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National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

_X_ New Submission ____ Amended Submission

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A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

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"Historic and Architectural Resources of Hobson Village, Suffolk, Virginia 1865-1968"

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B. Associated Historic Contexts

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(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

From Settlement to Village (1865-1900)
Hobson in the Early 20th Century (1900-1920)
Hobson in the 1920s
Hobson in the 1930s through World War II
Hobson Village and the Decline of Oystering (1945-1968)

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C. Form Prepared by

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature and title of certifying official — Date 2/14/10

Kathleen S. Kilpatrick
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts
Introduction

In 1865, at the close of the American Civil War, a band of African-Americans whose numbers and antebellum stories have yet to be fully investigated or recorded, fled the Virginia Peninsula between the James and York rivers and settled at Barrett's Neck in Nansemond County (now the City of Suffolk). By 1870, 16 African-American oystermen had planted themselves and their families on the peninsula between Chuckatuck Creek and the Nansemond River and drew a livelihood from the water. By 1900, the original settlement had grown to become a community of nearly 60 African-American households, had its own post office and took its name from Richard Pearson Hobson, a now forgotten naval hero of the Spanish American War. The following statement of historic contexts traces the growth of Hobson from its inception in the years immediately following the Civil War through its rise from settlement to village in the late 19th century to its heyday in the 1920s and 1930s, and finally to its gradual decline as a self-sufficient oyster village in the years following World War II. It examines the economic, religious, and social life of the village over time, using census records, real estate and tax records, architectural analysis of the surviving built environment and recent sources in oral history drawn from the memories of Hobson residents going back to the 1920s. For decades the people of Hobson, like the white villagers of nearby Crittenden and Eclipse, earned their livelihood as watermen and farmers, although farm work in Hobson usually meant growing food on small plots and doing seasonal work on white-owned farms. During the early decades of the 20th century, nearly everyone who wanted work in Hobson could find it in oystering or in working in oyster houses. As recently as the 1950s, about 60 boats worked out of Chuckatuck Creek, and three oyster houses, and two marine railways served the local industry. Men of Hobson village built their own boats and families maintained their own oyster beds, passing them from one generation to another. However, Hobson's fortunes as a community of black watermen declined with the damming of Carter's Cove Creek in 1968, the Kepone scare of 1975, the decimation of oysters through pollution and disease, and the cutting of a new channel in the James River. But Hobson's demise can also be traced to new educational and economic opportunities that opened for African Americans in Hobson and in Virginia after World War II with the advent of Civil Rights movement and the fall of legal barriers to equal opportunity and economic and social advancement. Declining in population from 420 villagers in 1930 to 275 inhabitants in 2009, the community of Hobson today stands at a cross roads, facing the encroachment of new residential development on its borders and searching for the confidence and optimism of earlier generations to choose a future that is worthy of Hobson's unique past.

From Settlement to Village (1865-1900)

Peninsula Refugee Camps

During the Civil War, enslaved persons throughout southeastern Virginia fled from their legal owners and sought refuge behind Union army lines on the peninsula between the James and York rivers. They gathered near Fort Monroe in Hampton and behind Union army lines in Yorktown and Williamsburg.[1]

At the war's end, thousands of blacks were concentrated in refugee camps at Yorktown and Hampton, and smaller groups were camped outside Williamsburg in James City County. The white population on the Peninsula felt threatened by the large concentration of blacks, and their leaders urged military and Freedmen's Bureau officials to close down the camps and require the refugees who originated from outside the Peninsula to return to their home counties.[2] Officials from York County and Williamsburg asked that the 25,000 refugees in their region be removed "either by voluntary action or by Federal authority."[3]

The Freedmen's Bureau provided the refugees with food rations, but as that agency's mission came to a close, Bureau officials unsuccessfully tried to interest the freedmen in settling in Florida, or immigrating to Liberia, West Africa. A local newspaper expressed concerns about the danger of a cholera outbreak among the densely-settled freedmen.[4]

Local whites were also perturbed because some freedmen exhibited an unusual degree of economic independence by working as oystermen and fishermen. A Norfolk editor lamented that the blacks on the Peninsula were concentrated on the coast and river shores "where no systematic labor was required for…by fishing in the summer and oystering in the winter, they manage to eke out a scanty and precarious subsistence….The abundant resources of the water," the editor claimed, was "sufficient for the blacks own few wants, but contributes nothing to the wealth of the community."[5]

Conditions were not as idyllic as the Norfolk editor portrayed them, for many freedmen died in the refugee camp in Yorktown of malnutrition and disease. Notwithstanding these deplorable conditions, most survivors refused to leave the area both because their children had begun to attend schools taught by missionaries, and because they did not want to return to work on land owned by people who had kept them in slavery. In James City County, vigilante white groups flogged blacks to try to drive them from the area; and when that tactic did not work, some even resorted to murdering helpless victims. White planters on the Peninsula vowed as one that they would not rent land to the newly freedmen or hire them as laborers until the black population was reduced to its pre-war level.[6]

Settlement at Barrett's Neck

Under these dismal circumstances, a group of freedmen are traditionally believed by the Hobson community to have departed from the Carter's Grove area in James City County in 1865 and then traveled by boat down the James River and across Hampton Roads to the northernmost part of what was then Nansemond County. The party may have had support from The Freedmen's Bureau, which customarily gave ex-slaves travel allotments during this time, especially when officials were trying to depopulate refugee camps. While the Nansemond Indians, after whom the county was named, had once lived on this same peninsula but concentrated along the river bearing their name, the newly freed blacks selected land farther inland. Shortly afterward, another group of blacks who could no longer tolerate the threats of white vigilantes, left the refugee camp in Yorktown, and joined the earlier group in the settlement originally known as Barrett's Neck. They entered a peninsula in which the large antebellum plantations of families such as the Moores, Grays, Lewises, Adamses and Veseys were being replaced by largely white-owned family farms of one to two hundred acres.[7]

Coming from an area that was bordered by rivers and the Chesapeake Bay on three sides, the new settlers were accustomed to life on the water, so it is reasonable to assume that some of them had supplemented their diets by oystering and fishing and brought those skills with them to the new settlement. In Middlesex County on the Middle Peninsula, for example, free blacks had made a good living as oystermen and farmers before the Civil War and they were very successful in acquiring land. [8] Moreover, at a time when industries and farms were still suffering from four years of Civil War, oystering was one of the few industries in the region that was thriving, as coastal shipping by steamboat and railroad opened up new markets in the North and the South for Hampton Roads oysters. The Nansemond River nourished one of the richest oyster grounds in the Bay. Oyster houses in Suffolk were soon shipping 75 thousand bushels of oysters a year. In 1869, Virginia's Auditor of Public Accounts estimated that there were more than 640,000 acres of oyster beds within state waters, and their annual value was determined to be approximately ten million dollars. Not surprisingly, because many other sources of revenue in the state had dried up, a tax was levied on the oysters, notwithstanding the opposition of local white oystermen in the area who strongly opposed it.[9] That almost all of the wholesalers were Northerners probably made the tax more palatable to the legislators. Over the coming decades, the growing Nansemond oyster industry would attract white watermen from the north with experience in oystering and boat building to settle with their families in the nearby villages of Crittenden and Eclipse on Chuckatuck Creek. There is little evidence that they settled in Hobson. [10]

What is certain is that 16 black oystermen headed households in Chuckatuck Township in Nansemond County in 1870, according to U.S. Census records. Their names were: William Gunnell (37), Joseph Gunnell (18), John Lee (43), James Newby (22), Fem Hampton (27), George Carter (39), George Tynes (19), Frances Johnson (20), Robert Thomas (22), Graham Thomas (21), Horace Thomas (21), James Outland (35), Whorton Sheperd (73), John Tynes (60), Walton Jordan (45) and William H. Crocker (29). The same census also listed James Newby as a 25-year-old black man working on a farm in the township. James Newby, Fem Hampton, George Carter, and William H. Crocker soon figured prominently in the founding of Hobson.[10]

Landownership and Religious Developments

After a few years of hard work and savings, a few settlers managed to accumulate enough money to purchase land. In 1872, George W. Carter, James B. Newby, Isaiah Riddick, Quincy Joyner, Fem Hampton, and Richard H. Crocker purchased a total of 13 acres from John H. and Mary E. Moore. These men proved to be good role models for their neighbors, and Frances Johnson, Horace Thomas, and William H. Crocker soon followed their example. Two clusters of a settlement, one branch later called Little Hobson and the other Big Hobson, emerged along what was then a wood path (Crittenden Road today) leading west to Chuckatuck village, with farm lanes gradually connecting the settlement to the Nansemond River to the south and to Chuckatuck Creek to the north. Architectural evidence compared with related historical evidence appears to indicate that none of the dwellings of the first Hobson settlers have survived. [11]

Religion was paramount in the lives of the early settlers, but it took years of hard work and saving before they could acquire the land and material to build a church. However, they did not go churchless. For several years, they worshipped in nearby Chuckatuck at Little Bethel Baptist Church. In 1876, however, the community constructed a bush tent so that they could gather in their community and praise God. Three years later, they erected a church and named it Macedonia. When the area-wide Norfolk Virginia Union Baptist Association met in the summer of 1879, Macedonia Baptist Church of Nansemond County was listed on its membership roll as an affiliated church, but the church did not have a representative present.[12] The next year Reverend Cary Hopson served as the church's delegate to the Baptist Association. Reverend Hopson was obviously regarded by the Association's leaders as a very capable person, because he was regularly appointed to committees even though he represented a new church with a membership of only twenty parishioners. In the 1880 minutes of the Baptist Association, it was recorded that Macedonia was constituted in 1877, but in later years, 1882 was listed. In 1880, Ferry (spelled Fem in the 1870 census) Hampton was listed as church clerk and Crittenden's store was listed as his post office.[13] The congregation numbered twenty-nine in 1882. Reverend Cary Hopson had left

Macedonia Baptist and was serving as pastor of Carey Chapel in York County. Reverend J. W. Summer provided spiritual leadership at Macedonia and Robert A. Lee performed the duties of church clerk. When the Baptist Association met in 1885, the church's membership had grown to seventy-two congregants, and Reverend W. M. Reid had left two Nansemond County churches, Gethsemane and Palm Tree, to pastor at Macedonia. While Reid served as pastor during the ground breaking and construction of the present Macedonia Baptist Church, beginning in 1900, a bronze plaque dedicated to the pastors and lay leaders of the congregation attributes this role to Rev. W.E. Lyon. The plaque also lists the names of the deacons and trustees who oversaw the construction, including Joshua Thomas, Jasper Thomas, Helon Hudgins, Lorenza Fox, George W. Pope, Henry E. Brinkley, Curtis Pittman, Moses Walker, Leonard Walker, Ralph L. Thomas, and Clarence Lee. The building at once became a familiar and treasured community anchor and gathering place as well as a Baptist house of worship.[14]

Emma V. Kelley

Besides Hobson's founders and early pastors, the most notable person associated with the community of Hobson in its early years was Emma V. Kelley, born on February 8, 1865, the daughter of John and Agnes Lee, who were among the first settlers in Barrett's Neck. Her parents are remembered as hardworking, deeply religious people whose Christian teaching left a strong impression on their daughter. Taking advantage of educational opportunities offered to her by her parents and by the first public schools in Nansemond, young Emma qualified for admission to the Hampton Normal Institute, where she excelled as a student and began her career as a teacher. It is noteworthy that parents in the small rural community, who were little more than a decade removed from slavery, found the means to send their daughter away to normal school.[15] After teaching for a number of years, Emma married Robert Kelley in 1893. Her husband died seven years later, and she moved to Norfolk in 1900. Shortly afterwards, she started working to form an organization for women, and she decided that it could best be done by founding an auxiliary to the Brothers of Elks. Her idea was not warmly embraced by all of the brothers, yet she persevered, and in 1902, Norfolk Temple No. 1, the first women's auxiliary of the Elks in the United States was opened. The despair and poverty of body and spirit that she saw among her people; especially women compelled her to seek group action, because she said that many of her fellow-women were friendless, shelterless, ill and "bowed down with despair for they saw a bleak future without hope."[16] For the remainder of her life, Emma Kelley worked through her organization to uplift their lives. By the time of her death, thirty years later, the auxiliary had grown into an international organization of 35,000 women.[17]

Hobson's Growth by 1900

By the end of the 19th century, the settlement at Barrett's Neck had grown to the point that the existing post office where Fem Hampton dispatched his correspondence as the clerk of Macedonia Baptist Church no longer proved adequate to the community's needs. "Bud" Johnson, one of the most prosperous residents of Hobson in the early 20th century, built a

large general store on the main road

out of Hobson in 1898 and applied for its designation as the village post office. The U.S. Postal Service required that the new office adopt a short name which was not being used by any other post office in the state.[18] Richard Pearson Hobson did not have a direct connection with the area other than serving a brief tour of duty, at the Newport News Shipyard, but the Alabama native's name was revered throughout the country, for he emerged from the Spanish-American War as a genuine naval hero [19] Thus, Hobson became the official name of the community. By 1900 mail carrier Will Hatten had begun to deliver mail by horse and buggy to and from Hobson three days a week. Richard Pearson Hobson's exemplary military service in the recent war inspired Hobson men to serve their country in military uniform in the coming century.

