

## Society Participates in Unveiling of VA Historical Road Marker Jun 20, 2015

At 11am, June 20, 2015 at Plum Point in Norfolk a Virginia Historical Road marker was unveiled for the War of 1812 Harbor Defense Forts. Attending from the Society were member, Steve Forest dressed in War of 1812 attire, Councilor, Stuart Butler, and Legal Counsel, Carter Furr, who presented the wreath for the Society. Stuart Butler, also as an Advisory Council member of the Virginia Bicentennial Commission, presented their wreath. Also attending were Jennie Lou Pringle, President of the Fort Norfolk chapter U.S. Daughters of 1812 and Navy Captain, Christopher Melhuish who officiated. A news release, information and selected photos follow:



**MARKER**

NorfolkCompany.com | The Virginian (201) 644-0100 | 95343

**SMALL BITES**  
Varied menu is just one of the good things about 757 Crave.  
PAGE 6

# LEAVING A MARK

*New state marker at Plum Point Park highlights the area's role in the War of 1812*

By Joshua Weinstein  
Correspondent

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the end of the War of 1812, a turning point in U.S. history and its relations with England.

In commemoration, the Norfolk Historical Society has sponsored the installation of a new state marker at Plum Point Park. The marker highlights the role of Norfolk's Elizabeth River defenses during that war.

Although Plum Point was never a military post, the site was chosen due to its proximity to Fort Norfolk, Craney Island and Fort Nelson (which no longer exists). From Plum Point, one can view those three sites, which were instrumental in the defense of Norfolk Harbor during the British attack of 1813.

Buoyed by soldiers and arms from Forts Norfolk and Nelson, the mouth of the Elizabeth River was successfully defended against the British at Craney Island. It was a crucial moment during what some refer to as "America's Sec-

**Plum Point Park**

The Norfolk Historical Society will staff Fort Norfolk every Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. through September, allowing tours and answering questions.

Dedication ceremony for new state marker is Saturday from 11 to 11:30 a.m.

Questions about Fort Norfolk or the Norfolk Historical Society can be answered at [info@norfolkhistorical.org](mailto:info@norfolkhistorical.org).

JOSHUA WEINSTEIN PHOTOS

Plum Point Park was chosen for the historical marker due to its proximity to several military installations active during the War of 1812, including Fort Norfolk and Craney Island.

See MARKER, Page 17

## MARKER

Continued from Page 1

ond War of Independence.”

Fort Norfolk, however, existed long before that battle. It was one of 19 coastal fortifications ordered built by George Washington in 1794.

Tensions between the U.S. and Britain would escalate in the years to come, and Fort Norfolk would be refortified in 1810 during the lead up to war with Britain. At one point, the fort stationed more than 700 soldiers with 37 mounted guns at its perimeter.

The fort changed hands several times over the next 200 years. Originally built and owned by the U.S. Navy, it was taken by the Confederates during the Civil War, but recaptured by the Union shortly thereafter. It is now owned and managed by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Of those original 19 coastal fortifications ordered by George Washington, Fort Norfolk is the only one to survive. It is a registered Virginia historic landmark and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Peggy Haile-McPhillips, president of the local historical society and Norfolk's city historian, speaks of Fort Norfolk with enthusiasm.

“It is such a great snapshot of time,” Haile-McPhillips said. “Preserving that sense of history and seeing how early American armies defended themselves is important, especially in a city like Norfolk,” where the military has such a big role.

McPhillips said she wants people to visit and learn from Fort Norfolk, to use its history as a beneficial enterprise in public discourse.

The state marker seeks to highlight the historical significance of Fort Norfolk,



JOSHUA WEINSTEIN

The construction of Fort Norfolk was ordered by President George Washington in 1794 and was completed in 1810. It is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Craney Island and other sites, but it is meant to welcome more visitors to these historic places as well.

Plum Point Park is along the Elizabeth River Trail, which allows the park and

its historical plaques to be easily accessed and viewed by bikers and pedestrians.

The lush area boasts a sweeping view of the Elizabeth River, and is just behind Fort Norfolk Plaza off

Brambleton Avenue.

