Historic Walking Tour

How Tappahannock Got Its Name

In 1608, this area was first visited by Captain John Smith. The area was inhabited by Native Americans and when Captain Smith attempted to land here he was fiercely driven back to his ship. It was a Native American village and so he gave both the river and the village Native American names. The river became the Rappahannock, which meant "rise and fall" of water, and the village, set upon it, became Tappahannock, which means "town on the rise and fall of water". In the 1660s, Capt. Richard Hobbs owned 800 acres along Gilson’s Creek (now Mt. Landing Creek) at the Rappahannock River. He dropped anchor of his ship “Elizabeth and Mary” at the deepest place in the water nearby. For a few years the area was known as Hobb's His Hole Harbor and later as New Plymouth. Eventually, the original name was returned in 1705. On and around the water still remain thirteen homes and buildings from these early days of Tappahannock.

Historic Town Walking Tour

The Tappahannock Historic Town Walking Tour is designed to take you back to the 17th, 18th and 19th century buildings all located within 3 blocks of one another in the central downtown area. The numbers on the map refer to the descriptions below and are not in chronological sequence. For a little more exercise, this sequence follows the evolution of the historic district:

- Scots Arms Tavern - 1680
- Ritchie House - 1706
- Henley House (Emerson's Ordinary) - 1718
- Beale Memorial Baptist Church - 1728
- Anderton House - 1760
- McCall-Brockenbrough House - 1763
- The Old Debtor's Prison - 1769
- Customs House - 1800
- The Old Clerk's Office - 1808
- Essex County Courthouse - 1848
- St. John's Episcopal Church - 1849
- St. Margaret's Hall - 1850
- Roane-Wright-Trible House - 1850

Walking Tour
Driving Tour