Hobson's growth after the Civil War can be measured not only by its designation as a post office but also by the increasing number of landholders and buildings in the village, as reflected in the 1899 Land Tax Records for Nansemond County's Chuckatuck Magisterial District. The local tax records indicate the presence of 28 separate parcels of land in the ownership of African-Americans living 16 miles north of the courthouse in Suffolk in 1899. Acreage of parcels varied from 8 acres (owned by George Carter and others) to three one-eighth acre plots (owned by George Hatten, Mollie King and Alfred Wilson.) The value of acreage varied from $800 per acre (Mollie King's 1/8 acre parcel) to $20.00 per acre for the 7 and 3/4th acres owned by Lewis Ely and for small plots owned by John H. Jackson and John H. Thomas. At least 21 parcels were taxed for building improvements, the value of buildings on the parcels varying from $520. (George W. Carter and others) to $20. (Charles Armistead). No less than eleven of these buildings appear to be standing in the village today.[20]

Fostered by the growth of the oyster trade and the need to harvest oysters for a national market, Hobson's emergence as a thriving community by 1900 was also clearly reflected in the high number of African-American heads of households in the village who earned a living as oystermen and farmers and owned their own houses and farms. The federal census for Nansemond County in 1900 recorded the presence of 40 African-American households living in the vicinity of James Newby and another 16 African-American households living in the vicinity of George Carter. Both men had helped found the original settlement and served as community leaders from Hobson's inception. The principal occupations of the heads of these households included oystermen/boatmen (23), farmers/farm laborers (14), day laborers (11), one carpenter (Daniel Allen) and one Baptist preacher (William Reid), pastor of the Macedonia Baptist Church. Four heads of households listed no occupation. It is particularly notable that 26 of 35 of these households owned their own homes and 11 of 15 owned their own farms. Only one household owned their house under a mortgage and 8 of the 11 farm owners owned their farms in fee. Four households rented farms and 9 rented their houses.[21]

Hobson in the early 20th Century (1900-1920)

Hobson in 1910

Hobson continued to advance economically, socially and culturally in tangible ways during the first decade of the 20th century, based on federal census data on 500 people who lived in vicinity of Hobson in Nansemond County in 1910. [22] By 1910, 57 Hobson households of 98 owned their own homes, and 14 households of 22 owned their own farms. The village in 1910 had at least 98 dwellings and 22 farm houses and/or related farm buildings. Of 85 African-American households listed in the 1910 census for Hobson, the heads of 43 of those households made their living on the water, while the heads of 23 of these households made their living as farmers or farm laborers. Looking at the occupational data on every working member of a Hobson household in 1910, 85 Hobson men worked as boatmen, nearly all of them doing oyster tonguing; and 69 men worked the land--31 as laborers in truck farming, 23 as farmhands for hire, and 18 as farmers, doing general farming or truck farming. Other occupations of Hobson men in 1910 included house carpenter (2), engineer (1), merchant of a general store (1), salesman in a general store (1), machinist (1), mail driver (1), cook/house servant (1), barber (1), Baptist minister (1), shipyard worker (1), and brickyard worker (1). In 1910, nineteen women in Hobson village worked outside the home: 11 as washwomen for private families, 6 as house servants for private families, 1 as a public school teacher, and 1 as a solicitor in an insurance agency.

The social advancement of Hobson villagers over nearly fifty years was most evident in the census data on the literacy of the populace in 1910 and the number of school age children who had attended school since September of 1909. By the year 1910, 167 villagers of 500 could read and 165 could write. Of a total school age population of 152 in 1910, 121 children had attended school since September, 1909. Of 105 African-American school age children, in Hobson in 1910, 65 or approximately 62% had attended school sometime during that school year. The data on literacy and education set clear benchmarks by which educational progress in the village could be measured in the decades ahead.

Masonic Hall

Hobson's cultural advancement also found tangible expression in the construction of an important community anchor building that has remained a treasured and familiar landmark in Hobson ever since. In 1912, men in the Hobson community constructed a two-story Masonic Hall on the southwest corner of Crittenden Road and Macedonia Avenue. [23] Masonic Lodge F. and A.M. served as a very important meeting and community gathering place for many years. On the second floor, the Masonic brothers fellowshipped, conducted their secret rituals, and engaged in community uplift; while the first floor of the building was made available to the community as a school for the children of Hobson.[24] The Hall served as the educational center of Hobson until 1929.

The Masonic Hall was far more than an imposing physical structure in Hobson. It was the embodiment of the highest ideals in a community in which almost all of the adult males came to be guided by Masonic principles. A long-time member later characterized the " Masonic Lodge as "being right up there with the church."[25] Everyone could not join the Lodge because applicants were scrutinized very closely. Upon receiving an application for

membership, lodge members visited the applicant's home and queried his wife to determine if he were taking care of his family properly. After members passed, the Masons had a well-known reputation for generosity to widows and children. They also gave liberally to churches.[26] A Masonic funeral was the ultimate honor bestowed on a Mason, and it was one of the few occasions in which outsiders could observe their ritual. Once the family of the deceased agreed to a Masonic funeral, the lodge members took over the service and excluded other organizations from participating. No one handled the casket but Masons, and during the service one member sat at the head of the casket, and another sat at the foot. Only Masons acted as pallbearers, and the long Masonic liturgy was always the last words spoken at the graveside ceremony.[27]

The Masons were also noted in the community for their "turnouts" at Macedonia Baptist Church. Their most important observance was St. John's Day which fell on the fourth Sunday in June. Their march from the lodge to the church was described as an impressive sight. Initiation of new members guaranteed large "turnouts" at the lodge as Masons from throughout the region came to show their support.[28]

World War I

When American troops were sent abroad in 1917 under President Woodrow Wilson, at least eight Hobson men represented the community in uniform.[29] The villagers of Hobson took special pride in the military heroism of William Glenn Hurdle of nearby Driver in Nansemond, who received the Distinguished Service Cross and was cited for bravery by General John J. Pershing. The Hobson area veterans, and all Nansemond County's war heroes, were welcomed back home in September 1919 with a large parade through the streets of Suffolk. Most of the veterans returned to farming and oystering; however, Helan Hudgins established a bus service, a grocery store, and a boarding house. The community later named his street, Hudgins Circle, in his honor. Besides Hudgins, Hobson men who were identified as veterans of the First World War in the 1930 Federal census included Jackson W. Thomas, George W. Walker, James O. Walker, Moses Walker, Frank Vaughan, Dennis Walker and John E. Spady.[30]

Hobson in the 1920s

A Snap Shot of Hobson in 1920

The U.S. Census in 1920 was the first federal census taken in Nansemond County that identified Hobson village and Hobson households by name in the census records. Census records for 1900 and 1910 referred only to households in the Chuckatuck Township Magisterial District, without references to roads, streets, street addresses or other keys to location. The 1920 census records thus provide the first clear snapshot of Hobson households--a comprehensive slice of village life in 1920 through detailed household data, home data, school attendance and literacy, occupation and employment. [31]

In 1920, 386 people loved in Hobson among 87 households. The reasons for the decline in population from 500 in 1910 are not clear, and may be somewhat exaggerated given the difficulty of defining who did and did not live in Hobson before 1920. What is certain is that 78 of the 87 households were families of predominately African-American descent (identified as Negro or Mulatto). Nine of the households were families of predominately European descent (identified in the census as White). From this household data it can be inferred that at least 87 dwelling houses stood in Hobson in 1920.
In 1920, 50 Hobson households owned their own home. 37 Hobson households rented their dwellings. 42 black households owned their own homes. 8 white households owned their own homes. 36 black households rented their dwellings. 1 white household rented its dwelling. While the 1920 census did not record the value of homes in Hobson, it did indicate whether families owned their homes in fee or under mortgage. 43 households owned their homes in fee; 7 under mortgage. 37 black households owned their homes in fee; 5 under mortgage. 7 white households owned their homes in fee; 2 under mortgage.

There were 121 children in Hobson in 1920 of school age (6-17). One hundred nine of these children had attended school since September 1919. Of 104 school aged children who were black or mulatto in 1920, 92 had attended school since September 1919. Of 17 white children of school age in 1920, all 17 had attended school since September 1919. In 1920, 250 people in Hobson could read. Of these, 165 were black or mulatto and 40 were white. In 1920 197 people in the village could write. Of these, 153 were black or mulatto and 44 were white. In 1920, everyone in Hobson could speak English. Every villager had been born in the United States, and nearly everyone (356 people of 386) had been born in Virginia. Twenty eight were natives of North Carolina, one of Delaware, and one of Tennessee.

In the year 1920, 136 people in Hobson were employed. As in previous census years, a large number of Hobson men (35) earned their living as watermen, at least 25 of whom worked in the oyster industry: 10 as oystermen in their own boats; 3 as oystermen in hired boats, 6 as laborers on oyster boats, five as laborers in oystering, and one as a boatman in oyster boats. Other maritime tradesmen included 6 boatmen in freight boats, one boatman working out, one boatman on a buoy tender, one laborer in freight boats, and one laborer working generally on boats Other occupations/industries in which Hobson men were represented were: 56 laborers/Working out, 12 farm laborers/truck farm, 8 farmers/general farm, 3 farm laborers/ working out, 2 farm laborers/general farming, 2 house carpenters, one merchant/general merchandise, one grocery merchant /retail store, one Engineer/ gas engines, one restaurant proprietor/own shop, and one salesman in a retail store.

The number of women in Hobson who worked outside the home declined with that of the general population between 1910 and 1920. Only eight Hobson women indicated in 1920 that they were engaged in work outside their own households: one as a sales lady in a retail store, one as a public school teacher, four as laundresses for private families and

two as servants for private families.

Economic and Transportation Developments

The founding of the J.R. Dixon Oyster Company on Chuckatuck Creek in the 1920s gave a major impetus to employment in Hobson, Crittenden and Eclipse for watermen and boat builders as the company expanded its marketing of oysters all over the country and into Canada. The company operated a fleet of 20 "flatties" for tonguing oysters and servicing its oyster house. Tongers from Hobson, Crittenden and Eclipse worked on the company's boats or on their own boats to meet the growing demand for oysters. The company provided shuckers from Hobson with transportation to and from Eclipse. Schooners such as the one operated by George W. Dixon, the founder's son, regularly shipped oysters and farm produce from the three Chuckatuck Creek villages to Norfolk. During that same decade, Charles Gray Adams, Sr. founded a rival oyster company and oyster house on the Hobson side of Chuckatuck Creek. It featured a marine railway to lift boats out of the water for repair. Adams operated a fleet of 32 boats out of Chuckatuck Creek and put his son, Charles Gray Adams, Jr., in charge of the shucking house, where Adams Sr. also built boats.[32]

Until the late 1920s, Hobson and its nearby neighbors Crittenden and Eclipse remained largely isolated from Hampton Roads and Tidewater. Rivers, creeks and poor roads impeded transportation. Private boats provided the most efficient means of transportation in and out of Chuckatuck Creek and the Nansemond River. Four stores in Hobson village supplied the basic necessities of shoes, clothes, boots, furniture, tools and food that could not be grown in the village. However, construction of the James River Bridge System in 1928 proved to be a major watershed in the history of Hobson and the surrounding peninsula The opening of successive bridges over Chuckatuck Creek, the Nansemond River and the James River provided local farms an alternative route for shipping produce to market by way of Route 17 and greatly improved the connection of Hobson and its sister oyster villages to the larger world. The Chuckatuck and Nansemond bridges opened on July 4, 1928. The James River Bridge opened with a dedication address by President Coolidge on November 17, 1928. [33]

Hobson in 1930s to World War II

A Snapshot of Hobson in 1930

The 1930 census data for the village reflected the reality of these new developments. Like the 1920 data, the data for 1930 provided a fascinating profile of the economic, social and cultural life of the village, with the difference that the 1930 census questionnaire added several new fields of data. In the intervening ten years, the population of the village had grown from 386 to 420, although this increase in numbers does not appear to have resulted in a notable increase in the number of dwellings in the village. Some buildings may have been enlarged or replaced.[34]

In 1930, there were 85 households living in the village of Hobson. 69 of the households were families of predominately African-American descent (Identified as Negro or Mulatto). 16 of the households were families of predominately European descent (identified in the census as White). Thus, it followed that at least 85 dwelling houses stood in Hobson in 1930—roughly the same number of houses recorded in federal census taken 10 years before.

In 1930, 46 Hobson households owned their own homes. 39 Hobson households rented their dwellings. 36 black households owned their own homes. 10 white households owned their own homes. 33 black households rented their dwellings. 6 white households rented their dwellings. Unlike the previous census, the 1930 census indicated the values of homes in the village. Home values ranged from 10,000 to $100. Heads of black households who owned their own homes in 1930 in Hobson included:

Gilbert Fulghum ($600)
Mansfield Cross ($400)
George Walker ($300)
Joseph Wright ($200)
Avery Burrell ($650)
Isaac Walker ($1,000)
Elijah Wright ($300)
Willie Armistead ($150)
George Bumpass ($300)
Thomas J. Jones ($500)
Josephine Hattan $250)
Harriet Wilson ($500)
James O. Walker ($200)
Henry Jones ($500)
John H. Thomas ($500)
James Joyner ($500)
Charles E. Thomas ($200)
James H. Eaton ($1,000)
Henry E. Brinkley ($ 1,000)
Edward Foster ($800)
Essex Newsome ($250)
Tinsely Bumpass ($300)
John Hall ($250)
Virginia Chapman ($300)
Howard Foster ($300)
Ernest Hill ($500)

Robert E. Brinkley ($500)
Annie M. Wright ($250)
Maha Bumpass ($200)
Robert Crocker ($250)
Dinah Walker ($200)
Robert J. Townsell ($1,000)
Joyner Elliott ($200)
Bennie Walker ($300)
Flavius Bailey ($150)
Thomas Ash ($300)

Heads of white households who owned their own homes in 1930 included:
James T. Johnson ($10,000)
Walter Bagnell ($800)
William F. Hackney ($800)
Thomas H. Beale ($1,000)
Edgar Lameln ($100)
James Mathews ($500)
Edward Luke ($2,500)
John Spady ($300)
John T. Benton ($1,000)
John A. Miller ($800)

The unusually high valuation of the Johnson property may have represented the combined value of Johnson's house (still standing) and his general store (torn down in the 1940s). The value of homes owned by black households in 1930 ranged from $1,000 to $100 in value: $1000 (4), $800 (1), $650 (1), $600 (2, $500 (7), $400 (1), $300 (7), $250 (5), $200 (6), $150 (2), $100 (1). The value of homes owned by white households in 1930 ranged from $10,000 to $100 in value: $10,000 (1), $2,500 (1), $1000 (2), $800 (3, $500 (1), $300 (1), and $100 (1). The monthly rent paid by households varied from $1.00 to $15.00 a month. The average monthly rent paid by Hobson households was $4.00 a month. A notable Hobson renter in 1930 was Lois Ballard, a 19-year-old, single, black public school teacher who paid $15.00 a month—the highest rent in the village-- to rent her dwelling but she likely shared the rental payment as well as the house with two other public school teachers, Helen B. Johnson, and Pearl Parks, who were listed in the census as boarders. In 1930, for the first time, federal census takers asked villagers if they had radio sets in their homes. The survey revealed that eight (8) Hobson households had radio sets in 1930. Six of them were white: James T. Johnson, Walter Bagnell, William F. Hackney, James T. Mathews, Albert C. Bumpert and Edwards T. Luke. The heads of two of them were black: Avery Burrell and Isaac Walker.

Of a total population of 420 people in Hobson in 1930, 225 were males and 195 were females. There were 187 black males and 166 black females. There were 38 white males and 29 white females. There were 131 children in Hobson in 1930 of school age (6-17). Ninety-one of these children had attended school since September 1929. In 1930, 234 people in Hobson could read and write. 188 people could
not read or write but a number of these were children under the age of 6.