Starting today, the society will staff the fort every Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. through September. Visitors can tour the grounds and enter some of the buildings. So-

ciety volunteers will be able to answer any questions about the Entry to Fort Norfolk.

Allowing access to Fort Norfolk and encouraging the consumption of local history is central to the work of the Haile-McPhillips and other historians, who strive to make these valuable historic sites relevant in an age of modernity.

“It has survived for over 200 years,” McPhillips said. “It is now our job to promote it, preserve it, and make it accessible to everyone who ple into the future.”

The historical society also sponsors a dedication ceremony for the state marker at Plum Point Park on Saturday from 11 to 11:30 a.m. Questions about Fort Norfolk or the Norfolk Historical Society can be answered at norfolkhistorical.org.

Joshua Weinstein,  
joshua.akiva@gmail.com

## State Historical Highway Marker

### “War of 1812 Elizabeth River Defenses” To Be Dedicated

—Norfolk marker recalls four fortifications, constructed under authorization in 1794 of Pres. George Washington and completed by 1810, prior to War of 1812—

*The marker's text is reproduced below—*

RICHMOND – A state historical marker issued by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources highlighting fortifications that once guarded approaches to the Elizabeth River, authorized for construction in 1794 by President George Washington, will be dedicated this weekend. The dedication ceremony begins at 11 a.m., Saturday, June 20, at the marker's location in Plum Point Park in Norfolk. The ceremony is open to the public. Parking is available at the Fort Norfolk Plaza garage, 301 Riverview Avenue, Norfolk.

Speakers at the event will include Peggy Haile McPhillips, president of the Norfolk Historical Society; now-retired U.S. Navy Captain Christopher Melhuish; and Lieutenant Colonel John Drew, U.S. Army Deputy Commander in the Norfolk District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A presentation of wreaths during the ceremony will be made by Jennie Lou Pangle, president of Fort Norfolk chapter of United States Daughters of 1812, and Carter Furr, of the War of 1812 Society in Virginia.

The “War of 1812 Elizabeth River Defenses” sign marks another stop on a War of 1812 heritage highway route linked by historical markers created to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war, which was fought between 1812 and 1815. The signs—now numbering 19 approved, with 15 erected—resulted from collaboration between the Department of Historic Resources and the Virginia Bicentennial of the American War of 1812 Commission.

Each of the bicentennial signs features on one side general information about the causes of the War of 1812 and its impact on Virginia, especially the Chesapeake Bay and Tidewater regions. The signs also note that “more than 2,000 enslaved African Americans in Virginia had gained their freedom aboard British ships.”

Fought between the U.S. and Great Britain, the War of 1812 is viewed by some historians the nation’s second war of independence.

The “War of 1812 Elizabeth River Defenses,” marker recalls that in 1794 President George Washington authorized the construction of 19 coastal defense fortifications, giving rise in Virginia to forts to guard the Elizabeth River, located along the western edge of Norfolk.

Fort Norfolk, which featured 37 mounted guns, and Fort Nelson, armed with 10 cannon, “were constructed by 1810 to guard the Elizabeth River approaches to Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Gosport Navy Yard,” in the marker’s words.

Additionally, later defensive works, Forts Barbour and Tar, were built along with a blockhouse on Craney Island. “Because Craney Island was successfully defended against the British on 22 June 1813, Forts Norfolk and Nelson never fired their guns during the war,” according to the marker, which was approved in 2010.

Today, of all these fortifications, only Fort Norfolk survives.

According to the legislation enacted by the General Assembly to establish the bicentennial commission, "An estimated 70,000 Virginians served during the War of 1812. There were some 73 armed encounters with the British that took place in Virginia during the war." The 2008 legislation also states, "The nation's capitol, strategically located off the Chesapeake Bay, was a prime target for the British, and the coast of Virginia figured prominently in the Atlantic theatre of operations."

