

NORFOLK'S HISTORY AND CHARM

Norfolk is a charming port city centrally located on the mid-Atlantic coast with nearly 400 years of stories to tell its guests. Visit and experience hospitality as it is meant to be. Rich in maritime history, Norfolk is also the cultural center of the Commonwealth as the home of Virginia's finest in performing arts companies. Water is our lifeblood, and here you can slip along the river aboard a tall ship or while away your day on a bay beach. Dance and dine on a dinner cruise. Savor regional dishes prepared by local chefs in one of our many independently operated restaurants. Special memories await. Discover yours today.

The history of Greater Norfolk coincides with the birth of our nation and throughout the region, evidence of this important legacy may be found today. Walk along downtown Norfolk's Cannonball Trail and revisit the city's past among historic sites, buildings and museums. Enjoy a harbor cruise on a three-masted schooner, and envision a time when scores of merchant vessels dotted the Elizabeth River and the Chesapeake Bay.



Within an hour of the Norfolk are colonial attractions, major theme parks, and beach resorts. Day trips to First Landing State Park, the Jamestown Settlement, Yorktown and Colonial Williamsburg offer an in-depth experience of the rich history of the 50-mile Virginia Waterfront region, where Norfolk plays a major role.

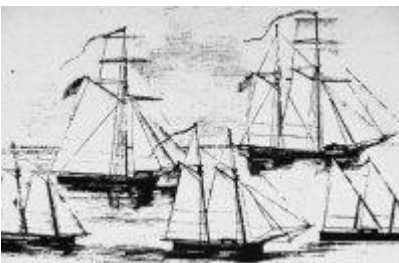
1606 - In 1606, a group of English investors formed the Virginia Company of London, to try to establish a permanent colony in the New World. In 1607, 104 men and boys sponsored by the Company landed at present day Cape Henry in Virginia Beach and traveled upriver to establish Jamestown, the country's first permanent English settlement.



Virginia became England's first Royal Colony in 1624, when the now-bankrupt Virginia Company was dissolved by King James I. That same year, Thomas Willoughby was granted 500 acres of land in what is now the Ocean View section of Norfolk.

original "Norfolk Towne."

Twelve years later, under King Charles I, Willoughby received a grant of another 200 acres in the present downtown Norfolk, part of which would become the



1673 - The House of Burgesses authorized construction of a fort in the shape of a half moon on Four Farthing Point in 1673, to protect the harbor from attacks by the Dutch, and later from the threat of pirates. While no trace of the old fort remains, Four Farthing Point is now the site of downtown's bustling

Town Point Park. Norfolk's Half Moone Cruise and Celebration Center was named for this early battlement.

Norfolk's importance as a port began in 1680, when the Crown under King Charles II directed "the building of storehouses to receive imported merchandise ...and tobacco for export" in each of Virginia's then 20 counties. In 1682, 50 acres of land along the Elizabeth River were purchased from Mr. Nicholas Wise for ten thousand pounds of tobacco, and the "Towne of Norfolk" was established.



During the next century, communities developed throughout the nearby countryside, and the capital of the colony was moved from Jamestown to Williamsburg. Ships from Europe and the West Indies traveled in and out of Norfolk's deep-water harbor, and by 1775, Norfolk was the colony's most prosperous town.

In 1754 Lt. Gov. Robert Dinwiddie presented a silver mace to the Norfolk Borough Council on behalf of the Crown, a token of England's esteem. The mace is housed in the Chrysler Museum of Art today. Within the next 20 years, relations with England became strained, however, and Revolution would follow.



1776 - In 1775, Norfolk's newspaper was shut down by the British, who seized the presses and carried them aboard ships lying off downtown. On New Year's Day 1776, three English ships under the command of Royal Governor Lord Dunmore bombarded the city. During the three-day siege, cannonballs and fires destroyed most of Norfolk's early structures. Only the walls of the Borough Church (built 1739) survived. The church, renamed and rebuilt as St. Paul's in 1827, is still in use today and an English cannonball remains embedded in its historic wall. Forced to abandon Norfolk, her citizens soon returned and made plans to rebuild. By the end of the century, several substantial buildings had been erected here, among them the Moses Myers and Willoughby-Baylor homes, both of which stand today.

