



I. CRADOCK: HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE





This 1892 bird's eye view of Portsmouth shows commercial and military waterfront operations as well as the railway lines that served the port. The growth fueled by these activities spurred new residential development at the outer edges of the city which can also be seen in this view.

A. Brief Overview of the City and the Historic Districts

1. General Portsmouth History

The City of Portsmouth is a deepwater port located on the Elizabeth River in the Tidewater region of Virginia. It is considered a part of the harbor and population center known as Hampton Roads, the nation's thirty-third largest metropolitan statistical area. Its roots as a transportation center, a constant throughout the city's history, began when Adam Thoroughgood established a ferry connection between Portsmouth and Norfolk in 1636.

The town of Portsmouth was not formally established and platted until 1752 when Colonel William Crawford gave approximately 65 acres of his plantation land. Over the next 250 years, the city grew to its present size of 26 square miles. The first shipyard, "Gosport," was established south of town in 1767 and began Portsmouth's long association with naval history.

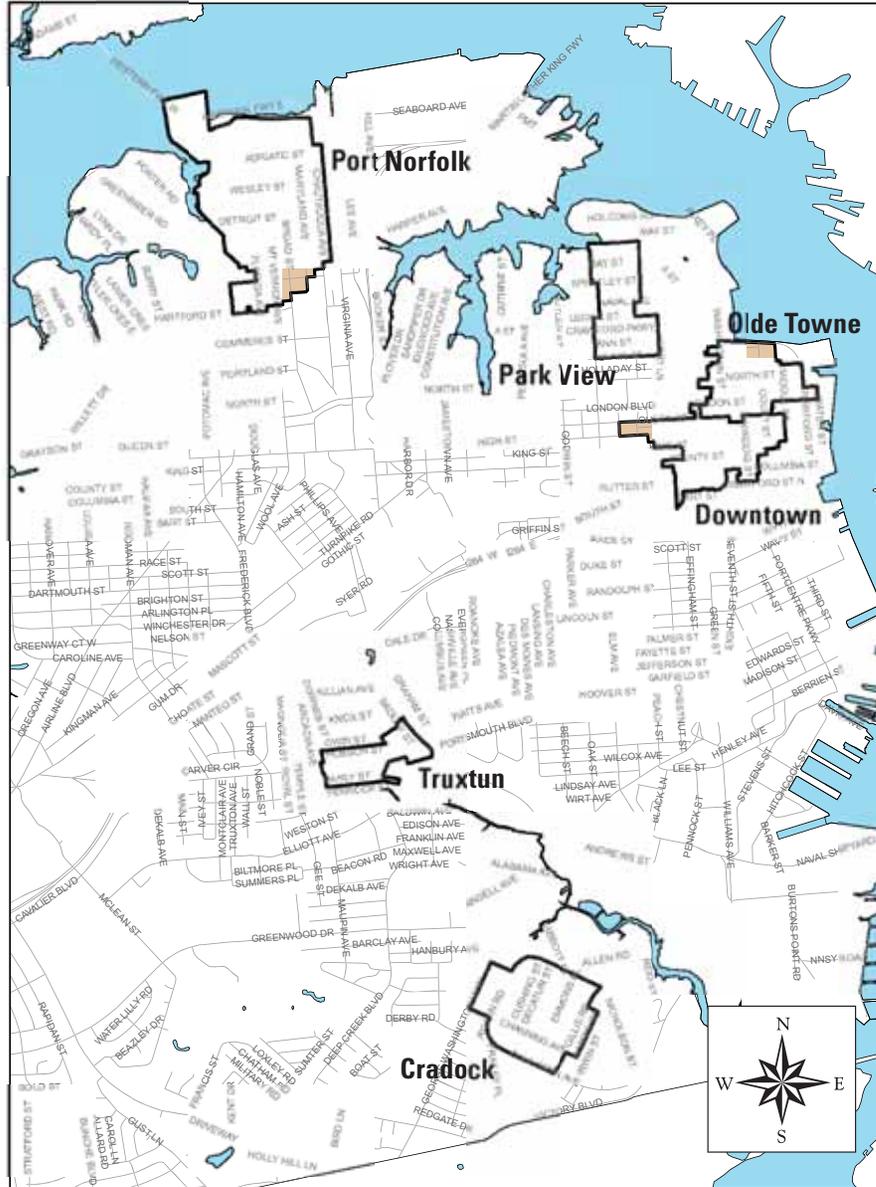
Named for the famed English port, Virginia's Portsmouth is home to many of the United States' maritime firsts. These include the first federal shipyard and dry dock in the nation and construction of the first ironclad ship,

first battleship, and first aircraft carrier. At least one source cites Portsmouth as having one of the greatest concentrations of architecturally significant buildings between Alexandria and Charleston. Portsmouth's current historic districts are representative of its long association with transportation and shipbuilding. Each represents an era in the development of this old and important Virginia city.



