CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF WEST POINT

COLONIAL PERIOD
1. West Point’s long and unique history is a result of its location in Colonial Va. and rich Am. Indian heritage. Once the site of an Indian village named Cinquitoek. Seat of Opechancanough, chief of the Pamunkey Indian Tribe and youngest brother to the powerful “Powhatan” of the federation of tribes known as Powhatan (Chief Wahuncenacawh). His federation reached into Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina with some thirty tribes total. This federation was, at the time of the English intrusion, at war with the Chichomony Tribe. “Powhatan” did not want the English (tribe) siding with his rivals the Chichomony and decided to take in the English tribe as one of his own by symbolically having Capt. John Smith become one of his own (Pocahontas story). Chief Wahuncenacawh visited many villages and lived in several all along the Chesapeake Bay area during his life time. Each of these became known as his village. The Powhatan Capital however was at Wocomico in Gloucester, Va. It is recognized as the true seat and home of the powerful “Powhatan”

2. 1607-1609 – Captain John Smith is taken by force march and boat to village of Cinquitoek as a prize captive. He is released by The Powhatan Chief later.
3. 1609 – Captain John Smith returns to Cinquitoek with armed demand for food supplies for Jamestown. He holds Opechancanough at gun point for this demand.
4. 1610 – Thomas West (3rd Baron De-la-warr). He is made the first “Governor for life” and “Capt of Va.” after his 1610 rescue of the Jamestown settlement from Indian attacks and near starvation.
5. 1635 – Capt. John West, younger brother of Thomas West - Lord De-la-warr is made deputy governor of Virginia from 1635-1637.
6. 1653 - Land grant of some 4000 acres given to Gov.(Capt.) John West. He lived at his plantation at Port Richmond, West Point. The peninsula is named in honor of Gov. John West.
7. 1676 - Colonel John West Jr., son of Gov. John West Sr., opposed Nathaniel Bacon in 1676. Bacon’s followers however occupied WP peninsula and strongly fortified until captured. Col West sat on the court-martial that tried the rebels and hung one of Bacon’s lieutenants, Anthony Arnold, here in WP near 2nd and main.
8. 1689 – John West III inherits West Plantation. He and his siblings convey 50 acres to the county for the establishment of a colonial town.
10. 1701 – The colonial town of Delaware Town was founded and incorporated in 1704. It name was given in honor to Capt. West’s older brother Thomas West – Lord De-la-warr.
11. 1705 - Delaware Town’s Anglican Church, Pamunkey Neck Chapel occupied the part of town between 4th and 5th street with the burial grounds nearer the corner of 5th and Main. A lone crypt marker remains as silent testimony of its former use.
12. 1707 – First deeds for property for Delaware Town were recorded. Due to failure of most lots to sell, those that did not sell were soon reverted back to the “West Plantation” with the result of the Delaware town never really materializing as planned. Some fifty years later these lands are bought by Carter Braxton.
REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

13. 1776 - Carter Braxton, signer of the Declaration of Independence, moves to residence in town of WP after burning of his home “Chericoke” in King William County during Revolutionary War Period”. It is doing this time period that Carter Braxton starts buying remaining unsold lands in the “West Plantation” still owned by heirs of the West family. The WP home was called Grove House in the nineteenth century and was located on the West side of Main between 7th and 8th Streets. Records have him living in WP in 1781. The house was burn in the 1903 fire.

14. 1781 - During the Revolutionary War, the French under Lafayette, occupied and fortified WP during the last two weeks of August 1781 while Cornwallis was in Yorktown.

15. It was reported at this time by the French in 1781 that Delaware Town was anciently a very large Indian village but now all but one good house and the ruins of several others where the remnants of the Mattaponi Tribe now dwindled to 15-20 souls.

16. 1799 – Carter Braxton brought the “West Point Peninsula” for $35,000.00 from the West heirs. (King William Co, Va. P.40)

1800s

17. 1810 – John Taylor brought the West Plantation from the Braxton estate.

