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Jonathan Mark Souther

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TWIXT OCEAN AND PINES: THE SEASIDE RESORT  
AT VIRGINIA BEACH, 1880-1930

Jonathan Mark Souther  
Master of Arts  
University of Richmond, 1996  
Robert C. Kenzer, Thesis Director

This thesis describes the first fifty years of the creation of Virginia Beach as a seaside resort. It demonstrates the importance of railroads in promoting the resort and suggests that Virginia Beach followed a similar developmental pattern to that of other ocean resorts, particularly those of the famous New Jersey shore. Virginia Beach, plagued by infrastructure deficiencies and overshadowed by nearby Ocean View, did not stabilize until its promoters shifted their attention from wealthy northerners to Tidewater area residents. After experiencing difficulties exacerbated by the Panic of 1893, the burning of its premier hotel in 1907, and the hesitation bred by the Spanish American War and World War I, Virginia Beach enjoyed robust growth during the 1920s. While Virginia Beach is often perceived as a post-World War II community, this thesis argues that its prewar foundation was critical to its subsequent rise to become the largest city in Virginia.

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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**TWIXT OCEAN AND PINES: THE SEASIDE RESORT  
AT VIRGINIA BEACH, 1880-1930**

By

**JONATHAN MARK SOUTHER**

B.A., Furman University, 1994

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the University of Richmond

in Candidacy

for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

in

**History**

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## Introduction

America's seashore was virtually untouched prior to the Civil War. The American attitude toward leisure held that any time spent engaging in unproductive activities was time wasted. In antebellum society, industrialization had yet to transform the lifestyles of rank-and-file Americans. In a predominantly agrarian society, work and leisure were ill-defined. No widespread notion of "leisure time" existed. To be sure, a few resorts did flourish in the antebellum United States. With the notable exceptions of Newport, Rhode Island, and Cape May, New Jersey, these tended to be health resorts situated in close proximity to inland springs believed to offer therapeutic properties. These resorts, which lay far away from the large seaboard cities, drew only wealthy sojourners. The presence of landed elites, planters, and urban merchants stimulated the evolution of resorts, such as Lake Placid and Saratoga Springs, New York, and White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, into social centers for prominent Americans. The great majority of Americans, however, did not "vacation."

It is hardly surprising that the earliest efforts to create major seaside pleasure resorts in the United States took place in the Middle Atlantic region. This area experienced major industrialization before the rest of the country, leading to a newly-heightened sense of productivity and time. The creation of an urban industrial society in the Middle Atlantic states led visionary entrepreneurs to the realization that workers and their families would surely

support some form of pleasure resort that offered a contrast to their mundane and tiresome urban lives. This was the impetus that led to the establishment of Coney Island, New York, and Atlantic City, New Jersey. These seaside towns became enormously popular because they were sufficiently close to New York, Brooklyn, and Philadelphia to facilitate timely travel, yet sufficiently distant to maintain the magical allure of a haven removed from the oppressive city. Not only workers, but also wealthy industrialists enjoyed seaside vacations. Long Island's Brighton and Manhattan Beaches, and Cape May, New Jersey, developed into resorts decidedly more upscale than Atlantic City and Coney Island.

A number of historians have examined American seaside resorts. Some have written studies of the social history of a particular resort. Charles E. Funnell's work on Atlantic City emphasizes the social history of the resort during the 1890s. Funnell presents the themes of mechanization, the city versus nature, and morality versus pleasure as powerful forces playing upon attitudes toward and pursuit of leisure. He asserts that the crystallization of a new popular culture, brought about by rapid industrialization and urbanization, led to the rise of Atlantic City as a major seaside resort. Observing similar characteristics in other Jersey shore towns such as Asbury Park, Funnell argues, nevertheless, that it is appropriate to study Atlantic City alone because its sheer size allows for broader implications to be made about seaside resorts in general.<sup>1</sup> Like Funnell, Stephen F. Weinstein seeks a representative resort, in his case to study the dynamics of the relationship between major cities and their immediate

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<sup>1</sup>Charles E. Funnell, *By the Beautiful Sea: The Rise and High Times of That Great American Resort, Atlantic City* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975).



seacoasts. Weinstein suggests the importance of the application of technology to entertainment, availability of cheap rapid transit, isolation of specific leisure time, and the presence of a large, concentrated population in stimulating the development and patronage of the most famous of all urban seaside resorts, Coney Island.<sup>2</sup>

At least one historian has focused on the seaside resort as a unique cultural entity. John F. Kasson's *Amusing the Million* examines how Coney Island represented a new model of urban recreation. Previous attempts to offer a rural retreat in the form of a sylvan city park like Manhattan's Central Park or to try to reshape a city into an unattainable "classical" form, as encouraged by the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, had failed to offer true alleviation of the social pressures of dwelling in an industrial city. Located too far north of Manhattan's working-class neighborhoods, Central Park attracted mainly wealthy people, the very ones least in need of repose. The World's Columbian Exposition did not "speak" to the needs of the urban masses because of its elitism. Coney Island, Kasson contends, offered a special place in which social inhibitions and form could be relaxed somewhat. It allowed the masses to participate meaningfully in American society.<sup>3</sup>

While these studies have added greatly to an understanding of the social and cultural aspects of seaside resort development, they all focus just on those resorts made famous

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<sup>2</sup>Stephen F. Weinstein, "The Nickel Empire: Coney Island and the Creation of Urban Seaside Resorts in the United States" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1984).

<sup>3</sup>John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

because of their closeness to America's largest cities. It seems that it would be of great benefit to study a resort whose founders hoped to overtake the established resorts along the New Jersey and Long Island shores, a resort that was farther from the largest concentrations of population but had the ambition to vie for the patronage of the same people who already vacationed at resorts lying less than two hours from home.

The founders of Virginia Beach, one such resort, believed that its salubrious climate, pristine beach, and the therapeutic "exhalations" of its pine forests would make it a favorite haunt for northerners. A number of questions arise concerning the feasibility of competing directly with the most famous seaside resorts. Did Virginia Beach's promoters realize that the very success of Atlantic City and other popular resorts came from their accessibility as daily destinations? Did they consider that their plan to appeal primarily to rich people automatically limited Virginia Beach's ability to draw a steady stream of daily visitors from nearby Norfolk? Could they not see that it would be very difficult to operate a large hotel and a railroad if they appealed only to a small proportion of possible visitors? These are a few of the questions this thesis shall attempt to address. It will assess the degree of success the resort enjoyed in its formative years, as well as the role of location and timing in determining the success of Virginia Beach. Finally, it will attempt to show that the resort's heyday came once initial intentions faded, infrastructural problems were solved, and promotional efforts were redirected.

Certainly Virginia Beach merits closer examination. The existing body of historical writing on Virginia Beach's early history is far from comprehensive. It is limited to three

pictorial histories and a short chapter in a 1976 book about the history of Virginia Beach and Princess Anne County. All have given only slight treatment to the resort's formative period prior to World War II. Without understanding Virginia Beach's intended place among American seaside resorts and the degree to which it fulfilled that promise, one has no foundation for comprehending the spectacular postwar evolution of the enclave into the most populous city in Virginia. More importantly, the resort has never been portrayed as what it was: a town that continually ranked itself among the finest American seaside watering places yet repeatedly found that it did not, in fact, measure up. This study endeavors to place Virginia Beach in a broader historical context by examining how it compared to its model -- Atlantic City. In doing so, it presents a useful view of the boosterism that sought to smooth over any shortcomings present in the seaside resort.

## Acknowledgments

In writing this thesis, I am greatly indebted to a number of people who helped me so generously. Foremost among them is Edgar T. Brown, a Virginia Beach businessman whose keen interest in local history led him to amass an extensive personal collection of primary materials, including more than 900 letters kept by the first mayor of Virginia Beach, numerous brochures and pamphlets, and approximately 4,000 postcards of the seaside resort. Mr. Brown graciously offered me the use of his extensive personal collection of Virginia Beach historical materials. His collection forms the core of documentation for much of this thesis, adding a dimension that newspaper articles alone simply could not provide. Further, his knowledge of local history and his connections to some of Virginia Beach's older natives made my task much easier. I am also indebted to Stephen S. Mansfield for assisting me in using the Virginia Wesleyan College Local History Collection, of which he is curator. Gwen Tayloe and the rest of the staff at the Library of Virginia Archives greatly facilitated my efforts.

I would like to thank Katrine deWitt and Peter deWitt, both of whom grew up in one of the first year-round residences at the seaside resort, and Charles E. Barco, son of Virginia Beach's third mayor, for agreeing to be interviewed about their experiences in old Virginia Beach; Carlos Wilson, bell captain at the Cavalier Hotel, for sharing recollections from his

fifty-eight years at the hotel; Tracey Entwisle for her assistance with deeds in the Virginia Beach Circuit Court office; Ruth Hodges Smith, Virginia Beach City Clerk, for assisting me in the use of old town council minute books; Robert C. Reisweber for his advice concerning sources of railroad information; Calvert W. Tazewell, great-grandson of Virginia Beach founding father Marshall Parks, for his helpful insight concerning sources; Robert C. Kenzer for directing this thesis and offering encouragement; R. Barry Westin, John L. Gordon, Jr., and Mary Jane Walsh for reading my work and providing constructive advice. Finally, the University of Richmond Graduate School of Arts and Sciences facilitated my research in Norfolk, Virginia Beach, and Richmond with a substantial research grant that has been greatly appreciated.

## ONE

### **Raising a Grand Seaside Resort out of Pine Flats, 1880-1897**

It is the most healthful and beautiful spot on the ocean side, and is within easy reach of New York and the other chief centres of population. It has long enjoyed a most enviable reputation among those who seek rest and rational recreation. The beach at this point is wide and at low tide is as hard as a boulevard, affording either driving or bicycling along the very edge of the surf. Great forests of noble pines fringe the shore for miles either way, and back of the Princess Anne Hotel, adding their balsamic and healing odors to the tonic of the ocean, whose surf is uncontaminated by neighboring cities.<sup>1</sup>

This colorful vignette from the mid-1890s described the young seaside resort of Virginia Beach, whose centerpiece, the Princess Anne Hotel, was intended to attract wealthy vacationers to the Atlantic shore. The resort's promoters, however, relied on more than idyllic persuasion to coax the well-heeled to the Virginia coast. They capitalized on the availability of railroads and steamships, which could bring guests from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and Richmond in a reasonable amount of time. (See Map 1.) Indeed, one could reach nearby Norfolk via train or steamer and then take a seventeen-mile trip on a narrow-gauge rail line whose tracks ran to the edge of the Princess Anne's lobby, within three hundred feet of the Atlantic surf.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Princess Anne Hotel brochure, 1897, Edgar T. Brown Collection, Virginia Beach.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.; *Washington Post*, May 15, 1992.

Virginia Beach was born in 1883, the fruit of the efforts of some visionary Norfolk businessmen who had observed the successes enjoyed by such northern resorts as Atlantic City, New Jersey. Prior to 1883, the site of Virginia Beach was a pristine land of windswept dunes and dense maritime forests of entangled sea myrtle and pine. Before it assumed its present name, Virginia Beach was known as Seatack. In the War of 1812 the Princess Anne County Militia clashed with a landing party of British seamen who had been shelling the coastline. As a result of this “sea attack,” the area was christened Seatack.<sup>3</sup> The only traces of civilization at Seatack were a few farms, barns and sheds, and, after 1878, U.S. Life Saving Station no. 2.<sup>4</sup> The wide, sandy beach was bounded on the north by Cape Henry, at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, and stretched over seventy miles southward into North Carolina’s Outer Banks, punctuated only by the shallow Rudee Inlet seven miles below Cape Henry. It formed the eastern fringe of Princess Anne County at Virginia’s southeastern corner.

Princess Anne’s expanse in 1883 was split almost evenly between cultivated land on the one hand and pine woods, blackwater cypress swamps, and bays on the other. The county had no large market towns or villages. Although the port city of Norfolk lay about twenty miles to the west, it could be reached only by the most precarious sand or mud paths. The dearth of roads helps explain why Princess Anne remained an isolated farming and fishing

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<sup>3</sup>*Sun* (Virginia Beach), April 27, 1983.

<sup>4</sup>*Beacon* (Virginia Beach), May 27, 1983.

community of fewer than 9,000 residents as late as the 1870s.<sup>5</sup> Even the county seat of Princess Anne Court House counted only twenty-five residents.<sup>6</sup> (See Map 2.) The county was blessed with a sandy loam that sustained a flourishing summer truck farming economy. However, Princess Anne's agriculture suffered the ravages of Union occupation during the Civil War. In 1865, the county lay devastated, with many of its best farms lying fallow and farmhouses destroyed by Union fires. Further, the labor supply necessary to sustain farming dwindled with the emancipation of slaves following the war. Many families fell into debt and were forced to sell their farms. Although wealthy people from upstate New York bought some of the finer plantations as winter homes and established dairy farms, land declined in value as more and more natives chose to abandon Princess Anne. Thus, although no Civil War battles were waged on her soil, Princess Anne emerged from the conflict in the throes of economic depression.<sup>7</sup>

With many farms remaining idle following the war, some Tidewater residents concluded that it was necessary to encourage outsiders to buy land in Princess Anne.

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<sup>5</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census *Statistics of the Population of the United States; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census, 1870* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872).

<sup>6</sup>Archer P. Montague, Commissioner of Labor, comp., *First Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics of the State of Virginia for the Years 1898 and 1899* (Richmond: Clyde W. Saunders, 1899), 99-100.

<sup>7</sup>Kathleen M. Eighmey, *The Beach: A History of Virginia Beach, Virginia* (Virginia Beach: Virginia Beach Department of Public Libraries, 1976), 55; *Sun*, April 27, 1983.



Although most efforts to attract buyers were directed at people in the United States, in 1872 one notable attempt was made to lure foreigners as well. Two real estate agents, W. H. Burroughs and J. J. Burroughs of Norfolk, produced a promotional pamphlet entitled “America. Homes for Englishmen in the State of Virginia” to persuade Englishmen that they would find Princess Anne’s land, climate, and people similar to those of England. They trumpeted the fact that most of Princess Anne’s inhabitants were from “English stock.” The booklet described in detail twelve properties for sale ranging from ninety-two to over 1,000 acres in size, located mostly near either the Lynnhaven River or the courthouse, both approximately five miles from the oceanfront. The availability of navigable water for getting produce to market, proximity to churches, and richness of soil were among the parcels’ most touted assets. Of some farms it was emphasized that “cranberries grow wild here.”<sup>8</sup> Importantly at this time, however, no mention was made of the distance of the properties to the beach, for roads were poor. Further, although resorts like Cape May, New Jersey, and Newport, Rhode Island, were long-established, Americans had yet to embrace the beach as a desirable destination on any national scale. As Stephen F. Weinstein asserts, even when negative antebellum ideas about leisure eroded, the discovery of the seashore on a mass scale required efficient transportation -- a luxury Princess Anne still did not enjoy.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, a few years earlier a Norfolk couple took a two-day horse-drawn carriage ride through a land of

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<sup>8</sup>“America. Homes for Englishmen in the State of Virginia” (promotional booklet), 1872, Virginia Wesleyan College Local History Collection, Virginia Beach.

<sup>9</sup>Weinstein, 124, 129.

“beautiful trees, green fields and little streams,” only to set foot briefly on the beach. Perhaps their long trip had been the highlight rather than the destination. It is not difficult to imagine that their cheery recollection of their ride through the verdant countryside suggests that the desolate, steel-grey ocean compared unfavorably in their eyes. It is plausible that, like many people, they feared the ocean as well because of the images they doubtless held of disastrous storms, drownings, and shipwrecks.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the first organized effort to promote land in the county after the Civil War proved fruitless.

Where demand for a seaside resort did not exist, it had to be created. The first evidence of a desire to develop an ocean resort in Princess Anne County came with the formation of the Norfolk and Princess Anne Narrow Gauge Railway Company in 1875. In 1877 the company announced that its railroad’s eastern terminus would lie at the Atlantic, six miles south of Cape Henry. Its treasurer, F. Richardson, estimated that a resort on this beach would draw about 1,000 guests for two months each summer, each guest spending at least five dollars a day. The company took subscriptions for stock, not to be binding unless \$40,000 could be secured by July 1, 1878.<sup>11</sup> In a letter to the editor of the *Public Ledger* of Norfolk urging support for this fund, one company official described “a beautiful beach which has been used for bathing by generations of the country people without the loss of a single

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<sup>10</sup>C. W. Tazewell, ed., *Virginia Beach Vibes* (Virginia Beach: W. S. Dawson, 1991), 50-51.

<sup>11</sup>Stephen S. Mansfield, *Princess Anne County and Virginia Beach: A Pictorial History* (Virginia Beach: Donning, 1989), 76; *Norfolk Virginian*, September 27, 1877.

life by undertow. Along the coast, malaria is unknown, so that . . . bilious people in Norfolk can escape their enemy as well as if they traveled 200 miles on an excursion to the Blue Ridge.”<sup>12</sup> Evidently, his pitch for financial support failed, for the company soon ceased to exist. Importantly, however, the future site of Virginia Beach had been recognized as an ideal location for a resort.

In 1880, Norfolk businessman Marshall Parks began efforts to reorganize his flagging Norfolk and Sewell’s Point Railroad, which in its eight years of existence had failed to lay any track.<sup>13</sup> The son of a part-owner of the Tidewater’s first resort hotel, the Hygeia at Old Point Comfort, he had acquired some knowledge of the resort business. Parks, who had been a Confederate naval officer, had long set his sight on Princess Anne’s beach. An avid sportsman, he had made many expeditions to Princess Anne, which was noted for its abundance of goose, duck, and snipe, particularly in the Back Bay area of the county’s Pungo district.<sup>14</sup> (See Map 2.) Parks must have sensed that the area’s natural beauty gave it potential to be a resort. After the Civil War, Parks had wanted to develop an oceanfront farm he owned called the Hollies, which encompassed several ponds and woodland along the

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<sup>12</sup>*Public Ledger* (Norfolk), September 28, 1877.

<sup>13</sup>Tazewell, 58-59; Mansfield, 76-77. This railroad was intended to connect Norfolk and Sewell’s Point, which lay near the mouth of the Elizabeth River on Hampton Roads.

<sup>14</sup>Princess Anne Hotel brochure, 1897, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

beach. Parks believed he could create a seaside resort to rival even the popular New Jersey shore but met widespread skepticism.<sup>15</sup>

Marshall Parks' vision of transforming a deserted beach into a seaside health and pleasure resort certainly was not unique, for one has only to look to the north to see similar contemporaneous endeavors. The New Jersey shore between Atlantic City and Cape May remained, with the exception of U.S. Life Saving Station crews, entirely uninhabited as late as 1880. Though isolated from the mainland, this string of barrier islands was not completely neglected. Farmers used the islands to forage cattle, horses, and sheep, while others rented shares of the beaches for timbering, whaling, and oystering. Previously blind to their potential for development, developers began to market the pristine islands as health resorts. As a result, Peck's Beach, Ludlam's Beach, Seven Mile Beach, Five Mile Beach, and Two Mile Beach became the resorts of Ocean City, Strathmere, Sea Isle City, Avalon, Stone Harbor, Wildwood, and Wildwood Crest.<sup>16</sup> (See Map 1.) Likewise, Parks intended to convert the desolate Seatack area into a vibrant seashore mecca.

As he pursued the revitalization of his railroad company, Parks also formed the Seaside Hotel and Land Company, which immediately began the process of acquiring oceanfront farms. The land along the Princess Anne seashore was owned entirely by county

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<sup>15</sup>Tazewell, 57-58.

<sup>16</sup>Jeffery M. Dorwart, *Cape May County, New Jersey: The Making of an American Resort Community* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 141-3.

natives. Much of it was uncultivated pine forest. In September 1880, the Seaside Hotel and Land Company entered agreements with the owners of four farms totalling approximately 700 acres. By May 22, 1882, Parks had signed deeds for eleven farms totalling about 1,350 acres. The company paid an average of about \$2,000 for each farm, or about \$17.50 per acre. The fact that these farms ranged in value from \$1 to \$8 per acre in 1880 suggests that the owners had to be paid generously to encourage them to part with their land.<sup>17</sup> The most expensive farm was the 200-acre "Simmons Tract" that sold for \$6,000. This parcel brought substantially more than the other farms because it afforded frontage on both the Atlantic seashore and Linkhorn Bay.<sup>18</sup> (See Map 3.)

Not all parcels had to be purchased, however. In 1882 the fifty-acre oceanside farm belonging to James Diggs was exchanged for the 150-acre landlocked farm that the company had purchased for just \$800 in 1880. Further, the acquisition of property was not always a smooth process. For example, William and Mary Ann Ackiss, Esther S. McClanan, and the Simmons family stipulated that family cemeteries on their farms be exempted from the sale. Additionally, at least three landowners requested that they be able to continue to reside in their houses. Edwin and Mary Ives kept their "Holly Grove" and its surrounding acre of land.

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<sup>17</sup> Virginia Land Tax Record, 1880, Princess Anne County, Library of Virginia Archives, Richmond.

<sup>18</sup>Princess Anne County Deed Book 55, pp. 91, 191, 282, 284, 382, 498, 567, 575, 576, 577, 579, Book 56, pp. 477, 479. Virginia Beach Clerk of Courts Office.

In addition to retaining their home, Edward and Josephine Drinkwater did not include Life Saving Station no. 2, located on their 116 1/4-acre farm, in the deed to the company.<sup>19</sup>

Three of the eleven farms were not able to be acquired immediately because their legal owners died shortly after the initial agreements of sale were made, leaving some minors as heirs. As a result, the Seaside Hotel and Land Company was forced to file chancery cases with the Princess Anne County Circuit Court in 1882. Depositions of the value of the land in question were obtained from qualified land assessors, who contended that the land could not be satisfactorily subdivided to give the young heirs their portion. In short, the court determined in each case that payment by the company to the heirs was the logical way to settle the issue in the best interests of both parties.<sup>20</sup>

In 1881, Parks escorted a Washington, D.C., newspaper reporter around Cape Henry by steamer to the beach and described his vision of grand seaside resort in the midst of the pine-studded sand flats owned by his Seaside Hotel and Land Company along the ocean.<sup>21</sup> Within two years, the company's property stretched from Parks' Hollies property on the north almost five miles southward to Rudee Inlet. In addition to nearly five miles of ocean frontage,

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<sup>19</sup>Princess Anne County Deed Book 55, pp. 84, 282, 382, 498, 575.

<sup>20</sup>*Seaside Hotel and Land Co. v. Diggs et als.; Seaside Hotel and Land Co. v. Bonney et als.* (2 separate cases), Princess Anne County Chancery Papers, 1883, box 22, folders 11-12, Library of Virginia Archives, Richmond.

<sup>21</sup>Tazewell, 53.

the land also included frontage on Owl Creek, a brackish finger of Rudee Inlet, freshwater Lake Holly, and Linkhorn Bay.<sup>22</sup> (See Map 3.)

Parks' efforts to revive the Norfolk and Sewell's Point Railroad were realized on January 14, 1882, as the Virginia General Assembly approved the reorganization of the company as the Norfolk and Virginia Beach Railroad and Improvement Company (NVBRRICO), provided that a railroad was built between Norfolk and "the said Virginia Beach" within five years. Later that year, the railroad company purchased the Seaside Hotel and Land Company and its land holdings on the oceanfront. The railroad and resort developers were now integrated under the leadership of NVBRRICO president Marshall Parks and poised to launch the venture.<sup>23</sup> The *Public Ledger* reported on November 29, 1882, that the company would complete the rail line to the ocean by the following June and "will commence next month to lay out the streets, avenues, &c., and make a plat of the cottage lots, which will be offered for sale to those who desire a cottage by the sea."<sup>24</sup>

In January 1883, the NVBRRICO began clearing the right-of-way and preparing the roadbed for what would be a perfect air line "without a bend or an obstruction to the view," slicing through farms and forests between Broad Creek (three miles east of Norfolk) and the

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<sup>22</sup>Princess Anne County Deed Book 55, pp. 91, 191, 282, 284, 382, 498, 567, 575, 576, 577, 579, Book 56, pp. 477, 479; Princess Anne Hotel brochure, 1897, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>23</sup>Mansfield, 77.

<sup>24</sup>*Public Ledger*, November 29, 1882.

ocean.<sup>25</sup> The project was expedited by the relatively level terrain over which the line was to pass. Only the Lynnhaven River's branches had to be bridged, and a few small creeks and ravines required minimal trestle-work.<sup>26</sup>

Before the railroad opened to the public, local newspapers offered Norfolk residents vivid descriptions of a beach unsurpassed in quality on the Atlantic coast. In March one well-traveled *Norfolk Virginian* reporter journeyed to the site of Virginia Beach and declared that it far surpassed Cape May, Atlantic City, Asbury Park, Long Branch, and Coney Island: "As far as the eye can see, either north or south, an unbroken line of beach is so straight that a transit can scarcely detect a deviation of a direct line. . .".<sup>27</sup> (See Map 1.) The railroad having been completed nearly on schedule, on July 16, 1883, NVBRRICO officials took the first train excursion on the fourteen-mile narrow-gauge line to the newly-constructed pavilion at Virginia Beach. The *Public Ledger* sent a reporter along to record the momentous occasion. The steam locomotive Marshall Parks no. 1 hauled the single passenger car, full of about thirty company men in formal business attire, eastward "through stands of tall pines and scrublands of live oak and wild blackberries."<sup>28</sup> Finally, the train "swept over a sheet of water which runs parallel to the coast [and] is said to be swarming with fish." At the terminus of the line was a "Y" connecting to the rail spur that carried the passengers past the wooden

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<sup>25</sup>Mansfield, 77; *Public Ledger*, December 6, 1882.

<sup>26</sup>*Public Ledger*, February 15, 1883.

<sup>27</sup>*Norfolk Virginian*, March 20, 1883.

