



The Historian

Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake, Virginia

Fall November 2022 Volume 27, Issue 4

Dear NCHSC Members,



Fall is here. The leaves are changing color and are falling, making many lawns where we live look like a carpet of various colors of brown, gold, and red. As fall ushers in cooler weather, our historical society is participating in several events and planning a few of our own.

Many of our members helped the Battlefield & Waterways Museum in their Ghost Tour, and a few of our members participated in the Sons of Norway tour of Elmwood Cemetery in Norfolk, Virginia.

The NCHSC will also be hosting a tour of Elmwood Cemetery on November 12, 2022, at 10 am. We invite you to come out and join us! (Page 5 has details.)

Rather than a holiday dinner this December, as we have hosted in the past, we have scheduled a regular membership meeting for December 4, 2022, at 2 pm. Our guest speaker will be Mr. Gary Szymanski, retired engineer, local historian, preservation advocate and author. (See page 6).

NCHSC volunteers are working diligently to make our archives one of the best in Virginia. Some are sorting documents from the 1870s, and I am still documenting and sorting Bail Bonds from the 1820s. Others are sorting historical maps of our area and our state into new map cases. This will make it easy for our patrons who are looking for a rare map of the area.



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Calendar of Events

November 2022

Closed 8 & 11 Nov

Elmwood Cemetery Tour

12 Nov 10:00am

NCHSC Board Meeting Via ZOOM

8 Nov 6:00pm

Closed 23, 24 & 25 Nov

December 2022

Battle of Great Bridge Reenactment
3 & 4 Dec

Wreath-laying at Great Bridge Memorial
4 Dec

NCHSC Membership Meeting

4 Dec 2:00pm

Closed 23-27 & 31 Dec

January 2023

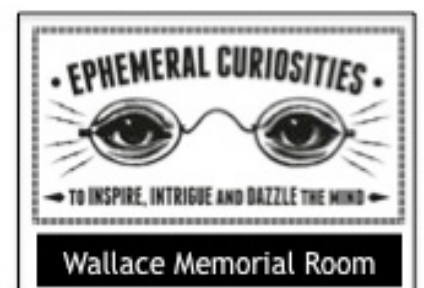
Closed 1 & 16 Jan

February 2023

NCHSC Board Meeting Via ZOOM
14 Feb 6:00pm

NCHSC Membership Meeting

19 Feb 2:00pm



President's Letter, *Continued*

It's wonderful when we receive new items from patrons to add to our ever-growing collection in the Wallace Room. We are also especially grateful for our wonderful guest speakers at our membership meetings.

My friends, before this magical time of year ends, enjoy the beautiful mornings and cool, gorgeous evenings that only autumn can bring.

Robert B. Hitchings, NCHSC President



Tour of Portsmouth Naval Hospital Building One

By Kay Ziegler,
NCHSC Treasurer and Wallace Room Manager



On October 19, 2022, Mr. Allen Cutchin, the Volunteer Command Historian of the Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, gave a wonderful and informative tour of the hospital's Building One to nine NCHSC volunteers.

Originally known as Portsmouth Naval Hospital, it is the first and oldest Naval Hospital in the United States. Construction on the hospital began in 1827 on the site of Fort Nelson. In fact, over a half-million bricks used in the construction of the hospital came from the Fort Nelson buildings. Portsmouth



NCHSC Volunteers Tour
Naval Medical Center Portsmouth
Building One



Mr. Allen Cutchin Shows Tour Group the "Dungeon"
in Building One

Naval Hospital opened for medical service in 1830 with its first medical director, Surgeon Thomas Williamson. Today, the medical center includes three buildings -- Building One, the High Rise (opened in 1960), and the Charette Center (opened in 1999). The medical center employs a staff of about 6,500 military personnel, civilians, and contractors.

Our volunteers toured from the "dungeon to the dome". Mr. Cutchin was knowledgeable about the history and even threw in a few ghost stories.



Remembering Mrs. Eleanor Phillips Cross

By P.S. Vredenburg,
NCHSC Board Member and Wallace Room Volunteer



We were saddened to learn of the passing of NCHSC Charter Member and Director Emeritus, Mrs. Eleanor Phillips Cross, on September 23, 2022. As a life-long resident of Hampton Roads, Eleanor cultivated a love for local history and shared her interest with husband, Charles B. Cross, Jr.




Eleanor P. Cross from
*Chesapeake:
A Pictorial History*


While raising their family, the Crosses became integral to the merger of Norfolk County and South Norfolk that created the City of Chesapeake – Charles as a principal architect in the merger and the first Clerk of the Circuit Court of Chesapeake, and Eleanor as a local news reporter for the *Chesapeake Post*. Eleanor later created scrapbooks full of newspaper articles and memorabilia pertaining to the merger and donated them to the NCHSC.



Eleanor P. and Charles B. Cross
from *Chesapeake: A Pictorial History*

In October of that same  year, Eleanor and Charles, along with a handful of dedicated Chesapeake citizens, founded the Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake, VA. Both Eleanor and Charles served on the board of directors and held several offices. They continued their historical and genealogical research and donated much of it to the NCHSC Wallace Room Collection.

The Crosses co-wrote a number of noteworthy NCHSC publications, including *Chesapeake: A Pictorial History*, *The War Comes to Glencoe*, *Glencoe Diary*, *Child of Glencoe*, *The Voyages of Frederick Williams*, *The County Court: 1637-1904*, and *From the Archives*.

