PREFACE

This report has been prepared to satisfy the research needs specified in Historical Resource Study Proposal CALC-H-1, Historic Resource Study, Portsmouth Village, Cape Lookout National Seashore, North Carolina. The area's historic sites have been identified, evaluated and plotted on the Historical Base Map. Structures that are to appear on the list of classified structures have been identified, as well as the lands and resources to be designated Class VI in the Land Classification Plan. National Register Forms have been prepared for structures and the historic district nominated for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

The dearth of information on Portsmouth Village when I began the study has been overcome by the extensive use of colonial documents, deeds, decennial censuses of the United States and other official documents, State records, personal interviews and a personal survey of the area. Although limited by the scope of this historic resource survey, the history of Portsmouth has become viable and suggestions are made for further exploration of the subject.

Many persons were helpful with the preparation of this report. Outstanding were Senator Everett B. Jordan and Representative David Newton Henderson of North Carolina who provided vital information on the political organization and the whereabouts of State documents. Their interest in the project was exceptional.

Particular thanks are due the master planning team consisting of Team Captain William W. Smith, engineer-planner, Barron H. Bohnet, landscape architect, both of the Office of Environmental Planning and Design, Eastern Service Center, Superintendent Dan Davis of Cape Lookout National Seashore, and Park Ranger Dave Fletcher of Cape Hatteras.
National Seashore (Ocracoke). All gave unstintingly the sum of their knowledge and experience in the area and provided documents essential to the study. Much of it has been incorporated in the text. Bill Smith was most helpful in permitting me to use his recent photographs of Portsmouth Village.

Mark Eckoff, Mrs. Hope K. Holdcamper, Joseph Howerton, Arthur Hecht and Robert Kvasnicka and others of the National Archives were especially helpful in locating rarely used documents.

Especial thanks are due all those North Carolinians who so willingly and cheerfully aided me in my search for first-hand materials. Among these I would like to mention the Honorable John T. Icenhour, Assistant Attorney General; Mr. E. C. Coker, Head Administrator, State Archives and Library and his staff at Raleigh; and the administrators of the Office of the County Commissioners, County Courthouse, Beaufort, N.C., including the Honorable A. H. James, Clerk of the Superior Court; Mr. Elbert Davis, Tax Supervisor, and his assistant, Sterling Hancock; Mrs. Alma Tilghman, Register of Deeds, and her assistants, Mrs. Sharon Piner and Miss Charlotte Taylor. For their enthusiasm in providing first-hand information on Portsmouth and life on the island I wish to thank Miss Elma Dixon, and Mr. Henry Pigott, the two surviving permanent residents; Captain Justin Austin, and Mr. and Mrs. George Wilkes of Ocracoke; and Mrs. Ada Roberts Styron of Arlington, Va., who as a child helped her mother in offering succor to the survivors of the wrecked Vera Cruz VII.

My colleagues Edwin C. Bearss and F. Ross Holland were especially helpful in providing information and copies of the excellent reports they had completed on Cape Hatteras and Cape Lookout. Both read
preliminary drafts of the report and offered valuable assistance in its completion. I wish to extend my thanks to Frank B. Sarles for proof-reading the final draft and to Dr. R. Nortensen for reviewing my recommendations. Miss is due special thanks for an excellent typing job.

Washington, D. C.

September 10, 1970

G. J. O.
CONTENTS

Preface                                      1

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF PLATES

CHAPTER I. HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION          2

II. THE FOUNDING OF PORTSMOUTH               8

III. GROWTH OF PORTSMOUTH                   20

IV. PORTSMOUTH THE SEAPORT                  39

V. THE CIVIL WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH          56

VI. PORTSMOUTH TODAY                        71

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS         75

ILLUSTRATIONS

APPENDIX A. Original Kersey Land Grant, 1753
First Registered Deed to Portsmouth, February 13, 1756

B. Customs Inspection Regulations for Portsmouth, 1758

C. Last Will and Testament of William Gaskill,
Portsmouth, N.C., November 1768

D. Court Judgment Against Otway Burns, 1838

E. List of Furnishings and Medical Supplies,
Portsmouth Marine Hospital, 1847

F. Ship Enrollment, 1869

G. List of U. S. Postmasters, Portsmouth, 1840-1956

H. Legislation on Cape Lookout National Seashore,
   PL 89-366, approved March 10, 1966

BIBLIOGRAPHY
CHAPTER I. HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

The Geographic Setting
Ocracoke Inlet
Blackbeard, the Pirate

II. THE FOUNDING OF PORTSMOUTH
Original Legislation
The First Deed

III. GROWTH OF PORTSMOUTH
   First
   U.S. Census, 1790
   The Shell Castle Shipping and Trading Center
   The War of 1812
   The Shell Castle Lighthouse

IV. PORTSMOUTH THE SEAPORT
   Ship Enrollments
   The Portsmouth Marine Hospital

V. THE CIVIL WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH
   Eighth U.S. Census, 1860
   Portsmouth and the Civil War
   The Portsmouth Life-Saving Station
   Vera Cruz VII

VI. PORTSMOUTH TODAY

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover  Scene from the Blount Pitcher, c. 1800, showing the warehouses and wharves of the Shell Castle enterprise

1. Miss Elma Dixon, last surviving white female resident of Portsmouth, age 66

2. Henry Pigott, last surviving Negro male resident of Portsmouth, age 72

3. The Blount Pitcher showing Shell Castle warehouses and harbor as it appeared c. 1800

4. The Methodist Episcopal Church as it appeared in May 1970

5. Methodist Episcopal Church, Portsmouth, surrounded by marsh grass and sea oats.

6. Airview looking southeast toward Atlantic Ocean showing Methodist Episcopal Church, unoccupied and occupied houses, and landscape

7. Decommissioned U. S. Coast Guard Station at Portsmouth, May 1970

8. Former U. S. Postoffice at Portsmouth opened in 1840, discontinued April 11, 1959

9. Portsmouth School House as it appeared May 1970

10. The oldest surviving house at Portsmouth, c. 1875

11. The old Portsmouth Cemetery dating to 1864

12. Typical lagoon, marsh grass and sea oats leading to Pigott cottage, May 1970

13. Typical overgrowth of marsh grass and sea oats covering the Portsmouth landscape, May 1970

LIST OF PLATES

PLATE I. The White map of Virginia, 1585

II. The Dudley map of the coast of Florida and Virginia, 1647

III. The Moseley map of North Carolina, 1733

IV. The Collet map of North Carolina, 1770

V. The Mouzon map of North Carolina, 1777

VI. The Tatum survey of the Channel at Portsmouth, 1808

VII. The Tatum survey of Ocracoke Inlet, 1808

VIII. The Coast and Geodetic survey of Ocracoke Inlet and Pamlico Sound, 1852

IX. Site of proposed U.S. Life-Saving Station, Portsmouth, June 1893
CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

THE GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

Portsmouth Village was founded in 1753 lies in latitude 35°01'11" and longitude 76°03'55" on the northernmost tip of Portsmouth Island which stretches about eight miles south to Core Banks. It is the northernmost part of the chain of low, sandy, string bean islands known as the Outer Banks. They stretch for 40 miles in a southwest-erly direction to Cape Lookout at the southern extremity of which lie Shackleford Banks that jut out into the Atlantic off the coast of the mainland of North Carolina. Portsmouth Island is separated from Core Banks, probably named for the Coree Indians who once populated the area, by Drum Inlet which opened in the 1930s and was formerly known as Swash Inlet. Whalebone Inlet which cut through Portsmouth Island in the 1860s closed in the early 1900s. There is no road connection between Portsmouth and the other areas of the Outer Banks and the mainland.

Portsmouth is separated on the north from Ocracoke Island, the southernmost extremity of Cape Hatteras National Seashore, by the turbulent waters of Ocracoke Inlet discovered in 1585. It was known earlier by its Indian names of Wokoko, Wosoton, Woccoc, Okok, Ocacock and Ocracock. It appears on the White map of 1585, the Dudley map of 1647, and the Moseley map of 1733. The town of Portsmouth appears for the first time on the Collet map of 1770 and the Mouzon map of 1777 distinguished by a cluster of about nine houses and what appears to be a church. A road runs from the village in a southwestely direction.
Ocracoke is the scene of the last days of Blackbeard the pirate, known as "North Carolina's own." The area is isolated; it is primitive.

---


Portsmouth is considered to be one of the most important areas of the Cape Lookout National Seashore now being established to preserve the primitive nature of one of the last-remaining seashores of our eastern seaboard.

EARLY EXPLORATION

The area was undoubtedly known to the Spanish and French fleets of
the sixteenth century as they took advantage of the trade winds and the warm currents of the Gulf Stream to beat their way back to Europe. It was in 1524 that the Italian navigator, Verrazzano, then in the employ of the French king and using a French fleet left the first written record of the Outer Banks, naming them "Verrazzano Isthmus." Pamlico Sound appeared to him to be an endless sea and he believed that the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans were separated by that narrow strip of land and that the prize for which he was searching—a route to India and China—lay just beyond. This idea was accepted by the French and other Europeans for almost 150 years.

---


It was during the second expedition of Raleigh that left England on April 9, 1585 under the command of Sir Richard Grenville, and with a force of over 600 men, half of whom were soldiers, that the area became known to the English. Grenville reached the Outer Banks at Ocracoke and from there continued his exploration of the countryside moving up the Banks to Roanoke Island where he established a fort and a settlement. Thereafter English ships regularly visited the area. It was most probably during one of these voyages that White prepared his map in 1585 showing "Jococo Inlet" with some degree of accuracy.
Once the English were established in America and their settlements grew as trade and commerce expanded between the Colonies and the Mother Country, Ocracoke Inlet was to become the most important port of entry for North Carolina. All exports and imports from her three most important ports—New Bern, Washington, and Edenton—were funneled across the fresh waters of Pamlico (also known as Pamlico) Sound through its narrow exit at Ocracoke Inlet. And it was at this vital juncture where the fresh waters of North Carolina's rivers, lakes and streams met the turbulent salt waters of the Atlantic that nature was to challenge man.

Daily, according to figures furnished by the U. S. Geologic Survey Office at Raleigh, 15,000,000,000 gallons of water run off the mainland of North Carolina into its bays and sounds of which the most important is Pamlico Sound. It is here that nature must keep her balance and to do this the waters must mix. And it is the mixing of these waters that create the dangers at Ocracoke Inlet for the undercurrents create the vast shoals and turbulence to hinder a ship's passage through these waters.

4. Ibid., p. 5 fn.

5. Ibid., p. 4 fn.
aground at Middle Ground, or Royal Shoal, or Sheep Island Shoal, or else
past Beacon Island, Shell Island and others in the area which had been built up from oyster shells, remnants of the rich harvest of the sea that abounded in Pamlico Sound. Taham's map show these dangerous waters for the first time in 1808 as man sought the answer to conquering his environment. Piloting ships through Ocracoke Inlet and lightering cargoes into warehouses, after Portsmouth was established as a seaport in 1753 and the Shell Castle enterprise was established by Mount and Wallace about 1799 provided part of man's answer to the (furies) of nature. It also was to furnish a livelihood that lasted well over a century for the fishermen, mariners, and pilots of Portsmouth.

---

How about going a little bit deeper into Ocracoke Inlet and describe it through the years, especially the establishing of light boats and lighthouses? Consult the American Coast Pilot; it was issued periodically from the 1790s to the 1860s. It was revised regularly so changed conditions are reflected in it. The Coast Pilot is a little used but excellent source. The Lil. of Ros
One of the earliest descriptions for safe sailing into Ocracoke Inlet is from the Moseley Map of 1733 which states:

**DIRECTIONS FOR OCRACOKE INLET in Lat. 34° 55′**

If you happen to fall in with Cape Hatteras which lies in Lat. 35° 3 N, the Cape land is full of low Trees. Your Course to Ocracoke is W. b. S. about 10 leagues distant from the Cape.

When you come up with the Inlet, to the Northward lies a large Tuft of Trees. In the middle of the Inlet lies a small Island having two large Beacons on it. You must bring them in one and your Course will be W. b. N. Then Steer up with them, till you come within a Cables length of the Shore. Then steer up along the said Beacon Island till you bring Thatch's Hole to bear E.N.E., then steer up with the same and then come to an Anchor in 5 or 6 fathoms water marked [with an anchor on the map].

You have, over Ocracoke Bar, 12 fathoms at low water in the range of the Beacons.

S.E. b. E. Moon, makes full Sea on the Bar, and the Tide flows 3 Feet. The flood runs in the Sound 3 Hours after High water.

If you happen to fall in to the Southward of Ocracock near Cape Lookout, then will appear double land. But if to the Northward, then a large Sound within, and nothing but water will appear over the Bank at Thatch's Hole, take a Pilot to go up the Country.

---

1. Edward Moseley Map, 1733, photostat copy in Map Division, Library of Congress.

sailing

Note should be made in these directions of the variation which still existed in the spelling of "Ocacock" and "Ocracocka."

Didn't the shoals continually shift over the years?
BLACKBEARD, THE PIRATE, NORTH CAROLINA'S OWN

The colonial history of the waters off Portsmouth Island, the site of the future seaport, would not be complete without looking into the career of the pirate, Edward Drummond of Bristol, England, popularly known as Blackbeard, and considered North Carolina's own. He is seldom known under the name of Drummond for after he became a pirate, he started calling himself Edward Teach sometimes spelled in the records as Thatch, Tache, or even Tatch. His memory is preserved today under the name of "Teach" at Teache's Hole off the southwest coast of Ocracoke Island where legends concerning him add lustre to the eyes of modern day tourists and a jingle to the pockets of local tradesmen. It was at Teach's Hole that Blackbeard's piratical career was ended by a powerful slice of Lieutenant Robert Maynard of the British warship Pearl hung the head of the pirate from the bowsprit of Ranger, the sloop on which Maynard and his men had hoodwinked old Teach, and threw his decapitated body into the waters of Ocracoke Inlet. Local legend says that because Blackbeard was such a powerful person, his headless body swam seven times around his sloop, the Adventure, before it sunk out of sight. It is also said that on stormy nights and in fog-bound weather, the powerful voice of Blackbeard calls out, "O-crow-cock," and is heard above the booming of the surf, thus giving the inlet its current name. He has appeared on many maps.

Pirates of North Carolina. Raleigh
CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDING OF PORTSMOUTH

The town of Portsmouth was founded in 1753 for the specific purpose of providing a site on Core Banks for warehouses and wharves where commodities could be stored that were used in the foreign trade of the Province of North Carolina. For many years the trade and commerce of the province had been greatly obstructed by reason of the numerous shoals which lay within Oocacock Inlet. Merchants, or barges, and traders were obliged to employ vessels as lighters, to partially lighten the load of heavier laden ocean-going vessels over the swash. This procedure not only added to the expense of goods and merchandise and lowered the shipper's profit, but also placed the heavier vessel in a vulnerable position until it was light enough to pass over the dangerous shoals of Oocacock Inlet, enter the channel and ride safely at anchor in the harbor adjoining Core Banks.

Experience had shown that merchants trading at the three principal ports of entry—Edenton on Albemarle Sound, Washington on the Pamlico River, and New Bern on the Neuse River—at least half of their cargo, at times the entire cargo, were obliged to forward designed for export, to Oocacock Inlet or Core Banks, for shipment in vessels of any considerable size. The early Proprietors in seeking legislation to establish the town of Portsmouth concluded:¹

It is absolutely necessary to have warehouses and other conveniences on the said Banks, near the said harbor, for the reception and safe keeping of the commodities they are constantly obliged to send down, for completing [sic] the loading of their ships.

