

# The Historical Village at the Dismal Swamp

The Historical Village at the Dismal Swamp will represent how generations of our region's residents *lived, learned, worked, farmed, and played*. From the Indigenous groups who first inhabited the Swamp, to the extractive efforts of early colonists, plus the unique communities for people of African descent, the Dismal Swamp served as a significant crossroad for trade and commerce. The Historical Village will share the experiences of these important people and their descendants.



WASHINGTON AT LAKE DRUMMOND, DISMAL SWAMP



Paleo-Indian groups occupied the Swamp nearly 10,000 years ago. It was a rich resource, serving as hunting and fishing grounds for various tribes like the Nansemond and Chesepiuc.

Ground samples taken from the Swamp indicate that corn had been cultivated by Native Americans long before European colonization. Other archaeological evidence includes projectile points and clay sherds.

City staff are working with members of the Nansemond Nation to interpret their ancestral and continuing relationship with this land.

Early colonists aimed to drain water from the Swamp to create farmland. Prominent Americans like George Washington and Patrick Henry depended on the labor of enslaved people to reshape the Swamp.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the site changed from a natural refuge to a site for manufacturing and transportation. The first goods to emerge from the Swamp were shingles and barrel staves.

The expansive timber ventures allowed unique economic conditions to arise in the area. This distinct setting provided opportunities for the enslaved to self-emancipate from bondage.

The Dismal Swamp Canal opened in 1805, linking the Chesapeake Bay with the Albemarle Sound.

Initially, flatboats and log rafts were manually poled or towed down the canal. Lumber was regularly shipped from the saw mills at Wallaceton to places all across the Eastern Seaboard and beyond.

The Canal was later deepened and widened to accommodate larger vessels like passenger steamboats and schooners. As boat traffic increased, the Canal became a route to freedom via the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was a network of people and places that facilitated the movement of people from slave states to free states.

The above illustration was published in 1856. It depicts Osman, who was believed to be a leader of the Swamp Maroons.

The Maroon Communities were permanent settlements within the Swamp where people of African descent made a life secluded from the horrors of slavery.

Since 2004 archaeologists have recovered thousands of artifacts that they view as remnants of a large Maroon Society.

# CONCEPT FOR THE HISTORICAL VILLAGE AT THE DISMAL SWAMP

"Bringing History to Life in Chesapeake"



Cornland School

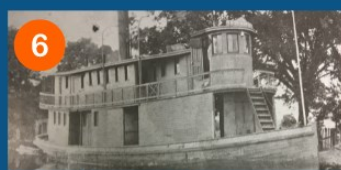


Superintendent's House

3 Pedestrian Connection to Dismal Swamp Canal Trail

4 Farmland to Share the Story of Farming in Chesapeake

5 Outdoor Classroom



Trade and Commerce Exhibit

7 Visitor Center for the Historical Village at the Dismal Swamp



8 Underground Railroad Exhibit



9 Dismal Swamp Maroon Communities Exhibit



10 Native Peoples Exhibit