

Hampton Roads: Heart of the Mid-Atlantic

Photography by Veronica Dana Donnelly

By Ellen McBride



A publication of The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce



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There has been a tremendous effort to protect the beauty of the area; you can find many peaceful spots like this one at Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge.



First Edition

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Hampton Roads: Heart of the Mid-Atlantic

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Chapter 1



Visiting Colonial Williamsburg is a time-travel adventure, and it attracts almost two million visitors a year.

It was a new beginning in a new world. In 1607, three small ships named the *Susan Constant*, *Godspeed* and *Discovery* landed on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay at Cape Henry. Captain George Percy, one of the Englishmen who climbed up the dunes at this First Landing, was struck by the “goodly tall trees” and “such fresh waters running through the woods as I was almost ravished at the first sight thereof.” The crew did some exploring, skirmishing with Chesapeake Indians that first night, then came upon oysters left roasting by those Indians the next day, as well as strawberries “four times bigger and better than ours in England.” Less than three weeks later, Captain John Smith established nearby Jamestown, and it became the first permanent English settlement in America.



Left: Not only is Chippokes Plantation State Park a living historical exhibit, it's one of the oldest working farms in the United States.

Center: Scarecrow? Hardly! These Colonial Williamsburg gardens are tended by hard-working, knowledgeable interpreters that make our country's history personal and real.

Bottom: Marshes teem with life near the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay.

HAMPTON ROADS IS CHAPTER ONE IN AMERICA'S HISTORY BOOK

As the colonists continued to explore, traveling southeast, they discovered the Sewell's Point area of Norfolk, and in 1620, the first shipyard in Hampton Roads was opened.

The name "Hampton Roads" came about during this time when the region was a struggling British outpost. Some believe it honors Henry Wriothesley, the third Earl of Southampton, one of the founders of the Virginia Company and a great supporter of the colonization of Virginia. It's also a nod to the safety provided by our large natural harbor where the James, Nansemond and Elizabeth Rivers pour into the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay; in nautical terminology, "roads" means "a narrow stretch of sheltered water where ships may ride at anchor."





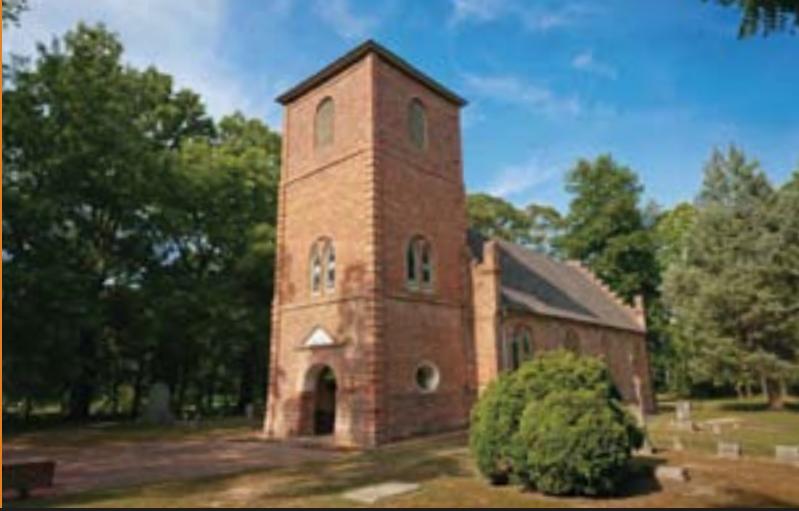
Top: It was here in Yorktown on October 19, 1781, that British forces under Lord Charles Cornwallis surrendered to the American and French armies led by General George Washington, effectively ending the American Revolutionary War.

Above: Students show off their marching ability in a popular St. Patrick's Day parade, one of many celebrations in Hampton Roads.

Below: Civil War re-enactors feel right at home at Chippokes Plantation State Park, where one of the original James River plantations still stands.

