

Kempsville PONY Baseball's History

Written by Frank Albero

The story of Pony Baseball in Kempsville begins with the story of baseball in southeast Virginia. The area long known as Hampton Roads was home to a number of professional and semi-pro baseball teams going as far back as 1865 with a Norfolk baseball club called the Junipers. A Norfolk Public Library description of the history of baseball in Norfolk says that spectators watching the Junipers play were astounded by the “feats of dexterity displayed by the fielders in catching the ball on the fly.”

With its large Navy base, commercial port facilities, and downtown office and business activities, the City of Norfolk was the clear center of activity and employment in the area. By 1896, Norfolk had become the home of the Norfolk Tars in the Virginia League. In the 1930s, the Tars joined the Piedmont League as part of the large minor league farm system of the New York Yankees.

To the east of Norfolk, a large area of farmland and small towns comprising Princess Anne County lay between the city and the oceanfront resort area known as



The 1939 Kempsville High School varsity baseball team

“Virginia Beach.” On an unpaved, two-lane Kempsville Road, Kempsville High School was one of the first high schools established in the county. Allen Gettel, a member of the Kempsville High School Class of 1935, would become the first Kempsville player to draw the close attention of baseball scouts. The mound they would watch him pitch from was not across Kempsville Road, where ballfields would eventually be built, but on a field behind the high school building. Upon signing with the Yankees, Allen Gettel would enter what was then a very extensive minor league farm system for one of just sixteen teams in Major League Baseball at the time.

As popular as Babe Ruth had made baseball in the 1920s and 1930s, youth baseball before reaching high school was largely played in open fields with as many players as could be gathered on a given day. Scrap wood or a newspaper served as bases. Balls and strikes or plays in the field were called by the players. In the summer of 1938, a gentleman in Williamsport, Pennsylvania gathered neighborhood boys to lay out a scaled-down field and decide on some rules for organized youth baseball games. In 1939, this “Little League Baseball” had its first season with three registered teams of 9- to 12-year-old boys.

The cornerstone of the second Kempsville High School building marks one of the most significant years in United States and local history. At the very end of the year the

school was completed, the attack on the Navy base at Pearl Harbor led to the United States' direct entry into World War II. Over the next four years, the war would bring thousands of workers to the area for the shipbuilding, ship repair, and transport work needed to support the war effort. It would also bring thousands of Navy personnel, many of whom would find the area to be a great place to settle and raise a family. Among them was a Navy officer named Richard "Ralph" Garriott. A Kentucky native, he served in the Navy for 30 years, including service throughout the Pacific in World War II during which he earned two Bronze Stars.

Another of the war's local impacts was the significant demand for farm products to support the war effort. So great was this need that exemptions from military service were granted to ensure that the work of farms throughout Princess Anne County and the rest of the country could be completed. At the Gettel farm, near what is now Princess Anne Road and the west end of Parliament

Drive, Allen Gettel would split time between pitching for the Norfolk Tars and working the farm with his father. In a 2002 interview, the legendary Yogi Berra talked about his time with the 1943 Norfolk Tars: "We had one pitcher on that team, Allen Gettel, who made it up to the Yankees in '45 and then bounced around the majors for a few years with Cleveland, the White Sox, and Washington. He had a kinda strange deal. He owned a farm near Norfolk and only pitched in home games. When the team went on the road, he had to stay home and work his farm."

As the war effort accelerated, Baseball Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt corresponded about whether professional baseball should be suspended as many players entered military service and effort at home focused on the war. While leaving the final decision to the commissioner, President Roosevelt advised, "I honestly feel that it would be best for the country to keep baseball going. There will be fewer people unemployed and everybody will work longer hours than ever before. And that means that they ought to have a chance for recreation and for taking their minds off their work even more than before." Baseball continued through the war, providing entertainment for those at home and a diversion for the troops and sailors overseas as their teams at home played on. Major League players in the service played exhibition games in Europe and in the Pacific as baseball fields appeared and games broke out in the most unlikely places. Already well-established as the "national pastime" before the war, baseball provided a strong reminder of home to Americans serving very far away.

