

12.07-01/01/86-00116

The Heritage of Virginia, James Hagerma
see Donning Company, 1986

THE PENINSULA
PENTAGON

THE PENINSULA

The land between the York and the James rivers is, without doubt, the most historic territory in all of the United States. It was settled and formed into an organized government years before the Pilgrims made their way to New England in 1620.

Permanent settlement at the lower tip began in 1610 and has continued, without interruption, ever since. From the Peninsula people moved to the Middle Peninsula between the York and the Rappahannock, to the Norfolk region just inside Cape Henry, and to the Eastern Shore.

At its tip is Point Comfort where Fortress Monroe was built to control the entrance to Hampton Roads. From that landing, General McClellan began his Peninsula campaign in the summer of 1862, intending to march right up to Richmond and take it quickly to end the Civil War. McClellan's troops, those that survived the Seven Days Battle, were forced to march back down the Peninsula in defeat.

Today the lower portion of the Peninsula is thickly populated by Hampton, Newport News, and York County. See: Cape; Hampton; Jamestown; Middle Plantation; Newport News; Old Point Comfort

PENNIMAN

York County

Site

Prior to the outbreak of World War I, the DuPont Company purchased 4,000 acres of land on the York River for a new dynamite plant. The land had once been the farm of Captain John Utie who settled at Chischiak in 1630. In the eighteenth century, the land was owned by Major Lewis Burwell and, until the DuPont Company got to work, this was a quiet waterfront area where nothing of significance transpired. Along with the new chemical plant, the company built housing for the workers and their families to create a town of about 15,000 people which was named Penniman. It honored the inventor of ammonia dynamite, Russel S. Penniman. Before any material was made, the Federal government took over the facility for a shell loading plant for the military forces then engaged in the Great War.

During the height of activity, 10,000 people worked at the Federal plant, most of them living in Penniman. Thousands more came by train on three runs a day from Williamsburg and the lower Peninsula. When World War I ended, the government quickly ceased all activity at the shell loading plant and the town of Penniman was emptied. The name

disappeared except for Penniman Road that still winds from Williamsburg to Cheatham Annex.

During World War II, the site of the old plant was reactivated by the creation of the U.S. Naval Mine Depot which today is known as the Yorktown Naval Weapons Station. Cheatham Annex, where the town of Penniman once stood, is now a huge supply point, a complimentary facility of the Naval Supply Center of Norfolk. See: Cheatham Annex; Chischiak; Hopewell; Utimara

PENN LAIRD

Rockingham County

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Place Names*, Penn means "the place on a hill." The early settlers of this region of Massanutten Mountain were of the Laird family. Laird is the Scottish word for "lord," a nobleman. Taken literally, Penn Laird is a lord's place on a hill.

PENOLA

Caroline County

This village originally was called Polecate from Polecate Creek that runs nearby. It was renamed to honor John Penn, a signer of the Declaration of Independence who represented North Carolina. He was born near Port Royal, VA., in 1741 and died in his home in Granville County, N.C., in 1788. See: Port Royal

PEN PARK

Charlottesville

Site

Originally in Albemarle County, the first house was erected by Charles Lynch whose relatives moved west to found Lynchburg. Owned prior to 1774 by John Harvie, Sr. of Belmont, he sold it to George Gilmer in 1777 who lived at Pen Park for the remainder of his life. Gilmer was a county magistrate and the sheriff of Albemarle County. When the town of Charlottesville was founded, he was one of the civic leaders. The origin of the name Pen Park has been lost. See: Albemarle County; Belmont of Albemarle; Charlottesville; Lynchburg

PENTAGON

Arlington County

Penta is the Greek word for the number five. This structure, the world's largest office building covering forty-two acres, is in the shape of a pentagon. It has five sides and is five stories high. Within this gigantic concrete structure are seventeen-and-one-half