Hampton Roads became a bustling center of trade, transportation and military activity thanks to the shipbuilding industry, the British Navy, and merchant ships from around the world that frequented area ports. During the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, the area proved to be strategically important; in fact, the famous 1862 battle of the *Monitor* and *Merrimack* (also known as the Battle of Hampton Roads) took place right here. Fast-forward about fifty years to 1917 when 474 acres of land on Sewell's Point became the Norfolk Naval Station and Norfolk Naval Air Station. Fast-forward again, and these naval stations and other related facilities in the area cover 36,000 acres of land and make up the largest naval complex in the world.





5

Clockwise, starting from the top:

Historic St. Luke's Church in Smithfield, known as "Old Brick Church" before 1820, is the oldest existing church of English foundation in America and the nation's only surviving Gothic building.



Chapter 1

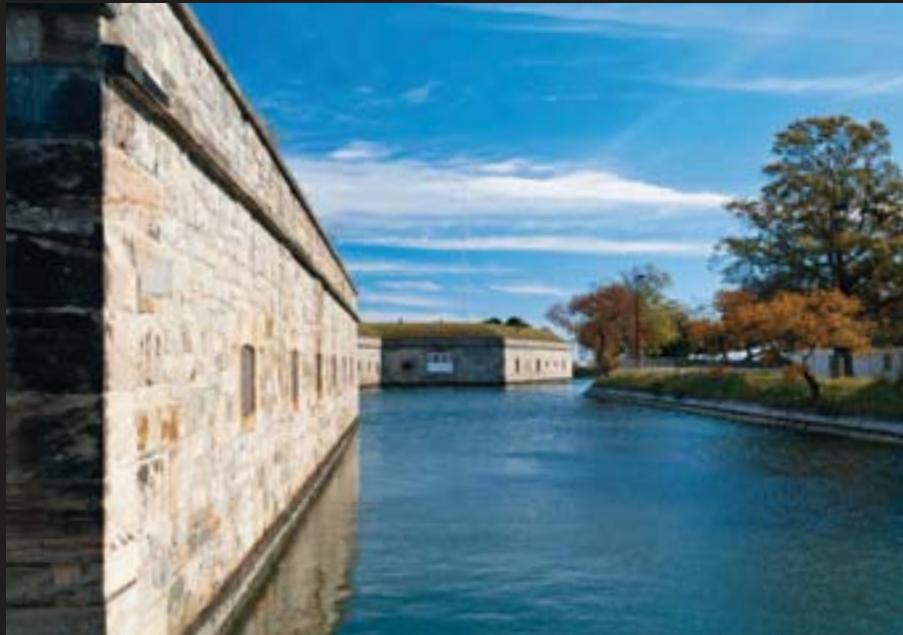


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*Top, left: Visitors can tour the
USS Wisconsin, America's largest and
last battleship, docked in Downtown
Norfolk next to Nauticus, the National
Maritime Center.*

*Top, right: A banner of broad stripes
and bright stars is a familiar sight at the
many, many historic sites throughout
Hampton Roads.*

*Right: Inside Hampton's Fort Monroe,
the largest stone fort in America and a
haven for slaves during the Civil War, is the
Casemate Museum. Fort Monroe was closed
as an Army post on September 15, 2011,
and, on November 1, was designated a
national monument.*





Left: The 1,105-foot MSC Bruxelles visited the Port of Virginia in July 2011. Longer than an aircraft carrier and capable of carrying 9,200 20-foot containers, this giant vessel took advantage of our shipping channels, the deepest on the East Coast.

Middle: Look for the "Mermaids on Parade" in Downtown Norfolk. The mermaid is the icon of Norfolk and these fanciful statues, designed by local artists, are swimming throughout the city.

Bottom: In a place with this much history, there are lots of antiques to be discovered. This shop in Poquoson displays some interesting treasures.

Today, Hampton Roads, also known as "America's First Region," is home to just over one and a half million people and includes the cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach and Williamsburg. Also included are the counties of Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, Southampton, and York. The bond that ties all these places together? Their close association to the water and this historic harbor called Hampton Roads.



Chapter 2

We're on the Move



With so much water, you're bound to have to drive across a bridge or through a tunnel, such as the 3.5-mile-long Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel connecting Norfolk and Hampton.