<sup>28</sup>Tazewell, 90.



pavilion, which was being completed in time to host an excursion of 200 members of the National Cotton Exchange and their wives the following week. Joining company officials for “a dip in the briny,” the newspaper reporter observed, “The bottom is of firm white sand, without a shell or a stone to mar it . . . , and in the late evening the heavy forest back of the pavilion and Club House throws its shadow far out over the water.”<sup>29</sup> Within a week of the first rail excursion, a front-page advertisement in the *Norfolk Virginian* inquired, “Have You Ever Seen the Ocean? The Norfolk and Virginia Beach Railroad and Improvement Company is now ready for Picnic Excursions to Virginia Beach.”<sup>30</sup>

From the railroad’s public opening on July 28 to September 30, 1883, 6,565 visitors went to Virginia Beach to picnic, dance on the pavilion’s hardwood floor to the music of a live band, and frolic in the surf.<sup>31</sup> By the summer of 1884, the NVBRRICO had completed at Fourteenth Street and Atlantic Avenue the Virginia Beach Hotel, a rambling three-story timber-frame, shingled structure with sweeping oceanfront verandas. (See Map 3.) The hotel, about half the size of the Hotel Brighton in fashionable Brighton Beach, New York, provided the budding resort’s first overnight accommodations with ninety guest rooms. The imposing hotel was situated on a grassy terrace about twelve feet above the beach and 100

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<sup>29</sup>*Public Ledger*, July 17, 1883; Minutes from special meeting of Virginia Beach Town Council honoring B. P. Holland (copy), November 9, 1950, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>30</sup>*Norfolk Virginian*, July 22, 1883.

<sup>31</sup>*Beacon*, July 17, 1883; *Poor’s Manual of Railroads*, 1884 (New York: H. V. and H. W. Poor), 391.

yards from surf's edge.<sup>32</sup> In its first two seasons of operation, the hotel was managed by two Norfolk men, R. Worthy Smith and John T. King. Their dinners of fried spot and other fresh fish soon became popular with patrons.<sup>33</sup>

That same summer the railroad was completed between Broad Creek and downtown Norfolk, ending the time-consuming steamer trip to Broad Creek.<sup>34</sup> Passengers now could board a train in Norfolk and enjoy an uninterrupted seventeen-mile ride to the beach in "cars of the most elegant description, open of course, with reversible seats, of alternate slats of ash and cherry, with bronze mountings, and foot boards on each side."<sup>35</sup> The roundtrip fare was seventy-five cents in winter and fifty cents in summer. Although it initially took one hour to go from Norfolk to Virginia Beach, the time soon was cut to just thirty-five minutes.<sup>36</sup> The vision of Marshall Parks slowly was becoming a reality.

Nevertheless, Virginia Beach had far to go if it was to compete with Atlantic City, New Jersey, begun about thirty years earlier in 1854. Like its northern neighbor, Virginia Beach was developed as a resort simultaneously with the introduction of rail service to the seashore. In both cases, a narrow-gauge railroad connected a port city to the beach.

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<sup>32</sup>*Norfolk Landmark*, May 20, 1888.

<sup>33</sup>Minutes of special meeting of Virginia Beach Town Council honoring B. P. Holland (copy), November 9, 1950, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>34</sup>Mansfield, 77.

<sup>35</sup>*Public Ledger*, July 17, 1883.

<sup>36</sup>Minutes from special meeting of Virginia Beach Town Council (copy), November 9, 1950, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

Although Atlantic City lay about fifty-five miles southeast of Philadelphia, a burgeoning industrial city of nearly 850,000 people in 1880, the sheer size of Philadelphia provided a healthy market for a railroad to the ocean. (See Map 1.) By contrast, Norfolk had only 22,000 residents in 1880. Despite its being three times nearer the oceanfront than Philadelphia, it never could generate the same volume of vacationers. Nevertheless, Marshall Parks clung to his belief that if a new resort with a healthful climate and superb accommodations were introduced, northerners would surely beat a path to it. Thus, if Virginia Beach developers were to succeed in enticing northerners away from the already well-established New Jersey resort, they first would have to convince them that Virginia Beach was significantly more desirable than their favorite watering place.<sup>37</sup>

In accordance with Marshall Parks' dream, the NVBRRICO did everything in its power to attract wealthy and distinguished guests to its hotel. Appropriately, it offered ballrooms, horseback-riding, tennis, croquet, concerts, and even jousting tournaments. Despite the air of sophistication, however, the resort soon was plagued by the NVBRRICO's liberal spending.<sup>38</sup> By September 30, 1883, the railroad had run up a deficit of more than

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<sup>37</sup>W. George Cook and William J. Coxe, *Atlantic City Railroad: The Royal Route to the Sea* (Oaklyn, N.J.: West Jersey Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, 1980), 6; Donald B. Dodd, comp., *Historical Statistics of the States of the United States: Two Centuries of the Census, 1790-1990* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993); Donna Andriot, ed., *Population Abstract of the United States* (McLean, Va.: Documents Index, 1993), 690.

<sup>38</sup>Mansfield, 77-78; Princess Anne Hotel brochure, 1895, Virginia Wesleyan College Local History Collection.

\$3,000.<sup>39</sup> When the resort did not prove immediately successful, Parks resigned from the venture. In 1884, Pennsylvania congressman James H. Hopkins of Pittsburgh, who represented the company's dominant northern interests, replaced him as president.<sup>40</sup> However, Hopkins could do no more than Parks had done to keep the company solvent, and on December 19, 1884, Corporation Court Judge D. Tucker Brooke concluded that it was best for the interests of all concerned parties that he appoint a receiver for the railroad, which was now heavily in debt. After many suggestions were voiced concerning who would be the best choice, Judge Tucker appointed Captain Charles G. Elliott and R. B. Cooke, traffic manager of the Cape Charles steamship line, as receivers.<sup>41</sup> The following year the receivers were discharged and the railroad, now free of debt, was restored to the company.<sup>42</sup>

In 1885 the Virginia Beach Hotel was rented to a Major Harbrough and Mr. Kavanaugh. That fall, the company made its first attempt to operate the hotel as a winter resort. Steam pipes were installed, but the high ceilings minimized their ability to heat the hotel adequately. Within a few weeks the railroad abandoned the scheme and closed the hotel

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<sup>39</sup>*Poor's Manual of Railroads*, 1884, 391.

<sup>40</sup>*Beacon*, July 17, 1983. From 1884 on, the NVBRRICO was controlled by northern interests, eventually including members of the Vanderbilt family in New York.

<sup>41</sup>*Norfolk Landmark*, December 20, 1884.

<sup>42</sup>*Poor's Manual of Railroads*, 1886, 492.

for the winter.<sup>43</sup> It would be three more years before the company solved the heating problem.

That same year, seventeen-year-old Bernard P. Holland of Norfolk came to Virginia Beach to work for the NVBRRICO. He spent the winter of 1885 in the small house that Marshall Parks had built years earlier as a hunting clubhouse at the end of Seventeenth Street. In addition to serving as railroad agent, telegraph operator, and postmaster, Holland also helped with the clerkship of the Princess Anne. In time he would assume control of the railroad's affairs at the resort as general superintendent. Holland later stated that his most vivid recollection of his first year at the beach was when he and some friends had put out a net to catch fish but instead retrieved five or six barrels of coconuts. As it turned out, twelve miles down the coast a vessel had wrecked, setting adrift its cargo of some 280,000 coconuts. Holland remembered that everyone at the beach gathered coconuts and sent them to friends. Many people drank the milk and discarded the coconuts on the beach, resulting in the washing ashore of coconut hulls for several years at Virginia Beach.<sup>44</sup>

Holland recalled that the 1886 summer season was especially good, attracting many of Virginia's most highly-regarded people. General Fitzhugh Lee, the governor of Virginia, came to the resort several times. Mrs. J. E. B. Stuart and Judge William J. Robertson of Charlottesville and his family also spent that season at Virginia Beach. However, the

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<sup>43</sup>Minutes of special meeting of Virginia Beach Town Council honoring B. P. Holland (copy), November 9, 1950, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

presence of such prominent Virginians did not ensure the resort's success.<sup>45</sup> Despite the hotel's success in attracting the type of patrons it desired, the company was unable to make enough money to cover its debts. It was sold under foreclosure on May 17, 1887, for \$170,000 to a syndicate that reorganized it as the Norfolk and Virginia Beach Railroad. Charles W. Mackey, a congressman from Franklin, Pennsylvania, replaced Hopkins as railroad president on July 1, 1887, planning to replace the narrow-gauge track with a standard-gauge line by the spring of 1889. Improving the road would enable Norfolk and Western coaches and sleeping-cars to go directly to the beach without transferring passengers in Norfolk. President Mackey noted that by changing to a broad-gauge line, the trip from Norfolk to Virginia Beach could be reduced to twenty-five minutes. He also planned to add amusements such as bowling alleys, shooting galleries, and boats for rowing and fishing on Linkhorn Bay to draw more patrons from Norfolk.<sup>46</sup>

The 1887 reorganization enabled the company to expand and improve its Virginia Beach Hotel that winter. Towers, bay windows, and glass-enclosed verandas along the oceanfront were added, along with a fourth floor containing nearly fifty more guest rooms, bringing the total to 139.<sup>47</sup> The hotel assembled a supervisory staff from northern hotels and a Parisian chef to assure that the service was impeccable. The company also installed

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>*Norfolk Landmark*, March 13, 1889; *Poor's Manual of Railroads*, 1888, 609; *Beacon*, November 22/23, 1988.

<sup>47</sup>Mansfield, 78; *Sun*, April 27, 1983.

elevators to meet the guests' high standards.<sup>48</sup> The hotel even had its own steam heating plant and what was believed to be the first electric light plant in Tidewater Virginia.<sup>49</sup> A new log seawall was constructed to prevent sand from drifting in the hotel's front lawn. Atop this bulkhead, and extending from Twelfth to Sixteenth Street, was a new wooden boardwalk with stairs down to the beach at regular intervals. Arc electric lights were installed in the pavilion and along the beach, extending bathing hours into the night. Additionally, the hotel offered a new billiard room, bowling alleys, tennis court, fresh and saltwater baths, and a ballroom with an orchestra. The guests even enjoyed telegraph service and a resident physician.<sup>50</sup> One report held that the hotel was "an architectural gem maintained in true metropolitan style, within 300 feet of the surf."<sup>51</sup> The *Norfolk Landmark* noted that the hotel was very close to excellent hunting and fishing grounds, and boating opportunities in Linkhorn and Lynnhaven bays. It described the "magnificently grand" view from the hotel's verandas:

The white-winged messengers of commerce are passing to and fro, and the stately steamships from and to other climes are "walking the waters like things of life." All is animation on the grand waters of the dark blue sea, inspiring the looker-on with feelings of joy and gladness, while the healthy and

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<sup>48</sup>*Beacon*, July 17, 1983.

<sup>49</sup>*Virginian-Pilot* (Norfolk), April 14, 1940.

<sup>50</sup>Princess Anne Hotel brochure, 1888, Virginia Wesleyan College Local History Collection.

<sup>51</sup>*Virginian-Pilot*, April 14, 1940.

invigorating influences presented build feeble mortality up to the full standard of a vigorous enjoyment.<sup>52</sup>

The paper also described the advantageous location of the hotel, which reopened as the Princess Anne in 1888 with the promise of becoming a year-round resort. “There is neither malaria nor mosquitos [*sic*] at Virginia Beach, neither can exist, in consequence of the shore breeze at day and the sea breeze at night.” Additionally, Virginia Beach’s pine forests were thought to prevent malaria, presumably because they soaked up water rapidly from the forest floor, allowing no time for mosquitoes to breed. It was claimed that Virginia Beach was unique in the Middle Atlantic region in being “the only beach where the forest is in close proximity to the sea.”<sup>53</sup> Apparently, this distinction continued to be recognized for some time, for in a Princess Anne Hotel brochure from about 1900, Virginia Beach was billed as lying “Twixt Ocean and Pines.”<sup>54</sup> However, the breezes and trees alone could not ensure that mosquitoes would not be a problem. The railroad company decided in the late 1880s to construct a flume from the ocean at Thirteenth Street, two blocks westward to Lake Holly. This flume carried saltwater to the lake, precluding the breeding of mosquitoes and offering more accessible saltwater fishing to the Princess Anne’s guests.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, a canal was

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<sup>52</sup>*Norfolk Landmark*, May 20, 1888.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup>Princess Anne Hotel brochure, ca. 1900, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>55</sup>Mansfield, 117.



dug between Lake Holly and Linkhorn Bay to further facilitate the tidal flow deemed necessary to control mosquitoes.<sup>56</sup>

The hotel itself touted the healthy conditions of Virginia Beach, noting that the late Dr. A. Y. P. Garnett of Washington, president of the Medical Association of the United States, stated that Virginia Beach's climate was superior to that of Atlantic City. The Princess Anne emphasized the brightness and warmth of its interior, stating that log-wood fires and steam heating, along with many glass-enclosed verandas and parlors, allowed guests "opportunities for promenading or rest in full view of the ocean, even when the storm king rages without."<sup>57</sup> Indeed, with its new steam heating system, the Princess Anne could now operate all year. The message was not lost on wealthy northerners, who increasingly flocked to Virginia Beach. Many of the Princess Anne's winter visitors hailed from New York, travelling to the place that physicians came to celebrate for its healing salt breezes and the "terebinthinate exhalations" of its adjoining pine forests. Despite the resort's favorable reputation, however, the railroad was never able to operate the hotel in winter on a full scale. A decade after its inception the resort still was trying to attract attention to its poorly-attended winter season.

Although the Princess Anne did very little business from October through January, it enjoyed some success in late winter. By 1889 it began its season in mid-February. In March

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<sup>56</sup>Princess Anne Hotel brochure, 1888, Virginia Wesleyan College Local History Collection.

<sup>57</sup>Princess Anne Hotel brochure, 1897, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

1889 a Norfolk newspaper reported that the number of guests had risen substantially since the season started, until nearly all of the best rooms were filled, and applications were made almost daily in New York for accommodations. It also reported that 150 guests were staying at the Princess Anne at the time. Many improvements were made to the hotel property in preparation for the 1889 season. Lake Holly was dredged and freed of aquatic vegetation, and the pine forest was cleared of its undergrowth to create a park-like atmosphere surrounding the Princess Anne. The Company had spent \$250,000 in improvements since 1887.<sup>58</sup>

Under the new management of Simeon E. Crittenden beginning in 1888, the Princess Anne attracted more elite patrons than ever before. Crittenden, a Cooperstown, New York, hotelier, came from Old Point Comfort, where he had spent several years managing the famous Hygeia Hotel. The Princess Anne gained considerable fame during Crittenden's tenure, becoming a regular "way station" for the early New York millionaire colony, including the Vanderbilts, Goulds, and Astors, that had begun to flock to the fledgling winter resort of Palm Beach, Florida. These patrons stayed at the hotel in the spring and fall while en route between their summer and winter residences. President Benjamin Harrison and Vice President Levi P. Morton sojourned at the Princess Anne, as did President Grover Cleveland. Alexander Graham Bell, Robert Ingersoll, Senator James G. Blaine, William Jennings Bryan,

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<sup>58</sup>*Norfolk Landmark*, March 13, 1889.

Joseph W. Harper, Cyrus Field, Samuel Gompers, and the McCormicks of Chicago were also among the more distinguished patrons at the hotel.<sup>59</sup>

B. P. Holland later recalled his conversations with some of the hotel's prominent guests. He noted that Alexander Graham Bell, always preoccupied with experiments he conducted just outside the Princess Anne, had little to say. Cyrus Field shared with Holland his difficulties in getting anyone to back him in laying the first trans-Atlantic cable. John Dwight, an immigrant who started the baking soda business in the United States, told Holland of his early struggles in America. He said his lunch always consisted of "two cents' worth of crackers and three cents' worth of cheese on one day, and two cents' worth of cheese and three cents' worth of crackers on the next."<sup>60</sup>

The Princess Anne's wealthy guests often came to take advantage of the county's excellent ducking grounds. The men would leave their wives and children to enjoy the social activities at the hotel while they went duck hunting. B. P. Holland met his future wife at the hotel, a young woman from Cooperstown, New York, who had travelled to the hotel with her family so her father could go hunting. Following their marriage in 1895, Holland built his bride a brick cottage by the ocean just south of the hotel. An avid ducker, Holland enjoyed watching Lake Holly from the second story window to see if any ducks were there.

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<sup>59</sup>Mansfield, 78; Joseph Dunn and Barbara Lyle, *Virginia Beach "Wish You Were Here": A Postcard View of Days Gone By* (Norfolk: Donning, 1983), 22-23; *Ledger-Dispatch* (Norfolk), July 3, 1925, May 29, 1926.

<sup>60</sup>Minutes from special meeting of Virginia Beach Town Council honoring B. P. Holland (copy), November 9, 1950, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

Unfortunately, the incessant pounding of the surf kept his wife awake at night, prompting Holland to erect a second cottage farther from the ocean.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to northerners, Norfolk residents increasingly came to Virginia Beach to enjoy dancing, concerts, and even fox hunts. Although they did not necessarily help the hotel proper, they did stimulate general activity and support the rail line. In the late 1880s the railroad carried a yearly average of more than 80,000 passengers, many from Norfolk, to the beach. Many built cottages after the railroad began selling building lots in 1887. Constructed mostly of rough shingle, sometimes painted, the early cottages usually served as summer retreats. All had large porches at least on the first floor to allow vacationers to enjoy the sea breeze.<sup>62</sup> The cottages were located on the oceanfront north of Sixteenth Street, eventually forming a distinct "cottage line."<sup>63</sup>

The first Norfolkiens to erect cottages represented some of the city's most prominent citizens. They tended to be wealthy corporate officials, entrepreneurs, merchants, attorneys, and physicians. Robert M. Hughes, a Norfolk attorney, purchased the first building lot. Barton Myers, who was among the ten purchasers of lots in 1887, co-owned a firm of

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<sup>61</sup>Katrine deWitt, interview by author, tape recording, Virginia Beach, October 10, 1995. Although deWitt, an eighty-six-year Virginia Beach resident, was not born until 1904, she notes that she learned this information from her parents, who knew the Hollands well.

<sup>62</sup>Dunn and Lyle, 48-49.

<sup>63</sup>*Beacon*, July 17, 1883; *Poor's Manual of Railroads*, 1888, p. 608, 1889, p. 588, 1890, p. 380.

steamship agents and ship brokers, was vice-consul to Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Brazil, president of three manufacturing and mining companies, and treasurer of the Norfolk Land and Improvement Company. Between 1889 and 1892, Michael Glennan, editor of the *Norfolk Virginian*, bought seventeen lots, including six in the Hollies. In addition to Norfolkins in the professional world, property owners in Virginia Beach soon included three clergymen. Reverend Arthur S. Lloyd, rector of St. Luke's Episcopal, Bishop Beverly D. Tucker, rector of St. Paul's Episcopal, and Reverend George D. Armstrong, pastor of First Presbyterian Church bought lots in the first five years of availability.<sup>64</sup> Bishop Tucker held the first church services at Virginia Beach in his new cottage and was instrumental in establishing Galilee Chapel by the Sea, an interdenominational church. A Captain Drinkwater of the U.S. Coast Guard Station managed a new social club that met in a cottage on Twenty-fourth Street. Originally called the Drinkwater Club, it was soon renamed the Atlantic Club.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the fact that Norfolkins were interested enough in the resort to build cottages and even start a church congregation and a social club suggested that the roots of a permanent community already were taking hold.

In 1889 the Princess Anne ceased to be the only hotel at Virginia Beach. The Ocean Shore Park Hotel opened that summer to the south of the Princess Anne on ten acres near

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<sup>64</sup>Virginia Land Tax Record, 1888-1893, Princess Anne County; J. H. Chataigne, comp., *Chataigne's Directory of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Berkley, 1889* (Norfolk: J. H. Chataigne, 1889).

<sup>65</sup>*Sun*, April 27, 1983.

Rudee Inlet. The hotel's developers negotiated with the railroad company to offer patrons a rate of fifty cents, fifteen cents of which would be paid to the Ocean Shore Park Association. The Ocean Shore Park Hotel was a three-story Queen Anne style building covering an area of 60 X 200 feet. It had seventy-two bedrooms, ladies' and gentlemen's lavatories with modern plumbing fixtures, and a belvedere tower affording a view of the ocean and surrounding countryside. On the ground floor the hotel featured a large octagonal restaurant with broad verandas on three sides. The exterior of the hotel, covered with riven shingles, contributed to a rustic effect. On the hotel's spacious, park-like grounds was a 350-foot-long switchback railroad that cost five cents a ride. Thus, by the closing decade of the nineteenth century, Virginia Beach appeared well on its way to fulfilling its mission to become the premier seaside resort on the Atlantic coast.<sup>66</sup>

For a number of years, however, the new enterprise had a limited impact on Princess Anne County. Northerners continued to control the railroad and resort, keeping earnings out of the Tidewater and the Commonwealth. The railroad itself, while deriving 60 percent of its revenue from passenger tickets, did provide a means for Princess Anne farmers to get their produce to Norfolk more efficiently than by water. This advantage propelled the county into its future status as one of America's most productive garden spots. Nevertheless, the resort itself did not greatly enhance the lives of the county's native residents.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>*Norfolk Virginian*, April 27, 1889.

<sup>67</sup>*Beacon*, July 17, 1983.

In the late 1880s the community of Virginia Beach certainly did not mirror the grandiose plan that Marshall Parks had drawn up in 1884 for 1,600 acres of company land. In 1889 the resort still had only two hotels and sixteen summer cottages.<sup>68</sup> Though streets had been laid out, they were, in reality, only weed-strewn easements. In lieu of streets, the early cottage residents built plank walks wherever they pleased. Additionally, neither the lakeside parks nor the race track shown on the original plan was built.<sup>69</sup>

The owners of the Norfolk and Virginia Beach Railroad knew that getting a broad-gauge rail line out to the beach was a crucial step in the resort's continuing development, for it would reduce the time and eliminate the inconvenience of transferring passengers in Norfolk. Unfortunately, it appeared that progress in building the new line would be hampered by the company's charter, which did not allow it to become a standard-gauge line. Because the company's owners were anxious to begin work on the line, they did not wish to wait for another convening of the state legislature in order to get a new charter. As a result, the owners searched for a railroad with a liberal charter that they could buy out. The Danville and Seaboard, a "railroad on paper," appeared to be the ideal choice, for its charter enabled anyone with the necessary resources to build a broad-gauge line from Danville to anywhere they desired. The railroad bought the Danville and Seaboard's stock and replaced its president with George S. Jones of New York. One member of the new board of directors,

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<sup>68</sup>*Sun*, April 27, 1983.

<sup>69</sup>*Virginian-Pilot*, April 14, 1940.

J. P. Harrison, then proposed that the Danville and Seaboard be consolidated with the Virginia Beach line. The board unanimously approved this resolution and christened the new company the Norfolk, Albemarle and Atlantic Railroad Company on March 2, 1891. In addition to broadening the track's gauge, the company planned to build forty-five miles of new branches, including a six-mile spur from Virginia Beach to Cape Henry.<sup>70</sup>

When the Norfolk, Albemarle and Atlantic Railroad (N.A. & A.R.R.) proved insolvent by May 1893, railroad improvements that had been promised for four years again were put on hold. The company had assumed the liability of the interest on bonds issued by its predecessor, which totalled \$25,000. Further, although the railroad carried a record 142,441 passengers to Virginia Beach for the year ending June 30, 1893, the company's net income of over \$10,000 was not enough to offset its liabilities. As a result, George S. Jones was named receiver and took possession of all the company's property and accounts on May 25, 1893.<sup>71</sup>

The condition of the beleaguered N.A. & A.R.R. strained the Princess Anne Hotel's resources well into 1895. By 1894, Bernard P. Holland was the N.A. & A.R.R.'s general superintendent at the beach.<sup>72</sup> In time he would become the first mayor of the town of

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<sup>70</sup>*Norfolk Landmark*, January 25, 1891; *Poor's Manual of Railroads*, 1892, 441.

<sup>71</sup>*Norfolk Landmark*, May 26, 1893; *Poor's Manual of Railroads*, 1894, 177-78.

<sup>72</sup>Numerous letters from the railroad company's headquarters at 35 Wall Street, New York, to Holland at Virginia Beach survive in the private collection of Virginia Beach businessman Edgar T. Brown. These letters offer a rare glimpse of the condition of both the railroad and the seaside resort in the 1890s and early 1900s.



Virginia Beach, created several years after the turn of the twentieth century. In September 1893, New Yorkers Colonel Silas W. Burt and Warner Van Norden replaced George S. Jones as co-receivers of the financially-strapped company.<sup>73</sup>

By 1894, the N.A. & A.R.R. was struggling to prove its ability to become profitable in a frantic effort to stave off foreclosure. Hoping instead to be reorganized, company officials in New York were anxious to be kept abreast of the daily operations of the hotel and railroad at Virginia Beach. Their primary concern was that earnings must not be eclipsed by expenditures, a situation that plagued the company incessantly. It is likely that the depression that followed the Panic of 1893 also affected the company adversely. Receiver Burt's letters to General Superintendent Holland reveal that the hotel had mixed success in the mid-1890s. The resort's fortunes could be swayed easily by the weather. The 1894 season began on a slow note due to inclement weather in February. Bad weather could hinder the resort's success, especially during the cooler months. As a result, it was crucial to draw large crowds during more favorable weather.

The hotel certainly could not afford to allow other negative factors to impinge upon its operations. Burt became concerned about Holland's belief that the hotel's proprietor, Morgan D. Lewis, who had leased the hostelry after S. E. Crittenden allowed his contract to expire, was charging unreasonably high rates. However, Burt tried to convince Holland that

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<sup>73</sup>Silas W. Burt to B. P. Holland, December 8, 1894, B. P. Holland Papers, Edgar T. Brown Collection. It is not known why Burt and Van Norden replaced Jones as receiver.

