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Bruce E. Field. NORFOLK IN WARTIME: THE EFFECT OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR ON THE EXPANSION OF A SOUTHERN CITY. (Under the direction of Professor Henry C. Ferrell, Jr.) Department of History, East Carolina University, June, 1978.

This study examines the effect of the First World War on the urban expansion of Norfolk, Virginia. A relatively minor, although regionally significant, port before World War I, Norfolk became in the years of that war a military-commercial center of national importance.

The study is arranged chronologically. It begins with an overview of Norfolk before the outbreak of war in 1914, continues on to a discussion of the war's effect on Norfolk before America's entrance in 1917, follows through to an evaluation of the positive and negative influences brought to Norfolk by American involvement in the war, and concludes with an assessment of the First World War's long range effect on the city in the aftermath of the conflict.

Norfolk before World War I was a rapidly expanding commercial port. Guided by the progressive tenets of the post-Civil War New South Creed, the city's local promoters pulled her from the depths of despair that had descended upon her with that earlier conflict and, riding the optimistic wave brought by coal companies and railroad lines, inched her toward prosperity. The beginning of war in Europe, by increasing that continent's need for American resources, furthered this prosperity.

America's entrance into the war shifted Norfolk from a primarily commercial to a primarily military center. The federal government's astute awareness of Norfolk's strategic location led to the establishment of numerous military facilities in the region, the most significant of

which was the Hampton Roads Naval Operating Base. In the year and a half that followed, the federal government replaced the local promoters as Norfolk's leading advocates. The shift to a military interest, however, did not change the basic rhythm of Norfolk's course--she continued to move steadily forward.

The forward movement was, of course, occasionally interrupted by obstacles. The federal arrival in Norfolk brought about a series of difficulties, as labor, housing, transportation, and utilities problems plagued the city for the duration of the war. In addition, those difficulties common to most American cities in wartime--food, fuel, and energy shortages, cost of living increases, and monetary contributions demanded for the continuation of the war effort--further hampered Norfolk's development. To her credit, though, Norfolk survived the sacrifices well and ended the war period with the same spirit of optimism in which she had begun.

The immediate aftermath of World War I showed just how well Norfolk had weathered the storm. While her local promoters regained the prominent position that they had held prior to 1917, they did so in a spirit of cooperation with the now well established military-federal authorities. In a similar vein of cooperation, the commercial and military spheres united in a partnership that discouraged conflict and promoted joint progress. The Norfolk of 1918, then, became a model of military-civilian cooperation and one of the forerunners of the military-industrial complex.

NORFOLK IN WARTIME:  
THE EFFECT OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR  
ON THE EXPANSION OF A SOUTHERN CITY

A Thesis

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Bruce E. Field

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by

Bruce E. Field

APPROVED BY:

*W. M. Still*  
*Charles L. Rice*  
SUPERVISOR OF THESIS

*Harry C. Jones*

CHAIRMAN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

*Robert R. Paul*

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

*Joseph H. Boyette*

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Professional thanks are also extended to the staffs of the following institutions: the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the Virginia State Library, the Kirm Memorial Library (Norfolk), the Norfolk City Hall, the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce, the Hampton Roads Maritime Exchange, and the libraries at East Carolina University, American University, and Old Dominion University. Among those staff members, a special thanks is due to Gary Conn of the Military Archives Division of the National Archives, who gave to me the most generous of assistance in uncovering archival material as well as in finding a decent place to eat during my month's stay in the nation's capital.

My personal love and thanks go to three people: my mother and father, who have put up with a lot from me in twenty-five years, and my wife, Kim, who suffered through countless rewrites by a person who felt compelled to read each aloud. They are very special parents and she is a very special wife. For what it's worth, I dedicate this thesis to them.

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## FOREWORD

The generally widespread belief that war often serves as a positive catalyst for the American economy was the original inspiration behind this thesis. Although this nation is not so foolish as to initiate wars deliberately for the sake of financial or commercial gain, rarely has her economic well-being suffered as a result of her entrance into such conflicts. In fact, the United States has come to accept as part of her collective bag of quotable quotes the cynical yet accurate statement that war is good business. With that in mind, the purpose was to focus in on one city, Norfolk, Virginia, to see if the adage held true, to see if prosperity accompanied the war to Norfolk.

A number of factors dictated the choice of Norfolk. On the practical side, the city's proximity to eastern North Carolina and to East Carolina University made source materials easily accessible. The more important deliberations centered primarily on the belief that Norfolk itself is a significant American city. Located at almost the exact midpoint of the American east coast, she is ideally positioned to carry on trade with the major ports of both the north and the southeast, from Boston to New Orleans. Her physical advantages of being situated on one of the world's finest natural harbors, the Hampton Roads, and at the same time of being snugly tucked onto the eastern shore of the Elizabeth River and thus away from the rough waters of both the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay, increase her attractiveness as a center for local, national, and international commerce.

This study centers upon World War I because of the relative importance that that war, above all other wars, held for Norfolk. While the Revolutionary and Civil Wars brought physical destruction, and while according to Marvin W. Schlegel's Conscripted City: Norfolk in World War II (Norfolk, 1951) the Second World War brought confusing disarray, no other war determined as assuredly as did the First World War the shape of Norfolk's future. By bringing with it a fresh military interest in the form of the Hampton Roads Naval Operating Base, World War I guaranteed that Norfolk would go beyond being simply a commercial giant and would in the following years become also a military Goliath.

When this thesis was begun, then, the sole concern was to demonstrate how the First World War affected Norfolk. Keeping the adage about war being good business firmly in mind, the assumption was that the city would benefit from America's involvement in the conflict, that her commercial sphere would gain from the needs of both a Europe and a United States at war, and that her military significance would receive a large boost from American participation. While that assumption has been borne out, it also has been significantly modified. Added to the war as a springboard and catalyst for Norfolk's growth was the equally important sense of optimism given to the city by the post-Civil War creed of New South expansionism.<sup>1</sup> The major tenet of that creed--the belief in progress for an area of the country long dominated by regression and suffering--typified

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<sup>1</sup>For a concise view of the New South creed, see C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge, 1971) and George B. Tindall, The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945 (Baton Rouge, 1967), the latter hereinafter cited as Tindall, New South.

the attitude of many of Norfolk's residents in the years of the war. More importantly, it dominated the thoughts of Norfolk's leaders, men who used the philosophy to further Norfolk's growth.

This concept of urban growth built upon the twin pillars of New South progressivism and the benefits of war is the heart of this thesis. Stressing a series of related themes--prosperity in the midst of sacrifice, competition from other cities as an incentive, and local versus federal control--the purpose is to chronicle the changing face of a city, to record how Norfolk was catapulted from local port to national center for commerce and defense.

Beginning with a brief recounting of Norfolk's history up to the start of the war in 1914, Chapter I traces her rhythmic periods of advancement and decline in those early years, concluding that by the time of the "Great War" a sense of optimism permeated the city. Guided by the progressive attitude of the New South creed and favored by the arrival of previously absent railroad lines, a handful of true believers in Norfolk's potential steered their city toward commercial prosperity. With the advent of the war came increased benefits, as cries from Europe for wartime necessities augmented the city's growing shipping and coal trades. A renewed government interest in her long neglected Navy Yard--an interest spawned in part by the fear that the United States might soon enter the war--added to Norfolk's pattern of growth and made prophetic the predictions of her promoters that the war in Europe would prove a blessing to their already thriving Norfolk.

Chapter II begins the discussion of what happened in Norfolk once

the United States entered the war in April, 1917. Following up on the earlier concern with the Navy Yard, the federal government concluded that Norfolk's physical attributes gave her excellent potential as a much needed military site. What resulted was the authorization in June, 1917, for the building of the Hampton Roads Naval Operating Base, the largest naval facility on the east coast. In the ensuing months the American military took firm control of Norfolk. Zealously striving to make the base an operating reality in as short a time span as possible, the military contracted laborers, brought in materials, and virtually changed the face of the city overnight. Difficulties inevitably followed, for despite Norfolk's recent growth few preparations had been made to deal with such swift modifications in her life style. As labor, housing, transportation, and utilities problems plagued the city, Norfolk was trapped between the desire for continued expansion and the desire to serve loyally a nation at war.

Despite the dilemma, Norfolk survived the war years well. While the military achieved its desired goals, establishing not only a flourishing Navy base but also an Army base in the Hampton Roads area, Norfolk continued on her positive road to growth. Yet in the midst of persistent expansion, the city was forced to accept a myriad of sacrifices made necessary by America's involvement in the war. Many of the sacrifices, such as food, fuel, and energy shortages and the monetary forfeitures of the Liberty Loans, War Savings Stamps, and Red Cross drives, were the same as those faced by countless American cities. Others, such as labor strikes and disputes, riots, and increased crime, were peculiar to Norfolk

in her new role as a center for transient laborers and military personnel. Chapter III is an account of those sacrifices.

The immediate aftermath of the war, dealt with in Chapter IV, brought with it one overriding question: Would prosperity continue for Norfolk once the war was over? To those who saw the military as the sole key to the city's expansion, the answer was an unfortunate "no." The exiting of laborers, the cutting back of appropriations for military sites, the cycling down of wartime wages, and the almost immediate removing of numerous federal boards seemed to foreshadow a significant retreat. Yet to those who realized that the military's arrival in Norfolk was only a part of the positive growth pattern that had begun with the Civil War, these negative events were seen as nothing more than what they were intended to be--a phasing out of wartime necessities. Regaining the control of their city that they had relinquished to the military for the war period, these pragmatists looked with optimism to the future. They hoped that the newly acquired military significance would combine with the already notable commercial fame to make Norfolk an even greater city than she had been at the outset of the war. The hope was soon fulfilled.

Research for this thesis proved at times perplexing. Our national fixation with the agrarian myth, the yeoman farmer, and rural life in general has contributed to a not unexpected lack on the part of American cities of a sense of their own history. Even though this traditional attitude of neglect has been gradually changing since Arthur Schlesinger's 1933 The Rise of the City took the pioneering step on the road of urban history, its influences stubbornly linger on. Norfolk, unfortunately, is

no different from her American sisters in her indifference to the past.

Norfolk's indifference, though, is a selective indifference, an approach in which her residents, record keepers, and historians readily highlight certain periods of the city's history while completely shunning others. The era of the First World War falls in the neglected group. At almost every turn in the research, suggestions were offered that other eras, most particularly the "glorious" years of the Civil War, would make for more fruitful study. The attitude never made much sense, for every bit of unearthed information made it vividly obvious that by comparison the years of the First World War were decidedly more "glorious" for Norfolk than were the years of the Confederacy.

This sense of apathy was encountered initially upon visiting Norfolk's new city hall, where few World War I statistics existed. What records the city has held on to, officials said, go back only to 1925, for a fire at some time had destroyed most of the other records. Inquiries at the office of the building inspector resulted in the discouraging knowledge that in the moving from the old to the new city hall all but the most recent of the records for building permits were simply thrown out. Records at the Hampton Roads Maritime Exchange as well as picture files at local newspapers were equally scarce. The New Norfolk Statistical Digest, published by the Chamber of Commerce and containing invaluable information, carries Norfolk only back to 1953. Kirm Memorial Library, according to everyone in the city the last word on Norfolk's past, for all of its wealth of information contains incredibly little on the years of the war.

This lack of local data led to a concentration on state and national sources. What follows, then, is based more on materials at the Virginia State Library, the National Archives, and the Library of Congress than on what scattered information exists in the city itself. The only major exception is the Virginian Pilot, a source which was relied on quite heavily, both out of necessity and out of the immediate recognition that the local newspaper conveyed more of a feel for the subject than did any other source.

The research benefitted from a handful of secondary sources, although Norfolk's disinterest in her past has caused these few efforts to be fragmentary at best. Even more discouraging is their lack of any overall conceptual theme such as the one aimed at here. Thomas J. Wertenbaker and Marvin W. Schlegel's Norfolk: Historic Southern Port (Durham, 1962), heralded by the city's partisans as the valid biography of their city, despite its superficiality, occasional errors of fact, and Chamber of Commerce promotional approach, served as an adequate springboard for ideas. Most of the others were useful mainly for their abundant statistical data: Caroline Reeves' "Impact of World War I on the Hampton Roads Area," written as a part of the Labor Department's more sweeping The Impact of War on the Hampton Roads Area (Washington, 1944); the Navy Department's Activities of the Bureau of Yards and Docks (Washington, 1921); the Virginia State Planning Board's Population in Flux: A Study of Population Trends in the Hampton Roads Area, 1890-1942 (Richmond, 1943), edited by John Clausen; and the Virginia War History Commission's multi-volume Virginia's War History (Richmond, 1920-1927), edited by Arthur K. Davis.

Two master's theses, both of which were overly factual and insufficiently conceptual, Ira Hanna's The Growth of the Norfolk Naval Air Station and the Norfolk-Portsmouth Metropolitan Area in the Twentieth Century (Old Dominion University, 1967) and Grace Browning Benton's The Development of Port of Norfolk (American University, 1924) were also consulted.

This thesis is not meant to be either definitive or exhaustive of its subject. There are sections--notably the portions on the development of the Navy Yard, the relationship between local and national legislators, and the personal backgrounds of prominent local leaders--that with more comprehensive research would make first-rate doctoral dissertations. With some perseverance and a little luck those projects will be tackled in the future. Neither is this thesis designed to present an in-depth statistical analysis of Norfolk's growth pattern. While the author admires the analytical approach of an Alen D. Anderson's The Origin and Resolution of an Urban Crisis; Baltimore, 1890-1930 (Baltimore, 1977), he feels at the moment unprepared for such a mathematical adventure. Even if he were prepared, the paucity of available statistics in or on Norfolk would make the analytical approach impractical.

This thesis is a deliberate attempt to shy away from the endless enumeration of fact and the pointless recitation of promotional gibberish that have characterized past studies of Norfolk. Out of personal preference the author has chosen to stress instead a conceptual approach, an approach that leans toward Blaine Brownell's The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930 (Baton Rouge, 1975), in which the primary purpose was to "examine urban imagery, urban boosterism, and concepts of the urban community in the

context of a relatively specific historical...situation."<sup>2</sup> By doing so a hopefully more useful understanding of Norfolk's role in the years of the First World War will emerge. If it does not, the blame falls entirely upon the author, who offers as his only excuse the fact that this thesis is his initiation into the field of urban history.

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<sup>2</sup>Blaine Brownell, The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930 (Baton Rouge, 1977), xvi.

## CHAPTER I

### PRELUDE TO INVOLVEMENT;

### NORFOLK'S PREWAR GROWTH

The thirty-two months of American non-involvement in World War I, from its outbreak in August, 1914, to America's entrance in April, 1917, brought dramatic changes to the United States. The country did not participate in the actual fighting, but necessity required involvement in world trade and commerce. The uncertainty of the future caused by the war led to an initial depression in the American economy, as goods that under normal circumstances would have flowed to European shores were forced to find newer, yet untested markets. By late 1915, this threat to American stability had passed, for with President Wilson's concrete decision to remain steadfastly neutral and with the steps that he took to aid American shipping in this neutrality, confidence was restored to American business. Through 1916 and up to America's entrance into the war, growth indices pointed steadily upward.<sup>1</sup> Progress became the order of the day.

Progress was even more so the rule in Norfolk, Virginia, a city that had seen prosperity alternate all too frequently with poverty since her beginnings in the late seventeenth century. Established in the 1680's and made a town in 1705, Norfolk lived her first two centuries in a

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<sup>1</sup>Frank Freidel, America in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1960), 169, hereinafter cited as Freidel, Twentieth Century; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970 (Washington, 1975), 626-1042, hereinafter cited as U.S. Census Bureau, Historical Statistics.

constant state of flux: she did well through 1775, suffered from that year until the 1790's, regained her prestige until 1812, struggled once more through the Civil War, and then with the end of that war finally started on a successful road that by World War I she was still upon.<sup>2</sup> This cyclical history was determined in large part by Norfolk's position as a commercial port. That the Norfolk Navy Yard was located in her immediate vicinity<sup>3</sup> also effected Norfolk's history, yet in the years before the First World War its role was minimal in comparison with the commercial sphere.

Norfolk's rise as a commercial port began almost in unison with her creation in the 1680's. While most other ports in the colonies thrived on tobacco as their chief export, Norfolk at first relied on naval stores. Although she served as port merely for local districts, her trade was lively and profitable. Yet, as Thomas J. Wertenbaker and Marvin W. Schlegel have noted, "had Norfolk been the mart for the adjacent counties only, she would have remained always a village."<sup>4</sup> Her ability to attract northeastern North Carolinians to use her facilities allowed her to avoid this predicament. Farmers from that colony, disgruntled with the lack of port facilities in their own land, rushed their goods instead to Norfolk. By the time of the American Revolution, the town served not only as the

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<sup>2</sup>Marvin W. Schlegel, editor, Norfolk: Historic Southern Port, 2nd edition (Durham, 1962), 3-299, hereinafter cited as Schlegel, Historic Port.

<sup>3</sup>Despite its name the Norfolk Navy Yard is actually located across the Elizabeth River in Portsmouth.

<sup>4</sup>Schlegel, Historic Port, 30.

chief port for southeastern Virginia but for northeastern North Carolina as well.<sup>5</sup>

The bombardment of Norfolk by Lord Dunmore on January 1, 1776, brought to a temporary halt the town's commercial prosperity. With all but one of her buildings completely levelled and with her people scattered to other sections of the colonies, opinion was widespread that Norfolk would be unable to regain her commercial prominence. The predictions proved inaccurate, as twenty years after the Revolution Norfolk had not only failed to collapse but had rallied to prosper. The acquisition of new trade routes--with Europe, the West Indies, and the northern colonies--expanded her commercial position, as once again she became a busily congested port. By 1810, her population had reached 9,193, a figure that was 3,000 higher than her pre-bombardment level and 6,000 higher than the 1790 level.<sup>6</sup>

As the Revolution had adversely affected Norfolk's commerce, so too did the War of 1812. The embargoes and exclusion acts of the war period paralyzed Norfolk's trade with the West Indies. At the same time, she lost much of her European trade to the rapidly expanding port of New York, while the invention of the steamboat, by making it easier for the northern colonies to trade directly with Virginia's fall line cities, caused the

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<sup>5</sup>Schlegel, Historic Port, 27-47.

<sup>6</sup>Schlegel, Historic Port, 48-94; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States, Census of Population 1960, Volume I: Characteristics of the Population (Washington, 1961), 66, hereinafter cited as U.S. Census Bureau, Eighteenth Decennial Census.

loss of the town's last area of trade. Population in Norfolk rose steadily after declining to 8,478 in 1820, yet even though it reached 14,620 in 1860 the city in these years was a stagnant one.<sup>7</sup> Having at one point rivalled Baltimore for trade, by the Civil War she rivalled no one. Her commerce shattered, she was a city of little merit, a city with an impressive past but no apparent future.

As it did for much of the south, the end of the Civil War started Norfolk out of the depths of depression and onto a new road to progress. The adoption of the New South creed, in its many shapes and forms, returned prosperity to that section of the nation. For Norfolk, relief came in the form of the railroad. Prior to the war, investors had been reluctant to build rails to connect Norfolk with the interior, their reasoning being that the steamboat made inland river ports more economically feasible. In the 1870's, as the newer and bigger ocean liners found it more convenient to trade with Norfolk, the railroads quickly changed their minds. They now converged on the city with all possible speed, and so numerous were they in number that a belt line had to be built to ease the congestion.<sup>8</sup>

Railroad expansion was matched in most other phases of Norfolk's existence. At her piers, the once-heralded exports of naval stores and

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<sup>7</sup> Schlegel, Historic Port, 95-206; U.S. Census Bureau, Eighteenth Decennial Census, 66.

<sup>8</sup> Schlegel, Historic Port, 247-299; John Clausen, editor, Population in Flux: A Study of Population Trends in the Hampton Roads Area, 1890-1942 (Richmond, 1942), 21, hereinafter cited as Clausen, Population in Flux; Ira Hanna, "The Growth of the Norfolk Naval Air Station and the Norfolk-Portsmouth Metropolitan Area in the Twentieth Century," M.A. thesis, Old Dominion University, 1967, 1, hereinafter cited as Hanna, "Growth of Norfolk."

tobacco were replaced at the top of the list in 1874 by cotton, which was itself replaced ten years later by coal. In her streets, horse-drawn cars gave way to electric trolley cars, which gave way to automobiles. This transportation revolution, as well as a 1910 population of 67,452, pushed Norfolk's city limits farther north and west, and as suburbs sprang up in all directions the entire area took on the appearance of one uninterrupted city.<sup>9</sup>

By the beginning of World War I, then, Norfolk was a city on the move. After having bounced up and down the roads of prosperity and poverty, Norfolk had finally come into her own. Her population had climbed 361 per cent in the half-century from 1860 to 1910, a growth rate six times that of the previous half-century.<sup>10</sup> Her city limits similarly had begun to stretch, as the city's original fifty acres by 1914 had spread to 9.33 square miles.<sup>11</sup> Most importantly, Norfolk had established herself as a leading commercial port. Buoyed by her new-found source of wealth, coal, Norfolk was intent on making "slow but steady progress."<sup>12</sup> The intention was carried through successfully in the months leading up to American entrance into the war.

That Norfolk continued to grow was due entirely to the enthusiasm

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<sup>9</sup>Schlegel, Historic Port, 271-299; U.S. Census Bureau, Eighteenth Decennial Census, 66.

<sup>10</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, Eighteenth Decennial Census, 66.

<sup>11</sup>Retail Merchant's Association of Norfolk, Golden Jubilee, 1903-1953 (n.p., n.d.), 20, hereinafter cited as Retail Merchants, Golden Jubilee.

<sup>12</sup>Marvin W. Schlegel, Conscripted City, Norfolk in World War II (Norfolk, 1951), 2, hereinafter cited as Schlegel, Conscripted City.

of her local residents. More specifically, it was owing to the enthusiasm of a small handful of Norfolk residents in advertising their city to the rest of the nation and to the rest of the world as well. Chief among these local promoters was Barton Myers, who in his long life in Norfolk served in perhaps every position he could to further the city's growth. As the mayor of Norfolk in the 1880's, Myers played an active part in luring new railroads to the city. In 1890 he helped organize the Businessmen's Association of Norfolk, a group with the avowed purpose of selling Norfolk to the nation. Finally, in 1905 Myers played the key role in convincing the Virginian Railway to build a line to his city.<sup>13</sup>

Myers had numerous associates in his efforts to promote Norfolk, yet none were more convincing than W.A. Cox, a Norfolk businessman of long standing, Wyndam R. Mayo, the mayor of Norfolk, and Foster K. Murray, the outspoken editorialist of the Virginian Pilot, Norfolk's leading newspaper. Between the four of them, these men had access to and influence among the major bodies of opinion in the city: the business community, the city government, and the public. Assessing the mood of these groups, Myers and his colleagues in 1912 created as a watchdog over the city's expansion the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce, with Myers as president of that body. An extension of the earlier Businessmen's Association, the Chamber was designed to guarantee that Norfolk's recent expansion would be more than a temporary phase.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Schlegel, Historic Port, 278-283.

<sup>14</sup>Virginian Pilot, December 12, 1915, hereinafter cited as Pilot.

Equally as vocal in promoting Norfolk were her newspapers, of which there were two of major significance: the previously referred to Pilot and the Ledger-Dispatch. In philosophy the papers were identical. Both reflected an undaunted support of President Wilson, stressed an unwavering loyalty to the nation, and attributed the recent wave of American prosperity to the presence of a Democratic administration in Washington. Yet for all of their national awareness, their chief concern as the war broke out in Europe was the furthering of the city's progress. As Arthur Davis has written, the Pilot was intent on guarding local interests, while the Ledger-Dispatch portrayed "all the aspirations of the port" in its pages.<sup>15</sup>

The optimism of Norfolk's promoters was exhibited with the beginning of hostilities in Europe. Refusing to believe that the war necessitated a slowdown in Norfolk's forward stride, Myers and Cox, from 1914 to 1916, stepped up their advertising of the city to the rest of the nation. Having established Norfolk as a leading commercial port, they now directed their efforts toward attracting smaller supporting industries. Travelling from section to section of the country, the two stimulated widespread interest in their city with their description of it as "the most virile, optimistic community on the southern seaboard," a community whose "equable climate" would be a boon to any prospective new industry.<sup>16</sup> "Southern business," the Chamber wrote, "can be handled more quickly and economically from

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<sup>15</sup> Arthur K. Davis, editor, Virginia War Letters, Diaries, and Editorials (Richmond, 1925), 257-269, hereinafter cited as Davis, Virginia War Letters.

