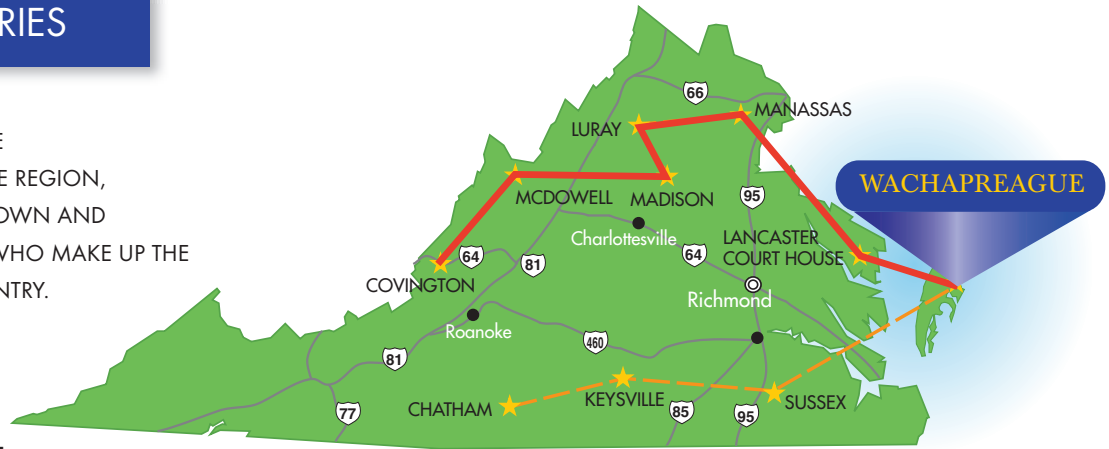


DOWN HOME SERIES

AGAIN IN THE YEAR 2008, WE'RE MAKING OUR WAY AROUND THE REGION, EACH ISSUE VISITING A SMALL TOWN AND MEETING SOME OF THE FOLKS WHO MAKE UP THE HEART OF ELECTRIC CO-OP COUNTRY. ON THIS YEAR'S SEVENTH STOP, WE'LL BE ...



DOWN HOME IN

WACHAPREAGUE

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CANDY FARLOW, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

"THE LITTLE CITY BY THE SEA" IS
A.K.A. THE "FLOUNDER CAPITAL OF THE WORLD"

Drive across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel and continue north till you're about midway up Virginia's Eastern Shore. Turn right on Route 180, and go as far east as you can go without getting wet.

Welcome to Wachapreague, the "Little City by the Sea."

While the town often uses that nickname, in no way can it be considered a city at all. With a population of about 250 full-time residents, the town takes up only a smidgen of Virginia real estate — but what real estate it is.

Entering town on Main Street, visitors pass the two churches, post office, general store and town hall before coming to the waterfront. There they are greeted with one of the most beautiful vistas on the East Coast.

There the Wachapreague Channel cuts a winding trail through expansive salt marshes, out toward the uninhabited barrier islands of Parramore and Cedar standing sentry at the

entry to the Atlantic Ocean.

Throughout the area, commercial watermen ply their trade while recreational fishermen experience some of the finest the sport has to offer. Known to many as the "Flounder Capital of the World," Wachapreague also offers other challenges, such as some of the best offshore fishing on the eastern seaboard, including forays for tuna and marlin.

While fishing put Wachapreague on the map, there's much more to this seaside village, including a rich history.

It was in 1656 that the Algonquin Indian Emperor Wachiwampe penned his last will and testament, leaving the land he referred to as Wachapreague to his daughter. Less than a hundred years later, however, the area had been settled by the family of one John Teackle and had become known as Teackle's Landing.

The national events of the time did not bypass the fledgling community, however, and by 1779, makeshift forts had been established on Parramore and Cedar islands. From these outposts, defenders of the new country fired upon at least one British warship, the sloop *Thistle*, forcing its sinking offshore.



One of the Coast Guard's smallest — but vitally important — small-boat stations is located in Wachapreague. INSET: The Wachapreague Marina provides safe mooring for visitors who arrive by water.

