“One of the South’s Fine Hotels”

~ Introduction ~

Only vintage images and fading memories remain of this once-famous establishment. Once located on both sides of Main Street in Hilton Village, between Warwick Road (original name of what is now known as Warwick Boulevard) and Piez Avenue, The Colony Inn prospered for over 30 years, after being created in 1926 and opened in 1927.

A couple of recently published histories of Hilton Village mention that the near-twin facilities functioned, albeit briefly, as an army officers’ club during World War I. This is undocumented and seems unlikely, since that war ended well before the construction of Hilton Village was completed.

Newspaper accounts from 1927 and a well-researched and documented history of Hilton Village created in 1968 by Ruth Hanners Chambers clearly indicate otherwise. What follows, I believe, is the most likely scenario of the hotel’s creation, use and ultimate demise. Included are some great memories, several artifacts…and even a bit of a mystery.

Bill Lee
~ Before the Beginning ~

A Hilton Village plot plan, dated October 1, 1918 and prepared for a short-lived government entity called The Shipbuilding Realty Corporation reveals that originally there were ten narrow 'mirror image' lots located in close proximity on both sides of Main Street and east of Piez Avenue. These lots eventually became the locale of The Colony Inn, and the barely visible portions of several lots on the far right of this image are where commercial buildings were later erected along Warwick Road.

Main Street is roughly aligned east and west; therefore the five plots shown at the top of this and subsequent images are on the north side of Main Street. Street names did not appear on the original plot plan; those came later, after construction of the Village commenced. They have been added to this segment of the plan to help orient the reader.

Most of the home sites in the development were rectangular, and conventionally and consecutively numbered. But the ones shown, numbered 1_A through 1_E on both sides of Main Street, included four lots of irregular shape.

As this next image, extracted from the Master Plan for Hilton Village indicates, ten row houses were constructed on these properties. The tree symbols that appear match up nicely with the locations of trees; some of which still flank Main Street and Piez Avenue. The homes located on lots 1_A through 1_C were of the traditional row house variety. But the remaining four homes were semi-detached and connected by enclosed structures that apparently served as covered entryways for several of the residences. This feature was not repeated elsewhere in the development, although numerous duplexes had similar entryways integral with their main structures.

Like all of the homes first built in Hilton Village, these units were initially rented out. The 1920 census indicates that they were all occupied. These ten abodes were numbered 90-99, with the odd numbered units being located on the north side of Main Street.
In 1921, the entire village was sold by the government to the Newport News Land Corporation, which was a firm created and owned by Henry Huntington, the Chairman of Newport News Shipbuilding at the time. Starting in 1922, homes in Hilton Village were offered to individuals for private ownership, but sales were very slow because the ‘Naval Holiday’ that followed World War I resulted in many shipbuilders leaving the area. In addition, the initial advertised price for a single 6-room home was $2,800...a figure considered so outrageous that it was a year before any Hilton Village houses were sold.

By 1926, the row houses in the ‘90 Block’ of Main Street had become vacant, as had many other units throughout the Village. But J. Philip Kiesicker, who was in charge of shipyard real estate operations at the time, had an idea to put the closely clustered ten to good use. He proposed building an inn. Then-Shipyard President Homer L. Ferguson backed the idea. Mr. Huntington enthusiastically endorsed it and provided the funds to create a first class hotel in the heart of Hilton Village. He felt that an upscale facility would appeal to prominent visitors to the area, and that such an establishment would provide an appropriate venue to entertain guests and customers of the shipyard. The Colony Inn was thus created and advertised in a unique Anglo-American fashion.

~ “An English Inn on the American Plan” ~

The total cost to create The Colony Inn was reported to be $80,000; a substantial sum in 1927. The five connected houses on the south side of Main Street were extensively modified and expanded. Original plans called for an 8-story tower with a roof garden to be built on the east end (i.e., the end closest to Warwick Road). But this addition was halted at the third story and the roof garden idea abandoned. Guest rooms were created on the second and third floors of the tower, and also on the second floor of the original row houses’ structures.

A one-story addition was also constructed to the rear of the group of houses on the south side of the street. Included was a formal dining room, an informal porch dining area, a then-modern kitchen and additional supporting service areas. Walls between the row houses were opened up to permit easy access between a lobby, offices and other public spaces for use by Inn guests.