Lewis probably knew that the class of people the hotel hoped to attract expected to “pay well for accommodation.”<sup>74</sup> By April it became obvious to Burt that Lewis was hurting the hotel’s chances for success. Burt’s family came down to Virginia Beach from New York for a five-week vacation in March and April, with Burt joining them part of the time. When Lewis presented him the bill, it revealed an overcharge of \$10.75. Lewis had charged the full rate even during the days that Burt was absent. Burt “concluded that it was best to pay his bill in full and . . . show him no favors in future.” It was after this mishap that Burt decided Lewis was a detriment to the hotel’s welfare.<sup>75</sup> When in late April the Princess Anne’s guest numbers remained low, Burt angrily wrote that Lewis “will be moved to grasp as much and do as little as possible,” noting that he was disinclined to make necessary repairs to the hotel. Burt hoped that the requested auditor’s examination of Lewis’s account books would illuminate “such information as will justify us in raising his freight rates.”<sup>76</sup>

By the summer of 1894, the Princess Anne’s earnings had increased substantially, inducing Lewis to renew his lease for two more years. Burt was furious, writing Holland that he wished he had not supported Van Norden’s scheme to lease the hotel in the first place. Burt believed that Holland could do a much better job of managing the hotel himself, noting that Holland would be wise enough to avoid “waste and extravagance.”<sup>77</sup> In late July,

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<sup>74</sup>Silas W. Burt to B. P. Holland, February 19, 1894, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>75</sup>Burt to Holland, April 11, 1894, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>76</sup>Burt to Holland, April 21, 1894, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>77</sup>Burt to Holland, July 9, 11, 1894, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

deficiencies discovered in the hotel's inventory gave the N.A. & A.R.R. the evidence it needed to terminate Lewis's proprietorship of the hotel. Among the problems for which Lewis was held accountable were broken crockery and glassware. Burt hoped that Lewis had enough supplies on hand and interest in bonds to serve as security for paying damages. After Lewis's ousting, Burt noted that the excitement Holland observed among the hotel employees was probably a direct result of their lack of faith in Lewis.<sup>78</sup>

A nagging concern in the 1890s was how to keep the hotel afloat in spite of the Company's poor financial condition. Every effort was made to maintain the hotel's high standards. B. P. Holland assumed the management of the Princess Anne on August 1, 1894, and produced a flyer assuring guests of first-class service at rates "reduced to suit the times: \$3.00 to \$4.00 per day." He promised that "The table will be supplied with all the delicacies of the sea -- Fish, Crabs, Clams, Oysters, etc."<sup>79</sup> Silas W. Burt cautioned Holland repeatedly about the need to keep costs down while still assuring hotel guests a pleasant stay. He stated that Holland must not disable himself from providing satisfaction to guests, however few they might be in number. He advised him to keep "a good lot of firewood ready for the fire places -- these go a great way in making people contented . . . . Be sure that your cook and baker are both competent -- we do not want an extensive or expensive *menu* but want it of good

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<sup>78</sup>Burt to Holland, July 30, 31, 1894, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>79</sup>Notice of Change of Management of the Princess Anne Hotel, August 1, 1894, Edgar T. Brown Collection. The lowered rates were probably in response to the Panic of 1893.

materials well cooked. Of course the sea-food and other local delicacies should be prominent." Burt felt certain that if the company kept the hotel comfortable and attractive, satisfied guests would spread the news and thereby increase business.<sup>80</sup> In autumn he wrote that much of the disadvantage of the hotel's reduced staff could be offset by showing personal attentions, thereby retaining guests' good will.<sup>81</sup>

Evidence suggests that the Princess Anne went out of its way to ensure guests a pleasant visit, particularly if they were friends of N.A. & A.R.R. officials. Burt often made Holland aware of friends who planned to visit the Princess Anne, reminding him to show them every attention. In late 1894, for example, Burt told of a friend from Washington who planned a trip to the beach as part of a tour of the southern states to ease his grief after the death of his wife. He also noted that his friend, Edward Cary of the *New York Times*, planned to visit Virginia Beach with his daughter.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to providing excellent service, the company hoped to draw more visitors to the resort through advertising and special promotions. One method the hotel tried was to give the advertising agent of the Old Dominion Steamship Line hotel coupons to distribute to the editors of leading New England newspapers, allowing them free transportation, rooms, and meals in return for free advertising in their papers. It is assumed that this scheme, if it

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<sup>80</sup>Burt to Holland, September 17, 1894, Edgar T. Brown Collection. Apparently, the hotel was not able to retain its Parisian chef for very long.

<sup>81</sup>Burt to Holland, October 11, 13, 1894, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>82</sup>Burt to Holland, November 19, December 7, 1894, Edgar T. Collection.

was in fact carried out, had no major impact on the resort, for in the following months, Burt mentioned the hotel's inability to tap even the much closer Washington, D.C., market effectively. Burt wrote on at least two occasions of the need to advertise in Washington. He noted that many congressmen probably would come if they only knew about the Princess Anne, especially when Congress was out of session throughout the fall. If only they could get Washingtonians' business, they would be carried through the off-season, Burt contended. He also hoped to lure sportsmen by advertising in sporting papers. He reasoned that "Sportsmen may be glad to have an outing away from their families but are not indisposed to have them where they can be readily reached but not readily reach them, i. e. the sportsmen."<sup>83</sup> Additionally, Burt believed that the hotel might take more advantage of those trying to regain their health. He noted in late 1894 that "we could get plenty of business if the public only knew of us. There are lots of people 'out of sorts' in the fall as well as during the other seasons."<sup>84</sup> It appears that a vigorous effort was made in 1895 to advertise the Princess Anne. Burt mentioned that he would have circulars in the *New York Evening Post*, as well as papers in Boston and Springfield, Massachusetts, Providence, Rhode Island, Hartford, Connecticut, and Washington, D.C. He soon wrote Holland that the advertisement

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<sup>83</sup>Burt to Holland, August 1, September 6, 8, 1894, Edgar T. Brown Collection. It is unclear why people in Washington did not know more about the resort, for other evidence suggests that it was well-known in more distant New York.

<sup>84</sup>Burt to Holland, September 20, 1894, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

was to appear in the *Washington Evening Star* three days a week from January to April, and in the *Evening Post* three days a week until March.<sup>85</sup>

In the 1890s Virginia Beach was a popular seaside watering place. Each summer the railroad conveyed thousands of excursionists from many churches and organizations throughout Virginia to the beach for annual picnics in the pavilion. The Norfolk Light Artillery Blues and the Central Labor Union brought quite large crowds.<sup>86</sup> In addition to daily excursionists, the resort drew ever larger numbers of wealthy vacationers who stayed in the Princess Anne and in a number of boarding houses that began as private cottages. They walked on the boardwalk or the beach and swam during the morning. In the afternoon they withdrew to their parlors to preserve their fair complexions. Vacationers sported the latest fashions while at the beach. Men wore dinner jackets to evening meals and could be seen in coats and hats even on the beach. Ladies wore long, flowing dresses, many purchased in New York, hats, and even gloves, and carried parasols on the boardwalk.<sup>87</sup>

After two years of staving off foreclosure the Norfolk, Albemarle and Atlantic Railroad was acquired at public auction by the Vanderbilts of New York on April 26, 1896. The broker for F. W. Vanderbilt already had bought \$100,000 of the railroad's securities and was debating whether to put those securities on the market or buy the company's property.

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<sup>85</sup>Burt to Holland, January 4, 5, 10, 1895, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>86</sup>Minutes of special meeting of Virginia Beach Town Council honoring B. P. Holland, November 9, 1950.

<sup>87</sup>Dunn and Lyle, 22-23.

The superintendent of a Vanderbilt company, the Fourth Avenue Car Line in New York, went to Virginia Beach to investigate. B. P. Holland told the railroad's president, Alfred Skitt, that he believed if the Vanderbilts bought the property and changed the gauge of the railroad, they would have a solid investment. A few weeks later Skitt informed Holland that the Vanderbilts had bought the property.<sup>88</sup>

Reorganizing the company as the Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Southern Railroad, the Vanderbilts provided the solid financial backing that the road previously had lacked. In contrast with the N.A. & A.R.R., which operated for four straight years under deficit conditions and allowed the Princess Anne to languish, the reorganized company erased its deficit in its first year. The Vanderbilt interest soon gave B. P. Holland permission to upgrade the railroad to broad gauge. The improved road seems to have had an immediate impact upon earnings, for within one year of broadening the track in 1897, the road increased the number of passengers it carried to the beach from 113,190 to 148,817. The N.V.B. & S.R.R. soon arranged with the Norfolk and Western Railroad to run a coach on its famed "Cannonball" train daily between Richmond and the Princess Anne Hotel. The company also provided for the sale of tickets from all principal points in the United States and Canada to the lobby of the Princess Anne.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Minutes of special meeting of Virginia Beach Town Council honoring B. P. Holland (copy), November 9, 1950, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>89</sup>Minutes of special meeting of Virginia Beach Town Council honoring B. P. Holland (copy), November 9, 1950, Edgar T. Brown Collection; *Poor's Manual of Railroads*, 1892, p. 441, 1893, p. 480, 1894, p. 178, 1895, p. 197, 1897, p. 166, 1898,

In less than fifteen years, the Princess Anne County coastline had been transformed from the nearly inaccessible farming and fishing community of Seatack into Virginia Beach, a seaside resort connected by rail to much of North America. Once a deserted beach fringed with pines, it was now a sandy playground lined by a boardwalk, hotels, and cottages. The resort and railroad worked together to stimulate business by efficiently whisking city dwellers in need of relaxation to the company's hotel, pavilion, and bathhouses, where they received "royal" treatment from a staff that included both African American porters, cooks, waiters, and bellboys, and wealthy northern hoteliers.<sup>90</sup> The resort grew famous as a haunt for the nation's most illustrious personalities. Despite being neglected initially as potential patrons, Norfolkiens increasingly ventured to their nearby beach. While the first Norfolkiens spent only a day at Virginia Beach, often toting picnic baskets, Norfolk's most prominent citizens soon began to erect summer cottages. Some eventually chose to try their hand at hosting visitors, opening boarding houses and small inns at the beach. It would not be many years before amusements and eating establishments further enlivened the young resort.

Thus, in the closing decade of the nineteenth century, Virginia Beach was a small but thriving seaside resort. While it drew only a fraction of the crowds that flocked to Atlantic City, Cape May, and Coney Island, it showed every sign of closing this gap. With a grand hotel and several smaller hostelries lining the oceanfront, Virginia Beach attracted prominent

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p. 171, 1899, p. 477.

<sup>90</sup>U.S. Census MS., 1900, Princess Anne County, Va. Schedule I (Inhabitants). Library of Virginia Archives, microfilm copy.



society people to her shore each summer. While the patronage of a sophisticated clientele certainly pleased the railroad company and the growing number of individuals who vied for a share of resort earnings, they began to see that the beach needed to offer more attractions if it was to compete effectively with the seashore playgrounds to the north.

Indeed, the Jersey Shore and Long Island beaches offered a plethora of amusements such as fireworks displays, merry-go-rounds, roller coasters, snack shops, dime museums, circuses, plays, bands, casinos, saloons, and even reenactments of disasters and battles. Such attractions, coupled with rapid transit from nearby New York and Brooklyn, had enabled Coney Island to become a booming resort. Virginia Beach's mission to become the preeminent resort on the Atlantic coast had not yet been realized. While the original intent was to build an elite resort at Virginia Beach, the desire to tap an ever-increasing Norfolk population could not be suppressed. To be sure, Norfolk's population more than doubled in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>91</sup> To ignore such a trend would be folly. The turn of the century would usher in a new era in Virginia Beach's history in which aristocrats and commoners would share space on the boardwalk. More importantly, a permanent community gradually would coalesce in a county that had never had a focal point in its 300-year history.

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<sup>91</sup>Andriot, 690. For a closer examination of Coney Island, see John F. Kasson's *Amusing the Million* and Stephen F. Weinstein's "The Nickel Empire."

## TWO

### A Virginia Beach for Virginians, 1898-1919

As American forces fought the Spanish in Cuba and the Philippines, Virginia Beach was enlivened by a sham battle one summer day in 1898 in which the Norfolk Light Artillery Blues “bombarded” a mock Spanish fleet offshore. Resort visitors watched as the U.S. Life Saving Station surfmen “rescued the Spaniards” at the close of the spectacle. While giving United States servicemen a training opportunity, the sham battle also served as a resort attraction, accompanied by a lawn fete, tennis tournament, swimming match, bicycle races, fireworks, and a ball.<sup>1</sup>

If some effort was made to please the masses, most entertainment at Virginia Beach on the eve of the twentieth century was confined to the Princess Anne Hotel and aimed at wealthy guests. Balls, minstrel shows, lectures, comedies, and parties constituted the greater part of the social round. Sometimes the hotel’s guests were amused by African American performers in the pavilion ballroom. On one occasion the *Norfolk Landmark* announced that a cake walk and concert would be given under the direction of Thomas Bond, the head bellman of the Princess Anne. Among the performers were “Professor James Grant of

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<sup>1</sup>*Public Ledger*, June 27, 29, 1898.

Boston, with his famous cake walkers; the renowned Black American quartette; 'Steamboat Billy,' the buck dancer, and Professor James Harrison, the well-known Negro songster and Southern joker."<sup>2</sup> Ironically, the same African Americans who staffed the hotel and performed for its guests were forbidden to set foot on the beach until late at night, when the last steam train had whisked Norfolkins away and overnight guests had retired to their quarters.<sup>3</sup> However, the days of wealthy northern patronage of Virginia Beach on a large scale were numbered.

The close of the nineteenth century marked the end of Virginia Beach as a resort existing exclusively for the "upper crust." In its first fifteen years, the resort had billed itself as a haven for the high society of northeastern cities. Having weathered several brushes with financial disaster, the Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Southern Railroad realized it would be advantageous to curry favor with a more numerous group of patrons -- Norfolkins and other Virginians. With its recently-completed stretch of standard-gauge track, the railroad could bring Virginians to their shore in a reasonable amount of time. The evolution of a "cottage line" along the boardwalk augmented the two large hotels, allowing a greater number of visitors to stay overnight at the beach. The resort had already succeeded in attracting a loyal clientele of wealthy northerners by advertising in newspapers from Boston to Washington. However, prior to 1898 the resort made virtually no effort to advertise in Norfolk

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<sup>2</sup>*Norfolk Landmark*, August 5, 1898.

<sup>3</sup>Carlos Wilson, interview by author, Virginia Beach, October 11, 1995. Wilson is bell captain at the Cavalier Hotel.

newspapers. Ostensibly a result of the railroad's failure to promote Virginia Beach in advertisements, Norfolk's papers almost completely neglected to mention the resort in articles. Perhaps the beach's promoters were so bent on securing only the upper class of society that they did not wish to advertise locally, for to do so might encourage all sorts to take the seventeen-mile train ride to the resort. More likely, however, they did not advertise because little at the beach presented itself to be touted.

Virginia Beach's offerings, with the exception of a new nine-hole golf course carved out of the pines around Lake Holly, remained little-changed in fifteen years. The Princess Anne Hotel's recreational amenities centered on both the ocean itself and a number of indoor and outdoor games. The array of attractions at Atlantic City, by contrast, dazzled visitors. If Virginia Beach's developers still hoped to emulate Atlantic City's kaleidoscopic variety, they needed to realize that their northern competitor's success was not built primarily by wooing the wealthiest members of Philadelphia society. Rather, it drew the urban masses with the promise of a day filled with pleasures, including vaudeville acts, hot dog stands, moving pictures, freak shows, dime museums, salt water taffy shops, mechanical rides, and game galleries and arcades. Importantly, if Virginia Beach was to mimic Atlantic City, it had to devise an advertising alternative to its vague and doubtful claim of offering "the finest surf bathing on the Atlantic coast."

Before Virginia Beach could consider itself a resort of national stature, it first had to become the choice retreat for nearby Norfolk. Indeed, by the turn of the century, Virginia Beach's status as Norfolk's resort was far from being solidified. Since 1854 a number of

Norfolkians had built summer cottages at Ocean View, a seaside resort on the Chesapeake Bay six miles north of Norfolk. (See Map 2.) Additionally, many northerners who perennially stopped at Ocean View en route to Florida became so impressed with the resort that they abandoned their plans to go farther south.<sup>4</sup> Like Virginia Beach, Ocean View claimed to have the safest beach in the area. By the early 1900s the bayside resort featured a toboggan slide, scenic railway, merry-go-round, bowling alleys, billiard room, shooting gallery, Japanese ball game, pleasure swings, boats, pleasure pier, vaudeville theatre, and a casino ballroom. Claiming to lead all other resorts “in patronage and popularity,” Ocean View proclaimed itself the “Atlantic City of the South.”<sup>5</sup> Although Virginia Beach offered some similar attractions, it had an initial disadvantage. Its location seventeen miles east of Norfolk compared unfavorably with Ocean View’s location. Not only was Virginia Beach nearly three times as far from Norfolk as its nearby competitor, it was not as easily reached. As late as 1900 only seven trains left Norfolk daily for the beach, compared to twenty-eight daily trains to Ocean View.<sup>6</sup> By the turn of the century, the Norfolk and Ocean View Railway had abandoned its “wheezing and puffing little coffeepot engines,” converting to an electric line. The Ocean View line afforded a soot-free journey that the Virginia Beach line’s steam locomotives could not provide. More important than the Ocean View line’s superior schedule

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<sup>4</sup>Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *Norfolk: Historic Southern Port* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1931), 295.

<sup>5</sup>*Norfolk Landmark*, June 30, 1901; *Public Ledger*, June 10, 1905.

<sup>6</sup>*Public Ledger*, June 2, July 5, 1900.

and equipment, the round trip to Ocean View cost only twenty cents, compared to forty cents for a round trip to Virginia Beach.<sup>7</sup> Although the Virginia Beach line sometimes offered fare reductions, its lowest fares still cost 25 percent more than those of the Ocean View line. More affordable than its younger competitor, Ocean View remained Norfolk's most popular beach through the early 1900s.

Despite the fact that Virginia Beach's promoters had always intended to attract wealthy northerners, they began to position themselves favorably to lure Norfolknians away from Ocean View. One of the earliest attempts to bolster Virginia Beach's popularity among Virginians, and particularly among Norfolknians, was undertaken in 1898. James S. Groves, a Norfolk real estate developer, became vice president and general manager of a newly-formed company, "The Chautauqua-by-the-Sea." The company planned to build a large auditorium and cottages along the beach, using as its models the Chautauqua grounds in New York and Ocean Grove, New Jersey, both of which drew a host of prominent speakers who gave programs covering a variety of topics.<sup>8</sup> Groves also hoped to make the Chautauqua at Virginia Beach a picnic spot that would become a celebrated excursion destination. An agreement was reached with the Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Southern Railroad in which the railroad sold Chautauqua 400 acres of land about one mile south of the Princess Anne Hotel for \$2,500 and agreed to extend its tracks up to three-fourths of a mile south of the Inverness

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<sup>7</sup>*Public Ledger*, June 13, July 5, 1900.

<sup>8</sup>James S. Groves to Alfred Skitt, July 19, 1898, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

Inn upon the completion of the Chautauqua facilities. The railroad stipulated that Chautauqua build \$5,000 worth of facilities to match the cost of the rail spur. The agreement represented an understanding that the Chautauqua and the railroad would benefit mutually -- each would enhance the other's business.<sup>9</sup> By April of 1898, Groves informed B. P. Holland that he planned to commence building despite concerns that the Spanish American War might have a negative impact on the project, and urged the railroad to build its spur on the promise that the planned auditorium and cottages would be built. He wrote that he believed the railroad was making a mistake by not extending its tracks a full mile because it would open up "one of the most beautiful picnic grounds" in Virginia. Groves observed that picnic grounds would make the N.V.B. & S.R.R. very popular, judging by the Seaboard Air Line's advertising picnic grounds on its line.<sup>10</sup>

By June, Groves' company had completed six cottages at a cost of about \$800 each, and a 45 X 76-foot pavilion that Groves insisted would seat 1,500 people. However, the railroad was not impressed with the facilities, noting that the pavilion really would seat only 400 to 500 people and lacked a necessary enclosed hall, wash rooms, and toilet and cloak rooms. Although the war scare had compelled the Chautauqua to downscale its original plans, Groves maintained that he had fulfilled his contract. The railroad's disapproval placed

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<sup>9</sup>Agreement between Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Southern Railroad and Chautauqua-by-the-Sea, January 21, 1898, B. P. Holland Papers, Edgar T. Brown Collection. Groves had leased the Inverness Inn, originally called the Ocean Shore Park Hotel, from the N.V.B. & S.R.R. since 1897.

<sup>10</sup>Groves to Holland, April 30, 1898, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

Groves in a precarious position, for he had promised purchasers of lots that the railroad spur would be completed by mid-July and had engaged speakers from July 15 to August 15. The railroad considered building the spur in 1898 on Groves' promise to complete improvements by 1899.<sup>11</sup> When the railroad decided not to build the rail spur before the Chautauqua was completed, Groves was forced to abandon plans for the 1898 Chautauqua lecture series. However, he did not relax his pressure on the railroad company's president. Groves offered Skitt examples of the scale of his development, noting that a contract had been let for a \$5,000, thirty-three-room boarding house, whose construction was pending the railroad extension. He also wrote that he had sold sixteen lots to a Washington, D.C., contractor to erect houses as an investment, and that the Methodists had expressed an interest in holding their annual camp meeting at the Chautauqua.<sup>12</sup> Despite Groves' efforts to take advantage of the 1898 season, the project had reached an impasse.

In 1899 Groves again worked frantically to launch the Chautauqua before the close of the summer season but was hindered by a number of setbacks. Although the Chautauqua company had raised about \$40,000 to accelerate the opening date, necessary site improvements failed to materialize. The boardwalk extension from the Inverness to the Chautauqua auditorium was only half complete because the company could not transport the needed lumber quickly without a rail spur. Additionally, a street connecting the auditorium

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<sup>11</sup>Holland to Skitt, June 20, 1898, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>12</sup>W. H. White (Attorney for Chautauqua-by-the-Sea) to Skitt, July 19, 1898, Groves to Skitt, July 19, 1898, Edgar T. Brown Collection.



to the beach could not be completed because a contractor did not finish levelling a sand hill that blocked its path. The failure to grade this sand hill also prevented the final segment of the N.V.B. & S.R.R. spur from reaching the auditorium. Holland finally concluded that Groves had undertaken more than he could accomplish.<sup>13</sup> Chautauqua cottage lots were available for as little as \$40 by November of 1899, indicating that the project was near collapse.<sup>14</sup> Although Groves vowed to open the Chautauqua-by-the-Sea for the following season, by 1900 he had forsaken the boondoggle and, forming a new company, poised himself to direct the development of Virginia Beach itself.

Unlike Groves, the N.V.B. & S.R.R. did manage to attract a reasonable number of patrons from Norfolk, but most visitors to their Princess Anne Hotel in 1899 still were northerners. The railroad could survive only by making a large profit in the summer to cover for the "dull months" between September and February. In 1899 the railroad's officials were uncertain whether they should operate the Princess Anne on a very small scale during the winter. They had discovered in the past that such endeavors to make a nominal charge of \$2 or \$2.50 per day met with guests' complaints of lack of heat.<sup>15</sup> If the fall and winter were

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<sup>13</sup>Holland to Skitt, July 22, 1899, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>14</sup>A. Matthews (Emporia, Virginia, businessman who served as agent to promote Virginia Beach lots) to Holland, November 21, 1899, Edgar T. Brown Collection. By contrast, lots in Virginia Beach proper often sold for \$400 to \$800, as noted in numerous letters in the B. P. Holland Papers.

<sup>15</sup>Holland to Skitt, August 21, September 5, 1899, Edgar T. Brown Collection. The railroad did secure a couple to operate the hotel through the winter of 1899-1900.

“dull,” summer was not guaranteed to be substantially better. Without a large number of Norfolkins at Virginia Beach, the Princess Anne was not very profitable around the turn of the century. It seemed as though the hotel’s allure had faded. The company’s treasurer, John Carstensen, complained to Holland in March of 1899 that recent visitors to the Princess Anne reported that the food was fairly good, but the hotel itself was “dirty and badly kept.” Holland replied that, while the hotel did need to be painted, the staff was maintaining it satisfactorily.<sup>16</sup> Throughout the 1899 season, the hotel’s success fluctuated. Carstensen repeatedly expressed concern that hotel and passenger earnings were declining, to which Holland invariably responded by trying to allay his fears.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, guest numbers were down, while employee numbers grew. Indeed, by mid-August that year the hotel had only forty guests.<sup>18</sup>

In order to offset dismal hotel earnings, the N.V.B. & S.R.R. had to make a concerted effort to entice Norfolkins to its resort. It needed to encourage people to make more day trips to the beach, which would directly benefit the railroad through ticket sales. In response to Groves’ request, the company agreed to sell \$1 excursion tickets, good for a dinner and

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<sup>16</sup>Carstensen to Holland, March 21, 1899, Holland to Carstensen, March 21, 1899, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>17</sup>Carstensen to Holland, May 21, 23, June 28, 1899, Holland to Carstensen, May 27, June 21, 30, 1899, Clarence Morgan to Holland, July 19, 1899, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>18</sup>W. T. McCullough (General Manager of N.V.B. & S.R.R.) to Holland, August 17, 1899, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

bath at Groves' Atlantic Hotel, knowing it could increase its passenger receipts in the process. The railroad also encouraged a photographer to set up a tent near the hotel's bathhouse, planning to reap 20 percent of his earnings. Not only would the photograph gallery earn the railroad money, it would also serve as a new drawing card for the resort. Additionally, Holland arranged for a test of free vaudeville entertainment for the month of June in the Atlantic Hotel theatre. The railroad and Groves split the cost of the attraction, in which up to fifteen personalities would be engaged per week, hoping it would help both the railroad's excursion business and Groves' hotel.<sup>19</sup> The vaudeville bill was advertised weekly in the *Norfolk Landmark* during June, but the attraction seemed to be eclipsed by the vaudeville shows at the Ocean View Casino, which received excessive acclaim in Norfolk newspaper articles. By mid-July the shows ended at Virginia Beach.<sup>20</sup>

In the absence of elaborate rides and shows that were common at Atlantic City and Coney Island, one popular means of attracting Norfolknians to Virginia Beach around the turn of the century was with fireworks displays. These tended to be confined to less than spectacular skyrockets.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the railroad company relied on reduced train fares for evening and night trains to maintain attendance. Holland reported to Skitt in New York that the fireworks display staged one July night in 1899 cost \$90 for fireworks and \$10 for

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<sup>19</sup>Holland to Carstensen, May 17, 1899, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>20</sup>*Public Ledger*, June 21, 24, 29, July 8, 1901.

