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## Norfolk in the First World War

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NORFOLK IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

by

Stephen Paul Nasca  
B.A. May 1974, St. Bernard College

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

HISTORY

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY  
May, 1979

Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

NORFOLK IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Stephen Paul Nasca  
Old Dominion University, 1979  
Director: Dr. James R. Sweeney

World War I brought the military establishment in the form of bases and service personnel to Norfolk. Because of Norfolk's close proximity to the various military bases, recruiting for the various branches of the Armed Forces was carried on very diligently. Those Norfolkians who did not volunteer for one of the services, or were not drafted, were encouraged to join the Norfolk Home Guard.

To build the military bases and to work in the various government plants, thousands of workers were needed. This demand for laborers strained Norfolk's public transportation, health, and social services as well as housing accommodations and public utilities.

The First World War had a positive impact on Norfolk's economy and established a permanent relationship between the civilian and military communities. The war contributed greatly to the overall character and culture of Norfolk, Virginia.

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## INTRODUCTION

While researching the history of Norfolk, Virginia, I found it impossible to avoid the military presence which has figured in its life since its founding in 1680. Norfolk has either benefited or suffered from the consequences of every war in which the United States has participated.

Norfolk was an important center of trade with England and the West Indies until the Revolutionary War. It was bombarded by the British fleet on January 1, 1776, and later burned by Virginia militia to prevent its occupation by the British.<sup>1</sup> The rebuilt town was attacked unsuccessfully by the British in 1812. During the Civil War Union forces captured it in 1862. The Spanish-American War in 1898 increased the ship-building industry in and around Norfolk. Having already established a ship-building capacity and having indisputable strategic advantages, the city of Norfolk was an ideal site for a naval base. The advantages of building such a base in Norfolk were soon apparent to officials of the United States government.

It was recognized that Norfolk could be utilized as a naval base in 1907 during the Jamestown Exposition. Presi-

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Thomas J. Wertebaker and Marvin W. Schlegel. Norfolk Historic Southern Port. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1962), pp. 66-67. (Hereafter cited as Wertebaker, Norfolk Historic Southern Port).

dent Theodore Roosevelt opened the Exposition, which celebrated the 300th anniversary of the founding of the first colony in Virginia, and concluded it by assembling the American fleet in Hampton Roads before sending it off on its famous around the world cruise. It was the Navy's representative at the Exposition, Admiral P. F. Harrington, who inquired<sup>2</sup> about the land for the United States Navy.

On January 31, 1917, the Germans announced they had commenced unrestricted submarine warfare and all vessels of any kind bound for Allied ports or returning from them would be sunk. The submarines Deutschland and U-53 visited Norfolk waters and other Atlantic ports. The U-53 was able to sink five Allied merchant ships and the military question of American coastal defense became a matter of grave importance.<sup>3</sup>

When the United States entered World War I, there were only two United States government military installations in Norfolk. Both were situated on the Elizabeth River: the twelve acre Fort Norfolk and the ninety acre St. Helena Training Station.<sup>4</sup> However, during 1917-1918, three additional

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<sup>2</sup>  
Theodore A. Curtin. "A Marriage of Convenience, Norfolk and the Navy." (M. A. thesis, Old Dominion College, 1969), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>  
Ira R. Hanna. "Growth of the Norfolk Naval Air Station and the Norfolk-Portsmouth Metropolitan Economy in the Twentieth Century." (M. A. thesis, Old Dominion College, 1967), p. 22. (Hereafter cited as Hanna, "Norfolk Naval Air Station.")

<sup>4</sup>  
Arthur Kyle Davis, ed. Virginia Communities in War Time. (Richmond: Virginia War History Commission, 1926), p. 295. (Hereafter cited as Davis, Virginia Communities).

military bases were built and one was leased in Norfolk County.<sup>5</sup> The government spent nearly \$200,000,000 in, or near the City of Norfolk making it the second port in the United States.<sup>6</sup> The history of Norfolk City and County's six military bases is the principal topic of the second chapter of this thesis. In addition the reader will find a description of what life was like for the recruit or draftee who was assigned there during the World War.

Besides military bases, recruits were needed to prosecute the war in Europe. Norfolk's strategic position on the sea, its courtship of and subsequent "marriage" to the Navy subjected Norfolkkians to an exhilarating recruiting campaign. All the Armed Services did their best to recruit young men in the Norfolk area. Those Norfolkkians who did not volunteer for one of the services, or were not drafted, were encouraged to join the Norfolk Home Guard. Since many Norfolkkians joined the service, many people from other states took their place constructing the government bases and working in the government plants.

The war years brought both natural and man-made problems not directly related to the military establishment. An influenza epidemic invaded Norfolk in 1918 followed by the coldest winter and hottest summer that had been recorded.

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<sup>5</sup> See boundary map of the City of Norfolk and adjacent cities in Appendix A.

<sup>6</sup> The Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch. 1 January 1919.



The influx of soldiers, sailors, and laborers, with their families into Norfolk, caused a shortage of everything from public utilities and housing, to food, fuel, and transportation. The city's facilities were inadequate for handling the approximately 100,000 people who flocked to war-time industries and government plants.

CHAPTER I  
PRE-WAR CONDITIONS

On June 28th, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated beginning the chain of events that led to the outbreak of World War I. Norfolkians watched the events in Europe anxiously, however, few anticipated that the United States would be involved. In July, 1916, Norfolk began to feel effects of the prosperity brought by wartime commerce. She was swept involuntarily from a busy Virginia seaport to a national metropolis and world port.<sup>1</sup> Norfolk attributed the prosperity to her commercial location and potential industrial capabilities.<sup>2</sup>

In the year preceding the European conflict, Norfolk possessed an invested capital of thirty million dollars in 362 manufacturing plants which employed fifteen thousand people.<sup>3</sup> Served by six foreign lines of steamships and twenty-six coastwise and river steamships,<sup>4</sup> Norfolk held the world's record in shipping and marketing coal and peanuts. Six percent of the U. S. cotton came through Norfolk in 1913: the annual shipment of fish, oysters, and crabs was valued

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<sup>1</sup>The Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch. 18 July 1916.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Davis, Virginia Communities, p. 295.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

at three million dollars and the annual shipment of vegetables to the North and West at fifteen million.<sup>5</sup> The federal installations near Norfolk were counted as assets for the individual and commercial future of the town: the Navy Yard (273 acres), St. Helena Training Station (90 acres), Marine Barracks (87 acres), St. Julien's Magazine (95 acres), United States Naval Hospital (150 acres), and Fort Norfolk (12 acres), represented an expenditure by the government of \$14,350,000.<sup>6</sup> By the time the war had begun in Europe, Norfolk's industries were beginning to feel a surge in growth.

Shipments to both the Allies, and the Central Powers (through neutral countries), brought about a rapid increase in exports. Shipments from Norfolk rose from \$9,500,000 in 1914 to \$19,000,000 in 1915, and to \$36,000,000 in 1916.<sup>7</sup>

On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson delivered his war message. It was based largely on German unrestricted submarine warfare which interfered with American maritime commerce. With the declaration of war, the United States government lost no time in securing bases, depots, and land in Norfolk. The government was interested in Norfolk for three reasons: a) the inability of the wharves and piers in New York to handle the sudden demand made upon them; b) the advantages of Norfolk for both ocean and railway traffic, and, c) its accessibility to the great coal and cotton regions

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5

Ibid.

6

Ibid.

7

Wertenbaker, Norfolk Historic Southern Port, p. 301.

of the South.

By 1917, many industries had located in Norfolk, the government was spending millions there, and war workers and military trainees came in tens of thousands.

## CHAPTER II

## MILITARY BASES IN NORFOLK

Within weeks after the United States declaration of war, the United States government appropriated funds for building a Naval Operating Base, a Naval Air Station, and an Army Supply Base in Norfolk. Later, the United States government leased the Engineer Depot at Lambert's Point.<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of military bases was the main reason why Norfolk's population doubled. The construction of the bases demanded every skilled and unskilled worker who could be secured in the countryside. While the bases were under construction, the workers lived in town, resulting in a booming business for landlords, retailers, and restaurant owners. Once portions of the bases were constructed they were immediately filled with the new recruits or regular service personnel. The establishment of these bases affected the surrounding area in every conceivable way.<sup>2</sup>

The six bases are described in this second chapter to show the overall impact, economically, socially, and historically, they had on Norfolk.

## Fort Norfolk

Fort Norfolk was purchased in 1794, and used by the Navy

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<sup>1</sup>A map, showing the location of the military bases in Norfolk City and County can be found in Appendix B.

<sup>2</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 30 December 1917.

Department between 1824 and 1861. The fort was seized by the Confederates in 1861 and retaken by Federal troops in 1862. Thereafter, the installation was used by the United States Army until 1864, when again it was turned over to the Navy. Fort Norfolk was not utilized in the First World War.

#### St. Helena Training Station

St. Helena Training Station was located in the Berkley section of Norfolk directly across the Elizabeth River from the Navy Yard in Portsmouth. Fairfax Berkley, a life long resident of Norfolk, lived near the training station and remembers soldiers and sailors passing in front of his parents' house all day. He also remembers waking up every morning to the sound of the training station band. The training station had been planned long before the war broke out. Instead of barracks, the streets were lined with small bungalows quartering six men each.

Once a recruit reported into the training station he was immediately put into a "detention" camp which was set apart from the rest of the station for a three week isolation period. The detention camp also served the Naval Operating Base which was under construction at the time. Despite the detention camp's isolation from the rest of the world, it was built like the rest of the reservation. There were bungalows

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<sup>3</sup>  
William P. Bradshaw, Jr., and Julian Tompkins. Fort Norfolk Then and Now. (n.p., n.d), p. 44.

<sup>4</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>  
Interview with Fairfax M. Berkley, 708 Baldwin Place, Norfolk, Virginia, May 23, 1978.

for living quarters, as well as big barracks that served as a mess and assembly hall. At the detention camp the recruits were issued their uniforms, and received instruction as to the care and cleaning of these clothes. A dentist examined each recruit, a chaplain lectured them on the penalty for desertion in wartime, and the doctors gave the recruits the first of three shots of the triple-typhoid serum.

One of the most interesting, although unofficial diversions of the station was singing, which was incorporated into the training school life. The first of the singing periods began while the men were in the detention camp. The singing served to keep the recruits' morale up. All the songs were in the "Sailors and Soldiers Song Book," published by the Commission on Training Camp Activities, and sold to the men at the cost of five cents.<sup>6</sup> The main idea was to get all the men interested in singing. One of the most popular songs was, "Over There," which went like this:

Over there, over there  
 Send the word, send the word over there,  
 The Yanks are coming, the Yanks are coming,  
 The drums rum tumming everywhere  
 So prepare, say a prayer  
 Send the word, send the word to beware,  
 We'll be over, we're coming over,  
 And we won't be back till its over,  
 Over there.<sup>7</sup>

Once out of the detention camp, the recruits were sent to one of three camps inside the training station; Camps Lawrence, Perry or Farragut. Reveille sounded for everyone

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<sup>6</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 18 November 1917.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

at 5:30 a.m., and it was not uncommon to hear the sailors singing:

I can't get em up,  
 I can't get em up,  
 I can't get em up in the morning,  
 I can't get em up,  
 I can't get em up,  
 I can't get em up at all,  
 Corp'rals worse than the privates,  
 Sergeants worse than the corp'rals,  
 Lieutenant's worse than the sergeants,  
 And the captains worst of all.<sup>8</sup>

At seven o'clock in the morning, the sailors assembled on the "big grinder," as the men called the parade ground. The men went through their morning calisthenics to the accompaniment of the bands' stirring music. St. Helena had its own athletic instruction, and the men not only had regulation calisthenics, but also had instruction in boxing, wrestling, and swimming. Throughout all hours of the day, the grounds were alive with figures in white, drilling and marching.<sup>9</sup> Mr. Odell Byers enlisted in the U. S. Navy in 1917 at the age of seventeen and received his basic training at St. Helena. Mr. Byers remembers every Friday evening the command held a dress parade consisting of forty-eight platoons. A platoon consisted of seventy men.<sup>10</sup>

Each one of the training camps was independent in its working and living environment, and all had separate halls. The various regiments also had separate infirmaries. Camp

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8

Ibid.

9

Ibid.

10

Interview with Odell Byers, Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy (Retired), 4610 Colley Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia, May 26, 1978.



Lawrence, the largest of the three camps, was used entirely for the training of the armed guard crews that saw service with the merchant marine. Two of the requirements for all men in the armed guard were that they be volunteers and in perfect physical condition. Good eyesight and keen hearing were especially important in their future work of "spotting" submarines. The training of the armed guard's crew covered all forms of anti-submarine warfare. The men had gun drill and infantry drill; they studied radio and signaling, seamanship, and the handling of boats. Mr. Byers remembers being trained as an armed guard at St. Helena. After basic training he said he was assigned to the U.S.S. Florida, stationed in Yorktown, Virginia. He calls escorting convoys<sup>11</sup> to France.

The portion of St. Helena's that was given over to the living quarters of the musicians school was known as "Band Street," although the official sign read, "Third Street, Camp Perry."<sup>12</sup> All the members of the school lived in one of the thirty-two bungalows on a long street. Each little house consisted of one small square room which had a floor and a roof, but all four sides were open. There were heavy canvas curtains which could be let down in case of a storm, and each building was equipped with piped-in steam heat. Ten men were assigned to each bungalow and they slept in canvas hammocks such as they would have aboard ship. Discipline was

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<sup>11</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 11 November 1917.

rigid and punishment was certain for any breach of order. A lighted cigarette in the band barracks was punishable by ten days in the brig, preceded by a stinging rebuke at the hands of an officer.<sup>13</sup>

The musicians school at St. Helena was divided into three sections; the ship's orchestra, which was kept permanently at the station, and whose members were instructors in the school; and the men on "general detail" comprising those who were in training. It was from this number that new bands were formed. The orchestra, composed of stringed instruments, was a volunteer unit within the band organization.<sup>14</sup>

The men enlisted for a four year term to be musicians in the United States Navy. To be eligible, a man had to be able to read music at sight and he must possess a rudimentary knowledge of some instrument. He must have a love and feeling for music and he must possess a "good ear." The recruit musicians period of training lasted six months and he spent nearly all his time practicing. When he was sent to sea he was rated as a second class seaman. Later, he might become a bandmaster. His weapon against the enemy was always a musical instrument and never a gun. Physical drills were a part of the regimen, but there was no drill in the actual business of combat. When a call came from the Navy Department for a band to be sent to a battleship, it was

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13

Ibid.

14

Ibid.

assembled by the bandmaster. Navy regulations read that a ship at station and all flagships were entitled to a band of twenty-two pieces. The commander-in-chief alone was allowed a band of twenty-eight pieces.<sup>15</sup>

Battleships no longer went into action with bands playing. Instead, when battle was at hand, all instruments were stored away in the depths of the ship, so that by no possibility could they splintered by a flying shell and cause injuries to the men. When a ship was in action, all members of the band were assigned to the hospital corps, where they acted as stretcherbearers and orderlies. They did their part, but the real service of the band was in tiding men over in times of uncertainty and homesickness. The kind and quality of music that was played aboard battleships was varied: classical, opera, rag-time, patriotic, and sacred music.

Camp Farragut, was the last of the three sections of St. Helena training station. The camp trained men for what was known as the "general detail." These men were tradesmen of various sorts, such as plumbers, shipfitters, carpenters, and so on. These men were kept at this camp temporarily pending their reassignment to ships or stations.<sup>16</sup>

For entertainment at St. Helena, movies were shown four times a week. Several speakers and lecturers came to talk about the war and the country's goals in the war. For example, Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy, came to St. Helena's

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15

Ibid.

16

Ibid.

17

on July 20, 1918, to speak to five thousand young men. Interregimental athletic teams competed to determine the regimental championship of the station. There was also musical entertainment, provided by no other than their own St. Helena band. Mr. Carroll Walker, a lifelong resident of Norfolk, and a seventh grader during the First World War, told me that music seemed to motivate not just the soldiers and sailors, but the people of Norfolk as well. Mr. Walker called World War I, "A Singing War." He remembered humming the following tunes as a small child:

Good morning Mister zip, zip, zip,  
Is your haircut just as short as mine,  
Good morning Mister zip, zip, zip,  
I hope your feeling fine,  
Good morning Mister zip, zip, zip,  
If Uncle Sam doesn't get you the Germans will.

The Army is a clover  
But the Navy brought them over,  
and the Navy brought them back.<sup>18</sup>

In April, 1917, the St. Helena Training Station was, with 9,642, taxed to its capacity.<sup>19</sup> A new training base was needed.

#### Naval Operating Base

On April 17, 1917, Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy, asked Congress for \$3,000,000 for the acquisition of land and equipment of a fleet operating base at Hampton Roads.

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<sup>17</sup>  
Edmund D. Cronon, ed. The Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels, 1913-1921. (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska), p. 54.

<sup>18</sup>  
Interview with Carroll Walker, 1117 Rockbridge Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia, July 14, 1978.

<sup>19</sup>  
Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 8 April 1917.

A large naval training station was needed to replace the small school located on the St. Helena Reservation in Berkeley.<sup>20</sup> The Secretary of the Navy saw the necessity for acquiring the old Jamestown Exposition and Pine Beach properties.

The movement to place a federal base in this area was of long standing, dating from the Jamestown Exposition. What was the Jamestown Exposition? At the instigation of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities and the Tidewater Commercial League, the General Assembly of Virginia passed a bill in 1903 authorizing the Governor to proclaim that the tercentennial of the landing at Jamestown would be celebrated in 1907. This celebration occurred in Norfolk County during the administration of Governor Claude A. Swanson of Virginia. Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States, became a staunch supporter of the Exposition. On April 26, 1907, the President's yacht, Mayflower, arrived for the dedication. The Exposition closed shortly thereafter, a financial failure.<sup>21</sup>

During the Exposition, men connected with the enterprise realized the suitability of the site for naval activity and discussed the matter with high ranking naval officers, who also favored the idea; however, a bill introduced in Congress in 1908 for the appropriation of one million dollars

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<sup>20</sup>

Marvin W. Schlegel. Conscripted City. (Norfolk: Norfolk War History Commission, 1951), p. 2. (Hereafter cited as Schlegel, Conscripted City).

<sup>21</sup>

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 29 July 1917.

for the purchase of the property, including the buildings,  
<sup>22</sup>  
 died.