<sup>16</sup> Norfolk Chamber of Commerce, Norfolk, Virginia, Central Atlantic Port (Norfolk, 1915), 1-5, hereinafter cited as Chamber of Commerce, Central Atlantic Port; Pilot, December 3, 1914.

Norfolk than any other city, bar none."<sup>17</sup> Back in Norfolk, Foster Murray made periodic reports to the people of the city that their emissary's efforts were paying off, and each new edition of the Pilot brought news of an impressive array of companies electing to move to Norfolk.<sup>18</sup>

Promotional campaigns were only one of the means used to further Norfolk's growth. From 1914 to 1916, Myers travelled to numerous business conferences to discuss Norfolk's future with some of America's most respected men. In mid-August, 1914, he met with President Wilson and Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo, receiving assurances from them that if the war hampered American shipping they would take steps to relieve the strain. In the same month, Myers sent a committee of three to the Southern Cotton Congress to represent Norfolk in a similar discussion. These efforts to boost the city's position in business and commercial spheres were highly successful, and with the end of each year Norfolk's city and business leaders predicted continued prosperity.<sup>19</sup> Their predictions were supported by the statements of Cyrus Kehr, a city development expert who upon visiting Norfolk in mid-1916 declared that she had possibilities second to no other city in the nation. The decision of the

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<sup>17</sup>Chamber of Commerce, Central Atlantic Port, 7.

<sup>18</sup>Pilot, August 1, 6, September 9, December 3, 1914, February 20, July 31, September 4, October 28, December 9, 24, 1915, January 5, July 19, October 22, 24, December 29, 1916; Arthur K. Davis, "Norfolk City in War Time; A Community History," in Virginia Communities in War Time, editor Arthur K. Davis (Richmond, 1926), 322-323, hereinafter cited as Davis, "Norfolk City."

<sup>19</sup>Pilot, August 16, October 2, 1914, January 1, December 31, 1916.

Southern Commercial Congress to hold its eighth annual, and biggest yet, convention in Norfolk in December, 1916, boosted even further the spirits of the city's promoters.<sup>20</sup>

The atmosphere created by this bouyant optimism was one in which few would have guessed that a major war was in progress on the other side of the ocean. The mood was not one of jubilation, but it was even less so one of depression. While the earliest months of the war brought most of the American business community to a near halt, Norfolk's businesses remained relatively unharmed. Even at the height of the national slump, when retail sales in many northern and western cities were off as much as 28 per cent, Norfolk's 350 manufacturing plants continued to hold surprisingly steady. Occasionally a local company suffered as a direct result of the war, as was the case with a local warehouse whose nitrate shipments from Chile were being sunk by both German and British warships. For the most part, however, business was good, and when a company was forced to close because of the depression, more often than not it soon reopened on an expanded basis.<sup>21</sup> When the General Superintendent of the Railway Mail Service, A.H. Stephens, visited the city in late 1914, he could only marvel at her position:

While there is a feeling of general depression all over the

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<sup>20</sup>Pilot, June 20, December 11-15, 1916.

<sup>21</sup>Pilot, October 27, December 13, 1914, January 7, November 5, 1915; The Industrial Commission of Norfolk, Norfolk, Virginia: The Sunrise City by the Sea (Norfolk, 1914), 25, hereinafter cited as Industrial Commission, Sunrise City. Figures given in the Manufacturers Record, LXIX (May 4, 1916), 51, show a smaller number of manufacturing establishments in Norfolk than the 350 cited here. Nevertheless, both sources agree on the forward moving nature of the city's businesses.

country because of the war, Norfolk does not seem to have felt it. Of course, it has in a measure, for no part of America has altogether escaped it, but Norfolk seems live and bustling.<sup>22</sup>

"Live and bustling" described best Norfolk's port facilities, although here Norfolk felt most pointedly--even if only temporarily--the initial effects of the war. Collector of Customs Norman R. Hamilton, appointed to his office on April 16, 1914, had his hands full in the earliest months of the conflict when the unsteady situation in Europe left shippers in doubt as to what course to follow. Fear of a general tie-up of shipping haunted the city, and one of her two major shipping companies instructed railroad officials to accept no new shipments until further notified. Goods that had already been sent to Norfolk accumulated on the wharves and in the warehouses, and ships already laden with cargo chose to stay in port until they could be sure of the safety of the seas.<sup>23</sup>

Cotton suffered heavily in this early shipping crisis. The outbreak of the war brought a curtailment of export markets for the southern farmer, and as a result Norfolk experienced a 51 per cent decrease in the amount of cotton handled from August 1 to November 30, 1914. Norfolk's usually heavy British trade also was slowed in these early months by the presence of German sea raiders off of the Atlantic coast. So leary were British ships of leaving Norfolk that at least one, the Strombus, resorted

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<sup>22</sup>Pilot, November 21, 1914.

<sup>23</sup>Pilot, August 4, 1914.

to sneaking out of the port in the middle of darkness.<sup>24</sup>

This initial slowdown in Norfolk's shipping was short-lived. Collector Hamilton, barely four months in office, announced an extremely tight supervision of any ships entering or leaving the port. In an effort to enforce America's position of neutrality, he ordered the stationing of the U.S.S. Mayflower off of the Hampton Roads, giving her the authority to stop and search any ships headed for foreign ports. When these local attempts to provide stability were backed by similarly inspired federal efforts--the passing of laws providing for emergency shipping insurance and the admittance of foreign-built ships to American registry--Norfolk's brief shipping recession faded into the past.<sup>25</sup> By the end of 1914, shipping once again was at peak levels, and with the arrival of 1915, Norfolk's cotton crisis was over. Although the sinking of the Lusitania in May, 1915, once more brought a temporary slowdown, Norfolk's fortunes as a port steadily rose from 1914 to the end of 1916. Her export trade climbed 277 per cent, while her import trade grew at the rate of 201 per cent. The latter's volume remained relatively small and was the decisive factor in keeping Norfolk second to New York as an Atlantic coast port.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Pilot, August 1, 7, 30, September 12, 27, 30, October 1, 4, November 6, December 1, 1914, January 17, May 1, August 2, October 1, December 2, 1915, May 1, June 1, August 1, October 2, 10, November 1, December 2, 31, 1916; Tindall, New South, 33-38.

<sup>25</sup> Pilot, August 6-30, 1914.

<sup>26</sup> Pilot, May 8, August 31, 1915, April 30, 1916; Freidel, Twentieth Century, 170-172; Grace B. Benton, "The Development of Port of Norfolk," M.A. thesis, American University, 1924, 62, hereinafter cited as Benton, "Port of Norfolk"; Hampton Roads Maritime Exchange, The Ports of Hampton Roads 1928 Annual (Portsmouth, 1928), 19-23, hereinafter cited as Maritime Exchange, 1928 Annual.

Coal was at the heart of the port's success. Railroads drawn to Norfolk by the city's new coal industry had from 1880 to 1900 extended numerous lines into the coalfields of southwest Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio. The Norfolk and Western quickly took the lead in the new business, yet it was not alone. Seven other railroads also entered Norfolk: the Southern Railway, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway, the New York, Philadelphia, and Norfolk Railroad, the Virginian Railway, the Seaboard Air Line Railway, and the Norfolk Southern Railroad.<sup>27</sup> When the war caused a shortage of coal in Europe and made it essential for that part of the world to rely on the neutral United States for coal, Norfolk's coal businesses met with rabid prosperity. Foreign governments signed huge contracts with the Norfolk companies, and as new export and coal dumping records were successively set and broken from September, 1914, to May, 1916, the Virginian Pilot optimistically predicted that Norfolk would surpass Cardiff as the world's greatest coal shipping market.<sup>28</sup>

To meet that goal, Norfolk had to face stiff competition in her own region, for the physical advantages of the Hampton Roads area had benefitted more cities than just Norfolk. The whole region had long profitted from its favorable locale, and competition between the larger cities of Norfolk, Portsmouth, Hampton, and Newport News had for years served as a stimulus

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<sup>27</sup>Hanna, "Growth of Norfolk," 1-2; Clausen, Population in Flux, 21; Retail Merchants, Golden Jubilee, 20.

<sup>28</sup>Pilot, September 1, October 1, 1914, March 7, May 1, July 1, 1915, May 31, June 20, 1916; Schlegel, Historic Port, 304.

for growth. Particularly challenging to Norfolk was Newport News, the site of the impressive Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company and of coal piers that with the beginning of the war were anticipating increased business as eagerly as Norfolk's companies. Ever aware of the need to keep ahead of their competition, the Norfolk firms spent millions of dollars expanding their facilities to meet increasing demands. The Norfolk and Western, after setting a national record for coal dumped over its piers as early as June, 1915, nine months later allocated \$1,000,000 to construct two more warehouses at its Lambert Point piers. The improvement resulted in a 1916 fiscal total almost double its 1915 figure. The Virginian Railway tripled its coal dumping capacity at Sewall Point by the end of 1916, and by the early months of 1917 was challenging the Norfolk and Western for local superiority. As a whole, Norfolk's piers dumped 37 per cent more coal in 1916 than they had in 1914.<sup>29</sup>

Other indices of growth besides the coal trade similarly indicated the positive direction in which Norfolk's port was moving. Day after day, ships arrived to pick up cars, trucks, and horses to be used in the war zones, steel rails to reconstruct war-torn sections of Europe, and numerous other goods all deemed essential in the crisis of war. Each new day also brought news that yet another steamship company was seeking to make Norfolk a regular port of call on their routes from the west coast, the Mediterranean, Hawaii, and Japan. The end of fiscal year 1915 showed the city to

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<sup>29</sup> Pilot, June 2, 17, July 2, December 31, 1915, March 7, September 27, November 26, December 24, 1916, January 3, 1917; Chamber of Commerce, Central Atlantic Port, 3.

have experienced the greatest foreign trade in the history of Virginia, and the following year showed a remarkable doubling of ships handled over the record-setting pace of 1915.<sup>30</sup>

The rest of Norfolk fared equally as well as her port. Especially was this true of her banks, who from 1914 to 1916 increased their clearings by 14 per cent and their deposits by 56 per cent. Norfolk's building activities also rose, with the cost of improvements climbing 37 per cent in the same two year period.<sup>31</sup> At no other point was the prosperity felt with greater effect, though, than at the city's other major sphere of economic activity, her military establishment.

In 1914 in Norfolk the military establishment meant mainly the Norfolk Navy Yard. While there were other minor installations--the Southern Drill Grounds, the Saint Helena Training Station, the Marine Barracks, and the Marine Hospital--the yard, with its close to 3,000 employees, represented the federal government's major outlay of funds in the Norfolk area. Built by the British just before the Revolution but confiscated by Virginia in that Revolution, the yard remained in state hands until it was sold to the United States government on June 15, 1801. A handful of vessels was constructed in the next thirty years, but not until it built the first stone

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<sup>30</sup> Pilot, November 30, December 19, 1914, January 26, 28, March 27, April 16, May 1, 14, June 16, 28, 30, July 3, 8, 25, September 10, October 19, 1915, January 6, February 11, July 30, November 26, 1916.

<sup>31</sup> Pilot, October 30, November 1, December 7, 12, 1914, February 27, June 1, July 1, 18, December 1, 1915, March 31, April 30, May 14, July 22, November 2, December 31, 1916, January 1, 1917; Manufacturers Record, LXIX (January 3, 1916), 53.

dry dock in the nation in June, 1833, did Norfolk's Navy Yard attain national prominence. Twenty-eight years later the yard was captured by the Confederacy, but was not held long and was not put to any great use, although it was the site of the conversion of the Merrimack into the Virginia. Following the war, the yard remained what it had been for most of its existence--a potentially significant yet woefully neglected site.<sup>32</sup>

By the early twentieth century, conditions at the yard had improved very little. Although it had set national records for the most tonnage cared for in a single day, and although it served as the home base for the Atlantic Fleet, years of neglect had left Norfolk's Navy Yard in pathetic shape. Equipment was so outdated that it was hardly operable, and storage space was so limited that many supplies were in danger of deteriorating from being left outdoors.<sup>33</sup> At the end of 1915, the yard's supply officer wrote to the commandant that the conditions were deplorable:

That, in the event of war, a huge number of vessels would be assembled in Hampton Roads to be fitted out at Norfolk seems almost a sure eventuality. The supply officer feels that he is quite conservative when he expresses the opinion that the Supply Department would not be adequate to outfit thirty per cent of the vessels thus assembled.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Edward P. Lull, History of the United States Navy Yard at Gosport (Washington, 1874), 8-18, hereinafter cited as Lull, Navy Yard; Schlegel, Historic Port, 211-218.

<sup>33</sup>Pilot, April 16, December 30, 1916.

<sup>34</sup>Supply Officer to Commandant, December 24, 1915, Records of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, Record Group 71, Entry 11, File No. 10879-10, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. Archival records are hereinafter cited as Record Group Number, Entry Number:File Number.

Two inspection trips by the Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks in early 1916 confirmed the supply officer's story: the public works section was seen as thoroughly inadequate, the industrial section badly congested and supplied with buildings that pre-dated the Civil War, and the berthing facilities lamentably weak. The situation was worsened in May, 1916, when a fire destroyed the shipfitter's shop, one of the most important buildings in the yard.<sup>35</sup> The Navy Department, clinging to the attitude that had plagued it through the Taft administration, responded with muted indifference.

To alter the pattern of neglect, Norfolk turned at first to her old faithful few, the men of the Chamber of Commerce who so recently had announced their dedication to an expanded Norfolk. Upon hearing that the New Hampshire and the Michigan were to be sent to New York rather than to Norfolk following their tours in Mexican waters, the Chamber's F.S. Royster wrote to Josephus Daniels, the Secretary of the Navy, asking that the plan be changed:

...the expenditures of the officers and men in our city constitute a large share of the business of our commercial interests, and to send ships that have Norfolk as their home yard to other cities deprives us of a large amount of expenditures.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Pilot, May 19, 1916; Bureau of Steam Engineering to the Chief of Naval Operations, January 5, 1916, RG 71, 11:10879-10; Bureau of Yards and Docks to the Chief of Naval Operations, February 8, 1916, RG 71, 11:10879-10; Memorandum concerning inspection trip, March 11, 1916, RG 71, 11:8586-198; Memorandum in connection with yard inspection, undated, RG 71, 11:8586-198; Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks to the Secretary of the Navy, March 18, 1916, RG 71, 11:8586-200; Bureau of Yards and Docks to Bureau of Supplies and Accounts, July 20, 1916, RG 71, 11:10879-54.

<sup>36</sup>F.S. Royster to Josephus Daniels, December 22, 1913, Josephus Daniels Papers, Box 636, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., hereinafter cited as Daniels Papers.

Letter followed letter, and appeal followed appeal. By the time that the local floodtide of enthusiasm had subsided, Norfolk found herself with a new and more powerful band of allies. Secretary Daniels, at the time completing the plans for a massive rebuilding of the navy, became a loyal supporter of naval expansion in Norfolk. Not only would such a scheme benefit his cherished navy, but it would also, he surmised, benefit his home state of North Carolina, a state that for over 200 years had maintained close commercial ties with Norfolk.<sup>37</sup> Similarly convinced of the wisdom of refurbishing Norfolk's naval facilities were Virginia's two United States senators, Claude A. Swanson and Thomas S. Martin, as well as Second District Representative Edward E. Holland. With Holland on the House Rivers and Harbors Committee, Martin as the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Senate Majority Leader, and Swanson as the third-ranking Democrat on the Senate Naval Affairs Committee, Norfolk had a right to feel confident that negligence of the Navy Yard would become a thing of the past.<sup>38</sup>

The interest of these men in Norfolk was motivated by more than the expansionist desires that had driven her local enthusiasts. Southern

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<sup>37</sup> Josephus Daniels, The Wilson Era; Years of Peace, 1910-1917 (Chapel Hill, 1944), 301-302, hereinafter cited as Daniels, Wilson Era; E. David Cronon, editor, The Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels, 1913-1921 (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1963), 21, hereinafter cited as Cronon, Cabinet Diaries; Henry C. Ferrell, Jr., "Regional Rivalries, Congress, and MIC; The Norfolk and Charleston Navy Yards, 1913-1920," in Benjamin F. Cooling, editor, War, Business, and American Society (Port Washington, New York, 1977), 61-62, hereinafter cited as Ferrell, "Regional Rivalries."

<sup>38</sup> Ferrell, "Regional Rivalries," 59-72.

regionalism played a large role, particularly in the case of Senators Swanson and Martin, who in their efforts to strengthen Norfolk's position time and again were frustrated by the efforts of other senators intent on furthering their own state ports. Ironically, the bitterest rivalry was with another southern state, South Carolina, where Senator "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman insisted on promoting the advantages of Charleston. Secretary Daniels eventually smoothed out the differences between Tillman and the Virginians, convincing them that the cause of southern yards in general would benefit most from a spirit of cooperation.<sup>39</sup>

A generous Congressional attitude toward naval expansion was another decisive factor. The bitterness that had split the Democratic party as a result of the closely contested 1912 presidential nomination still lurked in the shadows from 1914 through 1916. It exploded most violently in the debate over programs to expand the nation's army. Led by House Majority Leader Claude Kitchin, a group of thirty to fifty Democrats stubbornly blocked President Wilson's plans for the adoption of a continental army. In contrast to this violent controversy, Congress adopted with ease the naval expansion program suggested by Wilson and Daniels. They even went so far as to speed up the building program, shortening its completion date from five to three years.<sup>40</sup>

Populistic convictions, especially for Swanson and Daniels, were even more important than either southern regionalism or naval loyalty. The Navy

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<sup>39</sup>Ferrell, "Regional Rivalries," 60-66.

<sup>40</sup>Arthur S. Link and William B. Catton, American Epoch; Volume I: The Progressive Era and the First World War, 1900-1920, 4th edition (New York, 1973), 169-171.

Secretary's agrarian North Carolina roots and the senator's long-time affiliation with the Bryan wing of the Democratic party had given them both a basic mistrust of the effects of corporate wealth on government programs. When the naval rebuilding program presented them with the opportunity to decide between using private yards or government yards to restructure the fleet, they quickly chose the latter. Despite the objections of private yards, including the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, the philosophical leanings of these men led them to place the reconstruction of the military establishment in the hands of the federal government rather than in the hands of private corporate wealth.<sup>41</sup>

The injection of national lobbyists forced the previously active local promoters into a secondary, supportive role. They were not altogether replaced--as they would very much be after 1917--yet their position now was one of being the junior partner in a firm dedicated to advancing Norfolk's prestige. Rather than carrying the city's case to court themselves, the Myers-Cox group instead observed from the wings, applauding the efforts of their more nationally recognized allies and periodically urging the Chamber of Commerce to put in writing their appreciation of those efforts. A resolution adopted by the Chamber on April 3, 1916, extending to Josephus Daniels "the appreciation and gratitude of the people of Norfolk"<sup>42</sup> was representative of the willing-

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<sup>41</sup>Ferrell, "Regional Rivalries," 61-64.

<sup>42</sup>Resolution of Norfolk Chamber of Commerce, April 3, 1916, Box 636, Daniels Papers.

ness of Norfolk's promoters to take a back seat to the Secretary and his colleagues as long as the furthering of Norfolk remained the unquestionable goal of all concerned.

The Navy's revitalization in Norfolk was based on more than the pleas of these local and national lobbyists. Contrary to those in the city who held that it was but a minor factor in Norfolk's growth,<sup>43</sup> the war was beyond any doubt the key motivation behind the federal government's revived interest in the yard. Although President Wilson held constantly to a stance of neutrality, neither he nor anyone else in the government could guarantee that the United States would never enter the fighting. Echoing the President's desire that the nation's military facilities be in smooth-running condition, Secretary Daniels on May 2, 1916, appointed the Board for the Development of Navy Yard Plans under the direction of Captain Josiah S. McKean. Similar boards had been organized before, notably in 1904 and 1909, yet most of their recommendations had been surreptitiously filed away to gather dust. Only the creation of the position of Industrial Manager, designed to achieve a more efficient operation of the yard by distinctly separating its industrial from its military functions, had been followed through with. On January 11, 1915, Naval Constructor Richard M. Watt became Norfolk's first Industrial Manager.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>The Virginian Pilot and the Ledger-Dispatch both insisted that Norfolk's prosperity was due to the Democratic administration in Washington. See Pilot, December 31, 1915, August 1, September 17, 1916, and Davis, Virginia War Letters, 269.

<sup>44</sup>Pilot, January 28, 1916; Ferrell, "Regional Rivalries," 63; Admiral A.C. Dillingham, "Historical Narrative of Development of Naval Operating

Because of his affinity for the southern yard, Daniels requested that McKean's board study Norfolk first. Another of the earlier recommendations, the expansion of the Schmoele Tract, became the backbone of the 1916 study. Although it had been purchased in 1904 with the intention of using it as the chief ingredient in a renovation of the yard in that year, little but a temporary waterfront and a small section of a sea wall had been completed by 1914.<sup>45</sup> McKean suggested that the earlier development plans be rapidly advanced.

The board's suggestions prompted a dramatic change in the amount of funds available to the Norfolk Navy Yard. Whereas three years earlier the Naval Appropriations Act had allocated but \$262,500 for Norfolk, in 1916 the figure climbed to an initial appropriation of \$1,400,000 and a maximum limit of \$5,000,000. The improvements inspired by this monetary windfall proceeded at a frantic pace: railroad services were improved, wharves were extended, new buildings were constructed, and power plants were enlarged.<sup>46</sup>

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Base, Hampton Roads, Virginia, June, 1917-March, 1919," June 6, 1919, World War I History Commission, Box 23, Virginia State Library, 10, hereinafter cited as Dillingham, "Historical Narrative"; U.S. Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, Navy Department, World War, 1917-1918 (Washington, 1921), 129-131, hereinafter cited as Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau; Josephus Daniels to Admiral John R. Edwards, October 9, 1913, RG 71, 11:7539; Board of Inspection to Bureau of Yards and Docks, November 20, 1913, RG 71, 11:7539-136; Navy Department Memo, June 1, 1914, RG 71, 11:8586-145; General Order Relating to Management of Norfolk Navy Yard, December 21, 1914, RG 71, 13:311-1 Norfolk; Josephus Daniels to Bureau of Yards and Docks, September 1, 1915, RG 71, 11:10879-5; Roosevelt Board Report, October 12, 1915, RG 71, 11:7539-146.

<sup>45</sup>Pilot, August 2, 1914; Report of Board of Development, July 18, 1914, RG 71, 11:7539-139.

<sup>46</sup>Pilot, August 16, 1916; Ferrell, "Regional Rivalries," 63-68; Bureau of Yards and Docks to Commandant of Norfolk Navy Yard, March 15, 1913, RG 71, 11:8586; "Summary of 1915," undated, Box 572, Daniels Papers.

The two most extensive improvements, however, were the building of a new dry dock and the construction of building ways capable of handling capital ships.

