

John Paul Jones (1747-1792)
Officer in the Continental Navy, called “Father of the American Navy”
According to NC legend, he adopted his last name through friendship with Willie Jones.

John Baptist Ashe (1748-1802)
Major in the Revolutionary War; Speaker of House of Commons; State Senator
Delegate to Constitutional Convention of 1789 in Fayetteville; US Congressman
Elected Governor of NC, but died before he could take office

Abraham Hodge (1759-1805)
Operated George Washington’s traveling press while the army was stationed in Valley Forge
Appointed State Printer by the General Assembly
Published the “North Carolina Journal,” largest circulation of any newspaper in the state

John Chavis (c.1762/3-1838)
Educated free black; Preacher and teacher both to blacks and whites
Served three years in the American Revolution
Lived and worked for a period as an indentured servant in Halifax

Willis “Congress” Alston, Jr. (1769-1837)
NC House of Commons 1790 - 1792 and 1819 - 1824; NC Senate 1794 - 1796
US Congressman 1799 - 1815 and 1825 - 1831

Hutchins G. Burton (1774-1836)
Served in NC General Assembly; NC Attorney General; US Congressman
22nd Governor of NC

Miles Howard (c.1799-1857)
Born enslaved; Freed around 1818 and given land by Thomas Burgess
Owned an entire block in Halifax at the time of his death

Sir Archie (?-1833)
Considered greatest thoroughbred in NC’s history; Owned (for a time) by William R. Davie
Sired 31 racing champions; descendants include Man O’ War, Seabiscuit, and Secretariat

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- Site of St. Luke’s AME Church is located at the corner of 301 By-Pass and Pittsylvania Street.
 - There are over a dozen historic markers in Halifax that tell of important men and events.
 - Halifax was named in honor of George Montague-Dunk, second Earl of Halifax, who was president of the British Board of Trade.

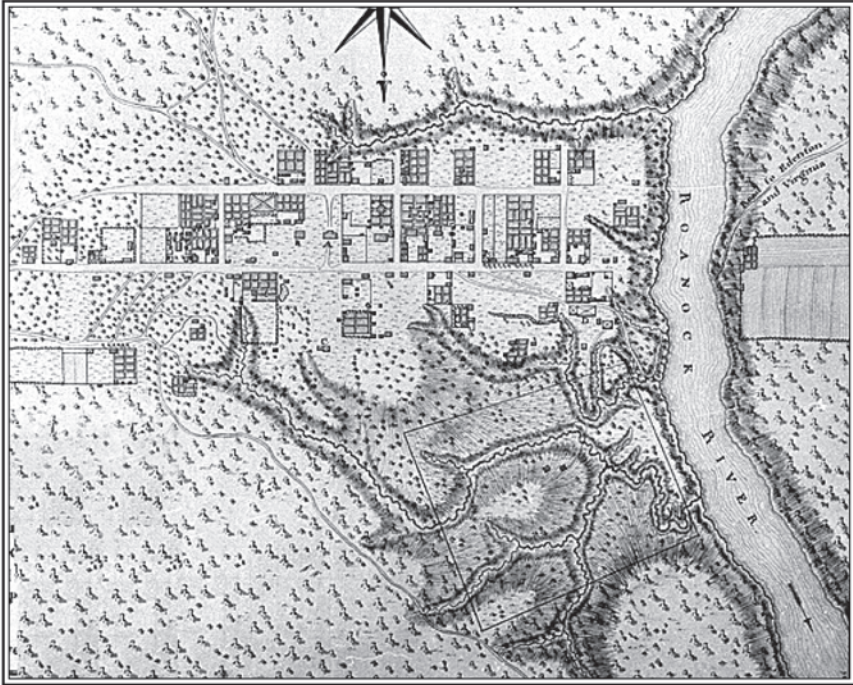
Historic Halifax State Historic Site
interprets the history of Halifax to 1845.

