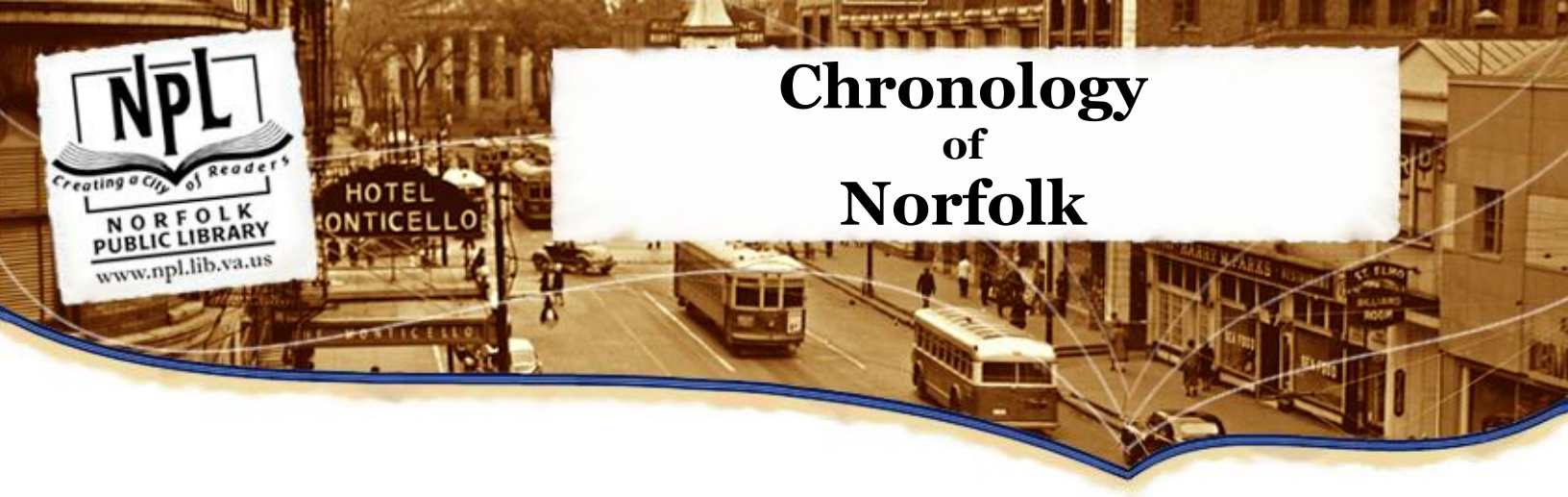

Chronology of Norfolk

BEFORE NORFOLK
The Chesipean Indians ruled the area. Their town was called SKICOAK, the site of which is now Norfolk.

17TH CENTURY
1607 -- Three English ships landed at Cape Henry. After giving thanks for their safe passage to the New World, the colonists proceeded up the river to establish Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in America.

1680 -- Charles II commanded that 50 acres of land be purchased by each Virginia county and laid out for a town and storehouses. In Norfolk County, 10,000 pounds of tobacco were paid to Nicholas Wise for the 50 acre area now bounded by City Hall Avenue on the north, Water Street on the south, the Elizabeth River on the west, and the Norfolk and Western Railroad tracks on the east.
1682 -- The purchase of land became official, the deed was recorded and Norfolk Towne was established.

18TH CENTURY
1736 -- By charter from George II, Norfolk and its suburbs were incorporated into a borough. Samuel Boush became our first mayor.

1754 -- The silver mace, ancient symbol of royal authority, was presented to the Borough council by Lt. Gov. Robert Dinwiddie.

1776 -- On New Year's Day, English ships under the command of Lord Dunmore opened fire on Norfolk, burning many of the buildings to the ground. The destruction was completed by Colonial troops in order that the British might not occupy the borough. Norfolk was the only American town completely destroyed and rebuilt. A British cannonball in the wall of St Paul's Church is the only reminder of the Revolutionary War.

1787 -- The first U.S. Marine Hospital was established in Norfolk County. It later became the U.S. Public Health Hospital.

1790 -- The first government lighthouse was erected at Cape Henry. It is still standing, though no longer used, since a new lighthouse was built in 1881.

19TH CENTURY

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

1813 -- The British attacked Craney Island and were successfully repelled.

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

1845 -- Norfolk was incorporated as a City.

1855 -- The Yellow Fever Epidemic wiped out one-third of Norfolk's inhabitants.

1862 -- The first ironclad ship was built at the Norfolk Navy Yard. The first battle between ironclads - the MERRIMAC and the MONITOR - was fought in Hampton Roads.

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

After the Civil War, industries and railroads opened the way for transportation of coal to our port, the beginning of trade which made Norfolk the greatest port in the world.