The debate over a new dry dock at Norfolk took the better part of three years, for besides Norfolk the rival yard at Philadelphia also wanted the dock. Competition with Philadelphia was keen, as with Secretary Daniels' rebuilding program the two yards became chief contenders for the larger share of the naval appropriations. Although in this case the Secretary refused to play favorites, leaving the decision on the dock's location to Congress, Norfolk's other promoters did all they could to assure their yard of the allocation. Representative Holland led the fight for the city in the House, and Senator Swanson performed similar duty in the Senate. When Norfolk secured the approval of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, opposition from Philadelphia crumbled and a compromise was reached giving Norfolk the dock and Philadelphia new building ways to construct large vessels. The contract for the dock, Dry Dock Number Four, was awarded and actual construction began in early 1917.<sup>47</sup>

If Philadelphia had expected to hold down growth at Norfolk through the compromise, she was to be badly mistaken. Having obtained the dock, the Norfolk Yard then set out to, and succeeded at, obtaining new building ways for capital ships. The debate over these ways centered not upon one

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<sup>47</sup>"Dry Dock No. 4," undated, RG 71, 11:10871-1; Josephus Daniels to J.W. Williams, February 10, 1914, Box 636, Daniels Papers; "Factors Which Emphasize the Supremacy of the Norfolk and Portsmouth Navy Yard as the Logical Location for the Dry Dock," 1914, Box 636, Daniels Papers; Josephus Daniels to Richard H. Edmonds, September 21, 1915, Box 636, Daniels Papers; Ferrell, "Regional Rivalries," 67-69; Pilot, December 1, 8, 12, 13, 1915, October 31, 1916, January 8, 1917.

government yard versus another government yard, but upon government yards in general versus private yards. In the naval appropriations acts of previous years authorizing the construction of battle cruisers, dreadnaughts, and destroyers, private yards invariably were awarded the resulting contracts--if for no other reason than that only one government yard, New York, had the facilities to construct such large vessels. When the bids offered by the private yards skyrocketed in the wake of drastic increases in armor-plate prices, the reaction of the department was to increase the facilities of the government yards at the cost of \$6,000,000. Much to the chagrin of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, the Norfolk Yard was one of the six chosen for improvement. The \$1,250,000 that the yard received for the construction of dreadnaughts put it in a much better position to compete with its rival to the north of the Hampton Roads. Philadelphia, meanwhile, received \$3,000,000 for the construction of the larger battle cruisers.<sup>48</sup>

While these two developments, the dry dock and the building ways, met with eventual success, the extension and deepening of Norfolk's harbor surprisingly met with no success whatsoever. Federal expenditures for rivers and harbors progressively declined from 1914 to late 1916, and Norfolk was no exception. Representative Holland fought extended struggles

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<sup>48</sup> Pilot, November 23, December 8, 12, 22, 1915, January 13, March 23, July 2, November 15, 19, 23, 1916, January 16, February 9, 1917; Thomas S. Martin to Josephus Daniels, September 11, 1916, Box 636, Daniels Papers; Josephus Daniels to Naval Constructor R.M. Watt, February 25, 1915, Box 636, Daniels Papers; Admiral Harris to Norfolk Navy Yard, January 10, 1917, RG 71, 11:8586-212; U.S. Congress, Senate, Letter from the Secretary of the Navy, Senate Document 706, 64th Congress, 2nd Session, February 6, 1917, 1-2; U.S. Congress, House, 64th Congress, 1st Session, June 1, 1916, Congressional Record, 53:9112.

in the House to get appropriations for Norfolk, but until early 1917 his efforts failed. Even in that year, as Holland bordered on success, the fear that the United States would soon be at war caused rivers and harbors appropriations once more to be cut in favor of more pressing maritime needs. Despite Holland's pleas that Norfolk's harbor witnessed overcrowding that periodically resulted in the collision of ships, the Congressional committee maintained a tight rein on the purse strings.<sup>49</sup>

To the people of Norfolk, who had seen the Navy Yard largely ignored since becoming a federal site in 1801, the new wave of government interest was warmly appreciated. In fact, the whole note of advancement for both the yard and the port, Norfolk's two main employers, was gratefully welcomed. Feeling that their city of so many natural advantages had for too long been bypassed while other cities with less attractive benefits had received lavish attention, Norfolk's citizens greeted each new development as proof that their city soon would be more firmly on the map.

If there had been no war at the time, Norfolk could have relished her new found fame in leisurely bliss. The events in Europe, however, dampened the enthusiasm by bringing to the city a rapid rise in the cost

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<sup>49</sup>Pilot, September 13, 22, 25, 1914, January 16, 24, 30, December 24, 1915, January 27, February 25, December 6, 8, 1916, January 11, 24, 27, February 27, 1917; E.E. Holland to Josephus Daniels, October 8, 1915, Box 636, Daniels Papers; U.S. Congress, House, Report of the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors on Survey, House Document 605, 63rd Congress, 2nd Session, December 30, 1913, 5; U.S. Congress, House, Letter from Chief of Engineers to Rivers and Harbors Committee, House Document 605, 63rd Congress, 2nd Session, January 13, 1914, 2; U.S. Congress, House, 63rd Congress, 3rd Session, January 15, 1915, Congressional Record, 52:1661-1664; U.S. Congress, House, 64th Congress, 1st Session, April 7, 1916, Congressional Record, 53: 5669; U.S. Census Bureau, Historical Statistics, 765.

of living. Lack of goods flowing in from Europe, accompanied by a rapid flowing out of goods for the ravaged, war-torn Europeans, cut to the bone the supply of necessities available to the Norfolk consumer. As demand outraced a rapidly diminishing supply, prices on available goods increased at a tremendous pace. Sugar, bread, egg, and meat prices climbed to heights that caused widespread discontent. In the most severe of the increases, prices on drugs jumped to as much as ten times their prewar values, prompting local companies to opt their way out of previously signed contracts. By March, 1916, estimates of Norfolk's losses directly related to the war reached only \$3,000, yet by the end of that year prices had risen 32 per cent in a mere twelve months. In the next two months the situation worsened, as prices on twenty-four food commodities exploded upward 131 per cent.<sup>50</sup>

Although the price increases forced Norfolk to accept the reality of the war, like most American cities she preferred to keep the conflict a safe arm's distance away. Finding herself in sympathy with those who suffered from the war's effects, Norfolk contributed generously to fund drives sponsored for war-stricken Jews, for the citizens of a near-devastated Belgium, and for French, British, and Belgian citizens blinded in the war. In addition, the Chamber of Commerce inaugurated a movement in late 1914 to colonize Belgian war victims near the city.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Davis, "Norfolk City," 296; Pilot, August 7, 19, 25, October 4, 12, 13, 15, 1914, April 16, 17, October 29, 1915, March 17, June 9, August 12, October 11, 30, November 25, December 1, 5, 1916, February 18, 21, 1917.

<sup>51</sup>Davis, "Norfolk City," 298-299; Letter from the Governor's Secretary to David McFall of the Ledger-Dispatch, December 11, 1914, and the "Plan of

Norfolk's early attitude toward the war remained safely detached from its more serious sides, with the monetary contributions and price increases being the only heavy sacrifices made. Norfolk's residents preferred to see the conflict as a removed adventure that they could periodically experience through the excitement of vivid motion pictures and tales told them by fellow citizens returning from Europe. The Wells Theatre's showing of "real pictures of a real war," billed as "the most sensational moving picture that has as yet been shown to the public,"<sup>52</sup> was more to the city's taste than was the thought that they themselves soon might be on the battlefields of Europe. Things were going so well in Norfolk, and it made more sense to her people to head to Ocean View to relax on the beach than it did to harbor any ideas of American involvement in the war.<sup>53</sup>

Even though Norfolk formed branches of the Navy League and the National Security League in mid and late 1915, not until 1916 did the arousal of local consciousness toward the serious side of the war reluctantly begin to show itself. Spurred by the realization that American involvement was becoming inevitable, Representative Holland, Mayor Mayo, Barton Myers, and W.A. Cox alternately appealed to the city to ready

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Action Adopted by the Immigrant's Conference," December 12, 1914, Box 19, "Immigration" folder 3-2, Papers of Governor Henry Carter Stuart, Virginia State Library, hereinafter cited as Stuart Papers; "Virginian Commission on Belgian Relief," November, 1914, Box 5, "Belgian Relief" folder 3-1, Stuart Papers; Pilot, October 3, 25, November 18, 19, December 29, 1914, January 5, 30, 31, November 29, 1915, January 23, 30, February 12, 1916, February 20, 1917.

<sup>52</sup>Pilot, January 3, 1915.

<sup>53</sup>Pilot, March 26, 1915, May 29, 1916.

herself for the coming conflict. A massive parade in June involving citizens from all of the Hampton Roads communities highlighted the new spirit of involvement. As the months passed, the dual themes of preparedness and enlistment swept through the city.<sup>54</sup>

With the severance of relations with Germany in February, 1917, Norfolk took on a new air of excitement and intrigue. Already bustling from her increased commercial activity, the daily arrival of new businesses, and the building of the new dry dock and the shipbuilding ways at the Navy Yard, the city paused, holding her breath to see what was to come. At the Navy Yard, where the worst was expected, a series of precautionary measures followed each other in rapid succession: armed guards were placed on all of the ships, a "hurry" order was put on the construction of underwater mines, twelve-hour shifts rushed toward completion of vessel repairs, and visitors were barred from entrance at the gates. A steel wire net was spread across the channel of Hampton Roads, and at the end of February the commandant of the Fifth Naval District ordered that the port be closed between 9 p.m. and daylight as a precaution against submarines.<sup>55</sup> Two months later the worst came.

The thirty-two months of America's non-involvement in the First World War brought Norfolk tremendous growth. While her population increased 20 per cent, from 85,000 to 102,000,<sup>56</sup> her position as a

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<sup>54</sup>Pilot, July 3, September 1, October 20, November 3, 12, December 1, 1915, January 24, February 4, 13, June 11, 18, July 30, 1916.

<sup>55</sup>Pilot, February 4-19, 1917; Josephus Daniels to Representative Frank E. Doremus, March 24, 1917, Box 636, Daniels Papers.

<sup>56</sup>Davis, "Norfolk City," 297.

leading commercial port was greatly improved, and her once neglected importance as a significant military center was given fresh attention by the Navy. Guided initially by a small group of local promoters and later by a larger group of nationally prominent congressional and military leaders, Norfolk entered the period with optimism, weathered the storm of competition from cities such as Newport News and Philadelphia, and in the early months of 1917 fully expected her recent progress to continue well into the future. That that future held more for her than she imagined Norfolk was shortly to find out.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MILITARY COMES TO NORFOLK;

#### A TEST IN PERSEVERANCE

All through Norfolk's period of rising prosperity, Barton Myers and his fellow promoters stressed the importance of local initiative. The citizens of Norfolk, he constantly repeated, held the keys to the city's growth. Without their efforts, Norfolk would be stopped in her tracks, for no one else was going to do for her what she refused to do for herself.<sup>1</sup> His advice had been heeded, for even when the McKean Board initiated a renewed military interest in their city the local Chamber of Commerce and its promotional offshoots had continued, although in a secondary role, to push Norfolk up the avenue of success.

A new phase in Norfolk's existence began in 1917. The 1916 military interest expanded to the point where for one of the rare times in her history Norfolk found her reins of leadership not in the hands of her local popularizers, but in the hands of the federal government. The local initiators still operated, still sent flyers to promote Norfolk, and still functioned behind the scenes in supporting the city's growth; yet after 1917 it was the federal government, and particularly the military, that controlled Norfolk's fate. The military's interest in Norfolk brought the city national recognition on a grand scale and further increased the prosperity of the preceding years. It also prompted countless difficulties, making the next year and a half not only one of Norfolk's most prosperous

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<sup>1</sup>Pilot, December 31, 1915, December 31, 1916.

periods of history, but one of her most trying as well.

The new interest in Norfolk was part of an overall re-evaluation of military facilities by the federal government. Discouraged by the unwillingness of the European belligerents to come to any immediate and peaceful terms, President Wilson initiated in early 1916 a widespread program of military preparedness designed to assure that the nation would be ready if forced into the war. Striving against the isolationist efforts of a solid band of midwest Congressional Republicans, Wilson managed in the summer of 1916 to push through Congress a handful of measures--the National Defense Act, the Naval Appropriation Bill, and the United States Shipping Board Act--that decidedly strengthened the American military.<sup>2</sup> Not until the following summer, however, did a similar bill--the Military Deficiency Appropriation Bill--change the course of Norfolk's history.

Military facilities were nothing new to Norfolk in 1917. In the previous decades, the federal government had spent over \$14,000,000 establishing and improving military plants in Norfolk's immediate vicinity. Besides the Norfolk Navy Yard, the city was also witness to the Saint Helena Naval Training Station, the Marine Barracks, the U.S. Naval Hospital, Saint Julien's Magazine, and Fort Norfolk.<sup>3</sup> This total of 700 acres amounted to a sizeable government expenditure; nevertheless, a feeling of lasting significance was notably lacking. With the exception of the Navy Yard, none of the government plants were of the nature to bring Norfolk

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<sup>2</sup>Samuel Eliot Morison, Henry Steele Commager, and William E. Leuchtenburg, The Growth of the American Republic, Volume Two (6th edition, New York, 1969), 370.

<sup>3</sup>Davis, "Norfolk City," 295.

national prominence as a military center. This much sought after reputation came only with the June, 1917, decision to create at Norfolk one of this nation's greatest naval operating bases.

The choice of Norfolk for the base was by no means inevitable. Indeed, events prior to 1917 pointed to the eventual failure of any scheme to induce the Navy to locate in Norfolk. After lying unoccupied for five years, the abandoned grounds of the 1907 Jamestown Exposition, a celebration of the 300th anniversary of the landing of the colonials at Jamestown, were purchased in 1912 by a group of Norfolk residents.<sup>4</sup> They tried to sell the land to the Navy Department, but although the Department had earlier considered purchasing the site, the asked for price was seen as too unreasonable, and the sale fell through.<sup>5</sup> The rest of Norfolk's citizens, more interested in urban expansion than in personal profit, for the most part supported the sale of the site.

For twenty years the Navy had consistently recommended expansion in the Hampton Roads area. The failure of the Jamestown deal, then, did not end the Department's interest in the region; instead, it heightened it. In the years following 1912, a series of related boards in the Navy Department continuously studied the viability of a permanent naval base in Hampton Roads. Interest was maintained in the Jamestown proposition, but other

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<sup>4</sup>For more information on the Jamestown Exposition, see Robert T. Taylor, "The Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition of 1907," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXV (April, 1957), 169-208.

<sup>5</sup>Admiral Harris to Mr. Wool of the Jamestown Development Company, October 20, 1916, RG 71, 11:7539-157; Mr. Wool to Admiral Harris, October 30, 1916, RG 71, 11:7539-157; Dillingham, "Historical Narrative," 7-10.

possibilities were also examined, including a site on the York River and the expansion of the Navy Yard into a dual-functioning base.<sup>6</sup>

Although agreeing with his predecessors on the desirability of the Exposition site, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels was repeatedly repulsed by the exorbitant prices asked by its owners. While other Navy officials were pleading for acquisition of the land both in Congress as well as in such leading journals as the Manufacturers Record, the North Carolinian insisted that the purchase could wait. The Department's funds, he said, would go to the more immediate needs of construction in the already established navy yards. Not until April, 1917, after Daniels had visited the land himself and after interested navy officers had worked out an elaborate and convincing scheme for the layout of the base, did the Secretary reverse his original position and ask for a \$3,000,000 appropriation for the Exposition site's purchase and development.<sup>7</sup> From that point, the effort was to convince Congress.

On April 30, 1917, the Military Deficiency Appropriation Bill for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1917 (H.R. 3971), was reported to the House from the Committee on Appropriations. Two days later, it passed the House with a near-unanimous vote. In the Senate Committee on Appropriations, meanwhile, the same bill was burdened with close to one hundred amendments,

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<sup>6</sup> Memoranda on Development of a Permanent Navy Base in Norfolk, March-October, 1913, RG 71, 11:8586-145; Dillingham, "Historical Narrative," 15.

<sup>7</sup> Pilot, November 20, December 2, 12, 15, 1916, January 1, 7, April 17, 1917; Manufacturers Record, LXXI (March 29, 1917), 47; Manufacturers Record, LXXI (April 5, 1917), 65-68; Josephus Daniels to Thomas P. Ivy, April 24, 1917, Box 636, Daniels Papers.

one of which (#68) was added through the work of Virginia's United States Senators, Thomas S. Martin and Claude A. Swanson. Amendment #68 was Secretary Daniels' plea for the appropriation of \$3,000,000 for the creation of the Naval Operating Base at Hampton Roads: \$1,400,000 was for the acquisition of the property, while the other \$1,600,000 was for the equipping of the site as a naval installation. The total area involved was 474 acres, 367 of which was the old Exposition site and the remainder largely the property of the Pine Beach Estates.<sup>8</sup> In the month-long debate over H.R. 3971 that followed, this amendment was the major bone of contention.

The debate was almost entirely sectional and partisan in nature. In the Senate, where the amendment received scant opposition, the negative votes came from the midwest Republican contingent led by LaFollette, Borah, Cummins, and Kellogg; the only Democrat to vote against the measure was Thomas Gore of Oklahoma. In the House, opposition was widespread and intense. Patrick Kelley of Michigan and James Mann of Illinois, both Republicans, led a vicious fight that sent the bill to three Senate-House conferences. Virginia's Edward E. Holland was ably assisted by John Fitzgerald of New York and Lemuel Padgett of Tennessee in defense of the amendment. For weeks, though, the opposition prevailed, and the House continually refused to agree to the amendment that the Senate had quickly ruled worthwhile.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Congress, House, 65th Congress, 1st Session, April 30, 1917, Congressional Record, 2:1590; U.S. Congress, House, 65th Congress, 1st Session, May 2, 1917, Congressional Record, 2:1693-1694; U.S. Congress, Senate, 65th Congress, 1st Session, May 15, 1917, Congressional Record, 3:2329; U.S. Congress, Senate, 65th Congress, 1st Session, June 2, 1917, Congressional Record, 3:3212; Ferrell, "Regional Rivalries," 69-70; Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau, 135.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Congress, House and Senate, 65th Congress, 1st Session, May 16-

The key to the amendment's eventual success was the expert testimony of Secretary Daniels and Captain Josiah S. McKean before the Congressional committees on Naval Affairs, as well as Representative Holland's admirable defense on the floor of the House. One by one, these three men destroyed every point of opposition, from charges of graft, to claims that the purchase was not a war necessity, to statements that the Navy had never really approved of the acquisition.<sup>10</sup> Daniels was especially effective, and his reasons for the purchase convinced more than one stubborn representative to alter his vote.

The Navy, Daniels stated, had already obtained an \$800,000 appropriation for storehouses at the Norfolk Navy Yard. The proper function of Navy yards, however, was the building and repairing of ships, not the storing of supplies. It would make more sense, the Secretary reminded Congress, for the Navy to build a supply station elsewhere and to let the \$800,000 be used for badly needed workshops. The proposed site was ideal, as its closer location to the Hampton Roads--and thus to the fleet--would make unnecessary the hauling of supplies up and down the Elizabeth River.<sup>11</sup>

Then, too, Daniels continued, the Navy was in need of added training

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June 14, 1917, Congressional Record, 3:2382-2386, 2501-2532, 2577-2595, 2660, 2930-2931, 3013-3025, 3180-3189, 3212-3213, 4:3276-3297, 3427-3437, 3535-3540, 3546-3550; Pilot, May 2, 20, June 1, 3, 8, 12, 1917.

<sup>10</sup>U.S. Congress, House, 65th Congress, 1st Session, June 7, 1917, Congressional Record, 4:3284; U.S. Congress, House and Senate, Statements Before the Naval Affairs Subcommittees on Jamestown Exposition Property and Other Property, for the Naval Base at Hampton Roads, Virginia, 65th Congress, 1st Session, May 3, 23, 1917.

<sup>11</sup>U.S. Congress, Senate, Statements Before Naval Affairs Subcommittee, 65th Congress, 1st Session, May 3, 1917.

stations due to the recent increase in naval personnel:

Recruits have been pouring in so rapidly in the past few weeks that the training stations have been overtaxed, and for some time we have been enlisting men and sending them home to await call. The enlisted strength of the navy has been practically doubled within a short time, and it has been a problem to provide for the housing and training of these thousands of recruits.<sup>12</sup>

Purchasing the Jamestown site would not only allow for training space and facilities, but would also allow the men to be expediently placed on ships immediately after their training period. Unlike men trained at the massive base in Chicago, those trained at Hampton Roads would not have to be transported long distances before reaching their assignments; the ships would be waiting for them at the base.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, Daniels insisted, he himself would not approve of the purchase were it not for the one small section at Sewall Point, the one section, he demanded, that was worth all of the rest combined. The key was that the water immediately off of the point was remarkably deep. It would, therefore, permit naval vessels to dock with ease at the base.<sup>14</sup> This final facet alone made the Jamestown property the perfect site for the largest naval base on the Atlantic coast.

Daniels' eloquence, Holland's tenacity, and the Senate's insistence wore down the House. When President Wilson sent the body a letter in which he personally supported the amendment, the battle was all but won.

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<sup>12</sup>Manufacturers Record, LXXI (June 14, 1917), 48.

<sup>13</sup>U.S. Congress, Senate, Statement Before Naval Affairs Subcommittee, 65th Congress, 1st Session, May 3, 1917, 5.

<sup>14</sup>U.S. Congress, Senate, Statement Before Naval Affairs Subcommittee, 65th Congress, 1st Session, May 3, 1917, 3.

Gaining a slight victory at the last moment by cutting the purchase price from \$1,400,000 to \$1,200,000, the House on June 14 passed the bill and sent it to the President. The next day it became law, and the Hampton Roads Naval Operating Base was born.<sup>15</sup>

Congress once more was forced into the picture following the report of the Navy Board assigned with the task of assessing the value of each plot of land on the purchased site. Close to 300 persons held property rights in the area. Following President Wilson's June 28 evacuation order, each owner submitted a bid on the worth of his land. The cumulative total ran to over \$3,000,000, which far exceeded the \$1,200,000 authorized by Congress for the purchase. The Navy Board sliced the owners' requests in half, but the resulting sum still surpassed the original appropriation. Congress, thoroughly fatigued with the matter, on March 5, 1918, authorized an additional \$222,935 and finally brought to rest the financial complications.<sup>16</sup>

The Congressional roadblock was but the first of a series of annoying problems that confronted the Navy Department in the development of the Hampton Roads base. When construction began on July 4, 1917, serious

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<sup>15</sup>U.S. Congress, House, 65th Congress, 1st Session, June 12, 1917, Congressional Record, 4:3539; U.S. Congress, Senate, 65th Congress, 1st Session, June 13, 1917, Congressional Record, 4:3550; U.S. Congress, House, 65th Congress, 1st Session, June 14, 1917, Congressional Record, 4:3603; U.S. Congress, Senate, 65th Congress, 1st Session, June 15, 1917, Congressional Record, 4:3870; Pilot, June 13, 1917.

<sup>16</sup>Pilot, July 26, 1917, January 22, 31, February 1, 1918; J.T. Deal to Navy Department, July 26, 1917, RG 80, 19:28808-27; Secretary Daniels to Admiral McKean, June 28, 1917, RG 80, 19:28808-1; Navy Department, Report of Board Covering Valuation of Site for Naval Operating Base, Hampton Roads, Virginia (Washington, 1918), hereinafter cited as Navy Department, Report of Board.

physical obstacles arose in irritating succession. Despite Norfolk's impressive growth in the earlier years of the twentieth century, the city was unprepared for the massive numbers of men and materials that naturally came with the naval construction. Norfolk's transportation and utilities systems were rigorously overtaxed. Beyond these problems, the accompanying crisis in labor supply stood out as the most severe challenge and threatened the collapse of the entire project.

Norfolk's labor problems first appeared in the late days of April, 1917. The city had never had a large reserve labor force, as a very high percentage of her population was in normal times gainfully employed. When the government pulled numbers of her men into military service and labor agents drained off numerous others for work in northern war industries, the local labor supply was decimated.<sup>17</sup> The Navy Department's decision to bring Norfolk her own war construction activity left the city with little choice but to import labor from other sections of the nation. Induced by advertisements promising rapid riches in government work, laborers poured into Norfolk from Minnesota, Kansas, Texas, Kentucky, and several points west of the Mississippi River. The city's population quickly shot from 102,000 in 1916, to 110,000 a year later, and then to 150,000 in 1918. Forty to fifty thousand war workers were drawn like magnets to the government work, but even then the Navy's demands were never completely met. Pressed with a burning desire for the rapid completion of the base, the Navy often resorted to the impressment of enlisted men into

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<sup>17</sup> Davis, "Norfolk City," 331-332; Pilot, April 27, May 13, 1917; Clausen, Population in Flux, 31-32.

construction work.<sup>18</sup>

The workers drawn to Norfolk from other parts of the United States presented the Navy and the city with more problems than they had anticipated. Many of them were shiftless transients who moved as easily from one job to the next as they had from the midwest to Virginia. Looking only for a quick fortune, they would, after a few day's work, willingly abandon one employer for another whose wages and working conditions were more suitable to their insatiable tastes. Contractors in search of their ten per cent cut deliberately preyed upon these migrants, and the resulting labor turnover ranged anywhere from 30 to 500 per cent. Finding himself in such high demand, the laborer frequently worked a few days at the inflated wages and then relaxed for the rest of the week; if the weather was bad, being either too hot or too cold, he refused to work at all.<sup>19</sup>

Local businessmen had much to complain about with the arrival of the Navy in Norfolk. Not only were the city streets lined with suspicious new faces, but the government work lured away many of the old faces. Men who previously were satisfied with wages paid in the city now found that

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<sup>18</sup>Pilot, July 12, November 27, 1917, May 2, 12, July 4, September 2, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 331-332; Clausen, Population in Flux, 30; Admiral Dillingham to Chief of Naval Operations, January 12, 1918, RG 80, 19:28808-14; Officer in Charge of Naval Supply Station to Navy Base Commandant, October 19, 1918, RG 80, 19:28808-157; Caroline B. Reeves, "Impact of World War I on the Hampton Roads Area," in U.S. Department of Labor, The Impact of War on the Hampton Roads Area (Washington, 1944), 17-55, hereinafter cited as Reeves, "Impact of World War I."

