



The Historian

Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake, Virginia
-- Preserving and Sharing Local History for 55 Years! --

Summer September 2019 Volume 24, Issue 3

Dear Fellow Members,

It has been a long, HOT SUMMER and like so many I am looking forward to the fall and cooler temperatures. Last night I happened to be watching a TV station Me-TV and heard *The Jeffersons'* theme song, "Moving on Up . . . We finally got a piece of the pie." Yes, our Wallace Memorial History Room is moving on up and fast! This year, 2019, will go down as our *Annus Mirabilis* (A Remarkable Year).

We have received many rare books, old photographs, rare Valentine cards, maps, Norfolk and Norfolk County Medical Society books, paintings, rare papers and most of all monetary gifts. Frankly speaking, I do not know where to begin. In January we were given rare Norfolk County Revolutionary War documents and in March we received a 1785 two-volume set of Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language*. In July we received a 1637 copy of *William Camden's Britannia: A Chorographical Description of Great Britain and Ireland*, which includes maps of the counties of Great Britain. Recently a 95-year-old patron contacted me wanting to donate her rare 1925 photograph collection of the Norfolk Symphony to include the programs. Her father had been first violinist in the orchestra. Then I received a phone call from a man who wished to donate a painting of Judge Vernon D. Hitchings in his courtroom done in 1972 by Norfolk artist Stacia Mandaleris. The artist's daughter was so thrilled the painting was coming to our archives. The outpouring of support from our wonderful friends here in Chesapeake, Norfolk and Virginia Beach is humbling.

But with all our new additions to the Wallace Room this year, I cannot forget the many individuals, too many to mention, who believed and trusted us with their family heirlooms and prized possessions. Because of all of you, we are building a beautiful history library for the citizens of Chesapeake.

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Calendar of Events

September 2019

Library Closed 1 & 2 Sep
NCHSC Board Meeting 10 Sep 6:00pm
NCHSC Membership Meeting 15 Sep 2:00pm

October 2019

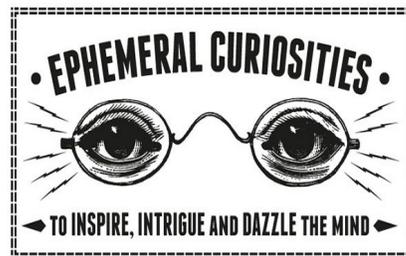
Library Closed 14 Oct

November 2019

Library Closed 11 Nov
NCHSC Board Meeting 12 Nov 6:00pm
Library Closed 27-30 Nov

December 2019

NCHSC Annual Dinner 4 Dec
Battle of Great Bridge Reenactment 7 & 8 Dec
SAR/DAR Battle of Great Bridge Commemoration 7 Dec
Library Closed 24 & 25 Dec, 31 Dec



Wallace Memorial Room

President's Letter (*Continued*)

Within 4 years our city of Chesapeake will be 60 years old. We are leaving behind a legacy of what a history room should be. I wish to thank my board members and patrons for supporting the work we do here in the Wallace Room. Yes, we are moving on up!

All the Best,

Robert B. Hitchings, President
Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake, Virginia

Remembering Friend and NCHSC Board Member Preston Grissom

By Robert Hitchings,
NCHSC President and Archivist/Historian

Our friend and board member, Preston Grissom, passed away on July 23, 2019. I was shocked when I heard this sad news, for I had just picked up the large ship model that Sam Leary and Preston had commissioned by Bob Guess, a local model boat builder. Bob had just finished this boat for our new Great Bridge Battlefield & Waterways History Museum. Here I was holding their ship model, a special treasure that both of these two men never got to see. How very sad.

I first met Preston at my first NCHSC Board meeting in September 2014. President Helen Spruill presided, and I was introduced to the board. As the members voted for me to be the first Archivist/Historian for the Wallace History Room, Preston said after the meeting, "Robert, we are all glad you are here." From that first day our friendship grew, and I found myself many times at Preston's home with his lovely wife Bettie or traveling in his car throughout Chesapeake with son Bud showing me the many old homes and old sections of Chesapeake. I'll never forget that one special outing with Preston and Bud when they wanted to show me the Wormington family cemetery at Hall's family farm. What an experience that was! Soon all of us were wading through fields of tall soybeans. Here I am, a city boy in a field of soybeans with Preston and Bud. I was following them, and they finally found the grave site, but what an adventure that was!

