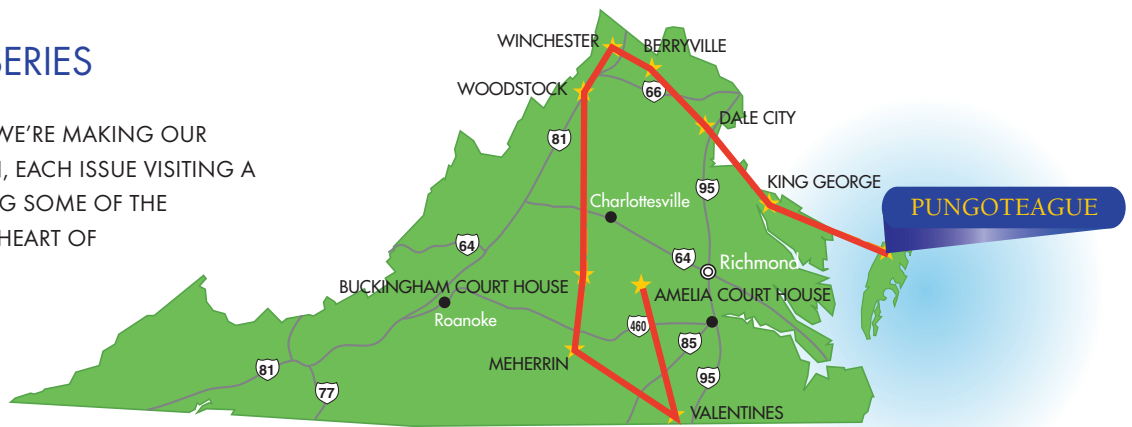


DOWN HOME SERIES

AGAIN IN THE YEAR 2010, WE'RE MAKING OUR WAY AROUND THE REGION, EACH ISSUE VISITING A SMALL TOWN AND MEETING SOME OF THE FOLKS WHO MAKE UP THE HEART OF ELECTRIC CO-OP COUNTRY. ON THIS FINAL STOP, WE'LL BE ...



DOWN HOME IN

PUNGOTEAGUE

Story and photos by Candy Farlow, Contributing Writer

Virginia's Eastern Shore — that narrow strip of land between the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean — is best known for Chincoteague ponies, wildlife refuges, Assateague National Seashore, incredible seafood and rocket launches from NASA's Wallops Island.

What is lesser known are the numerous hidden treasures, the tiny villages and towns found along the roads less traveled.

St. George's Church in Pungoteague is a registered National Historic Landmark. The communion chalice and paten set still in use by the congregation was a gift from Queen Elizabeth I. (Inset) A historic marker in the village designates the site of the first play performed in America.

One of these is the village of Pungoteague, an unincorporated area pretty much in the middle of the Virginia peninsula's bayside.

SMALL SIZE, BIG HISTORY

Though small in size, Pungoteague is big in history. The name itself is a derivative of the Indian term "Pungotekw,"

which means Sand Fly River and is the name used by the earliest inhabitants. By the early 1600s, that Native American population had been greatly supplemented by European settlers.

Among them was one Anthony Hodgkins. Mr. Hodgkins seems to have been canny enough to capitalize on a lucrative opportunity. A presiding justice, Hodgkins was among those assigned to Pungoteague when the county court began meeting there in 1640. He also quickly became the first licensed keeper of an ordinary on the Eastern Shore, and his tavern provided for him well until his death.

One of the more notable cases heard by the county court while it was still seated in Pungoteague resulted from a historic event.

It was a Saturday afternoon in late summer of 1665 when William Darby and two of his friends dared present a play at Folkes Tavern. Entitled *The Bear and the Cub*, this drama is believed to have been the first theater performance in the New World.

However, it opened — and closed — to less-than-rave reviews after one member of the audience, John Martin, deemed it indecent.

Ultimately, charges were brought against Darby and his cohorts and they were ordered to repeat the performance for the court. Apparently the justices were more inclined as patrons than the accuser and pronounced the defendants not guilty. Martin was ordered to pay all the court costs, including board for Darby, who had been held in jail while awaiting trial.



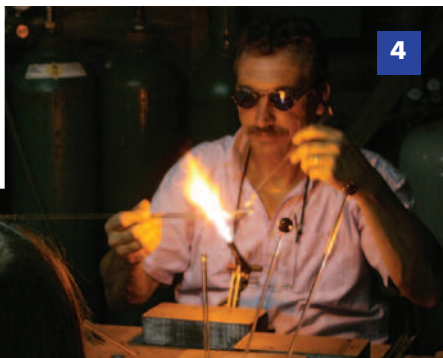
AT A GLANCE ...

POPULATION: Approximately 300.

LAND AREA: Approximately 1.5 square miles.

