

The HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HARFORD COUNTY, Inc.

Preserving Our Past For Your Future



143 N. Main Street
Bel Air, MD 21014

Society News

July / August 2013

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The Historical Society of
Harford County, Inc.,
headquarters.

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The Land Ethic and the Harford County Farmer

By *Peggy Eppig*

"Conservation is a state of harmony between man and the land."

Aldo Leopold

Most high school students studying U.S. history can describe the environmental, agricultural, and social catastrophe we know as the Dust Bowl Era. Textbooks and documentaries feature images of west Texas dust storms rising thousands of feet into the air and worn-out Oklahoma wheat fields buried under wind-driven sand dunes that marched across the landscape engulfing barns, pastures, fences and homes. History teachers may share the songs of Woodie Guthrie, passages from *Grapes of Wrath*, or the iconic photographs of Dorothea Lang to emphasize the impact this decade-long event had on farmers and the land.

The socio-economic ideas of Roosevelt's New Deal were put to work to provide relief and a way forward for the nation's hardest hit rural areas. These included regional programs that addressed agricultural economic policy, rural poverty, soil protection/restoration, natural resource conservation, and rural electrification. World War II soon took center stage as the U.S. joined the conflict, but a national commitment to soil conservation and stewardship for America's agricultural landscapes had taken firm hold.

During the 1940s and 1950s, Harford County embraced agricultural conservation activities central to restoring and conserving the fertile soils and pasturelands of the rolling landscape. Somewhat immune to the shift from agrarianism to industrialism after the war because of the hilly topography, Harford County continued to grow and maintain its agricultural villages of Whiteford, Dublin, Jarrettsville,

(cont'd page 2)

The Land Ethic and the Harford County Farmer (Cont'd from page 1)

Darlington, and Churchville which featured small industry and agricultural support businesses that provided off-season employment to farmers.

The greatest threat to local agriculture during the post-war years was encroaching suburbia, a new idea on the American landscape. Expanded and improved highway systems, residential tract-home developments, military/industrial land conversions, shopping and retail, and an influx of commuting workers from Philadelphia and Baltimore and their families challenged farm communities and the rural ideal they had worked so hard to build and maintain during the period of reform and restoration. Good land became more than an asset to be protected and valued, it became a family commitment and a rural village's right to defend: a shift in thinking not unique to Harford County, but a national land movement that continues today.

Promoting an evolving land ethic, inspiring farmers and land owners to conserve and protect open and working lands in the face of rapid landscape change, was a group of pragmatic agriculturalists and agrarian writers who advocated for the land movement in farm journals, Extension publications, and the popular press. After the war, farm journalist Russell Lord and his wife Kate, a talented landscape illustrator, relocated from their cramped D.C. apartment to the former Country Club Inn in Bel Air and later to a home on South Main Street to initiate one of the most influential conservation journals of the time, writing and illustrating numerous articles and gathering and publishing the work of some of the most influential writers of the twentieth century. The Lords years in D.C. working with the Roosevelt administration, first on

agricultural issues and later on the war effort at the Weather Bureau and the Treasury Department, helped develop their conservation ethic and numerous contacts.

Found among the pages of *The Land* (1941-1954) were contributors such as Hugh Bennett, Chief of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (1933-1951); Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring*; Louis Bromfield, farmer and Pulitzer Prize winner; Paul Sears, ecologist; Gifford Pinchot, Chief of the U.S. Forestry Service (1905-1910); E.B. White, author of *Charlotte's Web*, *Stuart Little*, and *The Trumpet of the Swan* and Aldo Leopold, author of *A Sand County Almanac*, landscape restoration ecologist. In fact it would be Leopold's philosophy of land stewardship and multi-stakeholder cooperation that came to define the core concepts of the land movement in the essay *The Land Ethic*.

