

Sargeant Memorial Room – Norfolk Public Library

Norfolk Main Library, 235 East Plume Street; Norfolk, Virginia 23510
Phone: (757) 664 – 7485; Fax: (757) 664 – 7319
Email: smr@norfolk.gov
Website: http://www.npl.lib.va.us/smrt/smr_home.html



Finding Aid: Researching Your Norfolk Residential or Commercial Property

Since the burning of Norfolk in 1776 during the Revolutionary War, our preceding generations have continuously been building and rebuilding Norfolk. Over the years, entire neighborhoods and streets have been swept away and built anew. Norfolk's remaining late 19th century through mid 20th century structures have undergone changes as well. As families grew in size, rooms and additions were added to houses. Changes in tastes and styles led to remodeling, which occasionally destroyed original architectural features. Exterior architectural items such as shutters, awnings and fences were removed to lower maintenance costs. During the Depression and World War II years, many of the large homes in the downtown area and in Ghent were converted into apartments and rooming houses, which necessitated the need for additional bathrooms and kitchens. The Algonquin, Edgewater, Larchmont, Ocean View and Talbot Park neighborhoods, formerly located in Norfolk County, were not annexed by the city until 1923.

If you are just starting out, here are a few steps you can take to learn more about the history of your property.

1. Perform a detailed inspection of the interior and exterior of your home or commercial building. Take notice of any visible changes; room additions, enclosed porches, newer exterior siding and updated kitchens, bathrooms & lighting fixtures.
2. Talk with your neighbors, especially those who have lived in for a long time in your area. They generally know much about the history of your neighborhood and of its individual homes and occupants.
3. Talk with previous owners. Inquire when they purchased the property and what repairs or improvements were done while they owned it.
4. Once you have finished gathering information from those different sources, there are a several other places you can visit to gain more information about the property.

Local places

- Public Library – Sargeant Memorial Room (Local History and Genealogy Collection)
- City of Norfolk: Assessor's Office
- Norfolk Circuit Court Clerk's Office – For Wills, Deeds, Land Books (1850 to Present), and Maps
- Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority
- City of Norfolk: Department of Planning and Community Development

State Level (typically if your building is historic, pre-1900)

- Library of Virginia, Richmond - Guide to the Norfolk (VA) Building Inspection Office – Architectural Drawings and Plans, 1898 – 1980
- Virginia Historical Society, Richmond (Fee for non-members)
- Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond

Books to consult:

General Style:

1. Bucher, Ward, and Christine Madrid. *Dictionary of Building Preservation*. New York: Preservation Press, J. Wiley, 1996. **Call #: Ref 720.3 DIC**
2. Light, Sally. *House Histories: A Guide to Tracing the Genealogy of Your Home*. Spencertown, N.Y.: Golden Hill Press, 1989. **Call #: 929.1 LIG**
3. McAlester, Virginia, and A. Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Knopf, 1984. **Call #: 728.0975 MCA**
4. Rifkind, Carole. *A Field Guide to American Architecture*. New York: New American Library, 1980. (On Order)
5. Whiffen, Marcus. *American Architecture since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992. (On Order)

Virginia:

1. Wells, John E., and Robert E. Dalton. *The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955: A Biographical Dictionary*. Richmond, VA: New South Architectural Press, 1997. **Call #: 720.9755 WEL**
2. Brownell, Charles E. *The Making of Virginia Architecture*. Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 1992. **Call #: 720.0755 MAK**
3. O'Neal, William Bainter. *Architecture in Virginia; an Official Guide to Four Centuries of Building in the Old Dominion*. New York: Published for the Virginia Museum by Walker, 1968. **Call #: 720.9755 ONE**

Norfolk:

1. *Art Work of Norfolk and Vicinity (Virginia)*. Chicago: H.W. Kennicott & Co, 1895. **Call #: 975.5521 ART (Special Collections)**
2. *Art Work of Norfolk, Virginia. Published in Nine Parts*. Chicago: Gravure Illustration Company, 1902. **Call #: 975.5521 ART (Special Collections)**
3. Herman, Frederick. *Downtown West Historic Survey*. Norfolk, VA: Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority, 1976. **Call #: 309.26 HER**
4. Hibbs, Wyatt. *Ghent Houses: Circa 1890 – 1920*. Norfolk, VA: Wyatt Hibbs, 1989. (2 Vols.) **Special Collections**
5. Norfolk Chamber of Commerce. *Pictures in Maritime Dixie: Norfolk, VA., Port and City: The Chamber of Commerce Book*. Norfolk, VA: G.W. Engelhardt, 1893. **Special Collections**
6. Norfolk (VA.). *House Numbers: City of Norfolk, Virginia June 1913*. **Special Collections**
7. Norfolk (VA.), and Shirley Virginia Aycock. *Building Permits City of Norfolk, Virginia: July 22, 1893 to October 25, 1898*. Norfolk, VA: S. V. Aycock, 2005. **Call #: 352 NOR**
8. Norfolk (VA.), and Shirley Virginia Aycock. *Building Permits City of Norfolk, Virginia: October 1898-December 1901*. Norfolk, VA: S. V. Aycock, 2005. **Call #: 352 NOR**
9. Norfolk (VA.), and Shirley Virginia Aycock. *Building Permits City of Norfolk, Virginia: July 1902-April 1905*. Norfolk, VA: S. V. Aycock, 2005. **Call #: 352 NOR**

10. Norfolk (VA.), and Shirley Virginia Aycock. *Building Permits City of Norfolk, Virginia: May 1905-January 1907*. Norfolk, VA: S. V. Aycock, 2005. **Call #: 352 NOR**
11. Norfolk (VA.). *A Pattern Book for Norfolk Neighborhoods*. Norfolk, VA: Dept. of Planning and Community Development, 2003. **Call #: 720.9755 NOR**
12. Norfolk (VA.), Virginia, and E.H.T. Tracerics (Firm). *Historic Architectural Survey of the City of Norfolk: Final Report*. [S.l.]: Tracerics, 1994. **Call #: 917.55521 HIS**
13. Norfolk (VA.). *Historic and Cultural Resources Inventory*. Norfolk: Dept. of City Planning, 1981. **Special Collections**
14. Norfolk Dispatch. *Jamestown Exposition Edition of the Norfolk Dispatch*. Norfolk, VA: Norfolk Dispatch Pub. Co., 1904. **Call #: 975.5521 NOR (Special Collections)**
15. *Norfolk, Virginia: A Great Maritime Port and Railroad Center ...: Its Early History ... Its Later Record ... : Portsmouth, Its Sister City : a Record of Its History, a General Review of Its Growth, and a Forcast of Its Future*. S.l: s.n.], 1897. **Special Collections**
16. Rossheim, Beth N. *An Illustrated Guide to the Major Architectural Styles in Norfolk, Virginia*. S.l: s.n.], 1982. **Call #: 720.9755 ROS**
17. Sams, Conway Whittle, and Charles E. Jenkins. *The Wards of Norfolk and Portsmouth; Changes in the Names of Streets, Etc., for Use of the Bar of the Two Cities*. 1923. **Call #: 917.55521 SAM**
18. Stevens, George, Compiler. *1911, 1915 & 1921 Land Books*. S.l: s.n.], n.d. **Special Collections**
19. Tidewater Automobile Association. *Marine and Industrial Issue of the Southern Motorist: In Which Is Presented Many Facts Favorable to the Growth and Development of Norfolk and Tidewater Virginia*. Norfolk, VA: Tidewater Automobile Association, 1921. **Special Collections**
20. Yarsinske, Amy Waters. *Ghent, Virginia: John Graham's Dream, Norfolk, Virginia's Treasure*. Charleston, SC: History Press, 2006. **Call #: 975.5521 YAR**