ELEVATION: Located 1 ½ miles from the head of Pungoteague Creek, the village stands about 30 feet above sea level.

FACTOIDS: Pungoteague is from the Indian name, Pungotekw, meaning "Sand Fly River." St. George's Church first met here in 1636 and services continue today. The first play performed in the United States took place here in 1655, resulting in charges being brought against the actors.



1. Pungoteague Community Church is one of three active churches in the tiny village. **2.** Those who attend St. Paul's African Methodist Church, established in 1886, make a joyful noise. **3.** Located in the neighboring village of Harborton, the Harborton House Bed & Breakfast is typical of the Victorian architecture in the area (photo provided by Harborton House). **4.** Local artisan Ken Platt at work in his Pungoteague studio, where he demonstrates the art of hot glass to visitors. **5.** An example of Platt's work.

Today, a state Historic Highway Marker is all that is visible at this infamous Pungoteague site. Other historic locations are found in the hamlet, however, such as Saint George's Church. It is believed that the first meetings of the Pungoteague Episcopal congregation were held in 1636, with the church's first building being constructed from 1666 to 1676.

The original frame church was replaced in 1736 by a brick structure in the Flemish-bond pattern. However, Federal forces occupying the area in the 1860s converted the

sacred building into a stable, causing irreparable damage to a portion of the church. The structure was rebuilt in the late 1870s and remains in use today. Also remaining in use is the communion chalice and paten set dated from 1734, a gift from Queen Elizabeth I.

Next door to Saint George's is another historic church. St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church was established in 1886. Today the congregation is working to expand its social hall in order to have space for children's and community ministries.

The village's third congregation is that of Pungoteague Community Church. A non-denominational Christian church, PCC is well known in the area for its mission work providing food, clothing, household goods and even shelter to those in need.

THE PEOPLE

Like most Eastern Shore towns, Pungoteague is a stronghold of independent, hardworking folks with deep roots in the community.



1. Local resident Janet Carros is a regular at Pungoteague's Bear and Cub Coffee Shoppe. **2.** Old meets new at the coffee shop, where ladies meet to spin yarn and techies like Macy Richardson hook into Wi Fi. **3.** The Bear and Cub is located in the heart of the village and offers locally roasted brews. **4.** Whatever is in season is for sale at the Pungoteague's Village General Store. **5.** Billy Huffman waits on Charlie Giddens at the store, which offers everything from salt pork to freshly made sandwiches. **6.** Buy your groceries, grab your lunch and put in your prayer request all with one stop.

In more recent years, however, the area has also become home to many first-generation residents drawn by the slower lifestyle and bucolic setting. Among those are a number of artisans, such as **Maurice Spector**.

A native of Bucks County, Pa., Spector has converted an old dairy barn on the banks of Pungoteague Creek into his studio. There he creates sculptures from stone and wood. Spector also does drawings in pen and ink, Conté crayon and gouache in the studio, where visitors are welcome to call and arrange a visit.

Another artist relatively new to the area is **Ken Platt**. Platt, a transplant from northern New Jersey, now lives in the center of town in the Victorian home he and his wife have lovingly restored. Retired from his career as a scientific glass blower, Platt has transformed one of the home's outbuildings into the studio for Highpoint Glassworks. Here, he utilizes several methods in crafting both decorative and functional glass pieces. Those methods include lamp work, fusing and slumping, glass blowing and even lathe work.

Platt is always happy to entertain visitors in his studio, but especially so during the Shore's annual studio and vineyard tour. Held each Thanksgiving weekend, the self-drive tour is sponsored by the Artisans Guild of the Eastern Shore. The tour takes participants to studios in several locations where unique pieces by award-winning artisans are waiting to be discovered. Adding to the experience are opportunities to visit local vineyards for tastings.

LOCAL HOT SPOT

Also on the tour is perhaps the most popular spot in Pungoteague, The Bear and Cub Coffee Shoppe. Taking its name from the historic theater production, The Bear and Cub offers locally roasted coffee with enchanting names such as the Hog Island Blend, Oyster Roast, Machipongo Morning and Mockhorn Bay Birder's Blend. Along with the coffees and other specialty drinks, patrons can enjoy fresh baked scones and muffins while browsing an array of local artwork or catching up with the rest of the world with free Wi-Fi.

Among the gifts available at The Bear and Cub is a unique collection of knitted items made from hand-woven and spun yarn. Stop by on a Thursday morning when the local knitting club meets at the shop, and you just might see some of those works in progress.

Just down the road a piece, one finds The Village General Store. Here, **Billy and Evelyn Huffman** offer everything from salt pork to fresh-made sandwiches. Whatever produce is in season will be found here, as well as good conversation about whatever comes to mind. A table in the middle of the store is where customers go to make copies of recipes, to pick-up information on a variety of topics or to drop a prayer request in the prayer box.