But my best memory of Preston was after Christmas 2018 showing him my 1820 long-stage-coach horn which I had received from my friends in England. Before I could turn around, both he and Bud were blowing this old horn and what a loud sound it made! I found myself laughing hysterically at both of them! Afterwards, Preston made us all his delicious tomato sandwiches that only Preston could make. And that was a special treat for me. When I left Preston's home that evening, I called him Gabriel, blowing his horn and he loved it. Each and every one of us have special memories of our friends and loved ones who have passed, and I know each of you have fond memories of that wonderful man called Preston Grissom.



Edward Preston
Grissom

Remembering Sam Leary, Wallace Room Volunteer

By Robert Hitchings,
NCHSC President and Archivist/Historian

We lost a wonderful man, volunteer, and lover of Norfolk County history on June 11, 2019. Sam Leary was a great supporter of our Norfolk County Historical Society and it came as a great shock to hear of his passing. Everyone liked Sam and we became close friends when I came over to the Wallace History Room in 2014. Sam was always working behind the scenes and loved every minute of it. We will never forget his immense capacity for helping so many people throughout his life. He was just that type of guy!

When I was preparing for our WWII exhibit, Sam was there to help. He introduced me to his cousin, Alex Leary in Shiloh, NC, who was a collector of WWII memorabilia. Before I left Alex's home, Sam was placing all the old artifacts for my exhibits into the car. Without Sam's help our exhibit would not have been as fantastic as it was.

Sam's last project before he passed was working with the Chesapeake School Board to secure the journal and papers of Captain John T. West, the first superintendent of Norfolk County Schools. Due to Sam's perseverance and connections with the Chesapeake School Board the NCHSC now has Captain West's journal and many other old school board papers that tell the history of the Norfolk County school system.

I know I speak for everyone here at our Wallace History Room and the Norfolk County Historical Society when I say, "We all have been blessed knowing Sam Leary." I know my life has been richer just knowing this man. He will be truly missed by all.



Sam Leary at the
Wormington Family Cemetery

Happenings at the Norfolk County Historical Society

Article and Photos By Kay Ziegler,
NCHSC Wallace Room Manager & Board Member

We are so fortunate to have members and patrons who are willing to share their histories and belongings with us. NCHSC board member, Deborah Paxson, shared her grandfather Joseph Paxson's diary from 1909 -1913. The diary is about everyday life and what their lives were like living in Norfolk County. Very interesting reading.

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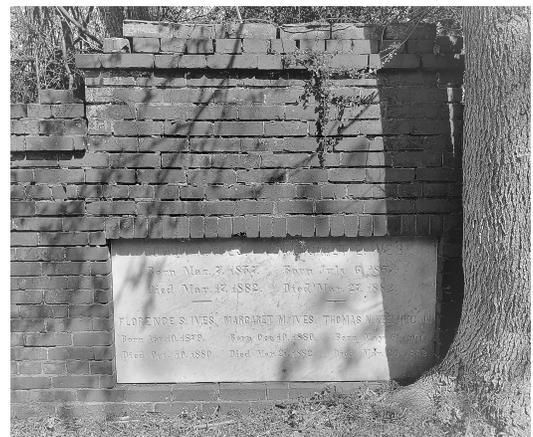
Warden Family Home

Warden-West Family History and Photos

In April of this year a patron, Heather Barlow, brought two interesting opportunities to my attention. First, she presented to us a notebook containing the family history of the Warden-West Family who had lived in the southeastern section of Norfolk County. This family history was written by Indiana Julia Warden Bonney in 1930 when she was 79 years old. What wonderful reading this was! The notebook was in the possession of the present owner of the Warden family home, Mrs. Laura Alexander Laurent. She also had pictures of the family of which we were able to scan and add both the family story and pictures to our family history files.

Ives Family Tragedy in St. Brides

The second bit of information Ms. Barlow gave me was the location of some graves that were not yet documented in our ongoing cemetery research. Jean Spencer and I went in search of these graves for documentation purposes. We found the burial vault in an overgrown field in southeastern Chesapeake. The brick vault is in desperate need of repair.



Ives Family Vault

While documenting the names on the marker, we noticed that all the people had passed away within days of each other back in March 1882. We heard there had been a fire at the property and thought that the family may have perished in the fire. The names listed were all from the same family including the wife's brother. With the list of names, we began our research in hopes of solving this mystery. I found my answer in a 1977 *Virginian-Pilot* article about the Ives family. The article detailed the loss of this family in the St. Brides area who had all succumbed to smallpox. The husband Edwin Ives, 25, Margaret, 24, her younger brother, Thomas Keeling, Jr., 20 and their 17-month-old daughter Maggie all died from this disease. This young family had already lost an infant daughter prior to the smallpox outbreak. Such a tragic story of the loss of a whole family in the farming community of Norfolk County.



