

Script for Southampton County

Slide 2: Southampton County

Southampton County is located along the Virginia/North Carolina Border and is centered around the Blackwater and Nottoway Rivers. The County is a mostly rural area whose principal towns include Courtland and Boykins. A number of smaller towns/communities such as Ivor, Newsoms, Capron, Sedley, and Sebrell are spread about the County. Agriculture and forestry are the principal industries and most of the modern development has taken place around the City of Franklin.

Slide 3: This is a map of Southampton County dating to 1895.

Slide 4: Native Americans to 1607

Human occupation of the Tidewater Region extends more than ten thousand years ago. Native Americans such as the Nottoway and Meherrin Tribes had established villages and both hunted and farmed the land for food. Eventually the land that they occupied became attractive the fur traders, farmers, and Europeans. As time progressed, the European settlers forced the Indians onto reservations near Courtland. This caused a period of warfare and open hostility between the Natives and the Europeans. As would be expected, there are no above-ground physical remains from this early period.

Slide 5: This is the John Smith Map of 1612

Slide 6: European Settlement to Society 1607-1750

The years 1607 to 1750 was a period marked by the exploration of the Colonies and a rapid expansion westward. Colonists began to cultivate tobacco and other food crops, as the desire to live on plantations and farmsteads rather than in settled towns increased. As settlement expanded, relations between the colonists and the Native Americans deteriorated leading to a series of Indian uprisings. In 1749 Southampton County was formed.

Slide 7: Architecture 1607-1750

There are very few buildings constructed prior to 1750 which survive in Southampton today. Early architecture of this area consisted of traditional or vernacular patterns brought over from Europe. Small farmstead dwellings were modest rectangular one or two room house plans, with a loft. On the opposite end of the spectrum were the large, grandiose plantation houses. Most were modeled after English Colonial or Georgian style however these homes did not represent the average dwelling found in Southampton. Additionally, this period allowed for the introduction of hallways and central passage/side passage plans or I-houses, allowing for privacy and designation of single purpose rooms.

Slide 8:

The photograph in the upper left corner is of Clements. This home is thought to be the earliest surviving structure from the Colonial Period. Built sometime after 1710, it takes its plan from the colonial post-medieval English style brick houses. It has massive brick walls with gabled dormer windows.

The photograph in the upper right corner is of Riverview Farm. It is a Georgian style plantation two story house built circa 1716 and clad with brick in 1960.

The bottom photograph is of Beechwood. The original portion of the house consisted of one-room and was one-story tall and was built sometime between 1722-1756. Additions would be added in 1814 and 1860.

Slide 9: Colony to Nation 1750-1789

In 1752 the first permanent court building was constructed in Courtland. The principal business of the County was to order the construction of roads, bridges, ferries and taverns. The growth of the County continued as farmers engaged in grain farming and raising cattle and hogs however, tobacco still remained an important cash crop. Then in 1775 the Revolutionary War began. Southampton was affected minimally, as opposed to Tidewater region and after the war, residents continued to develop the agricultural and forest economy of the County.

Slide 10: Architecture 1750-1789

The majority of the large colonial houses were often constructed in variations of the dominant Georgian style (simple one or two story box, two rooms deep, varied roof lines, cornice with decorative molding, doors and windows in strict symmetry). One-story shed roof extensions were typically added on the rear to provide more space as needed. Full-width, shed-roofed front porches became universal and service functions, like kitchens were housed in separate buildings located near the main house as dependencies.

Slide 11:

The photograph in the upper left corner is of Rotherwood. This is a large two-story Georgian house built circa 1748. There are a number of outbuildings located around the main dwelling, some of which still survive today.

The photograph in the upper right corner is of the Simmons-Sebrell Camp House. Built in 1770, this two-story Italianate house originally consisted of a smaller two story home which was expanded upon in 1858 and then again in 2002 to its current appearance. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The bottom photograph is the Rebecca Vaughn House. This property is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This one-and-one-half story house was built circa 1775. The house played a role in the Nat Turner rebellion and in 2004 it was moved to Courtland where it is currently undergoing extensive rehabilitation.

Slide 12:

The photograph on the left is of the Catslide House, This house dates to 1770. The back portion of the roof slopes, coming down farther than the front portion of the roof similar to a New England saltbox. The house was remodeled in the 1920s after a Craftsman Style home, obscuring its eighteenth century appearance.

The photograph on the right is the John Whitfield House. The original structure was one-and-one half story frame dwelling. The kitchen which was built in 1765 (far left of the building) makes it one of the oldest structures in the County. A two-story addition was constructed in 1896 and the original section became a kitchen ell.

