Museum History
The Yorktown Victory Center opened in 1976 as one of three Virginia visitor centers for the Bicentennial of the American Revolution. The Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, the state agency that operates the Yorktown Victory Center, implemented structural and exhibit improvements in the 1990s, broadening the museum’s focus to encompass the entire Revolution. Critical short-term exhibit renovations were completed in 2006. The museum currently serves a national audience and provides significant curriculum-based educational programming.

New Name
The new museum will be known as the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown®, a name adopted in May 2012. The name will be implemented in Fall 2016.

Concept Overview
An approximately 80,000-square-foot facility locates expanded exhibition galleries, classroom and event space, visitor services, gift shop and support functions in one building, with improved access to outdoor exhibit areas. The concept includes reconstruction of the living-history Continental Army encampment and Revolution-era farm and provides for outdoor special event space and expanded parking capacity.

Building the New Museum
Westlake Reed Leskosky of Cleveland, Ohio, and Washington, D.C., with Hopke & Associates of Williamsburg, Va., as associate architect, developed the architectural design for the project. W. M. Jordan Company, Inc., of Newport News, Va., is construction manager for the parking areas and museum building. Work on the site began in mid-2012, and a cornerstone dedication on May 10, 2013, formally launched the project. Construction is occurring in phases and included a transition to the museum building in March 2015, followed by continued development of new gallery exhibits, an introductory film, and outdoor amenities and living-history areas. The film and permanent galleries will debut October 15 and 16, 2016. A grand opening will take place in early Spring 2017.
Film and Gallery Exhibits
A new film in the museum theater will introduce visitors to the world of Revolutionary America and prepare them for the new galleries and outdoor living-history areas.

Permanent exhibition galleries, approximately 25 percent larger than previous gallery space, will engage visitors through American Revolution period artifacts, re-created immersive environments, dioramas, interactive exhibits and short films, including an experiential theater. Five major themes are identified for the permanent exhibits. “The British Empire and America” examines the geography, demography, culture and economy of America prior to the Revolution and the political relationship with Britain. “The Changing Relationship – Britain and North America” chronicles the growing rift between the American colonies and Britain. “Revolution” traces the war from the Battles of Lexington and Concord in 1775 to the Declaration of Independence in 1776 to victory at Yorktown in 1781 and the aftermath. “The New Nation” outlines the challenges faced by the United States in the 1780s and the creation of the Constitution as a framework for the future. “The American People” explores the emergence of a new national identity following the Revolution.

Gallagher & Associates of Silver Spring, Md., is exhibit designer for the new galleries. Design and Production of Lorton, Va., is exhibit fabricator. Cortina Productions of McLean, Va., is producing the gallery media components and the introductory film.

A 5,000-square-foot special exhibition gallery will provide the opportunity for in-depth treatment of subjects related to permanent exhibit themes and encourage repeat visitation to the museum.

Education Center
A section of the new building accommodates the needs of group visitors, who comprise about one-third of the Yorktown Victory Center’s annual visitation, and serves as a venue for lectures and special educational programs for the general public. A separate group entrance provides direct access to group check-in and five classrooms that support segments of curriculum-based structured educational programming – provided for 46,144 students in the 2014-15 academic year – and other museum special programs.

Visitor Amenities
From a spacious entrance lobby, visitors have access to a large museum gift shop, an orientation video and a café. A moveable wall separating the lobby from the museum theater, where a new introductory film will be shown, allows the space to be adapted for education programs and after-hours functions. Additional space for receptions and meetings is located on a mezzanine overlooking the lobby.

Outdoor Living-History Program
Significant enhancements will occur at the Yorktown Victory Center’s re-created Revolution-era farm and Continental Army encampment. An outdoor informational pavilion will assist visitors with moving from the indoor to the outdoor museum experience. The encampment will triple in area, with additional space for artillery demonstrations and military drills. Improvements to the farm include a larger farmhouse, kitchen and tobacco barn and construction of a building representing quarters for enslaved people. Interpretive programming at both outdoor sites will be linked to gallery themes. Architect for the outdoor elements of the new museum is GuernseyTingle of Williamsburg, Va. General contractor for construction of the outdoor elements is Daniel & Company, Inc., of Richmond, Va.