For nearly ten years the grounds of the abandoned exposition remained undeveloped. When the United States entered the World War in 1917, the Navy, under the direction of the Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, hastened to make use of the vacated waterfront acreage. Men who had invested in the Jamestown Exposition were responsible for the selling of the site to the Navy. They, of course, were trying to compensate for their financial losses, but at the same time they were convinced that the site was ideal for a major naval base. The idea of selling the property to the government was taken to Washington. Theodore J. Wool, Norfolk attorney, represented most of the men who had money invested in the land. Wool made repeated efforts to persuade the government to buy the land. As late as January, 1917, the Navy Department declined to take any action, although many individuals and naval officers urged it. On the day after the United States entered the World War, April 6, 1917, Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels called Wool regarding the property.  
<sup>23</sup>

Three million dollars was requested to develop and equip the fleet operating base and to include a traing station, submarine base, aviation-operating base, oil-fuel storage,

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22

"Fifty Years of Navy in Norfolk, 4 July 1917- 4 July 1967." The Seabag, 4 July 1967, p. 2.

23

Ibid.

fleet storehouses, mine and net storehouses, torpedo store-  
houses, medical storehouses, and fleeting grounds. The  
Secretary of the Navy's communication to the Speaker of the  
House of Representatives submitting an estimate of an appro-  
priation in the sum of \$3,000,000 was prepared by Captain  
J. S. McKean, Assistant for Material, Office of Operations,  
Navy Department. The House balked at first. The chair-  
men of the House Naval Affairs Committee staunchly support-  
ed by the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee,  
wanted the base on the York River. Land was cheaper there,  
they pointed out. On the other hand, Senator Thomas S. Martin  
of Virginia (chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee)  
wanted the base at Norfolk. The Navy, declaring that the  
York River site was too far (seven miles) from a railroad,  
supported Martin's choice. The Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch  
praised Senator Martin for his efforts to secure the naval  
base for Norfolk. Secretary Daniels said that the recruits  
were coming in so fast that the housing accommodations were  
taxed until, "The feet of the men were sticking out the win-  
dows." This time, President Woodrow Wilson endorsed the  
Secretary of the Navy's report, prepared by the Assistant

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24

U. S. Congress. House. Aquisition of Land for Fleet  
Operating Base. H. Doc. 26, 65th Cong., 1st sess., 1917, p. 2.

25

Ibid., pp. 2,3.

26

Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch. 5 July 1917.

27

Ibid., 6 April 1917.

28

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 4 May 1917.

Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who recommended the acquisition of an adequate naval base at Hampton Roads.<sup>29</sup> President Wilson wrote the following letter to Representative L. P. Padgett, chairman of the House Committee on Naval Affairs:

I understand that the House will today be considering the proposition for the establishment of a naval base, and I take the liberty of availing myself of this opportunity to ask you to say to the House how essential it seems to me that a naval base and training station should be established, and established at the earliest possible day, at Hampton Roads.

I have considered this matter from a great many points of view and am more and more impressed with the immediate necessity for such a training station. If it cannot be had, and had promptly, the most serious embarrassment will ensue.

I sincerely hope that it will be the wish of the house to take the necessary steps for its establishment.<sup>30</sup>

The President also wrote a letter on the same subject to Champ Clark, Speaker of the House.<sup>31</sup>

On June 15, 1917, the President signed the appropriations bill:

WHEREAS the Act of Congress to supply urgent deficiencies in appropriations for the Military and Naval Establishments, approved June fifteenth, nineteen hundred and seventeen (Public law number Twenty-three, Sixty-fifth Congress), contains the following provisions:

Naval Operating Base, Hampton Roads, Virginia: The President is hereby authorized and empowered to take over for the United States the immediate possession and title, including all easements, rights of way, riparian and other rights appurtenant thereto, and including all the rights and properties or railway, electric light, power, telephone, telegraph, water, and sewer companies,

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<sup>29</sup> Ray Stannard Baker. Woodrow Wilson Life and Letters. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), p. 108.

<sup>30</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>

Ibid.



of the tract of land known as the Jamestown Exposition site, Hampton Roads, Virginia . . .<sup>32</sup>

On July 4, 1917, construction of the initial barracks began. Approximately three months later, fourteen-hundred blue jackets marched from St. Helena to the construction area for the formal dedication of the operating base. On October 12, 1917, Rear Admiral A. C. Dillingham, the first Commander of the Naval Operating Base, officially opened the military installation by saying: "The Base has begun to function."<sup>33</sup>

The general plan of development for the naval base was to use the main entrance of the old exposition grounds as the entrance to the base. From the entrance, the main approach led to the administration buildings, which were the buildings of the Exposition. They were in a good state of preservation. A large parade ground, which was used for training and recreation, was laid out between the administration buildings and the piers.<sup>34</sup> The naval base consisted of a torpedo base, an aviation section, and the training station proper, where the new recruits were given the preparatory training before they were sent to the fleet. As at St. Helena, the men who were sent to the training station were raw recruits. When they first arrived they were placed in what was

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<sup>32</sup>U. S. Congress. Senate. Appropriations Committee. An Act to Supply the Military and Naval Establishment on Account of War. Pub. L. 23, 65th Cong., 1st sess., 1917, pp. 488-490.

<sup>33</sup>Lenoir Chambers and Joseph E. Shank. Salt Water and Printer's Ink, Norfolk and Its Newspapers, 1865-1965. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 287. (Hereafter cited as Chambers, Printer's Ink).

<sup>34</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 29 July 1917.

known as "the incoming habitations." This group formed what was really a large detention camp, with a capacity for eight-hundred men.<sup>35</sup> (In early 1918, St. Helena closed her detention camp). The men were kept there for a period of three weeks quarantine. During this period the men received regular instruction. Upon release from the detention camp, the period of training at the station was four months. At the end of this time the men were rated as second class seamen and sent to sea. So far as possible, the men were allowed to choose work that they liked and knew how to do. For instance, a man who said that he was a cook in civilian life was given an opportunity to prove it at the cooks and bakers school. Then, there was the mess attendants class for American blacks and the Filipinos direct from Manila.<sup>36</sup>

The new men who came to the base as apprentice seamen, but who had previous military training were grouped somewhat differently. These men were retrained for two months, and then formed the guard for the entire base, including the guard for the "brigs" (jails). The retrainees could request to stay at the training station for six months if they so desired before they were sent to sea.

Training for Reserve Officers in the Fifth Naval District took place at the Naval Operating Base. The course offered to those enlisted men who qualified combined three months of intensive theoretical work with one month's practical

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

work. The school was well equipped and its faculty consisted of military officers. The course covered four general subjects; navigation, gunnery, seamanship, and naval regulations and customs. Practical experience in handling lifeboats, compasses, and the management of a small vessel was gained on the Pamlico, a small Coast Guard cutter thoroughly equipped with guns, radio, and a trained crew.<sup>37</sup> If the students were successful in all school training, they received their commissions and became line officers in the United States Navy.

Not only was training constantly going on at the base, but construction work was also. The government undertook the task of reclaiming about four-thousand acres along the entire waterfront at the base.<sup>38</sup> In 1918, however, the Navy was contemplating moving from the Naval Operating Base in Norfolk to Yorktown. This was suggested because the government was not given satisfactory land terms for expansion, and because of inadequate public utilities. Barton Myers,<sup>39</sup> president of the Chamber of Commerce in Norfolk, stated that if Yorktown was made an important port for the government, an old rivalry for supremacy between Richmond and Norfolk would be revived.<sup>40</sup> "In this great emergency," declared Mr. Myers, "it is up to the people of Norfolk to see that no monetary consideration stands in the way of the government constructing the new training station at

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 30 December 1917.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 9 December 1917.

<sup>39</sup> Barton Myers served as Mayor of Norfolk, 1886-1888.

<sup>40</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, 22 August 1918.

this port. If we lose this training station it will mean the loss of at least ten million dollars in distribution to the merchants annually.<sup>41</sup> Captain W. M. Crose, Commandant of the Naval Training Station of the Hampton Roads operating base, made the following statement to the Virginian-Pilot on September 1, 1918:

I have always favored Norfolk as the site for the new naval training station, and after having conferred with members of the two city councils, members of the special committee of the chamber of commerce, the county engineers, and Manager Hix of the Federal Railroad Administration, as well as other officials and citizens of the city, all of whom promised the heartiest support in obtaining facilities in the way of public utilities needed in connection with the work, I telephoned the Secretary of the Navy, Daniels, and recommended that the station be constructed here. The matter is now up to Secretary Daniels.<sup>42</sup>

The naval operating base stayed in Norfolk because of Norfolk's cooperation with the military and its ability to solve the problems as they arose. As the authors of Salt Water and Printer's Ink put it:

The planting of the Navy on the Hampton Roads site where the Jamestown Exposition had sparkled in its completed beauty was, more than anything else in that era and ever since, the recognition of the values of the passage between the Virginia Capes and of the riches inside-the bays, the roadsteads, the rivers, the surrounding complexes of land and cities and railroads and people-for utilization for natural defense in war or in peace. Nothing of greater importance had come into the life of Norfolk since it was established as a town two hundred and thirty years earlier.<sup>43</sup>

#### Naval Air Station

With the exception of the flying station at Pensacola,

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 1 September 1918.

<sup>43</sup> Chambers, Printer's Ink, p. 288.

Florida, the newly constructed air station at the naval base was the most important of all the navy's flying centers. This station was completely independent and distinct from the operating base. In May, 1917, the north end of the old Jamestown Exposition grounds was made into a landing field for the U. S. Navy. There were five officers, eighteen students, and twenty mechanics attached to the station, which boasted facilities for handling a fleet of seven seaplanes.<sup>44</sup>

The Navy sought the best students in the colleges and universities of the nation so that they could be recruited for this branch of the service. On the average, from every two-thousand applicants, only a few hundred were accepted. The student officers who came here were graduates of the eight-week Ground School at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.<sup>45</sup> This eight-week course covered instruction in navigation, radio, seamanship, and gunnery.

The air station had its own living quarters. There were a long series of barracks and several mess halls for the enlisted men. There were also quarters at the base for officers. Because of the dangerous environment the "birdmen" (aviators) lived in from day to day, three medical officers were stationed at the base. There was a first aid building, but all cases of injury or accident were transferred to the Naval Operating Base hospital. Just the same, many young men were willing to

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<sup>44</sup>F. E. Turin. "The Navy and Norfolk," Know Norfolk. August 1944, p. 66.

<sup>45</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 14 October 1917.

take a chance on flying. A Virginian-Pilot reporter wrote:

When you go up you have a feeling that you have never had before of the wonderfulness of the earth. You get a panoramic view of everything below you. Your engine buzzes incessantly and almost deafens you. But you don't feel nervous. When you start on a glide, at first the sensation is a queer one, but you soon get used to it, and the feeling of the marvelousness of it all grips you again. You look down on the big warships and transports and they appear no larger than little rowboats. And you feel as if you were seeing so much that you don't care very much what happens to you-you don't care if there is a chance of getting killed. It's worth it!<sup>46</sup>

Training was given for every branch of the aviation service. There were seven departments in the aviation section at the Naval Air Station; the flying school proper, the mechanics and quartermasters school, the dirigible or balloon school, the radio department, and the ordnance department.

The Aviation School was divided into two sections-Junior and Senior. The day's work began at 5:30 a.m., when reveille sounded. The Junior section studied navy regulations, seamanship, theory of flight and navigation. They also received instruction in flying. For the Senior section, a student aviator had to be up in the air from five to ten hours with an instructor before he was permitted to take a machine up by himself. The student aviator was required to have twenty-five to forty hours of "solo flying" before he was eligible for a commission.<sup>47</sup>

The principal duty undertaken by the "birdmen," at the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 14 October 1917.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

air station besides training, was patrol duty.<sup>48</sup> So far as recreational facilities were concerned, the air station had a new Y.M.C.A. hut, and also a canteen, where the men could gather and buy such things as sweets and cigarettes.

From April, 1917, to November, 1918, the Norfolk Naval Air Station trained more than 622 officer-pilots, and several thousand mechanics.<sup>49</sup>

#### Army Supply Base

Shortly after the entry of the United States into the Great War, the necessity of additional port terminals became apparent. The War Department and the Council of National Defense began a series of investigations to determine where the ports should be located. A "Depot Board" with Brigadier General Charles B. Wheeler appointed as president, recommended that the main terminal for Hampton Roads district be located at the Army Supply Base which had been secured by the Chamber of Commerce and the City Administration of Norfolk.<sup>50</sup> The Army Supply Base, also known as the Norfolk Terminal or Quartermaster Terminal, was located on the Norfolk side of Hampton Roads, at Bosh Bluff, fronting on the Elizabeth River, six miles from the center of the city of Norfolk. The plans of the government to establish a 912.4 acre, permanent army

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 2 June 1918.

<sup>49</sup> Hanna, "Norfolk Naval Air Station," p. 14.

<sup>50</sup> Millard A. Butler, Colonel, United States Army, War Department, Construction Division of the Army, Office of the Constructing Quartermaster, Army Supply Base, Norfolk, Virginia. "Report of 1 October 1919," p. 1. (Hereafter cited as Butler, "Army Supply Base Report of 1 October 1919.")

base in Norfolk were authorized on December 21, 1917. Barton Myers, the chairman of the Norfolk dock commissioners, had been working on this government proposal for some weeks. The city of Norfolk made an agreement with the federal government, which was represented by Brigadier General I. W. Littell, Quartermaster's Corps, for the lease or option to buy the property for the terminal.<sup>51</sup>

When construction started on January 19, 1918, the government already had erected a shed on the city property for the storage of building materials. However, there were no usable roads on the site of the Army Base because the swamps had not been filled with dredging material. In the fall of 1917 through action of the Navy, arrangements were made whereby the City of Norfolk assisted Norfolk County in financing the construction of a road leading from the City of Norfolk, through the site of the Army Base to the Naval base.<sup>52</sup>

Construction costs, including land for the Army Base, were estimated at \$29,000,000. The cost included barracks for soldiers and workmen, two piers, eight warehouses, from twenty-five to thirty miles of track, and classification yards.<sup>53</sup> In addition to the city terminal property, the government purchased four pieces of adjacent property which totaled nearly seven hundred acres of high ground and shoal. The owners of

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<sup>51</sup>Norfolk, Virginia. City Records of Common Council. Record no. 28, 6 June 1916-13 December 1918. January 1, 1918, p. 47.

<sup>52</sup>Butler, "Army Supply Base Report of 1 October 1919," p. 79.

<sup>53</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 15 September 1918.



this property were: the Bosh Bluff Corporation, 400 acres; American Realty Company, 51 acres; Boulevard Corporation, 32 acres; and, Norfolk and Hampton Roads Company, 200 acres.<sup>54</sup> These properties were combined with the city terminal property to make up the government terminal and army base.

The work of building the army supply base was one of the largest construction projects in Norfolk. Over nine thousand workmen were employed at the base. The pay-roll, consequently, was one of the largest in the area. The system employed in hiring the men, record making, and time keeping was elaborate. Workmen were originally paid by check but soon had to be paid in currency. Norfolk banks could not supply enough cash. It was a striking sight to see 9,000 workmen gathering for the grand "pay-off," at fifty-five windows about five o'clock on Saturday afternoon.<sup>55</sup>

The base had its own telephone and telegraph offices, postoffice, fire department, and hospital. At the center of the base were found the most vital activities of the terminal, the storehouses and giant piers. The bulk of the waterfront developments were on reclaimed land. Some idea of the magnitude of the dredging operation may be had from the fact that two-thirds of the warehouses stood on filled ground that was part of the Elizabeth River. Dredging was done with mud piped a distance of over 8,000 feet, to be finally dumped where needed. As a result of silt or "soup" from dredging

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Ibid., 9 January 1918.

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Ibid., 15 September 1918.

operations, various property owners abutting the port acquired an injunction to stop the development. Several conferences were held at which the Constructing Quartermaster explained his intent in so far as possible to restore the original condition after completion of the necessary operations. Also, a number of plaintiffs represented stated that their oyster beds had been destroyed either totally or in part by the deposit of silt and had been referred to the Port Real Estate Board.<sup>56</sup> However, due to war-time patriotism, the owners agreed to let the matter rest.<sup>57</sup>

The dredging operations to reclaim swampy area of the base were unsuccessful. Very few mosquitoes were seen on any part of the Army Supply Base. Several cases of malaria were diagnosed, but further investigation showed that in almost every instance the subject was a recent arrival from a malarial district. However, to do away with mosquito breeding, the Constructing Quartermaster, acting in conjunction with the Public Health Service, authorized an expenditure of small sums of money for dredging and draining.<sup>58</sup>

In May, 1918, the Standard Oil Company opened a fuel station at Bosh Bluff Army Base, with three tanks having a capacity for 8,000,000 gallons of fuel oil.<sup>59</sup> Three months later, six new fuel tanks were added, and two kerosene and

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<sup>56</sup> Butler, "Army Supply Base Report of 1 October 1919," pp. 15, 16.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 15 September 1918.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 26 May 1918.

gasoline, making a combined capacity of 2,250,000.<sup>60</sup>

The base was used for the temporary storage of supplies, destined for overseas, and their transshipment to ocean-going vessels. The principal commodities in the warehouses were foodstuffs and other Quartermaster's stores. The quartermaster stores contained large amounts of both our own and captured ordnance returned from overseas together with a considerable quantity of French Government material consisting mostly of car bodies, trucks, and other railroad equipment.<sup>61</sup> After the war it was proposed that a rifle factory be established at the terminal in connection with the Army Base. It was also probable that the warehouses and piers at the army base would have a large part to play in peace as they did in war.

Immediately after the Armistice, a Commerce Committee, headed by Mayor Albert L. Roper, requested that the War Department sell or lease the Army Terminal in Norfolk. Mayor Roper pointed out that the city was entitled to the first consideration, because it was Norfolk which had turned the property over to the government when needed for war purposes. Eventually, Mayor Roper gained the government's consent, to lease to the city one of the piers for foreign commerce.<sup>62</sup>

#### Engineer Depot

The Engineer Depot, also known as Lamberts Point Engineer Depot, was located at Lamberts Point, on the Norfolk

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 11 August 1918.

<sup>61</sup> Butler, "Army Supply Base Report of 1 October 1919," p. 139.

