

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 2017

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

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VILLAGES OF HARFORD: Norrisville

By Jack Jones

This is the second in a series of articles prepared by long time Society member and volunteer, Jack Jones. We encourage those of you who know these villages and can add to there histories to forward your stories to us as well.

History: Why the name Norrisville? In 1747, Joseph Norris obtained a certificate for survey of land in the area that is now named for his family, Norrisville. Joseph was born in Anne Arundel County in 1705 and settled in northwest Harford County in the early 18th century. The will of emigrant John Norris granted "Prospect" on Winters Run to his son Joseph. Joseph Norris and his wife Mary had at least 10 children, their son Edward is generally regarded as the founder of Norrisville in that he built the first house in the village in 1770.

The village of Norrisville is geographically located in the northwest corner of Harford County. The village is in the county's fourth district and is bounded on the north by the Mason-Dixon Line, on the south by Deer Creek, on the west by Baltimore County and on the east by Maryland Route 24. The entire precinct lies in an area known as "The Barrens", a territory extending across lower York County, Pennsylvania, and upper Harford County on the east and Baltimore County on the west. The term "The Barrens" stems from the scarcity of timber in the area; a land where trees had been cut down by Native American tribes leaving the land rocky and bare. The Norrisville area became known as "Long Corner" in the early 1800s because it is the greatest distance of any Harford County community from the county seat (20 miles).

Over the years Long Corner became a rural trading center. In 1801 Samuel Stubbins built a hotel at the fork of York and Lancaster Roads to serve travelers between Baltimore and York and Lancaster Counties. At about the same time Buel J. Smith built a plow shop.

(cont'd on page 2)

Little development is recorded again until 1870 when Curtiss M. Stifler began operating a foundry. In 1871 the Maryland Gazette described Norrisville as a "small village/post office "situated in the extreme northwest part of Harford County and listed 99 patrons of the post office.

The cause of the isolation of Long Corner is uncertain. Some people claim it is a result of ethnic allegiance to Pennsylvania while others claim the East-West flow of Deer Creek made north-south travel over the swift stream difficult. Also, possibly early establishment of York/Lancaster roads caused people to ally more with Pennsylvania than with Maryland.



Annotated 1878 Martenet's Map of Harford County showing the location of Norrisville in the NE corner.

Immigrants: Settlers to the area came via three waves of migration. The earliest settlers were Scotch-Irish, some Quakers from several parts of Europe and Germans, most of them farmers. These were strong, independent people, necessary in an area located in disputed territory claimed by both Maryland and Pennsylvania. Several of these early settlers amassed large land holdings. Some families, including Thomas Ayres, Aquilla Norris, Daniel Smithson and Matthey Wiley, owned property more than 1,000 acres.

Just prior to 1920, a second wave brought many southerners into the area, mostly from Virginia and West Virginia due to the promise of inexpensive, plentiful, and fertile land and better economic opportunities. These included the Comer, Hankins, Moxley and Blevins families as well as several others.

A few years later a third wave materialized when better transportation allowed residents from nearby Baltimore City and County the opportunity to find their dream homes with acreage and quiet surrounding it, along with lower taxes and an escape from the troubles facing urban areas in the 60s and 70s.

Industry: Prior to the Revolutionary War agriculture was the major industry in the area with corn, wheat, flax and sugar cane being produced on most farms. Tobacco was the most important cash crop. By the 1800s Norrisville had at least 15 mills situated along Deer Creek along with 10 blacksmiths shops, some connected directly to iron foundries. Charcoal was also made from the chestnut, maple, hickory and oak trees that abounded in the area, helping to fuel local foundries. In 1853, Jacob Forder remodeled the old plow shop into a hotel and operated it until 1882 providing travelers with shelter on the long horse and carriage ride between Baltimore and York.

Farming: In the early days, many farmers in the area kept four to eight cows for family use and to make a little income; twelve cows was considered a large herd. The labor was of course intensive. Cows had to be milked by hand twice a day. Milk was poured into 5, 7 and 10-gallon metal cans and then stored in a cool place. Crops had to be grown for feed. Later, technology made it possible to have milking parlors. Surplus milk and calves both played a part in the economics of the family farm. Calves were kept for 6 – 8 weeks after which the farmers took them to Norrisville to sell. Any extra milk was transported by horse and wagon to local creameries to be separated. Local entrepreneurs established creameries in neighboring Shawsville and Norrisville in the 1890s. The creamery building housed a separator, a kind of centrifuge run on a one cylinder engine. Left over skim milk was fed to hogs for a secondary income.

