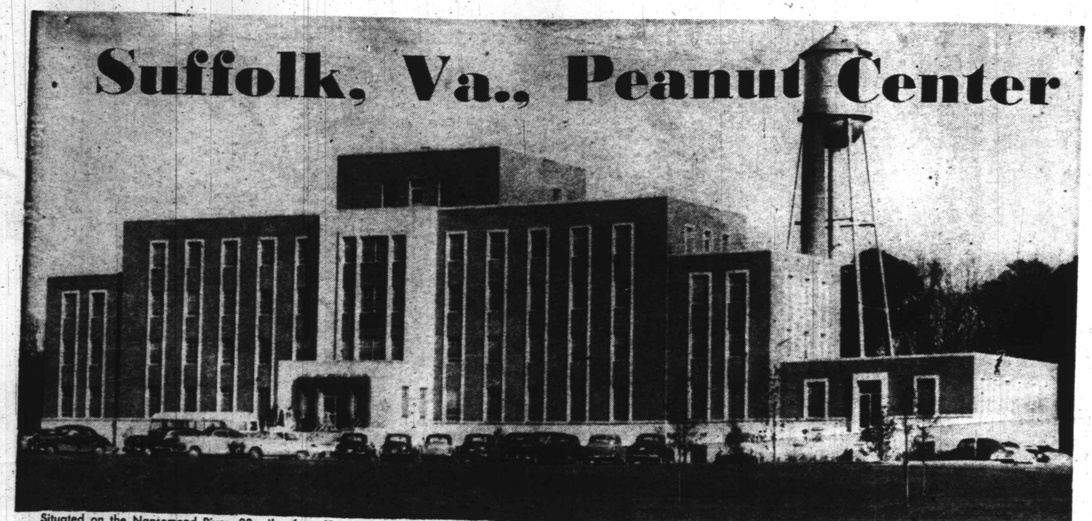
Suffolk, Va., Peanut Center



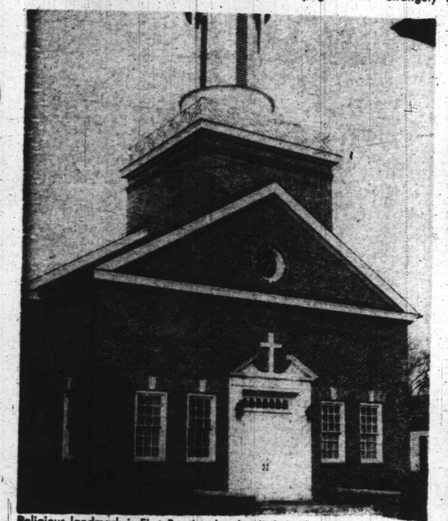
Situated on the Nansemond River, 23 miles from Hampton Roads is Suffolk, Va, one of the peanut centers of the world. Its rich farmlands grow the peanut and many of its 17,000 residents market the crop for processing.

Suffolk is one of the reasons why the state of Virginia ranks as one of the six large producers of the crop. Together with Ga., Ala., N.C., Fla., and Tex., Va. sends to the markets over 3 million pounds of peanuts a year.

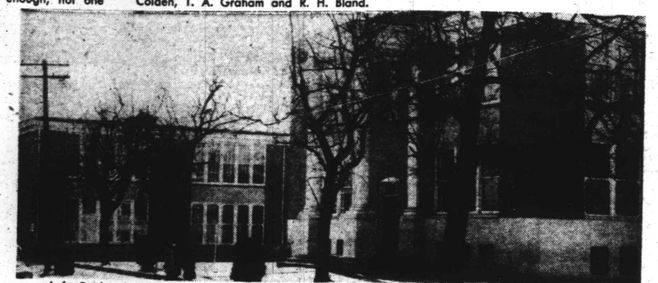
Served by six railroads, 33 passenger trains and 78 busses, Suffolk is also a busy communication center. Its school building program, speeded up since recent Supreme Court decisions, is rapidly making this Virginia city an educational center for colored people, as the modern new buildings on this page show. Strangely enough, not one school is named for Dr. George Washington Carver, the peanut wizard, who discovered hundreds of worthwhile uses for the peanut.

Suffolk has six physicians and three dentists who practice indiscriminately at the Louise Memorial Hospital pictured above. A memorial to the wife of a peanut industrialist, the hospital was directed in his will to practice democracy in the treatment of patients and admission of physicians.

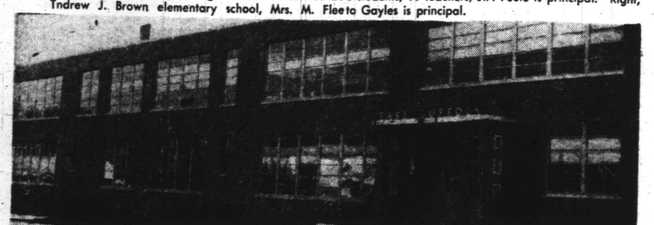
The city's physicians include: Dr. W. M. Hoffler Sr., and his son, Oswald; Dr. L. T. Reid, recently returned from Army duty in Germany, and his wife, Dr. Margaret Reid; Dr. Randolph Reid, brother of L. T., and Dr. H. M. Diggs. Dentists include, Drs. Charles M. Colden, T. A. Graham and R. H. Bland.