<sup>62</sup> Wertebaker, Norfolk Historic Southern Port, p. 321.

side of Hampton Roads. The government entered into a lease with the Norfolk and Western Railway on July 3, 1918, for the use of their two new warehouse piers at Lamberts Point, then nearing completion. The government also leased approximately sixty-six acres of land adjacent to the yards and tracks serving the piers. The government planned a number of improvements to cost approximately, \$2,125,000. Shipments of war material to France began through the Lamberts Point depot in early September, 1917. A total of 332,018 tons had been received and a total of 278,058 tons had been shipped to the American Expeditionary Forces up to June 30, 1918. The operating force at the Depot consisted of one regular officer, eleven reserve officers, fourteen enlisted men, and 952 civilian employees.<sup>63</sup> The government did not renew its lease for the Engineer Depot after the war.

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U. S. Congress. House. Report of the Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army. H. Doc. 1433, 65th Cong., 3rd sess., pt. 1, p.66.

## CHAPTER III

## MILITARY RECRUITING IN NORFOLK

After January, 1917, a major theme in the editorials in the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot was compulsory military training. On March 25, 1917, the newspaper declared that Tidewater, Virginia, was heartily in favor of compulsory military training.<sup>1</sup> Norfolk contributed her share of men to the cause, and this chapter is devoted to military recruiting in Norfolk during 1917 and 1918, for the different branches of the service: Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, as well as, for Norfolk's own Home Guard units. The chapter also deals with the Selective Service, better known as the draft.

For the most part, recruiting was easier in Norfolk than in other areas of the country for many reasons. First, Norfolk was a seaport community. The population was accustomed to the presence of the military. The Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth and the St. Helena Training Station were located near or in Norfolk. Second, when the United States government established bases in Norfolk, especially Navy bases, this encouraged the local population to participate in the construction. Thirdly, as the Germans advanced through France, the Norfolkkians' fear of a threatening submarine off the coast increased. The east coast of the United States developed an instant dislike for the Central Powers. Many Norfolkkians dreamed of a possible

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Kyle Davis, ed. Publications of the Virginia War History Commission. (Richmond: Published by Order of the Executive Committee, 1926), Vol. 3, p. 300. (Hereafter cited as Davis, Publications).

invasion of the eastern shores of the United States by the "Huns" (as the Germans were often referred to).

Virginia contributed to Federal Service, thirty white units and two black units, ranging in size from regiments to companies and embracing about one-fifth of all Virginians in the Armed forces.<sup>2</sup> National Guard units were mustered into Federal Service in 1917-1918. Norfolk contributed one infantry headquarters company, four companies of infantry, one support company, one machine gun company, and one ambulance company.<sup>3</sup> Norfolk also supplied an artillery battery and a sanitation department. In most cases the companies were split up and integrated into regular federal service. Many Norfolkiens saw first line service and ninety-two Norfolkiens from the city and county combined collected 139 awards for gallantry in action and meritorious service.<sup>4</sup>

#### United States Marines

The Marine Corps, which entered the war with 511 officers and 13,214 enlisted men, began an expansion which brought its strength to over 2,400 officers and 70,000 men on November 11, 1918. Under the energetic direction of Major General Commandant George Barnett, the Marines prepared to send a brigade to France to fight alongside the Army.<sup>5</sup> Even though the United

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Vol. V, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>4</sup> Davis, Publications, Vol. I, p. 207.

<sup>5</sup> Edward C. Johnson, Lieutenant Colonel, United States Marine Corps. Marine Corps Aviation: The Early Years 1912-1940. (Washington D. C.: Headquarters U.S.M.C. History and Museum Division, 1977), p. 11.

States Marine Corps was known as "the cream of military nobility," and was the first branch of the service to be brought to full allowed war strength, the other branches of the armed forces seemed more popular with Norfolk men during the First World War. There were a number of reasons for this situation. General Barnett instructed United States Marine Corps recruiting offices to receive recruits for the duration of the present war with German only.<sup>6</sup> Individuals interested in joining the Marines could not enlist for a certain number of years as recruits could for the other branches of the armed service. Another possible reason was that the Marines asked to be the first transported to the action. Recruits entered the Marines with the promise that they would get action if there was action for the United States forces in any part of the world.

The requirements to be a Marine were similar to the other branches of the service. The recruit must be a native born or naturalized citizen of the United States, between eighteen and thirty-five years of age and unmarried; he must read, write, and understand the English language; must be of good character; sound of limb; in good health, have good eyesight and hearing, have twenty sound teeth and between five feet four inches and six feet one inch in height, and not less than 125 pounds or more than 233 pounds.<sup>7</sup>

The regular pay for the Marine ran from \$45.00 to \$69.00

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<sup>6</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 19 May 1917.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 1 May 1917.

per month, according to rank and length of service, with additional allotments for good conduct, marksmanship and foreign duty. These extras ranged from eighty-three cents for good conduct to twenty dollars per month for gunnery. A Marine received a clothing allowance of seventy-three dollars during the first year of his enlistment and \$36.50 per year during the three succeeding years.<sup>8</sup> The duties of a Marine aboard ship included the manning of the guns of the secondary and intermediate batteries, the ship's defense against torpedo attack, and also the "sky guns" (anti-aircraft guns).

On Sunday, May 20, 1917, a Marine Regiment under the command of Colonel Charles A. Dayen, was ordered to join General Pershing's First Expeditionary Force in France. Private Frank Nolley, U.S.M.C., of Norfolk, wrote home stating that the Germans thought the Marines were drunk because they could not imagine sane soldiers fighting so ferociously. The title "Devil Dogs," was given to the Marines by the "Huns."<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, there is no record of how many Norfolkians served in the Marine Corps during the First World War.

#### United States Navy

Norfolk has long been looked upon as the home of the Navy. Norfolk, the Headquarters for the Fifth Naval District,<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>

Ibid., 10 June 1918.

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Ibid., 14 July 1918.

<sup>10</sup> Before the establishment of Naval Districts the Navy's contact with the civilian population was restricted principally to coastal areas adjacent to Navy Yards. In 1910, however, the United States and insular possessions were divided into fourteen Naval Districts for the purpose of better organization of local defenses and mobilization of resources.

F. E. Turin. "The Navy and Norfolk," Know Norfolk, August 1944, p. 2.



served as the navy's mobilization point for Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and seven counties in North Carolina.

When war broke out, local recruiting was not up to expectations. A number of things had to be done to induce enlistments. First, sailors from the Naval Training Stations would occasionally march through Norfolk in an effort to increase enlistments. Second, the age limit for recruiting was lowered from seventeen to sixteen. Third, and perhaps the most effective was the Navy's utilization of pretty girls to take charge of a recruiting tent fitted up to enlist men for duty aboard the battleships. In trying to appeal to Norfolk's pride, the newspapers often said that Norfolk girls seemed more fired by patriotism and love of country than its boys. Fairfax Berkley recalls the recruiting posters depicting pretty girls saying "Uncle Sam Wants You."<sup>11</sup>

On April 5, 1917, President Wilson issued a call for 38,000 men.<sup>12</sup> Norfolk's response left much to be desired. It prompted Governor Stuart of Virginia to telegraph Norfolk's Mayor, Wyndham R. Mayo, the following message:

With only seven days left in which to raise Virginia's quota of 800 men for the Navy, it is found that only 86 have enlisted. Such a failure to respond to a call to the first line of defense cannot be attributed to lack of men who are willing to serve their country, but to lack of organized effort to place the opportunity properly before the young men of our state.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Fairfax M. Berkley, 708 Baldwin Place, Norfolk, Virginia, May 23, 1978.

<sup>12</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 5 April 1917.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 13 April 1917.

The message was printed in the newspaper and it must have had some influence on the young men of Norfolk because on April 19, 1917, an announcement was made that Norfolk led the United States in recruiting for the Navy in proportion to its population.<sup>14</sup>

The Virginian-Pilot ran a story in their July 3, 1917, edition saying that for months it had been impossible for the Negro to enlist in any branch of the service. Every branch was supposedly filled before the war was a week old. When the Navy opened its door to Norfolk Blacks, it advertised not for sailors, but for mess attendants. "Colored boys," as they were referred to, between the ages of eighteen and thirty, with experience as cooks, waiters, or servants in hotels, restaurants or clubs, were the target of recruiters. The pay started at \$37.00 a month. Before his discharge it was possible for a Black to work his way to ship's cook, first class; to admiral's cook, to ship steward, or to admiral's steward. The maximum pay would be \$72.00 a month, aside from the various allowances and increases for reenlistment.<sup>15</sup> By May 5, 1917, Norfolk and Tidewater, Virginia, had given 700 men to the service, and most of them were in the Navy.<sup>16</sup>

#### United States Army

The full realization of the meaning of war came only with the departure of the Norfolk detachments of the National

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<sup>14</sup>"Newsnote" The Vigilant, 16 August 1932, p. 25.

<sup>15</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 3 July 1917.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 6 May 1917.

Guard. The Virginia National Guard Units were mustered into federal service during June, 1917.<sup>17</sup> Norfolk was particularly proud of its Fourth Virginia Infantry. Before service in the World War, some of the Fourth saw duty on the Mexican border. When war with Mexico seemed imminent in 1916, the U.S. dispatched National Guard units to the Mexican border. The Norfolk Light Artillery Blues, Norfolk's oldest active military unit, organized in 1829, left for the border in 1916 and returned early in 1917.<sup>18</sup> Norfolk had a big "welcome home," for her boys back from Camp Wilson, in San Antonio, Texas, as they disembarked from a train at the Lambert's Point armory.<sup>19</sup>

On April 6, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany. Even without any active campaign, the Fourth regiment began recruiting six days after the declaration of war, and was able to add recruits. The Light Artillery Blues, which had been Battery B of the First Regiment, Virginia Field Artillery, became part of the United States Army 111th Field Artillery. Both the 116th, which consisted of many detachments of the Norfolk National Guard, and the 111th Field Artillery, were a part of the Twenty-ninth Division known as the "Blue and Gray." This division saw service during the First World War in France, notably the Meuse-Argonne offensive.<sup>20</sup> On May 20,

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<sup>17</sup> Wertebaker, Norfolk Historic Southern Port, p. 302.

<sup>18</sup> Linda G. Fates and Carroll Walker, eds. A Pictorial History, Norfolk, Virginia. (Virginia Beach: The Donning Company, 1975), p. 159.

<sup>19</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 12 March 1917.

<sup>20</sup> Wertebaker, Norfolk Historic Southern Port, p. 310.

1919, the 116th Infantry returned to Newport News and five days later the 111th Field Artillery, containing the old Light Artillery Blues, came in on the U.S.S. Virginian.<sup>21</sup>

The black citizens of Norfolk offered to raise a regiment. "We are ready to die for the flag that protects us," was the general attitude among blacks. Parades were held by the black citizens of Norfolk to show their loyalty to the stars and stripes. In a letter to the editor in the April 10, 1917, issue of the Virginian-Pilot, a "colored American" wrote:

To one possessing any knowledge of the Teuton's attitude toward the colored race, the charge that the American negro is pro-German in his sentiments is unworthy of credence or serious attention.<sup>22</sup>

Early in the spring of 1917, enlistment in the United States Army was no longer restricted to citizens of the United States or to men who had filed a "declaration of intention." Orders were passed down to accept all men between eighteen and forty who were not subjects of enemy countries; however, they had to be able to speak the English language.

There are no statistics available on how many Norfolkians joined the United States Army but a list of commands that Norfolk contributed to the World War effort can be found in Appendix C.

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<sup>21</sup>

Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>22</sup>

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 10 April 1917.

Black Army regiments were raised, and saw limited action in Europe. Some of the men in these black regiments were Norfolkians.

### The Draft

On April 3, 1917, President Wilson asked Congress for an Army of 500,000 men based on the Universal Service Plan.<sup>23</sup> Approximately a month later, President Wilson ordered General Pershing and a division of regulars to France, and he signed the army draft bill that fixed June fifth as the registration day.<sup>24</sup> When the draft was decided upon, Mayor W. R. Mayo appointed men for the conscription board. Norfolk registered 9,894 out of a population of 91,148 on registration day. A total of 4,829 whites, 4,571 blacks, 464 aliens, and 30 enemy aliens registered. Of this number, 6,162 (or about 65%) asked for exemption. Most of the pleas for exemption were based on marriage.<sup>25</sup> One who filed such a plea was W. B. Shafer of Norfolk, twenty-five years old at the time of World War I, married, a farmer, and also the owner of a produce business under contract with the government. Because he was married and a government contractor, Mr. Shafer was successful in gaining an exemption from military service.<sup>26</sup>

The first draft quota was called in August, 1917. Norfolk's yearly quota was 242 men. Four-hundred eighty four men were summoned, and two-thirds either pleaded exemption or were physically unfit.<sup>27</sup> Of the 484 called, only 135 (27%)

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 3 April 1917.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 19 May 1917.

<sup>25</sup>Davis, Virginia Communities, p. 313.

<sup>26</sup>Interview with W. B. Shafer, 1348 Cornwall Place, Norfolk, Virginia, June 12, 1978.

<sup>27</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 11 August 1917.

could be drafted; thus 107 were still needed to fill the quota.<sup>28</sup> By the first of September, 1917, the quota was completed by calling up more physically fit and exemption-free draftees.

There were no incidents or acts of violence at any of the registration booths. The Virginian-Pilot reported that: "the blacks registered cheerfully and almost to a man; they (the blacks) gave absolutely no trouble to registrars except on occasions because they were not able to answer questions promptly or accurately without considerable prompting and aid."<sup>29</sup> The second quota of 447 men came at the end of June, 1918, and three weeks later 292 Norfolk blacks were summoned.<sup>30</sup> Later, black draftees were honored by the City of Norfolk and commended for their promptness in registering and answering the draft call.<sup>31</sup>

Blacks registered and went off to fight even though Norfolk still had residential segregation ordinances. For example, it was unlawful for any white person to use as a residence or place of abode any house, building, or structure, located in any colored block or vice-versa. Any person guilty of violating the provisions of this ordinance would be guilty of a misdemeanor, and, upon conviction, would be subject to a fine of not less than five, nor more than fifty dollars, and additional

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 9 September 1917.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 6 June 1917.

<sup>30</sup> Wertebaker, Norfolk Historic Southern Port, p. 303.

<sup>31</sup> Davis, Virginia Communities, p. 346.

finest for each day that the violation should continue.<sup>32</sup>

Every man in Norfolk who reached the age of twenty-one and was not yet thirty-one years old registered under the federal service conscription law. Failure to register brought a sentence of twelve months imprisonment. Regardless of color or state of health, all had to register. The police made good use of the registration card system for their own purposes. Boys under twenty-one years of age who had been ordering whiskey from mail order houses and swearing they were twenty-one years of age, were asked why they did not register. If they claimed to be under twenty-one, the police or the state prohibition agents wanted to know why they should not be indicted for perjury.<sup>33</sup> No instances of opposition to the draft could be found in Norfolk.

Admiral Dillingham, the officer responsible for construction of the Naval Operating Base, recommended that all men be trained as soldiers and that the age limit for the draft be raised to forty-five years.<sup>34</sup> Although not every American male was trained as a soldier, the second registration on September 12, 1918, included the forty-five year olds.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Army units remained segregated, even though some 250,000 blacks were eventually inducted into the national armed services. Norfolk, Virginia. City Ordinances. (Book no. 10, 15 February 1915-12 May 1917. City Hall Building, Norfolk, Virginia); Andrew Buni. The Negro in Virginia Politics 1902-1965. (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1967), p. 70.

<sup>33</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 7 June 1917.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 1 May 1917.

<sup>35</sup> Davis, Virginia Communities, p. 314.

## Home Guard

In July, 1917 it became evident that the National Guard of Virginia would shortly be called into Federal Service, leaving the state with no military agency or means of local defense. Governor Stuart of Virginia issued a proclamation on July 23, 1917, through the Council of Defense, asking the cities, towns, and counties, to organize a Home Guard.<sup>36</sup>

Norfolk came forward before the war with motor boats and men to protect Hampton Roads. A declaration of war would be a signal for 75 motor boats and 175 men to guard Hampton Roads.<sup>37</sup> These would be commanded by the Naval Reserves. They would be used largely for transporting food and supplies to the men-of-war operating off the coast. A small gun crew from the United States Navy would be placed aboard each vessel.<sup>38</sup>

An ordinance to establish and equip a home guard for the City of Norfolk, and prescribing certain duties and powers, was passed by the Norfolk City Council on Sunday, May 20, 1917. Section one reads:

That in view of the serious condition confronting the City of Norfolk because of the existence of a state of war between the United States of America and the Imperial German government, and pursuant to the terms of the City Charter to preserve the public peace and good order, and to prevent riots, disturbances and disorderly assemblages, et cetera, the officers and members of the Norfolk Protective League, as now or hereafter constituted are authorized to act as a Home Guard for the City of Norfolk, to

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<sup>36</sup> Davis. Publications, Vol. IV, p. 357.

<sup>37</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 1 March 1917.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



aid and assist the police authorities of the city.<sup>39</sup>

There were two distinct Home Guard units in Norfolk, both organized in 1917: the Brambleton Home Guard and the Norfolk Protective League, better known as the Norfolk Home Guard. The Brambleton Guard, an independent organization formed by Colonel John L. Degge, consisted of 100 men.<sup>40</sup> In the latter part of 1917, W. R. Mayo, Mayor of Norfolk, wrote the Adjutant General that the Norfolk Home Guard was composed of about six hundred representative citizens and that the city had appropriated \$23,000 for the maintenance of the organization.<sup>41</sup> These public spirited citizens were ready to respond at a moment's notice to preserve the public peace and good order, and to prevent riots, disturbances, and disorderly assemblages. It was the first and last force to defend Norfolk and all that part of Norfolk County east of the Elizabeth River. The Home Guard was the third line of defense, the first being the soldiers in the Army and the National Guard, and the second being the police. If called, the Home Guard could form in two hours. This could be done by suspending regular telephone service and contacting each member of the league. The organization was to perform service that would relieve fighting men and permit them to go into active service.

The Home Guard consisted of men from all walks of life. Not only were its officers men who had served in the Army

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 20 May 1917.

<sup>40</sup>Davis. Virginia Communities, p. 308.

