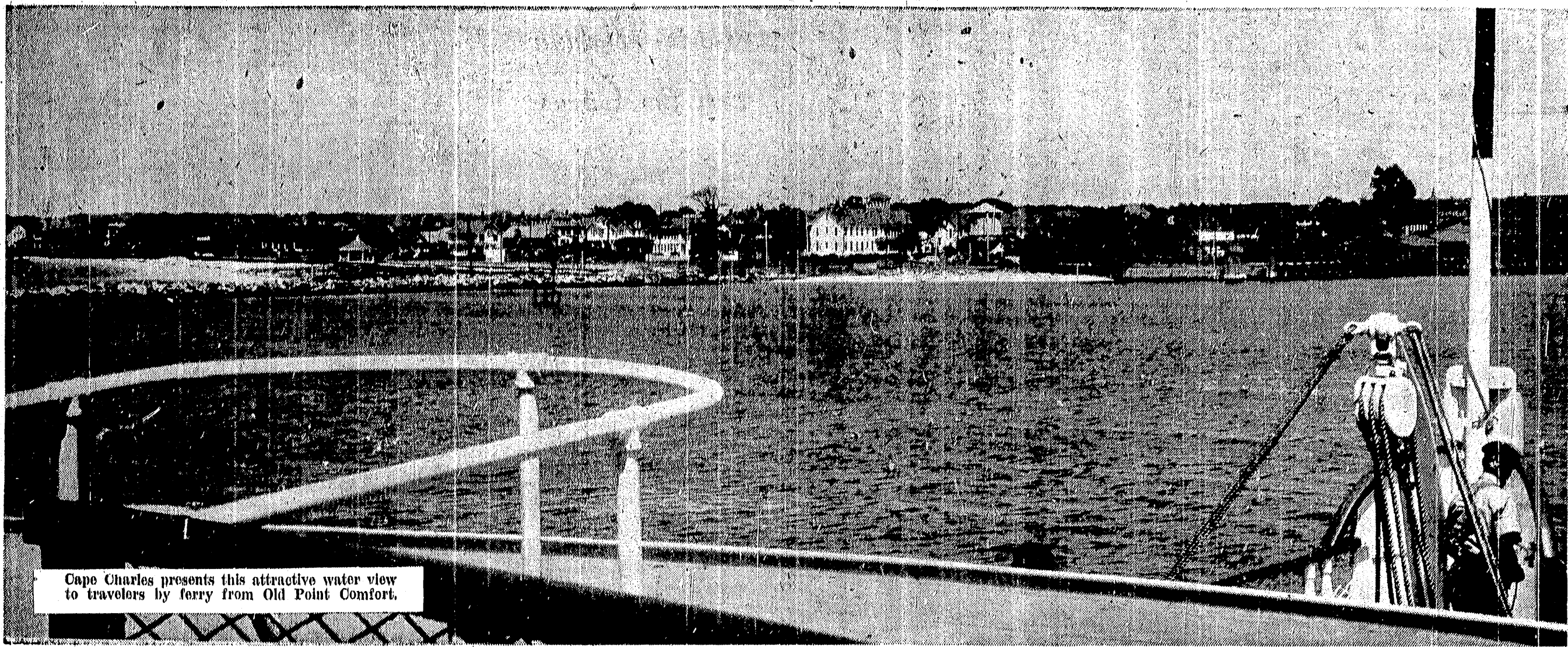




Cape Charles presents this attractive water view to travelers by ferry from Old Point Comfort.

A RAILROAD moved in 1884, and Cape Charles began. A ferry moved out in 1950, Cape Charles didn't end, but it's hurting.

More even than for most towns, transportation has written the ticket for this one on the Bay side of Virginia's Eastern Shore, a dozen miles or so north of the tip of the peninsula.

For years the southern gateway to the Shore, Cape Charles has been, self-styled, a "transient" town, and made a fair part of its living serving the neighbors who passed through.