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Portsmouth's historic districts are distributed throughout the city. Olde Towne, Downtown, Park View and Port Norfolk are located close to the water in this port city. Cradock and Truxtun, the city's two planned developments for shipyard workers, were located on the outskirts of the city in the early twentieth century.



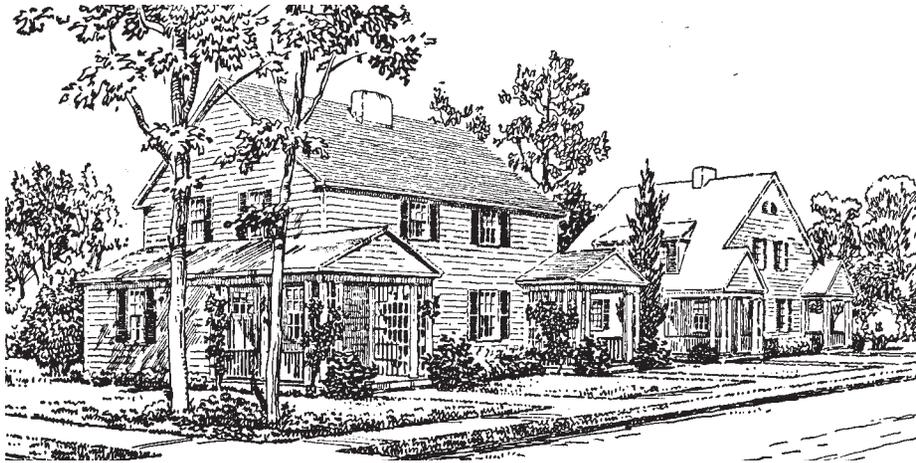
A. Brief Overview of the City and the Historic Districts *continued*

2. Portsmouth's Historic Districts

Olde Towne was the first established historic district in the city. It represents the town's earliest surviving history and is the only example of an early townscape in the Hampton Roads area. Portsmouth's other residential historic districts have their own stories to tell as well.

Port Norfolk and Park View were both developed in the closing years of the nineteenth century as Portsmouth assumed the position of a regional transportation center. These streetcar suburbs, built on former farmland, provided a healthful and attractive living condition for the middle-class workers involved in the growing shipping and railroad industries taking Virginia products to far-distant ports.

Cradock and Truxtun are the only twentieth century districts presently listed in Portsmouth and date to approximately 1918. Both were built as projects of the U.S. Housing Corporation to house shipyard workers during World War I. They are significant as they are among the first government-funded and planned communities in the country. The design concept of these districts reflect what we today call "new urbanism,"



This perspective view captures the village feel that was intended for the Cradock neighborhood.

a wholly contained community where residents could live, play, and shop within an easy commute of the workplace provided by public transportation.

The newest historic district in the city is the Downtown Portsmouth Historic District that encompasses the original town plat. Most of the buildings date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period of rapid growth for the city. Unlike the other listed districts that are residential in nature, this district is mainly commercial and anchored by the city's main street, High Street. The buildings in this district represent a variety of service-oriented uses and diversity of ethnicity and religion.

Individually listed properties also contribute to the overall understanding of the development and history of the city. Landmark religious and municipal institutions include Trinity Episcopal Church and the Old Portsmouth Courthouse. Those that represent Portsmouth's long marine and transportation history include Drydock Number One, the Portsmouth Naval Hospital and the Seaboard Coastline Building. More modern entertainment culture of the twentieth century is represented by the Commodore Theatre. These individual properties help to complete the picture of Portsmouth's past.



Cradock today retains much of its original character and architecture.



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The Cradock fire station was originally located at Afton Square in this shingle-clad structure.



The rental office for Cradock houses was located at Afton Square. Many of the new houses can be seen in the background.



Located at the corner of George Washington Boulevard and Afton Parkway, the Masonic Temple was an early element of the Cradock neighborhood.