18. 1811 – John Taylor deeds the “West Plantation” to his son William Penn Taylor to manage the farming of the surrounding lands.


20. 1859 - a rail line by the Richmond and York Railway (later to become part of the Southern Railway) was placed up the Pamunkey River from White House New Kent to above the town of WP. The line went into service with the completion of a iron drawbridge completed across the Pamunkey River in 1860.

21. The Railway office depot was the brick building on 4th and Lee Street on the Mattaponi side with the rail services going across present day WP right up 4th street to reach the Mattaponi side of the river where the shipping docks were located at that time. During the Civil War, rail shipping stopped for the most part until the bridge at White House Landing could be rebuilt in 1868. (Treat notes)

22. 1867 – The York River Line started passenger service to WP and Whitehouse Landing from Baltimore with two side paddleboats the Kenebec and the Admiral. Also during this time one additional boat from Norfolk started services to WP.

23. 1868 - The bridge across the Pamunkey River from Whitehouse Landing in New Kent to the King William side toward down toward WP, which was destroyed during the Civil War, was finally restored again in 1868.

24. 1868 – New wharfs and warehouses were built along the Pamunkey between 3rd and 6th streets replacing the rail head across the middle of the present day town on 4th and Lee on the Mattaponi River. This newly developed area was then located west of present day Kirby Street where present day marshes and rail tracks are now located. It was also during this time period of (1868-1890) that many warehouses, saloons and rooming houses and the early waterfront district was being built up alone this same area.

25. 1868 – Freedman’s Bureau established first free school for African-American just prior to Beverly Allen creating his progressive school for Blacks after the town council appropriates monies toward a free school for back children in the home of Mr. Allen in 1873.
Talked given by Mrs. Daisy Treat to the “Twentieth Century Club” in WP. (items 14-28) presently located on HSWP web site.

26. 1870 - July 11th - WP was incorporated as a Town with a population of 75 people.

27. 1870 - The first town election was in September 3rd for town council officers: Mayor: John Whitbeck, Councilmen: E.W. Massey, Hansford Anderson, Haley Cole, Beverly Allen (colored), George Washington (colored), George Massey: policeman-a negro. It was reported that the only paid salary was that of policeman who received the sum of $1.00 per arrest.

28. 1873 - Beverly Allen created his progressive school for Blacks after the town council appropriates monies toward a free school for back children held at the home of Mr. Allen.

29. 1880 – First major fire as report in NY Times on 30th November. A fire of unknown origin aboard the ship “Shirley” was discovered as the cause. Railroad Warehouses burn all along Pamunkey River in West Point, Va. This water front area built up between 1868 and 1880 is largely destroyed. It was at this time the town moved East two blocks over into present day Kirby and Main streets to rebuild. The York Wholesale Building built afterwards now stands as the sole survivor of a once extensive warehouse system of building and wharfs.

30. 1881 – Second fire at the wharfs. December 26th. The same above ship “Shirley” now just newly rebuilt and renamed “West Point” was to be involved yet again in a horrific explosion just some thirteen months later at the same West Point wharfs and again only to be completely destroyed this time with the loss of some nineteen lives.

31. 1884 – Mr. and Mrs. Broaddus started a girl’s private school located on 2nd and (D) Main and also in the Ware Cottage on 11th Street.

32. 1885 – Electricity comes to WP. Electric Lights –Mr. E.W. Milken and Mr. Thomas P. Bagby started the first electric light company supplying electricity to the town and a limited number of homes.

33. 1895 – Sam Bland’s General Store, later Riddle’s Pharmacy then Heath’s Jewelers.

34. 1887 – Southern Railway announces its future plans to move the port terminus out of WP to Pinner Point in Portsmouth.

35. 1887 – the arrival of the 200-room Terminal Hotel heralded the town’s transformation to a resort destination from the shipping and cotton port of the South. Vacationers could then choose between regular train excursions or luxury steamship cruises to Baltimore. This financial investment in part by a Major James Dooley and other Richmond investors. It comes at a time when WP desperately needs the economic relief from the shocking news of the eventually closing of the shipping port here. The Terminal Hotel burns some thirty-nine years later in the fire of July 1926.

