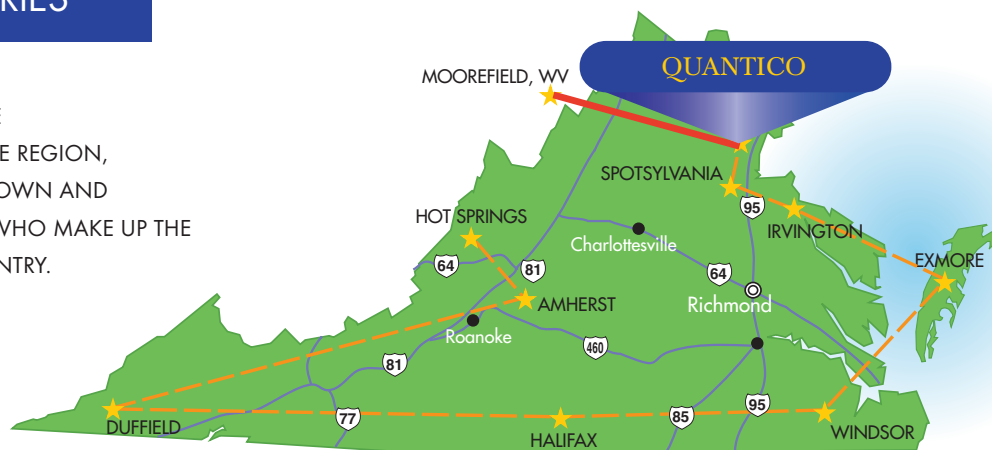


AGAIN IN THE YEAR 2007, WE'RE MAKING OUR WAY AROUND THE REGION, EACH ISSUE VISITING A SMALL TOWN AND MEETING SOME OF THE FOLKS WHO MAKE UP THE HEART OF ELECTRIC CO-OP COUNTRY. ON THIS YEAR'S SECOND STOP, WE'LL BE ...



DOWN HOME IN

QUANTICO

BY BENNIE SCARTON, CONTRIBUTING WRITER • PHOTOS BY BENNIE SCARTON

THE CROSSROADS OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

The town of Quantico, having the distinction of being the only town surrounded by a military post, has a colorfully storied past.

While not part of the Quantico Marine Corps base, the town is bordered by the base on three sides, and a municipal park fronting the Potomac River forms Quantico's fourth boundary.

When the U.S. Marine Corps needed river-front land for a training camp in 1917, it leased 5,300 acres beside the town of Quantico. The Marine Corps bought the land the following year.

Over time, the town and the base have forged a close relationship. Quantico is one of the only places in the world where Marines may routinely wear their utilities, or camouflage uniforms, off base.

The town is located on the southern side of the mouth of Quantico Creek, just around the bend from the Potomac River. Its location made it a transportation center — for ferries across the Potomac, for steamboats, and eventually for the railroad.

According to the 2000 census, the population of Quantico was 561.

"We have a mixed population. Retired and active-duty Marines live in town among civilians. Everyone knows what's happening in town. We have seven compact streets, financially independent, trouble-free and heartstrung to the Marine Corps," says Mayor **Albert R. Gasser**, who is currently serving for the third time as the town's mayor.

Stores line Potomac Avenue, the town's old-fashioned commercial thoroughfare, many catering to the Marines on the base. Restaurants, shoe stores, dry cleaners, barber shops, tailors, beauty shops, pizza parlors, laundromats, variety shops, uniform shops, a financial planner, a bank and a U.S. post office serving both the town and base all can be found within the town's nine blocks. There



Town councilman and former mayor Mitchell Raftelis has lived in Quantico his entire life and is the town's unofficial historian.

AT A GLANCE ...

POPULATION: 561 as of the 2000 census

LAND AREA: 42.7 acres

FOUNDED: The first land patents were given to English settlers in 1654. The Town was incorporated in 1927 and chartered in 1934.

