

Walking Tour Begins at the Library—.71 miles (1.15 km)

△ = Indicates the property is on the Va. Department of Historic Resources Register.

House dates are approximate and taken from Northampton County assessment records.

7745 Seaside Road – The current location of the Northampton Free Library, this was originally the site of R.D. James’ and Son store which can be seen on a 1929 aerial photograph as a two story, wooden, box-shaped store. Robert Dunton James sold clothes, shoes, and millinery (hats). His sons: Harry Milton, Edmund Mapp (“Boots”), and Robert Dunton (Jr.), later had their own businesses. Next door, but still on the library lot, was the location of Barney Wescott’s art studio and gallery. She taught many local children how to paint.

7746 Seaside Road – Across the street from the library is a large Victorian built around 1900. This was the home of Dr. Widgeon, a dentist. His office was a small building by the house. You can find his office, moved to the west side of Route 13, just south of the Social Services building, heading north out of town.

Please start walking west toward Downtown on Roger’s Drive.

10296 Rogers Dr., Walker House - The second house on the left is a white colonial built around 1880. It was later owned by Scott and Virginia Walker. Scott worked at Northampton Lumber as a logging overseer. Virginia “Gin” owned the Textile Shop and a dry cleaners downtown.

10279 Rogers Dr. △ – An American Craftsman style four-square brick home built in 1910.

Vacant lot (left) – This was the site of Mildred’s Hat Shop, the local milliner frequented by ladies for custom designed hats. Mildred was adept at taking existing hats, deconstructing them and then revitalizing them with new embellishments. The site originally had a house owned by the Wilsons and it was demolished. The Hat Shop was moved to Brownsville.

10280 Rogers Dr., Barton D. Holland House – This Queen Anne Victorian, built in 1907, was owned by Barton Holland, the third person involved with the incorporation of the Northampton Lumber Company. Holland moved to Nassawadox from Maryland in 1898, just two years prior to starting B.D. Holland & Company, a local lumber firm. Holland became the treasurer of Northampton Lumber Company when it first opened and continued with his position until his death in 1934.

10268 Rogers Dr., John C. Walker House △ - Built in 1906, a Walker was a founding owner and first president of Northampton Lumber Company. His interest in the lumber industry began in 1890 when he moved from Maryland to the small Eastern Shore town of Willis Wharf. He managed the lumber yard and the buying and selling of mules during the early to mid-1900s. In addition to being the Northampton Lumber Company President, Walker was a board member at the Bank of Northampton, a member on the Board of Trustees at the Northampton-Accomack Memorial Hospital, and a Director of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Fire Insurance Company. After his death in 1929, his sons Linwood and George joined the Northampton Lumber Company business. Walker’s brother W.E. “Will” Walker later became the Vice-President of the company.

10258 Rogers Dr., Joshua Pitts Wescott House – Pitts Wescott, Sr. was Northampton County Commissioner of Revenue. He died in a barber shop while being shaved. He had two wooden legs lost in a saw mill accident. Pitts Wescott, Jr. was appointed to serve after Wescott, Sr. died.

10248 Rogers Dr., Lynn and Margaret Whitehead House - Margaret was Pitts Wescott, Sr.’s daughter. The house was piped for gas lights.

8031 Seaside Road, Doughty House – This house is believed to have been relocated here from Hog Island.

7813 Seaside Road, Nassawadox Methodist Church – Now a house, this former church, established in 1903, operated until 1928.

7743 Seaside Road, Robert Dunton James House – This four-square home, built around 1920, was owned by this patriarch of Nassawadox retail who passed away in 1929. Later, Barton Holland, Jr. bought the house around 1935 after building the Holland and Grimmer Funeral Chapel, now Holland Funeral Home, at 7342 Lankford Highway (Route 13). This was one of the first funeral homes on the Shore built specifically as a funeral home and it is now operated by Barton Holland, III.

