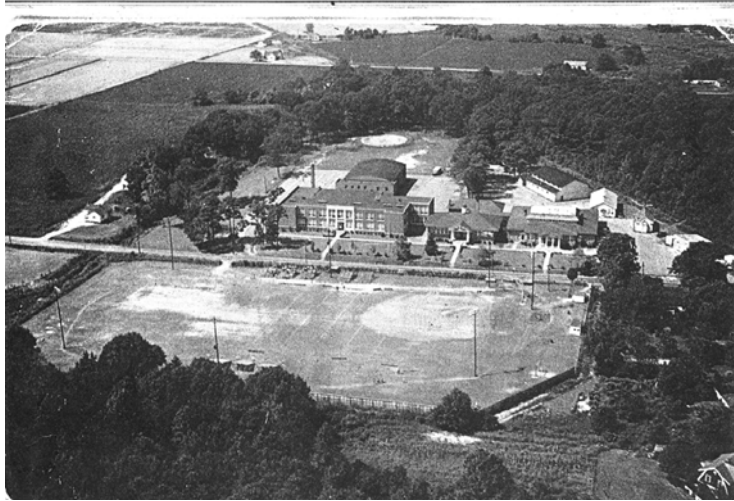


The Intersection Project and Providence Park

Frank Albero, Kempsville PONY Baseball President – 1.4.08

Kempsville PONY baseball's 50th season as a PONY league will be played this spring at the southeast corner of Kempsville Road and Princess Anne Road. In 1959, when the first PONY games were played here, Kempsville was a borough of Princess Anne County. "Virginia Beach" was not a city, but was the actual resort area out at the oceanfront. The roads connecting Kempsville and Virginia Beach, including Princess Anne Road, were small, two-lane roads through miles of farm country.

On the first base side of what we now call KPB#1, the "PONY Field" was separated from the old Kempsville High School by a two-lane Kempsville Road. Foul balls came off of wood bats and were unlikely to land on Kempsville Road at all. If they did, there just weren't that many cars to hit.



All of this is probably hard to imagine if you have spent time over the last 20 years sitting in traffic at the intersection of Kempsville Road and Princess Anne Road. This spot has long been one of the most overused and congested intersections in the state of Virginia. The City of Virginia Beach and VDOT have spent years developing a plan to relocate and expand the intersection and Witchduck Road north to where it meets I-264. The new path of Princess Anne Road will run directly through KPB#1, where it all began for Kempsville PONY Baseball.

Although the timeline for the intersection project is still being developed, the City of Virginia Beach has stepped out on a project that will expand outdoor recreation facilities and provide a new home for our league. In 2004, the City



purchased the farm property adjacent to the VDOT Traffic Management Center on Reon Drive between Indian River Road and Providence Road. When the design for what will be known as "Providence Park" was developed, the plan included a multi-purpose

athletic field for city-wide use and two baseball fields to replace the fields that we will have to abandon because of the intersection project.

Over the last year and a half, KPB's executive board has worked closely with the City's project engineer and the Parks & Recreation Department to create field designs that are better tailored for the PONY age groups that will play on the new fields. The smaller field (located closest to Providence Road) will be used for the Mustang and Bronco leagues with the outfield fence set at the recommended distances for Bronco games. The larger field (located closest to the VDOT Traffic Management Center) will be used for the Pony, Colt, and Palomino leagues with the outfield fence set at the recommended distances for Palomino games.



Both fields will have additional room in foul territory and significantly more room between home plate and the backstop. Both fields will have grass infields. The in-ground irrigation system will help to keep the grass healthy and will keep the infield clay from turning to dust during dry spells. The installed drainage system will allow us to recover more quickly from rainy weather. These fields will be among the best youth baseball fields in the area.

In addition to the playing field improvements, Providence Park will have a modern building that will house our meeting room, concession stand, and restrooms. The building's exterior will have features drawn from the farmhouse and barns that once stood on the property. Kempsville PONY Baseball will be responsible for the construction of a two-story scorer's booth building behind the backstop on each field. The materials used will match those used on the concession stand building. The parking lot for Providence Park is adjacent to the sidewalks that lead to the playing fields -- a welcome relief from the requirement to cross Kempsville Road with young children. In another phase of the Providence Park project, a playground and family picnic area will be placed under the great old trees where the farmhouse once stood.



As exciting as this project is, it will come with some challenges for our league. The construction of scorer's booths, batting cages, and practice mounds and the purchase of new groundskeeping equipment better suited for the new fields will require time, talent, and treasure. The executive board made some decisions several years ago to put aside some funds that might be needed for the relocation, but these funds will only go so far. We have received some generous offers of materials and volunteer time that we hope will keep our costs down, but there's more to be done. If you work for a company or know of a company or organization that might consider becoming a league sponsor, please refer them to our sponsorship page at www.kpb.org/kpb-sponsors.html. Sponsorship fees received in 2008 will be applied directly to our relocation costs.



It won't be long before the lights that have marked baseball nights in the heart of Kempsville for decades are gone. Some of the players in our league have fathers *and* grandfathers who played here. Many will miss the fields at Kempsville and Princess Anne Roads, but the quality of the fields at Providence Park and the opportunity to improve on how we teach and play the game will provide a quick transition. As we work through it, we're very interested in hearing from former players, coaches, and parents who have special photographs or memories so we can document the history of the league. Please encourage anyone you know who might have something to share to send a note to us at P.O. Box 65243, Virginia Beach, VA 23467 or an e-mail to president@kpb.org. We'll put it all on display when we celebrate Kempsville PONY Baseball's 50th anniversary (1959-2009) at Providence Park.

