

A Brief History. . .

Welcome to Portsmouth Village. Echoes of the past surround you here, an invitation to explore . . . and imagine.

Established in 1753 by an act of the North Carolina General Assembly, Portsmouth grew to be the largest settlement on the Outer Banks by 1770. For 100 years, the town remained a major shipping center.

Ocracoke Inlet was the major trade route through the Outer Banks. However, large, heavily laden ships found the inlet too shallow to sail through and were forced to transfer their cargo to lighter, shallow draft boats. Portsmouth was established to provide storage and support facilities for this "lightering" business. "Governor" John Wallace, shipping tycoon, was the co-founder of this successful business on nearby Shell Castle Island and is buried on Portsmouth.

The coming of the Civil War signaled the end of an era on Portsmouth. Many residents fled for the mainland and chose not to return after the War. Their reasons were as much economic as political. Even before the War began, Ocracoke Inlet had begun to shoal and a new, deeper inlet was opened at Hatteras by an 1846 storm. Shipping routes shifted north.

Portsmouth's days as a center of commerce were over. Fishing replaced shipping as the primary occupations for the islanders that remained. In 1894, the United States Life Saving Service was established on Portsmouth and for nearly fifty years played a vital role in the survival of this community.

Isolation, a depressed economy, and the constant threat to life and property from storms prompted the final abandonment of Portsmouth. With the death of Henry Pigott in January, 1971, the last two residents, Elma Dixon and Marian Babb, reluctantly moved to the mainland. Another chapter had ended.

In 1976 with the establishment of Cape Lookout National Seashore, new life came to Portsmouth. The 250 acre historic district of Portsmouth Village is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and honor roll that recognizes outstanding historic buildings and districts throughout the United States.

Captains are native guides - licensed by USCG, born and raised on Ocracoke and know well the history and stories of these islands.

PORTSMOUTH ISLAND *(Cape Lookout National Seashore)*

Daily trips in season departing from Ocracoke Harbor.

Off season trips available on demand.

GROUP TRIPS

Trips can be scheduled for your group's convenience. Please call for information and reservations.

Public Facilities on Portsmouth are limited. Be sure to bring INSECT REPELLENT (*Deepwoods Off or Cutter's*), drinking water, suntan lotion, adequate clothing and a hat.

All trips are subject to cancellation due to weather conditions.

For information on scheduled times

CALL "THE AUSTINS"
928-4361 or 928-5431

BOAT TOURS

TO PORTSMOUTH ISLAND *(Cape Lookout National Seashore)*

Enjoy a 20 minute boat ride to historic Portsmouth Village where time stopped when the last residents left. A short walk from the Village is the beach where you can fish, birdwatch, clam, look for shells or just sunbathe.

ISLAND TOUR

Dolphin & Pelican Watch

Enjoy a boat ride. You'll get a close up look at Blackbeard's hideout, Beacon Island (nesting site for the brown pelicans), the under water site of Fort Ocracoke, Portsmouth Village and Ocracoke. All the while listening to stories of the areas intriguing history. Don't forget your camera, we have several dolphin pods that share our waters and see the baby pelicans.



"THE AUSTINS"

P.O. Box 375

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