

The HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HARFORD COUNTY, Inc.

Preserving Our Past For Your Future



143 N. Main Street
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Society News

July / August 2025

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The Historical Society of
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RICHARD'S CORNER

The Society's archives continue to provide fascinating stories. Researcher Ken Sterner unearthed past research tracing the Society's collection of stamps and letters that charted the nation's postal history from 1799 to the 1860s. This edition of the newsletter presents a portion of his findings. A second story will follow in the September newsletter.

• Frank Stewart, Jr., Postal History Project (1989 -1991)

Former Forest Hill resident Frank M. Stewart, Jr. (1928–2008), author of the December 1991 Society Bulletin, *History of Post Offices of Harford County, Maryland*, was a member of the Historical Society of Harford County and a noted philatelist who enjoyed exhibiting his cover collection at numerous stamp exhibitions. According to **Linn's Stamp News**, "postal history" is a term sometimes used by cover collectors to describe the items that they collect, e.g., folded letters, envelopes, and post cards that passed through the mail. Between 1989 and 1991, Mr. Stewart searched the Society's voluminous files looking for evidence of postal history. During his search, he found several items that had been mailed between 1799 and 1840.

According to Carolyn and J. Thomas Wollon in **Harford Historical Bulletin #4**, the early postal system used "drop letters" which the sender would leave at a post office for pickup by the addressee without further handling through the mail. Postage stamps were not in use until 1847 so local Postmasters would mark the letters, sometimes elaborately, with the postage
cont'd on page 3



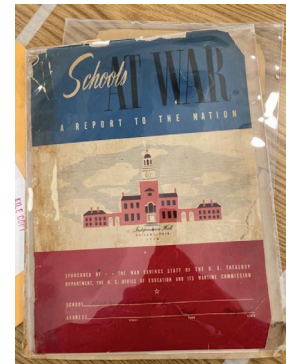
HARFORD MUTUAL
INSURANCE GROUP

The Historical Society of Harford County newsletter is funded in part through a gift from Harford Mutual Insurance Group.

SCHOOLS AT WAR

The SCHOOLS-AT-WAR Program was launched by the Education Section of the U.S. Treasury Department in cooperation with the U.S. Office of Education and its Wartime Commission. In each State an Education Committee, appointed by the State War Finance Chairman, directs the SCHOOLS-AT-WAR Program in keeping with local needs and procedures. This assures complete flexibility within the States.

At the time of this publication (1944 Issue / published 1943) pupils across the United States purchased about \$300,000,000 worth of War Stamps and Bonds. They ran successful SCHOOLS-AT-WAR Campaigns to finance some 40,000 jeeps and nearly 100 fighting planes and bombers. They presented countless victory concerts, plays, radio programs and debates.



This museum piece tells a unique story in Harford's Past

The SCHOOLS-AT-WAR Program is a learning leading to action. It focuses attention on the fundamental task of financing the war because it is a program basic to all others, and one in which every individual, without exception, can play a part.

It also recognizes that each separate war activity is but part of one whole; that the boy or girl actively serving in Red Cross, salvage, and civilian defense work will, as a result, be more, rather than less, active in buying War Stamps, stopping rumors and conserving materials.

The SCHOOLS-AT-WAR Program is based on the assumption that what we are fighting for is worth our best efforts and sacrifices; that we will fight best when we understand the issues and strategy; and that the first business of the schools in war as in peace is therefore education. The fact that the War Savings Program has been set up on a voluntary basis, is proof of our faith and the ability of education for democracy to do its job.

[Schools at War Handbooks of Suggestions for School Administrators.](#) U.S. Government Printing Office. 1944



NEW MEMBERS

Patrick Goles, John Gibson Mullan, Elizabeth Whiteford Whitehead, Patrick Baker,
Nelson Smith, Daniel Webster, Dennis L. Peters, Evelyn P. Clayton

MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE PROJECT COMPLETED

Volunteers scanned and indexed Harford County marriage certificates from 1865 – 1990.

