HENRICO COUNTY
VIRGINIA
HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

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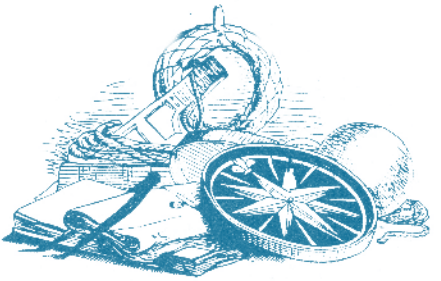


A History Predating Most of the Country

As one of the oldest political subdivisions in Virginia, Henrico was the site of the second English settlement in the New World. In 1634, the English Crown established Henrico as one of the eight original shires or counties. Its first boundaries incorporated the counties of Goochland, Albemarle, Amherst, Fluvanna, Nelson, Chesterfield, Cumberland, Buckingham, Powhatan and part of Appomattox, as well as the cities of Richmond, Charlottesville and Colonial Heights. The English named this territory Henrico for Henry, Prince of Wales, the eldest son of King James I.

The Quest Begins

In the spring of 1607, a small band of adventurers led by Captain Christopher Newport left Jamestown on a voyage up Powhatan's River, now called the James River. Newport's company included Captain John Smith, George Percy, Esq., Captain Gabriel Archer and about 20 others. The Virginia Company of London, a private organization chartered by the crown to settle Virginia, had authorized the exploration.

On the third day of their voyage, they sailed to a place occupied by the Arrohattoc Indians, one of the tribes ruled by Chief Powhatan. The explorers became the first Englishmen to set foot on the soil that was to become Henrico County.

The Indians fed and entertained the adventurers, who departed the next morning. They explored the area and Newport erected a cross, claiming the river and the country for God and England.

Henrico Is Settled

In 1611, four years after Newport's early explorations, Sir Thomas Dale left Jamestown to establish a settlement upriver. Relations with the Indians had steadily deteriorated since 1607, and Dale's company suffered constant attacks. The party finally came to a peninsula on the north side of the river, now Farrar's Island, where Dale established the colony's second settlement, Henricus, known also as the "citie" or town of Henrico. In just four months, Dale's men built a fortified settlement. Lining three streets were frame houses, a wooden church, a brick foundation for a permanent church, storehouses, watchtowers and huts.

Life in the New World was hard, but the English had high hopes that their settlements would add valuable minerals and raw materials to their economy. In addition to providing strategic military outposts, they saw this land as a new frontier for spreading Christianity.

In 1612, colonist and farmer John Rolfe introduced a new strain of mild tobacco, which dramatically transformed Virginia's economy.

In March 1613, Captain Samuel Argall abducted the Native American princess Pocahontas in an attempt to negotiate with her father, Chief Powhatan. During her captivity, Pocahontas converted to Christianity. Rev. Alexander Whitaker baptized her as Rebecca and introduced her to John Rolfe. In 1614 they married, establishing temporary peace between the Native Americans and the English.

A Representative Government

In 1619, the Virginia Company instituted reforms in the colony that led to the establishment of a representative form of government. The new leaders divided the colony into settlements or plantations, including the Citie of Henrico. Each plantation sent representatives to the Jamestown General Assembly of 1619, the first representative legislature in a British colony.

The site of Henrico's first settlement was part of a large land grant made to William Farrar, Sr., and later known as Farrar's Island. The settlement included a parcel of 10,000 acres for the University of Henricus, which would have been the first English university in America. One of the schools within the university was intended for the Native Americans.

A Town Under Attack

The colonists' plans to further develop Henricus ended abruptly in 1622. On Good Friday morning, Indians—who regarded the colony's rapid expansion as a threat—attacked settlements throughout the colony, burning homes and slaying entire families. Powhatan's brother, Opechancanough, led the great attack that nearly destroyed Henricus. Most survivors retreated to Jamestown or to nearby settlements. The English abandoned the Citie of Henricus.

In the years following the uprising of 1622, colonists engaged in regular attacks against the Indians, pushing them farther and farther westward.

Henrico Becomes a Shire

As the native population became less of a threat to the colonists, more settlers came to Virginia. In 1624, England assumed control of the colonies.

