

# The HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HARFORD COUNTY, Inc.

*Preserving Our Past For Your Future*



143 N. Main Street  
Bel Air, MD 21014

## Society News

September / October 2017

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

### IN THIS ISSUE

APG's 100 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary	1
<i>The Society</i> , a poem	2
Annual Dinner	3
Board of Trustee Candidates 2018-2019	3
President's Message	4
Coming Events	
-Brown Bag Lunches	5
-Genealogical Toolbox	5
-Hays House Happenings	6
-Bel Air Haunts & History tour	6
New Members	6
Volunteer Recognition	7
Volunteers Needed	7
In Memoriam	9
Down Yonder Reunion – A Day to Remember	9
Jones Junction – 100 Years	10
Good News	10
Archer Collection Grows	11
Reservation Form	11

### ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG) is so much a part of Harford County's existence that it is easy to forget the trials and tribulations of the early acquisition.

On October 16, 1917, President Wilson issued a proclamation authorizing the secretary of war "to take over the land." The government appointed four men to fix values of the land being confiscated. Bel Air attorney Thomas A. Robinson was appointed to represent local landowners. The proclamation gave area residents until January 1, 1918, to vacate the premises, along with all of their livestock and belongings. Many had no place to go. It was a traumatic experience dislocating not just landowners but also tenant farmers and workers—people who had lived on this land for generations. Everything had to go because once the buildings and homes were vacated; residents were not allowed to return for any reason. By the war's end, on November 11, 1918, the once rich farming and hunting peninsula was gone, replaced by a major military installation and testing facility.

The President's order called for the taking of approximately 70,000 acres of land and water area along the Susquehanna Flats, Bush and Gunpowder Rivers that had been prime agricultural, fishing, hunting and recreational land for centuries. Sportsmen came here from across the country for the duck hunting, shooting and fishing. Canvas Backs, Redheads and others abounded alongside the corn and tomato fields that provided the county's canning industry success. Within a matter of months, all of this changed and a way of long established way of life disappeared.

War in Europe had finally touched the U.S. and the highly accessible, well situated land, became a center for Ordnance activities in research, development and testing of arms, ammunition, tanks and combat vehicles. This mission changed over time as new demands were placed on military leadership at the Base. To meet the tremendous needs of the war effort, not only soldiers, but workers,

*(cont'd on page 2)*

(cont'd from page 1)

scientists, mathematicians, and laborers came from across the country. By the 1920s, even though the war was over, the base continued to grow, housing 8,000 men, a complete waterworks system, a 250-bed hospital and over 25 miles of railroad tracks. This was just the beginning, Harford County went from being a sleepy backwoods farm community to a military center in just one year with APG leading the way as the county's largest employer, changing county demographics, economy, and landscape forever.



**On Saturday, November 11, 2017**, the Historical Society will celebrate the many contributions made by those who served at APG and the numerous county citizens who were part of the 1917 war effort, whether serving in the military, with the Red Cross or with Home Defense.

For the last year volunteers, led by Walter Holloway, have collected the stories and photographs of these incredibly brave men and women. The Society encourages you to attend this year's Veteran's Day exhibit at the Society's headquarters, 143 N. Main Street in Bel Air. Learn about the people who bravely fought and served in the "War to end all wars". Come and share your stories, photos, and memorabilia; explore the exhibits; and learn of the accomplishments of your grandparents and great grandparents who made this Veterans Day celebration possible.

### THE SOCIETY

A Poem by French D. Poole

*The Historical Society of Harford County  
In it I have found a wonderful bounty  
They work hard to preserve the history  
Of the County in which I live  
So much time and effort the volunteers give!  
Collecting, recording and storing our history.  
All the families and events, story by story.  
I have heard it said, "Forget your history and you might repeat it."  
So the Society collects it all, the good and the bad.  
Because to repeat the bad would be so sad!  
The good is such a joy to read.  
And that I wouldn't mind to repeat!  
So many citizens of Harford County that care,  
About our history and all of it they want to share!  
So stop in when you have a chance.  
But you won't see it all in just one glance.  
So consider becoming a member  
And so many stories you will have to remember!*

### ANNUAL DINNER

On **Wednesday, September 20, 2017, members** are invited to attend a very special dinner and presentation at the Maryland Golf and Country Club. Doors will open at 6:30 pm, followed by dinner at 7 pm. In addition to a delicious dinner, we will conduct the Society's annual Board of Trustee elections.