<sup>21</sup>Arthur and Clarence Barco, interview by Edgar T. Brown, tape recording, Virginia Beach, July 7, 1985.

advertising, while earning a net profit of between \$200 and \$250. About two weeks later another display was held in spite of an impending severe thunderstorm. The railroad sold 696 special twenty-five-cent tickets, and Holland noted that if the weather had been more favorable, 2,000 likely would have come to the beach.<sup>22</sup>

On November 1, 1899, the Norfolk and Southern Railroad, which already controlled rail lines running from Norfolk to eastern North Carolina, purchased the Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Southern Railroad for \$529,000, heralding the prospect of redoubling efforts to tap the potentially lucrative Norfolk market.<sup>23</sup> The new owners of the railroad attempted to increase the number of passengers on its resort-bound trains by making patronage more attractive. In early 1900 the railroad announced that beach cottagers could buy monthly commutation tickets from May to October at special low rates.<sup>24</sup> By June the company had arranged to allow the Norfolk and Western Railway to run its "Ocean Shore Limited" between Richmond and Virginia Beach once daily. This arrangement would benefit not only the Norfolk and Western through ticket sales, but also the Norfolk and Southern, which must have received a portion of the profits from these trains.<sup>25</sup>

Independence Day and Labor Day naturally drew the largest crowds to American seaside resorts, including Ocean View and Virginia Beach. The days were filled with sporting

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<sup>22</sup>Holland to Skitt, July 28, August 16, 1899, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>23</sup>*Poor's Manual of Railroads*, 1901, 351; *Norfolk Landmark*, February 17, 1900.

<sup>24</sup>*Norfolk Landmark*, February 17, 1900.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, June 14, 1901.

activities, contests, picnics, swimming, and completed by fireworks displays. Ocean View's displays surpassed those at Virginia Beach around the turn of the century. Each year the Norfolk newspapers advertised "Pain's Fireworks" at Ocean View, almost thoroughly neglecting displays at Virginia Beach. Pain's Fireworks originated in the 1880s at Coney Island, introduced by Henry J. Pain, an English immigrant. His shows, celebrated for their fantastic extravagance, typically included such recreations as Niagara Falls and closed with the colorful eruption of Mount Vesuvius and "burying" of Pompeii in shrouds of magnesium powder.<sup>26</sup> Virginia Beach finally attracted a Pain's display in 1904 but still failed to receive adequate attention in Norfolk's seemingly biased papers. If the Norfolk press favored Ocean View as late as the early 1900s, Norfolkiens began to discover Virginia Beach's appeal somewhat sooner. Between 1898 and 1900, an estimated 4,000 to 8,000 people came to Virginia Beach each Independence Day. On Labor Day in 1901, the railroad carried about 10,000 passengers to the resort.<sup>27</sup> Clearly, Virginia Beach had grown considerably, for in 1883 only about 6,000 people visited over a two-month period. Thus, it appears that Virginia Beach benefitted from new efforts to offer more attractions and lower train fares aimed at Norfolk's masses.

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<sup>26</sup>Richard Snow, *Coney Island: A Postcard Journey to the City of Fire* (New York: Brightwaters Press, 1984), 45.

<sup>27</sup>*Norfolk Landmark*, July 5, 1898, July 5, 1900, September 3, 1901; *Public Ledger*, July 5, 1899.

Although Virginia Beach was home to only about 75 to 100 year-round residents in 1900, B. P. Holland believed it would make a fine winter home, especially for avid sportsmen. He wrote, "There are places one can go, and by paying a small sum for board, a guide and decoys, get good shooting within a radius of a half mile of the [Princess Anne] hotel."<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, Holland's endorsement of Virginia Beach as a desirable place to live could not erase the fact that few people had purchased lots by the turn of the century. In 1900 the railroad company relinquished its control of the Virginia Beach resort property, selling 1,300 acres of land for \$125,000 to the newly-formed Virginia Beach Development Company, headed by James S. Groves and dominated by Philadelphia investors. The property, which included the Princess Anne and Atlantic Hotels, underwent many changes under Groves' supervision to become more attractive to Norfolkiens.<sup>29</sup> A new plat map of the property, prepared by the company, reflected an apparent attempt to imitate Atlantic City. Virginia Beach's north-south streets, with the exception of Atlantic Avenue, had always been named for various trees, while the east-west streets carried numbers. The new plat adopted the Atlantic City street scheme, renaming the north-south streets for bodies of water -- Atlantic, Pacific, Arctic, Baltic, Mediterranean, and Caspian Avenues -- and the east-west streets for states of the Union. These name changes probably were intended to boost Virginia Beach's

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<sup>28</sup>Holland to Matthews, January 22, 1900, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>29</sup>*Public Ledger*, June 12, 1900; Mansfield, *A Pictorial History*, 79. The Atlantic Hotel, originally the Ocean Shore Park Hotel, experienced repeated financial troubles and was known by several successive names: the Inverness, the Atlantic, the Virginia, the Gulf Stream, the Randolph, and Hotel Virginia Beach.

image as a nationally prominent seaside resort in the eyes of Norfolkians, but the changes did not transfer completely from paper to reality. The east-west streets remained numbered streets, probably because it would be difficult to remember which street carried the name of which state.<sup>30</sup>

More important than changing street names was the Virginia Beach Development Company's commitment to providing a variety of amusements and selling building lots. The company soon contracted with the Southern Amusement Company to construct mechanical amusement rides, including the largest switchback railroad in the South, and amusement pavilions along the boardwalk near Tenth Street.<sup>31</sup> The developers divided the resort into more than 60 blocks, each containing 12 to 20 building lots, most of which measured 50 X 140 feet. When the company acquired Virginia Beach, nearly fifty of the existing oceanfront lots had cottages. By contrast, only eleven cottages had been erected on the numerous landlocked parcels. However, most of the oceanfront cottages were not occupied during the winter. Most of the few year-round residents lived away from the beach because many people feared the ocean.<sup>32</sup> The company worked to improve the beach's physical plant, contracting with a Norfolk firm to construct gas, electric lighting, sewerage, and heating plants. It also surfaced a few streets with granolithic pavement to make the lots more desirable. Virginia

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<sup>30</sup>Map of Virginia Beach, ca. 1900, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>31</sup>*Public Ledger*, May 29, 1901. Switchback railways were early roller coasters with gentle hills that mimicked mine trains.

<sup>32</sup>deWitt, interview.

Beach clearly was still very much a seasonal resort strip with few features of a permanent community. Most of the resort property remained undeveloped pine flats with only crude sand or seashell roads. With the Virginia Beach Development Company now rested the responsibility for shaping a year-round community.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the railroad's withdrawal from the business of developing the seaside resort, railroads would continue to play an important role in the growth of Virginia Beach. A new railroad route to the seashore soon would alter the dynamics of Virginia Beach's growth. In 1898 James R. Werth, the general manager of the Farmville and Powhatan Railroad Company of Richmond, and some of his associates formed a syndicate to construct an electric railroad from Lynnhaven Bay through Cape Henry to Virginia Beach. He arranged with the N.V.B. & S.R.R., which still owned the resort property in 1898, to acquire a two-mile right-of-way to the north of the Princess Anne Hotel, but no further action was taken.<sup>34</sup>

In 1899 another syndicate, the Chesapeake Transit Company, was formed to build a railway between Virginia Beach and Cape Henry, where it saw the potential for handsome profits. The purpose of the syndicate was two-fold -- to open up a new seaside resort and extract valuable lumber at Cape Henry, which lay at the southern end of the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. (See Map 2.) The cape had long remained undeveloped and presented attractive possibilities for developers. Despite the fact that most of the land between the coast

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<sup>33</sup>Map of Virginia Beach, ca. 1900, Edgar T. Brown Collection; *Norfolk Landmark*, May 19, 1901.

<sup>34</sup>Holland to Carstensen, July 19, 1898, Edgar T. Brown Collection.



and Broad Bay was a blackwater cypress swamp known as the "Desert," the tract offered several miles of beach. In February of 1890 the Cape Henry Park and Land Company had formed and soon acquired over 5,500 acres of land, which it began subdividing into cottage lots. In 1899 the company was reorganized as the Cape Henry Syndicate, and logging operations soon commenced.<sup>35</sup>

If the Chesapeake Transit Company was to realize its plans, it first had to acquire the "Desert." The company hoped to begin work on the new line as soon as an agreement could be made with the Virginia Beach railroad. J. Edward Cole, who represented the company, informed N.V.B. & S.R.R. general superintendent B. P. Holland in July of 1899 that his company wanted the railroad to donate \$10,000 or any portion of the railroad's land north of the Seatack Life Saving Station. Holland first refused to donate money or land, noting that while the line would increase the value of adjacent beach lots, the right-of-way would also become a valuable asset.<sup>36</sup> About a week later, however, a proposed agreement was discussed. The N.V.B. & S.R.R. stated that in the event that the Chesapeake Transit Company acquired the "Desert," it would give the syndicate a right-of-way through Atlantic Avenue to the northern limit of its property, provided that the resort to be established at Cape Henry would be "only for persons of the caucasian race." This stipulation suggested that the N.V.B. & S.R.R. feared that the presence of a nearby resort allowing African Americans

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<sup>35</sup>Mansfield, 88, 95.

<sup>36</sup>Holland to Carstensen, July 19, 1898, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

would compromise the reputation of Virginia Beach itself. The railroad also agreed to give the syndicate a small portion of the profits on sales of lots along Atlantic Avenue.<sup>37</sup>

Erupting with new life, Werth's dormant syndicate soon complicated the matter. Hoping to resurrect his year-old agreement with the N.V.B. & S.R.R., Werth was frustrated to learn that the Chesapeake Transit Company had already gained control of the "Desert" and could offer "many million of feet of lumber" for shipment on the N.V.B. & S.R.R.'s existing line. Determined to acquire the necessary right-of-way for his rail line either by deed or condemnation, Werth offered to transport the lumber on a basis equitable to that of the Chesapeake Transit Company and the Cape Henry Syndicate.<sup>38</sup> In September of 1899, the *Norfolk Landmark* reported that although the two companies were competing to build a line between Virginia Beach and Cape Henry, if one company started the other likely would drop out. It was believed that the Chesapeake Transit Company, possessing more capital, was more likely to build the line than its competitor and would begin work in autumn. O. D. Jackson, a company representative, told the paper the road would tap 200 million feet of marketable lumber and noted that his company was making arrangements with the N.V.B. & S.R.R. to help handle lumber, oysters, and truck crops on its line.<sup>39</sup> Although the Chesapeake

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<sup>37</sup>Memorandum of proposed agreement with J. E. Cole, July 25, 1899, B. P. Holland Papers, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>38</sup>James R. Werth to Capt. W. H. White, August 16, 1899, Holland to Werth, August 17, 1899, Werth to Holland, August 18, 1899, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>39</sup>*Norfolk Landmark*, September 3, 1899.

Transit Company eclipsed its competitor, work on the electric line did not begin until three years later.

In anticipation of rail service, W. D. Southall and Company of Norfolk, agents for the Cape Henry Syndicate, sold a number of Cape Henry beach lots in 1902. By August that year, the Chesapeake Transit Company completed its trestle over Lynnhaven Inlet, and within a month the tracks extended around the cape and southward towards Virginia Beach.<sup>40</sup> In mid-September the company inaugurated regular hourly service between Norfolk and Cape Henry, advertising the cape as having the “[f]inest scenery on the Atlantic coast” and the “Sand Mountains,” which were towering dunes, some as high as seventy feet, separating the beach from the swampy “Desert.” A round trip to the cape cost thirty cents, ten cents less than the N.V.B. & S.R.R.’s fare to Virginia Beach. The rail line opened up an area formerly as inaccessible “as though it were in Africa.”<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Cape Henry had always been remote, isolated from the city by Lynnhaven Inlet and Broad Bay and lacking improved roadways. As late as 1902, the cape boasted only the two lighthouses and a U.S. Life Saving Station. The cape was noted for its thickets of wild grapes that punctuated the shifting sand dunes. Virginia Beach cottagers often walked or rode horseback the six miles to the cape, where they picked the grapes to use for jam and preserves.<sup>42</sup> With the opening of the Chesapeake Transit

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<sup>40</sup>*Public Ledger*, September 6, 1902.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, September 19, 20, 1902.

<sup>42</sup>deWitt, interview.

line, the cape was now easily accessible to a growing Norfolk, which by 1902 had about 50,000 people.<sup>43</sup> It seemed plausible that Cape Henry, with its massive “sand mountains” and pristine beach, in time would rival Virginia Beach.

The new resort at Cape Henry did show much promise. The facility with which Norfolkins were conveyed to the cape produced great excitement. In 1903 the Chesapeake Transit Company erected a wooden dancing pavilion similar to the new one near Tenth Street at Virginia Beach, which was constructed the same year to alleviate overcrowding at the Princess Anne Hotel’s pavilion.<sup>44</sup> An even greater attraction, the Cape Henry Casino, opened on July 4, 1903. William J. O’Keefe, the owner of the casino, began his resort career a year earlier as the proprietor of an ice cream parlor in the basement of the Princess Anne Hotel. While in Virginia Beach, O’Keefe often walked six miles to the Cape Henry Life Saving Station after work. He developed great affection for the cape and soon decided to open the Cape Henry Casino, which seemed certain to succeed with regular daily trains passing it. Indeed, his establishment, which soon was known simply as O’Keefe’s Casino, quickly became the home of nationally-famous raw, fried, and roasted Lynnhaven oysters. With its long picnic tables that were restocked constantly with oysters, O’Keefe’s became a favorite haunt of Norfolkins, especially on New Year’s Eve, when a special dinner-breakfast of oysters and Smithfield ham was served. O’Keefe’s also provided bathhouses, a soda fountain

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<sup>43</sup>Andriot, 690.

<sup>44</sup>*Public Ledger*, June 29, 1903; Dunn and Lyle, 35.

and ice cream parlor, refreshment stands, and another dancing pavilion, made popular by Borjes' Orchestra.<sup>45</sup> Other pastimes at Cape Henry included climbing and sliding down the "sand mountains," enjoying a picnic atop these promontories, and picking wild huckleberries and blackberries at their base.<sup>46</sup>

Cape Henry enjoyed such great success that the Chesapeake Transit Company increased its capital from \$500,000 to \$630,000 to transport increasing numbers of Norfolians and to build larger facilities. The following summer the company offered twenty-five-cent "moonlight excursions" to Cape Henry every night for about two weeks. Pain's Fireworks came to Cape Henry at the same time Virginia Beach first enjoyed them.<sup>47</sup> By 1908 the Cape Henry Beach Company was formed to promote the resort. The company regularly advertised building lots, which it claimed it was selling "to people you will be pleased to have as neighbors. To the most reliable business men of Norfolk, whose chief aim and object is to secure a quiet, comfortable Summer home on the prettiest stretch of beach on the Atlantic, away from the overcrowded unsanitary districts of the so-called seaside resort." Although it is uncertain whether the company was referring to Ocean View or Virginia Beach, it seems probable that it was the former because Virginia Beach did not fit this disparaging description. The company also tantalized Norfolians with the prospect of

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<sup>45</sup>*Public Ledger*, July 1, 1903; Dunn and Lyle, 33.

<sup>46</sup>Dunn and Lyle, 29.

<sup>47</sup>*Public Ledger*, July 2, 1903, June 24, July 2, 1904.

building the John Smith Inn, a Swiss-style, gambrel-roofed hotel that was to feature ball rooms, bowling alleys, and billiard parlors.

Despite the considerable popularity of Cape Henry for daily excursions, it failed to become a complete resort. Within a year it was clear that the John Smith Inn would not be built, and the Cape Henry Beach Company quietly dissolved.<sup>48</sup> Although the Cape Henry Syndicate assumed responsibility for the land and later revived lot sales for a time, within a few years another development would preclude any future attempts to make Cape Henry a sizeable resort.

While introducing the short-lived threat of a new competitor, the new electric line did more to advance the development of Virginia Beach than to impede it. By May of 1903, the Chesapeake Transit Company advertised twenty-four daily trains to Cape Henry and Virginia Beach. The forty-cent fare to the beach equalled that of the Norfolk and Southern Railroad. The new company's line, while taking longer to reach the beach, took a jab at its competitor, trumpeting: "No smoke! No cinders! No dust!"<sup>49</sup> Not to be outdone, the Norfolk and Southern responded with an advertisement reminding Norfolkkians that its line, offering "coke burning engines," "dustless roadbed," and "high class train service," was the "Quickest Route to the Ocean." The railroad even sold tickets at Norfolk hotels and drug stores that included street car fare to its Atlantic Terminal Station at Atlantic and Plume Streets. Further, it

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<sup>48</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, May 3, 10, 25, 1908.

<sup>49</sup>*Public Ledger*, May 2, 1903.

augmented its 1903 summer schedule, offering fourteen daily trains.<sup>50</sup> In order to level the playing field, the Norfolk and Southern extended its tracks northward to the cape, paralleling the Chesapeake Transit's rails, and converted from steam to electric power.<sup>51</sup> Virginia Beach, of course, benefitted greatly from this railroad war, enjoying a combined thirty-eight daily trains to Lake Station, near the Princess Anne Hotel.

On April 15, 1904, the Chesapeake Transit Company's Pittsburgh interests agreed to buy the Norfolk and Southern Railroad's 149 miles of tracks in Virginia and eastern North Carolina. In the process, the Norfolk and Southern, controlled by the Vanderbilt interest since 1896, passed into the hands of George J. Gould, who was the president of the Great Wabash Railroad as well as an investor in the Chesapeake Transit line. The sale seems to have been misread by Norfolk and Princess Anne County observers, who anticipated the building of a breakwater and railroad, coal, and merchandise piers at Lynnhaven Inlet. To be sure, Lynnhaven Inlet was widely regarded as the best point along the Atlantic coast for the establishment of deepwater railroad terminals.<sup>52</sup> The *Public Ledger* observed:

Everyone who has been over the Chesapeake Transit line has noticed the immense rails of that company's tracks, and from the time they were laid, it has been confidently expected here that they were intended for the heavy traffic that would be, necessarily, incident to the erection of coal and

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., May 3, 23, 1903.

<sup>51</sup>James Jordan IV and Frederick S. Jordan, *Virginia Beach: A Pictorial History* (Richmond: Hale, 1975), 40.

<sup>52</sup>*Public Ledger*, April 18, 1904.

merchandise piers on Chesapeake Bay. It was scarcely thinkable that they could have been laid for any other purpose, such monster rails having no legitimate connection with a trolley passenger line, and the building of piers on the Bay shore -- to save the long run of steamships to and from Lambert's Point for coal -- was known to be commercially inevitable.<sup>53</sup>

The purchase of the Norfolk and Southern Railroad, a large company, by a small electric line was so unusual that it is not surprising local observers expected the Great Wabash Railroad to use the purchase as the impetus for building a deepwater terminal. They pointed out that the Great Wabash needed the Norfolk and Southern because the Chesapeake Transit line lacked a bridge over the Elizabeth River, which was necessary to connect to the Great Wabash's great inland railroad empire. The Norfolk and Southern controlled the Belt Line Railway, affording a bridge over the Southern Branch of the Elizabeth River, and had a trestle over the Eastern Branch on its Virginia Beach line.<sup>54</sup>

Although the deepwater terminal was never developed, the railroad merger still had important implications. The immediate significance was that the two competing seacoast lines now would be converted into a single electric trolley line operating a Norfolk, Cape Henry, and Virginia Beach loop. Some people in Norfolk and Princess Anne feared that the merger, eliminating competition, would end reasonable fares. Their concerns were eased when fares remained at existing levels. Physically, the merger simply meant that one company now operated what two companies previously had administered. However, the agreement paved

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., April 19, 1904.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., April 18, 19, 1904.



the way for the electrification of the old Virginia Beach line. Despite an injunction granted in New York in the summer of 1904 to restrain temporarily the merger, the consolidation was fully completed by 1905.<sup>55</sup> The fact that the reorganized company continued to use the name Norfolk and Southern, doubtless in realization of name recognition, has misled past accounts of the merger to state that the Norfolk and Southern Railroad purchased the Chesapeake Transit Company.

The long-term implication of the merger was that it led to the promotion of Virginia Beach and Cape Henry at an unprecedented level. Controlling the route to both resorts enabled the new Norfolk and Southern Railroad to stimulate Norfolkians' interest in excursions to both. Importantly, the fact that both resorts now were being promoted in a complementary manner by the railroad defeated the boosterism and puffery that had sought to glorify Cape Henry at Virginia Beach's expense. By the 1905 season the forty-two-mile electric loop offered trains to Virginia Beach every half hour, half via the longer cape road and half on the old road. The trains stopped at Lake Station, Seventeenth Street, and Twenty-fourth Street. The resulting increase in excursion travel led the railroad to move from its Atlantic Terminal Station to a new depot at the end of City Hall Avenue. The following year the railroad began offering "moonlight excursions" to the beach every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, arriving at the Princess Anne in time for dinner and dancing.<sup>56</sup> The

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., April 18, 19, June 27, 1904, February 13, 1905.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., April 29, May 15, 1905; *Ledger-Dispatch*, July 17, 24, 28, 1906.

increased excursion travel indicated that Virginia Beach finally was making progress in its effort to attract Norfolkiens.

If Cape Henry did not threaten to reduce Virginia Beach's crowds in the way Ocean View always had, the situation was complicated in 1905 by the arrival of yet another competitor. Situated near Sewell's Point on Hampton Roads, just five miles north of Norfolk, Pine Beach immediately was dubbed "The Queen of Resorts" and "The Coney Island of the South." (See Map 2.) The familiar claim of being the safest bathing spot on the Atlantic again was advanced, though Pine Beach perhaps had the most credible claim because its location on the tranquil waters of Hampton Roads precluded the risk of dangerous undertow. Lacking the distinction of being an ocean resort, Pine Beach instead emphasized that it offered numerous amusements, including bathhouses, a "Luna Park" circle swing like the one at Coney's famous Luna Park, a scenic waterway, a carousel with a \$3,000 organ, the 2,000-seat Palace Theatre for "polite vaudeville," and the largest pavilion in the United States. Like Ocean View and Virginia Beach, Pine Beach was reached by its own trolley line. Although it advertised "No undesirable characters permitted in the surf," Pine Beach promoters certainly did not check too closely the 10,000 people who visited on its inaugural day. The beach became a popular alternative to nearby Ocean View, especially after its 150-room Pine Beach Hotel opened later that summer. By August of 1905, Pain's Fireworks show arrived, dazzling visitors with its "Peacock Plumes," "Golden Comets," "Prismatic Dragons," and "Mount Vesuvius Eruption." Like its northern counterpart, the Coney Island of the South

offered such captivating, exotic spectacles as Diana the Fire Dancer, making Virginia Beach appear comparatively pastoral.<sup>57</sup>

Indeed, Virginia Beach still suffered from a lack of exciting attractions in 1905. Although it was founded more than two decades earlier on the assumption that it would in time surpass Atlantic City, Virginia Beach had yet to add amusements on a scale that would draw immense crowds. The early twentieth century was a time in which this fledgling resort reassessed its identity, abandoning pretensions to greatness and concentrating on becoming a stable community. By 1905 the idea of incorporating the beach as a town had been raised a number of times. It seemed that the formation of a town would bolster the beach's ability to develop further. The fact that Virginia Beach was begun as a resort about thirty years after Atlantic City put it at an incredible disadvantage. Not only was its northern model three decades more established, it had solved its infrastructure problems long before the great era of industrialization and urbanization arrived by the 1880s. As a result, Atlantic City was poised to take full advantage of Americans' newfound desire to take seashore vacations. By contrast, Virginia Beach struggled through the 1880s and 1890s, having inadequate fire and police protection, a minuscule sewage system, and poor drainage. By the early 1900s, influential beach property owners decided that these problems could best be solved by forming a town.

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<sup>57</sup>*Public Ledger*, May 5, 29, July 3, August 8, 1905.

Late in 1905 the beach cottagers appointed B. P. Holland, W. J. Wright, A. J. Ackiss, William J. O'Keefe, and David Stormont to draft a charter for the proposed town.<sup>58</sup> The Virginia General Assembly approved the charter, and on March 15, 1906, Virginia Beach became a town with Holland as mayor.<sup>59</sup> Importantly, Virginia Beach was the only incorporated town in Princess Anne, providing a focal point in a county that had always lacked a "center."<sup>60</sup> The town council met in the Princess Anne Hotel and occasionally elsewhere until a town hall could be constructed. The council's first action was to address the town's sanitary conditions and appearance. Holland contended that Lake Holly, whose stagnant water provided a perennial breeding place for mosquitoes, was "the greatest menace to our health." He suggested that either the flume conveying salt water along Thirteenth Street to the pond should be repaired, or oil should be poured into the water. If these measures failed the lake should be filled in. Holland also urged that other improvements be made, including building a wider boardwalk, improving streets and sidewalks, and beautifying the town.<sup>61</sup> Another pressing need was the construction of an adequate sewage and water system to eliminate the practice of channelling inadequately treated wastewater into Linkhorn

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., September 9, 1905.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., March 16, 1906.

<sup>60</sup>*Princess Anne Times* (Virginia Beach), May 14, 1915. Even Princess Anne Court House, little more than a courthouse and a few houses surrounded by a veritable wilderness, was never incorporated.

<sup>61</sup>Virginia Beach Town Council Minute Book 0 (1906-1908), 17. Virginia Beach City Clerk's Office.

Bay, whose bounty of oysters, crabs, and clams attracted resort visitors. Holland also took measures to prohibit chickens, ducks, geese, and cows from being kept within Virginia Beach's corporate limits.<sup>62</sup>

In order to finance extensive infrastructure improvements, necessary if Virginia Beach was to become a first-class resort, the town council decided to issue \$72,000 in bonds at 6 percent interest. This was the town's maximum allowed indebtedness, based on the \$400,000 assessed value of the town's property in 1906.<sup>63</sup> Two months later, however, the town's assessed value was determined to be only about \$300,000, forcing the bond issue to fall to \$54,000. This source of revenue proved sufficient to enable many improvements to be made, including building a wider boardwalk between the Princess Anne and the pavilion, several brick sidewalks, and a new town hall, and contracting with the Norfolk and Southern Railroad to provide lighting for the entire town from its electric plant.<sup>64</sup> Although much remained to be done, Virginia Beach now had the ability, albeit limited, to rectify infrastructure problems by issuing bonds and levying property taxes.

Such improvements were particularly necessary because of a coming event that could win Virginia Beach many new visitors. Anxiously awaited by Norfolkkians, the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition, a seven-month celebration of the 300th anniversary of the

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<sup>62</sup>*Public Ledger*, March 20, 1906.