From the mid-19th century to the mid-1970s farms were small – mostly less than 200 acres with grain crops and dairy farming at the top of the list. By the late 1950s small dairy farms began to disappear because of technological improvements such as milking machines and refrigerated trucks.

Norrisville Today: Norrisville today is a mix of small farms and suburban residences with a population of about 500 people. It retains much of its original character and remoteness.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As the New Year approaches, I have a strong sense of optimism for growth in 2017. I welcome the new members of the Board of Trustees -- William Carr, Mark Galihue and Robert Wirtanen -- and look forward to their contributions to the Board and to the Society.

I am also looking forward to the arrival of spring and warming weather. Good weather conditions will allow contractors to begin serious work on the restoration of the street facade of the headquarters building. They will be involved in the removal of the external airlock to expose the decorative woodwork above the entrance. The project includes restoration of the tympanum (the decorative triangle above the main entrance) and painting the cornice around the front and sides of the building.

We have received a matching grant from the Town of Bel Air for the facade restoration. The Society's portion of matching funds will need to be supported by the membership and the community. A number of educational and social events are being organized for 2017 and your support of these activities will enable the Society to raise the remaining matching funds for the town grant.

During the early winter, some interior painting will be professionally done at the Hays House, and as the weather warms repairs will be made to the railings of the front porch. By the date of their 2017 spring opening, the oldest house in Bel Air will be ready to welcome visitors.

In my last newsletter article, I identified two recipients of the 2016 George W. Archer Award, Walter Holloway and Jack Shagena. At that time, I could not share with you the name of a third individual (who was unable to attend the Annual Dinner) because it would have spoiled the element of surprise. James T. Wollon, Jr. was later recognized at the George W. Archer Lecture for his many contributions over the years to the Society and for his work as a historical architect. A very surprised past-president of the Society became the final 2016 Archer Fellow.

During the first weekend of December, the Society had two holiday events -- a Christmas Open House at headquarters and a holiday celebration at the Hays House. The former was the result of the efforts of our Director, Maryanna Skowronski, and those volunteers who spent many hours to help prepare for the festive occasion. Members of the Country Garden Club of Harford County assisted Hays House chairman Betsy Lehmann in decorating that colonial home for holiday visitors. These events gave both members and the community access to the Society's facilities to enjoy a display of our artifact and archive collections.

Volunteers have recently implemented several organizational revisions in managing the Society's collections. The Archives collection has now been divided into a Photo collection (photos, slides, digital images, and negatives) and a Document collection (paper items) due to growing numbers of donations. Earlier in 2016 the Society began digitizing the photographs in its collection, which has the benefit of making these items available visually to researchers without added wear on the collection. Helen Shields is managing the collection and Walter Holloway is providing the time and talent in the digitizing.

The focus of the Artifacts collection has also been made more specific: Textile; Fine Art; and Objects. Now that the textile room is up to speed, these items are being processed into the collection. Accessioning, cataloging and preservation are being handled by Betsy Lehmann, Kathy Scholl and a dedicated group of volunteers.

The collection of Fine Art that has spent a lot of time in storage cabinets and the safe is being placed in its own room in the basement that will provide proper climatic conditions. A Fine Art chairperson is needed to further review the accessioned items, register additional pieces, and arrange for the storage of the collection.

The remainder of the Artifact collection (Objects) continues to be processed. Old objects (new to us) continue to come in and Dottie Vinopal and her helpers register, photograph and put them into proper storage.

All of these projects provide ample opportunities for you to offer your participation and support of the Historical Society in 2017.

Richard Sherrill, President

NEW MEMBERS

Stanley and Marlene Butler
Sally Campbell
Sally Cassilly
Donald Gunther
Louis and Paulette Haber
Mr. and Mrs. Tom Herbert
Joseph Holland
Kristan Holt

Edna Hynes
Frances Scroggins Johnson
Klein/Rubinoff Family
Ralph H. Morgan
Dennis and Marilee Moore
Trish Orndorff
Warren Turner
Eleanor Walter

COMING EVENTS

Brown Bag Lunch Series: *You Should Have Been Here Yesterday*



Tuesday, January 10, 2017, 12:30 – 1:30 pm at the Historical Society, 143 N. Main St., Bel Air

The Society is pleased to introduce the first of its Brown Bag Lunch talks for 2017. Last year our series started with a talk and power point presentation by Carol Deibel about the early history of Bel Air. Time allowed us to cover the 18th century, a time of much turmoil (the American Revolution and subsequent wars) and development. In the second session, Ms. Deibel will transport you into the 19th and 20th centuries through pictures and discussion. This series is free to the public, donations are encouraged. Bring your lunch and enjoy a journey into our past.

