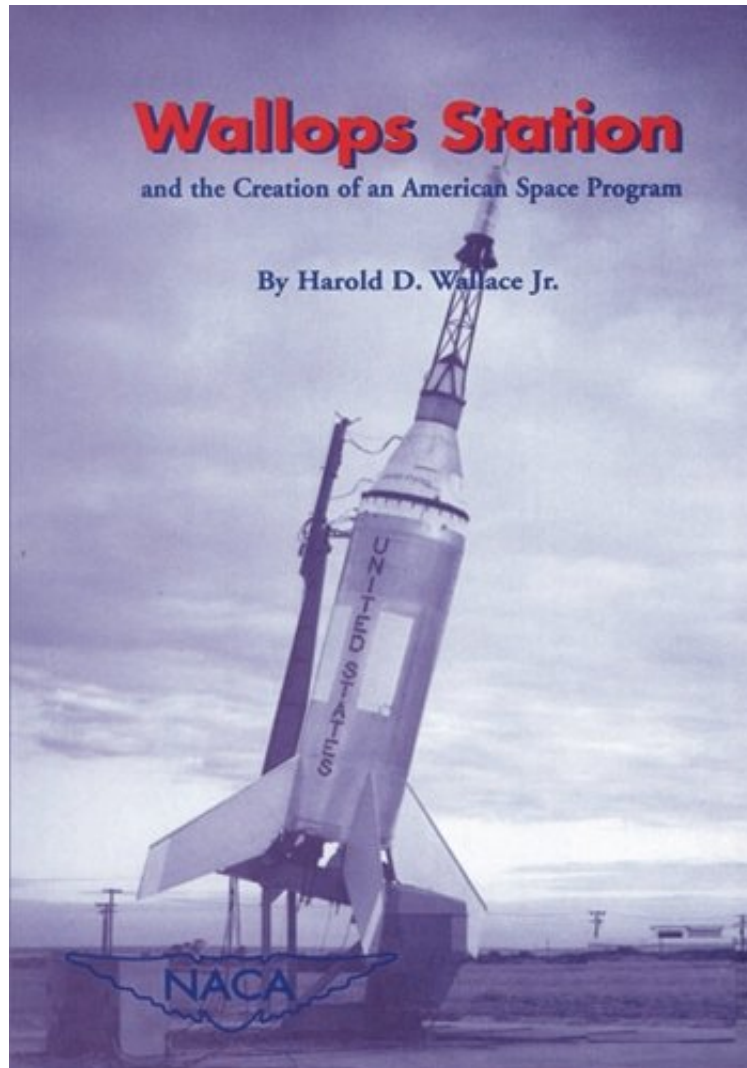


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Wallops Station and the Creation of an American Space Program (The NASA History Series)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Jr., Harold D. Wallace
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The course of the Space Age underwent a fundamental shift during the decade of the 1980's. The heady era of Sputnik, Apollo, and the Cold War-fueled space race shifted to an era of more methodical activities as space operations became popularly mundane. Similarly, seminal works pertaining to the history of conspicuous early space projects have been joined on the library shelf by words examining less glamorous, but still important topics. The big, visible space projects existed as much for reasons of politics and national prestige as for scientific research, and thus attracted the early attention of historians. The advancement of human knowledge and skill, however, owed at least as much and perhaps more to smaller projects and research conducted out of the spotlight. A facility devoted to such projects still operates on the East Coast of the lower Delmarva Peninsula. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Wallops Flight Facility has, since its establishment in 1945, launched over 14,000 rockets, making it one of the most prolific launch sites in the world as well as one of the least known. Currently a subsidiary of Goddard Space Flight Center, Wallops has always been among the smaller of America's aerospace research facilities. Despite, and possibly because of, the administrative and budgetary chaos that often characterized this nation's space effort, Wallops evolved from a highly specialized, test facility to a more generalized, multi-faceted research center. The history of the base reaches back to the early days of U.S. involvement in space research, and reflects most of the major controversies encountered therein. An historical examination of the base, therefore, has value not only because of the comparative lack of such attention, but also because it allows a unique vantage point from which to view what is, to paraphrase policy historian John Logsdon, the great adventure of our lifetime. This thesis will focus on the political, administrative, and social history aspects of the base from 1957 to 1966. This period began with the launch of the Soviet Union's Sputnik 1, continued through the creation of NASA, and culminated at the height of the Project Apollo escalation. A fast-paced era, it also includes the second of the three most important periods in Wallops history to date.