B. Cradock Historic District Character

1. General Cradock History

The Cradock neighborhood was built in 1918 and named in honor of British Rear Admiral Sir Christopher G. F. W. Cradock whose fleet was sunk by the German Navy in 1914.

It was built on a 310-acre tract, formerly known as Afton Farm, three miles south of Portsmouth on Paradise Creek. It was connected to Portsmouth by a streetcar line leading directly to the shipyard. This line, in turn, was attached to the existing system that covered all of Portsmouth and its major suburbs, making Cradock part of an early mass transit system.

An Act of Congress in 1918 allowed the federal government to build housing projects related to the wartime effort. Accordingly, the United States Housing Corporation began planning Cradock since the adjacent city of Portsmouth was not equipped to handle the sudden increase in population due to the rapid influx of workers at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard during World War I.

Cradock was one of the first federally funded planned communities in the United States. Conceived as a self-contained pedestrian community, it incorporated many of the most advanced planning techniques of its day and is a direct predecessor of the current trend towards "new urbanism."

Most of the features of present-day planned communities, including recreational areas, churches, a commercial square, and a public transportation system, were provided for the residents of Cradock. With its own government-built schoolhouses, firehouse, sewerage and water system, and electric street lighting system, Cradock attempted self-government from the Armistice until 1922. It was then taken over by Norfolk County before becoming a part of the City of Portsmouth.

The Cradock National Register Historic District was established in 1974 and local review, according to the criteria established by the historic districts Zoning Ordinance, began in 1976.



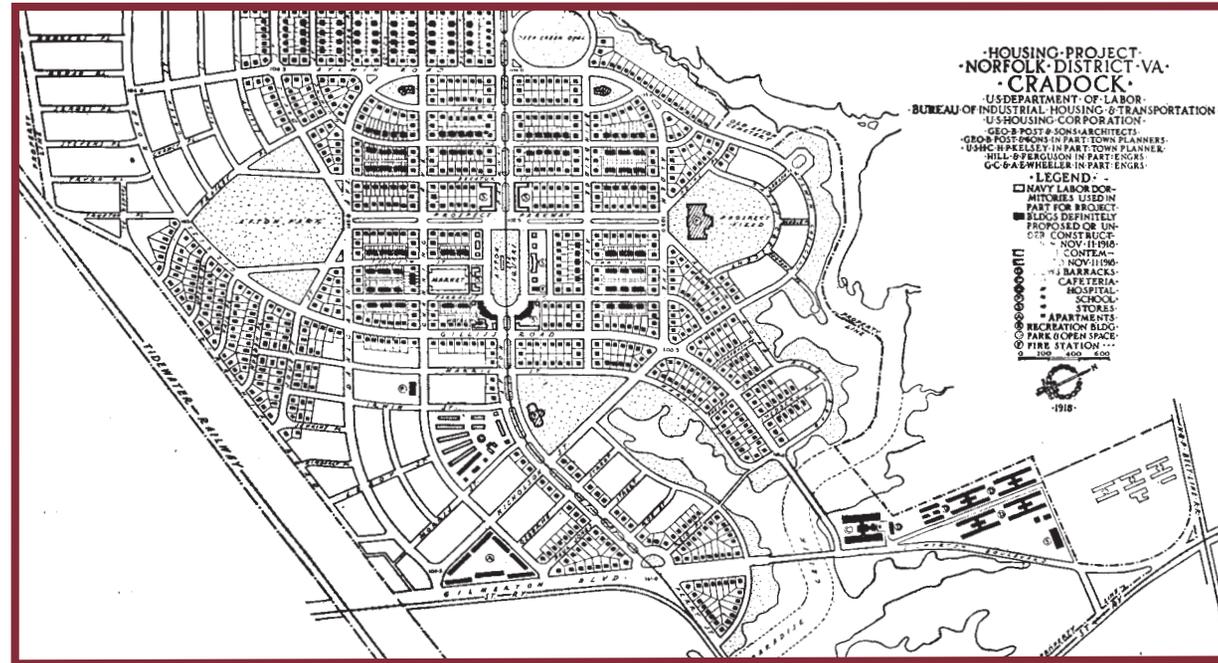
2. Streetscape Character

The Cradock Historic District is a well-defined planned neighborhood of 35 rectangular blocks. The district is bounded on the northeast by Alden Avenue, the southeast by Harris Road, the southwest by Dahlgren Avenue, and the northwest by George Washington Highway. The district's layout is based on the design of a ship's anchor. Afton Parkway forms the shank of the anchor, the curving arms are created by Alden and Dahlgren avenues, and the stock is represented by Gillis Road.

