



The Historian

Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake, Virginia

Spring

May 2021

Volume 26, Issue 2

Dear Friends & Members,

Spring is here and thank goodness! I have a hunch before the month of May gets in full swing, we shall have a very warm summer.

On April 5, 2021, the Chesapeake Public Library System opened back up; all 7 branches are open and doing well. As some of us have observed, the COVID-19 pandemic is beginning to fade. The restrictions are beginning to be lifted on restaurants, churches and public buildings. Soon I believe we shall ease into a position of some normalcy. Let's hope so! However, it has been rough on all of us. As one patron said to me by phone, "Robert, are we operating on all 6 cylinders now?" One has to laugh! But the answer is yes, we have been operating on all 6 cylinders, mostly, during this horrible pandemic. Despite the odds, we continue to press on.

I am sure many of us, myself included, find ourselves lamenting over the missed opportunities to get things done and missed accomplishments during the shutdowns. You're not alone in your thinking. Many of us, especially our dedicated Wallace Room volunteers, are feeling the same thing. As difficult as it has been, Kay and I have been holding down the fort at the Wallace Room, and we have done exceedingly well. Kay and library intern, Rachel Fiery, kept up the cataloging of our books, and we were able to answer all our emails and phone calls. We continued to perform research for others and are grateful for the many nice compliments and donations. This

Calendar of Events

May 2021

NCHSC Board Meeting
11 May 6:00pm

NCHSC Membership Meeting

Via ZOOM
16 May 2:00pm
(See details on page 5)

Library Closed
30 & 31 May

June 2021

July 2021

Library Closed
4 & 5 Jul

August 2021

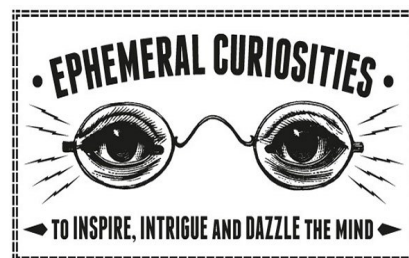
September 2021

Library Closed
6 Sep

NCHSC Board Meeting
11 Sep 6:00pm

NCHSC Membership Meeting

16 Sep 2:00pm



Wallace Memorial Room

Continued on Page 2

President's Letter, *Continued*

has been most rewarding, considering some of the limitations. Our Wallace Room did not shut down, but let's say it took a "wee bit of a nap" and sprang back to life as soon as we could.

Now that spring and summer are approaching, let us not look back to the past, but let's continue to look to the future and the good days ahead for our historical society and our Wallace History Room. Under the circumstances of this pandemic the NCHSC and the Wallace Room have done well! Remember, we are an optimistic organization, and that word "optimism" is the key that opens the door to the future. I am proud of our historical society, and I am proud of all our volunteers and the work we all do for the public and for the City of Chesapeake.

Robert B. Hitchings, President

Amusing Discovery During Research

By Laura Lane,
Wallace Room Volunteer

I recently came across something that made me chuckle while researching a family that had the last name of Poole. While on Findagrave.com I decided to research who else with that surname was buried in the same cemetery. Although this person wasn't connected to the family that I was working on, his name made me think that if he were living today, he would be teased for his name. His name was Gene Alton Poole -- therefore Gene Poole. He was born in 1935 and died in 2008. He was named before DNA was even thought of being used in genealogy.

I also have a distant paternal cousin in North Carolina whom I have never met. As she was born in the 1940s her parents had no way of knowing that in the 1950s, Superman would be a TV show. Therefore, giving their daughter the first name of Lois when their last name was Lane didn't concern them.

Got a local history or genealogy question?

☎ Call Us at (757) 410-7152. ☎

Follow us on Facebook and find us on the web:

www.NorfolkCountyVAHistory.org

Remembering NCHSC Board Member and Friend, Jim Curtin

By Robert Hitchings,
NCHSC President, Archivist/Historian

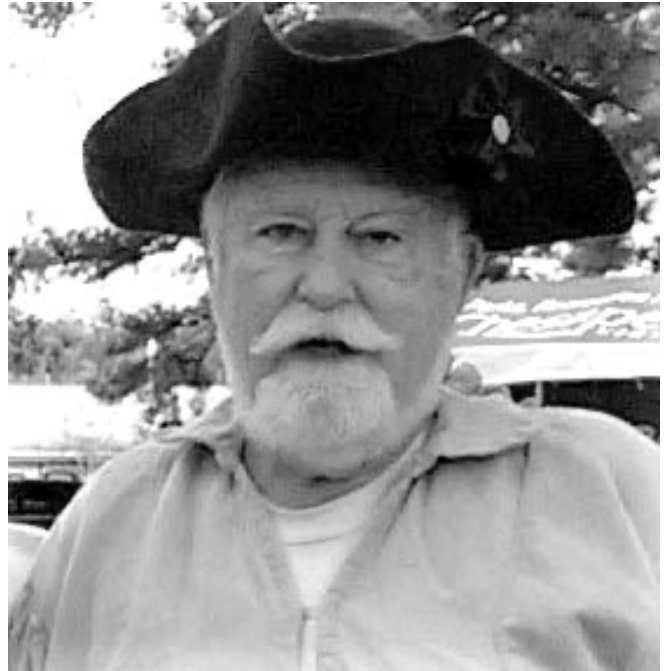
On February 12, 2021, I received a phone call that our friend and faithful board member, James Curtin, had passed away. Jim had been in failing health for some time. Jim was a uniquely talented person and a caring individual who loved history, especially Norfolk County history. His wife Pebbles was at his side when he passed.