The Land readership and subscription grew nationally and they became spokesmen for the land movement across the country, attending meetings, agriculture conferences, participating in farm tours and promoting national as well as local authors who contributed their voices to the journal. The ordinary farmer, dairyman, gardener, and shepherd carried as much literary weight as well-known proponents of agriculture conservation, and the Lords eagerly accepted poems, essays, family recollections, and technical articles from them.

Today *The Land* is little known to Harford students and teachers, an obscure locally (Bel Air) published journal at best. It is, however, well-remembered and acknowledged by present-day progressive agriculturalists throughout the world for the influence its contributors had on forming agricultural land preservation initiatives, strengthening soil and natural resource conservation programs, and

inspiring farmers to make land stewardship part of their every day practices. It introduced the world to new ideas in cooperative land conservation practices and ideas in rural community sustainability.

The land movement continued to gain momentum throughout the 50s and 60s, and seemed to blend briefly with the emerging environmental movement in the 70s and 80s, but has always stayed true to agriculture and soil/water conservation. *The Land*, however, ceased publication in 1954 when the Friends of the Land, the association that sponsored the journal, merged with the Isaac Walton League.

The Historical Society of Harford County is fortunate to have in its library a complete set of *The Land* in bound format. An additional set of individual copies was recently donated to the Society by former Board of Directors member James Chrismer. It is great fun to seek out our local contributors who so eloquently and lovingly shared their stories along with internationally famous conservationists. The Society has also been gifted with an original oil painting done by Kate Lord. The painting was donated by former *Aegis* publisher John D. Worthington, IV in memory of his late mother Grey Worthington. The painting had been a gift to Mrs. Worthington from Russell Lord.

Refs:

Corddry, Mary and James Chrismer. *Russell and Kate Lord*. Harford Historical Bulletin Number 106: Summer/Fall 2007

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*. Oxford University Press. 1949

Leopold, Aldo. *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays*. Susan L. Flader and J. Baird Callicott. The University of Wisconsin Press. 1991

Lord, Russell and Kate, eds. *Forever the Land: A Country Chronicle & Anthology*. Harper & Brothers, Publishers. 1950

Phillips, Sarah T. *The Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal*. Cambridge University Press. 2007

SPRING EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



Wheatland Bus Tour



Spring House and Farm Tour at Merryland

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As summer heats up so do our projects and campaigns. There is significant movement on the relocation of the old Aberdeen B&O Station which will take place in August. The building restoration campaign is gaining momentum and the first phase to address our headquarters roof leak is underway. Contributions are needed so don't be shy. Please donate if you have not done so already. Our summer Quarterly Membership Meeting in July will be when we vote on the bylaws revision recently approved by your board. Please attend not only for that purpose, but also to hear an interesting speaker. Other events and matters involving the society are presented elsewhere in this newsletter. Thank you one and all for your continued support.

Henry Peden
President

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVES

Initial discussions about development of a Strategic Plan identified serious concerns about declining memberships and the need to use the Society's website more effectively.

Subsequently at the April Board meeting, it was agreed to proceed with a web membership program, a discussion ensued to determine the most logical way forward. Larry Carmichael, the Society's publicity chair and Doug Washburn, our IT specialist were contacted to discuss these concerns. The discussion highlighted some of the complexities of implementing a secure server to handle web logins. It was rather quickly determined that the degree of difficulties were outside the extant expertise of Society volunteers, therefore, the Harford County Public library was contacted and a dialog ensued with their Webmaster David McLaughlin.

At a meeting with McLaughlin and the aforementioned individuals along with the writer and Henry Peden on April 23rd, it was learned

that modern web designers rely on recently developed open-source (free) software (generally called Content Management Systems) to build web sites. Based on his preliminary understanding of the Society's requirement, McLaughlin suggested this was the way to proceed, but a detailed analysis of specific material to be posted would have to be undertaken.

