And he When the Circus Came to Norfolk, Virginia

*Tiger, Tiger burning bright,*

*In the forest of the night,*

*What immortal hand or eye,*

*Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?*

William Blake, 1794

Ladies and gentlemen, step right up and see the greatest show on earth. For 5 cents see the flying trapeze artist, and other amazing feats!” From those tickers hawkers there was no doubt when they arrived in the Borough of Norfolk they had arrived to a very welcoming fan club.

What is a circus? A circus is a company of performers who were noted for their entertainment, clowns, magicians, trapeze artist, musicians, dancers, tightrope performers, acrobats, and wild and train animals from the darkest part of Africa & Asia. They had side shows, a bearded lady, the tallest man and shortest woman, not to mention the snakes from Asia and Africa.

But who actually started the circus? His name was Philip Astley and he is credited with being the “Father of the Circus.” He opened his first circus in England in 1768 and this amusement cought on and spread to the United States after our revolutionary war. But it would be a Scotsman named John Bill Ricketts who brought the first circus to the United States on April 3, 1793 to an exciting crowd in Philadelphia. It would be here in Philadelphia Ricketts would give his first circus performance. The people oved it. And in Richmond, Virginia, the Examiner, newspaper, July 16, 1803, reports Monsieur Durieux he will be performing a great Fire Works display and surprisingly his Flying Pigeon and something unusual in its bill or beak.

During the 19th century, the circus became the most popular attractions to stir up excitement everywhere in the USA. In the background one could hear, men yelling, popcorn, peanuts, cotton candy, crackers, apples, and soda pop. And you had folks selling programs describing the different attractions. In the early years, 1830 sideshows were opened all day. And in addition to the elephants, horses, and bears one could see a collection of paintings depicting our country’s past and our early leaders in famous battles. The circus environment had something for everybody. To a rural country the circus brought excitement to the town but also the news of the day.

My curiosity started about the circus when I came across an ad promoting the circus here in Norfolk in 1837. At the end of the ad was the reptile exhibit. I am not a reptile person but wondered how the circus manager Joseph E. W. Hobby, in 1837 could transport his reptile exhibit in a horse drawn wagon. It was probably no easy task. They must have had wet burlap bags to keep these snakes, wet and alive.

The two interesting newspaper articles, American Beacon, dated July 18, 1836 and Norfolk & Portsmouth Hearld, dated, September 4, 1833, both advertisements featuring not only WILD BEASTS, but SERPENTS from India, Africa, and New Zealand., but a large reptiles, including a large Rattlesnake from the United States of America. But it would be the Public Ledger of Norfolk & Portsmouth that ran an illustration of a TIGER & TIGRESS of Asia, on January 12, 1810 on a cold day here in Norfolk. Their location would be on Norfolk’s Church Street, a Frenchman from Santo Domingo, named, Joseph C. Maigne’s who had a dry-goods store. He housed the circus, near Maine Street & Church St. Today, the street is called, St. Paul’s Blvd.

The ad for these tigers reads, *“These curious animals were imported from Surat in Asia. When full grown, their bulk is tremendous, much superior in size to a lion. They are blood thirsty, preferring human fresh. They lurk among the bushes and pounce on their pray. They are the most powerful animal in the world. Below the ad, reads, “The cage in which the tigers are confined is very strong. So no danger may be apprehended from this*.” I guess people were afraid to approach these two tigers in the winter of a dull January day in 1813.

As I began to write this article, I remembered the Walt Disney movie, called, Toby Tyler, a boy of eight years old running away in the 1860’s to join the circus. Grandma Hitchings took me to the Melrose Theatre on Colley Avenue to see this movie. It was a delightful movie in 1960.

As a small boy I did not like the circus! Some of the circus performers were scary. I remember going to Forman Field, Hampton Blvd., when the circus came to town around 1954. I was about 4 or 5 years old and my grandfather being a Mason and a Shriner got free tickets. Grandma Hitching took me and we sat not far from the March of Dimes children, children that had afflictions, especially polio. They were all in wheel chairs. I remember the nurses in their blue capes near the wheelchairs with the white rubber handles on these wheelchairs. The kids were all dressed up in their Sunday’s best for this event.

But it was my grandmother that recalled the stories of the circus coming to Norfolk in the 1880s. The circus was a big thing in her day and people of her generation. In the 1880s the circus brought entertainment. The circus and their menagerie of exotic animals and wagons would march down Main Street in downtown Norfolk. Everyone, young and old was on the sideline to cheer the performers. In those days there was not much entertainment.

Grandma Hitchings always had a story to tell of Norfolk’s entertainment in the olden days. According to Grandma, when the circus came to Norfolk, she and her girl’s friends found a way to skip class to see the circus parade. They had their plans, each would write a note to be excused for the day and they forged their parent’s signature. It always worked. Once free from school they went to the circus to see all the clowns and the side shows. The show was exciting with all the costumes, and performers. It was here she saw her first contortionist and the medicine man selling his tonic, called Whizzer Oil. His tonic would cure everything from insomnia to rheumatism. She described this man, saying, “Step right up, get your bottle of a merical cure. It cures everything.” While the medicine man was strumming up business, another performer was on the stage lying on a flat board 12 inches from the floor and he was streathing out and moving his head until it stretch and stretch until his head was on the floor. After the applause, within seconds he would rewind his head back to his normal neck where it belonged. Then I heard all about the knife thrower and the sword swallowers that had their acts. What a show this must have been. And grandmother said, as a child she would be careful of the gypsies that always followed the circus reading ones palms and predicting their future. One had to be careful for the gypsies were noted for stealing small children. This was a rumor, gossip of the day which over years have caused many hurt feelings among the Roman people.

In January 2017, came the end of the Circus. The Animal Activist groups finally had their way. They put the Circus out to pasture. Over the years they brought out the cruelty that these animals that suffered under the Big Top.

We all have opinions as to the demise of the circus. But I truly believe television helped kill the circus. On television one could see circuses all over the world. Ed Sullivan (1901-1974) the T.V. host and impresario brought to us the famous Moscow Circus from Russia to the T. V. screen. Declining ticket sales was another factor that times were changing for the circus. And we cannot forget the Animal rights groups, activist groups that brought out horror stories of how animals were being treated. I remembered in the 1970s Ringley Brothers had a rare Unicorn in the show. It turned out to be a goat with a horn sewed into its skull. This did not help the image of the circus. The Virginian-Pilot reported on this story. And as times change, audiences increasingly preferred other forms of entertainment.

I remembered the blizzard of February 1980 under the Big Top, in down town Scope, Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus was here in town. I remember excitement in the air and many residents of Tidewater had purchased tickets in advance to see the shows. When the circus arrive here in Norfolk snow was on the ground, temperatures were dropping, but the show went on.

Under the Big Top at Scope, the circus performers played to a small crowd that night. Later during the performance an announcement came on the intercom system, “the snow is heavy and the roads of Norfolk are closed.” Soon, the lights dimmed, the temperatures dropped. That night many people of Norfolk felt the warmth and the hand of comfort from those circus performers. Many performers went back to their dressing rooms and brought out coats and blankets for the audience. It was a night so many would remember. Many watched the second half and did not worry about the snow or going home.

Gone are the days when the only entertainment in America was the Circus. Gone are the big beautiful elephants, horses, clowns, the laughter, dressed up performers in their sequin, sparkling clothes. And who cannot forget the human being shot out of a large cannon. This was sensational.

In May 2017 the last big Circus Company, Ringling Brothers & Barnum and Bailey folded their circus tents forever. It was an end of an era.

But the circus lives in the memory of old folks like me, who remembered all the sights, sounds and the excitement under the Big Top when these circuses came to town, my home town called, Norfolk, Virginia.

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Know Grand Staircases of Long Ago

Growing up in Norfolk, Virginia one sees many old sections, old neighborhoods that time seems to have stood still. Many of these old home are over 100 years old and what stories they all can tell us of the early inhabitants of long ago.

Norfolk has preserved many old sections of our area. In preserving these old historical houses and neighborhoods respecting its historical character of the by gone days, Norfolk’s has created its beautiful rich past. These old neighborhoods still reflect their old charm and the era they were built. Many of these sections of Norfolk have been designated as historical places.

We have many architectural styles of old homes in our old neighborhoods, Freemason Street, Edgewater, Larchmont, Lockhaven, and Meadow Brook just to name a few. I love to walk in different neighborhoods and see the different styles of homes, Georgian, Colonial, French style, with their mansard roofs, Tudor, etc. But there is one thing I am always as impressed as I enter an old home is to see the grand staircases. Believe me, I have seen many beautiful, grand staircases in our area. And I am always impressed to see so many different types of art objects such as a marble statues, old Chippendale chairs or even large oriental vases next to these elaborate structures. I remember an old home on Matoka Avenue in West Ghent, the owner, a dear friend of mine had a large Indian Totem pole at her grand stair case. And that totem pole was LARGE, unique and had a rather large red carved nose. Believe me, it was interesting!

Interestingly, Thomas Jefferson disliked staircases and preferred to save space by using narrow steep stairways in his homes. Many were hidden by a wall or a door giving the rooms a much larger space.

In our culture one can see photographs of staircases of long ago, children hiding behind the old balusters or spindles listening to conversations of their parents or waiting with excitement to get a glimces of old Santa Clause. And how many of us as children slid down these beautiful railings landing with a thump on the floor. As kids one would say, “Sliding down the rails.” And how many old black & white movies did we see such merriment of kids sliding down the rails, especially in the Al Roach comedies. And today how many families decorate the banister rails at Christmas time with fresh garlands, greens and maybe a few pinsetters.

Staircases do take up so much space and yet it shows prominence in an old home. But it’s the spindles or baluster that are more noticeable. And it’s the old local mills that cut these spindles into a unique shapes and sizes for these grand staircases.

Nowadays, homes are getting much bigger than several years ago. Now, you see the staircases making an appearance, taking on prominence as one enters the foyer of a home, just like the 1890s. History has a way of repeating itself. The interest in staircases has been growing as the homes of today are getting bigger with a much large upstairs.

Last year I was invited by two friends who live in the Ghent area. One friend lived on Pembroke Avenue and another friend on Fairfax Avenue, two old streets in the East Ghent area. The first thing I noticed as I entered the foyer was the beautiful, staircase. Both these homes were built around 1898 and it was customary to reflect ones wealth and prestige with a grand staircase. However, this all changed in the 1930s -1950s when the bungalows were creeping into our society, especially with a cape cod houses, bay windows and a simple staircase to the second floor.

Many years ago I gave my wife a magazine subscription called, Colonial Homes. She loved it, but in her mind she too wanted a home with a staircase with a nice cherry railing. Within a few years in March 1989 we bought a home in Talbot Park that was built in 1940 with a beautiful staircase. I told our friend Betsy Granby Elling, our real-estate friend that I was going to set my wife’s bed next to this old staircase for she always wanted a nice stairwell. She got her dream, we bought the house.

As I have gotten older I have grown fonder of these old grand staircases. I am a fan of old historical homes, and the beauty of these graceful staircases that draw the eye and can capture the heart. I cannot exactly know for sure when my passion for staircases began, but perhaps as my circle of friends increased who live in old neighborhoods, that I began to pay attention. Or, maybe it was my wife’s doing when we bought our old house and she got her wish for a beautiful staircase in our foyer.

The Mausoleum of

Rev. William H. Lewis

1816-1883

Every cemetery has its stories and Norfolk, Virginia cemeteries have theirs. Cemeteries are supposed to be a sacred place, but unfortunatley in today’s world one sees so much vandalism and hatred towards the dead. It’s truly sad. Many people feel a cemetery is the only place they can connect with their love ones that have parted, from either a horrible disease or a horrible traffic accident.

Every mausoleum is unique in appearance and comes with its own rich story. And each mausoleum is a resting place for a beloved individual. Mausoleums are a symbol of remembrance and honor in many cultures. It is also a status simple reflecting ones wealth. Over the years exquisite mausoleums have made its way here in Norfolk Virginia cemeteries. But I prefer the ones that are plain and simple. And who cannot forget the many ghost stories of different mausoleums that have been written over the years, sighting of ghosts in these old tombs. Unfortunately, my story has no ghosts.

The Victorians use to say, “Cemeteries are the city of the Dead.” They are so right, for in every cemetery you have your dead mayors, doctors, lawyers, ministers, saloon keepers, protestutes and regluar folks who represent the beautiful fabric of our city.

Recently, l was called upon to do research on this African-American man who is buried in WestPoint Cemetery, Norfolk, Virginia. He is buried in a mausoleum which is unusual for an African-Americans in those days.

John Dill, an old friend of Bureau of cemeteries operation’s manager called on me to solve the mystery of this man who rests in his mausoleum. Who was this man who resting in this old peaceful cemetery?

Quietly tucked away in old West Point cemetery, the oldest African-American cemetery here in Norfolk with its high wall separating from Elmwood cemetery is an unusual mausoleum of a Rev. William Lewis, a Methodist minister, Man of the cloth of our city of Norfolk. You can see this mausoleum as you drive up into this old cemetery.

As one looks at the front of this unique, simple old, mausoleum, one sees a small marble plague stone above the old rustic door that reads L. E. Lewis, 1895.

On the back of the mausoleum is a tall beautiful, slab-like marble tombstone that that stands reading, William H. Lewis, born in July 25, 1876 in Hollis Maine. He dies in July 25, 1876.

The stone is made by O’Rourke, a catholic stonemason whose business was not far from todays’ City Hall, on Union Street. Unfortunately, there is no obituary on this man from Hollis, Maine. I even checked the Maine newspapers and found nothing.

The information on these old marble stones are not accurate. In my research the dates were wrong. Could someone have added the wrong dates by accident, or could the mausoleum been built in the golden years of one’s life when memory has faded? Essentially, I was dealing with faulty data that simply did not add up.

I went to work, first by using the old City Directories (1880-1883) of Norfolk, Virginia. I also checked the 1850, 1860, 1870 and 1880 Norfolk, Virginia census records for a William E. Lewis. However, my big discovery was when I found the will of a Rev. William H. Lewis, probated in Norfolk’s city hall, listing his wife Mary and adopted daughter Rosa Hunter. This was a terrific find.

In the Norfolk-Virginian newspaper, I found a small obituary of Rev. William H. Lewis, as memorial service being conducted by a Rev. J. Butts & Rev. I. J. Pindell, on July 15th 1882, District Conference, Southern District of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The census records proved to be so good. In 1860 Norfolk, Virginia Lewis H. Lewis is listed as a Huckster, and his personal estate value is $400.00 which in those days a hefty sum of money for an African-American. A Huckster is a door to door peddler selling all sorts of things. Apparently he did well in his business. He is listed as a Mulatto, free person of color. He is 42 years and in his house is living

A. L. Armstrong, 20 years and a John Bowser is 21 years. A Harriett Bowser is only 2 years old.

In the 1870 Census record I find William H. Lewis listed as a minister of the cloth. He had apparently found GOD during the trouble times of our Civil War. He has a wife, Mary E. Lewis age 47 and a daughter Rosa Hunter 18 years old and an Ellen Brown age 17.

In 1880, Norfolk Census he is listed as Rev. Lewis age 64 with his wife Mary E. Lewis, age 54. He made his last will on July 17, 1882. On December 22, 1882 his will was probated in Norfolk’s Corporation court.