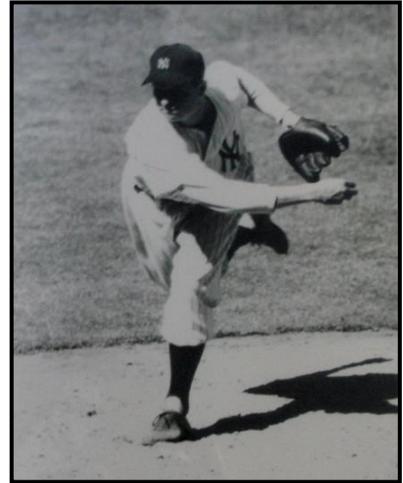


The cornerstone of the second Kempsville High School building. It was completed just before the United States entered World War II.



Wherever they served during World War II, American GIs found a way to play the game that reminded them of home.

During spring training before the start of the 1945 season, Kempsville's Allen Gettel made the impression on Yankees manager Joe McCarthy that would bring him up to the big leagues. On April 20, 1945, after nine years in the Yankees farm system, he made his Major League debut against the Senators at Griffith Stadium in Washington, D.C. Pitching the last four innings, he struck out four and gave up one hit to earn the save in a Yankees win. It was the start of a ten-year Major League career with five teams that would make him a teammate of Hall of Famers Joe DiMaggio, Phil Rizzuto, Joe Gordon, Yogi Berra, Bob Feller, Lou Boudreau, Nellie Fox, Willie Mays, and Stan Musial. A year later, on September 22, 1946, Allen Gettel's former Norfolk Tars teammate, Yogi Berra, made his Major League debut, hitting a home run in the first game of a double-header at Yankee Stadium. Allen Gettel pitched in the second game and got the win.



Kempsville's Allen Gettel on the mound at Yankee Stadium in 1946

As late as 1946, Little League Baseball had grown to just twelve 12 leagues, all of which were located in Pennsylvania. By 1949, there were more than 300 leagues in several states. Little League Baseball remained limited to 9- to 12-year-old boys and there was growing interest in providing organized baseball games for those players "graduating" from Little League and playing on larger fields as a way of transitioning to a regulation size baseball diamond. In the summer of 1951, a new "Pony League" of just six teams of 13- and 14-year-olds was started in Washington, Pennsylvania. Pony Baseball was onto something. Just one year later, there were more than 500 teams in 106 leagues around the country. When these Pony players turned 15, their interest in baseball was as great as ever. In 1953, a "Colt League" for 15- and 16-year olds was started in Ohio and their games were played on the regulation 90-foot diamond. In 1959, the Pony and Colt Leagues were merged into a single organization based in Washington, Pennsylvania.



The Davis Corner Volunteer Fire Department was one of the early sponsors of youth baseball in Princess Anne County.

Back in Kempsville, the years following the war had brought a return to normalcy for the farming community that was turning into a hub for small businesses and new homes. In Princess Anne County, a youth baseball program involving hundreds of

players was a center of family activity. Teams were assembled by neighborhoods such as Woodstock, Davis Corner, Kempsville, Thalia, and Aragona Village. They were sponsored by businesses and civic organizations like the Kempsville Lions and Ruritan Clubs, Herbert Holt Buick, Larasan Realty and the Davis Corner Volunteer Fire Department. The land across Kempsville Road from Kempsville High School had been developed into athletic fields that were busy with “Midget League” baseball in the spring and summer and football in the fall.

A photo of the ballfields thought to be taken around 1955 shows not only the second Kempsville High School built in 1941, but the original high school building as well. A 1941 Ford Deluxe rumbles along the road between the school buildings and the ballfields. Remarkable for the year the photo was taken, field lights can be clearly seen and this can be credited to the community spirit and “trained initiative” of some Navy veterans. As the story goes, Commander Garriott and others arranged for some Navy Construction Battalion (the “Seabees”) expertise and equipment to install and light what would become Kempsville’s own “Field of Dreams” for many years.

Kempsville ballplayers and their coaches had much success against the other teams in Princess Anne County. A 1956 team coached by Jim Goad, another Navy veteran of World War II, won its Midget League Championship. Herb Culpepper, one of the young players on that

team, held onto a baseball signed by that championship team for more than 50 years. A team from Davis Corner that won the championship in 1958 included Ralph Garriott’s



Herb Culpepper, a member of the 1956 Princess Anne County Midget League championship team, provided this iconic photo of the Kempsville schools and lighted ballfields in the mid-1950s.