I met Jim at my first NCHSC board meeting in September of 2014. Helen Spruill was president at the time and had introduced me as the new archivist/historian for the Wallace History

Room. I never will forget that after the meeting Jim came over with his down-to-earth manner and said, "Robert, if you need help with anything, let me know, I live just around the corner." When I became President, I took him up on his offer and Jim was always there to help me. He loved to be under the NCHSC tent during the Heritage Festivals and the city's Battle of Great Bridge Reenactments. Jim never met a stranger and loved talking history to every passerby and selling our many books. I also remember how Jim loved dressing up with his "Backwoodsman outfit" as if ready to fight in the American Revolution. He looked sooooooooooooo GOOD!

As the years went by, we became quite close. When I would call him by phone, I would say, "Mr. Curtin, this is your President calling." "Yes Sir, Mr. President," he would reply. "What can I do for you Mr. President?" We liked to joke with each other, and he loved it.

In addition to history, Jim loved trains and was a member of the local train association. Jim loved a good train ride! Last week, I had to stop at the Wards Corner intersection to let the Norfolk Southern train go by. As the big train approached, I could see the engineer blowing its whistle and when I heard the clogging of its wheels, I quickly thought of Jim. That train whistle was a tribute to our friend Jim Curtin -- a historian, devoted family man and a wonderful friend to all of us. Jim Curtin, you will be missed!



Jim Curtin, NCHSC Board Member and Volunteer

Volunteer Spotlight – Rachel Fiery

The NCHSC, and the Wallace Room volunteers in particular, want to take the opportunity to thank Rachel Fiery for her assistance over the last year. As an intern at the Central Library, Rachel cataloged a huge backlog of books that, until now, had not all been available to the public. Her efforts have resulted in making these new resources available for researchers and in improving the information about our collection items in the library's catalog system.

Rachel Fiery was born and raised in Chesapeake, Virginia. She graduated from Hickory High School in 2011 and from Christopher Newport University in 2016 with a BA in English and a minor in Childhood Studies, and this past December from the University of South Carolina with her Master of Library and Information Science. In her free time, she enjoys gardening, yoga and, of course, reading.



Rachel Fiery, Library Intern
and Wallace Room Volunteer

When she began her internship with the NCHSC, there were shelves upon shelves of books that needed to be added to the library's catalog system. Since August 2020 she has spent most of her time copy cataloging, which is the process of editing pre-existing bibliographic records and adding them into the library's catalog. She has also had the opportunity to create original records for some of the more obscure items. Once the new books were added to the catalog, she would then create their spine labels, place security tags on the books, and cover the dust jackets with a protective plastic cover. In addition to adding new

books to the collection's records she has adjusted the labels for many of the multi-volume works and restored several series that had been accidentally deleted from the catalog.

During her time in the history room, she also learned about local history, such as the story of the Witch of Pungo and more details about the Battle of Great Bridge. Although she has now accepted a full-time position as a Library Media Assistant at Princess Anne High School, she looks forward to continuing to update the history room's catalog, perhaps during the summer when school is not in session.

We wish Rachel much success at Princess Anne High School and look forward to working with her in the Wallace Room in the near future.

Archeologist is Guest Speaker at May Membership ZOOM Meeting

Please join us for another ZOOM membership meeting at 2:00 PM on May 16, 2021. Our guest speaker will be archaeologist Mr. Thane Harpole, who will give a presentation on exciting archeological discoveries at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Norfolk. Known locally as St. Mary's, the basilica is the oldest Roman Catholic Church in the Diocese of Richmond, which covers most of the state of Virginia. The parish began in 1791 as Saint Patrick's Church which burned in 1858. St. Mary's was rebuilt on this site in 1857-1858. During recent restoration of the church, Mr. Harpole's archeology team was called when a discovery was made of a series of crypts and tunnels beneath the church floor.

Thane Harpole received a bachelor's degree in Anthropology and History from the College of William & Mary in 1996. He completed graduate coursework for a master's degree in Historical Archaeology at the University of Massachusetts, Boston in May 2001. Mr. Harpole has conducted extensive research on the history and archaeology of Gloucester County during the past nine years. He has also worked as an archaeologist at the William & Mary Center for Archaeological Research and George Washington's Mount Vernon. His experience includes extensive training in field and laboratory methods and in supervising volunteers and students. Since November 2000, Mr. Harpole has been Co-Director of the Fairfield Foundation in Gloucester County, and in 2003 he became co-owner of DATA Investigations LLC, a cultural resource management company, also in Gloucester County.



Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception,
Norfolk, Virginia

Instructions on how to join our ZOOM meeting will be emailed to our membership list prior to the meeting date.

Don't Wait to Get All Your Ducks in a Row . . .



Donate copies of your Chesapeake/Norfolk County family trees, histories or research notes to the NCHSC Family Files.

Just drop them off in the Wallace Room.

You never know who might want to follow your footsteps!

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

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) _____

NCHSC Newsletter *The Historian* Is Going Paperless!

By *The Historian* Newsletter Staff

At the NCHSC, we tend to focus on the past, but this year we are also setting our sights on the future. We are taking steps to modernize our quarterly newsletter *The Historian* by going paperless!

Beginning with our September 2021 issue, we will deliver our newsletter *The Historian* in digital format to your email inbox. Our digital version will be delivered in the same basic style and layout as the paper version that we've been sending to your home, but it will be printable if you prefer to read a paper version and shareable if you want to forward it to friends and family.

More importantly, our e-newsletter puts your membership dues to work to provide high-quality educational programs and exhibits and to preserve our local history, rather than to pay for printing and postage.