In his will he leaves his double house and lot next to his church, St. Luke’s Methodist on the north side of Scott Street, Norfolk, Virginia to his wife and later to his adopted daughter Rosa Hunter.

In viewing the outside of the mausoleum one sees two memorials. And as I was probing this old tomb for family information, I was coming up empty. The mystery of this old tomb is still a mystery. Unfortunatley, our cemetery records have been damaged and many have just disappeared. Determining the identity of the people buried inside is a mystery too. For example, how many of Rev. Lewis family are buried inside. We do not know. Was this mausoleum just built for him? At times I felt like I was dealing with three different Lewis’s.

We may never know the answers to my questions, but we do know this Rev. Lewis, through hard work pulled himself up by the boot straps and afterwards became a most beloved minister, man of the cloth for the African American community here in Norfolk, Virginia. Believe me, the mystery of Rev. Lewis has been very challenging, but I must say, “Most interesting and intriguing.”

A Good Samaritan of Norfolk, Virginia

Several weeks ago after looking at the documentary on Thomas Jefferson, our PBS station by Ken Burns, I got curious how our two local newspapers here in Norfolk, Virginia reacted to the deaths of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, both Presidents of the United States. Both men died on the same day, July 4th 1826, our 50th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Our country quickly went into mourning. Everywhere in our country, only 20 states, all local churches city halls had funerals for this two famous men. July 4th celebrations became a day of sadness and mourning on the 50th anniversary of our country. And many locals were seen wearing black arm bands and black shawls to show respect for these two great presidents, both men known as fathers of our country.

As I was looking at the American-Beacon and the Norfolk & Portsmouth Hearld, two popular newspapers of our area, I quickly noticed the heavy black lines separating the columns, a sign in those days of mourning. I could not help noticing another article, a much smaller article tucked away on the second page near the bottom of the Norfolk Portsmouth Hearld newspaper. It was this small article that cought my eyes and promoted this article.

A man named, Josey Bucknam (1793-1846) a native of Massachuttes was featured. This man who sold (Utensils) & Real-Estate) was living in the Borough of Norfolk with his family on Market Square, near where our Waterside stands today. In 1844 he was also dealing with peanuts at his store. Most likely his business was on the ground floor and he and his family lived upstairs like so many merchants in the 19th century. He was just an ordinary citizen of the Borough of Norfolk who happened to stopped by to see Captain Butler.

According to the American Commercial Beacon, Norfolk & Portsmouth Daily Advertiser, July 17th 1826, Captain Butler of the sloop, told Norfolk authorities about this young passenger. It seems that on the second day out at sea young man became suddenly violently deranged. Without any previous indications of any disordered, his mind was completely gone. This young 22 years old got out of his cabin window where he was found half conscience, hanging onto the rudder of the ship with one hand. Captain Butler and a crewmen quickly stepped in saving this young man’s life and he was quickly confined to his cabin under lock & key. During the night the other passengers would hear fits of violence in his cabin.

Josey Bucknam responding to the aid of the Captain Butler, Mr. Josey Bucknam and his wife made the decision to bring the young man a stranger into their home. They quickly made a special bed for their new patient and immediallly called the doctors.

According to the newspaper article, the best medical treatment which our town could offered was administered. Mrs. Elizabeth Bucknam (1795-1870?) quickly soothed the young man’s brow with cool compresses. News spread over the Borough of Norfolk, and many residents questioned Mr. Bucknam’s decision for doing this kind act. However, this young man could bring into the Buckram house a horrible disease that could spread and wipe out his entire family, but also whole Borough of Norfolk.

This young man lived only 10 days at the Bucknam’s home where he was subjects to violence and fits where he had to be restrained. He died on the 16th July 1826.

Who was this young man, a stranger that landed here in Norfolk, Virginia? In the dead man’s pouch (cloth handbag) were papers reveling his true identity. He was Alden Emmons, 22 year old, a native of Woodstock, Vermont. It appears in his papers, he was on his way to Sampson, North Caroline for a position as a teacher in one of their local academy’s’. A diploma was found from the University of Vermont, testifying that he had graduated in August 1825. Also, a letter was found from a John P. Richardson, Esq. a lawyer of Woodstock, Vermont where this young student was interested in studying law.

On August 29th 1826, a letter, A CARD of THANKS` appeared in the American Commercial Beacon, Norfolk & Portsmouth Daily Advertiser. The letter was written from Abel Emmons, the father of Alden Emmons to Mr. Josey Bucknam & family stating how much he and his family appreciated his kind service to their son and especially making sure that their son had a proper Christian burial.

Jose Bucknam died around the early part of 1847. He had recently buried his only son, Otis F. Bucknam (Market Square) who died November 7th 1846. According to the newspaper, he died of heart disease. Otis was only 21 years old.

Unfortunately, in our old Cedar Grover cemetery on Princess Anne road, you will not find the name of Alden Ammons nor that of Josey & Elizabeth Bucknam or any members of the Bucknam family due to missing cemetery records over the years. And without a tombstone it is difficult to find their exact graves. But they rest here quickly with so many unidentified citizens of Norfolk, Virginia.

Mr. & Mrs. Bucknam of the Borough of Norfolk, were both truly good Samaritans who unselfishly and compassionately help others in distress, going beyond what’s expected or required of them. They were just good people.

Norfolk & Portsmouth Hearld Newspaper, 1847.

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. Mr. Thomas Jefferson

Around the early part of the 19th century, 1810’s, the only way one would get to these small towns in Virginia as well as any part of the USA was by horse and wagon. The area was dotted with Inns, or Ordinaries, later called taverns. It was the only transportation at that time. We were very much a ruel country side.

Fords Tavern in Buckingham County, northwest of old Appomattox Court house was a favorite a lodging place of many a travelers.

A respectable stranger a man of the cloth was staying at Fords Tavern. The two men got acquainted by conversation. They talked about agriculture, mechanical devices, and religion. This man of the cloth, pondered, is this man a wealthy farmer, an engineer, or maybe a minister like myself. The Clergyman was puzzled.

As the two men approached the Inn, both men being very tired were showned to their bed chambers, each said good night to each other? The minister was up early to proceed on his journey when he asked the Inn keeper, “Curious, who was that man I was with last night. He never gave me his name.” The Inn keeper said, “That was Thomas Jefferson.”

Who was this man named Jefferson? He is a complex man, may Jeffersonian scholars have tried for over 200 years to penetrate this man, and failed. Jefferson, is complete enigma, an unassuming man, no one can really know or understand this man. He was a shy man, tongue- tight, small talk, his voice was high pitch, low and solf, and no one could hardly hear him speak. He did not speak well in public. He was not an orator, but a magnificent writer with a strong vocabulary.

He became our Third President, serving the as President 8 years. He double-sized our County when he bought the Louisianan Purchase 1804, 4 cents an acre, 15 million from Emperor Napoleon.

Jefferson is on our Two dollar Bill and is found on our Nickle, 5 cents and you use him all the time in change.

Jefferson was born on April 15th 1743 to Peter Jefferson and his wife Jane Randolph Jefferson. He was born in the wilderness of Virginia.

His father was Peter Jefferson, independent man, a self-made man, a surveyor self-taught and a man that love to walk in the forest and loved nature. He took young Jefferson on many walks in the forest hunting fishing, and Jefferson met many ingenious people Indians who lived on the land too.

At the age of 14 tragedy in 1757 his father died.

He loved the classics and taught himself Latin, Greek and the violin at an early age. He was a farmer, surveyor, scientist, engineer, and an architect. And he loved fine wines and pasta.

At the age of 16 he is admitted to the College of William & Mary. It’s the first time he has been to a city and he finds Williamsburg fascinating. He spent at least 15 hours of reading and studying his lessons. He was a good student and later was introduce to George Wythe a renound lawyer where he studied law under. George Wythe took the boy under his wing, and quickly noticed his keen interest in learning.

Thomas Jefferson was catapulted into Williamsburg society. He was invited to the Governor palace, dinners and the refinement of great music. He was a good dancer and learned quickly the fine arts of being a gentleman.

He designed his house, 8 times, and he named it Monticello, meaning Little Mountain.

As writer could hit all topics within one or two sentences. He was a student of philosophers like, Locke, Hume, Berkley, Rousseau, Kant and Voltaire. These old philosophers were his friends. He studied these men over and over. He studied past governments like Egypt, Greece and Rome. He wrote one book in his life, *Notes on the State of Virginia.*

He was a Burgess representing Albemarle County, Virginia, 1769-1776. it here he got into politics. He quickly learned, all government officials came from England. No one could be elected from the area. One has to obey to a far off government a government that really did not know who we were. War clouds are moving in. Separation is heard all the time. Animosity between the two counties is quite apparent.

On June 22, 1775 Jefferson arrived in Philadelphia. He represented our state of Virginia, at that time the largest state in the Union. . The Second Continental Congress was there with its 56 delegates, men from all the 13 colonist. They mission was to set up a government to be able to governed themselves. Jefferson was serving on 39 committees. And he was known for his handsome work. But he was still a very quiet person. He was just 33 years old. This was the first time he had been out of the state of Virginia.

When it came down for someone to write up this important document,

Adams, & Franklin had persuaded Jefferson to write the Declaration of Independence. When Jefferson asked Adams why he did not want to do this himself, Adams quickly answered,

1. You are a Virginian.
2. I am dislike, repulsive, and would be rejected.
3. You are 10 times a better writer than I am.

Franklin said, “He did not like to see people correct his letters, & documents. Etc.

So a committee was formed and Jefferson agreed to write up this document.

Jefferson went to work in his small apartment on Market Street in Philadelphia. It was HOT during July 1775. He struggled with each word, finding each word it in the rightful place in his document. With his knowledge of the great philosophers, like Locke, Rousseau, Hume, he drafted this document.

At times he took a break, played his violin, drank cups of tea, and would resume back again on his document. He constructed erased, crafting the best language he could use. He changed paragraphs, inserted words and took other words out, Jefferson was a mastermind of crafting the best English words and sentences together. When he finished within a few days, it was a brilliant piece of work. And he did this on a small desk he brought from home.

When he got finished with this Declaration of Independence, it was truly an expression of the American way of life. He used his choicest words in American History, they were magic to the ears of the delegates. This document has become our American creed. Our country was born on this date. But it would take another generation to Americans to realize the importance of this document and who its author was.

His Declaration of Independence was received on the second of July 1775. The whole body of delegates, 56 delegates at the 2nd Continental Congress, all signed the Declaration of Independence, except New York for they took a few days to approve.

All were eager to sign this document. John Handcock was so pleased, he signed his name first so large that King George III would not have to put on his glasses to read.

That afternoon the Declaration of Independence was read aloud on the streets of Phillelphia.

How Jefferson felt about this document, is unknown. He did not write anything down. In in note book for that date, July 4th 1775 was a notation to bring back 7 pairs of gloves to Monticello.

In 1775 the world had

1. Kings in Europe, England, France, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Italy,
2. Mighty Czarina Catherine II of Russia who ruler
3. Sultan in India,
4. A Mighty Sultan in Constantinople, now Turkey
5. In Japan, Slogan of Japan, a mighty ruler.
6. In China, Emperor.

In Congress, July 4th 1776, Philadelphia

*The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America, When in the course of Human Events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s GOD entitled them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.*

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*

After this magnificent document was read, the men all 56 of them put a clause at the end of the Declaration stating,

We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.

*“I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the GREAT ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL. It ought to be commemorated, as the Day of Deliverance by solemn Acts of Devotion to GOD ALMIGHTY. It ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires, and Illuminations from one end of the Continent to the other from this time forward forever more.”* John Adams

Twilight Years

The invention.

Did not dwell in the past, but dream of the future.

1. Author of the Declaration of Independence
2. Statues of Religious Freedom
3. Father of the University of Virginia.

This invention this government that these 56 delegates put together has lasted for 249 years.

When the Founding fathers signed the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia, 249 years ago they did not know what the future would hold. Or what kind of legacy they would have.

Would they win the war against Great Britain, the large super power of the time? Remember, England was an Empire. I do not think they really knew had no idea they had laid the cornerstone for one of the most unique and innovative countries the world has ever seen. They did not know whether they could hold the colonies together. As our founding fathers each look to the future and each one signed anyway because like Jefferson they all looked towards the future, not the past.

And look at our country today, Industrialization, space flights moon landings and great American doctors. And soon we shall put an American man on Mars. And this optimism Jefferson had this was the spark of liberty they lit spreading across our globe. D

The Burning & Bombardment of the

Borough of Norfolk, Virginia

In 1774 and 1775 War clouds were gathering. Tensions were rising. In every newspaper Virginian Gazette, Norfolk Gazette you found individuals shop owners, farmers, selling out. Many individual who were wealthy were getting out of Norfolk. Getting out of DODGE. Loyalist & patriots knew something was going to break. War was coming to the colony of Virginia.

In the Virginia-Gazette we read how many posted articles that read, “I Intend to Leave the Colony of Virginia. Signed their names. In the Virginian-Gazette, it was nothing to see 10 prominate indivuals leaving the colony.

By the middle of the 18th century, the Elizabeth River waterfront had developed into a network of rope walks, saw mills, warehouses, and blacksmith and carpentry shops. The local maritime industry by then was so sophisticated that it boasted several navigation instrument repair shops and an apothecary shops where various mixtures of ships paint could be found. Taverns and Inns provided British officers and their crew hearty meals and overnight accommodations line Main Street here in Norfolk leading to the Elizabeth River.

In 1775 Norfolk had a population about 6,250 making us the most populous and prosperous community in Virginia. We were the six largest city in the British North Atlantic. The Borough of Norfolk was the largest coastal city between New York and Charleston, South Carolina. Norfolk was a key port in the colonial mercantile system that powered the British Government. Many Scotsmen had businesses in Norfolk and many Scotsmen did not like the British aristoscocy of England. Remember, they had no say in the government of Scotland, their native home.

Soon the conflict escalated between Britain and Virginia Patriot leaders. It was quite clear that whoever held Norfolk and its adjacent waterways would enjoy an advantage in controlling the shipping lanes between Virginia and North Carolina as well as the Chesapeake Bay. One could ship lots of gun-powder and rifles, etc. These shipping lanes were the vital arterials of the 18th century. Today, our highways would be the main arteries.

Tensions were rising especially on December 9th 1775 when Dunmore lost his first battle. At Great Bridge Dunmore had ordered a fort, Ft. Murry) to be built to govern the waterway.

The group of regular farmers of Great Bridge, freedom loving people banded together on that small logged bridge and took out his army at Fort Murry. Captain Forcyte, a nobleman and a kinsman to Dunmore was taken out within 15 minutes. He was shot 14 times. His bullet proof body lay on that Bridge so all could see how a band of farmers took out this captain, a lobster-back. After the battle of Great Bridge was over one could find hundreds of hair combs laying on the Bridge from the British soldiers, some had their wigs on that day. How could a bunch of farmers defeat the British, the greatest army in the world? General William Woodford winning this battle was a blow to Dunmore that bruised his ego badly. Soon, more Dunmore’s proclamations were sent out and the more folks that read them, the more people hated hm. The respect Dunmore had when he first arrived in Virginia was now gone.

