the Charles River after King Charles I.
- 1635: Ancient planters, including Yorke Burgess Nicolas Martiau, depose Governor Sir John Harvey.
- 1640: First Yorke Parish Church built on the edge of Yorke Village east of current-day Yorktown.
- 1642: Charles River and Charles River Shire change to York River and York Shire after the second Duke of York.
- 1667: Second York Parish Church, a brick structure, erected near York Village.
- 1676: Bacon's Rebellion occurs when colonists urging Governor Berkeley to take action against Indians on the frontier revolt.
- 1691: Fifty acres of Nicolas Martiau's property surveyed and laid out for the new town on the York River.
- 1691: Eighty-five lots laid out in the town of York by hired architect/surveyor Lawrence Smith of Gloucester.
- 1697: Third York Parish Church built of marl from the York River cliffs on property donated by Governor Francis Nicholson.
- 1697: Courthouse built of frame and marl with a shingle roof near the site where York Hall is now located.
- 1710-1739: Most of the tobacco grown in the York River basin ships from Yorktown, creating a great demand for labor.
- 1720: Richard Ambler builds the Custom House, which is used to secure import and export taxes until the Revolution.
- 1718-1739: Enslaved Africans numbering 14,218 enter Virginia through the port of Yorktown.
- 1769: A major hurricane wreaks havoc on Yorktown and its harbor.
- 1774: On November 7, Yorktown's "Tea Party" protests the Stamp Act.
- 1775: American Revolution begins with fighting in Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts.
- 1776: Declaration of Independence adopted by Congress.
- 1779: Another major hurricane inflicts heavy damage on Yorktown.
- 1781: In September and October, the combined American and French army traps Cornwallis at Yorktown.
- 1787: The General Assembly of Virginia incorporates Yorktown.
- 1800: York County's population is 3,231 according to the 1800 census, a 38% decline from ten years earlier.
- 1814: A great fire in Yorktown, beginning below the hill, destroys the second Courthouse, which was built in 1733.
- 1824: Marquis de Lafayette returns to Yorktown after nearly a half century.
- 1850: York County's population is 4,460 according to the 1850 census.
- 1861: The Battle of Big Bethel takes place near the present community of Tabb.

- 1862: During the Second Siege of Yorktown, approximately 56,000 Confederate troops evacuate on May 3. The ensuing Battle of Williamsburg includes fighting in York County.
- 1863: Stored Union ammunition blows up, destroying the Swan Tavern and adjacent Phillip Lightfoot House.
- 1881: Cornerstone laid for the Victory Monument, which was approved by Congress ten days after Cornwallis surrendered on October 19, 1781.
- 1900: York County's population reaches 7,482 according to the 1900 census.
- 1901: Although the project was never realized, Polish immigrants arrive to work at a planned cement factory in Hornsbyville.
- 1918: York Village becomes part of the Fuel Oil Station.
- 1919: Chiskiack becomes the Naval Mine Depot (now the Naval Weapons Station) and Penniman Munitions Works.
- 1926: Yorktown Country Club builds a golf course and begins to build a hotel. Hotel never completed due to Stock Market crash, though golf course remains open until WWII.
- 1930: Colonial National Monument established, becoming Colonial National Historical Park on June 5,
1936. Today's visitor center is located on the country club hotel site.
- 1933: Hurricane destroys Yorktown waterfront and damages Seaford, Dandy, Dare, and areas that later become the city of Poquoson.
- 1938: Authorized in 1930, The Colonial Parkway between Yorktown and Williamsburg is completed.
- 1950: York County's population reaches 11,750 according to the 1950 census.
- 1952: The George P. Coleman bridge opens. It spans the York River from Yorktown to Gloucester, and connects the Peninsula with the Middle Peninsula.
- 1959: The Naval Mine Warfare School becomes the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve Training Center.
- 1962: N.S. Savannah, the first nuclear powered merchant ship, sails on her maiden voyage from Yorktown to Savannah, Georgia.
- 1976: The Yorktown Victory Center opens as one of three Bicentennial visitor centers in Virginia. It later merges with the Jamestown Festival Park (now Jamestown Settlement).
- 1981: The Bicentennial of the Siege of Yorktown includes a visit from foreign heads of state and President Ronald Reagan.
- 2000: York County's population reaches 56,297 according to the 2000 census.
- 2003: Hurricane Isabel causes major damage to Yorktown and surrounding areas.
- 2005: Riverwalk Landing opens, revitalizing the Yorktown waterfront.
- 2006: Yorktown celebrates the 225th Anniversary of the Siege of Yorktown with four days of activities, a signature event of America's 400th Anniversary celebration (Jamestown, 1607).
- 2012: Sesquicentennial (150th Anniversary) of the Peninsula Campaign of the Civil War.
- 2013: Memorial Day – Ceremony honoring the Africans who died in the Middle Passage and those who entered the colonies through Yorktown and the York River District as enslaved people. Port marker dedicated on Water Street.