



# An American Tour: 144



## Virginia Beach's *Frontier City*

FRONTIER CITY HAD AN ABBREVIATED RUN in Virginia Beach, but for the first half of the 1960s, it was a magnet for youngsters and the young-at-heart eager to witness an Indian attack, stagecoach robbery or Wild West gunfight.

Frontier City opened in 1961 on the outskirts of what was then Virginia Beach Borough in Princess Anne County. The attraction was built on 26 acres at the corner of Laskin and Birdneck Roads - the same site where another historic drama, "The Confederacy," had a listless two-year run dramatizing the life of Robert E. Lee. Frontier City featured a stockade town, a paddlewheel steamer, a Longhorn saloon, a stage coach depot, a steam locomotive, and even an Indian village, complete with teepees and snake dancers.

Business was great the first year, prompting an extension beyond Labor Day weekend. The next year, the Virginia Beach Elks club brought in top rodeo riders for an event in September. It wasn't flagging attendance that doomed the attraction. It was the beginning of the Virginia Beach boom. By 1965, property within walking distance of the Oceanfront was at a premium, so the owners decided to sell it to make way for an apartment complex. "The land is just too valuable to leave as an amusement park," Charles D. Norton, who was to negotiate the sale and manage the apartment complex, told The Ledger-Star for its May 3, 1965, editions. A week later, apparently in a move to clear the title, the property was sold at a public auction on the courthouse steps for \$100,000. There was only one bidder. The paddlewheel steamer had already sunk, the train and most of its tracks had been sold to an outfit in Ohio, and the Frontier City itself had, fittingly, become a ghost town.

There were brief proposals to move the attraction to a 50-acre tract near Camp Pendleton and a 66-acre tract west of Rudee Inlet, but neither panned out.

[[https://www.pilotonline.com/news/article\\_9ef65052-dc18-53ef-b9bb-ec9c7b8f915a.html](https://www.pilotonline.com/news/article_9ef65052-dc18-53ef-b9bb-ec9c7b8f915a.html)]

