

Yorktown Victory Monument



Victory Monument/The 13 Colonies

Rising above the quiet waterfront of Yorktown, Virginia, the Yorktown Victory Monument stands as one of the nation's most powerful reminders of the moment the American Revolution was won. The nearly 98-foot granite and marble column commemorates the decisive American and French victory over British forces in 1781—a triumph that effectively secured independence for the young United States.

Congress authorized the monument in 1781, the very year of the victory it celebrates. Yet like many national memorials, its creation took time. Political challenges, funding delays, and the young nation's competing priorities postponed construction for a century. Finally, between 1881 and 1884, work began on the monument that would permanently mark the site where the war's final chapter unfolded.



Cornerstone laying for the Victory Monument in 1881

The monument stands near the Yorktown battlefield, overlooking the York River at the southeastern end of Main Street. From its elevated position, it surveys the landscape where American and French forces surrounded British General Lord Charles Cornwallis, forcing his surrender on October 19, 1781. That surrender effectively ended major combat in the

Revolutionary War and paved the way for the recognition of American independence.

Designed by renowned architect Richard Morris Hunt—who would later design several prominent American landmarks—the monument reflects both classical symbolism and national pride. Its tall column rises from a decorative base or podium adorned with sculpted figures. Thirteen female figures represent the original thirteen colonies, a symbolic reminder that the victory at Yorktown belonged not to a single state, but to a united group of colonies fighting for a shared cause.

At the summit of the monument stands its most striking feature: a statue of Liberty. With arms outstretched, the figure looks out over the river and surrounding town, embodying the ideals of freedom and independence born from the Revolution. The statue was added slightly later, completing the monument's dramatic silhouette and reinforcing its message of national triumph.

Today, the Yorktown Victory Monument sits within Colonial National Historical Park, where visitors can explore the battlefield, walk along historic streets, and reflect on the events that reshaped world history. More than just a memorial, the monument serves as a symbol of perseverance—both for the revolutionaries who fought for independence and for the generations who later ensured their victory would be remembered.

Standing tall above Yorktown more than two centuries after the surrender that changed history, the monument continues to remind Americans of the moment when a bold experiment in self-government became a reality.

