

YORK COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM

WINTER 2017/2018 NEWSLETTER

York County Historical Museum P.O. Box 2431 Yorktown, VA 23692

Two Locations in Historic Yorktown

York Hall, Lower Level, 301 Main Street Museum on Main, 307 Main Street



York Hall



Lower Level, York Hall



Museum on Main

MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS TOUR WILLIAMSBURG AREA CIVIL WAR SITES

On September 26, 2017, the YCHM hosted a tour of Civil War sites for several of our volunteers. The tour was led by Drew Gruber, Executive Director of Civil War Trails, Inc. and Carson Hudson, retired Colonial Williamsburg Historian and noted author. The group explored prominent sites of the 1862 Peninsula Campaign and May 5, 1862 Battle of Williamsburg. The day started with a stop at Redoubt Park, where Mr. Gruber explained how redoubts (fortifications) were constructed by Confederate forces (soldiers and African American slaves) across the peninsula between the James and York Rivers to hinder the Union advance making its way from Fort Monroe. The tour also included stops at the “bloody ravine” off of Pocahontas Highway (where the two armies clashed as the rear guard of the Confederate forces was making its way west toward Richmond), Confederate Fort Magruder off of Penniman Road (site of fierce artillery fire during the battle), and redoubts in New Quarter Park (demarcating the western flank of the Confederate defenses).

The group met Mr. Hudson on Duke of Gloucester Street in Colonial Williamsburg, where he related stories of the village during the time of the war. Williamsburg was occupied first by Confederate forces and later by the Union Army during the Peninsula Campaign, and residents of the village had to endure hardships under both occupations. The Palmer House near the Capital Building served as headquarters first for Confederate Generals John B. Magruder and Joseph E. Johnston, and later by Union General George B. McClellan and Federal Provost Marshall Lieutenant William W. Disoway following the Confederate withdrawal to Richmond. Both the Wren Building (before it was burned down by Union soldiers in September 1862), and Bruton Parish Church were used as hospitals for soldiers from both sides of the conflict. The churchyard is the final resting place for at least 40 Confederate soldiers.



Drew Gruber (second from right) explains how the Confederate and Union armies converged near the “bloody ravine” off Pocahontas Trail in Williamsburg



The tour group stands on Duke of Gloucester Street in Colonial Williamsburg as Carson Hudson (second from left) recounts stories of civilian and military life during the Civil War

“HUMAN COMPUTERS” PROGRAM



Janet Stephens, Christine Darden, and Sharon Stack (l-r)

On November 13, 2017, Christine Darden, Sharon Stack, and Janet Stephens shared stories of their experiences working in the field of aeronautical research. The speakers worked at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)/Langley computing pool during the 1960's, where, with the job title of “computer,” they performed various computing and programming tasks related to aeronautical and aerospace research and development. They later became engineers during a time when being promoted to such advanced positions was rarely achieved by women. Ms. Darden became one of NASA's preeminent experts on supersonic flight and sonic booms.

They have followed in the footsteps of women who were first hired in 1935 as computers by the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (later to become NASA). Prior to the advent of electronic computers, these innovative women performed such tasks as calculating space capsule trajectories for some of the Mercury missions, and were instrumental in furthering the country's early spaceflight program.

ARTIFACT SPOTLIGHT ~ SOLDIERS' HELMETS OF WORLD WAR I AND WORLD WAR II



Circa WWI steel battle helmet

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, our soldiers were equipped with English Mark I steel helmets designed and patented by John L. Brodie in 1915. Although 400,000 helmets were initially purchased from English manufacturers, American troops quickly experienced shortages. In response, American manufacturers produced their own version of the helmet, the M-1917, using rolled steel supplied by the American Sheet and Tin Plate Company. The steel was pressed and stamped into the helmet shape and then lined with cotton and leather. They were first painted a drab olive, followed by a layer of sawdust and a second layer of paint that helped to provide camouflaging and water resistance. By the end of the war, American manufacturers had produced almost 3 million of these helmets.

During World War II, the M-1 steel “GI” helmet replaced the M-1917 model. As the country began preparing for potential participation in the war in 1940, surplus M-1917 helmets were issued to our troops. By 1941, the trimmer M-1 helmet was developed which included an adjustable interior liner. Netting or other cloth coverings could be attached to the helmet for camouflage. During the Battle of the Bulge in the winter of 1944, white cloth was used as a covering. Twenty-two million of the M-1 helmets such as the one pictured were manufactured between 1941 and 1945 for use by all branches of the military service. This design remained in service until the 1980s, when it was replaced by the PASGT Kevlar helmet.