The site of Portsmouth was established on the original land grant made to John Kersey, an Englishman, who was granted six hundred and forty acres of land by King George, II, of England. The original grant which is filed in the Office of Secretary of State of North Carolina reads as follows:

George the Second, etc., To all, etc., Know ye that we have given and granted unto John Kersey a Tract of Land Containing Six Hundred and Forty Acres Lying and being in the County Carteret. Beginning on the W side of Occocock Inlet at a Small Creek. Running up the Creek S.S. lil W S W 320 poles to a point of Marsh on Sheep Island Bay, the E side thence S. l W S 320 poles to a Hammock or Island in Great Pond. Then N S S 320 Poles to a Small Cut that Comes Out of the Harbour called Beacon Island Harbour. Then to the First Station Holding and Yielding & Paying four Shilling Prec. [Proclamation] Money Yearley for every Hundred Acres [illegible] the Same According to his rights. Clearing and Cultivating Three Acres for every Hundred within Three Years & Entering these Dates with the Auditor within Six months. On Tertimony and Witness & Dated this Eleventh Day of April Anno Dom 1753.

Matt Rowan

Secretary of State,


Efforts were made to lay out the metes and bounds of the land granted to Kersey without success. Owing to variations in the early maps such as the White map of 1585, the Collett map of 1776, etc., in which the areas described are at variance with the description of the original Kersey land grant, it was suggested that in such a case the "intent" inherent in the description of the property would be the guiding factor, i.e., attempts to tie in the description with a 90° angle to square off the property would bring Portsmouth Island within the score of the metes and bounds of this grant. Interview of Gray, Civil Engineer, ESC, to Olszewski, Sept. 21, 1970.
The first commissioners of Portsmouth were appointed by the Honorable Mathew Rosean, President, by and with the advice and consent of his Majesty's Council and the General Assembly of the Province. They were Joseph Bell of Cateret County, John Williams and Joseph Leech and of New Bern Town, Michael Countanch of Bath Town, John Campbell of Edenton. All or any three of them had full power and authority to lay out fifty acres of land on Core Banks at a point most convenient to the harbor and adjoining said Banks. The town was to be named Portsmouth and the fifty acres were to be divided into lots of half an acre each. The Commissioners were to lay out convenient streets as they thought requisite.  

2. Ibid., Sec. II, p. 253.

When the town was laid out, the Commissioners were authorized to sell, grant, convey and to acknowledge by deed to any person or persons, and his or their heirs and assigns for ever in fee simple any lot or lots they may have selected upon paying $20 shilling proclamation money. Lots were to be sold by the Commissioners to any person willing to become an inhabitant of Portsmouth and they were to be free to select any lot or lots they desired.

4. Ibid., Sec. III.

The first treasurer to be appointed was Joseph Bell, one of the Commissioners. He was to receive all arising from the sale of such lots and he was to credit them to a special fund for the use of the original proprietor, John Kersey, his heirs and assigns. Upon the death of the treasurer or if he should leave his government post, the other Commissioners—Williams, Leech, Countanch and Campbell—were to appoint
some other person in his place or county where the former Commissioner resided. 4

4. Ibid., Sec. IV.

The Treasurer and every Treasurer to be appointed by virtue of the legislation was to post security to the County Court of Carteret, deposit from time to time the monies received from the sale of the lots in Portsmouth, and to present an accounting yearly on March 25 to John Kersey or his heirs or assigns. 5

5. Ibid., Sec. V.

Purchasers of lots were obliged within eighteen months after their deeds had been conveyed to them:

To build a good substantial habitable framed or brick house or a good substantial warehouse of not less than twenty feet in length and sixteen feet wide otherwise such grant or conveyance would become void and of no effect as if it had never been made. Under these circumstances the lot or lots were to revert to the use of John Kersey, the proprietor, his heirs or assigns. 6

6. Ibid., Sec. VI.

Local historians have preserved the legend of having been built on one of the several islands existing among the shoals of Ocracoke Inlet and Pamlico Sound. Legislation for its construction and money to complete it were provided for in the same Act that authorized the founding of Portsmouth. In view of the two subsequent paragraphs, why this statement now?
The idea for a fort at Ocracoke Inlet sprang from the practical view that Portsmouth was an isolated martime town far out on the Outer Banks and that it was isolated from the the bulk of the thus inhabitants on the mainland. It was subject to attack by an enemy in wartime and to being harassed and raided by pirates in peacetime. It therefore required some measures for its defence.

An earlier Act of the Assembly had appropriated two thousand pounds proclamation money for building a fort or fortifications at or near Ocracoke Inlet but nothing had been done to carry it out. Under the legislation £2,000 proclamation money was "appropriated towards discharging the Expenses of building and erecting the said Fort or Fortifications." 7

7. Ibid., Sec. VII, p. 254

The Commissioners who had been named for carrying out the earlier legislation were discharged from this responsibility and: 8

The Commander in Chief for the Time being, the Honourable Francis Corbin, and John Rieussett, Esqrs., Mr. Joseph Bell, Mr. John Williams, Mr. Joseph Leach [sic], Mr. Michael Coutanch, and Mr. John Cambell [sic], be, and hereby nominated Commissioners to compleat and finish the said Fort or Fortification; and they, or the Majority of them, shall be and are hereby invested with all the Powers and Authorities given to the Commissioners in the before mentioned Act, nominated and appointed for building the same; and that the said Fort shall be called Fort Granville.

8. Ibid., Sec. VIII.

The fort was named after Lord Granville, one of the early Lords Proprietors.
Apparently there was little enthusiasm for settling the town of Portsmouth. Two years later, when the newly appointed Governor Arthur Dobbs set out on a tour of Core Banks and reached Ocracoke Inlet on May 9, 1755, he found that Portsmouth and Fort Granville existed in name only.

Surveying the site of the town, Gov. Dobbs felt that Portsmouth harbor was "so exposed that every Privateer sailing along the coast could from their fast head see every vessel in the harbor, and go in and cut them out, or destroy them." To combat such a contingency he urged construction of Fort Granville and fixed its site on Beacon Island. It was described as a "fascine battery, secured by piles, with 2 faces; one to secure the passage in coming down a Narrow Channel to this Harbour, and the other to play across the Channel where it is not above 300 yards wide."


2. Stick, pp. 41-42.

Work was begun shortly thereafter on Fort Granville and when inspected by Gov. Dobbs in June 1756, he found the fort "almost piled and filled, and the house ready to be framed." Even the town of Portsmouth was beginning to take shape for the first lots had been sold earlier that year in February. By 1757 Fort Granville was far enough along to be manned by a garrison of 53 officers and men as provided for by an Act of the Assembly of 1758. The strength of the Fort Granville complement varied yearly according to the exigencies of war, the state of the colony's finances, and the general attitude of the colonial Assembly. There were 25 troops in 1762, only five in 1763, and with the signing of the Treaty of Paris ending the French and Indian War in 1763, the garrison was discontinued, and the barracks were ordered to be rented to provide funds for taking care of the guns. The fact that troops were stationed there most probably gave added impetus to the development of Portsmouth.
The First Deed.—The first purchaser of lots in the new town of Portsmouth according to the earliest deed registered in the office of the Recorder of Deeds of Carteret County at the County Courthouse, Beaufort, North Carolina, is that dated February 13, 1756, and registered in the names of John Tweton, William Martiner Denham, and Joseph Tweton deeding to them lots numbered 5 and 20 in consideration of the payment of 40 shilling proclamation money. Because of its historical significance and to remove all doubt from the minds of local historians, it is here recited in full as it appears in Deed Book A, folio 378:

presents shall core, Whereas

To All to whom these shall cor. & acknowledge by deed to any person or persons who is willing to be an inhabitant of the Town any lott pr lotts of land to him or their heirs and assigns forever in fee simple upon payment of twenty shillings proclamation money. And the said Commissioners in virtue of the s Act have laid out the s Town into Lots of half an acre each lot accordingly. Now Know ye that ye Joseph Leech, John Campbell & John Williams, three of the s Commissioners in the above recited Act mentioned and in virtue of the same for & in consideration of the sum of forty shillings proclamation money to us in hand paid by Messrs John Tweton of the Parish of Rowley Regis in Staffordshire in the Kingdom of Great Brittain & William Martiner Denham & Joseph Tweton of Bath Town in Beaufort County in the Province of North Carolina Merchants the receipt whereof we do hereby acknowledge & for divers other good causes & considerations as thereunto especially moving. Have granted bargained sold & confirmed unto the s Messrs John Tweton, William Martiner Denham & Joseph Tweton all those two lots of land situate lying & being in Portsmouth town abovemenioned known in the plan of the s Town by the numbers five & No twenty together with all privileges & appurtenances whatsoever to the s lots now belonging
or hereafter to belong or in any wise to appertain thereto.

To Have and to Hold the said two Lots above mentioned & every part & parcel thereof with appurtenances unto the said Messrs John Tweton William Martiner Denham & Joseph Tweton their heirs & assigns to the only proper use & behoof of the said John Tweton, William Martiner Denham & Joseph Tweton their heirs & assigns forever. And the said Joseph Leech John Campbell & John Williams for them their heirs & successors Commissioners aforesaid the said two Lots & every part thereof against them & their heirs and successors aforesaid & against all and every other person or persons whatsoever in virtue of the above recited Act to the said Messrs John Tweton, William Martiner Denham & Joseph Tweton their heirs or assigns shall not within eighteen months from the date of these presents build a good substantial habitable frame or brick house or a good substantial warehouse of not less dimensions than twenty feet in length & sixteen feet wide on & upon said Lots hereby granted then this grant or conveyance shall be void & none effect as if the same had never been made & the Commissioners in the above recited Act mentioned Shall & May grant & convey the said two Lots hereby granted to any other person or persons who shall or may apply for the same or in & by the above recited Act is directed. In Witness the said Joseph Leech John Campbell & John Williams have hereunto sett their hands and seales this 13th day of February 1756.

Signed sealed and delivered in the presence of us.

John Cambell (Seal)  
E. Legardue, John Smith  
Joseph Leech (Seal)  
John Williams (Seal)

Carteret County, March Court 1756. Proved in open Court by the oath of Jno Smith, pray'd & ordered to be registered.
Registered 8th April 1756.
Jno Smith D. Reg.

The above deed has been certified as follows:

North Carolina, Carteret County
Register of Deeds of aforesaid County

and State, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and exact copy as taken from and compared with the records in this office, in Book "A, B, C, E & F,"Page "378". Witness my hand and official seal, this 31 day of Aug. 1970.

AIMA TILGHMAN (Seal)  
Register of Deeds

1. General Index to Real Estate Conveyances, Carteret County, N.C., Grantors, p. 51.
Actually a John Tolson had bought lot number 28 the previous day on February 12, 1756, according to the date of his deed, but it was not registered until June 28, 1757, more than two months after the deed of John Tweton et al. Furthermore, and perhaps this can be used as an indication of whose deed actually represented the first lot sold in Portsmouth is the fact that Tweton's et al deed was registered in Book A-F on page 378, whereas Tolson's deed although dated the date previous to Tweton's et al deed was not registered in Book A-F until page 443.

Tweton et al also bought lots 6 and 19 adjoining 5 and 20 on June 22, 1756, their deed being registered on September 11, 1756.

---

1. Ibid., Deed Book, A-F, p. 399.

Another group of lots was sold when Charles McNear bought lots 7 and 22 on March 19, 1757, both being registered on June 22, 1757, in Deed Book A-F, on pages 435 and 436 respectively. Valentine Wade also bought lot 20 the same day on March 19, 1757, the deed being registered in the same deed book on page 440. Lot number 2 was purchased for twenty shillings proclamation money by a John Campbell on December 11, 1757, the deed being registered on March 3, 1758, in Deed Book A-F, on page 473.

---

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., Author's Note: Although the certificate of the Register of Deeds which this writer obtained while on a recent trip to examine the Carteret County records at Beaufort, N.C., gives the date of registration as "March 3, 1757," it is obvious that the date is in error for it would have been impossible to register the deed before the lot was sold.

---

4. Ibid. Valentine Wade purchased another lot (number 20) on March 28, 1759, but did not pay for it until June 5, 1759, the deed being registered in Deed Book C-H on page 11. William Baker may have been the earlier
Wade apparently was one of the first aggressive businessmen of Portsmouth for he immediately opened a tavern in the town while the construction of Fort Granville was under way and workers, most probably looking for a place to relax at night after work. The growing town of Portsmouth was most probably an inducement for the workers to row or sail the short distance from the construction site of the fort on Beacon Island across Wallace's Channel and to Wade's Tavern. The following year 1858 Wade bought another lot (number 30) from a William Sibbly on October 7, 1758. Sibbly was a carpenter then living at Portsmouth who had bought the same lot from James Burns, a mariner, for forty pounds. Burns undoubtedly made a tidy profit on the deal for he had bought the original lot for one Pound (the stipulated twenty shillings proclamation money) the year before on October 7, 1757. Wade was noted in the deed from Sibbly as an "inholder" so Wade, having also been appointed a Justice of the Peace, was dealing in real estate as well for he purchased another lot the following year on March 28, 1759. Wade may have been running into financial difficulties for the deed indicates he did not pay the stipulated twenty shillings until June 5, 1759. A William Baker also purchased a lot, number 50, the same day, March 28, 1759, but there is no specific date to indicate when his deed was registered other than a notation that it was done during the session of the "June Court 1759." However, Baker's deed is registered on page 9 of the same deed book (G-H) and may be presumed to have preceded the registration of Wade's deed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Grantor:</th>
<th>Lot No.:</th>
<th>Paid:</th>
<th>Date of Deed:</th>
<th>Date Registered:</th>
<th>Deed Book &amp; Folio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Tolson</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>£1.0.0</td>
<td>February 12, 1756</td>
<td>June 28, 1757</td>
<td>A-F, 443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Tweton, William Martiner &amp; Denham &amp; Joseph Tweton</td>
<td>5 &amp; 20</td>
<td>£1.0.0</td>
<td>February 13, 1756</td>
<td>April 8, 1756</td>
<td>A-F, 378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Tweton, William Martiner &amp; Denham and Joseph Tweton</td>
<td>6 &amp; 19</td>
<td>£1.0.0</td>
<td>June 22, 1756</td>
<td>September 11, 1756</td>
<td>A-F, 399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles McNear</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.20.0</td>
<td>March 19, 1757</td>
<td>June 24, 1757</td>
<td>A-F, 473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles McNear</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.20.0</td>
<td>March 19, 1757</td>
<td>June 24, 1757</td>
<td>A-F, 473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentine Wade</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.20.0</td>
<td>March 19, 1757</td>
<td>June 26, 1757</td>
<td>A-F, 473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Campbell</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.20.0</td>
<td>December 14, 1757</td>
<td>March 3, 1757</td>
<td>A-F, 473</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Records of the Register of Deeds, Carteret County, Beaufort, N.C.*
By now, however, Wade was running into trouble and afoot of the law. It appears that contrary to public policy and in violation of "An Act to prevent excessive and deceitful Gaming," covering gambling losses of forty Shilling in twenty-four hours, John Bragg, an Ocracoke Inlet pilot, and Joseph Ryall, a soldier at Fort Granville, had sworn out a complaint warrant against Wade.

The Council of the Colony was then in session at Wilmington, and on September 1, 1759, charged that:

Upon Complaint being made that Valentine Wade one of his Majestys Justices of the Peace for the County of Carteret and who keeps a Tavern in the Town of Portsmouth in said County, Permits suffers and encourages disorderly persons, to dance and play at cards and dice in his house upon the Lords Day and upon reading the affid of Joseph Ryall and another Affid of said Joseph Ryall and John Bragg

It is ordered that the said Valentine Wade appear before his Excellency the Govr in Council on Tuesday the 20th day of Nov next at Wilmington to shew cause why he should not be struck out of the Commission of the Peace for the said County.

