



Project 1619, Inc. Timeline:

1619 – Changing the False Narrative of Jamestown and the first Enslaved Africans.

The false narrative began on August 25, 1619 when an English pirate ship, named the White Lion, landed at Point Comfort, present day Fort Monroe. The English colonists never sent a ship to Africa to bring back kidnapped Africans. The accidental landing of a ship with kidnapped Africans would begin a 400-year journey to freedom for their ancestors.

In 1985, Hampton resident, Calvin Pearson, came across information that contradicted the story of the first Africans and Jamestown. He then set out for the next ten years to discover the truth. As new documents and research from the Spanish Archives, libraries and other collections were being released, he was able to combine the documents and create a blueprint of events that started with their capture to their landing at Point Comfort. His research revealed that on that dreadful day in August 1619, a plan was created to hide the Africans at neighboring plantations along the James River and to shroud their landing, since they knew England would not have approved of them accepting so-called slaves.

In 1994 Mr. Pearson started a national campaign to promote the true history of the first Africans. He contacted officials at the Jamestown Settlement to inquire if they were aware of new documents that disputed their claim as the first landing site. They told him he did not know what he was talking about and needed to prove it. He then began a letter writing campaign to local newspapers and history outlets around the United States. His first article appeared in the Daily Press in 1994. That same year, after observing the false 375th Commemoration of the arrival of the first Africans at Jamestown, Mr. Pearson was more than determined than ever to make sure the 400th Anniversary would be held at Fort Monroe in 2019.

In the late 1990's, Mr. Pearson approached the City of Hampton Department of Tourism and Visitors Bureau. For many years that department had promoted the arrival of the first Africans at Jamestown in their Visitors Guide. Mr. Pearson was again told he did not know what he was

talking about. He asked the staff at the Visitors Center for proof that the First enslaved Africans had arrived at Jamestown. They responded, because Jamestown said so. It was evident they were willing to allow Jamestown to have that history.

In 2004, Mr. Pearson approached officials with the City of Hampton about creating a monument to the first Africans as they began planning for the City's 400th Founding Anniversary in 2010. Mr. Pearson was appointed to the planning committee and selected Chair of the Monument Committee.

Around 2008 a compromise was reached. Instead of a separate memorial, a monument with an African, English Settler, and a Native American would be combined into one monument. The monument was finally completed after a delay and dedicated at Carousel Park in 2011.

In 2007 when Jamestown celebrated their 400th founding, they proposed markers celebrating the first African arrival in 1619. Mr. Pearson protested and the signs were edited for the commemoration weekend.

In 2007, based on the research by Mr. Pearson, The City of Hampton and Fort Monroe finally acknowledged the correct history and installed the first African Landing Marker at Fort Monroe, but it was flawed. Mr. Pearson was left out of the marker review process because he had retired from the City of Hampton in 2005.

In the Spring of 2008 Mr. Pearson proposed the creation of an event to commemorate the landing of the first Africans in 1619. Dr. Bill Wiggins, Larry Gibson, and Mr. & Mrs. Welbeck requested to be involved, and a committee was formed and the first commemoration was held at Mill Point Park in Hampton in August 2008.

In 2009, Venita Benitez, President of Global Slavery Remembrance Day, joined forces with the African Landing Day Committee to produce the first memorial for the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Hampton, Virginia on March 25, 2009.

In August 2010, Project 1619 Inc. hosted the African Landing Day Luncheon and Memorial Service to the First Enslaved Africans at the Radisson Hotel in Hampton. Presentations on the true history of the first enslaved Africans was presented. Those in attendance included then current Hampton Mayor Molly Ward, and other local dignitaries.

In 2010, Project 1619 Inc. was formally created as a non-profit organization.

In August 2011 African Landing Day was moved to Fort Monroe.

In August 2011, Project 1619 Inc. partnered with Rev. Ronald Myers, President of the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation to produce Virginia Juneteenth Jazz and Heritage

Reconciliation & Healing Concert at the American Theater. The annual concert would continue until 2017 until Rev. Myers became ill and was not able to perform anymore.

In November 2011, based on the documentation by Mr. Pearson and his persistence since 1994, President Barack Obama proclaimed Fort Monroe a National Monument and expressly noted Fort Monroe as the first landing site of enslaved Africans in English North America.

The Enslaved African Commemoration Day Program continued from 2012 to 2015 at Fort Monroe with financial support from the City of Hampton..

In 2014, Calvin Pearson and Dr. Bill Wiggins contacted the Virginia Department of Historic Resources about inaccuracies in the original African Landing marker at Fort Monroe. The marker was edited and re-installed in 2015.

Project 1619, Inc. continues to pursue the commissioning of a First African Landing Memorial at Fort Monroe. In 2019, after competition, an artist was selected to design the memorial. The concept is still being reviewed. The Commonwealth of Virginia provided a contribution of \$6.5 million towards the memorial. Installation is scheduled for 2025 or 2026.

In 2016, the Commonwealth of Virginia informed Mr. Pearson they were taking over the highly successful African Landing Day Program at Ft. Monroe. After complaints to a variety of Virginia legislators, they recanted and allowed Project 1619 Inc. to be a part of the event they had originally created.

In 2017 and 2018 Project 1619 Inc. continued to host Enslaved African Landing Commemoration Day at Fort Monroe with financial support from the city of Hampton, Fort Monroe Authority and the National Park Service.

In 2019, the 400th Commemoration year and global historic event, the Commonwealth of Virginia assumed planning for African Landing Day. Project 1619 Inc. did play a small part in planning a portion of the program. Project 1619 Inc. brought African history, culture, African dancers and drummers to the event.

In 2020 the event was virtual.

The commemoration resumed in 2021 and 2022 at Fort Monroe and the name was changed to Enslaved African Landing Day. Financial and programming support provided by the city of Hampton, Fort Monroe Authority and the National Park Service.