A 12-page booklet that lists all the historical markers in Virginia relating to the War of 1812, including each sign's text, is available online for downloading (as a PDF) from the Department of Historic Resources' Website ([www.dhr.virginia](http://www.dhr.virginia.gov)). Here is the direct link to the publication:

[http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/pdf\\_files/War%20of%201812%20Markers%20publicationFINAL.pdf](http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/pdf_files/War%20of%201812%20Markers%20publicationFINAL.pdf)

Virginia's historical highway marker program, which began in 1927 with the installation of the first historical markers along U.S. Route 1, is considered the oldest such program in the nation. Currently there are more than 2,400 official state markers, most maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation, as well as by local partners in jurisdictions outside of VDOT's authority, such as Norfolk.

#### **Texts of the marker:**

##### **War of 1812 Elizabeth River Defenses**

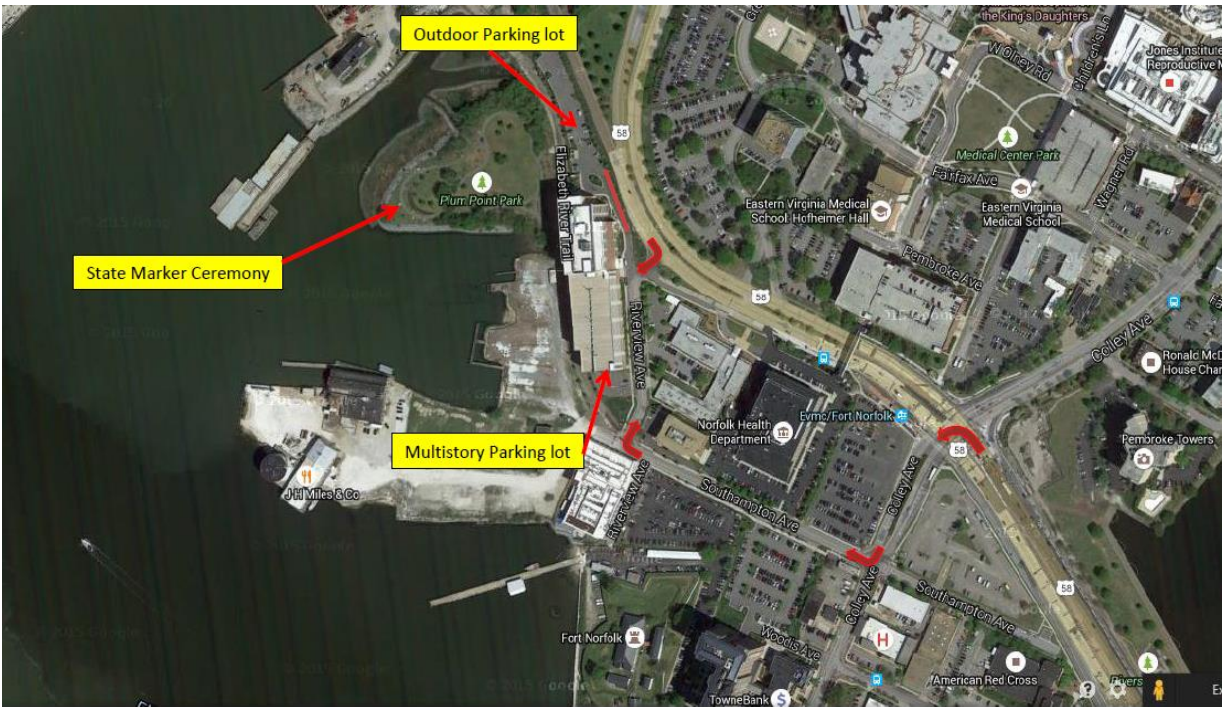
President George Washington authorized the construction of 19 coastal defense fortifications in 1794. Nearby Fort Norfolk, which mounted 37 guns, and Fort Nelson, armed with 10 cannon, were constructed by 1810 to guard the Elizabeth River approaches to Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Gosport Navy Yard. Additional defensive works, Forts Barbour and Tar, were later added and a blockhouse was built on Craney Island. Because Craney Island was successfully defended against the British on 22 June 1813, Forts Norfolk and Nelson never fired their guns during the war. Of these fortifications, only Fort Norfolk survives.