The 19th century began with renewed tension between the United States and Great Britain, culminating in the War of 1812. Fort Norfolk was constructed on the Elizabeth River to protect the harbor, on a site once occupied by a fortification built during the American Revolution. In December 1814, the Treaty of Ghent was signed in Europe, ending the War. A copy of the treaty was carried to America on a ship belonging to Norfolk resident Richard Drummond, who proudly re-named his property "Ghent." Today's Ghent neighborhood was developed on Drummond's property in



the 1890s.

Norfolk was incorporated as a City in 1845 and commissioned a beautiful new City Hall to befit its new stature. Completed in 1850, the building housed all City

offices until the 1890s, and served as a courthouse until the 1960s. In 1964, it became the final resting place of five-star Army General Douglas A. MacArthur and is now the MacArthur Memorial.

Yellow fever was a frequent visitor to the port for much of the 19th century. The most devastating epidemic struck in 1855, when a steamer arrived from the Virgin Islands with the fever on board. Almost every citizen became ill, and about 2,000 died. A memorial on Hampton Boulevard at Princess Anne Road honors those who died during this time.



1862 - One of the most famous naval battles in history took place in Hampton Roads in 1862, when the USS Monitor engaged the CSS Virginia in the first battle between ironclad war ships. The outcome of the battle was inconclusive, both sides claiming victory, but the course of naval warfare was changed forever, as it became clear that a wooden Navy had little future. After Virginia seceded from the Union, Norfolk was surrendered to Federal troops and was

occupied for the duration of the war.

After the Civil War, Norfolk County's rich waterways and farmland enabled it to recover quickly. Railroads opened the way for transportation of coal to our port, trade that would make Norfolk the greatest port in the world. The first coal arrived here by rail in 1883, and soon replaced cotton as Norfolk's primary export.



After each setback, Norfolk has risen and rebuilt herself, stronger and with a definite sense of purpose. Since the beginning, Norfolk's citizenry has been determined to survive and flourish. Many of the city's prominent examples of residential architecture were built in the decades following the Civil War.



1907 - Architectural expansion continued into the 20th Century, as Norfolk prepared to host the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition of 1907. This World's Fair, held on 340 acres at Sewell's Point on the Chesapeake Bay, celebrated the 300th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown. President Theodore Roosevelt delivered the opening address on April 26. Other honored guests included American humorist Mark Twain, educator Booker T. Washington and orator William Jennings Bryan.

Vessels from many countries participated in an International Naval Review during the Exposition, followed by the departure of The Great White Fleet - American warships, all painted white - on a round-the-world cruise to demonstrate American naval power.

The Exposition closed in November 1907. When the United States entered World War I, the Federal government took possession of the property for use as a naval base. Today, only 17 of the original buildings survive. Of these, many



serve as housing for senior Naval officers, and are known collectively as "Admirals' Row". The buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and can be seen on a guided tour of the base, now Naval Station Norfolk, the world's largest naval installation.



By the early 20th century , the intersection of Granby Street and City Hall Avenue was the city's primary commercial hub. Nine annexations between 1887 and 1959 brought Norfolk's land area to its present size; and two World Wars created population booms that did not abate when the wars ended. Norfolk's Naval Station and Port continue to be among the largest in the world,

and provide employment for thousands.

Norfolk is a city actively planning its future while not abandoning its past. In the Downtown Historic District, exciting new urban renewal projects such as a revitalized restaurant and theater district and the super-regional MacArthur Center mall live in harmony with such historic treasures as the 1859 U. S. Customhouse and the refurbished Wells Theater, an outstanding example of Beaux Arts Classical architecture.



Special thanks to Ms. Peggy Haile McPhillips, Norfolk City Historian.