Wade, apparently, knowing that he was guilty as charged and that he had no chance of beating the case, failed to show up and subsequently Wade also assigned the deed to lot 30 to David Wallace on August 27, 1759. He was no longer Justice of the Peace at Portsmouth. This case undoubtedly was the first indication of a sense of morality and religion appearing in Portsmouth for the next year, 1760, a reader was appointed by St. John's Parish, and in 1766 Reverend Alexander Stewart Baptized 27 white and colored children from the islands in a baptismal ceremony held on Portsmouth.

1. CR, 6, 1759-1765, 82.
CHAPTER III

GROWTH OF PORTSMOUTH

Little information is available on the growth or activity taking place in Portsmouth up to the Revolution. However, the Collett map of 1770 shows what appears to be eight structures—houses or warehouses according to the terms of the original deed—and the Kauzon map of 1775 also shows eight structures, one larger than all the others indicating the possibility that it may have been a church, although there is no record of one having been established aside from the fact that a reader of the Gospel was appointed to Portsmouth as noted above.

1. William P. Cumming, North Carolina in Maps (Raleigh, 1966) Plates VII and VIII. Photostats of these original maps are in the Map Division of the Library of Congress and copies are included in the appendix.

During the American Revolution it was reported that the British made several forays into Pamlico Sound through Ocracoke Inlet and also attempted to close it to American shipping. However, there is no significant action that can be associated directly with Portsmouth during this period. It was reported that the British landed a large force at Ocracoke and Portsmouth while on their way to attack New Bern. They captured sheep and cattle at both towns and shipped them north to the Chesapeake Bay area. This raid prompted the Governor of North Carolina to order Captain John Nelson in September 1777 to repel the British invaders.
It is not until the taking of the first United States census in 1790 that we have any concrete evidence of the population of Portsmouth. An examination of the original census returns makes that difficult to determine with any degree of accuracy. This is due not only to the illegibility of the records and the lack of systematic procedure but also to the fact that the population of Carteret County was taken together as a group. Holland lists 96 free white males, 92 free white females and 38 slaves. David Wallace, Jr., was apparently the leading citizen with a total of 16 slaves. William Williams was next with nine slaves. The only family names to appear on the first census and which are identifiable from early deeds are Tolsin, but spelled with an "i" instead of an "o" as in the original deed for lot number 28. Other family names are: Wallace, Gaskin, Salter, Bragg, Howard, Neale, and Stiron.

The census of 1800 indicated that Core Banks and the neighboring Shell Castle Island which had become important to the economy of the area as having a free white population of 165, including 25 heads of families and 98 slaves. The census of 1810 which is much more legible than earlier ones shows an increase in the population of Portsmouth. Undoubtedly by this time it was also beginning to grow beyond the limitations
of the original fifty acres provided for in the original legislation for laying out the town of Portsmouth. The total white population had grown to 225 in addition to which there were 121 slaves. David Wallace was still the largest slave holder with 17 slaves, and a Hannah Wallace, possibly a widow, the second largest slave holder with 11. From the evidence it appears that there were 43 heads of families.

The name of John Kersey now appears as a head of family indicating that he had probably returned to Portsmouth to live on a section of his original grant, he being the original proprietor of the land on which Portsmouth was laid out. It may also indicate that a former purchaser had not conformed to the terms of the original sale for building a home or warehouse on a lot within eighteen months of purchase. There was also a Richard Kersey, possibly the son of the former Kersey who was listed as being over 45 whereas Richard Kersey was between the age of 26 and 45 as was his wife. The older Kersey had three children between the ages of 10 and 16 whereas the younger Kersey (Richard) had four male children under 10 years of age. There was also a Thomas Kersey, over 45 years of age.

The name of a Wilson Wade appears for the first time possibly being related to the original Valentine Wade who had run afoul of the law. The largest families by number of families bearing the same name and possibly related are: Wallace, seven; Tolson, eight; Dixon, five; Styron, four; and Gaskill, three.  

On February 24, 1861, on the eve of the Civil War, Dr. S. Singleton, who had replaced Dr. Cramer, tendered his resignation to the Secretary of the Treasury as physician to the Marine Hospital.

The last note of record that appears to exist concerning the hospital is a letter of R. W. Chadwick, collector of customs at Portsmouth, dated January 15, 1866, to W. Sargeant, Commissioner of Customs at Washington, D. C. Chadwick submitted an account of Augustus Dudley for supplies which he claimed he had furnished the Marine Hospital according to his contract of July 1, 1860. Dudley had furnished the supplies from April 1 to May 11, 1861, and had ceased furnishing further provisions after the inhabitants of Portsmouth had fled before the approach of Federal troops.

Chadwick testified to the "unwavering fidelity" of Mr. Dudley to the government of the United States throughout all our troubles.

He enclosed a copy of Dudley's account amounting to $271.20. Payment was refused by the Secretary of the Treasury.

Following the end of the Civil War and the closing of the Ocracoke Collection District in 1867, the Marine Hospital was abandoned and in 1894 it burned to the ground. That same year the U. S. Life Saving Station was established on the shore of the Marine Hospital property. Although detailed statistics of the number of patients handled at the hospital are not available, there was an average of 25 patients per day during 1860.
The shell castle shipping and trading center

The increase in the population of Portsmouth was most probably due to increasing shipping activity resulting from the establishment of the trans-shipment business on Shell Castle Island by John Gray Blount of Washington on Pamlico Sound and John Wallace, an entrepreneur of Portsmouth. In November 1789 they had secured state grants to five islands inside of Ocracoke Inlet and in 1790 they established a major shipping and trading center on Shell Castle, one of the five islands, about 10 miles from Portsmouth harbor. The largest was Dry Sand Shoal about 50 acres in extent. "Bacon" or "Beacon" island was a 20-acre island of marsh land. The other three consisted of formations of oyster rocks varying in size from 40-acre Long Dry Rock, to 25-acre Old Rock and 15-acre Remus's Rock.

Wallace and Blount had promptly changed the name of "Old Rock" to "Shell Castle" and began to convert it into a major shipping and trading center. Vessels from the open sea could anchor at the Wallace and Blount docks, unload their cargoes, undergo repairs, take on supplies, and then load their outbound cargoes without having to cross Ocracoke Swash, enter Pamlico Sound, or sail close to the old ports towns up the river.

The two men were well suited to their business venture. Wallace, a practical man, was the brains and working partner of the organization. He was a resident of the Outer Banks and had accumulated considerable property in the area. He was fully acquainted with the peculiar navigation problems of Ocracoke Inlet. Blount was the brains of the organization. He was a former member of the Council of State, a representative to the North Carolina General Assembly, and a partner of the prosperous merchant firm of John Gray and Thomas Blount. The latter had considerable land holdings in the vicinity of Washington, and operated a small fleet of vessels trading with the West Indies and Europe.
Blount had been concerned over the difficulty in shipping his cargoes to and from Pamlico River and was interested in setting up a shipping facility at Ocracoke Inlet where his own vessels could exchange and lighter cargo. His fleet of small scows, flats and lighters operated in the sounds and rivers between Ocracoke and Washington. His larger vessels used Ocracoke as a base for ocean voyages.

They started out by constructing wharves, a warehouse, a grist mill, and a windmill and several residences. Business prospered and they added stores, operated a fishery, controlled piloting of the Ocracoke Inlet and provided lighterage service for vessels that had to cross the Swash.

Local history states that Wallace was called "Governor" as a title, but it is believed that it was purely the traditional term of respect which the average Cockney or seaman applies to the British merchant. Wallace was most probably called "Governor" by the seamen of the British ships that tied up at the Shell Castle docks. However, it is reported that Wallace conducted himself as a feudal prince at times, tipping the till without accounting for funds and often just placing the cash in his pocket. He also loved his rum and often tipped the bottle as once clerk reported in a confidential letter to Blount.

When a severe hurricane struck Ocracoke Inlet in August 1795 and Shell Castle survived the blow, Wallace and Blount were elated that comparatively little damage was done to their enterprise. They added additional warehouses, a lumber yard was added, new wharves were built and a ship chandlery was completed in 1797. A porpoise fishery was added, they built more lighters, bought other types of boats and by 1800, when a
The Shell Castle pitcher in the collection of the North Carolina Department of Archives and History, included herein as Illustration 3 and which is used as the cover design of the present study may be considered indicative of the contemporary scene. The pitcher is most probably typical of what is called "Liverpool China" sketched and painted to order for seamen visiting that port.

A companion pitcher was placed on exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, in May 1964.

The Shell Castle lighthouse was completed and lighted in 1798 and when the government sought a site on which to build a fort to replace Fort Granville, Wallace and Blount sold the government nearby Beacon Island for the purpose. Although little information is available on the construction of this fort, it is shown on Tatham's map of 1808 which he completed following a survey of Ocracoke Inlet and Pamlico Sound.

The Wallace-Blount enterprise continued to prosper and the 1800 census which included Shell Castle as a separate entry listed a total of 25 persons living on the island, including five white males and fifteen slaves owned by Wallace. In 1806 an official port of entry was established at Shell Castle. When Tatham began his survey of the coast between Cape Hatteras and Cape Lookout, Wallace provided him with private rooms as office space. By that time Shell Castle was an important and established port in North Carolina's growing maritime trade and Ocracoke Inlet was still the main port of entry for a number of the ports of Edenton, Washington, and Bath Town.
The War of 1812 seriously interfered with the Shell Castle enterprise and ceased to exist shortly thereafter. Governor Wallace died in 1813 and was buried on Portsmouth Island where a huge marble slab lauds his merits as "Governor" of Shell Castle. Although time worn, it is still eligible to the visitor.

What happened to the Lightship? See my copy.

See any copy. How about Be?
THE WAR OF 1812

Portsmouth, being a maritime port, was to have its share of activity during the War of 1812 which began on June 4, 1812, and was ended by the Treaty of Ghent of December 24, 1814. When war broke out between the United States and England, it was the Outer Banks that provided protection to the mainland of North Carolina against British raids. It also provided a base of operations for American privateers and Otway Burns, a native of Swansboro, was to emerge from the conflict as the local hero.

He fitted out a fast Baltimore clipper, named it Snap-Dragon and armed it with four 12-pound guns and a pivot gun. Though he sometimes put in at Ocracoke, Burns used Fort Hampton as his main base of operations. The fort had been constructed in 1808 near the site of Old Fort Dobbs on Bogue Banks just west of Beaufort Inlet. Burns ranged from Newfoundland to the Caribbean in Snap-Dragon and British shipping was to pay the toll. In the first seven months of his privateering operations Burns captured ten vessels, 250 prisoners, and cargo valued at approximately one million dollars.

Although anticipated since the outbreak of hostilities, a British attack on the coast of North Carolina did not materialize until the summer of 1813. At daybreak on July 12 the residents of Portsmouth, Ocracoke and Shell Castle awoke to find a British fleet consisting of nine large war vessels anchored just off the Bar. Two American privateers, Anaconda and Atlas, and a revenue cutter lay at anchor.

The British attacking force consisting of 19 barges carrying 140 men each, according to one observer, put off from the warships, attacked the privateers and forced the cutter to retreat up the Sound. British troops then landed at Portsmouth and Ocracoke, seized hundreds
of head of cattle and sheep. They spread terror on the Banks and after five days, the fleet weighed anchor and sailed away first announcing that the entire coast of North Carolina was under blockade.

Meantime the cutter reached New Bern and word quickly spread that the Outer Banks was in the hands of the enemy. Each town expected imminent attack by the British. Mrs. John Gray Blount, writing from the town of Washington to the wife of the President, Mrs. Dorothy Payne Todd Madison, said: "We are in hourly expectation of the British coming up here. I am so frightened that I scarce can write, the men flying to armes and the drums beating." The British failed to return, however,

and with the signing of the treaty of peace in December 1814 attention was paid to improving the navigational aids of the area.

Following the war Otway Burns returned to North Carolina and settled in Beaufort. He represented Carteret County in the General Assembly for 12 years and operated a shipbuilding business there. In 1842 he moved to Portsmouth where he lived until he died in 1850. Part of that time was spent as keeper of the Brant Island Shoals Lightboat in Pamlico Sound. One interesting fact developed from a search of the records of the Clerk of the Superior Court at Beaufort. In 1838, Dr. Samuel Dudley brought suit against Otway Burns for the sum of $20.00 for the use of Dr. Dudley's flatboat in transporting molasses from the cargo Schooner Dr. Dudley Palestine to the Schooner Wm. R. Smith lying in Core Sound. Dr. Dudley obtained judgment against the local hero on December 2, 1838. The tomb of Otway Burns is in the Old Cemetery at Beaufort, N.C., one of the guns of Snap-Draco lying atop his marble enclosed remains.

2. Records of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Carteret County, N.C., Judgment #3277. Copy in appendix.
THE SHELL CASTLE LIGHTHOUSE

The dangerous waters and the lack of navigational aids for vessels attempting to enter Ocracoke Inlet for Portsmouth and Shell Castle prompted Congress to consider the construction of a lighthouse on Shell Castle but its initial action that also led to the construction of the more important Cape Hatteras Light Station. Only the barest details of the latter are included herein since the two lighthouses were built simultaneously by the same contractor.

In 1794 the United States Senate instructed the Treasury Department to examine the feasibility of erecting a lighthouse at Ocracoke Inlet. The Department took the opportunity to examine the North Carolina coast as a whole to determine its navigational needs. When the study was completed, Tench Coxe, then Commissioner of Revenue and consequently responsible for navigational safety reported that the majority of those engaged in maritime activities desired a light at Cape Hatteras. In view of increasing coastwise traffic, Coxe reported that a light at Cape Hatteras would be beneficial to far more mariners than would a light at Ocracoke Inlet. A light there would benefit only those traders using Pamlico and other sounds of North Carolina.

Coxe subsequently recommended that a lighthouse of appropriate size be erected at Cape Hatteras and that a smaller wooden beacon be erected at Ocracoke. Alexander Hamilton, the Secretary of the Treasury, concurred in the recommendation of the lighthouse for Cape Hatteras. As a result, Congress in April 1794 authorized the erection of a beacon on Shell Castle Island at Ocracoke and it being of more importance nationally, a lighthouse at Cape Hatteras. However, ten years were to slip by before a light shone at either beacon principally due to the difficulty.
of locating a builder who would undertake the contract for the two light-
houses simultaneously. that was

One of the minor delays occurred when the legislature of North Carolina ceded jurisdiction over land at Beacon Island (the site of Fort Granville) for lighthouse purposes at Ocracoke Inlet. Following a delay of 6 months the legislature finally remedied the situation by ceding jurisdiction over a small piece of land on Shell Castle Island in place of that on Beacon Island. The Federal Government then proceeded to acquire the necessary land. On November 29, 1797, John G. Blount and John Wallace, co-proprietors of Shell Castle, sold to the Government for $200 a lot 70 feet by 140 feet on the island and stipulated that the government "Shall not permit goods to be stored, a Tavern to be kept, spirits to be retailed or Merchandise to be carried on, on said Lott...". This was to prevent any competition to their vast money-making enterprise on the island.

Ibid., pp. 2-3.

When the Government approached local contractors, they showed little if any interest in it. According to the local Collector of Customs, local North Carolina people felt their money could be employed more advantageously in Commerce or Agriculture and of course no one had a surplusage to tempt him into more arduous and less profitable enterprises.

Ibid., p. 3.

Coxe thereupon had handbills posted in various government offices from Maine to North Carolina and instructed the collectors in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts
to advertise for bids in local newspapers. As a result bids were received from several sources. One bid came from an "English master workman" who offered to build the Shell Castle Light for $16,000. Coxe considered the bid "dishonest and impudent" and filled with "misconceptions and misinterpretations." Coxe attempted to interest an experienced lighthouse builder, such as John Mack, a brickmason who had built the Montauk Point and the Cape Henry lighthouses, without success. Even an attempt to elicit a bid from Thoras and John Gray Blount of North Carolina failed.