The Society is pleased to announce that Williamsburg's Bryan Austin will appear as President James Madison, Jr. Mr. Austin portrays President Madison in venues throughout the country describing him as a brilliant individual who was one of the chief authors of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Still Austin is quoted as saying "I think Madison, not having the acclaim or prestige of a Washington or a Jefferson is, in many ways, to our benefit. We tend to put the founders on the pedestal, viewing them as something larger than life. The truth is they were ordinary people, just like us, with their faults as well as their virtues. A public unacquainted with James Madison provides an opportunity for them to meet him on their level, as a man and not a myth. In talking to him about his successes and failures in his time, it provides a drive to see the problems of today in a different perspective." This promises to be a very special night.



*Bryan Austin as President  
James Madison, Jr.*

This year's menu includes a choice of three entrees: Seafood Alfredo, Chicken au Franchise and Eggplant Parmesan. All meals include salad, vegetables, rolls, beverages and Apple pie ala mode. There will also be a cash bar serving wine, beer and soda. The cost for the dinner and presentation is \$35 per person.

**Reservations are required by September 12, 2017. Reservations can be made by phone or by sending in the reservation form attached at the end of the newsletter. Please indicate your entrée choice at the time you make your reservation.**

### BOARD OF TRUSTEE CANDIDATES 2018-2019

Board members serve a two year term overseeing the business of the Society and assuring that the mission and purpose of the Society are satisfied. **On Wednesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>** at the Society's Annual Dinner, members will vote for a slate of candidates presented by the Society's Nomination Committee. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor with the prior consent of the nominees.

Candidates for the 2018-2019 Class are: Meg Algren, Angela Saccenti, Jennifer Dombeck, French Poole, and Edward Hopkins

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The summer months have been just as busy as the months prior. The efforts expended by the staff, regular volunteers and other volunteers who are with us for only a short time have continued to add to the organization of the collections, as well as the maintenance of our buildings and the grounds around them.

What follows is a brief summary of the areas we have been pursuing. Art work has been cataloged and put into proper storage. Archives volunteers continue to organize, accession, and catalog the vast amount of paper items that have kept them busy for months and in one case as long as five years. The ladies who set up the textile area have been highlighted in a Voice of America presentation which will be available all around the world. The Artifacts Division recently has been reorganized with two sub-sections, Textiles, and Fine Arts. Each of these will now function independently with its own budget and numbering sequence. All of the other objects will continue to be preserved by the Artifacts volunteers. In Archives, the Image Collection (formerly identified as the Photograph Collection) has also been separated with its own numbering sequence. These new arrangements will allow for the special care needed for each portion of the growing collections. Additional work in the basement has been accomplished which will eventually bring about better facilities for all of the divisions to safely store items that can't be housed on the main floor. Thursday volunteers continue to add to the library and genealogical materials that researchers steadily use. Work on our digital catalog, Past Perfect, never ceases and we are looking forward to an upgraded system in 2018.

I hope you share the pride I have in those volunteers whose abilities, effort, energy and dedication have made our collection of the county's historical materials the best it has been in the past 132 years.

In the area of programs that will enhance the knowledge of the members and the general public, I am looking forward to the continuation of the Brown Bag Lunch presentations, the Annual Dinner and new topics made available by the Genealogical Toolbox talks given in the fall.

Activities at the Hays House Museum have been slow since the Fourth of July, but this has allowed time for needed repairs and painting to the porches and the final replacement of the damaged portion of the fence. At headquarters changes have been carried out which will expand our computer network. If you have not yet seen the nearly completed parking lot behind headquarters, you need to stop by and take a look. Nearly all of the concrete surface and most of the curbing is being replaced by Kinsley Construction. It will be finished by the end of August. Soon there will be no more cracks, holes, and loose gravel.

All-in-all, the Society is progressing in every aspect of organization, collections, and programing. My thanks go to each and every individual who makes these accomplishments possible. I hope you feel the same and will continue to keep the momentum going by supporting our worthy cause during our Annual Giving Drive. I will!