This is the end of the Nassawadox History Walking Trail. Consider visiting nearby Brownsville next! To learn more about Nassawadox, go to:

<https://espl.org/genealogy/walking-driving-tours/>

*A project of the Eastern Shore of Virginia
Heritage Center*



We extend much appreciation to Bart Holland, III for his driving tour that provided much of this information and the Kirk Mariner Collection at the Heritage Center. Learn more at espl.org.

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NASSAWADOX HISTORY WALKING TRAIL

Introduction

In the early twentieth century, farmers and watermen frequented the businesses in Nassawadox, which is the focus of this tour. We begin our trail at the Northampton Free Library which is at the corner of Seaside Road and Route 606, now called Rogers Drive. Seaside Road was the original “Main Street” for Upshur Station, which was the name of this hamlet prior to 1886. Nassawadox was created as a crossroads between the seaside, bayside, and the New York, Pennsylvania, and Norfolk Railroad line, built in 1884. Before Route 13 bisected the Eastern Shore peninsula, area residents crossed this “Land Between Two Waters,” the Native American translation of Nassawadox, on their route to and from the Brownsville and Bridgetown wharves, from the seaside to the bayside. Nassawadox was incorporated in 1958 and Willard Henry was the first mayor.

Brownsville is located 1.5 miles from here on Upshur Creek, on the seaside, and is the home of The Nature Conservancy’s (TNC) Brownsville Preserve. The historic Brownsville home, built in 1806 by John Upshur, still stands, but is not accessible to view except during TNC special events. TNC nature trails are open to the public. Brownsville was a busy wharf as well as Thomas’ Wharf, on the other side of Upshur Creek. With the coming of the railroad, transportation of produce shifted from the waterways to the railroad, shifting businesses and residences to the small towns that popped up at the railway stations, like Nassawadox Station.

10249 and 10253 Rogers Dr. – These two homes used to be one home. The Richardsons originally owned the (intact, single) house. He owned a Buick dealership on the northwest side of the intersection of Rogers Drive and Route 13. The house was then bought by H.M. James, the son of R.D. James. When the son of H.M., “Pinky,” married, James divided the house into two so that the newlyweds could live in the same house, but next door.

10243 Rogers Dr. – The old wooden post office (described later) was moved to this lot. It served as Boots James’ restaurant, Wescott’s grocery store, Harry McCann’s Blue Cross Insurance, and lastly Gin Walker’s dry cleaning. It was then moved to a vacant lot in town owned by her son.

10237 Rogers Dr., The Textile Shop – This storefront was originally H.M. James’ clothing store before it moved to a new location on the other side of Route 13. It later became The Textile Shop providing a variety of fabric for ladies to make the dresses to coordinate with Mildred’s hats.

Masonic Lodge, No. 71 - The door to the left led to the upstairs, the former home of the Masonic Broadwater Lodge formed December 8, 1901. By 1933, it boasted 140 members. However, it was originally over the drugstore, next door. The upstairs at one time housed the Victory Theatre before the Masonic Lodge formed. The Theatre had moved there after its original location, across Rt. 13 on Rogers Drive, burned. Prior to being the Victory, it was called the Strand Theatre. It was the first theatre on the Shore to debut “Birth of a Nation,” in 1917.

10235 Rogers Dr., Pharmacy – This storefront originally served as a drugstore. Nassawadox Drugstore opened in 1913 and later became Arnold’s Drugs, Henderson’s Drugs, and Rayfield’s Pharmacy. The drugstore also had a soda fountain and served ice cream.

10233 Rogers Dr., Bank of Northampton – A modern, but vacant bank building now stands where the Bank of Northampton, formed in 1906. It once served the busy merchants and farmers of the area until it went bankrupt during the Depression. The original bank still stands there, but subsequent additions to the later bank in operation here encircled the original building. The original vault is still inside.