Let's just put it out there. We have a lot of water around here. Which means we have many, many (and did we say many?) bridges and tunnels. These are what unite us and what allow us to more easily travel into and out of the cities and counties in this very large community.

One of our most famous bridges is the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, a 17.6-mile link between Virginia Beach and Virginia's Eastern Shore.

Following its opening on April 15, 1964, the Bridge-Tunnel, considered the world's largest bridge-tunnel complex, was selected "One of the Seven Engineering Wonders of the Modern World" in a worldwide competition. The next year, it was distinguished as "The Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement" by the American Society of Civil Engineers. Beyond its accomplishments, this is simply a beautiful way to drive across the Chesapeake Bay.



Above: With our deep shipping channels and without bridges between our docks and the open sea, most any day you look out toward the Chesapeake Bay, you'll see ships, lots of ships.

Left: Lamberts Point is the home of Norfolk Southern Corporation's Pier 6, the largest and fastest coal-exporting facility in the Northern Hemisphere.

Below: Norfolk International Airport serves coastal Virginia with more than 250 landings and takeoffs every day.

Other popular bridges (and tunnels) are the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel, built in 1957 and the first bridge-tunnel complex in the world, and the Monitor-Merrimac Memorial Bridge-Tunnel, built in 1992. These two spans make it much easier to travel between the Southside and the Peninsula. That brings us to another reason there are so many bridge-tunnels in Hampton Roads: the need for access to the open ocean from Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Naval Station Norfolk, Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, and Newport News Shipbuilding (where, by the way, all U.S. nuclear aircraft carriers have been built). Ships from these ports must be able to reach the ocean without passing under any bridges, which would be considered a potential threat to the U.S. fleet. Of course, this impacts non-Navy ships coming to and from local ports and is an advantage for them as well.





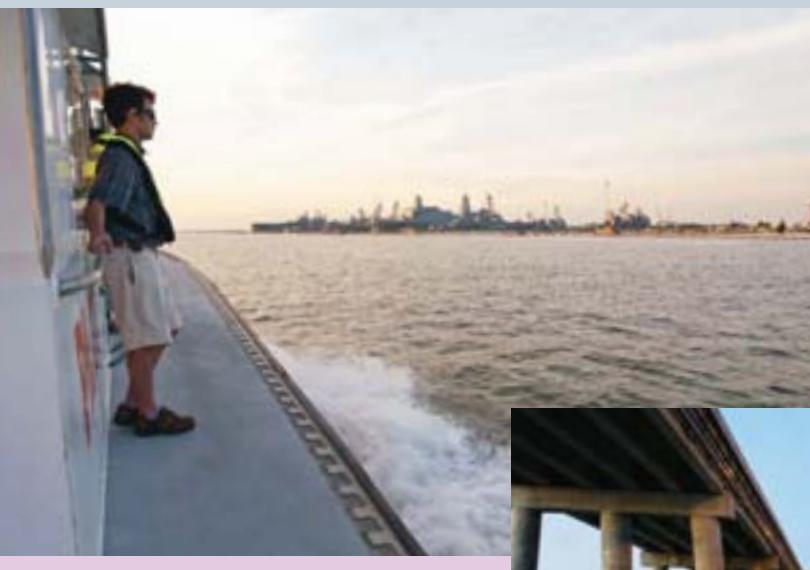
Above: The George P. Coleman Bridge crosses the York River in Yorktown. Its moveable spans open, allowing ship access to several military installations that are upstream of the bridge.

Left: The USS Enterprise, the world's first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, comes home to Norfolk after a six-month deployment.

Below: The USS California SSN-781, a Virginia-class submarine, is under construction at Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding in Newport News.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF RICKY THOMPSON.