36. 1887 – a primary school situated on 8th streets in the vicinity of the present day home of John Payne. The building housed the WP Star newspaper on the first floor and the primary school on the second floor. The high school was located at (D) Main and 3rd street. Part of the building occupied a portion of a lot and was torn down when Mr. Whaley did some remodeling on his home. Later all grades were taught in what was then known as the “Community House” until it was then again later moved to the site on 12th street where the present West Point Station shopping center is located between 12th and 14th streets.

37. The back schoolyard on 12th streets was separated with an 8-foot high board fence with the boys outdoor area on one side and girls on the other. On each side the
two story school building had a water spigot, one designed for the boys and the other side designated for the girls.
38. 1887 – Christian Church moves into frame building on 8th and Lee.
39. 1887 – WP Christian Church help establish a rival “female seminary” boarding school called “Virginia Female Seminary” to rival the already established “female seminary of Mrs. Broaddus. During this time there was a white public school with four teachers and a separate black public school in WP.
40. 1887 - West Point Episcopal Church built on Main between 9th and 10th St.
41. 1888 - The population grew very fast afterward to 650 people in 1880 onto 3500 people in 1888.
42. 1889 – West Point Methodist Church built at 11th and Main.
43. 1990 - WP moved into its new brick school building on 12th street. Grades 1-8 were first established and in 1906 the high school grades of 9-12 were added with the creation of a high school department in the same building.
44. 1895 – a military school for boys was started by Mr. and Mrs. Broaddus in a house located on (E) Lee between 14th and 15th streets.
45. 1896 – January 1st Before the railroad moved their terminal to Pinner’s Point in Portsmouth Va., there were six @6 wharfs in WP to handle all the shipping being brought into the town for transport in and out. Foreign ships brought their freight here to be distributed by rail and other shipping as well as to pick up cargo to take aboard. During this time there were two large cotton presses and one very large hosiery factory. West Point was noted as the country’s fifth largest cotton port prior to this time. In addition there were four hotels all located at or nearby the wharfs. The location of much of this industry was located two blocks West of present day Kirby Street next to the Pamunkey River. This major business move out of West Point occurred in 1896. This of course created much economic hardship for the once thriving community.
46. 1888 – Telephone lines installed in WP
47. 1889 - Tidewater Commercial College for men and women established.
48. 1898 – Lewis B. Puller born in WP on first street.
DAWN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

49. 1903 – 2nd major fire. May 3rd. The fire was reported originating in the vicinity of the present WPBC (old Leggett Building). The fire that burned the downtown area, starting between 6th and 7th street burning many of the old frame buildings (52) between 4th and 8th street on (D) Main. One of the sole remaining frame buildings was that of Sam Bland’s General Store on 8th and Main also known as Riddle’s Pharmacy and later Heath’s Jewelers. It was at this time that new construction was done with brick buildings, which you now see on Main Street. It was also during this time realized that our water supply was woefully inadequate to fight a fire of any size and shortly afterward the town’s water system was put into place and a fire department started.

50. 1904-05 – present town water system installed using three electric pumps and one gasoline pump for the town.

51. 1906 – Establishment of high school department at present school on 12th street. High school grades 9-12 added to school grades 1-8, all held in the present building on 12th street.

52. 1907 – West Point Christian Church rebuilds on 5th and Main after fire of 1903

53. 1907-1908 acetylene gas streetlights were installed to serve for a brief period of time when the town loss its electrical power first started in 1885.

54. 1908 – Dr. B.B. Bagby moves to town

55. 1910 - Electric lights in town were again installed to replace the gaslights. It was during these times and even after electric lights were installed on the streets that quite frequently one would mistakenly walk up on a cow, horse or other barnyard fowl at night without being able to see adequately and be quite startled. It was the custom for these animals to roam freely in the streets at night. They could be quite a nuisance while walking about after dark. It is also for this reason that most respectable people would have a fence around their yards to keep in their animal whether it be a horse, cow, pig or fowl.

