Autumn conjures up thoughts of harvest time, cooler temperatures, brilliant foliage, and yes, fox hunting. Riding to hounds, the huntsman’s horn, the chase was once a very prominent part of the season in old Warwick County. Horse and rider dashed after the braying pack of hounds in pursuit of Reynard, the elusive fox. Landowners and farmers beware, for wherever the fox led, the chase would surely follow. Fences and streams were jumped with alacrity, for there is nothing that will stop the chase.

Fox hunting was a serious sport for generations in Virginia. It continues today in less populated regions. The vast woods and fields that afforded such pleasures are long gone from old Warwick County. While there are undoubtedly many reminiscences from local fox hunting days, we are fortunate to have one rather specific report for a man who had a passion for the hunt.

**Milstead’s Indestructible Fox**

“I hear that Milstead’s fox has already opened the season in Warwick County. The veteran quarry suffered a good deal with rheumatism in one of his off legs early in the Fall and at one time it looked as if the sergeant and his fellow sportsmen would have to buy a new fox for the Christmas week chase; but by keeping the animal in flannels for ten days and rubbing his limbs briskly with axle grease, Reynard was restored to almost his pristine vigor and bloom.”
When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe — John Muir, Scottish American naturalist

We welcome member participation; send your news, events and comments to pattigibbs@cox.net
In 1940 when the county had a population of 9,248, all police duties were performed by one Special County Officer and the Sheriff, with the cooperation of the State Police stationed in this area. As a result of the tremendous increase in population, which began during the latter part of 1940 and in May of 1944 had reached an estimated 33,950, it was necessary to take steps to provide additional police protection.

In early 1941 the Board of Supervisors recognized the fact that additional protection would be required and funds were provided in the budget to pay for three additional police officers. The Board recommended to the Judge of the Circuit Court that three men be appointed as police officers and that the incumbent Special County Officer, Mr. M. J. Yoder, be made Chief of Police. He served in this capacity until his death in April 1944, at which time the present Chief, Leroy Woody, who was a member of the Virginia State Police Force, was appointed. When the County Manager Form of Government was adopted on January 1, 1945, he was reappointed as Chief by the County Manager, and all other officers were retained.

The population continued to increase as did police problems, and it was necessary to add additional men until in the latter part of 1944 the department had reached the maximum of a Chief, two investigators, seven full-time police officers, and three dispatchers. At this time a police station was provided in Hilton Village to render service on a twenty-four hour basis.

When the department was first organized it was customary for each officer to supply his own automobile. This was not a satisfactory arrangement for transportation and in the latter part of 1942 the County purchased three cars to be used exclusively for police work. They were equipped with one-way radios tied into the State Police Radio network, sirens, red lights and other necessary equipment. The fleet has now grown to five automobiles, all of which are equipped with special police equipment and three-way radio, which...
The Parkview Community

In the life of any community, neighbors come and go. But, those families who lived the longest in the same home in the same neighborhood come to mind. In the early 1940s, large tracts of land which lay between downtown and Hilton Village were primarily forests and creeks.

The land was owned by the late Harry Aaron and Newport News Mayor, R. Cowles Taylor, D.D.S., who owned large tracts in the Newport District of then Warwick County. These tracts of land represented part of the whole when the Old Dominion Land Company was liquidated in the 1940s, and upon which much of Parkview was built.[1]

As the Newport News area began to grow with a soon to be wartime population, these tracts were cleared and subdivided. The C&O Railway tracks bisected the area. Jefferson Avenue, extended, ran parallel to these tracks. Briarfield Road intersected with Jefferson Avenue.

On May 30, 1941, Drucker & Falk ran a large ad in the extinct Times-Herald, offering homes in two of these subdivisions: Betsy Lee Gardens and Sussex Hilton. Homes in Betsy Lee Gardens ("the close-in subdivision") were sold for $150 down and $24.96 per month. Sussex Hilton houses ("the Park Community") were priced at $2,875 with $170 down and $23.59 a month. A unique feature of the development cited by the builders was that no identical homes adjoined each other, making the property more desirable.