In the meantime further complications arose. The three-year limitation on the cession of land by the State of North Carolina to the Federal Government expired in 1797, just as the time limit on the appropriation for building the light house on Shell Castle expired. Coxe, thereupon, requested the North Carolina legislators for a new act of cession which was agreed to in December 1797. Earlier that year, in July 1797, Congress had appropriated $44,000 for the lights at both Cape Hatteras and Shell Castle. Coxe now cast about for another contractor.

In July, Henry Dearborn, who had just completed his second term as a member of Congress from Massachusetts, wrote that he might be interested in contracting to build the Shell Castle lighthouse. Coxe responded immediately and encouraged Dearborn to submit his bid. Dearborn did so and in September his bid along with two others was submitted to President John Adams for approval. Coxe felt that Dearborn's bid would receive the contract. He felt so confident that Dearborn's bid would be accepted that he ordered the Collector of Customs in Edenton to purchase the land for the Shell Castle light house. But just as this juncture Tench Coxe was removed from his post as Commissioner of Revenue, and before
President Adams could take action on Dearborn's contract.

The newly appointed Commissioner of Revenue, William Miller, Jr., had his own ideas about the contract. He felt it was too vague on transportation charges, the amount of stone required for the lighthouse, and the nature of the foundation. This vagueness, Miller contended, favored the contractor. In February 1798 President Adams disapproved Dearborn's contract on Miller's recommendation. The new Commissioner thereupon wrote Dearborn and offered to draw up a new contract with more definitive wording and elimination of the former vagueness.

In the meantime Miller wrote to McComb who, however, appeared to have lost interest. Miller continued to look elsewhere for a contractor. Sometime during the spring he wrote the Customs Collector at the port of Savannah, Georgia, asking if likely prospects were in that city. There were none. In the fall of 1798 Dearborn finally submitted a satisfactory proposal that the President accepted, and on October 9, 1798, Miller forwarded articles of agreement to Dearborn to sign. This he apparently did on October 31, 1798.

---

Holland, pp. 6-7.
The site selected for the Shell Castle lighthouse was a small lot on the eastern end of the island with "Seventy feet fronting the north side of Wallace Channel and running northward one hundred and forty feet...." According to Dearborn's proposal, the Shell Castle light station was to consist of a wooden, octagonal beacon tower, 64 feet tall (including lantern), a wooden dwelling, and an oil vault and shed.

---

5: Ibid., p. 7.

Even though the contract with a representative of the Federal Government was not signed until February 14, 1799, thus making it official, began work on the construction of the Shell Castle light. In the latter part of November 1798 he requested and received a partial advance of funds to begin the work. He began to ship construction materials to the Outer Banks in the late spring, but owing to unforeseen delays he was not able to begin actual construction until August of that year. His ship had barely cleared port when he was forced to return to Boston for a refitting due to an accident. Fortunately he was not delayed too long so that by the end of August Dearborn and the construction materials had arrived at Shell Castle.

Dearborn stayed but a short time at the site and then went to Cape Hatteras where he built the keeper's quarters. Leaving workmen to continue construction of the light, Dearborn journeyed between the two sites. At Shell Castle Dearborn met Samuel Tredwell the collector
of Customs at the port of Edenton, whom the Commissioner of Revenue had appointed to supervise the work of the contractor. Tredwell indicated to Dearborn the site that was desired for the Shell Castle beacon.

As work on the lighthouse progressed during the fall, Dearborn received partial payment for his work and then most probably due to the approach of winter left the Outer Banks with his crew.

He returned the following March (1800) with another construction crew that he had hired and by July the workmen had erected Shell Castle beacon. It lacked only the light to be complete. The keeper's house was also nearing completion. Thereafter Dearborn concentrated on finishing the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse and worked on it during 1801 and 1802. In July of that year, June Dudley Hobart, Dearborn's representative at the Cape Hatteras site, estimated that the Shell Castle beacon would be ready for lighting that month. It proved to be a poor estimate for the "raising of the light" as it was termed had not occupied by June 28, 1803, when newspapers were complaining about the delay. According to Holland it is not known just when the light was "raised" but it was in operation before October 29, 1803.

In the meantime Dearborn agreed to build up the foundation of the Shell Castle lighthouse for apparently inspection must have shown its foundations to be deficient. He received an additional $1,200 for the work of building up the foundation. By running an outside wall at the distance of 12 feet from the foundation of the Buildings 2 feet high, between the wall and the foundation, a solid bed of stone was to have been laid gradually rising towards the center as to cover the foundation, and to extend as high as where the
wood work of the Beacon and Dwelling commences."


By the fall of 1803 Dearborn obtained $39,300 of the total contract price for the two lighthouses of $39,650. Due to litigation which developed when the Commissioner of Revenue refused to approve payment of the final $350 on Dearborn's contract, his claim was not settled until May 6, 1824. It is not known whether Dearborn added the additional stone the foundation of Shell Castle lighthouse required. Apparently,

8. Ibid., p. 13.

Dearborn's reputation did not suffer for in 1825 he was appointed Secretary of War, and about six years later in 1831 he contracted for and erected the lighthouse on Plumb Island and two beacons in Ipswich Harbor.

9. Ibid.

As Shell Castle light neared completion, the question of a keeper for it arose. Dearborn and his agent, Hobart, recommended a John Mays for the job, and he was appointed to the Shell Castle light by the President in the autumn of 1802. Mays was to be paid $250 per year, but declined the appointment when he heard that the Cape Hatteras keeper was to receive $333 per year.

Tredwell, the collector at Edenton, in searching about for a replacement for Mays, reported that John Wallace, one of the owners of Shell Castle island would accept the job for the same salary as that paid the keeper at Cape Hatteras ($333). Wallace received his appointment shortly thereafter and accepted the post. However, he had a misunderstanding:
about the salary when he took the job. Tredwell claimed that he had made it clear to Wallace that his salary would be $250 per year. When Wallace claimed his salary a year later he said he understood that it would be $333. Albert Gallatin who was now Secretary of the Treasury gave Wallace the benefit of the misunderstanding but informed him that he would henceforth be paid at the rate of $250 per year. Wallace, dissatisfied with the offer, informed Tredwell shortly thereafter that he had stopped lighting the Shell Castle beacon. Dismayed at the news Tredwell apparently visited Shell Castle and searched the service of a John Willard who remained on duty for a year and was then followed by a James Taylor. 10

10 Ibid., p. 15.

Several years later Tredwell recommended that the salaries of the two keepers be equalized. Recognizing the fact that the Shell Castle light was not as important as Cape Hatteras, Tredwell felt that it was a more difficult place to live. The keeper at Shell Castle not only had to bring his own wood in by boat but the station property was too small for the keeper to grow his own garden. Washington turned a deaf ear to Treadwell's plea and the keeper's pay remained at $250 per year. Several years later, on August 16, 1818, when lightning struck Shell Castle beacon and destroyed it together with the keeper's quarters, the question became academic. It was replaced four years later in 1822 with the lighthouse now at Ocracoke. 11

11 Ibid., p. 16.
The census of 1820 showed a continuing increase in the population of Portsmouth for the number of dwellings had now increased to 37. The white population consisted of 139 males and 126 females, reaching a total of 265. The slave population had fallen to 92 possibly due to the closing of the Shell Castle enterprise.

Portsmouth continued to grow during the next decade and the census for 1830 indicates there were 51 dwellings with a total white population of 342 persons, consisting of 173 males and 169 females. The slave population reached its highest figure of 120 to that time and was to taper off thereafter. Some of the leading family names continued to the Dixons, Tolsons, Wallace, Styron, Gaskins and Roberson. Samuel Dudley was the general practitioner of Portsmouth and Joshua Taylor, the Collector of Customs. The number of dwellings listed in the census schedules is generally taken to mean the number of individual residences containing the head of a family, thus giving some idea as to the growth of a town. For instance, according to the legislation which provided for 100 sites for homes or warehouses to be constructed on the fifty-acre limits of Portsmouth, it is obvious, even though there is a complete lack of data to prove the point, that more houses were constructed for domiciles that were warehouses for the storage of goods for transshipment from the port.
In 1835 the Boston firm of Witterage and Wyman applied for a lease of a site on Beacon Island, the property of the United States. The lease was granted and a two-story dwelling house and a warehouse for the storage of naval stores, staves, etc., was constructed as part of the firm's lighterage business. In 1860, upon the death of Wyman, his heirs requested permission to remove the buildings so that they could be dismantled and sold at a greater profit than they could be if sold on the site. Permission was granted.\footnote{O. S. Dewey, Collector, to the Hon. Howell Cobb, Sec. Treasury, April 7, 1860, in \textit{Letters on Marine Hospitals}, M. 1866, NA, RG 90, p. 137.}
CHAPTER IV
PORTSMOUTH THE SEAPORT

The greatest period of Portsmouth's activity as a seaport was between the end of the War of 1812 and the outbreak of the Civil War. Its growth and importance is reflected in the number of vessels that designated Portsmouth as their home port on the enrollment papers. Unfortunately, we do not have the complete story. An examination of the ship enrollment records reveals that the records at the National Archives are not only in very poor condition, having been subjected to fire and other hazards, but that and many are presumed to be missing. Nevertheless, what records are available do give some indication of the activity of Portsmouth as a seaport.


The enrollment papers of ships enrolled in the Ocracoke Collection District indicate that seven ships sailed out of Portsmouth in 1816. On these papers, Portsmouth is indicated as being the ship's home port. In 1816 there were nine ships enrolled. The number of enrollments for 1817-18 is considered to be too few to give any real clue as to the size of the Portsmouth fleet. The information contained in the enrollments, however,

2. Enrollments from the Port of Ocracoke, 1815-16, ibid.

does not give a complete clue as to the real identity of ships for a ship's owner would apply for a new enrollment only when a change was made in the ownership, name, or build of the vessel. Therefore, if it was not desired to show a ship as being from a certain port, or for other reasons known only to the owner, a ship could be registered from any other port he desired.

Practically all the ships enrolled from Portsmouth were single deck, two-masted schooners. Their tonnages ranged from 21 to 60 tons each. Tonnage was not the actual weight of the vessel, but rather an arbitrary computation for tax collection purposes, taxes being imposed according to the capacity of the ship's hold, in other words, its cargo capacity. A ship under 80 tons cargo space was not considered to be an ocean-going vessel. Ships listed as having a 40-ton capacity were approximately 55 feet in length. Such vessels drew from four feet, seven inches to six feet, three inches of water. The logical conclusion would be that these vessels were used chiefly in the lightering trade, for it was a common practice and a necessity to get the ships over the shoals of Ocracoke Inlet.


From 1822 to 1829, 36 ships were enrolled from Portsmouth. This is considered to be a conservative estimate for the reasons stated above. During these years, the enrolled ships showed greater tonnage capacity. Thirteen of the 36 were over 60-ton vessels. The Brig Galaxy, Thomas Robinson of Portsmouth owner, was calculated to be over 111 tons and of 75 feet, 5 inches length. Its master was John S. Hunter.

2. Ibid., 1822-1829.

No one man or group appears to have owned a disproportionate share of the Portsmouth vessels. Many masters were part-owners of the ships they commanded. The Elizabeth, one of the larger ships of 74 tons...
capacity was built in the Portsmouth yards in 1826. Certainly, if a ship of this size was built at that port, it is a fair indication that Portsmouth had an active shipbuilding industry.

During the decade from 1829 to 1839, 25 ships were enrolled from Portsmouth, showing a definite decline in enrollments from that port. On the average at least 12 ships a year were enrolled and it can be calculated from the file numbers that many papers are missing. However, there was a continual increase in the size of vessels based at Portsmouth. Nearly twenty-five percent of the ships enrolled during the decade were over 85 tons, and Portsmouthers had a definite interest in these ships. Dr. Samuel Dudley, one of the most affluent of its residents acquired an interest in at least four ships. Other Portsmouthers, whose names appear regularly in the census population schedules, such as Thomas Robinson, John C. Wallace, and William W. Dixon each had an interest in at least three ships. But lightering, rather than ship building or owning, was

---

1. Enrollments from Port of Ocracoke, 1830-1839.

the great source of income for the many pilots of Portsmouth for between 1836-37 over 1,400 vessels passed through Ocracoke Inlet and the great number requiring lightering is obvious. But the beginning of the end of the great hey-dey of Portsmouth was undoubtedly marked with the opening of Hatteras and Oregon Inlets a few years later in 1841.

As late as 1869, however, vessels were built at Portsmouth as proven by the enrollment papers of the Schooner Alice B. Hill, John Hill, owner, and Joseph A. Hill, master, which was registered at New Bern, October 12, 1869. The vessel was a single deck, two masted with a square stern and billet head. Her length was 43 and 2/10 feet, her breadth 15 feet, and her depth four and 7/10 feet. She measured 21 tons
and 34/100 cubic feet of cargo space. In this analysis of such an important activity as ship building, vital to any seaport, it is indeed strange that not a single resident of Portsmouth ever declared himself to be a shipbuilder on any of the census records of the nineteenth century. One or two carpenters appeared in the census for 1860 and 1870, but that appears to be the limit of what can be associated with ship building. Undoubtedly, further investigation research, perhaps in the Whaling Museum at New Bedford, Mass., where over 600 ship logs are collected would produce vital information on the subject.

"2. Ship Enrollments from the Port of New Bern, Registry No. 1833, NA, RG 41.

The increasing importance of Portsmouth as a seaport was shown when a U. S. Post Office was established at the town in 1840 by the federal government. It was located in the general store on the island and its site still exists as shown in Illustration 8. John Rumley was the first postmaster and he was appointed September 3, 1840.

"62. See Table of Postmasters, Portsmouth, N.C., in Appendix compiled by the author.

According to the census of 1840 there was a slight drop in the white population of Portsmouth when it was reported as being compared to 142 in 1830. White males registered a very slight gain whereas white females increased by 35. There was a drop in the slave population from 120 in the census of 1830 to 90 in the census of 1840. Perhaps the effects of the Panic of 1837 was even felt on the Outer Banks. Even the fury of nature had increased during the 1830s, when hurricanes became more frequent.

"5. Census of the United States, 1840, North Carolina, Carteret County. NA, RG 27.
On August 10, 1835, a particularly severe hurricane struck Portsmouth. Although it was of short duration, it did considerable damage to shipping anchored in the roads. Portsmouth could do little to protect ships at anchor in such storms. Vessels usually anchored on the Pamlico Sound side of Portsmouth in an area about due north of the town. The storm sweeping down on the island from north northeast crossed the unbroken waters of the sound and buffeted the ships at anchor. Portsmouth Island could offer little safety against such a storm.

On August 29 and 30, 1839, a far more severe gale struck Portsmouth. To old inhabitants it was the worst since 1795. During the height of the storm, the tides completely inundated the island sweeping everything before it. The water was reported as rising to an unbelievable height in many of the homes of the Portsmouther. All gardens on the island were destroyed and most of the livestock was swept away. Several houses, including one belonging to the U. S. Government vanished before the storm. Fortunately, only 15 vessels were anchored in the roads at the time, far fewer than usual. Four were totally lost; seven were driven ashore. Two were saved by cutting the rigging; two rode out the storm. One master was lost with his ship.

\[16\] Ibid, Aug. 31, 1839.
THE PORTSMOUTH MARINE HOSPITAL

The succor of its seamen has been one of the constant problems of civilization since man first went to sea in ships. The barbarity and cruelty with which ship's captains flung sick and injured seamen ashore in strange lands or overboard to a watery grave led to international recognition of the problem. The rise of nationalism and international law led to worldwide agreements for rendering aid to these unfortunates so that they could be brought back to health and eventually returned to their native lands and homes.