Peden and the writer then began assembling what is generally called a Work Breakdown Structure of volunteer activities in the areas of Court Records, Archives, Library, and Artifacts. The first draft is dated April 24th and by May 19th (seven iterations later and after meeting with Judy Rogers to obtain Past Perfect information) a fairly comprehensive listing was produced. This was provided McLaughlin and discussed with him at a meeting on May 28th.

McLaughlin will do some additional study and plans to meet with the committee, now including Judy Rogers, sometime towards mid-July. Subsequently, he will provide a proposal on the best way to proceed. Additionally, plans are underway to present an analysis on the web design progress to the Board that will facilitate comments and suggestions for improvement.

Jack Shagena
Strategic Planning Chair

DID YOU KNOW

Kayakers make their way around Garrett Island. Great blue herons and bald eagles watch from the shore. It's hard to believe that the island remains this pristine after almost 400 years of European occupation, even though it was the first true settlement in the Lower Susquehanna River Valley.

Maryland's Lower Susquehanna River Valley,
David A. Berry

HARFORD COUNTY IN 1985; FROM SETTLEMENT TO AGRICULTURAL AND SUBURBAN CENTER

By *Carol Deibel*

In 1622, Edward Palmer, a fortune seeking Englishman, acquired a land grant and settled on an island at the head of the Bay near the mouth of the Susquehanna River. This settlement spurred other settlements along the shoreline. Originally, Baltimore County included the land area of Baltimore, Harford, Cecil and a bit of Carroll County. The County seat, established in a small settlement known as "Baltimore Town", was located on the Bush River within the area now occupied by Aberdeen Proving Grounds. As the Maryland colony grew, the seeds of development for present day Harford County were sewn.

As the population increased during the 18th century, development moved inland, creating the need for new roads connecting homes and farms. By 1785, the county had the beginnings of a road system linking inland properties with the ferry system along the Susquehanna River and the major market towns along the coast. When the county seat was moved from the Joppa area to Baltimore in 1768, the citizens of the Upper Bay petitioned the Assembly to divide Baltimore County into two regions. In 1773 their request was granted. The newly created county was named after Henry Harford, son of Frederick Calvert VI, Lord Baltimore. Harfordtown or Bush, now in the vicinity of Abingdon, was selected as the county seat and was the site of the signing of the Bush Declaration in 1775. This was one of the first declarations of independence in America. After the Revolution, the county seat was moved to the more central location of Scott's Old Fields or Bel Air, as it is called today.

The 19th century saw many great strides in transportation technology in Harford County. The development of railroads and the opening of the Susquehanna and Tidewater canals made access to the county easier and stimulated industry. The county's many inland waterways provided ideal sites for a wide variety of milling operations. Commercial fishing and lumbering industries expanded. The county moved from a frontier civilization to a flourishing industrial region. The new industries drew immigrants from many European countries. Slate quarries attracted Welsh laborers to the Whiteford/Cardiff area. The fertile farmland and lumbering opportunities lured English and German immigrants. Every group coming into the county contributed to its changing cultural and industrial development.

Technological advances and the introduction of the railroad had definitively changed farming practices in Harford County by the late 1800s. Creameries allowed farmers to have milk processed and shipped directly into Baltimore via the Ma & Pa railroad. This provided a lucrative market for local farmers. By the end of the century, Harford County was a major dairy producing county.

Between 1867 and the early 1900s, Harford County was a major canning center. Corn and tomatoes were canned in more than 100 local canneries. The purchase of Aberdeen Proving Grounds in 1917 severely impacted these local canneries. The location of the army installation removed thousands of acres of fertile farmland from corn production, forcing many canneries to close. The remaining canneries were affected by changes in local farm practices and increased competition from Baltimore canneries. By 1985, only a few canneries remained in operation.

(cont'd next page)

Two major events overshadowed county development in the 20th century. The first, already alluded to, was the federal government's purchase of 35,000 acres of prime farmland along the Harford County shoreline. The second was post war suburbanization which brought literally thousands of new residents to the county from the more urbanized areas around Baltimore. Agriculture remained an important part of the County economy, but it never regained its former prominence.