ELEVATION: Ranges from 20 to 40 feet

FUN FACT: Originally named Potomac for the river that flows along its edge, the town's name was changed to Quantico, an Indian word meaning "by the large stream," in 1872.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A replica of the famous Two Jima monument stands at the entrance to the base; The waterfront town lies on the Potomac River where Marine-base docks are adjacent to Quantico Municipal Park; Potomac Avenue, Quantico's old-fashioned commercial thoroughfare, is home to around 50 small businesses; The National Museum of the Marine Corps, which opened in late 2006, is expected to draw thousands of tourists to the town.



are about 50 small retail and service businesses in the town.

Quantico Municipal Park is located on River Road on the banks of the Potomac River. It's adjacent to docks that are part of a marina on the base.

The pride of the town is the newly renovated Virginia Railway Express-Amtrak Station (old Quantico train station), com-

plete with waiting area, ticket sales, coffee shop, newsstand and tourist information corner. It is also home of the Prince William Model Train Club, which has a permanent exhibit in part of the station.

Stephanie Schupe and **Dan Hampton** of Fredericksburg have been using the Virginia Railway Express for the past three years. They commute from their homes to

work on the base at the Marine Corps System Command, which has more than 900 employees plus 500 to 700 contractors and consultants, some of whom are opening offices in town.

"We used to stand outside in the cold of winter and heat of summer waiting for the train, but the opening of the station has been a real blessing for us," says Hampton.

"Riding the train sure beats driving up and down jammed-up Interstate 95 or U.S. Route 1," adds Schupe, who says it's only a 10-minute walk from her job to the station at the town's entrance.

ultimately saved by a destructive storm.

The waterway was a source of danger again during the Civil War. Virginia seceded in April 1861 and the Potomac shoreline was immediately recognized as

BY THE LARGE STREAM

Quantico is an Indian word that means "by the large stream." The large stream is the Potomac River, which flows along the edge of the town and has been the source of prosperity, fear and pleasure from the 1600s to the present.

The town is rich in history, beginning in 1654 when the first land patents were given to English settlers. The town began as Carborough, then Evansport, Potomac and, finally, Quantico. Great plantations "Dipple" and "Be-rea" were built nearby.

During the Revolutionary War, both land and water routes were used heavily. George Washington and Colonial ally, General Rochambeau, traveled the Quantico Road with their troops. The fledgling Navy of Virginia numbered 72 vessels, which harbored in the area of Quantico.

The second military conflict with Great Britain, the War of 1812, brought the fighting closer to Quantico when a number of British ships anchored off shore in 1814. The town organized its defenses but was



LIKE THE MARINES, SO ARE THE TOWNSFOLK OF QUANTICO: FEW AND PROUD. CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Local Barber Larry Mino at work on Lt. Col. Anthony Kolkmeier; Town clerk Mary Booth has been a life-long resident; Sangchul Lee in his shop, Quantico's Best; Fredericksburg commuters Stephanie Schupe and Dan Hampton appreciate the Virginia Railway Express-Amtrak station; Mark O'Connor, financial advisor, and Brenda Wando, office manager, work in Quantico for First Command; Frederic Willar operates two restaurants in town, Li'l Harry O's and Harry O's Bakery & Deli; Elizabeth Boyles serves customers at the Whistle Stop Coffee Shop; Taehwan Lee assists his father in the running of Quantico's Best; Albert Gasser, mayor and owner of the Command Post Pub; CENTER: Postmaster Bill Hall, a native of Kansas, has enjoyed his time in Quantico.

a danger to the Union, especially the capital city, Washington.

By August gun batteries were in place at Evansport (Quantico) to protect both Manassas Junction to the west and Fredericksburg to the south. Supplies to Washington and troop transports were cut off for a few months.

In 1870, the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac (RF&P) Railroad extended its line to Evansport and operated a ferry to Washington. The Alexandria & Washington and the RF&P Railroads would bring passengers as far as Quantico until such time as the lines were consoli-



IF YOU GO...

Quantico is a nice place to raise a family and a great place for entrepreneurs who are looking for that perfect business environment. Come take a look at Quantico. You'll like what you see.

Every Marine has a story to tell and that is exactly what **The National Museum of the Marine Corps**, open daily, does through its displays, artifacts and interactive exhibits. It is located in an ultra-modern, 118,000-square-foot building adjacent to the Quantico Marine Base. Phone (800) 397-7585.

