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A Brief History of Nassawadox, VA

Three hundred years ago, explorers who may have come ashore, would have found our shore heavily wooded with pines and hardwoods. There would have been seaside and bayside trails, used by Indians moving north and south. To the west of this area, the Nuswattocks tribe lived, and to the east, the Machapungoes were resident, each tribe living mainly on the shores and islands. Here, as at other levels on the shore, cross-paths existed for east-west movements. From these developed our first roads, as the English settlers established themselves from about 1619 forward. Land patents were allocated by the colony in the 1600's to those thought able to develop the property. According to Whitelaw<sup>1</sup>, five such patents of 600-1200 A. more or less centered on the present Nassawadox cross-road on Rt 606. As Whitelaw takes these properties thru many divisions, these he designated as N. 85, 86, 90, 91, and 92, and he derived as owners of the plantations or large farms bordering present day Nassawadox include Thomas W. Badger in 1811, John Carpenter in 1809, John T. Elliott in 1833, James W Rogers in 1857, Rowland Doughty in 1838, Obedience Kelly in 1837, Thomas T. Upshur heirs (Brownsville) in 1910 and Orris A. Browne (Woodstock) 1897.

There was little evidence of a town until the railroad came through in 1884. At that time a post-office was developed with John T. Rogers as first post-master. He prevailed on the powers to name the town for the creek, Nassawadox, though "Upshur Station" had been suggested in view of the large Upshur plantation "Brownsville" of about 1200 A. just to the east.

Thence came the town's building boom. Soon on Rt 600, there was a small school and by 1908, a Methodist chapel. John Rogers built a hotel just west of the railroad and a large store just east and the latter still stands. He also had a livery stable. The Walker family from Oriole, Md- came and with the Hollands established

Northampton Lumber Co. with a sawmill to supply the building town. The coming of the automobile brought people to town and as never before and by 1915, these were Buick and Overland agencies and garages. On the west end of town was a combination hotel-bar room-and theater. It burned about 1920 but another was soon built adjacent to the drug-store in time to show "the Birth of the Nation," etc. About this time electric power came to town from the ice plant of Exmore.

The railroad, the Pennsylvania, was from the outset in 1884 the great power behind development. Once could then travel anywhere, in comfort, and produce and seafood poured thru the station to the northern markets. The mail service was good bringing the best daily newspapers - sportsmen came, at times in their private rail-cars to fish and hunt at Hog Island or Broad-water Club.

In World War I, the ladies rolled bandages for the Red Cross for soldiers over-seas in the hall over the Rogers Store. Here also were held the early Bazaars to support the gradually building Northampton Accomack Memorial Hospital from about 1920. It opened in 1928, the same year Hwy 13 came through town - bringing many changes and improvements. Both with farming, were to become the major industrial settings for the town. Good highways and vehicles led to the demise of the railroad after World War II. Good tractors and farm machinery ended the days of horse, and mule farming at about the same time, causing farm workers and others to come to live in town, to work in the hospital, shops ,etc. The multiple small grocery stores gradually gave way to the "chains" elsewhere, but as of the present, Nassawadox is growing and it seems likely that ere-long, will have a big grocery of its own.

<sup>1</sup> Virginia's Eastern Shore, Vol 1 by Ralph T. Whitelaw 1954

John Rogers Mapp  
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