In 1634, Virginia was divided into eight shires or counties, including Henrico. By 1640, the Henrico court moved to Varina. In 1752, officials moved the courthouse to Richmond.

Bacon's Rebellion

By 1676, many colonists had become angry over grievances against Sir William Berkeley, governor of Virginia at that time. Opposing the governor's authority, some colonists waged a campaign against the Indians, with Henrico planter Nathaniel Bacon, Jr., as one of the principal leaders. English authorities viewed his acts as rebellious and soon found themselves in combat with Bacon's men. However, Bacon died of a fever in October 1676; without his leadership, the colonists' revolt dissipated and England regained control. Even so, Bacon's Rebellion made an important statement about Virginians' willingness to fight what they saw as an unfair government policy.

The American Revolution

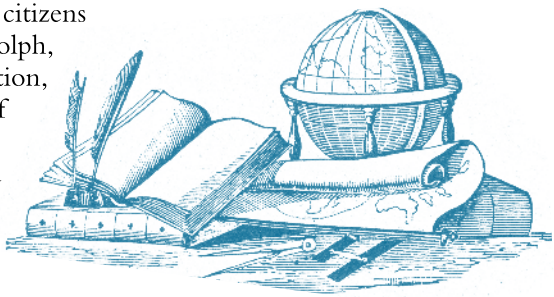
In 1776, Henrico representatives Richard Adams and Nathaniel Wilkinson participated in the Fifth Virginia Convention, which voted to send delegates to the Continental Congress to propose separation from the British. That proposal led to the Declaration of Independence.

During the Revolutionary War, when Benedict Arnold's invading army occupied Richmond in January 1781, the Henrico militia was called to active duty. During the brief occupation of Richmond, British soldiers destroyed many Henrico County court records.

Three months later when Arnold's men—now part of British forces led by General William Phillips— approached Richmond for a second time, they were stopped by the sight of local militiamen and American Continental troops led by a young Frenchman, the Marquis de Lafayette. Outnumbered, Lafayette later abandoned Richmond when General Charles Cornwallis occupied the town in June 1781. Cornwallis then retreated to Williamsburg and later to Yorktown. After General George Washington and his French allies surrounded Cornwallis, he surrendered, effectively ending the American Revolution.

The Virginia Convention of 1788

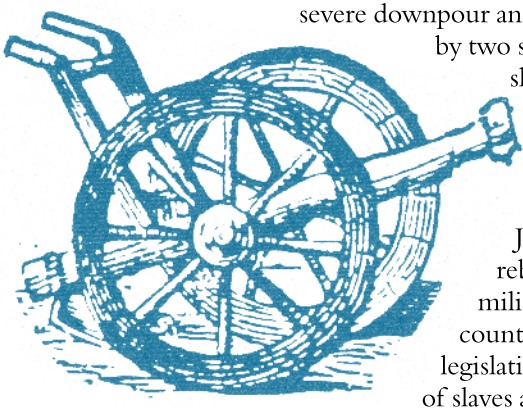
In 1788, members of the General Assembly called a special convention to consider the ratification of the proposed United States Constitution. Henrico citizens sent Governor Edmund Randolph, who presided over the convention, and John Marshall, future chief justice, as delegates. After 25 days of heated debate, Virginia voted 89-79 in favor of ratification, which included affirmative votes from Randolph and Marshall.



Gabriel's Rebellion

In the early 19th century, most Henricoans made their living by farming and related industries, such as milling. Coal mining was also important, especially in northern and western Henrico. Slaves provided the principal source of labor for these industries.

In 1800, a slave named Gabriel, owned by Thomas Henry Prosser of Brookfield plantation in Henrico County, conceived and organized a widespread slave uprising. Involving several Virginia localities, Gabriel planned one of the most far-reaching uprisings in the history of the South.



The conspirators might have succeeded had it not been for a sudden, severe downpour and the disclosure of the plot by two slaves. Tom and Pharoah, slaves of the Sheppard family, revealed the plot to Mosby Sheppard of Meadow Farm in Henrico. The alarm went out and Governor James Monroe thwarted the rebellion by calling out the state militia. Because of Gabriel's plan, county and state leaders instituted legislation to regulate the movement of slaves and free blacks.

