

Virginia Revolutionary War Trail



Dunmore's Virginia Campaign 1775 – 1776

*250th Anniversary of the
American Revolution*

Yorktown 250 Commemoration Committee

VIRGINIA₂₅₀
A REVOLUTION OF IDEAS
1776-2026

1. St John's Church

On March 23, 1775 The Virginia assembly met at St. John's Church in Richmond to discuss the growing tension between the colonies and Great Britain. Patrick Henry addressed the assembly with a rousing speech ending with Give Me Liberty or Death.

2. Williamsburg

On April 20, 1775 The Royal Governor, Lord Dunmore had the royal marines seize the gunpowder at the Williamsburg Magazine to prevent the militia from rising up against the crown. Instead the militia forces were stirred up to anger. Lord Dunmore fortified the Governors Palace grounds. Volunteers from as far west as Halifax, Bedford, Augusta and Charlotte Counties as well as those south and west of Richmond to include Amelia, Prince Edward, Lunenburg, Goochland and Cumberland counties rallied to Patrick Henry's call to arms.

3. Hanover Tavern

May 2 the militia gathered at Hanover Tavern where Patrick Henry rallied the men to move upon Williamsburg.

4. New Kent

The combined militia advanced through New Kent County as far as Doncastle Ordinary in James City County then stopped when they received a notice that Lord Dunmore had agreed to pay back the cost of the gun powder.

5. Yorktown

On May 8, due to growing pressure from the militia forces, Lord Dunmore evacuated his family to Bello Porto Plantation on the York River. On June 8. Due to pressure from gathering militia Lord Dunmore took up residence on the Frigate HMS Fowey in Yorktown and began to recruit loyalist forces to his side.

6. Portsmouth

On July 15, 1775 Lord Dunmore moved his growing flotilla to Portsmouth.

7. Hampton

A hurricane that hit the Chesapeake Bay on September 2 had run the British tender ship *Liberty* aground at Hampton. The local Hampton militia found the abandoned dinghy, seized her onboard supplies, and set her afire. In retaliation, several of Lord Dunmore's ships under the command of Captain Matthew Squire sailed up the Hampton River to engage recently fortified local militias on October 25 and 26. The skirmish was an unexpected failure for the British, who had to retreat in the face of heavy militia musket fire. This 1775 Battle of Hampton marked the first British military conflict of the Revolutionary War in the southern colonies.

8. Kemps Landing

By November 1775, Lord Dunmore had established a naval stronghold in Norfolk. On November 14, following word of Lord Dunmore's planned landing at Great Bridge, the Princess Anne County militia assembled at nearby Kemps Landing in an attempt to ambush the British along the road to Great Bridge. A skirmish between British and Patriot forces the following day resulted in a defeat of the militia forces and their retreat toward the south side of the Great Bridge crossing.

Dunmore's Proclamation

On November 15, Lord Dunmore published a proclamation giving freedom to all slaves or servants (of the rebels) that joined the British forces. The proclamation was meant to bolster depleted troop numbers as well as cause havoc with area Patriot plantation owners and other slave holders. Over 800 enslaved men were recruited, many of whom served in Dunmore's Ethiopian Regiment and were trained at Windmill Point (now the site of the Portsmouth Naval Hospital).

9. Great Bridge

Patriots and British soldiers faced each other for eleven days and skirmished amid constant cannon fire before the climactic Battle of Great Bridge that lasted a half-hour. The British had fortified the northern end of the bridge. The 500 rebels fortified the southern end of the crossing. December 9, 1775 Lord Dunmore's 800 men assaulted the combined forces of Virginia and North Carolina militia. The militia poured heavy fire into the British. The British assault was repulsed and Dunmore's men fled back to Norfolk onto the waiting warships.

10. Norfolk

On December 14, 1775 the patriot forces moved into Norfolk. On December 20th four British warships took up positions to threaten the town. On Jan 1, 1776 the British opened fire on the rebel positions. The British sent men to burn specific targets in the town resulting in the destruction of the waterfront. The Patriots in turn burnt and looted loyalist properties. At the end of three days there was little left of the town.