The whole of a Norfolk county white family named Ives and a young man named Keeling, brother of Mrs. Ives, have recently died of smallpox. The spread of the disease has, however, been very greatly curtailed.

Welcome to New Volunteer, Linda Phelps Noe

We are happy to welcome Linda Phelps Noe, one of our newest Wallace Room volunteers! Linda joined as a lifetime member of the NCHSC and has a love and appreciation for all things historical. She began researching her own family history 15 years ago and it's taken her on a journey to Colonial Virginia and Maryland, with strong ties to Halifax and Culpeper counties in Virginia, as well as Prince George's and Anne Arundel counties in Maryland. Linda is also a member of the Virginia Historical Society and enjoys attending Virginia Journeys bus tours throughout the state. Linda is originally from Washington, D.C. and has lived in Chesapeake since 2016. She looks forward to learning about the rich local history of the Tidewater region. Linda is currently scanning the history files in the Wallace Room.



Linda Phelps Noe

Family History Queries: Can You Help?

By Amy Williamson Jonak,
Wallace Room Volunteer

We're introducing a new feature in *The Historian* -- family research queries. To genealogists, a "query" is a question published to a specific group who might be able to provide information about a family line. Queries are a targeted way to reach out to folks who may be distant cousins or have personal knowledge about an individual or family. Some queries are broad. Specific questions tend to generate the most helpful responses. If you have a query you'd like to submit for future editions, email it to nchs.wallaceroom@gmail.com with "Newsletter Query" in the subject line. Please include your email address so those responding can reach you directly. Can you help with the items below?

Queries

BOYETTE - Searching for information on Ancram Arnette Boyette (1817-1894) married to Mary Jane Gavin (1816-1878). They resided in North Carolina. My grandfather, Hiram Spencer Boyette, was a prominent citizen of South Norfolk and was a member of the first Chesapeake City Council in 1963. General information about the BOYETTE family in Norfolk County, VA is also appreciated. Please email Patti, pbhami@live.com.

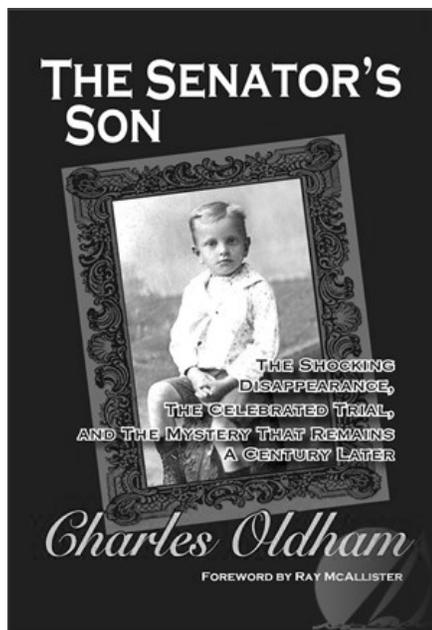
WATERFIELD - Searching for information on Caleb Waterfield (1790-1870) and wife Mary (1795-1870) in North Carolina. My grandfather Waterfield lived in the Hickory area (Saint Brides Road) where subsequent generations still reside. I am aware of WATERFIELDS in Knotts Island, N.C. but have not made a connection there yet. Please email Patti, pbhami@live.com.

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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) _____

Local Crime Mystery To Be Discussed at September 15th Membership Meeting



On Monday, February 13, 1905, eight-year-old Kenneth Beasley, son of a NC state senator, walked out onto a school playground and never returned. A massive search, including hundreds of volunteers, combed the Currituck County woods but found no trace of the child. Eighteen months after the child's disappearance, the father's political rival was charged. The courtroom overflowed with spectators and newspaper reporters and the trial became a sensation, but the mystery remained unsolved. Attorney Charles Oldham has reopened the case using modern research methods and his own legal training. The result is his book, *The Senator's Son*.

Please join us at the Chesapeake Central Library on Sept. 15, 2019 at 2:00 p.m. to hear this fascinating story. Light refreshments will be served. Come and support the NCHSC with your presence and bring a friend!