<sup>41</sup>Davis. Publications, Vol. IV, p. 358.

or National Guard, but many of them were graduates of Virginia Military Institute and other recognized military schools. There was no age limit and no regard for social status or professional attainments in the Home Guard. All the Home Guard companies, except two, were armed with the latest model Winchester repeating rifle, which was more destructive in its effects than the high powered thirty caliber Springfield rifle of the army.<sup>42</sup>

The Home Guards of Norfolk served the community in many ways. Not only were their services used in loan drives, but 400 were called out for guard duty on the first registration day which was held on July 5, 1917.<sup>43</sup> The guard also participated in parades, solicited funds for the war effort, and served as sentinels and police.<sup>44</sup>

A Woman's Home Guard company for home defense was also organized in Norfolk. They were given military and other training that fitted them to render aid to the city, state, and federal government in time of war.<sup>45</sup>

Mr. John L. Degge, organizer of a company of the Brambleton Home Guard, in his report of the activities of the Home Guard said:

They promptly answered every call made upon them...doing guard duty on many occasions drilling every week, and giving the city a

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<sup>42</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 20 May 1917.

<sup>43</sup>Davis. Virginia Communities, pp. 309-310; Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 6 June 1917.

<sup>44</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 20 May 1917.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 12 April 1917.

splendid body of men...equipped for any emergency.  
The men who composed the organization gave freely  
of their time and means.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Davis, Publications, Vol. IV, p. 358.

CHAPTER IV  
WAR IMPACT ON NORFOLK

When the United States of America officially entered the war, the population of Norfolk almost doubled overnight. The United States government recruited skilled and unskilled workers throughout the country to help construct military bases and to run the war industries. These contract laborers were followed by their families, and in turn by the soldiers and sailors who would occupy and train at the newly constructed bases.

There was a constant shortage of labor in Norfolk throughout the war; however, this shortage resulted in increasing employment opportunities for women and blacks. For example, the Naval Base during September, 1918, needed women and blacks for many positions.<sup>1</sup> The following month, 250 women clerks replaced as many men at the Army Supply Base.<sup>2</sup> Norfolk's black women rendered valuable service to the city by instituting a campaign of rounding up all black idlers and bringing them to the U. S. Labor Employment service.<sup>3</sup>

Even though Norfolk was plagued with a labor shortage the city was always overpopulated during the war. The residents of Norfolk opened their homes to allow the new workers a place to stay, sometimes by rotating them in shifts!<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 30 September 1918.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4 October 1918.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 3 November 1918.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 7 October 1917.

Transportation and public utilities were overextended. When it appeared that these municipal services would slow down the war effort, the Secretary of the Navy offered that a board, known as the Board of Control for Construction Activities in the Hampton Roads area be set up. The Board would consist of representatives from the Department of Labor (U.S. Employment Service and Housing Committee), and the U.S. Shipping Board (Emergency Fleet Corporation).<sup>5</sup> The Board of Control acted as a liaison between Norfolk and the United States government.

The rapid growth of the city during war time brought about a change in city government and a \$10,232,550.00 municipal debt in 1917.<sup>6</sup> (By 1920 the debt was \$15,058,550.00).<sup>7</sup> The need for additional public safety personnel occasioned by the influx of new residents consumed most of the ten million dollars. The money was also used for the purchase of riot guns and pistols, National Security League<sup>8</sup> equipment and expenses, harbor patrol work, the state militia, Norfolk's Light Artillery Blues horses, and the Norfolk Light Artillery

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<sup>5</sup> Norfolk, Virginia. City Records of Common Council. (Record no. 29, 5 March 1918), p. 124.

<sup>6</sup> Finances for Norfolk City, Fiscal Years Ending June 29th 1909-1917. As audited and reported by A. Lee Rawlings, Certified Public Accountant, Norfolk, Virginia. Vol. I, p. 60. (Hereafter cited as Finances for Norfolk City).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> The National Security League was established in 1914. The League was a private organization that undertook a campaign to strengthen the national defense. The organization pointed to Belgium as an example of the fate in store for an unprepared nation.

Blues.<sup>9</sup>

Norfolk at the time of World War I had a bi-cameral government. The city government consisted of a chief executive or mayor elected by the people, a Board of Aldermen of ten and a Common Council of fifteen. Late in 1917 a new charter was proposed to establish the "city manager" form of government. The proposal received the approval of the voters, although not without considerable opposition, and the new charter was put into effect on September 1, 1918. In its June 20, 1917 issue the Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch supported the new City Charter and declared that the charter would be a great success here.<sup>10</sup> Under this system, a City Council of five men was elected at large with no regard for geographical distribution. The Council elects one of its members president, with the title of Mayor for ceremonial purposes, and the Council also hires the City Manager. The first City Manager was Charles E. Ashburner.<sup>11</sup>

Norfolk's first Council under the Charter of 1918, and Norfolk's first Manager were faced with many of the problems

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<sup>9</sup>Finances for Norfolk City, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup>Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch. 20 June 1917.

<sup>11</sup>Charles E. Ashburner was the son of an English army officer, who had been educated in England, France, and Germany, before he came to the United States to begin his career as an engineer. In 1908, he became the first city manager in the United States when Staunton, Virginia, introduced the new plan of city government as an experiment. In September, 1918, he came to Norfolk as the city's first city manager where he remained until 1923.

Rogers Dey Whichard. The History of Lower Tidewater Virginia. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1959), Vol. I, pp. 502-503; Wertebaker, Norfolk Historic Southern Port, p. 319.

created by the war.<sup>12</sup> Ashburner was charged with managing a city of more than 130,000 people, with municipal facilities designed for a population of fifty or sixty thousand. To complicate matters further, the war ended shortly after he assumed office, and immediately new social and economic problems were created in a city geared to war rather than to peace.<sup>13</sup>

The years 1917 and 1918 were times of considerable unrest in Norfolk City Government. The necessity of settling the difficulties arising from the changeover to the city manager form of municipal government made Norfolk somewhat tardy in war matters.<sup>14</sup> Norfolk's City Government was so preoccupied with reorganizing itself that the government failed to keep pace with the growing civilian and military population and their needs. Such needs included improved schools, streets, sanitation, public utilities, and better social conditions.<sup>15</sup>

Some of the accomplishments of the new government were: doubling the mileage of paved streets; building a new armory; modernizing the water supply; reorganizing the police, fire, and educational systems, and taking over the piers after the World War. The piers became the Norfolk Tidewater Terminals.<sup>16</sup>

The city overcame many difficulties brought on by the war. She successfully contended against an influenza epidemic and

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<sup>12</sup>Mattie B. Patterson. "Poverty and Private Charity in Norfolk During the Depression Years 1929-1933." (M. A. thesis Old Dominion College, 1969), p. 25.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>14</sup>Davis, Virginia Communities, pp. 328-329.

<sup>15</sup>Sixth Annual Report of Norfolk Chamber of Commerce, Board of Trade, December 31, 1919. Report of Barton Myers, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup>Whichard, The History of Lower Tidewater Virginia, Vol. 1, p. 503.

diverse weather conditions. Norfolk was able to absorb the ever increasing number of new residents. And, Norfolkkians supported the United States government, physically, by providing their sons, financially, by purchasing Liberty Bonds and War Saving Stamps, and spiritually, through such organizations as the Red Cross, schools and churches.

#### Labor and Housing

The labor shortage in Norfolk was first considered serious in May, 1917. Securing workmen became almost as serious a business as recruiting an army. As early as Thursday, May 10, 1917, the Virginian-Pilot editorialized that the war was expected to bring to Norfolk the most active building boom it had ever known. Million of dollars were expected to be spent on government work alone. In addition to this, thousands of skilled laborers would be imported and this expansion of the work force would call for homes, stores and factories.<sup>17</sup> Three hundred and sixty-two manufacturing plants in Norfolk in 1913 employed 15,000 workmen. With the growth of the war-time contracts and with general business inflation, employment in Norfolk's government plants alone increased to 18,000 men in April, 1918.<sup>18</sup> Norfolk was recognized by the government as one of the most important industrial centers in the South.<sup>19</sup>

Thousands of men were called into national service, and in almost every factory, shop, and store, and on almost every

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<sup>17</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 10 May 1917.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 4 July 1918.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 2 October 1918.



farm in Norfolk, there was a shortage of labor. The Chamber of Commerce believed that every man who was not drafted into the army should be made to go to work. If he were a "loafer" or a nonproducer, while his country was at war, they believed he should be subjected to the same treatment meted out to those who evaded military service.<sup>20</sup>

From time to time, the police would make sweeps through the city looking for slackers. For example, on Tuesday, August 6, 1918, approximately two-hundred men, white and black, were arrested in a series of coordinated raids conducted by police upon the pool rooms of the city in an attempt to enforce the new vagrancy laws which went into effect July 1, 1918. These new vagrancy laws were designed to help ease the labor shortage. The men were afforded every opportunity to prove that they were working, and the majority of them produced evidence of their employment and were released. "Work, fight, or go to jail," was the slogan of the police department.<sup>21</sup>

The numerous laborers coming to Norfolk to work on the bases and in the industries brought about the exodus of a few Norfolklans who wanted more peace and quiet. The cost of housing was exorbitant. Housewives who were once glad to get a dollar or so a week for a nice, comfortable room, would not accept anything less than eight or nine dollars for a place to sleep, breakfast and dinner. The arrival of laborers

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 26 May 1917.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 7 August 1918.

for contract work at the United States Naval Base at Sewells Point, and the announcement that many of these men would be accompanied by their families, threatened to swamp the office of the Community Welfare League with demands for lodging. Housing was in such short supply that several propositions for the relief of housing congestion came up. Judge Thomas H. Wilcox, chairman of Norfolk's Council of Defense, appointed a Housing Committee in Norfolk with Mr. W. A. Cox, Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, chairman. Some of the other members were W. E. Doherty, the Labor Representative in Tidewater, Virginia, and Wyndham Mayo, the Mayor of Norfolk.<sup>22</sup> The committee was authorized to conduct an educational campaign in an effort to bring the people of Norfolk to a realization of how short housing really was in the city. Norfolkians who had a room or two to spare were called upon to answer the war-time call, and do their part by renting rooms to the workmen who were pouring into the city to work on the various government projects. The association was asking people having residences or rooms for rent to communicate with the Chamber of Commerce.<sup>23</sup> Mr. Fairfax Berkley remembers his parents turning the upstairs room into a place for servicemen.<sup>24</sup> The general purpose of the Home Service Section of the American Red Cross was to serve the families of the men in the service in any capacity which might arise. Many of the

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<sup>22</sup>Davis, Publications, Vol. IV, p. 55.

<sup>23</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 6 December 1917.

<sup>24</sup>Interview with Fairfax Berkley, 708 Baldwin Place, Norfolk, Virginia, May 25, 1978.

problems arose among non-residents who had come to Norfolk to be near their husbands. The Red Cross helped to find boarding places and help families adjust to their new surroundings.<sup>25</sup> Lists of these rooms and residences were compiled daily by the Chamber of Commerce, and distributed to the navy yard, naval base, and other government stations in Norfolk.<sup>26</sup>

One of the plans that had been proposed for the relief of the housing congestion was the Ballentine Realty Company's plan to purchase prefabricated houses. The Ballentine Company made the proposition that the houses be sold to the workmen on the easy payment plan.<sup>27</sup> However, the war ended before the Ballentine housing plan could be initiated.

During February, 1918, the Council of National Defense stepped in to remedy problems in housing and living accommodations that had beset Norfolk since the beginning of the war. Nine million dollars had been appropriated by the United States government to be expended in erecting houses for the use of employees engaged in government work at military stations in and around Norfolk.<sup>28</sup> The government decided to erect houses of its own and planned for three residential communities; at Glenwood, near the Naval Base; at Truxton, outside Portsmouth; and at Cradock, on Paradise Creek. The Glenwood project was eventually discontinued, and the other

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<sup>25</sup>Second Annual Report of the Executive Committee dated 20 November 1918. (Norfolk, Virginia Chapter Red Cross), n.p.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 6 December 1917.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

two were merely in the preliminary stages when the Armistice was signed.<sup>29</sup>

The labor shortage led to a scarcity of cooks, waiters, and waitresses, and other classes of help used in hotels, restaurants, and boarding houses. This shortage was a serious problem to certain proprietors in Norfolk. As one real estate advertisement put it, "Norfolk was growing like a house afire."<sup>30</sup> The population of Norfolk City in 1910 was 67,452.<sup>31</sup> In 1916 the population was approximately 102,000. Of this number, about thirty-six percent were black, not a large ratio for a Southern city.<sup>32</sup>

In order to meet job quotas, the United States government Employment Bureau of Norfolk imported labor from as far South as Florida, as far North as Minnesota, and as far West as Kansas and Texas. The federal government had hesitantly stepped into labor-management relations shortly before the war. Labor for the various government projects averaged sixty-five percent white and thirty-five percent black. At various times both Puerto Rican and Bahamian labor were considered, but owing to lack of transportation they were never imported.<sup>33</sup> In April, 1918, there were 18,000 civilians employed by the government installations in and around Norfolk.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Wertebaker. Norfolk Historic Southern Port, p. 309.

<sup>30</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. & July 1917.

<sup>31</sup>The population statistics for Norfolk City and County are listed in appendix D.

<sup>32</sup>Davis, Virginia Communities, p. 297.

<sup>33</sup>Butler, "Army Supply Base Report of 1 October 1919," p. 36.

<sup>34</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 4 July 1918.

Throughout the progress of the work at the various military installations, there were a great number of strikes and disputes over wage rates. The Board of Control, War Construction Activities, Hampton Roads District, established rates of wages for all classes of construction labor in the ports up to the time of the formation of the National War Labor Policies Board in July, 1918. There was, however, a very large amount of small construction work throughout the City, and it was the tendency of the individual to offer a rate above the government scale. This increase, once established, spread, resulting in a continued unsettled condition.<sup>35</sup>

For example, an article in the Wednesday, May 1, 1918,

Virginian-Pilot states:

Carpenters employed at the army and navy bases at the regular weekly union meeting last night in the Odd Fellows' Home expressed a disappointment over the failure of the government to report on the decision of increased wages demanded by the workmen.<sup>36</sup>

At the Army Supply Base on March 30, 1918, the plumbers went on strike because of their dissatisfaction with the wage scale. This strike, which lasted four days before the men returned to work, was only the beginning. The plumbers were soon followed by the electricians, sheet metal workers, carpenters, pile drivers, riggers, bricklayers, tug boat employees, and others.<sup>37</sup> On April 1, 1918, union men at

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<sup>35</sup>Butler, "Army Supply Base Report of 1 October 1919," p. 40.

<sup>36</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 1 May 1918.

<sup>37</sup>Butler, "Army Supply Base Report of 1 October 1919," p. 41.

three of the government bases planned to strike for a minimum of 62½¢ an hour, but conciliation by the government prevented any drastic action.<sup>38</sup> In July, 1918, fifteen men at the Virginian Railway pier struck and stopped 20,000 tons of coal a day from moving.<sup>39</sup>

On Tuesday, September 11, 1918, shipyard men struck over the issue of having to wear identification tags on government bases. The Navy had to send enlisted men to fill their places.<sup>40</sup> In November, 1918, 8,000 men of the building trades were out on strike demanding a dollar an hour.<sup>41</sup> In extreme cases where the strikes were materially affecting the progress of the work, the matter was referred to the War Labor Policies Board. In order to assist the various departments of the Naval Operating Base in obtaining mechanics and laborers, the Navy Department authorized the establishment of the War Labor Board. However, the government used up so many farm laborers for work in Norfolk City that the farmers in Norfolk County could not cultivate all their acres. And with the railways carrying troops and war supplies, it was difficult to market what they did raise. The farmers' complaints poured in on the government. But, the government could do nothing for them, and thousands of acres of the most

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<sup>38</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 1 April 1918; Norfolk, Virginia. City Records of Common Council. Record no. 29, 10 May 1918.

<sup>39</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 16 July 1918.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 11 September 1918.

<sup>41</sup> Davis. Virginia Communities, p. 355.

fertile land in the United States remained idle at the moment when food was of supreme importance.<sup>42</sup>

In the apportionment of material as well as labor, the Board of Control, War Construction Activities, Hampton Roads District, took an active part in curtailing materials requested for private construction. Priorities in allotting all similar material requested by the government or considered essential to the welfare of the community from a military point of view came first.<sup>43</sup>

There were a number of strikes and many difficulties encountered in dealing with laborers. Such difficulties were securing and keeping men on the job after being shipped to Norfolk at a great expense to the government, and the unrest which undoubtedly was caused by the variation of wages. Due to these problems, the Board of Control, War Construction Activities recommended that on future emergency work all laborers should be conscripted, and placed on a non-competitive basis throughout the country.<sup>44</sup>

After the signing of the Armistice in November, 1918, the workmen started to depart from Norfolk.

#### Industry and Transportation

World War I gave birth to an optimistic vision of a prosperous South. Shipbuilding and tobacco, textile, furniture,

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<sup>42</sup>Wertenbaker. Norfolk Historic Southern Port, p. 307.

<sup>43</sup>Butler, "Army Supply Base Report of 1 October 1919," p. 32.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

chemical, and paper manufacturing emerged as major industries. Older cities such as Richmond, Petersburg, Norfolk, Roanoke, and Danville, finally began to realize long hoped for industrial potentialities.<sup>45</sup> The Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch stated on July 15, 1916, that Norfolk was on the eve of her greatest prosperity, and, again on June 12, 1917, commented editorially that Norfolk was the unsurpassed location for business as evidenced by the new industries moving to Norfolk. War has long been a stimulating factor in the Hampton Roads economy and World War I was no exception. The water borne commerce of the Hampton Roads Ports averaged about 22,500,000 short tons a year during the eight year period from 1917 to 1924 inclusive.<sup>46</sup> The value of exports rose from \$9,534,551 in 1914 to \$19,063,677 in 1915; to \$35,980,116 in 1916; to \$57,089,046 in 1917; to \$66,450,731 in 1918, to over \$100,000,000 in 1919.<sup>47</sup> It was no uncommon sight to see ships from Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, Italy, Spain, Russia, France, China, Japan, Argentina, Sweden and Brazil in Hampton Roads. Coal was the magnet that drew them.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Raymond H. Pulley. Old Virginia Restored, An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930. (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1968), p. 40. (Hereafter cited as Pulley, Old Virginia Restored).

<sup>46</sup> U.S. War Department. Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army. Port Series No. 15, 1927. n.p.

<sup>47</sup> The Ports of Hampton Roads 1928 Annual. (Norfolk: Hampton Roads Maritime Exchange, 1929), p. 19.

<sup>48</sup> M. E. Bennett. "Commercial and Industrial Norfolk." Know Norfolk, 1936, p. 76.