In 1930, 394 Hobson villagers of a population of 420 were born in Virginia. Of the rest, 19 were born in North Carolina, 3 in New Jersey, 2 in Maryland, 1 in Delaware, and 1 in Michigan. In 1930, 354 people in Hobson had fathers who were born in Virginia. Of the others, 57 had fathers who were born in North Carolina, 2 in New Jersey, 1 in Pennsylvania, 1 in Delaware, 1 in Maryland, 1 in Florida, and 1 in Michigan. Only two had fathers who were born outside of the United States: 1 in England and 1 in Germany.
384 people in Hobson had mothers who were born in Virginia. Of the others, 30 had mothers born in North Carolina, 2 in New Jersey, 2 in Maryland, 1 in Pennsylvania, and 1 in Michigan.

In the year 1930, 136 people in Hobson were employed. Compared to the survey in 1920, a greater proportion of Hobson men worked in the oyster industry in 1930 than ten years before. 84 people (or approximately 2 out of three) worked in the oyster industry: 4 tongers, 8 mariners, 70 laborers, 1 planter, 1 grower and nine mariners who worked on freight boats including one on a government boat.

Other occupations/industries in which Hobson men and women were employed in 1930 included: Laborers/Farm (14), Farmers who worked on their own farms (3), Laundresses for private families (9), Servants for private families (2), Merchants/own store (3) including Harriet Wilson, a black woman, Mechanic/auto garage (1), Collector/toll bridge (1), Salesmen/grocery store (2), Manager/farm (1), Seamstress/public (2, Tailor shop (1), Teacher/public school (3), and Laborer in a private garden (1)

The recently transcribed memories of Hobson elders born during the period 1917- 1925 provide a richly detailed and strikingly personal image of Hobson life ways in the 1930s and early 40s, ranging from employment in the oyster industry, farming, religious and leisure activities to race relations, education and social advancement. These oral histories give flesh and blood to the census data for the village.

Working on the Water

George Hatten (1917 -) recalled that during the oyster season, everyone who wanted work was employed in the community. No one had to go out and look for a job. Women who wanted to work

could find employment shucking oysters. Hatten recalled that even as late as the 1950s 50 or 60 boats went up Chuckatuck Creek every morning. That included the boats of whites and blacks. The area had three oyster houses, and two railways. Hatten said they used to build boats down there on the water where the bridge crosses to Crittenden, and they repaired boats also. "Blacks did not have to go anywhere to look for jobs. All they had to do was learn the trade of catching oysters," said Hatten, who started work on the water at the age of 15. "We pass it on from one generation to another." He worked for the Gray family, remembered Captain Charlie Gray as "like a daddy to all the people of Hobson, " and recalled that at least 30 boats went out of the creek from Adams place in his youth. James Townsell (? -) said that the Hobson men also used their boats to take out visiting fishing groups. After the groups fished, they would all come back to the local shops, fry the fish, and roast oysters and clams. Hobson had been an independent community in the days of George Hatten's youth. "People came from as far away as West Point, eighty-three miles away in King and Queen County, to shuck oysters after the Hobson people caught the oysters. The West Point people stayed down on the river during the oyster season. Hobson people had oyster beds in the James River, the Nansemond River, and Chuckatuck Creek. Then there were the public rocks (beds) that belonged to the state. People could buy licenses and work the public beds. Ships came in from Maryland and many other places along the Chesapeake Bay to buy the oysters. Clams, fish, and crabs were sold also." Mr. Maxie Brinkley (1925 -) recalled that Jim Walker, George Hatten, Lorenzo Fox, Sr., Moses Walker, Leonard Walker, and Sonny Burgess were the Hobson residents during his day who built boats. He added that the boat owners included his father, Henry Brinkley, and just about every man in the community. Sonny Burgess (1917-2007) owned and built his own boats, sold oysters to buy boats out of Norfolk and worked for the Grays for over thirty-five years. George Hatten (1917 -) named his boat *Ethel Louise* after his two daughters. A good mechanic was essential to keep the motor boats going and Rushan Burgess filled that vital role. When bad weather kept the boat owners in, they could find work at Charlie Adams oyster shucking house. He paid them from $1.50 to $2.00 a day.[35]

Mr. Ernest Wilson (1916 -) described the oystering process. In his early days on the water all of the boats had sails. The oyster season started on the 15th of September, and the oystermen had to pay for a state license to tong the bivalves. Charlie Adams and other whites had the largest oyster grounds. They were not interested in the oyster grounds in the creek because mud would cover the oysters during heavy rainstorms. Tongs were basically two long rakes put together. The handles were usually 14 or 16 feet long, but occasionally they were 20 feet long to reach deeper oyster beds. After the back- breaking task of raising the oysters from their beds to the boat was completed, and then the oysters had to be measured or carded on the oyster board. If they were less than three inches across, they had to be thrown back. Maxie Brinkley (1925 -) said most of the work was done with your arms. "You work them like you are raking up leaves. The oysters are dumped on the boat and carded. The smaller shells were raked right back into the water so that they would be ready for the

next year. In the first half of the twentieth century, it was an easy process for the Hobson blacks to acquire oyster beds." Ernest Wilson (1916 -) declared that all a person had to do was go out in the river and place sticks around the area that he wanted to claim. Next the person had to apply to the state, and an official would come out and inspect the site before informing the applicant that the grounds were his. Once a license was awarded for the oyster grounds, taxes had to be paid on the grounds every year. Mary Hill (1960 -) to this day regularly pays the taxes on the oyster beds which were awarded to her father many decades ago. The Hobson men seeded their oyster beds by catching small oysters at their favorite spot "up on the other side of the James River Bridge" and planting them in their oyster beds. After they grew to be three inches across, they were ready for harvesting. Shells from shucked oysters were also dropped in the oyster beds to provide a safe habitat for seed oysters.[36]

Mr. Ernest Wilson (1916 -) recalled that the 1935-36 oyster season was the worst that he could remember. The Chuckatuck Creek froze over before Christmas and again after Christmas. He added that Elie Crocker and others put a boat on ice near the community and pushed the boat all the way to the Chuckatuck Creek. "You couldn't go out there when it got rough, ain't talking bout little ordinary rough." Wilson added that he had been on the water when it was so rough that he had to keep his knees bent because the boat was rocking so much. He said that sometimes it was so cold on the water that when the tongs were pulled up, they froze and the men had to put them near the fire pot to melt the ice. There was always the danger of hands freezing. Ernest Wilson said that he has seen oystermen with icicles hanging from their hats. Charlie Adams built a boat that could break through the ice. Wilson said that the front part of the boat was very strongly reinforced. Captain Adams would run the boat up on the ice and then rock the boat to break the ice and they eventually reached the oyster grounds. [37]

On extremely cold days, the boats would have fire pots to provide some relief from the numbing cold. Ernest Wilson (1916 -) recalled that on one occasion, the ice was so thick that Captain Charlie Adams threw the hot embers from the fire bucket onto the ice to help break it up. Fortunately, George Welsey, a friend of Wilson's walked out on the ice and retrieved the embers so that they would not freeze.[32] Maxie Brinkley (1925 -) added that they had bad days and good days on the water. Some days they had to stay home because the wind was too strong. When the wind got up to about twenty-five to thirty-five miles per hour, they had to bring the boats in, Wilson explained. The boats had life preservers for each man; also a fire extinguisher, a horn, and a bell. There was always the possibility of slipping on the boats. The tongs were the first line of defense. They helped the oystermen keep their balance. Ernest Wilson (1916 -) declared that all of the oystermen looked out for each other when they were on the water, and safety was always paramount. If

they made the mistake of overloading the boat, it could turn over and cost them their lives. Wilson concluded that God was with him and all of the Hobson villagers who worked on the water. He recalled that in his day, Leslie Townsend and about two other people drowned while oystering. "They fell overboard and couldn't swim."[1]

Working on the Land

The 1930 census indicated that only five Hobson families lived on a farm in 1930, the heads of three of whom were black: Gilbert Fulghum, Willie Mann, and John R. Mann. After the end of the oyster season, many more black villagers worked on the larger-white-owned farms. Newman's farm, Jack Lassiter's farm, Batten's farm, Cedar Crest Hill farm, Wilkerson's farm, and Charles Gray Adams' farm among them provided seasonal employment during the summer months. Truck farming crops included white potatoes, strawberries, string beans, spinach, kale, cabbage, peanuts, and corn. They also raised cotton.[2]

Ernest Wilson (1916 -) recalled that when he and his friends planted on the farms, they always brought some back home for their families to eat. The owners did not want them to do it, so many times he and his black cohorts had to hide the food in their cars "and do things like that." In the years between the two world wars, Hobson residents who worked on white farms used to get two cents a quart for picking strawberries. They used to cut spinach and other vegetables "…for so much a bushel," and they used to "get up" white potatoes" for so much a barrel." Wilson recalled that Lassiter's farm, at present day Cedar Point, was in his day the largest potato farm in Virginia. Mr. Maxie Brinkley (1925 -) added that he and his co-workers packed the potatoes in bags and barrels. He preferred bags because they held up better. "Them barrels bust all to pieces." Brinkley added that after picking strawberries locally, he would go over to Cape Charles and spend weeks picking strawberries over there. Jack Lassiter also owned farm land on the Eastern Shore. He paid the workers with tickets and they cashed the tickets in at the end of the week.[3]

Most of the crops which were raised on farms near Hobson were shipped to New York by boat. On many occasions, the New York wholesalers would sell the produce, pocket the money, and send a freight bill back to the farmers. When Buzzy Gizum, a local white farmer, received a freight bill instead of payment for the produce that he sent to New York, he purchased a gun and went up there. He went into the wholesaler's office and told them they were going to die that day. Fortunately, they paid him.[4]

Ninety-one-year-old Ernest Wilson (1916 -) recalled how whites and blacks used to strike business

deals which were beneficial to each group. Old man Batten owned extensive forest land around Hobson, and he had the timber cut off the land. After clearing the land of brush, many stumps and roots remained in the ground, so it could not be cultivated. Thus, he allowed Mary Hill's grandfather, Henry Brinkley and other black men to grow watermelons people that if they did not pay him for his stuff, all of them and cantaloupes on it for four years in the late 1920s. Those fruit were grown in hills, not long-straight rows. During the four- year period that the blacks worked the land they would continue to dig up the stumps and roots.[51] Ernest Wilson added "…that's the only thing you could raise over there was watermelons and stuff like that because you could not plow it …and then soon as the land got so that they got most of the stumps up and everything then that's how that white man got the land cleared up."[52] Mrs. Marie Hill (1921-) said that she recalled many days that her father and brothers "grubbed up those stumps."[53]

When the watermelons were ready to be harvested, Ernest Hill (1917 - ?) and friends would cut them from the vines, pick them up, and carry them over to the lane where they would be put on a wagon and taken down to a boat. They would transport the watermelons across the river to Pier A on 25th Street in Newport News. They berthed at the pier and sold their watermelons and other vegetables. Ernest Wilson (1916 -) reported that they usually stayed a few days selling their load and they had nothing to eat but watermelons.[54] Mrs. Marie Hill (1921 -) said that years later, after the James River Bridge was built (1928), her father and brothers would load their truck with watermelons and cantaloupes and drive over to Newport News and Hampton to sell them. They also sold produce in Driver, Pughsville, and downtown Suffolk.[55]

Religious and Leisure Activities

In 1929, the school that had operated in the Masonic Hall since 1912 was relocated to a house on Macedonia Avenue which was owned by Nansemond County; and the first floor area of the Masonic Lodge was converted to a store. The basic grocery items that the store carried were stacked on wall shelves behind counters. Thus, ample floor space remained for meetings, dances, and other community events [56]. While the Masons continued to conduct their proceedings behind closed doors on the second floor, the community made full use of the first floor area. Numerous fundraisers were held to support a wide range of worthy causes.

Thanksgiving oyster roasts and Christmas repasts were annual events at the Lodge, and it was also the locale for many social and entertainment events. Fish, oysters, chicken, pig feet, beef stew, and homemade ice cream were some of the delicacies sold at the events. Weekend dances brought out a large crowd of well-dressed people. Sometimes they danced to live music played by Hobson residents, and at other times bands were brought in from nearby communities. The Masons' prohibition against beer or wine on the premises did not appear

to detract from the great times that residents reported having at the dances.[57] Movies and live shows were also presented at the hall. Mrs. Marie Hill (1921 -) recalled that a magician performed at the Masonic Hall when she was nine years old.[58]

In 1930 a second church was started in Hobson to serve better the religious needs of the community. [59] In that year the families of George Walker and Shedrick Crocker gathered to form the First Holiness Church. They met "down the woods" in an area that was only accessible by a wood cart path. Elder Miller was the first pastor. He served from 1930 to 1935. Elder Lee pastored from 1935 to 1936. Elder Williams Whitaker headed the church from 1936 through World War II. The present name of Mt. Lebanon Church of God in Christ dates to pastorate of Elder Junius Clifton who served the congregation from 1957 to 1975. The church is sometimes called "Little Hobson Church."[60]

In the days when automobiles and radios were a rarity and televisions were not on the scene, the church was both the religious center and the social center of the community. Many elderly people who reflected back on their leisurely activities inevitably touched on events centered on the church. Mr. Ernest Wilson (1916 -) recalled days in the 1930s that people in the community would go down to Red House Shore and swim in the summertime. It was like a beach, he said, many people came in boats. He also fondly remembered that it was the place where he was baptized. The congregation left the church and walked down to the beach, singing all the way. The baptisms also attracted people on boats from across the river. George Hatten called the place where these baptisms took place "the Whirlhole," a small inlet located between Cricket Hill Farm and Governor's Point on the McNeal's farm (where Cedar Crest Hall homes stand today). [61]

It was not unusual for members of the Hobson community to walk several miles to attend events at nearby churches. Because Little Bethel Church in Chuckatuck was the mother church, of Macedonia Baptist the members of Little Bethel and Macedonia supported each others' activities. Mr. Ernest Wilson (1916 -) recalled that "he walked 3 or 4 miles to Diamond Grove Baptist Church many a nights."[62] Mrs. Marie Hill (1921 -) added that she and her friends used to take their shoes off and walk in the middle of the unpaved highway. "They actually had a good time walking together," she declared. Nellie Wright Spratley (1927 -) also recalled that she walked everywhere she went, from her home in Little Hobson to attend the three-room school that stood where the Community Center stands today or to Jack Lassiter's farm to dig potatoes, cut spinach, or pick string beans, green peas, peanuts and cucumbers, or to Minnie Corson's house in Eclipse where she cleaned house. [63]