An aerial view of the heart of Kempsville in the late 1950s. Navy Seabees installed the field lighting around 1955. The original Kempsville High School and Grammar School buildings seen to the right of the 1941 Kempsville High School building were demolished when a one-story addition to the 1941 building was built in 1958. Behind the school buildings is the Kempsville farmland that would become the Fairfield neighborhood.

son, Mike and 10-year-old Mac Carpenter, who would become the 28th President of Kempsville PONY Baseball in 1995. The Larasan Cardinals beat a Davis Corner team for the 1959 championship. Pitching with a broken finger on his glove hand, a young William “Buster” O’Brien got the win. He would become a star quarterback at Princess Anne High School and the University of Richmond before eventually becoming a Circuit Court Judge in Virginia Beach.

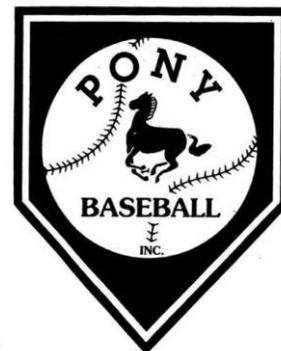
In the same year the Pony League for 13- and 14-year-olds and the Colt League for 15- and 16-year olds were combined as P-O-N-Y Baseball in Washington,

Pennsylvania, Commander Ralph Garriott applied to establish the “Kempsville Pony League” for six teams of 13- and 14-year-olds. The Navy’s influence getting the Pony League started is clear on the application form. The five league officers included Commander Garriott as President, Chief Petty Officer Frank Leach as Vice President, and WWII veteran Jim Goad as Player Agent. Four of the six original teams were sponsored by Navy commands or clubs: Submarine Squadron Six, USS CADMUS, the Acey Ducey Club, and the Chief Petty Officers Club. The other sponsors were Tidewater Awning and Coaches Sporting Goods, the early supplier of uniforms and trophies for the league.



Ralph Garriott (center) was the Kempsville Pony League’s first President. Here, he presents a championship trophy to Coach Stark. To the right is Jim Goad, the league’s first Player Agent.

The two Kempsville ballfields were always busy. On May 2, 1959, the Virginian-Pilot reported on the opening of the season: “Maybe baseball may be dying in the minor leagues, but you would never know it here in Princess Anne County. Approximately 1,200 boys between the ages of 8 and 16 years of age will break out their baseball bats and gloves today to participate in the sport.” The schedule for that opening day listed Aragona Village vs. the Kempsville Cardinals at Kempsville Field No. 1 and Westwood Hills vs. the Woodstock Indians at Kempsville Field No. 2.



Each season from 1959 to 1965, the Kempsville Pony League fielded between six and eight Pony teams. In 1966, the league expanded to add 15- and 16-year-old Colt players as the “Kempsville Pony/Colt League” through 1975. It was during this period that the larger field became known as the “Pony-Colt Field.” It was also during this period that Kempsville baseball made its mark in Virginia. When the third Kempsville High School opened south of the Pony-Colt fields for the

1966-67 school year, a new baseball coach named Ray Barlow was there to get a program started. With just eighth and ninth graders at the school in its first year, Coach Barlow led the team to an undefeated junior varsity season. It was the start of a run that has not been repeated since. From 1970 to 1977, Kempsville High School won six Eastern Region baseball titles and four Group AAA state baseball championships in six years (1972, 1973, 1975, and 1977). The 1975 team went undefeated with 19 wins. Describing Coach Barlow's success, Virginian-Pilot sports reporter Harry Minium wrote, "His 10-year varsity coaching record: 174-20. That's a winning percentage of 89 percent. It helped that Kempsville had the best youth baseball program around."

Kempsville's "Boys of Summer" were interested in playing even after high school. In 1976, the league added a "Thoroughbred" team of 17- through 20-year-olds and was re-named, "Kempsville Borough Boys Baseball (KBBB)." In 1977, PONY Baseball, Inc. offered the option of separating 17- and 18-year-olds from the Thoroughbred league to a "Palomino" league. In 1981, Kempsville fielded its first Palomino team with Garland Payne getting that program started. Three years earlier, in 1978, Coach Payne had led a team to the Pony South Region tournament in Casey, South Carolina, advancing through the bracket to the championship game. When a heavy rain came through and it looked like a lost tournament day would allow Kempsville's ace pitcher to return to pitch in the championship game, the host team instead pulled some strings and arranged for a National Guard helicopter to hover over the field to dry it out. The championship game was played without Kempsville's ace on the mound. The team might have returned to Kempsville with a runner-up trophy, but it had a championship baseball story that would be told for many years. While PONY Baseball, Inc. had introduced the "Bronco" league with 70-foot bases for 11- and 12-year-olds back in 1961, Kempsville did not have its first Bronco teams until 1981.