Norfolk's industrial life was marked by unprecedented growth, which was divided distinctly into two classes: the government installations in and around Norfolk, and the privately owned corporations which developed in or were placed in Norfolk during 1917-1918.

The government, realizing the importance of Norfolk's location, had important plans for the city. The government not only spent millions but Congress kept appropriating more millions for developments at this port. Government holdings were represented already by the following: the Navy Yard in Portsmouth, St. Helena Training Station, Marine Barracks, St. Juliens Magazine, the Naval Hospital in Portsmouth, and Fort Norfolk. Equipment and property at these stations were valued at \$14,350,000.<sup>49</sup> To this add the Naval Base at Pine Beach-the old Jamestown Exposition grounds-and the Army Base at Bosh Bluff. Of the two only the former was built with the idea of permanence. In total, the large government investments during World War I stimulated the development of private industry in Norfolk. Many new plants came to Norfolk at the time and some old concerns doubled their capacity. Business in 1917 had greatly increased in Norfolk. Postoffice receipts showed a gain of \$8,817 or twenty-five percent over July, 1916.<sup>50</sup> The Norfolk Bank of Savings and Trust increased its capital stock from 100,000 to \$1,000,000 and changed

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<sup>49</sup>Davis. Virginia Communities, p. 324.

<sup>50</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 3 August 1917.

its name to the Trust Company of Norfolk.<sup>51</sup> Bank clearings for 1915 were \$211,335,662;<sup>52</sup> they rose to \$327,297,048 in 1917 and to \$426,156,347 in 1918.<sup>53</sup>

Although Norfolk's main industries before the war were those connected with shipping, the period from 1916 to 1919 showed a dramatic increase in manufacturing. The money invested in private manufacturing enterprises in and around Norfolk amounted to approximately \$75,000,000 in 1917,<sup>54</sup> and to \$80,000,000 in 1918.<sup>55</sup> It was estimated that 40,000 people working in the Norfolk area earned upwards of \$35,000,000 in 1917.<sup>56</sup> In 1918, 55,000 workers earned \$47,000,000.<sup>57</sup> The following are some of the firms which located in Norfolk during the First World War. The American Chain Company set up shop at Bosh Bluff.<sup>58</sup> The British-American Tobacco Company was located on Water Street and employed 600 people. In December, 1917, the Water Street location burned and new quarters were set up at Twenty-second and Monticello Avenue,

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 21 September 1917.

<sup>52</sup> Norfolk and Portsmouth, Virginia Directories 1916-1919. (Norfolk: Hill Directory Company Publishers, 1916-1919), p. 2. (Hereafter cited as Norfolk and Portsmouth Directories).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 1919, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 1918, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 1919, p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 1918, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 1919, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Hanna, "Norfolk Naval Air Station," p. 16.

and the firm employed between 700 and 800 men and women.<sup>59</sup> The E. I. Dupont Company, as well as Linde Air Products Corporation built a plant for the manufacture of oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen and argon.<sup>60</sup> The Virginia Coal and Navigation Company, and the Standard Oil Company were also among those which opened new operations in or near the city.<sup>61</sup>

The influx of so many people meant a greater volume of business for the retailers. Nathaniel Beaman, President of the National Bank of Commerce was quoted as saying that, "Business has been better, and more active during the past year (1917) than I have ever seen it....as a whole, Norfolk is apparently approaching the biggest year in her history."<sup>62</sup> J. H. Brownley of Ames, Brownly, and Hornthal, President of the Retail Merchant's Association, declared: "Despite the war Norfolk will be prosperous because it is the scene of war preparations...the future of Norfolk as one of the great cities of the Atlantic Seaboard is assured and her great commercial prestige, which has long been looked for, will doubtless be realized in 1918."<sup>63</sup>

Despite predictions of a good industrial year in Norfolk in 1918, the year started off disastrously. On Tuesday,

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<sup>59</sup> Davis. Virginia Communities, p. 322.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Hanna, "Norfolk Naval Air Station," p. 16.

<sup>62</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 30 December 1917.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

January 1, 1918, Norfolk was swept by the greatest fire in its history. Just before 4:00 a.m., with the thermometer standing above twelve degrees, flames were discovered in a building next to the Monticello Hotel. Property worth almost \$2,000,000 was reduced to ashes within twenty-four hours.<sup>64</sup> The most expensive loss to Norfolk was the Monticello Hotel itself which was valued at \$405,635.<sup>65</sup> Some of the other shops that were located on the bottom floor of the hotel were destroyed by the fire. They are listed in appendix E.

Many citizens of Norfolk as well as military personnel stationed at the surrounding bases assisted in putting out the fire. The Red Cross provided hot coffee and sandwiches to the firemen, Home Guard, and others fighting the blaze.<sup>66</sup> The Common Council and the Board of Aldermen passed a resolution on behalf of the City of Norfolk, formally expressing profound gratitude and appreciation to the officers and men of the United States Army and Navy, the members of the Home Guard, and the citizens who volunteered to fight the fires which occurred January 1, 1918.<sup>67</sup> Instances of individual heroism, among enlisted men and civilians were numerous,

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 2 January 1918.

<sup>65</sup> History of the Norfolk Fire Department. (Norfolk: Norfolk Firefighters Association, 1975), p. 23.

<sup>66</sup> Second Annual Report of the Executive Committee dated 20 November 1918. (Norfolk, Virginia Chapter Red Cross), n.p.

<sup>67</sup> Norfolk, Virginia. City Records of Common Council. Record no. 29, 2 January 1918.

and it was such assistance that prevented even greater loss of life, than the three firemen who died fighting the blaze.<sup>68</sup>

One of the most persistent rumors on the streets was that the Norfolk fires were part of a nation-wide plot, and that fires were raging in Baltimore, Richmond, and other large cities. Rumors were circulating that German saboteurs were responsible for the devastating fire. Twenty-three people were arrested, and most of the City of Norfolk was put under martial law.<sup>69</sup> The twenty-three people were soon released because of a lack of evidence. Fortunately, many of the businesses lost in the fire had insurance.

Another disaster struck Norfolk business in January, 1918. This was the coal shortage. A principal article of export, coal, was urgently needed in war-torn Europe, and nowhere could it be more readily obtained than Hampton Roads. Long trains moved in unending streams from the West Virginia fields, to dump their loads into the holds and bunkers of the vessels at the piers at Sewells Point, Lamberts Point, and Newport News. In 1917, Norfolk and Portsmouth alone exported 10,469,060 tons of coal.<sup>70</sup> The shortage became so acute that all industrial

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<sup>68</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 2 January 1918.

<sup>69</sup>Linda G. Fates and Carroll Walker, eds. A Pictorial History, Norfolk, Virginia. (Virginia Beach: The Donning Company, 1975), p. 162.

Interview with Carroll Walker, 1117 Rockbridge Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia, July 14, 1978. Mr. Walker said that he remembers going to the store for his mother to buy a loaf of bread. On the way he saw the Monticello Hotel fire; he heard people saying that "the Germans were burning the city." He stated that he went right home, forgetting to buy the loaf of bread.

<sup>70</sup>Wertebaker. Norfolk Historic Southern Port, p. 304.

plants east of the Mississippi River were ordered to close down for five days. Businesses and industry were required to observe Mondays as holidays for two weeks. While a storm of protest raged at the Capital, and among business interests throughout the nation, Fuel Administrator James Garfield, signed the order closing down manufacturing plants east of the Mississippi River. Manufacturing and distribution of drugs, food and public utilities were exempted from the order. Industries producing arms, munitions, war supplies, or food, were also not included in Mr. Garfield's directive.

J. W. Hough, fuel administrator of Norfolk, made the following statement:

I have received a letter from Harry Flood Byrd, State Fuel Commissioner, advising me that the order published through the newspapers regarding the closing of plants and the observance of Monday as a holiday, is the only order which will be promulgated. Upon this authority and without further orders this mandate of the National Fuel Administration would be enforced in the city.<sup>71</sup>

Norfolk observed the order of the National Fuel Administration regarding the shutting down of all plants in an effort to conserve the national supply of coal.

Actually, the coal shortage was forecast in the summer of 1917. In May, 1917, coal was selling for \$8.50 a ton cash, and \$9.00 for payment within thirty days. In 1916, the same quantity could have been bought for \$7.50 a ton.<sup>72</sup> In 1917, G. B. Ferebee, vice president of the Nottingham and Wren Coal

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<sup>71</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 18 January 1918.

<sup>72</sup>Davis. Virginia Communities, p. 326.

Company, said that the coal supply was inadequate and even higher prices could be expected.<sup>73</sup> The chief concern of the people and industries in Norfolk was the outlook for coal for the coming winter. There was not a shortage of coal but a shortage of railroad cars to distribute it. In 1908, 415,000,000 short tons of coal were mined in the United States and the railroads had 800,000 coal cars in which to move it. In 1918, the production of coal was estimated to be 738,789,000 short tons of which 100,000,000 short tons were anthracite. To move this tonnage only 960,000 coal cars were available. In other words, during the last decade the output of coal had increased seventy percent and the number of coal cars only twenty percent.<sup>74</sup> Norfolk's alternatives were to reduce war shipments for export or curtail less essential activities. As expected, the less essential activities were curtailed.

If the coal situation did not hinder production, then it was the heat. In August, 1918, war work was badly hampered by a heat wave. Thousands of workers at the army and navy base, as well as industrial and shipbuilding yards were forced to remain idle. Horses dropped in the streets and fields while at work.<sup>75</sup> Businessmen were perturbed because during the summer heat wave of 1918, the government bought the bulk of the prepared ice, from the ice house, for the army base at Bosh Bluff and the Naval Operating Base, leaving little for anyone else. Finally, cool weather relieved

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<sup>73</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 6 May 1917.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 7 July 1918.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 7 August 1918.

the situation in Norfolk.<sup>76</sup>

Fuel shortages and weather conditions did not slow down the flow of people into Norfolk. The increase in people and business brought about the installation of 10,000 new telephones in Norfolk by the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company. This placed Norfolk fifth in the South in the number of telephones.<sup>77</sup> Norfolk became so overcrowded, that the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company introduced the dial system of telephones here before any other place in the country.<sup>78</sup>

In spite of Norfolk's prosperity, the city had serious transportation difficulties in both ship and rail service. In the latter, the car shortage was most keenly felt in Norfolk during the fall of 1917. In the spring of 1918 truck growers lost thousands of dollars by delays in the shipment of vegetables to New York and other Eastern cities.<sup>79</sup>

As early as March, 1917, the Secretary of the Navy submitted estimates and plans for river and harbor works to provide adequate facilities for naval operations in defense of the harbors on the Atlantic. Norfolk's harbor and channel was dredged to a depth of forty feet for the estimated cost of \$4,039,000.<sup>80</sup> The harbor and channel were dredged because

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 19 August 1918.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 7 June 1918.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Mrs. Virginia Tunstall, 1401 Graydon Place, Norfolk, Virginia, May 14, 1978.

<sup>79</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 8 April 1918.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 6 May 1917.



more port facilities were needed for the ships transporting men and material to our Allies in Europe.<sup>81</sup>

Norfolk's railroad interests appeared before the Interstate Commerce Commission in May, 1917, in Washington to advocate a general advance in freight rates throughout the country with the exception of certain commodity rates that would have a marked effect upon Norfolk. Included in the exceptions were rates on truck produce shipped to northern and eastern markets; rates on logs and finished lumber sent to and from Norfolk, and, certain rates on guano and fertilizing chemicals. The railroads presented their side of the question, attempting to show that it would be impossible for them to maintain service unless given an increase in revenue.<sup>82</sup> Norfolk's railroad interests were granted their rate increases. In the spring of 1918, the United States government began to work to coordinate the railroads of the nation into one unified system so that the uninterrupted transportation of troops would be possible. This unified system was called the United States Railroad Administration. On Friday, December 28, 1917, the government operation of the railroads under Secretary of the Treasury William G. McAdoo, began.<sup>83</sup> This changeover did not have any impact in Norfolk.<sup>84</sup>

In the Norfolk district, another problem that had to be worked out was the scarcity of storage space. Every shack or building that could keep out the rain was used. The Norfolk

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<sup>81</sup>Wertenbaker. Norfolk Historic Southern Port, p. 306.

<sup>82</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 29 May 1917.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 27 December 1917.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

district included the deep-water terminals at Norfolk, Portsmouth, Berkley, Port Norfolk, Newport News, Old Point, Cape Charles, Sewell's, Lambert's and Pinner's Point.<sup>85</sup> The Railroad Commission of the Norfolk district was composed of, C. P. Dugan, of the Norfolk Southern, as its head, and E. M. Graham, of the Norfolk and Western, as vice chairman. Others on the commission were, C. L. Candler, of the Southern Railway; H. L. King, of the Atlantic Coast Line; A. R. Sydnor, of the Chesapeake and Ohio; H. Whyte, of the Seaboard Air Line; M. W. Clement, of the New York, Philadelphia; C. E. Reynolds, of the Virginian, and M. A. Moore, of the Belt Line.<sup>86</sup> The Norfolk Commission appealed to all the local organizations for active support. Included in the appeals were ones to the Southern Produce Company and another to the Norfolk Truckers' Exchange, asking them to urge that railroad cars used for perishable freight be loaded to full capacity.<sup>87</sup>

The Old Dominion Steamship Line was also used to transport people, vehicles and material. However, some of the material the Steamship Line carried was illegal. Raiding the Old Dominion Steamers had become a habit with the Norfolk City Prohibition Squad. Liquor was occasionally found in every conceivable hiding place aboard the vessels.<sup>88</sup>

River traffic came to a standstill when Hampton Roads froze during the winter of 1918. Thomas Wertenbaker, author

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 7 October 1917.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 16 February 1918.

of Norfolk: Historic Southern Port, wrote that the winter of 1918 paralyzed shipping, and freight piled up on the piers and wharves. Great battleships, which were set to work to break the ice, often could make little headway. Even when the channel was cleared to the coal piers, the steamers had to wait for their cargo because the coal had frozen and could not be dumped until steam pipes had been run through the cars. Jack Frost proved a valuable ally for the Kaiser.<sup>89</sup>

The Virginia Railway and Power Company bought new trolley cars to provide service to Pine Beach, the site of the Naval Operating Base. The main mode of transportation was the street cars, but there were never enough of them because the Street Railway Committee of the City Council was responsible for transporting too many workmen and enlisted men to and from the naval base. The railroads were also used to take workmen to the naval base to relieve the street car shortage. These trains, however, did not reach the localities where any considerable portion of the workers lived, and arrangements were made with one truck company, which had thirty-one trucks to transport the workers. Later in the summer of 1918, after the advent of the Motor Transport Corps, several other companies added their efforts and they continued

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<sup>89</sup> Wertebaker. Norfolk Historic Southern Port, p. 60.

Interview with Odell Byers, Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy (Retired), 4610 Colley Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia, May 26, 1978. Mr. Byers said that he remembers people walking from ship to shore on the ice back in the winter of 1917 and 1918.

Interview with Mrs. Virginia Tunstall, 1401 Graydon Place, Norfolk, Virginia, May 14, 1978. Mrs. Tunstall said that the Elizabeth River froze over and that it was possible to walk across it. She added that the Chesapeake Bay Steamer Service between Norfolk and Washington and Baltimore was suspended.

to give uniformly valuable service. While the hauling of labor in trucks was expensive, it was found advisable to continue it, as trucks were able to reach the homes of the laborers and deliver them to work on time.<sup>90</sup>

Besides trains, shipping vessels, and trolley cars, there were also private automobiles and "jitneys." The "jitney" buses carried cards on their windshields indicating their destination. The cost of a ride was five cents or a "jitney." However, the government's need for gasoline resulted in the commandeering of much of the fuel. Therefore, the wartime shortage of gasoline curtailed the service provided by the automobiles and "jitneys." The Norfolk police were called upon to enforce the conservation of gasoline. Mr. Hough, Chairman of the Local Fuel Commission, wrote the following letter:

Major W. P. Ford, Chief of Police,  
Norfolk:

Dear Major-Owing to the necessity for conserving gasoline for war purposes, and on account of the fact that the order has not been observed as generally in this locality as it should have been, I request that your officers stop every machine on Sunday, September 22, that are found operating on the streets and have the officers take the name of the owner and license number of the machine and the reason for operating.

I would like for you to pay special attention to all of the roads leading in and out of the city, both on the Berkley and Norfolk side, including the ferries. Your very truly,

(signed) J. W. HOUGH  
Chairman Local Fuel Commission)<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Butler. "Army Supply Base Report of 1 October 1919," p. 39.

<sup>91</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 12 December 1917.

Because of the shortage of gasoline, horses and mules were still utilized as a means of transportation. An ordinance was passed in Norfolk in 1917 forbidding interference with access to drinking troughs for horses and mules.<sup>92</sup>

Although driving was curtailed, the Tidewater Automobile Association undertook in conjunction with Rand-McNally Company, the marking of the main roads around Norfolk.<sup>93</sup> These signs were put on telegraph and telephone poles.

In February, 1918, little improvement in transportation had occurred especially involving the workmen and soldiers at the Naval Operating Base. The United States Railway Administration told the Virginia Railway and Power Company that the base workers must be given better service or the United States government would run the lines. The administration said that the workers must ride, even if all Norfolk has to walk.<sup>94</sup> Eventually an understanding between the City government of Norfolk and the Virginia Railway and Power Company insured prompt action in giving the Naval Base and the Norfolk Quartermaster Terminal necessary car services. This understanding was reached because Norfolk feared that the government would run the lines.

There was a milk famine in 1918, brought about, not by a shortage, but the lack of transportation to distribute the product.

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<sup>92</sup>Norfolk, Virginia. City Ordinances. Book no. 11, Ordinance Number 1110, p. 301.

<sup>93</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 4 April 1918.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 16 February 1918.

