

PATH OF HISTORY SELF-GUIDED TOUR

OLDE TOWNE PORTSMOUTH



A WALK THROUGH HISTORY

More than 250 years of American history is unveiled during the Walking Tour – from the home that the Union Army's Provost Marshal used during the Civil War (412 London St.) to the house where President Andrew Jackson visited (The Watts House pictured above, corner of North and Dinwiddie streets). As identified in the sites you will visit, many influential leaders have shaped the course of human events from our city.



As you walk streets with names like London, Queen, King and High, you can trace the roots of Olde Towne back to 1752 when William Crawford took 65 acres of his plantation and laid out the area in streets and half-acre lots. He called the new community Portsmouth, after his hometown of Portsmouth, England.



(POH) indicates the location of descriptive signage along the "Path of History." Each sign details the significance of the location and offers extra insight and details.

Whether you wander around on your own or follow the tour sequentially, you'll see Portsmouth as a city that has preserved its character through more than two centuries of change.



To Naval Medical Center

Marina

Harbor Ct.

Ferry Landing

Elizabeth River

Ferry Landing

Crawford Pkwy.

Water Street

Downtown Tunnel to Norfolk

nTelos Wireless Pavilion

To Naval Shipyard

Wythe St.

Wavy St.



OLDE TOWNE SITES



- 1 **Fresnel Lens** (POH)
- 2 **The Elizabeth River** (POH)
- 3 **Seaboard Railroad Building** (POH)
Seawall, adjacent to High Street Landing
- 4 **Towne Square** (POH)
- 5 **TCC Visual Arts Center**
Corner of Court and High Streets
- 6 **Portsmouth Public Library** (POH)
Court and King Streets



- 7 **Commodore Theater**
421 High Street
Opened in 1945 and was considered the best-equipped theater in Hampton Roads. It has been meticulously restored and today again operates as a movie theater. The theater is listed on the Virginia and National Registers of Historic Places.
- 8 **1846 Courthouse** (POH)
Corner of Court and High Streets
Now the Portsmouth Art & Cultural Center
- 9 **Court Street Baptist Church** (POH)
Corner of Court and Queen Streets
- 10 **423 London Street**
Originally built in 1846, this house acted as a model for the houses at 421 and 419, which were built about 40 years later. During the Civil War, it was used as a hospital and later an apothecary shop.

- 11 **412 London Street**
During the Civil War the Union Army's Provost Marshal used this frame house during Union occupation of the city. The original portion of the home is over 200 years old.
- 12 **Corner of London and Court Streets**
This is an excellent example of Victorian architecture complete with exquisite brick and ironwork. Joseph Parker built this residence for his family of 12 children in 1874. The Sacred Heart above the doorway is a symbol of the Catholic faith.
Directly across London is 430 Court Street. The home served as a residence for a prominent businessman, William G. W. Parker, brother of Joseph Parker. With 16 children, William Parker had an even larger family than his brother. The house served as a boarding house and the lodge of the local chapter of the International Association of Machinists.
- 13 **Prefabricated House** (POH)
Corner of Court and Glasgow Streets
- 14 **Glasgow Street Park** (POH)
Between Dinwiddie and Court Streets
One of 103 sites statewide on Virginia's War of 1812 heritage Trail commemorating Virginia's part in the war confirming America's independence.



- 15 **Elk's Lodge** (POH)
Corner of North and Court Streets
- 16 **Yellow Fever** (POH)
North Street Park
- 17 **The Watts House**
Corner of North and Dinwiddie Streets
Colonel Demsey Watts built this house in 1799. It was originally constructed on a hill between Dinwiddie and Washington Streets. The home was moved to its present location in 1808. Congressman Henry Clay, Chief Black Hawk and President Andrew Jackson have all been entertained here.
- 18 **Lincolnsville** (POH)
600 block of North Street
- 19 **Cedar Grove Cemetery** (POH)
Entrance on Fort Street
- 20 **Scenes from Portsmouth** (POH)
Washington Street

21 Fort Nelson Park (POH)
Intersection of Effingham and Crawford Parkway

22 Craney Island (POH)
Crawford Parkway

23 Crawford Bay (POH)
Crawford Parkway

24 Peter's House
315 Court Street

Pierre L'Enfant, who designed the street plan for Washington, D.C., also designed this Classic Revival house. William Peters obtained the plans and built the house in 1859. Other noteworthy homes in the 300 block of Court Street are 325 and 340. 325 was built about 1802 as a two-story cottage with one main room on each floor over a basement. A dining room was added around 1807 and a kitchen before 1855. The Trinity Church Rectory is located at 340 Court Street. It was built in 1825 and sold to Trinity Church in 1902.