Slide 13: Early National Period 1789-1830

The last decade of the 18th century found Southampton County well on its way to becoming a mature, well settled community. The basis for economy of the County was grain, some tobacco, fruits, hogs, cotton, and timber related products. The early national period saw an increased population among whites and slaves which was the exact opposite of the population of the Tidewater region. During the early 1800's the great slavery debate was heating up involving such issues as gradual emancipation, repatriation, and a variety of slave revolts. The Southampton landscape in the years 1790 to 1830 appears to have been different form the pattern that developed in the older Virginia counties to the north and east. While there were large landholdings in Southampton, most of the land was owned by mid-level farmers and planters.

Slide 14: Architecture 1789-1830

1789 to 1830 brought a new development of house patterns and styles centered around new concepts or ideas about formality, proposition, style and the emergence of classical themes such as Greek Revival, Colonial, Classical and Colonial Revival style houses. The majority of slaves and poor whites lived in small frame houses, most of which were dependencies on larger plantations. There are a number of middle income housing that exists from this period many of which were smaller homes which have been expanded upon.

Slide 15:

The photograph in the upper left is of the Mahone Tavern. This is a Colonial Revival style dwelling built in 1796. The two story entry porch dominates the front façade with four colossal posts. It is one of the oldest structures in Courtland

The photograph in the upper right is of Harts Tavern. Located next door to the Mahone Tavern, this is a Colonial Revival I-house with a rear ell built in 1820. It was once connected to the Mahone Tavern by a passageway.

The bottom photograph is of the Rochelle House. This Colonial House was built in 1800. The original house consists of the one-and-one-half story wing located on the left side of the dwelling. A two-story section was added in 1827. Although the house has undergone renovations in 2004, the simple white frame house has changed little since the turn of the nineteenth century.

Slide 16:

The photograph in the upper left is of Aspen Lawn. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this Early Republic style house was built circa 1798.

The photograph in the upper right is of the William Drewry House. This Greek Revival home was built in 1825 and is one of the older and larger homes in the County. There are three later additions on the rear.

The bottom photograph is of the Emma Jackson House. This is a vacant hall-parlor house that likely dates to 1810. It is a typical example of a farm dwelling from the nineteenth century.

Slide 17: Antebellum Period/Civil War 1830-1865

In 1830 the population of Southampton County was almost evenly split between whites and African American slaves and freeman. Agriculture was the principal occupation of land holding population and diversified farming and crop rotation had been established by 1830. Near the beginning of this period, unrest in the slave community brought of the bloodiest events in the history of the county. On August 21, 1831, a Southampton County slave and preacher Nat Turner initiated a slave rebellion. The insurrection was a catalyst for the establishment of strict laws restricting the freedom and rights of both free and enslaved African Americans. Southampton County had one of the earliest railroads with the establishment of the Portsmouth and Roanoke line in 1834. Then in 1861, the Civil War began with Southampton helping the Confederates.

Slide 18: Architecture 1830-1865

The domestic architecture reflected the economic status of the landowner. Smaller hall and parlor type houses were utilized from earlier periods often with later, two story additions. The Greek Revival style house was popular among the more affluent population. Most of these style homes have large entry porches with prominent square posts or round columns with capitals. Another architectural style popular during this period was the Early Classical Revival. This form basically builds upon the Georgian and Federal styles with an entry porch or portico that dominates the front façade and is supported by four classic columns.

Slide 19:

The photograph in the upper left is of the Benjamin Pope Homestead. This two-story Classical Revival mansion was constructed in the 1840s. It features a classical two-story shallow-pedimented gabled front porch supported by four colossal columns.

The photograph in the upper right is the Berlin School. This is one of the few remaining mid-19th century school buildings in the County. It is a fairly rare Classical Revival school building because it is two-stories tall, rather than the normal one-story, one-room type school.

The bottom photograph is of the Pope Prince House. Constructed in 1847, this Greek Revival home consists of two hip-roof I-houses connected by a gable roof hyphen, which forms an H. The additions do not detract from its historic nature.

Slide 20:

The photograph in the upper left is of Gus's Corner. This Colonial tenant house was built in 1850. The property was part of the Pretlow Family and an African American farmer, who was named Gus lived here.

The photograph in the upper right is of the Porter House. This two-story Greek Revival house was built in 1850

The bottom photograph is of the Peter Edwards House. This is also a two-story, Greek Revival style house which was constructed in 1860. The house was originally built in 1790 but was burned and later rebuilt completely in 1860.