The Sunday School Unions provided additional opportunities for young people to meet and socialize. "Macedonia Baptist, the church at Sandy Bottom, Chuckatuck, and the one near Kirk's" were supervised by the same area missionary leader.[64] The four Sunday Schools met

together on a regular basis, and they had a friendly competition to see which Sunday school would present the most money. The winner got to take the Union banner back to their church, and keep it until the next Union meeting. Very importantly, these Sunday school meetings brought together young people from distant areas who would not have had opportunities to meet prior to the advent of busing to a centralized school. As in other small rural communities in Virginia in this era, the villagers worked hard, but they also knew how to enjoy themselves while doing the most mundane things. Even butchering pigs was anxiously anticipated, for "Community Pig Killing Day" was described as "fun."[65] Baseball was a popular diversion for Hobson residents, and for people in small communities throughout the region. In addition to having a men's team, Hobson had a girl's team. In the summer, Sunday afternoons were normally spent visiting a nearby community's baseball field or hosting a game at Hobson's Fairmont Park. George Hatten recalled that the baseball field and a club house stood on what is today Governor's Point. His father owned a share in the club and he remembered Horace Thomas and Clive Thomas playing there. In May of 1921, Philip Moseley, the captain of the Hobson baseball team advertised in the weekly Journal and Guide newspaper that "Hobson has a fine baseball diamond," and he challenged any team in the county to a match game.[66]

Race Relations and Education

Elderly Hobson residents recall that race relations in the Hobson area seemed to have been better than they were in other areas of Hampton Roads. They attributed this to the fact that Hobson residents were an almost self-sufficient group of people who made few demands on white officials. The men's status as land-owning, independent oystermen probably helped to elevate them to respectability in the eyes of local whites who also earned their living on the water and the land. It is an oral tradition in Hobson that African-American relations with the Native Americans of the Nansemond in the 19th century were cordial; and newly freed black settlers who settled at Barrett's Neck had no conflicts with them.[67] Elderly residents born in Hobson between 1917 and 1925 recalled fondly their childhood experiences of sitting silently as Mr. Manley, a Native-American, told them ghost stories. He also played with them, but the village elders gave no reference to Hobson children interacting with Native American children.[68]

In 1934, Nansemond County replaced the house that had served as a primary school for Hobson children since 1929 with a more modern, three-room school house, typical of many wood-framed school buildings built for the education of blacks in Virginia in this period. Helen B. Johnson (1904 -) served as the principal teacher in the school during the 1930s. Marie Hill (1921-) fondly recalled her years as a student in Ms. Johnson's class.[69]

The schooling of most African-American students in Nansemond County improved

dramatically with the building of East Suffolk High School for blacks in 1937. However, the children of Hobson, Sandy Bottom, and Oakland had to make special arrangements. They lived far away from the school, and the school board members said that they had no money to purchase a bus to transport them. The black parents, however, were determined that their children receive the best possible education, so members of the three small communities got together, purchased a bus, and hired a driver in 1939. The parents also helped to support the project by giving their children the daily quarter required to ride the bus.[70] The Masons of Hobson helped purchase the bus to transport students to the new high school. For George Hatten Sr.'s leadership in facilitating the attendance of Hobson's young people at East Suffolk, he won the memorable nickname of "Bus" Hatten.[71]

James Townsell (? -) recalled that the East Suffolk High School was a major improvement over the three-room school he attended in Hobson, but riding the bus seventeen miles each way was not fun. The long distance was especially problematic to him because he was the third student from Hobson to play organized sports at East Suffolk High, and he had to thumb his way home after practice. Eventually, his parents insisted that someone bring him home after practices and games, and because he was a star athlete in football and baseball, the coaches agreed to do so. After high school, Townsell played organized baseball with the Chuckatuck Giants before he left the area in the 1950s and moved to New York.[72]

Safe drinking water has been an abiding concern for Hobson residents. Mr. Ernest Wilson (1916 -) recalled that in his childhood everybody used to get their drinking water from Jim Newby's spring. The drinking water in the church came from the spring also. As a boy, Wilson said that he used to help friend carry water from the spring in a tub so that the boy's mother could wash clothes. As the community grew, the residents had to turn to another water source. A white store owner on Hobson Drive, Charles Gray Adams, allowed residents to get water from his artesian well and he did not charge them for it. In the evenings, children could be seen lined up at the artesian well filling their buckets and pails with water and carrying it home for their mothers to cook. [73]

World War II

With the outbreak of World War II, a new generation of Hobson men answered the call of duty and enlisted in every branch of military service. The twenty-four Hobson men who served in World War II included:

Sherman Hatten, Sgt. U.S. Army (1918-1971)
Freddie H. Hill, Cpl U,S, Army (1926-1998)
Herbert Page Hill, STML, U.S. Navy (1923-1959)
Thomas M. Lee, PFC Army Air Forces (1920-1962)
James Preston Walker Sgt. U.S. Army (1916-1956)
Joseph M. Cameron, Cpl. 4195 GM SVC CO (1924-1973)
Eucless Taylor, TEC 5, U.S. Army (1922-1984)

John Henry Thomas, 366 Truck CO TC (1922-1952)
Emery Hudgin Sr., SC3 U.S. Navy (1912-1970)
Bennie M. Walker, PFC 110 Base Unit AAF, (1922?-1967)
Nehemiah S. Walker, PVT, C31 CO Engineer BN, (1926-1956)
James C. Hatten, PVT U.S. Army (1922-1985)
Elmore T. Wright, Sr., S2 U.S. Navy, (1926-1958)
Charles G. Armistead, Cpl U.S. Army, (1923-1985)
Ralph L. Thomas, U.S. Army, (1921-1998)
Johnnie J. Walker, A5 U.S. Navy, (1926-1978)
Harry Vernon Jones, S1 U.S. Navy (1919-1978)
Norman Lassiter Thomas, U.S. Army, (1915-1976)
Curtis Pittman (PVT U.S. Army, 1921-1974)

During the war, Charles Gray Adams Jr.'s Breezy Point Farm in Hobson housed an anti-aircraft artillery command unit with a large search light and 50-caliber, water-cooled mounted machine guns. Twenty to twenty-five men manned the site, one of three on the peninsula. [74]

Hobson Village and the Decline of the Oyster Industry (1945-1968)

Community Spirit and Changes to Community Landmarks

In the aftermath of World War II, the African-American residents of Hobson decided in 1947 to build their own artesian well system so that they would not have to depend on renting water from the well system owned by Everett Newman. The well provided each home in the village the convenience of modern plumbing. They dug down 550 feet and ran pipes throughout the community to individual homes. In a marvelous spirit of community and cooperation, everyone agreed that each household would pay a fee of $25.00 a year. Once again Masons raised funds to help install the new system. The system worked very well for twenty years. In 1967, the community sank an even deeper well, and it is still in use today. Residents still gladly pay the fee of $75.00 a year per household. The village lacked streetlights until the residents paid for them and had them put up on October 3, 1961. [75]

A fire destroyed the Masonic Hall in 1950, but because it was such an integral part of the community, the decision was made to rebuild it right away. Attorney Mills Godwin, future Governor of Virginia, wrote the construction contract for the project and in a later period intervened to stop its sale at auction. In 1950, Charles Gray Adams served as contractor, and Lorenzo Fox, Sr. of Hobson was employed as the carpenter.[76] The new hall gave shelter to political activism when the Civil Rights Movement emerged in the 1960s. The registration of voters had long been a major goal of the Masons, and as Hobson residents became more involved politically, the lodge hosted candidates' forums and question-and-answer sessions. Ironically, the success of the Civil Rights Movement was a factor in the decline

of Hobson's Masonic Lodge and the community itself. Capable, young men started moving away in pursuit of new opportunities beyond Hobson, and as the elderly members passed, there was no one to replace them. In the mid-1960s, declining sales forced Mary Hill's father to close the community store which had been operating on the first floor of the building since 1929.[77]

Originally begun in 1900 and completed by 1918, Macedonia Baptist Church underwent substantial exterior and interior renovations in the 1960s. With funding from the Masons and the congregation, a brick veneer was added to the exterior in 1957, and several improvements made in the interior, with a major remodeling completed in 1968. In an era of new social and economic opportunities, the bricking of the façade of this landmark building became a model for Hobson residents to emulate. [78]

Race Relations and Desegregation of Schools

Chuckatuck native and later governor, Mills E. Godwin, was widely regarded in the state as an arch segregationist because he was a lieutenant of the Byrd Machine--a network of city and county officers of the Virginia Democratic Party led by Senator Harry F. Byrd, Sr., the architect of "Massive Resistance" to school desegregation in Virginia.[79] However, some Hobson residents saw Godwin from a different perspective. Mary Hill (1960 -) said that on many occasions Godwin took the time to sit on her mother's porch and talk.[80] Sitting on the porch, of course, would not have been in violation of the social norms of the time. Ernest Wilson (1916 -) is still troubled by talk that Godwin was a racist. "He would do anything I would ask him to do," he said.[82] Attorney Godwin took care of legal work *pro bono* when the Masonic Lodge was renovated in 1950, and later stepped in and saved the building from being sold at auction. [82]

During the period of desegregation, the community had several outspoken leaders, chief among them Ernest Wilson (1916 -) who was well connected to other local and state civil rights leaders through membership in the NAACP. During the first few tense days when Hobson children were bussed to previously all-white schools, Wilson expected trouble. Therefore, he stayed off from work and drove behind the school bus in the event that black children were not picked up.[83] His suspicion was misplaced on that occasion, but he correctly assumed that ingrained prejudices would persist. When John Yeates High School opened in 1963, school officials held a "private" prom for white students at the Sportsman's Club in Portsmouth. Ernest Wilson brought about the integration of the prom the following year after he threatened legal action if it was determined that school board money was used to subsidize the "private" prom.[84] Wilson also had clashed with the school board when the black Oakland Elementary School was opened in the late 1950s. The Board informed the black community that money was lacking to provide equipment for the cafeteria, so the Board asked their Community League to help. Wilson's response was, "we are not going to give you a dime," and he suggested

that the Board put the black kids on busses and send them to the white elementary school in Chuckatuck to eat.[85] The Board backed down. The superintendent was directed to compile a list of everything that was needed to make the cafeteria operational.[86]

The so-called Klondike tragedy of March 1968 drew the black and white communities of Hobson, Crittenden and Eclipse together in grieving the loss of Chuckatuck watermen Thomas Crocker, William H. Mann, Charles Gray Adams, III, and S. Bertram Hazelwood, Jr., who drowned when the oyster boat Klondike captained by Hazelwood capsized with all four men aboard. Adams and Hazelwood were best friends and Adams had just returned from a tour of duty in Vietnam. The boat was loaded with sixteen hundred bushels of seed oysters and it was the last run of the season. All four men were recovered on Good Friday, April 12, 1968 and buried on Easter Monday. Everett Hale Newman recalled:

> The sorrow displayed that day from the black and white communities of Eclipse, Crittenden and Hobson was extraordinary. All the families went to the black church that morning for their services. Then that afternoon, they had the services for the two close friends, who belonged to the same church (Ebenezer United Methodist Church) and whose family cemetery plots were side by side. The church was overflowing. …black and whites all lined together outside that church….[87]

The Decline of Oystering in the Village

As the walls of segregation began to crumble for Hobson's residents, new threats to the community loomed on the horizon. Carter's Cove Creek was Hobson's direct outlet to Chuckatuck Creek, which flowed out to the James River. The residents had oyster beds in Carter's Cove and most kept their boats there. Hobson residents remember 1968 as the year when the Army Corps of Engineers built a dam across the Creek that struck a devastating blow to the economic well-being of the community.[87] They recall the event as a telling reminder of the relative powerlessness of small black communities like Hobson in this era.

It appears that no public agency--federal, state, or local--took into consideration the interests of the Hobson's residents before the dam was built; nor does it appear that any public agency gave the community advance notice of project. After the dam closed Carter's Cove Creek, the residents had to purchase boat trailers and drive to Rushmore to put their crafts in the water. Villagers who owned larger boats had to dock them at the marinas in Crittenden or Eclipse and pay the required marina fees. Some blacks who no longer had access to their oyster beds chose to allow whites to work them for an agreed-upon price.[88]

Beginning in the late 1950s, the parasitic diseases, Dermo and MSX, began to undermine the sustainability of the oyster industry, killing many oysters in the James River and the Bay.

In 1975 news broadcasts revealed that the Allied Chemical Plant in Hopewell had been dumping Kepone, a potentially cancer-causing chemical, into the James River, and workers at the plant were experiencing serious side effects. A temporary ban was placed on harvesting seafood in the James River and it had an immediate adverse impact on the livelihood of Hobson's residents.[89]

Mr. Ernest Wilson (1916 -) recalled that people stopped catching oysters around Hobson in the late 1980s because there were so few oysters left here, and Hobson men had to go all the way up the James River to the Rushmere area--an additional eighteen miles. "They cut the Squash Channel, the new channel coming by Rushmore. That is where all the oyster beds were. When the tides came down, they came down so swiftly that oysters do not get a chance to feed back in our area. The tide wiped out the oysters in the James River Bridge area and then it finally got into the Chuckatuck Creek and Nansemond River."[90] "We used to depend on that area where the James River Bridge is," Wilson recalled. "That area used to be infested with oysters this time of year [summer], "said Wilson. "They grow this time of year, and October is when we used to go out there and tong the oysters."[91]

In the winter of 2007, Maxie Brinkley (1925 -) estimated that about six or seven men were still engaged in oystering. He agreed with Mr. Wilson that few oysters remained in the near waters. He recalled that things had not been right since the discovery of the cancer-causing chemical Kepone, which he blamed for destroying the beds and hitting the village in the wallet. "It used to be nice to have good cash money every night," he said. Mrs. Marie Hill (1921 -) recalled that times used to be so good that her father carried a money bag around his waist, and he owned a car and a truck. In 1953 the Commonwealth issued 3,204 licenses for hand-tonguing oysters in Virginia. Less than 400 licenses were issued in 2007.[92]

Other black communities of watermen in Tidewater experienced the same decline in oystering in recent decades. The reasons for the decline of the industry differed, and approximate time periods for the demise of oystering as a major livelihood varied by community, but overall, the black oysterman became an increasingly rare phenomenon on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries after 1968. For example, in the early part of the twentieth century, oyster houses were the largest source of employment for blacks in Middlesex County, Virginia. One black entrepreneur employed several people at his oyster shucking establishment, and another black resident became well known in the industry after inventing and patenting an oyster punching machine. By the 1990s, however, oystering had declined as a livelihood, for young people were leaving their counties and the region in search of other careers, and some black-owned boats were converted to fishing party boats. Eleven blacks in the county were licensed as captains of recreational fishing boats. In Talbot County, and Kent County, Maryland, oystering and oyster packing houses were major sources of employment for blacks until the last few decades of the twentieth century. By the twentieth-first century, however, crab-processing

plants had replaced the oyster-shucking houses, and Hispanic migrant laborers had replaced the black workers. The black oysterman had become a rare and endangered species.[93] Because a few men in the Chesapeake Bay watershed still do tong oysters, the legacy of oystering persists. Memory of that legacy is deeply felt in the village of Hobson, once the oldest self-sustained African-American oystering community in the Hampton Roads metropolitan region.