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

20TH CENTURY

1902 -- Park Place (Norfolk's 7th ward) is annexed, followed by Berkley (8th ward) in 1906 and Huntersville (9th ward) and Lambert's Point (10th Ward) in 1911.

1903 -- News of the Wright Brothers' historic first flight at Kitty Hawk NC is "scooped" by a Norfolk newspaper reporter.

1907 -- The Jamestown Exposition, celebrating the 300th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown, is held in the Sewell's Point area of Norfolk.

1907 -- The Abraham Doumar family moves to Norfolk and sets up an ice cream concession at

Ocean View Park. In 1904, at the St. Louis Exposition, the Doumars were credited with inventing the ice cream cone. In 1905 they made the first ice cream cone machine, which is still in use at Doumar's Restaurant today.

1907 -- The Great White Fleet - 15 U.S. ships on a peace mission around the world - sail from Norfolk.

1909 -- The Virginian Railway opens for business.

1910 -- Eugene Ely makes aviation history when he successfully launches his Curtiss biplane from the deck of the cruiser Birmingham and lands on the beach at Willoughby Spit.

1910 -- P.B. Young founds the Norfolk Journal and Guide newspaper.

1917 -- 600 German sailors, crew of the interned raiders Kronprinz Wilhelm and Prinz Eitel Friedrich, are held at the Norfolk Navy Yard in Portsmouth and build a German Village to pass away the time. The village is a popular tourist attraction - entrance fees and revenue from the sale of baked goods and souvenirs are sent to the German Red Cross. After the United States enters the war, the sailors become prisoners of war and are sent to POW camps in Georgia.

1917 -- The U.S Naval Operating Base and Training Station is established on the old Jamestown Exposition grounds. 1400 sailors from the St. Helena Training Station in Berkley march to the new base.

1917 -- The announcement is made that Norfolk leads the nation in U. S. Navy recruiting for World War in proportion to population.

1917 -- Poet James Weldon Johnson meets with P.B. Young and other prominent blacks in Norfolk to organize a local NAACP chapter.

1918 -- The City Manager form of government is established in Norfolk, and the old five ward system is replaced by a five member at-large City Council. In1989, the ward system returns to Norfolk, with members elected from five wards and two superwards.

1919 -- The Crispus Attucks Theatre opens; designed, financed and developed by African Americans. The theater is named to honor African American Crispus Attucks, who was the first American killed by British soldiers when they fired into a crowd of demonstrators in Boston in 1770. The event, which closely preceded the American Revolution, became known as the Boston massacre.

1921 -- Virginia Beach Boulevard, a concrete road running from Virginia Beach to Norfolk, is completed.

1922 -- The US Army dirigible Roma crashes at the Quartermaster Depot (now Norfolk International Terminal), killing 34 of the 45 men aboard.

1923 -- An annexation which includes Ocean View, Larchmont and Lafayette adds 27 square miles to Norfolk City.

1924 -- A bus route between Norfolk and Virginia Beach is established.

1926 -- The Schneider Cup Race between American and Italian aviators is held in Norfolk and receives international publicity. The race is won by an Italian aviator, flying at an average speed of more than 246 mph.

1935 -- The Norfolk unit of Virginia Union University is established (now Norfolk State University).

1938 -- Norfolk Municipal Airport opens on the former Truxton Manor Golf Course tract. A new terminal building is dedicated in 1951. In 1976, Norfolk International Airport opens, with overseas flights.

1938 -- Norfolk Virginian-Pilot editor Louis Jaffe's anti-KKK editorials earn the Pulitzer Prize.

1939 -- Aline E. Black sues against Norfolk's unequal pay for black and white teachers, starting a series of legal maneuvers that eventually topples similar unequal pay scales throughout Virginia. Black's lawsuit is replaced by one from Melvin O. Alston of Norfolk. National civil rights attorney Thurgood Marshall represents the black Norfolk teachers as the lawsuit prevails at the U.S. Supreme Court in 1940.

1939 -- Norfolk City Manager Borland recommends the creation of a Housing Authority. City Council votes unanimously against the proposal.

1940 -- On recommendation of Manager Borland, Council reconsiders; and votes to create a Housing Authority so Norfolk can participate in federally funded low-cost housing projects. Louis H. Windholz is named chairman. The Authority applies to the US Housing Authority for $4 million for 1000 housing units. Ground is broken for Merrimack Park, the Authority's first defense housing project.

1941 -- World War II, with heightened defense activities and hundreds of families moving into the area, doubles Norfolk's population. At the end of the war, Norfolk Naval Base and Air Station remain the largest military installation in the world.

1941 -- USHA earmarks $2 million for slum clearance in Norfolk. The previous year, Nathan Straus, USHA administrator, called a Norfolk hotel-apartment "the worst slum he had seen anywhere in the US."

