



The Historian

Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake, Virginia

Summer September 2021 Volume 26, Issue 3

Dear Members & Friends,

The heat of summer will be coming to an end soon and fall is right around the corner. Through this summer season we have remained opened and dedicated to all who enter into our local Wallace History Room. "Covid Part II" seems to hang over us like a bad fog that will not be lifted or go away. We cannot predict what the coming years will bring us as we do not know how this new virus variant will affect any of us, but I feel we can conquer whatever comes our way. We have done it in the past, and we can do it again.

During the summer months we received many nice monetary gifts and fabulous collections to add to our Wallace History Room. It seems as though every week in July we received something unusual and special! We received scrapbooks and minutes of the South Norfolk Women's Club, a treasure trove of South Norfolk history. We also received about 48 three-ring binders of family genealogies from Virginia and West Virginia and a wealth of genealogy research from the estate of Rosemary Stout of Norfolk. Among the items donated from Ms. Stout's estate was a fantastic collection of supplemental lineages to the DAR, Daughters of the American Colonists, and other societies. We received several boxes of entertainment programs that belonged to Norfolk resident, Constance Ferebee (1921-2012). The programs are from a variety of Norfolk venues, including the Virginia Symphony, and date back to the 1960s. We also added more scrapbooks and police photos to the collection of former NCHSC President, Stuart Smith (1941-2015).

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Calendar of Events

September 2021

Library Closed 5 & 6 Sep
NCHSC Board Meeting 14 Sep 6:00pm

NCHSC Membership Meeting
19 Sep 2:00pm

October 2021

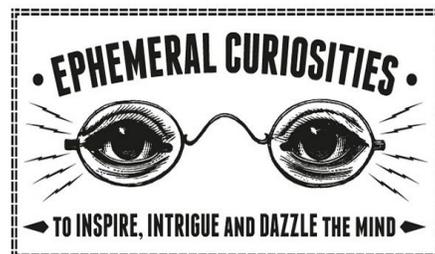
Library Closed 11 Oct

November 2021

Library Closed 2 Nov
NCHSC Board Meeting 9 Nov 6:00pm
Library Closed 11 Nov
Library Closed 24, 25, & 26 Nov

December 2021

NCHSC Annual Dinner at Traditions, Chesapeake Golf Club
1 Dec 6:00pm
Library Closed 23, 24 & 25
Library Closed 31 Dec



Wallace Memorial Room

President's Letter, *Continued*

These are all special additions to our ever-growing collections. Wallace Room Manager, Kay Ziegler, and volunteer, Laura Lane, and I have been busy cataloging these items, making sure all will be available to the general public.

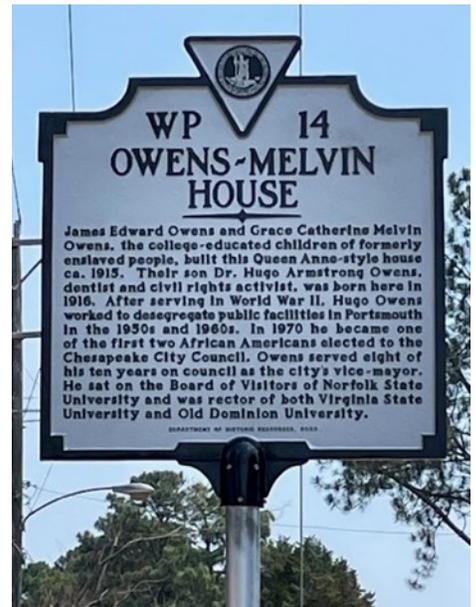
I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming membership meeting on Sunday, September 19th at 2:00 PM. at the Central Library. It's been a long time since we were together in person.

Robert B. Hitchings, President

Owens-Melvin House Receives Historical Marker

By Lori Pickett,
NCHSC Board Member

On May 26, 2021, Wallace Room Manager, Kay Ziegler, and I attended the unveiling and dedication of the historical marker erected at the Owens-Melvin House located at 732 Shell Road in Chesapeake, Virginia, the birthplace of Dr. Hugo Armstrong Owens, Sr. (1916-2008). The house was built around 1915 by Dr. Owens' parents, James Edward Owens and Grace Catherine Melvin, who were both children of enslaved people.



Owens-Melvin House
Historical Marker at
732 Shell Road, Chesapeake



Hugo Owens, Jr. Speaks During
Historic Marker Dedication

Dr. Owens graduated from I.C. Norcom High School and Virginia State University with a bachelor's degree in biochemistry in 1939. He served in the U.S. Army during WWII and graduated from the Howard University College of Dentistry in 1947.

He moved to Portsmouth and opened a successful dental practice, just a few blocks from the location of the plantation where his great-great-grandfather had been a slave. His office became a hub for mentoring young dentists and promoting community activism and advocacy.

Owens-Melvin House Receives Historical Marker, *Continued*

As a civil rights leader, Dr. Owens worked to desegregate public facilities, such as city parks, hospitals, cemeteries, and municipal golf courses, in Portsmouth in the 1950s and 1960s.

