

# Regional Update

A Monthly Report of Activities on the Eastern Shore of Virginia

October 2006

## Onancock Heritage Tourism Workshop Held

Thirty-two participants took part in the 2006 Heritage Tourism Workshop Historic Walking Tour of Onancock. The tour was sponsored by the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program and National Oceanic and the Atmospheric Agency.

Dr. Miles Barnes conducted the tour and explained how Onancock's development paralleled the Eastern Shore's development. Although the town has earlier beginnings, the Town we are familiar with is the result of a boom in development that occurred after the Civil War. This boom was shorewide and resulted from an economy based on seafood, visitors, lumber, and farm products (especially white potatoes).

One of the most intriguing developments was a marketing agency that created the Red Star brand of white potatoes. Prior to the organization's agents ensuring quality, buyers would purchase potatoes in barrels from the Shore and commonly find a pumpkin or bad potatoes mixed in. This situation depressed Eastern Shore white potato prices and injured farmers on the Shore. With the association this was all corrected, Red Star white potatoes became a nationally known brand that could command higher prices than other potatoes. Farmers who didn't adhere to the quality requirements lost their

privilege to sell under the brand name.

By the early nineteen hundreds, Accomack and Northampton were the richest rural counties in the entire United States. Number three right behind them was Los Angeles County, California.

ducers in places like Louisiana. The Great Depression marked the final end of that era. A presentation by the Donna Bozza, Eastern Shore Tourism Commission, about current branding efforts and strategies concluded the workshop.



*Participants in the Heritage Tourism Workshop Historic Walking Tour look at historic development along King Street.*

With the advent of the automobile, farmers and craftsman were moving to Onancock during this time for the excellent educational facilities and various amenities like one of the first power networks in Virginia.

The tour concluded at the wharf with Dr. Miles explaining that the prosperous time ended with the beginning of the Great Depression. Farmers had expanded on credit during the prosperous times and were increasingly having stiff competition from other potato pro-

### This Issue

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# Locust Mount Community Revitalization Project Complete

Phase II of the Locust Mount Community Revitalization Project has been completed. The Project was started in the year 2000 and was funded in two phases. The first phase was for \$500,000 and was completed in 2002. Phase II was for \$435,000 and was completed in August.

The Grant called for the rehabilitation of 12 owner-occupied homes, the rehabilitation of 6 investor-owned houses, substantial reconstruction of 5 houses, installation of 10 septic systems and 10 wells, demolition of 11 structures and training of 5 LMI residents in construction careers.

In the end, 12 new homes were constructed, due to severe structural deficiencies in the owner-occupied houses, 5 owner-occupied homes were rehabilitated, and 3 investor-owned houses were rehabilitated. Seventeen septic repairs or installations were done and 18 wells were installed. Sixteen demolitions were performed, and job

training for 6 residents, were accomplished.

Four of the new homes and a picnic pavilion were constructed on land that was purchased from The Nature Conservancy. The money was then donated back to the County to pay for a few amenities such as, increased roof pitch and front porches to give a more traditional look to the homes that were built

on these four lots.

Final closeout documents have been filled out and returned to the Department of Housing and Community Development. Some additional rehabilitation work will continue to be done with the Program Income that has been, and will be generated through repayment from clients that have an “ability to pay”.



*Two homes in Locust Mount that feature increased roof pitch and a more traditional appearance.*

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## Occohannock Workshop Results

Over 50 interested stakeholders attended a workshop on August 30 to start drafting a master plan for the property the A-NRHA has a contract on. The 54-acre parcel is located north of Occohannock Neck Road in Exmore.

After two 2-hour input sessions, architects Hill Studios presented a draft master plan to the Authority. The plan proposes 100-125 affordable housing units for the site, both rental and owner homes.

“All of the comments we heard today indicated that a diverse community is desired,” said Don Harwood of Hill Studios. “They would like to see di-

versity of incomes, ownership and styles.”

The plan proposes single-family, duplexes and multi-family structures. Workshop attendees also discussed the need for homes that address the special needs of elderly, farm-workers, and persons with disabilities.

“We still have issues to resolve like a second entrance and exit from the property,” said Authority Executive Director Paul Berge. “However, we all

agreed that we wish to create a neighborhood like other neighborhoods in Exmore that will meet the diverse affordable housing needs of its citizens.”



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# John Aigner Marks 15 Years at PDC

John Aigner, Community Development Coordinator, began working for the A-NPDC in 1991. Mr. Aigner began as a Housing Specialist drafting specifications for new homes and conducting inspections. He was promoted to Community Development Coordinator and has continued constructing and rehabilitating houses on the Eastern Shore.

Mr. Aigner recently completed the Locust Mount Revitalization Project but has worked on numerous other projects over the years. He is most proud of constructing 6 houses on Tangier Island. The project was one of the most difficult, being severely underfunded. It was completed by finding other sources to finish the project.

“John’s substantial construction

background has been a great asset to Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission housing programs. We congratulate him for the huge number of accomplishments that he has achieved over his 15 year tenure.” said Executive Director Paul Berge.



## How to Contact the A-NPDC

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