*Richard Sherrill, President*



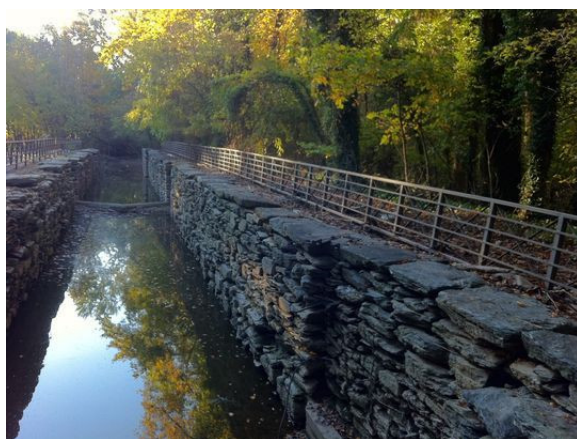
### COMING EVENTS



#### Brown Bag Lunch Series Continues

Brown Bag Lunches are held on the second Tuesday of the month from 12:30 – 1:30 pm and are free. Everyone is invited. Here are the topics for September and October

#### **The Growth and Demise of the Susquehanna and Tidewater Canal**



On **Tuesday, September 12<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 pm** the Society will host its monthly brown bag lunch presentation featuring Richard Sherrill who will transport us to the era of the Susquehanna and Tidewater Canal with the story of its growth, demise and impact on Harford County. Remnants of the canal dot the landscape even today, hinting at a time when the river provided not only a fishing and hunting oasis, but a major economic engine between Pennsylvania and points south. Then came the railroad and of course the great flood. This is an amazing tale of excitement and heartbreak.

#### **Canning Industry in Harford**

On **Tuesday, October 10<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 pm** the lunch time series will continue with Bernie Bodt and the story of the canning industry in Harford County. Canning was a major industry in Harford County between the Civil War and World War I. It is credited with generating the growth of Aberdeen as a commercial center and Bel Air as a financial center; brought workers from Baltimore each year to meet the farmers demand for pickers and processors; and generated an economic engine for the county for generations. Mr. Bodt will describe the families who brought this industry to Harford and the elements that brought about its eventual demise.



**We are in the process of booking speakers for the 2018 Brown Bag Series.**

**If you have any suggestions or topics you would like us to include, please email us at [admn@harfordhistory.org](mailto:admn@harfordhistory.org) or call 410-838-7691.**

#### Genealogy Tool Box Series

The Genealogy Toolbox Series continues this fall with Christopher Smithson and Mary Worthington introducing participants to the fascinating world of genealogy research. Each session stands on its own. Previous attendance is not necessary. **Pre-registration is required for the October Brick Wall Section**

since special preparation is needed by the presenter. See the registration form at the back of the newsletter.

- Wednesday, September 13, Hidden Sources I, 7:00- 9:00 pm, Fee \$10
- Wednesday, October 11, Brick Walls, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, Fee \$10 (pre-registration required)
- Wednesday, November 8, Hidden Sources 2, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, Fee \$10
- Wednesday, December 13, Land Records, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, Fee \$10

**Special note: For those of you who would like to come in for independent research, but can't come during the day, the Society will offer evening hours (5- 8 pm) on Wednesday, September 27<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, October 25<sup>th</sup>.**

### *Hays House Happenings*

Be sure to revisit our early American roots on **September 24** when Ben Franklin comes to town. Tour the oldest house in Bel Air. Visit with Interpreter David Fisher as he portrays Ben Franklin during the time of the signing of the US Constitution.

Also on display from our textile collection are wedding dresses and Red Cross uniforms to commemorate the centennial of the United States entry into World War I.



### *Bel Air Haunts & History Tour*

On Saturday, **October 21<sup>st</sup> at 4:30 pm**, the Society will host Lasos and the Town of Bel Air for this year's Bel Air Haunts and History Tour kick-off. Join us for Happy Hour at the Historical Society followed by a tour of old Bel Air and learn the stories of some of our more memorable people, places, and legends. Vans will be available to transport attendees from site to site and area actors will tell the tales of the bygone eras like who might be haunting the Proctor House, where were Bel Air's Speakeasies and the role Dunnigan's hotel played in Bel Air's "local option" riot. The tour and happy hour is available for \$40 (4:30 – 7:00), the walking tour only is \$10 (5:30 – 7:00). Tickets are available on Event Brite or via email at [info@lasos.org](mailto:info@lasos.org).



### *NEW MEMBERS*

Meg Algren  
Christopher Bowling  
Darin, Jemay, Grace and Josh D'Onofrio  
Justine C. Hendricks  
Michele H. and Robert E. Kesler

Bill Knight  
Christina McLoughlin  
Linda Rich  
Hugh and Joan Ward

### **VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION - JUDY ROGERS**

Judy Rogers is one of those rare volunteers who personify organization, drive and dedication. She is always available to help and patiently leads new volunteers through sometimes complicated mazes of documents, photographs and other materials with a smile and an understanding assurance. Judy's main role is as the *PastPerfect* Chairperson, coordinating the Society's cataloging system and ensuring that catalog records are accurately entered into the system so that items can be found by staff, volunteers and researchers. This includes working with Doug Washburn, the Society's IT specialist, and *PastPerfect*, the Society's computer system, to ensure proper maintenance of the system, training volunteers and staff in the use of *PastPerfect* and maintaining the files themselves. To give an example of how extensive this is, a recent report on Objects in the collection (artifacts, textiles, and fine arts) generated 4,000 pages of data. This amazing quantity of information is available because Judy patiently trained an army of volunteers and works with them regularly to update the system.