What caused this bombardment of Norfolk?

Before the bombardment of Norfolk our Printing press was taken out of Mr. Holt’s shop (Norfolk Gazette) and throwned into the Elizabeth River. Lord Dunmore did not like the articles that Holt was printing. This too made Norfolk folks angry. The British thugs of Lord Dunmore did his dirty work for him.

Dunmore tried to buy supplies in Norfolk for his crew and no one wanted his trade nor his money. He needed food supplies badly. And he was tired of being harassed by Patriot forces. Tempers started to flair and Dunmore did not want to hear any more BAD NEWS. He swore that if anyone came aboard his ship with BAD NEWS of the patriots they would be hanged.

On January 1, 1776 was a peaceful morning. The day was cold, middle of winter. It was a Monday. People were going about their daily routine here in Norfolk.

Around 3 PM without any warning Dunmore issued his orders to bombard Norfolk and the thunder of cannon was heard throughout Norfolk and lasted until 10 PM without intermission. Under their guns the British landed and set fire to the town in several places. The houses near the waterfront made chiefly of wood took fire immediately, before long the town along the ashore line was engulfed in fire.

Dunmore and his loyalist felt like if they bombarded the town all he patriots and families would move out and they could move in for provisions. This did not happened.

During the bombardment with dirt, dust in the air women and children were trying to escape through the narrow alley ways seeking safety anywhere. Panic screaming were everywhere.

Women were seen running holding their children close to their breast. It was total chaos. According to statistics no men was killed. However, one black slave was seen fleeing when a cannon ball struck her down. The only exit in town was going North (Church Street) towards what is now Brambleton Avenue. Some were able to seek shelter in barns and homes in Norfolk County and Princess Anne County. The boundary line between Borough of Norfolk and Norfolk County was this Borough Church later St. Paul’s Episcopal Church.

While the bombardment was going on, patriots discovered supplies of abandoned alcohol and encouraged other Patriots to indulge themselves. Many witnesses saw patriots at the river bank setting fire to wooden houses and due to a strong winter’s wind help to spread the fire. Norfolk with its wooden houses went up like a tender box’s.

However, we cannot forget the man, a loyal patriot who stood up against the British fiery furnace that day. His name was Cornstalk, a brave patriot, who has fallen through the cracks of time. Cornstalk, was a back woodman, a man with his long rifle. He had lived with the Shawnee tribe. His wife was an Indian maiden of the Shawnee tribe. He took his position at the shore-line near the burning rubbish and trees. He was a Sharpshooters like no other sharpshooters in town.

He stood proud in taking out every redcoat that appeared on the poop deck of Dunmore’s ship. Everytime a lobster-back popped up on deck, he was a dead man. Cornstalk was a celebrated superior marksman’s. As one local man once said, “Those lobster-backs did not know what hit them. Cornstalk took pride in hearing the grown of the lobster-backs tumble down on the deck with a loud thump. Dead on command. No one ever reveiled his name and he himself has been lost to History.

After the bombardment and the fires were out Norfolk was smolding, charred ash, the fiery blaze had done its duty. It left its mark.

Within a few days after the fire was completely out, shop owners and residents came home to see the damage.

On February 6th the Virginia Committee of Safety order the rest of the town of Norfolk to be set on fire. Burning the remaining homes and buildings would prevent Norfolk from falling into the hands of the British.

The British had attempted and partially accomplished burning of Norfolk. Over 1,333 houses had been reduced to rubble and ash. Total lost was $1,300,000.00. And 6 thousand residences had been made homeless in cold midwinter.

Many residences left the area and to live with family and friends in Princess Anne and Norfolk counties taking up with many residences. Many slept in Barns and worked as farm laborers for folks that took them in.

After this scorching nothing was left of poor Norfolk. She was charged with only dark, black chimneys standing. If you have seen pictures of the devastating fire in L.A. you can see and imanage what Norfolk looked life after her destruction by fire.

120 years later, Norfolk Virginian newspaper on September 10th 1896 reported that the lots near the Ward’s farm, called Villa Heights would be sold. However, in the area were two very large homes, standings houses, very weather-Beaton and falling into decay. They were said to be the oldest building in our area and offered shelter to many Norfolk refuges during the British bombardment.

In 1782 after the Peace Treaty was signed, Treaty of Paris Norfolk’s people began to rebuild. It was slow progress.

One of the first individuals to do so was a man named William Goodchild. After the bombardment of Norfolk one could see old Goodchild shifting through the debree of his old house. His hand were a black as soot. He had a large stick probing the floors until he had found his buried chest of Spanish gold coins. He would later be the first to build a fine house on the corner of Main Street and Metcalf’s Lane. He bought a lot on Main St. Running along Talbot St. The cost, $255.00 later this house would serve as Inn and a restaurant in the 1790s.

Many residents of Norfolk had buried their money under the floors of their homes and in the chimeys. But there were many Norfolkians that could not find their lost treasures after the fire.

Fairchild had come from St. Croix in 1772 after a devastating hurricane that left him with nothing. The hurricane was written up in the newspapers here in America by Alexander Hamilton who published the devastating hurricane which brought him to America. Mr. Fairchild lost everything and he rebuilt his life all over again here in Norfolk until he being a loyal subject was burned out by Lord Dunmore. Fairchild became a patriot that day. He is one of a few people that left a written account of their life.

In 1829, Mrs. Helen Calvert Maxwell Read sat down with her youngest son William Maxwell and her daughter-in-law and she recalled the years of the American Revolution here in Norfolk, Virginia. She was part of the Burning of Norfolk. She saw it! Her memory was astonishing, she gave an acrarate account the fine details of her life and what had happened on that cold day in January 1776. Here is her story.

Helen Calvert was born here in Norfolk, Virginia 1750. Her father and a few relatives were in the shipping business and the family made money. Her father was Maximillian Calvert who was Mayor of Norfolk two terms, (1765 &1769).

Cornelius Calvert was her grandfather who served two terms as Mayor of Norfolk (1768, & 1778). He was from Lancaster, England. He too was in shipping,

Helen Read in her Biography talks about herself and being married to Captain James Maxwell, (1733-1795) here in Norfolk in 1767 and soon she and Mr. Maxwell settle down to marital bless and raise a family when the Burning and Bombardment occurred here in Norfolk.

She witness the fleet of Dunmore ships lining up at Norfolk’s Harbor. Her husband being a ship Captain was on good speaking terms with the British. Many midshipmen were invited to their table to have dinner and many of the officers visited their house. One in particular she remember was a Mr. Lane, sailing master of Lord Dunmore’s ship and another man named Mr. Calder. As she said, we became very close to Mr. Calder and one evening when tension were getting high here in the Borough, I asked him if Lord Dunmore might bombard us. He quickly replied, “No madam, he did not think that would ever happened, there is no danger at the present. However, if he does, I will tell you. A few days later, he stopped by to see Capt. & Mrs. Maxwell and told them that Bombardment was in sight and for us to leave.

She quickly got the trunks ready and started packing their papers and valuables and sent everything over by a small boat to the home Herbertsville, now Berkley. Maximillian Herbert was a distinquest man who also made his fortune in shipping and his private shipyard. Maximillian put them up in a very fine rooms. The house was called, Riveredge plantation. In 1837, Maximillian Herbert dies and the estate was sold to the Hardy family. This was the home of General Douglas MacArthur mother, named, Pinky. The old house was torned down in the 1950’s and today there is a wall & park marks the spot of the old house, dedicated to Gen. MacArthur’s mother.

Helen writes, my husband James and I were safe at the Herbert’s home and we saw Dunmore’s fleet of ships get in position and fire on our fair city. I heard the drum beating on board the ships and witness the first fire at our beloved Borough. The time was 3 PM. The noise of cannon was horrible to my ears.

In the midst of the bombardment of Norfolk we saw a small boat rowed by a single man with another person in it. Trying to row toward us at the point. The enemy saw this too thinking it was our Mayor of Norfolk trying to escape. But who was this person, it turnout to be our faithful servant Sarah who was leaving the house for safety and inside her boar were her pet pigs, all six of them. As Helen Maxwell said in her manuscrip, Sarah was saving her Bacon.

The British captain saw the mistake he had made, learned that Sarah was the property of Mr. Maxwell and ordered the man rowing the boat to take the prize pigs for himself once at the point. Seeing this and witnesses this the Herbert family went back to the house and had their guns and rifles ready in case there house would be shelled.

After seeing all this, I realized I need to leave and I quickly took my daughter in my arms, son by the hand and we walked swiftly to another Herbert’s home (a sister of Maximillian)) whose house a mile away. The night was coming on and as the rore of the cannons was so dreadful to my ears. I got to the main gate of the Herbert’s House and an old Negro man named Jack, said, “Mistress where are you going? I replied to Mrs. Herbert house. He immediately said, your never fine the way. I shall take you. Let me get the horse. In the meantime traveling the main road I was met by my mother and Brother Jonathon in a small gig who were also flying to get to Mrs. Herbert’s house too. My Mother said, “The British are planning on torching ever home on the shore line.” Just than my husband Mr. Maxwell showed up and had made peace with the Barge Man. He assured the Herbert’s and my family that their house was safe and the British had enough problems within the borough of Norfolk than worry about torching everyone’s house on the shore line. So we all including Jack went back to the main house of Maximillian Herbert.

The next morning we had a fine barge with bag and baggage and my children and I was taken to Billy White place in Kempsville. Once I got there, to my surprised I saw my sister and her children there, who also had been fleeing the bombardment of Norfolk. His house was the largest and best in the Kempsville Village. Later his house would become a well-known tavern in the area.

As we were heading out to Kempsville, we ran into Lord Dunmore ahead of his grenadiers and a large company of refugees When the local militia saw this with their fancy red coats, drums beating the flags all flying, they got scared and ran away. Lord Dunmore had entered the town of Kempsville in triumph. He stayed at the home of Mrs. Logan and the house is still standing. It is called Pleasant Hall. Once the home of Dr. Whitehead and today belongs to a Baptist Church. This is where Dunmore made his headquarters.

Once we got to Mr. White’s place an ugly Negro man dressed up in full British military attired, regiments and armed with a gun came in upon us. He asked us, “Have you got any Dirty Shirts here? This is the name our patriots were known as.

My sister and I were worried that this wicket man would reappeared. So I stuffed my gold coins into my dress and other places on my body. We quickly went over the Pleasant Hall and found the house to be illuminated. Mrs. Logan was very kind and invited me in and she presented to me Lord Dunmore who was very at ease. I told him of my being frightened by this Negro all dressed up in the attired of a British regiment officer. Lord Dunmore, assured no harm would come to me. He escorted me to Mr. White’s house. Lord Dunmore was very pleasant that night. Before we parted, he told me that he wanted to see my husband. Than he made a small gentlemanly bow.

After my sister and I had settled into our two conforable room, a servant girl came up and told me of a strange man that wanted to speak to me. He is in the garden downstairs. I could not imanage who this man could be. It was my beloved Mr. Maxwell my husband. I told him about everything that has occurred that today including the Dirty Shirts.

Maxwell and I settled into bed when within 3 hours we heard some noise. I looked out the window and saw two tall grenadiers men armed cap-a pie, entered our bedroom coming toward our bed. Maxwell was up in a flash and demanded the men leave our bedroom. Maxwell demanded to know what right have you to barge into our bed chambers like this. In a flash Maxwell was wounded by the soldier’s sword cutting his shirt and making a small wound on his chest. The noise woke up everyone in the house including all the refugees who had fled Norfolk for safety. These two rascals went fled out the window real fast.

My husband had to leave on Business and left me there alone. I did not see him for a few days. However, after about a week, Mr. Maxwell was here with me. On his shirt was a large red cloth on his chest. I asked what this was. He replied, a loyalist sign so they will think we are loyalists. Helen replied, has it all come to this? I rather had seen you dead than to see you with the red cloth on your chest. “

Maxwell said, “This has not changed my mind. Dunmore is doing this to all of us. I am doing this to save our property. Many loyal patriots are disguising themselves as loyalist by wearing the red cloth.

Shortly afterwards, my husband told me that Mr. White and his family and others were planning on going to North Carolina to avoid the occupation of Red Coats. Helen, said, “Just take us somewhere so I will not have to hear those canons day in and day out.

So Maxwell had gone ahead, make arrangements lodgings at of a place with Squire Evrigan, Pasquotank County, North Carolina. He was a very fine man, a true Quaker in the congregation there.

**In the meantime Helen Reed memoirs she stats remembering other facts too of the Revolution.**

In the meantime, Lord Dunmore was elated over his small victory at Kempsville. Now, he was going to focas his attention to the sleepy village of Great Bridge at the breastworks, Fort Murry. He ordered Captain Fordyce to lead the men on the attact. Fordyce saw through this folly and rashness of this order. But he did not flinch from any duty. Fordyce was a good man, soldier. He was not a handsome man, but very genteel. He had been friends with my husband and he loved good music. He gave his watch to his friend and a message for his wife for he knew he was going to his death.

Before the battle of Great Bridge, Gen Woodford arrived on the scene he sent a Negro boy to Dunmore telling him they the army was without any ammunition and powder and the army had to melt down their shoe buckles for shot. This story made Lord Dunmore more confident. He believe it.

But Lord Dunmore enthusiasm did not last long after the fall of Kempsville. He heard the news of the Patriots victory at Great Bridge, the defeat of his army.

However, in her memories, she tells her son about seeing the cart full of dead and dying soldiers on their way to Norfolk by orders of Dunmore. The wounded were crying from their carts for water, they were so thirsty. She and other women in the area got pitchers of water to quench their thirst.

One has to remember the Battle of Bunker Hill in Massachuttes, they did run out of power and lost the battle.

Mrs. Helen Maxwell now finds herself in New Kent County, Virginia for her husband is appointed by General George Washington to head up the shipyard on the Chickahominy River. She sees a lot when the British army comes down to see all little farms. The army is like a hurricane, she writes they sweep in taking everything, farm animals, clothes, and was even noted for stripping the folks down for their clothes. Lord Cornwallis was behind this. Even a Mr. Byrd of Byrd’s Tavern never forgot how his only pair of boots were taken off his feet.

And it was a surprise visit at her home in New Kent County that Gen. Lafayette stopped by for a visit. The year was June 1781 and Maxwell and I were told about the BIG battle that was going to be at Yorktown. And when the great general Lafayette made his 1824 triumphant Tour of the United States and while in Norfolk he stopped in to see Mrs. Helen Maxwell, now Mrs. Read.

After the great victory she and her family return to Norfolk. It was still a disaster. Only a few buildings had been built.

In 1783 two years after Yorktown brought the population slowly back to Norfolk. Norfolk had only 12 houses and many were boarding houses for sailors and other sea men.

No houses for rent, but William Plume stepped in and rented our family a small house near Fort Norfolk on land that had been confiscated from a British family.

But what happened in Portsmouth, Virginia, across from Norfolk. Who was incharged there? His name was Benedick Arnold.

Many of our brave souls who fought for freedom and separation were later cought by Benedick Arnold and with permission of Lord Dunmore subjected to the most horrible hardships.