1941 -- First tenants move into Merrimack Park. Three black citizens - P.B. Young (publisher), J. Eugene Diggs (attorney) and the Rev. Richard H. Bowling - are appointed as an advisory committee on housing construction in black slum areas. Construction begins on Oak Leaf Park. Merrimack Park is dedicated.

1942 -- The Nansemond Hotel at Ocean View serves as headquarters of the Amphibious Training Command, Atlantic Fleet until the end of World War II. Troops stationed here participate in embarkation and landing exercises day and night on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay. Successful assaults on 40 enemy beaches are planned and practiced at the Nansemond, including Operation Torch, the successful invasion of North Africa.

1945 -- The first black police officers in Virginia are sworn in on the Norfolk force.

1946 -- The Shriners sponsor the first Oyster Bowl Parade and football game, to aid crippled children. The Granby High School Comets defeat Clifton New Jersey High School 6-0. The last Oyster Bowl game is played in 1995.

1946 -- The Norfolk Housing Authority changes name to Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority.

1948 -- Norfolk's last streetcar runs on the Ocean View line, as streetcars are replaced by buses.

1949 -- Norfolk, with 3000 units and Galveston TX, with 500 units become the first cities in the nation to be assigned an allocation of housing units under the new public housing program now being activated.

1950 -- The battleship Missouri runs hard aground off Thimble Shoal Light near Willoughby Spit.

1950 -- Work begins on Norfolk's first public (non-defense) housing project, across from Oak Leaf Park.

1951 -- Norfolk's slum clearance program begins with the demolition of a house on Smith Street.

1951 -- Four new housing projects in Norfolk are named for black leaders - Diggs, Young, Bowling and the late Dr. Robert R. Moton.

1951 -- The last reunion of Confederate veterans is held in Norfolk.

1952 -- SACLANT, Supreme Allied Command Atlantic, western arm of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and only international command in the western hemisphere, is established in Norfolk.

1952 -- The Downtown Norfolk-Portsmouth Bridge-Tunnel opens. A modern engineering marvel, it is followed by the Mid-Town Tunnel in 1962 and a second Downtown Tunnel in 1986. Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel opens in 1957, Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel in 1964 and a second Hampton Roads Tunnel in 1976. In 1992, the $400,000,000 Monitor-Merrimac Bridge-Tunnel opens, connecting Suffolk and Newport News and completing the loop of interstate highways in Hampton Roads.

1952 -- The 1918 Berkley Bridge is demolished

1954 -- The first Azalea Festival, now an annual event, is held to honor NATO countries.

1955 -- Tanners Creek is annexed. Ownership of the World War II-era Broad Creek Village is transferred to the Housing Authority. Norfolk becomes the largest city in the state, with a population of 297,253.

1955 -- Ferry service from Norfolk to Portsmouth, established in 1636 by Adam Thoroughgood, is discontinued. Pedestrian ferry service is resumed in 1983.

1955 -- Black parents petition the Norfolk School Board to reorganize public schools along non-racial lines

1957 -- The cornerstone is laid for Norfolk General Hospital's new wing. The wing is dedicated in 1958.

1957 -- Calvert Park opens in Norfolk - the last housing project of the slum clearance program begun in 1949.

1957 -- The International Naval Review, celebrating the sesquicentennial of our nation's birth, is held in Norfolk.

1958 -- Norfolk's Sister City program began with the adoption of Moji, Japan (changed to Kitakyushu in 1963). Additional Sister Cities follow: Wilhelmshaven, Germany (1976); Norwich, Norfolk County, England (1986); Toulon, France (1989); and Kaliningrad, Russia (1992).

1958 -- Gov. J. Lindsey Almond closes six Norfolk schools to stop their integration, putting 9,950 white children out of school.

1959 -- Norfolk's public schools are desegregated when 17 black children enter six previously all-white schools in Norfolk. Norfolk Virginian-Pilot editor Lenoir Chambers' editorials against massive resistance earn the Pulitzer Prize.

1960 -- Norfolk is one of eleven U.S. cities to receive the All American City Award, granted jointly by Look Magazine and the National Municipal League.

1961 -- The completion of the Public Safety Building marks the beginning of a $15,000,000 Civic Center. A court building and 11-story City Hall are completed in 1965.

1961 -- Demolition begins on Norfolk's East Main Street taverns.

1962 -- Kirn Memorial Library opens in a glass and marble structure in downtown Norfolk, replacing the old Carnegie building on Freemason Street. By 1992, there were also 11 branches and a bookmobile.

1962 -- The Norfolk College of William and Mary changes its name to Old Dominion College.

1962 -- The Brambleton Avenue extension, including a new bridge crossing the Hague, opens to traffic between Colley Ave. and Boush St.