HHRA

Historical Halifax Restoration Association
Working to preserve and promote Halifax since 1954
PO Box 187 • Halifax, North Carolina 27839

HISTORIC HALIFAX

BIRTHPLACE OF INDEPENDENCE



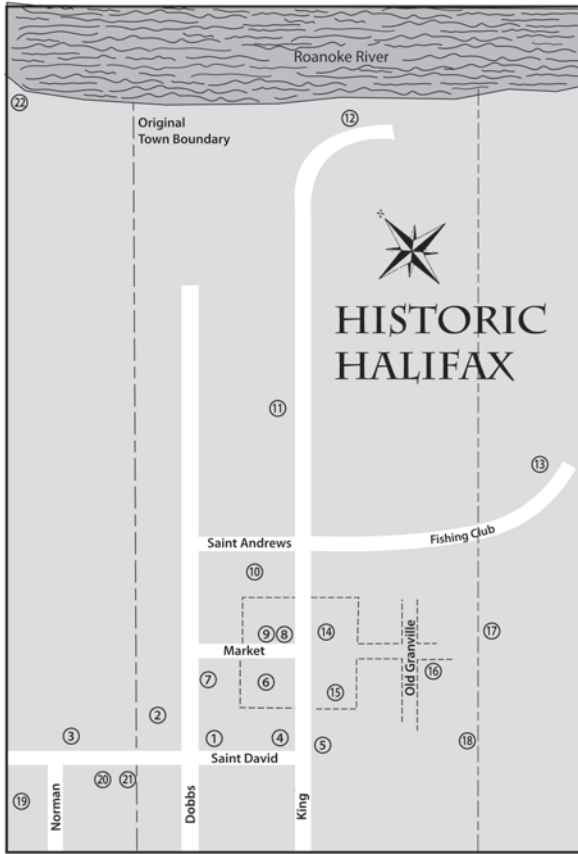
Sauthier's 1796 Map of the Town of Halifax - courtesy of North Carolina Archives

*Resolved that the Delegates for this Colony in the
Continental Congress be empowered to Concer with the Delegates
of the other Colonies in declaring Independency...*

THIS BOLD AND TREASONOUS ACTION LED TO OUR LIBERTY

Resolution Committee: Cornelius Harnett, Allen Jones, Thomas Burke,
Abner Nash, John Kinchin, Thomas Person, Thomas Jones

Welcome to Halifax, center of commercial and political life in the Colony and home to progressive thinkers and activists of the day. As you stroll these silent streets, imagine yourself here in 1776 experiencing the excitement and anxiety that the news of the resolution in Halifax—a declaration of independence from the Crown—would bring. What would be the consequences of such an action? We are thankful to the brave men of the Fourth Provincial Congress who took this daring step forward and laid the foundation for the liberties we enjoy today. In your exploration, consider this brochure a roadmap of the celebrated past of the town and the history of our American freedoms.



- 1 - Visitor Center
- 2 - Garden
- 3 - Parking
- 4 - Owens House
- 5 - Eagle Tavern
- 6 - Tap Room
- 7 - Jail
- 8 - Picnic Area
- 9 - Clerks office
- 10 - Site of First Courthouse
- 11 - Montfort Museum
- 12 - Underground Railroad Trail
- 13 - River Overlook
- 14 - Sally Billy House
- 15 - Colonial Cemetery
- 16 - Site of First Church
- 17 - Market Square
- 18 - Burgess Law Office
- 19 - Hilltop Cemetery
- 20 - Magazine Spring
- 21 - William R. Davie House
- 22 - Masonic Lodge
- 23 - Bradford Denton House

Denotes Town Square

OFF SITE

- 22 - Confederate Navy Yard

Magazine Spring - Important to the indigenous people of the area. Today it is a sacred location for the Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe.

Dobbs Street - Named for Arthur Dobbs who was appointed Colonial Governor of NC in 1754 by the Crown and served until his death in 1764.

(Old) Granville Street - Named for Lord Granville, heir to one of the eight Lords Proprietors, who did not sell his share back to the King in 1729 (as did the other seven), but kept it. His portion, was known as the Granville District.