The team is headed by volunteers Jule Grepps and Judy Kozo, with additional support from Carol Schatz and Jan Gilman. These dedicated volunteers worked on this project for over 15 years.

Marriage record indexes from 1865-1950 are online at Harfordhistory.org on our *PastPerfect* research catalog. Scans of the marriage certificates can be purchased and will be emailed to you.

RICHARD'S CORNER cont'd from page 1 ...

due from the recipient. These items are known as "stampless covers." As he reported in a letter to the Archive Committee of the Historical Society, Mr. Stewart found dozens of stampless covers in the Society's files addressed to Harford Countians from the first half of the 19th century, including covers without postmarks and those with hand-stamped or manuscript cancellations and postage. He placed those covers and letters that were in the best condition in a separate file for the Society. Some of the names among the letter recipients were Otho Scott, Edward Hall, J.D. Maulsby, Colonel Charles Sewell, and five members of the Archer family: Judge Stevenson Archer, Henry Archer, John Archer, Robert Archer, and Thomas Archer.

- **Unreliable Mail Delivery**

In reviewing this collection, the first observation I made was that issues with the delivery of the mail are not a 20th or 21st century phenomenon. Some writers expressed concern about their letters not being received, as Dr. Thomas Archer wrote to his brother in 1799:

Sometimes I am almost resolved not to write you unless by particular opportunities, for whither by Post or private conveyance they are alike unfortunate in reaching you. What may be the cause by Post I cannot divine, had I enclosed 1000 dollars I suppose it would have been the same. Other writers complained that they were not receiving letters, as Lt. John Archer wrote to his father in July of 1827 from the Arkansas Territory: *"I received a few days ago your letter dated in April. I am astonished to hear that you so few of my letters reach your neighborhood. I have written eight or ten since I arrived here to persons immediately around you & from whom you would have had news of me if they had received my letters.*

- **18th Century Letter**

The oldest letter I reviewed was that letter written on February 2, 1799, from Dr. Thomas Archer (1768–1821) at Mily Hill in Harford County to his brother, Dr. Robert H. Archer (1775–1857), on Bridge Street in "Old Town Baltimore." In the letter, Thomas described at length a *"horrid to relate and dreadful"* illness that was sickening and killing *"young men and children of high blooming health"* in the area where he lived. The disease was spreading among his neighbors so severely that he estimated the death of *"thousands"* if it were to be found in a city. The symptoms included chills and seizures, fever, vomiting, pain in the forehead and temples, quick pulse, and *"collections of matter in the brain,"* leading to swelling in the neck and shoulders, lasting three to seven days before death. Thomas described for his brother the treatments he was using, which were typical for the time: bloodletting and purging. Thomas mentioned he had learned of a Dr. Williamson, who had described a similar *"disease of the head"* in the Medical Repository, the first American Medical Journal. Thomas asked his brother to help him if he was aware of a better course of treatment. Both Thomas and Robert Archer were sons of Dr. John Archer (1741–1810), a Harford County resident, the first Medical School graduate in America, and a signer of the Bush Declaration.