25 Gaskins House (POH)
North Street at Gaskins Lane

26 Macon Hotel (POH)
Corner of Middle and North Streets

27 The Washington Reed House
351 Middle Street

This home was originally a two-and-a-half story, six room house built by Captain John Thompson. After the Civil War, Washington Reed purchased the home and added six additional rooms. It is an excellent example of late-Georgian architecture.

28 Grice-Neely House
202 North Street

Dating back to 1820, this home evokes the atmosphere of New Orleans in the exquisite ironwork of the balcony and the stairway.



29 Hill House
200 block of North Street

Built by Colonel John Thompson in the 1800s, his adopted son John Thompson Hill began a long line of Hills to reside in the home until 1961. At that time it was willed to the Portsmouth Historical Association.

30 Patriot Inn
Corner of North and Crawford Parkway

The Patriot Inn was built in 1784 and the oldest portion of the house sits on the foundation of a home built in 1772. Due to its location near the old ferry landing, it served as a boardinghouse for ferry workers for many years.

31 Irish Row House
Corner of Glasgow and Crawford Street

This is the last of the Irish row houses that existed in Portsmouth. These "rows" were settled by Irish immigrants in the early 19th century.

32 215 Glasgow Street

The first floor of this home was built in 1800 but the second floor served as the city market. It was moved and placed on top of the existing brick first floor. Note that the upper and lower story windows don't line up. The market stall numbers can still be seen on the inside of the roof beams.

33 Middle Street (POH)
Middle Street Park

34 The Nivison-Ball House

417 Middle Street

This house was originally located on Crawford and had to be moved when a railroad track was being laid. It was previously thought that the house was built around 1784 but research now shows that it was built closer to 1754. During the War of 1812 it was a barracks. In 1824 General Lafayette was entertained here as well as President Andrew Jackson and his cabinet in 1833.

35 The Red Lion Tavern
218-220 London Street

Originally a tavern for British soldiers and local sailors before the American Revolution, it was built in the 1700's. During the building's renovation, old menus and a pit for cockfighting were discovered in the cellar.

36 The Pass House
Corner of Crawford and London Streets

Built in 1841, it was used by the Union forces during the Civil War as the Federal Adjutant General's Office. It received its name because passes, which were required to leave Portsmouth, were issued here.

37 Benthall-Brooks Row Houses
Crawford Street

These English basement homes date back to the 1840s. All three brick houses were built by a sea captain named Brooks. He built only one floor a year to allow for adequate settling. Brooks lived at 421. 419 is the only house that still has the servant's quarters in the back of the house.

38 Coast Guard (POH)

39 Lightship Portsmouth (POH)
End of London Street at Water Street

40 Ferry Maintenance Building (POH)
2 High Street

Now the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum.



- 41 **Railroad Museum of Virginia** (POH)
Adjacent to nTelos Wireless Pavilion
- 42 **Gosport Park** (POH)
Between Lincoln and WAVY Streets
- 43 **Chevra T'helim Synagogue** (POH)

HISTORIC PLACES OF WORSHIP

- 44 **Trinity Episcopal Church**
Corner of Court and High Streets
Originally known as Portsmouth Parish of the Church of England, it was erected on its present site in 1762 as part of the original plan for Portsmouth as laid out by Col. William Crawford.



- 45 **First Presbyterian Church**
515 Court Street
Founded in 1822, the original building was located on Middle Street. In 1872 a larger building replaced it, which burned in 1877. When it was decided to rebuild, the congregation chose the present site. The new church was named Court Street Presbyterian, but in 1897 changed its name to First Presbyterian.
- 46 **Monumental United Methodist Church**
450 Dinwiddie Street
One of the longest continuing Methodist congregations in the nation. The present sanctuary was built in 1876, but the congregation – the second oldest in Portsmouth – dates back to 1772.
- 47 **Court Street Baptist Church** (POH)
Corner of Court and Queen Streets

- 48 **Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church**
637 North Street

The congregation of Emanuel, A.M.E. Church was organized in 1772, three years before the American Revolution and four years before the Declaration of Independence. Emanuel A.M.E. has one of the oldest congregations in Portsmouth. It enjoys the distinction of having been built and crafted by hand. Among its unique features are a number of benches, which were crafted at a time that many members of the congregation still suffered under the institution of slavery. Tradition states that the altar rail was carved from trees that grew along North Street. The church has long played a leading role in Portsmouth's African-American community. In the early days, all the mail for the residents of Lincolnville came to this church, which opened in 1857.