HALIFAX – AN AMERICAN STORY

The Colonial Period

Halifax became an important colonial town because of its location. It was positioned at the navigational head of the Roanoke River, making it a good river port; it was located at a crossroads, bringing traffic and trade from other towns as well as the backcountry; and the area had rich soil, enabling plantations to flourish. Also important to the area was Magazine Spring. This spring, used for many years by the Tuscarora Indians, provided the necessary water source for early Halifax.

The Roanoke River valley was first settled in the early 1700s when English colonists came down from Virginia. Incorporated in 1757 by the Colonial Assembly in New Bern, the town later became the county seat. Area plantations grew and produced many crops and products including tobacco, indigo, hogs, lumber and naval stores. These exports created a busy port with warehouses near the river. Most of these goods eventually went to Virginia ports. The river also promoted travel, bringing domestic and foreign visitors to the area.

Halifax had several taverns, a central part of colonial life. They not only provided lodging for travelers, but also offered a place for public and private meetings, social gatherings, and buying and selling. A tavern sometimes housed a temporary business such as a doctor’s office. In 1758 the Board of Trade recorded for the newly formed Halifax County a population of about 3,000 people, both black and white. By 1769 nearly sixty buildings had been built. While this may not seem like a large number, at that time Halifax was considered a metropolitan area and one of the premier cities in the colony.

The Pre-Revolution and the Halifax Resolves

At the dawn of the American Revolution, Halifax was a social and political center where planters and merchants gathered to discuss horse racing, cock fighting, business, and politics. Citizens were concerned about their rights as Englishmen because tensions had swelled between colonists and Britain. Such tensions had grown following the legislation of the 1757 Townsend Act and the 1765 Stamp Act, and especially since the actions of the 1773 Boston Tea Party. The Patriots’ victory in February, 1776, at the Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge (located in present-day Pender County and called “the Lexington and Concord of the South”), emboldened the colony. About fifty Loyalists, including their leader, Donald McDonald, were captured and taken to the jail in Halifax. This victory kept the British from controlling the southern states.

Two months later, the Fourth Provincial Congress of eighty-three North Carolina delegates met in Halifax, with colonial leaders and statesmen Samuel Johnson serving as President and Allen Jones serving as Vice-President. North Carolinians have expressed the Spirit of Independence many times, but there is no better example than in these Resolves. The Delegates formed a committee of seven to explore measures to defend the colony against King George and the British. Four days later, the committee, chaired by Cornelius Harnett, submitted a resolution that today we call the **HALIFAX RESOLVES**. These Resolves called for declaring total **INDEPENDENCE** from Great Britain and encouraged the remaining twelve colonies to follow their example.

On April 12, 1776, a momentous day in Halifax’s history, the document was unanimously approved. The Congress secretary, James Green, Jr. made a copy of the adopted resolution, and it was sent to the North Carolina delegate, Joseph Hewes, in Philadelphia. It was so well received by the other delegates that it helped to lay the groundwork for the Declaration of Independence.

The American Revolution and Early Federal Years

The HALIFAX RESOLVES, North Carolina’s call for a totally INDEPENDENT NATION, was the first official action by any colony and reaffirmed Halifax’s role as a leading political center. At the time of this resolution, not all colonies supported independence. Between November 1775 and January 1776, four colonies instructed their delegates to vote against independence. However, after the Halifax Resolves, support grew, and by June 24, 1776, only New York and Maryland opposed the idea. On October 15, 1776, the Fifth Provincial Congress met in Halifax and drafted North Carolina’s first state constitution, which included a twenty-three-article Bill of Rights. Richard Caswell was appointed the first governor.

In addition to being a political hub, Halifax was a supply depot for the Continental Army; a command post, where officers were commissioned; and home to 100 minutemen. The Halifax militia was involved in the famous and bloody battle at Guilford Courthouse [in present day Greensboro]. Although the battle was tactically a British victory, it came at a very high price. British statesman, Charles James Fox, remarked, “Another such victory would ruin the British Army”. Following the battle, General Lord Charles Cornwallis retreated to Wilmington to resupply and then moved north toward Virginia with Lt. Colonel Banastre “Bloody” Tarleton preceding him. On route, Tarleton slashed through a militia at Swift Creek [Nash Co.] and fought a brief skirmish at Fishing Creek [Halifax Co.] arriving at Halifax in early May of 1781. Governor Nash, the Council of State and other officers had left since General Allen Jones had determined that the town could not be defended with the available militia. Cornwallis and his 1,600 troops occupied homes in town and encamped on nearby plantations using Willie [Wylie] Jones’ estate, The Grove, as headquarters. While occupying Halifax, foraging parties were sent out by Cornwallis into every section of the country to gather supplies for his army before moving into Virginia. Tarleton records in his journal that a sergeant and dragoon were hanged at Halifax for rape and robbery. After a delay of about a week, Cornwallis left for Virginia where on, October 19th, 1781, following the siege of Yorktown, the British surrendered to General George Washington.