With the founding of Portsmouth, Ocracoke, and Shell Castle enterprise as colonial trade and commerce grew, steps were taken on a local basis and eventually by the federal government to see that some assistance was provided for these seamen. It was also realized that the lack of facilities—most lacked a ship's doctor—aboard the many types of sailing ships which plowed the commercial highways of the seas could lead to the spread of uncontrollable diseases. The location of the Portsmouth-Ocracoke area at the very core of the "Graveyard of the Atlantic" finally brought action from the federal government as it no longer became feasible to handle sick and injured seamen on a community basis.
What about the marine hospital established in 1827? Dr. Post and Dr. Jud... In 1842 the Commerce Committee of the House of Representatives issued a factual report on the status of shipping passing through Ocracoke Inlet. The report stated that "Ocracoke Inlet is the outlet for all the commerce of the State of North Carolina from the ports of Newbern, Washington, Plymouth, Edenton, and Elizabeth City and the whole extent of country for many miles around. More than two-thirds of the exports of the State of North Carolina pass out to sea at this point." Statistics were compiled for a year and showed that 1,400 sail of loaded vessels passed through the aforesaid inlet in the space of twelve months, bound for various ports. Because vessels were frequently detained at the inlet by adverse winds or tides, it was "not uncommon to see from 30 to 60 sail of vessels anchored in the roads at the same time." 

Inevitably there was a certain amount of sickness in such a vast accumulation of ships. The question of what to do with sick seamen at Ocracoke Inlet had been a matter of great concern for many years. The federal government at first entered into individual contracts to care for them at the rate of $1,500 per annum. Later it became the responsibility of the port collector to secure room, board and medical attention for any sick seamen in his district. The collector was authorized to pay "$3.00 a week for board, 25 cents per day for attendance ... and apothecary rates for medicine."

In 1841 the collector at Ocracoke Inlet, S. Brown, informed Representative William H. Worthington of the difficulties experienced under this system. He complained that ship's masters who found sick seamen aboard
their vessels feared "to take them to sea lest they should be quarantined at
their ports of destination, will land them here regardless of conse-
quen?es." Most of the houses at Ocracoke and Portsmouth were small with
only two rooms and often one story high. They were suitable for caring
for sick seamen. Brown said that he frequently had trouble securing a
place for the men to stay. "I have, on one occasion," he wrote, "having
17 sick seamen on my hands, been compelled to fit up a common boat-house
and put part of them in that—a situation not at all cal-
culated for a person in the best of health, much less one laboring under
severe bilious fever or some other dangerous disease. At another time I
was under the necessity of procuring an old house built on a shell rock,
two miles or more from any inhabitants to accommodate several seamen thrown
out here having small-pox." The inhabitants refused to allow them
to be landed on either Ocracoke or Portsmouth Island.

The cause was promptly taken up and Congressman Worthington secured
marine legislation for a hospital at Ocracoke Inlet to accommodate all sick sea-
men in northeastern North Carolina. In 1841 the hospital was built at
Portsmouth and placed under the administration of the Office of the Col-
lector of Customs for the Ocracoke District. Despite comparatively rapid
action on the part of the Congress in passing the legislation, it was to
be six more years (1841-1847) before the basic medical supplies, furniture,
and medicines were to be delivered to the Marine Hospital and it could
be opened to perform the function for which it was authorized.
The site of the Marine Hospital at Portsmouth insofar as it has been possible to trace the deeds was known as the "Burns" place. It is possible that this was the site of the original lot number 30 laid off when the town was first founded. A James Burns, a mariner, had purchased the site for one pound in October 1757 and had sold it to a William Sibbley, a carpenter, a year later for forty pounds. Sibbley in turn deeded the property over to the notorious Valentine Wade when he ran afoul of the law in 1759 and lost his post as Justice of the Peace for Portsmouth.

Wade, who was undoubtedly a promoter, assigned the deed to a David Wallace in August 1759 most probably to avoid having the property seized by the authorities. It is believed that David Wallace was related to John Governor Wallace who operated the Shell Castle enterprise. But the property remained known as the "Burns Place" and in 1840 Otway Burns, the local hero of the War of 1812, had built a home and made other improvements on the property at an expenditure of $1,500. The hospital building was built as a separate unit and the Burns house was to be used in later years as a residence by the hospital surgeon and his family.

Litigation involving the federal government was to arise for it was not known if the government had a clear title to the property when it built the Marine Hospital on the same grounds.

The site of the Marine Hospital consisted of eight acres of which two were enclosed as the hospital grounds and surrounded by a common paling fence. The land was on the highest and most level part of Portsmouth Island and was susceptible to improvement by planting trees, shrubbery and grass.

---

Although its specifications could not be located after considerable research, it is possible to reconstruct the size of the hospital from reports to and from the Collectors Office. O. D. Dewey reported in April 1857 that the Marine Hospital at Portsmouth was a "fine" building with four wards in the main building and two upper rooms with a wing on each side containing four rooms each with piazzas in the front and rear. Two cisterns for fresh water were constructed of wood, one being on the east side and the other on the west side of the hospital. Heat was supplied by coal stoves in each ward.

1/1. Ibid.

Furnishings, beds, linen, chairs, medicine, etc., for the hospital were purchased from Phelps and Kingman, 118 to 120 Chatham Street, New York City for $1,150, as shown in Appendix F which includes the complete invoice for the materials, their quantities and prices. Dr. Wm Cramer was the hospital surgeon at the time.
Operating personnel of the hospital consisted of a physician, a white male servant, a matron, and two female servants, one a free white and the other a colored slave. In commenting on the efficiency of this staff, O. S. Dewey reported that "the slaves are much the best servants, for when a patient enters the Hospital with a contagious disease, the white servants leave immediately and it is difficult to supply their places at that time. This is not the case with slaves."

Dr. S. Singleton commented in an earlier letter to the Secretary of the Treasury of the lack of personnel for adequate staffing of the hospital, saying, "In the organization of the Hospital I am allowed no Steward or Apothecary and but one ma'n Servant--the Matron and this servant are the only nurses I have at command and when (as in the case at the present time) contagious diseases are in the institution, I am wholly deprived of any service from this servant but such as are bestowed upon the patients suffering with the contagion." He suggested the addition of a boy to the staff.

Wages for the hospital staff were fixed when the hospital was first organized. The male servant was paid $10 per month, $5 each per month for the female servants. The Collector felt their wages should be increased for "considering the great advance in the price of labour within the last five years, the wages are inadequate to secure good and efficient servants, as a good cook will now hire for $80 to $100 per month." Dewey recommended that the wages of the matron be raised to $12 per month and the two female servants to $8 per month each. 

---


---

Ibid, March 125, 1857.
also recommended that a boy be added to the servants staff with wages from $6 to $8 per month. Up to the eve of the Civil War no changes were recorded in the size of the hospital staff.

Modern day red tape upon entering a hospital is apparently nothing new for Dewey complained that Regulations No. 68, the basic regulations for the administration of Marine Hospitals, had materially increased his labors, and suggested that blank forms be furnished "as a sick seaman must be examined and wait until the Collector can write out a permit, requiring a whole page of letter paper before he can enter the Hospital."
Provisions for the Marine Hospital were supplied under contract between the District Collector and merchants. They were entered into following advertising in three local newspapers for a period of 90 days by the District Collector. Bids were then opened and the name of the lowest bidder was selected and forwarded to the Secretary of the Treasury for approval. Although few bids were found in the official records of the Secretary of the Treasury, the bid for fiscal year 1856 is herewith given as it is most probably typical of those received and will give concrete evidence of the trend of the economy in Portsmouth for that year.

On June 9, 1855, Oliver S. Dewey, Collector of the Cracoke District and Agent for the Marine Hospital at Portsmouth forwarded the following agreement between him and Augustus Dudley of Portsmouth, N.C., to furnish provisions to the hospital as enumerated and at the prices cited. A. Dudley had been the contractor for the previous fiscal year as well.

The agreement read:

This agreement made the first day of June 1855 by and between Augustus Dudley of the County of Carteret, State of North Carolina, and Oliver S. Dudley, Collector of the Customs for the District of Cracoke, N.C., and Agent of the Marine Hospital in said District, on behalf of the United States, Witnesseth that the said Augustus Dudley doth hereby bind himself to supply said Marine Hospital for the term of one year, from the first day of June 1855 with the articles named in the annexed list, at the prices set opposite each, and also to furnish any and all articles that may be required, not enumerated in said list, at the lowest market prices. All of said articles to be of the best quality, and to be furnished at such times and in such quantities at the Hospital, as on the requisition of the Collector may be required; to be paid for at the expiration of each quarter as they shall have been furnished. It is further understood that any of the articles so furnished, which may be considered inferior by the Collector,
shall be exchanged by the said Augustus Dudley for others of suitable quality, so that otherwise said articles shall be purchased by the Collector at the expense of said furnishing party.

In testimony whereof the parties to this agreement have hereunto set their hands and seals this 1st June 1855.

Signed, sealed & delivered in presence of

THOS. C. JONES

AUGUSTUS DUDLEY (SEAL)

O. S. DEWEY, COLLECTOR (SEAL)

Agt Marine Hospital

I hereby guarantee the full and faithful performance of the above Contract on the part of Augustus Dudley

SAMUEL DUDLEY /LS/

The list of articles to be furnished the Marine Hospital according to the above Contract with the prices set opposite each article was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mess beef per bbl</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mess pork do</td>
<td>21.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans per pound</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh beef &quot;</td>
<td>.15/&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried do &quot;</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown sugar&quot;</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crushed &quot;</td>
<td>.12/&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee &quot;</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea (black)&quot;</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea (green)&quot;</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crackers (butter) &quot;</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above one can surmise that the diet of the people of Portsmouth was as well-balanced for the day as it could have been elsewhere. Augustus Dudley and Dr. Samuel Dudley both of whom were Portsmouthers their Dudley was a grocer or merchant at Portsmouth.\*\*\*What supplies were not available from the mainland were shipped in by coastwise vessels from New York and Boston ship chandlers. Sugar and coffee came from the West Indies. What the above foods lacked in freshness was supplied by garden vegetables such as lettuce, tomatoes, radishes, carrots which grow in practically any type of soil. Most probably there was also a garden someplace on the hospital grounds, surrounded by the typical white picket fence. Any seaman recuperating at the hospital was usually more than willing to tend to the garden a short time each day. Often, it would remind them of home.
On the eve of the Civil War, the population of Portsmouth reached its height as revealed by the census of 1860, which gives a comprehensive breakdown of the economic activity of the people. From it, it is possible to give a comprehensive and definitive cross-section of the age of the population, the leading families, the various age groups, the occupations, and other statistical data that is comprehensible in a modern sense. It is believed that the cross-section of Portsmouth as presented in this 1860 census and analyzed here-with should be used as a median for interpretive and administrative data for the future role of the town when it is absorbed into the Cape Lookout National Seashore. Sufficient information is included from which to prepare contemporary exhibits, charts, tables and displays that should prove one of the more interesting tourist attractions. Based on this analysis and the information it produces, this basic data study could be used for further investigation when more time and funds are available for a future study.

According to the eighth census of the free and slave inhabitants of Portsmouth, enumerated on July 5 and 6, 1860, and certified to by D. H. L. Bell, Portsmouth Postoffice, the following facts are deducible therefrom: The free white population of Portsmouth consisted of 263 males, and 305 females or a total of 568 persons occupying 109 separate or individual homes or dwellings. The Negro slave population was 117 and although the majority were usually considered to be household servants, it is obvious that some must have been employed in economic activity. Some may even have had their own dwellings counted in the above figures, the total white and black population for Portsmouth being 685 persons.

Considering the original limits of the town of Portsmouth when it
was first laid out in 1753 of fifty acres divided into 100 lots of half and acre each it is obvious that the town spread far beyond its original limits. The population must have been spread over a goodly portion of Portsmouth Island and the seaport itself the scene of much social and economic activity to support a population of this size. Yet many North Carolinians to whom I spoke on the mainland in Raleigh, Beaufort and Morehead City expressed their skepticism that Portsmouth could have had such a large population at any time. Even an authority such as the Administrative Head of the North Carolina Department of Archives and History, E. H. Coker, refused to believe that Portsmouth could ever have been of such a size, even when this writer presented him with the facts shown in the 1860 census. But then again hardly any of the people interviewed on the mainland had ever heard of Portsmouth.

The social and economic activity of the population is reflected in the type of work indicated according to the following tabulation:

Fishermen-81, mariners-54, domestics-46, pilots-7, seamstresses-7, farmers-3, merchants-3, mechanics-2, and one clerk.

Administrative and federal employees were the following: Reverend W. H. Wheeler, age 22, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church, who resided at the home of Dr. Dudley; Dr. Samuel Dudley, now age 70, town physician; Dr. Spyer Singleton, age 40, resident physician of the U. S. Marine Hospital; O. S. Dewey, age 52, Collector of Customs for the port of Ocracoke; Sylvester Styron, age 26, deputy collector of customs at Portsmouth; Thomas C. Jones, age 39, light boat keeper, and John Wallace, age 28, also a light boat keeper; and two teachers at the local school, Love Ireland, age 27, and Margaret Mayo, age 30.
The most numerous families were the Styrons-10, Roberts-6, Robinson-6, Dixon-5, Gaskill-5, Goodwin-5, Tolson-4, Willis-4, Daniels-3, Ireland-3, Wallace-3, Jones-2, Mason-2, Mayo-2, and Salter-2. These families were descended from some of the original settlers on Portsmouth and accounted for the majority of the population. The majority of the balance were single families.

In analyzing the reasons for the demise of Portsmouth, consideration was given to the possibility that it was an aging or over-age effects of the town and that the population rapidly died out from the primitive life of the area. Such is not the case for the census when analyzed on the basis of age groups reveals the vitality of the Portsmouthers, particularly of some of the families who were in their fourth and fifth generation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group:</th>
<th>Male:</th>
<th>Female:</th>
<th>Total:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infants to 5</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-18</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-34</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-50</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-59</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 80</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the year 104 children attended school at Portsmouth of whom 49 were boys and 55 were girls. They ranged in age from 6 to 21 years. Figures compiled on illiteracy reveal the following: Illiterate in the over 20 age group: 30 male, 55 female; husband and wife, both illiterate, 16; husband only, illiterate, 6; wife illiterate, 29%. Illiteracy in the work groups reveals the following: fishermen, 22; mariners, 6; domestics (female), 15; and housewives, 41. One mechanic and one pilot were illiterate. There was one deaf and dumb male, aged 26. No idiots or paupers were reported. Three marriages were performed during the year.

The total value of all real estate was computed at $33,320, for the entire population of Portsmouth. Of 40 fishermen who owned real estate valued at from $50 to $800, they owned a total of $8,495, or an average of $212.25 each. W. Gaskill, age 41, owned $800 in real estate. The Gaskills were one of the earliest settlers at Portsmouth. Christopher Lupton, age 60, was the most affluent fisherman whose personal estate was valued at $2,000. O. S. Dewey, age 52, the collector of customs, was the most affluent member of Portsmouth society. His real estate holdings were valued at $10,000; his personal estate at $30,000. Rebecca Gaskill, age 82, had a personal estate valued at $16,000, but had no real estate holdings.

Dr. Dudley's real estate was valued at $2,500, and that of both Earl Ireland, age 60, and Valentine Robinson, age 54, both mariners, at $1,000 each. The latter two also had personal estates valued at $5,000 each. A pilot, Francis C. Dixon, age 55, also had a personal estate of $5,000. Others with personal estates in the upper brackets, $1,000 or more, were: Dr. Dudley, $3,000; Susan Wallace, age 60, $3,000; Dr. Singleton, age 40, $2,500. Portsmouthers in the $2,000 bracket were: Thomas C. Jones (39) and John G. Wallace (28), both keepers of light boats; W. C. Dixon (44), pilot, and John Hill (43), a mariner. Both Winifred Dixon (50) and Ellender Dixon (59) had personal estates valued at $1,000 each.

Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, NA, RG 29.
Although the first shot of the Civil War was fired at Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, North Carolina did not formally secede from the Union until May 20, a month after Lincoln had issued his call for troops to suppress the rebellion. The formation of the Confederate States of America in February 1861 had kept North Carolina walking the tightrope of neutrality as she prepared for eventual conflict under Governor Ellis, a secessionist. He acquired military supplies, equipment and stores so that in the early stages of the conflict North Carolina troops were said to be the "best armed, and best clothed men that passed through Richmond." stick, p. 117.

At the outbreak of the conflict Confederate troops moved quickly to occupy the Outer Banks, including the key point to North Carolina's foreign trade and commerce, Ocracoke Inlet and the forts on Beacon Island and at Cape Hatteras. One of the most significant aspects of Lincoln's strategy was to blockade the South and appropriate steps were taken by the Union General Burnside, when he attacked Fort Hatteras on August 27, 1861. It fell a few days later. Portsmouth was quickly to become a casualty of the war from which it was never to recover.

Fort Morgan, also known as Fort Beacon, on Beacon Island had been constructed to replace the earlier Fort Granville. It was pentagonal shaped and constructed of thick mud sods. There was an earth bomb-proof protecting a large cistern and a stockpile of munitions. Nine guns were at the fort but had not been mounted. Four rusting guns lay on the beach at Portsmouth never having been installed in Fort Morgan. With the fall of Fort Hatteras,
Confederate troops abandoned Fort Morgan and evacuated Portsmouth causing consternation among the inhabitants who now realized they were defenseless. Portsmouth was abandoned as the population fled before Union troops. Tradition states, however, that one Portsmother remained for she was too fat to get through the door to her home in her attempt to escape. In her excitement she forget to go through the large rear door of her kitchen which had been especially constructed for her. When the population returned after the war she still lived on Portsmouth and reported that she had been treated very kindly by the Federals. Union forces, however, had found Portsmouth a virtual ghost town and after destroying military stores at both Portsmouth and Ocracoke departed the area. The history of Portsmouth during the period of the Civil War is shrouded in darkness, if any, records of the flight of the Portsmothers having been found.

1. Holland, pp. 46-7; Stick, pp. 117 ff.; and Burke, p. 47.

2. Ibid. See also John G. Barrett, The Civil War in North Carolina (Chapel Hill, c. 1963), pp. 33-4, 38, 49, cited by Holland.

But the Civil War accentuated a trend which had been going on at Ocracoke Inlet since the 1840s when Hatteras Inlet opened. Being more convenient to coastal shipping and port facilities, almost all shipping through the Outer Banks had switched from Ocracoke Inlet to Hatteras Inlet by the end of the Civil War. The effects of this trend on the economy of Portsmouth will become more evident when the census for 1870 is analyzed below.

3. Holland, p. 47.

Although attempts were made to breathe new economic life into the community such as the establishment of a menhaden processing plant in 1866, that industry soon failed. A further blow was given to the Portsmouth
economy when the Treasury Department abolished the Ocradoke Collection District in 1867 thus certifying to its lessening importance as the Portsmouth office was closed and the Pamlico District was created with New Bern becoming the port of entry.

---


The census of 1870 gives the first concrete evidence on which to base the conclusion that Portsmouth definitely began with the Civil War. Most probably some of the residents felt that they had had enough of the primitive life of the town and settled on the mainland. However, the census reveals that the population had declined to 323 persons occupying 60 dwellings as compared to a population of 568 persons occupying 109 dwellings. This figure did not include the 117 slaves of whom none are listed as returning to Portsmouth after the conflict. Dr. Dudley, now 80, returned to continue his medical practice. There were four lighthouse keepers and their assistants, this figure undoubtedly including keepers of the life boats. Occupations still reflected the majority as being connected with the sea; nine pilots, 37 mariners or seamen, and 36 fishermen. This represents a decline of 60 from the pre-war figure of 142 being associated with the sea. Two school teachers, two grocers, two store clerks and one gardener and one brick mason, the latter being noted for the first time, completes the trend of the working force of Portsmouth.

By 1880 the population had fallen to 222 white persons (slaves not being indicated) occupying 64 dwellings. James W. Lumly,

---

age 30 and illiterate was the new minister. Nine sailors or seamen were listed with 31 fishermen. Piloting ships through Ocracoke Inlet appears to have come to a definite end as an occupation for none are listed in the Portsmouth pilots this census. Most probably all had moved to the vicinity of Hatteras and Oregon Inlets for all ships entering North Carolina harbors sailed the shorter route. Unfortunately we cannot follow the trend of the Portsmouth population for the census records of 1890 had been destroyed by fire and those from 1900 on are inaccessible.

However, it is reported that the trend of the population for the next 30 years [1880-1910] was fairly static. One indication that the life on Portsmouth was continuing was the discovery of records of the Census of School Children at Portsmouth which was known as School District No. 1. These were found among miscellaneous records of the office of the Register of Deeds at Beaufort during a recent trip to the area. Although incomplete they do fill part of the gap in our knowledge of the population.

The school children were from 6 to 21 years of age and their attendance was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Boys</th>
<th>No. of Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Portsmouth Life-Saving Station was established on Portsmouth Island in 1895 on the northeast corner of the grounds of the former Marine Hospital which burned to the ground the previous year. It was one of the three established on Core Banks the others being the one at Cape Lookout which had been authorized in 1878 and the one opposite Hunting Quarters in 1897. The Portsmouth station was active

Excellent histories of the founding of the U. S. Life-Saving Service and its transition to the U. S. Coast Guard are given in Edwin C. Bearss, Rescue Operations from the Chicamacomico Station, 1871-1951 (Washington, 1965), and Ross Holland, Cape Hatteras Light Station, North Carolina (Washington, 1965), to which the reader is referred.

to 1915 when the U. S. Coast Guard was formed from a merger of the former Revenue Cutter and Life-Saving services, and in 1939 the Bureau of Lighthouses was placed under the Coast Guard. Some of the Coast Guard stations were de-activated prior to World War II—the one at Portsmouth being deactivated in 1938—due to the improvement of ships communications and navigational instruments which made the stations unnecessary. The duties of the Portsmouth station were taken over by the Coast Guard station at Ocracoke and today are still being performed. A few historical notes

The hurricane of 1899 was one of the fiercest to rage over the banks and Portsmouth Village. The U.S. Life-Saving Station records the events of August 16 and 17, 1899, and are here given with all their dramatic implications.

The surf was running high from midnight to sunset. The winds were blowing from "east northeast" towards evening they had gale force, and there was a heavy rain. The crew of six surfmen were aboard with the keeper, F. G. Ferrill. The "General Remarks" for the day were about as follows with certain entries being completely illegible:

Patrol was out on duty. Sunrise lookout was taken. House duties had been performed. Day patrol was out on duty. C. W. Gilgo surfman no. 7 on day watch from sunrise to 1 a.m. Washington Roberts surfman no. 2 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Geo. W. Gilgo 2 p.m. to sunset. Sunset lookout taken, patrol out on duty. Blowing a gale, Portsmouth Island under water, part of fence washed down, boat house at hill settling & 4:30 p.m. north key-post floated near station, picked it up. Unlocked safe and took out keys preparatory to abandoning station. 5 p.m. south key gone. Surfmen no. 1 and 2 Dennis Mason and Washington Roberts could not make their patrol, also no. 3 George W. Gilgo and 4 failed Leonard W. Nelson.

The hurricane of 1899 was one of the fiercest to rage over the banks and Portsmouth Village. The U.S. Life-Saving Station records the events of August 16 and 17, 1899, and are here given with all their dramatic implications.

The surf was running high from midnight to sunset. The winds were blowing from "east northeast" towards evening they had gale force, and there was a heavy rain. The crew of six surfmen were aboard with the keeper, F. G. Ferrill. The "General Remarks" for the day were about as follows with certain entries being completely illegible:

Patrol was out on duty. Sunrise lookout was taken. House duties had been performed. Day patrol was out on duty. C. W. Gilgo surfman no. 7 on day watch from sunrise to 1 a.m. Washington Roberts surfman no. 2 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Geo. W. Gilgo 2 p.m. to sunset. Sunset lookout taken, patrol out on duty. Blowing a gale, Portsmouth Island under water, part of fence washed down, boat house at hill settling & 4:30 p.m. north key post floated near station, picked it up. Unlocked safe and took out keys preparatory to abandoning station. 5 p.m. south key gone. Surfmen no. 1 and 2 Dennis Mason and Washington Roberts could not make their patrol, also no. 3 George W. Gilgo and 4 failed Leonard W. Nelson.

All night the gale continued, winds blowing from the N.E., changing to N.N.E. with a heavy gale and thick rain. The surf was high at midnight. By sunrise it was "very high." The barometer was 29.62 at midnight and fell to 29.05 during the day. There was only a three degree change in the temperature from 74 degrees at midnight to 71 degrees at sunset. Among the "General Remarks" for the 17th are the following:

Leonard W. Nelson on day watch sunrise to 10:40 a.m., William T. Willis, 10 to 2:40 p.m., Leonard W. Nelson, 2:40 p.m. to sunset. Patrol out on duty. No. 5 Daniel S. Willis substitute and No. one could not make their patrols, blowing a gale of wind, beach, all under water. Sunrise lookout taken, tide very high, still
rising. 11:40 flagpole fell, fence washing down. Weather getting worse, took one of the surfmen's skiffs—bent (illegible) to her and went & got two families from there (sic) Houses seven all told, brought them to the station, sunset—lookout taken impossible for surfmen to make patrols, tide still rising rising, 8 ft (scuttled) station 8:15 tide in station still rising 9:35 ft; water 9 inch high on floors 9:45 tide falling (illegible) and surfmen's stables gone with horses in them.

F. G. TERRELL /LS/
Keeper

Thus we have the mute testimony of nature vs the Portsmouthers.

How many of the residents lost their lives in these periods that nature was running amuck will never be known. Few, if any, records have been preserved by them. Generations have come and gone. Thanks to the preservation of official records such as the foregoing do we have some knowledge of the primitive life they led. But the record shows among other things, the valiant work of the men of the Portsmouth life-saving station and after 1915 of the men of the Coast Guard. Here is a partial list of the ships during that were lost at Portsmouth almost a quarter of a century.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Type:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Lives Lost:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Etta M. Barter</td>
<td>Schooner</td>
<td>Feb. 27, 1895</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sallie Bissell</td>
<td>Schooner</td>
<td>March 4, 1895</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Warren Hall</td>
<td>Schooner</td>
<td>April 5, 1895</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charmer</td>
<td>Schooner</td>
<td>March 4, 1899</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred Walton</td>
<td>Hulk</td>
<td>Aug. 17, 1899</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia A. Willis</td>
<td>Schooner</td>
<td>Aug. 17, 1899</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrietta Hill</td>
<td>Schooner</td>
<td>Aug. 24, 1899</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Friends</td>
<td>Schooner</td>
<td>Feb. 9, 1900</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading Breeze</td>
<td>Schooner</td>
<td>Nov. 23, 1901</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vera Cruz VII</td>
<td>Brig</td>
<td>May 8, 1903</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John I. Snow</td>
<td>Schooner</td>
<td>Jan. 14, 1907</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrovo</td>
<td>Steamer</td>
<td>Feb. 20, 1910</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luna</td>
<td>Schooner</td>
<td>July 29, 1918</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ibid. The entries throughout this period give the dramatic story of these rescue operations.
VERA CRUZ VII

Of all the dramatic events which have occurred within the memory of Portsmouthers who are still alive, it is the rescue of the 421 shipwrecked persons from the 605-ton brig Vera Cruz VII on May 8 and 9, 1903. Mrs. Roberts of Arlington, Va., now 74, reaffirmed the events depicted in the Log of the Portsmouth Life-Saving Station by Keeper F. G. Terrell. Not only did the Portsmouthers try to clothe them, but they also prepared over 1,248 meals for them, using practically all the flour on the island. Mrs. Roberts recalled that as a girl of nine, she had helped her mother bake biscuits.


The Vera Cruz VII was a 29-year old vessel which hailed from the Cape Verde Islands. While trying to enter Ocracoke Inlet, it stranded on Dry Shoal Point about 2 p.m. on May 8. Why the brig ran ashore at this point is a mystery to this day for she had sailed from the Cape Verde Islands and was en route to New Bedford, Mass., and Ocracoke Inlet was considerably off course. Her Captain, Julius M. Fernandez, claimed that he was running short of fresh water and that he headed for Ocracoke to replenish the supply. It has been generally believed in Ocracoke ever since that in reality he was attempting to smuggle 399 Cape Verde Islanders into the United States through the sounds of eastern North Carolina. Local legend adds details to the story by saying that Captain Fernandez escaped the authorities at the time of the shipwreck and that he later had smuggled his way aboard a New Bedford whaler in a sperm oil barrel.

When the "collors" were seen by the watch at the Portsmouth Life-Saving Station, Keeper Ferrell and his surfmen approached the wreck, throwing
a line aboard her. Not getting much satisfaction from the Captain and the first mate, Ferrell rescued the passengers, hauling them over to the station even though his quarters were limited. The word soon spread and ferrell commandeered every available boat on the island. Portsmouthers immediately provided care, aid and sustenance for the passengers stranded aboard her. Meanwhile a fight broke out aboard the Vera Cruz VII which Ferrell helped to quell. It was no easy task to transport the 421 passengers, including 23 women and three children from the wrecked vessel to safety on Portsmouth Island. A strong northeaster was still blowing and the tide was still high enough to keep the beach flooded during the rescue operations.

When Ferrell returned to the stranded ship and asked the first mate who was going to pay for the expenses involved with the rescue operations, he was told that no one would. Ferrell thereupon placed members of his crew aboard her and spent several days unloading the cargo of 214 barrels of sperm oil valued at $6,000. The hulk of the Vera Cruz VII lay on the beach for years, giving its name to the shoal, until it eventually disappeared beneath the waters of the Atlantic. For years, maps carried the name of the Vera Cruz shoal on them, and Portsmouthers recount the story of the rescue as another episode in the life of their town.

Log, Portsmouth Life-Saving Station, Nov. 12, 1902-Dec. 5, 1903. NA, RG 41.
The history of Portsmouth during the first half of the twentieth century is indeed meager with the exception of the material which has already been cited.

In 1913 the Methodist Episcopal Church was destroyed by a storm but by 1915 the inhabitants of the town had erected the present church building in which occasional services take place.

The final coup occurred in 1933 when what was termed the "most severe hurricane in the memory of Portsmouth," according to Henry Pigott, practically wiped out the island and all its dwellings. Henry Pigott, who was then a young man of 22, said, "Everybody just left." The post office continued to be served regularly until 1959 when the last postmistress, Dorothy M. Salter, closed it on April 11, 1959 of that year. Postal service was kept up for the few remaining residents of Portsmouth whose numbers had fallen to but persons in 1950 by a villager named Tom Bragg who would meet the rail boat from Atlantic. Recently the schedule has been changed from Cedar Island to Ocracoke, no stops no longer being made at Portsmouth. Henry Pigott, now 72, and the last surviving Negro resident of the island, poled over to pick up the mail and supplies for a time but it is now handled by a Captain Austin of Ocracoke, who has assumed the role of caretaker of the island. Pigott only spends the months of June to September at Portsmouth now passing the remainder of the year with Captain Austin at Ocracoke. The other surviving resident, Miss Elma Dixon, now 66 and who was voting Registrar for Portsmouth in the 1950s, spends the summers on the island and the balance of the year with her niece at Beaufort, N.C.

