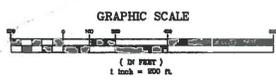
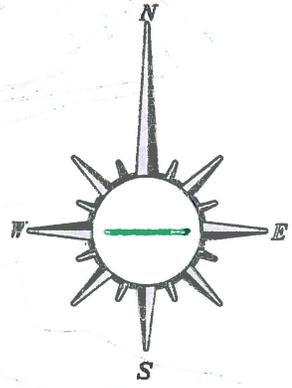


*A BRIEF HISTORY OF FIGHTING CREEK PARK  
POWHATAN COUNTY, VIRGINIA  
1986-2005*



*John M. Kerr  
Powhatan County Historical Society  
September 17, 2005*

**Powhatan County Public Library  
2270 Mann Road  
Powhatan Va 23139  
(804) 598-5670**



**LEGEND**

- |   |                     |   |                   |   |                 |
|---|---------------------|---|-------------------|---|-----------------|
|  | YOUTH BASEBALL      |  | SHELTER           |  | SOCCER/FOOTBALL |
|  | CONCESSION/RESTROOM |  | BASKETBALL        |  | TENNIS          |
|  | SOFTBALL            |  | VOLLEYBALL        |  | TRAIL           |
|  | PLAYGROUND          |  | OUTDOOR CLASSROOM |  | COVERED BRIDGE  |
|   |                     |  | MARSHWALK         |  | EXISTING HOUSES |
|   |                     |   |                   |  | SKATE ZONE      |

*A BRIEF HISTORY OF FIGHTING CREEK PARK  
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The United States Federal Census of 1990 indicated that the population of Powhatan County, Virginia, had increased from 12,000 in 1980 to 15,000. This indicated a growth rate of 25%. Furthermore, the *2000 Virginia Abstract* prepared for the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia projected that Powhatan County would be “the fastest growing county in the Commonwealth 2000-2010.” Prediction of continued population growth over the next decade and beyond concerned many of the residents of a county that at that time received only 4% of its revenue from industrial and commercial sources. An increasing population would require many upgrades in facilities, and place an increasing strain upon the ability of local government to provide community and recreational services to its citizens. In addition, the standards set forth by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Historical Resources recommended that 230 acres of recreational land use was needed for the projected population of 23,000 anticipated by the year 2000. Considering the fact that no county recreation park facility existed at that time, there was an increasing concern over “quality of life” requirements.

A series of events and coincidences would result in a unique venture that would involve a number of groups with similar needs and goals of upgrading existing facilities. Beginning in the mid-1980s, local Powhatan Youth Athletic Association leaders began to express concern over the potential shortage of playing fields for the children of Powhatan County. One individual, Charlie Green, a member of the Powhatan Recreation Committee, had approached the Board of Supervisors on several occasions requesting increased funding in order to create additional athletic venues. Although sympathetic to the needs of the program, the Board was unable to provide the type of funding required. Mr. Green decided to enlist the support of others with the same concerns. On January 26, 1986, he persuaded three other youth activity advocates, Larry Adams, Ernie Goins, and Powhatan High School head football and baseball coach, Bob Baltimore, to visit a newly created facility called Dorey Park, located in the Varina area of nearby Henrico County. They videotaped the park features, with special attention to the athletic fields and recreational areas. They hoped that the tape would show how a park located in a primarily rural area was feasible. The video was presented to the Board of Supervisors, and slowly, the concept of a comprehensive community park began to emerge.

Meanwhile, other seemingly unrelated civic needs began to arise. The Army National Guard had published a list of existing armories located throughout the state that were outdated and slated to be closed. At that time, the Powhatan War Memorial Building was the second oldest facility in the state still in use, and headed the list of structures in need of replacement. Company A of the 276<sup>th</sup> Engineers was informed to expect relocation. Amelia County was prepared to offer land for the construction of a new Armory. Powhatan was faced with the prospect of losing a part of its heritage dating back to the "Guard of the Commonwealth" component of the "Richmond Grays" established in Powhatan in 1844. At the same time, another group of citizens had been lobbying county leaders for twenty years to approve creation of a new library which would replace the inadequate facility located in the rear of the annex of the Village Building in the Courthouse. Other facilities in need of replacement or upgrade included the animal shelter located on Old Plantation Road, a sewage facility on the site of the Powhatan High School along Old Buckingham Road, and the District #1 Fire Station of the Powhatan Volunteer Fire Department located at Mann and Old Buckingham Roads.

Faced with so many needs, the county began to look at the concept of a comprehensive site plan with more interest. The next step to be considered was finding a suitable site where these facilities could be consolidated. Although there was much land available for such a project, site selection would have to be carefully considered. One suggestion was to develop the Wildlife Management area located in the western end of the county. The state quickly rejected that idea, unwilling to consider any change in that land's designation. Since a potential site was to be primarily recreational, and service oriented in nature, it should be located centrally and preferably near the village area. The desire for improved sewage, commercial development and fire protection only added to that consideration. The process then began to narrow down to a mostly wooded, approximately 220 acre tract of land located just west of the village area in the Fighting Creek watershed off of Route 13, just south of Route 60 at Mann Road. The land located there had traditionally been used for timber and agriculture and was essentially undeveloped. The major expenses facing the county were land acquisition, road construction and the building of a new library.