One man in particular was Captain Thomas Nash who fought bravely against Dunmore’s forces at the Battle of Great Bridge. Nash was captured along with a few other fellow soldiers were confined to the old sugar house in Portsmouth and the cruelties and oppression was inflected by the British officers. The food was not fit for a pig, very course meals, these men were later removed from the old sugar house to Cornwallis prison ships in the York River. When these men were liberated from their floating dungeon after our victory at Yorktown on October 19th 1781, the site of these pathetic men, holler cheeks, skin and bones was a horrible sight. When Captain Nash made his appearance on deck the only remaining portion of his shirt was the ruffles on his wrist.

During the treaty of Paris, old Benjamin Franklin was there. He pushed for repremations for the good people of Norfolk. He wanted the British to pay their part. Why would Franklin do this?

April 10th 1756, Benjamin Franklin was in Norfolk and presented beautiful citation for he is now a Burgess by Mayor Richard Kelsick. He was awarded the honoree status as an honorary Burgess and made a citizen of Norfolk, A parade down Main Street is where he got to meet so May inhabitants.

The great fire of Quebec City occurred in January 1768, in a grocer’s shop. Over ¾ of the city burnt down during the harsh winter. And on August 1778 it was reported in our Virginian Gazette that 10 parishes in Virginia had sent money to help the poor desolate city dwellers of Canada. The Norfolk Borough church, now St. Paul’s church sent 28 pounds.

Today, that 28 pounds is equal $3,626.36.

**St. Paul’s Pounds, 3,355 damage.**

Seven years later January 1776, Norfolk citizens were bombarded in midwinter, January and no one remembered us.

How many cannonballs have been found in Norfolk? We know about the one that is embedded in the wall, but how about the others?

On April 7th 1913 a Thomas Bell of Norfolk found one digging in his yard. Instead of preserving the ball here in Norfolk, he sends this to William Gibbs McAdoo 1863-1941) Secretary of the Treasury to be given to President Woodrow Wilson, as a cannonball paper weight. No one knows where the ball today. A British Relic, 4 pounds rolling around somewhere in America.

The third ball found was uncovered on April 5th 1962 near Main St. & Nebraska Street. Director of Public Works, a Carlisle Morrissett was in the newspaper with this ball and I am told that is rest within the MacArthur Memorial.

**1790 Norfolk’s population was listed as 2, 959 people, but the finale conflagration by the British, no community suffered more in America than the people of Norfolk during the American revolution than Norfolk. With its buildings in ashes, its people scattered far and wide and many in died in poverty.**

Norfolk, like the old phoenix in Greek mythology regenerated its self from the old ashes and 249 years later we have become a NEW modern city, a welcoming city, a city we all know and love, my home, your home, a place called, Norfolk, Virginia.

Afong Moy

First Chinese Lady here in Norfolk, Virginia

May 22, 1835

The Borough of Norfolk residents woke up to an interesting newspaper article here in Norfolk, Virginia. The year was May 1835 and the Borough of Norfolk had its first Chinese woman to visit. This beautiful young Chinese lady had a successful career on stage of New York City, displaying her culture and traditions of the old country called, China. Miss Moy exhibited her language, Chinese characters, expensive silks, clothing, incense in the air, and especially her 4-inch little feet, a result of foot binding. The Norfolk residents were captivated, thrilled to see this little woman displaying her culture. She is believed to be the first known female Chinese immigrant to visit and tour the United States. She was a curiosity here in Norfolk like everywhere in the United States. She was a traveling sensation throughout our country. Citizens were amazed at her attire and her exquisite manners.

Afong Moy came from Canton City, China, now knows as Guangzhou. She was reported to be the daughter of a distinguished citizen, parents being on a higher social economic status. Her father lived in the affluent suburbs of Canton.

It is not known how Moy was able to leave China and find her way to the United States. Her journey is widely attributed to two men, American merchants, Nathaniel & Frederic Carne. The Carne brothers worked closely with Captain B. T. Obear in staring up a business of Chinese goods in New York. To advertise and elevate their business the Carne brothers exhibited a Chinese Woman with all her traditional clothes and furnishings in marking their business a successful venture. This beautiful Chinses lady, Miss Moy would get westerners to develop a fascination for Chinese goods.

When she arrived in New York, Afong Moy was identified by local newspapers as, “Julia Foochee ching-chang king” the daughter of “Hong wang-tzee-king. Miss Ching-Chang-foo, Miss Keo-O-Kwang King” and other different spellings. This was probably due to let Americans know how to pronounce her name. Upon arriving in the United States, Afong Moy could not speak English, but communicate through her interpreter, a Chinese man named Atung or Acong.

On November 6, 1834, Moy gave her first performance at the Exhibition Hall at Number 8, Park Place New York. She was a sensation and more advertisements spread throughout the newspapers of New York and other capital cities throughout the East coast. She was described as 19 years old, 4 feet 10 inches tall, and dressed in her national costume and her feet were just four inches in length. Her wardrobe was elaborate and expensive. Her colors, especially baby blue silk were beautiful with superb Chinese gold embroidery along with her beautiful lace.

The cost to see Miss Moy was only 50 cents, children were 25 cents. She was viewed from 10 AM to 2 PM and from 5 PM to 9 PM. She sat on a small throne with all her rich Chinese silks, incense, and decorative objects of her homeland all around her. On stage she would show people her Chinese social practices, singing triditional songs, and using chopsticks to eat. The best part of her show was when she walked across the small stage. She was such a sensation! Miss Moy would later appeared at the American Museum, Peal’s Museum and Brooklyn Institute.

As her exhibition gained much fame, she embarked on a trip across the United States, visiting various major cities like, New Haven, Connecticut, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Maryland, Richmond and Norfolk Virginia, Charleston, South Carolina, and New Orleans, Louisiana. When she was in Washington, she met President Andrew Jackson, the 7th President of the United States. He was quite impressed with this young lady. And in New York, the famous lithograph firm published a beautiful lithograph of her titled, The Chinses lady.”

In 1836 the Evening Post of Washington, D. C. stated that Miss Moy had visited every town in the United States. In 1836 we only had 25 states. She had returned to New York to say farewell before returning to her native China. The Pittsburgh Gazette said she intended to return to China. However, something happened. She reappeared in New York I 1837 to a much loved audience. However, in April 1838 rumors were spreading that she was in financial difficulties. She ended up in a New York’s poor house until some of her American friends came to her aid and she returned to the New York’s Exhibition Hall where she had started her career. In 1847 she was back in the public’s eye doing shows. She also picked up the English language and by 1849 and 1850 she was doing her shows under a new name, Afong Moy Nanchoy. This new name could have been her husband’s name.

Moy last public appearance was in April 1850 in New York City Hotel. Rumors had it that she had gone back to her native China. Another rumor stated she was traveling doing shows in Europe.

It’s sad, the records of her life end here. What happened to Moy, we do not know. However, we do know Afong Moy made a big difference in the United States and here in the Borough of Norfolk. She presented a fantastic show, displaying her rich heritage of China. Her performance was pure, and she captivated the audience. Her manners, wardrobe, and her exquisite voice made her a sensation wherever she went.

Like so many stage performers, she has fallen to the cracks of time. Miss Moy might not have spoken English very well, but she was the first Chinese Lady to come to the United States and the first Chinese Lady to visit Norfolk, Virginia in the spring of May 1835. She has gone down into history as a beautiful, gifted, exquisite performer who captivated her audiences so long ago.

January 1, 2025

Ms. Emilie M. Hauser

8019 E. Glen Road

Norfolk, VA 23505

Dear Emilie:

Thank you for the wonderful gifts that you generously gave to the Wallace History room a few weeks ago. Your wonderful “photographs” of your church, Trinity Lutheran has already been filed under Photographs, Norfolk, Virginia, and Churches. They are safe and secure and will remain part of our Wallace room collection for many years to come. Someday in the future, a historian will be so appreciative to you Emilie for preserving your church history.

As a historian, all I can say is, “THANK YOU! Emilie, these are GREAT Photographs and a wonderful history of your church.” Looking over your church photographs your 100th Anniversary of Trinity Lutheran Church is a great achievement. Unfortunately, not many churches achieve this type of anniversary; which is very sad.

Emilie, “Its individuals like you that make a library what we are today.” Small items like your photographs goes a long way in building our history room. Our history room grows with such fine gifts. For over 60 years people like you have been donating so many special items, diaries, maps, and photographs. And each item and picture is special and tells a rich story, a story like yours of the growth of Trinity Lutheran Church of Norfolk, Virginia.

Thank you Emilie for depositing your photographs in our Wallace Memorial History room. They will live on in our Wallace room archives.

Our very best to you,

Robert B. Hitchings, *Archivist/Historian,*

*President of the N.C.H.S.*

Wallace Memorial History Room

Chesapeake Central Library

Chesapeake, VA 23322

Season’s Greetings to You All.

Christmas is here and the customs of writing Christmas cards is a wonderful tradition. It is a sure way to keep connected and stay in touch with family and friends.

We have had a very good year. All of the Hitchings clan of Norfolk have had good health and we keep busy. I am still working as a part time archivist and historian for Chesapeake’s Wallace Memorial History room. Many patrons ask, “Robert, when do you plan to retire? I say, at 98. He, He, He.” I love what I do and it keeps the old brain engaged and active.

This July, I received a phone call from the diocese of the Catholic Church. They are doing a history of the Catholics in Norfolk and someone back in the year 1907 stated the early Catholics were here in Norfolk in 1687. But, the indivuals did not divulged where the information came from. The next day, I found what the diocese needed in the original old manuscripts of the Chesapeake Circuit Court. The Dioceses and the bishop could not believe this. I have to admit, the good thing I had a magnifier to decipher the old English language. But I did it! This was a challenged, but I found it. The old brain of 75 is doing great.

Cef is always busy in her garden and her church. Each fall she enjoys planting her yellow pansies for the fall and winter giving the yard a little ray of sunshine during the winter months.

Patrick is my oldest son, and his wife bought a house just 7 houses away. It’s wonderful to have someone in the family close by as we get older. At times, I feel like my house is a grocery store for our grandchildren are always over. It’s nothing to get a call from Sarah my daughter-in-law asking if we had an extra stick of butter or a few eggs. Our grandchildren are, Ace, age 8, Scout, age 5 and little Birdy who is just 3. They are all students of Norfolk Christian School that is only about a block away. Yesterday, we were invited to see their beautiful Christmas pageant which was fantastic. Like all private schools the tuition is always increasing. But they are getting a fine education.

My son Paul who lives in Franklin, Virginia is doing well. He works from home as second in charge of IT for the city of Virginia Beach. My daughter-in-law Marina is second in charge of Accounting in the city of Franklin. Every Christmas she cooks up special goodies (sweets) and Paul’s brings over the meat especially duck for our Christmas dinner. All is good with the Hitchings clan of Norfolk, Virginia.

As every year we wish you and the Hitchings clan of Colorado the best of this wonderful Christmas Season.

Robert & Ceferina

The Old Drummond Hotel in the Great Dismal Swamp

There is in our vicinity of our city of Norfolk about 22 miles a place that is known as the great Dismal Swamp, Lake Drummond. The waters are quiet and still. The lake is in the interior. Mr. William Wirt (author of the first Bio of Patrick Henry) called this, The Great Dismal Swamp. Inside the swamp one will find in the forest, juniper and cypress trees with its luxurious branches interwoven throughout the forest. Below one sees grape vines, mosses and Virginia creepers everywhere. In the air one smells fragrances of jessamine, laurel and the wild roses.

For centuries this Dismal Swamp has capture the imagination of thousands of people. One man in particular was the poet, Thomas Moore, who wrote the ballad, *The Lake of the Dismal Swamp* in 1803. Moore spend many months residing near the Dismal Swamp, a guest of the Happer family of Norfolk County, now the city of Chesapeake, Virginia. This poem established the legend of the Lady of the Lake. The poem is based on local legends about an Indian maid who died before her marriage and is seen in a ghostly form in a white canoe on Lake Drummond. Her husband to be is reunited with her in death. This poem cought the imanagenation of many individuals in those days who wanted to venture into the unknown of the swamp.

*“They made her a grave, too cold and damp,*

*For a soul so warm and true,*

*And she’s gone to the Lake of the Dismal Swamp,*

*Where, all night long, by fire-fly lamp,*

*She paddles her white canoe.”*

On January 8, 1830, in the Norfolk & Portsmouth Herarld newspaper appeared an advertisement of the opening of a brand new hotel, called, the Lake Drummond Hotel. This was the second of its kind, situated on the Dismal Swamp Canal, halfway from Norfolk to Elizabeth City immediately on the North Carolina and Virginia line. The hotel was built that each wing sat half in Virginia and the other half in North Carolina. It was quite a popular resort, especially for young under-age lovers, not requiring consent of parents to get married. This hotel was truly a calling card for young people eagerly wanting to go over the border to be married. This was the Gretna Green of our area and it proved to be quite popular. This was a remarkable hotel, away from everything, a romantic background, more likely an enchanted cottage tucked away in an isolated swamp. A place tuck far away from everything for the young lovers. The marriage age was lower in North Carolina than Virginia. But we also had another cottage called, the Farange’s House. This too was also a popular rendezvous hotel for statesmen and older couples getting away from city life.

Farange House Hotel or Inn was the first to be built along the canel, and had entertainment in the swamp. A William Farance opened his establishment before 1818. In the Norfolk’s American Beacon and Commercial Diary, an article appeared stating that President James Monroe and some of his staff would be visiting this Inn. President Monroe was touring the country before he left office promoting American patriotism. In 1824 Gen Lafayette was also on his grand tour of America, but never stopped here at this inn.

During a stay at Drummond Hotel, many young lovers were full of excitement and many were married here by a Rev. Amalek C. Williams The sure pleasure of eloping was so romantic at the Drummond Hotel. And the Drummond Hotel became to many newlyweds an enchanted Cottage.

I have read that during the 1800s it was a lovers’ tradition to etch their inscriptions after marriage, beautifully on a glass window pane. Usually this was done with the engagement ring.

However, as was the custom of the day, I wonder how many young couples etched their names and marriage dates on these window panes. Unfortunately, we do not know if these etching ever took place here in the old Drummond Hotel, but we know it was a custom, a romantic gesture and was customary during this time frame.

Today, there are many old houses that are still standing in the South one can see this custom. One such house is Shirley Plantation near Williamsburg, Virginia. Today one can see and read the names of these young romantic couples who etched their love for each other on these small window panes. It was a lover’s tradition to etch their names on window panes, with their new adorned engagement ring.

The Lake Drummond Hotel, this noted hostelry was erected astride the Virginia-North Carolina border along the canal.

Amalek C. Williams’s minister was a household name in the area. He was always on hand to welcome new visitors and on hand to marry many couplers. And I am sure his sister and brother-in-law were on hand to be witnesses.

Williams was a minister and businessman. His father had been the proprietor of the long forgotten Queen Hotel in Elizabeth city, NC. His sister Eliza Williams had married Wilson G. Lamb who later became the proprietor of the Lake Drummond Hotel.

Lamb and Williams built a fine recommendation pledging himself to enforce the good order throughout the establishment. His advertisements in the local newspapers invited romantic couples to come to the hotel in one sole purpose, to be married. He also saw that the entertainment was the best of the day. Whether one traveled by stage coach or canal boat, one had prompt attention. Horses were attended too, with the upmost care.

