



The Historian

Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake, Virginia

Winter

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Dear Friends,

It is the beginning of a New Year! I hope that each of you had a wonderful Christmas. January and February can be dull and dreary months that can chill us to the bone. Can you imagine how our Norfolk County ancestors survived the cold winter nights without the luxury of today's modern heating devices or even electric blankets? I am sure they hoped for a short winter and early spring as I do! Dreary as it may be, this is always a good time of year to do a little housekeeping. Kay, Suzy and Allison have been diligently working on organizing our archive room. To our surprise, we continue to find so many wonderful, historical items which I like to call special "gems." We are still in the process of cataloging and what better time to do that than when we want to linger inside and out of the cold!

We are celebrating African-American History Month, and we hope you will brave the cold weather and join us at our February membership meeting. Mr. Winston Favor from the Mariners' Museum & Park will talk about the African Americans who built the Newport News Shipyard. Please come out of hibernation for this special program on February 18th at 2 PM at our Central Library. We look forward to your good humor and good company!

The Special Events Committee is planning our annual luncheon for May 4, 2024, from 11:00am to 2:00pm at the Garrett Plantation House. Details will follow as they finalize their plans. I hope to see you there!

On a personal note, I would like to thank all of you who sent me cards, e-mails, phone calls, and flowers during my hospital stay. Folks told me, "Robert, don't worry, your surgery will be a Hop, Skip and Jump."

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Calendar of Events

February 2024

NCHSC Board Meeting Via ZOOM
13 Feb 7:00pm

NCHSC Membership Meeting
18 Feb 2:00pm

Closed
19 Feb

March 2024

Closed
8 & 31 Mar

April 2024

May 2024

NCHSC Annual Luncheon
4 May 11:00am-2:00pm

NCHSC Board Meeting via ZOOM
14 May 7:00pm

NCHSC Membership Meeting
19 May 2:00pm

Closed
26 & 27 May



President's Letter, *Continued*

They were all wrong; it was a nightmare. But I am well and already back to work in the Wallace Room. I might not be able to do cartwheels yet, but I will in a few months. Wishing a Happy and Healthy 2024 to all!

Robert B. Hitchings, NCHSC President

Mr. Winston Favor of the Mariners' Museum to Present at February Membership Meeting



Winston Favor,
Curatorial Assistant at the
Mariners' Museum and Park

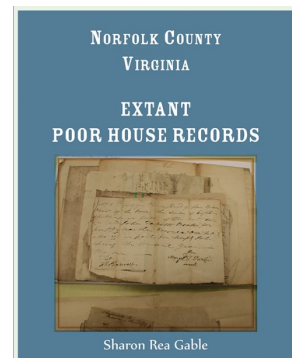
Join us for our membership meeting on February 18, 2024, at 2:00pm at the Chesapeake Central Library. In celebration of Black History Month, Mr. Winston Favor, Curatorial Assistant at the Mariners' Museum and Park, will present the program "Hidden Histories - Stories of the African American Men Who Built the Original Mariners' Museum and Newport News Shipyard." Be sure to bring a friend! As always, light refreshments will be served.

Mr. Favor, a graduate student at George Mason University, joined the museum staff as a volunteer in 2021. Using his research, Mr. Favor has developed programs and written blog posts for the Mariners' Museum on the birth of nuclear power in the US Navy, the building of the Newport News Shipyard, and the story of the Marcus Garvey movement in Newport News.

Local Author, Sharon Rea Gable, Publishes Book

By Suzan Ward Fleming,
NCHSC Board Member and Wallace Room Volunteer

NCHSC member and author, Sharon Rea Gable, has published her latest book, *Norfolk County, Virginia Extant Poor House Records*. The records, housed in the Library of Virginia, are mostly from 1790 through the early 1800s. Find her latest book here: <https://heritagebooks.com/collections/recent-publications/products/101-g2965>



Other Norfolk County books written by Sharon and Tim Bonney are for sale in the Wallace Room. Sharon is the author of over 30 books on North Carolina and Norfolk County.

Never one to rest, Sharon is working on her next book about apprentice records collected from the actual certificates (in Richmond), Minute Books and Order Books. She was kind enough to share her research challenges in this newsletter. Be sure to read her article!

Problems with Norfolk County Records

By Sharon Rea Gable,
Author and NCHSC Guest Contributor

I just completed a book on the apprentice records for Norfolk County and submitted it to the publisher (Heritage Books). One very big issue I found, which all Norfolk County researchers should know about, is documented in this article.... It was something I didn't know, and I have been doing research (and writing books on Norfolk County records) for decades.