A number of families were historically associated with the land, including, such familiar local names as Rosson, Cox, Brauer, and Harris. A small parcel at the proposed entrance of the park was owned by the Fire Company, and the remainder of the land was already owned by the county. Total land acquisition for the project would ultimately cost the county \$220,000. Land at the southeastern corner of the park property was originally known as the St. John Place. The homestead there pre-dated the village of Scottville (1777). The house had long since fallen in and only remnants of the chimney remain. At one time a road ran from the present Rescue Squad grounds to the St. John home, and then further west to where it joined the original Old Plantation Road. Old Plantation Road extended along the western boundary of the Park and came out onto Old Buckingham Road just east of the current Junior High School site. A structure once located there was known as Owens Store.

Once all property had been secured, The Timmons Group of Richmond was retained for the purpose of submitting a park “master plan.” A proposal for the area was then presented to the Board of Supervisors. Sections of the land would be set aside for construction of a new armory, library, fire station, animal shelter, sewage plant, nature trails, and athletic fields. A road near the existing fire station was then cut through the property. Most of the pine was cleared and the lumber was sold to offset some costs to the county. The hardwoods were left intact. Through the first of several grants obtained by County Administrator Steve Owen, and with the cooperation of the Virginia Department of Military Affairs, work was begun in 1995.

Soon the “Fighting Creek” project required a name. Among the suggestions were: Five Bridge Park, Triple Trail Park, Harmony Park, Friendship Park, Amity Park, Unity Park, Oak Park, Oakwood Forest Park, Maplewood Park, Eco Park, Tomahawk Park, and Trails Head Park. However, because of historic significance and common use of the term, Fighting Creek became the official designation.

The name Fighting Creek is among the earliest land tracts mentioned in Powhatan history, listed as early as 1715. The name was researched for Planning Director Paul Grasiewicz by Powhatan County Historian, Margaret Palmore. According to Mrs. Palmore, “The site had an excellent water supply; Osage orange trees, which were valued highly by the Indians, were plentiful, and there was an abundance of game. This made it a coveted spot and tribes often fought over it.” Hence, it became known as “Fighting” Creek. Other early sources cite early battles between the Genitoes and other tribes such as the Iroquois who often sent war parties into the area.

Along with naming the park, suggestions were offered to name the road that would wind through the site. Again, several names were considered. These included: Fighting Creek Parkway, Fighting Creek Park Road, Park Parkway, Parkway Road, County Park Road, County Parkway, Village Park Road, Village Parkway, and Mann Road. Since Mann Road was already the “connector” to the park entrance from Route 60, it seemed logical to keep the name on the road that ran through the Old Buckingham Road intersection.



As the master plan began to take shape, Powhatan had another advocate in Mr. Joseph Elton, a local resident who was, at that time, and is still Director of Virginia's State Parks. Mr. Elton shared his expertise in an advisory capacity to the project. With cooperation from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (Virginia Outdoors Fund), he was able to help the County Administration obtain a \$100,000 grant for roads, nature trails, playground equipment, and soccer fields. The Federal government, through a Pentagon-approved "training exercise," then authorized Company A of the 276<sup>th</sup> Engineers to construct the soccer fields.



As previously mentioned, a small piece of land at the proposed entrance to the park at Mann Road was owned by the Volunteer Fire Company. At that time, new federal safety mandates on fire fighting equipment had essentially required larger apparatus. This made the existing bays at the facility too small to house the trucks. In exchange for the land that the county needed, the Fire Company received a new facility at the park entrance. The \$750,000 structure was completed and opened in the spring of 2003.



Meanwhile, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality had declared that the existing Sewage Treatment Facility near the Powhatan High School was also inadequate and had to be replaced. A new treatment plant was built at the end of Old Plantation Road, at the edge of the park property. The new plant was built to provide additional capacity and to be expandable to treat 100,000 gallons of wastewater, thus insuring adequate service for a projected growing commercial presence along the Route 60 corridor. It was opened and operational in November of 2000. The nearby old Animal Shelter was razed and replaced by a new facility which opened in 2002.



The largest buildings scheduled for the Park were the Powhatan County Library, and the Armory. The Armory construction was begun in February of 2000. The project was completed in October 2001 at a cost of \$3.9 million dollars to the Federal and State governments, which contributed 75% and 25% of the costs respectively. The county donated 10 acres of the parkland taken from the Brauer family tract. In addition to training facilities for the Virginia Army National Guard, the 31,600 square foot building included meeting rooms to be made available to community groups. The American Legion, Powhatan Post #201, is an example of a local organization that uses the Armory for its monthly meetings.