After the American Revolution, North Carolina became the 12th state to ratify the U.S. Constitution (on November 21, 1789, in Fayetteville), having held out for the inclusion of the Bill of Rights. It was Willie Jones, a strong advocate for states’ rights and an Anti-Federalist, who stood firm on this inclusion. It was William R. Davie, a strong Federalist, who pushed for and secured the ratification of the Constitution. These two remarkable leaders and statesmen worked together for America’s independence, yet saw the formation of the country and way forward differently. Davie and Jones represented the conflict in the colonies between these two opposing views – Federalism, supported by John Adams, and Anti-Federalism, supported by Thomas Jefferson. That President Washington had visited Halifax as a part of his southern tour on April 16, 1791, is evidence of the prominence of the town during this era.

In 1793 the first church, The Free Church of Halifax, was built in the town square. By this time ten licenses had been issued for taverns. At one point mulberry trees were planted in hopes of producing silk—a sign of sophistication—but this endeavor was unsuccessful for the wrong species were planted. Records from 1790 show specialty shops such as hairdressers, a clock-and-watch maker, and two silversmiths. There are also records of social events such as a ball and dance lessons offered at a tavern. Another highlight was the annual three-day Halifax Races (horse races), held in October. These events illustrate the wealth and sophistication of the area. Between 1787 and 1800, the men of Halifax county continued to shape both state and local affairs through the lives of prominent and politically influential citizens.

Later Events

- The Frenchman Marquis de Lafayette, known as “the hero of two worlds,” led troops in several battles of the American Revolution and was a friend of George Washington. At the invitation of the President, Lafayette came to the young country for a celebratory tour and visited Halifax in 1825. A large banquet at the Eagle Tavern was held in his honor. Before leaving town, he visited the widow of his close friend Willie Jones.

- Halifax was important to the Underground Railroad in the US due to its proximity to the river, as well as having the largest number of free blacks in the state (2,452 in 1860). This large number enabled the network to better operate and the fleeing to more easily go undetected. From the edge of town to the river is a trail that the enslaved people used for escape. Quaker abolitionists and other sympathetic whites lived across the river and offered shelter and help for the journey north. The river also provided alternate routes such as the use of the Great Dismal Swamp.

- Halifax, like most Eastern North Carolina towns, contributed men and materials to the Confederate cause during the Civil War. Junius Daniel, a native son of Halifax, served as a distinguished Confederate General. He died in 1864 from a battle wound that he had received the preceding day and is buried in the Colonial Cemetery in town. Though the ram Albemarle was constructed at Edwards Ferry located southeast of Halifax near Scotland Neck, the ship itself was moved to the Halifax Confederate Navy Yard for the applying of iron plates. The ship saw action on the Roanoke River but was eventually sunk in a Union raid on Plymouth led by Lieutenant William B. Cushing, known as Lincoln’s Commando.

- By 1830 changes had come to Halifax that would determine the town’s future. Political activity had moved to the capital in Raleigh. Railroads were becoming the new and preferred source of transportation, minimizing river traffic. Finally, the Civil War brought an end to the plantation system.

For its first one hundred years, Halifax remained in the political forefront. From its Colonial beginnings as a thriving center of culture and commerce, to its identity as the birthplace of INDEPENDENCE, Halifax helped forge our nation’s story. We welcome you to Halifax and encourage you to explore the people, events, and places that shaped our history in this extraordinary place.