<sup>19</sup>Schlegel, Historic Port, 309; Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 41-42; Captain M.M. Taylor to Chief of Naval Operations, February 11, 1918, RG 71, 13:603-1 Norfolk.

government work offered a better deal. Unskilled labor, usually abundant at \$2.50 per day, abandoned the city for the \$3.08 wages of the government. Restaurants and boarding houses closed down for lack of sufficient help. The Norfolk City Home similarly curtailed operations, and local shipping companies grieved as dock workers fled to the navy base and those who stayed demanded higher wages and better benefits.<sup>20</sup> Norfolk simply could not compete with the government.

Norfolk area farmers were the most effected by the labor depletion. Unable to match government wages, the farmers watched thousands of dollars worth of crops wither in their abandoned fields. When they managed to overcome the shortage and get their produce to the docks, they were again stymied--the labor situation at the docks frequently matched that in their fields. The farmers suggested to the government that the crisis could be alleviated if more men were brought into the area to work, but they soon discovered the futility of their suggestion when those who came to Norfolk chose to work not in the fields but at the base.<sup>21</sup>

Complaints frequently were voiced to the government, but at first they did little good; the labor problem was viewed as a local one in which the government should not interfere. Despite the efforts of Norfolk's Chamber of Commerce to prompt federal intervention, Washington refused to

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<sup>20</sup> Pilot, June 21, 27, 28, November 14, 17, 1917, June 4, 1918; Bureau of Yards and Docks to Public Works Officer, Norfolk Navy Yard, July 12, 1918, RG 71, 13:342-1 Norfolk; Admiral Dillingham to Chief of Naval Operations, October 12, 1917, RG 80, 19:28808-14.

<sup>21</sup> Schlegel, Historic Port, 307; Pilot, May 16, June 23, July 8, December 25, 1917, February 4, March 15, April 7, 1918; Arthur K. Davis, Virginia War Agencies: Selective Draft and Volunteers (Richmond, 1926), 78-81, hereinafter cited as Davis, Virginia War Agencies.

play the arbitrator, insisting that Norfolk's businesses could only respond by matching government wages. When local farmers wrote to Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin Roosevelt stressing the impossibility of such a course, the response was callously to the point. Labor, wrote Roosevelt, was not leaving Norfolk because of the government operations, but instead because of the pull of northern industries. Besides, he continued, the Navy had never directly appealed to farm labor for government work, and so the farmer's crisis was in no way the Navy's concern.<sup>22</sup>

The federal government held off from taking a hand in Norfolk's labor situation until the early months of 1918. In January, the Army announced that it too had chosen the city for expansion of its facilities, as a site on Bush Bluff had been selected for the "greatest army supply depot in the country." The plan called for an immediate \$16,000,000 expenditure to convert Norfolk's semi-completed municipal terminals into 2,000,000 square feet of Army storage space. At least 10,000 more construction workers, therefore, would have to be brought to Hampton Roads.<sup>23</sup>

The Army's decision caused a reversal of government apathy. With both military branches operating in the area, it was now obvious that Norfolk's labor situation was beyond a doubt a federal concern. By February, the first proof of this policy reversal arrived in the city in the form of a

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<sup>22</sup>Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 33-34; Pilot, February 16, 1918; W.L. Whitehurst to Bureau of Labor, August 1, 1917, RG 80, 19:28808-33; Franklin Roosevelt to W.L. Whitehurst, August 10, 1917, RG 80, 19:28808-33; Raymond R. Richardson to William J. Flynn, January 31, 1918, RG 80, 19:28808-92.

<sup>23</sup>Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 22; Manufacturers Record, LXXIII (January 17, 1918), 58; Pilot, December 8, 1917, January 9, 20, September 15, 1918.

U.S. Employment Service study team sent to respond to farmer's grievances. Three months later the Navy Department followed suit by establishing a board at the navy base to regulate all hiring at that installation. The most effective body was the District Board of Control, created in March, 1918. Acting in conjunction with the War Industries Board, the U.S. Employment Service, and the U.S. Housing Corporation, the Board of Control became the chief agency in Hampton Roads for the solving of all local labor problems related to government construction. Originally established to settle wage differences between army and navy operations, the Board soon took on an all-encompassing attitude, outlawing contract labor at the Navy Base in June, 1918, and seeing to the shifting of laborers from non-essential to essential industries.<sup>24</sup>

The Board of Control, the only board of its kind in operation during the war, had its hands full in Norfolk if only because of the large number of strikes. Labor at all of the government projects, including the Navy Yard, struck at various times throughout the war. The Army Base saw eleven brief walkouts, while the Navy Base was the scene of the period's largest strike, a one-day affair involving 2,700 laborers, most of whom were carpenters. Most often the strikers were asking for higher wages, a demand repeatedly agreed to by the government. The Board of Control eventually solved the wage dilemma by devising a standard scale for all govern-

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<sup>24</sup>Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 23-24, 35; Pilot, July 6, August 10, November 9, 1917, February 26, May 6, 13, June 9, October 31, 1918; Public Works Officer to Commandant of Fifth Naval District, September 14, 1918, RG 80, 19:28808-14; "History of the Board of Control, War Construction Activities, Hampton Roads District," December 31, 1919, RG 45, ZPN-5, 2-12, hereinafter cited as "History of the Board of Control."

ment work, a move which stifled many, but not all, of the strikes.<sup>25</sup>

Strikes were overshadowed in Norfolk by the housing problem, as this issue caused the most difficulties and received the most attention from the government. Norfolk and Portsmouth were the only places in the state where the housing situation became a serious one, a state of affairs caused not only by the new Army and Navy construction but also by increased activity at the Navy Yard. In Newport News, the only other city where housing threatened to become critical, the dilemma was quickly extinguished with the development of the Hilton project by the U.S. Housing Corporation.<sup>26</sup> In Norfolk, the government was slower to react, and not until the war was almost over did similar projects begin in the city.

The earliest efforts to house Norfolk's growing numbers of laborers were piecemeal ones, widely scattered efforts by widely divergent groups. A housing survey by the city's Board of Trade, the leasing of land by the Virginian Railway, and related efforts by the local Defense Council and the Community Welfare Association were the only attempts prior to 1918 to provide shelter for the city's new workers.<sup>27</sup>

The following months showed a new trend in labor housing, as tents

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<sup>25</sup>Pilot, September 15, 25, 26, 27, October 4, 1917, March 31, April 1, 2, 3, 17, 28, May 1, 4, 16, 28, 1918; Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 37-42; Cronon, Cabinet Diaries, 211-213; Franklin Roosevelt to Civil Engineer R.C. Hollyday, January 9, 1918, RG 80, 19:28808-82; Admiral Dillingham to Chief of Naval Operations, April 6, 1918, RG 80, 19:28808-14; Public Works Officer to Bureau of Yards and Docks, March 25, 1919, RG 71, 13:651-21 Norfolk.

<sup>26</sup>Davis, Virginia War Agencies, 54-56; Pilot, June 23, 1918.

<sup>27</sup>Pilot, October 5, December 6, 25, 1917; Davis, "Norfolk City," 333-335; Admiral Dillingham to Chief of Naval Operations, January 5, 1918, RG 80, 19:28808-14.

and other temporary shelters sprang up around the city. When the government leased twenty acres of land from the Portsmouth Cotton Oil Refrigeration Corporation and built shelters for 1,000 men, and then again when the Navy threw 700 tents up at the Navy Base, the indication was that the government did not envision permanent residency by the new laborers; once the job was completed, they would return to their old homes. The same was true of the Bureau of Yards and Docks' three labor camps, the U.S. Housing Corporation's 2,000-capacity camp, and of local efforts to find lodgings for the men in the homes of Norfolk citizens.<sup>28</sup>

As 1918 progressed, the housing trend veered toward a realization of the possible long-lasting, even permanent, residency in Norfolk of large numbers of the new workers. Many were now bringing their families, and the need for housing was no longer one of considering merely the workers. As school enrollment figures climbed, officials realized that more than the passing facade of a war industry was involved.<sup>29</sup>

The government now stepped in in a more determined effort to stifle the rapid labor turnover and to diminish the transient nature of Norfolk's new population. A close liaison between the local Council of Defense and her offspring, the Norfolk Housing Committee, resulted in the tapering off of many of the city's housing problems. Federal government projects played

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<sup>28</sup> Pilot, August 30, October 20, 1918; Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 50; Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau, 501; Public Works Officer to Bureau of Yards and Docks, May 3, 1918, RG 71, 13:640-1 Norfolk; Admiral Dillingham to Chief of Naval Operations, January 26 and February 10, 1918, RG 80, 19:28808-14; Admiral Dillingham to Admiral McLean, September 16, 1918, RG 80, 19:28808-14.

<sup>29</sup> Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 52.

an even larger role: the Bureau of Yards and Docks' \$20,000 construction appropriation and the building of 600 houses near Bush Bluff and of 100 in West Ghent were evidences of a more permanent involvement.<sup>30</sup>

The most intense housing effort, but yet one of the most belated, was undertaken by the U.S. Housing Corporation in late 1918. The Corporation had at long last assumed full responsibility for Norfolk's housing needs, and by September of that year was planning three housing projects for the area as part of the government's \$60,000,000 housing bill passed four months earlier. Glenwood, near the Navy Base, was designed for workers at that plant, while Truxton and Cradock, outside of Portsmouth, were built for those at the Navy Yard.<sup>31</sup>

The irony about Norfolk's housing efforts was that the building of houses for laborers demanded the influx of more laborers, which in turn demanded more houses for laborers, and so on ad infinitum. The city once more sent out agents to far parts of the country, this time advertising not only better wages, but better services--good food and police protection--as well. The results were the same as before--a transient population with a hefty turnover rate of 30 per cent.<sup>32</sup> Once more the city paid the price of a large transient population for a smaller group of permanent residents and the hoped-for advantages of lasting industry and progress.

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<sup>30</sup>Pilot, September 11, October 6, 19, 27, 1918; Admiral Dillingham to Chief of Naval Operations, January 5, 1918, RG 80, 19:28808-14.

<sup>31</sup>Pilot, February 17, March 3, 20, May 14, September 29, October 6, 1918; Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau, 498-501; Katherine H. Davidson, Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the U.S. Housing Corporation (Washington, 1962), 89.

<sup>32</sup>Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau, 500.

The housing dilemma brought out the worst in some of Norfolk's citizens, resulting in an intense degree of rent profiteering. The crisis was brought about mainly through the charging of unscrupulously high subrents on buildings originally rented at much more reasonable prices. The Board of Control, the U.S. Housing Corporation, and the Navy Department all stepped in to solve the problem, but it was the latter group that devised a successful remedy: the commandeering of property whose owners were found guilty of overcharging. The Department also played another major role in the crisis, as in a related matter it was found that Navy personnel at both the yard and the base were consistently refusing to vacate houses once their leases expired, claiming that they could not be thrown out into the streets while engaged in important military work. Here Secretary Daniels struck conflicting poses, threatening courts-martial for any men at the base guilty of violating their leases, but giving the yard permission to commandeer disputed residencies for the use of Navy personnel.<sup>33</sup> This civilian-military conflict, besides being an extension of the increasing labor crisis, was in addition a sign of things to come.

With the huge labor influx, Norfolk's transportation system proved incapable of handling the increased traffic between the city and the government projects. Least effective was the city's electric street car service, run by the Virginia Railway and Power Company. Not until the federal government in February, 1918, threatened to take over the company's

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<sup>33</sup>Pilot, August 6, 1917, January 27, March 23, April 3, May 2, July 14, 20, 21, September 16, 17, 26, October 2, 12, 15, 18, 1918.

lines did extensive improvements begin. The construction proved inadequate, however, and a complete breakdown of the service resulted in July and August of the same year. The scene was repeated in October, as a city-wide power crisis once more left the Railway Company's cars stalled in the streets of Norfolk.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast to the labor and housing dilemmas, the federal reaction to Norfolk's transportation problem was one conducted with deliberate speed. Special trains were run from the city to the bases, additional cars were added to existing routes, and millions of dollars were spent to improve roads, railway lines, and the city's ferry system. Norfolk's city council helped in the improvements, approving a \$42,000 appropriation for the paving of roads to the bases. The Virginia Railway and Power Company provided assistance by belatedly hooking up with Richmond power plants to supply more electricity in Norfolk.<sup>35</sup>

Financial cooperation did not mean cooperation in spirit, however, and many Norfolk residents resented the government's attitude in the transportation crisis. Despite their desire to please the military in the hope that continued government presence would mean continued prosperity for the city, citizens found hard to accept the government's position that Norfolk's

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<sup>34</sup> Pilot, February 15, July 28, October 19, November 2, 1918; R.M. Bradshaw to the Navy Department, July 19, 1917, RG 80, 19:28808-20; "History of the Board of Control," 6.

<sup>35</sup> Pilot, July 19, September 6, 1917, January 18, February 19, 25, March 29, April 20, June 2, September 25, 29, October 13, 1918; Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau, 140; Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 48-49; Manufacturers Record, LXXIV (September 26, 1918), 75; Manufacturers Record, LXXIV (October 10, 1918), 55; Josephus Daniels to Wyndam Mayo, September 1, 1917, RG 80, 19:28808-45; Admiral Dillingham to Chief of Naval Operations, January 27, 1918, RG 80, 19:28808-88.

transportation facilities were primarily for war workers and only incidentally for the city's permanent residents.<sup>36</sup>

A dilemma over the inadequacy of Norfolk's water system brought about a similar tension between government and city officials. Norfolk's daily water usage of six million gallons was increased by a quarter of a million gallons by the Navy Base alone. Contemplating additional facilities requiring an additional water supply, military authorities requested that Norfolk purchase Norfolk County's water system. Resistance to the plan arose in the city government, particularly from Mayor Mayo, who felt that it did not matter who supplied the Navy with water, just as long as someone did; the county could do it just as well without the city having to expend time and expenses joining the two systems.<sup>37</sup>

Pressure for adoption of the plan increased, as the Navy successively threatened to give part of Norfolk's appropriations to Yorktown, to cut back on contemplated barracks expansions, and to finance the county water company itself unless Norfolk agreed to the proposal. In late July, 1918, after overriding the mayor's second veto of the scheme, the city finally succumbed to the Navy's plan. Construction began immediately on the unification of the two systems, with the city doing the work and the government footing the \$151,800 bill. Apparently convinced of the wisdom of avoiding any similar entanglements, Norfolk purchased reservoirs to the west of the city. Although the labor situation prohibited the immediate connection of these new sources to the city's system, their 17,000,000

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<sup>36</sup> Davis, "Norfolk City," 328-329.

<sup>37</sup> Davis, "Norfolk City," 324-325; Pilot, September 26, 1917, May 27, June 26, 1918.

gallon daily capacity guaranteed a more than adequate future supply.<sup>38</sup>

If Admiral Albert C. Dillingham had known of the difficulties that Norfolk's insufficient resources would cause, perhaps he would have thought twice before accepting the assignment placing him in charge of the Navy Base's development. His belief in the growth potential of the Hampton Roads area overshadowed, however, the depression he must have felt upon viewing Norfolk's questionable facilities. Earlier in his career, when as a lieutenant he had served as the chairman of a board exploring possible future naval sites, he had enthusiastically recommended Sewall Point. Now he had the chance to put his earlier views into practice. Little did he realize when construction started, though, that the base would be faced with other problems beyond the control of either Norfolk or the Navy. Nature itself seemed bent on hampering the base's evolution, as from July, 1917, to January of the following year weather conditions ranged from record breaking heat to record shattering cold. A driving rain in the first few weeks of work was followed in August by temperatures that rarely fell below eighty degrees--even at night. Two workmen died from the heat, and when the thermometer hit 105 on August 8, many others laid down their tools and sat out the heat wave. The winter that followed was the worst in fifty-seven years, and as the Hampton Roads froze from shore to shore, snow and cold once more brought the work to a standstill.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Davis, "Norfolk City," 324-325; Pilot, September 26, 1917, March 6, 9, June 8, 24, 26, 27, August 7, 1918.

<sup>39</sup> Pilot, August 2, 3, 7, 1918; Admiral Dillingham to Chief of Naval Operations, August 4, September 15, December 17, 1917, RG 80, 19:28808-14;

At least one construction difficulty was directly attributable to Navy Department officials. While selecting the Exposition site as the best possible one for their purposes, they had also accepted the land's bad points. With its low lying terrain and tropical vegetation, the site had much in common as a "malarial hotbed" with its ancestral namesake of 1607. Commencing the development at the height of mosquito season did little to further construction activities, and medical personnel were amazed that only two cases of typhoid fever developed. An unrelated flu epidemic a year later resulted in 175 deaths, and served as the final reminder of the difficulties to be overcome before Norfolk would see her Navy Base a reality.<sup>40</sup>

Construction progressed, however, and Admiral Dillingham grew more optimistic as the sweeping extent of the base's planned operations took clearer shape with each new day. Besides Secretary Daniels' suggestions concerning training and supply stations, Hampton Roads was also to include divisions for aviation, hospital, submarine, and ordnance activities.<sup>41</sup> As the plan unfurled, the intended scope of the base became more apparent, particularly with the announcement that Hampton Roads was to be designated

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"Report of the Fifth Naval District From File of Naval District Room 2702-- Captain Bennett's," December 9, 1919, RG 45, ZPN-5, 16, hereinafter cited as "Report of the Fifth Naval District"; "U.S. Naval Air Station, Naval Operating Base, Hampton Roads, Norfolk, Virginia: Historical Data," March 29, 1919, RG 45, ZPN-5, 5, hereinafter cited as "U.S. Naval Air Station."

<sup>40</sup> Pilot, September 19, 1918; Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 53; Admiral Dillingham to Admiral McLean, October 14, 1918, RG 80, 19:28808-14; Dillingham, "Historical Narrative," 21-29.

<sup>41</sup> Admiral Dillingham to Chief of Naval Operations, September 11, 1917, RG 80, 19:28808-54.

as headquarters for the entire Fifth Naval District.

With the nation at war, the training station was seen as the most urgent necessity, and so the first construction activity was the building of accommodations for the new recruits. Norfolk already had one training station, Saint Helena across from the Navy Yard. Established in 1908, with an original capacity of 500 men, Saint Helena was by the First World War largely inadequate for the Navy's expanding personnel. The overflow at the station, an overflow amounting to 7,679 men, was forced to find shelter in tents as the late months of 1917 approached. A welcome relief occurred upon the opening, two months behind schedule, of the new Hampton Roads Training Station in October with the transfer of 1,400 men from the old base. This initial change-over was followed every twenty-one days by a transfer of an equal number of men, until by April, 1918, Saint Helena was completely replaced by Hampton Roads and was expediently remodeled as an annex to the Navy Yard. The new base, designed to accommodate 12,500 men, quickly reached its quota as the war further increased America's call for troops.<sup>42</sup>

The other sections of the Naval Operating Base began operations in rapid succession. At first building only temporary storehouses to relieve congestion at the Navy Yard, the supply station took on a more permanent atmosphere by November, 1917. The aviation station, originally intended to be located in Newport News, was quickly moved to the Exposition site to gain closer access to navy supplies and to take advantage of the bene-

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<sup>42</sup>Pilot, April 8, October 13, 1917, May 26, June 29, 1918; Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau, 41-66; Admiral Dillingham to Chief of Naval Operations, August 25, 1917, RG 80, 19:28808-14; "Report of the Fifth Naval District," 12-19; Hanna, "Growth of Norfolk," 10.

fits of Willoughby Bay for seaplanes. Flying began at the base on September 3rd, and when additional men and equipment were transferred from the Squantum, Massachusetts, base in October, the new site was officially designated as Naval Air Station, Hampton Roads. In comparison to these divisions, the submarine base at the northeast section of the site received scant attention, but slowly evolved as an integral part of the layout.<sup>43</sup>

Attention was turned, once the various personnel facilities were well under way, to the development of the base's waterfront. The original 474-acre site was more than doubled in size when a four-mile long bulkhead was constructed and the area behind it filled in with land dredged from the Elizabeth River. In addition, two 1,400-foot piers were extended out to the channel, giving ships an even better deep water access to the base than Secretary Daniels had originally anticipated.<sup>44</sup>

Construction obviously dominated the war-time activities of the Hampton Roads Base, as the hurried development of the site remained uppermost in the minds of the men involved. Despite its embryonic form, however, the base played a significant role in the First World War. In addition to its training activities, Hampton Roads was also the site of Fifth Naval District commandant Walter McLean's direction of the Navy's efforts from Maryland to northern North Carolina. Admiral McLean's first war-time order was the

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<sup>43</sup>Pilot, August 13, September 3, October 14, 1917; Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau, 390; Admiral Dillingham to Chief of Naval Operations, September 15, 1917, RG 80, 19:28808-14; Anniversary edition of PEP, the magazine of the Norfolk Supply Station, March 6, 1920, RG 80, 19:28808-300; "Report of the Fifth Naval District," 23-25; "U.S. Naval Air Station," 1-3.

<sup>44</sup>Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau, 136-139; Pilot, December 9, 1917.

banning of all amateur radio stations in the district, but his major responsibility was the laying and patrolling of the dual set of anti-submarine nets in the Hampton Roads and the Chesapeake Bay. Additional duties for the base involved the storage of naval defense mines, the stopping and searching of neutral ships off Lynnhaven Roads and Old Point Comfort, and the sweeping of the area for submerged German mines.<sup>45</sup>

When submarines were reported off of the Virginia coast, the Hampton Roads Base assumed a new responsibility. Training at the aviation station was halted, and the planes instead were sent out on daily patrols of the shipping lanes from the base to Morehead, North Carolina. Few, if any, encounters occurred with actual German submarines, but the flights were kept up for the duration of the war, and the pilots once or twice bombed suspicious-looking wakes.<sup>46</sup>

While wartime military operations progressed, so too did construction. The Navy Base was 90 per cent complete four months after the armistice, while the Army Base, built at an impressively frantic pace, was virtually finished with the end of the war. In addition to these government plants, funds were also issued for a naval quarantine station at Craney Island, for a 524-acre extension of the Navy Base near Tanner's

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<sup>45</sup>Pilot, April 8, 1917; "Report of the Fifth Naval District," 38-40; "History of the Fifth Naval District, April 7, 1918-June 30, 1919," January 24, 1920, RG 45, ZPN-5, 2-21, hereinafter cited as "History of the Fifth Naval District."

<sup>46</sup>Pilot, June 7, 1918; "Report of the Fifth Naval District," 31-32; Dillingham, "Historical Narrative," 44; "U.S. Naval Air Station," 6-12; "History of the U.S. Naval Air Station, Morehead City, North Carolina," July 10, 1919, RG 45, ZPN-5, hereinafter cited as "History of the U.S. Naval Air Station"; "History of U.S. Naval Air Station, Hampton Roads, Norfolk, Virginia: Yearly Report of Operations," July 31, 1919, RG 45, ZPN-5, 2, hereinafter cited as "Yearly Report."

Creek, and for mine-filling plants and torpedo storehouses at both Hampton Roads and Saint Julien's Magazine. Norfolk even offered the Navy 1,000 acres of waterfront property next to the Army Base for use during the war period at the rental price of \$1. Surprisingly, the Navy turned the offer down.<sup>47</sup>

In October, 1918, ground was broken for a second large training camp adjacent to the Hampton Roads Base. Christened the East Camp, the 370-acre base was a response to the U.S. Shipping Board's July announcement that it would call on the Navy for 200,000 sailors to man her new contingent of ships to be completed by January 1, 1920. Both Norfolk and Newport, Rhode Island, gained from the Shipping Board's announcement, but the Hampton Roads community almost lost her newest improvement before it was even begun. Distraught once more over Norfolk's inadequate utilities system, the Navy came very close to placing the new base in Yorktown. Only the efforts of Norfolk's ever-present promotional group in appealing to Secretary Daniels saved the appropriation for the city.<sup>48</sup>

While activities at the new navy and army bases held the spotlight in the war years, events at Norfolk's oldest military site, the Navy Yard, also felt the benefits of the new government interest in the city. Admiral Walter McLean, swamped with three positions after the opening of the Naval Operating Base, relinquished his job as the yard's commandant to devote

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<sup>47</sup> Pilot, April 24, July 12, August 28, 1917, May 14, 22, July 30, August 3, October 17, 24, 1918; Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau, 287-288; Dillingham, "Historical Narrative," 65.