No one leaves the store without warm smiles and kind words from Billy and Evelyn.

ON THE SHORE'S BAYSIDE

Visitors to the Eastern Shore access the area by U.S. Route 13, which bisects the peninsula from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel to the Maryland state line. Locals refer to any area of the Shore east of Route 13 as the seaside, while the land on the western side of the highway is the bayside. Thus, Pungoteague is a bayside community; and indeed, the waters of the Chesapeake lap ashore a mere three miles from the heart of town.

Turn off the main road in Pungoteague, and one is just minutes away from the public boat landing at Harborton. Here, Chesapeake Bay watermen ply their trade, bringing in their bounty of fish, blue crabs and other succulent seafood. Recreational boaters also use the modern marina, located where steamships once docked to load and unload barrels of supplies, mail bags and passengers. Sailboats sway at their moorings just blocks from Harborton House, a delightful Victorian B&B. There, guests choose to be served in the formal dining room, in the garden, on the porch or in their room.

For the ultimate romantic getaway, couples may choose the Pretty Byrd Cottage on Evergreen Farm in Pungoteague. Here, visitors really get away from it all as they cross a footbridge to an island cottage on a small lake. A paddleboat, biking, hiking trails, bird watching and kayaking are among the amenities.

Such activities are prominent throughout the Shore, as are boating, beachcombing, antiquing and camping. Also prominent are scores of villages such as Pungoteague, each with its own hidden treasures, and all offering a generous dose of down-home hospitality. ■



IF YOU GO...

The Bear and Cub Coffee Shoppe —

Located in the heart of Pungoteague, this is the place to stop in for great, locally roasted coffee, a friendly community atmosphere and free Wi-Fi connections. You will also find yourself browsing through the works offered for sale by local artisans or you might just want to curl up with a book in the inviting sitting room. The Bear and Cub is open Thursday and Friday from 7:30 a.m. until noon and Saturday from 8 a.m. until noon. 757-442-7222.

8th Annual Open Studio and Vineyard

Tour 2010 — A Thanksgiving weekend self-drive holiday shopping and wine-tasting tour sponsored by the Artisans Guild of the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The 2010 tour runs Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 26 – 28 from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. each day. Get details by e-mailing info@esartisansguild.org.

High Point Glassworks is located on Bobtown Road in the heart of town. Here, hot-glass artisan Ken Platt can be found in his studio crafting both functional and ornamental glassware, many pieces with a nautical theme to celebrate the studio's Eastern Shore locale. www.highpointglassworks.com; 757-442-7155.

The Studio of Maurice Spector, located on the banks of Pungoteague Creek. Both completed works and those in progress can be seen in the old dairy barn, now used as the artist's studio. Call for directions and available times. www.mauricespector.com; 757-442-5595.

Harborton House — Built in 1900, Harborton House's four-year restoration was completed one year shy of its 100th birthday. Harborton House is graced with open porches on two stories and stands proudly in the heart of Pungoteague's neighboring village, Harborton. Filled with antiques, reproductions and family

Local artisans display a variety of wares at Pungoteague's popular Bear and Cub Coffee Shoppe.

heirlooms, Harborton House is casual but full of luxuries. You may take breakfast in the formal dining room, in the garden, on the porch or in your room. Wherever you choose to dine, your hosts Helen and Andy Glenn will share their special blend of hospitality to make your stay unforgettable. www.harbortonhousebb.com; 757-442-3614.

Pretty Byrd Cottage at Evergreen Farm —

Imagine getting away from it all by crossing a footbridge to an island Victorian cottage on a small lake. This guesthouse in Pungoteague is no mirage. Pretty Byrd Cottage on Evergreen Farm, an 18th-century estate on the Chesapeake Bay, is a unique oasis that combines the best of today's conveniences with the charm of Victorian decor. Surrounded by a three-acre pond, the cottage is accessible by walking across the footbridge or paddling over on the paddleboat. Enjoy breakfast on the Victorian Porch, then take a stroll through the gardens, or put on your bathing suit and stroll to the beach on the Chesapeake Bay. There are even kayaks if you are so inclined. You can even feed the fish from the bridge. A charming retreat for couples or a pleasant solo getaway, Pretty Byrd Cottage is a unique and delightful experience. 757-442-3375.

Churches play a large role in the lives of Pungoteague residents, as in many rural areas. Though only a few scores of folks live in the town itself, they have three active churches from which to choose. **St. George's Episcopal Church** dates back to colonial times and has been designated a registered National Historic Landmark. Next door is **St. Paul's AME Church**, established in 1886. The newest of the congregations is that found at **Pungoteague Community Church**, a non-denominational, mission-driven organization. ■