

# NSCC Tour Guide Spotlight!



## **Robert Burgess Hitchings-**

### ***History, Mystery, Mayhem & Murder Tour***

A Norfolk native, 7<sup>th</sup> generation from this area and 12 generations here in Virginia. He grew up in the Edgewater/Larchmont area of Norfolk, Rolfe Avenue.

Robert graduated from Maury High School 1968 and attended Old Dominion University, associates in Biology & Environmental Major.

For 25 years he was a laboratory Technician. with Norfolk's Utilities Water Department. He met his wife Ceferina Cardenas a former chemist there.

1992, He went back to college and got his degree in History from Virginia Wesleyan College. From there he received a scholarship (Summer Program) to study at Emmanuel College at Cambridge University in England.

Two years later he was back in England studying at the Westminster College in Oxford now called Brooks-Westminster College working on his Master's.

In August 1999, he became the new Archivist/Historian for the Sargeant Memorial History Room, Kirn Library, where he looked after Norfolk's rich history. He retired from this position Aug. 1<sup>st</sup> 2014.

TODAY, Robert is the Archivist/Historian for the Wallace Memorial Room, and President of the Norfolk County Historical Society, housed in the Central library in Chesapeake on Cedar Road.

Robert lives in the Talbot Park section of Norfolk and is married to Ceferina Hitchings, 39 years, now a retired Chemist from the City of Norfolk Water Dept.

Patrick Hitchings works at the Family Centered Services as a Social Worker/Counselor for young adults in Chesapeake, VA.



## **Shannon Stafford**

### ***Women in Norfolk, Mysteries in Elmwood, Symbols, Norfolk Notables, Series of Unfortunate Deaths Tours***

Shannon Stafford graduated in 1999 from the University of New Mexico with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology/ Archaeology as well as a Bachelors of Arts degree in Russian History. For the past 10 years, he has led tours in four cemeteries in Toronto, Ontario Canada, to include Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Toronto Necropolis, St James Cemetery and Prospect Cemetery. Working closely with the Board of Directors of Mount Pleasant Cemetery, he was able to write numerous tours and educate the masses.

As the new tour guide for Elmwood Cemetery, Shannon looks forward to using his vast knowledge in all things Victorian to educate the greater Norfolk area and hopes to be able to, with the assistance of the

Norfolk Society of Cemetery Conservation, hold tours at other cemeteries in the area in order to bring new life into death.



**Mike Frost**  
***Cedar Grove Historic Tour***

Mike Frost will be your guide for the tour of Cedar Grove Cemetery. You will learn the history of the city's oldest municipal cemetery, which was established in 1825, including why it is located where it is and why it was established. In addition, you will learn about the burial practices of the period and about some of the prominent individuals who are interred there.

Mike Frost began his involvement with the Norfolk Society for Cemetery Conservation in the Fall of 2014. He first attended one of the tours of Elmwood Cemetery led by Joshua Weinstein, then participated in the From Here to Eternity 5-K Run. This led him to participate in the volunteer workdays where he learned how to repair the cemetery monuments. He also learned what needed to be done to monuments that have fallen over to place them upright again.

"I enjoyed the experience because I felt like I was doing something meaningful with my time," he said, "and I got to see how our work was helping to preserve the cemetery."

The city of Norfolk will mow the grass at the cemeteries but does not have the funding or the manpower to repair the monuments. It is considered the responsibility of the families to do this, but in many cases, there are no family members left to do so. In the case of Cedar Grove, Elmwood, and West Point Cemeteries, the result was that the cemeteries were deteriorating. That's why the NSCC was established in 2013.

"One of the projects we worked on in the Summer of 2016 was to paint what remains of the iron fencing around the individual plots in Cedar Grove and Elmwood Cemeteries," he said. "I found that I enjoyed this particular project and volunteered to come on my own time outside of the weekly volunteer days."

His extra volunteer hours led to him being selected as Volunteer of the Year for 2016.