The Civil War

Union and Confederate troops fought many important battles on Henrico soil, including the battles of Seven Pines, Savage's Station, Glendale, Malvern Hill, Yellow Tavern and New Market Heights, in defense of Richmond.

At Brook Hill plantation in the northern part of the county, General Robert E. Lee instructed Confederate forces to construct an earthen fort to guard Brook Turnpike (now U.S. Route 1, a major route into Richmond). To the east on Nine Mile Road, Lee made his headquarters at Dabbs House. In the next century, this historic structure would become part of Henrico's Eastern Government Center and for many years served as the eastern precinct headquarters for the Henrico Division of Police.

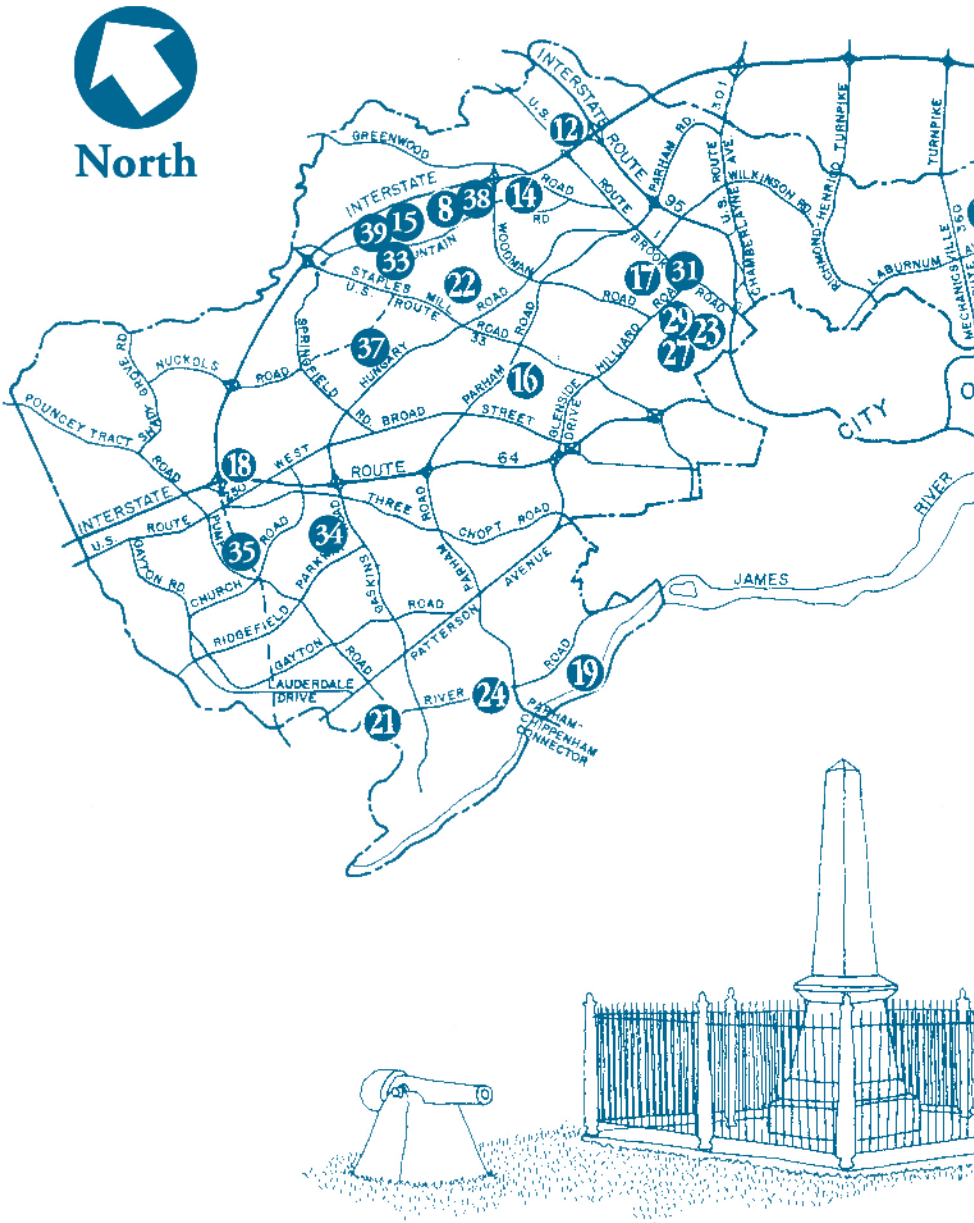
At New Market Heights on September 29, 1864, Union black infantry troops dislodged Confederate defenders in a heroic action for which 14 men received Medals of Honor. An additional 200 soldiers received a special medal commissioned by their general.