1. Personal interview, Dane Fletcher, NPS Ranger, Ocracoke, Aug.
In retrospect it may be said that undoubtedly many of the Portsmouthers left the town after the chain of events which deprived them of a livelihood and settled on the mainland. If names are any clue to the whereabouts of the descendants of the original families whose names appeared prior to and in the population schedules of Carteret County as reflected in the decennial censuses, the information gleaned from the 1970 edition of the Carolina Telephone Directory for Morehead City, Atlantic, Beaufort, Marshallberg, Newport, and Ocracoke may be useful. It is entirely possible that an investigation and subsequent interviews with some of these families may produce primary source material which, if not looked into, may be lost forever thus depriving the Service of valuable historical material.

Among these families now living in the area and whose names appear to have been associated with Portsmouth are the following:

- Morehead City:
  - Fulcher, 20;
  - Dudley, 11;
  - Gaskill, four; Gaskins, five; Lupton, four;
  - Roberts, 13; Robinson, 13; Salter, 18; Styron, 25; Wade, 18; Willis, 103.

- Atlantic, N.C.:
  - Fulcher, 26; Gaskill, 15; Gilgo, six; Styron, 18.

- Beaufort, N.C.:
  - Dixon, 10; Dudley, 11;
  - Eubanks, nine; Fulcher, 13; Gaskill, 11; Lupton, seven; Mason, 23;
  - Pigott, two; Robinson, three; Salter, nine; Styron, nine; Taylor, 30; and Wallace, four.

- Marshallberg, N.C.:
  - Fulcher, four; Pigott, seven; Salter, eight; Styron, eight; and Wade, six.

- Ocracoke, N.C.:
  - Gaskill, ten; O'Neal, 13; Styron, four; Tolson, four; and Wahab, three.

Common names such as Brown, Jones, and Smith are too numerous to mention, but undoubtedly the potential information on Portsmouth is unlimited within the areas mentioned above which also includes Harker, Cedar, and other islands of Pamlico Sound.
CHAPTER SIX

PORTSMOUTH TODAY

Portsmouth today lies alone and desolate. The memory of her active and turbulent history is kept alive in the records of Carteret County, at Beaufort, N.C., and by the federal government in its records at the National Archives. Few, if any, personal records of the Portsmouthers are available as they did little correspondence. From the evidence of numerous interviews, however, and current investigations carried on during this study it is evident that existing gaps can be filled.

A few of the old structures such as the late nineteenth century clapboard Post Office, the Coast Guard Station, one or two other weather beaten buildings dating back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century and several frame dwellings from the early twentieth century as shown on the illustrations still stand. The latter are used for weekend and seasonal visiting from the mainland; the Post Office stands idle, the nearest one being at Ocracoke; and the Coast Guard Station is used as a weekend and seasonal gun club. Divine services are conducted occasionally in the Methodist Church.

The remnants of Portsmouth Village are in a fair state of preservation, some of the buildings being recently painted as is that of Elma Dixon and Henry Pigott. It would lend itself to historic stabilization for the buildings could be used for a cultural exhibit depicting the life of the village and of the Outer Bankers.

The final phase of the history of Portsmouth is now being written in the Office of the Attorney General of North Carolina. As a result of congressional legislation authorizing the establishment of the Cape
Lookout National Seashore,\(^1\) including the authority to appropriate $3,200,000 for the acquisition and development of the seashore in accordance with the purposes of the Act,\(^2\) the Honorable John C. Icehour, Assistant Attorney General, has been acquiring the land clearing the titles to all properties not only within the boundary of the original 50 acre site of Portsmouth Village but also of the entire Portsmouth Island. Mr. Icehour has had a staff of legal assistants searching the Carteret County records books consisting of deeds, transfers, grantors, grantees and others in an effort to establish ownership of the various parcels many of which have had a mixed history over the years.\(^3\)

---

2. Ibid., Sec. 71, P.
3. Personal Interview Mr. Icehour with Olszewski, Raleigh, N.C., Sept. 4, 1970.

One interesting point that developed during a recent trip to the area is that the entire complexion of the study has changed. Instead of the basic data being restricted to the original site of Portsmouth Village and to its two remaining residents, a completely new set of owners, practically all non-resident, has been uncovered.
Beginning in 1950s, various tracts of land of Portsmouth Township were surveyed, sold to the following persons or organizations and registered in the deed books of Carteret County, as hereewith noted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deed Book</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
<th>Date Registered</th>
<th>Owners Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>October 10, 1951</td>
<td>Eugene B. Reams &amp; Chas. F. Driscoll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>March 26, 1952</td>
<td>Stanley Wahab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>May 20, 1952</td>
<td>C. H. Case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>January 5, 1953</td>
<td>T. T. Potter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>July 31, 1953</td>
<td>Morgan Bisette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>September 16, 1954</td>
<td>T. T. Potter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>March 29, 1956</td>
<td>H. L. Holt &amp; C. Roy Eubanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>August 2, 1962</td>
<td>Long Rock Club, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>January 6, 1964</td>
<td>R. S. Wahab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Office Register of Deeds, Beaufort, N.C.

In addition to all the tracts which have been under investigation and eventually will lead to acquisition of the entire island of Portsmouth by the State of North Carolina prior to transfer of their jurisdiction to the United States and the National Park Service, both Elma Dixon and Henry Pigott have donated their lands and the improvements thereon to the state of North Carolina, but will continue to occupy the premises until their deaths.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A great deal of primary source material has been uncovered in the course of this basic data study. It has brought to light much that was unknown. It is obvious that further historical research is needed to fill in the gaps which the study has accentuated. The story of Portsmouth Village is stirring in that it shows man's determination to dominate a primitive environment. That he did it for more than a century from 1753 to the 1860s is proof of man's determination to live the way of life he desires. That he gradually was forced to seek his livelihood elsewhere is proof of man's reaction to contemporary social and economic changes. Earlier concepts that the story of Portsmouth involved only the history of the site of the original town have given way to the realization that it is possible to reconstruct the history of the vitality of the people, and of the social and economic changes that took place at Portsmouth as part of a unique history that primarily involved man and the sea.

This undoubtedly is the broad historical theme that should dominate the establishment of Cape Lookout National Seashore. It is the same theme that prevails at Cape Hatteras National Seashore. However, different facets of this comprehensive theme should dominate each area. At Cape Hatteras the main emphasis is on the story of the efforts of the United States to provide lighthouses and life-saving stations to make the lot of the mariner safer. Less stress is placed on the cultural and economic history of the Outer Banks.

At Cape Lookout just the opposite should prevail. Portsmouth should be restored to accent the cultural and economic life of the Bankers. At Portsmouth the story could be told of how the people lived, earned their daily bread, raised their children and adapted to their environment. Economic activity centering around Ocracoke Inlet should be
A great deal of primary source material has been uncovered in the course of this basic data study. It has brought to light much that was unknown. It is obvious that further historical research is needed to fill in the gaps which the study has accented. The story of Portsmouth Village is stirring in that it shows man's determination to dominate a primitive environment. That he did it for more than a century from 1753 to the 1860s is proof of man's determination to live the way of life he desires. That he gradually was forced to seek his livelihood elsewhere is proof of man's reaction to contemporary social and economic changes. Earlier concepts that the story of Portsmouth involved only the history of the site of the original town have given way to the realization that it is possible to reconstruct the history of the vitality of the people, and of the social and economic changes that took place at Portsmouth as part of a unique history that primarily involved man and the sea.

This undoubtedly is the broad historical theme that should dominate the establishment of Cape Lookout National Seashore. It is the same theme that prevails at Cape Hatteras National Seashore. However, different facets of this comprehensive theme should dominate each area. At Cape Hatteras the main emphasis is on the story of the efforts of the United States to provide lighthouses and life-saving stations to make the lot of the mariner safer. Less stress is placed on the cultural and economic history of the Outer Banks.

At Cape Lookout just the opposite should prevail. Portsmouth should be restored to accent the cultural and economic life of the Bankers. At Portsmouth the story could be told of how the people lived, earned their daily bread, raised their children and adapted to their environment. Economic activity centering around Ocracoke Inlet should be emphasized since it relates so closely to the life of the Portsmouthers.
For these reasons, it is suggested that the area within the confines of the boundary shown on the map of Appendix B be declared the Portsmouth Village Historic District.

Within this district the following features should be included: the U. S. Marine Hospital, Methodist Episcopal Church, the Coast Guard Station, the Postoffice, the Portsmouth School, the Old Building (1875), the Portsmouth Cemetery, Cottage, the Elma Dixon House, and the Henry Pigott House.

SITE EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Methodist-Episcopal Church

The Methodist Episcopal Church was the scene of much community and social life for the women of the village. It gave life and meaning to an otherwise drab existence. It brought them together in meaningful social gatherings. This historical resource should be interpreted to give depth to the meaning of the life of the Portsmothers to the visitor. Tablets should probably indicate the history of the previous church building and list the names of the ministers.

2. The Portsmouth Coast Guard Station

The stirring events of the role of the earlier life-saving station in assisting the Portsmothers in times of distress and in the many rescues of crews of ships that had gone ashore on the shoals of Ocracoke Inlet, including the later work of the Coast Guard station should be interpreted for the benefit of the visitor. The building should be preserved.

3. The U. S. Marine Hospital

The site of the Marine Hospital should be located and its role in providing aid to sick and injured seamen stressed in its interpretation perhaps at a nearby Visitor Center.
1. The Post Office and General Store

The Post Office and general store was an active scene of the daily life of the Portsmouthers. Here they came for their mail and to do their general shopping for groceries, dry goods, and most probably drugs. The site should be recreated to portray the type of goods and services, including the mail handling facilities that were available so far from the conveniences of the mainland. This historical source should be interpreted in a colorful and meaningful fashion for the visitor.

5. The Portsmouth Elementary School

Here was the scene of whatever intellectual development was available to the villager. The appearance of the schoolroom should be recreated and if possible contemporary school books should be located by the Park staff to bring this historic resource to its daily appearance, to bring a meaningful experience of this phase of the village's history.

6. The Oldest Building (c. 1875)

Since this building is one of the oldest of the village, reflecting construction techniques of the island for resisting the storms of the area further investigation should be made, if possible, to pinpoint its original appearance. This historic resource should be made one of the highpoints of the visitor's experience, possibly with full restoration or at least partial stabilization to prevent further deterioration.

7. The Old Portsmouth Cemetery

Here lie buried many of the early Portsmouthers. Further investigation should be made of the headstones to identify so that interpreters may point out some of the historic personalities.
This house also has an excellent water tank of local design, very important item since there are no fresh water wells there.

8. The Elma Dixon Cottage

Upon the death of the present inhabitant when the site becomes the property of the State of North Carolina (or of the National Park Service), every effort should be made to preserve this historical resource, as evidence of the manner in which her last days and her life was spent.

9. The Henry Pigott Cottage

For the same reason as enumerated under 8. above, the site should be preserved as a historic resource and interpreted for the benefit of the visitor. If possible, all furnishings presently within both cottages should be retained.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Based on the above recommendations and in view of the rapid deterioration which might possibly occur under the adverse weather conditions of the area, it is suggested that Historic Structures Reports for the following structures be immediately programmed to preserve this vital and prime historical resource of Cape Lookout National Seashore:

1. The Methodist Episcopal Church.
2. The Portsmouth Coast Guard Station
3. The Post Office and General Store
4. The Portsmouth Elementary School
5. The Oldest Building (c.1875)
6. The Elma Dixon Cottage
7. The Henry Pigott Cottage.
Historical Base Map, Portsmouth Village, N.C.

Proposed Boundary Portsmouth Village Historic Site

Nomination Form: Portsmouth Village Historic Site

Nomination Form: Portsmouth Coast Guard Station

(Note: to be paginated during final typing, GJO)
HISTORICAL BASE MAP, PORTSMOUTH VILLAGE, N.C.
1. **NAME**

   COMMON: Portsmouth Village Historic Site
   AND/OR HISTORIC: Portsmouth Village Historic Site

2. **LOCATION**

   STREET AND NUMBER: That portion of Portsmouth Island surrounding the site of the original Portsmouth Village
   CITY OR TOWN:
   STATE: North Carolina
   CODE: 
   COUNTY: Carteret
   CODE: 

3. **MAP REFERENCE**

   SOURCE: U.S.G.S. - Portsmouth, N. C. Quadrangle
   SCALE: 1:24,000
   DATE: 1950

4. **REQUIREMENTS**

   TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS
   1. Property boundaries where required.
   2. North arrow.
   3. Latitude and longitude reference.

---

1. **NAME**

   COMMON: 
   AND/OR HISTORIC: 

2. **LOCATION**

   STREET AND NUMBER:
   CITY OR TOWN:
   STATE: 
   CODE: 
   COUNTY: 
   CODE: 

3. **PHOTO REFERENCE**

   PHOTO CREDIT:
   DATE OF PHOTO:
   NEGATIVE FILED AT:

4. **IDENTIFICATION**

   DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.
1. NAME

COMMON: Portsmouth Village Historic Site

AND/OR HISTORICAL: Portsmouth Village Historic Site

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Portsmouth

STATE: North Carolina

3. CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY (Check One)</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>X Occupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>X Restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>X Unoccupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Agricultural
- Government
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Educational
- Military
- Entertainment
- Religious
- Private Residence
- Other (Specify)
- Park
- Transportation
- Museum
- Scientific
- Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Various private; National Park Service, State of North Carolina

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Portsmouth

STATE: North Carolina

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Office, Register of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER: Carteret County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN: Beaufort

STATE: North Carolina

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Basic Data Study, "History of Portsmouth Village, N.C."

DATE OF SURVEY: 1959

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service

STREET AND NUMBER: 801 19th Street, NW

CITY OR TOWN: Washington

STATE: D.C.
Portsmouth Village today consists of about 12 houses in fair condition including the former Coast Guard Station, the old Postoffice, and the Methodist Episcopal Church. The original site consisted of 50 acres and has since expanded to take in almost the entire island. Although there are only two surviving permanent residents of Portsmouth, the majority of private owners are non-resident. Unless these areas are included within the site as recommended, it will be impossible to present a true picture of Portsmouth at the height of its greatest population.

Portsmouth was originally founded in 1753 as a seaport and consisted of 100 half-acre lots. By 1861 its population had increased to more than 500 residents and the population had spread over a considerable area of Portsmouth Island involving hundreds of acres.
area as a prime example of American heritage.

The two remaining residents, one a white woman, Miss Elma Dixon, now 74, and a Negro, Henry Pigott, now 60 (both descended from two of the early families to reside there), continue to live at Portsmouth refusing to quit the area. They have donated their lands and its improvements to the State of North Carolina and will live there until they expire—Portsmouthers to the last.
The story of the people of Portsmouth is of a population determined
to establish their homes and families in an area buffeted by all the primit­
tive forces of nature. Established as a seaport in 1753 with the admoni­
tion to build either a wooden frame house or a warehouse suitable for
the storage of goods in transit to aid in the economic growth of North
Carolina, the people of Portsmouth gradually gained a dominant position
at Ocracoke Inlet in the lightering trade. Hundreds of ships, coastwise
and foreign, anchored in the vicinity, had their cargoes lightered, and
goods stored in the warehouses of Portsmouth so they could continue to
the main ports across Pamlico Sound on the mainland. The Wallace-Blount
Shell Castle enterprise (1798-1818) was an important constituent of this
activity and Portsmouthers aided in its success.

The colonial government recognized the importance of Portsmouth and
in 1764 established an official commodiy inspection station at the port.
From 1799-1806 Portsmouth was the official customs collection district for
the port of New Bern. Between 1836-37 over 1,400 vessels passed through
Ocracoke Inlet. In 1840 a U. S. Postoffice was established at Portsmouth.
In 1841 Hatteras and Oregon Inlets opened depriving Portsmouth thereafter
of much of its maritime trade. In 1847 a Marine Hospital was established
on the island. From 1876-85 a U. S. Weather Buoy station operated there.
In 1894 a U.S. Livesaving Station was established to become a Coast Guard
Station in 1915. Earlier in 1880 a telegraph station had been opened.