The last mode of transportation was the new "airplane." On May 5, 1918, the first airplane mail service was inaugurated between Washington, Philadelphia, and New York.<sup>95</sup> The airplane was also used to drop a special autographed letter from President Wilson to Mayor Mayo and the citizens of Norfolk personally appealing to them to respond to the call for subscriptions to the second Liberty Loan issue.<sup>96</sup>

#### Health

The Association of the Registered Nurses of Norfolk voted unanimously on Wednesday, April 11, 1917, to tender their services to the Mayor of Norfolk to help put the city in a state of medical preparedness.<sup>97</sup> Norfolk's physicians and surgeons also offered their services to the nation according to the Norfolk Medical Society. If unfit for duty at the front, the doctors offered to serve at the navy yard, marine barracks, training station, or some other reservation that might be used.<sup>98</sup> The Norfolk Virginia Chapter of the Red Cross was organized on June 15, 1917, with Robert B. Tunstall elected as chairman. The Red Cross section of military relief included four committees: the committee on surgical dressings, the committee on hospital supplies and patient clothing, the section on civilian relief, and the committee on dependent families. Reporting to the committee on dependent families were the committees on state troops (National Guard) and

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 15 May 1918.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 11 April 1917.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 8 May 1917.

United States troops (Regular Army), as well as the committees on Naval Forces and Nursing Service.<sup>99</sup> Information was secured regarding the families of all Norfolk men in the Fourth Virginia Infantry and in the local artillery company, so that the relatives could be kept posted on soldiers' movements and whereabouts.<sup>100</sup> The Red Cross also collected similar information on Norfolk's draftees.<sup>101</sup>

The Red Cross also provided social, medical, legal and financial aid to people in need. For example, during the winter of 1917, 2,425 people were assisted, and \$15,555.33 was expended in loans and grants.<sup>102</sup>

Robert B. Tunstall was chairman of the Norfolk Chapter of the Red Cross until August 7, 1918, at which time he resigned to enter the United States Army. C. W. Grandy succeeded him. However, the original success of the organization was due largely to Mr. Tunstall's efforts.<sup>103</sup>

Doctor W. H. Bell, medical inspector, for the United States Navy and sanitary officer in charge of all sanitary conditions at the Hampton Roads naval base informed the Norfolk County Health Board that over one-hundred men were working on the grounds to improve the sanitary conditions. Doctor

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<sup>99</sup>First Annual Report of the Executive Committee dated 1917. (Norfolk, Virginia Chapter Red Cross), n.p.

<sup>100</sup>Davis. Virginia Communities, pp. 337-338.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>Second Annual Report of the Executive Committee dated 20 November 1918. (Norfolk, Virginia Chapter Red Cross), n.p.

Bell said, "A great deal of work has got to be done, if we want to secure excellent health surroundings for the 16,000 or more young men who will be quartered here. These young men will come from all parts of the country."<sup>104</sup>

When the demanding task of transforming the Old Exposition grounds into a great naval base was first undertaken, there was no more urgent problem than sanitation. The old Pine Grove was a place of such unimaginable filth, that as the Virginian-Pilot described it, "the cleaning out of the Augean stables would have seemed a small task in comparison!"<sup>105</sup> Sanitation conditions at the Pine Beach section adjacent to the base were so poor that it reminded some people of Panama in the early days of work there.<sup>106</sup>

From a health officer's point of view, Norfolk had a very successful year in 1917. Norfolk had few contagious diseases, no epidemics, and a steadily declining death rate. The population of Norfolk City in 1917 was 106,157; white 68,180, black 37,979. The total number of deaths from all causes was 1,387, of which 559 were white, and 828 black.<sup>107</sup>

The Department of Health in Norfolk was concerned about the unsanitary conditions at the carnival shows that visited Norfolk and the military bases. The Health Department said

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<sup>104</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 9 August 1917.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 23 September 1917.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 23 December 1917.

The only other statistics available reveal that 18.9 per thousand died in 1908, and 9.6 per thousand in 1915. Norfolk and Portsmouth Directories, 1917, pp. 1,2.



that the shows brought with them in practically every instance a number of drug addicts, both male and female, and numerous cases of venereal disease.<sup>108</sup>

Stories would occasionally be reported concerning sickness at the different naval installations. The Virginian Pilot reported on February 20, 1918 that 1,500 men at the Naval Operating Base became ill after a corn beef, rice soup, and fruit pie dinner. Officials believed it could possibly have been food poisoning.<sup>109</sup>

The world's oldest profession set up shop in Norfolk either on East Main Street or near one of the military establishments. This profession eventually caused health problems. Stories appeared in the daily newspapers everyday concerning the red-light, "tourist cabins." Samples of such stories follow:

Nannie Arnold, white, was fined \$50.00 and costs and sentenced to serve five days in jail by Justice Pitt in police court for conducting a house of ill fame.<sup>110</sup>

Mrs. D. H. Bibb of 309 Brewer Street, was arrested by officers of the department of justice and charged with maintaining a house of ill fame within five miles of a military post of the United States.<sup>111</sup>

Carl Seider and M. E. Wells were found guilty of inducing Hazel M. Randall and Verna M. Wilber, both being under the age

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<sup>108</sup> Norfolk, Virginia. City Records of Common Council. Record no. 29, 14 May 1918, p. 225.

<sup>109</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 26 February 1918.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 12 June 1917.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 15 September 1918.

of eighteen years, to travel as passengers from Rochester, New York, to Norfolk, for immoral purposes, in violation of the Mann white slave act.<sup>112</sup>

Federal officials are endeavoring to ferret out the circumstances connected with the discovering of Thelma Hodges and Alma Gray, nineteen year old girls, who were taken from a naval vessel in the Norfolk harbor Sunday night, attired in sailor uniforms of the United States Navy.<sup>113</sup>

The Common Council of Norfolk adopted an ordinance on January 2, 1918, to prohibit soliciting for prostitution or illicit sexual intercourse.<sup>114</sup> The number of women arrested in Norfolk for such activities during one eight to ten week period was over five-hundred, a large percentage of whom were girls under the age of eighteen and still a larger percentage of whom were found infected with a communicable disease.<sup>115</sup> Because so many minors were infected with venereal disease, the importance of sex education in the schools was stressed in an article in a Norfolk newspaper.<sup>116</sup> However, other than publicity, nothing was done in this regard.

Although Norfolk was a "Navy Town," with "Troop Followers," the citizens of Norfolk, on the whole, usually characterized rumors of immorality as pro-German propaganda.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 12 May 1918.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 15 October 1918.

<sup>114</sup> Norfolk, Virginia. City Records of Common Council. Record no. 29, 2 January 1918, p. 33; Norfolk, Virginia. City Ordinances. Book no. 11, Ordinance Number 1079, p. 195.

<sup>115</sup> Chambers, Printer's Ink, p. 297.

<sup>116</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 14 September 1917.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 8 March 1918.

Nevertheless, police went around investigating the number of idle women in Norfolk, native Norfolkkians as well as outsiders, girls with nothing to do but sit around at home and in public places reading books, chewing gum, or eating ice cream. Northern newspapers referred to this type of girl as the "lounge lizard."<sup>118</sup>

Every week, dances were held in the Norfolk armory for the military personnel. The U. S. Camp Community Service received permission to use the Armory Hall as a "Liberty Theatre," Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights each week. There were a number of different encampments in the vicinity of Norfolk and men both in camp and on the fleet often declined liberty leave to visit Norfolk because of inadequate means of entertainment. If the enlisted men did take "liberty leave" it resulted in thousands of men drifting in the streets, unable to gain access to wholesome places of amusement, because of crowded conditions.<sup>119</sup> The Reverend Doctor Francis C. Steinmets, rector of Christ Church, said that one-third of the enlisted men were unable to serve their country on account of their immoral indulgences.<sup>120</sup> The Reverend's intention was to criticize the armory dances. Hundreds of men at the Naval Operating Base replied by signing a communication challenging the statement.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 2 August 1918.

<sup>119</sup> Norfolk, Virginia. City Records of Common Council. Record no. 29, 7 May 1918, p. 167.

<sup>120</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 16 May 1918.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 17 May 1918.

Perhaps the biggest health problem to afflict Norfolk was the influenza epidemic which struck in September of 1918. The influenza epidemic started in Europe and soon reached Boston and spread rapidly down the east coast. The presence of Spanish influenza on ships entering the Port of Norfolk was so serious that community health leaders had to close schools, dance halls, and theatres. Although some speculated that the cause of the influenza could be attributed to the military, most really believed that a tramp ship brought the influenza to Norfolk. It was caused by the failure of somebody to enforce quarantine on incoming ships.<sup>122</sup> Mr. Odell Byers, Navy veteran of the First World War, says he remembers more soldiers than sailors dying from "the flu" on their way over to France.<sup>123</sup> W. B. Shafer recalls the coffins coming out of the Naval Base.<sup>124</sup>

The Spanish influenza, was also known as "the flu," and "three day fever." The United States Public Health Service had some recommendations for the citizenry: keep out of crowds as much as possible; cover up each and every sneeze; do not spit on the floor or sidewalk, and shun the common drinking cup and the roller towel in public places.<sup>125</sup> Mr. Carroll Walker has stated that he was an usher at the Columbia

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 4 October 1918.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Odell Byers, Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy (Retired). 4610 Colley Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia, May 26, 1978.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with W. B. Shafer. 1348 Cornwall Place, Norfolk, Virginia, June 12, 1978.

<sup>125</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 8 October 1918.

Theatre on Main Street when the epidemic began. Mr. Walker said that his theatre closed as well as all the other public places.<sup>126</sup> Mrs. Virginia Tunstall recalled that many close friends of hers either died or were made sick by the flu.<sup>127</sup>

Norfolk's Red Cross aided in the influenza epidemic. Under the leadership of Mr. Wiley Grandy, the Norfolk Chapter of the Red Cross received the following letter from Norfolk's Health Commissioner:

4 November 1918

Mr. Wiley Grandy  
Chairman Red Cross  
Norfolk, Virginia

My dear Mr. Grandy:

In behalf of Mr. Charles E. Ashburner, City Manager, the Department of Health, and the City of Norfolk, I extend to you and the Red Cross our deepest gratitude for the splendid service rendered during the recent epidemic of influenza . . .

signed P. S. Scheneck<sup>128</sup>  
Health Commissioner

The Blacks seem to have been immune to this epidemic since few cases were reported.<sup>129</sup> The influenza's death toll reached 273 in Norfolk. There were 8,726 cases reported, with 1,600 cases of subsequent pneumonia.<sup>130</sup> By November 4, 1918,

<sup>126</sup>

Interview with Carroll Walker, 1117 Rockbridge Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia, July 14, 1978.

<sup>127</sup>

Interview with Virginia Tunstall, 1401 Graydon Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia, May 14, 1978.

<sup>128</sup>

Second Annual Report of the Executive Committee dated 20 November 1918. (Norfolk, Virginia Chapter Red Cross), n.p.

<sup>129</sup>

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 13 October 1918.

<sup>130</sup>

Ibid., 25 October 1918.

Rogers Dey Whichard. The History of Lower Tidewater Virginia. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1959), Vol. 2, p. 502. Whichard reports a peak of nearly 9,000 cases and 562 lives lost for the lower Tidewater area.

the epidemic was practically over. Norfolk's three hospitals, Norfolk's Protestant Hospital (Norfolk General), St. Vincent's Hospital (DePaul), and St. Christopher's succeeded in handling most of the influenza cases. The patients unable to be admitted were cared for in make-shift shelters set up in neighborhood schools and maintained by Norfolkkians and Red Cross workers who did not contract influenza.<sup>131</sup>

At the meeting of the Norfolk German Club in October, 1918, there was considerable discussion whether all dances for that social season should be abandoned. The ravages of the influenza epidemic and the mounting casualties of our army in France had cast a pall upon the country.<sup>132</sup>

#### Spirit and Social Conditions

Norfolkians stood, for the most part, undivided in their allegiance to President Woodrow Wilson's policy toward Germany. In early 1917, the President authorized the arming of American vessels even though some Senators opposed the new policy. The view of the State Department was that the sighting of a periscope entitled vessels to take protective measures. Norfolk, being a seaport community, gladly accepted this shoot-on-sight policy.<sup>133</sup> The editorials from the Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch

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<sup>131</sup>Second Annual Report of the Executive Committee dated 20 November 1918. (Norfolk, Virginia Chapter Red Cross), n.p.

<sup>132</sup>H. Clark Meredith. A History of the Norfolk German Club, 1868-1960. (Richmond: Printed by Whittet and Shepper-son, n. d.), p. 52.

<sup>133</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 6 March 1917.

and Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, constantly and consistently appealed for sane and united action by the United States against the German military regime. The Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch urged universal military training, government control of railroads and newspaper censorship. The Norfolk Virginian-Pilot editorials urged compulsory military training and control of the food situation.

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To show their support for the President the patriotic citizens of Norfolk held parades and wore celluloid flags on their clothes. The Norfolk Lodge of Elks, Spanish War Veterans, Confederate Veterans, the Women's Equal Suffrage League, the various church organizations, the American Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, and other organizations, were always pledging their fullest measure of loyalty and devotion to the country. Memorial days were a widely celebrated holiday in Norfolk especially during the World War I years. It was a day to remember her gallant sons who followed Robert E. Lee through the four hardest years in Southern History.

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During the Christmas season, the Norfolk Chapter of the Red Cross would fill Christmas parcels for friendless American soldiers. The Junior Department of the Red Cross consisted of 13,969 members in 24 City Public Schools, three County, two private, and one Sunday school. The children made hospital garments, made hundreds of booklets for the entertainment of convalescing soldiers and sailors, and wrote letters of Christmas

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Davis. Publications, Vol. 3, p. 1.

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Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 17 May 1917.

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greetings to the men overseas.

The World War called for every conceivable material, especially food. The Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch argued editorially in favor of price control of food by the government saying the occasion demands it and that other nations are doing it successfully. <sup>137</sup> President Wilson, urging the nation to arm itself with shovel and hoe and plant a garden, offered the following suggestion:

Let me suggest that every one who creates or cultivates a garden helps greatly, to solve the problems of the feeding of the nations....as a dictate of patriotism which no one can now expect ever to be excused or forgiven for ignoring. <sup>138</sup>

Governor Stuart of Virginia also urged his fellow Vir-  
ginians to conserve food and eliminate waste. <sup>139</sup>

Although the potato was the major crop in Norfolk, the following crops were also grown in the area: onions, pole beans, cabbage, lettuce, radishes, tomatoes, carrots, peppers, okra, egg plants and beets. An anonymously written twenty-eight page pamphlet entitled "Home Grown in Virginia" was distributed to give information on preparation of the ground, fertilization of the soil, time for planting, and cultivation <sup>140</sup> of the various vegetables.

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Second Annual Report of the Executive Committee dated 20 November 1918. (Norfolk, Virginia Chapter Red Cross), n.p.

137

Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch. 17 May 1917.

138

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 27 May 1917.

139

Ibid.

140

Ibid.



Mayor W. R. Mayo took the lead in a movement to conserve food in Norfolk. His first move was to suggest to the Board of Control that something be done to prevent waste. City Manager Ashburner declared that the city was wasting between \$100,000 and \$150,000 daily in food.<sup>141</sup> While there was never a severe food shortage, nevertheless on several occasions, because of congestion of transportation, and the construction of the various war industries, there was a scarcity of necessities. The local Food Administrator, H. K. Wolcott, directed the Tidewater Wholesale Grocers' Association to be on the look-out for profiteering or hoarding.<sup>142</sup> There were no restrictions placed on local butchers regarding the kinds of meat, although the Food Administration strongly advised, and intimated the possible necessity of, the substitution of pork for beef.<sup>143</sup>

Besides the Saturday night dances held at the armory, between ten thousand and twelve thousand enlisted men visited Norfolk every week during their liberty time. As Carroll Walker, author of Pictorial History of Norfolk, remembers, Norfolk looked like a "sea of white hats." The Y.M.C.A. sponsored entertainment for the servicemen. They also invited mothers and other relatives of enlisted men stationed in Norfolk to visit the city. Those who accepted the invitations were entertained in private homes as guests of the city and community.<sup>144</sup> The War Camp Community Service also held events

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141

Davis. Virginia Communities, p. 351.

142

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 2 November 1917.

143

Ibid., 14 June 1918.

144

Ibid., 7 November 1917.

to keep the enlisted men entertained. President Wilson's daughter, Miss Margaret Wilson, sang at the Naval Base, as she did at all the military bases throughout the country.<sup>145</sup> Apparently, the servicemen were spending their paychecks on entertainment because in November, 1917, a war tax was added to the admission fee for theatrical amusements.<sup>146</sup>

Two of the most popular films were "Ben Hur" which opened in Norfolk on Sunday, October 7, 1917, and "Birth of a Nation," which opened on New Years Day, 1918. The movie "Birth of a Nation" reportedly stirred prejudices and kindled racial animosities in Virginia.<sup>147</sup>

Norfolk enjoyed parades as well as good films. Parades were held periodically during the war years. They were conducted for any number of reasons: to show support for the war effort, recruiting, Red Cross aid, Liberty Loan purchases or War Saving Stamps. The Black organizations of Norfolk were also encouraged to march and participate in the parades. In one parade staged to boost financial support for the Red Cross, Norfolk showed her loyalty by the nearly 20,000 people who participated. The procession was four miles long and took more than an hour to pass a given point.<sup>148</sup>

The Bank of Norfolk contributed to the war effort by

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145

Ibid., 2 June 1918.

146

Ibid., 31 January 1918.

147

Davis. Publications, Vol. 4, p. 123.

148

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 21 October 1917.

selling "Liberty Loan" bonds to help the government finance the war. Fifty dollars was the smallest denomination issued. All the bonds bore 3½ percent interest, were payable semi-annually and reached maturity in twenty years. Interest was paid on the bonds on June 15 and December 15. Norfolk responded promptly to all calls for aid in financing the war. Each Liberty Loan quota for Norfolk was met and passed.

Norfolkians during the World War put up with meatless Tuesdays, fuel shortages, Prohibition, and the over-extended public utilities. Approximately, 350,000 pounds of meat and 43,160 pounds of wheat products were saved in Norfolk by the observance of the four meatless Tuesdays and the four wheatless Wednesdays in December, 1917, according to the Assistant Federal Food Administrator of Norfolk.

On Tuesday, December 18, 1917, the Fuel Administration made Thursdays and Sundays "gloom days." Flashing signs and other outdoor lights, not absolutely necessary for safety on streets and in stores, were cut off on order from the Fuel Administration in Washington. A little less than two months later, every night went lightless in Norfolk until further notice, under the decree of the Federal Fuel Administration as set forth in a letter from J. W. Hough, the local Federal Fuel Administrator. The reason for this was abnormal

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149

Ibid., 23 May 1917.

150

Ibid.

Norfolk's contribution to the "Liberty Loans" can be found in appendix I.

151

Ibid., 19 January 1918.