Reconstruction

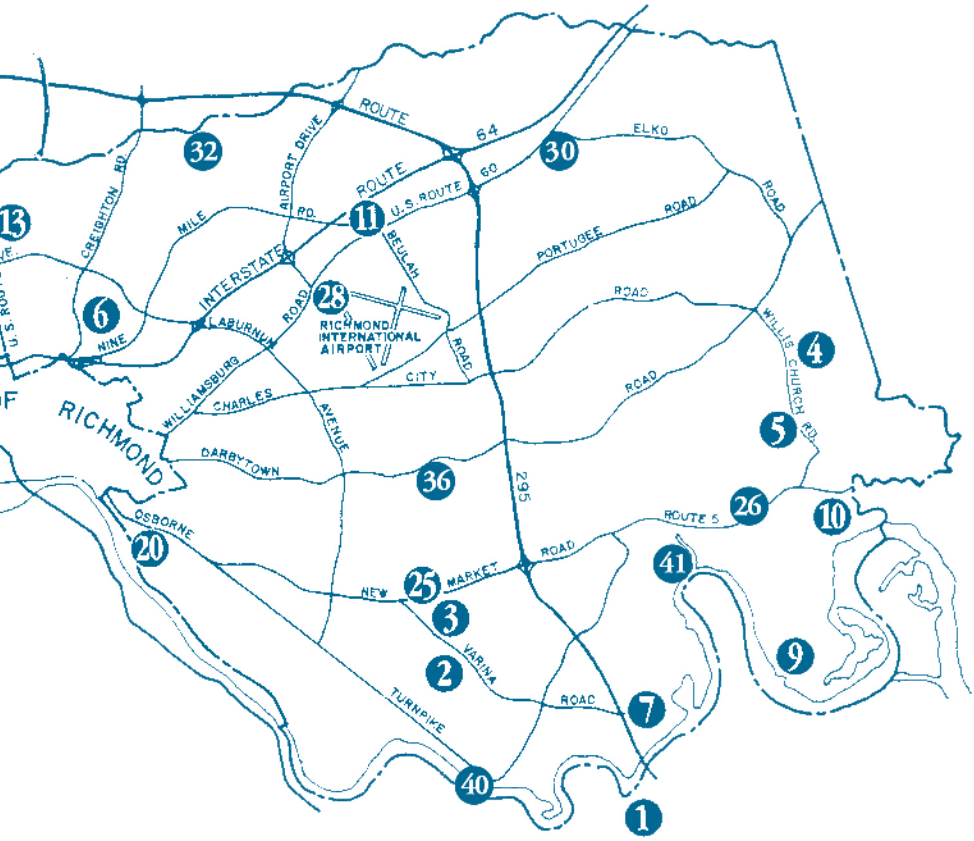
Henrico's economy languished for many years after the war. Land values dropped and many residents sold their property. Federal law called for new state constitutions and ratification of the 14th and 15th Amendments, which recognized and protected the voting and citizenship rights of former slaves. The 1870 constitution provided a new beginning for Henrico County. It established a governing body—the Board of Supervisors—to administer county government. The constitution also divided the county into townships, which became the original magisterial districts in 1874.