This was also the site of the Nassawadox Post Office. Note the lower brick section with the boarded drop box. The small wooden post office was located here. Nassawadox was originally called **Upshur Station**. In 1886 when the railroad depot and post office were established, the station’s name was changed to Nassawadox. The name of the area near Franktown that was once “Nassawadox” was changed to Bridgetown. Mr. John T. Rogers was the first postmaster.

10227 Rogers Dr., Grocery Store ◻ – The oldest, two story section of the current tenant, Little Italy, was built in 1897 during the Reconstruction Period. It was “Lev James” grocery store and then Bonniwell’s. In the current banquet hall area of the restaurant stood Shreave’s “Five and Dime” store (also known as Ben Franklin’s) which was demolished.

Henry’s Print Shop, also no longer standing, was in the brick section to the right of the former grocery and now part of the restaurant.

10219 Rogers Dr., Pinder’s Grocery – This building is not historic, but the design is reminiscent of Pinder’s Grocery which stood there for many years.

At this point, the tour turns to Railroad Street.

Site of Southern States - Standing in the parking lot looking west, back toward the current post office, once stood a large wood store called Southern States, a supplier of farm supplies. Given that agriculture was the business that lured most

to Nassawadox, this store justly stood at the hub of town.

Site of Nasswadox Depot - Across the Railroad Street, by the train tracks, once stood the train depot. Surviving photographs show three structures: the main passenger terminal, a freight terminal with a large ramp, and a connecting shed-like building. The freight terminal was moved to and still stands near Smith Beach.

Hodge Podge – The first building on the left was a famous knick-knack second hand store crammed full of all sorts of antiques and curios.

7401 Railroad St. John B. Dunton Store and Muck Roger’s Grocery – This building has served many businesses. It was even the first location of the Northampton Free Library from 1993 until 2005.

7409 Railroad St. – Northampton Lumber Historic District ◻ - The Northampton Lumber Company was one of the major producers of the wood barrels used for shipping potatoes, making up to 500 barrels per day. The first building in the District was built in 1898. The buildings are still being used for their original purposes, they retain their original detail and design, and the construction methods used while building each structure was specific to the period in which they were built. This District is made up of the following buildings:

- ◆ **Retail Store**
- ◆ **Potato Shed:** East of the retail building.
- ◆ **1940s Shed**
- ◆ **Water tower:** Standing directly east of the 1940s shed is a c. 1898 water tower. The cast iron tower sits atop a concrete foundation. Until the 1950s, the tower served as a water source for the lumber yard and several surrounding properties. The water tank was removed at an unknown date.
- ◆ **Barn,** c. 1912

- ◆ **New shed**
- ◆ **Lumber Sheds 1&2:** built 1920’s
- ◆ **Sawmill:** John W. “Jack” Chandler was the original owner of the saw mill and a member of the firm of Chandler & Walker.
- ◆ **Caboose:** this was relocated to this site recently for preservation and public interest.

Turn left/east on Shell Street and head east to Seaside Road.

10168 Shell Street – The long building behind the Northampton Lumber store is composed of a new structure (west) and the grading shed (east part) which was moved from its location by the railroad tracks.

10186 Shell Street, Bill Davis House – Built around 1920. Davis was a yard foreman at Northampton Lumber.

10192 Shell Street, John Kelly House – Built around 1920. Kelly was a mill foreman at Northampton Lumber.

10198 Shell Street – The main building standing here was originally a “beer garden” in Trehernville that was moved here when Route 13 was widened. Prior to this building, the Ivan Upshur blacksmith shop operated here. Upshur, an African American, moved his business to 1009 Franktown Road (Route 609) where he also built a 1936 bungalow, still standing. This location placed the blacksmithing closer to the mule barn located across the street and behind the Douglas Canning Company (no longer standing).

Turn right on Seaside Road and head south.

7792 Seaside Road, Edmund “Boots” James House – Built around 1925. Boots was the son of R.D. James. Boots partnered with Fox’s Funeral Home in Cape Charles and had funerals in this house.

Walk to the end of the sidewalk and cross to the other side of the street.