



The Historian

Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake, Virginia

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Dear Members,

Last month our NCHSC board met virtually via ZOOM. What an experience this was for many of us! My special thank-you goes out to Lori Pickett for arranging this successful meeting. Our board met, and we were able to see each other and discuss matters of importance concerning our society, and how we shall proceed with the coronavirus still looming over us. I cannot thank our board members and volunteers enough for all the support they have given to the Wallace History Room since this epidemic hit. Fortunately, we continue to receive many nice items from our many patrons, and I am excited to report that last month the ABC television network in New York called us looking for court bail bonds from the 1760s which they needed for a documentary. We were able to find them in our collection, and Kay Ziegler and I scanned them and sent them off to ABC. I understand the documentary will be aired sometime next year, and I will be looking for the NCHSC to be included in the credits!

Our September membership meeting was the best part of last month when many of us gathered together at the Chesapeake Arboretum on Oak Grove Road. It was sooooo good to see each other again, especially under the beautiful, new gazebo at the arboretum. There were about 22 attendees including a few first timers. We all practiced social distancing and there were many colorful masks. We had a great meeting as our three guest speakers told us about the history of this special, tranquil place in the heart of Chesapeake.

Calendar of Events

November 2020

NCHSC Board Meeting
10 Nov 6:00pm
Library Closed
11 Nov, 25 Nov -- 27 Nov

December 2020

NCHSC Annual Dinner
2 Dec 6:00pm
Battle of Great Bridge Reenactment
5 Dec 10am to 4pm
6 Dec 10am to 2pm
SAR Battle of Great Bridge
Commemoration/Wreath Laying
5 Dec 11:00am
Library Closed
24 Dec -- 27 Dec, 31 Dec

January 2021

Library Closed
1 Jan, 18 Jan

February 2021

NCSHC Board Meeting
9 Feb 6:00pm
NSCHS Membership Meeting
21 Feb 2:00pm

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President's Letter, *Continued*



September 2020 Membership Meeting
at the Chesapeake Arboretum

The old farm belonged to the Williamson family dating back to about 1840. Chesapeake Parks Manager Kevin Kaul, Arboretum Board Member Phil Johnson, and NCHSC member and Williamson descendent Amy Williamson Jonak gave us much information and history concerning this 48-acre "Nature's Classroom" that promotes horticultural and environmental awareness. We all learned so much. The arboretum is truly a beautiful oasis and a Virginia treasure of plant and tree life that belongs to the City of Chesapeake.

Robert Hitchings, President

Great Bridge Battlefield & Waterways History Museum Now Open

By Lori Pickett,
NCHSC Board Member, *The Historian* Newsletter Editor

The Great Bridge Battlefield & Waterways History Museum at 1775 Historic Way in Chesapeake is now open! Come and check out the exhibits and experience the battle right before your eyes! Learn all about this pivotal event in history and how it led the country to independence. The museum and gift shop are open Wednesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. General admission is \$8.00, and military and seniors pay \$7.00. Children's admission is \$5.00. The museum is also open the second Sunday of every month from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, and Chesapeake residents

pay only \$5.00! Call the museum office if you are interested in a docent-led tour of the museum or interpretive park or for information on facility rentals. Check out the museum Facebook page to read about coming events/exhibits.



Photo of Volunteers from the
Great Bridge Battlefield & Waterways Museum

Volunteers are the backbone of the museum. There are many volunteer opportunities at the museum such as museum hosts, gift shop workers and event volunteer opportunities. If you would like to find out more information on how to become a volunteer at the museum, please call 757-482-4480.

John G. Wallace's Horseless Carriage of 1898

By Robert Hitchings,
NCHSC President, Archivist/Historian

The photograph was given to us by Beth Wallace Johnson of Chesapeake, Virginia. Ms. Johnson was impressed with the article I wrote for the *Virginian-Pilot* newspaper (August 20, 2020 edition) about her grandfather's first automobile pictured near their home in Wallacetown along the Dismal Swamp Canal in Chesapeake. It was also the first automobile in the state of Virginia.

When I first looked at this picture, I thought of that old song "Love and Marriage" which was made popular by Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin back in 1955. "Love and marriage, love and marriage, they go together like a horse and carriage..." is an oldie but goodie, and I am sure many of you may remember this song. But our picture shows John G. Wallace and his wife, Marie Wallace, nee Wilson, sitting together in just their carriage, no horse. With John and Marie, "Love and Marriage" came together without the horse. Mrs. Wallace could brag she was the first woman in Virginia to be courted in a horseless carriage.



Photo of John and Marie in
John's Horseless Carriage,
Courtesy of Beth Wallace Johnson

Please Add Us to Your Gift List -- Donations Are Welcome

The holidays are coming, and the Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake would love to be included on your gift list! Please consider slipping a donation into the historical society's stocking this year. Your tax-deductible donation helps us protect and preserve our valuable history!

If you shop on www.amazon.com, one way to give is to shop using www.smile.amazon.com, select *Norfolk County Historical Association of Chesapeake, VA* as your favorite charity, and shop as you normally would. It costs you nothing, and Amazon donates a small portion of your purchase to help us preserve items in our collections. The pennies add up! So far, we received over \$70 in donations via www.smile.amazon.com this year. And for that, we thank you!



Illustration by Thomas Nast
from the Library of Congress

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Please check the date on your mailing label above to 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) _____

Rob Garnett to Present “The Civil War Origins of Santa Claus” at NCHSC Annual Dinner

Few modern Americans are reminded of the Civil War when they see a jolly, portly Santa Claus distributing Christmas gifts. It seems incredible that such cheerful scenes could be rooted in the country’s darkest days. Rob Garnett will reveal how a German-born political cartoonist for *Harper’s Weekly* shaped the popular portrayal of Kris Kringle in his presentation “The Civil War Origins of Santa Claus.” Mr. Garnett, a Gloucester VA native, graduated with honors from Christopher Newport University and earned an MA in English at ODU. For nearly a decade, he has taught composition and literature at four Virginia Community Colleges, Christopher Newport University, and Richard Bland College of William & Mary. His research primarily focuses on 19th century American literature and history – especially Walt Whitman and the Civil War.



Iconic Illustration of Santa Claus
by Thomas Nast

We look forward to Mr. Garnett’s program and to a very festive and fun evening! Please see the enclosed flier for further details and on how to RSVP.