

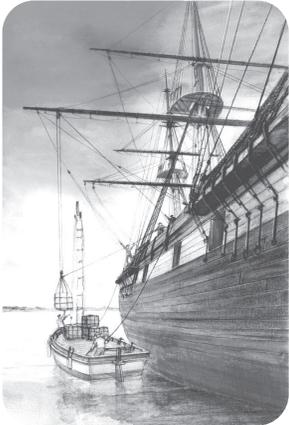


Portsmouth Village - For Kids



The Atlantic coast was a big part of trade in the 1800s. Ships carried food, clothes, and many other things all over the country and the world. Towns like Portsmouth Village were created to help this trade. These towns had warehouses to store trade goods and hospitals for sick sailors.

What is a Lightering Port?



Food, clothes, and many other goods were sent to North Carolina from other states and other countries. One of the fastest ways to send these goods was by ship.

Large, heavy ships carried goods across the ocean. But, these ships were too big to sail in the shallow water of North Carolina's sounds. To get the goods to the mainland, they had to be put on smaller boats. Moving goods from a large ship to a small boat is called lightering.

Portsmouth was a lightering port, which is where ships go to have their cargo moved to small boats. Some people in Portsmouth worked lightering cargo. Others owned warehouses where goods could be stored before being moved.

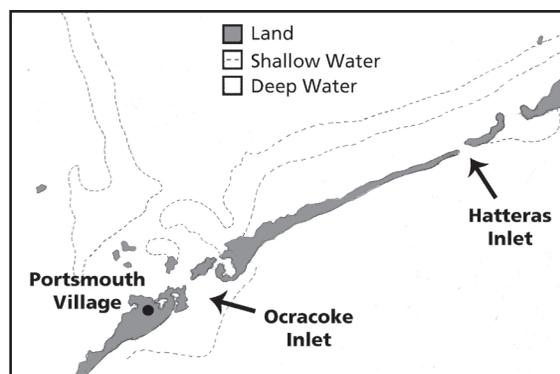


Portsmouth Village was built in 1753. It was built near Ocracoke Inlet. The village was a major state port for almost one hundred years. Many ships and goods were brought to the state using this inlet.

Changing Times

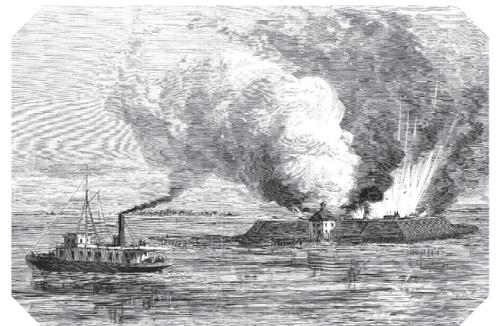
Barrier islands change shape and size all the time. Ocracoke Inlet started to fill up with sand. This made the inlet very shallow. It was hard for large ships to sail through the shallow water to Portsmouth.

In the mid-1800s, a new inlet opened near Cape Hatteras. This inlet was much deeper than the one at Ocracoke. Many ships used the new inlet instead of Ocracoke Inlet.



Sketch of the shallow and deep water at Ocracoke Inlet and Hatteras Inlet in 1862

Fifteen years later, the Civil War came to Portsmouth. Confederate troops were sent to the village and other places on the coast. The Union took over many of the forts north of Portsmouth. It seemed like they might attack Portsmouth, too. The soldiers decided to leave the village. Many of the villagers left, too.



Drawing of the destruction of Fort Ocracoke, a Civil War fort built in Ocracoke Inlet

When the war ended, some of the villagers chose not to come back. Ships used Hatteras Inlet more often now. There were not many shipping jobs in Portsmouth. Fishing was the most common job after the war.

The Village Today



Henry Piggot



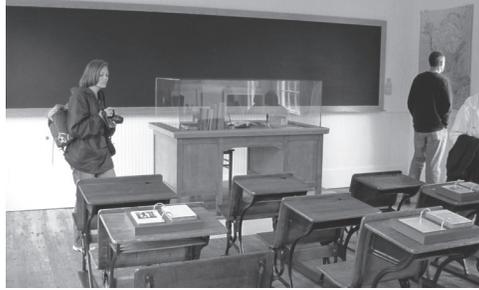
Elma Dixon (left) and her sister, Nora (right)

Henry Piggot, Elma Dixon, and Marian Babb were the only people who lived in the village in 1970. Henry died that year. With no way to get supplies, Elma and Marian left Portsmouth, too.

The village became a part of Cape Lookout National Seashore in 1976. Today, the village allows us to see what life was like in fishing towns and sea ports on the Outer Banks.

Places in Portsmouth

Some of the buildings in Portsmouth are open during the summer. Inside, displays tell the story of the lives of people who lived in this village.



School – All the kids in Portsmouth went to the same school. There was only one teacher in this school. The teacher had to teach kids of different ages and in different grade levels in one classroom.

In 1850, there could have been as many as 140 kids at the school at one time. But, more families moved away after each storm. By the time the school closed, there were only two students.



Life-Saving Station – This station was built in the late 1890s. The men who worked at this station were called Surfmen. They would look for shipwrecks from the watch tower and by walking on the beach.

These Surfmen would risk their lives to save strangers from sinking ships. They practiced every day. That way, they would be ready when someone was in trouble.



Henry Piggot House – This house once belonged to Rose Ireland. She was born a slave but was later freed. She worked as a midwife, doctor, and nurse. She also worked at the mill. Like many people in Portsmouth, Rose caught fish and oysters to feed her family and to sell at the market.

Rose's grandson, Henry Piggot, brought the mail ashore from the mail boat. The house is furnished the way it would have been when Henry was alive.



Post Office and General Store – Mail and supplies were brought to the town by boat. People in Portsmouth picked up their mail and bought food and other goods at the post office. The store was small, but people could have other items sent to them by mail.

But, the post office was more than just a place to send mail and buy groceries. It was a place for people to get together and talk with friends.

On Your Visit

Six buildings are open in the spring, summer, and fall. These buildings are the Visitor Center, Church, School, Post Office, Life-Saving Station, and Henry Piggot House. The other houses and buildings are closed.



Theodore and Annie Salter House Visitor Center

There is a ferry in Ocracoke, NC, which can take people to the village. Cars are not allowed in the village.



Portsmouth is known for its mosquitoes. Be sure to bring bug spray. You will also need drinking water, food, sunscreen, a hat, good walking shoes, and a trash bag.