As farmland was developed into neighborhoods, the steady increase in Kempsville's population contributed to the growth from 6 teams in 1959 to 21 teams in 1982. In line with that growth was the increase in automobile traffic that made the intersection of Princess Anne Road and Kempsville Road one of the most congested in the state. These once unpaved, two-lane roads of 1955 had been widened to four lanes separated by a median in the early 1970s with the expanded Kempsville Road encroaching on the ballfields as well as the school property across the street. On the Pony-Colt field during 6:00 pm games, foul balls



Even after Kempsville Road had been widened in the early 1970s, steady development led to ever-increasing traffic congestion near the ballfields. By 1984, further expansion of the intersection was already being discussed.

leaving the first base side were a regular threat to vehicles stopped in traffic on Kempsville Road. In 1983, the Kempsville Lions Club donated large safety nets strung between the light poles on the first base side to keep foul balls from leaving the field. The nets could not be kept anchored in high winds, though, and the City directed the league to take them down. Most concerning of all, there were too many screeching tires and close calls for players and families making their way to practices or games from the school side of the road.

By 1984, it was clear that the intersection would require further expansion. The minutes of the league's Executive Board meeting in September included the "status of the Pony-Colt fields as regards the intersection construction for Princess Anne and Kempsville Roads. KBBB will probably need a new field for the 1986 season if the Virginia Beach Bond Issue passes." A number of options had been drawn up for expanding the intersection, including a modern "flyover" design. All of the options involved the loss of the Kempsville Pony fields to wider roads. League President Al Ward met with and wrote letters to City planners and the School Board explaining the eventual need for a new home for the league. He described what the league had meant to the community since the 1950s, the recent successes of Kempsville's All Star teams, including the Pony All Stars' advancement to the Zone Tournament in Ohio, and the dangers of crossing Kempsville Road to get to games. Summarizing the league's position, he wrote, "We are not asking to add a new program or activity. We simply want an opportunity for the Kempsville community to keep something of value as the City attempts to accommodate growth." But funding for the intersection work was subject to Virginia Beach voters approving a bond issue totaling \$36.5 million for highway improvements. In April 1985, voters rejected the highway bond issue.

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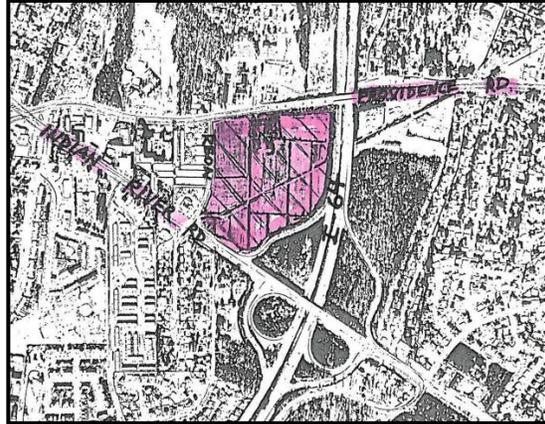


In this mid-1980s photo, two of the league's names from over the years can be seen. The white lettering on the side of the concession stand building says "KEMPSVILLE PONY-COLT LEAGUE." The sign mounted to the backstop says "KEMPSVILLE BOYS BASEBALL."

Although the overall highway bond issue had been rejected, the writing was on the wall that eventually, the Kempsville Pony ballfields would be lost to the steady growth of a part of Virginia Beach that somehow retained its small town feel. The prospect of the eventual loss of the fields, however, didn't keep league volunteers from maintaining the diamonds and facilities as among the best in the area. It was not at all unusual for Kempsville Pony games to be played as scheduled after rains had washed out games on all other local fields. The league continued to expand as it tried to accommodate the interest in Pony Baseball among younger players. The 9- and 10-year-old Mustang league with 60-foot bases was introduced in Kempsville in 1986.

