



## Wallops Island (Images of America)

*Nan DeVincent-Hayes, Bo Bennett*

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Located in Accomack County on Virginia's Eastern Shore, Wallops Island was once a primitive swath of land, uncivilized but by the wild ponies and mosquitoes that made its scrub-covered shores their home. But as the centuries passed, the wildness of the island was radically altered by the influx of colonists, then vacationers, and, eventually, some of the brightest scientific minds in the country. The history of Wallops Island has been one of transition. In the colonial period, John Wallop, an industrious man and self-made millionaire, was granted much of the island's acreage by the English Crown for providing assistance to new colonists trying to reach Virginia. In 1889, Wallops Island was bought and converted into a vacation destination for a handful of wealthy families from Pennsylvania, who, in turn, sold the island to the federal government in the 1940s. Once in the hands of NASA the island was transformed into a center for the high-tech development of rockets, missiles, and the means for space travel. From weather balloons and Tiamat missiles to aerodynamics and hurricane research, the Wallops Island Flight Facility and its predecessors have been instrumental in the evolution and success of the American space program.

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