Hobson's Uncertain Future

Besides the decline of oystering, various other factors undermined the economic viability of the tightly knit community. As the outlying farms on the peninsula became transformed into modern residential subdivisions--a trend that began in the 1950s and continues to the present, residents of Hobson found it increasingly difficult to obtain permits to build new houses and bathrooms because they could not put in septic tanks, and they were not hooked up to city water. They learned from city officials that that their soils did not percolate; and thus, they could not install additional septic tanks. Because with this limitation new houses could not be built in the community, young professionals with ties to the community had to look elsewhere to build new homes.[94] In addition, by 1968, the slow dismantling of segregation was opening up new opportunities for young educated residents beyond the confines of the Hobson community. Mr. Ernest Wilson concluded that "integration was good and integration was bad." Before integration, "all of the doctors and lawyers lived in the same community with the poor folks, but when they integrated, they moved out into the rich neighborhoods and that is why you see slums in black communities."[95] While Hobson census data does not confirm the presence of a large professional class in the village in the early 20th century, there is no question that the push of limited opportunities in Hobson and the pull of greater opportunities elsewhere advanced Hobson's decline.

Today, the homes in Hobson are passed down from one generation to another instead of being sold. About 275 blacks live in Hobson and they are mainly the young and the old.[96] As new residential development encroaches on the village, the confidence and optimism of earlier generations have given way to skepticism and anxiety—the fruit of unanswered questions.

Endnotes

[1] Robert Francis Engs, Freedom's First Generation: Black Hampton, Virginia, 1861-1890 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 114.
[2] Ibid.., 115.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Norfolk Virginian, Dec. 18, 1866.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Engs, Freedom's First, 115.

[7] Mary Hill's oral history interview of Mr. Ernest Wilson, May 12, 2003. Mr. Wilson's grandmother told him that she was eight years old when she and others were forced to leave York County and settle in Barrett's Neck after the Civil War. She was 101 when she died. Whites in York County had threatened to burn their dwellings. The story of Hobson's development in the larger context of the stories of Crittenden and Eclipse is told by Karla Smith et al in The River Binds Us: A Story Told by the People of Crittenden, Eclipse and Hobson, Hallmark Publishing Co., Gloucester, Va. 2007. In this context, see p 35.
[8] Engs, Freedom's First, 171
[9] Tommy L. Bogger and The Black Church Cultural Affairs Committee, A History of African-Americans in Middlesex County, 1646-1992 (The Black Church Cultural Affairs Committee, 1994), 76-78; Harold Anderson, Black Men, Blue Waters: African Americans on the Chesapeake, http://mdsg.umd.edu/marinenotes/Mar-Apr98/. . For early oyster industry in Nansemond, see Smith et al, The River Binds Us, pp 17-18.
10 U.S. Census, Virginia, Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Township, 1870.
11 Nansemond County Deed Book 1869-1871. Sept. 30, 1869 (microfilm reel 9); Sept. 15, 1876 (reel 11); and October 22, 1879 (reel 12). See also Karla Smith et al. The River Binds Us, p 11.
12. The Norfolk Virginia Union Baptist Association, "List of Churches With Their Pastors, Clerks, and etc.," 1879, microfilm roll 98. Found in African-American Baptist Annual Reports 1865-1990s, Harrison B. Wilson Archives, Norfolk State University, 1880 and 1882.
[13] Ibid. 1882 and 1885. See also Sister Carolyn M. White, typed "History and Church Progress of Macedonia Baptist Church" (revised, Nov. 1982). Copy in possession of Mary Hill.
[14] Golden Jubilee Souvenir Year Book, 1902-1952 (Daughter of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World, Inc., 1952, reprinted July 2002).
[15] Ibid., p. 8 and 9.
[16]. Ibid.
[17] See Nansemond County 1898 application for a post office. Copy in possession of Mary Hill; also "Hobson, Richard Pearson, naval officer." The National Cyclopedia of American Biography, vol. IX, pp. 10-11.
[18] Ibid.
[19] 1899 Land Tax Records, Nansemond County, Virginia, Chuckatuck Magisterial District. See The River Binds Us, pp 100-102. The three villages lost their separate identifies as post offices in 1974 when the City of Suffolk merged with Nansemond County.
[20] U.S. Census, 1900, Virginia, Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Magisterial District.
[21] U.S. Census, 1910, Virginia, Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Magisterial District.
[22] Department of Historic Resources. "Hobson Village Virtual Tour," p. 17; and Mary Hill's interview of Ernest Wilson, July 8, 2007.
[23] Tommy Bogger's interview of Mary Hill, July 3, 2007.
[24] Ernest Wilson, July 8, 2007. All interviews conducted by Mary Hill unless otherwise noted.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ernest Wilson, July 5, 2007.
[28] Mary Hill, February 8, 2007.
[29] Mary Hill, February 8, 2007.
[30] U.S. Census, 1930, Virginia, Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Magisterial District.
[31] U.S. Census, 1920, Virginia, Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Magisterial District.
[32] The River Binds Us, pp 55-58.
33 The River Bind Us, pp 21; Minnie Corson, Living Memories of Crittenden and Eclipse, pp 39, 101.
34 U.S. Census, 1930, Virginia, Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Magisterial District .
35 George Hatten, July 24, 2001; Maxie Brinkley, January 19, 2007, James Townsell, Jr. July 21, 2003; The River Binds Us, p 35.
36 Ernest Wilson, January 19, 2007.
37 Maxie Brinkely, January 19, 2007.
38 Ernest Wilson, Maxie Brinkley and Marie Hill, January 19, 2007.

[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid; U.S. Census, 1930, Virginia. Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Magisterial District.
[46] Ernest Wilson, Maxie Brinkley and Marie Hill, January 19, 2007.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Tommy L. Bogger's interview of Mary Hill, July 3, 2007.
[57] Ernest Wilson, July 8, 2007.
[58] Marie Hill, July 7, 2007
[59] See one page typed history of "Mt. Lebanon Church of God in Christ." Copy in possession of Mary Hill.
[60] Mary Hills' oral history interview of Ernest Wilson, George Hatten and Marie Hill, July 24, 2001.
[61] Ibid; and The River Binds Us, p 43.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid; and The River Binds Us, p 37.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid and James Townsell, July 21, 2003.
[66] Journal and Guide, May 8, 1921; The River Binds Us, p 46.
[67] Ernest Wilson, May 12, 2003.
[68] James Townsell, Sr.
[69] School Board, Nansemond County, Annual Attendance and Facility Records, 1934-1968; U.S. Census, 1930, Virginia, Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Magisterial District; and Bob Carter's interview with Marie Hill, July 15, 2009.
[70] Marie Hill, January 22, 2007; and Ernest Wilson, January 19, 2007.
[71] Marie Hill, July 7, 2007.
[72] James Townsell, July 21,2007.
[73] Ernest Wilson, May 3, 2003.
[74] Mary Hill, February 8, 2007; List of World War II Veterans compiled by Mary Hill and in her possession.; For artillery command unit, see Smith, The River Binds Us, pp 27-30.
[75] George Hatten, July 24, 2001. See The River Binds Us, p 36.
[76] Ernest Wilson, July 8, 2007.
[77] Tommy L. Bogger's oral history interview of Mary Hill, February 8, 2007.
[78] Norfolk Union. "List of Churches," 1882 and 1885; See also Sister Carolyn M. White's typed "History and Church Progress of Macedonia Baptist Church," (revised, Nov. 1982). Copy in possession of Mary Hill.
[79] James Townsell, Sr.
[80] Mary Hill, "The Historical Significance of Hobson."
[81] Ernest Wilson, May 3, 2003.

82 Ibid and Tommy L. Bogger's interview of Mary Hill, February 8, 2007.
83 Ernest Wilson, Maxie Brinkley and Marie Hill, January 9, 2007.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 The River Binds Us, pp 76-77.
88 Bogger interview of Mary Hill, February 8, 2007.
89 Ibid' The River Binds Us, p 72.
90 The Suffolk News Herald, June 25, 2007; "Kepone in the James River, 1976-2002" in Science Total Environment, pp 286-297.
91 Ernest Wilson, Maxie Brinkley and Marie Hill, January 19, 2007.
92 Ibid; The River Binds Us, p 72.
93 Marie Hill, July 7, 2007.
94 See Tommy L. Bogger and The Black Church Cultural Affairs Committee, A History of African-Americans in Middlesex County, 1646-1992 (The Black Church Cultural Affairs Committee, 1994).
95 Ibid.
96 Ernest Wilson, Maxie Brinkley and Marie Hill, January 19, 2007.
97 Ibid.

F. Associated Property Types

Overall Period of Significance: 1866-1968 for all property types

General Physical Integrity Statement:
Hobson Village buildings, structures, objects and sites date to a 102-year span of time. The buildings in the community have been improved and maintained with fabric that has been available over that period. There are treatments, such as brick veneer over frame, that have historical significance because they reflect improving economic conditions. Enclosed porches are also generally acceptable because these types of alterations also show evolution of the use of building space. Where brick veneer, aluminum siding, enclosed porches and other post-WWII material treatments occur, if the treatment dates to 1968 and earlier, it is generally assumed as historic fabric. More modern cladding fabrics and moderate renovations that do not obliterate the building form are acceptable. Post 1968 treatments should be weighed carefully as to whether they diminish a resource's integrity significantly. An example of a significant loss of integrity would be where the form of a building, through substantial interior or exterior remodeling, rebuilding or additions has been obliterated rendering the historic form of the building no longer intact. Replacement windows may be acceptable in some cases. The Hobson Village resources that may be potentially eligible for designation must be able to convey enough physical integrity in general architectural form to meet Criteria A significance (a stronger association to historical significance may balance with loss of physical integrity), and if Criteria C is being considered, the test for physical integrity will depend to a higher degree on the qualities of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Domestic Architecture

Name of Property Type: Single and Multiple Dwellings

Description

Hobson is a residential community in Suffolk, Virginia, that was built by former slaves shortly after the Civil War. It exists as a self-contained, viable community. The traditions of the community remained stable from the late 19th century throughout the segregation era, and well into the 1960s. Home ownership was high, as the residents made a comfortable living oystering and working small parcels of land. The community experienced a moderately quick decline as oystering and fishing in Hampton Roads became significantly limited by water pollution. The semi-rural village of Hobson features architecture from the late nineteenth century up through the 1990s.

Most of the homes constructed prior to 1900 are no longer standing, but a preliminary study conducted by the Department of Historic Resources' staff suggests that as many as seven

residences (or possibly more) built in the nineteenth century might still be standing.[33] Over the years, old structures have been razed and new homes built on the same sites. The houses that have replaced older simpler buildings are, in some cases, reaching the age where they support the significant history of the village. The predominantly wood frame, one- and two-story homes represent a variety of building styles from simple vernacular rectilinear forms without ornamentation to more sophisticated Victorian, Craftsman and Colonial Revival styles. Many houses have been updated over time, especially after World War II when metal and vinyl cladding became popular in the United States. Brick veneers have been added to the exterior of some of the frame houses. The use of brick, and Formstone (or PermaStone) cladding over frame was often a sign of improved living conditions and in many cases it can be important in understanding the evolution of the community as it improved over time.

Significance

Within seven years after they emerged from slavery and settled in Barrett's Neck, a few settlers managed to purchase small plots of land and build homes. The early homes may have been cabins or simple frame houses. None of these early houses survive, but there may be some potential for finding early house sites. Archaeological testing and evaluation of the sites would need to be conducted to confirm whether any sites might have physical integrity and significance. By 1900 as many as fifty-five homes were located in the community which was by then known as Hobson.[34] As oystermen, fishermen, small farmers, and farm hands, the men managed to eke out a living—and were probably better off than most blacks in the Hampton Roads region--and raised stable families. There is evidence that Hobson women also worked in the nearby communities.

Many of the modest wood frame homes built in the early years were torn down and replaced with more substantial structures, and in some cases, additions were made to the earlier structures. The tax assessors records from the 1940s record houses that range in size from two rooms to as many as ten[35]. During the period of rigid segregation in almost every aspect of life in rural Virginia, the inhabitants of Hobson were very resourceful in building their homes, disposing of solid waste, and establishing their own artesian well system, for they knew that county officials would not follow through on providing basic services to Hobson. In addition to the homes that were built there is much evidence that the land around the properties was also improved. There are functioning street gutters and drainage systems throughout the Hobson Community. Domestic architecture comprises the most numerous of historic resource types in the community and the buildings, by size and level of sophistication or plain character, are a good way to gain a window into what family life was like during Hobson's historic period (especially c. 1900 to 1968).

Recommended Study for Domestic Architecture Designation

Hobson Drive Historic District:

Hobson Drive contains the largest group of houses that date from the late 19th century to the early twentieth century. 1917 Hobson Drive, the Eaton House, is the smallest house on the street, and though modified, its scale and form exhibit the more typical size of early houses in the community from the early years of settlement. Houses of this low 1-story, 3-4 room, size were built from the late 19th century well past World War II. They were typically frame buildings. The Johnson/Edwards House at 1932 Hobson Drive is a very plain frame version of a typical 2-story 19th century farm house. The Vesey Plantation, one of the large farm houses in the area has a similar form and it dates to the mid 19th century. It's possible that local architecture on the plantations and in Eclipse and Crittenden are likely to have influenced some of the architectural forms in Hobson. The William Edwards House at 1940 Hobson Drive is one of the more unusual two story, asymmetrical, houses in Hobson. Originally it would have had an open porch. The porch area was converted into interior space. While not located on Hobson Drive, the J.T. Johnson House at 8509 Crittenden Road, adjacent to Hobson Drive, could be included in this street-long district. J.T. Johnson (one of few white residents in Hobson) was the owner/operator of the nearby Johnson's Mercantile and his house was built by one of Hobson's identified home builders/carpenters, Lorenzo Fox. The Johnson House is the only Four Square style house in Hobson. Dating to c. 1935, it shows Craftsman style influences with the pylon porch supports and shingle cladding on the second story. The house also features an unusual port cochere for protected access from the drive to the porch.

There are seven primary resources in the potential district (outbuildings need to be assessed). The Hobson Drive Historic District does not have any buildings that post date 1935.

