

NORFOLK: 19TH CENTURY

1800 - First Baptist Church on Bute Street was established in Norfolk as the city's first predominantly black congregation.

1801 -- The first Continental Navy Yard was established here.

1803 - Norfolk was divided onto 8 wards, each electing within its own bounds two common councilmen.

1804 - Fire destroys more than 300 houses and warehouses south of Main Street in Norfolk.

1804 - Norfolk Academy, founded in 1728 and named Norfolk Academy in 1787, receives its charter from the General Assembly.

1807 - Act of Assembly passed empowering the court of Norfolk Borough to cause the streets to be paved under certain conditions.

1807 - Embargo Act closes ports. Exportation nearly ceases and business is suddenly interrupted.

1809 - Embargo Act repealed.

1810 -- Fort Norfolk is constructed on the Elizabeth River, on a site originally occupied by an earthenworks fortification built during the Revolutionary War to protect the harbor.

1811 - Act of Assembly allows the corporation to erect lamps for the purpose of lighting the streets.

1814 -- The new Dismal Swamp Canal opened the way for trade between Norfolk and the ports of eastern North Carolina.

1815 - the first steam boat, the sidewheeler Washington, arrives in Portsmouth

1819 -- Act of Assembly authorizes the Governor to cede to the United States jurisdiction over a plot of land for the building of a customhouse in Norfolk.

1820s - A severe depression affected the agricultural community in Norfolk County and Princess Anne County and many families moved away from the area.

1821 - The Great Gale of 1821.

1821 - The Norfolk branch of the American Colonization Society was organized for the purpose of sending blacks to Africa. Many of the emigrants from Virginia and North Carolina embarked from this port. Norfolk native, Joseph Jenkins Roberts, became the first president of Liberia when it became a republic. Roberts Village in Norfolk is named for him.

1822 - Slow-moving team boat drawn by blindered (horses wearing blinders) horses established as ferry to Portsmouth.

1824 - French soldier and statesman Marquis de Lafayette, a hero of the American Revolution, revisits visits Norfolk and Portsmouth and is entertained at a Grand Ball.

1832 - First steam ferry between Norfolk and Portsmouth, the Gosport, begins service.

1837 - Town Back Creek fills in to Henry (now Boush) Street. Most of the remainder of the creek was filled in by 1905.

1838 - Wilkes Expedition sails from Norfolk to explore southern Pacific and Antarctica.

1839 - Prince Louis Napoleon visits Norfolk.

1841 - Norfolk Academy building completed (present Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce).

1845 -- Norfolk incorporated as a City.

1847 -- Cornerstone of City Hall (now MacArthur Memorial) laid.

1850 - the Princess Anne and Kempsville Turnpike Company was established to construct a road between Norfolk and Kempsville; however, the turnpike was not built until 1871.

1850 - The Worshipful Court of the City of Norfolk met for the first time in the courtroom of the new City Hall on 29 May.

1851 - Virginia authorized the charter of an 80-mile railroad connecting Norfolk and Petersburg. The line was completed in 1858 and was the forerunner of today's Norfolk Southern Railroad.

1852 - Margaret Douglass, a white woman from South Carolina, is arrested and spends a month in jail for teaching free black children to read and write in a school in her Norfolk home.

1852 - Ordinance passed in Norfolk prohibiting cows to go at large in the city.

1855 -- Steamer Ben Franklin arrives in Hampton Roads with Yellow Fever on board. Epidemic spreads through Norfolk and by 11 August about one-half the population had fled. The epidemic raged until October, by which time one-third of Norfolk's inhabitants, 2,000 people, had died.

1856 -- St. Vincent's Hospital (later DePaul) is founded in Norfolk by the Sisters of Charity in the home of Ann Behan Herron, who had died the previous year of Yellow Fever and left her entire estate to the Catholic order for the purpose of establishing a hospital

1859 - United States Custom House completed.

1861 - Virginia secedes from the Union. Richmond becomes Capital of the Confederacy.

1861 -- Slaves fled from Norfolk to Fortress Monroe and Union General Benjamin Butler labeled them as "contraband".