The library groundbreaking ceremony occurred in August of 2000 and the formal dedication ceremony was celebrated in November of 2001. The cost to the county was \$2.1 million. The architectural firm of Tymoff and Moss called the woodland site of the 16,000 square foot structure “the most spectacular they had ever been involved with.” The library was designed with a capacity of 60,000 volumes.



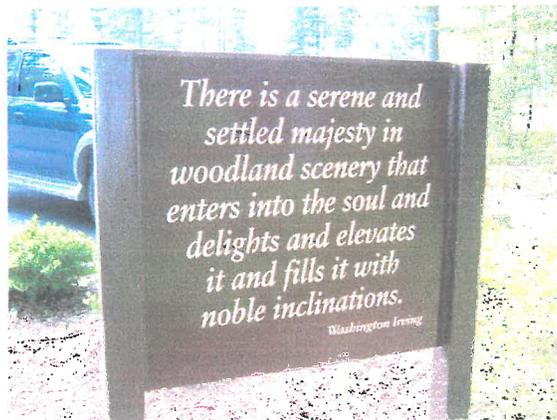
An additional project also began to enter into the comprehensive plan as early as January, 1999. A Powhatan YMCA building had long been the dream of Elizabeth Randolph Lewis, wife of long-time Commonwealth Attorney Jack Lewis. The YMCA had been providing services to the Powhatan community for a number of years and had long considered building within the county. A number of feasibility studies had indicated that such a facility would be viable. The land situated directly across the road from the new library was selected for the project and donated by the County. Mr. and Mrs. Lewis then spearheaded a community fund-raising project to complete the \$2.66 million dollar complex. Groundbreaking took place in the spring of 2003. Today, the 10,500 square foot facility proudly bears her name. Sadly, Mrs. Lewis died in 2001 before she could see the final result, but through the efforts of her family and the commitment of many friends within the community, the project became a reality. The formal dedication occurred in June, 2004.

Other structures of note within the park, including a covered footbridge which spans Fighting Creek, are located behind the library. The bridge was an Eagle Scout Project submitted by Zach Burkhart and was completed in December 2000 with the help of local business and volunteers. It has become an “unofficial” symbol of the park, and is part of the nature trail which winds through the area. Other facilities that have been built to enhance the park in that area include the Huguenot Ruritan Shelter, the Jacob McDaniels Eagle Scout project shelter, the Helen Pearson Sensory Garden (an Eagle Scout project of Brian Chicoki, with the help of the Goochland-Powhatan Master Gardener Association), the playground behind the library (which includes apparatus that can accommodate children with special needs) and the soccer field concession shelter. The sign at the park entrance listing the main park facilities was constructed in 2005, and the flower beds also located at the park entrance were planted by the Civic Beautification Committee of the Powhatan Garden Club in 2003.





The park today, serves a community of 25,000 and is still not fully completed. As the population and industrial/commercial tax base (now 14%) grow, so will the park facilities. Future plans call for a lake, a skate park, baseball and softball diamonds, volleyball and basketball courts, and an outdoor classroom. Between 30 and 35% of the land is still designated as “passive” recreation, to remain undeveloped for future generations. Residents of Powhatan County can be justifiably proud of the result of the vision and cooperation of numerous individuals and community groups. There are approximately 3,100 counties throughout the United States; it is unlikely that most can match the degree of cooperation between public and private interests exhibited in this project.



I wish to acknowledge the many individuals and groups who contributed to this history project. They include Bob Baltimore, Bill Boelt, Carolyn Cios, Mary Kay Gates, Mary Harrison, Roy Harrison, Kurt Hildebrand, Laura Kerr, Steve Owen, Peggy Palmore, Editors, and Staff of *Powhatan Today*, the Powhatan County Historical Society, Penny Reams, Rick Thomas, and The Timmons Group.



## Family Day at Fighting Creek Park

# FREE

Saturday, Sept 17; 10 am – 3 pm

You are cordially invited to join us on Family Day at the Park as we formally dedicate Fighting Creek Park and continue the day by recognizing those Powhatan resources that protect, educate and entertain our children. This is a project hosted by the County Administrator's office and the Powhatan Lions Club.

There will be no cost to the participants, except food that will be available. The day is being underwritten by the Powhatan Lions.

Activities will include demonstrations by the Sheriff's Department, the Firefighters and many of the extra curricular activities available in the county. There will be moon walks, a tumble bus, clowns and face painting by the Red Hatters, as well as traditional festival activities like 3 legged races hosted by the Powhatan Leos, a high school service club.

There will be craft tables for children and adults alike, hosted by groups like the Junior Women's Club, the Powhatan Health Department and Cartwheels.

There will be a presentation by the Powhatan Historical Society, documenting the development of the Park, and presentations by the YMCA and the Powhatan Library.

Ongoing during the day will be demonstrations by local dance, gymnastic, and cheerleading groups and a special dog trial demonstration.

We encourage you to come out and bring your children and grandchildren as we celebrate the community we call home.

For information call:  
Ray Dewey 378-0680