During this entire period the Portsmouthers gave assistance and succor
to those in need or shipwrecked in the vicinity. In 1903 for instance,
when the Vera Cruz foundered on the shoals at the entrance to Ocracoke
Inlet, Portsmouthers rescued and fed its 371 passengers.

Time after time and despite all the adversity which the Portsmouthers
had to face by the frequent storms and hurricanes which swept their island,
they returned to rebuild their homes. Some of these were the severe gale
of 1795, the frequent hurricanes of the 1830s, especially the one of August
29, 1839, when the sea swept over the entire island inundating the houses
with 27 feet of water, and the hurricane of San Ciriacio of 1895 which de­
stroyed almost everything on the island. But the climax appears to have
occurred in 1933 when the greatest hurricane of all swept the island to
disaster. After this most Portsmouthers left their homes to settle on
islands and other areas of the mainland.

Even with the loss of their piloting business after the opening of
Oregon and Hatteras Inlets, Portsmouthers turned to the sea and continued
to live as fishermen and mariners while their wives continued to bear children.

The history of these sturdy people should not be lost and everything
possible should be done to recapture and retain the primitiveness of the

---

### 6. SIGNIFICANCE

**PERIOD** (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- [ ] Pre-Columbian
- [ ] 16th Century
- [ ] 18th Century
- [ ] 20th Century

**SPECIAL AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE** (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- [ ] Aboriginal
- [ ] Prehistoric
- [ ] Historic
- [ ] Agriculture
- [ ] Architecture
- [ ] Art
- [ ] Commerce
- [ ] Communications
- [ ] Conservation
- [ ] Education
- [ ] Engineering
- [ ] Industry
- [ ] Invention
- [ ] Landscape
- [ ] Literature
- [ ] Military
- [ ] Music
- [ ] Political
- [ ] Religion/Philosophy
- [ ] Science
- [ ] Sculpture
- [ ] Social/Humanitarian
- [ ] Theater
- [ ] Transportation
- [ ] Urban Planning
- [ ] Other (Specify)

---

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The story of the people of Portsmouth is of a population determined
to establish their homes and families in an area buffeted by all the primit­
tive forces of nature. Established as a seaport in 1753 with the admoni­
tion to build either a wooden frame house or a warehouse suitable for
the storage of goods in transit to aid in the economic growth of North
Carolina, the people of Portsmouth gradually gained a dominant position
at Ocracoke Inlet in the lightering trade. Hundreds of ships, coastwise
and foreign, anchored in the vicinity, had their cargoes lightered, and
goods stored in the warehouses of Portsmouth so they could continue to
the main ports across Pamlico Sound on the mainland. The Wallace-Blount
Shell Castle enterprise (1798-1818) was an important constituent of this
activity and Portsmouthers aided in its success.

The colonial government recognized the importance of Portsmouth and
in 1764 established an official commodiy inspection station at the port.
From 1799-1806 Portsmouth was the official customs collection district for
the port of New Bern. Between 1836-37 over 1,400 vessels passed through
Ocracoke Inlet. In 1840 a U. S. Postoffice was established at Portsmouth.
In 1841 Hatteras and Oregon Inlets opened depriving Portsmouth thereafter
of much of its maritime trade. In 1847 a Marine Hospital was established
on the island. From 1876-85 a U. S. Weather Buoy station operated there.
In 1894 a U.S. Livesaving Station was established to become a Coast Guard
Station in 1915. Earlier in 1880 a telegraph station had been opened.

During this entire period the Portsmouthers gave assistance and succor
to those in need or shipwrecked in the vicinity. In 1903 for instance,
when the Vera Cruz foundered on the shoals at the entrance to Ocracoke
Inlet, Portsmouthers rescued and fed its 371 passengers.

Time after time and despite all the adversity which the Portsmouthers
had to face by the frequent storms and hurricanes which swept their island,
they returned to rebuild their homes. Some of these were the severe gale
of 1795, the frequent hurricanes of the 1830s, especially the one of August
29, 1839, when the sea swept over the entire island inundating the houses
with 27 feet of water, and the hurricane of San Ciriacio of 1895 which de­
stroyed almost everything on the island. But the climax appears to have
occurred in 1933 when the greatest hurricane of all swept the island to
disaster. After this most Portsmouthers left their homes to settle on
islands and other areas of the mainland.

Even with the loss of their piloting business after the opening of
Oregon and Hatteras Inlets, Portsmouthers turned to the sea and continued
to live as fishermen and mariners while their wives continued to bear children.

The history of these sturdy people should not be lost and everything
possible should be done to recapture and retain the primitiveness of the
9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corner</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NW</td>
<td>35° 4' 28&quot;</td>
<td>76° 3' 59&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE</td>
<td>35° 4' 10&quot;</td>
<td>76° 3' 27&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>35° 4' 6&quot;</td>
<td>76° 3' 30&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>35° 1' 5&quot;</td>
<td>76° 1' 15&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPROPRIATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

Standard Form 2-11

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE: CODE COUNTY: CODE

STATE: CODE COUNTY: CODE

STATE: CODE COUNTY: CODE

STATE: CODE COUNTY: CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Dr. George J. Olszewski, Historian

ORGANIZATION: Office of Archeology & Historic Preservation, Eastern Service Center, National Park Service

CITY OR TOWN: 1228 Wisconsin Ave., NW

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Name ____________________________

Title ____________________________

Date ____________________________

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date ____________________________

ATTEST: ____________________________

Keeper of The National Register

Date ____________________________
Form 10-300

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(TYPE ALL ENTRIES - COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS)

1. NAME

COMMON:
Portsmouth Coast Guard Station

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Portsmouth Coast Guard Station

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Old Coast Guard Station

CITY OR TOWN:
Portsmouth

STATE:
North Carolina

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNER'S NAME:
State of North Carolina

OWNERSHIP

STATE:
North Carolina

STREET AND NUMBER:

ACCESSIBLE

STATUS

TO THE PUBLIC

PRESENT USE

(CHECK ONE OR MORE AS APPROPRIATE)

☐ Agricultural ☐ Government ☐ Park ☐ Transportation ☐ Comments
☐ Commercial ☐ Industrial ☐ Private Residence ☐ Religious ☐ Other (Specify)
☐ Educational ☐ Military ☐ Private ☐ Preservation work
☐ Entainment ☐ Museum ☐ Scientific ☐ In progress
☐ Object ☐ Public ☐ Both ☐ Being Considered ☐ Unoccupied

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
State of North Carolina

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:
North Carolina

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Office, Register of Deeds

CITY OR TOWN:
Carteret County Courthouse

STATE:
North Carolina

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Basic Data Study, "History of Portsmouth Village, N.C."

DATE OF SURVEY:
1969

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Office of Archeology & Historic Preservation, National Park Sv

STREET AND NUMBER:
801 19th Street, NW

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE:
D. C.
### 7. DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDITION</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Deteriorated</th>
<th>Ruins</th>
<th>Unexposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DESCRIPTION**

In 1894 the U. S. Life-Saving Service established a life-saving station at Portsmouth. This building dates back to 1905 as indicated by its architecture. It is a two-story wood frame structure with a cupola watchtower. The first floor is divided into two sections, one 32 feet by 42 feet for living quarters, the other section 28 feet by 42 feet has a concrete floor and was used as the boathouse fronting on Station Creek. The second floor was used for sleeping quarters and has two baths. There is an L-shaped porch 8 feet by 52 feet on the south extending part way on the east side to 10 feet by 28 feet. The foundation is solid masonry. The gabled roof is shingled. The floors are of softwood; the interior is of dry wall construction. It has no heating apparatus and the building is in fair condition.

Located on Station Creek, the Portsmouth Coast Guard Station is a good example of a facility of this period located on a cove, bay or sound. This was opposed to a station, such as the one located on the beach at Cape Lookout. In answering calls for assistance during storms, it was frequently impossible for crews of beach stations to launch their surfboats through the breakers, while Coast Guardsmen posted at a station such as at Portsmouth could take their craft through the comparatively calm waters of Station Creek to Ocracoke Inlet.

The station was deactivated in 1938, when its duties were taken over by the Coast Guard Station at Ocracoke. As the other structures such as the wharf, walks, garage and cistern complement the station, they must be preserved.
### 8. SIGNIFICANCE

#### PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- [ ] Pre-Columbian
- [ ] 16th Century
- [ ] 18th Century
- [ ] 20th Century

- [ ] 15th Century
- [ ] 17th Century
- [ ] 19th Century

#### SPECIFIC DATES (If Applicable and Known)

#### AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- [ ] Aboriginal
- [ ] Prehistoric
- [ ] Historic
- [ ] Agriculture
- [ ] Architecture
- [ ] Art
- [ ] Commerce
- [ ] Communications
- [ ] Conservation
- [ ] Education
- [ ] Engineering
- [ ] Industry
- [ ] Invention
- [ ] Landscape
- [ ] Literature
- [ ] Military
- [ ] Music
- [ ] Political
- [ ] Religion/Philosophy
- [ ] Science
- [ ] Sculpture
- [ ] Social/Humanitarian
- [ ] Transportation
- [ ] Urban Planning
- [ ] Other (Specify)

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Portsmouth Coast Guard Station is a historical resource that is closely identified with the life of the sturdy people of Portsmouth living their lives under the most adverse conditions as they were buffeted by all the primitive forces of nature. At the same time they extended their hospitality to the unfortunates who were shipwrecked in the vicinity at Ocracoke Inlet or suffered through the numerous storms, gales and hurricanes that swept over the island. And it was the men stationed at the Portsmouth Coast Guard Station who were instrumental in rescuing and providing assistance and succor to the victims of the sea's fury. Of more than a dozen schooners and other types of vessels which came to grief on the shoals at Ocracoke, there was a minimum loss of life, only three deaths being recorded in almost a quarter century of service.

Among the vessels whose crews were brought to safety were Etta M. Barter (1895), Sallie Bissel (1895), S. Warren Hall (1898), Charmer, the hulk of Fred Walton, Lydia A. Willis, and Henrietta Hill (all in 1899), Three Friends (1900), Leading Breeze (1901), Vera Cruz VII (1903), John I. Snow (1907), Arroyo (1910) and Luna (1918). The most stirring of all these events was that of Vera Cruz VII when the station crew rescued its 421 passengers and crew without loss of life, the Portsmouthers providing food and clothing for them to the best of their ability.

Noteworthy assistance was provided to the people of Portsmouth when the town was struck by the San Ciriacco hurricane in 1899 and the hurricane of 1933 when the entire island was inundated. These events should not be lost sight of for they will provide the visitor with a prime example of man's courage in the face of the furies of nature as he conquers his environment.
9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORNER</th>
<th>LATITUDE</th>
<th>LONGITUDE</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>LATITUDE</th>
<th>LONGITUDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NW</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: George J. Olszewski, Historian

ORGANIZATION: Eastern Service Center, National Park Service

STREET AND NUMBER: 4228 Wisconsin Ave., NW

CITY OR TOWN: Washington

STATE: D.C.

12. STATE LIASON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National [ ] State [ ] Local [ ]

Name ____________________________

Title ____________________________

Date ____________________________

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date ____________________________

ATTEST:

______________________________
Keeper of The National Register

Date ____________________________
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES: ARCHIVES

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Records of the Department of Commerce

Records of the Bureau of the Census, Population Schedules, 1790-1890, Record Group 29, Carteret County, N.C.

Records of the Treasury Department

Letters to and from Collectors of Small Ports, 1789-1833, Record Group 90
Letters on Marine Hospitals, M-1834 to M-1876, 33 vols.
Letters of the Secretary of the Treasury
Letters Received
Letters Sent
Life-Saving Service Log Books, 1871-1942, Record Group 51.
Records of the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation
Ship Enrollments, 1800-1869

NORTH CAROLINA STATE ARCHIVES

Records of Carteret County, North Carolina, County Courthouse, Beaufort, N.C.

Records of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Carteret County, N.C.

Judgments, 1700-1970
Lis Pendens, 70-715, -16, -163, -16d, -15, -5, -1627, -1672.
Old Court Papers, 1700 to date
Order of Decrees, 1700-1970
Special Proceedings, 1700-1970
Wills, 1700-1970, 12 vols.

Records of the Register of Deeds, Carteret County, N.C.

Birth Certificates
Death Certificates
Deed Book to Carteret County, N.C., A-F, G-H
Deeds, Carteret County, 50 vols.
General Index to Real Estate Conveyances, Grantors, 1700-1970
General Index to Real Estate Conveyances, Grantees, 1700-1970
General Registration Book for Portsmouth Precinct, Carteret County, Book No. 1898
Marriage Certificates
School Census Records, Portsmouth, 1893-1920
Records of Carteret County, North Carolina, Beaufort, N.C.,
County Courthouse (Cont.)

Records of the Supervisor of Taxes, Carteret County, N.C.

Map of Parcels as Tax Appraised, PO-10, PO-10A, PO-11
Parcel Re-Evaluation, Portsmouth Township
PO-10-1 to PO-10-11, Portsmouth
PO-10A-1 to PO-10A-11, Core Banks
PO-11-1, Casey Island

Records of the Secretary of State, N.C.

Land Grants, Book 10

State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.

John Gray Blount Papers
Petitions in Legislative Records, LP 95
Vestry Book, St. John's Parish
Department of Commerce, Coast and Geodetic Survey. Atlantic Coast
Cape Henry to Key West. U.S. Coast Pilot. Washington: Govern-

U. S. Coast Guard. Historically Famous Lighthouses. Washington:

U. S. Lighthouse Board. Annual Reports, 1860, 1868-73, 1888. Wash-

Compilation of Public Documents and Extracts from Re-
ports and Papers Relating to Lighthouses, Light-Vessels, and
Illuminating Apparatus, and to Beacons, Buoys, and Fog Signals,

List of Beacons, Buoys, and Daymarks in the Fifth Light-
house District, 1890. Washington: Government Printing Office,
1890.

Light List, 1866. Washington: Government Printing Office,
1866.

U. S. Post Office Department. List of Post Offices in the United

U. S. Coast Guard. Register of the Commissioned and Warrant Officers
and Cadets, and Ships and Stations of the United States Coast

National Archives and Record Service. Guide to the Records in the

Heyl, Lewis (comp.). Statutes of the United States Relating to Rev-

Uzzell & Co., 1910.

Olds, Fred A. Abstract of North Carolina Wills, 1760-1800. Oxford,
GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS


______________________________

______________________________


SECONDARY WORKS: BOOKS


______________________________


PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

- Captain Justin Austin, Ocracoke, N.C.
- Mr. and Mrs. George Wilkes, Ocracoke, N.C., 66 years old.
- Miss Elma Dixon, Portsmouth, N.C., 72 years old.
- Mr. Henry Pigott, Portsmouth, N.C.
- Miss Alma Tilghman, Register of Deeds, Beaufort, N.C.
- Mrs. Sharon Piner, Assistant Register of Deeds, Beaufort, N.C.
- Miss Charlene Taylor, Secretary to Register of Deeds, Beaufort, N.C.
- Mr. Elbert Davis, Tax Supervisor, Carteret County, Beaufort, N.C.
- Mr. Sterling Hancock, Assistant Tax Supervisor, Carteret County, Beaufort, N.C.
- Mr. A. H. James, Clerk of Superior Court, Carteret County, Beaufort, N.C.
- Mrs. Wm. H. Styron, age 74, born Ada Roberts at Portsmouth, 1609 South Adams Street, Arlington, Va.
- Hon. John T. Icenhour, Assistant Attorney General, Raleigh, N.C.
- Mr. Robert Newcomb, engineer, Raleigh, N.C.
- Captain J. D. Willis, Morehead City, N.C.
NEWSPAPERS

N. C.

Durham Morning Herald, N. C., October 12, 1947.


Carteret County News-Times, N. C.