The district's two main thoroughfares, Afton and Prospect parkways, are divided streets with landscaped medians and intersect at the northwest terminus of the district's small, centralized commercial area – Afton Square. The cross-axial grid is created by these main parkways and filled in by narrow residential streets with street parking on both sides. Mature crepe myrtles punctuate planting strips on both sides of the major streets, and utility lines are concealed to the rear of the houses.

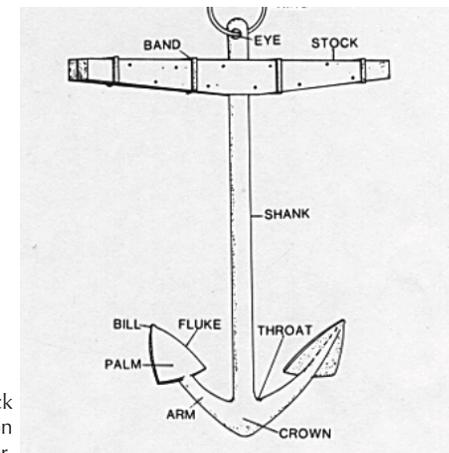
3. Site Character

Most house parcels in Cradock are single-family lots, 50-feet wide and of irregular depths due to the curving street pattern. Houses have a uniform, moderate setback and relatively narrow side yards. Most houses have concrete walkways leading



The site plan for Cradock as it appeared in a U.S. Department of Labor publication on the development of Cradock.

to the front door across well-kept lawns. Concrete ribbon driveways, sometimes shared, are also common. Plantings, when present, include evergreen foundation shrubs as well as a variety of deciduous trees. Smaller specimens are planted in some front yards and larger, more mature examples provide shade in the backyard of many houses.



The design for the Cradock neighborhood was based on that of an anchor.



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B. Cradock Historic District Character *continued*

4. Architectural Character

Of the original 1235 houses planned for Cradock, 759 were built before the Armistice ended shipbuilding activity in 1918. Designs for the single-family, duplex and row houses in Cradock were influenced by then-popular architectural styles such as English Cottage, Bungalow, Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial, and Tudor Revival.

There is a large variety in design and plan, with houses unified by the repetition of sloping roof lines and Colonial Revival features such as small-paned shuttered wooden windows, classically detailed porch posts and pedimented entry porticos. Most single-family homes consist of five to seven rooms, with five-room duplexes and six-room row houses.

Cradock was built in an efficient and cost-effective manner, and so it is the variety of house designs rather than the materials that provide its character and interest. The architect cleverly manipulated several stock designs to add variety to the street scene. Plans were

rotated on site and different entrance locations or porch designs were added to create the appearance of an entirely new house type. Most Cradock houses are frame structures covered in wood clapboard siding. Brick houses are rare as are those clad in shingles or stucco.

While the windows and doors of many of these houses may have been replaced over time, the openings retain their original configurations and ratio of wall to window and door area. Few roofs in the district retain their original diamond-patterned asbestos shingle roofs, however, new coverings have been applied to retain the original roof forms.



C. Cradock House Types

The appearance of the Cradock Historic District is defined by the use of a small number of house forms, sited closely together to create a village feel.

The repetition of simple Colonial Revival details, gable roof lines, and uniformly light colored houses with dark shutters unify the limited variety of house types without becoming monotonous.



Type 1: Side-gable roof with center entry and entrance porch.



Type 2: Side-gable roof with center entry and entrance porch. The second story of the facade is clad in board-and-batten siding.



Type 3: Side-gable roof with center entry and three-bay porch. The second story of the facade is clad in board-and-batten siding.



C. Cradock House Types
continued



Type 4: End-gable roof with side entry and entrance porch.



Type 5: End-gable roof with side entry and full-width porch.



Type 6: Side-gable roof with center entry and three-bay porch under main roof.



Type 7: Cross-gable roof with center entry and three-bay porch under main roof.



Type 8: Side-gable roof with center entry and full-width porch under main roof, continuous shed dormer above.



Type 9: Side-gable roof with center entry and full-width porch under main roof, joined dormers above.