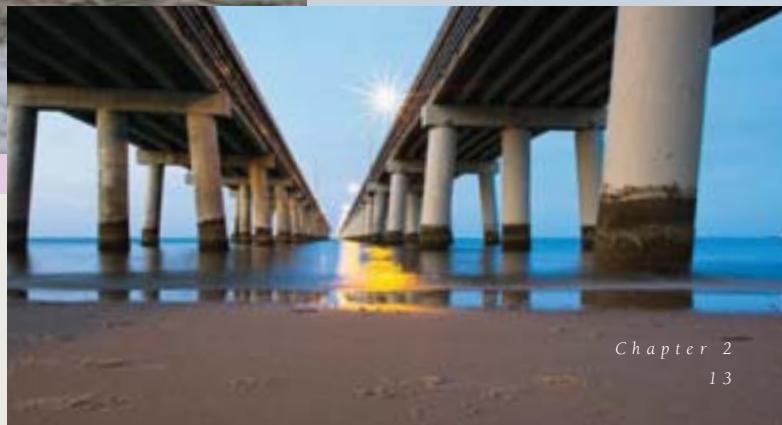
None of this would have the impact it does without our tremendous harbor. Strategically located in the middle of the eastern seaboard of the United States, Hampton Roads is home to the world's greatest natural, ice-free, deepwater harbor, with ports capable of accommodating the largest cargo ships on the planet. Since 1989, Hampton Roads has been the mid-Atlantic leader in U.S. foreign commerce by water and, when import and export tonnage are combined, the Port of Hampton Roads ranks as the third largest port in the country. In addition, the coal-loading facilities at the Port of Hampton Roads are able to load in excess of 65 million tons annually, giving the port the largest, most efficient and modern coal-loading facilities in the world.



Above: From shore to shore, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel measures 17.6 miles and is considered the world's largest bridge-tunnel complex.

Left: A Virginia Pilot Boat captain looks toward Naval Station Norfolk, in the Sewells Point area of Norfolk. It is the largest naval complex in the world.

Below: After its opening in 1964, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel was named "One of the Seven Engineering Wonders of the Modern World."





Above: The Port of Virginia has Suez-class cranes that can handle large ships loaded twenty-six containers across. In fact, they can handle ships larger than any currently built.

Below: At the docks, a new locomotive is loaded onto the Stellanova to be shipped to Gabon, Africa.



Through the skyway, Norfolk International Airport and Newport News/Williamsburg International Airport both cater to passengers from Hampton Roads.

Back on land, our efficient road and rail systems connect the interior of the United States—and nearly two-thirds of its population—with the goods and services they need. It's a fact that over 60 percent of the population of the United States is within 750 miles of Hampton Roads. Norfolk Southern Corporation, one of the nation's premier transportation companies, calls Hampton Roads home, and its subsidiary, Norfolk Southern Railway, operates approximately 20,000 miles on the most extensive inter-modal network in the East. It's also a major transporter of coal and industrial products.



Clockwise, starting from the top left:

A vast network of railroads converges at Lamberts Point.

Ships load coal at Lamberts Point Docks in Norfolk, which is served by rail and is within two miles of the interstate highway system.

Norfolk Southern Corporation has been transferring coal and coke from railroad cars into ocean-going export and domestic vessels in the Lamberts Point area since 1884. In 1999, Pier 6 dumped its billionth ton of coal and became the only facility in the world to have reached that milestone.

A Jumbo Shipping employee orchestrates heavy-lift transportation activity.



Above: With general cargo terminals, the largest intermodal facility on the East Coast, and the largest, most efficient coal-exporting facility in the world, a large fleet of tugboats is needed for docking, sailing and towing services.

Left: Ride the Tide! Virginia's first light rail system, The Tide, opened for service in Norfolk on August 19, 2011. It extends 7.4 miles from the Eastern Virginia Medical Center complex, shown here, east through Downtown Norfolk to Newtown Road.

Below: All manner of wheels keep us moving, even when our uniformed officers are simply parading on area streets.



HAMPTON ROADS - Heart of the Mid-Atlantic

Speaking of rail, the first light rail system in Virginia, *The Tide*, began service in Norfolk in August 2011 and is operated by Hampton Roads Transit. Its daily ridership is around 5,000 passengers a day.

High-speed rail is also a possibility. Amtrak services currently exist to and from Newport News. Beginning in late 2012, expanded passenger rail service to downtown Norfolk and the northeastern corridor will be looked at as a potential first step in the development of new high speed rail service to connect us with not only the northeast, but the southeast and beyond.

Unlike many other places, we've had to work very hard at coming together. And we're proud to say we have.

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