

# THE CHINCOTEAGUE STORY...

While enjoying our beautiful wildlife, exploring our pristine creeks and marshes, relaxing on our beaches, indulging yourself in delicious seafood, and taking advantage of our vacation activities, please include some time to learn more about our island's extensive history.

The island's first inhabitants were the Gingo-Teague Tribe (for which the town is named). The first British settlers arrived in the early 17th Century and Colonel Daniel Jenifer, a surveyor appointed by Governor Berkeley, was the first to claim land on the island. Jenifer was granted 1,500 acres on the island in 1671 and he established the first British settlement with 30 other people. The native Gingo-Teague Tribe members were driven from the island to the mainland by 1672. In 1692, 2,500 additional acres were granted to William Kendall and Major John Robins. Early life on Chincoteague could be described as nearly primitive. Chincoteague Bay separated the early settlers from settlements on the mainland and forced them to live in near isolation.

The island population continued to grow and there were 36 houses on the island by 1838. In 1861, the island voted not to secede from the Union (the only Virginia town to do so) and stood against slavery. The town played a role in the Civil War when the Battle of Cockle Creek was fought in Chincoteague Bay in 1861.

Major storms have helped write the history of the island. The great storm of 1933 and the Ash Wednesday storm of 1962 put the town underwater, destroying many structures and devastating the town.

The town's population is approximately 3,000 and life on the island has changed in many ways. The primary economy has evolved over the years from farming to seafood and finally, to tourism. This tour guide will help show you Chincoteague's rich history and help provide a glimpse into the way life once was on this historic and unique island.



*The "Steamer of Chincoteague" carried passengers and freight from the island to the Franklin City railroad dock prior to the construction of the causeway.*



## Walking & Biking Tour



### Informational Credits:

*"Assateague and Chincoteague As I Remember Them"*  
by Lillian Mears Rew

*"Once Upon An Island"* by Kirk Mariner  
Mrs. Victoria Pruitt

### Supporting Organizations:

Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission  
DEQ Coastal Zone Management Program  
NOAA

### Town of Chincoteague

*Chincoteague Cultural Alliance* - Island's source for  
artisan shows, musical & theatrical events, art classes, farmers market, & more!

### For more information contact:

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## Historic Chincoteague Island

*Enjoy your tour of Chincoteague Island, Virginia!*



**1 Firehouse (4028 Main St.)** - No longer active, the original building was a wooden structure on Cleveland Street built around 1925. Ebe Jones was the first fire chief. The current structure was built in 1934 and enlarged in 1957, and moved in 2017. The wooden eagle above the garage doors was carved in the 1890s and first mounted on the Red Men's Lodge.

**2 Old Town Jail (6287 Cropper St.)** - This building was built around 1927 after a fire in the old wooden jail on Mumford Street killed one and injured another. This "modern" structure served as the Town Jail into the 1960s.

**3 Brasure Building (4039 Main St.)** - The building includes part of John A.M. Whealton's home built in 1861. Whealton is said to have introduced the "cultivation" of oysters in 1864. He led the effort to keep Chincoteague with the Union during the Civil War and erected a flag pole over 100 feet high with a Union flag that could be seen on the mainland.

**4 Chincoteague Channel Fishing Pier** - Prior to 2009, this was the location of the bridge onto the island. The original bridge was built in 1921-22 and was a privately owned toll road which was later taken over by the state. When dignitaries came to the opening of the bridge, their cars became stuck in mud on the road and many were stranded on the island for days.

**5 Watson Brothers Building (4065 Main St.)** - Originally Watson's Ice Cream Parlor, the building later housed a restaurant, pool hall, real estate office, and retail store.

**6 Island Theatre (4068 Main St.)** - Located at the former site of the Atlantic Hotel, the theater was built in 1945 as a movie house. The newly renovated building retains some original details and decor. The theater's more famous predecessor, the Atlantic Hotel, opened in 1876 by Joseph English, was the largest building in town. The property contained a grand lawn that stretched to the waterfront and hosted tourists in the 1800s who travelled to the island by train and steamer from Philadelphia and New York. English's successful venture collapsed in 1878 when he shot a guest dead who refused to pay his bill. The hotel burned in 1920.

**7 Boatman's Bank Building (4073 Main St.)** - Erected in 1896, this building later served as a doctor's office, barber-shop, and book store.

**8 Chincoteague Island Library (4077 Main St.)** - Built in 1887, the building was originally the O.M. Jones Drug Store. In 1908, the building became Wallace "Tig" Jester's Barber Shop. For 75 years, Tig offered a shave, haircut, and a gathering place for Island men. In 1983, the Citizens' League purchased the building and moved it to its present location. The new addition completed in 2009 is modeled after the Caulk House (1860) which served as a Customs House.

**9 Robert N. Reed, Jr. Downtown Park** - The current park is located on the site of the Wharf. Ferries and mail boats carried passengers, mail, and freight from the Wharf to and from Franklin City and Wishart's Point. The 1962 Ash Wednesday Storm destroyed several stores that were later built on this site. The current park was established in 2004.

