

The HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HARFORD COUNTY, Inc.

Preserving Our Past For Your Future



143 N. Main Street
Bel Air, MD 21014

Society News

November / December 2016

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

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As cooler weather has returned to the county, your Society continues to fulfill its mission. Many new donations have come into the building. We have continued to provide informative public events for the members and anyone wishing to attend. Restoration and maintenance of our properties continues. Refinements in the systems we use to accession, catalog and store materials in our collection are being instituted.

Some of the recent artifact acquisitions are a sewing machine from Gleneagles Clothing Factory and an 1842 printing press. We also received an iron cooking pot and a chamber pot, which have been added to the furnishings of the Hays House. Memorabilia from the Aegis office highlighting many of their accomplishments and history are now a part of our artifacts collection. The numerous pieces of art work in our collection have been inventoried and identified in a new cataloging system. Research is currently underway that will lead to the acquisition of a suitable storage rack to protect our collection. These fine art items will be stored in Room D in the basement, which has recently been repainted.

Among the archival donations are the papers of Dr. Percy V. Williams, a pioneering educator who was Harford County's first African-American school board president. We obtained copies of the *Aegis* newspaper spanning five years (2011 to August 2016), which will be boxed and added to the bound collection of the paper.

Those involved in the presentation of the Brown Bag Lunch events are pleased with their efforts. If you have an opportunity to come to the Society on the second Tuesday of the month, you can share in the experience.

The Annual Dinner provided for the election of new members of the Board of Trustees: William Carr, Mark Gallihue and Robert Wirtanen. We also recognized the accomplishments of Walter Holloway and Jack Shagena as George W. Archer Fellows.

(cont'd on page 2)

(cont'd from page 1)

Following dinner, we were visited by Patrick Henry, who was returning to Virginia and stopped by to share the accomplishments of the recent Continental Congress, which had met in Philadelphia. He also congratulated the local inhabitants on their establishment as an independent county.

Another busy but informative event was Harford History on Parade which gave a large number of the county's historical entities the opportunity to share their story with the people who attended.

Finally, I am happy to say that the Historical Society of Harford County, Inc. is no longer the owner of the 1885 station that served the B&O Railroad in Aberdeen! Rick Herbig, Chairman of the B&O Station Committee, arranged to have the STARRS stock and all of the other papers associated with the station turned over to Jon Livezey, treasurer for the Aberdeen Room Archives and Museum. In exchange, we received a donation of \$15,000 and a ceremonial dollar which represented their purchase of the one hundred shares of STARRS stock.

During the approximate fifteen-year period of time the Society was involved in saving and moving the station there were many, many, many hours of work dealing with bureaucratic red tape, constant delays and preparation for the eventual move. During this time a large dose of frustration was experienced by numerous volunteers, board members, officers, our Director and her assistant. I have a great appreciation for the efforts of those who supported the project from its inception. Now that this project is finished we can focus on the cornucopia of other projects before the Society. Your help with these endeavors is greatly appreciated.

Dial Tone Comes to Harford County

by Doug Washburn

Alexander Graham Bell was credited with inventing the "harmonic telegraph", what we call the telephone, in 1876 when the U. S. Patent Office issued Patent No. 174,465. The telegraph had been around for some 30 years, and much of the work to improve the telegraph led to the development of the telephone.

Bell beat Elisha Gray to the Patent Office by just hours, and some historians say that Bell's model did not really work and Gray's did. In fact, the 25-oct-1878 issue of *The Aegis & Intelligencer* reported:

A number of Americans have received the decoration of the Legion of Honor – Among them were Wm. F. Story, the sculptor; Thomas A. Edison, inventor of the phonograph; Elisha Gray, inventor of the telephone; Charles A. Tiffany, manufacturer of silver-ware; J. A. Bridgman, artist and others.

Maryland had its first telephone exchange in Baltimore City in January 1879, but Harford County's first telephone service, between Bel Air and Churchville, did not come about until 1890. Service between Churchville and Havre de Grace followed shortly. The Harford County Telephone Company was established in 1895 and telephone service throughout Harford County quickly flourished. The 7-jan-1898 issue of *The Aegis & Intelligencer* reported:

The Home Telephone Company has completed its lines from Fallston to Upper Cross Roads via Scarff and Pleasantville. The company contemplates an extension to Taylor, Jarrettsville and Shawsville in the near future.

Early telephone exchanges were 'switchboards', huge wooden panels filled with jacks manually connected via cables by your friendly telephone operator. The backside was a maze of wires connecting to the homes and businesses (lines), and other offices (trunks). Most readers have probably seen an old movie where a caller would ring the operator and say "Martha, connect me to the drug store". The 18-aug-1916 issue of *The Aegis and Intelligencer* reported:

The many patrons of our local telephone exchange learned with regret on Wednesday that they will be required to ask for all parties by number in the future. Our local operators have been so considerate along this line; patrons have become spoiled and find the new ruling very burdensome. We trust the management will see its way clear to return to the old method of calling by name.

Even if management did "see its way clear to return to the old method", the introduction of the dial office would have made knowing the called number a necessity. In Harford County, the introduction of the dial exchange happened in Jarrettsville. The 24-nov-1939 issue of the *Harford Democrat & Aberdeen Enterprise* reported:

FIRST DIAL PHONES COME TO HARFORD COUNTY

The first dial phones to be installed in Harford County will make their appearance during January 1940 at Jarrettsville, according to Mr. R. R. Childes, manager of the Jarrettsville exchange.

The new building to house the dial central office equipment is now being constructed in Jarrettsville, near the present office, and work on the installation of the new telephone instruments was started November 13th.

Additional trunk lines are being installed between Bel Air and Jarrettsville and, after the conversion, long distance and operator calls will be handled by the Bel Air operators over these lines.

The conversion is under the direct supervision of Mr. T. C. Crane, wire chief, and Fielding K. Woods, manager of Bel Air.

The 24-may-1940 *Harford Democrat & Aberdeen Enterprise* then reported:

An opportunity to inspect Harford County's first dial telephone exchange will be given to the public at an open house at the Jarrettsville exchange on the nights of May 28th and 29th.

The earliest telephone exchange in Jarrettsville was in the hotel that stood on the south-west corner of the town square, where the second fire house, the Keene Dodge annex, is today. Although not mentioned in the article, the 'present office' referred to, the switchboard, was in home of Charles and Mary German. Readers may recall the German's white house on the hilltop on the west side of Keene Dodge that Keene used as an office for a period of time before razing it. A building that could have been mistaken for a second garage on the German's property was the building that housed the new Strowger Step-by-Step (SXS) dial switch.

Strowger, a mortician by trade, developed the mechanical switching system because the wife of his chief competitor was the switchboard operator in their town, and she routinely directed calls for an undertaker to her husband's business rather than to Strowger.

In my memory, my mother (Viola McFadden Washburn, who earlier worked as an operator in Bel Air) and my aunt (Margaret McFadden Watters) were hired every so often to perform 'traffic studies'. The Strowger SXS looked like a maze of coffee cans; these were the 'line finder' units. Many a trouble was cleared with a simple tooth pick.

My cousin, Shirley Watters Garrett, also worked with her mother for C&P doing traffic studies and provides this insight:

My mother went to work for the phone company when she graduated from high school and worked that switchboard. She became a boarder at the German's because someone needed to be on call 24/7 to connect calls. She lived with them and worked there for about a year before she transferred into Baltimore City, where she worked until she was married.

The building referred to as 'the dial house' was a smaller building behind the garage and not especially visible from the road. It was full of those 'coffee cans' you mentioned. I did many a traffic study with my mother, too - not just in Jarrettsville, but in other dial houses around the area. I remember going to Long Green and, especially, a rather long assignment that took us to Churchill for many days.

The Jarrettsville dial house was eventually enlarged. I'm guessing that was late 1950's - possibly even early sixties. It was nearly doubled in size and the equipment became much more modernized.

The 1940 SXS office was replaced with an Electronic Switching System in the 1970s, and again in the 1990s. Both were located in the still functional building on the east side of the shopping center on the northeast corner of the square where the Jarrett Mansion once stood.



Strowger SXS Line Finder. The two center units are covered with the "coffee cans" and the two exterior units exposed.

Source: www.telephonetribute.com/switches.html



Mary German (l), Margaret Watters (c), and Kurtz Fuller (r), of C&P Telephone, in the expanded Jarrettsville exchange behind the German house c.1960. Source: Shirley Watters

THE BOOK CLUB, A HARFORD COUNTY TREASURE FOR 70 YEARS

By George F. Harrison, Jr.

Aberdeen Proving Ground has been a catalyst for many things in Harford County, since its opening in 1917 during World War One until the present day. Tens of thousands of people have been involved with APG over the years, most staying for a year or two. But many made Harford County their home, raising a family and eventually retiring here.