- 49 **St. John's Episcopal Church**
424 Washington Street
Founded in 1848 by seven dissenting members of Trinity Church, the original church – located on Court Street – was replaced in 1896 by the present brick and stone building designed by local architect, Charles Cassell.



- 50 **St. Paul's Catholic Church**
518 High Street
Built in 1897 to replace an earlier wooden church that burned in 1896, St. Paul's features many fine stone carvings. Note the relief of Christ praying in the Garden of Gethsemane above the doorway.
- 51 **St. James Episcopal Church**
Effingham Street
In 1890 some African-Americans at Trinity decided to form their own congregation. Between 1893-1917 the congregation moved a number of times prior to purchasing a grocery, liquor and wine store on the corner of Effingham and Bart Streets. They began renovating the building and added a parish hall in 1982. They called their new church St. James.

MONUMENTS

52

William Crawford

Corner of High and Crawford Streets
Founder of Portsmouth

53

Confederate Memorial

Court and High Streets

Construction began in 1876 on this memorial to Portsmouth's Confederate dead and was completed in 1881. The four statues represent each branch of the Confederate military – Calvary, Artillery, Infantry and Navy.

There are only three Confederate monuments in the country with a statue that includes the Navy.

54

Richard Dale Monument

North and Washington Streets

This monument commemorates Commodore Richard Dale, the premier Commandant of one of the nation's first shipyards, now known as the Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth.

55

Spanish American War Monument

Crawford Parkway at intersection of North Street

This monument commemorates the Portsmouth men who served in Cuba and the Philippines.

56

The Lafayette Arch

Corner of Glasgow and Crawford Streets

When the United States celebrated its 200th anniversary, this arch was dedicated to all who have lived or died for freedom. It was inspired by an arch erected in Portsmouth in 1824 to honor the Marquis de Lafayette's visit to the city.

57

William "Billy" Flora

Corner of London and Middle Street

Billy Flora was a free black who distinguished himself at the Battle of Great Bridge during the Revolutionary War. His livery stable stood on the corner of London and Middle Streets where the Olde Towne Commons condominiums now stands.

58

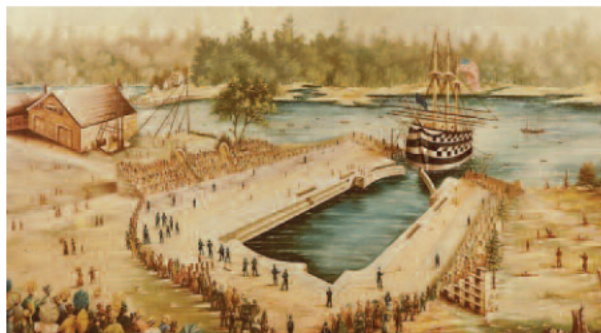
William "Buffalo Bill" Cody

Water Street at One High Street

William "Buffalo Bill" Cody, with his traveling show, made their last performance in the nation in Portsmouth on November 11, 1916.

FUN FACTS

- Portsmouth is home to the nation's oldest naval shipyard.
- Naval Medical Center, Portsmouth, is the oldest continuously operating hospital in the Navy.
- Portsmouth is located on the world's largest and deepest natural harbor.
- Portsmouth is located at the Zero Mile Marker on the Intracoastal Waterway – the midway point between Miami and Maine.
- The first ferry service in America was established on the Elizabeth River between Portsmouth and Norfolk in 1636.
- The first dry-docking in America occurred in 1833 at the Gosport Navy Yard in Portsmouth, now called the Norfolk Naval Shipyard – Portsmouth. The drydock is still in use today.



- The collier *Jupiter* was converted into the U.S. Navy's first aircraft carrier, the USS *Langley*, at the U.S. Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth during 1919-1922.
- Portsmouth is home to the Fifth Coast Guard District and became an Official Coast Guard City in 2009.