- **U.S. Government Document**

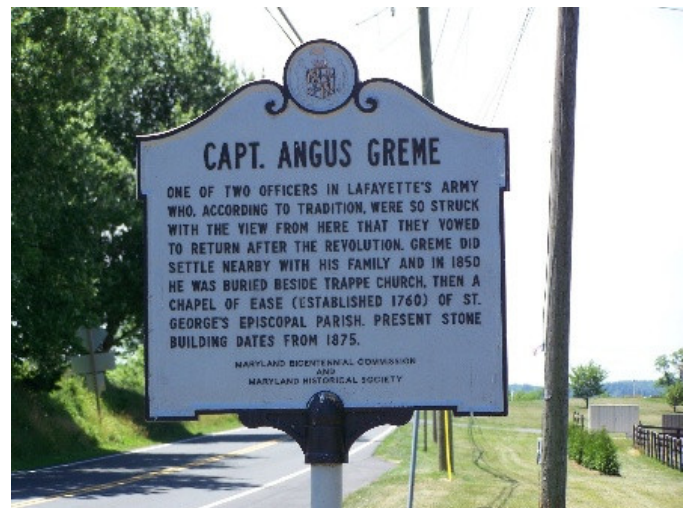
The most "official" item in Mr. Stewart's file was a certified copy of an extract taken from Page 274 of Register C of the Treasury of the United States written on the letterhead of the Consulate of the United States in Paris (France) dated May 24, 1784. The extract acknowledges a warrant obligating the United States to pay Lieutenant Colonel Jean-Joseph Soubadère de Gimat (1747–1793), an aide-de-camp of Lafayette during the Revolutionary War and leader of troops at Yorktown, *"the sum of six thousand and*

seventeen dollars 32/90^{ths} equal to thirty-two thousand, four hundred and ninety-three livres, fourteen sous, four deniers, bearing interest at six percent."

The provenance of this document is a bit difficult to follow, but it appears the original 1784 text describing the warrant had been entered by the first Register of the U.S. Treasury, Joseph Nourse (1754–1841). The Consulate copy was certified by Isaac Cox Barnet (1773–1833), Consul of the United States of America for Paris, on December 2, 1816, and again on April 23, 1818, when he also affixed the seal of his office. Albert Gallatin (1761–1849), the former Secretary of the Treasury for Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, was "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the U.S." to France for President James Monroe between 1816 and 1823. On April 23, 1818, he added text to the document indicating he received the original certificate, canceled it, and sent it to the Secretary of the Treasury in Washington as requested earlier in the year.

Lieutenant Colonel Gimat was a French officer who served under General Lafayette. He purchased 800 acres of land on what is now MD Rt. 136 in Harford County along with fellow officer Captain Angus Gremé just after the Battle of Yorktown and initiated the construction of Maiden's Bower. Gimat was ordered to Santo Domingo before the house was completed and was killed and buried there. Captain Gremé lived the rest of his life at Maiden's Bower and is buried at Trappe Church cemetery. The home is still standing. (some records show an anglicized version of the Gremé name as Graham). He was one of several French officers who served with Rochambeau and Lafayette to return to the county after the Revolutionary War, hence the county connection.

Watch for more stories from this fascinating treasure trove of letters in the September newsletter.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to welcome the Society's new Associate Director, Chelsea Cline. Ms. Cline's background in Art History and cultural heritage artifacts will serve the Society well as she oversees the Historical Society's extensive collections, volunteer programs, and museum curation activities. As the Society's programs and offerings continue to grow, Ms. Cline's education and experience are sure to enhance the Society's mission.

As many of you know, the past couple of months have been extremely busy. In addition to our new employee, the Society held numerous successful events. The Second Annual Sports Hall of Fame honored eight local athletic legends. You can learn their stories on a visit to the Society's museum and Sports Hall of Fame display. Our Revolutionary Harford program continues to tell the story of Harford's role in the American Revolution. In May 2025, we followed our Bush Declaration programs with the story of the "Shot Heard Round the World." Please watch for the Society's upcoming programs at the Hays House Museum, Society Headquarters, and elsewhere as we celebrate America's 250th Anniversary year.



Honorees at the 2025 Sports Hall of Fame

In recognition of the Society's efforts, Harford County Executive Bob Cassilly and the Harford County Historic Preservation Commission presented the 2025 Biennial Special Preservation Award for Community Involvement to the Historical Society for the Harford 250 Commemoration Project, which brought together numerous nonprofit organizations, businesses, government agencies, and individuals to celebrate Harford County's 250th anniversary.