Among them were the highly specialized mathematicians and engineers brought in to work at the Ballistic Research Laboratory (BRL), where they were pioneers in the use of computers. They came from all over the country and they brought with them their wives and families.



During the war there was not much of an opportunity for these wives to get to know their surroundings and those in the area with similar interests. The war had ended and a group of women from the BRL family decided it was time they got to know the county they now called home.

Grace Sterne was one of those women. In the fall of 1946 she put out a call to several of her friends suggesting a meeting to discuss some ideas. What they decided to do was form a book club. It was a simple idea but it worked. And as a measure of its success, it is still going strong after 70 years.

It was decided at that first meeting to limit membership to no more than 15 or 16, and that has been the case over the past 70 years. The hostess at the monthly meeting would serve refreshments, and perhaps wine, which everyone agreed would be another good idea.

They created a protocol for the meetings: A topic would be decided on for the entire year. Each member would choose a book to read and review and then make a recommendation to the other members. Only one book would be reviewed at each meeting. A luncheon would be held at the end of the year to decide the topic for the next year.

Over the years, topics included The Italian Renaissance, Twentieth Century Literature, Arabian Culture, Biographies. Maryland history and many, many others. Books included Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners, James Joyce, Walt Whitman, Dostoevsky, Schopenhauer, as well contemporary writers. These are serious topics and serious writers; there are no romance novels or formula mysteries here.

The current topic for this year is current events, and during an election year, there is much to read and discuss.

The original charter members included Muriel Jones, Lenora Frazer, Anne Rodman, Doris Brown, Ruth Dederick, Marcia Kuhn, Pat Tomlinson, Vilma Zaroodny, Grace Lampson, as well as Grace Stern. These women were in Harford County because of their husband's work, but they had talents and accomplishments of their own.

One of these pioneers was Vilma Zaroodny, who had studied piano and violin at the Julliard School of Music in New York and the Leipzig Conservatory in Germany. While at APG she performed concerts for the war effort, formed a string quartet with APG scientists and mathematicians, performed recitals in the Baltimore area. In addition to her book club activity, her other interests included sculpting, painting and writing. She passed away in 2006 at the age of 99.

Other members over the years included Sara Brumfield Polk, a graduate of the Maryland Institute College of Art, who worked on airplane wing design at MIT during the war and later became co-founder and Head of School for Harford Day School. And there was Mary Poe Lang, a distant relative to Edgar Allen Poe, who was active in conservation activities with the Maryland Conservation Council, The Harford County Garden Club and the Committee to Preserve Assateague Island.

Membership also included the artist Eloise Wilson whose greatest passion was the Harford County Library System, where she served as a member of the Board of Trustees. Her close friend, Rowena Fahrney, longtime Chief Librarian for the Harford system, was also a Book Club member.

Current membership includes four teachers, a former writer for The Sun, and a former candidate for Lt.

Governor of Maryland and Harford County Executive: Marti Crouse, Cathy Heimerl, Diane Ruckman, Lynne Owen, Sandra Tracy, Mary Corddry and Ann Helton.

The Book Club members have been, and continue to be, women of talent and accomplishment who had a thirst for knowledge and a need to expand their horizon and share it with others. They have been at it for 70 years and they are still going strong.

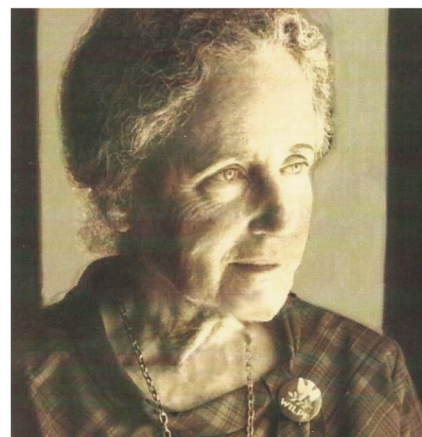
COMING EVENTS

Archer Lecture & Tea

From Debutante to Activist for Peace and Social Justice: The Life of Adelaide N. Noyes of Harford County Maryland - Lecture and discussion presented by Jim Chrismer

Adelaide Noyes led an interesting life, experiencing events and activities that few could even imagine today. In her early years in Baltimore as a member of a wealthy and socially prominent family, she went to all the "right" schools and parties; married well; learned to fly; and was active in the equestrian community. After moving to Bel Air in 1941, she became increasingly active in causes and groups such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the NAACP.

Historian, Jim Chrismer will share the story of this amazing woman, who fought for the things she felt important in this world and truly made a difference.



The Lecture and Tea will be held on Saturday, November 5, 2016 at the Historical Society headquarters, 143 N. Main St., Bel Air, MD from 2 – 4 PM. Tickets are \$10 per person for the tea. Reservations are required for the tea. Lecture only tickets will be available at the door. For more information, call 410-838-7691.

Brown Bag Lunch Series: The History of Diamonds



Our series continues on November 8, 2016 at 12:30 – 1:30 pm. Bring your lunch and join us for a very special presentation by Bob Rich, a graduate of the Gemological Institute of America and a staff member of Saxon's Jewelers. Mr. Rich specializes in diamonds and watches and has an impressive 26-year career in the jewelry industry.

This promises to be an outstanding event as Mr. Rich talks about famous diamonds throughout history and their importance. He notes that, diamonds are always a fascinating topic, but just to make it more fun the talk will include some of the facts and fictions about diamonds that have surfaced over the years. If you have any questions about jewelry, bring these as well. And just to add to the excitement of the day, there will be door prizes and some samples of the fine jewelry being described. Come and bring a friend! The event is free. Donations are appreciated. Free admission.



Christmas Open House

On Friday, December 2, 2016 the Historical Society will host an open house from 7 to 10 PM. Come join us for wassail, music and comradery. The Society's many Christmas trees and decorations will be on display providing a warm, traditional introduction to your holiday season. Todd Holden will be on hand with copies of his latest book, *Twists and Turns in the Road* and the North Harford High School string ensemble will perform Christmas music throughout the evening. There will also be a Christmas card photo opportunity with the Society's giant antique toboggan and decorated Christmas trees. The holiday gift shop will be open with tempting books on local themes and many unique gift items. Come enjoy the evening and the delicious refreshments. Free admission.

HAYS HOUSE HAPPENINGS

As it has for many years, the Country Garden Club of Harford County will once again decorate Hays House Museum with fresh greens and seasonal arrangements for its annual Christmas Open House to be held on December 3 and 4, each day from 1 to 4 pm. There is no charge to tour the historic 1788 Hays House and see the holiday decorations on these days. On Sunday, the Catherine Street Consort will play holiday music. Come get in the holiday spirit and get some ideas for your own holiday decorating.



2015
Hays House
Christmas Décor



Hays House will close for January and February, but planning is well underway for some exciting events in 2017. Just to mention one, in March, we will have a talk about hygiene in the days before indoor plumbing and display some vintage undergarments from the Society's collection. Later topics will include scents from the garden, exploring old furniture, and the proper care and storage of vintage textiles, just to name a few. Check out the next Newsletter for a full listing.

ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE NORTHERN CHESAPEAKE

Coming Events

- Wednesday, November 9, 2016, Assessing and Cataloging Personal Collections
Dan Coates, Bill McIntyre at Harford Community College
- Friday December 9 or 16, 2016, Annual Dinner Meeting and Election of Officers for 2017-2018,
I.O.O.F. Hall, Aberdeen

For more information, E-mail or call Bill McIntyre_ Vice President,
williamlmac@comcast.net, 410-939-0768 (h), 410-459-3532 (c)

2016 ANNUAL DINNER

Archer Fellow Award Recipients

Each year the Society recognizes people in the membership and community who have demonstrated exceptional service toward the mission and goals of the Historical Society of Harford County. This year two Society members received the George W. Archer Fellow Award at the Annual Dinner. The criteria for the award include years of exceptional service, the number of volunteer hours; recognition for special projects or research; activism, or in kind services.

One award went to Walter Holloway whose encyclopedic knowledge of the Society's collection, his written histories of the Ma & Pa Railroad, the Bel Air Fire Department, and the digitization of the Society's photographic collection have and will continue to serve the community for years to come.

The second award went to Jack Shagena whose service on the Society Board of Trustees, the Society's computerization projects and his numerous books on the buildings, industries and the history of the county continue to help promote the Society's goals of making the collection "user friendly" and helping to preserve and promote the county's rich and diverse history.

*Society president Richard Sherrill (left)
and Walter Holloway (right).*

Source: Larry Carmichael



*Society president Richard Sherrill (left),
Jack Shagena (center) and past society
president, Henry Peden (right).*

Source: Larry Carmichael



Patrick Henry Visits the Dinner



Source (3 images): Larry Carmichael



The Society's Annual Dinner was paid a visit by Patrick Henry as he was returning to Virginia after attending a session of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Henry (1736 – 1799), best known for his 'Give me Liberty, or Give me Death' speech, is one of several historical characters that visitors can 'sit and chat' with in Williamsburg, Virginia.