<sup>63</sup>Virginia Beach Town Council Minute Book 0 (1906-1908), 45-46.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 106, 113, 115, 178.

founding of the nation's first permanent English settlement, was expected to draw an unprecedented number of tourists to the Tidewater in 1907. Located next to the Exposition grounds, Pine Beach offered accommodations for some patrons. Virginia Beach also hoped to enjoy its share of revenue by promoting its ability to house many visitors. The Norfolk and Southern eventually arranged with the Norfolk and Portsmouth Traction Company to provide special electric trolley service to the exposition, allowing passengers to take trolleys between Virginia Beach and the exposition grounds.<sup>65</sup> As expected, the Jamestown Exposition opened with great fanfare. An estimated 54,000 people from around the world arrived to experience its formal opening by President Theodore Roosevelt on April 26, 1907. Many came aboard steamers that docked at Pine Beach's pier. The exposition featured daily attractions, usually elaborate, patriotic festivities that effectively complemented attractions at adjacent Pine Beach.<sup>66</sup>

The coming of the Jamestown Exposition had persuaded the Princess Anne Investment Company in late 1906 to expand and renovate the Princess Anne Hotel, recently purchased from the Virginia Beach Development Company for about \$135,000. The holding company planned to spend \$100,000 to enlarge the hotel to 220 rooms, and to add a new café, billiard room, and ballroom.<sup>67</sup> These ambitious plans were not fully executed, resulting

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<sup>65</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, July 26, 1907.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, April 26, 1907.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, June 11, 1906; *Virginian-Pilot* (Norfolk), September 6, 1906.

in a \$50,000 expenditure on hotel improvements but no additional rooms. Before the opening of the exposition and the 1907 summer season, the Princess Anne was sold to the Princess Anne Hotel Corporation, which in turn leased it to A. C. Mitchell of Asheville, North Carolina. Anticipating a great exposition business and steady growth thereafter, Mitchell signed a five-year lease.<sup>68</sup>

In the early morning hours of June 10, 1907, Carl H. Boeschen, a sergeant in the Richmond Light Artillery Blues staying at a Virginia Beach cottage, awoke and prepared to catch the first train to the Jamestown Exposition, where he was to act as an escort to President Roosevelt on his visit. As the young man made his way to Lake Station at about four o'clock, he found flames leaping through the roof of the southwest corner of the Princess Anne Hotel. Boeschen dashed into the hotel, waking the night bellboy, who assisted him in rushing through the smoky corridors to alert sleeping guests. Soon the eighty guests and thirty hotel workers began pouring out of the burning hotel, many in their night clothes. About 2,000 townspeople and visitors rushed to the scene within minutes.

It soon became apparent that the entire seaside town was in danger of being engulfed in the conflagration. Although the town charter provided for fire protection, its fire department had yet to be organized. The town's waterworks system was to have become operational the next day, the hydrants and 80,000-gallon holding tank having already been

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<sup>68</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, April 26, June 10, 1907.

completed.<sup>69</sup> As a result, a bucket brigade, mostly of women, soon formed between the hotel and the ocean. The intense heat soon ignited the boardwalk, threatening to send a ribbon of fire up and down the oceanfront cottage line. As the bucket brigade struggled to protect adjacent cottages, a number of men and women began tearing up the wooden planks to check the spread of the flames. In a herculean effort, the bucket brigade managed to save the cottage line. As the hotel's bar caught fire, people inside began tossing bottles of whiskey out the windows, which were caught by many outside. One observer later exclaimed, "Not one bottle hit the ground broke."<sup>70</sup>

After twenty minutes one of the largest hotels on the Atlantic coast was completely engulfed in flames. Two hours later the once-elegant Queen Anne style hostelry was reduced to a smoldering ruin. Only the three brick chimneys stood as blackened sentinels amid the scorched rubble. The lawn surrounding the hotel emerged as charred sand, and the nearby railroad depot was destroyed. The heroic actions of Sergeant Boeschen probably accounted for the astoundingly low death toll. Only John Eaten, a pantryman from Boston, and Emma Clark, an African American chambermaid, perished in the fire. However, most who did escape lost all their personal belongings. The fire, believed to have started in the kitchen, was

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<sup>69</sup>Eighmey, 67.

<sup>70</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, June 10, 1907; *Norfolk Landmark*, June 11, 1907.



especially distressing to A. C. Mitchell, who had to be guarded to prevent him from self-destruction. Mitchell lost all his worldly possessions.<sup>71</sup>

In the wake of the fire, Mitchell examined the contents of the hotel's office safe. About 200 African American hotel employees, concerned that they had not been paid, gathered as the safe was opened. A number of gold and silver coins were retrieved, but the extreme heat of the fire had ruined the wooden boxes containing paper money. Planning to take the charred notes to be redeemed at a Norfolk bank, Mitchell attempted to board a trolley. Before he could reach the trolley, several of the unpaid hotel workers seized him, demanding that he must not leave with the contents of the safe until they had been paid their wages. Having little choice in the matter, Mitchell remained at the beach until the matter could be settled.<sup>72</sup>

The loss of its flagship hotel perhaps was the strongest impetus for the reassessment of the resort's purpose. Without a grand hotel the town would no longer be as attractive to wealthy northerners, who usually were not content to stay in cottages with fewer amenities. Virginia Beach would now have to rely more than ever on Virginians to fill its coffers. To be sure, northerners did continue to patronize the other large hotel, which now changed its name from the Randolph to Hotel Virginia Beach, but this hostelry was only about half the

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, June 13, 1907.

size of the burned hotel.<sup>73</sup> As a result, the resort's tourism business languished.<sup>74</sup> A sampling of two social registers published in the *Ledger-Dispatch* two years after the fire suggests that Virginians accounted for almost half of Hotel Virginia Beach's guests.<sup>75</sup> If the resort's promoters saw the need to attract more Virginians, they were reluctant to abandon the hope of again attracting the well-heeled from the North. Indeed, just two days after the Princess Anne burned, officials spoke of the "inevitability" that the hotel would be rebuilt on an even grander scale.<sup>76</sup> Little more than one year later, it was announced that parties in New York had formed a syndicate to purchase the Virginia Beach Development Company's 1,700 acres of land and build a hotel north of the site of the Princess Anne.<sup>77</sup> The failure of the syndicate to acquire the resort underscored the need to redirect the beach's promotional efforts.

During the next few years, Virginia Beach promoters redoubled their efforts to make the resort attractive to Norfolknians and other Virginians. The Norfolk newspapers increasingly touted the beach in advertisements and articles in the years following the great hotel fire. Asserting that 5,000 people could be accommodated in Virginia Beach's hotels and cottages, one advertisement emphasized the resort's improved infrastructure and facilities -- two-mile boardwalk along the oceanfront, three miles of cement sidewalks, modern sewerage

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., June 13, 1907.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., July 3, 1925.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., August 13, 19, 1909.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., June 12, 1907.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., July 6, 1908.

and water system, five miles of lighted streets, and new amusements such as the largest switchback railroad in the South.<sup>78</sup> By 1909, the *Ledger-Dispatch* assured Norfolkians that recent improvements at Virginia Beach have rendered it “in line with the finest Northern seaside resorts.” While this claim certainly was exaggerated, Virginia Beach soon did offer improved amusements, operated by the Atlantic Amusement Corporation. In 1910 the grand opening of the summer season was accompanied by the introduction of the biggest searchlight on the Atlantic coast, which threw “its vari-colored rays far out to sea, making the brilliant, dazzling, bewildering, magnificent effect ever devised at a summer resort.”<sup>79</sup>

For the first time, the resort began to follow the lead of Atlantic City and Coney Island in advertising exotic attractions. In 1910 Norfolkians were urged to see the “wonderful flying machine” on exhibition in the pavilion.<sup>80</sup> The following year an advertisement touted the “Big Man-Eating Shark weighing 1,800 lbs. -- nearly 20 feet long -- caught after a big fight by the fishermen at Virginia Beach.” A ten-cent admission was charged to see the “huge monster.”<sup>81</sup>

However, Virginia Beach was not to evolve into a bawdy resort with the myriad attractions of its more urban counterparts. Rather, the resort’s most popular attraction was its dancing pavilion, which had been located at Tenth Street since 1903. Under the direction

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., July 3, 1907. The switchback railway was located at the pavilion near Tenth Street.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., June 7, 1909, June 11, 13, 1910.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., June 25, 1910.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., August 7, 1911.

of the Virginia Carolina Amusement Corporation by 1910, the "Pavilion Dancing Saloon" featured the music of the Swiss Alpine Village Orchestra and Gargano's Royal Italian Orchestra on Saturday nights.<sup>82</sup> Even more popular was Saturday night dancing at the Hotel Virginia Beach's ballroom the following year. In order to promote dancing at the hotel, the Norfolk and Southern electric line in 1911 began operating the "Two-Step Express" between Norfolk and Hotel Virginia Beach. The trolley left Norfolk at 7:45 P.M., arriving at the hotel in time for dancing at 8:30 P.M. The hotel was to host dancing until a new pavilion could be built on the northern fringe of the resort.<sup>83</sup>

Occasionally the pleasant resort atmosphere at the beach was marred by criminal activity. Although Virginia Beach never had a significant problem to match its northern counterparts, it did experience some crime. Most crimes at the resort were of a nonviolent nature. Many involved violations of laws against selling liquor on Sundays and gambling. In 1903, Princess Anne County voters elected to ban the sale of liquor countywide. However, the Virginia state law that provided for a majority vote to determine liquor sales exempted seaside hotels. Hence, Virginia Beach's five saloons continued to serve spirits as sixteen saloons in other parts of the county closed.<sup>84</sup> Being the oasis in a dry county presented challenges to authorities, for Virginia Beach saloon keepers frequently ignored the law against

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., July 20, 1907, June 9, 1910.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., June 9, 1911.

<sup>84</sup>*Public Ledger*, May 7, 1903.

Sunday liquor sales. In the next few years the Raleigh Bar came under scrutiny repeatedly. In 1903 A. C. Weaver, the Raleigh's owner, was charged with violating the Sunday liquor law and exhibiting slot machines. About five years later William B. Rudolph, a subsequent owner of the Raleigh, faced similar charges. Four bartenders also faced charges of selling alcohol on Sundays.<sup>85</sup> The operation of slot machines became increasingly pervasive in Virginia Beach's hotels and cottages over the next three decades, routinely ignored by officials. The Hotel Virginia Beach narrowly averted a revocation of its liquor license after a disturbance in the hotel bar "in which a pistol was flourished during a heated political dispute."<sup>86</sup> Not only were some saloon keepers on the wrong side of the law, their patrons often presented trouble related to drunkenness and fighting, especially on weekends. A column of the *Princess Anne Times* in 1915 noted, only half-jokingly, "The Beach jail is empty. Will it be so Monday night?"<sup>87</sup>

A few crimes, however, involved robbery and assault. In at least two incidents in the first decade of the twentieth century, resort visitors were robbed. Two laborers building the new scenic railway robbed a man of \$110 in one incident. In another a "fantastically attired" African American man stole \$100, several "fine" umbrellas, and two silver-headed walking canes. Occasionally, violence erupted. Two black employees in the servants' hall of the

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., September 11, 1903; *Ledger-Dispatch*, June 30, 1908, June 29, 1909.

<sup>86</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, August 17, 1910.

<sup>87</sup>*Princess Anne Times*, July 2, 1915.

Princess Anne Hotel had a row in which one attempted to cut the other, only to have a teacup smashed over his head. The shooting of a black hotel cook in 1901 was the only instance of homicide at the resort in the early 1900s.<sup>88</sup>

Although criminal activity existed at Virginia Beach, it did not extinguish the resort's ever-increasing popularity as a family and religious retreat. In addition to the throngs of weekend picnickers from the Norfolk-Portsmouth area, numerous churches sent Sunday school excursions to the beach. Although most came from the immediate Tidewater region, a considerable number hailed from Richmond and as far away as Edenton, North Carolina.

In addition to Sunday school excursions, in 1910 the annual Baptist encampment began being held at Virginia Beach and soon drew more than 1,000 participants.<sup>89</sup> Soon after the Baptists chose the resort for their "Seaside Chautauqua," they opted to establish permanent roots by constructing a large, octagonal pagoda that served as an auditorium.<sup>90</sup> The encampment perennially attracted distinguished speakers from throughout the eastern United States. Among the roster in 1914 were Frederic W. Boatwright, president of Richmond College, and Dr. Edwin M. Poteat, president of Furman University.<sup>91</sup>

If the resort was attractive to religious groups, its healthful setting also caught the attention of the military. In 1908 the Virginia General Assembly authorized the building of

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<sup>88</sup>*Norfolk Landmark*, July 28, 1898, August 1, 1899; *Public Ledger*, July 27, 1901.

<sup>89</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, June 21, 1910, July 8, 1911.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, July 14, 1911; Postcard, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>91</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, July 4, 1914.

a State Rifle Range but did not specify where it would be located. Virginia Beach quickly became one of the most favored sites, and local boosters worked to convince the state that the beach site would allow the soldiers safely to fire guns out over the ocean and might encourage more men to sign up for the militia.<sup>92</sup> After officials were assured that malaria and possible injuries to tourists were highly unlikely, the site one mile south of Virginia Beach was approved in 1912. The decision, however, came only after Virginia Beach residents helped raise money to buy a large farm south of Rudee Inlet to donate to the state. Norfolk Southern extended its tracks to the encampment about fifteen years after its predecessor failed to reach the ill-fated Chautauqua-by-the-Sea. In July 1913 over 1,800 Virginia militiamen began arriving, beginning the trend of an increasing military presence in Virginia Beach.<sup>93</sup>

In 1908, eight years after James S. Groves' Chautauqua-by-the-Sea development collapsed, a new attempt was made to force Virginia Beach's growth southward beyond Rudee Inlet. The South Virginia Beach Corporation of Norfolk began running advertisements in June asserting the inevitability of a new resort. One advertisement noted that "the one thing most needed to make this suburb property increase in value by 'LEAPS AND BOUNDS' is street car transportation across the short distance . . . to Virginia Beach." The corporation relied on its belief that the Norfolk and Southern Railroad would extend its line southward to the proposed State Rifle Range, just north of the South Virginia Beach

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid., April 27, 1908.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., July 5, 1913; Mansfield, 105.

property. If the state did not select the beach site, the corporation planned to build a rail spur itself. Arguing that only a short line would have to be built, the ad claimed construction would be fairly inexpensive, "owing to the fact that the ties can be cut from our own property and the ballast of sand is at hand and the grading is mostly mule scraper work."<sup>94</sup>

According to its promoters, South Virginia Beach was located ideally on two waterfronts, one on the ocean, the other on Lake Christine, named for Groves' daughter.<sup>95</sup> The company encouraged Norfolkins to "go among relatives, friends, and acquaintances and form a syndicate to buy one of our lots, which range in price from \$10 to \$300." The company would then give the syndicates' initiators 20 percent commission in cash for their work. Soon it published a partial list of purchasers of 322 of its 2,600 lots. In addition to many Norfolkins, the purchasers hailed from places as far away as Richmond and Baltimore.<sup>96</sup> However, the South Virginia Beach development floundered when the decision to locate the State Rifle Range at the beach was delayed for four more years. It is not certain why the company did not follow through with its back-up plan of building the rail spur itself. The failure of the venture underscored an intensifying trend of development to the north rather than south of the town.

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<sup>94</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, June 26, July 27, 1908.

<sup>95</sup>*Princess Anne Times*, July 16, 1915.

<sup>96</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, July 27, 1908.



By 1912 the resort-building enterprise had been reassumed by the railroad company, which had been purchased by Norfolk Southern Railroad two years earlier. Since the beginning of Virginia Beach the railroad had played an instrumental role in its development, cornering the market on transportation and attractions. On June 1, 1912, Norfolk Southern opened the \$120,000 Virginia Beach Casino, a complex of three interconnected, pitched-roof frame pavilions that spanned 600 feet of oceanfront.<sup>97</sup> Lying between Thirty-first and Thirty-third Streets on a well-manicured lawn several blocks north of the cottage line, the new casino was reached conveniently by Norfolk Southern's new Casino Station.

The casino included indoor and outdoor amusements, a ballroom, picnic pavilion, and the ritzy Casino Cafe. The cafe, which seated 500 people, offered seventy-five-cent "Shore Dinners" featuring seafood caught twice daily.<sup>98</sup> Amusements included a penny arcade, first-run movies in the Airdome, bowling and billiards, Japanese ball games, a duck pond, a rifle range, the African Dip, and "Haleb, the educated horse."<sup>99</sup> However, the key attraction was the ornate carousel, whose fifty wooden horses, unicorns, lions, and dragons were studded with multicolored jewels. Mirrors and lights overhead combined with the jewels to transform the spinning ride into a "gigantic kaleidoscope."<sup>100</sup> In 1913 the casino added a popular bamboo slide, the Foolish House, and the wooden "Skyscraper" or "Camel Back Coaster,"

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<sup>97</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, June 1, 1912; Mansfield, 105.

<sup>98</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, June 15, 1912.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, July 13, 15, 16, 18, 1912.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, August 31, 1912.

the highest and longest roller coaster in the South.<sup>101</sup> This half-mile long roller coaster was far more exciting than the gently undulating 350-foot-long switchback railway constructed at Rudee Inlet near the Ocean Shore Park Hotel in the mid 1890s.

Although the Virginia Beach Casino provided Norfolkiens with an array of amusements, it did not neglect the simpler pleasures of dancing or swimming. The casino's basement contained 1,000 bathrooms and a kiosk where bathing suits could be rented for the day. By 1914 the casino featured the resort's first swimming pool, supplied with seawater by a powerful pump.<sup>102</sup> The ballroom, however, became the casino's chief venue, attracting large crowds of young Norfolkiens nightly. Norfolk Southern's "Two-Step Express" whisked them to and from the casino. By 1915 the casino added to its existing attractions a Ferris wheel, "Japanese Bazaar," "Crystal Maze," "Hindoo Princess" fortune teller, and free iced artesian well water.<sup>103</sup> The bazaar and fortune teller clearly were offered to satisfy the American fascination with exotic lands beyond distant seas and were an integral part of amusement centers in Atlantic City and Coney Island as well.

In addition to permanent amusements, the Virginia Beach Casino provided patrons with special events, such as a "Triple Parachute Drop and Balloon Ascension" and a military carnival in which the Norfolk Light Artillery Blues would engage in a Sunday battle

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., July 3, 29, August 2, 1913.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., June 23, 1914.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., July 18, 1914, August 6, 13, 1915.

practice.<sup>104</sup> The events gradually became more elaborate, drawing well-known artists. Fred D. Greene, “world’s greatest equilibrist,” performed stunts on the casino plaza in 1914, as did high diver Al Gorman, better known as “Nervo.” It was announced that Nervo, the only man to have jumped off all four of the highest bridges in the United States, was to dive 100 feet from an aerial platform, strike a curved bamboo slide and hurdle headlong into a three-foot-deep water basin, skipping off its surface and somersaulting onto the plaza lawn.<sup>105</sup>

For the first time it appeared that Virginia Beach had achieved a formula for success. With greatly swelled patronage, Norfolk Southern’s advertisements for the Virginia Beach Casino were emboldened to stake new claims. Years after Ocean View christened itself “The Atlantic City of the South” and Pine Beach proclaimed itself “The Coney Island of the South,” Virginia Beach followed suit. Appropriately for a resort that was never fully sure of itself, Virginia Beach never attempted to take Ocean View’s nickname and could not seem to decide just how it stacked up against its northern neighbors. Stopping short of implying that it was the southern equivalent of Atlantic City or Coney Island, and short of offending its two nearby rivals, Norfolk Southern alternately called Virginia Beach “The Most Magnificent Seaside Resort South of New York” and the “Most Magnificent Ocean Resort South of the Jersey Coast.” However, once the State Rifle Range brought over 1,800 Virginia militiamen to the resort, the railroad settled on calling the beach the “Centre of

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid., July 11, 1912; *Virginian-Pilot*, August 10, 1913.

<sup>105</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, June 2, July 18, 1914.

Military Life in Virginia,” abandoning bolder claims.<sup>106</sup> This nickname perhaps was well-deserved, for the presence of the soldiers prompted the railroad to sponsor military balls and brass band concerts at the casino.<sup>107</sup> Along with frequent drills, these events supplemented the beach social round and kept the trolleys busy hauling pleasureseekers between the casino and the encampment. The casino infused the resort with new life, an achievement that was not lost on visitors. Returning to Virginia Beach nearly a decade after his last visit, one patron exclaimed, “[The resort] looks heaps better to me. The last time I was here the old Princess Anne Hotel was the center of attraction and there were no amusements worthy of the name.”<sup>108</sup>

The success of the Virginia Beach Casino also facilitated the Virginia Beach Development Company’s lot sales. In 1913 the company began actively promoting building lots as never before. In the older “Lake Holly” subdivision near the southern end of the beach, the lots were priced between \$400 and \$600. The new “North Casino” section featured lots for \$200 to \$500. The company boasted that more than fifty new homes were under construction, indicating that Virginia Beach’s popularity was far greater than thirteen years earlier when the entire resort claimed only about sixty cottages. About two weeks later the developers advertised that 116 lots had been sold in one week alone. The company even

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<sup>106</sup>Ibid., June 20, July 4, 1912, July 7, 1913.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., July 2, 7, 9, 1913.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., August 14, 1913.

marketed seventy-five oceanfront lots in the “white elephant” South Virginia Beach.<sup>109</sup> Their greatest marketing strategy, however, was not that of assuring potential buyers that many others had already purchased land. Rather, they tantalized them with predictions that land values would soar:

In Newport, one piece of property bought for \$12,000, was resold for \$850,000. Another of \$5,000 in Manchester-by-the-Sea, sold for \$150,000. \$1,400 in Bar Harbor brought \$500,000 . . . . There are still just as good opportunities, for profitable investment in seashore property. One of the BEST is VIRGINIA BEACH.<sup>110</sup>

The Virginia Beach Development Company’s efforts seemed to work, for the town grew substantially. Having perhaps as few as seventy-five permanent residents in 1900, Virginia Beach grew by as much as 1,000 percent to 846 people in the next two decades.<sup>111</sup> Along with the population increase came a heightened sense of community. Virginia Beach began to develop a distinct business district along Seventeenth Street and Atlantic Avenue. The Virginia Beach Grocery delivered to the town’s residents, while hucksters plied the streets selling fresh vegetables and seafood. Numerous businesses sprang up along Seventeenth Street during the first two decades of the twentieth century, including a meat market, two drug stores, two restaurants, a hot dog stand, a confectionery, three barber shops, a bakery,

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<sup>109</sup>Ibid., May 10, 12, 27, 1913.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., May 12, 1913.

<sup>111</sup>Andriot, 691. Although the permanent population of Virginia Beach was low, the town swelled to several thousand each summer.

a general merchandise store, and a hardware store.<sup>112</sup> Additionally, the town soon supported five churches, including Star of the Sea Catholic, Galilee Episcopal, and Virginia Beach Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist Churches.<sup>113</sup> The north end of the beach experienced the most rapid growth. As the south end filled up with cottages, the town marched relentlessly northward toward Cape Henry.

Nevertheless, as passengers left the Casino Station on northbound trains, they still saw few houses en route to Cape Henry. About halfway between the casino and the cape was the thirty-two-room "mansion in the wilderness." Built in 1906 by Dr. John Miller Masury, the son of a prominent Brooklyn paint dealer, the palatial granite residence was situated on about 130 acres of land between the ocean and Crystal Lake, purchased from Mrs. S. K. Uber. (See Map 4.) The Masury mansion, replete with ballroom, pipe organ, elevator, and a half-mile lighted and covered cedar boardwalk that connected to an oceanfront cottage, was considered during the Woodrow Wilson, Calvin Coolidge, and Franklin Roosevelt presidencies as a potential summer White House, though the idea never came to fruition.<sup>114</sup> Only two other houses broke the monotony of an otherwise unabated stretch of sand dunes, swamps, and pine woods.

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<sup>112</sup>*Beacon*, October 1/2, 1985; Marias Page Garrison, interview by Edgar T. Brown, tape recording, Virginia Beach, October 7, 1987.

<sup>113</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, June 26, 1926.

<sup>114</sup>Mansfield, 112; Jordan, 89.

On the eve of World War I, Cape Henry ceased to be a resort, leaving Virginia Beach the only true ocean resort in southeastern Virginia. Since the late nineteenth century the United States War Department had considered the cape an excellent place to build fortifications protecting the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. The bay needed to be secured because it afforded a direct route to Washington, Baltimore, Annapolis, Richmond, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Newport News. During the Spanish American War, a company of naval reserves spent a short time in an encampment at Cape Henry. In 1905 Secretary of War William Howard Taft was appointed chairman of a board to consider fortifying the bay. When Taft became president four years later, the bay remained unprotected.<sup>115</sup> A debate ensued over whether to build an island in the middle of the bay or build a fortification at Cape Henry. The Taft board recommended constructing an island fortress at a cost of about \$2.6 million, but no action had been by 1909.<sup>116</sup> The cape site did not appear very promising because the Cape Henry Syndicate wanted \$300,000 for 2,000 acres of land the government required.<sup>117</sup>

In 1909 President Taft came to Norfolk to deliver an address in which he declared his support for the construction of an island fortification midway between Cape Henry and Cape Charles. While in the Norfolk area the president furthered the national reputation of the

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<sup>115</sup>Mansfield, 105.

<sup>116</sup>*Public Ledger*, March 16, 1906.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, March 19, 1906.

Lynnhaven oyster, voicing his satisfaction with the several dozen oysters he had just eaten at O'Keefe's Casino. The plan to build an island eventually proved too costly, and in 1913 the federal government opted instead to purchase land at Cape Henry.<sup>118</sup> In 1914 the U.S. Army bought 343 acres of land at the cape, planning to expand later.<sup>119</sup> Over the next few years the federal government constructed a military reservation named for Major General John P. Story of Virginia, a noted artillery expert, fortifying it with "the heaviest guns [in] the Western hemisphere."<sup>120</sup>

The decision to build a military installation at Cape Henry ended that resort's ability to sell more property. Through the summer of 1913 the Cape Henry Syndicate sold 208 of the 360 lots in the subdivision closest to the lighthouses.<sup>121</sup> Before a second subdivision could be begun, however, the fortification plans shut down any further sales. A number of new property owners who already had built cottages insisted on being paid a high price for their land, which may account for the Army's decision to acquire only about one sixth of the land originally said to be needed.<sup>122</sup>

As soon as it became clear that the cape no longer would be available for development, the Atlantic Beach Corporation, formed by Baldwin Brothers Real Estate of

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<sup>118</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, November 19, 20, 1909; Mansfield, 105-6, 113.