The original structures are colored yellow on this fire insurance plan; indicating wooden frame construction. The brownish coloring reflects the fire-proof construction used for the additions.
Across the street, the remaining row houses were reconfigured to provide additional guest rooms. A swimming pool to the rear of the north side building was originally included in the plans, but never realized.

Externally, the architectural charm that makes Hilton Village unique was largely retained on both sides of the street, as the following vintage photographs indicate. The north side portion of the Inn is shown on the left; the much-expanded south side main building on the right. The top of the three-story addition was barely visible behind the original houses’ roof lines, when viewed from across Main Street.

The ‘under construction’ image that appears on the first page of this article, part of a large collection of very clear, circa 1918 photos, was deliberately selected for use because it depicts a portion of the Inn’s south side building. As a quick comparison of the far right-hand portion of the image immediately above this one indicates, when the row house at 90 Main Street was converted for use as part of the Inn, its structural features remained unchanged.

~ Featuring an Equally Charming Interior ~

In keeping with the old English style that the near-mirror image structures that comprised The Colony Inn represented, the interiors were equally inviting. The following excerpts from a Daily Press news story dated May 28, 1927, coupled with selected interior images, make that abundantly clear.

“An Inn of an old English type, situated in the heart of a village built after the English style, will open for business today.

“The main building itself is furnished throughout in pure English style. It is of irregular construction with the lobbies, lounge rooms and office on each side of the entrance.”
“The dining room, which is divided into three rooms, occupies space on the first floor of the main building, one of the rooms being in the nature of a sun-parlor with high broad windows.

Reportedly, some of the Inn’s furnishings came from the former German liner Vaterland; rebuilt for passenger service at the Newport News shipyard in 1923 following duty as a troop transport during World War I.

Another noteworthy feature in the dining area was a large, decorative map of the Virginia Peninsula by Thomas C. Skinner, resident artist at the shipyard for a number of years. Unfortunately, no images of that mural could be found. In addition, an unknown number of his equally artistic wife’s paintings were also positioned in some of the Inn’s rooms.

“In each building are attractive suites, each with sitting room, bed room and bath. The Inn has 52 bed-rooms in all.

“The guest rooms in both buildings are attractively grouped, for the most part in twos. Each of the Inn’s rooms is an outside room with plenty of windows and well ventilated. Many of the rooms have connecting baths. Each room has a telephone and those rooms which do not have private baths have running water.

“The detached section contains several club rooms suitable for afternoon teas, card parties and the like. The Inn has a number of fireplaces of old English design, with hand-done benches and fire-guards. The wall decorations carry out the English effect and just off the lobby is a replica of an old English tavern bar.

“Fixtures such as stair rails, lamps, telephone cages and other hardware are of wrought iron, all hand made by a local iron worker.”
The charming architecture and décor, delightful atmosphere and superlative food quickly made The Colony Inn a landmark. The prices were ‘right’. Single rooms rented for $1.50 without bath and $3.50 with. Breakfast was 45 cents, lunch 75 cents and dinner $1.00.

The 1930 census reveals that Mary Shumate was the resident manager of the Inn, and is believed to have been the Inn’s second of several managers over a span of four decades. She lived there for some unknown period of time along with her husband, William, who served as the establishment’s night clerk, and their teenage son, William, Jr. Prior to becoming the Inn’s manager she ran the restaurant there; parlaying her experience in serving meals at her West Avenue boarding house to hungry shipbuilders in downtown Newport News.

Also in residence at the Inn in 1930 were Murtis Thomas, listed as the Inn’s housekeeper and Ann Robinson, identified as the day clerk. The address listed for all of them was 98 Main Street, although the hotel’s layout and exterior pictures seem to indicate that the main entrance was closer to the middle of the block. Perhaps the end house that once had that street number was where the establishment’s office was located.

In 1931, the Inn issued a flyer to promote business during the Yorktown Sesquicentennial, held that October. It pointed out that the inn was conveniently located ‘on the concrete road from Richmond, Yorktown and Williamsburg’.

In later years, R. L. Cooke was the in-residence proprietor. Still later, in the early 1950s, Mrs. Eula L. Powell became the Inn’s manager. In 1954, she listed her residence in Hill’s Directory as being at 96 Main Street. A half-page ad for the Inn also appeared in that publication.
The Inn’s second manager, Mrs. Shumate, and Mrs. C. D. West, Jr., were sisters, which made Elsie Duval (nee West) a niece of Mrs. Shumate. In her youth, Elsie Duval would often ride the trolley car from downtown Newport News out into what was then considered far-off Warwick County to visit childhood friends and her aunt (whom everyone in her family called ‘Sis’).