AT A GLANCE ...

POPULATION: Around 250 full-time residents

LAND AREA: .26 square miles

INCORPORATED: 1902

ELEVATION: 10 feet

FACTOID: In 1884, a steamboat began making trips between Wachapreague and New York City. Hotel Wachapreague became a popular destination of visitors from the north.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Scientific research is a big part of what goes on in Wachapreague, where The College of William & Mary maintains facilities. The Eastern Shore Laboratory (ESL) has become internationally known for its important contributions to ecology. • Beautiful Victorian architecture abounds in the seaside community. • Standing at the town's overlook, visitors can gaze upon the Virginia Coast Biosphere Reserve. • No big-box stores here. Sandys is the only game in town.

Early in the next century, the Teackle family fell on hard times and eventually their holdings were sold to Capt. John Finney, whose family, in turn, sold 39 acres of the property to George, John and Henry Powell, three men who were not only brothers, but also astute businessmen. Soon, a little village known as Powellton sprung up with a busy wharf as the hub of activity.

By 1884, the need for a post office was evident; however, the petition for postal service for Powellton was turned down,

since that name was already in use elsewhere. Thus, it was back to Wachapreague as the town's moniker.

Only a few years later, the famous Wachapreague Hotel was built overlooking the water. This four-story luxury accommodation became a preferred destination for vacationers from the north — and at least one president, Herbert Hoover.

Sadly, in 1978, a fire left the hotel ravaged and it had to be demolished. Today, the site of the Wachapreague Hotel is owned by The Nature Conservancy, but an

effort is underway by the town to purchase the property for use as a town square.

Despite the loss of the hotel, other amenities still abound. Nearby, B&B lovers can check into the Garrison Bed & Breakfast in Painter, which also offers non-guest gourmet dining.

Waterside, the Wachapreague Motel offers accommodations including rooms, efficiencies and two-bedroom apartment. Meanwhile, the best seafood on the East Coast can be enjoyed at Fish Tales at the wharf or at the Island House Restaurant



Like most places, Wachapreague has its share of colorful characters, like J.D. Bradshaw who, by day, tends to the town's maintenance needs while at night he works to promote his heavy-metal music career.

IF YOU GO...

ACCOMMODATIONS

Archie's Flounder House
(757) 709-0265

Captains Corner Motel
(757) 787-2346

Fisherman's Lodge and Campground
(757) 787-1358

Wachapreague Motel
(757) 787-2105

Garrison Bed & Breakfast
(757) 442-9446

BOAT RENTALS

Capt. Zed's
(757) 789-3222

Wachapreague Seaside Marina
(757) 787-4110

MARINAS

Fisherman's Lodge & Marina
(757) 789-3222

Wachapreague Hotel/Marina
(757) 787-2105

Wachapreague Seaside Marina
(757) 787-4110

Wachapreague Town Marina
(757) 787-1930

VINEYARDS

Bloxom Vineyard and Winery
Bloxom
(757) 665-5670

Chatham Vineyards
Machipongo
(757) 678-5588

Holly Grove Vineyards
Franktown
(757) 442-2844



overlooking the barrier islands. At the Island House, host **Randy Lewis** ensures the Shore's finest seafood can be complimented by the Shore's finest wines. Wines from Bloxom Vineyard in Bloxom, Chatham Vineyards in Machipongo and Holly Grove Vineyards in Franktown are all available. Either — or all three — of the vineyards make excellent side trips while visiting the area.

Bloxom Vineyard and Winery is a 35-acre Victorian farm with six acres of Chardonnay, Merlot and Cabernet grapes and features a tasting room open on weekends.

The Federal-period home at Chatham Vineyards was begun in 1818 by Major Scarborough Pitts on land on Church Creek first patented in 1640. The buildings on the property reflect four centuries of continuous use as a working farm. The latest addition is the winery built in 2005. In 1999, the first five-acre block of grapes was planted and today there are more than 20 acres of French Vinifera. The winery is open to the public with free tours and tastings.