Schedule of Rate at the Dismal Swamp Hotel, Dinner: $ .50, Supper or Breakfast. $37 1/2 cents, Lodging, $12 1/2, Board-by day, $1.00, Week, $4.50

By month, $18.00.

And many women traveled with a simple trunk holding her precious bridal trousseau, a tradition that dates back hundreds of years. Inside was her Bride’s clothes and maybe quilted sheets and possibly money.

And in September 1851 two men, Overton Matthews and his friend Mr. Davis were leaving in their buggy from the Lake Drummond Hotel when they were attacked by two African-Americans. One had a double-barrel shot-gun and the fire-arm went off wounding Mr. Matthews so severely, that the doctor at Lake Drummond Hotel thought he might have to amputate the leg. The Negros fled into the darkness of the Dismal Swamp.

In May 21st 1855, a fire raged with fearful violence in the Dismal Swamp, destroying lumber and standing tees. Sweeping almost everything in its path and leaving black and very gloomy regions of Dismal swamp. And when the wind blew towards Norfolk one could smell the awful odor of the brush fire leaving Norfolk with not only a bad odor, but a heavy smug like fog.

And it is a proven fact that many a duel took place near these two Hotels which brought considerable attention to the area by newspapers. And sometimes these duel’s involved the love for a certain woman. And we must not forget the highway men that hid out to rob men on horseback, or as some folks called it, a murderous gang.

The Lake Drummond Hotel and Farange’s House played a large part in early 19th century of our area. Its historical significance was being a favorite spot for weddings by young individuals in the lower part of Virginia. As we can see Lake Drummond Hotel advertised their establishment whereas Farange Hosue decline.

How strange that the owner and proprietor of the Lake Drummond Hotel, Mr. Isaiah Rogerson passed away within a month of opening his hotel, on Aug. 21, 1830.

What happened to these two robust hotels? Like all things, like people the two hotels had their own obituaries due to progress. They are a dim reminders, of two fine hotels or Inns, a story for part of our history. Gone are the days of young people eloping to a dismal safe place. Taste of people change and different fads come in and out with every generation.

The Dismal Swamp canal is no longer an artery of commercial water traffic. Most of the timber has been depleted and only a small part of the former Dismal Swamp area can be truly regarded as swamplands. And due to the invention of the automobile and new roads like route 17 these old Inns, hideaways are no longer needed.

The Dismal Swamp Hotel has fallen through the cracks of time. Once a beacon of light in the early 19th century to so many weary travelers, shrouded with marital bliss for many young lovers. Today, it is now just a memory of a mysterious allure of the Indian maiden whose ghostly imanage appeared within the Dismal Swamp so long ago.

Old World War II, Christmas Cards,

*I’ll be home for Christmas,*

*You can count on me,*

*Please have snow and mistletoe,*

*And presents under the tree!*

Last year, the Wallace Memorial History room received a packet of old WW II Christmas cards to add to our ever-growing archives. These unique Christmas cards were written to servicemen (soldiers) long ago who fought bravely, during World War II.

WWII ended in 1945, 80 years ago, but these Christmas cards represent their own time frame. These cards were sent to the servicemen serving his country in Europe and Asia, from loving parents and friends back home.

In 1943, Bing Crosby’s recorded a new song, *“I’ll Be Home for Christmas.” a* top hit that was originally written to honor the soldiers overseas who wished to be home for Christmas. Today, it’s an all-time classic. And yet many soldiers never saw a Christmas. They never made it home, they were either missing or killed in action far away from family and friends.

How many mothers, fathers and newly-wed brides would answer the knock at the front door around Christmas time and seeing two “somber manner military men” standing still like? These men were representatives of the military, usually an officer bringing a telegram or letter of bad news at Christmas. And how many families were told that their sons or fathers were missing in action or were dead?

These simple Christmas cards boosted the moral of the servicemen on both war fronts. Keeping up the moral of the soldier was so important in the war effort. Servicemen serving overseas were so appreciated of the mail especially at Christmas time. Receiving Christmas cards and maybe a tin-can of home-made cookies meant so much to the soldier. And we must not forget how sugar was rationed during WWII. But just keeping in touch with that soldier at Christmas time with a card meant so much!

This is a small exhibit to honor the men and women of the Arms Forces who fought bravely during the long battles of WW II. We see a lot of patriotism written in these old Christmas cards. Some cards are humorous and some are rather sad. But each Christmas card had a special loving message to the servicemen. And sometimes inside these Christmas cards were small snapshots of family and friends, sending Christmas greetings.

These old vintage Christmas cards are timeless, a reminder of a war fought so long ago, and to a group of men and women who served gallantly throughout World War II. As Tom Brokaw (b. 1940) said in his awarding winning 1998 book WWII, these gallant men & women have gone down in history as, “The Greatest Generation.”

Merry Christmas and a Joyous Happy New Year 2025,

Robert Burgess Hitchings, *Archivist/Historian*

Norfolk County Historical Society,

Wallace Memorial History Room

Central Library

Chesapeake, VA 23322

Lake Drummond’s Name

Behind every great name is a great story and Lake Drummond has a story to tell. Lake Drummond is an unusual name, it’s a Scottish name, named after an early settler of the colony of Virginia.

The somewhat famous rebellion in the History of Virginia, better known as “Bacon’s Rebellion” took place in the years 1675 & 1676. As a historian, one hundred years later 1776 we Virginians were fighting another rebellion with the mother country called, England. This time we won the rebellion and we become the free and independent country called, the United States of America. And it all started here in the state of Virginia.

Our Lake Drummond has a connection with Bacon’s Rebellion and no one seems to know. Lake Drummond is one of two natural lakes in Virginia. It’s not really clear why either lake was formed or persisted until today for so many lakes in Virginia have been drained by man and by erosion.

Lake Drummond sits in the middle of the Great Dismal Swamp is about 3 acre open body of water on our coastal plain, east of Suffolk and Chesapeake, Virginia. It’s a large body of water in the middle of the Dismal swamp.

William Drummond, (d.1667) patented this property and down through history this body of water has been known as Lake Drummond.

William Drummond was born in Scotland and was in the mercantile business along with his family. Tobacco was the cash crop of its day. He arrived in the colony of Virginia around 1630 and he married a woman named, Sarah. We do not know her maiden name, but she had several children. In the beginning he acquired at least 25 acres of land in James City County, Virginia and he would later became a large land holder.

Drummond served as Sheriff in James City County and bailiff of the Quarter Court, as well Sergeant at Arms of the General Assembly. He and former Governor, royal appointee, Sir William Berkley had a good relationship, but this would end in a contentious relationship. Drummond, also served as governor of Albemarle County in the province of Norfolk Carolina.

In 1672, Sir William Berkley contracted William Drummond to erect a fort at Jamestown during the Third Anglo-Dutch War, but he clashed with Governor Berkley. He was arrested twice for not completing the job. Drummond’s poor performance sealed Berkley’s dislike for this man named, Drummond.

Apparently, Drummond was a Hot Head. Sir William Berkley warned the General Assembly in June 1676, against the influence of William Drummond. When Bacon’s men burned Jamestown in the autumn, (Bacon’s Rebellion) Drummond set fire to his own house too.

When Nathaniel Bacon rebelled against the crown and royal governor, Drummond was a faithful follower. When sudden death of Nathaniel Bacon ended the Rebellion, (dysentery) Drummond refused to give up. He and his fellow rebels were captured in the Chickahominy swamp

Officers and men from the warship *Young Prince* captured Drummond and his friend Lawrence, hungry and cold. Five days later Drummond was presented to the Royal Governor, Sir William Berkley. The angry governor greeted him with respect and with a bow; along with a few sarcastic words, “Mr. Drummond, you are very welcome, I am more-glad to see you than any man in Virginia. Mr. Drummond, you shall be hang’d in half an hour.” Drummond was tried, convicted and hanged on January 20, 1677. Today, no one knows where Mr. William Drummond was buried.

Behind every great name is a great story, and Lake Drummond has a great story of a man who rebelled against Royal Authority, and was hanged in Bacon’s Rebellion.

Cheese in Virginia

Have you ever wondered how cheese was produced in early America? When did the cheese come to Jamestowne, Virginia?

One of the first discovers in Jamestown several years ago was when the archeologist came across a ceramic earthward knows as a Surry Hampshire Border ware. The archeologist quickly recognized this as a device in making cheese. This discovery raised many questions concerning when cows were introduced to the colony of Virginia.

This small ceramic vessel was known as a cheese strainer to produce cheese. The big problem solver was, “When were they used? What year? When were the first cows introduced to Jamestowne?” One also has to remember, cheese making requires fresh milk and without modern day refrigeration, milk could not survive the long Atlantic journey. Sir Thomas Dale and Sir Thomas Gates were responsible for bringing in cows and cattle into Virginia 1611. Could this cheese strainer be the year it was introduced to the farmers of Virginia? Also, what kind of cheese did the cows produce? We may never know this question. But, this simple artifact must have come over with the women at Jamestown. Women began to arrive to Jamestown as early as 1608. Thomas Gates traveled with his wife and family to Jamestown in 1611. As early as the 17th century England, women were responsible for cheese making, dairy products. Many were simply called, milkmaids.

We may never know what type of cheese was produced here in the colony of Jamestowne, but there is much evidence that cheeses were imported from England to the colony of Virginia in 17th century. The most popular was Cheddar and Double Gloucester cheese.

Today, Cheddar cheese is a popular cheese that so many love. The connoisseurs know and love this cheese. It’s the most popular cheese just behind Mozzarella.

Cheddar has a long history dating back to the 12th century in a community in Somerset, England. Its namesake Cheddar Village, is a small quaint little town with gorges and caves that many farmers would keep milk cool, and fresh in the hot summer days. The myth behind the birth of cheddar cheese is that a milkmaid forgot about a pail of milk in one of the caves. Later, when she returned, she found and discovered the milk had hardened into the perfect golden goodness that we love today. Before long the monarchs of England developed a taste for cheddar cheese. King Henry II purchased several pounds of cheddar in 1170. He is the King that declaired it to be the best cheese in all of England. His son, King John (Magna Carta fame) carried on the tradition by ordering large qualities of the cheddar cheese for all royal banquets. King Charles I, who lost his head in 1649 loved this cheddar cheese too, and had lots of cheese wheels (measurements in those days) storied in many of his palace basements. Merchants were buying large quality of cheese wheels at that time. Even in this country, cheese would be bought in round cheese boxes. Today, many antique lovers love to add these quaint boxes to their kitchen decorations. In those days, one did not buy a small piece of cheese in today’s supermarket stores, but one bought a whole wheel, sometimes in 12 and 14 inches diameter. Many times in the 19th century Norfolk, Virginia one could see merchants rolling pounds cheese in wheel bearers down Church and Main Streets.

Double Gloucester is another fine triditional English cheese made from Gloucester cow’s milk and a vegetarian rennet. It’s a hard cheese and has been produced since the 16th century by milkmaids of Gloucester. It has a distinctive orange color. Usually Double Gloucester is aged for around 4 -6 months.

Unfortunately, in the 1950s manufacture of triditional Gloucester cheeses died out when other cattle were brought into the area. Apparently due to new breeds of cows being introduced to the area and people’s taste changing over the time caused this to become a lost cheese. However, in 2004 there is a movement to bring back this delightful old cheese.

In the Virginia Gazette, dated July 3, 1746, page 4, an article appeared that all contents of the prize ship, *Providence* together with her guns, Rigging, Tackle furniture and all its cargo would be sold at the docks downtown Norfolk. And part of her cargo was delightful British cheese.

On November 15th 1770, page 3, the Virginian Gazette advertisement announce that the subscriber ( F. A. Doeber) at his store on Church Street, Borough of Norfolk had an assortment of items from India and Europe, to sell, among the assortment of items was Gloucester and Cheshire cheese.

In St. Paul’s Episcopal Churchyard cemetery, downtown Norfolk, is the grave of a John Lawrence, a native of Great Britain who departed his life on December 25th 1814 at the age of 80 years. He had been a merchant and on May 12, 1774 he advertised in the Virginia Gazette, a huge sale at his store; imported goods, rum, coffee, ginger, and bottle beer from Liverpool, linens, muscovite sugar and of course lots of cheese.

But one of the advertisements I read concerning cheese was an article published in the Virginian Gazette, dated December 8, 1775. Apparently on August 29th 1775, between 50 and 60 foot soldiers, had offered to go to America to fight. These men had been exercised in shooting at a pasteboard image in the shape of a man. The reward for their bravery in fighting against a helpless pasteboard statue, and any man that could shoot at a certain distance with a single ball received a quart of porter and two penny worth of bread and cheese. This was the reward from the British government in Boston for fighting the rebels.

Cheese making has come a long way since 1611.Today, the U.S cheese market is around 36 billion. In the grocery stores cheeses come in all shapes and sizes from all over the world. Cheese assortments are sold everywhere, so many varieties to choose from. And it all started here in 1611 with a simple cheese strainer at a place called, Jamestown, Virginia, just 414 years ago.

Bird Cages

A Joke, from the Virginian-Pilot newspaper, November 11, 1909. *“He called his jug of Whisky a Birdcage, because it had many swallows in it.”*

He, He, He.

Last month, I was in a thrift shop waiting for my car’s inspection. I walked over from Casper Auto Works to the Thrift Shop. In one of the display rooms I happened to see a quaint, wooden, small Birdcage, very clean and unusual. The price had been marked down to $2.50. I quickly snatched this precious gem up. At home my wife immediallly fell in love with the birdcage.

Birdcages have been around since ancient times, especially in Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome, India and China. During this time rare birds were often kept, especially for religious reasons. But in Europe birdcages were a sign of wealth for the aristocracy. Many birds were kept for their beautiful plumage and singing ability. However, it would be the canary bird that was often the favorite with its beautiful, bright, yellow, orange, plumage and singing ability.

My neighbors, The Barrett’s had a blue parakeet that seem to have the roam of the house. At night he was tucked away in his birdcage with a cover so he could sleep. This was in the 1950s. And that bird always landed on my head as I entered their living room.

As I stared in amazement at this wooden, well-crafted birdcage, memories started coming back of favorite birds that were caged by Norfolk’s wealthy. My grandmother, Elizabeth Knight Hitchings 1878-1967 told me that many wealthy individuals on Granby and Freemason Streets had many bird cages in their back yards. One bird that was most popular and caged was the Virginia Mocking Bird with its lovely singing. Everyone love to sit back and listen to its beautiful chirping at night. Many a host and hostess took pride in their small summer parties with jack o’ lanterns and homemade lemonade, followed by homemade ice cream being cranked in a wooden bucket by the host. Sitting in a well-cut-kept yard talking and listening to the Mocking Bird sing in the distance made the summer months most enjoyable. I also remember grandma had in her Victrola cabinet, a record called, *Listen* *to the Mocking Bird* by Madam. Alma Gluck, a noted soprano from the Metropolitan Opera. And as a child I cannot forget the background music of the cartoons of Heckle and Jeckle cartoons. They were called magpies. Years later a Virginia law was passed that prohibited the caging of the Virginia Mocking Birds.