56. Love ones were very often buried in the back yards in town as noted by a Herndon family who occupied the Mayo house on 6th street. And another of a small child buried in the back yard near the present Town Hall Building. These bodies were later moved to Sunny Slope Cemetery

57. 1910 – 3rd major fire. In July of that year the Beach Park Recreation area burns.

58. 1911 – Mr. Crosby Thompson moves to WP.

59. 1913 – Chesapeake Pulp and Paper Company comes to WP and builds a paper plant.

60. 1913 - The Gresham Bridge built across Mattaponi River. Remained a toll bridge until 1928. Later called the “Lord Delaware Bridge”.

61. 1914 – The town of WP declares the town to by a dry town prior to prohibition in 1920.

62. 1917 – York River Shipbuilding Corporation 1917-1919. Built wooden cargo ships. One built but a engine was ever being placed, the other was never completed. 1000 were originally contracted for. The yard was dismantled after WWI in 1919.

63. 1925 – Toll bridge built over the Pamunkey River, ending ferry service.

64. 1926 – 4th Major fire. Terminal Hotel burns in July of 1926. By this time the bloom was off the petals of the beautiful hotel and it had been a boarding house. Stories report that the origin of the fire was down in the basement of the old building where an illegal liquor still had caught fire.
MID TWENTIETH CENTURY
65. 1930s- the town thrives during the depression thanks to the Chesapeake Mill.
66. 1941 – The twice a day passenger train service from Richmond is terminated completely coming to West Point.
67. 1942 – Baltimore steamer “City of Richmond” ended services completely to WP.

Hotels of West Point

**Hotels no longer standing:**
1. Grove Hotel The Grove Hotel was the first of the important hotels. It stood on Main Street between Seventh and Eighth Streets. The building was one of the few in existence dating back to Colonial time. West Point was known as Delaware Town. Today no buildings in West Point date back to this era. It was built before 1777. Carter Braxton used the building as his home from 1777 to 1786. After West Point's incorporation, the building became known as the Grove Hotel. It served as the first church for non-denominational services. Also used as first post office. It burn in the fire of 1903. {taken from HSWP site Gray/Dill}
2. Boarding houses all alone 7th Street and Kirby.
3. Terminal Hotel 1887-1926
4. Central Hotel
5. Commercial Hotel
6. Exchange Hotel

**Hotels still standing today:**
7. Trice Hotel: The present O'Connor home on 5th and Main. Mrs. Trice also ran the Triple River Club on 5th and Mattaponi River destroyed during hurricane of 1933.
8. O'Connor Hotel: 5th Street between Main and Kirby where Elizabeth Gray lived.
9. Royal Hotel: at 9th and Main where the doctor’s office was (The old community building where the school use to be.
Famous Homes in and around WP

OUTSIDE TOWN
1. John West Home site: ??????
2. Chericoke Plantation: King William County, home of Carter Braxton.
5. Taylor Farm: home of William Penn Taylor possible location area of Sutton/Knapp house in Port Richmond on Pamunkey River.

INTOWN
2. Stark House: 5th and Main (Baptist Parsonage). Civil War Federal Hospital 1862-1863.
4. Dr. Herndon House: 6th Lee. Cr 1860s. First physician living in WP.
5. Robert Dudley House: 206 Main Cr 1887. Oldest brink structure.???
6. Hughs House: 215 Main Cr 1884. Believed to be “Colonial Hotel”
9. 1884 – Masonic Hall built at 5th and Main. Cr 1884. The first brick commercial building placed in WP.
10. 1885 - Ball house between 10th&11th on Kirby reported to be first brick residence. (p24 Recollections of WP.)
12.
Churches of West Point

1. 1705 - Delaware Town’s Anglican Church, Pamunkey Neck Chapel occupied the part of town between 4th and 5th street with the burial grounds nearer the corner of 5th and Main. A lone crypt marker remains as silent testimony of its former use.