<sup>48</sup> Pilot, August 18, September 1, 6, October 20, 1918; Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau, 69; Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 21-22.

his full time to the management of the new base and the Fifth Naval District. He was replaced in February, 1918, by Admiral A.F. Fechteler. More significant than this switch, however, was the assignment a month earlier of Admiral Frederic R. Harris as the yard's Public Works Officer. Harris, for the previous two years the head of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, had in 1917 vigorously promoted naval development in the Norfolk area. The assignment of the former head of one of the Navy's leading departments to the Norfolk yard was enough evidence for local observers that the yard was indeed to receive special attention.<sup>49</sup>

Under Harris and Fechteler, the Norfolk Navy Yard continued on its recently begun road to expansion. In an effort to alleviate the still congested and disorderly conditions at the yard, the two ordered a series of structural changes to simplify the yard's operations. They were aided in their efforts by the Navy Department, for the Naval Appropriations Acts of March, 1917, and April, 1918, included funds for the yard's waterfront development, for its ventilating system, for improvements to its streets and railways, as well as for a new crane, a new power plant, and better storage facilities. In addition, work on dry dock #4 continued, with Secretary Daniels pushing for an additional \$2,000,000 for its completion. Finished in early 1919, one of only seven built in the United States from 1916 to 1921, dry dock #4 was at the time the largest in the country.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Pilot, January 25, 1918; Undated, unsigned memorandum, RG 71, 13: 611-105 Norfolk.

<sup>50</sup> Pilot, May 19, December 4, 1917, February 15, 19, April 21, 1918; Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau, 204-208, 255; Manufacturers

Growth remained the order of the day. Although Norfolk lost to Charleston a supposedly assured appropriation for yet another dry dock, the yard shrugged off the defeat and continued to expand in other ways. Representative Holland finally squeezed sufficient funds out of Congress to allow for sizeable developments on the Schmoele tract, while the Navy leased 550 acres between Bush and Mason Creeks and 200 additional acres on the shore of the Elizabeth River for extensions to the yard.<sup>51</sup>

While the structural and acreage changes were taking place at a feverish pace, the main work of the Norfolk Navy Yard in the war years remained the repairing of ships. Although the yard had completed its shipbuilding ways, construction of new vessels played a very minor role at Norfolk during the war, and only one destroyer was built there between 1917 and 1919. However, innumerable ships were repaired. Dry Dock #3, reportedly in deteriorating shape, was refurbished early in the war in preparation for the influx of crippled ships. The Eitel Friedrich and the Kronprinz Wilhelm, two German sea raiders that since mid-1915 had been interned at the yard, were removed to Philadelphia to likewise make

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Record, LXXI (March 8, 1917), 48; Manufacturers Record, LXXI (April 12, 1917), 53; Davis, "Norfolk City," 325; Captain M.M. Taylor to Chief of Naval Operations, February 11, 1918, RG 71, 13:603-1 Norfolk; Memorandum, July 12, 1918, RG 71, 13:661-1 Norfolk; Bureau of Yards and Docks to Norfolk Navy Yard, July 20, 1918, RG 71, 13:221-1 Norfolk; Abstract of Account, September 23, 1921, RG 71, 13:525-1 Norfolk.

<sup>51</sup>Pilot, January 19, March 15, 20, July 11, 23, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 325; Manufacturers Record, LXXI (April 19, 1917), 71; Industrial Manager to Bureau of Yards and Docks, March 11, 1918, RG 71, 13:628-1 Norfolk; Bureau of Yards and Docks to Norfolk Navy Yard, April 16, 1918, RG 71, 13:812-1 Norfolk.

room for repairs to American ships.<sup>52</sup>

Work at the Navy Yard went smoothly when compared with the feverish confusion at the Navy Base; nevertheless, swiftness remained the key, not only for the yard and the base, but for the Army depot and for Norfolk's minor military plants as well. Inspired by President Wilson's personal desires and further prompted by America's entrance into the First World War, the federal government moved with lightning-like speed to reshape the American military. In the process, she also reshaped Norfolk.

While the war went on in Europe, then, another struggle on a smaller scale took place in Norfolk, one between a federal government interested in military growth and a city interested in municipal expansion. Unlike the battlefields of Europe, though, there were no losers, for both sides achieved their goals. The military got its bases, while Norfolk, despite having to accept not only the difficulties associated with the military's presence but also the government's sometimes reluctant and sometimes arrogant attitude toward the solutions to those problems, was rewarded with a continuation of her recent growth. The difference in this growth from that of the pre-1917 years was that it came not from Norfolk herself, but from an outside source, the military. Whereas a year earlier the city had been guiding her own destiny, beginning with 1917 and continuing through the final years of World War I she became more the spectator than the creator of her own future.

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<sup>52</sup>Pilot, October 1, 1916, June 29, 1918; Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau, 189; Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 11-12; Industrial Manager to Medical Officer of USS New Jersey, February 6, 1918, RG 71, 13:410-3 Norfolk; Public Works Officer to Bureau of Yards and Docks, July 26, 1918, RG 71, 13:661-3 Norfolk.

CHAPTER III  
NORFOLK IN THE WAR;  
SACRIFICE IN THE MIDST OF PROSPERITY

While the benefits of military expansion held center stage, other less advantageous changes also came to Norfolk in the years of American involvement in the First World War. The latter changes, changes that for the most part had been foreshadowed before America's entrance into the war, profoundly altered the city's way of life, making it more difficult to live there. A relentless continuation of the earlier rise in the cost of living, a drastic reduction in the amount of available fuels and foods, and the constant demands of the federal government for additional funds for the continuation of the war played major roles in creating havoc in Norfolk's social and economic well-being.

Most American cities faced similar problems, yet Norfolk, because of her newly rediscovered importance as a military site, was presented with even more difficulties. Her labor problems spilled over from the government sites to the city as a whole, prompting strikes in most phases of her industrial activity. Her streets, newly cluttered with transient laborers, became the stalking grounds of what seemed at times to be the entire United States Navy. The worst fire in her history capped Norfolk's year and a half of frustration, a period designed to crush any city's hopes for future expansion.

To Norfolk's credit, she weathered these difficulties with surprising serenity. By adopting the national war-consciousness and by refusing to abandon her earlier established orientation toward progress, Norfolk

minimized the difficulties brought by the war, made the most of the benefits of the military's overshadowing presence, and so resolutely continued to grow. New industries continued to pour into the city, her place as a port maintained its high position, and her indices of growth remained on an upward swing. Despite all of the obstacles, then, Norfolk's prewar prosperity carried through the armistice of November, 1918. As it had in the previous thirty-two months, the war played a major part in sustaining that prosperity.

When the United States went to war in April, 1917, Norfolk responded with an enthusiasm far removed from her earlier indifference. In the week leading up to the declaration of war, mass rallies, parades, speeches, and demonstrations thundered through the city, and the applause for Wilson's war message of April 2 was deafening.<sup>1</sup> The response to the call to arms, however, was mute by comparison. As early as 1916, the men of Norfolk had shown a decided lack of interest in joining the service, being reluctant even to enlist in so tame an outfit as the Naval Reserve. Despite the efforts of the men at the Saint Helena Naval Training Station in putting on weekly parades to promote enlistment, the results had been discouraging at best. Even though girls in recruiting tents at the corner of Granby Street and City Hall Avenue prompted more than one eager young man to sign up, and even though the newly opened offices of the Fifth Naval District were periodically swamped with applicants for the reserves, things still went slowly. By April 23, Mayor Mayo wrote to Governor Henry Stuart that

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<sup>1</sup>Pilot, April 1-7, 1917.

Norfolk had enlisted but fifty-nine of her quota of 200 men for the Navy.<sup>2</sup>

The passage of the Selective Service Act of May 18, 1917, brought a change in Norfolk's apathy, a change so remarkable that the city soon bolted to the top of Virginia's recruiting list. Preferring the relative freedom of enlistment to the fearful bondage of conscription, Norfolk's men rushed to join the service. With the late 1917 announcement that no man registered for the draft could enlist after December 15, a second rush to the recruiting offices swept the city: offices that previously had averaged twelve men a day from December 8 to 15 were flooded with close to five times that number.<sup>3</sup>

Those who volunteered to serve did so in a number of capacities. Twelve hundred Norfolk men chose as their duty in the war the organizing of home guard units. The Brambleton Home Guard and the Norfolk Home Guard, both set up in the spring of 1917, refused to join the Virginia State Volunteers, preferring instead to operate as strictly local units. The groups served in loan drives, as guards on draft registration days, and as aids to the police in protecting warehouses, docks, and piers. More than anything, they served as a stabilizing influence on the morale of the people of Norfolk.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Pilot, September 10, 1916, March 10, 19, 29, 30, April 3, 7, 11, 13, 14, 18, 20, 22, May 2, 1917; "Report of the Fifth Naval District," 1-11; "History of the Fifth Naval District," 139-140.

<sup>3</sup>Pilot, April 25, 29, May 20, 24, June 6, July 20, 24, August 5, 9, 1917, September 12, 13, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 310-314; Davis, Virginia War Agencies, 112, 217, 274; Schlegel, Historic Port, 302-303.

<sup>4</sup>Pilot, May 20, 1917; Davis, "Norfolk City," 308-310; Davis, Virginia War Agencies, 358.

Of the hundreds of Norfolk men who actually participated in the fighting, the group that received the most attention was the First Virginia Field Artillery, nicknamed the "Light Artillery Blues." Fresh from a disappointingly dull tour on the Mexican border, the "Blues" were mustered into service on June 30, 1917, trained at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, and then shipped to France, arriving there on July 12, 1918, and remaining for the duration of the war.<sup>5</sup>

The Norfolk that these men left behind was one burdened very early with countless difficulties, for 1917 and 1918 proved to be the peak years of war-related sacrifices in the city. A 52 per cent increase in the national cost of living from 1914 to 1918 was felt with devastating effect in Norfolk. Particularly was this true of staple food items, as the earlier shortages of milk, bread, meat, and eggs continued through the late years of the war. Restaurants took the drastic step of charging for bread and butter, and then cut back on their sugar usage as a shortage of that item hit the city in late 1917. I.A. Cox and the Chamber of Commerce very early organized a committee to look into the city's food situation, but the group's study proved discouraging. The only successful weapon against the rising prices turned out to be the planting of backyard gar-

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<sup>5</sup>Pilot, June 19, 25, October 13, 29, December 16, 1916, March 11, August 15, 1917; Davis, Virginia War Agencies, 283; Schlegel, Historic Port, 302-317; Arthur K. Davis, editor, Virginia Military Organizations in the World War (Richmond, 1927), xii, hereinafter cited as Davis, Virginia Military Organizations; Colonel T.M. Northam, "History of Battery B," in Davis, Virginia Military Organizations, 147-155; Colonel T.M. Northam, "History of the One Hundred and Eleventh Field Artillery," in Davis, Virginia Military Organizations, 134-135.

dens, a step taken by large numbers of Norfolk's citizens.<sup>6</sup>

Food conservation went beyond this stage of backyard gardens as early as October, 1917, when, guided by the National Food Administration as well as by Virginia's Council of Defense, the city instituted a program of beefless Tuesdays in her hotels and restaurants. By December the program spread beyond public facilities, and Norfolk announced that she would as a whole observe meatless Tuesdays and wheatless Wednesdays. The program met with success, as in its first two months Norfolk saved over a million pounds of meat and a hundred thousand pounds of flour.<sup>7</sup> As the war progressed and the food situation worsened, restrictions became even more rigid. In May, 1918, thirty-five food dealers were forced to make donations to the Red Cross for violating the local food administration's laws. The following June, when the National Food Administration ruled that beef be eliminated from all but one or two meals per week, the local group went even further and demanded that all of the city's hotels and restaurants serve no beef whatsoever through September 15.<sup>8</sup>

Items other than food also proved scarce. Coal and wood became too expensive as fuels, postal rates went up, and even the Virginian Pilot was forced into raising its subscription rates. The most severe non-food

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<sup>6</sup> Pilot, April 14, May 8, 11, 16, 27, July 6, 11, August 11, September 1, November 1, December 20, 1917, January 30, July 12, August 12, September 29, 1918; "Pay Data," undated, RG 24, 410:280; Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 47.

<sup>7</sup> Pilot, October 9, 24, November 9, December 27, 1917, January 19, February 5, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 320; Davis, Virginia War Agencies, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Pilot, May 21, June 20, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 320-321.

crisis came in May, 1918, when a huge shortage of ice left the city and her workers sweltering in the heat. Norfolk's Food Administrator, Harry K. Wolcott, after failing to secure the support of the state administration in his efforts to get ice dealers to lower their prices, abandoned his post in protest. The situation was alleviated only in August, when appeals for ice were answered by New York, Maryland, and by Norfolk's neighbor, North Carolina.<sup>9</sup>

Fuel conservation in Norfolk followed the basic pattern of the food program. The National Fuel Administration and the state Council of Defense took the lead in attempting to solve Norfolk's fuel problems. An acute coal shortage that began in late 1917 lasted for the majority of the war, forcing Norfolk's residents to switch to higher priced wood and to less efficient soft coal. Although the situation in Norfolk was bad, in New England, where heavy industries demanded huge amounts of coal, the crisis was even more severe. The people of Norfolk watched with unamused irony, then, as ships loaded with coal left the shivering city daily for New England destinations. The city's coal yards remained cluttered with people demanding coal. These yards quickly lost control of the situation, and so the local fuel commission felt the necessity of opening a yard of its own for the heaviest period of the crisis. It helped little, if at all.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Pilot, October 10, 1917, May 3, June 3, August 10, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 319.

<sup>10</sup>Pilot, November 25, December 20, 1917, January 1, 4, 13, February 1, July 31, 1918.

Norfolk's industries abided by the January, 1918, order demanding the closing of all non-essential manufacturing concerns east of the Mississippi River for a five-day period and for ten consecutive Mondays, although the last half of the order was met for only five weeks. The city also followed the lightless Thursday and lightless Sunday rules. When the two-day restriction proved inadequate and local fuel commissioner J.W. Hough increased it to a full seven, Norfolk's Retail Merchant's Association and the Chamber of Commerce reacted with heated indignation. Noticing that the lights across the river in Portsmouth--where the same energy source was used--were remaining on, the merchants went over Hough's head and appealed to state commissioner Harry F. Byrd. The state's response was a compromise that left half of the city's lights on each night, a solution that lasted until the two lightless nights program was reinstated in July, 1918. Later that year, Norfolk's other conservation plan was born with the announcement that unnecessary driving would be prohibited on Sundays.<sup>11</sup>

While on one hand Norfolk was asked to conserve, on the other she was asked to invest, and the Liberty Loan, War Savings Stamps, and Red Cross drives put a healthy dent in her pocketbook. Although the city exceeded her quota in three of the four wartime Liberty Loans, it took a struggle to do so. After failing to meet her quota in the first drive in June, 1917, Norfolk found her citizen's interest waning so badly that with a week left in the second drive in October, 1917, the city was

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<sup>11</sup> Pilot, December 20, 1917, January 1, 17, February 1, 28, March 6, 28, July 26, September 5, November 10, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 325-326.

\$4,300,000 short of her almost \$6,000,000 goal. Only when Mayor Mayo commandeered 375 of the city's leading businessmen to spur the drive to a successful conclusion did Norfolk avert the list of "slacker" cities. When the third drive, in April, 1918, again slumped badly, Norfolk's banks blacklisted those who would not buy bonds, a move which again pushed the city over the top. The fourth drive moved with more efficiency, as the obvious need for better organization prompted the formation of the Norfolk War Funds Campaign Committee in September, 1918, to oversee the last of the loan drives.<sup>12</sup>

Norfolk's performance in the War Savings Stamps and Red Cross drives were equally tenuous in their success. Although the city's brigade of four-minute men verbally prompted her residents to freely contribute, stamp sales drooped through 1918, and only with the most strained and drawn-out effort did Norfolk reach her goal of \$1,700,000. If it had not been for the excellent work done in the drive by her schools, she perhaps would have failed altogether. The Red Cross drive of June, 1917, crept at the same unstable pace. Only in the spring of 1918 did Norfolk finally have a drive that was a success from start to finish--her Red Cross drive of that year doubled the anticipated goal.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Pilot, May 13, 26, June 5, 15, 17, September 28, October 3, 15, 20, 23, 24, 26, 28, December 22, 1917, April 6, 11, 16, 21, May 4, 6, September 25, 26, October 20, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 314-317; Schlegel, Historic Port, 303. Schlegel's statement that Norfolk "responded promptly to all calls for aid in financing the war" is both misleading and inaccurate.

<sup>13</sup>Pilot, June 17, 20, 25, July 18, October 20, 1917, January 15, May 28, June 23, 28, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 305, 317.

When these monetary donations were added to the \$100,000 collected in the city as an amusement tax in the first year of the war, the financial burden became very real. Some observers noted that Norfolk had no reason to complain in the face of the sacrifices asked of her, as the benefits brought to the city from the military's presence more than offset the troubles.<sup>14</sup> As true as this was, Norfolk's residents could not be convinced entirely of the argument, for besides the labor and housing problems that the government building program caused, it also brought other difficulties. Municipal work, particularly road construction, was hurt badly by the lack of labor and materials, and the city for the entire war period found herself hampered by poor roads as a result.<sup>15</sup> The strikes at the military sites spilled over to the civilian sector, as from May, 1917, to July, 1918, work stoppages were a daily occurrence in Norfolk. Seeing the better conditions and higher wages of the government workers, Norfolk's laborers demanded similar treatment. Her barge masters twice tied up the city's port facilities, her railroad clerks obstructed transportation routes, her coal car dumpers slowed down her leading trade, and workers at the American Cigar Company, one of the city's largest industrial plants, walked out for a full month. While union issues played a minor role in most of the strikes, at least one incident, involving the city's oyster packers, centered upon the question of recognition of the Longshoreman's Union.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Pilot, January 31, 1918.

<sup>15</sup>Pilot, June 29, September 1-15, 1917.

<sup>16</sup>Pilot, May 2, 31, July 1, September 11, 25, 28, October 2, 4, 6,

Schools in Norfolk also were effected by higher wage demands. Already feeling the effect of the war with the orientation of sewing and manual training classes to benefit the Red Cross, Norfolk's schools in early 1918 saw their teachers asking for better benefits. When the increased benefits proved inadequate, many of the teachers left the profession for the more consistent salary of Navy yeomen. Students, too, deserted the schools, and despite the preventative measure of introducing vocational programs, many students left to join the service or to work in the newly arriving war industries. In April, 1918, the most obvious effect of the war on the schools came about when, in an effort to minimize the possible effects of propoganda, the German language was removed as a course of study.<sup>17</sup>

Natural disasters added to the city's difficulties. The worst fire in Norfolk's history, completely levelling the Monticello Hotel and destroying in all \$2,000,000 worth of property, struck on New Year's Day in 1918. Besides adding to the already urgent housing shortage, the fire also crippled many of the city's businesses by bringing to a halt their previously thriving activities. When a nationwide flu epidemic arrived in Norfolk nine months later, causing the closing of schools, theatres, dance halls, and scattered businesses, the people of the city had barely recovered sufficiently from the fire to weather the anguish of the 273

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November 22, 26, 29, December 8, 1917, March 31, April 3, 7, July 16, September 11, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 332-333; "History of the Fifth Naval District," 131.

<sup>17</sup>Pilot, May 7, October 21, 1917, January 26, February 2, 20, 21, April 10, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 304-306.

deaths brought by the flu.<sup>18</sup>

All of Norfolk's difficulties up to this point, from the rising cost of living to the monetary sacrifices to the fire and the flu, were seen by the city's residents as being beyond their immediate control. The worst of Norfolk's new problems, however, was seen as something definitely within the people's power to regulate: the increasing crime rate that came at first with the influx of new laborers and then became more severe with the arrival of military personnel to man the new bases.

Before the decision to build the Hampton Roads Naval Operating Base, Norfolk had been only intermittently the scene of trouble between sailors and city residents. Occasional incidents in 1915 had left St. Vincent's Hospital periodically overwhelmed with emergency cases, but for the most part the relationship between the city and the sailors had been a good one, profiting both parties. While Norfolk had provided entertainment for the men during their brief shore leaves, they in turn had contributed heavily to the city's increasing revenue.<sup>19</sup>

The establishment of the base changed that situation. With naval personnel now a permanent part of the city, the old amity was quickly replaced by a feeling of heightened tension. Aimlessly roaming the streets of Norfolk, sailors easily fell prey to the temptations of the city's growing population of prostitutes. Women who had come to Norfolk on a

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<sup>18</sup>Pilot, January 2, September 26, October 1, 2, 3, 9, 25, 1918; Frank Wing, Ye Hysterical Historie of Norfolk Towne (Norfolk, 1931), 56, hereinafter cited as Wing, Hysterical Historie.

<sup>19</sup>Pilot, April 9, May 1, September 6, 14, 27, October 1, 11, 1915, October 6, 1916.

lark, hopeful of seeing more of the world than they had from their backwoods homes, hastily adopted this easy but illicit way of life. A comical stream of backstabbing ensued between the sailors and Norfolk's new brood of wayward women, with the latter making a game of matrimonial profiteering by marrying two or three sailors for their allotment checks, and the men in their turn promising marriage with one breath and escaping through the hotel's back door with the next.<sup>20</sup>

Less humorous, and by far more serious, was the increase in Norfolk's venereal disease rate that inevitably accompanied the rise in prostitution. Thanks in large part to Norfolk, Virginia soon found herself with the third worst V.D. rate in the country. When a high percentage of the 900 girls arrested in the city from July, 1917, to May, 1918, were found to have contracted the disease, Norfolk's crisis threatened to become an epidemic.<sup>21</sup>

The war against Norfolk's expanding prostitution trade was carried on by groups from all levels of government. On the federal level, the Navy established the office of Aide for Information in Norfolk to investigate misconduct on the part of enlisted men, and in July, 1917, Secretary Daniels appointed the Naval Commission on Training Activities to safeguard the morals of new trainees. The latter group, under the national direction of Raymond B. Fosdick and including Barton Myers as the local representative, carried the burden of the Navy's efforts in Norfolk. On the state level, Virginia's Council of Defense, in May, 1918, adopted a resolution

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<sup>20</sup> Pilot, December 23, 1915, February 20, May 5, 16, June 12, 1918; Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 48-49.

<sup>21</sup> Pilot, April 2, May 25, June 9, 29, July 1, 1918; Davis, Virginia War Agencies, 100-106.

making those with venereal disease subject to prosecution.<sup>22</sup>

The heart of the attack on prostitution was managed by Norfolk's Police Department and by her city council. Through 1917, the police cracked down hard on Norfolk's red light district and claimed by the end of that year to have all but abolished it. The Department maintained and patrolled a preventative five-mile zone around the naval base, and, in addition, in February, 1918, began arrests under a new ordinance prohibiting solicitation from an automobile for immoral purposes. The council, meanwhile, took the most practical and successful step when in May, 1918, it appropriated \$10,000 for the establishment of a detention home and hospital for the arrested women. Designed to correct the incredibly filthy and inadequate accommodations existing prior to 1918, this move more than any other helped to gradually whittle down Norfolk's rising rate of immorality.<sup>23</sup>

While prostitution flourished, so too did the whiskey trade. Norfolk in 1917 had the reputation of being a drinking city, as two years before fully 22 per cent of her total arrests had been for intoxication. When statewide prohibition went into effect with the Mapp Act in November, 1916--without the support of Norfolk--the problem went underground, but remained nevertheless. Sailors found it easy to obtain whiskey in Norfolk, and even after the police crackdown on alcohol netted 20,000 pints of whiskey

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<sup>22</sup> Pilot, July 11, 1917; "Report of the Fifth Naval District," 41-43; "Law Enforcement Data," undated, RG 24, 410:213; Newport News Daily Press clipping, July 14, 1917, RG 80, 19:28308-16.

<sup>23</sup> Pilot, November 11, December 23, 1917, February 23, March 7, May 15, 1918.

in the first six months of prohibition, if an enlisted man knew the right people he could easily replenish his stock.<sup>24</sup>

Crimes other than prostitution and bootlegging similarly jumped with the arrival of the Navy in Norfolk. Sailors were arrested daily on a wide spectrum of charges, from disorderly conduct, to assault, to larceny, to housebreaking.<sup>25</sup> The most consistent problem, however, was a heated distrust between naval personnel and the black residents of Norfolk. The city had been segregated since a March, 1914, law prohibiting blacks and whites from moving into areas completely inhabited by the other race. The sailors, thinking perhaps that entertainment would be easier to come by in the black sections of the city, freely roamed those areas. Trouble brewed for weeks after the enlisted men first entered the areas, as accusations of robberies and other assorted crimes flew from both sailors and residents. The lid blew off in August, 1917, when the Church and Charlotte Streets area--which, ironically enough, was celebrating a "festival week" because of recent improvements by merchants--became the scene of an intense riot.<sup>26</sup>

Twenty-five years later, when the nation was again at war, Norfolk would tacitly allot the sailors the area around East Main Street. She

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<sup>24</sup>Pilot, April 16, May 4, 28, June 2, 1917, February 3, 1918; Norfolk, Virginia: Report on a Survey of the City Government (New York, 1915), 182, hereinafter cited as Report on City Government; Allen Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville, 1968), 311-312.