#### **Reverse side:**

##### **The War of 1812**

Impressment of Americans into British service and the violation of American ships were among the causes of America's War of 1812 with the British, which lasted until 1815. Beginning in 1813, Virginians suffered from a British naval blockade of the Chesapeake Bay and from British troops plundering the countryside by the Bay and along the James, Rappahannock, and Potomac Rivers. The

Virginia militia deflected a British attempt to take Norfolk in 1813 and engaged British forces throughout the war. By the end of the war, more than 2,000 enslaved African Americans in Virginia had gained their freedom aboard British ships.

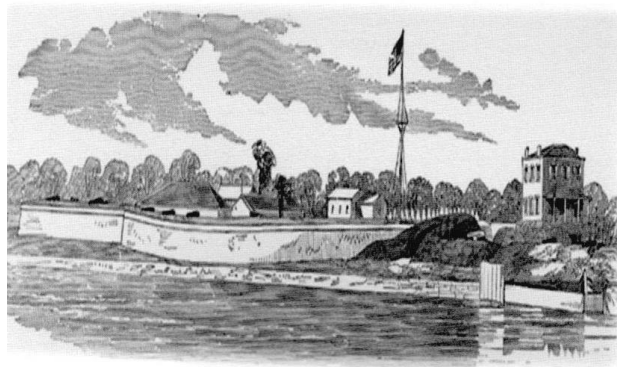


**Parking Street address is 301 Riverview Ave.** If the outdoor parking lot is full, use the multistory garage.

If driving down **BRAMBLETON AVE** (westbound). Turn left on **COLLEY AVE**. Take first right on **SOUTHAMPTON AVE**, then right on **RIVERVIEW AVE**.

If driving east on **BRAMBLETON AVE**. Turn on **RIVERVIEW AVE**.

## DEDICATION



PLUM POINT PARK NORFOLK  
JUNE 20, 2015

## **History of Fort Norfolk**

Authorized by George Washington in 1794, Fort Norfolk was originally an earthwork fortification. In 1810 it was rebuilt as a brick and earthworks fort. Together with Fort Nelson, the two harbor defense forts were designed to protect the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth from an enemy force sailing up the Elizabeth River and repeating the British naval bombardment of Norfolk in 1776. Because of the successful outcome of the Battle of Craney Island on June 22, 1813, the two harbor forts did not see action in the War of 1812 – the outer defensive system at Craney Island succeeded.

Brigadier General Robert B. Taylor of the Virginia Militia, commander of all American forces in the area, made Fort Norfolk his headquarters during the Battle of Craney Island. He would have been able to see the smoke from the American battery, and the signal flags at Craney Island rapidly communicated news of the victory back to General Taylor.

Fort Norfolk now occupies about four acres overlooking the Elizabeth River and includes the original walls, Officers' Quarters, a large magazine, barracks and a guardhouse. During the American Civil War, federal forces captured the fort in 1862 and used it as a prison to house Confederate POWs. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers came into possession of the fort in 1923, and still owns it. Fort Norfolk is the last remaining of the 19 harbor forts authorized by President George Washington.

# **Program**

## **Pledge of Allegiance**

*Led by Captain Christopher Melhuish, U. S. Navy (retired)*

## **Welcoming remarks**

*Mrs. Peggy Haile McPhillips  
President, Norfolk Historical Society*

## **Unveiling of the marker and brief remarks**

*Lieutenant Colonel John Drew, U. S. Army  
Deputy Commander, Norfolk District  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*

## **Presentation of Wreaths**

*Miss Jennie Lou Pangle  
President, Fort Norfolk Daughters of 1812*

*Colonel Carter Furr, U. S. Army (retired)  
Officer, War of 1812 Society in Virginia*



Above L/R Stuart Butler, Carter Furr and Steve Forest





Above L/R: Jenni Lou Pringle and another member Of the Norfolk Chapter U.S. Daughters of 1812, Steve Forrest of the War of 1812 Society, Peggy Haile McPhillips, president of the Norfolk Historical Society; and now-retired U.S. Navy Captain Christopher Melhuish;