<sup>119</sup>Jordan, 8.

<sup>120</sup>Mansfield, 106; *Princess Anne Times*, May 14, 1915.

<sup>121</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, June 9, 1913.

<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.*, July 28, 1913.



Norfolk, administered the sale of lots. Atlantic Beach, located five minutes south of Cape Henry by trolley, comprised 440 lots filling eleven blocks on either side of a proposed extension of Atlantic Avenue northward from Virginia Beach. Advertisements for Atlantic Beach assured potential buyers that the proposed government fortifications at Cape Henry would “make this property jump in leaps and bounds in value.”<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless, the development flopped, leaving the area just south of the cape largely undeveloped for the next two decades.

If Virginia Beach promoters were pleased with the enormous success of the Virginia Beach Casino in catalyzing the support of Virginians, they still hoped to restore the seaside town to its original mission of becoming a national resort city. By 1915 a newly-formed Virginia Beach Chamber of Commerce worked alongside the town’s new weekly newspaper, the *Princess Anne Times*, to hasten progress toward that end. The paper featured editorials extolling the virtues of the resort and urging local residents to conceive of their hometown as a year-round permanent community rather than simply a summer resort and to build more substantial homes than the ramshackle wooden structures that perennially suffered the buffeting of maritime storms. One editorial inquired:

Why can we not take a leaf from the experience book of European sea-side resorts, which are generally large and important cities with stone palaces and brick mansions and paved streets flanking the sands, and where people live . . . year round?

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<sup>123</sup>Ibid., June 14, July 2, 1913.

It closed with the admonishment, "Let us begin now to build the CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH, the City Beautiful by the Sea!"<sup>124</sup>

Eight years after the old Princess Anne Hotel burned, Virginia Beach still had not succeeded in erecting a similar structure to recapture lost patronage by the well-heeled. Indeed, the absence of a first-class hotel had driven away Virginia Beach's "upper-crust" clientele. Periodically, the resort's boosters proposed a new hotel but failed to gain the necessary financial backing. In 1915 a prominent Washington, D.C., businessman wrote in a letter to the editor of the *Princess Anne Times* that he used to come to the resort every spring, but after the Princess Anne burned he had ceased coming because he "couldn't obtain satisfactory quarters." His letter prompted an editorial that reasoned that the upper class would not patronize even a "splendidly equipped cottage," demanding instead a "first-class" hotel.<sup>125</sup> The chamber of commerce again labored to raise a new hotel by 1916. It announced a proposed eight-story fireproof hotel to be built upon the site of the old Princess Anne at a cost of \$400,000. However, less than two months later the local paper reported that a considerable sum still remained to be raised, noting that the chamber had appointed a committee of M. C. Ferebee, Hugh W. Davis, and James S. Groves to meet with Norfolk Southern Railroad president Marsden J. Perry in New York.<sup>126</sup> The chamber's hope that

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<sup>124</sup>*Princess Anne Times*, May 21, 1915.

<sup>125</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, May 28, July 16, 1915. Ferebee, a Norfolk businessman, would figure prominently in the push for a new hotel in the next decade.

Norfolk Southern would subscribe the needed money was not fulfilled, again dooming the effort to regain the beach's lost tourism. Thus, in the midst of World War I Virginia Beach, failing to expand its popularity, held its own as a regional resort.

Another item on the chamber of commerce's "wish list" was an improved Norfolk-Virginia Beach Boulevard. In the second decade of the twentieth century, automobiles were becoming an increasingly popular mode of transportation, gradually reaching down the socioeconomic ladder and ceasing to be a novelty of the richest Americans. Although the railroad offered easy access to the beach and was responsible for the beach's existence in the first place, Virginia Beach's progressive boosters realized that promoting an enjoyable automobile trip through the serene Princess Anne countryside might swell the beach's popularity.

In 1915 the ride from Norfolk to Virginia Beach was anything but enjoyable. Barely adequate for horse-drawn carriages, the only road connecting city and resort was positively primitive in light of the ensuing age of the motorcar. Dusty in dry weather and muddy after rainstorms, the road was, observed one editorial, "almost prohibitive to such automobilists as value their lungs, their clothes or their cars." The same editorial quipped that even the ancient Egyptians and Greeks had built roads superior to this route thousands of years earlier. How could Virginia Beach ever aspire to become a resort of the first order when, more than thirty years after its inception, it had such miserable access? This question, one implied by Virginia Beach promoters, marked the beginning of the end of the railroad as the preferred means of travel. The *Times*' editorial suggested that, at the very least, the road should be

paved with crushed oyster shells.<sup>127</sup> However, like the wish for a new hotel, this luxury too would be postponed until the next decade as the automobile became more commonplace. Indeed, not long after the Norfolk and Virginia Beach Chambers of Commerce managed to obtain the state and county support for the road, the resulting construction virtually ceased when the United States became involved in World War I.<sup>128</sup>

Virginia Beach seemed to stagnate during the Great War. Even before the United States became involved uncertainty associated with the world conflict appeared to restrict the seaside town's growth. The *Ledger-Dispatch*, filled with Virginia Beach boosterism through 1915, fell silent by the 1916 summer season. The Virginia Beach Casino, which had announced several new attractions and improvements in the three years following its inaugural season, failed to offer any in the next three. Indeed, a certain pessimism pervaded the town. One longtime beach resident notes that the war was at times too close for comfort, recalling seeing explosions at sea and, on one occasion, watching a ship disappear mysteriously from the horizon from the attic window of her cottage on the oceanfront at Twelfth Street.<sup>129</sup> The visible evidence of German U-boats plying the waters so close to shore certainly filled the people of Virginia Beach with much anxiety. The census suggests that development was

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<sup>127</sup>Ibid., June 4, 1915.

<sup>128</sup>Mansfield, 105.

<sup>129</sup>deWitt, interview.

deferred during the war, for Princess Anne County's population rose only slightly to 13,626 by the end of the second decade in this century.<sup>130</sup>

Thus, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, Virginia Beach had mixed success in becoming a successful ocean resort. Having received solid financial backing from the Vanderbilts by the turn of the century, the railroad began operating profitably. The introduction of a competing rail line to Cape Henry could have undermined the dominant position Virginia Beach enjoyed on Princess Anne's shoreline. However, the seaside town's stock rose when the resources of the Goulds and other Pittsburgh interests enabled a merger of the two lines, resulting in an electric loop that allowed Cape Henry to enhance the popularity of its neighbor to the south. When it was learned in 1907 that Norfolk would draw visitors from around the world to the exposition celebrating the 300th anniversary of the Jamestown settlement, Virginia Beach promoters envisioned the opportunity to give the seaside resort new luster.

The urge to proclaim Virginia Beach a first-class seashore vacation spot ran counter to the growing realization that more effort first needed to be made to become the choice resort for Virginians and, in particular, Norfolkiens. Indeed, Virginia Beach had a natural disadvantage of lying three times farther from Norfolk than its bayside rival, Ocean View. When the Princess Anne Hotel, the paragon of the enclave, burned in 1907, it became painfully evident that Virginia Beach would lose its trump card in the endeavor to be the

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<sup>130</sup>Andriot, 688.

leading destination for wealthy Northerners. Although the idea of an even grander hotel to rise from the ashes of the old Victorian hostelry resurfaced in the years following the tragedy, it seems that promoters found an alternate key to success. The Virginia Beach Casino's opening in 1912 did more to endear Norfolkiens to their oceanside playground than any event since the completion of the first narrow-gauge railroad to the shore three decades earlier. Offering the right mixture of attractions -- ocean bathing, dancing, shore dinners, and amusement rides -- the casino provided city dwellers with more substantial entertainment than had previously been afforded. To be sure, all of these opportunities had existed earlier, but they were not as effectively packaged. Indeed, the casino was a veritable "amusement center." This new facility was able to capitalize on a burgeoning market, for Norfolk's population swelled from fewer than 50,000 in 1900 to over 115,000 twenty years later.<sup>131</sup>

After four banner years at the casino and despite a strong accompanying real estate market at the beach, the increasing uncertainties of the world war eroded the progressive spirit of the townspeople. While development came to a virtual standstill, the resort continued to attract visitors, albeit at pre-war levels. Even after the armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, it took several years before Virginia Beach enjoyed significant growth.

Although beach dwellers had planned to solve infrastructure problems that impeded development by incorporating as a town in 1906, thirteen years later the beach still suffered an inadequate water supply, inferior streets, and mosquito infestation. Worse, the seaside

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<sup>131</sup>Ibid., 690.

village was now without a luxury hotel, losing ground in its effort to win national acclaim and patronage. In the coming years it would take unprecedented civic responsibility to assure a bright future.

## THREE

### Heyday and Depression at the Seashore, 1920-1930

Punctuating a string of high sand dunes overlooking Thirty-eighth Street and the Norfolk Southern tracks, in the section known as Sea Pines, the Princess Anne Country Club opened in 1920. (See Map 4.) The stately clubhouse, affording a commanding view of the ocean from its breezy verandas, lay on the eastern edge of a dense pine forest where eighteen fairways sown in verdant Bermuda meandered past the finger-like projections of Linkhorn Bay. The golf links, considered the second best in the United States, quickly became the center for prominent Norfolk society at Virginia Beach. Incidentally, the club's youngest charter member, James M. Jordan, Jr., was the first man to ride a surfboard on the East coast. During the 1920s the Princess Anne Country Club also attracted President Warren G. Harding, an honorary member, British Open winner Walter Hagen, and National Open champion Gene Sarazen.<sup>1</sup>

The air of sophistication the golf club provided may have reminded Virginia Beach's progressive boosters of the "golden age" two decades earlier when the seaside resort enjoyed the patronage of elite society. Despite the impressive roster of Virginia Beach sojourners, had the town really been so prosperous? The Princess Anne Hotel had been, in a very real sense,

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<sup>1</sup>Eighmey, 68; Mansfield, 142; *Ledger-Dispatch*, April 5, 1927.



the sole drawing card at the beach. When it burned, reality set in, revealing that the resort's favorable image had little left to recommend it. Virginia Beach remained a second-rate vacation spot even in 1920. While it boasted many small inns, cottages, and a popular amusement center, the beach still lacked the "grand" hotels and the multitude of attractions that had made Atlantic City famous. Further, Virginia Beach still had poor roads and an antiquated water supply furnished entirely by wells. Substandard roads meant that Virginia Beach might wither in an age of skyrocketing reliance on automobiles, while a lack of water limited the town's capacity for growth.

In 1920 Virginia Beach was little more accessible by automobile than at the turn of the century. Despite minimal improvements the single roadway between Norfolk and Virginia Beach remained unpaved. To be sure, the Norfolk Southern Railroad still offered frequent electric trains to the beach. Nevertheless, automobiles became more attractive to vacationers, affording the freedom to travel whenever and wherever they wished. The automobile circumvented the restraints of fixed railroad schedules, which were complicated, confusing, and changeable. Norfolk Southern's electric division operated such a schedule. Some trains ran daily, some daily except Sunday, some only on Sunday, and still others on two or three selected days. Some trains were local, stopping several times at stations intermediate between city and beach, while others, dubbed "express," made quick, uninterrupted runs. Further, the schedule usually changed about four times a year.

The inconvenience of railroad travel, coupled with Americans' growing attachment to their automobiles, would lead to an unprecedented level of road-building and

improvements to existing routes. After being hindered by the World War, the concrete Virginia Beach Boulevard opened to traffic on July 29, 1921, greatly reducing the travel time between Norfolk and its ocean resort.<sup>2</sup> (See Map 4.) Merely connecting the two, however, was not enough, for Virginia Beach's streets remained precarious sand lanes.

Naturally, the most essential of the resort's streets, Atlantic Avenue, received attention first. Paralleling Virginia Beach's oceanfront, Atlantic Avenue provided direct access to dozens of cottages, inns, and boardinghouses. Leading the effort to connect the concrete boulevard with the oceanfront strip, the Virginia Beach Chamber of Commerce, along with the newly-formed Women's Municipal League, began raising funds to pave the extension of the boulevard (Seventeenth Street) and Atlantic Avenue. In an impressive collaboration of civic effort, the two organizations raised about \$50,000, much of it from property owners along the route. Less than a year after the Norfolk-Virginia Beach boulevard opened, motorists could travel on concrete northward along the ocean to Sea Pines.<sup>3</sup> It would be five more years before Virginia Beach's east-west streets were paved in concrete.<sup>4</sup> As more and more people drove to Virginia Beach, traffic congestion became a problem. As a result, the town installed a "silent policeman" or "red lighted turtle" (traffic signal) at Seventeenth and Atlantic in 1925.<sup>5</sup> Over the course of the decade, transportation

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<sup>2</sup>Mansfield, 133.

<sup>3</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, June 17, 1922.

<sup>4</sup>Virginia Beach Town Council Minute Book 4 (1916-1928), 24-25.

<sup>5</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, July 30, 1925.

would be facilitated greatly by new highways that shaved many miles off the trip to the resort town.

In 1924 the Virginia Beach Bus Line formed and sought permission from the State Corporation Commission (SCC) to operate motorbuses on the new concrete boulevard between Norfolk and the beach. Fearing the arrival of a competing carrier, Norfolk Southern Railroad implored upon the Virginia Beach town council to voice opposition to the SCC's granting a permit for the conveyance of bus service.<sup>6</sup> After agreeing to oppose the proposed bus line, the council reconsidered when approached by more than fifty property owners along the boulevard who believed the service would enhance land values. Following the council's about-face, Norfolk Southern complained that buses would hurt the railroad, which gave service at a loss nine months of the year, by usurping its profitable summer passenger business and "robbing" it of what took decades to build up.<sup>7</sup> The general sentiment among Virginia Beach residents supported the railroad, which had the advantage of conveying passengers from much farther away than would the bus line.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, the SCC granted permission for the bus line to begin service immediately.

The Virginia Beach Bus Line began operating in time for Independence Day in 1924, and within two years maintained a schedule of twenty-nine daily buses to Virginia Beach.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., April 23, 1924.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., May 14, 1924.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., June 11, 1924.

Additionally, in 1926 the company inaugurated its "Cottage Bus Line," running thirty-two daily buses on Atlantic Avenue between Second and Thirty-ninth Streets.<sup>9</sup> Almost immediately, Norfolk Southern tried to adapt to the loss of its monopoly on public transportation between Norfolk and Virginia Beach by inaugurating its own bus line, which paralleled its bayside railroad line on the new Shore Drive, rounding Cape Henry and approaching the resort from the north. The railroad company also cut its train fares in half to recapture lost ridership. By 1929 the two bus lines appealed to Norfolkkians either to "Take the Blue Bus" (Virginia Beach Bus Line) or to ride the "Red Bus" (Norfolk Southern Bus Corporation).<sup>10</sup> The impact of a competitor on Norfolk Southern was deleterious, helping pare the railroad's passenger revenue from \$273,000 in 1920 to only \$80,000 by 1927. Despite this loss, the company somehow maintained its frequent trains to the beach.<sup>11</sup> This public transit "war," augmented by the introduction of Yellow Cab service to the beach in 1926, could only help Virginia Beach in terms of accessibility. Thus, in a very few years, the seaside town enjoyed a variety of travel options -- train, bus, taxicab, and private automobile.

Another problem that hindered growth, the lack of an adequate water supply, also would be addressed during the 1920s. In addition to impeding the beach's progress, the poor water supply diminished the town's ability to combat fires. The Virginia Beach town council

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., July 2, 1924, June 3, 1926; Virginia Beach Town Council Minute Book 4 (1916-1928), 206.

<sup>10</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, June 26, August 7, 1926, May 16, 1928, August 24, 1929.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., June 30, 1928.

looked to Norfolk, whose waterworks had enabled the city to expand beyond Lafayette Creek to the north and to Broad Creek on the east. Over the winter of 1923-24, the council negotiated with the City of Norfolk to construct a water main from the Moore's Bridge Pumping Station near Kempsville to the western town limits of Virginia Beach. The eleven and one-half-mile main, originally constructed of juniper, cost \$200,000. On January 1, 1925, Norfolk began supplying water to the seaside town, offering a tremendous impetus to growth.<sup>12</sup>

Improving transportation and the water supply removed drawbacks that likely made capitalists reluctant to invest earlier in a new hotel to replace the old Princess Anne. Having attempted unsuccessfully to build a first-class hostelry for more than a decade, Norfolk and Virginia Beach civic leaders finally mounted a highly-organized campaign to achieve that goal beginning in the fall of 1922. The stimulus came from M. C. Ferebee, a Norfolk businessman who had just returned from a year-long trip to identify a place where he could enjoy his retirement. Having traveled extensively the world over, Ferebee concluded in the fall of 1922 that nowhere possessed the ideal conditions enjoyed by the Norfolk area. A latter-day Marshall Parks, Ferebee presented to the Virginia Beach Chamber of Commerce his vision of a grand seaside resort at Virginia Beach. He then approached Elisha Lee, vice president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, which planned to erect a major rail terminal at Little Creek on the Chesapeake Bay. Although enthusiastic about Virginia Beach's possibilities, Lee was

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<sup>12</sup>Virginia Beach Town Council Minute Book 4 (1916-1928), 131-34, 200; Edgar T. Brown, telephone conversation with author, January 25, 1996.

mindful of his company's keen interest in Atlantic City and Asbury Park and suggested that if Ferebee needed financial backing for resort improvements, he instead should contact the Norfolk and Western Railway.<sup>13</sup> Ferebee may have looked past Norfolk Southern because he understood the need to involve outside capital if Virginia Beach was to cast its net farther afield.

Ferebee's initiative convinced the chamber of commerce to act decisively, convening a conference of ten influential civic leaders in March, 1923, to discuss ways of promoting the resort. By the following October, the chamber created the Virginia Beach Hotel Committee, which was charged with taking measures toward building a great hotel at the beach. The committee included N. D. Maher, president of Norfolk and Western, Elisha Lee, M. C. Ferebee, George R. Loyall, president of Norfolk Southern, S. L. Slover, president of the *Ledger-Dispatch*, attorneys H. H. Rumble and Hugh W. Davis, J. H. Brownley, of Ames and Brownley, bankers Hugh M. Kerr and R. S. Cahoon, and D. J. Callahan, president of the Norfolk and Washington Steamship Company. Realizing the importance of a water supply to attract investors, this committee aided the Virginia Beach town council in its effort to extend Norfolk's mains to the resort.<sup>14</sup> The support of so many influential men must have gone far in convincing the city of Norfolk that it would lose no money in the long run by an outlay for the pipeline.

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<sup>13</sup>*Virginian-Pilot*, April 9, 1927.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

The first step in planning the new hotel was choosing an appropriate site. The hotel committee, chartered in early 1925 as the Virginia Beach Resort and Hotel Corporation, secured an option on sixty acres of the old Hollies farm once owned by Marshall Parks. Located just north of the Princess Anne Country Club, the site dictated that the future hotel would become the northern “anchor” of the two-mile-long oceanfront resort. Having selected the property, the hotel corporation next moved to raise necessary funds to build the hotel. It was decided that 14,000 shares of 7 percent preferred stock were to be sold at \$100 per share. For every two shares of preferred stock purchased the buyer was to receive one free share of common stock. This stock issue would cover the estimated construction cost of \$1.4 million. In order to market the stock, the corporation created a campaign organization consisting of a 48-member executive committee and 387 workers, who in turn were divided into 16 teams. On March 23, 1925, the stock-selling campaign began with a luncheon at which 220 workers and members of the executive committee subscribed \$275,000, or about one-fifth of the stock issue. That same day the organization sold an additional \$69,800, and after one week \$821,500 had been subscribed. Although far short of its goal, the corporation decided to move forward in the hope that the remainder would be raised eventually.<sup>15</sup>

The project advanced rapidly during the rest of 1925. In April the Virginia Beach Resort and Hotel Corporation took up the option on the site for \$165,000, securing 1,800 feet of oceanfront. It also selected Neff and Thompson of Norfolk, and George B. Post and

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

Sons of New York as the architects for the structure. The latter firm was known for designing the Western Union Building (1875) and the New York Stock Exchange (1904) in Manhattan, and the Statter Hotel (1912) in Cleveland, Ohio.<sup>16</sup> Later in the year, it chose Charles F. Gillette, a highly-regarded Richmond landscape architect, to design the hotel's grounds.<sup>17</sup> By late spring the corporation had concluded that the hotel would be situated on a high sand dune west of the Norfolk Southern tracks rather than directly on the oceanfront, believing that the hilltop site would take better advantage of the sea breezes.<sup>18</sup>

On March 1, 1926, J. W. Inglehart and Company of Baltimore ensured the fruition of the project by purchasing \$650,000 worth of stock. Inglehart was among many substantial concerns that bought shares in the new hotel. In addition to more than 1,600 merchants, bankers, corporations, and other subscribers from the Norfolk area, stockholders included the Norfolk and Western Railway, Chesapeake and Ohio Railway, Pennsylvania Railroad, Norfolk and Washington Steamship Company, Old Dominion Steamship Company, and Baltimore Steam Packet Company.<sup>19</sup> The willingness of so many transportation companies to invest in the Virginia Beach hotel underscored the general consensus that Virginia Beach possessed splendid potential as a seaside resort of national eminence. Doubtless, these railroad and

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<sup>16</sup>Katie Whelahan, "The Cavalier Hotel in Virginia Beach, Virginia," May 1, 1986 (research paper), 3. University of Virginia Alderman Library, Charlottesville.

<sup>17</sup>*Virginian-Pilot*, April 9, 1927.

<sup>18</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, May 13, 1925.

<sup>19</sup>*Virginian-Pilot*, April 9, 1927; *Ledger-Dispatch*, May 29, 1926.



steamship companies envisioned increased patronage of their lines resulting from the building of a great hotel.

Having addressed the difficult issues associated with so ambitious an undertaking, the hotel corporation was ready to choose a name for its future hostelry. Several months earlier, in September of 1925, the *Virginian-Pilot* announced that the corporation would welcome suggestions from the public for the hotel name. Among the names the corporation most seriously considered were Algonquin, Linkhorn, Crystal, Sea Pines, and Cavalier. Citing the desirability of selecting a name commensurate with the hotel's planned colonial design, the corporation chose "Cavalier" as the most appropriate, for it evoked images of Captain John Smith and other early colonial settlers.<sup>20</sup>

After the cornerstone was laid on May 9, 1926, builders labored feverishly to erect the hotel in time for the 1927 season. At times the crew consisted of as many as 225 men.<sup>21</sup> When completed, the Y-shaped Cavalier stood eight stories amid the pine forest. (See Map 4.) Colonial in design, the hotel was faced with brick laid in Flemish bond. The Cavalier's first floor was dominated by colonnaded verandas flanked at each corner by pavilions capped by copper domes.<sup>22</sup> Atop the stately hotel was a copper-domed cupola, which afforded a

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<sup>20</sup>*Virginian-Pilot*, September 21, 1925, April 9, 1926.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, April 9, 1927.

<sup>22</sup>Whelahan, 5.

magnificent vista where one could view the ocean to the east, Linkhorn Bay to the west, the resort to the south, and the distant twin lighthouses at Cape Henry to the north.

The Cavalier's interior matched the exterior in its elegance. Passing beneath the colonial portico, one entered the oval lobby, with its domed ceiling, fluted Ionic pilasters, and marble tile floor. To the left of the lobby, the loggia overlooked the "Emerald Pool," which would become affectionately referred to as "The Plunge." Around the periphery of the pool were two broad verandas with French doors and Tuscan columns, and the Sir Walter Raleigh Lounge, whose focal point was a replica of a 1589 map of the Virginia Beach area, drawn under Raleigh's direction. Across the lobby were the Pocahontas dining room and Cavalier ballroom. On the lower level, beneath the lobby, one could enjoy the more casual John Smith Grill. Above the main level of the Cavalier were 195 richly-appointed guest rooms.<sup>23</sup> In a time in which seawater was believed to hold medicinal value, every bath tub had four handles -- Fresh Cold, Fresh Hot, Shower/Tub, and Cold Salt. Additionally, every sink had an icewater spigot. Near the top of the hotel was a large basin continually filled with blocks of ice. Water poured over the blocks and, by force of gravity, traveled down through pipes insulated by several inches of cork, and into each bathroom.<sup>24</sup>

Every effort was made to create an outdoor setting that would complement and enhance the regal Cavalier. Charles F. Gillette, who also was designing the formal gardens

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 6-11.

<sup>24</sup>Bob Wilson, "Comments on the Original Cavalier Hotel," fall 1992, 7, Edgar T. Brown Collection. Wilson is a retired manager of the Cavalier Hotel.

at Agecroft Hall in Richmond, drew inspiration from such great Virginia plantations as Brandon, Westover, and Shirley as he developed a plan for the Cavalier grounds. Gillette's design included an entrance through wrought iron gates and past a brick serpentine wall draped with English ivy, culminating with a flagstone court bordered with boxwood. He also planted formal gardens and wisteria arbors around the hotel.<sup>25</sup> Assisting Gillette was Anthony Joseph Croonenberghs, the son of Belgian immigrants, who designed the Cavalier's sunken garden.<sup>26</sup> Gillette's most difficult task was to beautify the series of sandy terraces sweeping eastward to the ocean. The result, reminiscent of Lower Brandon on the James, featured grassy terraces with wide, brick herringbone pattern walks leading through beds of native jasmine, bayberry, and myrtle to the brink of the sea. Upholding the resort's reputation as a health resort, the Cavalier had a ramp for "roller-chairs" to allow "invalids or persons convalescing" to enjoy the terraces.<sup>27</sup> The gardens were intended to evoke the heritage of old Virginia. It was noted:

Every effort has been made to surround the Cavalier . . . with an atmosphere of quiet dignity and of comfort, where one may pursue comfort in drowsy, leisurely flights, and in fancy may return to the stately homes of the Old South, that flourished a century ago . . . .<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>*Virginian-Pilot*, April 9, 1927; Whelahan, 11.

<sup>26</sup>Wilson, 2.

<sup>27</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, April 5, 1927; *Virginian-Pilot*, April 9, 1927.

<sup>28</sup>*Virginian-Pilot*, April 9, 1927.