“I had to pay an additional five cents at 64th street in order to ride all the way to Hilton. And, that was so far away, that when I went, I spent the day. I don’t remember many details, except that there were circular staircases that led up to the cupolas on top of each of the buildings and some of the public rooms had dark paneling.

“But what I do remember most of all were the wonderful meals prepared by Sis’ cook, Mamie Hudson. Mamie taught me to cook. She also worked many years for my parents after we moved to 9911 River Terrace (now 11 Hilton Terrace), where I still reside.

“During my high school years (I graduated from NNHS in 1934), our Literary Club sometimes met in a small dining room in the north building of the Inn. My son tells a story about a tunnel under Main Street that was used by the servants to bring food to that location from the kitchen in the south side building. I was also told that a few years after the Inn was demolished, the city became worried about the road possibly caving in if the tunnel was not maintained, so they filled it in.”

~ A Curiosity that Remains Unconfirmed ~

At one time, there may well have a tunnel that connected the Inn’s north and south side buildings; passing under Main Street. The emphasis here has to be on the word ‘may’.

Someone at the Bank of Warwick, years ago, casually mentioned to Elsie Duval’s son that there had once been such a passageway. That makes practical sense; it would have permitted Inn staffers to go back and forth between the south side kitchen and small meeting rooms in the north side structure without passing through public rooms, going out into the weather or having to dodge traffic while carrying trays and other items.

If, in fact there was such a tunnel, and the city filled the tunnel in and paved it over; there is no indication anywhere in that area that such a thing ever existed. Unfortunately, the name of the individual who related this intriguing story has been forgotten. No documentation of such an underground passageway can now be found. Nevertheless, the search continues. Hopefully, some former Inn employee or city public works official can shed some light (pun intended) on this curiosity.
~ Some Notable Guests ~

At the top of this list are the wives of no less than four presidents. Mrs. Calvin Coolidge, Mrs. Herbert Hoover and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt all stayed there when they sponsored ships built at NNS. On one such occasion, Emily Fournier (nee Lankes), who lived in the Village during her pre-teen years saw a huge, open touring car parked near the Inn’s main entrance and was told that the vehicle was for the use of Mrs. Roosevelt and two of her grandchildren that were staying there. Mrs. Woodrow Wilson was also a guest at the Inn during one of the earliest Virginia garden tours.

Philadelphia industrialist Archibald McCrea and his wife, Mollie, purchased Carters Grove in 1928. The mansion required extensive restoration and modernization work in order to make it livable. Since the Williamsburg Inn and Lodge were not opened until the mid-to-late 1930s, the closest comfortable place for them to stay and supervise renovation work at their newly-acquired residence was The Colony Inn. When that work was completed, Mr. and Mrs. McCrea left their lodgings at The Colony Inn, moved into Carters Grove and then proudly and somewhat pompously posed in front of their elegant new home.

Mrs. Walter Post Smith, Jr., now in her mid-90s, remembers events associated with the Inn from the late 1920s and early 1930s. In particular, she recently recalled that the daughter of the then-current Governor of Virginia spent her wedding night at The Colony Inn. Mrs. Smith further reminisced about the Inn’s impressive exterior and interior décor; and that the businesses’ restaurant was first class. She and her mother were both members of the Newport News Woman’s Club which originally met on West Avenue in what was once known as downtown Newport News. But club members would sometimes journey to Hilton for special meetings. In addition, a literary society held meetings at The Colony Inn and people often brought personal poetry to share.

The best accommodation at The Colony Inn was called the Huntington Suite. It was named for Archer Huntington, who had become Chairman of the shipyard in 1924 and whose support had allowed the Inn to become a reality. Archer Huntington was also the driving force behind the creation of The Mariners’ Museum, and his wife, Anna Hyatt, was a world-renowned sculptress whose works still adorn the museum’s landscape.