<sup>25</sup>Pilot, August 13, 17, September 17, October 1, 1917, January 7, 10, 25, March 1, 19, 25, 30, April 2, June 25, July 22, 23, September 22, November 1, 2, 6, 1918.

<sup>26</sup>Pilot, August 6, 7, November 6, 7, 1917.

would let the men do anything in that section, hoping that by confining them to a small area she could prevent their spreading, with their vices and crimes, to the rest of Norfolk.<sup>27</sup> In World War I, though, the city offered no such haven to the Navy, and so when the sailors invaded her black sections there was little that she could do. Mayor Mayo tried the opposite approach of his World War II counterpart when he asked Secretary Daniels to issue an order prohibiting enlisted men from visiting the black sectors. Daniels, pleading uncertainty of the legality of such a move, hesitated to issue the order. When the interracial problems failed to subside on their own, but instead became a permanent feature of the city's war years, Norfolk and military police joined forces to patrol the city. Accepting the fact that they could not get a blanket order restricting enlisted movement in Norfolk, the patrols concentrated instead on those areas most frequently suspected as zones of crime. Beginning in October, 1917, as merely a weekend detail, the patrols grew by March, 1918, to a seven-day force designed to keep the Navy men permanently in line.<sup>28</sup>

When Norfolk's police were not working on the sailor crisis, more often than not they were busy with one of two other new problems, enemy aliens or transient laborers. Although Virginia had a small percentage of foreigners in the war years, Norfolk and Richmond held the bulk of those that the state did have. With the declaration of war, Mayor Mayo complied with federal regulations by demanding the surrender of all weapons

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<sup>27</sup> Schlegel, Conscripted City, 6-7.

<sup>28</sup> Pilot, October 31, November 11, 1917, March 1, 1918; Davis, Virginia War Agencies, 24-25; Raymond B. Fosdick to Secretary Daniels, September 22, 1917, RG 80, 19:7657-499.

held by Norfolk's enemy aliens. Going one step further, the mayor carried out a Navy request that all such aliens be prohibited from living or doing business within one half mile of any of Norfolk's military sites. Those already living there were forced to move, and those who entered the restricted area after the institution of the program found themselves subject to quick arrest.<sup>29</sup>

Norfolk's transient laborers also were under the watchful eye of the police. At first enjoying the leisurely advantages of high wages and increased competition for their work between contending companies, the laborers by early 1918 were more than aware of the truth behind the city's "Go to Work or Go to Jail" signs. A frenzied campaign against idlers put 500 of them behind bars from April to June, 1918. The least hardy of the slackers fled from the city rather than face jail, choosing Baltimore and other northern points as potentially better sites in which to gain an easy living.<sup>30</sup>

The police, then, held the keys in Norfolk's efforts to overcome many of the difficulties caused by the rapid influx of both military and civilian population. By carrying on sustained anti-crime drives and by, in March, 1918, adding thirty new men to their force, Norfolk's police kept the city's crime rate from exploding to one of unmanageable propor-

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<sup>29</sup> Pilot, March 6, August 26, 1915, November 15, 1916, April 7, 13, 18, 22, June 1, 17, July 12, 1917, January 15, February 10, March 12, 1918; Davis, Virginia War Agencies, 122.

<sup>30</sup> Pilot, July 15, 22, 1917, May 12, 23, July 5, October 24, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 335-336; Davis, Virginia War Agencies, 95-98.

tions.<sup>31</sup> Other groups, however, also deserved credit for making the city a more hospitable place, particularly for the sailors, than it once threatened to be. The War Camp Community Service, the Red Cross, and the Y.M.C.A. raised funds and provided more wholesome entertainment than could be found elsewhere in the city. The Liberty and Red Circle theatres, much to the consternation of the Wells Theatre, opened as exclusively military movie houses, thus giving the enlisted men a place of their own to go. In addition, when the city's housing crisis became acute, many individual families threw aside any distrust that they may have harbored for the Navy and opened their houses to the sailors as places to stay during their weekends in town.<sup>32</sup>

When the people of Norfolk looked at the new military interest in their city, seeing the Navy Base, the Army Base, and continued improvements at the Navy Yard, they felt assured that the war had brought them nothing but the best of luck, that it meant for them unlimited expansion. Seeing the other side of the coin now with the draft, the price rises, the food and fuel shortages, the monetary demands, the strikes, and the crime wave, they began to realize that the expected growth demanded a price. Norfolk's leaders, though, felt sure that expansion was worth the price being paid. Many of the sacrifices were obviously temporary in nature, the kind that would fade away with the passing of the war. Operating under this assumption, Norfolk's promoters shrugged off the most

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<sup>31</sup>Pilot, June 17, 1917, February 15, March 21, 23, 1918; Report on City Government, 188.

<sup>32</sup>Pilot, November 9, 11, December 23, 1917, March 8, May 4, 5, June 30, September 14, 20, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 348-349.

recent difficulties and continued to guide the city in the direction of progress. Growth, they felt, would outlive the war.

Wishing to give a more permanent impetus to the Chamber of Commerce's earlier work in promoting Norfolk, F.W. McKinney and a group of the city's businessmen on October 13, 1917, created the Norfolk Industrial Corporation. Composed primarily of the same men who had steered the earlier movement, with Barton Myers as its first president, the Industrial Corporation directed its efforts and its \$300,000 working capital toward luring even more businesses to Norfolk. Aided by the smaller scale Norfolk Ad Club, the promoters bought over \$100,000 worth of desirably located land and then offered it to prospective firms at more than reasonable rates.<sup>33</sup>

Although the Industrial Corporation was hampered by one of the same irritants that provoked the military's wrath in Norfolk, the city's poor roads, on the whole the group's efforts were an overwhelming success. While it lost at least two large industries on account of the city's bad transportation routes, the Industrial Corporation gained many more because of the magnetic attraction of the military's massive expansion in the city. Whereas prior to the war most of the industries that came to Norfolk were small in nature, designed as mere supports to the city's commercial sphere, in 1917 and 1918 those that arrived were more of the large-scale, self-sufficient variety. The arrival of the British-American Tobacco Company, the American Chain Company, and a branch of DuPont in mid and late 1917 began the new migration of major businesses to the city. They were followed in rapid succession by the opening of new facilities by the Southgate

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<sup>33</sup>Pilot, September 23, October 13, 1917, May 24, 1918.

Terminal Corporation, the beginning of the Hampton Roads Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company by Cleveland capital, the arrival of the country's largest ice and cold storage company, the spending of \$1,000,000 to set up the Guardian Motor Company, and the expenditure of \$2,000,000 by Standard Oil to build a supply station at Bush Bluff, adjacent to both the Army and the Navy Bases. When the Norfolk and Portsmouth Belt Line moved its offices from Portsmouth to Norfolk, it was a sure indication of the city's growing importance.<sup>34</sup>

Old established businesses also benefitted in these years. The moving of the federal government--in the form of the Navy, the U.S. Shipping Board, the U.S. Housing Corporation, and the District Board of Control--into offices on Granby Street brought with it the awarding of numerous war contracts for local businesses. Only those industries thought to be essential to the war effort gained from this influx of government contracts; those deemed non-essential were rapidly crowded out. In Norfolk, though, with her growing list of shipbuilding, lumber, steamship, electrical, and general building corporations, few non-essential industries existed.<sup>35</sup>

Shipbuilding and transportation companies benefitted most from the government-sponsored work. The Norfolk Navy Yard, at the first of the war handling repairs on both Navy vessels and on civilian vessels com-

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<sup>34</sup> Pilot, May 13, June 29, July 7, September 1, 14, 15, October 5, 12, 15, November 6, December 23, 1917, January 27, February 19, 1918; Manufacturers Record, LXXII (October 25, 1917), 60; Clausen, Population in Flux, 31; Benton, "Development of Norfolk," 44.

<sup>35</sup> Pilot, April 12, June 13, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 323-324; Davis, Virginia War Agencies, 56.

mandeered for the coast watch, by late 1917 found its space too limited to carry the load. Private companies were then contracted to handle the overflow, with Colonna's Marine Railway, Craig's Marine Railway, and the Norfolk Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company picking up the majority of the work. The last of these companies profitted the most, adding a new dry dock and increasing its work force from forty in 1916 to 700 in 1918. Meanwhile, the Virginian Railway was handed over \$1,000,000 to increase its coal storage facilities and to make additions to its piers.<sup>36</sup>

The new government interest was highly valued in the city itself, particularly in her banking facilities, where clearances climbed 65 per cent and resources 70 per cent from 1916 to 1918. In the building trades, despite a decline in the first year, the two year advance amounted to 14 per cent.<sup>37</sup> The interest was most appreciated, however, at Norfolk's waterfront. After seeing his most sought after appropriation continually shot down in the House for the previous five years, Representative Holland finally managed, in August, 1917, to convince Congress of the necessity of deepening Norfolk's harbor to forty feet and of widening it up to 750 feet. The work began in early 1918, joining a host of other government approved projects for Norfolk's port.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Pilot, June 16, 1918; Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 7-12; "Report of the Fifth Naval District," 32; Manufacturers Record, LXXI (April 26, 1917), 60; Manufacturers Record, LXXII (August 9, 1917), 55; Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau, 233-235; Schlegel, Historic Port, 310.

<sup>37</sup>Pilot, April 20, June 2, 8, July 1, August 3, September 2, December 30, 1917, April 15, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 323.

<sup>38</sup>Pilot, July 27, 1917, January 1, February 17, 21, August 4, 1918; Davis, "Norfolk City," 330; "Land at Norfolk" memorandum, February 18, 1917,

The position of Captain of the Port for Hampton Roads was created by the Navy at the same time that the Rivers and Harbors bill was clearing Congress. Assigning Captain J.G. Ballinger to the post, the Navy hoped, by taking control of the local facilities, to prevent any possible congestion and thus to aid both commercial and military shipping through the port. When a jam in export traffic through New York in early 1918 demanded the rerouting of much of that port's traffic to Norfolk, the necessity and advantages of having a congestion-free harbor became apparent.<sup>39</sup>

The port, in fact, remained surprisingly unobstructed throughout the war period. Despite the dredging work and an increase in shipping--10 per cent in coal dumping, 85 per cent in exports, and 123 per cent in imports from 1916 to 1918--Norfolk's commerce went on in smooth, although hectic fashion.<sup>40</sup> Only once was there any major tie-up of shipping, that being when the severe winter of 1917-1918 froze the harbor and left numerous ships waiting off of the Virginia capes for coal. That winter caused not only a tie-up of vessels, but also a slowdown of the port's coal shipment to New England's vital war industries and the loss of jobs for many of Norfolk's dock workers. When the harbor finally thawed, it

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RG 71, 13:621-1 Norfolk; U.S. Congress, House, 65th Congress, 1st Session, June 16, 1917, Congressional Record, 4:3737; U.S. Congress, House, Hearings Before Rivers and Harbors Committee, 65th Congress, 1st Session, May 2, 1917, 52-53; Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, War Department, Ports of Norfolk, Portsmouth, Newport News, and Hampton, Virginia, Port Series 15 (Washington, 1935), 14-15, hereinafter cited as Board of Engineers, Ports of Norfolk.

<sup>39</sup>Pilot, January 31, August 7, 1918; "Report of the Fifth Naval District," 39-40.

<sup>40</sup>Pilot, May 1, July 1, August 1, October 3, December 6, 23, 27, 30, 1917, October 27, 1918; Schlegel, Historic Port, 303-305; Maritime Exchange, 1928 Annual, 19-23.

took weeks for the port to resume normal activities, as the coal itself had not yet thawed and the men who had been put out of work had to be induced to return, as many of them had found new employment at the military construction sites. This winter and the initial demoralization of shipping caused by the news of German sea raiders off of the Atlantic coast were, however, the only instances of disappointment in Norfolk's otherwise successful years as a wartime commercial port.<sup>41</sup>

Progress at the port was brought about just as much by government-spawned programs as had been the case in the city's other spheres of activity. The U.S. Shipping Board, organized in January, 1917, and the Board's main wartime instrument, the Emergency Fleet Corporation, organized in April, 1917, early in the war established offices in Norfolk. Spurred by the immediate necessity of a large fleet to transport men and materials to the war zone, the E.F.C. requisitioned private vessels and authorized the building of dry docks to care for the infant fleet. In Norfolk, following the suggestion of Secretary Daniels, the E.F.C. paid for the building of two small floating dry docks (#6 and #7) at the Navy Yard, under the condition that the Corporation would have free, unlimited access to the docks for the duration of the war.<sup>42</sup>

The work of the Naval Overseas Transportation Service also increased

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<sup>41</sup>Pilot, April 8, July 6, 1917, January 4, 6, 25, February 2, 1918; Schlegel, Historic Port, 305.

<sup>42</sup>Pilot, June 26, July 4, October 15, 1918; Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 2; Davis, "Norfolk City," 325; Forrest R. Holdcamper, editor, Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the United States Shipping Board (Washington, 1956), 3; A.F. Fechteler to Secretary Daniels, March 5, 1918, RG 71, 13:410-1 Norfolk; Contract between U.S. Shipping Board and George Leary Construction Company, August 27, 1918, RG 71, 13:410-1 Norfolk.

the importance of Norfolk as a port. The body primarily responsible for the transportation of American men and materials overseas, the N.O.T.S. sent convoys of twenty to forty-two ships out of Norfolk every eight days bound for Europe. The port quickly became the nation's second most active N.O.T.S. base of operations, second again only to New York. The cargoes out of Norfolk more often than not were composed largely of coal, as dumpings over the piers of the Norfolk and Western and the Virginian Railways, now regulated by the newly established Tidewater Coal Exchange, easily maintained their high prewar levels.<sup>43</sup>

In October, 1918, with the war drawing to a close, Norfolk received the biggest boost to her commercial prosperity when the federal government's Exports Control Committee named her the one "neutral" port for the Atlantic coast. Meaning that all exports leaving the country from east of the Mississippi River had to clear through Norfolk, the appointment was a clear recognition by the national government of the city's growing significance.<sup>44</sup>

When the war ended one month later, Norfolk was, as she had been in 1914, a city on the move. Her commercial sector continued to climb, her military sphere maintained its dominant prosperity, and the city as a whole, despite the sacrifices and difficulties of the previous four years, held steadily to an attitude of optimism. Yet in spite of her forward-

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<sup>43</sup>Pilot, January 1, 1918; Schlegel, Historic Port, 305-306; "History of the Fifth Naval District," 23-54, 92-140; "Movement of Troops, Munitions, and Supplies Through Newport News, Virginia, and Other Data During the World War," September 2, 1922, RG 45, ZPN-5, 3-7.

<sup>44</sup>Pilot, October 2, 1918.

looking manner, even the most optimistic of Norfolk's residents could not help but wonder about the future, and in their wondering they persistently asked and reasked the same questions: Would progress fade with the end of the war? Would Norfolk be able to adjust to overcome the problems brought by the war and by the military's presence? Would the military continue to overshadow Norfolk's commercial sector, or would the two spheres be able to strike an even balance, each supporting the other and each continuing to grow? As they welcomed their fighting men home, Norfolk's citizens could only speculate on the answers. What would come beyond the armistice remained to be seen.

CHAPTER IV  
THE RETURN TO PEACE;  
REVERSION TO CIVILIAN RULE

The end of the First World War in November, 1918, found Norfolk blanketed in an air of uncertainty. The struggle had brought to the city an unprecedented, yet abnormal, prosperity. Pre-1917 growth in Norfolk, based on commercial expansion, had been steady and patterned--the kind of growth common to many cities in their developing years. The prosperity of 1917 and 1918, based on military expansion, was anything but patterned. Coming to the city unexpectedly and in great haste, and bringing with it numerous problems never before faced by Norfolk, military expansion bolted the city out of her normal pattern of progress and demanded from her not the routine approaches of the past but more improvisational answers to less predictable questions.

With the end of the war, many of Norfolk's leading citizens questioned whether this extemporaneous approach of the past year and a half would be continued. The logical sequel to this first question, since the military had initiated and largely controlled Norfolk's improvisational growth, was whether or not the military would remain as a significant influence in Norfolk. Addressing the city's residents in early November, Barton Myers warned that, "This country, and Norfolk especially, is as unprepared for peace as it was unprepared for war."<sup>1</sup> Citing military expenditures as the key to the city's recent growth, Myers went on to warn

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<sup>1</sup>Pilot, November 5, 1918.

that Norfolk could not rest upon the laurels of government favor. If by some chance the military should decide to abandon the city, having used it as nothing more than an expedient wartime benefit, Norfolk must be prepared to steer her own independent course to continued prosperity. Re-emphasizing the theme that he had stressed so often before, Myers concluded that "it is up to the people of this community to maintain its advantages."<sup>2</sup> The most consistent of Norfolk's promoters was saying, in short, that if the military deserted the city, she must be ready to resume the methodical approach to growth that had been her trademark before 1917.

The prophetic nature of Myers' suspicions became evident almost in unison with the armistice. With the war over, the need for certain government plants was removed, and many of the facilities recently introduced to the Hampton Roads area felt the sting of rejection. The cry from the federal level, more particularly from the Republican Party, for economy in government dictated the tapering off of large numbers of new military sites and the whittling down of heretofore rising military expenditures.

On December 7, 1918, the Bureau of Yards and Docks announced that "the Naval Training Camp at the Hampton Roads Base is being carefully gone over with a view to reducing the outlay of money."<sup>3</sup> Once touted as the most important naval site in the country, the Hampton Roads Base now saw reduction quickly become the order of the day. When a fire destroyed a

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<sup>2</sup>Pilot, November 5, 1918.

<sup>3</sup>Bureau of Yards and Docks to Representative Scott Ferris, December 7, 1918, RG 71, 13:673-1 Norfolk.

set of barracks in February, 1919, no effort was made to replace them. In a similar vein of neglect, the coaling station at Lambert Point and the facilities of the Seaboard Wharf and Warehouse Company, both of which were used extensively by the base in the war years, were allowed to deteriorate into uselessness, with the latter being auctioned off in late 1919. The base's auxiliary station, the East Camp, although completed after the armistice, was nevertheless torn down, its land being sold to private interests. By the first of 1920, through the twin evils of apathy and neglect, the Hampton Roads Base was \$425,000 in debt, and late that same year Admiral Fechteler considered closing the base entirely. As the summer of 1921 approached, the once proud base of 12,500 men had dwindled to a skeleton that barely supported 4,000. Hampton Roads' only bright spot came in early 1922 with the announcement that the plan for closing the base's supply section had been rejected.<sup>4</sup>

The Army Base at Bush Bluff encountered a similarly discouraging fate. Completed in March, 1919, the base fought for a year against a group of Norfolk businessmen determined to repurchase its docks for use by commercial interests. Arguing that they had vastly improved the facilities since purchasing them in 1918, army authorities refused to consider a sale. They strengthened their position by requesting that the Navy remove all of its goods that it had stored there, their argument being that

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<sup>4</sup>Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 22; Navy Department, Activities of the Bureau, 69; Transcript of phone conversation between Admiral Fechteler and Captain Hutchinson, January 26, 1920, RG 80, 19:28808-282; Solicitor General to Commandant of Fifth Naval District, May 28, 1920, RG 80, 19:8483-775; Judge Advocate General of the Navy to Bureau of Yards and Docks, December 13, 1921, RG 80, 19:25175-15; Navy Department memorandum, November 11, 1922, RG 80, 19:28808-378.

storage space was at such a premium that the Army needed every inch it could get. By August, 1920, however, the investors had won, and the government agreed to lease the base to municipal authorities.<sup>5</sup> This turn of events, then, differed from the Navy Base situation in that the city and not the military initiated the government withdrawal from Norfolk.

The postwar demise of the Navy and Army Bases was matched by a similar depreciation at Norfolk's Navy Yard. In the years immediately following the war, it became apparent that the wartime measures designed to lift the yard from its position as one of the Navy's poorest bases had largely failed. While improvements had gone on at a feverish pace in the four years of the war, by early 1919 Industrial Manager Watt was far from satisfied with the results. Displeased with the yard's wartime policy of merely leasing and commandeering land, Watt suggested that the Navy shift to a more permanent plan by purchasing enough land to increase the scope of the yard and make any further commandeering unnecessary. Stymied in its efforts to do so by stubborn speculators intent on selling their land at a healthy profit, the Navy by late 1922 abandoned any efforts to expand the yard. Although it had spent over \$500,000 improving the land it had commandeered for the duration of the war, the Navy by

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<sup>5</sup>Davis, "Norfolk City," 321-325; Schlegel, Historic Port, 321; Board of Engineers, Ports of Norfolk, 55; Base Hit, I (June 20, 1919), 1; Base Hit, I (June 27, 1919), 4; Hampton Roads Maritime Exchange, Hampton Roads Maritime Exchange Annual, 1925 (Norfolk, 1925), 5, hereinafter cited as Maritime Exchange, 1925 Annual; Chief of Naval Operations to the Secretary of the Navy, October 17, 1923, RG 80, 19:28808-431.

1923 returned all of the land to its original owners.<sup>6</sup>

Congestion compounded the problems at the Navy Yard. The wartime development of dry docks #4, #6, and #7 greatly reduced berthing facilities at Norfolk and prompted the commandant to suggest that the Navy find other berthing facilities at such places as Willoughby Bay, Suffolk, Bush Bluff, and Yorktown. True to its postwar attitude of neglect, the Navy ignored the suggestions. The seemingly never-ending question of a forty-foot channel also was pushed aside, although the work went on as it had for years: so discouragingly slow that ships frequently were damaged trying to maneuver up the Elizabeth River.<sup>7</sup>

The most crushing blow to the Navy Yard came when the Conference for the Limitation of Armaments met in Washington in 1921. At the time of the conference, five ships were under construction in the Hampton Roads area, with only one, the North Carolina, being built at the yard.

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<sup>6</sup> Industrial Manager Watt to the Secretary of the Navy, October 4, 1918, RG 71, 13:521-1 Norfolk; Industrial Manager Watt to the Secretary of the Navy, October 31, 1918, RG 71, 13:602-1 Norfolk; Bureau of Yards and Docks to Commander Thurber, November 23, 1918, RG 71, 13:661-30 Norfolk; Bureau of Yards and Docks to the Chief of Naval Operations, March 31, 1919, RG 71, 13:621-1 Norfolk; Andre Mottu to Franklin Roosevelt, September 25, 1919, RG 71, 13:600-2 Norfolk; Commandant of Norfolk Navy Yard to Navy Yard Development Board, December 6, 1919, RG 71, 13:661-2 Norfolk; Norfolk Navy Yard to Navy Department, September 10, 1920, RG 71, 13:661-30 Norfolk; Commandant of Norfolk Navy Yard to the Secretary of the Navy, September 30, 1921, RG 71, 13:661-30 Norfolk; Secretary of the Navy to Commandant of Norfolk Navy Yard, June 27, 1922, RG 71, 13:661-30 Norfolk.

<sup>7</sup> Report of Damage to the U.S.S. Mississippi, May 15, 1919, RG 71, 13:513-1 Norfolk; Admiral Fechteler to Chief of Naval Operations, June 17, 1919, RG 71, 13:513-1 Norfolk; Commandant of Norfolk Navy Yard to Chief of Naval Operations, July 12, 1919, RG 71, 13:510-1 Norfolk; Secretary of War to the Secretary of the Navy, July 18, 1919, RG 71, 13:513-1 Norfolk; Commandant of Norfolk Navy Yard to Navy Yard Development Board, December 6, 1919, RG 71, 13:661-2 Norfolk; Industrial Manager Watt to the Secretary of the Navy, March 22, 1920, RG 71, 13:602-1 Norfolk.

The conference reached a decision on the further construction of these ships in February, 1922, and as a result only one, the West Virginia at the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, was authorized to be completed as scheduled. Work on the half-completed North Carolina was therefore halted.<sup>8</sup>

The decision of the Navy to slow down its previously expanding activities pushed the progress of the Navy Yard back to its prewar levels. The growth of the war years meant very little when a 1925 inspection trip showed that most of the prewar deficiencies at the yard were still in need of attention. Conditions there had been so bad in 1914 that a continuous effort at improvement was the only key to successful expansion; the vigorous efforts of the war years could not be followed by neglect once the trauma of war had passed. This, however, was the road chosen by the Navy, and the yard suffered as a result.<sup>9</sup>

Other institutions decidedly less permanent than the Navy Yard, the Navy Base, and the Army Base also diminished in importance with the close of the war. The Board of Control, after having successfully handled the area's construction difficulties, gradually faded out of existence as its members were reassigned to other duties. The Emergency Fleet Corporation, its hands full with 971 ships that it had either leased, bought, or commandeered for the war effort, anchored a third of the ships in the James River, returned the majority of the rest to their owners, and thus unobtrusively removed itself from the scene. The U.S. Shipping Board,

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<sup>8</sup>Schlegel, Conscripted City, 3; Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 1.