Beyond the immediate Cavalier grounds were paths leading through the pine forest to Lake Holly. Covered with water lilies, the lake was surrounded by cypress, pines, azaleas, wisteria, laurel, live oak, and semi-tropical plants. Gillette wrote that this area was patterned after Magnolia Gardens near Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>29</sup>

When it opened on April 7, 1927, the Cavalier was truly one of the grandest hotels on the Atlantic coast. J. Leslie Kincaid, president of American Hotels Corporation, which had been chosen to operate the hotel, even remarked that the Cavalier “is the finest resort hotel in America, and I have seen them all.” On hand for the hotel’s opening ceremonies were Virginia Governor Harry F. Byrd and more than 100 newspaper reporters. Byrd declared that he favored the Cavalier as the official summer capitol of Virginia, although no action was taken toward that end.<sup>30</sup> The ceremonies, enjoyed by more than 7,000 people, were broadcast from the hotel’s own 500-watt radio station, WSEA, which was the nation’s third station to broadcast coast to coast.<sup>31</sup> WSEA later became the first American radio station welcoming back Charles Lindbergh as his ship passed Cape Henry after his famous solo transatlantic airplane flight.<sup>32</sup>

The Cavalier quickly restored Virginia Beach’s air of sophistication, recapturing affluent white society. At the hotel guests enjoyed afternoon tea and cinnamon toast beside

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<sup>29</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, April 5, 1927.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, April 4, 1927; *Virginian-Pilot*, April 6, 8, 1927.

<sup>31</sup>*Virginian-Pilot*, April 6, 7, 1927; Wilson, 5.

<sup>32</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, June 11, 1927; Wilson, 7.

the pool, on the verandas, or on the garden terraces, as well as tennis, croquet, and swimming. Although the Cavalier did not have a golf course initially, it planned to create one on ninety acres lying in Bird Neck Point and surrounded by Linkhorn Bay. The tract was donated by Richard Crane, owner of Westover plantation and minister to Czechoslovakia under President Wilson. In the meantime, guests had the privilege of using the Princess Anne Country Club's links or the nine-hole miniature course on the Cavalier lawn.<sup>33</sup> Inside the hotel, guests enjoyed such conveniences as a sport shop, beauty and barber shops, a confectionery shop, and even a branch of Smith and Welton, a fashionable Norfolk store.<sup>34</sup> Among the Cavalier's distinguished guests in its early years were Presidents Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover, Eleanor Roosevelt, F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, Rudy Vallee, and Will Rogers. Another of the hotel's notable patrons, Adolph Coors, the founder of Coors Brewery, jumped to an enigmatic death from a sixth-floor window of the Cavalier on June 5, 1929.<sup>35</sup> As had always been typical of Virginia Beach's hotels and cottages, nearly all of the Cavalier's employees were African Americans. Most were housed in quarters at the rear of the hotel, separated from the cottages where the Cavalier's few white workers lived. One bellman later recalled that in 1927 he received five dollars per week, plus tips, housing, uniform, medical care, and one meal daily. The employees, like those of other establishments,

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<sup>33</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, May 9, 1926; *Virginian-Pilot*, April 9, 1927; Whelahan, 14; Wilson, 4.

<sup>34</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, April 5, 1927; *Virginian-Pilot*, April 9, 1927.

<sup>35</sup>*Beacon*, July 25/26, 1989; Wilson, 4-5.

were forbidden to enjoy the beach, except during the late-night hours. However, Carlos Wilson, who became a bellman about ten years after the Cavalier opened, recalls that African Americans were subject to arrest if they stayed on the beach “too long” into the early morning hours.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the Cavalier depended on black labor and cared for its workers in a paternalistic way while rigidly adhering to the social dictates of the day.

From the outset, the Cavalier promoted itself as a haven for sportsmen in the tradition of the old Princess Anne hotel. It was suggested that one could drive down the hard, sandy beach to the famous Back Bay duck shooting grounds. Partridges, pheasants, and turkeys were said to be plentiful in Princess Anne County and Currituck County, North Carolina, while the Dismal Swamp purportedly yielded deer, opossum, and raccoons. In the “wilderness of chinquepins, blackberries, and tall trees” of the Cape Henry “Desert,” sportsmen would find foxes, rabbits, and quail. To accommodate hunters, the Cavalier provided a kennel for hunting dogs and would furnish dogs for those who did not bring their own. Sportsmen could even be supplied with guns and guides for their expeditions.<sup>37</sup>

The Cavalier also catered to equestrians with its riding academy, directed by two nationally-known instructors, E. T. Zollicoffer and Mrs. Fontaine Maury Thraves. Teaching cross-country, jumping, and ring craft, the academy also hoped to secure a pack of fox hounds and offer drag hunting. Surrounding the hotel were many miles of bridle paths leading

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<sup>36</sup>*Virginian-Pilot*, April 9, 1927; Wilson, 6; Carlos Wilson, interview by author, Virginia Beach, October 11, 1995.

<sup>37</sup>*Virginian-Pilot*, April 9, 1927.

to Linkhorn and Broad Bays and the "Desert." Soon the academy would offer horse shows that lent the hotel an aura of old England.<sup>38</sup>

The key to the Cavalier's immense success lay both in advertising and accessibility. Immediately the hostelry received attention from various transportation companies. The Norfolk and Western Railway devoted a full page in its time table to the Cavalier, while the Pennsylvania Railroad included a description of the hotel on the back of its dining car menu cards. It was noted that other railroads and steamship lines soon would follow suit.<sup>39</sup> When the hotel opened, both the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Norfolk and Western Railway inaugurated trains dubbed the "Cavalier" that ran directly to the newly-built Cavalier station on the Norfolk Southern line. By the middle of the 1928 season, Pullman service was introduced, allowing passengers to board a Pullman coach in Chicago or New York and travel non-stop to the Cavalier.<sup>40</sup> In addition the Cavalier boasted that it lay "directly on the Ocean Highway, the fastest and safest route from New York to Florida."<sup>41</sup> Although this assertion concealed the fact that the Cavalier really was a fair drive east of this automobile route, it was true that Virginia Beach was becoming more and more accessible by car. In the two years after the Cavalier opened, the drive from Richmond was shortened considerably. In 1928 the Norfolk-Richmond Short Route, or "King's Highway," sliced thirty miles off the trip. One

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid.; Wilson, 3.

<sup>39</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, April 5, 1927.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., April 8, 1927, June 26, 1928; *Virginian-Pilot*, April 9, 1927.

<sup>41</sup>Whelahan, 13.

year later Shore Drive was completely paved, offering people residing anywhere north of the James River a much more direct route to the resort.<sup>42</sup> (See Map 4.) Indeed, the Cavalier could attribute its success in large part to the ease with which it could be reached.

As travel conditions improved, so did the Cavalier's offerings. In 1929 the Cavalier Beach Club and the Cavalier Country Club opened to guests. (See Map 4.) Situated on the edge of the beach in front of the hotel, the beach club featured a clubhouse, bulkheaded dancefloor along the oceanfront, and many colorful cabanas of the type first used at Lido and subsequently made famous at the blossoming Florida resorts. The club was open to all guests of the Cavalier as well as to many Norfolkiens who chose to become members. It immediately became the home of popular dances and concerts and eventually drew many of the most famous entertainers.<sup>43</sup> The new country club featured a clubhouse of Bermudian architecture overlooking Linkhorn Bay. Some of the golf course's holes were modeled after those of several famous courses, including North Berwick and St. Andrews in Scotland and the Chicago Golf Club's Fox Chapel course.<sup>44</sup> By the end of the decade, the Cavalier rightly could claim to be a complete resort hotel.

While the Cavalier played an integral role in the development of Virginia Beach, the 1920s witnessed numerous other additions and improvements to the seaside resort. Rising

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<sup>42</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, August 24, 1928, July 29, 1929.

<sup>43</sup>Whelahan, 13; Virginia Beach promotional brochure, ca. 1930, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>44</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, June 30, 1930.



from the barren site of the old Princess Anne Hotel, at Sixteenth and Atlantic, the New Ocean Casino opened on May 30, 1925, offering vacationers and locals a second amusement center. (See Map 4.) The casino, with its trademark green and white striped roof and gigantic saltwater swimming pool, attracted a crowd of more than 7,000 to its ballroom alone on opening night, slicing into the older Virginia Beach Casino's business.<sup>45</sup> The new casino, to be sure, was not significantly different from its competitor fifteen blocks to the north. Both offered a ballroom, swimming pool, bathhouses, concessions, amusement rides, games, and "shore dinners." The New Casino boasted the "Caterpillar" roller coaster, merry-go-round, "Aeroplane Swing," "Custer Car Race Track" (bumper cars), and numerous other rides and games, but these also could be found at the old casino. Likewise, the new casino's hot stand, soda fountain, orange juice stand, tobacco shop, and Japanese gift shop mirrored the old casino's offerings.<sup>46</sup> Like its competitor, the new center periodically presented weekly spectacles such as "Delmar's Wonderful Fighting Lions."<sup>47</sup> The fact that two amusement centers with overlapping attractions were now in operation suggests the confidence people began to hold in Virginia Beach's future growth.

If Virginia Beach displayed much promise as a great resort, its land values remained quite low as late as 1925. That year Mount Vernon, New York, capitalist Elmer Laskin

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., May 29, June 1, 1925.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., May 29, July 2-4, 11, 1926, May 19, 29, 1928.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., August 3, 1926.

visited the town and was amazed that land was so cheap. Convinced of the desirability of the area, Laskin quickly purchased over \$300,000 worth of property lying mostly west of the old casino. Having been informed of the lucrative potential of the beach, his brother Louis and father Jacob Laskin, and Louis Siegel, also from New York, bought an additional \$500,000 in land. Forming the Laskin-Siegel Syndicate, the entrepreneurs began a determined effort to construct amusement attractions and hotels. The syndicate obtained a twenty-year lease on the Virginia Beach Casino and set about to improve its ability to compete with the newer complex to its south. Renaming the casino "Seaside Park," the capitalists refurbished the facility in time for the 1926 season.<sup>48</sup> (See Map 4.) In addition to renovating the casino, the syndicate gradually added a Venetian swing, Ferris wheel, Dutch mill ride, miniature railroad, the Parisian Cafe and Coffee Shop, and Club Parisienne, which offered vaudeville acts.<sup>49</sup> The Laskins continued to offer special weekly attractions, including "Peejay Rengens -- World's Greatest Diver" and Daredevil Del Roy, who would, it was advertised, "drive from 17th Street to the Casino blindfolded and tied to [his] car."<sup>50</sup> Responding to the increase in automobile use, Seaside Park provided nine blocks of parking for 3,000 to 4,000 cars and even operated two filling stations.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., July 3, 1926.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., May 27, 1926, May 28, 1927, May 29, 1930.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., August 6, 1926, May 31, 1930.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., May 27, 1926.

The Laskins realized that they needed a focal point for Seaside Park that would ensure its success. The men naturally turned to the popular ballroom, renaming it “Peacock Danceland” and featuring it prominently in Seaside Park advertisements. The enlarged 8,400-square-foot ballroom, which managed to attract some Victor recording orchestras, proved to be as successful as the corporation had envisioned, not only assuring the casino a lasting place among Virginia Beach attractions but seemingly catapulting it ahead of its popular rival.<sup>52</sup> By 1929, some New Ocean Casino and Seaside Park stockholders joined to form Oceanside Parks, Incorporated, and bought the New Ocean Casino. Headed by Louis Siegel, this new company opted to run the newer facility two nights a week as a night club and cabaret while leaving its rides and games intact, giving Seaside Park’s Peacock ballroom an added boost.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to reworking Seaside Park the Laskin-Siegel Syndicate saw the need for more hotels at Virginia Beach. At the beginning of the decade the resort had numerous inns, but only five -- Albemarle Hall, the Arlington, the Chalfonte, Courtney Terrace, and the Pocahontas -- had more than fifty rooms. (See Map 4.) The largest, Courtney Terrace, could accommodate only half the number of guests the old Princess Anne had housed. In 1926 the syndicate erected three new buildings between Sixth and Tenth Streets. Two of them, Pontiac and Traymore Apartments, were the first major apartment buildings at Virginia

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., May 27, 1926, May 26, 1928, May 29, 1930.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., May 28, 1929.

Beach. The third was the three-story stucco Spanish-style Pinewood Hotel. The sixty-room inn boasted French cuisine and ceiling fans in every room.<sup>54</sup>

The Laskins were not alone in constructing new accommodations for Virginia Beach's swelling crowds. From Rudee Inlet to Sea Pines, the resort strip added several substantial inns in the latter half of the 1920s, while some existing cottages expanded into hotels. The greystone Tait cottage expanded greatly in 1925 to become the largest hotel at the resort. Although situated several blocks north of the site of the old Princess Anne Hotel, the 110-room establishment adopted the legendary hotel's name.<sup>55</sup> The following year, two major hotels opened, in addition to the Pinewood Hotel. The Mediterranean-style Edgewater Hotel, with its pastel stucco exterior, cloisters, and tile roof, and the colonial Martha Washington Hotel and Apartments added fifty and sixty-one rooms, respectively.<sup>56</sup> One year after the grand 195-room Cavalier opened in 1927, the sixty-room Waverly Hotel opened. Reportedly modeled after the resort hotels in southern California, the Waverly was built of shale bricks with jade-green trim. It featured a red-painted piazza, awnings, two dining rooms, a sports shop, and a beauty parlor. Although originally conceived as one of two eight-story hotels three years earlier, the hotel's scaled-back design was still a significant contribution to the emerging hotel line.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., May 22, July 3, 1926; *Beacon*, February 7, 1993.

<sup>55</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, July 3, 1925; Postcard, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., May 29, 1926; Postcards, Edgar T. Brown Collection.

<sup>57</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, August 6, 1925, June 15, 1928.

If the opulent Cavalier appealed to the sophisticated traveler, Virginia Beach's other hotels enticed vacationers who primarily required the comforts of home. In 1925 at least twenty Virginia Beach hotels and cottages advertised their home-cooked fare. The Shoreham promised a "Generous Southern Table of Deliciously Prepared Foods [that] will please the most fastidious." Most explicitly touted their "home-cooked foods" or "home cooking."<sup>58</sup> This emphasis on providing guests with the a home-like sojourn was yet another reason Virginia Beach had become a favorite family vacation spot. To be sure, the fact that the resort's attracts and amusements, never as gaudy or racy as those at Atlantic City and Coney Island, could be enjoyed by all members of the family was equally important. However, it is particularly significant that Virginia Beach's inns assured vacationers' ability to transfer their daily lives and practices to their seaside "home-away-from-home." The family atmosphere these inns fostered was the crux of Virginia Beach's unique appeal.

As hotels began to bespeckle the cottage line, Virginia Beach's citizens decided the oceanfront would benefit from a more permanent boardwalk linking the resort's hotels and attractions. Since the first wooden-plank boardwalk was built in 1888, it had been washed out repeatedly by storms. By 1925 the townspeople saw the wisdom of constructing a modern concrete seawall and promenade. To this end they organized the Virginia Beach Walkway Corporation in 1927 with the goal of promoting a \$250,000 bond issue to finance

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., July 3, 1925.

the project.<sup>59</sup> At their urging the townspeople approved the issue by a vote of 198-9, and the following year a twenty-foot-wide ribbon of concrete stretched from Seventh to Thirty-fifth Streets.<sup>60</sup> The promenade ensured a greater sense of cohesion along its two-mile path, as well as facilitating more mobility of pedestrians between various points of interest.

With the resort's attractions and accommodations much expanded and improved, promoters worked to cast Virginia Beach's name far and wide. They knew that Virginia Beach enjoyed a salubrious climate, thanks to its moderate latitude and proximity to the Gulf Stream, and afforded a juxtaposition of ocean and pines almost unique on the middle Atlantic coast. Statisticians told them that the seaside resort lay within twelve hours' journey of 30 million people.<sup>61</sup> The problem was how to project the favorable image of the seashore town to as many of those millions as possible.

Virginia Beach's boosters found several vehicles for dispersing their message. Real estate and transportation interests played a key role, as did the media. F. A. Van Patten, a Norfolk realtor, negotiated with Merchants and Miners Transportation Company of Boston to promote the beach on its steamship line. Other companies touting Virginia Beach were the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway and the Chesapeake Steamship Company. The resort appeared in various companies' newspaper advertisements from New York to Miami.<sup>62</sup> Norfolk radio

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<sup>59</sup>Mansfield, 134.

<sup>60</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, May 18, 1927, May 26, 1928.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, July 3, 1925.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, May 25, July 10, 1926, May 26, 1928.

station WTAR agreed to promote the beach on the air, reaching listeners 500 miles away in all directions.<sup>63</sup> The Norfolk-Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce was almost as interested in publicizing the resort as was its Virginia Beach counterpart, for it hoped to capitalize on its proximity to the beach to increase area retail sales and enhance Norfolk's reputation. To this end, the chamber advertised "Splendid Surf Bathing at Norfolk" in Norfolk, Richmond, Washington, Baltimore, Brooklyn, and Buffalo newspapers, as well as Harper's, Scribner's, Country Life, Atlantic Monthly, and National Geographic. Perhaps the most exciting opportunity came in 1925 when Martin Stern Productions of New York agreed to make a newsreel billing Virginia Beach as the "mid-Atlantic playground."<sup>64</sup>

Although it cannot be known to what extent these promotional endeavors succeeded in luring visitors from far away, it seems that Virginia Beach never drew a majority of its patrons from beyond Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina. While most eastern states were represented in the frequent newspaper lists of persons staying at various hotels and cottages, the vast majority were from Virginia and surrounding states. To be sure, the Cavalier, like the old Princess Anne, drew many wealthy northerners. However, the other hostelries were certainly less exclusive and were patronized more often by the Richmond or Norfolk merchant and his family than the New York tycoon. Thus, Virginia Beach did not become a resort

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., May 26, 1928. The beach also enjoyed daily publicity on radio station WSEA.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., July 25, 1925, May 29, July 7, 1926.

dominated by northerners, just as Atlantic City and Coney Island never attracted a majority of southerners.

For the future of Virginia Beach, the origin of its vacationers mattered less than the fact that they came in increasing numbers. Although one must, of course, use caution in relying on the accuracy of population estimates, it is clear that Virginia Beach's "summer population" rose substantially. In 1915 it was estimated that the town had 5,000 to 6,000 summer inhabitants on most days. Fourteen years later about 25,000 stayed at the beach on a typical summer day, representing about a five-fold increase.<sup>65</sup> Clearly, Virginia Beach had blossomed into a considerable seaside resort.

Virginia Beach's popularity must not be seen only as the result of local progressivism and boosterism. Rather, it should be viewed as a single example of the many American seaside resorts that were beginning to enjoy great prosperity. While Virginia Beach gradually became the best-known resort in the Norfolk area, its rival Ocean View actually drew equal or greater crowds even in the late 1920s, mainly from the immediate city and its environs.<sup>66</sup> Farther away, other resorts received considerable promotion from railroads and steamship lines, particularly by the late 1920s. One could travel on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad from Norfolk to the emerging Gulf of Mexico resorts of Clearwater, Fort Myers, or Naples, Florida, for less than \$40 roundtrip, or to Key West for under \$50. (See Map 5.) Atlantic

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<sup>65</sup>*Princess Anne Times*, May 21, 1915; *Virginian-Pilot*, May 28, 1929.

<sup>66</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, July 18, 1927, July 5, 1929.



City could be reached from Norfolk via the Baltimore Steam Packet Company steamships for only \$13. For the same cost, one could take a sixteen-day Pennsylvania Railroad excursion stopping at Atlantic City, Wildwood, Cape May, Ocean City, Sea Isle City, Anglesea, Avalon, Peermont, and Stone Harbor, New Jersey. A similar trip to the Long Branch and Asbury Park area was only slightly more expensive. The Southern Railway offered a fifteen-day excursion with Pullman service to one's choice of resorts in western North Carolina's Appalachian Mountains -- Asheville, Saluda, Black Mountain, Hendersonville, Brevard, and Lake Junaluska -- for under \$20.<sup>67</sup> (See Map 5.) Indeed, an American propensity to vacation was developing rapidly in the late 1920s, for just a few years earlier, railroad and steamship schedules listed primarily major cities as destinations. Thus, Virginia Beach's growth in the 1920s corresponded with national trends.

Not only did the 1920s witness a marked upturn in resort activity at Virginia Beach, the decade brought a real estate boom unprecedented in the town's history. As in the growth of the beach's resort offerings, its growing real estate popularity may be traced both to local initiative and national antecedents. Indeed, the 1920s ushered in a brief but intense era of rampant growth and confidence that fueled a frenzied level of real estate speculation. Although real estate values at Virginia Beach were not inflated to the extent of those in much of Florida, some evidence suggests that considerable speculation did occur at the beach as well. The peak activity occurred in 1925, when in one ten-day period six new realty firms

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., May 2, 17, July 26, August 2, 1927.

opened in Norfolk to handle only Virginia Beach real estate.<sup>68</sup> In the Fourth of July week, \$100,000 of property reportedly changed hands. S. L. Nusbaum and Company of Norfolk announced \$200,000 in sales in only one month.<sup>69</sup> Real estate values, assessed by the Commonwealth, rarely matched the prices realtors asked on the market. Building lots, often 50 X 150 feet, were assessed between \$50 and \$1,680 in 1926.<sup>70</sup> However, in Norfolk newspapers, lots ranged from \$200 to as much as \$8,500. In one instance a company offered lots assessed at \$50 for \$250 to \$600, or five to twelve times their actual value.<sup>71</sup> Lots in South Virginia Beach, including those in the developments of Brighton, Ocean Grove, and Tecumseh Beach, were less inflated because few people wanted to buy land where a promised southward extension of Atlantic Avenue across Rudee Inlet had failed to materialize for more than twenty years. These lots, assessed between \$5 and \$40, appear to have been bought up in large quantities by speculators who hoped they would become valuable in the future.<sup>72</sup>

As in Florida, wealthy capitalists descended upon Virginia Beach, convinced of its ability to earn them money. At least one, Louis Siegel of New York, vehemently denied any intentions of producing a boom through wild speculation.<sup>73</sup> Barron G. Collier of New York,

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<sup>68</sup>Mansfield, 134.

<sup>69</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, July 13, 23, 1925.

<sup>70</sup>Virginia Land Tax Record, 1926, Princess Anne County.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, *Ledger-Dispatch*, May 15, 1925.

<sup>72</sup>Virginia Land Tax Record, 1926, Princess Anne County.

<sup>73</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, July 24, 1926.

developers knew how to handle large-scale projects.<sup>75</sup> Shadow Lawn Heights proved a great success. By the end of 1925 almost all of the development's 1,300 lots had been sold.<sup>76</sup>

Numerous other subdivisions opened at Virginia Beach during the 1920s. Among the more noteworthy were Linkhorn Park, Ubermeer, Bird Neck Point, Cavalier Shores, and Rudee Heights. All but the latter were situated north of Seaside Park, indicating a continued northward trend in development at the beach. The real estate market was decidedly far more active than in previously decades, when Norfolk newspapers listed very little beach property for sale. Thus, the 1920s saw Virginia Beach grow into a substantial town whose environs were dotted with new neighborhoods.

Although Virginia Beach gradually was evolving an urban landscape, it still was small and isolated enough to be a haven for criminal activity. After national prohibition was passed in 1920, Princess Anne County played a considerable role in the production and distribution of illegal distilled spirits. The county also lay at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, a favorite haunt of rum-runners hoping to elude authorities and get their product to the thirsty cities of the Middle Atlantic region. The wilds of the Cape Henry "Desert" had long been regarded as a "paradise for moonshiners." In fact, most of the illicit rum supply for Norfolk and Virginia Beach came from the Desert.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., May 9, June 5, 1924, May 20, 1925.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., May 29, 1926.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., July 30, 1925.

The issue of bootlegging had long divided the townspeople of Virginia Beach. Those in favor of allowing liquor sales and consumption included many hotel keepers, while the most vociferous opponents of liquor often were affiliated with one of the town's five churches. In elections the town's candidates often squared off along "wet/dry" lines. State-sanctioned prohibition had been in effect since 1916, but Virginia Beach officials, who had tended to ignore the problem of Sunday alcohol sales in the past, seldom made a concerted effort to curb drinking after national prohibition ensued. As a result, in 1921 some angry local citizens formed the Law and Order League, better known as the "Purity Squad," to assist state officials in catching outlaws. At least one major raid on a Virginia Beach hotel was made in 1923 when agents discovered corn liquor at the Spotswood Arms Hotel's soft drink stand. The county's most notorious bootlegger, Alonzo "Speed" Fentress, never was sentenced until 1935, despite many arrests, which suggests that the resolve to punish such offenders was weak. Throughout the 1920s, Fentress often was seen in his "heavily fortified Cadillac," careening down Princess Anne roads.<sup>78</sup>

One May night in 1923, one of three rum-running ships sailing under the Union Jack made a break for shore just north of Virginia Beach. As the outlaws' "shore representative" waited by the beach, the British ship unloaded 1,800 cases of Scotch liquor from Bermuda. The \$35 cases then were stuffed into trucks and taken to Norfolk for distribution. Although

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<sup>78</sup>Stephen S. Mansfield, "The 'Purity Squad' Versus the Bootleggers: Prohibition in Princess Anne County," *Olde Times* 4, no. 2 (1991): 4-9; Charles E. Barco, interview with author, tape recording, Virginia Beach, October 10, 1995. Barco is the son of the third mayor of Virginia Beach.

the authorities failed to intercept this run, they soon caught the smuggling ring, which was responsible for a total of \$1 million in contraband landed from off the Virginia capes.<sup>79</sup> Although no other similar instances were reported at the beach, the continuing presence of rum-runners bobbing just offshore was a constant reminder that the area was a strategic site for smuggling syndicates. Thus, the 1920s brought Virginia Beach more than hotels, amusements, businesses, and houses.

Aside from the problems associated with Prohibition, Virginia Beach enjoyed a decade of boundless confidence and prosperity. In the 1920s the seaside resort possessed for the first time a sense of civic cooperation that helped solve nagging infrastructure problems and secure financial backing for needed resort development. This immense effort, combined with a freewheeling national economy, an increasingly mobile society eager to vacation, and numerous interested capitalists willing to invest in the beach, brought about a radical transformation of Virginia Beach. For the first time in its fifty-year history the dream of a major seaside resort had been realized.

