

# Heavy Artillery at Yorktown

Within a few years of Yorktown's founding in 1691, a small gun battery was established along the shoreline. Later, Virginia's Royal Governor Spotswood rebuilt and enlarged the fortification to include 11 cannon. By 1731, the town's battery of between 12 and 20 guns was relocated to the slope overlooking the waterfront where it remained until falling into total disrepair by the 1770s.

In October 1781, Lord Cornwallis deployed 244 brass and iron pieces of various calibers against some 150 cannon, howitzers and mortars in the American and French arsenals. At the height of the siege, Allied artillery fired as many as 1,500 rounds each day, more than one round per minute. The British were forced to surrender.



*Cannon surrendered during the 1781 siege were stamped to denote their significance. Photo courtesy of York County.*



During the Civil War, Confederate troops armed Yorktown's bluffs with heavy artillery. Union General George McClellan highly over estimated their strength and prepared for a "second Siege of Yorktown." After exchanging fire throughout April 1862, in May the Confederates left and Union troops moved in to occupy the same positions.

*Photo of Union artillery courtesy of Library of Congress.*

