

Biography: Norfolk Photographers



Harden David "Volly" Vollmer, Sr. (1892 - 1971)

H. D. Vollmer was the "Charles Borjes" of the *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch* in Norfolk during the 1910s to 1950s. He was born in Richmond, Virginia, on 30 December 1892 to Charles D. Vollmer and Aurelia Lockhard Vollmer. He spent his first seven years in Richmond before his

family moved to Norfolk in 1899. Vollmer attended most of his grade school years in Norfolk and developed an interest in art during this time. He began working for the Old Dominion Tobacco Company as a bookkeeper and Virginia Electric & Power Company, VEPCO, (now Dominion Power) before joining the *Norfolk Ledger Dispatch* in 1917 as a sports and general reporter. During World War I, he joined the Army and was assigned to the 75th Photo Section of the Army Signal Corps from May 1918 to February 1919. During this time, he was stationed at an Eastman Kodak Plant where he learned photography in depth and honed his natural artistic talent to become a much acclaimed photographer.

Vollmer met and courted Gertrude Elise Sturm for about two years before they married in Rochester, New York. They had a son, Harden David Vollmer junior and a daughter, Clara J. Vollmer. Vollmer became a member of the Norfolk Art Corner and founded the Norfolk Photography Club. He took part in over 50 shows for the Art Corner while displaying his works at regional art and photography exhibits. Although he continued to work for the *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch*, besides photography he also began to work with different artistic mediums such as etching, pastel painting, soapstone and plaster carving, watercolors, linoleum block printing, and lithography. Some of his works appeared in the second printing of "Light's O'day" by Charles Day.





In his pursuit of photography, he developed a deep friendship, both professional and personal, with Charles Borjes of the *Virginian-Pilot*. Vollmer retired from the newspaper in 1958, but continued his work until his death at the age of 78 on 23 July 1971. He was buried at Forest Lawn Cemetery, Norfolk, Virginia. The legacy of his art lives on.

Photograph: H D. Vollmer from about the 1950s. Courtesy of Clara J. Vollmer of Norfolk, Virginia.

Source:

Staff Writer. "H.D. (Volly) Vollmer, Sr., 78, Photographer, Reporter." *The Virginian - Pilot*. 24 July 1971. B4.

Interview with Clara Vollmer on May 30, 2006 by W. Troy Valos and Robert Hitchings. Norfolk Public Library - Norfolk, Virginia.

Yarsinske, Amy Waters, Norfolk, Virginia: the Sunrise City by the Sea: a Tribute to Photographer Carroll H. Walker, Sr. Virginia Beach, Virginia: Donning Company, 1994.