Photos courtesy of Mary Clemons



Circa WWII M-1 helmet



SEABEES TOUR

On December 7, 2017, a special museum tour was held for members of the Underwater Construction Team division of the Navy Seabees based in Virginia Beach. The group toured our museums at York Hall and Museum on Main as well as the Custom House.

Museum Board member Jim Funk (far left) and Museum docent Kathleen Williams (second from left) with members of the Navy Seabees UCT in York Hall

VETERANS DAY CEREMONY



Members of the York High School Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (above) participated in the 2017 Veterans Day program held at York Hall. The program, sponsored by the York County Historical Committee, included readings and stories of York County's military past by local historian Tim Smith. *Photos courtesy of Kelly Kadra*

GIVE LOCAL 757 CAMPAIGN

Our Museum relies significantly on the generous contributions of donors to keep our doors open and free to the public as well as preserve and maintain the artifacts entrusted to us. A major annual fundraiser for us is the Give Local 757 campaign, run by the Peninsula Community Foundation. This year the main date for the fundraiser is Tuesday, May 8, 2018 from midnight to 11:59 p.m. However, donations can be made at any time before that date. Donations can be made online now at www.givelocal757.org or by mailing a check to Peninsula Community Foundation Virginia, 48 Queens Way, Hampton, VA 23669. Include "York County Historical Museum" on the memo line. Mailed checks must be postmarked no later than May 8th. Minimum donation is \$10. Please consider a donation to YCHM and mark your calendar for May 8, 2018. THANK YOU!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Do you love history? Would you like to learn more about our local history? Are you looking for ways to contribute to our community and pass along its wonderful story to others? Do you enjoy meeting new people of all ages with those same interests? Then consider volunteering at the York County Historical Museum! As a small non-profit museum, we rely on volunteer support to help tell the world about the unique history of York County. We are always looking for outgoing individuals to serve as docents at our two locations. Please visit our website at www.yorkcountyhistoricalmuseum.com or pick up one of our brochures at either of our museum sites for information about volunteering for us.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 9 – 11, Friday, Saturday, Sunday

Battle of Hampton Roads Weekend: “Modern Marvels: Technology in the Civil War”

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. daily The Mariners’ Museum and Park

Re-enactors, cannon firing, artillery unit, blacksmithing demonstrations, family activities, lectures
Stop by our Museum table on Saturday or Sunday!

March April 14/15; Saturday & Sunday

Yorktown During the Civil War; “Yorktown Under Fire 1862: The Approach of the Union Army”

Throughout Yorktown (Hours vary by location)

Military encampment, infantry and artillery firing demonstrations, living history interpreters, special museum exhibits, children’s activities. 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Saturday 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Sunday

Information: Watermen’s Museum 757-887-2641 or www.Watermens.org

April 28, Saturday

Lecture: The Search for Sir Walter Raleigh’s Legendary 1587 “Lost Colony”

2:00 p.m. York Hall Board Room, 301 Main Street, Yorktown

Since 1895, archaeologists have been searching for the site of Sir Walter Raleigh’s “lost colony.” Nicholas Luccetti, First Colony Foundation research vice-president, will present an overview of the history of the search, including the 1990’s excavations headed by the late Ivor Noel Hume that identified a 1585 scientific workshop at Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, the recent work of First Colony Foundation archaeologists at Fort Raleigh and up the Albemarle Sound, and their discovery of the site of a splinter group of Lost Colonists.

May 19, Saturday

“Virginia Leads the Way: Independence 1776”

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. On the grounds around York Hall, 301 Main Street, Yorktown

Living history program commemorating Virginia’s May 15, 1776 vote for independence. Listen to a reading of the Resolution on Independence and engage with members of the 7th Virginia Regiment as they practice military drills and recruit new members.

Registration is Open for the 2018 July 4th Run/Walk

Registration is now open for our annual 8K & 5K Run/Walk event. The 8K run and 5K run/walk start at York High School and traverse the scenic Yorktown Battlefield. For information and to register visit: www.athlinks.com/event/yorktown-independence-day-8k-5k-8911

For more information on these and other York County events, visit www.visityorktown.org

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OUR MISSION

To advance the knowledge and understanding of the history of York County and the Town of York through the preservation and presentation of historical artifacts in a museum.

Contact Information

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Visit us at

www.yorkcountyhistoricalmuseum.com

www.facebook.com/yorkcountyhistoricalmuseum/

We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization