

The HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HARFORD COUNTY, Inc.

Preserving Our Past For Your Future



143 N. Main Street
Bel Air, MD 21014

Society News

January / February 2014

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

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NEW MEMBERS

Stephen Gerald Fine
Hersey E. Gray, Sr.
Philip Hipley
Anna Chrismer Housman

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is an honor for me to be elected President of the Historical Society of Harford County, Inc. and to work with the other officers, volunteers and our members (you) to improve upon and further the positive work accomplished by our predecessors. There are many tasks before us: continue to carry out our mission statement; restore and maintain the properties for which we are responsible; provide the very best care of the papers and objects that we currently own as well as those items yet to be donated; and provide programs that expand people's knowledge of the history of Harford County. Collectively and individually these tasks require effort on the part of the membership. It is my belief that the Historical Society is not just for the benefit of the "membership" but all of the citizens of Harford County.

That being said, I challenge the other officers and the Trustees to be diligent in providing leadership, guidance and support to the Director, volunteers and members. I challenge our volunteers to surpass their current level of devotion to the work of preservation and organization of the artifacts, archives, and printed materials that expand the knowledge of researchers. I challenge the membership who are not actively involved in the society to utilize some of their time and talents to sustain the society's programs/needs and to provide financial support, not only personally but by encouraging businesses, community organizations and governmental entities that you have contact with to partner with us to achieve our goals. I challenge all of you to challenge me to do the same. Collectively and only collectively can we make the oldest county historical society in Maryland the very best it can be. And finally I, on behalf of the collective body, thank the individuals who have finished their terms as officers and trustees for a job well done.

Richard Sherrill, President

BEL AIR ROLLER RINK: A LOST TREASURE

The following article was extrapolated from an oral history with Carole De Ran whose parents built and operated the Bel Air Roller Rink on Conowingo Road in Bel Air. The entire interview is available at the Society Headquarters and covers Ms. De Ran's early childhood in Shawsville, her years in Street at the family's general store, the development and operation of the Roller Rink and her many years teaching at North Harford High School.

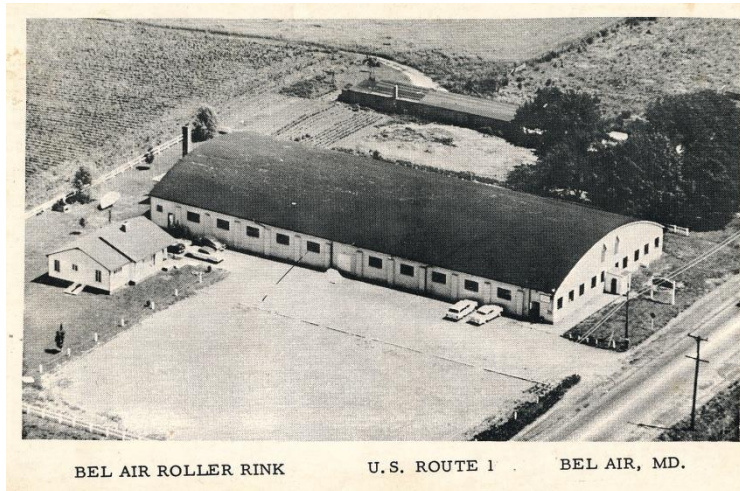
Joseph Orr came up with the idea to build a roller rink while on a family trip to Ohio in 1951. As his step daughter, Carole DeRan tells the story, she and her sister were prone to car sickness so the trip required many stops along the way. At one of these stops, Joe spotted a roller rink which he inspected in an attempt to escape all the action in the car. The shape and size of the structure truly inspired him and the thought of building one at home became his mission.

At the time, Mr. Orr and his wife Catherine owned a general store in the Street area, situated next to the Ma & Pa railroad line. The store served the surrounding community with postal services, groceries, even baby chicks, but the idea of the roller rink just wouldn't let go. In addition to running the store, Joe had a real estate license so he began checking potential locations for this venture. He initially thought about a Baltimore location, but it already had Carlin's roller rink. He then looked at the Route 40 corridor, but that didn't work out. Then he found the Kelly farm on Route 1 near Bel Air. Mr. Kelly had no children to continue the farm and offered to sell it to Mr. Orr, but Mr. Orr would have to sell the livestock and divide the parcels. When all was said and done, the Orr's made a profit of between \$10,000 and \$15,000, a

great sum in those days, plus they still had the store to sell. Still there was a big concern. Could the limited population in the Bel Air area support this venture?

Mr. Orr and his friends Donald Dick and Marshall Scarboro sat around the kitchen table and helped plan the building but the banks questioned the business plan and

recommended that Orr get an investor, so Ms. DeRan's uncle Charlie was approached and agreed reluctantly to be the investor, but only if he would be paid back after five years. The partnership lasted much longer than originally expected.



Scarboro, Dick and Orr could now move ahead with design plans so they sat around the table and roughed out sketches and a list of material needs. The big problem, as Mr. Orr saw it, was to eliminate posts in the center of the rink. He experienced the issue of center poles first hand at the Ohio rink and was determined to eliminate the possibilities of skaters running into posts. This led to an architectural innovation created by Marshall Scarboro. The design also allowed the side rails to be suspended from the open trestle so skating amateurs who didn't know how to stop could grab the rail and it would give away, swinging

back and forth. Now the trestles did have to be tightened with the change of season. The original building was constructed of block with the curved roof and Masonite floor. Mr. Scarboro worked at Aberdeen Proving Grounds and was aware of a new experimental plastic material being developed there. This provided the perfect covering for the floor. Similar to a boat finish, it turned a beautiful blue when applied to the Masonite. Six years later, the family was finally able to afford the final maple flooring.

This was truly a family business. Everybody pitched in to lay the floor including the four children ages ten and under. Once the rink opened all of the children learned to skate and to operate the business. They lived in a house next to the rink running the lunch counter, cleaning the bathrooms and helping with all phases of the operation. They also practiced for skating competitions with teams of youngsters from throughout the area. There were speed and dance skating teams and some of these skaters worked with pros, such as Bernie Lang. Interestingly, most of the moves you now see in Ice Skating competitions were first developed at roller skating rinks because the cost to build

ice skating rinks in the south was too prohibitive.

Mrs. Orr was in charge of marketing and promotion. She was constantly on the phone calling churches and organizations to bring in groups and arranging special events like Halloween parties and Buddy Dean Record Hops. Of course, according to Mrs. DeRan, Uncle Charlie had rules about such events. Because he did not want those “teenage rebel rousers” there regularly, Buddy Dean was only allowed to come twice a year and he insisted that there be a skating session first, the building emptied and then Buddy Dean, who was left waiting at the house, was brought in for the dancing from 10 PM to 12:30 AM.



Halloween party with skaters in costume.

On Friday nights George Magness ran buses from Parkville to the rink. Sometimes there were as many as twelve buses in a single night. Eventually the business expanded with rinks in Virginia and North Carolina. The children were not interested in continuing the business and each of the rinks were eventually sold. The Bel Air Rink is now a series of retail stores, although, the exterior design remains to remind locals of the “good old days”.

Vision: *The Historical Society of Harford County, Inc. seeks to be the preeminent and most user-friendly source for an individual to obtain historical information about the county and genealogical information about its inhabitants.*

Mission: *The Historical Society of Harford County, Inc. collects, preserves, promotes, and interprets the rich and diverse history of the Harford County area in its regional context from prehistoric origins to the present for the education and enjoyment of current and future generations.*

2013 -2016 Strategic Plan - Historical Society of Harford County, Inc.

YE OLDE BEL AIRE: A LETTER FROM THOMAS BOND



This article was found in the Society newspaper archives. It was printed in the Baltimore Star on May 1, 1918 and gives a picture of a far different place and time. For those who don't remember, the Country Club Inn (the Old Eagle Hotel) stood on Bond Street at the site now occupied by the Mary Risteau Court house. It was torn down to make way for Bel Air's first shopping center which included Polan's Department Store (with the county's first escalator) and the A & P Grocery Store among others. These were eventually replaced by the C-Mart and later the courthouse.

The Country Club Inn, at Belair, (sic) recently held its second centennial celebration. This old hostelry, since the days of Indian skirmishes has been the rendezvous of the big men of their times. The Father of Our country is recorded among the guests; the occasion of his visits were probably when he traveled to and from his headquarters on the outskirts of Philadelphia during the winter season of 1777 and 1778.

Although the inn has undergone many changes both of name and management since its erection in 1718, and has several additions in

the form of wings, the main building is essentially the same.

As its present name is of recent date it is more generally recognized as the Old Eagle Hotel, which name it bore for a longer duration than any other. From the time one traverses the box boarded wall and begs admission with an old brass knocker on a heavy paneled door, till the hostess, Mrs. John Butterfield bids " adieu so sweetly that you feel she bids you return", one remains a victim to a colonial atmospheric spell.

In cool weather, before the welcoming blaze, in the ancient fireplace with a coat of arms of Maryland backboard, one visualizes eighteenth century and belles treading the stately measures of the minuet; a belated maid with powdered locks hastening down the quaint little stairway to join a satin breeched partner, a Juliet wrafting kisses from the balcony to an adoring Romeo; or perchance, if the hours should be the eerie one of midnight-or the gloomy one of twilight- you hear a voice resonant with morbidity declaim: "When we have shuffled off this mortal coil." Be not affrighted; it is but the ghost of Edwin Booth-who spent more than a year here—rehearsing a Shakespearian tragedy.

Booth, the Boy

Previously Belair had known Booth as a barefoot boy, running around its streets with the other village lads. He was later a student at the Academy. His home was a short distance east of Belair.

But the present era is charmingly and consistently blended with the past in the outfitting of the inn and the touch of a fairy wand in the guise of a button, throws a mellowed light upon your reverie, you apologize for your delve into other centuries and answer the summons "supper am served," which is issued by Otho who is part and parcel of the establishment. And while you have tasted of the old fashioned menu- fried chicken, creamed gravy and crisp browned waffles, you sigh a sigh of gratitude that they are realities and not ye olden days. And you are further grateful that your dining room companions are not Beau Brummels of your reminiscences but twentieth century cavaliers—perhaps Walter de C. Poultney or Charlie McCann- with the military castle of continental days supplemented by a group of ordnance officers at the Proving Grounds not far distant.

Mr. Thomas B. Bond, a recent visitor at the inn, who has but lately returned from Ukiah, California where he resided many years, is a gentleman of the old school and a native of Harford. Mr. Bond has written by request, of Mr. Butterfield, proprietor of the inn a letter reminiscent of Belair 80 years ago. Comparisons may be "odious", but if so, Mr. Bond's letter is an exception to the rule. For, although modern conveniences, electricity, motor-buses, telephones, etc., have long since found their way into the little town of his boyhood- the character and spirit of the citizens remain the same; names prominent then are born by descendants now and the county, whose representatives framed a declaration of independence antedating the Declaration of the Continental Congress by 15 months and the Mecklenburg declaration by three months, is the mater county of Spaulding, the first American soldier to go over the top.

Eighty Years Ago

Mr. Bond's letter to Mr. Butterfield is as follows:

Dear Sir - In compliance with your request I refer to some reminiscences of Belair as I remember them 80 years ago and while residing there.

The town then had four or five dwellings, a courthouse, a jail and two taverns (as they were then called), one opposite the courthouse kept by a gentleman named McCloskey, and the other by Mrs. Kitty Richardson, where your hotel stands.

And a large part of the old building is still standing. There stood in the front yard a famous old hickory tree under whose shade, it was said distinguished gentlemen of the olden time assembled in social coterie to discuss the general topics of the day, among whom were Luther Martin, William Pinkney, General

Maulsby and many others who lodged and feasted at the genial hostelry.

Opposite the tavern, on the other side of the street, a mounted old cannon was often placed, which it was said saw service at the battle of Brandywine and used by Washington and Lafayette. It was sometimes discharged on public occasions to remind the surrounding country of the event celebrated.

Opposite the courthouse, a short distance from your hotel was a printing office, where Mr. Charles Boulden published a Democratic paper-I believe called the Harford Democratic- and nearby a gentleman named Keating was the proprietor of a paper of the Whig persuasion. These were the only papers published in Harford County at the time.

There were but four or five post offices in the county at that time, and Mr. Boulden's paper was distributed to the subscribers by a little gentleman named Philly Cole, on horseback. One day the horse ran away with little Philly-threw him off and broke his neck. There were two high schools in Belair then, the Academy and a female seminary, taught by a lady named Mrs. Norris - a lady of culture and universally beloved. Her schoolhouse was situated at the corner of Main Street and the Baltimore Road. It attracted many young ladies from a distance for the splendid opportunity it possessed of acquiring a refined education owing to the high merits that distinguished the principal who presided at the school.

The principal of the Academy was Mr. Wahn, a gentleman of great erudition and polished manners. He resided at the Richardson House for many years. There was also a French school, kept by a gentleman named Cherbannier at a place on the street a short distance from your hotel southward. Otho Scott, Henry Fernandez, Augustus Bradford, William B. Bond and

General Maulsby were prominent lawyers practicing at Belair at that time.

The Mail Service

All the mail from Baltimore to Belair, which supplied about half the county, was brought in one pouch on a stage three times a week, driven by a gentleman named Dick Frame.

Judge Stevenson Archer, with two associates, presided over the Circuit Court at Belair-Colonel Dorsey was clerk of the court and Thomas Scott Bond (my grandfather) was register of wills and Thomas Talbott Bond (my father) was his deputy, who had entire charge of the office for 27 years. My father was a defender of Fort McHenry at the bombardment by the British in 1814 and the only native of Harford there.

I think Belair was then spelled Belle Aire, meaning "good air", to distinguish it from "malaria" or bad air- which prevailed in the lower part of the county whence the county seat had been removed. Belair was a bay little town and noted for its fine entertainment and balls and the refinement of its citizens.

There was but one church in the town, which stood south west of the courthouse. It was free to all denominations. There was of course (I need not say) no railroad, automobile, telegraph, telephone, electric light nor photograph gallery in town; nor in the world, at that time except a few hundred miles of railroad far distant from Belair.

This is all I can remember just now worthy of mention, and perhaps some of it is not.

Very respectfully,
THOMAS B. BOND

(The Baltimore Star, May 1, 1918)

BUILDING RESTORATION CAMPAIGN

The first phase of the project, the leak investigation is completed. This is good news/bad news for the Society. It allows us to proceed with the next phase of the project and provides us with a phasing and cost schedule, but it also makes the reality of the fundraising effort more apparent. In January, the building restoration committee plans to release a Request for Proposal for the initial repairs to the roof. Meanwhile, the committee continues to work with an electrical contractor to develop an analysis of lighting needs; and flag specialists on the relocation and design of the flag court. The existing flag pole must be relocated because nearby trees restrict the ability to use the existing site and tree removal would be detrimental to the appearance and function of the site. Fund raising efforts continue to be a major focus for the committee with engineering estimates indicating that necessary repairs will cost approximately \$500,000.

The committee has been successful in seeking grant funds from a number of sources, but these must be supplemented to meet our needs. A bond bill request was submitted to the state legislature in November with the help of Delegate Mary- Dulany James. If approved, this could provide a major portion of the needed restoration funding. Meanwhile, the committee continues to conduct a variety of fundraising efforts including house tours, the upcoming - Dinner with "Dean Martin "(February 14th at Society Headquarters) and a spring tour of Mount Felix Winery in Havre de Grace (details will follow in the March/April newsletter). We hope that you will help us by attending these fundraising events. They promise to be very entertaining!

Also we ask for your continued financial support. To date we have garnered \$ 13,881 towards the \$25,000 match needed to match the **Dresher Grant Award**. Please consider helping us if you can. We have only a few more months to meet the award deadline. Also, consider helping us by voicing your support for the upcoming bond bill.

We are very appreciative of the donations received to date. Thank you to each of our donors. For those who have been thinking of making a donation but would like more information, please contact our Director, Maryanna Skowronski at 410-838-7691.

DONOR RECOGNITION

The Society wishes to express our sincere gratitude to the following businesses, individuals and families for their generous donations to the Building Campaign effort:

| | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Stephen Fine | C. Clark Jones | Dixie Construction |
| Carol Deibel | Alfonso Roberty | Henry C. Peden, Jr. |
| Harford Bank | Dr. John Duguid | Col. Jack Carmichael |
| Mary Silling | Stewart H. Getz | Col. Benjamin Silver |
| Hannah Koziski | Richard Sherrill | William & Donna White |
| Edward Hopkins | John Spielberg | Harford Mutual Insurance |
| | | |
| Gordon and Lorraine Skinner | Helen Wenner IMO Paul Wooddell | |
| Walter and Virginia Holloway | Harford County Genealogical Society | |

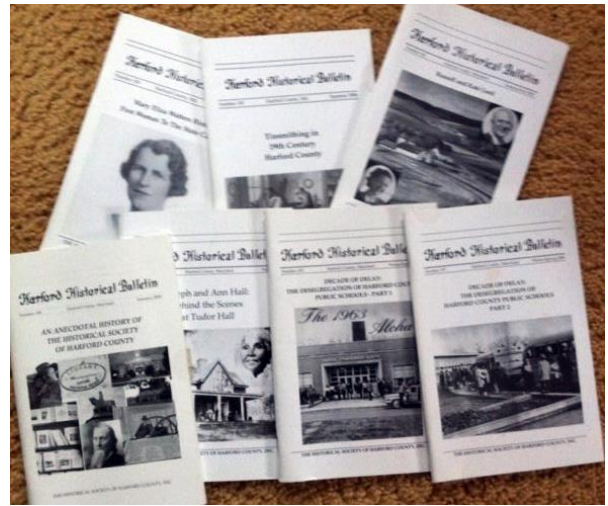
Anne Sinclair/Cat Sense Feline Hospital & Boarding , Inc.

We encourage anyone who would like to learn more about the building restoration campaign and how you can help to contact the Society Director, Maryanna Skowronski at 41-838=7691 or visit our website at www.HarfordHistory.org. Donations may be made using PayPal on the website.

COMING EVENTS

Harford History on Parade

Visit us on **Saturday, January 18th from 11 AM 'til 2 PM** for a unique opportunity to meet many of the stars of the Society. Bulletin authors, video artists and local writers will be on hand to discuss their work and to sign bulletins and books. These will include Joe Swisher, Jim Chrismer, Chuck Robbins and many others who have provided us with rare glimpses of Harford's History and attributes. Rarely displayed art work and photographs from the Society's collection will be on display and Society members will be on hand to provide information about the collection, upcoming events, and membership and volunteer opportunities. This event is open to everyone, so please share this with your friends and watch the Society's website and Facebook page for more information as it becomes available. Free.



Valentine's Day Romantic Italian Dinner

This year Valentine's Day falls on **Friday, February 14th**, to celebrate this romantic holiday, the Society is planning a very special event: a Romantic Italian Dinner featuring Eric Richardson, a Dean Martin impersonator. Let us take you back to the days when the Rat Pack ruled supreme and the words to songs could actually be understood! A sit down dinner will be served at **6:30 PM** at the Historical Society and will include an amazing candlelight presentation of the music of your youth. Call for reservations, 410-838-7691 or complete the form at the back of the newsletter and return to the Society.

Menu as follows:

Italian Green Salad: Romaine lettuce tossed with black olives, red onion, pepperoncini, chopped tomato and croutons drizzled with Italian Dressing

Chicken Cacciatore: tender breast of chicken, tossed with roasted peppers, caramelized onions, diced tomatoes, mushrooms, garlic and fresh herbs, Served over pasta.

Garlic Bread and Italian Bread served with Butter

Complimentary Coffee served with dessert





Sunday, March 9th from 1-4 pm will be the season opening of the Hays House Museum featuring an exhibit of vintage clothing. You won't want to miss this one. Watch for more details in next month's newsletter and on the Society's website and *Facebook* page.

NOTE: The Society Headquarters is open on the 4th Saturday of each month. This allows those who cannot come during the work week an opportunity to use the facility, check the gift shop offerings and meet with Society volunteers to discuss research projects and Society Happenings and opportunities. Starting in May, we will add Pit beef sales to the mix. We hope you will take advantage of this chance to visit the facility.

Northern Chesapeake Archeological Society - *Upcoming Events*

(For more information contact Dan Coates – 410-273-9619/410-808-2398
or Bill McIntyre 410-939-9768/410-459-3532)

Jan 8, 2014 –6:30 PM Lecture - Locating Historic Sites within the Boundaries of Fair Hill, Cecil County by Emily Kilby will be held at the Havre de Grace City Hall, Havre de Grace, MD

Feb 12, 2014 – 6:30 PM Lecture - The St. Francis Xavier Cemetery Archeological Investigation by Jim Gibb will be held at the Historical Society of Harford County, Bel Air, MD

DID YOU KNOW?

In the 1930s, the south side of the block of Baltimore Pike between Kenmore Avenue and Atwood Road in Bel Air was known by locals as "gasoline alley". William and Rachel Read, investors from Philadelphia, County, Pennsylvania, purchased a portion of the Boarmans farm situated along Baltimore Pike. (The farm included the Baltimore Pike frontage as well as the land now housing the Bel Air High School). After holding the property for a short while, the Reads subdivided the old farm



Gasoline Alley in the 1940s.

property and began disposing of the lots, starting with the sale of 0.579 acre to Standard Oil in 1932. Thus began the development of an automobile strip development and the loss of the first farm to the changing face of the county. The age of the automobile had come.

By 1946, the Reads had sold all of the properties fronting on Route 1 (Baltimore Pike) to buyers who built the Hopkins Motor Company, Sherwood Gas Station, The Diner (J.R. Brill Co.), an Esso station and finally P. J. Schafer's service station.

FALL EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Mollee Kruger Comes to Bel Air

The author of *The Cobbler's Last* traveled from Rockville to share her adventures growing up in 1930s-1940s Bel Air. A standing room only crowd included many of her class mates and graduates from old Bel Air High School. Chuck Robbins, one of her former classmates, presented her with a plat of the Main Street location of her father's shoe store and her childhood home which was located between the old Richardson's Drug Store and the Bel Air Movie Theater or Argonne Theater as it was known back then. Brady Chrismer gave her an original cast iron child's shoe form. Ms.



Kruger's two sons and daughters in law accompanied her as "Team Kruger" and together they presented an amazing story of Mollee's childhood adventures. Ms. Kruger's prolific writing career has spanned many decades and included several books, poems, plays, radio show and more. The following excerpt from her book *Ladies First: Rhymes and Times of the Presidents' Wives and Other Female Fantasies* seemed perfectly suited to our celebration of President's Month.

Archaeological Find

I found a mummy case of rhymes
(Grave robber! Shameless raider!)
Naïve pre-adolescent slush
The pride of a Sixth Grader.

The verse was scribbled years ago,
The sentiments paraded
By children now turned Golden Age,
Who find the world more jaded.

I left my autograph book out
This past Fourth of July,
And spirits of the Ladies First
Rewrote it in on the sly.

Renouncing youthful innocence,
Replacing girlish blather,
They spoke their minds as old friends do
Wherever women gather.

*When you own land
Attracting high bids
You'll find men will marry
Rich widows with kids.*

Martha W

*When you are old,
And coffers are drained,
What happened to people
You once entertained?*

Dolley M.

*Remember well and bear in mind,
Good subject matter's hard to find,
And though I've spent some rotten days,
I'm worth my weight in books and plays.*

Mary L.

Citation: Mollee Kruger, *Ladies First Rhymes and Times of the Presidents' Wives and Other Female Fantasies*. Rockville, MD, Maryben Books, 1995, pp. 92-93.



Modular Train Show at the Society Headquarters

This was the second annual train show put on by the Harford Modular Railroad Group.



The Society and the Hays House museum jointly sponsored a Celtic Christmas concert performed by the talented duo of Charlie Zahm and Tad Marks . The concert held at Christ Our King Presbyterian Church was a highlight of the season. Both musicians are exceptional and the finale, a performance of *Silent Night*, in the candle lit church was not to be missed!

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS

Baltimore in 1832 became the first American city to receive a boatload of bird guano from islands off Peru, on the other side of Cape Horn. One of the customers was Junius Brutus Booth, father of the man who later assassinated President Lincoln. Booth mixed the droppings of the Peruvian cormorants with bone dust that he ground up at his farm in Harford County. (*Excerpt: Robert Keith. Baltimore Harbor: A Picture History. Third edition. The Johns Hopkins University Press. 2005.*)



RESERVATION FORM

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Event</u> | <u>Fee</u> | <u># of Tickets</u> | <u>Amount</u> |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| February 14 | A Night with Dean Martin | \$50. ⁰⁰ | _____ | \$ _____ |
| TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED | | | | \$ _____ |

Return reservation form to HSHC at 143 N. Main Street, Bel Air, MD 21014
For more information or to make reservation by phone call 410-838-7691.

The Historical Society
of Harford County, Inc.
143 North Main Street
Bel Air, MD 21014



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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.