But what really intrigued local people was a custom-made bed that dominated the Huntington Suite. Archer was 6-4 and his wife Anna Hyatt, was nearly six feet tall. “Archer’s bed” was built by a local carpenter for the Huntington’s use, long before king-size beds became commonplace. Ironically, the Huntingtons’ seldom visited Newport News, and reportedly only used the bed once or twice. Most of the time, the suite was utilized by guests attending ship launchings and newly hired shipyard executives.
Like other civilian establishments on the Virginia Peninsula, The Colony Inn was taken over during World War II by the military to support the multiple activities associated with the Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation. For three and a half years, the Inn was leased to the Army, which used it to house officers assigned to HRPE, and for meetings and social events. The Inn’s signage remained in place, but military personnel called it ‘the officers’ hotel’. The following photos from that period of ‘military occupation’ depict, left to right, a 1944 convoy briefing for naval officers and merchant ship civilian skippers; and a meeting of Woman’s Army Corps brass in the Inn’s dining room.

This next photo was taken in December, 1944 during a dinner meeting for high-level army officers at the Inn. Included are two interesting groups of men. In the back, on the left, is the Camp Hill quartet, who entertained on many occasions during the war at various military installations on the Virginia Peninsula. The three other men standing are obviously waiters, but curiously, they all seem to be of draft age.

They also appear to be of foreign origin. Although undocumented, it is highly probable that these three white-jacketed individuals were members of a unique outfit called the Italian Service Organization. Thousands of Italian POWs were brought to the Newport News area during the war and after Italy switched sides, they were allowed to work, unguarded, in a wide variety of jobs. Many of them worked for Warwick’s Mennonite farmers and, as Nancy Jane Bains (nee Cyrus) - WHS, Class of 1954 recalls:

“During World War II, Italian prisoners took care of the grounds at The Colony Inn”.

"World War II Service"
In December of 1945, the Inn reverted to private operation. After a period of refurbishment, it reopened as The Colony Inn on May 3, 1946. Elijah Meekins, the well known and popular Chef at the Inn for fifteen years returned, along with his entire kitchen staff. Accompanying them was “Heath” a previous head waiter there. Newspaper advertisements referred to the dining room as The Colony Room, enticing local citizens to once again dine there.

Later that same year, the newly-formed Warwick Rotary Club moved its meeting place from The Cove Restaurant, which was located in the 9900 block of Warwick Road, to The Colony Inn. That move was precipitated by an increase in prices at the Cove. The Colony Inn’s price for the Rotarians at the time was $1.65 for each dinner, including tax and tip. The Warwick Rotary Club continued to meet at The Colony Inn until 1951, when they moved again, just across the street to the Women’s Club building at 87 Main Street, where they still meet.

By the early 1950s, The Colony Inn was faced with increased competition by the introduction of motels nearby, and by a lack of modern appointments. The Inn lacked air conditioning (although window units may have been installed) and there were no elevators in either building. At some point, some of the hotel rooms in both of the Inn’s buildings were converted into residential apartments. In addition, and still later, the public rooms in the building on the north side of Main Street were modified to serve as offices. It is believed that two local dentists were located there for a few years.

In July of 1955 it was revealed that the Bank of Warwick had negotiated for the purchase of the Inn’s properties from its owners at that time, a group of local businessmen. In parallel, plans were announced for tearing down the building on the south side of Main Street and replacing it with a modern, two-story building to serve as the bank’s headquarters. Demolition of the south side portion of the Inn commenced the next year and the bland building that presently occupies that site was constructed shortly thereafter.

The north side portion of the Inn survived a few more years, but it too succumbed to local commercial interests who wanted to erect a new building close to Hilton’s businesses on Warwick Road. The 1960 edition of Hill’s Directory lists The Colony Inn’s location as 97 Main, which was an address on the north side of the street that had not previously been utilized. That remaining portion of The Colony Inn was last managed by Mrs. Fay Dews, who lived elsewhere in what was by then had become the City of Warwick.

That same year, the Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Company acquired the remaining part of the Inn and had it demolished. C&P subsequently built a one-story business office there, which currently houses, amongst other succeeding commercial businesses, an upscale restaurant called 99 Main. So at least the tradition of serving fine food survives where The Colony Inn once stood…
~ And Yet, Happy Memories and Tangible Treasures Remain ~

John “Bud” Lankes, who once lived in Hilton and who graduated from Morrison High School in 1933, recently recalled the following:

“The Colony Inn started out around 1918 as a block of 4-room row houses at the corner of Warwick Boulevard and Main Street. Circa 1928, major remodeling took place, the three-story section was added, and it became a hotel. It was an exceptionally nice establishment, and notables such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover stayed there for launching events. In fact, the hotel probably was a shipyard-sponsored project for housing VIP visitors, since the Warwick Hotel was not exactly posh.”

“The dining room was a nice place to go; the food was excellent and the inn employed its own dietician; a lady named Mildred Larkin. Local people often went there for parties, banquets, and dances. I particularly remember one musician named Goff who played a ‘bull fiddle’.”

Margaret Lee Overton (nee Paine), a native of Newport News, recalls going to The Colony Inn on numerous occasions for dinner on Sunday nights in the 1949-1951 time frame. She and her future husband (the late Judge Overton of Hampton) were always served by a favorite waiter named William. Those were not casual events she emphasized; men wore coats and ties, and the ladies were attired in equally suitable garb.

Meredith West (Warwick High School - Class of 1954) grew up a few blocks north of Hilton Village, but remembers that out-of-town business associates of her father (he was a civilian employee at Langley Field during and after World War II) stayed at The Colony Inn in the late ‘40s. Another member of that class, Garland Moseley, recalls going to the Inn for dinner with his parents and that he had his first taste of caviar there.

Frank Blechman (NNHS - Class of 1965) and a boyhood chum, Chad Rayfield, lived near Hilton, in what was (and still is) called Rivermont. When the main part of the Inn was being demolished, boyhood curiosity overcame them, and they went exploring as boys are wont to do in such circumstances. For trespassing, Frank paid a price. While he was on the first floor, his friend dropped a chuck of concrete through a hole in the second floor and hit Frank in the head. Frank believes it was an accident; nevertheless, he says crime, anarchy and brain damage all befell him on the same day!

Warm memories provided by Jim Dossett (NNHS - Class of 1966) include the following:

“In the summer of 1959 my family moved from the 200 block of 37th Street to Palen Avenue. I attended Hilton for the 6th and 7th grades before going to NNHS. During that summer I roamed all over that part of Newport News.”
“One place that caught my attention was a big old Tudor style building behind the drug store and across Main Street from what was then the Bank of Warwick. The Tudor building was the Colony Inn and was mostly empty with maybe one or two small insurance/lawyer offices operating on the first floor. Within a very short time, that winter or perhaps the next summer, the building was removed and was replaced with a really ugly one story brick building.”

Jim went on to opine: “The Colony Inn was a hotel and part of the Hilton Village Planned Community. Being involved in the growth management side of local government over the last 30 years I often hear discussions about ‘New Urbanism’. In reality, Hilton was probably the first ‘New Urbanism’ development in the United States and was designed near the turn of the century (19th to 20th Century)...which hardly qualified it as ‘new’.”

Emma Padgett Fitzhugh, now 90 years young, also recalls dining at the Inn, which she remembers as being beautifully kept, both before and after World War II. On numerous occasions she says the Woman’s Club of Hilton Village met and dined there.

Virginia Poindexter (nee Shackelford), a mid-1940s graduate of NNHS recalls going to parties somewhere in the back of the main building as a college girl, where the main attractions, at least for her, at the time, she laughingly recalls as being libations and handsome college boys. Not only does she remember the establishment as being nicely furnished, she actually owns four interesting Inn artifacts. After the Bank of Warwick purchased the property, the Inn’s last management sold off the furnishings. Mrs. P thus acquired three chairs and a painting.

Two of those chairs are presently in use in her den. They have been re-upholstered using a casual print, but their shape and straight wooden legs, as depicted on the left, closely match the chair that can be seen in the black-and-white image on the right that shows a similar chair positioned in one of the Inn’s suites in 1927.

The third chair that she possesses is of the style once used in formal bedrooms. Currently, it is fitted with a contemporary, smooth silk slipcover. But if one is so bold as to raise the chair’s skirt past its seating area, what appears to be the original fabric, an elegant woven tapestry, and classic fluted wooden legs can be readily observed and appreciated.
But Virginia Poindexter’s most treasured artifact from The Colony Inn is a relatively small still-life painting set in a heavy gold frame. Just the kind of picture one might expect once graced the walls of rooms at The Colony Inn. Unfortunately, it is unsigned, and there are no identifying marks on the reverse side. But it’s easy to imagine that it could have been created by Therese Skinner (nee Tribolati), the Spanish-born and talented wife of shipyard artist Thomas C. Skinner.