Having this information available electronically means that researchers have a real feel for what the building holds, and if making the trip to the Society is worth their time. This is based on two parts: cataloging the information in a useful manner, and being able to translate that catalog number into a picture, book, or piece of paper that can be held. This is where Judy's extensive experience as a librarian has proved to be so valuable.

Judy's second major attribute that makes her so valuable to the Society, is her ability to organize the volunteer's effort. She develops a process that yields the desired result, and then teaches the volunteers how to follow that process that results in all that data and all those transcriptions.

In the last decade, the Society has grown from one computer to a network of 9 (for volunteer use) and, on many days, most of those are in use by the volunteers Judy has taught.

Judy, along with volunteer coordinator, Sue Niewenhous, are currently working on reorganizing the society's volunteer program; working with the chairpersons of various departments to establish procedures for each department; and helping to assess their need for volunteers. This project should make it easier for Sue and the department chairpersons to match volunteers with incomplete projects and get some things taken off the "to do" list. Judy's work with the Society's collections management system is critical to the Society's ability to successfully fulfill its Mission. As one staff member responded when asked about Judy, "I'm truly not sure what we would do without her."

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

The Society is always looking for new volunteers. If you have some time and would like to become more involved, we have a job for you. To learn more about these volunteer opportunities, please call us at 410-838-7691 or visit the Society headquarters at 143 N. Main Street in Bel Air. Training is provided for all volunteer positions, so don't worry if you have not done this type of thing before. Just come and be a part of this exciting adventure.

#### **Archives**

This committee meets on Wednesdays between 9 am – 3pm. This is a great position for anyone who enjoys looking through boxes for hidden treasures and documenting finds.

- A volunteer is needed to sort and evaluate documents in the Henry Archer collection and

prepare for accessioning and carding.

- A volunteer is needed to help develop a new, accurate index of the Society's map collection and enter the information into the Society's computer system.
- Volunteers are needed to go through boxes of donated items, sort the items, group like items, and create descriptions of the items.

### **Artifacts**

- A volunteer is needed to Sort, Organize and Move boxes of Artifacts. This is a one-day (a few hours) job. Boxes are numbered but unorganized. They need to be put in proper order and readied for inventory. Need a volunteer who can carry medium weight boxes. The day of the project would be coordinated according to the volunteer's schedule.

### **Library:**

- A volunteer is needed to create an index for the Harford County Barns Project files. These files were originally created by students in the Historic Preservation program at Harford Community College. Properties must be identified with their historic names and, if existing, MHIP numbers. It would be a perfect task for someone familiar with Harford County as the barns need to be identified, so some research is needed.
- A volunteer is needed to create an index for the newspaper clipping files stored with the Society.

**Past-Perfect:** Past Perfect is the computer system used by the Society to track its collections.

- Volunteers are needed to enter information about cataloged photos and post cards into the computer system. Training will be provided.

### **Building Maintenance:**

- Volunteers are needed to help oversee the maintenance needs, both interior and exterior, of the Hays House Museum and the Historical Society's headquarters. If you have background in construction, engineering, landscaping, etc. and can spare a few hours a week to help identify maintenance needs and oversee projects or help with minor repairs and upkeep, please consider sharing your talents with us.

### **Court Records**

- Volunteers are needed to help organize and inventory the court record books in the Society's possession. This committee meets on Tuesdays 9 am – 3 pm.

### **Smithsonian Exhibit**

- A volunteer is needed to photograph the Society's collection of Harford County panels created for a Smithsonian exhibit and to develop an inventory binder describing each panel.

### **Bookkeeping Assistant**

- A volunteer is needed to develop and maintain a spreadsheet to track Society income and expenditures for general administration activities, grants, and events. Time is flexible.



### IN MEMORIAM

Edward Franklin Wilsey, age 91, of Forest Hill, MD passed away on July 27, 2017.