Dr. Owens became one of the first two African-Americans elected to Chesapeake City Council in 1970. He served 10 years on city council, with eight years as vice mayor.

When Dr. Owens retired from city council in 1980, local newspapers named him Chesapeake's "Citizen of the Decade," and in 1988, the Great Bridge Jaycees honored him as Chesapeake's "First Citizen" to highlight his civic contributions.

Dr. Owens served as rector for Old Dominion University and for his alma mater, Virginia State University. He also served on the board of Norfolk State University. ODU's African American Cultural Center is named for Dr. Owens, as is Hugo A. Owens Middle School in Deep Creek.



Kay Ziegler and Lori Pickett, NCHSC Board Members, at Owens-Melvin House



Dr. Paula Owens Parker, Patrice Owens Parker, and Hugh Owens, Jr.

Speakers at the dedication included Dr. Colita Fairfax, chair of the Virginia Board of Historic Resources and a professor at Norfolk State University; Dr. Tommy Bogger, historian and archivist at Norfolk State University; Chesapeake Mayor Rick West; Cliff Hayes, Virginia House Delegate; Toby L. Word of the Chesapeake Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Tourism; and Rev. Tommie Smith, pastor of Divine Baptist Church.

Fort Norfolk Tour

By Kay Ziegler,
Wallace Room Manager & NCHSC Board Member

I recently had the opportunity to tour Fort Norfolk which has been on my bucket list of things to do. Fort Nelson no longer exists but I spent 30 years working at the Portsmouth Naval Hospital that was built on its former location in Portsmouth. These forts were both located in Norfolk County and, of course, that is the history our society is preserving.



Entrance to Fort Norfolk



Map of Fort Nelson and Fort Norfolk
During Battle of Craney Island, 1813

Fort Norfolk sits in the area formally known as Atlantic City in Norfolk. You wouldn't even realize it is there, except for the history surrounding the fort. The fort is now under the care of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Fort Norfolk was established in 1794 with its sister, Fort Nelson, located across the Elizabeth River in Portsmouth. The two forts were built after the Revolutionary War to guard the entrance to the inner harbor, which included Gosport Navy Yard, Berkley, Norfolk, and Portsmouth -- all part of Norfolk County.

In 1802, the Secretary of War, Henry Dearborn, gave the order to dismantle Fort Norfolk and create a new fort at Ferry Point, now called Berkley. Residents learned to rely on their own efforts to keep Fort Norfolk and Fort Nelson in good condition. These forts weren't large, but they served their purpose and continued to protect the inner harbor. During the Battle of Craney Island in 1813, an immense chain was extended across the river between these two points to prevent British ships from entering.

The tour was interesting, and the changes and purposes of the fort were many. They made ammunition, such as cannon balls, at the fort and even kept a store of ammunition there.

Some information in this article was taken from the book *Norfolk Historic Southern Port* by Thomas Jefferson Wertebaker, published in 1931. The 1812 map of Fort Nelson and Fort Norfolk is from a display at Fort Norfolk.

Picture This!

Do you have old photos of Norfolk County and Chesapeake to share? Wallace Room volunteers can digitally scan your old photos and preserve them, along with photo details and your name as donor, as part of our growing photograph collection. Your photos will help tell future generations about our local history and what life was like in Norfolk County. Contact the Wallace Room for details!



1967 Photo from the Collection of Alexander Brown

Virginia Road Maps Find a Home in Wallace Room

By Kay Ziegler,
Wallace Room Manager & NCHSC Board Member

We recently received a donation from NCHSC member, James Bradshaw. It is a collection of Virginia road maps dating from about 1930. With today's GPS systems, many of our younger population have no idea how to read a roadmap.

These early maps show the roads before interstates and superhighways. In the "old days" one would learn the route numbers and the names of all the little towns and villages along the route. Many of the donated roadmaps also include pictures of local or state historical landmarks. Each map is a history lesson of its own!

So, the next time you have a question about "such-and-such" road in Virginia, contact the Wallace History Room! Thanks to Mr. Bradshaw's donation, we might be able to answer your question.



Sample from the Collection of Roadmaps Recently Donated by James Bradshaw

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

**Please make sure your membership is current.
Membership dues 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 NorfolkCountyVAHistory.org. Date submitted (for your records) _____

Historian, Bob Perrine, to Present the Early History of Virginia Beach's Oldest Church

Our September guest speaker will be Bob Perrine, Historian of Old Donation Episcopal Church in Virginia Beach. Mr. Perrine will present a program on the early history of the church and people of Princess Anne County.

Old Donation Episcopal Church is Virginia Beach's oldest church. Records show that the parish's first church services were held in 1637 in the home of Adam Thoroughgood. The first church building was constructed on Mr. Thoroughgood's land in 1639 on the location later known as "Church Point."



Old Donation Episcopal Church on
North Witchduck Road in Virginia Beach

Please join us on September 19th at 2:00 PM at the Chesapeake Central Library for this wonderful program. Light refreshments will be served.