As town officials expected far fewer are passing through now, they say, since the Virginia Ferry Corporation, which hauled many of them, moved its terminal from here a few miles southeast to Kiptopeke Beach on May 1 last year. So they're hoping for new enterprises to come in.

It Holds Sports Records

Nobody is crying. The transient business wasn't all, Cape Charles has a number of business assets built to last.

Shopping center for most of Northampton County, it operates, according to Mayor Raymond M. Grimmer, pretty much by the rule that "as the farmers go, so goes Cape Charles." Eastern Shore farmers being a pretty solid lot, the shopping center hums on week ends.

Cape Charles also has a humming small-boat harbor on its north flank on King's Creek, to which sports fishermen flock, and a town-owned commercial fishermen's harbor on its south flank. It boasts the

world's record for size of both channel bass and drumfish caught off its shores by sports fishermen. The waters serve up small fish of all kinds. And thousands of crabs and oysters go each year out of the commercial harbor, at its busiest in the winter.

The railroad which gave Cape Charles being is also here and still the town's major industry. The Pennsylvania Railroad steamer, "Elisha Lee," makes two round trips daily from here to Old Point Comfort and Norfolk with passengers and vehicles and mail.

Scott Preceded Railway

It hauled some 212,000 passengers last year, which was about average, although the war years averaged more than 1,000,000, according to Chief Clerk R. E. Schrack. Very few of the passengers are local, however, he noted; most are making train connections on one side or the other of the Bay and move right on.

But the Pennsy also handles vast quantities of freight through its terminal here, headquarters for its "Delmarva" division serving the Shore; and its tugs ply the Bay steadily with barges loaded with freight cars in their wake. The 250 employees in the marina department live mostly elsewhere, Schrack said, but another 200 work in town. With their families they make up a sizable segment of the Cape Charles population (1950 census: 2,425).

It was the coming of the line which the Pennsy later absorbed, known locally

Cities and Towns of Virginia

Cape Charles

Story and Photographs by Hamilton Crockford

as "the Nyp and N," which started Cape Charles.

But William L. Scott, of Erie, Pa., preceded the railroad, a local historian has recorded. Scott in June, 1893, bought "from the heirs of the late Governor 'Tazewell' an estate of 2,050 acres for \$55,000; deeded part to the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk Railroad, to which a charter had been granted; built docks on the south side of the harbor and three oyster houses; and had his estate on the inland side, the account of the late Dr. W. D. Williams relates.

Dr. Williams, who lived at "Willow Grove Farm" four miles away and moved to town in 1888 to become the first dentist, wrote down his brief history on the typewriter in 1940. The manuscript is carefully preserved by his daughter, Mrs. Nannie Bott Thomas, a former school teacher in town. No other copy exists, she said.

Its pages tell how the town was originally laid out in a perfect square, six avenues long and six streets deep, and the first building was erected in the Fall

of 1883, "a little building put up by a Mr. Stevens from North Carolina at the present site of Savage's Drug Store, to be used as a barroom."

The railroad, Dr. Williams wrote, completed its tracks Oct. 25, 1884; and chartered its first steamer in November, 1884, to run at that time from Cherrystone Wharf, four miles north. The town, built on the site of an old Indian settlement, was incorporated March 1, 1886, with the manager of Scott's estate given the honorary appointment as mayor.

Until 1896, the historian said, it was "the only incorporated town in Virginia that was fenced in": the Scott estate bordering it was fenced in in accordance with county law, he explained, and to reach town from that side one had to drive through the estate.

In 1885, he noted, the railroad put a sidewheeler on the Bay with tracks on both sides to carry sleeping cars.

Cape Charles grew as the railroad grew and as the Eastern Shore grew in importance as a truck-crop producing area.

Today the town has a number of distinctions and nobody is prouder of them than Grimmer, the "first native-born mayor."

It is one of the few Virginia towns which are separate school districts in themselves, he noted, and has a combined high and elementary school of its own.

It was among the first towns in the South to have a Negro policeman, Willis Mitchell, employed four years ago for the part-time position, is an excellent officer, Chief Jackson R. Jarvis declared. All four men on the force are service veterans.