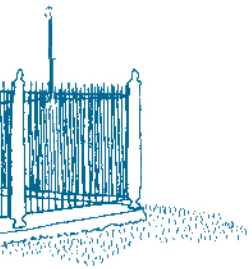
To be readmitted into the Union, Southern states were required to establish a free education system for all children. Virginia Estelle Randolph was an important part of education in Henrico from 1892 until her death in 1958. Born to former slaves, Miss Randolph opened the old Mountain Road School for black children in 1892. She was named the first Jeanes Supervisor Industrial Teacher in Henrico County schools in 1908 and conducted the first Arbor Day program in Virginia. Former students, family and friends of Miss Randolph worked to have the Virginia Randolph Home Economics Cottage dedicated as a museum in her memory. Their efforts helped establish the site as a National Historic Landmark.

Historic Points of Intel



REST IN HENRICO COUNTY





STUART'S MONUMENT

See pages 8 – 11 for descriptions of historic points of interest.

Historic Points of Interest

Dabbs House

Henricus Historical Park - The 1611 Citie of Henricus is located overlooking one of the most scenic areas of the James River. It is the second English settlement in Virginia. The 32-acre site is a partially recreated settlement, consisting of a watchtower, a small dwelling, a garden and a Native American site with a long house and gardens. The Visitors Center and Museum Store are open to the public Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and Sundays, noon-5 p.m. Closed January and February, except by appointment. Right on Rt. 615 on Henricus Road.

Richmond National Battlefield Park - Civil War battlegrounds preserved by the National Park Service. Included on the 97-mile tour through three counties are the remains of Fort Harrison, an important Confederate post in Henrico that fell to the Union Army on September 29, 1864. Other forts nearby are Gilmer—the last Confederate stronghold of Richmond's outer defenses—Gregg, Johnson and Hoke. Union Fort Brady is also part of the Henrico tour.

National Cemetery - Site near Fort Harrison where Union casualties from Civil War battles at Forts Gilmer and Harrison were buried.

Glendale - A national cemetery was established on this land on which, in 1862, Confederate troops met Union General George B. McClellan's army.

* **Malvern Hill** - Civil War battlefield where on July 1, 1862, the last of the Seven Days' Battle was fought. During the Revolutionary War, the Marquis de Lafayette camped here July to August 1781.

Dabbs House - Josiah Dabbs moved here in 1859. His house served as General Robert E. Lee's principal field headquarters from June 1 to August 15, 1862. In 1883, the county purchased the property as an Alms House. For many years, Dabbs House served as the eastern headquarters of Henrico's Division of Police.
3812 Nine Mile Road, adjacent to the county's Eastern Government Center.

* **Varina Plantation** - Site of Henrico's first county seat.

Walkerton - Constructed in 1825 for John Walker, the inn served travelers along Mountain Road. It is architecturally notable for its hinged, swinging, two-segment partition used to enlarge an upstairs room to accommodate guests.
2892 Mountain Road.

* **Curles Neck** - The former home of Nathaniel Bacon, Jr., known for his campaigns against the Indians and for leading Bacon's Rebellion against the English crown. In the 20th century, Curles Neck Farm was one of the largest dairy operations on the east coast.

*** Flood Marker of 1771** - Ryland Randolph of Curles erected this large sandstone obelisk to commemorate the disastrous flood that swept across Virginia in 1771.

Seven Pines - Civil War battlefield where Confederate General Robert E. Lee took command of the Army of Northern Virginia in 1862. A national cemetery now occupies part of this area.

Stuart's Monument - Erected in 1888 to commemorate Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart, who was mortally wounded near this site at Yellow Tavern on May 11, 1864.

Chickahominy Bluff - Within sight of the earthworks here, Confederate General Robert E. Lee watched the beginning of the Seven Days' Battle.

Virginia E. Randolph Museum - This brick structure built in 1937 was the home economics cottage for the Virginia Randolph Education Center. Virginia Randolph, an innovative black educator in vocational training, kept an office in this building during the latter part of her life. Miss Randolph died in 1958 and is buried in front of the building. 2200 Mountain Road.

Meadow Farm Museum/Crump Park - Seven generations of the Sheppard family owned the farm, starting in the early 1700s. From this site, Tom and Pharaoh, slaves working for Mosby Sheppard, warned him of a proposed slave rebellion on August 30, 1800. Visitors to this 1860 historical farm can experience 19th-century rural life in a farmhouse, barn, outbuildings, gardens, nature trails and more than 150 acres of pasture and woodlands. 3400 Mountain Road.