And one cannot forget the stories of Polly Parrots in cages, mocking the human voice. Grandma stated when she lived with her family on Church Street and later Marina Street her family has a pet bird called, Polly, a beautiful green parrot. Yes, Polly was a wonderful bird up until it accidently escape out of its cage. Months later, a policeman told Grandmother’s Father of a parrot that had been in the hands of the prisoner’s city jail on City Hall avenue. Yes, this was the pet Bird of the family and everyone was thrilled to have Polly back home. But Polly had been with prisoners in Norfolk’s city jail for a whole month. It was not too long when Polly quickly displayed her new vocabulary of words that shocked the family. Polly had quickly picked up many “four letter words” from her new prison mates. Yes, this was most embarrassing. As grandma would say, “These words would stop n eight day clock. Polly had to go!

In February 19, 1903, appeared a large article, in the Virginian-Pilot newspaper, with bold headlines, “A Real Vampire Is in Captivity Here.” A Norfolk man had purchased a bat from the island of Java in the East Indies. The bat was kept in a fancy birdcage, but needs no perch. This bat hung upside down. It’s the size of an ordinary rat the newspaper reported. Whoever this Norfolk citizen was, he wanted to remain anonymous. According to the reporter, this bat is not a pleasant thing to look at. It is ugly! Frankly speaking, after reading the article I think the audience and reporter had been reading too much of Bram Stoker’s novel, Dracula.

However, on July 5, 1904, the Virginian-Pilot carried an interesting article about the ever-growing business of saloons in our area. Around the early 1900’s Saloons represent the largest number of small enterprises in the United States. And each saloon has in the back room, a birdcage and a large round table where poker is played, not to mention the roulette table.

Over the years birdcages have been prized for their decorative appeal. In many countries, like China, so diverse the birdcage has been libelously, decorated for the bird. Beautifully made, these cages reflect the era they were made. In Hong-Cong there is a special street where the residents display their birds and their beautiful antique birdcages. This happens to be a favorite stop for tourist visiting the old section of Hong Kong.

The old Birdcages, charming, whimsical elegant, and soooooooo attractive, these birdcages represent an ancient art and a very contemporary preoccupation with our feathered friends. Looking at these old antique cages they can transform something so simply built into something so magical reflecting another era so long ago.

And this article on Birdcages all started when I purchased one simple wooden birdcage from the local thrift shop for $2.50.

The Hague Towers

I remember when The Hague Towers were being built. The Norfolk Redeveloping Housing Authority was in the process in the early 1960s of building high rise towers, around Norfolk. I saw The Hague Towers, Golden Triangle Hotel, Algonquin Towers, Kirn Library, Lafayette Towers, Pembroke Towers, and The Hague Towers all being built within a few years apart.

I was a student at Maury High school. My elective was always art and Mrs. Ethel Trice was my art teacher for all three years at Maury High School. She was w-o-n-d-e-r-f-u-l ! I have many fond memories of Mrs. Ethel Trice. Her husband and his family were into real-estate business in our area, better known as, W.H.H. Trice & Co.

In Mrs. Trice art class, we always had an art assignment, every month we were to visit an exhibit and write up a report (paintings, sculpture, etc.) of what we saw, and why we liked it. She was a fan of A. B. Jackson work, an African American who was a fabulous painter. Yes, I visited his exhibits in Portsmouth, Virginia

When the Hague Towers were completed, Samuel Nusbaum and the American Federation of Arts, decided to have a Pablo Picasso exhibit, not only to celebrate this extraordinary, gifted artist’s birthday, his 85th, but to bring in ordinary visitors to see this famous high-rise apartment building, state of the art building. This was a chance the public could view these new luxury apartments and its fantastic view of Norfolk’s harbor, plus to see this Picasso exhibit.

In October 1966, Mrs. Ethel Trice told the class about the new PICASSO exhibit at the new Hague Apartments. Our assignment was to visit the exhibit and to write up a report on a painting or ceramic objects. My father took me to this exhibit and I fell in love with Picasso. He had a pen and ink sketch called, “The Circus” and I reported on this sketch. What I liked about this sketch was one could only see a bunch of black lines, a jumble mess; but once you squint one’s eyes, once could see all the performers of the circus. It was beautiful, and well done. The pen and ink sketch was only $350.00. I wanted to buy, but like all teenagers, I only had a hundred dollars to my name. I kept wondering how I could raise the amount of money, but coming from working class family, $350.00 was a lot of money. I remember I got an A+ on my report. I do not know what other student reported on, but I remember this fantastic pen and ink sketch. Years later, with my aunt Mrs. William Portlock Butt, (1906-1999) I attended the Pablo Picasso Exhibit at the Chrysler Museum, and there in the center of the wall was my Pen & Ink sketch. Walter Chrysler, art connoisseur bought the sketch and presented this and other Picasso item from his personal collection to the Chrysler Museum of Art.

I remembered the first tenant was Mrs. Dorothy P. Brooks, (d. 1983) real-estate manager was to take over the third floor apartment. This apartment on Bramble ton Avenue overlooking The Hague and Elizabeth River, 20 stories apartment project is a development of the Columbia Reality Association of Washington, D.C. and Nussbaum’s firm, S. L, Nusbaum & Co. is the rental agent. The 4.5 million undertaking, built on land acquired from the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority completed in September 1965. The Standard Construction Co. of Washington D. C., was the general contractor. According to the Virginian-Pilot newspaper, December 12, 1963, *“2nd Apartment building to Rise High on the Hague.”*

However, in February 1970, The Hague Towers was bought by a New York firm, Fred Trump (1905-1999) real-estate developer for 4 million dollars. At the time Trump Associated also owned Pembroke Towers too, being purchased the same year. According the Virginia-Pilot newspaper of the time, Trump Associates owns about 17,000 apartment units on the East Coast.

In 1978, Sachs Investing Company of New York purchased The Hague Towers and Pembroke Towers, for 7.5 million from the Trump Associates,

The Hague Towers is still a wonderful place to live. It’s been sixty years and it’s still standing with a beautiful view of Norfolk’s waterfront. Life is so strange, if I had bought the Pen & Ink Sketch by Picasso in 1966, I could have retired early and benefited from my investment. Who knows, I might have been able to buy Hague Towers, He, He, He.

The Oldest Photograph of Downtown, Norfolk, Virginia.

July 12, 1931, an old photograph 1861, emerged from the effects of William R. Singleton,

(1818-1901) local architect for the old Court House, now the MacArthur Memorial. The photograph was quickly loaned out to the Virginian-Pilot newspaper by Singleton’s, grandson, Ogle R Singleton of Washington, D. C. This photograph is Bank Street at the corner of lower Main St in downtown Norfolk. It is the oldest photograph of Norfolk and rest in the archives of the Sargeant Memorial Room, Slover library. No one seems to know that this is the oldest known photograph of old Norfolk taken in 1861. It is sad the newspaper did not get the original photograph.

Who was the cameraman who took this photograph? The article does not tell us this, but I believe it was Jesse Whitehurst (1820-1875), a well-known photographer who was noted for his daguerreotypes. Whitehurst had branches, (Studios) in Norfolk, Richmond, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., New York, Lynchburg, and Washington, D. C. A native of Princess Anne County, Virginia, he was quite an entrepreneur of this new invention called, the camera. Mr. Whitehurst so well known for his daguerreotypes, he exhibited his photography skills at the Crystal Palace in London on May 1, 1851. Also on hand was another daguerreotypist of Virginia named William A. Pratt who was also at the Chrystal Palace, exhibiting his photographs? At the grand opening of this exhibit was Queen Victoria and her husband, Prince Albert.

Whitehurst studio was well-known on Main Street, probably where this photograph was taken. Whether this is a daguerreotype or ambrotype photograph one cannot tell. The owner kept the original. But we do know that Whitehurst ran advertisements in all of the leading newspapers in Virginia on his business, Whitehurst Gallery. By the 1850s the popularity of the daguerreotype led to fierce competition among operators.

In the foreground of this picture one can see cavalrymen, accompanied by foot soldiers on the sidewalks. It is presumed these are southern troops for Norfolk had not fallen into Union Hands until May 1862. As one can see, in front of the mansion is a body of water, called Back Creek which would later be filled in to make City Hall avenue. Today, it’s the intersection of Bank St. and City Hall Avenue.

**Imagine a world without photographs, I certainly cannot! Old rare photographs tell us a story, whether it’s of people, shaded street scenes, row houses, or quaint cobblestones streets with gigs; these old photographs tell the historian what was there in our city of Norfolk, Virginia so many years ago.**

**Norfolk County Historical Society**

**Wallace Memorial Room**

**298 Cedar Road, Chesapeake, VA. 23322**

**Books & Pamphlets received from James & Marilyn Melchor**

**July 26, 2024.**

1. *Report On the location of the Boundary line Along the Potomac River Between Virginia & Maryland,* by Edward Matthews and Wilbur A. Nelson.
2. *Abbyville, A complex of Archeological Sites in John H. Kerr Reservoir, Halifax Co., VA*. by John H. Wells
3. *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, May 1984, Vol. X, No. 1.
4. *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, May 1989, Vol. XV, No. 1.
5. *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts,* May 1986, Vol. XII, No. 1.
6. *The Chesopiean Magazine, A Journal of North American Archaeology*, Published Quarterly.
7. Spring 1986.
8. Fall 1992
9. Winter 1996
10. Winter, 1997, Nov. 2011.

September 6th 2024

**Mr. Dick Gresham**

**120 E. Severn Road**

**Norfolk, VA 23505**

Dear Dick Gresham:

Thank you Dick for these wonderful historical items of Norfolk’s rich history listed below. Our Wallace Room appreciates all these items.

Dick, its individual like yourself that preserves our past. It is also folks like you that help build a library, especially local history. And we thank you.

1. Newspaper, Virginian-Pilot, January 19, 1969, History of the old Talbot Manson, Talbot Hall. Janie Whitehurst.
2. Photographs:
3. Colley Avenue & Baldwin Ave. 1940.
4. Two Christmas Cards from Minton Talbot, no dates, before 1952.
5. Two pictures of the New DePaul Hospital 1951.
6. Early picture of Talbot Park section, 1950s.
7. Maps:
8. 1630 Map of Town of Norfolk, VA.
9. 1927 Map of Oak Grove Corporation.
10. 1940 Map of Riverpoint Corporation.

Sincerely,

Robert B. Hitchings, Archist/ Historian

NCHS of Chesapeake, VA.

July 8, 2024

Mr. James M. Dyer, Jr.

1865 Branch Wood Street

Norfolk, VA 23518

Dear Mr. James M Dyer, Jr.

Our friend, Nancy Kimsey came in to see me last week. She had a small donation for our Wallace History room that was given by you.

1. *The Tidewater Trail magazine, December 1937*
2. *Colonial Williamsburg, The First 25 Years, Dec. 31, 1951.*
3. *The Vigilant, August 1932. Official Souvenir Norfolk’s 250th Anniversary.*

Thank you Jim for your wonderful booklets.

Yours very truly,

Robert B. Hitchings, President NCHS

Archivist/Historian

July 15th 2024

Mr. John Lake

4652 Longleaf Place

Chesapeake, VA 23321

Dear John Lake:

What a delightful surprised in meeting you Sunday, July 14th. I am so pleased that Mrs. Kay Ziegler and I were able to meet and pick up the books that you wanted us to have. As an archivist and historian these book have found a great home. I have been wanting to have a set of these for a very long time. As I write this letter, the Daughters of the Colonist is donating to us, an old book called, *Burks Armory, 1939* and it is in great shape. This book will be added along with you in a nice section of English nobility. Thank you for this great donation.

1. *Royal Ancestry,* by Douglas Richardson, 1-5 Volumes.
2. *The Dictionary of Heraldry,* by Joseph Foster.
3. *The Dent, Atlas of British History* by Martin Gilbert.

John Lake, “Its individuals like yourself that make a library grow and make us who we are today. Small items, likes these books make a good history room. For over 60 years individuals like yourself have been donating special books, just like this to our Wallace Memorial History room. And each item and book has a special story.”

Thank you John Lake for thinking about our library. We here at the Wallace History Rooom, NCHS of Chesapeake, Virginia wish you the best as you began your move. Please, keep in touch.

Yours very truly,

Robert B. Hitchings, President, NCHS

Archivist/Historian

Past Local Druggist of Norfolk, Virginia

Many historians write about their own old family doctors, visiting the sick at home or doing their regular rounds at a local hospital facility. However, it’s sad no one ever thinks about the local druggist that kept the ordinary men and women well and alive in their community when very sick. And each citizen like myself had extraordinary stories to share. Unfortunately, these men and women do not get much recognition, or accolades. It is seldom they even get a simple thank you from the general community. These valuable and talented men were busy when Norfolk was visited by unusual diseases coming from ships that had visited lands of the Caribbean. Many of these skilled herbalists had their own Apothecary shops in the 17th & 18th centuries here in America. Some call themselves a chemist, druggist, or just plain Doc. It was the local druggist that kept the locals well.

Like many health care professions, the origins of pharmacy can be traced back thousands of years to Egypt. However, the earliest pharmaceutical text ever discovered dates back to the Mesopotamians in 2100 BC. Early civilizations and our early ancestors realized there were medicinal properties contained within our natural world. Even the Indians transformed leaves, seeds, bark and even insects into medicine to cure the sick. And how many times we heard the word, “Medicine Man.”

In colonial America apothecary shops were very popular and many owners practiced as a doctors. Records show that the local druggist made house calls to treat patients. They made and prescribed medicines, and they trained apprentices to follow them in their profession. And many worked with local doctors, barbers, and midwifes.

However, it would be the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy that would open up in 1821 training young students (men) to be a pharmacist.

One such man in Norfolk, Virginia, was Robert S. Bernard (1808-1855) who operated his shop on Main Street until he died in the Yellow Fever epidemic in September 1855. Bernard was called the local druggist and throughout decades he ran advertisements in the local newspapers of his business. Many locals would write to the local newspapers about being cured Robert Bernard. His drugs were known for their cures of cholera, diarrhea, summer complaint, and other sicknesses during the summer months. Mr. Bernard was certainly a household name in the city of Norfolk. It is believed that his father was Philip Bernard, a local doctor who migrated from Santo Domingo during the slave rebellion in 1795. 114 ships of French referees came ashore to Norfolk, Virginia and make their home here.

On February 15, 1832, he married Nancy Broughton (1816- 1855) the daughter of Thomas Broughton. Her father and brother were editors of the American Beacon, newspaper, better known as the Norfolk & Portsmouth Advertiser.

On September 4, 1846, Robert Bernard’s picture appeared in the American Beacon Newspaper, advertising his medical cures of, Cholera Morbus, Diarrhea, Summer Complaints, Colic, Cramps, and spasms.

During the Yellow Fever epidemic he was hard at work doing his best to save lives. But, like so many he and his wife died in September 1855.

The Richmond, Virginia newspaper reported that on August 24, 1855, Nancy Bernard, his wife was reported recovering from the fever, but she took a bad turn within a few days later. On September 11, 1855, Druggist Doc. Robert S. Bernard died at his post in trying to save so many. I believed he was buried on the large Broughton lot in Cedar Grove cemetery next to his wife and children. Druggist Bernard & family have no markers.