Valentine's Day Celebration: A Romantic Dinner in the Stacks



Saturday, February 14, 2017, 6:30 pm at the Historical Society, 143 N. Main St., Bel Air

Join us for a catered four course meal with select wines chosen to enhance your dining experience and the delightful ambiance of a strolling violinist – the perfect way to celebrate Valentine's Day.

(Each course will be paired with a wine selected to perfectly accompany the menu item)

FIRST COURSE: Hors d'oeuvres

Praline Grapes

Shrimp Cucumber Rounds

SECOND COURSE: Field Green Salad

THIRD COURSE – Choice of entrée

Chicken Florentine: Tender breast of chicken stuffed with spinach and Mozzarella cheese and served with a white wine cream sauce

Baked Salmon: Oven baked salmon served with a roasted red bell pepper cream

Vegan Vegetarian: Broccoli, carrots and sweet bell peppers sautéed in garlic herb seasoning, Quinoa Smashed Red Bliss Potatoes

Bakery Fresh Rolls & Butter

FOURTH COURSE: Desert

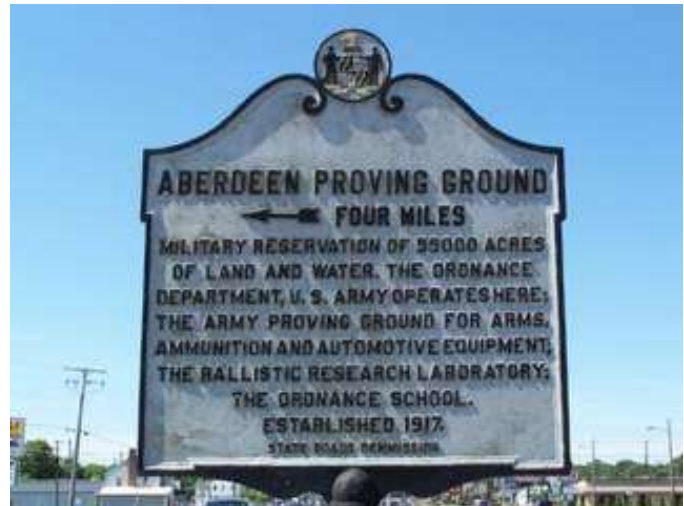
Tiger Cake (Pin striped cake with dark and white chocolate)

Reservations must be made by **February 9th**. There will be live dinner music. For more information or to make reservations call 410-838-7691 or visit our website, www.harfordhistory.org. Tickets are \$70 per person.

Centennial Celebration APG 2017

November 11, 2017

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Aberdeen Proving Ground development and the entry of the United States into World War I. A series of commemorative programs and ceremonies are planned throughout the year. The Historical Society is working with the Town of Bel Air to develop a local celebration recognizing those who served in the War and especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice. We need your help to assure that everyone who served is recognized.



If you know any of the descendants/relatives of those who served with Company D of the 115th Regiment of the 29th Division during WW I please pass on their names and contact information to us. We would like to recognize them at our Veterans Day Celebration this year on November 11, 2017. 556 men from Harford County were drafted and were among the first to serve in France during WW I, many never came home. Also, many served in the Army Government Nursing Program. These men and women deserve our gratitude and we would like to honor all those who served. Planning is just beginning, but your help in locating these people would be greatly appreciated.

Watch this column and our Facebook page for more information about the upcoming event as plans are finalized.