Potential Individual Houses Recommended for Designation Study

(Organized by Period/House Type-Style)

Early Vernacular Houses:

Settled after the Civil War and Emancipation, there are no identified houses that date back to the 1860s or 1870s, but several houses most likely have the same form and characteristics of the earlier houses, though they may be slightly larger in most cases. Houses built in rural Virginia in the 1860s were likely to have a heavier frame and there is also the likelihood that some of the earliest houses were impermanent, possibly log cabins that were built quickly. By the 1880s, milled wooden members were thinner and dimensions were more regularized.

Burt Hatton & Lucille Hatton House- 8347 Crittenden Road. The house dates to the 1880s, but may be older. It retains its original form without significant alterations. This is a small vernacular house with functional details.

Lelia Jones Brinkley House-8353 Hudgins Circle. This small house may have started as a one or two room house and while it appears to date to c. 1900, it is a good example of the very modest sized building that many of Hobson's residents would have lived in during the last quarter of the 19th century. This is a vernacular form building with functional details.

Vernacular 2-Story, 2 bay Houses:

Several examples of this simple form survive. A house type that most likely dotted the landscape of Eastern Virginia (and the eastern coasts of the United States and Canada) from the 18th century well into the early 20th century, this form is a two story simple rectilinear building with an entry door and window on the first floor, typically 2 bays, and most often topped by a side gable roof. Examples of this style that date before 1860 would more likely have a large exterior chimney on one end. While the asymmetrical door may indicate that the interior plan could be side passage, with stairs on the door side of the house, these houses may have had 2-4 rooms and plans that are not predictable from the exterior. All of the surviving examples of this 2-story, 2 bay type in Hobson have brick flues which would indicate dating from 1880s to 1910s.

Ben Vaughan House, 1711 Macedonia Avenue, c. 1890-1910
George & Geraldine Hatten House, 1713 Macedonia Avenue, c. 1900
Thomas & Sula Jones House, 1721 Sawmill Point Road, c. 1890-1900

Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Victorian Styles:
Hobson Drive contains some of the more significant Victorian style buildings, but there are also several other examples that relate to Hobson's most rapid period of community development, from the 1880s to 1920. This group of houses represents a diverse cross section of form and style. Some of these have pyramidal or hipped roofs, both Walker and Shermon and Alberta Hatten houses show this form. While many of these examples are generally simple and symmetrical, like both Bumpus and Horace and Annie Hatten Houses, there are examples that show more detail or unusual form like the asymmetrical, L-shaped, Burrell-Crocker House or the highly intact Townsell House that has a fine barge board with saw work and a porch with pylon posts on brick piers on two sides of the house. The porch, in this case, may date about 10-15 years after the house was built in 1890. The two large, nearly identical, houses, at 8341 and 8345 Hudgins Circle are also highly intact, both showing complex roof gables with a prominent front gable. Further study needs to be conducted to see whether there is good material integrity on the interior of these buildings. The exteriors remain in good condition. The most typical alteration to many of the houses with porch areas appears to be closing in the porch for additional interior space.

James & Carrie Walker House, 8369 Crittenden Road, c. 1910
Pearl Burrell/Robb Crocker House, 8405 Crittenden Road, c. 1890
George Bumpus House, 8313 Hudgins Circle, c, 1890

Shermon & Alberta Hatten House, 8328 Hudgins Circle, c. 1900
Helon Hudgins House, 8341 Hudgins Circle, c. 1900
Henry & Lelia Brinkley House, 8345 Hudgins Circle, c. 1900
Robert Townsell House, 1705 Macedonia Avenue, c. 1890
Daniel & Georgia Wilson House 1757 Sawmill Point Road, c. 1915-1930
Horace & Annie Hatten House 1769 Sawmill Point Road, c. 1890

Front Gable Houses (One Story Cottages)

The one-story front-gable house is one of the more common forms of buildings in Hobson. Several good historic examples survive. This house form was popular across the United States from the early 1800s well into the 20th century. There are numerous examples of this house form in the downtown neighborhoods of Suffolk, for instance. In Hobson, the form exists in small and large dimensions and spans the period between c. 1900 to 1950. There are examples built in the early twentieth century, the Odell Hill House at 8316 Crittenden was built in 1912 and later updated, and the later Clarence Crocker House at 1749 Mount Lebanon Avenue may date as late as 1949 (more likely that it is an earlier house with brick cladding that was added in 1949). Most have front porches with some ornamentation. The Emma Jackson-Jeanette Wright House at 8300 Hudgins Circle has been veneered with brick and does not have a porch, built in 1944, it is also significant as the site of a local social club (possibly more significant for its social history than architectural form).

Odell Hill House, 8316 Crittenden Road, c. 1912
Barbara Jordan House, 8303 Crittenden Road, c. 1930
Emma Jackson-Jeanette Wright House, 8300 Hudgins Circle, c. 1944
Clarence Crocker House, 1749 Mount Lebanon Avenue, c. 1949

Twentieth Century Revival and Modern Styles

Hobson Village features several good examples of mid twentieth century Revival and Modernist movement styles. Like the front gable houses, the revivalist architecture was a national movement and in Virginia, Colonial Revival is the most common strain The Lee/Jones House shows a more minimal example of Colonial Revival, brick walls and a complex gable roof with steep pitch. This house shows a clear break from the more simple folk vernacular styles that were still being built up to World War II. Both Fox and Walker houses are Cape Cod Colonial style, generally symmetrical with side gables and roof dormers. The Walker House shows the innovation of form stone (or PermaStone) that was either an original material or added later over wood siding. The Hatten House (at 1709 Macedonia Avenue) is one of the best examples of the modernist Ranch House in Hobson, characterized by low-slung design, a low-pitch hipped roof. This is a very simple and largely intact Ranch House from the mid 1950s.

Curtis Lee & Elnora Jones, Sr. House, 1752 Mount Lebanon Avenue, c. 1940
Lorenzo & Clarice Fox House- 1717 Sawmill Point Road, c. 1947
Leonard & Amanda Walker, Sr., 1745 Macedonia Avenue, c. 1952

George &Geraldine Hatten, Sr., 1709 Macedonia Avenue, c. 1955

Registration Requirements for Residential Buildings

For this class of buildings to be eligible, they must meet one or more of the National Register criteria and have sufficient integrity to convey their association with the historic period of c. 1866 to 1968. In the case where the house may be less than fifty years old it may be eligible under Criteria Consideration G for a property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance or a very rare criteria association.

Criteria for Residential Architecture

Criterion A: The residential buildings of Hobson may be eligible under Criterion A, for association of the history of the community, including the themes:

Agriculture- Many of the residential properties had medium to large gardens and small farm operations. A few small agricultural buildings may survive. Further study needs to be conducted to identify surviving and intact agriculture related buildings.

Community Planning and Development- The houses were developed along the primary transportation artery, Crittenden Road. Some houses were built near the roads that led to large farms at the end of Moore's Point Road and Sawmill Point Road. Many houses were built on Macedonia Road, which let to the part of Carter's Cove that comes closest to Hobson. The development of the community is generally linear, but the theme of Community Planning is more significant since Hobson was a self sustaining unit during Segregation period. When listing houses or the Hobson Drive Historic District, one needs to consider improvements to the house lots that owners made over time, such as guttering or connections to the Hobson Artesian Well.

Ethnic Heritage- the surviving houses of Hobson show the evolution of an African American community though architecture, buildings that the residents built for themselves. Hobson as a self sufficient community had residents who built boats and built houses. These community builders built the simple buildings and the more sophisticated designs as the community thrived. The trend is clear from vernacular to modernistic houses. Because many of the houses were built by the residents, the houses support theme of Ethic Heritage.

Maritime History: Hobson exhibits the range of residential architecture that was built by African-Americans who, in the greater part of the community, earned their living as oystermen or fishermen. The community is representative of a typical small to medium-sized African American oystering/fishermen village.

Social History: Before institutional buildings were established in the community, the

Masonic Lodge or the churches, houses were often the place to meet and organize. Some of the historic houses may have served the larger community for social activity. At least one house is noted as a "dance hall" in the real estate records. Residences are also likely to have been places where there were community meetings during the Civil Rights era.

Criterion B: There several houses that relate to leaders in the community. In some cases the place where the person worked, a store, a church, a school, for instance, may not survive so the house owned by and lived in by these significant individuals may be individually eligible.

Criterion C: Hobson's houses show a moderately full spectrum of styles dating from c. 1880 to present. The spectrum of architecture includes vernacular, some that recall mid 19th century forms, folk forms (or vernacular), Victorian, Revival styles, and modern styles (up to 1968). There are key examples of architecture from the various periods of Hobson's historic evolution.

Criterion D: While there is evidence that house sites exist, based in real property records, there is not enough information to confirm that the absent buildings translate into an archaeological sites. To confirm D, more research and field work needs to be conducted. If there are intact archaeological deposits associated with Hobson, they could provide information to look at socio-economic patterns, shifts in product availability and selection, foodways, and recreation.

Social History: Masonic Hall/Lodge

Name of Property Type **Masonic Hall**

Description

The Masonic Hall (the intersection of Rt. 700 and Rt. 628) is a wood frame two-story building that was constructed in 1950 by Charles Gray Adams, who served as contractor, with Lorenzo Fox, Sr. carpenter. It was built on the same site where the original building stood, which was erected in 1912 and destroyed by fire in 1950.[36] The rectangular building is capped with a metal front-gable roof. The primary elevation is symmetrical with two upper windows and two windows flanking a door on the first floor. The sides of the building have six windows; three on the first floor and three immediately above them on the second floor.[37] The Lodge is an interesting example of folk or vernacular architecture. A frame building of this plain style could date any time within the period from 1800-1950. Some of the light framing, visible on the interior, reveals it mid twentieth century construction.

Significance

From 1912 until the 1970s, the Masonic Lodge F. and A. M. served as the center of social and economic life in the community, and from 1912 to 1929, the first floor of the structure was used as a school house.[38] When the school was relocated, shelves were mounted on the walls and stocked with all the items traditionally found in a general store. On weekends, holidays, and other special occasions, dances, banquets, and other social events were held in the hall.

The lodge served the entire community, but only men of the highest moral character were allowed to join. Their secret rituals, elaborate hierarchy, impressive "turnouts" at churches and funeral services, and numerous fundraisers in behalf of worthy causes gave the members an aura of respectability that was too often lacking among non-professional black men during the segregation era. In the 1960s, the lodge witnessed more political activism because voter registration campaigns, candidates' forums, and political rallies were held in the building.[39]

Ironically, the movement of blacks into the mainstream of local and state politics led to a decline of the lodge's use in the community and the loss of prospective members as opportunities beyond Hobson's borders beckoned to the most capable and ambitious young men.

Registration Requirements

The Masonic Hall is one of the most significant architectural buildings in Hobson. Its history is closely associated with the oystermen and farmers who lived, worked, and fraternized in the community. Located at the intersection of Rt. 700 and Rt. 628, the Masonic Hall occupies a very prominent site in the community.[40] It was ideally situated to serve the community at various times as a school and a store in addition to being the center of social and Masonic activity.

It is would meet Criterion A for Social History (possibly for Commerce) and Criterion C for Architecture.

Religion/Funerary: Church/Cemetery

Name of Property Type **Macedonia Baptist Church (Crittenden Road)**

Description

Macedonia Baptist Church began as a small modest wooden structure in the early 1900s. The current building superseded an earlier structure which had been built in 1879 about a mile away from the present site.[41] The Gothic Revival building features colored glass

windows with pointed Gothic arches and a corner bell tower. Over the last century, the church has undergone numerous alterations in the interior and exterior. The alterations are generally limited to surface cladding on the interior and exterior. The frame building was covered in brick veneer in 1959. There are several small additions off the rear of the original building, but the overall form and interior primary spaces still convey the historic character of the building for the period c. 1920s to 1968. A preliminary architectural survey concluded that enough of its architectural integrity remains for it to be considered for inclusion on the National Register.[42]

The church also includes a cemetery on the south side of the property. The cemetery is a physical record of the Hobson community.

Significance

Macedonia Baptist Church has been the one constant institution in the life of Hobson residents from 1900 to the present day. The church's role in shaping the spiritual lives of the residents can easily be underestimated if one fails to consider that for half of its existence, Macedonia Baptist was a rural church in an isolated black community prior to the widespread availability of radios, televisions, and automobiles. Hard working farmers, oystermen, and their family members used the church as their refuge from hard labor on Sundays, gathered at the building for their weekly night meeting in the middle of the week, and often returned to the church for special services on Sunday nights. Holidays, birthdays, weddings, funerals, and anniversaries, were all celebrated at Macedonia Baptist Church. Architecturally, the church is the most elaborate design in Hobson, the only Gothic Revival style building.

Registration Requirements

Macedonia Baptist was built by residents of the community who employed the same styles and materials that they used in building their homes. The church was constructed in 1900 and extensively renovated in 1958-59,[43] but a preliminary survey indicated that it retains enough of its architectural integrity to complement the architecturally significant homes in Hobson.[44] The 1950s brick cladding is now a historic material. In a nomination for the church, the cemetery needs to be included as a secondary contributing resource.

Recreation and Culture: Howard Foster, Jr. House- Movie Theatre Building (Crittenden Road)

Name of Property Type: **Movie Theatre**

Description

This modest 1-story frame front-gable building dates to the 1930s and may be older. It was

built with three bays originally, a door flanked by two windows. At some point, a side addition was extended on one side to make the building significantly larger.

Significance

As a self sufficient village, Hobson had soup kitchens, stores, social clubs and a movie theatre. These met the needs of a segregated community. More research needs to be conducted to confirm the period of time that this operated as a movie theatre.

Registration Requirements

The building has excellent exterior integrity, but the interior may be altered if it now serves as a residence. If the building has good interior integrity as a small theatre, then it may meet Criterion A (Recreation and Culture) and Criterion C (Architecture). If the interior is not intact enough, the building may be eligible only for Criterion A. The rarity of a small segregated theatre makes it potentially eligible for it historical associations (Criterion A).

Commerce:
Leroy King House/Store (Sawmill Point Road)
Roxie Brinkley Soup Kitchen (Crittenden Road)
Lelia Jones Brinkley House/Soup Kitchen (Hudgins Circle)

Name of Property Type: **Store/Soup Kitchen**

Description

The Leroy King House/Store is a modest 1-story concrete block front-gable building dates to the 1940s or 1950s was one of the stores in the community. In the mid twentieth century, Hobson had several stores, including the Johnson Mercantile, a large frame building that stood in Crittenden Road, close to lower Hobson. While there were other stores in the community, this appears to be the only surviving example.