Quantico National Cemetery, which opened in 1983, is located off Interstate 95 on Route 619 west. Annual ceremonies are conducted on Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Phone (703) 221-2183.

Weems Botts Museum, located in the town of Dumfries, was built in the 1700s. It was originally the bookstore of Parson Weems, the first biographer of George Washington and the source of much of the folklore about the nation's first president. The second owner was Benjamin Botts, a well-known Virginia lawyer, noted for being on the defense team for Aaron Burr. Phone (703) 221-3346.

Quantico Marine Base covers 60,000 acres and employs 15,000 personnel and civilian employees. Call the public affairs office at (703) 784-2741. The base has a golf course called Medal of Honor. All newly commis-

sioned lieutenants in the Marine Corps receive training at the Basic School.

Locust Shade Regional Park is located near the Quantico Marine Base, and the 292-acre park features a golf driving range, batting cages, an 18-hole miniature golf course, six tennis courts, and picnic shelters. The park also boasts an eight-acre lake with marina and boating facilities and a 400-seat amphitheater. Phone (703) 221-8579.

Prince William Forest Park borders Quantico Marine Base and is an escape for those who like to spend their time in the great outdoors. On 18,000 forested acres, the park is the third largest National Park Service unit in Virginia and the largest park of any kind in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. Phone (703) 221-7181.

The Command Post Pub at 335 Potomac Ave. is one of 11 restaurants in Quantico and features many Marine memorabilia. Phone (703) 640-6998.

Leesylvania State Park off U.S. Route 1 north of Quantico Marine Base features boat launching and storage facilities, a nature trail, a history trail, picnic areas, guided hikes, canoe trips, a park store that sells food and gas for boats. Phone (703) 670-0372.

The recently remodeled **Virginia Railway Express Station** at 550 Railroad Ave. features a snack bar and many photographs and articles relating to the history of Quantico. Phone (800) RIDE-VRE. There is also an **Omni Link Bus Stop** in the 400 Block of Potomac Avenue. Phone (703) 640-9200.

For military-related items visit **Bolognese Marine Store**, 314 Potomac Ave., phone (703) 640-6613; **The Marine Store**, 300 Potomac Ave., phone (703) 640-7195; or **Quantico's Best**, 334 Potomac Ave., phone (703) 630-0276.

Occoquan, with its bounty of small shops, art studios and restaurants, boasts an old-fashioned charm that lures many visitors. It is located about 10 miles north of Quantico, off U.S. Route 1. Phone (703) 491-1918.

Quantico's municipal office is open Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and is located in an office at the rear of the Bank of America building, 415 Broadway St. The police department is located at 405 Broadway St. and Police Chief Gerald Tolson leads a four-officer police force, including parking-enforcement officers. Phone (703) 640-7411. ■



dated; then the ferry was no longer used. After the Civil War, a population decline in the area matched an economic slump. Potomac continued as a sleepy fishing village until 1872 when the two railroads met at Quantico Creek.

The Quantico Company was formed after the turn of the century to finish the task of bringing new life to the town. The company promoted Quantico as a tourist and excursion center. Picnic areas, beaches, refreshment stands and a dance pavilion were established.

The Quantico Shipyard was built in 1916 on Shipping Point, known today as Hospital Point. The company built ocean freighters, tankers and planned to build passenger ships.

Because of the war in Europe, the U.S. Marines would arrive in 1917 and Quantico faced a new destiny. The Corps purchased land from the Quantico Land Co. in 1918 and the Marines became permanent neighbors of the town. Within three weeks of opening the base, there were 1,000 Marines stationed at Quantico. By August 1917, most of the tents had been replaced by wooden barracks and a wood-frame hospital had been built.

Officers' quarters were housed in the Quantico Hotel, built on Rising Hill in the 1880s and acquired by the Marine Corps in 1918. The building stood until 1968 and when it was torn down, the Confederate Evansport battery was discovered beneath it.

Quantico has had its glimpses of history in the making because of its unique position.

Quantico's unofficial historian, **Mitchell Raftelis**, is 84 and has lived in the town his entire life. He has served as mayor and councilman. He notes that Teddy Roosevelt strolled the town's streets and is remembered sitting on a nail key, cracking jokes, in front of a hardware store. Another Roosevelt, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, would arrive in an open touring car flanked by motorcycle policemen. He'd wave his cigarette holder as he was driven down to the river to board the presidential yacht. More recently, Harry Truman would arrive on the yacht and walk to the headquarters building on the base.