Hays House Museum

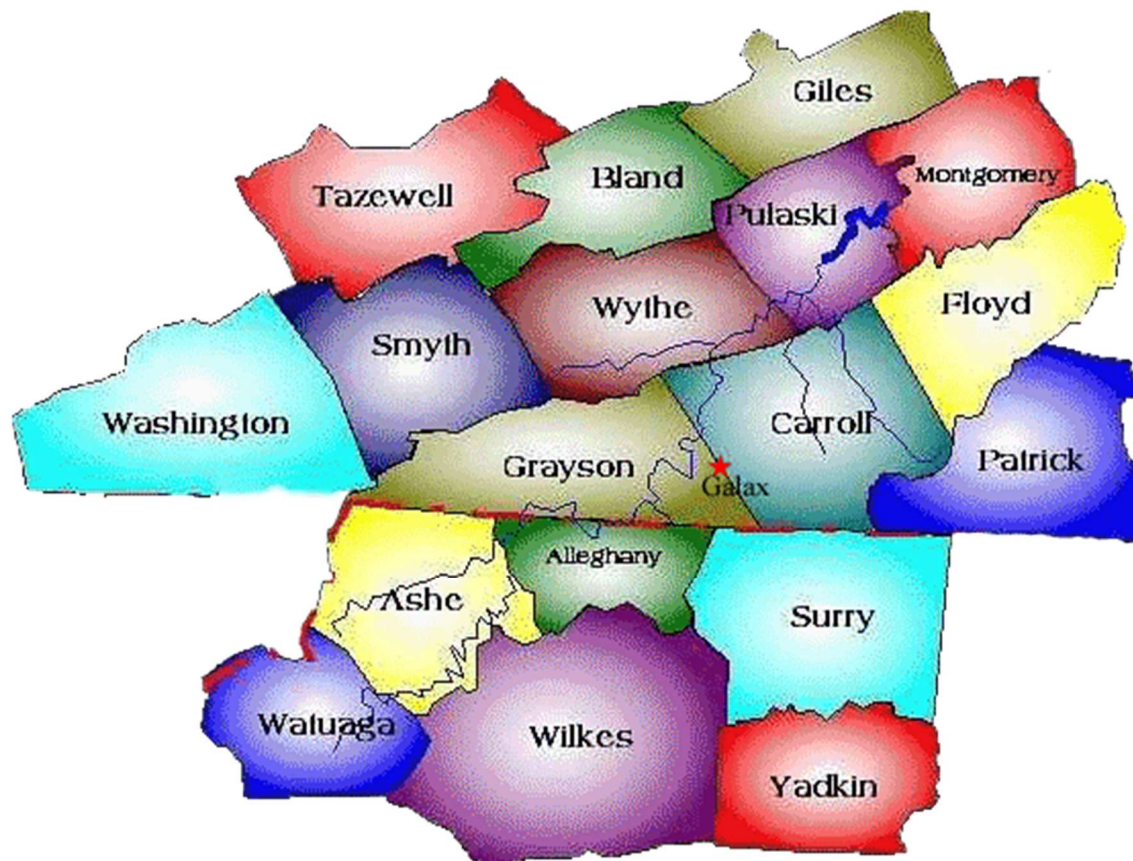
Beautiful, fresh greens and arrangements created by the Country Garden Club of Harford County decorated Hays House in early December. Seasonal music played by the Catherine Street Consort on period instruments completed the setting for the museum's annual Christmas Open House.

Now closed for the season, repairs and maintenance work is underway to repaint the interior trim, especially the front hall and numerous windows and doors, all sorely in need of refurbishing. Volunteers have spent many hours painting in past years, but the woodwork needed professionals to restore the wood to its original sparkle. Research to find the original paint colors used in the house was completed some years ago, so that a faithful recreation can now be accomplished.

Thomas A. Hays was the single largest land owner in Bel Air. Thomas Hays married Betsy Jones, who was the granddaughter of William Jones, and the daughter of Gilbert Jones, a well-known tavern keeper in Bel Air, located at Main Street and Baltimore Pike, on the northwest corner. Thomas and Betsy had seven children: Sally Galloway, Mary Giles, Frances Fulford, Elizabeth Jacobs, Harriet Whaland, Pamela Hays, and Thomas A. Hays, Jr.

When it reopens in the March, be sure to come visit Hays House, the oldest house in Bel Air and the home of one of Bel Air's founding fathers, Thomas Archer Hays, who lived in the house from 1813 until his death in 1861. Several special events are planned for 2017.

DOWN YONDERS REUNION SERIES: EASTERN PIONEERS



Map of home counties of Eastern Pioneers.

When we think of pioneers, we tend to picture wagon trains heading west. But early pioneers along the east coast were more likely to be following the "Carolina Road". By the mid-1700s, the available open farmland east of the mountains in Maryland and Pennsylvania was claimed. Some farmers were beginning to feel crowded. These were early colonists who relished the open space that was quickly disappearing as more settlers arrived from Europe. Many of the new arrivals from England, Scotland, Ireland, and Germany, found themselves traveling south to the western part of Virginia or North Carolina to claim land in the hollows of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

After the American Revolution, the President rewarded many veterans for their service with land grants. These were located primarily in the North Carolina Mountains, where large areas of open, unclaimed land and valuable timber stands existed enhanced by the great beauty of the area. Native American tribes living in the area were being forced west by the government and the new settlements in the area. Army veterans, adventurous farmers, and newly arrived Scotch-Irish immigrants soon filled the area.