Soup kitchens were operating as a simple commercial food preparation facilities. The Leila Brinkley House was a house that was used for a soup kitchen while the Roxie Brinkley Soup Kitchen more like a purpose built commercial building with a narrow gable front entry and small dimensions.

Significance

The store and soup kitchens of Hobson were a critical part of the village's self sufficiency. More research needs to be conducted to confirm the period of time that these establishments were in operation. The Roxie Brinkley Soup Kitchen building dates to the 1930s and may

have been in operation for a significant period.

Registration Requirements

These buildings have fair exterior integrity, but the interiors may be altered. None of these building serve as commercial establishments presently. If the buildings have good interior integrity as stores and soup kitchens, they may meet Criterion A (Recreation and Culture) and Criterion C (Architecture). If the interiors are not intact as commercial operations, the buildings may only be eligible only for Criterion A. The rarity of these former commercial establishments in an African American village is likely to make the buildings potentially eligible for just historical associations (Criterion A).

Community Planning and Development

Name of Property Type **Hobson Artesian Well (Macedonia Avenue)**

Description

The artesian well in Hobson is located on Macedonia Avenue. In 1947 the men of the community dug down 550 feet and ran pipes to each home.[45] Today all that remains of the artesian well is a pipe sticking out of the ground.

Significance

When the first blacks settled in Hobson after the Civil War, they drew most of their drinking water from a spring that belonged to a white farmer named Jim Newby. Children in the community had the chore of daily transporting buckets of water to their homes, and on washing days, they carried tubs of water. As the community increased in size, a safer, more dependable source of water was necessary. Charles Gray Adams, a white store owner on Hobson Drive had an artesian well and he allowed the community to draw water from his well free of charge.[46] By 1947, the Hobson men realized that their families deserved a far better standard of living, so they decided to build an artesian well system so that each home would have the convenience of modern plumbing. They dug a well down 550 feet and ran pipes throughout the community to individual homes. In a marvelous spirit of community cooperation, everyone agreed that each household would pay a fee of $25.00 a year. The system worked very well for twenty years until it was replaced by a deeper well.[47]

Registration Requirements

This very significant structure in the history of a black rural community was built sixty years ago and it epitomizes the community spirit which made Hobson an almost self-contained community. While the structure itself is just a simple pipe and parts of the system under ground. The structure carries strong historical associations for the village as it remained a

self sufficient unit. The Hobson Artesian Well is potentially eligible under Criterion A, its historical association with evolution of Hobson, under the area of Community Planning and Development.

General Property Index

Crittenden Road

Masonic Lodge- c. 1950/2 story, frame, front gable, vernacular form. (No address *Tax Map# 4A*2*63)* Original building built in 1912 rebuilt in 1950 after a fire.

8300- Macedonia Baptist Church- c. 1900/ 1 story with tower, frame with brick veneer, front gable, Gothic Revival style. This building is 109 years old; Macedonia Baptist Church was established in. 1876

8272- Milton Hill House- c. 1940/ 1 story, frame, front gable Cottage - Curtis & Cecil Pittman historic owners.

8289 Joe & Nellie Thomas, Sr. House- c. 1950/ 1 story, frame, side gable-Ranch (simple). Current owner Mary Hill.

8301-Community Building- C. 1980, /1 story, masonry, side gable-vernacular – This building replaced a Rosenwald School.

8303 Barbara Jordan House- c. 1930/ 1 story, masonry, front gable Cottage. Clyde & Nellie Thomas historic owners.

8316- Odell Hill House- c. 1912 (records)/1 story, masonry over frame, front gable vernacular w/ additions - Odell Hill is the current owner's, Mary Hill's grandmother.

8318- Phillip Hill House- c. 1940-1950/ 1 story, frame, side gable-Cape Cod Colonial. Historic owners: Freddie & Marjorie Hill (deceased) current owner is their son.

8319- Roxie Brinkley Soup Kitchen, Commercial Building- c. 1930/ 1 story, frame, front gable vernacular.

8320- James Newby/Celia Newby House-c. 1940/ 1 story, brick over frame, hipped roof vernacular form, w/additions.

8325- Robert & Roxie Brinkley House- 2 story, frame, front gable-vernacular. Originally built in 1917. remodeled (added second level) in 1980. Current owners are heirs.

8329- Charles Thomas House (Site) (1900) (demolished-records) Built 1948. Mary Hill's great grandfather. Charles (white) & Mary Vertley Chalk (descendant Nansemond Indian & mid-wife) current owner is Estelle Hudgins Neal great granddaughter.

8347- Burt Hatton & Lucille Hatton House - 1881/1 story, frame, side gable vernacular.

8353- Howard Foster, Jr. Movie Theatre Building- c. 1930/ 1 story, frame, front gable-vernacular.

8353- Howard & Mittie Crocker Foster House- c. 1950-60/ 1 story, frame (replaces 2 story house built in the 1800s).

8357- Burt & Lucille Hatton- c. 1960s-70s/ 1 story, frame, modular construction. Original house on site dated to 1800s. This was used as a dance hall. The house has been renovated.

8361- Samuel & Marjorie Chapman - c. 1960/ 1 story, brick, Minimal Traditional. Horace Chapman inherited the home from parents.

8369- James & Carrie Walker House- c. 1910/ 2 story, frame, Victorian vernacular. Current owner Melvin Fulgham.
8369-Garage- c. 1910/ 1 story, frame, vernacular.
8373- Rowland Hatton House- c. 1960s-70s/ 1 story, frame, modular construction.
8401- Josephine Hatten House- - c. 1950/ 1 story, frame, hipped roof-Ranch (simple). George Hatten and his sons built for his mother.
8405- Pearl Burrell/Robb Crocker House- c. 1890/ 2 story, frame, front and side gables, Victorian vernacular. Descendant Grandson Gordon Burrell currently lives there.
8509-J.T. Johnson House- c.1935/ 2 story, frame, hipped roof, front porch with port cochere extension, Four Square form- Built by Lorenzo (or Lorenza) Fox. Current owners Fletcher & Beatrice Fulgham. J.T. Johnson was owner/operator of the Johnson Mercantile that stood nearby on Crittenden Road.
8517-Martin/Bracey House-c. 1900/ 2 story, frame, front and side gables, Victorian vernacular. Current owners are Braceys.
8525- House Site. Built by Lorenzo Fox.

Hobson Drive (Original name Moores Point Road)
1917- Michael A. & Sharon W. Eaton House- c. 1910/ 1 story, frame, side gable, Victorian vernacular with small 20th century additions. This house may date to the 19th century.
1924- Williamson-Fulgham House- c. 1890-1900/ 2 story, frame, front gable, Victorian vernacular with early 20th century additions/ cornice returns and some chimney elaboration. Current owner William & Alice Fulgham.
1932- Johnson/Edwards House- c. 1890 (or earlier)/ 2 story, frame, low hipped roof, Victorian vernacular with later 20th century porch modifications. Current owner Alexander Edwards.
1940-William Edwards House – c.1917- 2 story, multiple gable, Victorian vernacular / projecting tower bay on front-asymmetrical.
1948- Sarah B. Adams/Annie Scott House- c. 1890/ 2 story, frame, exterior chimney. Current owner Annie Scott

Hudgins Circle
8300- Emma Jackson-Jeanette Wright House- c. 1944/1 story, masonry over frame, front gable vernacular. This originally was a social club and dwelling.
8301- Roy & Elsie Chapman House- c. 1910-20/ 1 story, frame, L-form w/side and front gables, late Victorian vernacular with small 20th century additions
8308- George Wesley & Madie Pope House- c. 1900/ 1 story, multiple front gable, frame, Victorian vernacular w/20th century additions-originally a front gable cottage.
8313- George Bumpus House - c. 1890s/ 2 story, frame, Victorian vernacular with 20th century porch modification.
8320- Beatrice & Gladys Chapman House site. House dated to 1947. Current owner is descendant Donald Chapman (deceased).

8321- Charles Armistead House/John Jackson/Rob Scott House - c. 1960/ 1 story, brick, front and side gables, Minimal Traditional
8324- Lewis Chapman House- c. 1890s/ 1 story, frame, Victorian vernacular with small 20th century additions.
8328- Shermon & Alberta Hatten House- c. 1900/ 1 story, frame, hipped roof, Victorian vernacular.
8341- Helon Hudgins House- c. 1900 / 2 story, frame, front and side gables, Victorian vernacular with early 20th century porch.
8345- Henry & Lelia Brinkley House- c. 1900/ 2 story, frame, front and side gables, Victorian vernacular (similar to 8341).
8349- Henderson Brinkley & Joyce Thomas Brinkley House Site- the house on this site dated to the 1890s. The house was inherited by Henderson Brinkley(& Joyce Thomas Brinkley, son of Henry Brinkley and grandson of W.H. Jones.
8353- Lelia Jones Brinkley House- c. 1900 - 1 story, frame, side gable, Victorian vernacular. This was Mary Hill's grandmother's Soup Kitchen. Now Lelia Jones Brinkley's son resides there.
8361- Ed & Otis Joyner Townsell- c. 1947/1 story, masonry over frame, front gable, Cottage. Current owner is daughter Susie Townsell, descendant of Quinney Joyner, a freed slave.
8365- Allen & Eva Denson House Site-last house on site appears to have been a 1 story frame building, built in the c. 1950s-60s.
8367- Quinney Joyner House Site – the last house on this site, recorded in the 1990s, was a 2 story, frame 2-bay side passage house that dated to c.1890-1910.
8368- Bennie & Mildred Williams House- c. 1950/1 story, masonry, hipped and flat roof, Modern Movement/vernacular. The house has been enlarged and more recent masonry cladding added.
8369- John Thomas House Site- Ralph Thomas, current owner is a descendant of John Thomas.

Macedonia Avenue
1701- John Price House- c. 1948 (likely to be older)- 1 story, 3-bay frame house, vernacular.
1705- Robert Townsell House- c. 1890- 2 story, frame, two-bay with 1 story side wing, Craftsman style porch surrounding 2 sides of the house.
1709- George &Geraldine Hatten, Sr. - c. 1955/ 1 story, brick, hipped roof, Ranch style.
1711- Ben Vaughan House –c. 1890-1910- 2 story, frame, 2-bay, side gable, side passage plan with 1 story rear addition, vernacular.
1713 - George & Geraldine Hatten c. 1900, 2 story, frame, side gable, Victorian vernacular.
1732- Bessie Walker House- c. 1910/ 1 story, frame, multiple gables, vernacular. This is where there was originally a Rosenwald (or older) school until it was moved in 1935 further up Macedonia to the area where the Community Building is currently located.

1745- Leonard & Amanda Walker, Sr.- c. 1952 (possibly older)/ 1.5 story, Formstone over frame, side gable w/dormers Colonial Revival.

Mount Lebanon Avenue

1665- Addison Property Site. Previous house at site was documented in the 1990s (tax records) Built c. 1890-1910

1671- Nat Johnson /Frances Johnson House Site – c. 1890-1910- 1 story, frame, front gable vernacular.

1667- Fred & Nellie Spratley House- 2001- earlier house on site dated to 1800s, rebuilt in 2001.

1716- Joseph Wright House- 1947 – 1 story, frame, front gable vernacular.

1717-Thomas Wright House Site- house at site is dated as 1950 in tax records, but may have incorporated sections from an older house. It was a 1 story gable-front vernacular.

1724- Leslie & Mary Townsell House-1942- 1 story, frame, front gable vernacular with large porch, current owners are descendants of the Armisteads, owners in 1900.

1732- Mount Lebanon Church - c. 1960 (may be built around an older building)/ 1 story, masonry, complex gable. Mt Lebanon Church 101 years old. In 1980 they added on a fellowship hall to the original structure.

1733- Bennie & Virginia Walker- c. 1940/1 story, masonry, multiple gables, Vernacular- a small house that may be pre-1940 with later 20th century additions/Garage may also be c. 1940. Current owner Robert E. & Margaret Townsell

1736- Thomas Wright House- 1936/ 1 story, brick veneer, front gable with side gables- renovated and may have 1930s house at core.

***1737* Wilson M. Reid Site**

1740- Joshua Thomas House-c. 1900-1930/1 story, frame, side gable Cottage w/ infill porch. Current owner is a heir Jacqueline Thomas Summerville.

1745- Queenie Townsend House- c. 1960/ 1 story, brick, front and side gables, Minimal Traditional.

1747- Mary Hall House- c. 1950-1960 1 story, side gable roof, vernacular. Current owners descendant of Robert Crocker

1748- Eduardo & Rhonda Holland House- c. 1980/2 story, masonry, gable roof, Modern Movement/vernacular (older outbuilding) Original house burned. Current owner descendants of Robert Crocker (freed slave)

1749- Clarence Crocker House- C. 1949 (records, but may be earlier) /1 story, brick over frame, front gable vernacular w/ small additions. Current owners descendant of Robert Crocker (freed slave)

1760- Curtis Lee & Elnora Jones, Sr. House- c. 1940/1 story (with garret), masonry, front and side gables, Colonial Revival.

1753- Ervin & Mary Lizzie Williams House- c. 1920/1 story, frame, front and side gables, Cottage. Current owner (recent) Timothy J. Holland, Sr. Family associated with this house.

1756- Corrine Crocker House- 2 story, frame, side gable, vernacular. Corrine Crocker is descendant of Crocker (feed slave).

1760- Curtis Lee & Elnora Jones, Sr. House.- c. 1948 (records)/1 story, masonry, side gables, Minimal Traditional.
1764- Gladys Mills Chapman House- c. 1951 (records)/1 story, masonry, side gables, Minimal Traditional.

Sawmill Point Road
1717- Lorenzo (or Lorenza) & Clarice Fox House- c. 1947/ 1.5 Stories, frame, side gable with dormers, Colonial Revival. Lorenzo Fox was one of Hobson's carpenters.
1721- Thomas & Sula Jones House- c. 1890-1900- 2 story, frame, side gable, vernacular.
1725- Nathaniel & Christine Walker House- c. 1930-1940/1 story, frame, side gable, Cape Cod Colonial. Nathaniel Walker was the appointed Sheriff.
1729- Ethel Mae Foster House- c. 1957/1 story, masonry, front gable, vernacular cottage.
1737-Henry Jones House- 1957/ 1 story, frame, side gable, vernacular. Current owner is Joe
Herbert Jones.
1739-Arthelia Eaton House-.1972.
1741- Moses Walker House- c. 1941- 1 story, frame, front gable vernacular cottage.. Current owner Silver Fletcher. Renting to descendants of Mittie Crocker Foster.
1747- Gholston Family House- c. 1950-1960 (or earlier)/1 story, masonry over frame, front gable, vernacular.
1751- George Hatten House- c. 1900-1920/ 1.5 stories, frame, front gable vernacular. It was a boarding house and social club. Current owner is Arthelia Eaton.
1757- Daniel & Georgia Wilson House- c. 1915-30/1 story, frame, side gable w/clipped gable, vernacular.
1757-B- Leroy King House/Store -c. 1940-50/1 story, masonry-CBU, front gable, vernacular. Originally is was a store and social place where they would go to play the pic-a-low.
1761- Leroy & Olivia King - c. 1970s/ 1 story, frame, modular construction. Current owner Mary Hill.
1769- Horace & Annie Hatten House- c. 1890/2 story, frame, side gable, vernacular.