Additional fond memories of the Inn were recently kindly provided by Emily Fournier (nee Lankes) and Barbara Granger (nee Osborne). Both of them grew up in Hilton Village during the 20’s and 30’s and attended Hilton Elementary School. Barbara Granger returned to the Village some years ago to care for her late mother, and now resides in the house on Post Street where she lived as a child.

In addition to a previously mentioned memory of Mrs. Roosevelt’s visit, Emily Fournier also recalls attending luncheons and at least one Apprentice School function in the north side building. In addition, she went to numerous dances that she believes were held in the Inn’s dining room during World War II (perhaps sponsored by the USO, she is not sure about that detail). However, she does vividly remember being told, back then, that Italian POW’s were working in the kitchen.

Her memories of entering the establishment are no less vivid:

“The dining room was off to the right, once you passed through the main entrance. But if you turned to the left, i.e., towards Warwick Road, the hotel registration desk was on the right and on the left was a big bay window with a comfortable sofa located beneath it. That area was all paneled in dark wood.”

Barbara worked briefly as a teenage waitress at the Inn’s small breakfast room, either in the summer of 1946 or 1947. She recalls that room was only big enough for about six tables and most of her customers were NNS executives who often stopped there early in the morning on their way to the shipyard. Her most vivid memory of that brief period of employment at the Inn was when someone pointed out Bill Blewett to her (at the time he was the shipyard’s executive vice president…and, a few years later, became the firm’s president). She didn’t have clue, then, as to his importance, but she was impressed by his stature, nevertheless.
Artifacts in the form of a fairly large number of vintage postcards depicting the Inn at various times during its existence have fortunately been saved. Many of them have been utilized as illustrations in this article. The last known postcard issued was produced in the 1950s, just before the systematic dismantlement of the Inn commenced.

Last, but not least by any means, Jane Waters (nee Denton), WHS - Class of 1956 vividly remembers often being in The Colony Inn in the late 1940s/early 1950s:

“I took piano lessons in the dining room. I would walk up Main Street from Hilton School and enter the lovely Colony Inn’s main entrance. A black butler wearing a white jacket would greet me as I entered. I turned to the right and went into the elegant dining area to take my lessons at the baby grand piano from Mrs. Emily King. All the tables in the dining room were covered in white linen cloths. There was a picture window on the front that had multiple panes in it."

Although this image is from an earlier era, the cloth-covered tables and white jacketed waiters agree with her memory. Best of all, there certainly appears to be a large piano in the room on the right, visible through a draped and decorated doorway. And, sure enough, there’s the large window with multiple panes!
~ Random Scenes from Yesteryear ~

This collage of images dates back to the 1920s. Some of these photos are near-duplicates of ones previously used in this nostalgic peek back at The Colony Inn. After discovering them in a variety of seldom-viewed files, they were considered too good not to share.
~ Postscript ~

I don’t recall ever being inside The Colony Inn, but surely my parents must have dined there or attended some function or other, at some point in time. They lived in Hilton Village, briefly, in 1935/36 and during the ‘40s and ‘50s we lived only a few miles away and frequently shopped there.

On numerous occasions, I must have gone past the place without appreciating its elegance, walking up Main Street from Hilton Elementary School to the stores along Warwick Road. Or, perhaps, I passed through the alley which formed the eastern boundary for the main part of the Inn without even noticing the sun parlor portion of the dining room on my way to a small, adjacent parking lot that conveniently served the Village Theatre and Rose’s ‘5, 10 & 15 cent’ store. Such are the transgressions of youth, I suppose…at least some of the more innocent ones!

The movie house and Rose’s were not erected until 1941, so this scene reflects what once was visible from Warwick Road before 1940. My one clear memory of The Colony Inn is the sign that once stood atop the three-story part of the south side unit. It was barely visible just above and behind the apartments located above Rose’s, when viewed from across Warwick Road.

As a result of a renewed curiosity driven by recent questions from people interested in the history of Hilton Village, I now know far more about The Colony Inn than I ever did before. Or thought I ever might discover. In addition to the quoted comments sprinkled throughout this story, significant help in finding valuable information and great illustrations was also provided by Dave Spriggs, Jeanie Lankes, Gary Sealey, Bill Fox, and Greg Grunow and other dedicated staffers in the Newport News Public Library’s Virginiana Room. Thank you one and all!

But what I cannot help but still wonder…whatever happened to the German-made shipboard furniture…or those Skinner paintings…or, for that matter, Archer’s big bed?

Bill Lee
March, 2010