The article above was written in 1985 as part of an assessment of the demographic, economic and land use trends affecting Harford County. Since then, agriculture has declined even further due to many factors. This newsletter focuses on some of those factors and the land ethic that has retained much of our existing farm land.

NEW MEMBERS

Individual and family members:

Michael B. Cain
Erin K. Day
Allison Demski
Vivian Johnson

Ernie Nuetzel
Jim Elliott
Susan B. Maule
Claire Sidell
Alice H. Remsberg

Peggy Tapley
Peyton Amy Taylor
Valerie O. Wilson
Robert & Donna Kahoe

Corporate members: The Baltimore County Savings Bank

PORTRAITS SOUGHT

The circuit court for Harford County is seeking to expand its collection of portraits of prominent men and women from Harford County's history. To be eligible to become part of the official collection now displayed in the courthouse, a portrait must be an oil painting of professional quality with an appropriate frame no larger than 9 square feet, exclusive of the frame.

The subject of the portrait must be an individual who has achieved prominence in the community, state or nation through their profession or by publicly being acknowledged for an achievement and /or must be of some significance to the history of Harford County, the State of Maryland or the United States. The portrait must be of an individual who is deceased.

Final acceptance of any portrait is subject to the approval of the Portrait and Biography Committee of the Harford County Bar Association and the Judges of the Circuit Court for Harford County. If you would be interested in donating a portrait of your ancestor to the Court's collection or having a copy of your portrait made for donation, please contact William O. Carr, Administrative Judge of the Circuit Court for Harford County at 410-638-3262 or Teri Scherer, Court Administrator at 410-638-3169.



Wm. Pinckney portrait from existing gallery at the County Court House.

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 4 9 am – 12 noon, Hays House Independence Day Open House

Each year visitors are treated to a unique historic experience including patriotic music and tours of the Hays House as part of a town wide celebration. This is a unique opportunity to be part of the Revolutionary War celebration in this historic property that housed members of the Hays family in the early days of the colony.

Recent Hays House News



Recent events at Hays House included a June 9 spinning demonstration by docent and Colonial re-enactor Kathy Scholl, who explained the workings of a spinning wheel, the use of accessory items and how to prepare raw wool for spinning into yarn for knitting or weaving.

On June 23, Betsy Lehmann led a book discussion about *Founding Mothers*, the best-selling book by TV commentator Cokie Roberts about the little known roles of women in the founding of our nation. While the men were at war with the French and Indians, or plotting the revolution, the women were not only managing their

children and households, they were running their husbands' and fathers' business affairs, farms and plantations.

Looking for a different luncheon meeting idea? Consider arranging a delicious luncheon tea at Hays House Museum. To book a private tea for your group along with a tour of the oldest house in Bel Air, call the Historical Society at 410-838-7691 or Betsy Lehmann, Hays House co-chair, at 410-592-8693.

July 14 1 -4 pm Liriodendron Mansion Tour



July 14th House Tour location –
Liriodendron Mansion

Many of you have visited the historic 1898 Liriodendron mansion as the guest at a wedding but how much do you know about the history of the house and grounds? Join us for a behind the scenes look at Liriodendron from the perspective of the family who lived there. Guided tours of the house and grounds will be available from 1- 4 pm. An exhibit of historic photographs of the property and some videos of the family and farm operation will also be on display. Come and learn about the history of this important Palladian mansion, home of one of the founders of Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Reservations are encouraged, but not required. For more information call the Society at 410-0838-7691 or email

DirectorHSHC@verizon.net.

UPCOMING EVENTS (cont'd)

July 20 2 -4 pm, Quarterly meeting, speaker Rebecca Whitman Koford, Preserving War of 1812 Documents Presentation

This lecture and tea will provide a unique opportunity to learn about the War of 1812 during this anniversary year and the science of document preservation in particular. This is also a very important quarterly meeting as well. As noted in the May-June newsletter, attendees will be asked to vote on the proposed revisions to the Society's Bylaws at this meeting. A synopsis of the proposed Bylaw revisions was included in your last newsletter. It may also be found on the Society's website at www.HarfordHistory.org or through the Society Headquarters at 143 N. Main Street, Bel Air (410-838-7691). All members will be asked to vote on the proposal after the presentation.