Endnotes
[1] Department of Historic Resources, "Proposed Hobson Historic District, City of Suffolk, Virginia," p. 1.
[2] United States Census, Nansemond County, 1900.
[3] Nansemond County Real Property records, 1947.
[4] DHR, "Hobson Historic District," p. 3.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Mary Hill's oral history interview of Ernest Wilson. July 8, 2007. The tape is in the possession of Mary Hill.
[12] DHR, "Hobson Historic District," p. 2.
[13] Department of Historic Resources, "Hobson Village Virtual Tour," p. 17.

[14]Ernest Wilson's interview. July 8, 2007.
[15]DHR "Hobson Historic District, p. 2.
[16]Ernest Wilson's interview. July 8, 2007.
[17]Sister Carolyn M. White, "History and Church Progress of Macedonia Baptist Church" (revised, Nov. 1982). Copy in possession of Mary Hill.
[18]DHR, "Hobson Historic District," p. 2.
[19]Ibid.
[20]Ibid.
[21]George Hatten's interview. July 24, 2001.
[22]Ernest Wilson's interview. May 3, 2003.
[23]George Hatten's interview. July 24, 2001.

G. Geographical Data

General Geographical Context

Hobson is about 17 miles north of downtown Suffolk. Formerly Nansemond County, the area became the City of Suffolk in 1974. While technically a "city", Suffolk contains large rural and suburban areas . Hobson is located along Crittenden Road (State Route 628) southwest of U.S. Route 17, on a Barrett's Neck between Chuckatuck Creek and the Nansemond River. Both the Creek and River drain into the James River and Hampton Roads. The City of Suffolk has a small geographic area that opens onto the James River and Hampton Roads, but there are long shorelines that extend into the City along Chuckatuck Creek and the Nansemond River.

Barrett's Neck, running from the southwest to northeast, from the Hobson community to the neck edge on Hampton Roads, is generally a mile to mile and a half wide. While Hobson is inland, access to the water is historically very close on the north and south shores of the neck. There are historic estuaries that cut into the neck, from north and south, and Hobson appears to have developed at a protected point where agriculture and maritime activities could thrive with both land transportation access (Crittenden Road) and on water networks. Hobson shares the neck with two other significant communities, Eclipse and Crittenden. Crittenden is located to the northeast of Hobson and developed near and along Bridge Road. Eclipse is located at the northernmost edge of the neck, on the James River.

Hobson currently consists of 6 streets that are on the north side of Crittenden Road: from west to east, Macedonia Drive, Hudgins Circle, Sawmill Point Road, Moores Point Road, Hobson Drive and Mount Lebanon Avenue. While most of the community developed on the north side of Crittenden Road, part of Hobson extends to the south, adjacent to an inlet from the Nansemond River. This area includes several houses and the Macedonia Baptist Church. Traditionally, the most direct water access for the residents of Hobson were at the area now called Sleepy Lake, north of Hobson. Before it was dammed, it was called Carter's Cove and it opened onto Chuckatuck Creek, which provided access to oyster beds. Several other coves and estuaries come up to Hobson from the Nansemond River side of the neck.[48]

While there are woods near Hobson, the landscape, until recent suburban development was an open agricultural area bounded by tree lines and crisscrossed by primary roads, local streets and paths. Based on historic descriptions and historic photography of Hobson and the adjacent area, the landscape has not changed radically. The most significant changes since the 1950s-60s has been the increases suburban development encouraged by easier access to the major cities nearby, growing downtown Suffolk, Newport News, Norfolk and Portsmouth, the conversion of Carter's Cove into a lake and the shortening of Mount Lebanon Avenue, one of the primary access roads to Carter's Cove.

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The multiple property documentation of historic and architectural resources of Hobson Village is based on a preliminary architectural survey by staff members of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources in 2003. The historic contexts were determined by combining the oral histories of the community with more recent oral history interviews, and having a historian research the history of the village and its people from the Civil War to the 1970s by using primary and secondary sources.

The significant property types were based on architectural styles and their function in the Hobson community during the period from 1866 to 1968.

The integrity of the properties listed is based on a preliminary architectural survey conducted by the staff members of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

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The National Cyclopedia of American Biography, Vol. IX.

Smith, Karla et al. The River Binds Us: A Story Told by the People of Crittenden, Eclipse and Hobson. Gloucester, Va., Hallmark Publishing Co., 2007.

Government Records

Virginia Department of Historic Resources File Numbers 133-5126 and 133-5257. Compiled research conducted by staff: Robert Carter, Bryan Green, Paige Pollard, Pam Schenian, Mary Taylor, Marc Wagner and Hobson resident Mary Hill.

Nansemond County Deed Book, 1869-1871.

Nansemond County Land Tax Records, 1899, 1947, 1995.

United States Bureau of the Census, Nansemond County, 1870, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930.

Newspapers

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Suffolk News Herald

Unpublished Studies

Department of Historic Resources, "Hobson Village Virtual Tour."

Department of Historic Resources, "Proposed Hobson District, City of Suffolk, Virginia."

"Mt. Lebanon Church of God in Christ" (n.a. n.d.)

Nansemond County 1898 Application for a Post Office.

Sister Carolyn M. White, "History and Church Progress of Macedonia Baptist Church," revised Nov. 1982.

Interviews

Mary Hill's interview of Mr. Ernest Wilson, Mr. George Hatten, and Mrs. Marie Hill, July 24, 2001. All of the interviews are in the possession of Mary Hill.

Mary Hill's interview of Mr. Ernest Wilson, May 12, 2003.

Mary Hill's interview of Ernest Wilson, Maxie Brinkley, and Marie Hill. January 19, 2007.

Tommy L. Bogger's interview of Mary Hill. February 8, 2007.

Tommy L. Bogger's interview of Mary Hill, July 3, 2007.

[1] Robert Francis Engs, Freedom's First Generation: Black Hampton, Virginia, 1861-1890 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 114.

[2] Ibid.., 115.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Norfolk Virginian, Dec. 18, 1866.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Engs, Freedom's First, 115.

[7] Mary Hill's oral history interview of Mr. Ernest Wilson, May 12, 2003. Mr. Wilson's grandmother told him that she was eight years old when she and others were forced to leave York County and settle in Barrett's Neck after the Civil War. She was 101 when she died. Whites in York County had threatened to burn their dwellings. The story of Hobson's development in the larger context of the stories of Crittenden and Eclipse is told by Karla Smith et al in The River Binds Us: A Story Told by the People of Crittenden, Eclipse and Hobson, Hallmark Publishing Co., Gloucester, Va. 2007. In this context, see p 35.

[8] Engs, Freedom's First, 171

[9] ; Tommy L. Bogger and The Black Church Cultural Affairs Committee, A History of African-Americans in Middlesex County, 1646-1992 (The Black Church Cultural Affairs Committee, 1994), 76-78; Harold Anderson, Black Men, Blue Waters: African Americans on the Chesapeake, http://mdsq.umd.edu/marinenotes/Mar-Apr98/. . For early oyster industry in Nansemond, see Smith et al, The River Binds Us, pp 17-18.

10 U.S. Census, Virginia, Nansemond County, Churckatuck Township, 1870

11 Nansemond County Deed Book 1869-1871. Sept. 30, 1869 (microfilm reel 9); Sept. 15, 1876 (reel 11); and October 22, 1879 (reel 12). See also Karla Smith et al. The River Binds Us, p 11.

12. The Norfolk Virginia Union Baptist Association, "List of Churches With Their Pastors, Clerks, and etc.," 1879, microfilm roll 98. Found in African-American Baptist Annual Reports 1865-1990s, Harrison B. Wilson Archives, Norfolk State University, 1880 and 1882 .

[13] Ibid. 1882 and 1885. See also Sister Carolyn M. White, typed "History and Church Progress of Macedonia Baptist Church" (revised, Nov. 1982). Copy in possession of Mary Hill.

[14] Golden Jubilee Souvenir Year Book, 1902-1952 (Daughter of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World, Inc., 1952, reprinted July 2002).

[15] Ibid., p. 8 and 9

[16]. Ibid.

[17] See Nansemond County 1898 application for a post office. Copy in possession of Mary Hill; also "Hobson, Richard Pearson, naval officer." The National Cyclopedia of American Biography, vol. IX, pp. 10-11.

[18] Ibid.

[19] 1899 Land Tax Records, Nansemond County, Virginia, Chuckatuck Magisterial District. See The River Binds Us, pp 100-102. The three villages lost their separate identifies as post offices in 1974 when the City of Suffolk merged with Nansemond County.

[20] U.S. Census, 1900, Virginia, Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Magisterial District.

[21] U.S. Census, 1910, Virginia, Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Magisterial District.

[22] Department of Historic Resources. "Hobson Village Virtual Tour," p. 17; and Mary Hill's interview of Ernest Wilson, July 8, 2007.

[23] Tommy Bogger's interview of Mary Hill, July 3, 2007.

[24] .Ernest Wilson, July 8, 2007. All interviews conducted by Mary Hill unless otherwise noted.

[25] Ibid

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ernest Wilson, July 5, 2007.

[28] Mary Hill, February 8, 2007.

[29] Mary Hill, February 8, 2007.

[30] U.S. Census, 1930, Virginia, Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Magisterial District.

[31] U.S. Census, 1920, Virginia, Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Magisterial District.

[32] The River Binds Us, pp 55-58.

33 The River Bind Us, pp 21; Minnie Corson, Living Memories of Crittenden and Eclipse, pp 39, 101.

34 U.S. Census, 1930, Virginia, Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Magisterial District .

35 George Hatten, July 24, 2001; Maxie Brinkley, January 19, 2007, James Townsell, Jr. July 21, 2003; The River Binds Us, p 35.

36 Ernest Wilson, January 19, 2007.

37 Maxie Brinkely, January 19, 2007.

38 Ernest Wilson, Maxie Brinkley and Marie Hill, January 19, 2007.

40 Ibid

41 Ibid

42 Ibid

43 Ibid

44 Ibid

[45] Ibid; U.S. Census, 1930, Virginia. Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Magisterial District.

[46] Ernest Wilson, Maxie Brinkley and Marie Hill, January 19, 2007

[46] Ibid

[47] Ibid

[48] Ibid

[49] Ibid

[50] Ibid

[51] Ibid

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Tommy L. Bogger's interview of Mary Hill, July 3, 2007

[57] Ernest Wilson, July 8, 2007.

[58] Marie Hill, July 7, 2007

[59] See one page typed history of "Mt. Lebanon Church of God in Christ." Copy in possession of Mary Hill.

[60] Mary Hills' oral history interview of Ernest Wilson, George Hatten and Marie Hill, July 24, 2001.

[61] Ibid; and The River Binds Us, p 43.

[62] Ibid

[63] Ibid; and The River Binds Us, p 37.

[64] Ibid

[65] Ibid and James Townsell, July 21, 2003.

[66] Journal and Guide, May 8, 1921; The River Binds Us, p 46. .

[67] Ernest Wilson, May 12, 2003.

[68] James Townsell, Sr.

69 School Board, Nansemond County, Annual Attendance and Facility Records, 1934-1968; U.S. Census, 1930, Virginia, Nansemond County, Chuckatuck Magisterial District; and Bob Carter's interview with Marie Hill, July 15, 2009.
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70 Marie Hill, January 22, 2007; and Ernest Wilson, January 19, 2007.

71 Marie Hill, July 7, 2007.

72 James Townsell, July 21,2007

73 Ernest Wilson, May 3, 2003.

74 Mary Hill, February 8, 2007; List of World War II Veterans compiled by Mary Hill and in her possession.; For artillery command unit, see Smith, The River Binds Us, pp 27-30.

75 George Hatten, July 24, 2001. See The River Binds Us, p 36.

76 Ernest Wilson, July 8, 2007.

77 Tommy L. Bogger's oral history interview of Mary Hill, February 8, 2007.

78 Norfolk Union. "List of Churches," 1882 and 1885; See also Sister Carolyn M. White's typed "History and Church Progress of Macedonia Baptist Church," (revised, Nov. 1982). Copy in possession of Mary Hill.

79 James Townsell, Sr.

80 Mary Hill, "The Historical Significance of Hobson."

81 Ernest Wilson, May 3, 2003.

82 Ibid and Tommy L. Bogger's interview of Mary Hill, February 8, 2007.

83 Ernest Wilson, Maxie Brinkley and Marie Hill, January 9, 2007.

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87 The River Binds Us, pp 76-77.

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90 The Suffolk News Herald, June 25, 2007; "Kepone in the James River, 1976-2002" in Science Total Environment, pp 286-297.

91 Ernest Wilson, Maxie Brinkley and Marie Hill, January 19, 2007.

92 Ibid; The River Binds Us, p 72.

93 Marie Hill, July 7, 2007.

94 See Tommy L. Bogger and The Black Church Cultural Affairs Committee, A History of African-Americans in Middlesex County, 1646-1992 (The Black Church Cultural Affairs Committee, 1994).

95 Ernest Wilson, Maxie Brinkley and Marie Hill, January 19, 2007.

96 Ibid

97 Ibid

[33] Department of Historic Resources, "Proposed Hobson Historic District, City of Suffolk, Virginia," p. 1.

[34] United States Census, Nansemond County, 1900.

[35] Nansemond County Real Property records, 1947.
[36] Mary Hill's oral history interview of Ernest Wilson. July 8, 2007. The tape is in the possession of Mary Hill.

[37] DHR, "Hobson Historic District," p. 2.

[38] Department of Historic Resources, "Hobson Village Virtual Tour," p. 17.

[39] Ernest Wilson's interview. July 8, 2007.

[40] DHR "Hobson Historic District, p. 2.

[41] Sister Carolyn M. White, "History and Church Progress of Macedonia Baptist Church" (revised, Nov. 1982). Copy in possession of Mary Hill.

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[43] Ibid.

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[45] George Hatten's interview. July 24, 2001.

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[48] According to Mary Hill, her family used the cove behind her house to access the Nansemond River.