Ed was born in Champaign, Illinois and was the only child of Edward Franklin Wilsey and Ruth Elizabeth Knepper Wilsey. His childhood years were spent in Marengo and Keokuk, Iowa, Denver, Colorado, Istanbul, Turkey and Athens, Ohio. He served in the US Army from 1944-1946, then matriculated at Ohio University where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree. Bel Air was Ed's home for most of his adult life. He retired in 1990 after forty-three years as a chemist for the Ballistics Research Laboratory at Aberdeen Proving Ground. Until his later years, he was an active member of the National Railway Historical Society, the American Chemical Society, First Presbyterian Church in Bel Air, and a long-term volunteer at the Historical Society of Harford County. Even after his active days at the Society, Ed continued to keep in contact and support its efforts wherever possible. He will be missed.

### DOWN YONDER REUNION – A DAY TO REMEMBER

This year's Down Yonder Family Reunion was filled with fun and entertainment. Everyone enjoyed the food, demonstrations and especially the music from our bands – Foggy Hollow, Stormy Deep and Late for Supper. Many people shared their family stories and photos both in the Family History Display area and with our Genealogist and Oral Historian. We are in the process of organizing these many stories for the Society's collection.



*Demonstrations by the Flying Geese Quilt Guild, the Warped Weavers Guild and a local caner*

In 2018, the Society plans to revisit this incredible venue by holding a countywide Family Reunion and asking local families to share their histories while enjoying a day of fine food and entertainment. Details will be forthcoming.



*Music filled the air keeping feet tapping and entertaining the young and the old*

### JONES JUNCTION CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

In 1917, C.M. Jones and his son, Vernon opened their first garage and auto dealership in the front yard of their home near Conowingo Dam, initially selling Studebakers. As Catherine Jones describes it, her husband Vernon was on call all the time. The gas pumps had a dinger that would ring a bell when service was needed and Vernon would hurry to take care of his customers. Eventually, they were able to expand with the acquisition of Plymouth, Nissan and Honda Motorcycles in 1963, moving to a new site on N. Bond Street in Bel Air, and then again in 1966 when they added Chrysler, Toyota and GMC franchises. With these new franchises, Vernon and his cousin and partner, Dan Kilby, decided to move to the current location 305 Baltimore Pike just south of Bel Air. The dealership was a major success and is still growing under the leadership of the children of Vernon Jones and Dan Kilby. The once tiny operation now encompasses six new car dealerships, a used car division, four car washes, a collision center, an Allstate Insurance Agency and employs more than 670 people.



The family has not only been an important part of the local economy, but has also been extremely generous to local non-profit agencies including the Historical Society, Habitat for Humanities and many more. We congratulate Jones Junction on its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

### GOOD NEWS

#### *Preserving History with a Needle and Thread*

Recently a Voice of America crew visited the Historical Society of Harford County, Inc. to tape a feature for its *Voices from Small Towns and Rural America* series. The crew beautifully captured the volunteers at work, touring visitors and the essence of the Society's mission, consolidating five hours of taping into a three-minute video. We encourage you to visit their website to see the video and read the story of the Society's textile conservation project. <https://www.voanews.com/a/in-harford-county-volunteers-restore-and-preserve-old-garments/3976661.html>



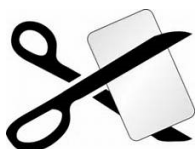
*Betsy Lehmann, chair of the Textile Project,  
working with tour group*



*Photo of VOA filming*

### ARCHER COLLECTION GROWS

The Society received several fascinating donations in the past couple of months including some beautiful paintings, several books and a collection of photographs and handwritten cookbooks from the Archer family. Perusing these amazing artifacts brings old Harford County to life.



### RESERVATION FORM

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u># Tickets</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Sept 20	Society's Annual Dinner with Bryan Austin; Maryland Golf & Country Club (indicate quantity below) Seafood Alfredo _____ Chicken Au Francaise _____ Eggplant Parmesan _____ <b>RSVP no later than 12 September</b>	\$35	_____	\$_____
Oct 11	Brick Wall Genealogy Session	\$10	_____	\$_____

NOTE: Brown Bag Lunch Series is free and Hays House Museum events are ticketed at door, no Reservations required. This is generally true of the Genealogy series as well, but due to the need for prior research by the presenters, the October Brick Wall Genealogy program will require prior registration.

**TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED** ..... \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Ph. or E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

For more information, check the Society's website at [www.HarfordHistory.org](http://www.HarfordHistory.org), [www.Facebook.com/HarfordCountyHistoricalSociety](http://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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*Walter Holloway*

**TRUSTEES 2017-2019**

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*Jacob Bensen*

**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.