Norfolk History: History of Local Families:

1. Bruce, Philip Alexander, Lyon Gardiner Tyler, and Richard Lee Morton. *History of Virginia*. Chicago: American Historical Society, 1924. **Call #: 975.5 HIS**
2. Bruce, Philip Alexander. *Virginia; Rebirth of the Old Dominion*. Chicago: Lewis Pub. Co, 1929. **Call #: 975.5 BRU**
3. Community Builders, Norfolk, VA. *Community Builders of Norfolk, Virginia*. 1942. **Call #: 920 COM**
4. Glass, Robert Camillus. *Virginia Democracy, A History of the Achievements of the Party and Its Leaders in the Mother of Commonwealths, the Old Dominion*. [Springfield, Ill.]: Democratic Historical Association, 1937. **Call #: 329.3 GLA**
5. Moore, Daniel Decatur, and James O. Jones Company, et al. *Men of the South: A Work for the Newspaper Reference Library*. New Orleans: Southern Biographical Association, 1922. **Call #: 920 MEN**
6. Squires, W. H. T., Francis E. Turin, and Maurice Edward Bennett. *Through the Years in Norfolk*. 1936. **Call #: 975.5521 NOR**

7. Stewart, Robert Armistead and William Glover Stanard. *Index to Printed Virginia Genealogies, Including Key and Bibliography*. Richmond, VA: Old Dominion Press, 1930. **Call #: 929.2 STEWART**
8. Stewart, William H. *History of Norfolk County, Virginia and Representative Citizens*. Chicago: Biographical Pub. Co., 1902. **Call #: 975.552 Stewart**
9. Tyler, Lyon Gardiner. *Men of Mark in Virginia, Ideals of American Life; A Collection of Biographies of the Leading Men in the State*. Washington: Men of Mark Pub. Co., 1906. **Call #: 920 TYL**
10. Tyler, Lyon Gardiner. *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography, Under the Editorial Supervision of Lyon Gardiner Tyler*. New York: Lewis Historical Pub. Co., 1915. **Call #: 920 TYL**
11. Whichard, Rogers Dey. *The History of Lower Tidewater Virginia*. New York: Lewis Historical Pub. Co., 1959. **Call #: 975.5521 WHI**

Other Resources in the Sargeant Memorial Room to Consult:

1. Vertical Files – Contains newspaper clippings, reports, and other items from the 1900s to present about the City of Norfolk. The files are organized by subject matter. Example subjects: Buildings, Places, Biographies, etc.
2. Norfolk City Directories – Our collection starts about the mid-1850s and continues to present. Please see our “**Finding Aids: Unlocking a Norfolk City Directory**”
3. Building Permits – Originals 1911-1920 (Incomplete) are in the Special Collections
4. Postcard Collection. **Please ask a staff member for assistance**
5. Microfilm records:
 - Norfolk City Records (1600s to 1890s)
 - Deeds
 - Wills
 - Personal Property Tax/Land Tax
 - Order Books
 - City Council Minutes and Records; 1798 – 1979
 - Norfolk County Records (1600s to early 1800s)
 - Deeds
 - Wills
 - Order Books
6. Newspapers – Local newspapers from 1760 to Present (Paper and Microfilm)
7. Deed and Title Abstracts (1700s to 1920s) Guaranty Title and Trust Corporation. Located in Special Collections. **Please ask a staff member for assistance**
8. Photographs – Over 60,000 images in the collection from of the images are from the late 1800s to Present. Located in Special Collections. **Please ask a staff member for assistance.**
9. Plats and Maps:
 - Streets and subdivision maps from late 1800s to Present
 - Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps – 1887 to 1960 (Book and online database)
 - Bowman Atlas – 1889 Edition and 1900 Edition
 - Guaranty Title and Trust Corporation plats
10. Norfolk AIR – Database about current Norfolk properties. **Please ask a staff member for assistance.**