

NEIGHBORHOODS: NORFOLK 1923 ANNEXATION

The 1923 annexation brought many improvements to the former citizens of Norfolk County, such as superior city services, and a new elementary school. Norfolk unfortunately had the unique distinction of being the largest city in the English-speaking world without an institute of higher learning. In later years, Larchmont Elementary School, which was built to replace its original structure, was given over to Old Dominion College, now Old Dominion University.

The land area of the 1923 annexation runs the central length of what is today considered to be the City of Norfolk, extending from as far as Ocean View to Poplar Hall. Hampton Boulevard, which was formerly known as Atlantic Boulevard, was renamed during the 1920s. During this time there was a streetcar line which ran the length of Hampton Boulevard to the 1907 Exposition area; this would later become one of the world's largest Naval Bases, the Norfolk Naval Base. Because WWI had a large impact upon the city itself, the local economy began to boom. After the war, many of the city's neighborhoods developed a housing shortage. This led to the subletting of homes into apartments, and general apartment dwellings for the masses.

To begin, the name Campostella, now a well-known area of the city, has quite a unique tale behind how this area acquired its name. The area was formerly a quartering camp equipped by Captain Frederick Wilson, for soldiers during the war of 1861-65. This camp was termed "Camp Stella," after his daughter. Captain Wilson owned most of the land which comprises most of Campostella today. In hopes of giving the area an exotic flair, the Campostella Land Company put the "o" between "Camp Stella," claiming that the land was named after a place in Italy meaning "starlit field."

Captain Wilson also is given credit for building a toll bridge on his property, this would later become the first Campostella Bridge. To honor the neighborhood's history the Campostella Garden Club placed a historic marker in a vacant lot during 1979 which was accepted by the then Mayor of Norfolk, Vince Thomas. In the more recent past, the Campostella neighborhood was visited by Martin Luther King, Jr. a couple of times, with his last visit being in October 1966 in which he gave his speech entitled "A Knock at Midnight".

With the exception of Ghent, probably no other neighborhood grew so rapidly in the early days of Norfolk than the suburb of Larchmont. Located five miles from downtown, then considered quite a distance, it was conceived in 1906 as part of Norfolk County. A detriment to the development of this area was the fact that this area was considered "country" by many Norfolk residents. Therefore, Mr. T. Marshall Bellamy came up with an ingenious plan to drum up business. He developed his own bus line, the Larchmont Transit Company, which regularly ran from the Confederate Monument to Larchmont at the cost of a nickel or a "jitney," as a nickel was then termed. This, in turn led to the nickname of the "Jitney Bus," which carried curious citizens into the rural outskirts of the city. Mr. Bellamy himself owned a house along Cambridge Crescent with the family farm animals, the Vanderberry House. This house, built in 1833, stayed in the same family from the time of it's construction; it was torn down several years ago, however. Jamestown Crescent was built specifically to gain access to the house. Located on what was once James Creek, this residence shared it's country setting with such locally known families as the Lamberts, Dunstons, and Captain Johnson.

The Willoughby-Ocean View area, a particularly popular tourist destination, became important to Norfolk's expanding economy. Ocean View was touted for it's beautiful position along the Chesapeake Bay, and it's sweet ocean breezes. Many summer homes and cottages were built here. Combined with the varied attractions of the Ocean View Amusement Park, the first hotels in the area began to sprout up. One of these hotels began at the home of Mr. and Mrs. C.A. Baker. After opening a few rooms of their home to out-of-towners, they discovered

their love of inn-keeping, so much so, that they added 25 rooms to their dwelling and named it the Nansemond Hotel. As a grand structure with Spanish design, it was touted as "a bit of old Spain," with daily rates of \$5-\$9.

The history of Talbot Park is also an interesting tale. Confederate soldiers are believed to have set up camp in Talbot Park during the Civil War. Apparently, Union troops marched in, and upon seeing the American seal on the fireplace, decided not to burn down the mansion. In 1772, Thomas Talbot owned the land which extends from what is now Tidewater Drive to the Riverfronts. Minton Wright Talbot, Thomas Talbot's grandson, was born in the plantation manor house, and over the years bits and pieces of the land were sold due to taxes and other expenses.