Through the Crosses' enduring guidance and dedication, the NCHSC has developed a significant local history and genealogy collection over the years. 

Fifty-nine years later, our historical society's mission remains the same -- to collect, preserve, and share the history of the City of Chesapeake and the surrounding area for future generations.



Charles B. and Eleanor P. Cross
from *Juniper Waterway* by
Alexander Crosby Brown

Little Cemetery Plots in Unusual Spot

By Robert Hitchings,
NCHSC Archivist/Historian and President



Our board members and volunteers have been busy, for years, searching for, and documenting small family cemeteries scattered throughout the City of Chesapeake. However, last month, I came across a very unusual cemetery at Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia. On top of the grassy ramparts overlooking the Chesapeake Bay, I discovered over 200 hundred small pet graves.



Pet Graves at Fort Monroe

The pet cemetery appeared to have been started in the 1930s by service members who were stationed there to remember their faithful family members.



Pet Grave at Fort Monroe

The little burial markers of dogs, cats, birds, rabbits and other animals were all scattered around the ramparts. Their military owners wanted to make sure their names would be recorded in perpetuity, as well as their noble pedigrees.

I found Dachshunds, German Shepherds, Boxers, Retrievers and regular old mutts. As I walked along the ramparts, I was captivated by the unusual names of some of these pets. I saw Rex, Tobo, Frisky, Buster and Toodles. My favorite was, "Flea Bag our Noble Friend," who passed away on August 2, 1975. As I looked upon these stones, a warm feeling came over me as I knew Fleabag and his many friends had been well loved and now were resting in peace on the grassy ramparts of old Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia.

Those Old Photographs

Do you have old photos of Norfolk County and Chesapeake to share? Your photos will help tell future generations about our local history and what life was like in the City of Chesapeake.

To donate copies of your photos of Chesapeake and Norfolk County, contact the Wallace Room for details!



1913 Photograph of
Deep Creek Grammar and High School

History, Mystery, Mayhem & Murder Cemetery Walking Tour

By Susie Fleming,
NCHSC Board Member and Wallace Room Volunteer

On Saturday October 15, 2022, the Sons of Norway along with a few NCHSC volunteers, met at historic Elmwood Cemetery for the History, Mystery, Mayhem & Murder Tour, given by our NCHSC President, Robert Hitchings.



Monument at
Elmwood Cemetery

About 25 members took the hour and half tour and Robert did not disappoint. The stories were factual and entertaining. Robert

portrayed Robert Clemmitt, a cobbler from Norfolk, buried in Cedar Grove around 1885. Along the carriage paths we ran into the ghost of Reverend Thomas Davis, former minister of Saint Paul's Episcopal Church from 1773 to 1776, portrayed by Tim Platek.

This was an hour and a half tour that you will not regret taking. You get a little exercise and a lot of history. Robert will be giving the tour again in November. I would highly recommend taking it.



Cemetery Resident Robert Clemmitt, Portrayed by
Robert Hitchings, and
Reverend Thomas Davis, Portrayed by Tim Platek

The NCHSC will host the History, Mystery, Mayhem & Murder Walking Tour at Elmwood Cemetery on Saturday, November 12th at 10 am. (Rain date is November 19th at 10 am.)

There is a suggested \$10.00 donation. All proceeds will benefit the Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake.

For details, contact us at (757) 410-7152 or via email at nchs.wallaceroom@gmail.com . You can also get details on our web site at www.NorfolkCountyVAHistory.org .



History, Mystery, Mayhem & Murder! Tour
at Elmwood Cemetery

Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake, Virginia
298 Cedar Road
Chesapeake, VA 23322

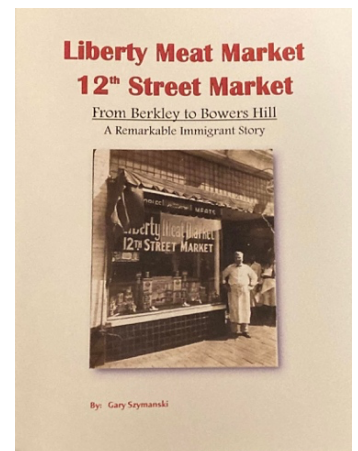


Annual membership dues are now \$20 and are due by May 31st.

Questions or suggestions? Email us at nchs.wallaceroom@gmail.com, call us at (757) 410-7152, or visit our site www.NorfolkCountyVAHistory.org.

Mr. Gary Szymanski to Present "A Remarkable Immigrant Story" at December Meeting

Join us at Chesapeake Central Library on December 4th at 2 pm for our membership meeting. Our guest speaker will be Gary Szymanski from the Sunray community of Bowers Hill in Chesapeake. A graduate of Western Branch High School and Old Dominion University, Mr. Szymanski has always been involved in civic and community service. He is an advocate for historic preservation in Chesapeake and has authored the book *The History of Sunray Colony*. His latest book, *Liberty Meat Market 12th Street Market, From Berkley to Bowers Hill, A Remarkable Immigrant Story* is an up-close look at the relationship between the mostly Polish agrarian settlement of Sunray and the business community in Norfolk. It is a story about human perseverance, hard work and determination.



Mr. Szymanski is currently working on two new books: *The Historic Sunray Schoolhouse*, and *Bowers Hill, Crossroads of Conflict and Courage*.



Join us on Dec 4th, and don't forget to bring a friend! Light refreshments will be served.