Other awards included:

- Preservationist Honor Award – Mr. James Chrismer – A passionate historian, educator, and advocate for historic preservation, especially dedicated to sharing previously untold stories of

Harford County

- Preservation Project Award – Aberdeen B & O Train Station, Phase II – Complete restoration of the station's exterior to its 1885 appearance
- Special Preservation Award for Communication – The Liriodendron Foundation Museum Project – Designing and installation of new interior and exterior exhibits on the history of the Kelly family and Liriodendron Mansion
- Special Preservation Award for Education – Ma & Pa Engine No. 6 Statue and Historic Markers – Installation of two-sided statue of a steam locomotive and two historic markers sharing railroad history with users of the Ma & Pa Heritage Trail
- Local Government Award – town of Bel Air Bel Air 150 Committee – Planning and executing public events to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Bel Air's incorporation.



Historic Preservation Award recipients gather with County Executive Bob Cassilly (back row, fourth from left) and Harford County Historic Preservation Commission Chair Jacquelyn M. Seneschal (seated front row, center)

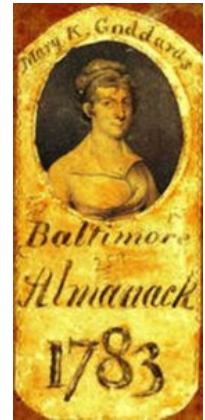
Watch for the Society's entry in the Bel Air 4th of July Parade and enjoy our Executive Director's performance before the Parade as she reads the Declaration of Independence from the grandstand in front of the courthouse as part of our Revolutionary Harford commitment. There is much, much more. See the Events pages to learn about all of our upcoming events.

Bill Walden, President

COMING EVENTS

- **Mary Katharine Goddard Prints the Declaration of Independence, Presentation by Rosemarie Law, July 5, 2025, Historical Society, 143 N. Main St., Bel Air, 2 pm.**

Just one woman's name appears on an official copy of the Declaration of Independence— Mary Katharine Goddard. In the face of British forces threatening to attack Philadelphia, the Second Continental Congress reconvened in Baltimore from December 1776 to January 1777. Congressional representatives contacted Goddard, a 38-year-old publisher and patriot who printed the Maryland Journal, requesting that she print the Declaration of Independence. Celebrate the country's 250th anniversary with us and learn the story of Ms. Goddard and her role in this Revolutionary time. Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased on the Society's website at www.harfordhistory.org.



- **Trials & Triumphs: A History of the African American Experience in Harford County**

July 7 – August 1, 2025, Historical Society, 143 N. Main St., Bel Air, 10 am - 4 pm Monday- Friday

The Historical Society's traveling exhibit will be on display at the Historical Society from July 7 to August 1, 2025. This remarkable exhibit features memorabilia, stories, and pictures that highlight the people, places, and events that have shaped generations of county residents. A special program is planned for July 22 at 12:30 pm to celebrate the exhibits' last stop.



- **The B & O Railroad Comes to Harford, July 14, 2025, Virtual Presentation by Frank Wrabel, 12:30 pm.**

Sign up for a railroad adventure you will cherish for years to come. Join B & O historian Frank Wrabel as he transports you to the early days of the railroad in Harford County and beyond with incredible stories, photographs, and legends. Visit the Society's website, at www.harfordhistory.org, to register for this free program.



- **Harford County Farm Fair, July 19 – 26, 2025. Harford County Equestrian Center, 608 N. Tollgate Rd, Bel Air**

Visit the Society's booth at the Farm Fair to learn more about our many activities and take a photo with General Washington and General Lafayette. There will also be displays and kids' activities available—a fun time for all.

WHAT'S NEW AT THE HAYS HOUSE

- **July 4 at the Hays House, July 4, 2025, Hays House Museum, 324 Kenmore Ave., Bel Air, MD, 9 am – 12 pm**



Begin your July 4th celebration with music, games, and crafts for the whole family at Bel Air's historic house. Traditionally, folks gather here to start the all-day celebrations in Bel Air. Consider joining us this year for a grand kick-off to the holiday season. Free event. Donations appreciated.