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The Kempsville/Princess Anne Road intersection project remained a high but unfunded priority for Virginia Beach. The same neighborhood developments that brought more people and traffic to Kempsville had also taken up almost all of the available land large enough to accommodate two baseball fields. Following up on Al Ward's 1984 effort to get the City to consider alternative field locations, League President Les Francis sent a detailed letter to the Director of Parks and Recreation in March 1986. The letter enclosed aerial photos of the few locations left in Kempsville with room enough for two lighted ballfields. The photos included the undeveloped area near the corner of Princess Anne Road and South Plaza Trail and the area planned to be developed into Woodstock Park on Providence Road. Another photo highlighted what was then known as the Davis Farm property just west of Interstate 64 between Indian River Road and Providence Road. This property dated back to the 1800s and was one of the last remaining family farms in Kempsville. The letter closed by saying, "The reality is that there are few land opportunities left in Kempsville and once they are covered with houses and commercial activity, the ball game is literally and figuratively over." Les Francis could not have known that it would take 23 more years for the ball game to be over at Kemps Landing, but a whole new ball game would begin on one of the very pieces of land he had identified.



League President Les Francis's 1986 letter to the City of Virginia Beach included this photo highlighting the Davis Farm property as a possible new location for the league.

The Kempsville Pony ballfields were still some of the few lighted fields in the area for league use, but by the early 1990s, the lighting constructed by the Seabees more than thirty years earlier was showing its age. In 1993, League President Lou McKinney recruited new sponsors and coordinated volunteers to staff Bingo nights. This led to success raising \$30,000 needed to improve the field lighting and another \$24,000 needed to renovate a long-serving concession stand building.



The concession stand building renovations championed by League President Lou McKinney served the league well until the end of the line at Kemps Landing. For 6:00 pm games on the Pony-Colt field, cars stopped in Kempsville Road traffic were sitting ducks for foul balls leaving the first base side.

The new structure would house a concession stand and storage rooms on the ground floor and a meeting room and scorer's booth on the second floor. The contributions of a small but dedicated group of Bingo volunteers and the support from

local businesses that enabled the field improvements would serve the league and the Kempsville community well for another sixteen years.

The league's name was changed again in 1997 when it was incorporated as "Kempsville PONY Baseball (KPB)." The coach-pitch "Pinto" league with 50-foot bases for 7- and 8-year-olds was introduced in 1999 with games played at Catholic High School. In 2009, the "Shetland" tee ball league was added for 5- and 6-year-olds with games played at Kempsville Meadows Elementary School. Unlike Little League Baseball, which did not adjust from its 60-foot bases for 9- to 12-year-olds until 2012, PONY Baseball had long ago recognized the benefit of two-year age groups playing on progressively larger diamonds aligned with the players' physical abilities.



In the time since the 1986 letter providing aerial photos of potential new locations, the Princess Anne Road/South Plaza Trail property had been developed into Bishop Sullivan Catholic High School and the adjoining shopping center and Sentara facilities. When built, Woodstock Park had just one unlighted ballfield that the City had already apportioned to a different league. Ownership of the Davis Farm property had passed to the Hargrove family. Development pressure in the area continued and a large national retail store chain contacted the Hargrove family about purchasing their farm property. It was a great location for a new big box store and the company's offer for the property matched the location's profit potential. That is when the community spirit and neighborly culture of old Kempsville met modern Kempsville.

Mr. Roland E. Hargrove, Sr., a member of the Kempsville High School Class of 1936, contacted the City of Virginia Beach about the offer he had received for the property. He explained that his family was prepared to sell, but their preference was for the land to instead be developed into a city park for the use of all.

Unfortunately, the funds the City had available to make the purchase didn't come close to the private offer that was already on the table. But in return for the City's commitment to turn the property into a public park, Mr. Hargrove sold it to the City of Virginia Beach for far less than what he had been offered by the retail chain.



The spring 2008 season was the 50th season as a Pony league at Kemps Landing.

The City's purchase of the Davis Farm property in February, 2004 finally provided an option for Kempsville PONY Baseball's relocation that aligned with plans for the expansion of the intersection near the Pony-Colt fields. As the project schedules shaped up, the league would play its 50th season as a Pony Baseball league at the old fields in 2008 and then move to the new fields at Providence Park in 2009 for the league's 50th Anniversary season.