1964 -- The General Douglas MacArthur Memorial opens in Norfolk. Death of General MacArthur.

1966 -- The Supreme Court outlaws Virginia's poll tax in a case brought by Evelyn Butts, a Norfolk citizen activist and seamstress.

1966 -- Norfolk International Terminals are built. This huge complex of one of the most complete and modern operations in the U.S. for steamship, rail and truck carriers serves international cargoes.

1966 -- Virginia Wesleyan College opens.

1967 -- The Virginia Beach-Norfolk Expressway, a 12.1 mile long toll road leading from Baltic Avenue in Virginia Beach to Brambleton Avenue in Norfolk, opens to traffic.

1968 -- Joseph A. Jordan, Jr. in Norfolk and Raymond Turner and Dr. James W. Holley III in Portsmouth, become the first African Americans to be elected to their city councils in this century.

1969 -- Norfolk State College, founded in 1935 as a branch of Richmond's Virginia Union University, becomes an independent four-year college.

1969 -- Old Dominion College gains University status.

1971 -- Donation of major art collection of Walter P. Chrysler, Jr. to the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences. The museum changes its name to The Chrysler Museum of Art.

1971-1972 -- Norfolk's $30,000,000 convention and cultural center opens; SCOPE, a unique domed convention hall; and Chrysler Hall, a separate theater.

1973 -- Eastern Virginia Medical School, the hub of a major regional medical and health service center, begins. In 1980, the first in-vitro fertilization clinic in the U.S opens at EVMS in a $25,000 lab. The clinic is named the Jones Institute for Reproductive Medicine in 1983 to honor its directors, Drs. Georgeanna and Howard Jones. In 1992, the Institute's new $25,000,000 home is dedicated.

1975 Professional Opera arrives in Norfolk as the Virginia Opera Association opens its premiere season at the Center Theater. In 1993, the renovated theater is rechristened the Edythe C. and Stanley L. Harrison Opera House in honor of the company's founders.

1976 -- Operation Sail begins as a tall ship celebration for the American Bicentennial. It develops into the annual Harborfest.

1976 -- First graduating class of the Eastern Virginia Medical School

1979 -- Norfolk State College becomes a University.

1980 -- Headquarters of the Jacques Cousteau Society move to Norfolk

1980 -- William P. Robinson Sr. of Norfolk becomes the first African American in Virginia to head a committee in the House of Delegates when he is appointed chairman of the House Health, Welfare and Institutions Committee.

1981 -- Birth at Norfolk General Hospital of the first baby in the United States conceived by in-vitro fertilization (Elizabeth Jordan Carr).

1982 -- Norfolk and Western and Southern Railways consolidate; the new company, Norfolk Southern, moves its headquarters to Norfolk.

1983 -- John C. Thomas, a Norfolk native, is appointed as the first black judge on the Virginia Supreme Court.

1983 -- Waterside opens in Norfolk as a festival marketplace with 120 food and specialty shops. Adjacent is Town Point Park, the scene of concerts and activities for all ages. In 1990, the $8,500,000 Waterside expansion opens.

1983 -- The World Trade Center is built in Norfolk. This $30,000,000, nine-story, curvilinear office complex is a vital center for international trade.

1983 -- The U.S Postal Center, in a new $13,000,000 building, replaces the Old Post Office and Parcel Post Annex in Norfolk.

1991 -- Site preparation begins for the $52,000,000 National Maritime Center, Nauticus, which opens in 1994.

1992 -- Ground is broken for a 12,000 seat, $13,000,000 baseball park, which opens as Harbor Park in 1993 and is touted as the country's finest minor-league stadium.

1993 -- Tidewater Community College opens a downtown Norfolk center with 100 students in seven classrooms. A $26.6 million, 185,000 square foot campus with a capacity for 5000 students, opens in the Fall of 1996.

1995 -- Tolls on the Virginia Beach-Norfolk Expressway are removed. Tolls had been removed from the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnels in 1976 and from the Norfolk-Portsmouth tunnels in 1986. The Jordan Bridge, closed for repairs in 1994, reopens in December 1995 with a 50c toll.

1996 -- Symbolic groundbreaking for MacArthur Center Mall is celebrated on 26 January. The mall is scheduled for completion in 1999.

1998 -- The Virginia Symphony, under the direction of JoAnn Falletta, performs at Carnegie Hall.

1998 -- The Armed Forces Memorial is dedicated at Town Point Park.

1998 -- President Bill Clinton participates in the commissioning of the USS Harry S. Truman at the Norfolk Naval Base. The nuclear-powered supercarrier was built at Newport News Shipbuilding, Virginia's largest industrial employer.

1998 -- Norfolk Southern acquires 7200 miles of Conrail