For this book I had to take the Minute Books and Order Books and go through them line by line to find the mention of apprentices, since there are only 203 actual apprentice bonds in the Library of Virginia Annex covering both Lower Norfolk County and Norfolk County starting 1709 through 1903 with a number of them undated. I didn't count the apprentices in this new book, as it was enough work just to gather the data but I used 39 Minute Books and 32 Order Books to gather the data so it is quite comprehensive. But like all old records it doesn't capture all the records as all the records were not captured by the court (or saved) when they were created.

Since I went through 71 "original" books, I found that although they might be labeled the same, they did not contain the same information. My first "discovery" of this was comparing two copies of the microfilm of #53 from the Library of Virginia Inter Library Loan (ILL) which contained the Order Book 1753-1755. The first page of this section of the film started with a page on the left side which had evidently been torn out followed by a partial sentence about a case being dismissed, followed by the will of Solomon Randolph being proved by the oath of John Ferebee and Stephen Batchelor. Like any genealogist I looked in Wingo's Will Book 1, but it didn't cover 1754. It started in 1755. So, I pulled Charles F. McIntosh's *Norfolk County Virginia Wills*, but it covered 1710 through 1753 --- so what happened to wills in 1754? I found it in Wingo's book *Collection of Unrecorded Wills of Norfolk County, Virginia 1711-1800*. It stated that it was proved in June 1754 but that didn't give me a date for the court session of that Order Book and why only a partial court record on that microfilm? I found the whole Order Book 1753-1755 on the FamilySearch web site (film #007645610 starting at image #553). So being curious, I compared the one on FamilySearch to the one I borrowed on ILL and found that in addition to the fact that the one on ILL was missing the first 50 plus images which I had seen on FamilySearch, there were other differences. So naturally, being curious, I compared the two.

I compared other films from FamilySearch with ones I had copied on ILL and found that although the one listed above was similar, with the exception of the missing pages, some of the films were not. I found that the info such as the apprentice records were not identical. The Order Book on FamilySearch had the parish info on entries such as the apprentice records which weren't in the version I saw on ILL. Confused yet? I sure was. How can two microfilms be so different when they were copies of the same Order Book? I found other examples between the ones on FamilySearch

and the ones from ILL... where tithables had been inserted in the book right in line with the court records in the same hand that weren't there in the other version. One of the other differences, the FamilySearch one had page numbers while the ILL version didn't. This really left me perplexed.

A short time later I attended a Slattern Lecture at the Library of Virginia put on by the Friends of the Library of Virginia. The speaker was Judy Russell, noted genealogist, who was not only a retired lawyer, but a Virginia researcher. If you aren't familiar with her lectures, check out her web site (<https://www.legalgenealogist.com/>). I spoke with her before her lecture and explained what I was finding in the different copies of the Order Book, and she told me that clerks made more than one copy of the books such as the Order Books so they were both contemporaneous copies. I don't think the clerks ever thought multiple copies would be preserved, but they were and I found them very confusing, not to mention that I had to go back through all of the apprentices I had completed for that Order Book and add the parishes. As you know, parishes are crucial for determining whether the Richard Whitehurst mentioned is the one in Elizabeth River Parish or the one in Saint Brides Parish since Norfolk County was a large county.

Some of the differences between multiple copies were minor such as Order Book 1734-1735 where on 20 Jun 1735 one of the copies mentioned Ivy Blount being bound out while the other copy listed Ivy as a dwarf and being exempt from the levy while also listing that he was bound out. The fact that he was a dwarf is not nearly as important unless you are tracking medical history, but the fact that he was exempt from the tithe is important if you track early ancestors through tithable records as many of us do.

I hope you will check out the data in the new book when NCHSC gets their free copy (probably February or March) or purchase your own from Heritage Books. I have spent my life honoring books and never touching the pages with pen or pencil, but genealogy books are usually different. I find that I like to add (in pencil, of course) additional data I find or just a note that this is my direct ancestor or collateral ancestor... you can't do that in the copy which NCHSC has on their shelf (at least I hope you don't).