**10 Old Powell Opera House and Theater (4098 Main St.)** - Built in 1909 by James T. Powell, this building was the first movie theater on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The theater had a Steinway player piano for silent movies and the facility served as the site of live entertainment.

**11 Bank of Chincoteague (4102 Main St.)** - This structure was built in 1925 at the site of the first downtown fire. The bank was established in 1909 and served the community well into the 20th Century.

**12 Accomack Masonic Lodge (4108 Main St.)** - The lodge was established in 1892 and the building erected at this address in 1921. A corner stone may be found on the south corner of the building. Masons remain active on the island.

**13 Marine Bank (4116 Main St.)** - Built in 1918, the building burned in the 1920 fire that destroyed much of the east side of the downtown area but it was repaired and reopened. The bank merged with the Bank of Chincoteague in 1932.

**14 Channel Bass Inn & Tea Room (6228 Church St.)** - Originally owned by the Whealton family, the building has been enhanced extensively over the years. It first became a hotel in the 1920s, when owned by Emma Russell, and has operated as a hospitality business ever since. In 1935 John W. Winder, twice Mayor of Chincoteague, purchased the property and it stayed in his family until the 1970s.

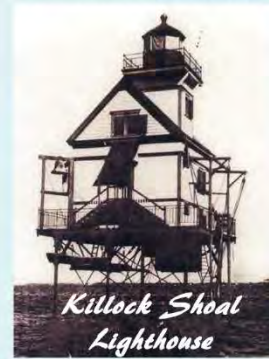


# Historic Downtown Chincoteague Walking Tour

**Fire Department**

**Union Baptist Church**  
Chincoteague, Va

**15 Christ United Methodist Church (6253 Church St.)** - Erected in 1922 as the Methodist Episcopal Church, the church merged with the Methodist Protestant Church as Christ Methodist Church in 1939. It is built of Pennsylvania Chestnut Hill stone, shipped by railroad and boat to Chincoteague where it was carried by horse cart to the building site.



**16 Methodist Episcopal Church (6254 Church St.)** - This original wood structure was built in 1886 and currently houses the United Methodist Women's Opportunity Shop to provide affordable items to the community.

**17 Saint Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church (6288 Church St.)** - This structure was originally erected in 1888 as the Methodist Protestant Church. A corner stone preserves the history on the lower right corner of the foundation. One of the first Colored Regiments formed during the Civil War served on Chincoteague Island. One of their responsibilities was protecting the Assateague Lighthouse. While on Chincoteague, they were housed in what is now the Catholic Church.

**18 Union Baptist Church (6365 Church St.)** - The congregation was established on the Island in 1841 and built this structure in 1898. Prior to 1841, Methodists and Baptists are said to have shared one worship service, thus the "Union" in the name of the church. Notably, the original structure only had one spire on the right side of the front of the building. When the second spire was built in the 20th Century, the contractor is said to have intentionally built it larger than the first.



**A Frank Bunting House (3860 Main St.)** - This home was built in the 1890s and was the home of Chincoteague's first Mayor elected in 1908.

**B U.S. Coast Guard Station (3823 Main St.)** - The station was established during World War II in 1943 as the 6th District Headquarters. In the 1990s, additional land was acquired to enlarge the facility. The station occupies land previously used as a marine railway, ship building facility and lumber yard.

**C "Squealer" Dan Whealton House (3760 Main St.)** - Squealer Dan was a sea captain with a high pitched voice who transported cargo on his schooner, "Alberta", up and down the east coast. In 1901, he purportedly saved the crew of a sinking Spanish ship off Winter Quarter Shoal. Dan was one of the Island's well-known characters. While in court on a charge of hunting out of season, Dan, who loved hunting, told the judge "I just couldn't help it."

**D Charlie Gall Store (3747 Main St.)** - This building housed one of several neighborhood stores on the Island. The store had groceries and other merchandise. Islanders often said that if Charlie Gall didn't have it, you didn't need it.

**E William C. Bunting House (3594 Main St.)** - Built in 1922, the owner established the William C. Bunting Oyster Company, which was famous for its Toms Cove brand of salt oysters. The company operated at the dock behind the current Don's Seafood Restaurant on Main Street.

**F Firemen's Carnival Grounds (3645 Main St.)** - Originally on Mumford Street, then moved to Marlin Street, and finally to the current carnival grounds in 1945. The annual carnival is conducted weekends starting the last in June, through Pony Penning the last week of July, when it runs all week (except Sunday). This event is the primary funding source for the Volunteer Fire Company.

**G John W. Bunting House (3608 Main St.)** - This home was built in 1901. Rising from a poor background, Mr. Bunting became one of the most prominent citizens of the Island. He made his money in the seafood industry and served as a community leader holding several appointed positions in town.

**H Miss Molly's Inn (4141 Main St.)** - Built in 1896 by the Rowley family, the building served as a lodging house for the Island. Local historians say that Marguerite Henry wrote the story of Misty of Chincoteague while staying at the Inn in 1946. The building is a bed and breakfast today.