In preparation for the 2005 season, Kempsville PONY Baseball invited former Yankee Allen Gettel to throw out the ceremonial first pitch to recognize the 50th anniversary of his last Major League game in 1955. Sadly, he passed away before Opening Day, but the league found another way to remember this Kempsville legend. In a 2005 interview, Allen Gettel had reminisced about a number of his teammates and said that baseball always emphasized the team over the individual -- something he said was important from the Pony League to the big leagues. At the end of the 2005 high school baseball season, the first Allen Jones Gettel Teammate Award featuring a photograph of its namesake on the mound at Yankee Stadium was presented at Kempsville High School. Sponsored by Kempsville PONY Baseball, this annual award recognizes the varsity player considered by the varsity coach to best demonstrate the qualities of being a good teammate. It has been presented every year since and a plaque listing the recipients is on display at the high school.



Kempsville High School player Chase Gardner received the Allen Jones Gettel Teammate Award in 2015. The award has been sponsored by Kempsville PONY Baseball since 2005.

Over the next few years, the Executive Board prepared for the eventual departure from the Kemps Landing fields to a new location. Although the City was constructing the new facilities at what would be named Providence Park, the league would be responsible for the construction of two new score booth buildings and scoreboards, and the purchase of maintenance equipment for grooming the infield and outfield turf that would be a new responsibility. But the Board remained committed to respecting the league's history even as it prepared for the future.

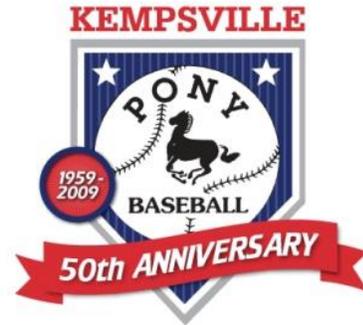


Mike Garriott (left) and Dick Garriott (right) each threw a ceremonial pitch at the closing ceremony held at the end of the spring 2008 season. Their father, Ralph Garriott, was the league's first President.

At an Executive Board meeting in 2008, Lou McKinney, who had led the effort to upgrade the field lighting and renovate the concession stand in 1993, suggested, "We ought to do something to help people remember there used to be ballfields here."

The 2008 baseball season was Kempsville Pony's 50th and final spring season on the fields at Kemps Landing. At a closing ceremony at the end of the season, ceremonial pitches were thrown by special guests representing each decade played there.

Representing the league's first decade and its founder and first president, Ralph Garriott's sons Dick and Mike each threw a pitch. They recalled their time on the fields as boys, not only playing baseball, but also helping their dad to get the fields in shape in the early days of the league. By a stroke of baseball magic, 2008 also marked the 100th anniversary of the debut of the song, "Take Me Out to the Ballgame." Former League President Chris Conley, "The Voice of Kempsville PONY Baseball," closed the ceremony by leading the KPB Family in a memorable community performance of that baseball classic.



After the closing ceremony, effort shifted to moving the league from Kemps Landing to Providence Park in time for the start of Kempsville PONY Baseball's 50th Anniversary season. On April 4, 2009, 41 teams from Shetland through Pony (ages 5 through 14) were introduced at the Opening Day ceremony at Providence Park. Lou McKinney was presented with PONY Baseball's Joe E. Brown Award for his long service to the league. Herb Culpepper and some teammates from the 1956 Princess Anne County Midget League Championship team were recognized. Garland Payne, who had introduced the Palomino program for 17- and 18-year olds in 1981, threw the ceremonial first pitch -- using the very baseball the 1956 championship team had autographed 53 years earlier.

Meyera Oberndorf, who had served as Mayor of the City of Virginia Beach from 1988 to 2008 and had insisted that Kempsville PONY Baseball would always have a place to play, spoke to the players, coaches, and parents. As she had done so many times before, she thanked the league volunteers for their time working with young people and encouraged the players to listen to their coaches and parents and to always show good sportsmanship. Most of all, she encouraged the players and fans to have fun playing and watching their games. In what has become an Opening Day tradition, Chris Conley once again led the crowd in "Take Me Out to the Ballgame." Construction of the two new score booth buildings continued even as the 2009 season was played. The barn design of these buildings and the larger



This is the baseball autographed by the 1956 Princess Anne County Midget League championship team. It was thrown as the first pitch at 2009's Opening Day ceremony at the newly-opened Providence Park, once the site of the Davis Farm.

concession stand and restroom building, are nods to Kempsville's farming history on this site.