We also had another famous druggist who was very successful here in Norfolk. He was Manuel A. Santos, (1798 -1859) a citizen of the Borough of Norfolk and a native of Portugal. Here in Norfolk he was always referred to as Doc Santos. He married a Miss Mary Rogers (1803-1839) on January 5th 1826 and the security for the marriage bond was Nathan Colgate Whitehead, who later would become the President of the Farmers Bank. In 1825, he was advertising in the local newspaper his druggist shop on Main Street. And it was Dr. Whitehead, who was one of his faithful clients that supported him as a druggist. On August 5th, 1839 his wife Mary passed away leaving age 36 passed away leaving a small family. On June 1, 1841 we see Doc Santos marring an Eliza A. Kerman (1815-1893). After, Doc Santos passed away in 1859, his son Charles A. Santos (1828-1896) druggist carried on the family business up to the date he passed away in 1896. However, it was Charles A. Santos, and his aged father who worked tirelessly during the Yellow Fever epidemic, both nobly remained in the city dispensing medicines so badly needed from the house in which he passed away. This was according to his obituary.

Another druggist in our area was John R. Ludlow (1827-1896). He had a privilege life and was raised by his Uncle who was President of the local Bank. He turned his attention to politics in later life and was elected to 4 terms as Mayor of Norfolk. He was also Capt. Of the 6th Virginia Regiment CSA. He had married Maria Jamesson (1825-1890) daughter of Commodore William Jamesson (1791-1872) USN. They had no children.

On August 31, 1910 appeared in the newspaper of Norfolk, another well-known Druggist, a Mr. Jacob L. Strole, (1888-1967), president and owner of the Strole Drug Store on Charlotte & Granby streets, one of the largest and most progressive retail establishments of its kind here in Norfolk. A native of Page County, Virginia, he graduated (1901) from pharmacy at the University College of Medicine in Richmond, VA. He came to Norfolk in 1905 years ago and he and his was one of the first establishments that filled prescriptions day and night

Today, it’s more to the pharmacist than how his predecessors mixed ingredients together many years ago. It’s a seven year degree to be a pharmacist. When I was a mere boy, during the 1950s, I remember Grays Pharmacy like yesterday and old Doc. Duryea Gray (1893-1983), a local pharmacist here in Norfolk. He seem to take care of folks in Edgewater, Larchmont and others living around Kellem Avenue. Everyone seem to know old Doc. Gray, but he was not a physician, but everyone called him Doc. Gray. Many times old Doc Gray sat me down on his stool in his office and looked at my little cuts before prescribing some type of ointment. As a child, I remember looking around the store at all the large pictures, on the walls, scenes of doctors looking and taking care of their patients. I also remember the stand full of stuff animals he sold in his store. And one cannot forget the delicious ice cream cones at his counter. Doc. Gray was the local pharmist and everyone loved and trusted him.

I remembered when my grandmother Hitchings (1878-1967) came down with the grip. Today, we call this the flu. Old Doc Gray would go back into his office and fixed up some sort of concoction and within a few days Grandma was well.

I also remember when I was sick old Mr. Milton M. Greenberg (1905-1986) at 4801 Powhatan Avenue & 48th Street would make sure his bicycle delivery boy would deliver the medicines we needed. Mr. Greenburg, was always looking after his clientele at his business, Edgewater Drug Store, Inc. He was a big man, mistouch, large face, tannish, black frame glasses and a big cigar always in his mouth. His old store is gone now, and today sits a 7/11 store. Whether he was a druggist, I really donot know. Mr. Greenberg was a friendly man and he gave to me the nickname, Weed. When I would walk into his store, old Mr. Greenberg would call out, “Here comes weed, growing like a weed.” As a kid, I was tall for my age. In 1959, when the schools were closed due to integration. His store became the Greenberg Academy, an impromptu tutoring group for students.

As a boy, I remembered Masters Pharmacy on the corner of Princess Anne Road and Colley Avenue. However, next door was Peoples Drug Store, also a Pharmacy. I remember another pharmacy in our area called, Frazier Drug Store #2 on 3500 Colonial Avenue and 35th street. And many times when we could not have our prescriptions filed, Frazier’s was there. They would send a delivery boy on a bicycle to our house when prescriptions were needed.

Before I end this report on druggist of Norfolk, there is one woman that worked in the Food & Drug Administration, as a pharmacologist in Washington, D.C. Her name was Dr. Frances Kelsey (1914-2015) who stood up against the drug establishment in keeping (sleeping pills) Thalidomide out of the hands of American pregnant women. She withheld approval of this drug for she had heard of Birth defects occurring in Europe and Canada, not to mention parts of Africa. Druggist. She prevented America from having severe birth defects of missing arms and legs. President Kennedy recognized her performance in the workplace and she received the President Award for Distinquest Federal Civilian Service, the second woman to receive this honor in our country.

In 1972, the Pharmacy Postage Stamp was issued to commemorate the 120th anniversary of the American Pharmaceutical Association. It pictures a mortar and paste, bowl of Hygeia and 19th century medicine bottles. It’s a beautiful stamp.

Today, these druggist are a thing of the past. They have been part of our civilization since the dawn of time. Gone are the old apothecary shops of old. We pick up our own prescriptions today while shopping at convenient stores. Times have changed, the old local pharmacist that we all knew growing up, is a thing of the past now.

A Man Named, Capt. William Colley

1763-1837

How many people in our area of Norfolk travel up and down on Colley Avenue? Does anyone ever wonder why it is called Colley Avenue? It’s sad not many individuals ever pay any attend to street names or why they were given certain names? Capt. Colley had a fascinating history and unfortunately his history of his life has been lost to time. As I like to say, “His life has fallen through the cracks.”

The Colley family owned quite a bit of property in the Ghent area during the 1800s. The old Colley family farm house was once located at the corner of Dandruff and Pembroke Avenue. Today in it’s a beautiful apartment complex known as Pembroke Towers with a magnificent view of the waterfront.

For over 100 years this section of Norfolk was called, Atlantic City, named after the Atlantic Iron works & Dock Company located on Colley’s land. Former Governor of Virginia, Gilbert Carlton Walker (1833-1885) of New York owned the iron works and the property.

In 1899, old Colley‘s family home was the start of Norfolk Protestant Hospital before moving to Raleigh Avenue. This hospital would be renamed Norfolk General and in 1972 Sentara. Andre Mottu (1866-1929) real-estate broker in Norfolk bought the old Colley Farm House and used it as his home until he passed away in 1929.

Many members of the Colley family died during the 1855 Yellow Fever epidemic. This epidemic took away about a fourth of the population of Norfolk and Portsmouth, Virginia. The family and other members of the Colley Family were buried in the Colley family cemetery which today is where a parking lot for the Santera Hospital now stands. However, with urban development in the 1960s the Colley family graves were all removed and reinterred in Forrest Lawn cemetery along with their beautiful Victorian, oblist monument.

Captain William Colley, the patriarch of the family had a most interesting career. He was a farmer and had a small shipyard business with his son-in-law, Isaac Talbot (1790-1837) on his property. By trade he was a seaman or mariner and loved the open seas. He learned the ropes at seafaring at an early age, navigating a ship by the stars and instruments of his day. He was a Captain of his ship Jane which he built at his shipyard. When he passed away on April 8, 1837, his unusual sea venture was part of his obituary.

As his obituary read, “Capt. Colley was raised on a Mountain wave. He did not graduate from any school of Navigation, but learned hands on aboard a ship. He was successful and applied himself with greatest skill in navigation.”

In 1807, the Embargo Act of 1807 was put into place. This was a general trade embargo on all foreign nations enacted by the United States Congress. This act affected many states with America ports, especially the Borough of Norfolk for she was a big trading port.

The first decade of the 19th century America shipping grew. Rival nations like England and France targeted American shipping as a means to disrupt the trade of the other nation. The French and English were at war. Both nations accused American merchants and their ships for trading with the “enemy.” Our American ships were seized as contraband and spoils of war. The British Royal Navy had impressed American sailors which lead eventually to the Chesapeake – Leopold affair which later lead to the War of 1812.

The British government had imposed harsh conditions in trade and Americans businesses felt the shackles imposed on their commerce. They were losing money. Some Americans decided to ignore the 1807 Embargo Act. One of these individuals was a William Pennock (1753-1816) a native of Maryland, who began his life as a sailor, ship captain, and later merchant here in Norfolk, Virginia.

In 1807, Captain William Colley with his new Ship Jane, was employed by William Pennock to make a voyage to London and later to Denmark. Money could be made on this venture. This was risky business, but according to Capt. Colley’s obituary, “His last voyage was signalhood by an achievement which deserves to be recorded on the same page with the brightest deeds of heroism in our Navy Annals.”

In the year 1807 on his way to London and later to Copenhagen, he and his ship were captured by Danish pirates. But with the assistance of his brave crew they were able to recover the ship after a desperate struggle. Many of his men were seriously hurt, and Capt. Colley received six, severe, wounds, on his arms, legs, not to mention the head wounds with a cutlass. Any other man receiving such blows would have been dead. Capt. Colley was throwned down on the deck by an athletic Dane, being beaten a faithful slave seeing that Capt. Colley was in trouble, quickly gave the Dane a most powerful blow to the head with a handspike.

After the defeat of the Danish pirates, Captain Colley and his men recovered from their wounds. However, for over 20 years when Captain Colley would walk around the streets of Norfolk everyone saw his deep, visible, scars on his head, and a reminder of this conflict with pirates.

Captain Colley wrote to the Pennock, from his ship Jane the first accounts of the fight with these Danish pirates. His letter later would appeared in the Norfolk & Portsmouth Herald on November 6, 1809, describing this fray.

*Gottenburg, Aug. 28 1807*

*“On Saturday morning, 19th inst. At 8 o’clock I was lying too about 3 miles from the Wingen Beacon for a pilot, when I discovered a small boat coming towards me under Swedish colors, which I took for a pilot; when she got along side, she proved to be a Danish privateer with fourteen armed men. They took procession of us and made the best on their way for Alburg, in Jutland, the wind being ahead, at 9. P., we got under the island of Lacessor, when they sent the privateer’s boat on shore with the log book and 5 men, we were then in 5 fathoms water just going to let go the anchor, when myself and the crew rose and took the ship from them. The contest was severe and bloody. For about 5 minutes, we killed two men and hove them overboard, wounded 4 severely, and 3 slightly out of the eleven. I received 6 wounds – two in the head, two in my left arm and one in my right arm and one in my right leg – three of them very bad. Three of my men are dangerously wounded and two slightly, we had made the best of our way for this place and got in early on the next morning. The attack was made by us without a weapon of any kind – the enemy had each a sord and a pistol.”*

Captain Colley was a well be loved and respected citizen of the Borough of Norfolk. He sleeps in old Cedar Grove cemetery with his wife Charlotte Colley, who proceeded him in death in March 1837. It’s sad this story has been lost to history. Finding this small segment of the history of this man named Colley, an able body seaman, a true Norfolk hero in his day.

Jenny Lind of Sweden

1820-1887

A few days ago my wife changed the center piece on our dining room table. She does this quite often when she has cut flowers from our garden. But this time, being February, she decided to have an old transferware pitcher, black and white with a few small brown cracks on the table. The pitcher does show its age. At the base of the pitcher was another stand that made pitcher stand out. I quickly noticed that it was a family piece that I had not seen in a very long time. How this pitcher got into the family I do not know. Apparently, it was a souvenir from a former concert of the famous opera singer, Jenny Lind when she toured the United States in 1850.

Jenny Lind was born in Sweden, as Johanna Maria Lind, (1820-1887) and was known as the Swedish Nightingale throughout the world. She had many composer friends, especially one called Felix Mendelssohn. It would be P. T. Barnum, (1810-1891) the greatest showman on earth here in the United States that recognized her talent. He proposed to her 150 concerts in 18 months. She did 93 concerts for P. T. Barnum and under her own management did the remaining concerts. The citizens of the United States fell in love with this little lady and she had the American audience at her feet, she was this popular.

In Richmond, Virginia, she was the Queen of Song, and played at the Marshall Theatre on 7th and Broad Street on December 20th 1850. Every seat was taken. Her concert was a huge success in Richmond, Virginia and especially all others in the United States. It is estimated she made over $350,000.00, a very hefty sum in those days.

Governor John B. Floyd (1806-1863) of Virginia gave her a grand tour of our Capital and our Governor’s mansion in Richmond. She was amazed at seeing the statue of George Washington. She also toured and adored Mount Vernon.

Jenny Lind did not get to Norfolk to perform, for her next concert was in Charleston, South Carolina. Shop keepers and other businesses across our country were able to catch onto the Jenny Lind fever making hefty sums of money on Jenny Lind souvenirs, like Jenny Lind dolls and paper dolls, china, furniture and even Jenny Lind steamer trunks. Today one can buy many of the items at antique shops and on-line stores. In her reprotrior with her musicians, she sang many arias by composer Vincenzo Bellini. She was most famous as Amina in La Sonnambula. The other role Jenny Lind loved was the Daughter of the Regiment by Donizetti.

That spectacular night at the Richmond’s Marshall Theater, the local newspaper, Richmond Enquirer had this to say, *“We have never seen a person of “world-wide-fame” who has been so much admired in every country which she has visited, so little affected and perverted by the triumphs she has won. Still simple in her in her habits; alive to all the purest touches of her nature.”*

Jenny Lind retired from the stage at the age of 28, settling in Wynds Point, Herefordshire, England with her husband, Otto Goldschmidt. She had three children. Queen Victoria loved her concerts and attended everyone. In fact, her last concert the Queen gave Jenny Lind on stage a beautiful bouquet of flowers personellly herself. She died at the age of 67 on November 2, 1887.

Today, her voice is silent, for she died without any recordings. However, it is amazing how a simple china pitcher on ones dining room table can conjured up history of a long, forgotten soprano, a woman called, Jenny Lind.

**A** Man called Paul O’Hare

A few weeks ago I was called upon by the Maury High School Alumi, called, Maury’s Ya, Ya. Group, to do a program. This group of women all graduates of Maury High who meet once every month for lunch, all graduates from Maury in the 1950’s. There were 50 members in the audience when I gave my talk. I was the invited guest speaker and I did my program on a man they all knew; Paul O’Hara, the Calligraphy Man of Maury High School.

Paul O’Hara, was a teacher at Maury High for 33 years. He taught business subjects and penmanship. His penmanship appeared on everyone’s diplomas. All these ladies in this group knew Paul O’Hara and many had an interesting story to tell. One lady said to me, “Robert, you should have seen how he could draw a peacock on the black board with his fancy curbs. He was amazing.”

Paul O’Hara was a household name in my house. My mother would recall the days as a young student at Maury High during the late 1920’s. She took all her business subjects from Paul O’Hara, along with his penmanship classes. Like so many students, she thought he was just wonderful!

On June 8, 1968, I can remember my mother holding my Maury’s High School diploma in hand for the first time. To see my diploma and his special calligraphy skills, that only O’Hara could do, brought back so many fond memories.

O’Hara was born in Alma, Michigan, and was a highly educated man. He graduated 1909 from the Zaner-Bloser School in Columbus, Ohio, a school of calligraphy and business. Calligraphy means “Beautiful Writing.” Zaner-Boser School was at one of the finest schools in the country. Unfortunatley, it closed its doors many years ago.