Versatile Fire Company

The town fire department, composed entirely of volunteers, serves as first-aid squad, too. It has its own ambulance in addition to four fire engines, equipment worth \$55,000. Chief R. T. Barnes, who's also a councilman, noted they've used it for everything from putting out a fire on a ferry boat to filling the baptismal font at a church where the water pump wasn't working.

The Northampton Memorial Library, converted from the original Presbyterian church as a memorial to World War I veterans, was the first such memorial library in the State, according to Dr. Williams' account.

The Northampton Country Club just outside town provides golfing right in view of the small-boat harbor.

Then there's the municipal parking lot, town officials' pet pride, which extends on one side of Mason Avenue, the main

street, the whole length of the business district, facing the stores on the opposite side.

It's not so full as it used to be, except on Saturdays, Grimmer said, since the Virginia Ferry Corporation moved.

The ferry company, which started operating between Little Creek near Norfolk and Cape Charles in 1933 announced the shift of its northern terminal southward on the Shore was made to shorten the ferry run and thereby provide more trips daily. The change made possible more runs than could have been obtained by building a fourth boat, it said. The company stepped up its daily trips from 14 to 19 after the move.

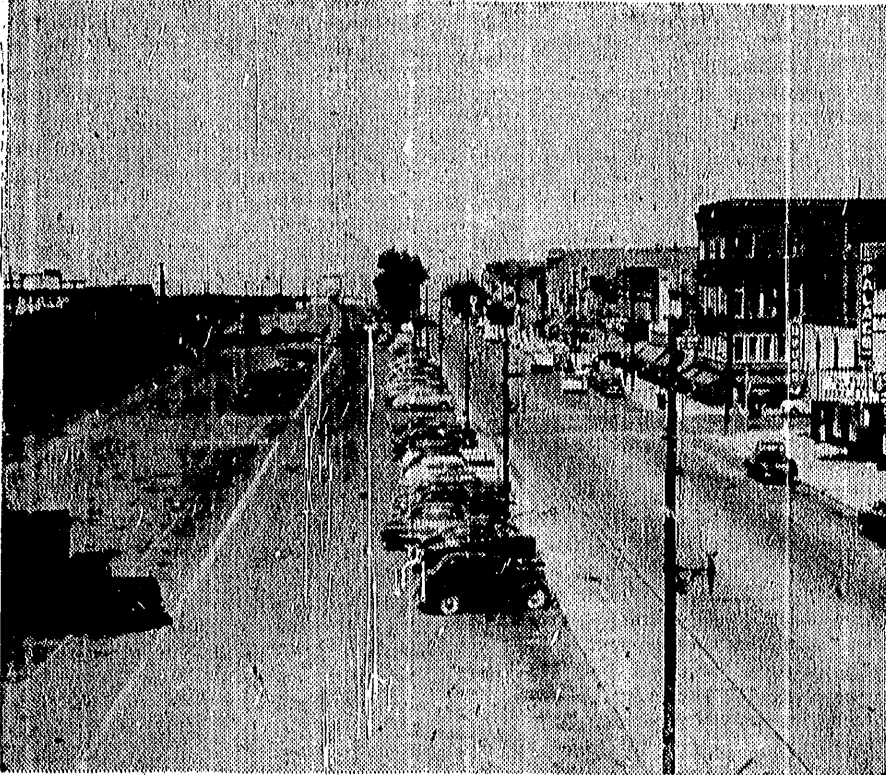
Plans for Resort Town

It has also announced early last year the formation of a subsidiary company to develop a complete resort town at the new terminal at Kiptopeke Beach. Signs went up marking the sites of a proposed motor court, truck center and shopping center. Streets were marked out.

There's no town yet and some Eastern Shore people figure it'll be a long time coming. N. C. Chandler, general superintendent of the line, said recently that in light of present material shortages, no date for a start can be set. But the project will be put through eventually, he declared.