152

Ibid., 1 February 1918.

demand for heating and cooking, as well as for lighting purposes. The heavy demand was caused by the exceptionally cold winter of 1917-1918. During the winter of 1917-1918, heatless days and a temporary suspension of industry to save coal caused no little suffering, and on one occasion a number of people in Newport News, desperate at the prospect of sickness in their families, actually raided the coal yards.<sup>153</sup> After the gas company pleaded with its customers to use less gas, on one night it was found necessary to cut off gas from one section of the city in order to keep the pressure at all.<sup>154</sup>

On Tuesday, December 18, 1917, the Virginian-Pilot<sup>155</sup> headlines read, "Nationwide Prohibition Wins in House." Citizens of Norfolk opposed to the prohibition amendment formed a States Rights Club. The States Rights Club did not succeed in changing the law, but that did not prevent bootleggers from plying their trade. Every day the newspapers ran stories of bootleggers of liquor. A typical story reported that:

Two-hundred eighty five cases containing 6,500 pints of whiskey, were seized early yesterday morning by the police in Norfolk County near the entrance to the Dismal Swamp Canal.<sup>156</sup>

There was some conflict between Norfolk and the military establishment over the amount of water the military bases

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153

Wertenbaker. Norfolk Historic Southern Port, p. 307.

154

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 1 January 1918.

155

Ibid., 18 December 1917.

156

Ibid., 2 June 1917.

needed. Negotiations went on between Norfolk and the federal government. Major J. A. Bensel, Engineer Corps, United States Army Reserve, recommended to the Board of Control of the War Construction Activities, Hampton Roads District, that the United States government take over the whole water supply situation. 157

Colonel M. A. Butler, United States Army Reserve, Construction Quartermaster, Norfolk Quartermaster Terminal spoke on the floor of the City Council and stated how necessary an adequate supply of water was to government activities in Norfolk. 158

Admiral F. L. Harris, the President of the Board of Control in March, 1918, explained the necessity for increasing the water supply. He stated that a preliminary study indicated that in order to carry out the work already authorized it would require 34,000 skilled and unskilled workers who would bring their families, about 64,000 people, or in round figures a total of about 100,000 additional people for Norfolk. The principal difficulty was the water supply. 159 The sudden growth of the suburban installations placed such a strain on the local water supply that Norfolk had to revolutionize her water system. In September, 1917, she was furnishing the Naval Base alone with 230,000 gallons a day. 160 Fortunately, the problem was worked out primarily because the government

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157  
Norfolk, Virginia. City Records of Common Council.  
Record no. 29, 31 May 1918, p. 202.

158  
Ibid., 28 June 1918, p. 257.

159  
Ibid., 5 March 1918, p. 125.

160  
Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 22 September 1917.

threatened to move its base elsewhere, which prompted the Mayor of Norfolk, Wyndham R. Mayo to go on record saying:

" . . . It is immaterial to the City of Norfolk who supplies the government with water, the whole interest lying in the desire that the government get the water it may need and she stands now, as ever, as far as in her may be, to help the government in its water emergency . . . ."161

To remedy the insufficient supply of water, Norfolk leased for \$200,000, with an option to buy for \$900,000, the plant of the Norfolk County Water Company and installed electric pumps, thus increasing the supply of 9,000,000 gallons daily to 22,000,000 gallons daily.<sup>162</sup>

Electric power, which had also been inadequate because of increased industrial demand, was increased by an enlargement of the local plant and by connection with Richmond.<sup>163</sup> Not everything worked out so smoothly. One rather unfortunate event happened in 1917 and one in 1918.

On New Year's Eve, 1917, rioters smashed store windows, killed one sailor, and wounded others. A Marine Corps detachment was called out to clear the streets with the butts of rifles. Secretary of the Navy Daniels ordered an investigation, and city and naval authorities went into conference. The strain of the war, the deficiencies in transportation, and the profiteering of some merchants had inflamed the sailor-

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161

Norfolk, Virginia. City Records of Common Council. Record no. 29, 31 May 1918, pp. 252-253.

162

Davis. Virginia Communities, p. 325.

163

Ibid., pp. 325-326.

164  
 civilian relationship. One result of the conference was  
 the establishment of a Navy Shore Patrol for downtown  
 165  
 streets. The City of Norfolk appropriated two-thousand  
 166  
 dollars for the maintenance of the Naval Patrol.

On Sunday, September 22, 1918, one police officer  
 was injured and five Blacks were shot, none fatally, when a  
 mob reported to be nearly 1,000 Blacks allegedly attacked  
 the Second Precinct police station at Queen and Church streets,  
 following the arrest of a Black soldier on a questionable  
 charge of robbing the cash drawer in a photographer's stand. 167

Wyndham R. Mayo, Mayor of Norfolk for six years retired  
 on August 30, 1918. Albert L. Roper was elected Mayor of  
 Norfolk under the Council-Manager form of government adopted  
 September 1, 1918. Mayor Roper, believing the war was nearly  
 over, made a speech in which he said that Norfolk must pre-  
 168  
 pare for peace. Less than a month later, Monday, November 11,  
 1918, the Armistice was signed. Instantly men, women, and  
 children, abandoning business, housework, and school, poured  
 into the streets. Main and Granby streets were jammed with  
 a mob of joyous people, shouting, singing, laughing, and weeping.

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164

Chambers. Printer's Ink, p. 298.

165

Ibid., pp. 298-299.

166

Norfolk, Virginia. City Ordinances. Book no. 12,  
 Ordinance No. 1222, 14 January 1919, p. 81.

167

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 22 September 1918.

168

James Sidney Kitterman. "Reformers and Bosses in the  
 Progressive Era: The Changing Face of Norfolk Politics, 1890-  
 1920." (M. A. thesis, Old Dominion University, 1971). (Here-  
 after cited as Kitterman, "Reformers and Bosses").

Every building was decorated with the flags of the Allies. Not until the small hours of the morning did the city regain its composure and its people retire to rest. Thus did Norfolk celebrate the signing of the Armistice.<sup>169</sup>

The local units returned in 1919 and the city set aside a week from June 22 to the 28th as a "Homecoming" celebration for the victorious men. For the "Welcome Home Week" the Common Council appropriated \$15,000, and in order to see that Norfolk's black population and black soldiers were not neglected, \$3,000 was set aside for the black celebration for the returning black soldiers. The black "Welcome Home" was from Sunday, July 20 to Saturday, July 26.<sup>170</sup>

By November 1, 1918, Norfolk industries and organizations were working at capacity, and then came November 11 and the Armistice. There was no disruption of the social order. When the armistice signaled the end of the frantic building and overtime pay in Norfolk, war workers began to drift away. "To Norfolk," the Virginian-Pilot said on January 1, 1919, "1919 offers the chance of realizing its greatest dream, the winning of a proper share of the world's commerce. Military activities have already brought to this harbor

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<sup>169</sup> Wertenbaker. Norfolk Historic Southern Port, p. 316.  
Interview with Carroll Walker, 1117 Rockbridge Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia, July 14, 1978. Mr. Walker declared that he remembered a false alarm set off signaling the signing of the Armistice. Students and workers poured into the streets, but returned to their respective places when told it was a hoax. The next time the whistle blew people came out cautiously.

<sup>170</sup> Davis. Virginia Communities, pp. 349-350.



larger share of the world's traffic....the new year places  
continued prosperity within the reach of the city...." <sup>171</sup>

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171

Chambers. Printer's Ink, p. 285.

## CHAPTER V

## POST WAR CONDITIONS

When the Armistice officially ended the war, which had been the foundation of Norfolk's great growth in prosperity, some realized that the city had been deprived of its main economic support. Activities continued under the momentum which twenty months of war had generated and allowed for a gradual decline of war activities, and a conversion of wartime agencies into peace industries.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the early post-war period Norfolk experienced a substantial building boom. For example, in April, 1919, 185 building permits valued at \$747,254 were granted compared to 79 building permits valued at \$349,378 in April, 1918.<sup>2</sup> The Norfolk and Hampton Roads Dry Dock and Ship Repair Corporation added a \$6,000,000 plant which began construction in January, 1919.<sup>3</sup> The project called for 5,000 workmen. The Norfolk Glass Manufacturing Company began its construction also in January, 1919, with plans for a capacity output valued at \$1,000,000 annually.<sup>4</sup> The government appropriated eleven million dollars in 1919 for making the navy yard the biggest in the country.<sup>5</sup> A \$175,000 ice cream plant, with a

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<sup>1</sup> Davis. Virginia Communities, p. 344.

<sup>2</sup> Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 3 May 1919. Also, see appendix G.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 5 January 1919.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 16 December 1918.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 9 February 1919.

capacity of 10,000 gallons daily was built on Llewellyn Avenue.<sup>6</sup> This commercial building was unaccompanied by any appreciable increase in residential construction because of prices and government regulations.<sup>7</sup>

Despite promising economic advances, labor conditions and employment constituted one of Norfolk's greatest problems in 1919. The servicemen faced serious circumstances upon returning to a city trying to cope with labor and unemployment on the one hand, and the rising cost of living and a housing shortage on the other. Representatives of the various social agencies and organizations, together with those from fraternal societies, labor unions and business, met with the Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Employment Bureau and resolved to give "instant cooperation to the end that no serviceman shall be unemployed."<sup>8</sup> As a result, an unemployment committee of more than 200 led by I. Walke Truxton canvassed the city in search of jobs.<sup>9</sup> Approximately fifteen hundred jobs were found, but most of the employment offered was of a menial type which was not considered "adequate for returning servicemen."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 12 March 1918.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 12 May 1919.

As early as March, 1918, the War Industries Board realized that indiscriminate non-war building was a drain on resources and labor badly needed for the prosecution of the war. (Davis, Publications, Vol. IV, p. 56).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 11 March 1919.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 11 March 1919.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 15 March 1919.

Further developments worsened the employment picture for civilians as well as the demobilized veterans. Approximately 13,000 civilian workers lost their jobs between 1919 and 1924.<sup>11</sup> The curtailment of government enterprises and the slowdown of naval contracts flooded the labor market with the unemployed.<sup>12</sup> In 1923 only 2,300 persons remained at work at the Norfolk Naval Yard which in 1918 employed 12,000.<sup>13</sup> More complications arose from the fact that jobless from other cities, lured by the promise of work, flocked to Norfolk.<sup>14</sup> Even though unemployment was high, in February, 1919, 10,000 unemployed were brought to Norfolk on vessels provided by the Navy Yard.<sup>15</sup> Many of these had to be cared for by the city, and by the private welfare agencies.<sup>16</sup> Reduced Naval operations were responsible in large measure for much unemployment as a result of the Washington Disarmament Conference which brought about a cut in appropriations and a curtailment of activities.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 1 July 1923.

<sup>12</sup>Mattie B. Patterson. "Poverty and Private Charity in Norfolk During the Depression Years 1929-1933." (Unpublished M. A. thesis, Old Dominion College, 1969), p. 28. (Hereafter cited as Patterson, "Poverty and Charity in Norfolk.")

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>15</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 4 February 1919.

<sup>16</sup>Patterson, "Poverty and Charity in Norfolk," p. 28.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

The Washington Disarmament Conference was held between 12 November 1921 and 6 February 1922. Of the nine treaties

As a consequence of the sudden end of the war, prices gradually rose resulting in many strikes during the spring of 1919. Nine-hundred stevedores and truckers; three thousand marine workers employed in the Ironmasters Association; the Norfolk Western Union telegraph operators; and, five-thousand telephone and electrical workers of the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company went on strike.<sup>18</sup> The strikes were settled when the workers received higher wages. During 1919 the government prevented much agitation among government employees by declaring that there would be no wage increase on government contracts, and that if the men struck all work would abruptly stop.<sup>19</sup> As the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot reported:

From 1920 through 1924 Norfolk had a succession of lean business years, during which the city felt the impact and the after effects of post-war deflation. The curtailment of business activity was particularly marked in the years 1921 and 1922. During 1923 and 1924 there was no perceptible movement backwards, but neither was there any notable movement forward.<sup>20</sup>

City officials tried to control this period of deflation following the prosperity brought by the war. Led by Mayor Albert L. Roper, an economic committee succeeded in leasing one of

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drafted, one included a ten year holiday in which no new battleships were to be built. The Naval Disarmament treaty was signed by the five powers; United States, Great Britain, Japan, France, and Italy.

<sup>18</sup>Davis. Virginia Communities, p. 355.

<sup>19</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 23 April 1919.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 1 January 1926.

the piers at the Army Base. They sought one principal article of export other than coal, tobacco or cotton which would enable the port to compete permanently with the great northern ports. They believed that grain was the answer and on February 7, 1922, a bond issue of \$5,000,000 was endorsed by Norfolkians for a grain elevator and terminal.<sup>21</sup> The Commission then set about an intensive program of enticing new industries to the area. This campaign proved to have mixed results for while the city could rejoice at the prospect of the Ford Motor Company opening a plant in the city,<sup>22</sup> there was lamentation when a large rayon plant chose not to locate in Norfolk.<sup>23</sup>

During the lush and loud years of the twenties, the city experienced many of the social manifestations peculiar to the era. The mood throughout the nation was one of rejection of past heritages, and the open pursuit of self indulgence and enjoyment.<sup>24</sup> Norfolkians were aided in their pursuit of happiness, as were citizens of other cities, by the availability of easy credit. The automobile provided for greater mobility while the radio and newspapers brought world affairs into the home, and motion picture houses projected unrealistic images of life on their screens.<sup>25</sup>

Norfolk weathered the twenties, and, went on to repeat

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<sup>21</sup>

Ibid., 8 February 1922.

<sup>22</sup>

Ibid., 1 September 1925.

<sup>23</sup>

Patterson, "Poverty and Charity in Norfolk," p. 30.

<sup>24</sup>

Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>25</sup>

Ibid.

her World War I performance in the late nineteen thirties and early forties. World War II, would also have an unforgettable impact on Norfolk, Virginia.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the entire period of time that the United States was officially involved in the First World War, the City of Norfolk was probably more congested and the prices of necessities of life as high, if not higher, than in most other American cities. With population and economic growth came new problems and an intensification of old ones. The city's requirements for an adequate water supply, improved streets, and more schools were even more obvious during this period. However, it can be said that the Chamber of Commerce, the City Administration, and a majority of the City's population cooperated in every possible way to facilitate the military work done in the area. Norfolkians allowed the commandeering of their homes and property lying within the designated military construction areas without condemnation, and were very patient in waiting for compensation.

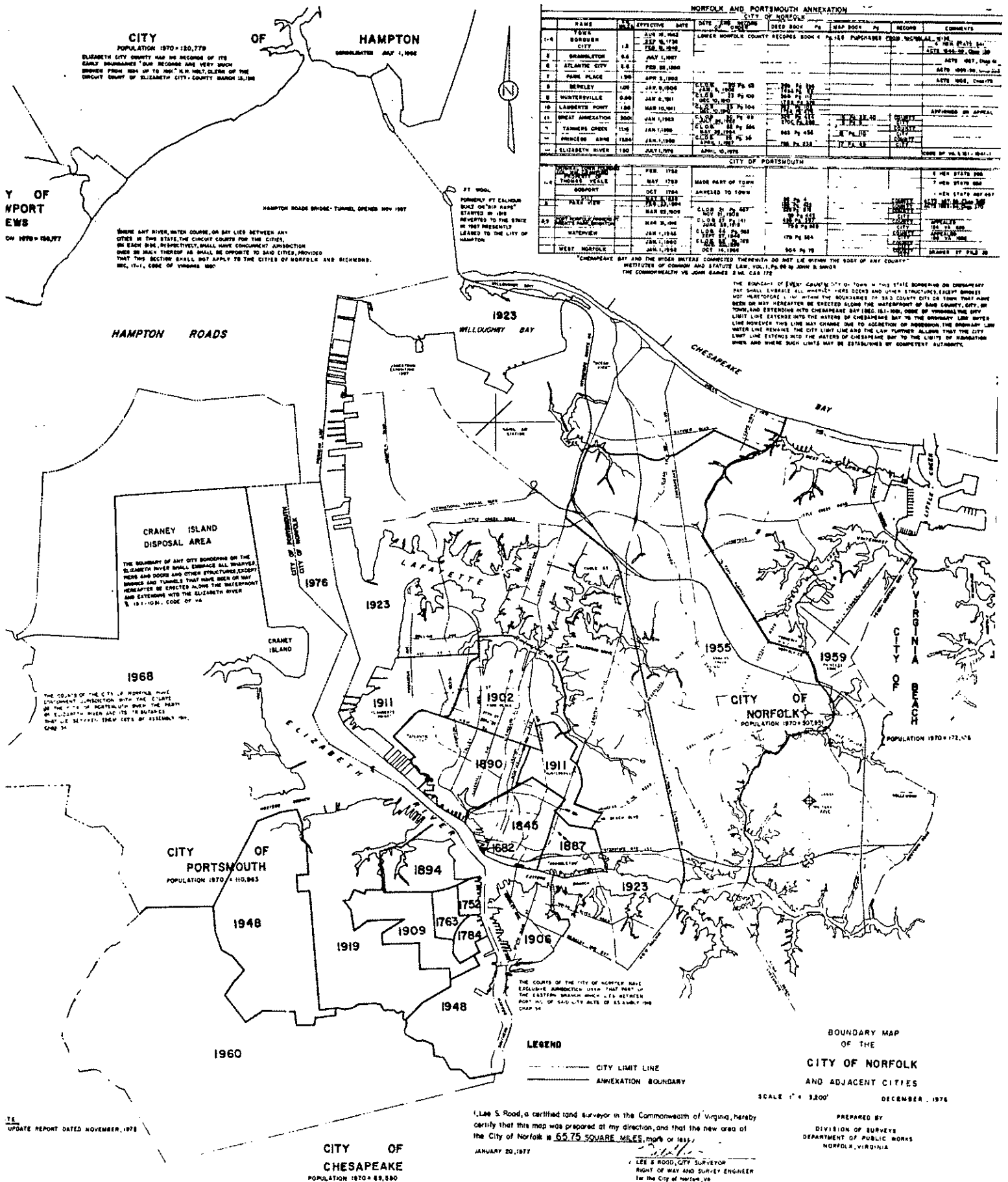
The First World War left Norfolk as the second major port in the United States.<sup>1</sup> The war also had an additional impact on the area's economy. It created a permanent relationship between Norfolk and the military, increased social services, and, contributed greatly to the overall character and culture of the port city.

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<sup>1</sup>Davis. Virginia Communities in War Time, p. 352.