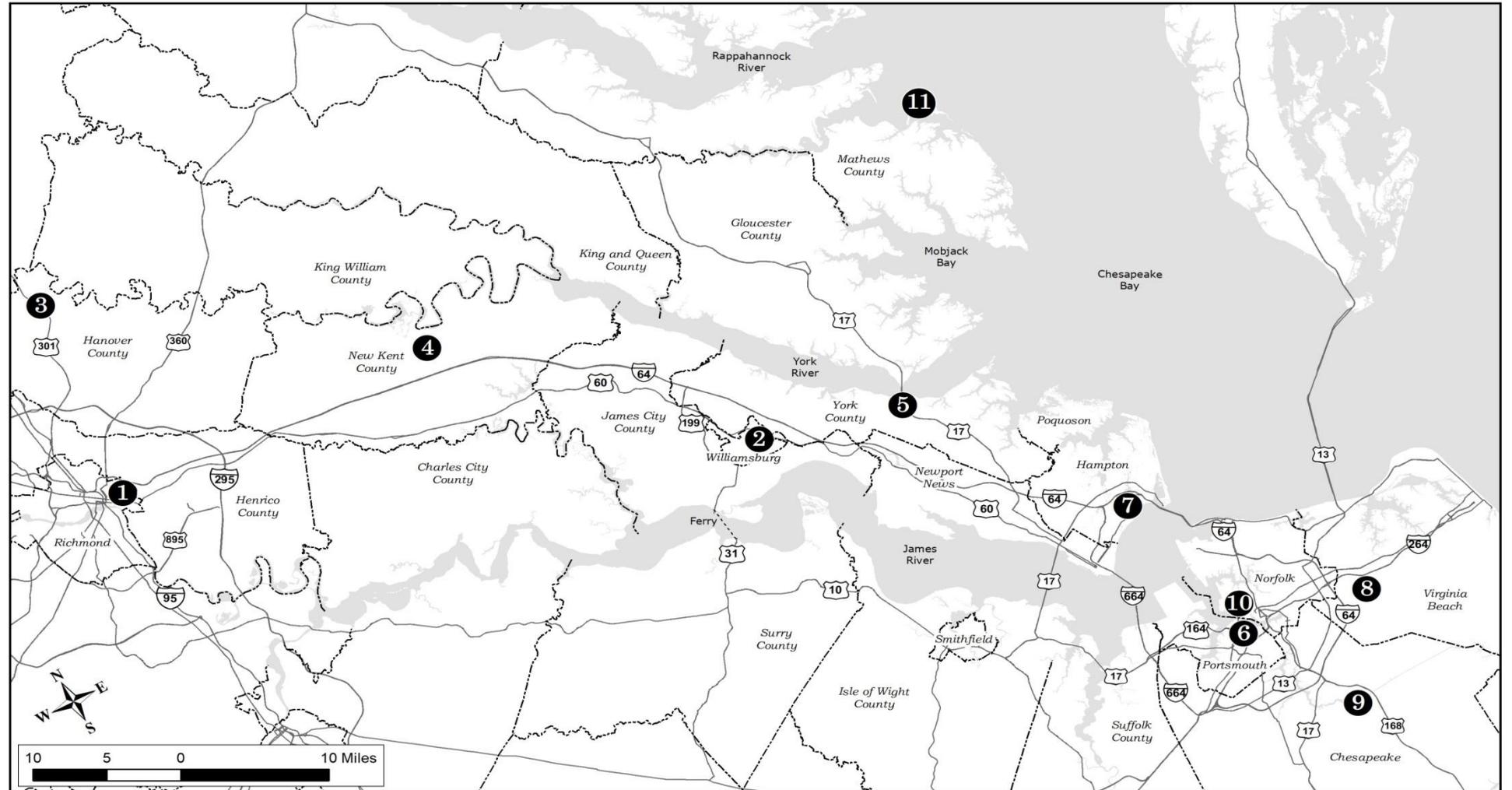
11. Gwynn's Island

In late May 1776, Dunmore left Norfolk with his fleet of nearly 100 vessels and sailed 30 miles north to Gwynn's Island. The 500 soldiers and loyalists set up camp by the marsh where they constructed a fortified position called Fort Hammond. Small pox and fever were decimating the British forces so they relied on the Royal marines to keep watch. Patriot forces surrounded the British position and on July 9 at 8am they attacked the ship and camp with cannon fire from Cricket Hill. The British retreated to their ships and sailed away by 1pm. Dunmore withdrew to Lynhaven where he departed for New York. The other ships with his followers including 1000 escaped slaves sailed onto St Augustine and the Caribbean.

Map of Lord Dunmore's Virginia Campaign

Historic Sites

1. St John's Church
2401 E. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23223
www.historicstjohnschurch.org
2. Colonial Williamsburg
Powder Magazine
101 Visitor Center Dr, Williamsburg, VA 23185
colonialwilliamsburg.org
3. Hanover Tavern
13181 Hanover Courthouse Rd,
Hanover, VA 23069
www.hanovertavern.org
4. New Kent Ordinary
12000 New Kent Highway, New Kent, VA. 23124
www.NewKentOrdinary.com
5. Yorktown Waterfront
Watermen's Museum
301 Water Street, Yorktown, VA, 23692
Watermens.org
6. Portsmouth Waterfront
Portsmouth Naval Museum
2 High St, Portsmouth, VA 23704
portsmouthnavalshipyardmuseum.com
7. Hampton Waterfront
Hampton History Museum
120 Old Hampton Ln, Hampton, VA 23669
www.HamptonHistoryMuseum.org
8. Kemps Landing
524 Kempsville Rd, Virginia Beach, VA 23464
visitvirginiabeach.com
9. Great Bridge
Great Bridge Battlefield and Waterways Museum
1775 Historic Way, Chesapeake, Virginia 23320
gbbattlefield.org
10. Norfolk Waterfront
Hampton Roads Naval Museum
1 Waterside Dr, Norfolk, VA 23510
<https://www.history.navy.mil/>
11. Gwynne's Island
Gwynne's Island Museum
1775 Old Ferry Road Gwynn, VA 23076
gwynnsislandmuseum.org



Resource Sites:

- York County Historical Society www.visitryorktown.org
 Gloucester County Historical Society www.gloucesterva.info
 Virginia Beach Historical Society www.virginiabeachhistory.org
 Norfolk Historical Society www.norfolkhistorical.org
 Hampton Historical Society www.HamptonHistoryMuseum.org
 Hanover County Historical Society www.hanovertavern.org
 New Kent County Historical Society www.NewKentOrdinary.com

Resource Sites:

- VA250 Commission www.VA250.org
 York County 250 Commission www.visitryorktown.org
 American Revolutionary Museum at Yorktown www.historyisfun.org