1861 - Norfolk voters instruct their delegate to vote for ratification of the Ordinance of Secession

1861 -- Vessels at Norfolk Navy Yard, including the Merrimac, burned and scuttled.

1861 - the first local encounter of the Civil War took place at Sewell's Point

1862 -- The Merrimac, rebuilt as an ironclad and renamed Virginia, was built at the Norfolk Navy Yard. The first battle between ironclads - the Virginia and the Monitor - was fought in Hampton Roads.

1862 -- Mayor Lamb surrendered the City to Union troops. Federal forces under the command of General Benjamin Butler occupied Norfolk until 1865.

1863 -- Emancipation Proclamation went into effect but did not apply to Tidewater.

1861-1865 - Princess Anne County and much of Norfolk County were under Union occupation for the duration of the war

1866 - First black-owned newspaper in Norfolk, the True Southerner, published by former slave Joseph T. Wilson.

1867 -- The United Order of Tents, J.R.G. and J.U., one of the most important African-American women's lodges in the country, officially organized in Norfolk. Founded by 2 slave women, Annetta M. Lane of Norfolk and Harriet R. Taylor of Hampton, with the aid of 2 abolitionists, Joshua R. Giddings and Joliffe Union, whose initials are incorporated in the title.

1867-68 --- Dr. Thomas Bayne (former slave Sam Nixon) represented Norfolk at the Virginia Constitutional Convention.

1870 - End of Reconstruction in Norfolk. Union occupation troops withdrawn and Virginia is readmitted to the Union. African-Americans throughout Hampton Roads are elected to state and local offices. After the Civil War, Norfolk County's rich waterways and fertile farmland enabled it to recover quickly from the destruction of the war. In Norfolk, industries and railroads opened the way for transportation of coal to our port, the beginning of trade that made Norfolk the greatest port in the world.

1870 -- Organization of the Norfolk Library Association, and the beginning of the Norfolk Public Library

1870 - the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad consolidated with the Virginia and Tennessee and the Southside Railroads, and eventually re-consolidated to become the Norfolk and Western. The Norfolk and Southern Railroad was chartered to operate between Norfolk and Elizabeth City NC, and opened in 1881. Both are now part of Norfolk Southern.

1870 - Horse-drawn trolley introduced in Norfolk.

1871 - The volunteer fire fighting system was abolished and the Norfolk Fire Department was established by the City of Norfolk. It was the third fully paid fire department to be formed in the United States.

1877 - Ball at the Navy Yard to honor Russian Grand Dukes Alexis and Constantine.

1879 - The Norfolk Traction Company lays a narrow gauge railroad to connect Ocean View to the railroad terminus at Church and Henry Streets. The cars are drawn by a steam-powered locomotive. The rail is changed to standard gauge in 1895 and is operated by electricity by 1902

1883 - The Norfolk and Virginia Railroad and Improvement Company opened a nineteen-mile, narrow-gauge railroad between Norfolk and Virginia Beach. The same year, the railroad purchased the Seaside Hotel and Land Company and in 1884 constructed the Virginia Beach Hotel, which was remodeled and reopened as the Princess Anne Hotel in 1888. The railroad reorganized, becoming the Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Southern Railroad in 1887. By

1898, the line was so popular that it was widened to standard gauge.

1883 - First car of coal arrived from Pocahontas fields over Norfolk & Western Railway.

1883 - Norfolk Mission College established by the United Presbyterian Church to provide secondary education for black students.

1887 -- Brambleton, Norfolk's 5th ward, was annexed, followed by Atlantic City (6th ward) in 1890.

1890 -- Atlantic City annexed to the city. Ghent Company begins to lay out a new residential area and renames Smith's Creek, The Hague.

1894 - Electric trolley introduced in Norfolk. Within ten years, they link Norfolk with Sewell's Point, Ocean View, South Norfolk, Berkley, Portsmouth and Pinner's Point.

1894 -- Classes begin at Norfolk's first public high school.

By the late nineteenth century, Princess Anne and Norfolk Counties became leaders in truck farming. More than half of all greens and potatoes consumed on the east coast came from this area. Also, Lynnhaven oysters became a major export during this time.