For the most part, these families were farmers with a few hardy shopkeepers, blacksmiths, and teachers ready to meet the new community's needs. The area prospered. Dairy farming, timbering and crop farms soon covered the hills and valleys. Families grew, many with more than a dozen children. Life was good. Train service came in the mid-1800s opening the area to trade. This prosperity brought with

it numerous problems. As children grew, wanting to establish their own farms, no land was available, essentially as Mary Corddry noted in her story in *The Land* (a Conservation Quarterly), "The only way to get land was to inherit it, or marry it."

With the accessibility of the area via train, eastern industrialists found the valuable timber stands irresistible. Soon farmers were offered hefty prices for these trees and clear cutting of the forests began, destroying the steep slopes, and leaving the inevitable environmental damage and economic impacts on the local community and farms.

By 1900 some families were seeking land outside of the area and ironically found it back in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Thus began a reverse migration that lasted 50 years. Among the first of these returning families was the Osborne family. Wiley Winton Osborne had 13 children and sizeable dairy operations with several farms in the Ashe County, N.C. area. Still as he approached his 63rd birthday he worried about what he would leave to his children. So he sold all of his land, giving money to some of his older children who stayed behind and started over in Maryland, buying Cool Spring Farm. Many of his neighbors and those from nearby counties, followed over the years seeking what he described as plentiful, fertile and inexpensive farmland with ready access to nearby markets. Most of these "Down Yonders" as they became known prospered and contributed immeasurably to the county although locals were not always welcoming. These initial Down Yonder settlers, gave way to several waves of migrants. In 1917, carpenters were needed to build Aberdeen Proving Ground as quickly as possible as World War I raged on. Many of these came from this area, known as Appalachia. Then in the 1920s, the Philadelphia Electric Company called out for workers to build the largest dam project of its time, Conowingo Dam. Again, Appalachian workers responded.

The 1930s brought hard times nationally, but especially in Appalachia. Migrants from the area came here seeking a better life. Then in the 1940, with war once again on the horizon, Glenn L. Martins, Bendix, Bethlehem Steel, and others desperately needed workers to meet the demands for fighter planes, war materiel, and basic equipment. Appalachian workers responded in large numbers, settling in Baltimore and Harford Counties. Weekly bus service between Bel Air and Ashe County, N.C. ran until the 60s as families made regular visits and new migrants came to seek work or land. Most of the workers stayed on after the war, often bringing friends and relatives to the area.

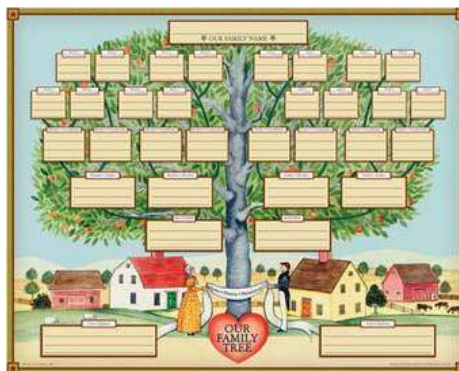
Another great host during the 50's and 60's was Bata Shoe Company in Belcamp. The Company brought buses to Ashe County NC to pick up young girls and guys, drive them north, rent them a room at the Bata hotel, sell them groceries, and give them a job. Born in Harford County, Jonathon Sage recently retired to Ashe County NC and noted that "It is amazing to see the older locals in Ashe County who can describe how many of their brothers and sisters and parents moved into the Harford/Cecil counties for work. Word of mouth was a powerful influence during the 40's through the 60's in this migration."

On June 10, 2017, the society will host a reunion of many families and their descendants who made the journey from Appalachia. These families added immeasurably to the heritage of Harford County. We hope they will come to share their stories, crafts and to enjoy a celebration of the bluegrass traditions and that other county residents will join us in celebrating the many contributions of these citizens. The Celebration will be held at the Deer Creek Overlook – 4H camp, on Route 24 in Rocks, from 12 – 7 pm on June 10, 2017. Ticket information is provided on the registration form in this newsletter.

"YOUR GENEALOGICAL TOOLBOX"

On January 11, 2017, Mary Worthington, one of the Society's talented Genealogists will initiate a three-part class on Genealogy. The classes will run from 7 – 9 PM at the Historical Society offices at 143 N. Main St. in Bel Air. Subsequent classes are scheduled for February 8 and March 8. Cost for each session in the series is \$ 10

This is an excellent opportunity to learn how to start that genealogical search we all consider and a chance to share your heritage with others. Ms. Worthington is a certified genealogist with years of experience. She will be assisted in this project by our chief genealogist, Henry Peden, who is recognized throughout the country for his knowledge and contributions to Genealogy. To register for the class, you may call the Society at 410-838-7691 or return the registration form at the end of this newsletter.