NEW MEMBERS

Linda Barnaba
Regi and Nancy Goldberg
Elaine Halchak

Tyler Buck, Executive Director of the Susquehanna Museum at the Lock House
Neil Nemser, Publisher, Nemser Publishing DBA Fallston Neighbors

Jean Montgomery Johnson
Holden Rogers
Scott Webb

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Help Needed with Historic and Vintage Textiles and Clothing!



The Harford County Historical Society has an extensive textile and clothing collection that needs to be organized and cataloged. Volunteers are needed to help with all aspects of this important ongoing project.

Volunteers would:

- Research and identify items
- Help with proper conservation and storage
- Label, catalog and photograph items, and/or
- Enter this information into the Past Perfect museum cataloging

computer program.

If you are interested in historic and vintage clothing, fashion and fabric, or have an interest in research or computer work, consider helping with this project. Training will be provided. More information can be provided by contacting Betsy Lehmann at 410-592-8693 or elizleh@gmail.com.



Hays House Museum Needs Volunteers!

Hays House Museum, the living-history arm of the Harford County Historical Society is seeking volunteers. If you like to meet people and have an interest in local history, consider becoming a Docent at Hays House. Hays House is open for tours on afternoons of the 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month from March through mid-December and at other times by appointment for groups.

A Docent -

- Gives tours of the museum one Sunday afternoon each month during the season
- Helps at special Hays House events like exhibits and teas
- Has the willingness to learn the history of Hays House and relates this history to visitors of all ages.

For more information about Hays House or what it is like to be a Docent, contact Betsy Lehmann at 410-592-8693 or elizleh@gmail.com

DOWN YONDER REUNION PLANNING BEGINS

The Society is sponsoring a special Down Yonders Reunion and Blue Grass Celebration on June 3, 2017 to showcase a unique part of our heritage and to help fund improvements to the Society Headquarters.

Society member, French Poole chaired the first planning committee meeting for the event in October. The committee is meeting bi-weekly to finalize a location, the picnic menu, music selection and activities for the day. For now, plans call for storytelling, recording sessions with oral historians, family photographs, and plenty of music, food and fun. We are still looking for a few more people to round out the planning committee and for anyone interested in becoming an event sponsor.



For those of you who may not know about the “Down Yonder” migration, this occurred between 1900 and 1950. Many of the families originally came from Maryland and Pennsylvania and had followed the Eastern Pioneers through the migration south after the Revolutionary War. Some had fought in the war and were rewarded with land in the Carolinas. Others went for the adventure. Over time the progenitor rules, where the oldest son inherited all the land, caused a shortage of good farmland and some of the pioneer’s children returned to Maryland and Pennsylvania to purchase the fertile and relatively inexpensive property here. They sent home letters detailing the splendor of this area, the land and jobs available and soon others followed. Some came for jobs at APG or for the farmland; some came because of the loss of the timber industry back home; others came to help build Conowingo Dam; and still others came during the Second World War to work in the defense industries. These families included the Umbargers, Livezeys, Reedys, Graybeals, Greers, Abschers, Osbournes, Reeves, Delps and many more who changed Harford County in many ways. The Reunion on June 3, 2017 will celebrate these contributions.

Starting this month, we will be scheduling recordings of oral histories of the descendants of these pioneering families. If you are interested in telling your family’s story, please call the Society at 410-838-7691. Also, if you are interested in more information about the event or would like to participate in planning for this event call the Society at the number listed above.

RESERVATION FORM

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Event</u> | <u>Fee</u> | <u># Tickets</u> | <u>Amount</u> |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|------------------|----------------|
| Nov 5 | Archer Lecture & Tea, Adelaide Noyes | \$10 | _____ | \$_____ |
| TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED | | | | \$_____ |

Name: _____ Ph. or E-Mail: _____

For more information, check the Society’s website at www.HarfordHistory.org, [www.Facebook.com/HarfordCountyHistoricalSociety](https://www.facebook.com/HarfordCountyHistoricalSociety) or call 410-838-7691. Return your Reservation form to the Historical Society, 143 N. Main Street, Bel Air, MD. 21014.

*The Historical Society of Harford County is supported in part by a grant from the
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The Historical Society
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Corresponding Secretary
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Henry Peden, Jr.

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Larry Carmichael
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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.