Raftelis was instrumental in getting grants to restore the train station and is now devoting his efforts to securing funding for the "Potomac Avenue Streetscape Enhancements" that would include beautifying the main street with new side-

walks, landscaping, lighting and benches. A new bicycle/pedestrian route is also in the works.

"With the opening of the National Museum of the Marine Corps last November, thousands of tourists will be coming to visit our town and we want it to be attractive," says Raftelis.

Another life-long resident of the town is **Mary J. Booth**, 69, who has been the town clerk since July 1998.

"It's a great community ... everyone is friendly. We have been labeled as the town that can't grow because of our unique situation – surrounded by the Marine base. The major change I've seen in recent years has been the coming of more office space," said Booth.

SMALL-TOWN AMERICA

Quantico was incorporated in 1927 and chartered in 1934 and is a textbook example of small-town America, with its safe, tree-lined streets. From town, it's an easy commute to the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area via the Virginia Railway Express. The housing is affordable and the scenery along the waterfront is breathtaking.

As in many small communities, the barbershop is a good place to catch up on the latest news in town.

Larry Mino, 64, who has run the City Barbershop for the past 18 years, says “For the retired Marines and their families who visit here each year for their reunion, it’s like coming home, bringing back old memories. The best thing about being a barber in such a small town is the opportunity to meet so many different people from all over the country and world.”

Lt. Col. Anthony Kolkmeier, stationed on the post and in the shop for a haircut, agrees.

“I like the old-town atmosphere of Quantico and always enjoy coming back from my other assignments,” he says.

There is a Marine Corps MP or sentry at the front gate standing by to greet visitors to the base and the town. The Marine Corps was given exclusive jurisdiction by Virginia and the Congress to maintain and police the road into town when the Marine Corps acquired the land. However, freedom of ingress and egress is maintained for the residents and visitors to the town.

Taehwan Lee, 28, whose father, **Sang-chul Lee**, opened Quantico’s Best in 1998 – an alteration, embroidery, military souvenirs store – assists in the running of the shop.

“I was in the U.S. Army for eight years and in my travels I never found such a unique town as Quantico, being surrounded by a base. It’s very quiet and our customers are very nice,” he says.

Quantico is located just off Interstate 95 and U.S. Route 1 in Prince William County, about 40 miles from Washington, D.C., and 25 miles from the cities of Manassas and Fredericksburg.

Mark O’Connor, 54, of Stafford, who is a financial advisor for First Command in town, says he has found that residents of the historic town “... feel like they are part of something special – being surrounded by the best people in the world – the Marines and federal civilian employees.”

Postmaster **Bill Hall**, 55, of Manassas, who is retiring in the spring of 2007, has headed up the Quantico post office for the past three years.

A native of Kansas, Hall says he has served with the U.S. Post Office for 37 years and has enjoyed his time in Quantico serving both the military and civilians.

“It’s a quiet, old, pretty laid-back town and I like that,” he says.

Frederic Willar, 40, of Fairfax, operates two of the 11 restaurants in the town, Li'l Harry O's and Harry O's Bakery & Deli.

“You couldn’t ask for nicer clientele than my customers. I want to give them a variety of foods, so one restaurant offers Mexican food and the other homemade deli and baked items,” he notes.

For the commuter or the visitor to town who wants a snack or a fresh cup of coffee, **Elizabeth Boyles** of Dale City, who works in the Whistle Stop Coffee Shop in the train station, can provide it.

“I also handle the purchase of train tickets,” she notes with a smile, adding, “I like the people who come in ... they are real friendly.”

Mayor Gasser says that, because of the isolation of the town, one of his main objectives is to find more activities for youth and more family-oriented events such as the annual Christmas Parade, which has been part of the town for the past 60 years.

“I’d like to see improvements made to the town, but I don’t want to change the complexion of it. I want people to come back 10 or 15 years from now and find that we have maintained and preserved the small-town atmosphere,” he concludes. ■