The following is a brief description of each class. Please note that you should bring a laptop, tablet, or other Wi-Fi device to join the hunt. (Limited computers are available to those who may not have devices. These will be allocated on a first arrival basis.

January 11, 2017 - Introduction

This class will introduce the beginning genealogist to different resources and will assist the more seasoned genealogist with alternate sources for research.



February 8th, 2017 - "Those Difficult Women"

This class will explore ways to breakdown the brick walls involving the fairer sex who could not own property, vote or work, as well as additional information on resources and search techniques.

March 8, 2017 - "Jumping the Pond"

Research techniques for foreign records without the jet lag

RAFFLE – HANDMADE ANTIQUE DOLL PROCEEDS TO ASSIST THE BUILDING RESTORATION FUND

This beautiful doll was handmade by recognized doll maker Flora Hankins Wiley. She would make an excellent addition to a collection or on her own as an example of doll making at its best. Raffle tickets are available for \$2 or 3 for \$5. The drawing will be held on June 10, 2017 at the Down Yonders Reunion and Blue Grass Celebration. See the registration form in this newsletter to order tickets or stop by the Society to see the doll and purchase tickets.

BUILDING RESTORATION UPDATE

As we enter our third year of restoration efforts, the Society is pleased to acknowledge the help many of you have provided. To date, the restoration committee has corrected the leakage issue that threatened the collection by replacing a section of the roof and repointing and repairing crumbling masonry throughout the building exterior. The facility's lighting and outdated electrical system was replaced along with the needed repairs to the heating and air conditioning systems. A large segment of the first floor was then painted. The abandoned air conditioning units in the basement were removed and improvement to this area initiated including completion of a textile room and development of an art collection archive room. While the painting and new lighting and shelving dramatically improved appearances, many of the improvements are not readily visible, but they have significantly increased the safety and functionality of the building.

In 2017, we hope to address many of the exterior issues. As the President noted in his message, the air lock will be removed, the painting of the trim will begin along with restoration of the 23 windows. Meanwhile, emergency repairs are needed for the parking lot and the metal overhang in the rear of the building, both are in serious disrepair.

The Society is seeking matching funds for a \$10,000 grant and a \$50,000 bond bill to allow us to proceed with these critical repairs. If there is any way you can help, please contact the Society's Director, Maryanna Skowronski at 410-838-7691.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The following is just a small example of the many volunteer opportunities available at the Historical Society. If you are interested in learning more, please contact us at 410-838-7681 or www.harfordhistory.org.

TEXTILES: 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.



LIBRARY: The Library at the Historical Society needs some help with sorting, indexing and filing information from scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, and other media about Harford County history and lore. If you like using a computer, you can also enter the information into the society's data base. Training for the tasks you choose will be provided. The hours worked are at your discretion. Just imagine the interesting information you might find!



See Jacob at the Reception Desk, or contact Page Smart for more information at pksmart@comcast.net under the subject line "Historical Society."

ART: Volunteers have been gathering information on the paintings and other pieces of art donated to the Historical Society. All of this descriptive information has to be entered into the society's data base. Training will be provided for this easy-to-use computer program. The hours you choose to volunteer are at your discretion. For more information about this interesting opportunity to help preserve beautiful Harford County lore, see Jacob at the Reception Desk, or contact Sue at suenie@comcast.net under the subject line "Historical Society."



RESERVATION FORM

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u># Tickets</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Jan 11	Your Genealogy Toolbox Class	\$10/class	_____	\$_____
Feb 14	Valentine's Dinner in the Stacks	\$70	_____	\$_____
	Indicate Dinner Choice for each person: Chicken _____ Salmon _____ Vegan _____			
Jun 10	Down Yonders Reunion/ Bluegrass Festival	\$10	_____	\$_____
Jun 10	Doll Raffle tickets	\$2@, \$5/3	_____	\$_____

(For raffle tickets, you can also call or order on line; tickets will be mailed to you.)

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$_____

Name: _____ Ph. or E-Mail: _____

For more information, check the Society's website at www.HarfordHistory.org, 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 Harford County Government Office of Economic Development.

The Historical Society
of Harford County, Inc.
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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.