Some of the first developments were originally a part of the Briarfield farm, which extended almost a thousand acres from the James River into Elizabeth City County. "Prior to 1792, "Briarfield" was the home of Wilson Curle, and by 1849 had been acquired by Baker P. Lee."[2] Betsy Lee Gardens, Briarfield Manor, Sussex Hilton, East Hilton and Hilton Park, built "for enduring homes" are part of this tract.[3-4]

Parkview was a thriving community in Warwick by 1945. By virtue of its location in the populous Newport District, it was semi-urban in character but lacked many city facilities such as sewers, adequate street lights, curbs and gutters (which were required after 1948 by a subdivision ordinance), sidewalks and suburban bus service.[5]

Industrial in nature, the neighborhood depended to a large extent on the shipyard for jobs. As the yard reduced its number of workers during the post-World War II slow-

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Those persons who remember the school best are the students, teachers and staff who were there when the late Elizabeth M. Campbell was the school’s only principal for 24 years. She came from Hilton to Parkview School when it opened. At that time, Parkview and Hilton schools were in the Warwick County public school system. Mrs. Campbell retired in 1967, after a 47-year teaching career. She is best remembered for the time and attention that she gave to every pupil, teacher and parent. The Christmas concerts in the school auditorium and the Spring picnics in the school yard were traditions that she started and were the envy of children in other schools. Some of the teachers who taught when Mrs. Campbell was principal came with her to Parkview when the school opened.

Parkview Elementary School opened in March 1943 at Jefferson Avenue and Military Road (later Mercury Boulevard) which had been built a year earlier. This valuable commercial property is now the site of a shopping center at one of the city’s busiest intersections.

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There have been established churches in the Parkview area for over 70 years, the first of which was Parkview Baptist Church. It began as a mission Sunday school in the now gone skating rink at Briarfield Road and Jefferson Avenue. It was supported by some of the other denominations until those members started their own congregations. The Methodists and Presbyterians followed within a few years.

The Parkview Civic League, chartered in 1943 (because of "orphan" roads in the district which had allegedly been neglected by the county) and the Woman’s Club, formed in 1945, sponsored and supported many worthwhile community projects. One of these was the community building which is now the Hilton Senior Center on Hilton Boulevard. Other projects of the Parkview civic clubs include the playground on Highland Court and the introduction of suburban bus service into the area. A branch of the Warwick Public Library was formed in the area and Parkview post office was opened.

Emmett Ward Milstead was born on December 9, 1859, at Folly Farm in Warwick County. His father, Thomas E. Milstead, was from Maryland, but his mother was Sarah Randall, who was connected to the Harwood family through her mother. After the Civil War, Thomas Milstead was sheriff of Warwick County for a number of years. Thomas died in 1880, and sometime after that, his son also became sheriff.

On December 5, 1894, Emmett Milstead married Ann Elizabeth (Nannie Bet) Wynne at Lebanon Church. She was the daughter of Thomas George Wynne and his first wife, Frances Langley Curtis, and had grown up at Greenmount in James City County. The couple lived in the developing area of Newport News. Emmett was still serving as sheriff of Warwick County when Newport News was incorporated in 1896. At that time, he became City Sergeant in Newport News. Emmett Milstead was an outdoorsman all of his life. One of his great passions was fox hunting, having grown up in the “hunt country” of Warwick County. An entry in one of his memorandum books dated Tuesday, February 21, 1893, “Went out fox hunting today. Wind high & too cold to start. Oyster roast but no fox,” offers a glimpse into this way of life. But perhaps, an enhancement to this tale is found in a newspaper article probably written in 1899:

“The Secrets of Fox-Hunting Laid Bare

Now that the glad, exhilarating hunting season is in full swing, and the horn of the hunter is heard on the hill, or words of that effect, I am reminded that there are but two huntsmen on the Peninsula who know how to properly pursue the fox.

Sergeant Milstead is the other fellow. While there are several points about the sport upon which we have been unable to agree, the Sergeant and I, I am free to confess that we are both proficient in the art of hunting the fox; and, as the Sergeant is yet in the hey-day of life and an apt student when he lays his mind down to a thing, we are likely to come to an understanding upon these differences of opinion one of these days.

Sergeant Milstead has more of a local reputation as a fox hunter than I have, because he has made a rule never to return from the chase with less than two foxes. Nothing affords me greater delight than to go to the Sergeant’s
house these glorious mornings and see him take flannels off his two champion long-distance sprinting foxes, Matt Quay and B. H. Roberts; rub their limbs with witch-hazel, tie a bunch of firecrackers to the tail of each and run them around the yard a few times to limber them up.

In this way, the Sergeant has continued to keep them both in the pink of condition. They are ready at a moment’s notice to be taken out and chased through the picturesque swamps and historic mud holes and ant hills of Warwick, and, like the motor-man of the trolley car making his last trip, they stop for no man—excepting, of course, the Sergeant.