2. 1800s – Non-denominational meetings occurred for all citizen at the “Grove Hotel”

3. 1869 – Methodist build frame church in WP. Church torn down after brick church in 1889.

4. 1876 – First Baptist church builds a frame church at Main and 4th Street. Later brick structure build between 4th and 5th on Main in 1927.

5. 1882 – St. John’s Episcopal Church built frame church between 9th and 10th on Main still standing today.

6. 1887 – Mt Nebo Baptist Church built 13th and Kirby

7. 1887 – Disciples of Christ Christian Church frame church built on 8th and Lee. Later burned in fire of 1903. Another frame church was rebuilt to a new location at 5th and Main in 1907. More recently in 1986 the church has moved to its present location on Euclid Blvd.

8. 1889 – Methodist Church built at 11th and Main
Other Building Structure of WP

1. 1653 – West Plantation Home site located some 2 miles up Pamunkey River form present-day town.
2. 1781 – Grove House, resident of Carter Braxton located between 7th & 8th on Main in WP.
3. 1830 – Taylor Farm Home located along Pamunkey River in Port Richmond area vicinity of Sutton/ Knap homes.
4. 1850 – William Mitchell house at 303 main
5. 1861 – Stark House at 5th and Main serves as a civil war hospital.
6. 1884 – Masonic Hall built at 5th and Main. The first brick building placed in WP.
7. 1887 – Terminal Hotel built by investors and Mr. James H. Dooley.
8. 1887 – Robert Dudley house at 206 Main.
9. 1913 – Chesapeake Pulp and Paper Mill comes to WP.

Bridges

2. 1925 – Pamunkey Bridge: Toll bridge built over the Pamunkey River, ending ferry service.

Additional facts to know

2. Four Hotels still stand from 19th century: Trice Hotel at 5th and Main. O’Connor Hotel at 5th and Kirby, Royal Hotel at 9th and Main, Colonial Hotel 215 Main
3. 5th Street East on Mattaponi, Triple Sportsman Club. Washed away in storm of August 1933.
4. 8th Street East on Mattaponi, Landing for Walkerton steamers Louise and Elm City. Louise sank in this area in 1926.
5. 1863 - 4000 union troops were in WP to build the Federal Fortifications just above the present day Old Dominion Granary. The area became known as Fort Shields.
6. Ferries to WP. Pamunkey River: New Kent at Brickhouse Farm to WP at 2nd street area. Mattaponi River: King & Queen at Dudley Farm (Brookshire) to 4th Street.
7. Major Alexandra Dudley of K&Q (Dudley plantation/Brookshire) was one the major investors for the pre-civil war railway of the “Richmond and York Railway” from Richmond to WP prior to 1860. Dudley was a pre-civil war navel officer who with his friend and engineer the famous Matthew Fontaine Maury as engineer recommended the port at WP for shipping for the South.
8. Large canning factory at 8th street and Mattaponi. Old pics show very tall smoke stack at this site.
9. Mail was handled in many locations around town over the years. Grove house, treat house, business building in Main and finally Post Office.
10. Several references to the “Grove Hotel” One built by Mr. New which seems to be down in Beach Park area. The other was Grove House which was on Main 7/8 St.
Famous Persons