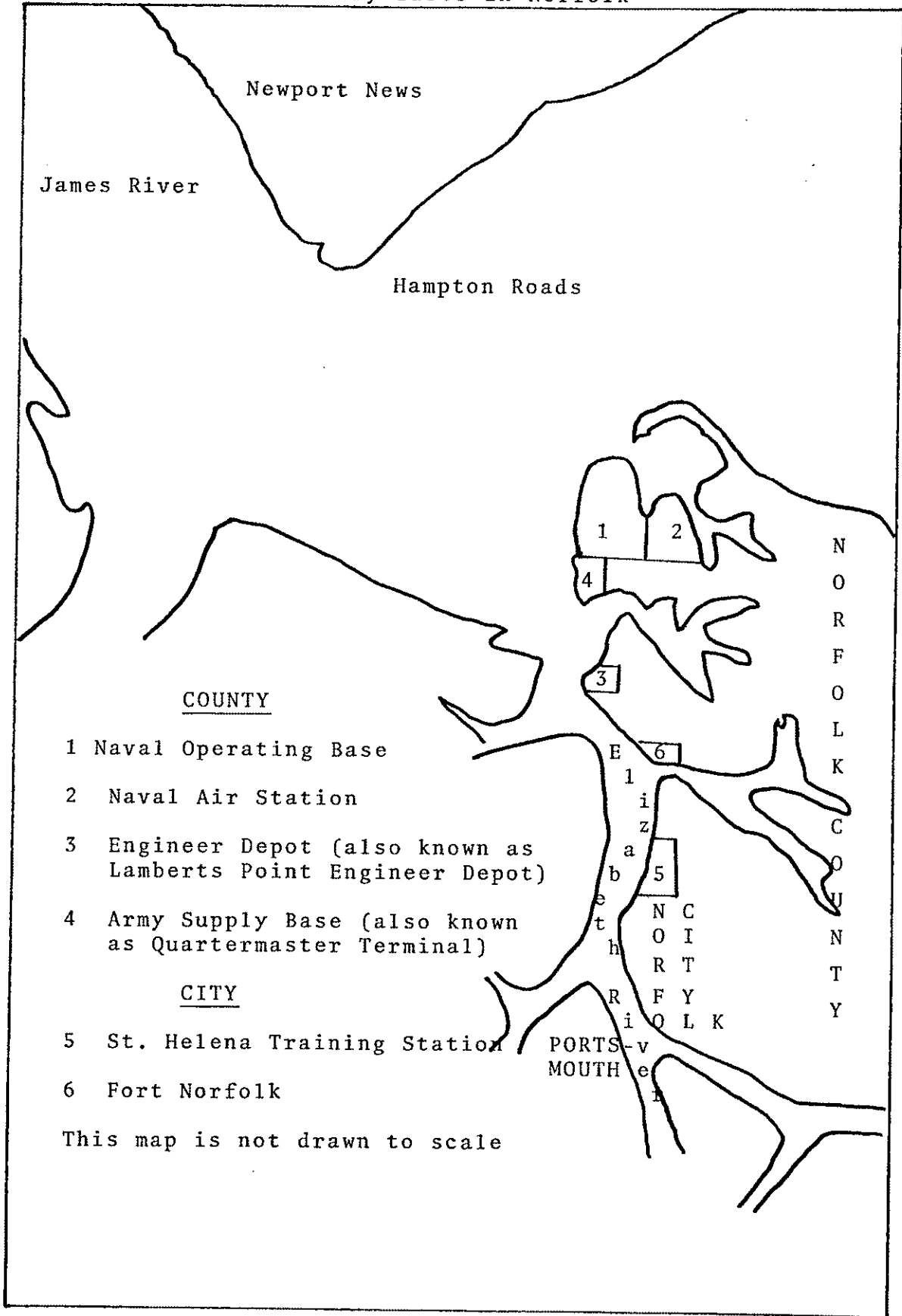


Boundary Map of the City of Norfolk



APPENDIX B

Military Bases in Norfolk



Newport News  
James River

Hampton Roads

COUNTY

- 1 Naval Operating Base
- 2 Naval Air Station
- 3 Engineer Depot (also known as Lamberts Point Engineer Depot)
- 4 Army Supply Base (also known as Quartermaster Terminal)

CITY

- 5 St. Helena Training Station
- 6 Fort Norfolk

This map is not drawn to scale

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PORTS-  
MOUTH

## APPENDIX C

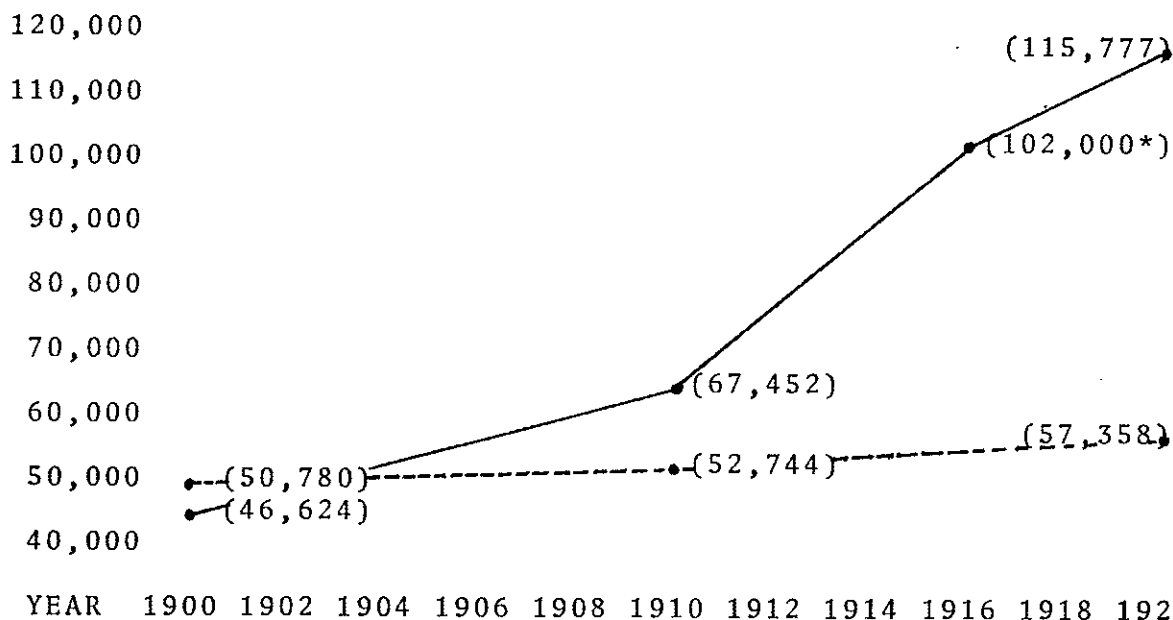
## The Fourth Virginia Regiment

- Headquarters Co., 4th Va. Infantry - This Co. was split up among the:  
 116th Infantry  
 111th Field Artillery  
 104th Field Signal Bn.  
 104th Engineer Train  
 116th Field Hospital  
 104th Trains Headquarters  
 104th Military Police
- Supply Co., 4th Va. Infantry - Supply Co. and Co. L, 116th Inf.  
 116th Field Hospital  
 104th Ordnance Repair Shop
- Machine Gun Co., 4th Va. Infantry - Co. B, 112th Machine Gun Bn.
- Sanitary Det., 4th Va. Infantry - 116th Field Hospital  
 Medical Det., 112th M. G. Bn.
- Co. A, 4th Va. Infantry - This Co. was split up among the:  
 116th Infantry  
 111th Field Artillery  
 104th Engineer Train  
 104th Supply Train  
 104th Train Headquarters  
 104th Military Police
- Co. D, 4th Va. Infantry - Co. K, 116th Infantry  
 Co. B, 112th Machine Gun Bn.
- Co. E, 4th Va. Infantry - This Co. was split up among the:  
 116th Infantry  
 104th Supply Train  
 104th Engineer Train  
 104th Field Signal Bn.
- Co. G, 4th Va. Infantry - Co. E, 116th Infantry
- Battery B (Light Artillery Blues),  
 1st Va. Field Artillery - Battery B, 111th Field Art.
- Ambulance Co., No. 1 - 115th Ambulance Co.

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SOURCE: Arthur Kyle Davis, ed. Publications of the Virginia War History Commission (Richmond: Published by Order of the Executive Committee, 1927), Vol. 5, p. 27. (List of commands Norfolk contributed to the World War as well as the Federal units they were integrated into).

## APPENDIX D

Norfolk City and County Population Graph 1910-1920POPULATION

YEAR 1900 1902 1904 1906 1908 1910 1912 1914 1916 1918 1920

\_\_\_\_\_ The straight line represents the growth of Norfolk City.

----- The dotted line represents the growth of Norfolk County.

Norfolk County population by district:

|                                | 1920   | 1910   | 1900   |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Butts Road district            | 2,040  | 1,913  | 1,821  |
| Deep Creek district            | 6,938  | 4,078  | 3,454  |
| Pleasant Grove district        | 3,012  | 3,513  | 2,974  |
| Tanners Creek district         | 24,331 | 18,716 | 13,077 |
| Washington district, including |        |        |        |
| South Norfolk town             | 16,310 | 10,528 | 11,515 |
| Western Branch district        | 4,727  | 13,996 | 17,939 |

Population of Deep Creek district for 1920 includes that of Craddock Village (unincorporated), a Federal Government project, built and operated by the United States Housing Corporation, immediately outside the limits of Portsmouth City; population in 1920, 2,709. Population of Tanners Creek district in 1920 includes that of U.S. Army Base (1,074) and U.S. Navy Base (5,908).

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Population. 1921, XIV: 650.

\*U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Occupation Outlook Branch, The Impact of War on the Hampton Roads Area, Part II, "Impact of World War I on the Hampton Roads Area," (Historical Study No. 69, January, 1944), p. 55.

## APPENDIX E

The monetary cost of the "Monticello fire" that occurred on January 1, 1918, was as follows:

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Monticello Hotel.....                     | \$500,000      |
| Monticello furniture<br>and fixtures..... | 75,000         |
| Shulmans.....                             | 90,000         |
| G. W. Thomas.....                         | 50,000         |
| Myers, The Tailor.....                    | 5,000          |
| Monticello Barber Shop                    | 3,500          |
| Halstead's Drug Store.                    | 20,000         |
| Truitts Drug Store....                    | 25,000         |
| Levon Building.....                       | 50,000         |
| Buchanan's Jewelry<br>Store.....          | 20,000         |
| Galeski's.....                            | 20,000         |
| Oriental Shop.....                        | 25,000         |
| Oriental Restaurant...                    | 18,000         |
| Carpenter Building....                    | 60,000         |
| Carpenter's stock.....                    | 50,000         |
| Dickson property.....                     | 50,000         |
| Mme. Sutton.....                          | 25,000         |
| S. J. Thomas & Company                    | 80,000         |
| Norfolk Stationery Co.                    | 25,000         |
| Total.....                                | \$1,116,500.00 |

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SOURCE: Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 2 January 1918.

APPENDIX F

Norfolk's Commerce Statistics 1914-1918

|   | <u>1914</u>                  | <u>1915</u>                  | <u>1916</u>               | <u>1917</u>                  | <u>1918</u>                  |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Exports from Norfolk<br>(in dollars)              | \$9,534,551 <sup>a</sup>     | \$19,063,677 <sup>a</sup>    | \$35,980,116 <sup>a</sup> | \$57,089,046 <sup>a</sup>    | \$66,450,731 <sup>a</sup>    |
| Imports to Norfolk<br>(in dollars)                | \$3,125,479 <sup>b</sup>     | \$3,567,540 <sup>b</sup>     | \$9,396,308 <sup>b</sup>  | \$16,477,776 <sup>b</sup>    | \$20,949,648 <sup>b</sup>    |
| Port of Norfolk<br>Water-borne Commerce<br>(tons) | *                            | *                            | *                         | 30,746,348 <sup>c</sup>      | 34,870,321 <sup>d</sup>      |
| (in dollars)                                      | \$1,373,143,923 <sup>e</sup> | \$2,042,335,814 <sup>f</sup> | *                         | \$2,727,679,768 <sup>c</sup> | \$4,119,089,948 <sup>d</sup> |
| Norfolk handled<br>tons of coal                   | *                            | *                            | *                         | 15,000,000 <sup>g</sup>      | 16,000,000 <sup>g</sup>      |
| Coal piers of N & W<br>(capacity of)              | *                            | *                            | *                         | 1,250 tons hr. <sup>h</sup>  | 9,500 tons hr. <sup>i</sup>  |
| Coal piers of Vir-<br>ginian (capacity of)        | *                            | *                            | *                         | 1,500 tons hr. <sup>h</sup>  | 6,000 tons hr. <sup>i</sup>  |
| Steamship lines in<br>Norfolk                     | *                            | *                            | *                         | 18 <sup>h</sup>              | 22 <sup>i</sup>              |

SOURCES: <sup>a</sup>The Ports of Hampton Roads: 1928 Annual. Norfolk: Published by Hampton Roads Maritime Exchange, 1929, p. 19.

<sup>b</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

\* Ibid., pp. 1,2. Comparable figures are not available according to Ports of Hampton Roads 1928 Annual. Except in a few cases, 1925 is the latest year for which comparable figures are available.

<sup>c</sup>Norfolk and Portsmouth Virginia Directories. Norfolk: Hill  
Directory Publishers, 1919, pp. 6-7.

<sup>d</sup>Ibid., 1919, pp. 6-7.

<sup>e</sup>Ibid., 1916, pp. 6-7.

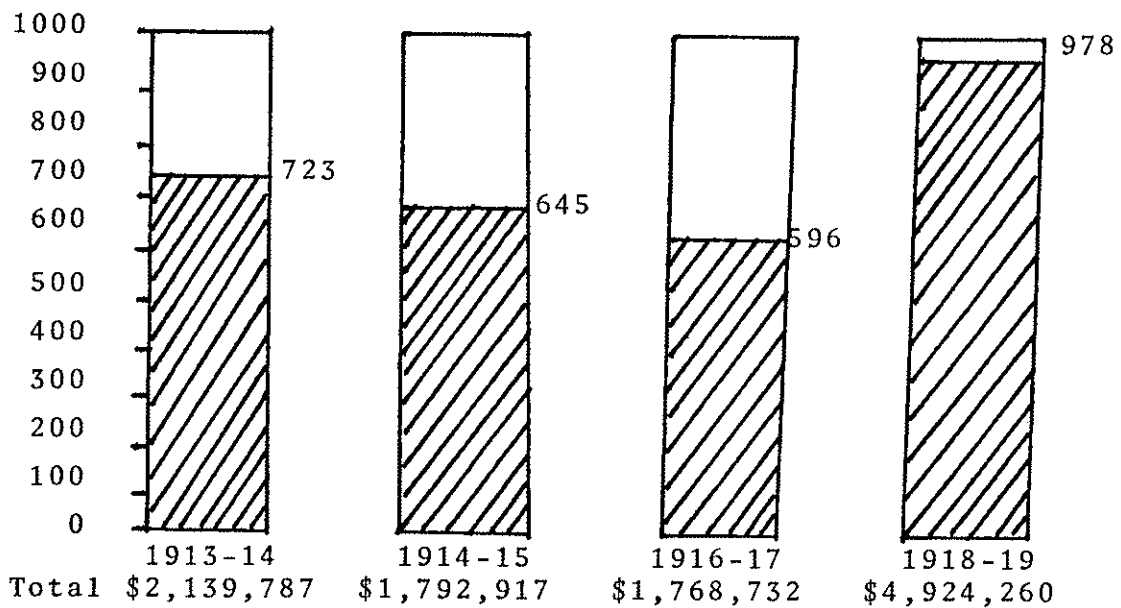
<sup>f</sup>Ibid., 1917, pp. 1-2.

<sup>g</sup>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 29 December 1918.

<sup>h</sup>Davis, Virginia Communities, p. 330.

<sup>i</sup>Ibid., p. 353

## APPENDIX G

Norfolk City and County Building PermitsFor Fiscal Years 1913-1919

Most of this construction activity was of a commercial sort.

No figures are available for fiscal years 1915-16 and 1917-18.

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SOURCES: Arthur Kyle Davis, ed. Virginia Communities in War Time. (Richmond: Virginia War History Commission, 1926), p. 353; Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, 30 June 1919.



## APPENDIX H

Norfolk's Food Price Index 1917-1918

|                       | <u>1917</u> | <u>1918</u>     |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Turkey                | 48¢ a pound | 80¢ a pound     |
| Hens                  | 48¢ a pound | 80¢ a pound     |
| Eggs (fresh)          | 68¢ a dozen | 70¢ a dozen     |
| Bread (18 ounce loaf) | 9¢          | 10¢             |
| Butter                | 69¢ a pound | 72¢ a pound     |
| Hams                  | 42¢ a pound | 45¢ a pound     |
| Potatoes (Irish)      | 3¢ a pound  | 3½¢ a pound     |
| Cotton                | 27¢ a pound | 37 3/4¢ a pound |
| Milk (quart)          | 18¢         | 25¢             |
| Sugar                 | 9½¢ a pound | 11¢ a pound     |

Norfolk's prices at the first of December, 1918, were by no means the highest in the State, because Richmond prices were noted to be thirty-five percent higher than those of Norfolk.\*

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SOURCES: Arthur Kyle Davis, ed. Virginia Communities in War Time. (Richmond: Virginia War History Commission, 1926), p. 350; Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, 6 December 1918; \*Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. 28 December 1918.

## APPENDIX I

Norfolk's Liberty Loan Campaign

| <u>Number</u> | <u>Quota</u> | <u>Subscriptions</u> | <u>Subscribers</u> |
|---------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1             | \$2,000,000  | \$3,131,900          | 17,000             |
| 2             | \$5,928,770  | \$7,687,800          | 17,299             |
| 3             | \$3,911,800  | \$5,898,500          | 23,392             |
| 4             | \$8,415,200  | \$10,607,050         | 39,686             |
| 5             | \$7,535,100  | \$8,393,950          | 20,260             |

In all nearly \$36,000,000 was subscribed.

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SOURCES: Arthur Kyle Davis, ed. Virginia Communities in War Time. (Richmond: Virginia War History Commission, 1926), p. 316; Thomas J. Wertenbaker and Marvin W. Schlegel. 2nd edition. Norfolk Historic Southern Port. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1962), p. 303.

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