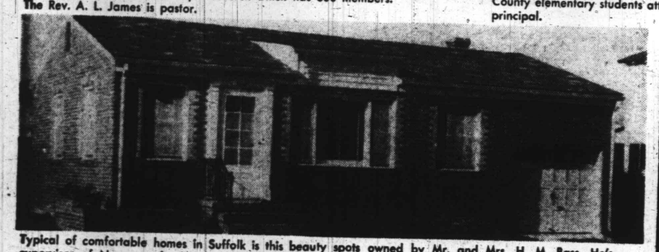
Religious landmark is First Baptist church which has 600 members. The Rev. A. L. James is pastor.



Left, Booker Washington high school which has 200 students, 11 teachers, J.F. Peele is principal. Right, Tndrew J. Brown elementary school, Mrs. M. Fleeto Gayles is principal.



County elementary students attend this East Euffolk school. High school is located in rear. L. Turner, is principal.



Typical of comfortable homes in Suffolk is this beauty spots owned by Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Bass. He's supervisor of Nansemond schools, she's registered nurse.

New Booker Washington High, ready in September, will have 14 classrooms, auditorium, gym., cafeteria, home economics and industrial shops.

VALLEY of the SHADOW

A FOUR-PART SERIAL BY JAMES H. HILL

Part I

George Ammons was beaming as he kept the convertible in a steady line, following the flow of northbound traffic. Despite the fact that he was earthbound, he had that cloud-hopping feeling close to ecstasy as he contemplated his happy lot.

Here it was his birthday—his twenty-fourth — and at ten o'clock this morning, his German bride, Sigrid, had been cleared at Ellis Island and sent to meet him. Later, they had gone to his father's on Long Island, and had been presented with keys to a six-room cottage in Jamaica, and George an interest in his father's real estate business, after three years with the U.S. Occupation Forces in Germany.

Three days ago, with his mustering-out pay, and the money his father had been saving for him, he'd bought the convertible — a resplendent vehicle with ochre top, with the rest in gleaming chrome and emerald green.

George Ammons considered himself a very lucky young man indeed. This was particularly true in the case of Sigrid, who sat beside him now, watching in dazed fascination the myriad lights, sights, and seemingly infinite chasms of masonry and steel, speckled with millions of small, square yellow eyes.

Sigrid was young and strong and well-formed. She was blue-eyed and taffy-haired, blooming with the pink - cheeked health so dominant in Bavarian farm girls.

It should be explained at this point, however, that though Sigrid was the youngest daughter of Hans Schact — a mild, but energetic wheat-and-hops farmer with home and acreage near Munich—she had never taken to the soil, as had her sisters and brother.

From the time she'd been able to mount the stool before the ancient harpsichord in the Schact living room, she had taken to the double key-boasted instrument like Br'er Rabbit to a briar patch.

It is possible that she would have rebelled against milking the cow and candling the eggs, if the stipend for these chores had been insufficient to cover music lessons under the stern and exacting eye of Musicker, Herr Wolfgang von Elbe, who claimed questionable relationship to Richard Wagner.

At the age of eight it appeared that Sigrid, of all the five Schact offspring, might be slated for a niche in the hall of musical greats—past and present — so adroit were her juvenile efforts at the keyboard.

But during that eighth year of her life, when her proven virtuosity seemed a lead pipe cinch, Fate, in the form of a Swastika—complete with goose-stepping, jutty - chinned Aryan automatons — stepped in and queered the whole deal.

Had Jewish Blood

It got noised around that Sigrid's musical instructor, Wolfgang, not only was unrelated to Wagner, but had been tactless enough to have allowed Semitic blood to course through his veins, through the even more tactless marriage of one of his forebears, three generations removed.

Wolfgang was summarily snapped up in the maw of the fearful Nazi juggernaut and clapped into concentration camp. He was never heard of again, though it is claimed that he gained a kind of grim immortality in the form of a lampshade for a Prussian oberst.

Following on the heels of Wolfgang's incarceration, the Herrenvolk cracked the whip over the peasants, confiscating food, clothing, shelter with utter abandon. And they weren't above confiscating women where such appropriation would serve to boost the morale of the Wehrmatch.

Two of Sigrid's sisters were carted off to breeding farms in this manner; though Else, the elder was dead on arrival, having slashed both wrists with one of her father's razors en route.

To a little girl of eight years, the imprisonment of her teacher, for no apparent cause; the dragging off of her sisters; the resultant misery and chaos in the Schact household, amounted to epochal tragedy. This, coupled with the daily ravage of the storm troopers on their pantry, reduced matters to desperateness.