Tours and tastings are available by appointment at the Holly Grove Vineyards. Holly Grove's 2006 vintage Chardonnay was a Silver Medal winner in the 2007 Virginia Governor's Cup Wine Competition, and both the 2006 Chardonnay and 2006 Merlot were medal winners in the 2008 Lodi International Wine Awards Competition. Their 2006 Merlot and 2007 Sunset Rosé were medal winners in the National Women's Wine competition in Santa Rosa, Calif.

LOCAL ART

While the fruit of the vine and the bounty of the sea are both to be enjoyed dockside in Wachapreague, so too is a sampling of the arts.

Alex Russell Decoys is located on Main Street. Russell has brought his own style to this age-old craft and features many unique works as well as more traditional carvings.

Another favorite Wachapreague artist is **Guy Wilkins**. Wilkins describes himself as "an Expressionist painter in the style that began in the early 20th century and continues today. Although I paint the real world," he says, "it is a very personal and imaginative interpretation, leaning towards the surreal."

Wilkins' work can be found in various shops in and around Wachapreague, including the retail shop at the Island House.

FISHING'S THE THING

Still, it is the fishing that attracts the most attention and there's more than one way to enjoy the sport. Boat ramps and slips are available for those who trailer their own watercraft or who choose to arrive by sea. Skiffs with outboards are available for rent, and charter boat captains welcome parties aboard for half-day or day-long jaunts.

After a day of fishing, browsing the numerous area antique shops or beachcombing on a barrier island, other small-town amenities beckon, such as the town park with its children's playground, tennis courts and baseball field. There is the Wachapreague Volunteer Fire Department's Annual Carnival with traditional rides, games and fantastic foods including oyster fritters. Canoeists and kayakers can check out the Virginia Seaside Water Trail, which runs between the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge at Cape Charles and Chincoteague Island. There's a floating dock at Wachapreague Harbor, and canoes and kayaks are available for rent at a local shop.

A scenic overlook area on the waterfront is a part of the Eastern Shore Loop of the



Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, as the area well should be. Having been protected from development, the area has continued to be a vital part of the Atlantic Flyway and, during migrations, can be seething with shorebirds, songbirds and raptors that follow the coast on their flights.

INTERNATIONAL ACCLAIM

Other facets of coastal ecology are also of importance in Wachapreague, where The College of William & Mary's Virginia Institute of Marine Science operates a field site in support of research and teaching, as well as a resident research facility. The Eastern Shore Laboratory (ESL) has become internationally known for its important contributions to the science of ecology. The ESL maintains a fleet of small vessels at its facility, which includes labs, dormitories, classrooms and a library.

Also maintaining a small fleet in Wachapreague is the United States Coast Guard. The service, which has a rich history in the area, keeps a contingent on watch for search-and-rescue and law-enforcement duties in the area. This small boat station is the modern incarnation of the original Life Saving Service that was housed in a stately facility on Parramore Island in days gone by.

While today's modern boats, laboratories and harbor facilities now occupy the Wachapreague waterfront, it is still easy to imagine the Wachapreague of old ... a town where folks took a stroll or sat on their porch after dinner ... where everyone you met offered a friendly greeting ... where the postmaster knew everyone in town ... where "fresh seafood" meant it was wiggling just an hour ago.

Yep. It's easy to imagine that Wachapreague of old ... because it's also the Wachapreague of today. ■

FROM OPPOSITE, L-R: A highlight for area folks is the Volunteer Firemen's Annual Carnival, made possible through a true community effort. Recently, town resident and Longwood art major Rebecca Taylor spent weeks refurbishing the carousel. • The Island House Restaurant, Motel and Marina caters to families and fishermen. • If Wachapreague had a Chamber of Commerce, Randy Lewis of the Island House would surely be its president. Lewis spends countless hours planning fishing tournaments, community benefits and other activities for the community.



ABOVE: Wildlife gets the respect it deserves. RIGHT: A modern playground is only one of the town park's features. BELOW: Apparently there are no liars in Wachapreague.