August 16 7-9 pm, Historical Society Headquarters Movie Night: *Green Fire: Aldo Leopold and a Land Ethic For Our Time*

On August 16th, the Society will present a screening of the Emmy award winning film, *Green Fire, Aldo Leopold and a Land Ethic for Our Time*. Aldo Leopold was a colleague of Harford County residents Russell and Kate Lord and was a contributor to *The Land*, a nationally and internationally distributed land, agriculture and conservation journal which was published in Bel Air. Presented in partnership with the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF) the evening will feature a post film discussion and the opening of an exhibit highlighting *The Land* and Harford County's role in the conservation movement. Tickets for the event are \$8 per person and include popcorn and soft drinks. Reservations are requested although tickets may be purchased at the door. For more information or to make a reservation please call 410-838-7691.

September 21 9-3:30, Historical Society Headquarters, Harford County Genealogical Society

Genealogical Seminar from (tentatively) 9:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. The guest speakers will be two well-known genealogists from the Maryland area. In the morning, Rebecca Whitman Koford will speak on *RESEARCHING YOUR WAR OF 1812 ANCESTORS AND THE PRESERVE THE PENSION PROJECT* and *GRANDMA WHERE ART THOU?* In the afternoon, Julia Coldren-Walker will speak on *YOU BETTER WATCH OUT: OMISSIONS, ERRORS & FRAUD* and *NEWSPAPER RESEARCH ON THE INTERNET*.

Admission: HCGS members - FREE; Non-members - \$20; Students (with school ID) - \$10. Seating is limited. Bring your own brown-bag. Light refreshments and drinks provided.

New members special ... join for 2014 and get members admission (free!) to this 2013 event. Registration form and most up to date info at www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mdhcgs/meetings.htm.

BUILDING RESTORATION CAMPAIGN UPDATE

The Society is extremely grateful for the monetary donations and puzzle donations that so many members and non-members have contributed. The Building Campaign Committee continues to work on grant applications and hopes to have more details in the next newsletter. Meanwhile, the historic house tours continue to provide enjoyable and lucrative means of raising funds for the cause.

The June tour at Merryland Farms allowed visitors to explore not only a beautifully restored 18th century home but also a working horse farm with approximately sixty thoroughbred and racing horses.

On **July 14th, 1 -4 pm** the Committee will offer a tour of the Liriodendron Mansion featuring videos of the family and the home as it appeared in the 40s and 50s. Docents, who grew up at the Liriodendron will be on hand to describe life at the home and on the Liriodendron farm and orchards.

Additional fundraising events are currently in the planning stages. Watch the Society's website for more information as it becomes available.

Restoration Efforts

The first phase of the restoration effort is underway with the initiation of a leak investigation. This engineering study will allow us to prioritize repairs and assure that future improvements will be protected and long lasting. We hope to have more details available for publication in the near future.

Donor Recognition

The Society wishes to express our sincere gratitude to the following businesses and individuals for their generous donations.

Andrew Colyer
Harford County Security Systems,
Inc. (Harford Alarm Co.)
George and Cora Harrison
Peggy Tapley
Wendel Fritz
Kathleen Franetovich
Richard and Theresa Gladden
Aberdeen Federal Credit Union
Carol Allen
Gregory Baker
Ramona Bolen IMO Clovis Bolen
Ellen Cutler & Daniel Tamkus
The Eva & Jerome Cutler Charitable Trust
Ronald Cofiell

Carlton Conway
Mr. & Mrs. Fred Liedlich
Barbara Love
Dorothy Meyer, IMO Lyman Meyer
Carol Michael
Elizabeth Miller
Joanne Osborne
Mr. & Mrs. Carl Punte
Elaine Sauer
Lori Scheiner
Richard Sherrill
Mary Silling
Mr. & Mrs. Joe Smith
Bonnie Watts-Cook

For information on how you can participate in this effort, please contact Maryanna Skowronski, the Society Director at 410-83-7691 or visit our website at www.HarfordHistory.org.