Titustown, a working class black neighborhood, was held up to be a shining example of the way blacks could care for their homes and yards while instilling a sense of pride in their community. "Cleanliness, good order, and flowers," were heralded as the predominant traits of this five or six-laned neighborhood, according to a Virginian Pilot article dated from 1911. Titustown began when Mr. A. T. Stroud, a Norfolk lawyer, bought the land on which his college was situated just after he finished college. Mr. Stroud required that buyers could not begin to build on their lots until it was paid for. As a result of this thriftiness, "each homeowner was proud of his home and his 'town'."

Alfred C. Ward operated a grocery store located at 833 New Market Street, on the southeast corner of what was first Brewer and Wolfe Streets, during the first two decades of the beginning of this century. Then, about 1910 Mr. Ward opened a general store on the northwest corner of Sewells Point Road and Granby. Due to signs advertising that "Mr. Ward wants to see you at Ward's Corner," the name "Ward's Corner" seemed to stick. Development of the Ward's Corner area began before WWII, when military families moved into the area's apartment buildings and residential projects. In the 1940's and 1950's, a time of rapid development for the area, Ward's Corner was proclaimed as the South's first suburban shopping center.

Today located within the confines of the Norfolk Naval Base, Sewells Point has had an extensive Military history dating from 1861 during the Civil War. Upon arriving at Fortress Monroe on May 6, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln and his official party sent for Flag Officer Goldsborough. After consultation, President Lincoln ordered Flag Officer Goldsborough to open fire on Sewells Point. He wanted to determine whether it would be practical to land Union troops there, in order to reduce the Confederate battery. At about noon on May 8, President Lincoln along with Secretary of War Stanton, went to the Rip Raps to watch the Federal fleet advance upon Sewells Point. In line were the Union ships: the Naugatuck, the San Jacinto, the Dacotah, and the Seminole; guarding the fray was the Monitor, while the Confederate ship, the Merrimac lay waiting. Though it became obvious that the number of men and guns at Sewells Point had been reduced, President Lincoln selected Willoughby as a better point of landing.

On May 9, the Merrimac was sighted two miles above Sewells Point. The Confederates had observed that their flag was no longer flying over Sewells Point. They learned that the station had been abandoned, and the then Mayor of the City of Norfolk was negotiating with the federal government for the immediate surrender of the city. This was the end of Sewells Point as a fighting station for the Confederates. Without a base, or guns to cover her, the Merrimac was also near her end. Rather than give his ship up to the federal government, Commodore Tatnall decided to destroy her after trying unsuccessfully to lighten her load to navigate her through the James River. "Those who happened to be looking in the direction of Craney Island about 4 o'clock in the morning of May 11 witnessed a most impressive sight. The mighty Merrimac was blown up by the men who had fought within her great iron sides."

In modern terms, the boundaries of the 1923 annexation are: The extreme southern portion across the eastern branch of the Elizabeth River, is bounded on the west by Obendorfer Road. The boundary then extends roughly

southwest towards Craig Street, and continues in an arc to Pescara Creek. It is bounded on the north by the eastern branch of the Elizabeth River, and on the east and the south by the City of Chesapeake.

Across the eastern branch of the Elizabeth River, which also comprises the southern boundary, the western boundary extends roughly from the right of Campostella Road towards Corprew Avenue. It then extends along E. Princess Anne Road in an arc, from the intersection of this road and Bolton Street, towards Ludlow Street. It extends along this street to Summit Avenue, and from this street to the Lafayette River. The Lafayette River bounds the western portion of Norfolk from this point to the Naval Base. The western portion of the Naval Base is then bounded by the Elizabeth River to Willoughby Bay and the Chesapeake Bay. The north is bounded by the Chesapeake Bay from Willoughby Spit to 1st Bay Street. The eastern boundary extends from this point to Bayview Avenue. From this street, it then extends to Fishermans Road, ending at Masons Creek. Granby Street picks up the eastern boundary across the creek, extending to Little Creek Road. From this street, the boundary follows the railroad tracks ending at the eastern branch of the Elizabeth River.