Henrico County Government Center and Courthouse - First opened in 1974.

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden - Once owned by tobacco entrepreneur Lewis Ginter, this Victorian estate's garden is evolving as a major botanical center.

Short Pump - Former site of a tavern and stagecoach stop named for a short-handled pump under the porch. Today the name designates an area in western Henrico.

James River and Kanawha Canal - The first commercial canal system in North America. Coal mined in western Henrico was transported to the port of Richmond through this system.

*** Tree Hill Farm** - The Marquis de Lafayette visited Tree Hill around 1825. It is rumored that the surrender of Richmond in 1865 took place here as city officials met the Union Army advancing up Osborne Turnpike. This was one of the largest early plantations and, along with Varina, was the horseracing center of the area.

*** Woodside** - Renaissance revival-style house built by local architect Albert L. West.

*** Laurel Historic District** - Site where in 1890 the Virginia Industrial School was built. This school, the first of its kind in Virginia, was a place where delinquent boys could learn a trade. The area also includes some private residences.

*** Brook Hill** - Site of Civil War fort where the Confederate Army defended Brook Turnpike (now U.S. Route 1).

River Road - Virginia Byway.

New Market Road - Virginia Byway.

State Route 5 - Virginia Byway.

*** Emmanuel Episcopal Church** - Historic Landmark; built in 1860.

Richmond International Airport - Site where Civil War earthworks have been preserved.

Spring Park - The Bloomingdale Land Company most likely constructed the granite springhouse sometime in the 1890s. By 1901, Spring Park, the oldest park in Henrico County, appeared in an advertisement for a proposed subdivision, which was adjacent to the park. Near this site Gabriel, a slave of Thomas Prosser, organized the slave rebellion of 1800. Lakeside and Park avenues.

Antioch School Community Center - Antioch was built as a schoolhouse around 1920 to serve the families in far eastern Henrico. Children who lived in the Elko community and surrounding neighborhoods had to travel long distances by horse and wagon to attend White Oak and Glendale schools. At the continued insistence of families in the area, Antioch School remained in operation as a one-room schoolhouse until 1965. 5650 Elko Road.

Belmont Recreation Center - The Warren family built Belmont shortly before the Civil War. The brick house has two stories, with a partial basement and interior end chimneys. Belmont Golf Course, formerly the Hermitage Country Club, was host to the 1949 PGA championship. 1600 Hilliard Road.

Confederate Hills Recreation Center - In 1852, Joseph and Elizabeth Tyree owned this 400-acre tract of land known as "Woodstock." The Locomotive Club of Richmond built this clubhouse in 1925. The Richmond and Rappahannock Railroad ran through the middle of the property. 302 Lee Avenue.

Courtney Road Service Station - This "house with canopy" style service station was built around 1925 when there was an increase in cars, improved roads and a decrease in the cost of gas. A 1940 Richmond telephone directory listed the site as the "Friendly Service Station." Owned by the Barlow family, locals recall Mr. Wiltshire operated the station/store. 10698 Courtney Road.

Deep Run Park - During the 19th century, a railroad bed carried coal from the Deep Run and Springfield coal pits through the center of the park to the James River and Kanawha Canal. Barges carried the coal to Richmond for domestic and industrial use. 9900 Ridgefield Parkway.

Deep Run School - The school, built in 1902, remained in operation until 1911. A center-folding wall divided the two rooms. On weekends, the wall was opened for dances and other social activities. Free admission. Open Saturday and Sunday, 1-4 p.m. Weekdays by appointment only. Short Pump Park, 3401 Pump Road.

Dorey Park - The 400-acre property, settled by Francis Frederick Dorey in the early 1900s, was an important dairy farm operation in the county.
2999 Darbytown Road, 1.5 miles east of Laburnum Avenue.

Echo Lake - Jacob E. Lewis, an African-American farmer and preacher, bought the property around the lake in 1909. The lake served as a popular recreation area for the black community during the 1920s. Many baptisms were performed in the lake. 5701 Springfield Road, 1/4 mile west of Staples Mill Road.