He moved to Norfolk, Virginia after WWI ended. He was married to his wife for 70 years. At Maury he taught Bookkeeping, Business Math, Business Law, and his favorite subject, penmanship. O’Hara retired in 1954, with 33 years at Maury High School.

But it was penmanship that he enjoyed teaching so much. He was keenly disappointed when Maury High dropped this subject from the curriculum in 1928. From 1921 to 1973 he did all the diplomas “calligraphy” for Maury High School, Booker T. Washington, and Granby High School. In all, he did about 75,000 diplomas. Every graduate’s name was inscribed with his special flourishments of his pen. For over 50 years O’Hara put his heart & soul into these diplomas. Sad, the Norfolk school system only paid Paul O’Hara, 50 cents for each diploma. As retired Principal of Maury High School, Rufus Tonelson (1911-2006) said in an interview in February 16, 1990 with Lawrence Maddry, “O’Hara’s, work was so artful, he was terribly underpaid.”

On February 16, 1989, at Hill Haven retirement home on Hampton Blvd, Norfolk, Virginia, O’Hara celebrated his 100th Birthday. Many admirers and old students stopped by to see this old man and wished him, “A Happy Birthday.” They all reminded him of their diplomas and thank him for all he had done in teaching.

The Virginian-Pilot newspaper with Lawrence Maddry covered his 100th Birthday. As he told the group of well-wisher’s, “If a person tales pride in his handwriting, it is an indication that he takes care in the other things he does.” He would tell this to all his students.

On October 8, 1990, at the age of 101, Paul O’Hara passed away in his sleep. From 1921 to 1973, Paul O’Hara inscribed about 75,000 diplomas for so many students here in our area. He was the man of Diplomas!

The Day President John Fitzgerald Kennedy Was Shot

Friday, Dallas, Texas, November 22, 1963

**They say, life is a special gift bestowed upon by God. But our memory is also a special gift too, leaving behind a moments in time that we like to share. Our memories are a treasure trove, leaving something that happened so long ago for others to read and enjoy. Unfortunately, it’s sad, that so many individuals do not share or record their memories. Their life stories and memories are lost forever in history. And this is very sad for the historian!**

November 22, 2023, marks the day President Kennedy was assisanated 60 years ago this year. I was fifteen years old living in Norfolk, Virginia, (Edgewater section) and I remembered that day like it was yesterday. My family always voted Republician, and we were not Kennedy lovers.

At the time, I was at Blair Junior High School, Colley Avenue & Spotswood Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia. I was an 8th grader on the third floor in my English class, last bell, the time was 2 PM. Mrs. Fry was my English teacher, when a Robert Mitchell, late as usual, came rushing into class and said, “Hay, did you hear President Kennedy was shot.” I have never forgot that day, Mrs. Fry, stood up and said, “Robert, you know that is not true, will you sit down in your chair.” Robert Mitchell was a little wild and quite mischievous guy. He was the cool guy who smoked outside of Blair High School and the kid that was always doing something. The next year Robert Mitchell was not present. Apparently he had dropped out of high school or moved away. I never heard what ever happened to him.

Three days later, returning to school on Tuesday, Mrs. Fry apologized to Robert in front of the whole English class; how sorry she was for not believing him. The news seem so unreal and preposterous at the time. No one would have believed that a sitting president would be assassinated in this modern age.

As I left Blair High school that day, it seemed a lot of uneasiness with the teachers. I could tell they knew something but was not going to tell. I walked out of school and straight to my grand-parent’s home on 838 Spotswood Avenue. Granddaddy (1877-1967) was racking up leaves in the yard under the old Oaktree. I asked him about the president and he gave me full details. He was 83 years old.

Grandmother Hitchings (1878-1967) was inside waiting for me. Every Friday, she always made fresh egg-custard for me. It was the egg custard she backed in the oven. She told me about the news of the president and it reminded her when President William McKinley was shot on my grandfather’s birthday, September 14th 1901.

I called my Mama and she gave me the details. She was watching the Guiding Light, channel 3, WTAR, an old soap-opera when Walter Cronkite, a news-commentator broke the news on the air, special report, Present Kennedy was shot in Dallas, Texas. I remembered my mother saying, “We now have a Southerner in the Whitehouse, a Texan.”

My father stopped by grandma’s house at 5 PM in the (utilities) city truck and he had bought the Ledger-Star newspaper along the way. Everyone at the Water Distribution on Church Street was talking. Dad picked me up and Gene my brother was in the truck too. Once home we all settled down glued to our television set. It was truly an event none of us will ever forget.

The next day, The Forrest family which lived next door to us (5404 Rolfe Ave.) had a visitor who was spending the weekend. Her name was Annie Merritt, a native of Danville, Virginia, who lived for many years at the old Botetourt Apartments in downtown Norfolk. She walked over to see us and in her conversation had mentioned her old Baltimore, Maryland newspaper in her cedar chest. She had an original newspaper when President Abraham Lincoln was shot. Her grandmother had saved the old newspaper.

Sunday, November 24th 1963, I was looking at the television when Jack Ruby shot Oswald. More chaos during the weekend. Every American was glued to the television. As I am older now, Parkland Hospital emergency room seemed to have had a very hectic weekend, not only the assassination of President Kennedy, but the assassination of his killer, Lee Harvey Oswald. That emergency room was hectic and I am sure the doctors and nurses had memories to share!

Yes, life is precious a special gift. It’s a precious gift when one can share their memories of the past and an unusual events. This is the memory I have on that dreadful day in November 1963, about the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917-1963) the 35th President of the United States of America.

**Pamphlets & Reports from the Chesapeake School Board**

**January 14th 2024**

G. M. Williams Primary, Challenging Every Child

B. M. Williams Elementary School, 1957.

History & Development of the South Norfolk Schools, by Lilly S. Valentine, 1957

School for Norfolk County’s Children

A School Plan for Chesapeake VA 1968-1985.

Our Year book 1995-1996, S. M. Williams Primary School

A History of Education in Norfolk County, VA.

Chesapeake: The Making of a City, 1963-1990. By William E. Ward, 1998.

What It Would Be Like to Teach in Chesapeake, VA.

Today and Tomorrow, Chesapeake Public Schools

Organization of the Public Schools of Norfolk, County, VA.

The General Plan, Chesapeake, VA.

Norfolk County Historical Society

Of

Chesapeake, Virginia 23322

October 16th 2023

Dear Matthew Maggy:

What a super day! Thank you for your time in guiding us around the old Masons’ Hall Lodge. As I told you, this was our first ***Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) Richmond, Virginia Tour***. October being the Halloween month, our group teamed up with the Great Bridge Presbyterian Church to do this historical tour. We all oved it.

When, I first heard from the curator Chris Semtner of the Edgar Allan Poe Museum, that your old lodge was the only building left in Richmond, Virginia that Edgar Allan Poe visited several times, I had to see the inside. Church Hill section is soooooooooo rich in history. Unfortunately, all the other old buildings associated with Poe have been raised due to progress. Matthew, the outside of your Lodge is a fine example of 1785 architecture. It’s a beautiful building one to be proud of.

After we left your place we visited the Poe Museum. We did our self-guided tour and had a fantastic time there. Afterwards, we visited the sight of the culvert of the Church Hill Tunnel where the hill collapsed sealing up the train and engineers. The date was 1925. So many in our group had never seen nor heard of this horrible event.

Afterwards, we stopped at Poe’s Pub on East Main Street where everyone enjoyed the food and a relaxed atmosphere. We were home in Chesapeake, Virginia 7 PM.

Thank you Matthew for an excellent tour and opening up the lodge to us. I hope one day you can visit our Historical library (Wallace Room) here in Chesapeake. All the best to you and your Lodge members, thank you,

Robert B. Hitchings, President

NCHS

October 16th 2023

Poe’s Pub

2706 E. Main Street

Richmond, VA 23223

Dear Managers & Staff:

I just wanted to write and thank you for the great hospitality that you at Poe’s Pub showed to our group of visitors from Chesapeake, Virginia on October 11th. Your Restuant in Richmond is a “special gem” that welcomes all. Our group consisted of 18.

As the historian for the city of Chesapeake, Virginia, this was my first field trip I have ever conducted. October being the Halloween month, I decided to take my group on an *Edgar Allan Poe’s tour*. Church Hill section of Richmond, Virginia, is rich with history of your town. They loved it!

After seeing all the sights of this American writer of mystery, the last stop was at your Poe’s Pub, which was the icing on the cake. Everyone loved it.

On behalf of the Norfolk County Historical Society and the Great Bridge Presbyterians Church, here in Chesapeake, Virginia, we would like to compliment your staff for serving us weary Travelers so well. Your staff and cooks are fantastic! Everyone in our group were so impressed with the food and the servers. The food was outstanding, sooooooooooooooo delicious. And for me, walking into your Poe’s Pub and seeing the reservation signs on the tables was an extra treat.

We all had a fine enjoyable good time in your Poe’s Pub and hope to return next year. It was truly a pleasure working with you.

Thank you once again for your great hospitality and for your fine service. We shall be returning. All the best,

Sincerely,

Robert B. Hitchings, *Archivist/Historian*

The 150th Anniversary of the Water Department

Utilities Department, Norfolk, Virginia.

This year marks the anniversary of the establishment of the waterworks, a valuable supply of water that was filtered and pumped off of Kempsville Road, Princess Anne Road to the citizens of Norfolk in the year was 1873. How did we get this supply of water and why did it take a growing Norfolk to get a waterworks.

When William Byrd was crossing into North Caroline to draw the boundary lines between North Careener and Virginia he and party of surveyors stopped into the Borough of Norfolk. In his diary, he states, “The water of Norfolk is very blackest and we see many women going to the streams getting fresh water.”

In the summer of 1800, Johnny Rouke who owned a large well of pure water at (Briggs Point) began peddling his water around town. The sight of his tea wagon was always welcomed and one could see the residents of Norfolk standing in line to buy his water. Soon others decided to peddle water and was quite common to see many free-African Americans old Negro men selling water around town in a wooden buckets at a gallon for ½ cent.

Soon citterns became popular in the borough of Norfolk. Caleb Bonsel, the leading bookseller was the first to build his underground cistern catching the rain water from the roof going down in pips to his basement. Other folks would followed. However, this cistern did not prevent Cholrlor epidemics. In 1832 the Borough was stricken by cholera.

In the 1840’s and early 1850’s Norfolk were looking for a better water system. In 1845 Norfolk became a city with a growing population. Our city government and others were looking at Lake Drummond, with its juniper water. Many argued that snakes and alligators swam in this water and it was too far away to pip water to its citizens. In the mist of this controversy, the dark clouds of the civil war was also approaching.

After the Civil War a moment began to bring fresh supply of water to the area. Major Tabb, who was discusted with so many old fogies who did not want a change, decided that he put the water issue on the Norfolk ballad. After the election, the old fogies were defeated, by a vote to 451-149. The Norfolk Post newspaper, dated October 15, 1865, the voters voted that the council to borrow five hundred thousand dollars to erect a Waterworks system. Getting the water bonds up was very slow, but it was a severe drought in the summer of 1869 a shortage of drinking water that got the attention of Norfolk citizens. According to the newspapers of the day one-could see many Norfolk residents putting plates on their lawns to catch the dew to obtain drinking water?

In1873, the city council had made up its mind to establish a drinking water plant set Princess Anne County where the Moors & Bridges land was used. Thus our waterworks was created. In January 1874 we had only 185 connections. In 1893 the Chamber of Commerce reported that the rain water cisterns were still being used in the city. And many were out-of-date

During WW1, in 1917 the citizens realized the water system at Moore’s Bridges was inadequate and a new water system was to be added, Burnet Mills and Lake Prince in Suffolk.

Vanishing Voices of Norfolk’s Busy Harbor & the Southern Branch of the Elizabeth River

Raymond John Mattes, Jr. 1934-2022

Ships’ bells, the splash of ferry side-wheels, dome and chime whistles, Diesel air-horns, deep Tyfons, outboard motors, and electric Klaxons are sounds of a vibrant harbor. Some of these sounds can be heard on the Southern Branch of the Elizabeth coming to great Bridge. Today we see river traffic and lots of pleasure vessels coming our way. The old horns of yesterday have vanish along the river.

Norfolk’s waterfront in 1912 was the heyday of steam transportation by land and sea. Norfolk was the terminus of many lines. It was a journey begging, transfer point or and for both passengers and freight.

Old Bay Line’s steamers Virginia II was one of many packets connecting Norfolk daily with Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, Smithfield, Cape Charles, Mobjack Bay.

It was a Norfolk yester era, yet remembered by elders and aptly to be pondered by the young.

Busy by the young busy as was Norfolk then on an early spring day, still there was feeling of tranquility and stability in steady progress.

In this 2 scrapbooks are color reproductions paintings of these vessels that one sailed.

Horse Racing in Norfolk County now Chesapeake, Virginia

Racing on a Public Road now called Ballehack

Several years ago I came across some old deeds of Norfolk County. The years were from 1822-1823. As I was preserving these old documents, Sept 13, 1825, down in the box was a torn old document concerning a legal court paper of a group of fellows racing their horses on a Public Road that ran into the Dismal Swamp? The year was 1823 and the men charged were Willoughby Forman, Thomas Forman and Josiah Butt of St. Brides. They all had to appear in court C. The individuals

James Nimmo, for the Attorney for the Commonwealth. Court cost, 31.51. Plead Not Guilty

Witnesses, John Smith

Richard Murray

James Sewell

Josiah Forman

Chris Manner

October 16, 2023

Ms. Julie M. Hume

505 Quail Lane

Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948

Dear Ms. Julie M. Hume:

As a historian, it was a great pleasure in meeting you a few weeks ago. Julie, thank you for giving to me your father’s (Mr. Raymond John Mattes, Jr.) collection of photographs, scrapbooks, pictures and all the memorabilia of the Old Bay Line Streamers of the Chesapeake Bay. It is a fantastic and wonderful collection. I could have kept everything that your Dad wanted me to have, but the collection is too far great just for one man. This collections needs to be in our Wallace Memorial History room where everyone (Historians) doing research on these old Steamers can come in and examine. It is truly a fantastic collection, a real treasure. Our Wallace Room is mighty proud to have this collection.

However, I did save for me the large picture of the Washington Steamer that hung in his den. It nows hangs in my guest bedroom. I am so proud to have this picture from your Dad.

Julie, I have created a special folder of your father’s photographs of these great steamers in our photograph files under ***Steamers of the Chesapeake***. I have also cataloged your Dad’s two scrapbooks and placed inside a paper stating that this collection was donated by your Dad. Julie, your Dad lives in our Wallace History Room and I feel he would be so proud.

And all the large oversize pictures, I have put your Dad’s name on the back. I have also filed all his paperwork correspondence between your Dad and Mrs. Peggy McPhillips of the Norfolk Public library concerning this collection. Reading through all of this, Norfolk Public Library is the looser, a BIG mistake on their part. But the Wallace Room is the beneficiary of a great collection.

Thank you Julie, it was a pleasure in getting to know you. Please, keep in touch,

Robert B. Hitchings, *Archivist/Historian*

*President of the NCHS of Chesapeake, VA.*