All of these properties are currently vacant and in a severely deteriorated condition. The Richard Porter House and the Peter Edwards House are associated with the Nat Turner Rebellion.

Slide 21: Reconstruction 1865-1880

Reconstruction in Southampton County brought stability and progress despite the loss of free agricultural labor. In 1872, the county began its first comprehensive school system. The peanut industry flourished during the 1870's. The Pretlow Peanut Company of Franklin had one of the first peanut checking plants in the area. Additionally, the railroad continued to be a significant economic factor in the County.

Slide 22: Architecture 1865-1880

The period 1865 to 1880 accounted for a number of popular Victorian architectural styles. Second Empire style homes were predominately found in cities and towns. Two other popular forms were the Gothic Revival house which had a steeply pitched roof with decorative gable verge boards and the Italianate buildings which had a low-pitched hipped roof with overhanging eaves decorated with brackets, sometimes a cupola or tower.

Slide 23:

The photograph on the left is of the Simmons Home Farm. The Greek Revival dwelling dates to 1869 and is one of the largest one-story houses in the County.

The photograph on the right is of Sunnyside. This large brick post-bellum Georgian Hangover style home was built in 1870. The enclosed second floor balcony lessens the historic integrity of the structure.

Slide 24: Growth 1880-1900

A good part of the growth of towns and commerce in the area was a result of the construction of the Atlantic and Danville Railroad 1888. By 1900, the total number of acres devoted to peanut production had nearly doubled and the second largest growing industry in the County was lumber.

Slide 25: Architecture 1880-1900

Style most often observed from 1880 to 1900 is the vernacular Victorian which was adapted into existing traditional building styles such as the I-house. Other styles of this period include the Victorian Queen Anne house which featured steeply pitched roofs with irregular shapes, a dominant front-facing gabled roof, patterned shingles, bay windows, and decorative turned spindles. Also the Richardsonian Romanesque was popular in cities and larger towns. Romanesque styled homes featured hipped roofs, round towers with conical roofs, rounded arches over windows, and constructed of stone and/or rough masonry.

Slide 26:

The photograph on the left is of the Captain Pretlow House/Farm. This is a late Victorian style I-house dating to the 1870s. The farm includes a number of original 19th century outbuildings. There is a unique star shaped detailing on the front porch of the main dwelling as well as an impressive open stair hall.

The photograph on the right is of the Feltz House. Built in 1890, this is a good example of a Queen Anne Style house. There is a turret and full width porch with decorative brackets. This house has more decoration than similar ones found in the area.

Slide 27: Modern Southampton 1900-1950

Four Railroad lines were servicing Southampton County by 1957. As a result new communities and towns sprung up and developed in and around the railroad lines. Agriculture was still the primary economic activity in the county however other major industries such as peanuts, lumbar and paper manufacturing, and concrete and pallet companies took shape.

Slide 28: Architecture 1900-1950

The architecture of modern Southampton includes “Four Square” homes which usually have a hipped or pyramidal roof. Bungalows and Craftsman style homes were popular because of their affordability. These homes featured low pitched roofs that were either side-or-front gabled, they have exposed rafter feet, and tapered porch piers. Modern housing after 1935 included ranch houses, split levels, and contemporary style homes.

Slide 29:

The photograph in the upper left is of a house located at 22160 Main Street. This Bungalow/Craftsman house has an integral porch, battered square posts on piers, a front shed dormer and exposed rafter feet.

The photograph in the upper right is of the Wakefield School. This is a small, one-story school house which was built in the 1920s after the Colonial Revival style.

The photograph on the bottom is of the Joyner Store, This two-story, commercial style, structure was fabricated with stone bricks left over from the Stonewall Hotel in Franklin. The property dates to the 1940s and is the only commercial structure in Burdette.

Slide 30: Survey and Documentation Priorities

To continue to survey and document historic properties within city limits, to develop comprehensive cultural resources management plan that integrates archeology, the built environment, historic landscapes, and other cultural/historical elements. To evaluate and nominate properties and districts for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. To integrate other cultural resource studies into planning efforts, including archeological investigations, oral histories and to promote private and public donations to the municipal archives.

Slide 31: Preservation Planning Priorities

The following are preservation planning priorities. The Office of Planning should consider effects to historic resources in reviewing subdivision applications. Historic resources GIS layers should be periodically updated. Preservation planners should promote adaptive re-use of historic buildings when feasible. They should also promote the use and applicability of state and federal tax credits for rehabilitation of significant historic properties. There should be an integration of historic preservation plans within city or county comprehensive planning. Finally, there should be the evaluation of the feasibility and public support of historic preservation ordinances.