Forest Lodge Cupola - The tower and surrounding columns are the last remaining architectural elements from the 1880s resort hotel. The vision of John Cussons, the 1,000-acre retreat boasted a hunting preserve, lakes, boathouses, gardens, parklands and an amphitheater. The lodge itself stood six stories high and had over 100 elaborately decorated rooms. The lodge was torn down in 1992, decades after its rooms became apartments and its parklands reverted to woods. Mountain Road and Old Washington Highway.

Log Tobacco Barn - The only surviving log tobacco barn in Henrico County moved in 2001 to Meadow Farm from the Cross property, located south of Staples Mill Road off of Lanceor Drive. The barn dates to the early 20th century but resembles similar barns from the 19th century. 3400 Mountain Road.

Osborne Boat Landing - The landing is located across from the village of Osborne. Peter Jefferson, father of the third president, was born and lived at Osborne. In 1781, during the Revolutionary War, British troops under Benedict Arnold burned the town and engaged American vessels in a fierce battle just off shore. 9680 Osborne Turnpike.

Deep Bottom Park - During the Civil War, a pontoon bridge linked Federal troops located north and south of the James River. It was in steady use between June 1864 and April 1865. 9525 Deep Bottom Road, off Kingsland Road.

*Denotes privately-owned property

Henrico County Today

In 1934, exactly 300 years after becoming one of the original shires, Henrico became the only county in Virginia to adopt the county manager form of government.

Bordering the city of Richmond on the west, north and east, the County of Henrico lies between the James and Chickahominy rivers and constitutes approximately a third of the Richmond metropolitan area. Today, Henrico's over 332,000 residents live in a well-planned community of 244.06 square miles, consisting of beautiful residential communities, large expanses of fertile farmland and carefully developed office, retail and diversified industrial areas.

Henrico County offers a quality of life responsive to the needs of its residents; an educational system among the best in the nation; and a strong and diverse economy. With its triple-A bond rating and favorable tax rates, Henrico provides an ideal environment for commercial and residential development.

The brave colonists, who carved a settlement out of the wilderness they found in the New World, have left Henrico residents a legacy of strength, determination and enterprise—qualities that will continue to shape Henrico's government and society through the ages.

County of Henrico Seal

County Planning Administrator W.B. Wilkins designed the county seal, which first appeared as a logo around 1942 or 1943. County officials first used the seal on the cover of the biennial county manager's report. The logo did not reappear in the manager's report until 1955.

In 1957, Ruth Starke, a draftsperson in the county engineer's office, updated the logo. She drew a new logo and a historical map of the county for a brochure titled, "While in Virginia, See Henrico County."

The county used Starke's adaptation intermittently with a revised Wilkins logo in annual reports until 1973. The board of supervisors officially designated Wilkins' design as the county seal in a resolution dated December 12, 1984. The seal was described as "a circle containing the right profile of Pocahontas, Indian corn and tobacco plants with the following words: City 1611, Shire 1634, Manager 1934, County of Henrico, Virginia."

County of Henrico Seal

Pocahontas is a prominent figure in early American history. Her marriage to John Rolfe, who developed Virginia tobacco, bridged the gap between the English and Indian cultures.

Starke Logo

The tobacco on the seal represents Rolfe's new strain of tobacco, which gave the New World its first cash crop and brought prosperity to Henrico and Virginia. The Indian corn on the seal represents the nurturing soil of Henrico and the gift of corn the Indians gave the early settlers.

Wilkins Logo

Pocahontas remains on the Henrico County seal as a symbol of the county's ongoing efforts to unify the diversity within this community and draw together varied resources to strengthen the whole. As Ruth Starke said in her 1957 brochure, "A pioneer spirit has always prevailed in Henrico County."

POCAHONTAS.

Image courtesy of the Library of Virginia

Published by
Henrico County
Public Relations & Media Services
in cooperation with the
Division of Recreation & Parks
P.O. Box 90775
Henrico, Virginia 23273-0775
(804) 501-4257

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Proud of our progress;
Excited about our future.

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