

COLONNA HOUSEBOATEX-HUNTING LODGE (HULL 40' x 32' x 8') - BUILT 1927

(PAINTING DONE FROM A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN 1978)

This houseboat is located on a 4 acre wooded area at the foot of Seneca Avenue in the Oaklette Section of Chesapeake, Virginia just off Indian River Road. The house part of the boat was built in 1927 by Captain Will Colonna, Sr. and his daughters on an existing Chesapeake & Ohio wooden railroad pontoon, which probably dates back to the late 1800's. The houseboat was built for and used as a hunting lodge. Each year back in the late 1920's and early 1930's, the floating hunting camp was towed with a tugboat to Mill Tail Creek, Buffalo City, North Carolina, a now non-existing town in the marsh lands west of Mann's Harbor, North Carolina where friends and business associates hunted deer, bear and squirrel from canoes and outboard motor boats and counted the many liquor stills in that East Lake area in those days.

In 1935, the houseboat was anchored north of its present location in the river when a violent hurricane struck, breaking the boat's anchor cable and blowing the houseboat with high winds and tide up the Creek beyond its present location. In an attempt to get the boat back in the river, Captain Will Colonna built a series of dirt dams across the cove, allowing the springwater to fill and create a small pond floating the boat, then moving it a bit closer to the river, then removing the existing dam and rebuilding it across the Cove again closer to the river repeating the process over and over until he had the boat back in the river. But after doing this several times and moving the boat several hundred feet down the cove closer to the river, he abandoned the idea, saying he got tired of building dams. So today the houseboat remains secure on the bottom in a freshwater pond behind the last dam Captain Will built. Captain Will Colonna sold the property and Bill and Ruby Mansfield raised their family and lived on the houseboat for about 30 years. In 1978, W. W. Colonna, Jr. bought the property back in the family again. Today the houseboat is used for small socials with family, friends, clubs, business associates, etc. The interior is a mixture of nautical and 1920 furnishings. It even has its own old player piano with lots of turn of the century tunes.