<sup>9</sup>Public Works Bulletin, June, 1925, RG 71, 13:305-1 Norfolk.

whose ownership of the Navy Yard's dry docks #6 and #7 had been purposely indefinite, similarly left the picture by relinquishing its rights to the two docks.<sup>10</sup> All of these groups, however, had always been seen as clearly temporary in nature. Their departure came as much less of a shock to Norfolk than did the government's apparent willingness to play down the importance of the city's three major military installations now that the war was at an end.

The tone of abandonment was also struck in the vast acres of housing projects so recently constructed to satisfy the needs of the city's wartime work force. The U.S. Housing Corporation closed its barracks in the fall of 1919, and when the Navy showed no interest in taking over the corporation's smaller barracks compound adjacent to the Cradock project, it too was shut down. Of the Housing Corporation's three largest developments, Cradock and Truxton were kept intact and were pushed to completion in May and September of 1919. The Glenwood project was altogether abandoned.<sup>11</sup>

That Cradock and Truxton survived was in no measure owing to the efforts of the federal government, but was instead attributable to the work of local businessmen. Seeing the government's lethargic attitude toward the city's future welfare, a small group of these local businessmen in

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<sup>10</sup> Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 23-28; A.D. Lasker to the Secretary of the Navy, September 2, 1922, RG 71, 13:410-1 Norfolk; "History of the Board of Control," 11.

<sup>11</sup> Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 23, 50; Schlegel, Historic Port, 309; Clausen, Population in Flux, 37; F.S. Parkhurst, Jr. to Charles P. Chase, September 24, 1919, RG 3, Series 15; Bureau of Yards and Docks to Commandant of Norfolk Navy Yard, November 17, 1919, RG 71, 13:640-1 Norfolk.

August, 1919, formed the Cradock Welfare Committee to see that that project at least would be guaranteed permanency. For the next two years the committee struggled continuously against the Housing Corporation. While Congress carried on an investigation of the Corporation's activities, the committee carried on efforts to secure for Cradock's residents fair treatment and affordable rents. By one measure the Welfare Committee failed, for rents paid by Norfolk's average worker, after having remained relatively stable through the war years, climbed steadily after 1917, reaching a peak in 1921 that was twice as high as the 1914 level. In the long run, the Welfare Committee's efforts were a success, for after failing to hold the residents of Cradock in forceful check, the U.S. Housing Corporation in 1920 and 1921 offered the houses in the project for sale to their residents.<sup>12</sup> The rental problem was thus solved, and the Housing Corporation, with an obvious sigh of relief, was removed from any further responsibility for housing the people of Norfolk.

The federal withdrawal from Norfolk prompted a similar retreat by Norfolk's wartime work force. That many of the laborers, particularly those from the far midwest, had come with the intention of staying only for the duration of the war was a clearly recognized fact. The steps taken by numerous others in bringing their families to Norfolk, however, had prompted municipal authorities to hope that some at least would remain

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<sup>12</sup>Clausen, Population in Flux, 37-38; President of U.S. Housing Corporation to the Secretary of Labor, August 19, 1919, RG 71, 13:640-1 Norfolk; Commandant of Norfolk Navy Yard to the Secretary of the Navy, August 20, 1919, RG 71, 13:640-1 Norfolk; W.L. Soleau to E.F. Kellogg, August 21, 1919, RG 3, Series 15; Thomas Washington to J.B. Duncan and P. Hamlet, September 12, 1919, RG 71, 13:640-1 Norfolk; G.R. Garner to the Secretary of Labor, July 18, 1921, RG 3, Series 15.

beyond the armistice. While many did stay, most left. By 1920, the city's population was 115,777, just barely above the 1917 figure but precipitously lower than 1918 and 1919.<sup>13</sup>

With the exit of large numbers of workers, the demand for labor in Norfolk, at least through the early months of 1919, remained high. War related industries did not close overnight, and so in the first few months after the armistice the rapid labor turnover made Norfolk one of the few places in the nation where it was still necessary to recruit outside workers. In February, 1919, one-fifth of Baltimore's 10,000 unemployed workers flocked south to pick up jobs in Norfolk.<sup>14</sup>

Despite continued enthusiasm from Barton Myers and other civic leaders, this immediate postwar boon of available jobs faded rapidly. By March, 1919, the Norfolk Navy Yard was requesting additional funds from the Navy, adding that if they were not made available, a "large discharge of employees will be necessary at once."<sup>15</sup> From that early month in 1919, employment at the yard quickly plummeted, and by the end of 1923, 8,000 of its civilian workers had been laid off and the total work force had receded to the 1899 level. A highly publicized and dramatically over-optimistic January, 1918, survey by the U.S. Housing Corporation, predicting a permanent postwar employment level at the yard of 8,000 proved inaccurate

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<sup>13</sup>Reeves, "Impact of World War I," ii, 55.

<sup>14</sup>Reeves, "Impact of World War I," i-ii, 44.

<sup>15</sup>Norfolk Navy Yard to Navy Department, March 19, 1919, RG 71, 13:232-1 Norfolk.

by close to 400 per cent.<sup>16</sup>

Other programs in Norfolk also cut back on employment. After the completion of the Cradock project, the construction force of the U.S. Housing Corporation was rapidly reduced, while at the same time the Army Base let go 5,000 of its wartime workers. The Navy Base, surprisingly enough, added to its work force--but only until 1920, when a steady depletion left the base by 1923 with barely 1,000 laborers, a scant handful of its wartime force.<sup>17</sup>

For those workers left in Norfolk by the early 1920's, times were hard. The ten-hour work day of the war period and its accompanying bonus of overtime pay, was reduced with the armistice to the usual eight-hour day and the disappearance of overtime. The cost of living continued on the upswing, and it became impossible for Norfolk's laborers to live on their reduced paychecks. A succession of strikes followed, but they did little to ease the strain. The U.S. Employment Service cut back its once helpful assistance to the workers, as Congress in 1919 mutilated that agency's financial requests, giving it but \$400,000 of its asked-for \$4,600,000.<sup>18</sup> Workers once lured to Norfolk by a government promising steady employment and impressive wages discovered with the end of the war what all of Norfolk was coming to assume: that the city had been used,

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<sup>16</sup>Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 13-17, 47; Clausen, Population in Flux, 22; Schlegel, Conscripted City, 3; Admiral Dillingham to Commandant of Fifth Naval District, December 3, 1918, RG 80, 19:28308-14.

<sup>17</sup>Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 22; Clausen, Population in Flux, 38-39; W.L. Soleau to U.S. Housing Corporation, August 28, 1919, RG 3, Series 15.

<sup>18</sup>Reeves, "Impact of World War I," ii, 44-46; Pilot, November 13, 16, 1918.

that with the war over previous government concern was quickly becoming government indifference.

The assumption, however, was incorrect. Despite the desertion of many government facilities and the exiting of numerous government workers, the federal postwar attitude toward Norfolk was not one of indifference but of practicality. With the war over, no need existed for the development of Norfolk's military establishments to maintain the frenzied pace of 1917-1918. Contrary to the thinking of the city's pessimists, though, the military never deserted Norfolk, never left her on the wastepile of purely expedient military sites, and never had any intention of allowing her new structures to waste away into oblivion. What the city's residents interpreted as abandonment was simply a toning down of the whirlwind pace of the war years. Although an initial neglect of the city's bases followed the armistice, the Navy did not pick up the stakes that it had laid in the years of the war. On the contrary, the Naval Operating Base remained and became an integral part of the city. Because of that, the Norfolk of the 1920's was a much different place than the Norfolk of 1914.

Continued federal interest in the Naval Operating Base and in the Navy Yard as well brought with it sustained interest on the part of business in locating in Norfolk. Among the new additions was a bottle factory and yet another dry dock company, both of which moved to Norfolk in early 1919. The biggest addition, the opening of a Ford Motor Company assembly plant, waited until 1923. The resulting rise in the number of Norfolk businesses greatly boosted Norfolk's tax base. A similar increase in military and civilian payrolls further boosted the fortunes

of Norfolk's banks, for total deposits and total resources both climbed 82 per cent from 1916 to 1924. Even a brief postwar period of deflation was dealt with effectively by Norfolk's economic institutions, as the few banks that verged on failure were quickly absorbed by the larger group of stable banks.<sup>19</sup> The end result was a city more economically stable than she had been for as long as her residents could remember.

Norfolk's other economic arenas fared equally well in the aftermath of the war. Her building trade climbed 155 per cent by 1921, an improvement second in the state only to Richmond. More importantly, Norfolk's port activities continued to climb. Coal remained the king of the port, and dumpings over the Norfolk and Western, Virginian, and Chesapeake and Ohio piers climbed 61 per cent from 1914 to 1927. Although Norfolk's export and import figures stumbled in 1918-1919 with the close of the war and the return to a peacetime economy, by 1927, after a continuous series of ups and downs, they climbed to levels that far outdistanced their position at the beginning of the war: 1927 import figures were six times larger than those of 1914, while export figures were a remarkable fourteen times greater than the prewar levels. So great was the impetus given to Norfolk's export trade by the war that her tonnage figures for 1917 were not equalled for another twenty-three years.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 32; Clausen, Population in Flux, 24; Manufacturers Record, LXXIV (December 12, 1918), 65; Manufacturers Record, LXXV (February 27, 1919), 91; Maritime Exchange, 1925 Annual, 14; Ferrell, "Regional Rivalries," 71-72.

<sup>20</sup>Schlegel, Historic Port, 327; Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 25-29; Maritime Exchange, 1925 Annual, 6-7, 23-25; Blue Book of Southern

While the military remaining in Norfolk was one factor that contributed to the city's postwar prosperity, the other equally significant ingredient was the revival of municipal initiative. Glad of the military's assistance in furthering Norfolk, yet anxious to play the leading role once more themselves, the Myers-Cox group took advantage of the federal government's period of interest in demobilization by regaining, in late 1918 and early 1919, the control of their city that they had willingly relinquished in the interest of progress in 1917. Having largely watched from the sidelines for a year and a half, Norfolk's promoters felt that their position as observers had taught them a great deal. One lesson had been particularly convincing: With the added dimension of a new military establishment, Norfolk would need, if she wanted to continue to prosper, a new way of running things. When they regained control of Norfolk, that belief was uppermost in their minds.

The adoption of a new form of city government actually began before the armistice. As early as June, 1917, a committee of nine was given the responsibility of drawing up a simpler and more efficient plan of government to replace the old rule by a mayor and a council of ten. The mayor-council plan, although effective before Norfolk's recent growth, proved with the new prosperity to be too cumbersome and too slow to deal effectively with the new population problems, the persistently acute water and utilities difficulties, and the insufficient housing and transportation facilities. At a time when a unified city government was

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Progress; The South: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow (Baltimore, 1922), 54-63, hereinafter cited as Blue Book.

needed, the council of ten, with each member elected from his own district, had come to be little more than a mutual assistance society, a group in which log rolling had become the order of the day and the returned favor more important than the welfare of the city as a whole. The plan developed by the committee called for a city manager form of government in which one man, elected and guided by five at-large council members, would direct the course of the city. Presented to Norfolk's voters in November, 1917, the new plan was adopted by an almost three-to-one margin.<sup>21</sup>

The war had for over four years overshadowed politics in Norfolk, with Woodrow Wilson's 1916 presidential election and Westmoreland Davis' 1917 gubernatorial election having been the only instances of the city shaking off her apathetic indifference. The June, 1918, election for the five city councilmen proved no exception to the rule. The group that had drawn up the charter handpicked their slate of five eligibles, and despite Mayor Mayo's objections to this blatant partiality, four of the original five won with ease in a very low-keyed election. Mayo, an obvious favorite with the consistent voters in Norfolk, won the fifth seat, but refused to serve.<sup>22</sup>

One month after the election, the new council chose Charles Ashburner as Norfolk's first city manager. Although a newcomer to Norfolk, Ashburner

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<sup>21</sup> Pilot, June 20, July 15, September 7, November 9, 16, 21, 1917; Schlegel, Historic Port, 318; William H. Jenkins, "What the City Manager Plan Has Meant to Norfolk, Virginia," The American City, XXVII (July, 1922), 19, hereinafter cited as Jenkins, "City Manager Plan."

<sup>22</sup> Pilot, April 8, November 7, 1917, May 2, 6, June 13, August 16, September 3, 1918.

had held similar positions in Staunton, Virginia, and in Springfield, Ohio, and so came to the city with both the experience and the ability to direct the course of Norfolk's growth. His attitude toward municipal administration was one built on the principle of efficiency and patterned after the governing bodies of America's leading industries. Reflecting the businessman's mentality that soon would dominate American life, Ashburner adopted the concept that a city could be run with the same speed and efficiency as any manufacturing concern and that by doing so a complete renovation of any city could be accomplished in a relatively short period of time.<sup>23</sup> Immediately recognizing that Norfolk's recent acquisition of military sites represented both possible benefits as well as possible dangers, the new city manager acted with speed to avoid the latter while preserving the former. Using the funds that Norfolk had gained through the expansion of her tax base, Ashburner directed his efforts toward assuring the city that her municipal growth would keep pace with her military expansion.

The new city manager faced numerous difficulties. The military-civilian tension that had become a trademark of the city in the late years of the war remained, and an occasional street riot reminded Norfolk's residents that the problem was there to stay. The problem of vice remained also and grew so persistent that even as late as 1924 naval officials were writing that, "There is no doubt at all that the town of Norfolk needs cleaning up in every particular."<sup>24</sup> The city's police made

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<sup>23</sup> Pilot, July 3, 1918; Jenkins, "City Manager Plan," 19.

<sup>24</sup> Commandant of Fifth Naval District to Chief of Naval Operations, March 13, 1924, RG 80, 19:28805-48.

impressive headway, but in those sections of Norfolk that were gradually becoming off limits to all but military personnel, their efforts proved ephemeral at best.<sup>25</sup>

A related difficulty was the question of what to do with returning servicemen. Although Norfolk served no major function as an embarkation point, relinquishing that duty in the Hampton Roads area to Newport News, she nevertheless felt the crunch of her own ex-servicemen looking for jobs that quickly proved non-existent. A March, 1919, canvassing of Norfolk turned up 1,501 jobs that employers would gladly provide for the men. Most of them, however, were menial in nature, ranging from street cleaning to garbage collecting to public improvement work, and the servicemen were reluctant to take up such degrading occupations. Servicemen who prior to the war had been farmers were demobilized first and in most cases returned to their farms on the outskirts of the city. The others were not as fortunate. Unwilling to take up menial or even temporary work and finding their old jobs taken by those who had not served, Norfolk's ex-military men added their numbers to the city's rising rate of unemployment. Even her cherished "Blues," who returned on May 25, 1919, found themselves removed from the heights of popularity and shackled to the depths of joblessness. Triumphant parades they received, but not jobs.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Secretary of the Navy to the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, March 12, 1919, RG 80, 19:26283-2192; S.W. Ironmonger to the Secretary of the Navy, March 8, 1924, RG 80, 19:28808-48.

<sup>26</sup> Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 44-46; Davis, "Norfolk City," 348-354; Davis, Virginia War Agencies, 117.

Problems of a non-military nature, problems that had plagued the city all through the war years and which with the end of the war were reluctant to go away, also burdened Norfolk's new city government. Norfolk quickly shot to the top of the list of U.S. cities where basic prices and the cost of living were climbing in a steady rate. Coal rates were especially high--so much so that a local committee was organized to ask dealers to reduce prices. The general ascent in the cost of living prompted a series of city-wide investigations, as well as accompanying efforts to regulate prices at a tolerable level. These early attempts at regulation failed to ease Norfolk's problems, however, and prices on the basic staples of life continued to climb.<sup>27</sup> Typical of Norfolk's difficulties was a late 1919 sugar shortage in which residents found unbearable the price on the small available supply. Typical also was the military's attitude in the crisis, for the Naval Operating Base and the Norfolk Navy Yard, buoyed by government surpluses of sugar, calmly allotted ample sugar to their employees while refusing to distribute left over surpluses to either Norfolk or Portsmouth.<sup>28</sup>

Ashburner's plan to rid the city of her many difficulties got off on the right foot on March 11, 1919, with the establishment of the City Planning Commission, a body designed to replace the old haphazard approach to city growth with a fixed plan of attack. The commission, on November 25, 1922, reached an agreement with a New York advisory group on the drawing up of a complete city plan. Maps of Norfolk were updated,

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<sup>27</sup>Reeves, "Impact of World War I," 47; Davis, "Norfolk City," 350-351.

<sup>28</sup>Navy Department memorandum, undated, RG 80, 19:28808-253.

surveys completed, and aerial photographs taken of all sections of the city. Looking specifically for what they felt were the points at which mistakes had been made in the past, the commission members amassed an impressive volume of statistics to help prevent the same errors in the future.<sup>29</sup>

Similar to the City Planning Commission was the Norfolk Port Commission, also organized in 1919. Spurred by the government's wartime interest in the city's port activities and fearing that these facilities could fall below their potential unless properly cared for, the Port Commission was given the duty of nursing the port through the immediate postwar period and of seeing that it prospered in the years following. The immediate reason for the commission's creation was the city's repurchasing of the Army Base terminals, as their transformation into municipal terminals greatly increased the port's capacities, thus necessitating firmer and more organized guidance. Not surprisingly, the Port Commission included as members some of the same men who had prior to the war kept Norfolk on an even keel: W.A. Cox held one of the commission's nine posts, while Barton Myers served as its first chairman.<sup>30</sup>

The establishment of the Port Commission brought to the attention of the people of Norfolk, perhaps for the first time ever, a basic weakness and deficiency in their port's operation. While coal as the city's

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<sup>29</sup>Norfolk City Council, City of Norfolk, Virginia (n.p., n.d.), 47-49, hereinafter cited as City Council, City of Norfolk.

<sup>30</sup>City Council, City of Norfolk, 17-18; Jenkins, "City Manager Plan," 20-21.

leading export could very well take care of itself, Norfolk's other major exports, notably cotton and tobacco, suffered from the port's lack of any heavy freight to stabilize in the holds of the ships the otherwise light shipments. Because of this, ships could rarely load a full cargo at Norfolk--unless, of course, the cargo was coal. Most other major ports handled both light and heavy freights, placing Norfolk at a distinct disadvantage. The solution to the problem was the endorsement by the voters of Norfolk, on February 7, 1922, of a \$5,000,000 bond issue authorizing the construction of a municipal grain elevator.<sup>31</sup> From that time, grain served as the balance for Norfolk's lighter tobacco and cotton freights. With her export products thus sufficiently diversified, Norfolk evaded once more a possible disaster, the disaster of extinction that so very often attacks ports too reliant on one product for revenue.

Ashburner's most significant effort was his insistence on improving Norfolk's long-embattled water system. A drought in late 1919 left the city parched and proved prophetic the 1917 purchase of Lakes Prince and Bensten. Those two reservoirs had sat idle since their purchase, and it took a new government and a disastrous drought to bring about the passage of a \$6,000,000 bond issue for the connection of the lakes with Norfolk's existing water system. When completed, the new reservoirs added a daily capacity of 17,000,000 gallons to Norfolk, eliminating for decades the fear of insufficient water resources for the city. Ashburner once more showed his ingenuity when he rerouted a new water main from the city to

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<sup>31</sup>City Council, City of Norfolk, 19-21; Schlegel, Historic Port, 321-322.

the Navy Base, removing it from an area of little potential growth and placing it instead in a section of the city ripe for future manufacturing expansion.<sup>32</sup>

The new government had just scratched the surface of possible improvements. Acting with the same tenacity that he had exhibited in Springfield and in Staunton, the city manager in the following years directed improvements in every phase of Norfolk's life. Bigger schools were built, and their teachers given better salaries. A modern city market was constructed following the demands of Norfolk's housewives. Public libraries were expanded. Streets were paved and the sewer system improved. A conglomerate of parks and playgrounds sprang into being, accompanied by an expansion of the city's existing recreational facilities--her golf courses, tennis courts, and swimming pools. An \$80,000 armory was built.<sup>33</sup> What Ashburner did, in short, was to give concrete evidence that the improvements of the war years did not of necessity have to diminish with the coming of peace. Spreading the theory of progress from its once isolated existence in the city's commercial sector to include her social and recreational sections as well, Ashburner gave credence to the fast growing concept of the New Norfolk, the Greater Norfolk.

With renewed expansion came the necessity for better public services, and this phase Ashburner's government also vastly improved. An expansion

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<sup>32</sup>Pilot, September 7, 1918; City Council, City of Norfolk, 23-31.

<sup>33</sup>City Council, City of Norfolk, 8-10.

of the fire department was exceeded in scope only by a similar development in the police department. The department increased in size but even more so in efficiency, and despite the nagging difficulties created by the presence of Uncle Sam's sailors, Norfolk unveiled a surprisingly low crime rate in comparison with other southern cities of similar size. To simplify the administration of justice for those arrested, Ashburner ordered the separation of juvenile and domestic offenders from the police court docket, establishing for these two groups a court of their own, the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. For those convicted, a new Detention Home was constructed, complete with honor system and all the improvements modern technology could provide. Finally, a Division of Public Safety was created, and its first directorship given to a long-time observer of and participant in Norfolk's growth, the now retired Rear Admiral Albert C. Dillingham.<sup>34</sup>

Admiral Dillingham's appointment as a municipal official was symbolic of what had occurred in Norfolk as a result of the war. She had entered the war period as a commercial port of increasing significance whose future rested completely upon the shoulders of her own people. When the war ended, she was a military-commercial center whose future depended on the successful cooperation between her old established leaders and her new military arrivals. In a reversal of the theme that Barton Myers had stressed for years, what Norfolk would become was no longer solely up to her. The federal government, in the form of the military, would now also

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<sup>34</sup> Pilot, November 6, 1918; Schlegel, Historic Port, 324-327; Jenkins, "City Manager Plan," 19; City Council, City of Norfolk, 32-34.

play a part in her future decisions.

If skeptics doubted that the new partnership would bear fruit, their fears subsided with the arrival of 1923. In addition to the immediate postwar prosperity, on January 1 of that year Norfolk took a more permanent step toward continued growth by acquiring twenty-seven additional square miles of land, extending her city limits across the LaFayette River all the way to Ocean View. Backed by continued rumors of consolidation with Portsmouth, the purchase was a clear indication that further progress was, if not guaranteed, at least expected.<sup>35</sup>

By the mid and late 1920's, then, Norfolk had successfully overcome the uneasiness and uncertainty that she had felt with the close of the First World War. Fearful at the end of the war that she would be abandoned by the military and would be allowed to deteriorate into insignificance, Norfolk discovered that neither situation developed. She instead continued to grow, and with the new alliance with the military was feeling daily more confident that the road she had set out upon in 1914 had no immediate end in sight.

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<sup>35</sup>Pilot, October 23, 1916, July 24, 1917; Schlegel, Historic Port, 323.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION:

#### THE LEGACY OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

In the years of the First World War, two momentous events highlighted the life of Norfolk, Virginia. The first was an unprecedented acceleration of her already thriving commercial activities. The second was an uncommon interest on the part of the federal government in her potential as a national military site. The two incidents, both of which owed their existence to the war, combined to make the Norfolk of the postwar years a decidedly different city than she had been prior to 1914. This, for Norfolk, was the greatest legacy of the First World War.

Among the most impressive of the changes in Norfolk was her transformation from a local, southern city to a military center of national importance. No longer was she controlled merely by local promoters interested in regional expansion; she now welcomed the federal government as an active participant in her future growth. No longer also was she occasionally burdened with the knowledge that her economy was primarily colonial in nature, dependent on outside sources for its successful continuation. With the increased tax base made possible by the arrival of more and more military and civilian enterprises, Norfolk's economic well-being reached the welcome point of self-sufficient stability.

The arrival of the military was, of course, the most significant new factor in Norfolk's life. With the passing of the war, though, the city's chief anxiety became the future status of the recent addition. When the federal government wisely and correctly cut back on the expen-

ditures of the war years, many Norfolk residents misread the reduction as a military abandonment of their city. Yet the government had spent too much time and money developing Norfolk to abandon its efforts. That consideration, combined with the fact that Norfolk's increasing commercial strength was making her daily a city of impressive credentials, prompted the military, in the form of the Navy Base, to become a permanent municipal fixture. Although the fleet would temporarily desert Norfolk in 1931, moving to the west coast to keep a watchful eye on an increasingly belligerent Japan, the military establishment was by that time irremovably cemented to Norfolk, and with the outbreak of World War II the city would play a major role in America's participation in that war.