I am not jealous of Sergeant Milstead’s reputation as a fox hunter. It does make me feel the canker of envy biting into my vitals to see the Sergeant strut along the avenue, after a day in the woods, with a fox under each arm, exhibiting them to the vulgar gaze of the uninitiated and easily imposed upon layman. I think I would rather bring back one fox, with a little style, spirit and git-up about him than carry around in my arms two foxes, which have been to town so often, masquerading as evidence of the Sergeant’s skill, that they smile and nod familiarly at the people he exhibits them to in front of the post office.

Fox hunting is a noble sport. It is healthy, invigorating and stimulates the appetite. It cheers and yet does not inebriate. In this respect, it differs from the new pastime known as the Dewey Cocktail, which, if persisted in to any extent, gives a man a horrible desire to borrow money and makes him forget to shave.

I do not know of anything that tickles me more than to hunt the fox. The fox hunter is an inspiring scene to the naked eye as he comes with his hark and halloo, whatever that means, over hill and dale, his slender limbed palfrey leaping creeks, fences, and stone walls, and sweeping by you with the hurry of a man who has been owing you an account for eleven months.

The swift rush of the chase, the thrilling scamper across country, the mad dash through the Warwick farmer’s pet pumpkin patch and the low moan of the Christmas hen turkey as the whooping horsemen run her down and pass on too intent upon following the brush to hear the strident voice of the farmer calling after them in large, blue cuss-words; all these things set the blood a-tingle and make the hair grow.
In November 1941, free city mail delivery service was extended in to the area. Hilton Village and Copeland Park became post office branches. It was at this time that the late Robert L. Simms began to work at the Newport News post office, assigned to the Parkview area. Mr. Simms faithfully served his postal patrons for 32 years. He retired in 1973.

In response to the post-war "baby boom," Briarfield School was constructed on Marshall Avenue, just north of Warwick Gardens (present-day Brookridge Apartments). [8]

The skating rink presented such famed bands as those of Harry James, Charlie Spivak, Louis Armstrong and Tony Pastor to the thrill of local dancers. [9] A prisoner of war camp was located at Camp Hill, adjacent to the James River Bridge overpass. Two shopping areas were convenient to the neighborhood. One was at the corner of Marshall Avenue and Briarfield (see below) and the other at the Briarfield/Jefferson intersection.

The first significant post-war residential subdivision in the area was Newmarket Village which was developed by the late Albert Brout in the early 1950s. Mr. Brout also opened his extensive Newmarket Shopping Center in 1956. It was then the region's largest center. No longer did shoppers have to travel downtown or to Hilton. Brout had finalized his plans for Newmarket North Mall before his death.

"Newmarket was the first shopping center in Newport News. It was opened on May 3rd, 1956."

~ Newport News: A Centennial History, John Quarstein and Parke Rouse, Publisher City of Newport News, 1996
In the early 1960s, Braxton-Perkins Post 25 of the American Legion built its new legion hall on Marshall Avenue on land donated by Harry Aaron.

It was also in the ‘60s that real estate developer, Anderson Smith, built his all brick homes subdivision, “Birdella Estates” between Briarfield Road and 72nd Street (its streets were named for his wife and daughters). These are the newest and last single-family homes erected in the immediate area.

Once proud and provincial, the Parkview/Briarfield/Newmarket area has undergone change. It is no longer primarily residential. The two major roads, Jefferson and Mercury, have become commercial strips.

Having lost some identity when Parkview School was demolished, the section continues to change, but the history of the area has not been forgotten by those who grew up there.

No fox hunt is complete without a pack of hounds. The foxhound is a cross between the bloodhound and the greyhound, the duffer and the come-on. He is about two feet in height and has more hair on one side than the other, the outside showing heavier growth of hirsute foliage as a rule. He travels at a high rate of speed; so much so that frequently in the excitement of the chase, he runs so far during the day that it takes him a week to get back in sight of his owner, by which time, of course, all interest in the hunt has died out. He usually accompanied on his return by a red-headed country boy, who demands $2 for feeding him.

About 90 or 100 of him are considered ample for a little fox hunt, though 120 are required to fill a pack. Some hunters think even this number inadequate, but unless the fox be unusually shy and creep in a hole this number ought to suffice. The trouble with most of the fox hunts that I have mingled with is the huntsmen with their hark and halloo and hurrah, boys, make too much noise and frighten the fox. This causes him to quicken his speed, necessitates hard riding and puts the brave band of huntsmen, dogs, whippers-in and horses with sawed-off tails to all sort of inconveniences, sometimes compelling a forward march just about the time when one feels like stopping to take another drink.