- **Viva Lafayette! July 13, 2025, Hays House Museum, 324 Kenmore Ave., Bel Air, MD, 1 pm**



General Lafayette played an outsized role in the development of Harford County and the American Revolution. In 1825, he returned to the United States for a Farewell tour. Join guest speaker Amy Rosenkrans to learn Lafayette's story and celebrate his triumphant return. Free event. Donations appreciated.

- **Open House, August 10, 2025, The Hays House Museum, 324 Kenmore Ave., Bel Air, MD, 1 pm**

The Hays House Museum will be open to visitors. Step back in time. Enjoy the house and gardens on a leisurely Sunday afternoon.

- **Revolutionary Harford: The Battle of Bunker Hill, August 24, 2025, The Hays House Museum, 324 Kenmore Ave., Bel Air, MD, 1 pm**

The Continental Congress sent an Olive Branch petition to King George III, but then, the Battle of Bunker Hill happened. Citizens have been nervously waiting for a response – and now they have one! Learn about the Battle of Bunker Hill and its aftermath. Revisit life in Harford in 1775. Free event. Donations appreciated.



Lafayette Farewell Tour Celebrations

- **Concert: Music from the Life and Tour of Lafayette, David, and Ginger Hildebrand, July 27, 2025, Havre de Grace Opera House, Havre de Grace, MD, 4 pm**

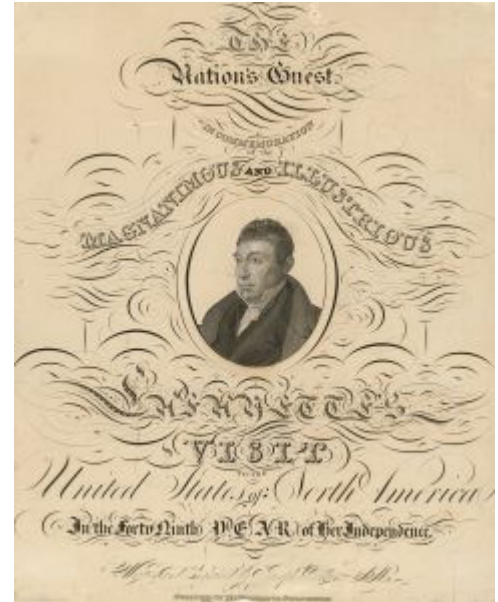
Join the Historic Havre de Grace Foundation, the Historical Society of Harford County, and the Cultural Arts Board for *The Concert: Music from the Life and Tour of Lafayette*. Musicians and music historians David and Ginger Hildebrand have selected pieces from period sources to create a historical music program commemorating the anniversary of Lafayette's Farewell Tour. Selections will be played on period instruments that may be new to many in the audience. Tickets are \$25. Tickets and more information are available at www.hdgoperahouse.org.

- **General Lafayette's Bicentennial Farewell Tour, July 29, 2025, Frank Hutchins Park and Graw Alley at Harmer's Town, 4 – 8 pm.**

Line the banks of the Susquehanna River and greet Lafayette as he comes ashore at Frank Hutchins Park. Mingle with the great General as he joins the festivities at Graw Alley at Harmer's Town. Listen as General Lafayette addresses the crowd to share his views on the America of 1777-1781 and the America he returned to find in 1824.

Enjoy food and beverages from local food trucks and join in the fun with family-friendly activities at booths lining the park.

THIS JUST IN! Following the Celebration at Harmer's Town, follow Lafayette to Concord Point to enjoy FIREWORKS sponsored by the City of Havre de Grace.



THE TEXTILE DEPARTMENT

Part 1: Soaking, Scrubbing, and a Day in the Sun

We previously mentioned that our backlog of donations includes many wedding dresses. We were making progress in evaluating them, but then we received even more garments that needed some urgent care due to having been stored in trunks and cardboard boxes over many decades.