1. **Thomas West (Lord de-la war)** – first Governor for life of Virginia
2. **Captain John West Sr.** – younger brother of Thomas West and Governor of Virginia from 1635-1637.
4. **Carter Braxton** (1736-1797)
   Carter Braxton brought the West Plantation from the West heirs. Signer of Declaration of Independence for Virginia. Lived in King William County at Chericoke until burn in 1776. Moved to WP and lived there limitedly at what was then the “West Plantation” later called the Brackson’s Plantation after Braxton moved here. The former Braxton home sat back in a grove of trees on the West side of Main Street between 7th and 8th Streets was later called the Grove House and during the Civil War was known as the Grove Hotel. During the 1800s the area was once again referred to as the “West Point Plantation.” Braxton accumulated a great deal of debt from the war and never recovered financially. He was forced to sell his estate in 1786 and move to a smaller residence in Richmond. Carter Braxton died Oct 10th 1797 and interned at his estate “Chericoke” in upper King William County.
5. **John Taylor**
   Bought the West/Braxton Plantation in 1810 and deeded to his son William Penn Taylor in 1811.
6. **William Penn Taylor** son of John Taylor. Own what was formally known as the “West Point Plantation”. 1839-1850. Could be the home site of “Riverview” the Knapp and Wilson home.
7. **Beverly Allen Sr.**
   “A free man of color” purchased a lot in WP. He served on the first town council. The town council appropriated monies toward a free school for back children in the home of Mr. Allen in 1873. His home, no longer standing was at the corner of 3rd and Lee St.
8. **Dr. B.B. Bagby**
   Dr. Bagby moved to town in 1908. During this same year his discovery of hookworm infection in this part of the country (previously thought to be in tropics only). Also his discovery lead to the establishment of the Va Health Dept which he later join as an officer in 1923. As a member of WP Christian Church and with his medical background, he was instrumental in getting the town to vote prohibition in 1914 before national prohibition in 1920. He left in 1923 to be Public Health Officer for Henrico and Richmond. While here in WP he convinced all town residents to screen their porches to prevent spread of Malaria. WP became a model village for disease control due to its modern implication of water and sewer system installed before his departure.
9. **Jack Holt**
   Jack’s family lived in WP and his father was rector of St. John’s Episcopal Church in 1904. Jack went on to become a famous Hollywood movie actor of the 1930-40.
6. **Crosby Thompson**  
Mr. Thompson was a Cleveland banker who moved to WP in 1911. He created the idea of Port Richmond by organizing an ambitious land development consortium called the “Old Dominion Industrial Corporation”. Mr. Thompson, with two other investors (C.L. Maskey from Cleveland and P.H. Hoffman from N.Y.) brought and controlled about 800 town lots and 7,100 acres of open land in around WP. Thompson idea was to promote industry and attract new residents to the benefit of O.D.I. and the area. He first put this idea to the public in May of 1912 in the local paper. His alternate goal was to have Port Richmond be the main port of service for the city of Richmond. The Port Richmond “town hall” of the day was the previous resident of Edmund Tokarz on route 30. ODI brought the then local paper “The West Point News” to continually promote their venture of land sales and prospective industrial growth. These articles were placed in local papers as far away as West Virginia and Pennsylvania offering inexpensive lots for sale to bolster the labor population for the potential growth of industry that never happen. These articles were written in Polish to attract the new influx of coal mining immigrants coming into the country at this time. Port Richmond remained an incorporated town from 1924 until 1930 when it gave up the idea of becoming what it had once hoped for once Richmond got federal monies to dredge and create its own sea port on the James.

7. **General Lewis B “Chesty” Puller** – Born and grew up in West Point. Only man to be awarded 5 Navy Crosses, Army Distinguished Service Award.


9. **Denmead Bros. Dry Dock**

---

**Industry of Early West Point**

1. Saw Mill started by Mr. Frank New later sold to Mr. E Wilkinson and David Treat.

2. Saw Mill operated by Ruark Bros. and later R.E. Richardson at end of Ninth St. and Mattaponi.

3. Shingles factory established by John Cox


5. Canning Factory end of 7th and Mattaponi.


7. Marsden Co. “cornstalk” factory. Made from marsh grass and cornstalks a product to plug holes in wooden ships. Located at site of paper mill.


9. Box factory which later turned into WP Panel Mill in Port Richmond.

Questions to find out
11. Date of route 30 was put in going up past 14th and Main
12. Date main street in town was paved:  Around 1940
13. Street Names: Lee, and Kirby:  Who these named after (Gen Robert E. Lee and Forest Kirby killed in WWll.)
14. Where did bridge cross from Whitehouse landing join up to tracks coming into WP?  Did this junction on the KW side have a name?