HARFORD'S NEWS FROM THE PAST

Sometimes it 'racks up' worse than you think. Here is an example from the May 29, 1942 *Harford Gazette*. The story reads like a 40s crime novel, providing a glimpse into newspaper styles of the past and Harford County's colorful history.

Poolroom Owner Stabs a Poolroom Employee

When Mary Bruce, thirty, attractive brunette soda fountain waitress, left Bel Air last Saturday for the high school graduation of her 16 year old son in West Virginia, little did she dream she would come home to find her husband facing serious stabbing charge on her account.

The Bruces hail from West Virginia, live in Bel Air. Husband Herbert runs the poolroom in the Woolley Richardson Building, South Main Street, Bel Air. Mary Bruce works in the Charas-Poppachrist bowling alley, Vaughn building.



Vaughn Hotel in Bel Air

Brunette, Mrs. Bruce had been complaining, said Bruce that dapper Benny Selbert, 31, racker-up in the adjoining Charas-Poppachrist poolroom was making passes at her, asked her for dates. The outraged husband decided to have negotiations with ambitious Benny.

Tuesday afternoon Bruce called on Benny, at work, for the peace talk. Hot words flared into open warfare in the hallway between the bowling alley and poolroom. Selbert started swinging with a beer bottle, according to Bruce. Then the husband got busy. He pulled out a 25 cent penknife, started stabbing.

Benny Selbert got seven gashes, five around the heart, one on the right side, one on the chin. Police, attracted by the noise tore off Selbert's shirt, red with blood, rushed him to Dr. Gerald Palmer's office. The wounds weren't very deep. Dr. Palmer sewed them up, sent Selbert home.

Bald Herbert Bruce, 46, a counterpart of Leon Errol in the movies sits in a jail cell under \$1,500 bond. Don Juan Selbert is getting well in his bed in the Iglehart apartments, North Main Street, under \$100 bond. Both men are charged with disorderly conduct and assault.

RESERVATION FORM

Date	Event	Fee	# of Tickets	Amount
July 14 th	Liriodendron Mansion Tour	\$10	_____	\$_____
July 20 th	Preserving War of 1812 Documents by Rebecca Whitman Koford, Tea/Lecture	\$ 8	_____	\$_____
August 16 th	Movie Night – Green Fire	\$ 8	_____	\$_____

Note: Annual dinner information is not yet available. Please watch the website or Facebook page for information on this upcoming event.

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED

\$_____

Send this form and your check to: Historical Society of Harford County, 143 N. Main St., Bel Air, MD 21014. For more information call 410-838-7691 or check website at www.HarfordHistory.org



Work progresses on the Aberdeen Train Station

"The purpose of history is to explain the present – to say why the world around us is the way it is. History tells us what is important in our world, and how it came to be. It tells us why the things we value are the things we should value. And it tells us what is to be ignored, or discarded. That is true power – profound power – the power to define a whole society."

Timeline
Michael Crichton

The Society's Gift shop is pleased to announce the recent acquisition of Mollee Kruger's book, *The Cobbler's Last*. These are in limited supply so you are encouraged to visit or contact the shop if you are interested in obtaining a copy of this fascinating story of old Bel Air.

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DIRECTOR

Maryanna Skowronski

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Carol Deibel

HISTORICAL SOCIETY and GIFT SHOP HOURS

Tuesday
COURT RECORDS
9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

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

Thursday
RESEARCH LIBRARY
9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Fourth Saturday
ARCHIVES and
RESEARCH LIBRARY
10:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.