Virginia Beach had suffered many setbacks in a half century. The early railroad from Norfolk, conceived as the link necessary to open up the beach, took thirteen years to stabilize financially under the care of the Vanderbilt interest. The first period of prosperity at the resort was strengthened when the new Chesapeake Transit Company bought out the older railroad, ending the short period when two competing railroads running to different resorts

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<sup>79</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, May 25, 26, 1923.

threatened to undermine Virginia Beach as the dominant ocean resort. When the Princess Anne Hotel burned in 1907, the beach mourned the loss of its ability to attract wealthy northerners, but soon the Virginia Beach Casino began luring Norfolkkians in droves, more than offsetting the lost patronage. Following a period of stagnation during World War I, Virginia Beach surged forth with renewed vigor in the 1920s. As dozens of hotels and cottages were erected, the beach was transformed into a two-mile strip with a more urban feel. The Cavalier Hotel recaptured the lost "upper crust," winning Virginia Beach the acclaim it had missed for twenty years after its first hotel burned. Most important, the beach became a thriving town with many shops and services and a heightened sense of community, particularly significant in light of three centuries with no true town in Princess Anne. The seaside town enjoyed a rapid rise in the number of real estate transactions as Norfolkkians and even Florida developers raced to open offices to deal in Virginia Beach property. Following nearly a decade of unbroken prosperity, the Great Stock Market Crash of 1929 capped the seaside resort's spectacular growth. Though Virginia Beach did avoid a total collapse during the Great Depression by continuing to attract a fair number of vacationers, it settled into a role it had played so often before -- holding its own while dreaming of a boundless future.

## Epilogue

Importantly, Virginia Beach's remarkable expansion during the 1920s not only left it with a luster that even the Great Depression could not tarnish completely, it also provided a solid basis for continued growth once the national crisis eased. The vast improvements in accommodations during the 1920s assured Virginia Beach the privilege of continuing to attract conventions, which brought in money and stability. The development of two first-class amusement centers offered inexpensive and accessible pleasure that could not succumb in hard times. The building of a concrete promenade to replace the old boardwalk lent an element of permanence while creating a "spine" to anchor the resort strip. Perhaps most important, the evolution of a permanent community gave the beach staying power. That is, the town no longer was boarded up in winter and left to the elements. Rather, it had its own year-round population (1,719 in 1930), businesses, churches, civic organizations, and clubs.<sup>1</sup>

During the 1930s Virginia Beach added few new facilities to host summer visitors. Nevertheless, the resort began to attract big-name entertainers, particularly to the Cavalier Beach Club, which gradually became the largest hirer of big bands in the world. In the 1930s and 1940s, the club enjoyed the performances of Glenn Miller, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey,

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<sup>1</sup>Andriot, 691.

Guy Lombardo, Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, and many others. Elsewhere in the Virginia Beach area, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) gave the resort its most enduring New Deal legacy, Seashore State Park, carved from the semi-tropical tangles of the Cape Henry “Desert” in 1936. The resort enjoyed one controversial year of greyhound racing in 1935. Almost doomed from the start, the track was accused of encouraging betting. In retaliation, the track owners quipped that if they were shut down, so too should be the many slot machines allegedly in operation in the resort town. The dog track became best remembered as the impetus for a major crackdown on businesses abetting gambling.<sup>2</sup>

World War II shut down Virginia Beach’s growth, which had resumed briefly in the late 1930s. During the war, the town endured “black outs” every night in which all lights were shut off to prevent the silhouetting of American ships at sea, making them less vulnerable to attack. The U.S. Navy took over the Cavalier for use as a radar training school from 1942 to 1945, draining “The Plunge” to create an auditorium. Following the war the resort lay in disrepair. Many hotels had been neglected, and tourism waned. In 1947 Norfolk Southern, bowing to automobile competition, discontinued rail passenger service to the oceanfront, ending a sixty-five-year tradition at the beach. After the war ended, the flood of soldiers back into the United States, eager to build new homes and new lives, led to the beginning of Virginia Beach’s growth as a suburb of Norfolk. The ensuing population growth was bolstered by an increase in military personnel at the beach. By the mid-1940s, Virginia

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<sup>2</sup>*Ledger-Dispatch*, July 5, 10, 11, August 10, 1935.



Beach had become home to Fort Story, Camp Pendleton (formerly the State Rifle Range), Oceana Naval Air Station, Dam Neck Coast Guard Station, and Little Creek Naval Amphibious Base.<sup>3</sup> By 1950 the beach had a population of more than 5,000, a 107 percent increase in ten years.<sup>4</sup>

The most noticeable change in the oceanfront strip at Virginia Beach since World War II has been its complete redevelopment into a skyscraper district that natives now sarcastically call the “concrete wall.” This complete metamorphosis goes far in explaining the surprise of many people when they learn that Virginia Beach actually dates to 1880 with the formation of the first railroad and land development company. Although the eight-story Cavalier failed to initiate the trend toward high-rise hotels at Virginia Beach, the first portent of change came in 1951, when the fifteen-story Mayflower Apartments opened at Thirty-fourth and Atlantic. At the time the Mayflower, then Virginia’s tallest apartment building, towered ominously over the two- to four-story hotels and cottages below.<sup>5</sup> By the 1960s the high-rise trend was in full-swing as the wrecking ball claimed Virginia Beach’s early landmarks, one by one. In 1996 only two pre-1910 structures remain at the resort, the Holland-deWitt cottage and the life saving station, both of which house museums.

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<sup>3</sup>Mansfield, *A Pictorial History*, 163, 170-71.

<sup>4</sup>Andriot, 691.

<sup>5</sup>Mansfield, *A Pictorial History*, 185.

Even more remarkable than the wholesale redevelopment along the strip has been the staggering population explosion. Having grown from 19,984 in 1940 to 42,277 in 1950, Princess Anne County had more than 110,000 residents when it merged with the seaside resort to form the city of Virginia Beach on January 1, 1963. Touted as the “World’s Largest Resort City,” the new consolidated city sprawled over 310 square miles, much of which remains undeveloped even today. Following the merger, Virginia Beach’s development resembled closely that of any other rapidly growing suburban area. The newest link to its “parent” city, the multilane Norfolk-Virginia Beach Expressway opened in 1967, greatly reducing the travel time and facilitating commuting. Two large shopping malls have been built in the vicinity of this freeway.<sup>6</sup>

Since the merger, Virginia Beach has grown almost without bounds, from about 170,000 in 1970 to more than 400,000 today.<sup>7</sup> Since 1982 Virginia Beach, having surpassed Norfolk, has been the most populous city in Virginia. One wonders what Marshall Parks would think if he could see Virginia Beach today. One has to look closely to see any trace of the “old” Virginia Beach. To be sure, the Cavalier still welcomes guests today, while golfers still ply the velvety green fairways of the Cavalier and Princess Anne Country Clubs. However, aside from these landmarks and the two remaining oceanfront structures, the seaside resort city stands almost devoid of any trace of its past. Of Virginia Beach’s

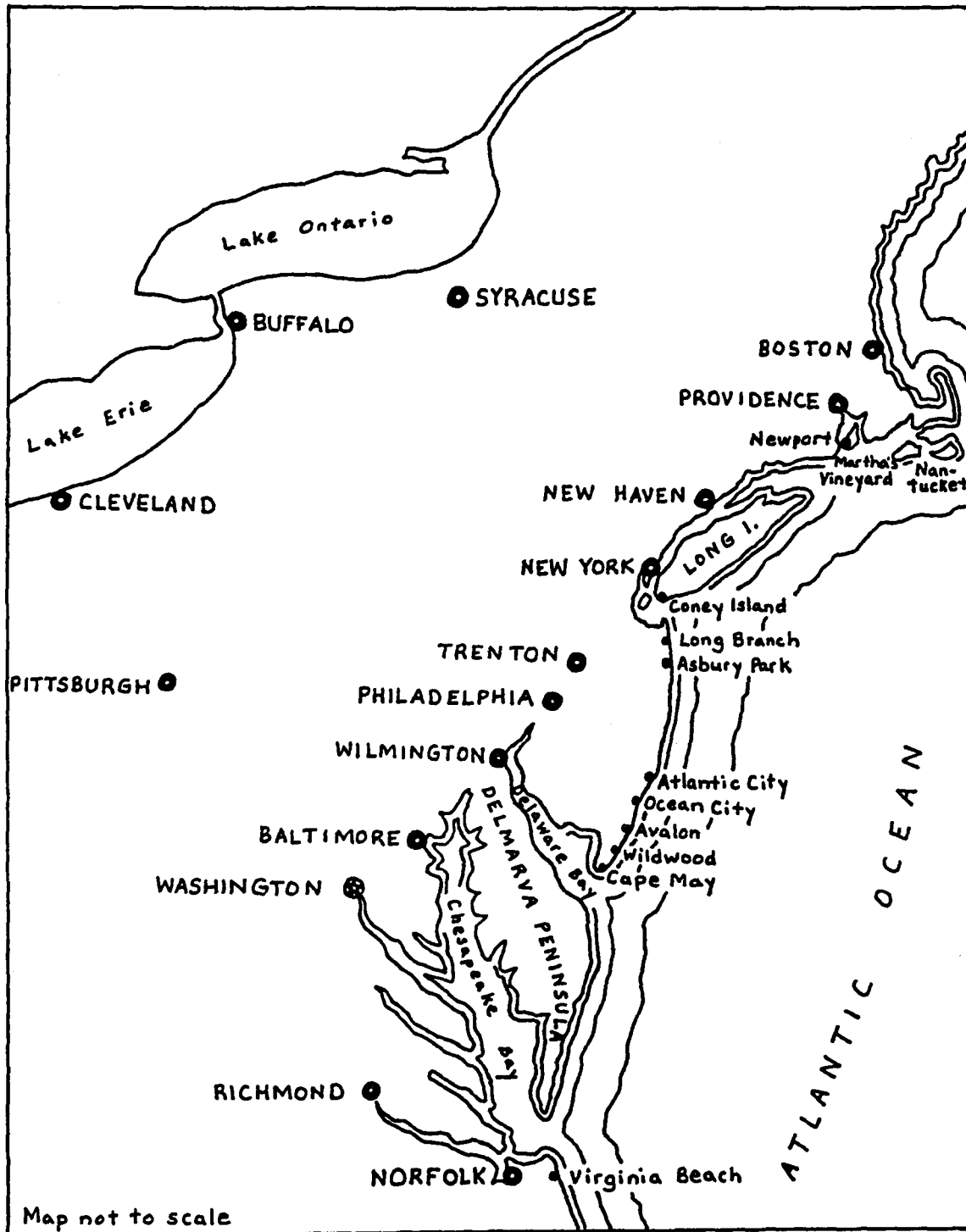
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<sup>6</sup>Andriot, 688; Mansfield, *A Pictorial History*, 196.

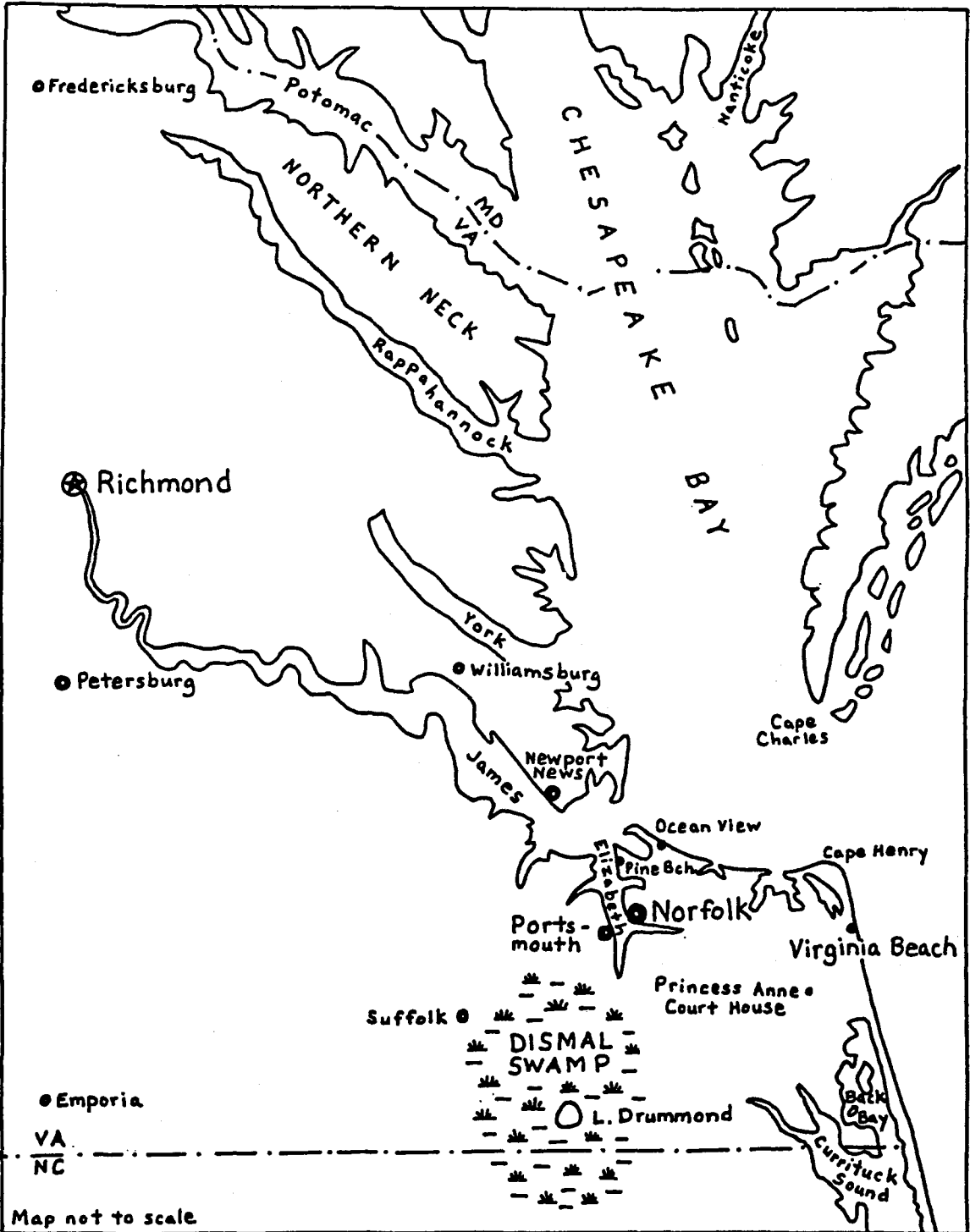
<sup>7</sup>Andriot, 691.

multitude, only a handful of natives remain who can recall the beach as it was decades before the “concrete wall” was thrust up beside the sea.

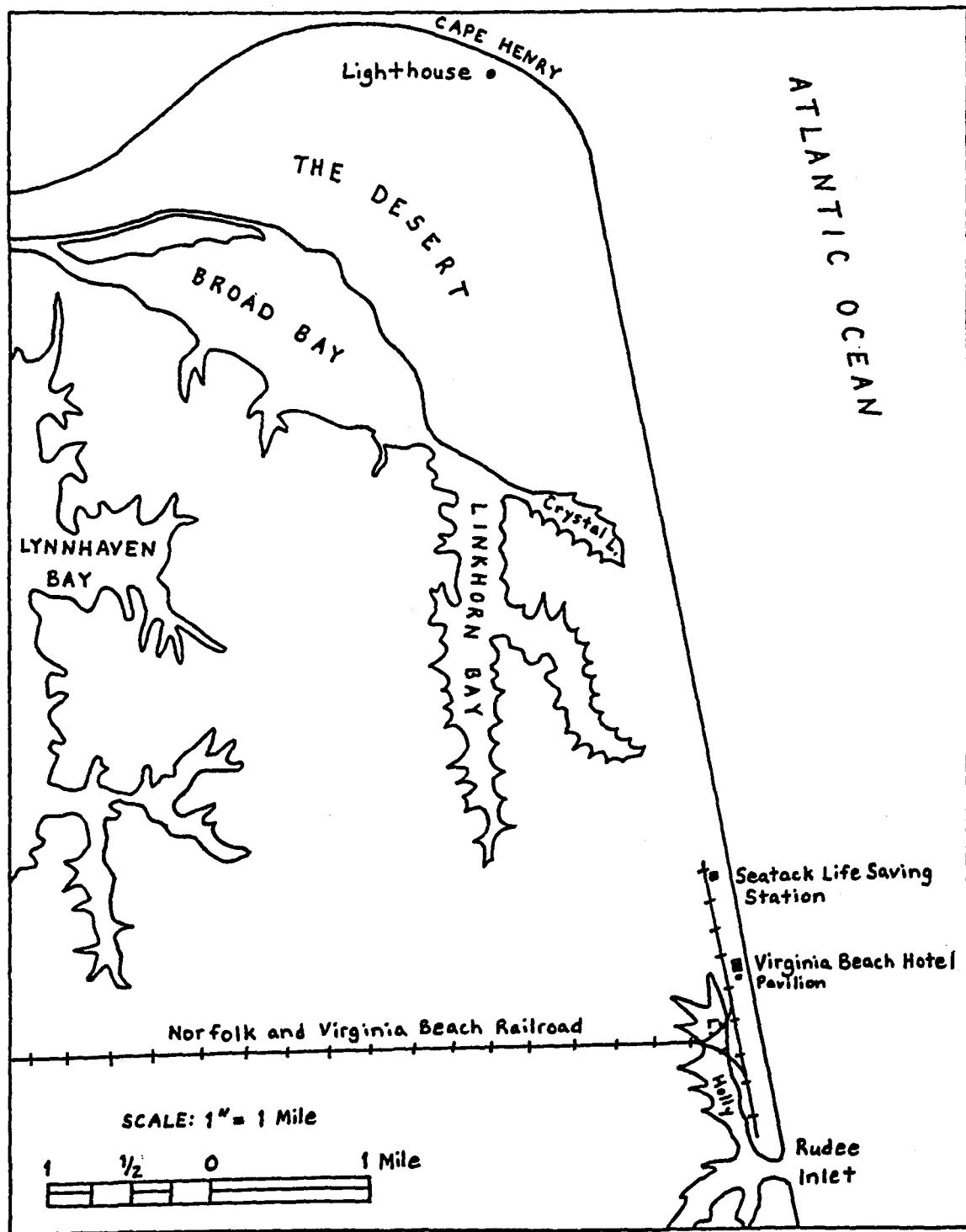
Indeed, Virginia Beach has paid no small price for its suburban- and military-fueled population boom, having become a city in which few people sink deep roots. Cities are built over time, and Virginia Beach may one day have a well-developed sense of its own history. For the present, however, the place once heralded as lying “Twixt Ocean and Pines” has lost not only those pines, but all sense of having been a resort for more than a century. Criss-crossed by dozens of multilane boulevards clogged with the traffic typical of “suburbia,” the city’s appears a modern creation, yet beneath the surface the diligent searcher may find the colorful heritage of one of America’s great seaside resorts.



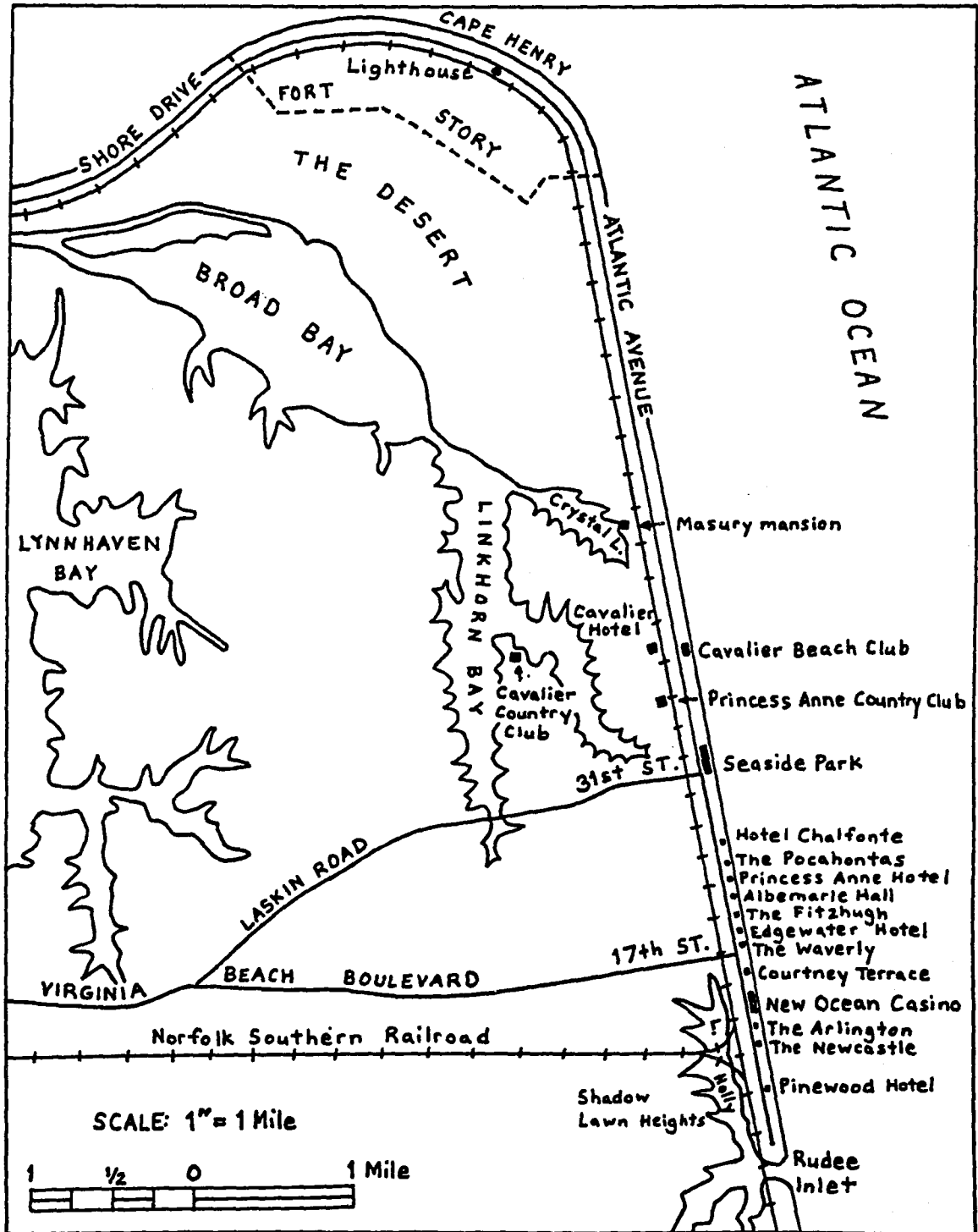
Map 1. Middle Atlantic Coast



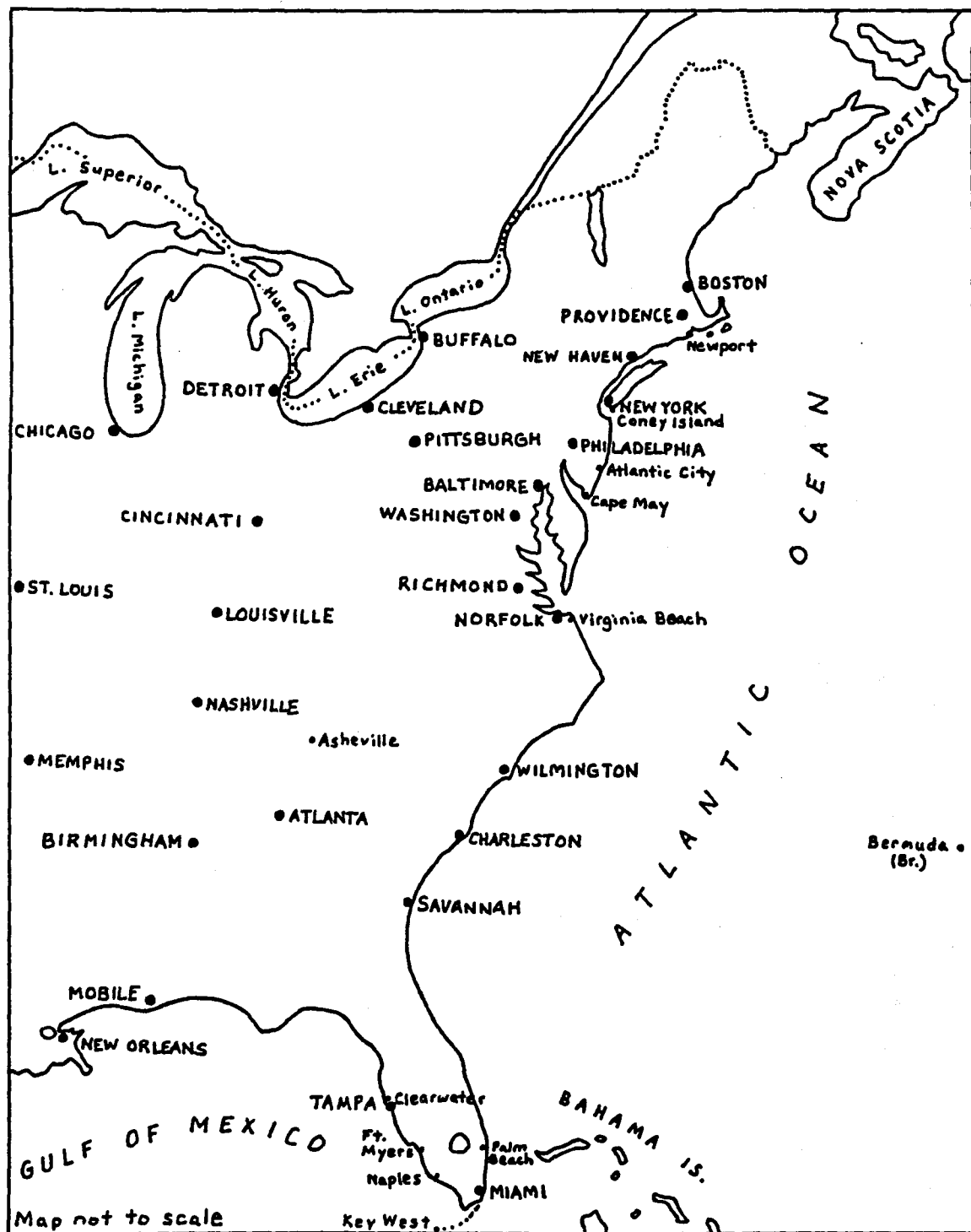
Map 2. Tidewater Virginia



Map 3. Virginia Beach and Vicinity, 1884



Map 4. Virginia Beach and Vicinity, 1930



Map 5. Cities and Resorts of the Eastern United States



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## Vita

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