The New Norfolk, as she came to be known as, faced the difficult task of balancing her young yet immense military sphere with her long established commercial sector. The latter had dominated the prewar years, while the military had quickly taken center stage following 1917. With many observers insisting that Norfolk's future expansion would depend almost completely upon continued federal expenditures, the fear arose that the military's overshadowing of the commercial sector would continue beyond the armistice. It was much to Norfolk's credit, and particularly to the credit of her revived local promoters, that this situation did not become a reality. Although all of the difficulties associated with the presence of an overbearing military were neither easily nor hastily solved--the answer to the question of what portion of the city to relinquish to the Navy has, for instance, shifted through the years from the

black section to East Main Street to its present location in Ocean View-- the status quo in Norfolk became, in an impressively brief time span, one in which neither the military nor the commercial sector overshadowed the other. The Navy learned surprisingly quickly how to live alongside Norfolk's population, even that segment of it that through speculation tried its best to take advantage of the military.

The First World War, then, was the beginning of modern Norfolk as we know it today. The war increased her commercial prosperity, made the Navy an integral part of her existence, strengthened her belief in local-national cooperation, and taught her how to survive and adapt to adversity. More than anything, however, it made her grow. Although the return of the Republican majorities in the 1920's temporarily halted Norfolk's growth in midstream and although the Great Depression dampened her enthusiasm as much as it did any other city's, the benefits of the First World War to Norfolk were immense. Without them she would not be the city that she is today.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MAP OF NORFOLK AND VICINITY

APPENDIX B: POPULATION IN NORFOLK, 1914-1920

APPENDIX C: VALUE OF NORFOLK EXPORTS, 1914-1920

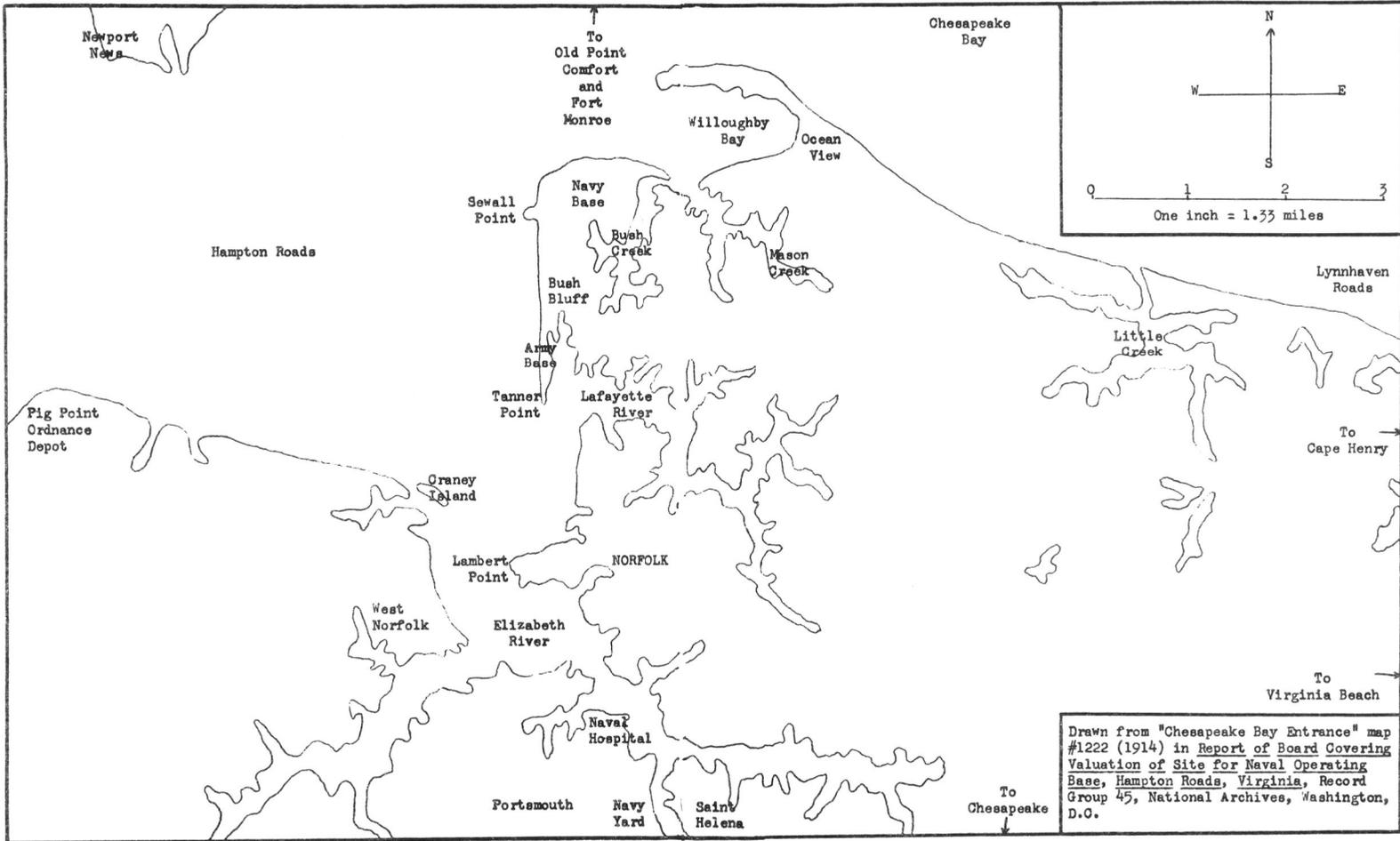
APPENDIX D: VALUE OF NORFOLK IMPORTS, 1914-1920

APPENDIX E: HAMPTON ROADS COAL DUMPINGS, 1914-1920

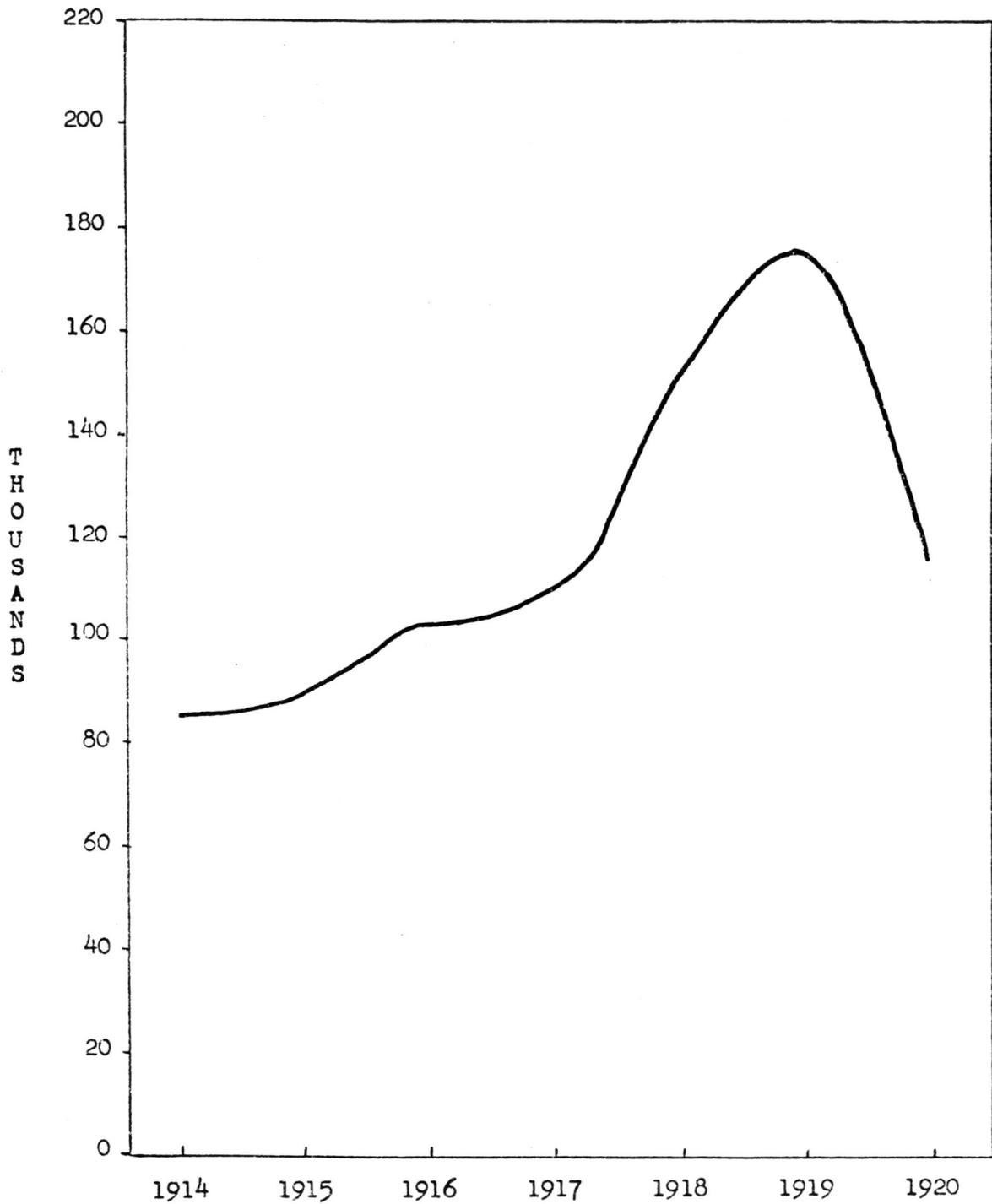
APPENDIX F: VALUE OF NORFOLK BUILDING PERMITS, 1914-1920

APPENDIX A:

NORFOLK AND VICINITY

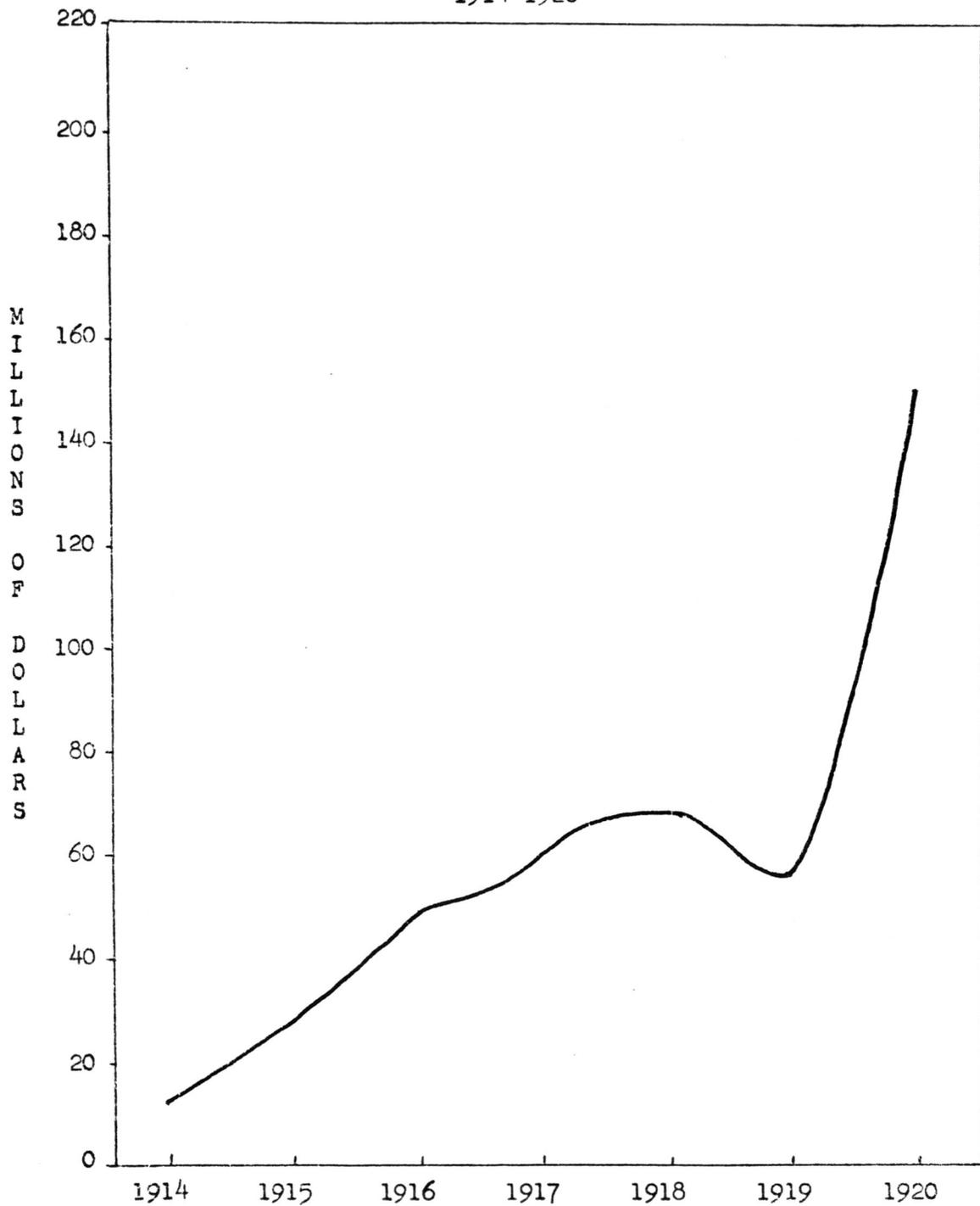


APPENDIX B:  
POPULATION IN NORFOLK  
1914-1920



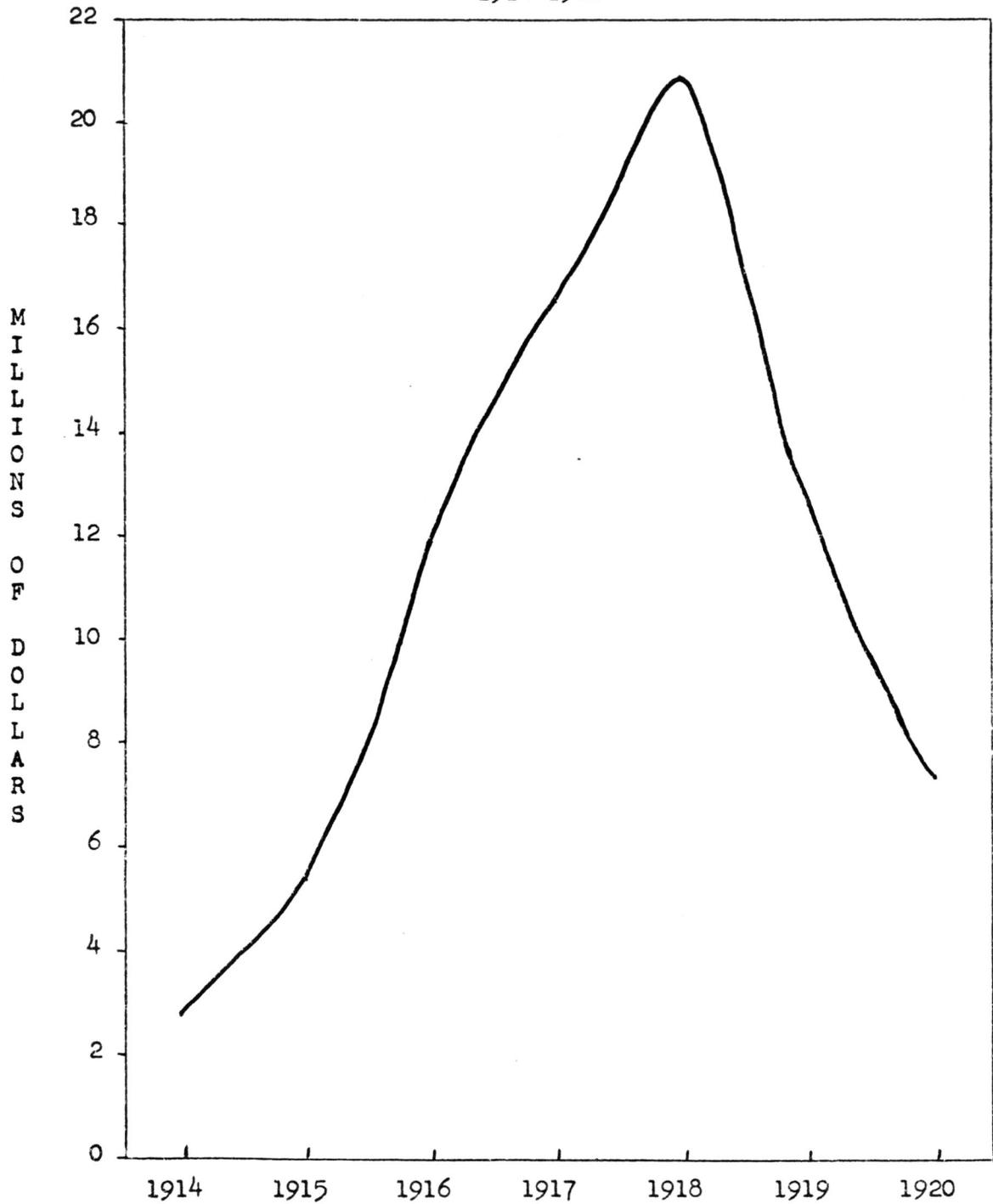
Figures compiled from the Virginian Pilot

APPENDIX C:  
VALUE OF NORFOLK EXPORTS  
1914-1920



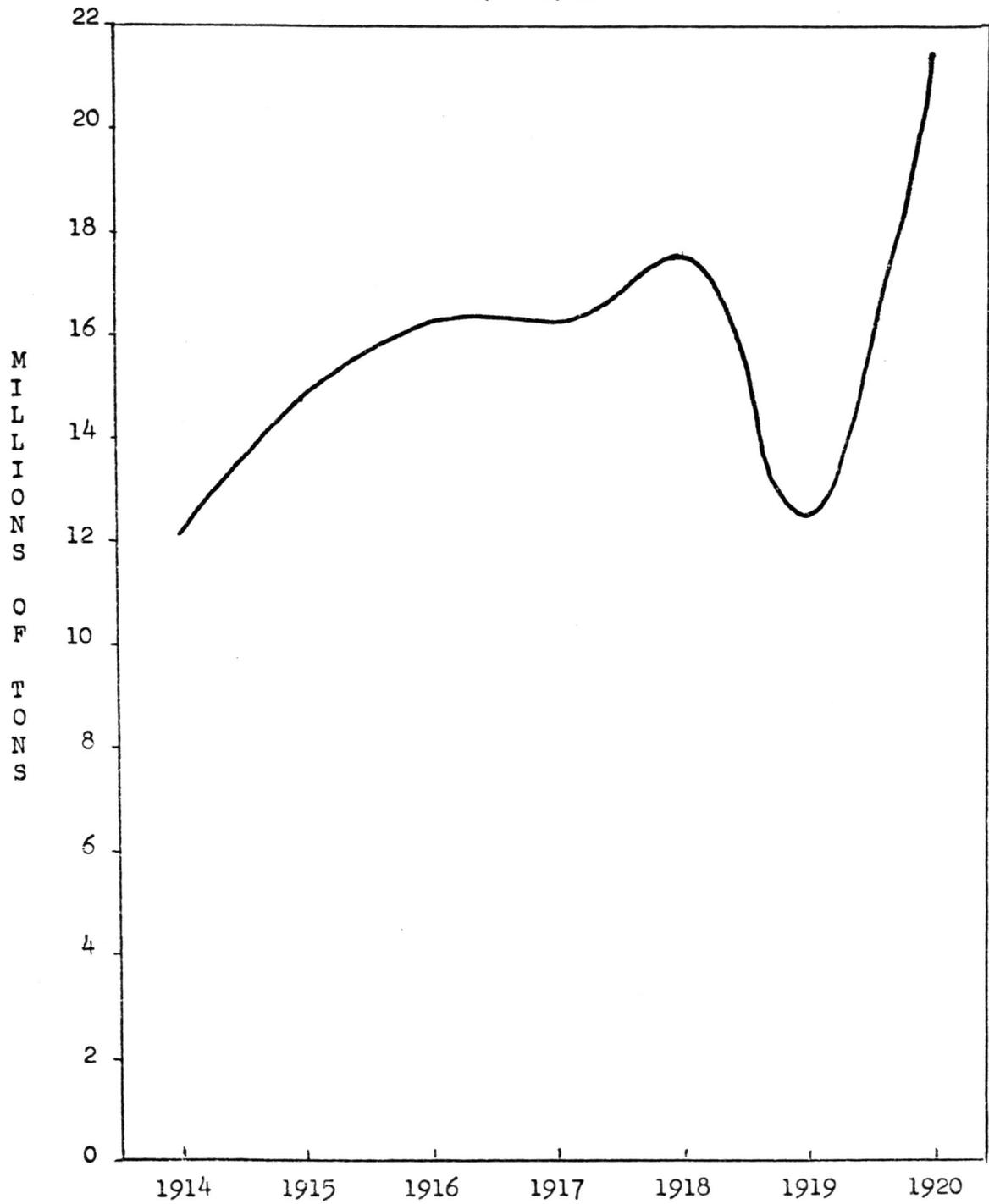
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VALUE OF NORFOLK IMPORTS  
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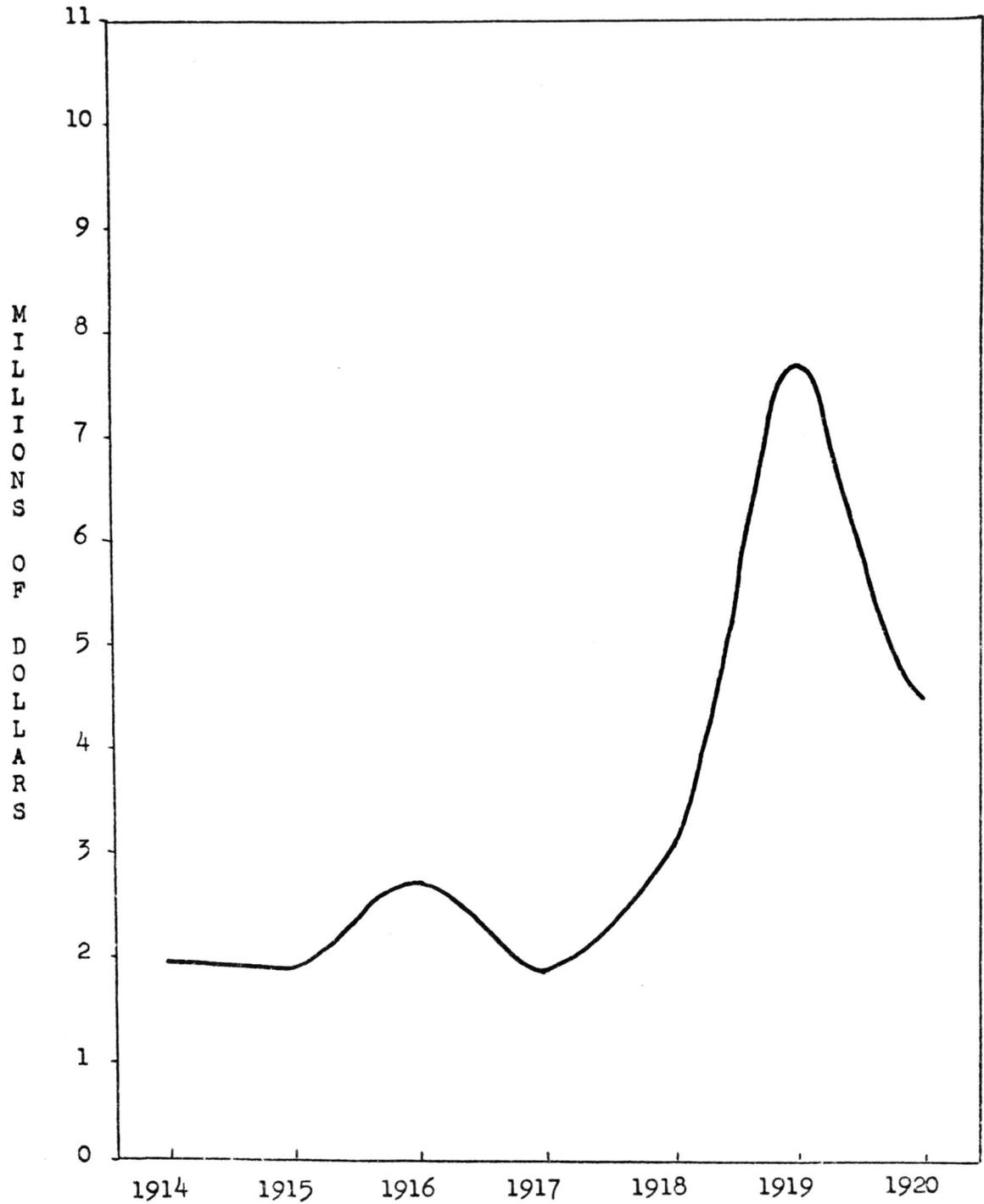
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APPENDIX E:  
HAMPTON ROADS COAL DUMPINGS  
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Figures compiled from the Virginian Pilot