**I Island Manor House (4160 Main St.)** - This building was originally two homes built by brothers-in-law married to two sisters, Dr. Nathaniel Smith and Joseph Kenny. Dr. Smith first came to the Island as the assistant surgeon on a Union warship during the Civil War. The buildings were joined to form the current structure which serves as a bed and breakfast.

**J Watson House (4240 Main St.)** - This house was built in 1898 by Robert Watson and his son, David. Robert's brother at one time owned most of the land between Maddox Boulevard and Clark Street. Many of the original houses on these streets were occupied by members of the Watson family.

**K Captain John Dukes House (4356 Main St.)** - This house was built in 1893. Captain Dukes was a member of the U.S. Life Saving Service which later was incorporated into the U.S. Coast Guard. Dukes was the officer in charge of several stations on the barrier islands.

**L Clarence Tarr House (4653 Main St.)** - This Victorian era home was preserved in the mid-20th Century by television actress Linda Lavin ("Alice") who moved the house from the east side of the street to its current location overlooking the Chincoteague Bay.

**M Christ Holy Sanctified Church (5084 Main St.)** - This church was formed in 1892 by former members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The building was built in 1903 and moved to its current location in 2008. Several members of the church left the Island in 1894 to establish congregations across the United States. Some early members of the church are buried in Holy Ridge Cemetery behind the church.

**N Captain Timothy Hill House (5122 Main St.)** - Built around 1800, it is the oldest known house on the Island. Enjoy the early architectural style with hand hewn log planks and a replication of the original wooden chimney. Open for tours in the summer season or by appointment.



**O Captain Joshua Chandler Gravesite (N. Main turnabout)** - Captain Chandler was a waterman who came to Chincoteague from Delaware. He was killed by lightning on his sailboat in 1877. The inscription on his tombstone reads: "Farewell wife and children dear. I am not dead but sleeping here. As I am, some day you will be also. Prepare for death and follow me."

**P Killock Shoal Light** - The remnants of this once vital lighthouse can still be seen. Erected in 1886, automated in 1923, and decommissioned and the house removed in 1939.

# Chincoteague Biking Tour

**Legend:**

- Designated Trail
- Suggested Routes
- Dangerous Routes- Walk Bike or Avoid Routes
- Water Access
- Plant Demo Garden



**Remember: Walk AGAINST traffic, Bike WITH traffic. Walk your bike on the sidewalk, Ride your bike on the street.**



# Neighborhoods of Chincoteague



Text from these sections are from Lillian Mears Rew's book, *Assateague & Chincoteague: As I Remember Them*. The copyright belongs to Mrs. Rew's family. Please note that the text may not be reproduced without written permission.

## 1 Up The Neck

The northern end of the island became known as "Up the Neck". The name probably came from the fact that the area is long and narrow like a neck.

## 2 Up The Creek

As the population of the island increased, residents began referring to this northern portion of the island as "Up the Creek". The reference to the creek probably came from the fact that the area runs along Lewis Creek, which is a narrow channel leading from Chincoteague Channel to the Bay.

## 3 Deep Hole

This was one of the first areas of the island occupied by the early settlers because it was a protected and accessible port from which to work on the water. In the early 19th Century, the land adjoining this deep creek was called "Deep Hole Creek". The creek got its name from a very deep (30 ft.) hole at the midway point of the creek.

## 4 Piney Island

This part of the island was covered with pine trees. It was used for many years for grazing cattle.

## 5 Chicken City

In the late 1800s, John Thornton, known as the "Butcher" of Chincoteague, lived in this area. After butchering and preparing beef for sale to local residents, he would dispose of the leftover bones and intestines in the nearby swamp and woods to be eaten by the buzzards. The region became known as "Buzzard Swamp". In the 1940s people began clearing off the land known as "Buzzard Swamp" in order to build chicken houses on it. The poultry industry flourished on the island and nearly 7 million broilers were produced annually by the 1950s. At this time it was called "Chicken City Road". (The Ash Wednesday storm ended the poultry industry on the Island.)

## 6 Madcalf Lane

Before there were stock laws on the island, cattle and horses roamed at will. One night a boy was escorting his girl home from church. The couple walked down the dark lane and as the boy started to step over what he thought was a log, a cow reared up and took off with the boy on its back. Since then the lane became known as Madcalf Lane. Today the lane is known as Clark Street.

## 7 Tick Town

There were many ticks in the woods in this area. Local legend states that if a boy married a girl from Tick Town, he would either do all of the cooking or starve, but he was certain to have one of the prettiest wives in town. The area is known as Willow Street today.

## 8 Dodge City

This area was given its name during the period when the TV show "Gunsmoke" was on air in the 1960s. A resident in this area often shot his gun like a cowboy. The old name for this area is Bear Claw.

## 9 Birch Town

There were many members of the Birch family living in this neighborhood.

## 10 Down the Marsh

This was the name given to the southern end of the island by the earliest settlers.

## 11 Snotty Ridge

This area was named for kids in the area who would wipe their noses on their shirt sleeves.