Sigrid spent her childhood in a world of screaming planes, exploding bombs and roaring guns. Her clothes were ersatz, her food was ersatz, and her protein intake was supplemented now and again with a gamey kind of meat that tasted like rabbit. Despite the fact that such meat was verboten by military decree, the cat population of Germany decreased with alarming rapidity.

Amid such ravages, Sigrid's talent, neglected for the primal needs of food and lodging, withered; but it did not die. It lay dormant until a year after V-E day. She was living with her Uncle Walther, a tool-and-die maker, at the time, having lost her parents in a bombing, her brother at Cologne, and her remaining two sisters God knew where.

The Colored Sergeant

An off-duty colored sergeant, with the quartermaster corps, happened to be strolling down Karlstrasse, where she was living, that particular day, plunking out a weird blues tune that must have come straight out of the bayous of Louisiana.

Fascinated by his stalwart bearing, the proud set of his shoulders, and the haunting melody, she had prevailed upon her uncle to invite the soldier in.

Unused to such unabashed hospitality in his native heath, Sergeant Joseph Peterson was a bit overwhelmed. Back in Lorraine Parish, in Lousiana, he would have been going around to the back door of the white folks' houses.

In the best English he could muster, Uncle Walther told Joe that his niece had been attracted to his music; and after a reasonably sufficient meal, which the colored-American topped off by passing chocolate bars around, the coffee-brown fingers plied the strings of the guitar with a brand of gut-bucket that first made the hosts sit up with rapt attention; then set them to swaying, their eyes bright with a kind of glassy-eyed hypnosis.

The guitar strings moaned, wailed, sang in high, brief tremolos; but always with a throbbing undercurrent of basso profundo. When the first number died away in a long mournful wail, Walther Strehle his wife Anna, and Sigrid, seemed temporarily transfixed, then they burst out applauding the way they'd done that time half a year ago when they'd seen Parsifal in the Dresden Opera House.

"Shucks," Sergeant Peterson said, feeling real gone now. "That's nothin."

"Lemme get my feet under that py-anna over there'n I'll show you how a canebrakes jive man can make the eighty-eight jump for joy."

He got up, laid his guitar aside and headed for the old grand piano. "Hope y' got asbestos on them percussion hammers, an' you, Herr Strehle, you better stan' by with a water bucket, 'cause when I start clawin' into this 'Gone Bal' Boogie,' the whole top o' that stringbox might purely go up in smoke!"

Didn't Understand

The Strehles and Sigrid Schacht understood little of the jargon the sergeant was spouting, but they gathered that he was going to entertain them on the piano. And though he didn't seem to understand why, Uncle Walther went out into the kitchen and returned a moment later with a bucket of water.

That was when Sigrid's musical talents reawakened. She and Joe became fast friends, and even though the alliance was strictly platonic, there were times when she caught the sergeant looking wistfully at her—like the time when he had almost reached out and touched her hair while she was trying her wings in low-down gut-bucket.

She learned fast and she learned well, and the story might have ended there if Uncle Walther hadn't died suddenly of coronary thrombosis. That was in '48, when Sigrid was seventeen.

Booked For Job

Sergeant Peterson, who knew a G.I. ex-booking agent, saw to it that she got a job entertaining in some of the night spots in Munich; and as the only gut-bucket, boogie - woogie - playing Fraulein in captivity, she caught on like wildfire.

That was how she met Lieutenant Barstow, a white flight officer, whose father ran two night clubs back in New York—The Pink Heron, and the Club Velvet. Sigrid was playing at Munich's Geld Haus at the time. The ash-blond American had proposed not only a contract, but more personal arrangements popularly known as "shacking up."

By some odd stroke of fate, Lieutenant George Ammons showed up the same night, and was introduced to Sigrid by Sergent Peterson.

Among other talents, George had a sweet tenor voice—something like an admixture of King Cole and Dennis Day.

Secret Admiration.

In no time at all, George and Sigrid were secretly admiring each other's features, and this tableau was not lost on Lieutenant Theodore Barstow, a wealthy man's son, quite used to having a majority of things his way. So at intermission time, he collared his colored contender for Sigrid's charms and stated his case. It was brief and to the point.

"You want a gal, there's a cat-house down on Jungstrasse. You got there 'bout now you won't even have to stand in line."

Lieutenant George Ammons' answer was just as simple and was short, hard, and vicious, and it landed squarely on Barstow's chin, catapulting him over a table and crash-landing him at the foot of the orchestra dais. A brief tussle ensued, but Lieutenant Barstow dreamed serenely through it.

Yes, it was great to be back; great to be out of the Army; great to be out on the town with his bride on his birthday, and her very first day on the Isle of Manhattan.

When they stopped at a traffic sign, George looked over at her. She was smiling at the sights, lost in a reverie of some kind. "Hey—remember me?"

She swung around to him, beaming her happiness, moving closer to him and gently squeezing his arm. "Oh, George, I'm so happy — so wonderfully hap-

(Continued on Page 11)