A Photo from the Battle of Great Bridge Reenactment, December 2023



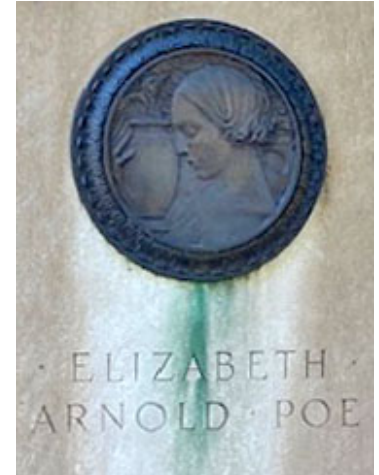
You can tell from the smiles on our faces that we had fun at the 248th anniversary of the Battle of Great Bridge in December. NCHSC volunteers and friends assembled for a quick photo during the event.

Many thanks to those who joined us and to those who stopped by to say "Hello!"

The Great Poe Adventure! -- NCHSC Volunteer Field Trip to Richmond, VA

By Allison Termine,
NCHSC Board Member and Wallace Room Volunteer

The NCHSC volunteers traveled to Richmond to visit the sites of American writer and poet Edgar Allan Poe. Poe was the son of actors Elizabeth ("Eliza") Arnold Poe (1787-1811) and David Poe. We toured the beautiful grounds of the Historic St. John's Church, circa 1741, to the grave of Eliza Poe. Her graveside service was said to be held at midnight. It is said that Edgar's father, David Poe, met Eliza while she was performing in Norfolk, Virginia.



Bas-Relief on
Elizabeth Arnold Poe Monument

Our next stop to Chimborazo Medical Museum to view exhibits on



At the Chimborazo Medical Museum

medical equipment and hospital life during the Civil War was quite fascinating. In 1865, the Union Army took over the hospital. After the end of the war, the hospital was converted to a Freedmen's Bureau school for 345 formerly enslaved people. Other buildings on site were occupied by nearly 1,500 other formerly enslaved workers, who were tasked with the clean-up of Richmond.

We moved on to Masons' Hall constructed in 1787. In addition to being a masonic lodge the hall served as a hospital in the War of 1812, a meeting place for Richmond City courts and a place where religious congregations, unwelcome elsewhere, could conduct services. Eliza



Items on Display
at the Masons' Hall

Poe, the mother of Edgar, made her last performance at Masons' Hall.



NCHSC Donation to the
Masons' Hall

Our last stop before eating at the Poe Tavern was the Edgar Allan Poe Museum. The Poe Museum is located at the "Old Stone House", built circa 1740 and holds Poe's possessions where researchers can also access the museum's renowned online collection of first editions, manuscripts, letters, images, and more. Although Poe never lived in the Old Stone House, the museum is only blocks away from the sites of Poe's Richmond homes and place of employment, the [Southern Literary Messenger](http://www.southernliterarymessenger.com). We all learned a lot and want to thank NCHSC President Robert Hitchings for facilitating this trip!

Cemetery Committee Members Document African American Troops' Graves

By Susan Ward Fleming,
NCHSC Board Member and Wallace Room Volunteer

Kay Ziegler and I recently recorded an African American cemetery on Cedarville Road. The cemetery is in the woods to the right of a house, and we found on the plat that it is identified as a burial ground. The property owner, Mrs. Tiffany Porter, graciously agreed to meet with us and lead us to the burial ground.



Grave Marker of
Joseph Duke, USCI Co. H

We found 7 grave markers and about 25 to 30 unmarked graves. Two of the markers indicated men who joined the Civil War Colored Troops, so we collected our data and returned to the Wallace History Room to begin our research.

The first marker was for Joseph Duke, USCI (United States Colored Infantry) Company H. Records show Duke filed for a pension as an invalid on March 9, 1883, and his wife Lucy filed for a widow's pension on November 16, 1895. The second marker was for Mills Perkins, USCC (United States Colored Calvary) Company G, 2nd Regiment. Mills Perkins filed for a pension on January 28, 1890. Both of these markers are historically significant, as they honor African Americans from Norfolk County who fought for the North in the Civil War.

A third military stone was for Mr. Harry Sykes, who served during WWI in US Army Unit 344th Labor Battalion, HQ Co. Sadly, Harry died tragically when he was struck by an unknown vehicle and left to drown in a ditch on January 24, 1938. His body was discovered the following day by his son, less than 200 feet from his home.



Grave Marker of
Mills Perkins, USCC Co. G

We would like to document more about the people this cemetery. If you have any information that might help us identify any of the other graves, please contact the Wallace History Room at 757-382-8408 or email us at nchs.wallaceroom@gmail.com.

Find NCHSC publications for sale at our storefront on Amazon.com!