Of course, only ill-trained foxes act this way. Sergeant Milstead’s foxes have been known to stop and sit down on their tails 10 (? ) times in one hour to accommodate the thirst of the pursuing party. When the fox gets frightened he leaves the road and takes to the tall timber, or thereabouts. This forces the hunter to stop every once in a while to take down a fence in order to follow him. Then before he is able to mount again, the owner of the land appears and by the time the hunter has made change with him, the fox is about nine miles ahead.

If you are bound to hunt the fox, it is much pleasanter to have an animal like Sergeant Milstead’s, which keeps to the straight and beaten patch, turning neither to the right nor left and yielding at the final ballot with the grace of a legislator who has seen a man in the lobby, after fighting against a bill for seventeen days.

THE RACONTEUR[2]
This light-hearted story recounts competition and camaraderie of a time gone by. Surely, today the hunt is still a very real pastime in rural areas, but no longer possible as it was a century ago on the peninsula.

Emmett Milstead served on the Newport News City Council at one time, and was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates, representing Newport News in 1912, 1914-15; and representing Newport News and Warwick County in 1924 and 1926-27. In 1918, he sold his portion of Brick House farm (see right) on Mulberry Island to the Federal Government when land for Camp Eustis was being acquired. During his lifetime, he was a deacon of the First Baptist Church, a member of the Board of Directors of Citizens and Marine Bank, a member of the Masonic Lodge and of numerous service organizations in Newport News. Emmett Ward Milstead died on November 30, 1932, and he and Nannie Bet were buried in the Wynne family plot at Lebanon Church in Lee Hall.

Fred Wills Boelt

Brick House Farm was named for the early colonial-era brick home built by Matthew Jones, II — it’s known in modern times as the Matthew Jones House. Constructed originally as an earthfast frame dwelling around the turn of the 18th century—the home then went through several transformations over 288 years. Etched into the brick of the now preserved home is the year 1727. The Matthew Jones House is located off Harrison Road on Mulberry Island (Fort Eustis).

Milstead’s Indestructible Fox

CONTINUED FROM COVER

... A few days ago the fox was given a trial trip in a field near the sergeant’s home. With a bunch of lighted fire crackers tied to his tail to start him off, he went a hundred yards in 11 seconds, which was fair to middling, considering the age of Milstead’s fox and saying nothing at all of the wear and tear the animal has undergone in the past fourteen seasons.

Personally, I am an enthusiastic advocate of the chase. Nothing is more inspiring to me than the spectacle of a score of wild-eyed riders doing a mad dash across the country on horses with sawed-off tails. I like to hear the ‘hark and honk and halloo, boys’ about as well as anyone else.

I like to see three hundred and two hounds in full cry fall upon one measly little fox about the size of a bologna sausage and tear him into little fiddle strings. I enjoy the healthful excitement of the fox hunt, but I believe that when the fox has become old and decrepit, when he is broken down by hard service and has to have his limbs thawed out and his joints oiled before he will run ahead of the hounds, he ought to be retired on half pay.

Therefore, I feel compelled to decline the Sergeants’ invitation to hunt the indestructible fox with him this season.”

(Undated newspaper clipping, but probably written by the same Raccoonier who wrote the other article.)
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Policing the County
Warwick Has It’s Own Force (1947)

Continued from Page 3

...gives perfect communication from headquarters to car, car to car, and car to headquarters.

Prior to the organization of the Police Department all messages had to be dispatched through the Sheriff’s office at the jail or the home of the Special Officers. Now that the official headquarters are established at Hilton Village with a dispatcher on duty twenty-four hours a day and with radio communication, the entire police force is as close to the people of Warwick County as their telephone. The County is patrolled on a twenty-four hour basis. This has, no doubt, prevented a considerable amount of crime and has aided in the prompt apprehension of violators.

The County Supervisors felt that in order for the Police Department to do an efficient job, for the public to recognize an officer, and for the officers to take more pride in their jobs, uniforms were an essential part of the equipment of the Police Department. In January 1945, very attractive uniforms were provided for each officer.

During the past 18 months, the chief and one of the Special Investigators of the Warwick County Police Department, have completed the course of the F.B.I National Academy in Washington, D. C.

We are very proud that we have the wholehearted cooperation of the Virginia State Police, County Sheriff’s office, the Police Departments in the adjoining Cities and Counties, and the F. B. I. agents assigned to this area. The harmonious relations with the other agencies has made our job more effective and efficient.

~Leroy Woody, Chief, Warwick County Police Department, 1947

This Deputy Sheriff badge was at one time in Chief Woody’s possession and held by a collector until WCHS acquired it. It is on display in the 1810 Warwick Courthouse Museum—e-mail us for an appointment to see our collections.

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