**IMPORTANT CITIZENS OF HALIFAX
(chronological order)**

Joseph Montfort (1724-1776)

Montfort came to Virginia from England and moved to Halifax in 1752. He was elected the first Clerk of the County Court in 1759, later becoming clerk of the Halifax Superior Court. Montfort was a delegate to all five colonial assemblies. An influential statesman, he was provincial treasurer of the Northern District of North Carolina, Colonel of the Colonial troops, and elected member of the Second Provincial Congress, though illness and subsequent death in 1776 prevented his participation. He secured a charter for a Masonic lodge, the Royal White Hart Lodge, under authority from the grand master of England. He initiated and received a deputation from England for title of Provincial Grand Master of and for North Carolina but, because of an error, the title read “of and for America.” Minutes of the Grand Lodge of England read, “Provincial G. M. for North Carolina.” He is buried in front of the Royal White Hart Masonic Lodge.

Willie Jones (1741-1801)

Jones was the son of colonial attorney general Robert Jones, who was originally from Wales. Like his father and older brother Allen, Willie Jones, was educated at Eton College. After taking the continental Grand Tour, Willie returned to Halifax in 1763 and married Mary Montfort, Joseph Montfort’s daughter, in 1776. They built a stately home, The Grove, just south of town, which boasted the “best racetrack in the colony.” He served on the Council of Safety and was president one year, a very prestigious job. He was elected to all five Provincial Congresses, serving on all except the Fourth Provincial Congress, as he had been appointed to a Committee on Indian Affairs and was away in Georgia. Jones is considered a principal author of the state Constitution, which was drafted at the Fifth Provincial Congress. Jones represented Halifax in many political positions. He was such a staunch advocate for states’ rights that he refused his appointment as a delegate to the 1787 Federal Convention. Jones was instrumental in deciding the location of North Carolina’s state capital and therefore earned the nickname “Real Father of Raleigh.” In addition, Jones was a supporter and one of the original Trustees of the University of North Carolina. Jones was one of the most remarkable men of the Revolutionary period and at one time one of the most influential. He died in Raleigh and is buried at his home there. This land is now part of Saint Augustine’s University.

William R. Davie (1756-1820)

Born in England of Scottish parents, Davie came to SC and then NC, finally settling in Halifax after marrying Sarah Jones, daughter of Allen Jones. Davie studied at Queen’s Museum in Charlotte and later at the College of New Jersey, which became Princeton. He served under Allen Jones during the Revolutionary War and was also Commissary General under Nathanael Greene, securing funds and supplies for the state militia, at times having to use his own credit to procure necessary materials. Davie was a member of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787. A strong Federalist, Davie worked for NC’s ratification of the Constitution in 1789. Called “The Father of the University,” he introduced the bill to charter the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, worked to establish the curriculum, and laid its cornerstone. He served in the House of Commons several times, was the tenth Governor of the state, and served as a peace envoy to France under President John Adams. In 1802 President Jefferson appointed him to settle affairs between NC and the Tuscarora Indians. The treaty was signed in Raleigh that year. He died in his home, Tivoli, in SC. His home in Halifax named, Loretta, still stands.

Nicholas Long (1728-1798)

Delegate to the First, Second and Third Provincial Congresses
Legislator in both Houses; Member of Committee of Safety
Deputy Quartermaster General for the Southern Department under George Washington
His plantation, Quanky, was occupied in 1781 by the British.

John Bradford (d. 1787)

Delegate to the Fourth Provincial Congress
Member of the Colonial Assembly and State Senate
Fifth Sheriff of Halifax County

James Hogan (d. 1781)

Delegate to the Fourth and Fifth Provincial Congresses; Member of Committee of Safety
Fought with George Washington in the battles of Brandywine and Germantown
One of NC’s five Revolutionary War Generals; Captured in Charleston, SC and died in prison

Allen Jones (1739-1798)

Member of the Colonial Assembly; Member of Committee of Safety
Delegate to all five Provincial Congresses - Vice President of Fourth Provincial Congress
One of seven authors of The Halifax Resolves; Revolutionary War General
State Senator and Senate President
Member of the Continental Congress from 1779-1780