Kempsville PONY Baseball's use of the brand new ballfields at Providence Park had started in late February and continued through the hosting of two PONY Baseball tournaments in July. When the last tournament game ended -- with a Kempsville Pony All Star team as the tournament champions -- the new ballfields were worn out. The decision was made to give the new fields a break for turf work and restoration through the fall. Fortunately, the old ballfields at Kemps Landing had not yet been demolished. The 2009 Fall Ball season was played there and the very last baseball game on the Pony-Colt field was played on the evening of October 31, 2009. Fittingly, one of the umpires for that night's game was Andy Owens, the great grandson of Jesse E. Owens, Sr., who was a coach in the earliest days of the Kempsville Pony League.



The final baseball game on the Pony-Colt field was a Colt Fall Ball game on the evening of October 31, 2009.

Back at Providence Park, scoreboards were purchased and installed before the start of the 2010 season. The league's commitment to honoring its past as it set out on its future at Providence Park continued. In June 2010, the Garriott family joined the league for the unveiling of a sign naming the new Pony and Colt field for the first President of the Kempsville Pony League.



In June 2012, the Hargrove family joined the league for the unveiling of a sign naming the Mustang and Bronco field for the gentleman whose commitment to the Kempsville community had resulted in a brand new public park being created where another big box store and parking lot might otherwise have been.



The next step in honoring the league's past was to act on Lou McKinney's recommendation to do something to help people remember that there used to be ballfields at Kempes Landing. The league's Executive Board committed to placing a statue at the new Kempes Landing Park, located on part of the original Kempesville Pony-Colt field. Virginia Beach sculptor Richard Stravitz was commissioned to create a sculpture of a Kempesville ballplayer. A Pony-age player posed for the sculpture wearing a vintage Kempesville Pony pinstriped uniform recovered from the old uniform storage shed, holding a Mickey Mantle model baseball glove. The sculpture was not made in a throwing or hitting pose, but instead exhibits the league's post-game sportsmanship tradition of congratulating the other team's players and coaches for a good game.



The April, 2015 unveiling of the "Good Game" statue located on the site of the original Kempesville Pony-Colt field.

The "Good Game" statue was unveiled at a ceremony at the Kempes Landing Park in April, 2015 as work on the expanded intersection and renovation of the 1941 Kempesville High School building continued. Virginia Beach mayor Will Sessoms spoke of the long history of baseball in Kempesville. Garland Payne told the story of the National Guard helicopter drying the field for the 1978 South Region Pony tournament championship game and presented the long-famous runner-up trophy to the league. Dick Garriott (son of the league's first President, Ralph Garriott) and Debbie Goad Hanson (daughter of the league's first Player Agent, Jim Goad) did the unveiling honors. Will Matney, the model for the sculpture in 2011 and now a member of Kempesville High School's varsity baseball team, looked on in the same vintage uniform he had worn more than three years earlier. At the end of the ceremony, the 2015 Pony Orioles lined up for "high fives" with the new statue.



The future of the league met the history of the league when the Pony Orioles demonstrated the post-game good sportsmanship tradition.

In August, 2018 a final step was taken to remember the original Pony-Colt ballfields. Working with the City of Virginia Beach, Kempesville PONY Baseball marked

the exact location of the Mustang-Bronco field's home plate. Recorded in 2009 with GPS precision, a granite home plate now marks the spot with an interpretive sign near it describing the league's history and the ballfield's role as a hub of the Kempsville community. The sign also explains that the location of the original Pony-Colt field's home plate is now



The exact location of the Mustang-Bronco "KPB #2" field's home plate with Kempsville Road running parallel to what was the third base line. The sign includes photos from over the years and a description of the Pony-Colt League's role in the Kempsville community.

within the roadway of the expanded intersection. Standing at the home plate marker now helps those who played or watched games at these ballfields to get a better feel for where things once were.

Moving forward, long-time Kempsville residents and former Pony-Colt players and coaches can be assured that strong Kempsville baseball and sportsmanship traditions are alive and well less than three miles away on the ballfields at Providence Park.



A Bronco tournament game being played on Roland E. Hargrove, Sr. Field at Providence Park. The field is named for the gentleman who wanted to see the former site of a Kempsville family farm turned into a public park instead of another big box store.