<https://www.amazon.com/s?me=A2NZFQ9MGEZ94B&marketplaceID=ATVPDKIKX0DER>

When Robert Frost Traveled to the Great Dismal Swamp

By Robert Hitchings,
NCHSC President and Archivist/Historian

We often read about people suffering from depression. Today, depression is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how one feels, the way one thinks and how one acts towards their fellow man. Thank goodness, we live in an age where depression is treatable, unlike 140 years ago when there were no drugs or cures to treat this debilitating illness.

This is a story of a young man whose depression caused so much sadness and loss of interest in life that he contemplated suicide. He quit college as he felt that college was not right for him. His marriage proposal to the woman he loved had been turned down. Nothing was going right for him. He felt the whole world was darker and the strains of everyday life had become heavier than ever. He was only 20 years old but his hopes and dreams for a bright future seemed to be over. Death would be a welcomed relief from his misery, so he devised a plan to end his life in the Great Dismal Swamp. No one would know, and no one would find his body. No one would care.



Robert Frost, Age 18
Photo Courtesy of
Jones Library,
Amherst, MA

On November 6, 1894, depressed and lonely, this young man with little money took the train from Boston to New York. From there he boarded a ship to Norfolk, Virginia. He was headed to a desolate place, a place he had read about long ago. From Norfolk, he walked to the village of Deep Creek and alongside the Dismal Swamp Canal where he saw logs timbered from the swamp being transported to the local sawmills. Arriving at the edge of the Great Dismal Swamp, he entered slowly. Into the dark, treacherous swamp he walked further and further into the unknown. But just as he was thinking this would be the perfect spot to die, he looked up and saw in the distance a light flickering in the darkness! It was a lockkeeper's light. He began to walk towards the light. That small light miraculously must have pulled him back to his senses as his thoughts of suicide soon faded. Once out of the swamp he asked a local man where the closest town was. The man responded, "Elizabeth City." Hungry and tired he was out of money, but the loggers, hunters, and strangers that he encountered along the way gave him food and shelter until he arrived in Elizabeth City, where an old hobo told him how to stow away on a freight train to get back home. In Baltimore, he was able to contact his mother, who sent him money for a ticket home.

This could be a story we read and hear about so often in our society today. Like so many, he too struggled from depression brought on by rejection and the ordinary pressures of daily life.

Who was this man who was so depressed in 1894? He would become one of American's best-loved, modern-day poets and Poet Laureate of Vermont. He would win four Pulitzer Prizes and receive the Congressional Medal of Honor for poetry in 1960. His name was Robert Frost (1874-1963).

Hanbury Family Cemetery Discovered Off Peaceful Road

By Susan Ward Fleming,
NCHSC Board Member and Wallace Room Volunteer

In October 2023, Kay Ziegler and I went to 208 Peaceful Road in search of the Hanbury Family Cemetery. We met with Mr. Ashburn, one of the owners, who was kind enough to show us the small cemetery. There are five known graves at the grave site, but we only detected one legible gravestone with a date of September 12, 1882, and two open graves without markings. From the date of death, we were able to identify the 1882 grave marker as belonging to Joseph Hanbury who was born in 1839 and died September 12, 1882. Mr. Ashburn's family had owned the property since the early 1950s. He was able to tell us, from memory, that the graves were a husband and wife with three children buried between them.



Grave Marker of
Joseph Hanbury (1839-1882)

Upon further research, back in the Wallace History Room, we discovered that Joseph was married twice. He married Nancy E. Lockheart in 1864 and then married Mary Octavia Gammon in 1872. Nancy died on December 5, 1868, and she is likely the second adult grave on the lot. The three children are unknown at this time but one is presumed to be Eva Hanbury born 1878 and died August 5, 1880, as found in the VA Death and Burial Index. Eva was the daughter of Joseph and wife, Mary Gammon.

Joseph Hanbury and his 5 brothers inherited the Hanbury property from their father Miles Hanbury, whose will was probated on August 26, 1861. The will is archived in the City of Chesapeake Courthouse.

A developer, who is hoping to purchase the land, seems very receptive to preserving the cemetery and if the sale goes through, we are hoping to search the area for markers in the hope of finding the missing gravestones.

A special thank you to Judy Miller and Allison Termine (NCHSC Board Member), who were kind enough to put Kay and me in touch with the developer.



View from
Hanbury Family Cemetery



One of Four Unmarked Graves
at the Hanbury Family Cemetery