Meanwhile, Cape Charles is hoping to locate those new industries. One councilman noted, "We've got a \$1,000,000 beach out there if we just develop it."

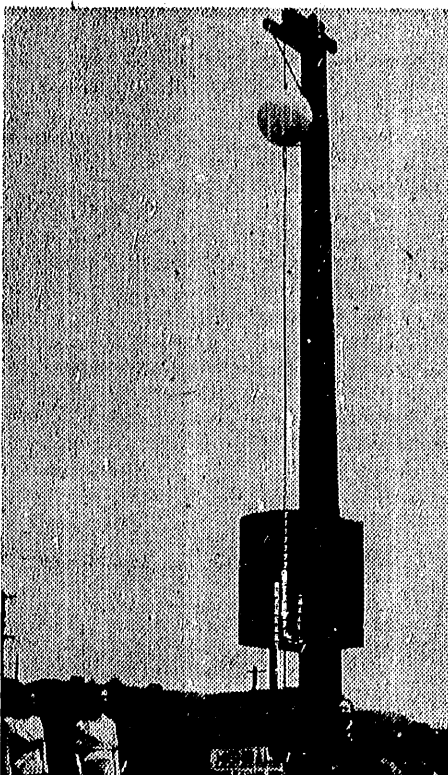
Next Week: Montross



Residents of the Eastern Shore community are proud of the municipal parking lot to left of main street.



Pennsylvania Railroad steamer Elisha Lee makes two daily round trips to Old Point.



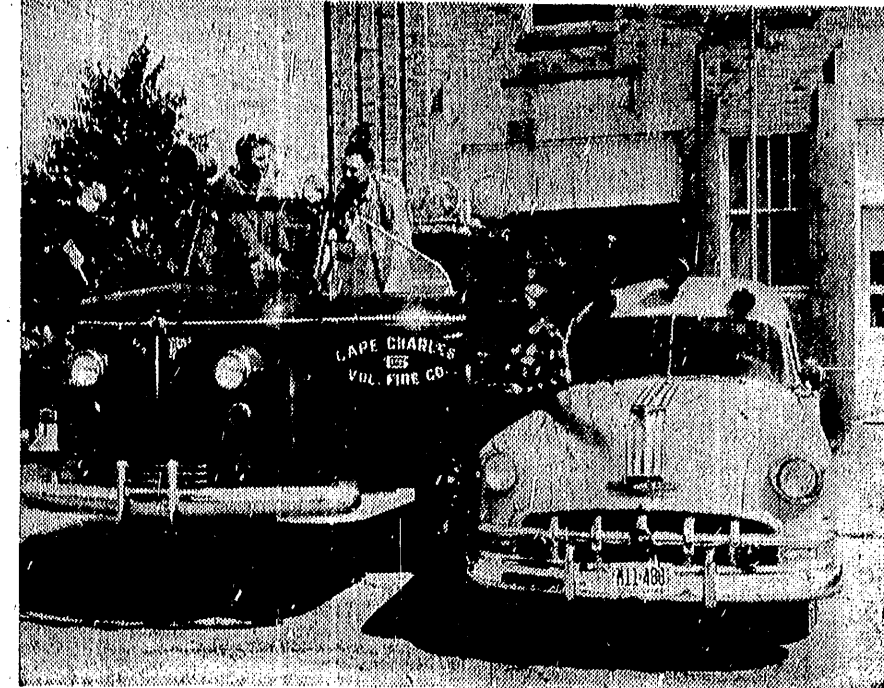
Oldtime railroad signal in the yards symbolizes PRR importance to town.



Crying his finny wares in a 'musical' fashion is Alonzo Moore, 74, with a fresh catch.



Decorating the white sands of the Cape Charles Beach are Mrs. Florence Masters and Mrs. Ruth Wainwright.



Fire Chief R. T. Barnes (center) is flanked by Firemen Frazier Hyler, Harry Batson with truck and ambulance.



Cape Charles Police Chief Jackson R. Jarvis (left) briefs Sherman Herries, Willis Mitchell, T. S. Gaskill.