A fascinating element of working with clothes that are really old, sometimes unique, but not priceless (as in museum quality), is the opportunity to discern if, and how, a garment can be cleaned safely. After sorting and ranking the new-to-us items, we determined that some of the discolored, stained, slightly musty cotton outfits were worth the effort of soaking, wet-washing, and, yes, scrubbing. Because our collection is woefully deficient in men's clothing (hint...hint), we especially wanted to salvage the clothes made for little boys in the 1930s and '40s, and a 1920s tuxedo shirt.

The newly cleaned toddler boys' pant sets, along with several infant and toddler girls' dresses of the 1930s through the early 1960s in our collection, comprised the Spring Has Sprung showcase we mounted in April at the County Administration Building. We enjoyed dressing our mini forms, several of which were made in-house by Kathy Scholl. We hope you were able to stop in and see how the display brightened the space, and hopefully also made the employees and visitors smile.

Back to the 1920s tuxedo shirt - we received three such shirts, still folded around thin cardboard packing and stabilized to the cardboard with false studs, just as they had come from the laundry 100 years ago. Each shirt is discolored to a brownish hue, likely from both the heavy starch and the cardboard. One shirt had come mostly undone from the packing and thereby presented itself as a good candidate for re-cleaning. Based on the manufacturer's labels imprinted on the neck and on the tail, along with the owner's initials, we found enough information on the style to determine its era and how it had been worn.

The shirt features a low, flat neck, sometimes called a stand, that holds a detachable collar by means of collar studs in the center front and center back. Detachable collars allowed a gentleman to wear the shirt

more than once before sending it and the collars to the commercial laundry for extreme washing, starching, and ironing. The sewn-in bib front and the sleeve cuffs were super-stiffened by tiny tucks of possibly two layers of fabric, or a heavier fabric, even before industrial strength starch was applied. The fabric in the body and sleeves is thinner and softer. Our project shirt required a lot of soaking, washing, scrubbing, and a day of drying in the sun to remove discoloration, stains, and most of the century-old starch. Now that it's almost as white as when it was last worn, this shirt is simply begging to be displayed. Stay tuned for Part 2!

If you want to explore some history of men's clothing, especially the elegance of various eras, visit the Vintage Dancer website. <https://vintagedancer.com/category/1920s/>

Susan K. Wooden and Kathy Scholl

CLASSIC ROYAL BLUE LINE SURVIVOR

Frank A. Wrabel

Civic Leaders, Architects, Historians, and Railroad Enthusiasts had much to celebrate in Aberdeen, Maryland, on October 4, 2024. That date marked the formal dedication of the relocated and restored Baltimore & Ohio passenger station. That event celebrated the end of a 20-year process to acquire, secure, stabilize, relocate, and restore the last remaining 1886 vintage passenger station between Bay View Yard in Baltimore and Philadelphia. That route, now owned and operated by CSX, once bore the regal title of the *Royal Blue Line* - an opulent marketing campaign launched in the 1890s to add a distinctive touch to B&O's Washington to New York passenger service. The B&O clearly needed that and much more in the face of competing service fielded by the well-entrenched Pennsylvania Railroad, whose predecessor railroads were built throughout the region in 1837.

The B&O Philadelphia Division, built between 1884 and 1886, was a late arrival by standards of eastern railroad development and was the last major construction project of the B&O mainline network. The line was the polar opposite of the direction B&O founders projected back in 1827 but was justified based on the emerging importance of the Washington to New York market. The new line was built in one broad stroke, and accordingly, it had a most complete and well-engineered look to it. The route featured the longest bridge on the B&O, at the Susquehanna River, and B&O's longest tunnel, Howard Street in Baltimore.

To underscore the first-class image and service, B&O selected prominent Philadelphia architect Frank Furness to design at least 80% of the station facilities between Bay View and Philadelphia. The work of Furness was characterized by an adventurous combination of styles, angles, roof shapes and sizes, ornate, decorative brick chimneys and, creative uses of elaborate woodworking, and shingle siding combinations above brick and stone sidewalls and foundations. His work received wide acclaim and was in demand, but beyond that, Furness must have been somewhat of a diplomat and negotiator as well since he successfully bridged corporate rivalries and simultaneously held commissions from competing B&O, PRR, and Philadelphia & Reading (known as the Reading Lines after 1924).

The Aberdeen station, built in 1886, displayed many of the distinctive elements that were Furness trademarks. Still, stylish architecture could not offset a larger traffic handicap: location. The late construction of the route forced the B&O to locate the mainline to the north, remote from the commercial

center of town. As such, B&O was unable to compete evenly with PRR for freight and, to a lesser extent, passenger traffic. Both deficiencies were underscored when Aberdeen Proving Ground, located on the PRR, opened in 1917. That traffic imbalance between the two actual and historic rivals was again repeated during World War II.



This 1918 postcard view of the 1898 PRR station shows a northbound train stopping for passengers. To the left is the waiting shelter, with a passenger car at the rear to facilitate troop movements. The freight station can be seen just beyond the station on the right rear. (Frank Wrabel collection)

Despite that location challenge, the B&O station developed a loyal passenger following, many patrons correctly believing that the railroad's personalized service offered a more civilized way to travel. Some of those appreciative passengers later included service personnel who preferred the inconvenience of the longer walk to the station compared to a ride on the less-friendly PRR "Big Red Subway." Canneries to the north and west of town also patronized B&O freight services, and other businesses in the area succumbed to the unrelenting, always-willing-to-please efforts of B&O freight solicitors. Those services kept the freight station and B&O yard in Aberdeen active.

The presence of Furness stations along the Philadelphia Division started to erode as early as 1900. The "build it and traffic will come" posture the B&O assumed in the heady days of construction never really

happened along the route at most rural locations, and by 1902, at least one-third of the stations along the line were non-agency facilities. The next blow came during the desperate years of the *Great Depression* when local passenger service was reduced to one round trip per day, and some station stops were eliminated entirely or replaced with three-sided passenger shelters. The final blow came on April 26, 1958, when the B&O discontinued passenger service east of Baltimore, and the remaining stations were torn down shortly afterward.

The passenger and large freight stations at Aberdeen were spared since the signal department occupied the passenger station and the track department used part of the freight house. As railroading went through the right-sizing process and embraced new technology from 1971 to 1980, there was no longer the need for the freight station and adjacent yard; both were removed, and finally, the passenger station was abandoned. The station was boarded up but remained to the point where continuing decay forced the town of Aberdeen to consider condemnation.

Several local activists recognized the significance of the B&O station and formed the *Friends of the Aberdeen B&O Train Station*. CSX cooperated with that movement, and in 2005, the station was donated to the Historical Society of Harford County, Maryland. To make the station accessible and safe, it was determined early on that the structure had to be moved away from the tracks. That occurred in 2015 when the station was braced, jacked up, and slowly moved 50 feet north of the CSX mainline.

In August of 2024, the exterior restoration was completed at a total cost of \$750,000. The restored station is truly a sight to behold from both an architectural and railroad history perspective. The accuracy and quality of restoration clearly place this project far above similar efforts elsewhere. This is the spot where many memorable trips began. Servicemen from nearby Aberdeen Proving Ground arrived and departed, and residents of Aberdeen bid farewell to B&O passenger service back in 1958. Many residents especially mourned the loss of the more civilized and personalized B&O passenger service that had served them so well since 1886.

For those interested in additional details or who wish to donate, the *Friends* contact information is aberdeenbotrainstation@gmail.org or P.O. Box 254 Aberdeen, MD 21001 or Phone: 410-914-7099

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The Historical Society
of Harford County, Inc.
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COURT RECORDS
9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Wednesday
ARCHIVES
9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Third Wednesday
ARCHIVES & HENRY
C. PEDEN Jr. LIBRARY
5:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.

Thursday
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Fourth Saturday
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