

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 2018

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

IN THIS ISSUE

President's Message	1
Annual Giving Campaign	2
Good News	2
Coming Events	3
Hays House Happenings	5
New Members	5
On Doing History	6
New Publication Featuring Havre de Grace	9
Personal Histories From The Vietnam War Era	9
Gift Idea For The History Buff In Your List	10
In Memoriam	11
Northern Chesapeake Archeological Society	11
Reservation Form	11

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

September was a very busy month at the Society. We sponsored several major events including the Rat Pack Tribute Dinner, the Annual Dinner, a Brown Bag Lunch program on the Celts in Harford, and a Genealogy Workshop. I am pleased to announce that each of these programs was highly successful. The food was delicious and the trio of artists portraying the Rat Pack was exceptional, as evidenced by the number of people on the dance floor

The Annual Dinner presentation by Gina Marie Aleo (Martha Jefferson) was a great success. The beautifully costumed, Ms. Aleo, transplanted attendees to the early 1800s and the amazing lives of Martha and Thomas Jefferson. Prior to her performance the Society held elections for the class of 2019-2020 Board members. The Board members for 2019-2020 are William Carr, Esq., Mark Gallihue, Gary Stokes, Jack Schammel, and David Craig. The officers for 2019 were also announced. They include George Harrison, President, Ed Meerholz, Vice President, Page Smart, Corresponding Secretary, Brianne Norris, Treasurer, Elizabeth Lehmann, Recording Secretary.

Attendance at both the Brown Bag Lunch series and the Genealogy workshops continues to expand in interest and attendance. We encourage everyone to attend these events. Membership is not required, and you will be wonderfully entertained and may even learn something new.

In October, the Society sponsored a Reception and Lecture by former FBI international art recovery expert, Robert Wittman, to hear the story of numerous recovered treasures and the people who made this possible, and the Hays House held a Halloween party for local children, in what for that day was the spooky Hays House Museum. Other programs included a Brown Bag Lunch on the Road Markers and Harford's role in that statewide initiative and the Harford

(cont'd on page 2)

(cont'd from page 1)

History and Haunts tour, which once again was a sellout. The calendar for next year's events is almost finalized. The events for the upcoming year promise to be equally as interesting as this past year. The actual calendar is expected to be completed and ready for distribution in November. Meanwhile, I encourage you to read about our exciting programs for November and December of this year which are highlighted in this newsletter edition.

The Society will be issuing a Request for Proposal for restoration of the Headquarters windows in the very near future. Funds for the project came from Harford County as well as several generous donors. Additionally, the Society is seeking assistance with urgent repairs at the Hays House Museum. The north wall and roof are in serious disrepair. I hope to have more information about this for our next newsletter.

Unfortunately for the Society, Administrative Assistant, Jacob Bensen left for a new position, following his dream of a career in architectural history. While this is a major loss for the Society, we are very pleased for Jacob and wish him well with his new career. We also want to welcome our new Administrative Assistant, Mary Schweers. She is a long time Society member and volunteer. Some of you may recognize her as one of our genealogy experts. She filled in for Jacob during his initial absence and will continue in the position, providing her expertise and a strong continuity for visitors and staff.

This will be my last "President's Message" as I have resigned as President, effective December 31, 2018. I have enjoyed serving as Society President, but due to continuing health problems decided that it would be best to pass the office on to someone else. In January, George Harrison, the Society's Finance Chair, will take over as President. Vice President Sherrill will also step down at the end of the year to return to his duties as Archives Director and Ed Meerholz will take over his position. I will continue to edit the newsletter and help with Society business wherever I can. Thank you for your support over the last year. I know I am leaving the Board and the Society in good hands.

Carol Deibel, President

ANNUAL GIVING CAMPAIGN

Each year the Society conducts an Annual Giving Campaign to help with general operating costs throughout the year. Many members have already sent in generous donations and the Society truly appreciates your help. We are still somewhat short of our goal for this year and would encourage anyone who has not yet participated to consider becoming a donor. This year members also received a brochure about our new Legacy program. If you did not receive your Legacy Brochure or if you have questions about the program, please call the Society Director, Maryanna Skowronski at 410-838-7691.

GOOD NEWS

Thank you to Todd Holden who posted a note on Facebook asking people to donate to the Historical Society in place of giving him birthday gifts. The Society received more than \$300 thanks to this generous posting.

COMING EVENTS



ANNUAL ARCHER LECTURE AND TEA: FEATURING JOHN PAULSON

Saturday, November 10, 2018, 2 P.M. at the Historical Society headquarters, 143 N. Main Street, Bel Air, MD 21014

Mr. Paulson, the author and filmmaker of *Conowingo Dam Power* will share his experiences of the Conowingo Dam from two points of view: first as the filmmaker who produced the documentary for Maryland Public Television, and then as the author who fixed the dam's history into the pages of a recent companion book. He will talk about the strengths and weaknesses of the two mediums in terms of how they present stories. For example, in television, living people tell their own stories to draw in the viewer's interest and touch their emotions, while in a book there are fascinating photographs from the past that readers may gaze into and linger upon, to offer an oftentimes richer, more meaningful experience. Mr. Paulson will present several film clips from the documentary that are special to him and discuss several photographs from the book that he really loves. He'll also talk a little bit about the processes involved in both making the film and writing the book. Ultimately, he hopes to convey a sense of the remarkable feat of engineering the dam was when it opened in 1928, and to bring alive some of the notable, forgotten or unknown stories related to the dam, its history, and the culture of the region.

Tickets for the program are \$10 and reservations are recommended. See the form at the back of the newsletter.



BROWN BAG LUNCH SERIES

SILLY PUTTY TO BITS AND BYTES: THE HISTORY OF INNOVATION AT ABERDEEN PROVING GROUNDS (APG)

Tuesday, November 13, 2018, 12:30 P.M. at the Historical Society headquarters, 143 N. Main Street, Bel Air, MD 21014

Jeffrey Smart, an APG historian and author, has studied the history of APG for many years. In this presentation, he will describe the many inventions credited to the Proving Grounds and Edgewood Arsenal dating back to the earliest days in World War I to the subsequent wars and peace time activities at the base. Although all of these inventions started out as military needs, many became part of our day to day life. Few of us realize how important the base has been in inventing everyday items from computers to waterproof clothing. Come learn about these incredible contributions to today's world and our daily lives. The program is free, but contributions are encouraged.

NOTE: There will not be a brown bag lunch program in December, but programs will continue in January.

HOLIDAY PAINT AND SIP NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Thursday, December 6, 2018, 7 P.M. at the Historical Society headquarters, 143 N. Main Street, Bel Air, MD 21014

Sue Niewenhous and Meg Algren, local artists, will lead us in an evening of painting and wine. In other words, a "Paint and Sip Night". Each budding artist will be given a slate and necessary supplies to create a one of a kind holiday work of art. This is a night of pure fun, so don't worry if you are not a talented artist, come for the laughs and comradery.

Tickets for the program are \$25 and reservations are recommended. See the form at the back of the newsletter.

**TRAIN SHOW**

Train garden enthusiasts make plans to visit this year's display at the Historical Society headquarters, 143 N. Main Street, Bel Air, MD 21014. The Harford Modular Train Club will design and produce the display which will open Friday evenings 6 to 9, Saturdays 10 to 8, and Sundays 12 to 6 starting Dec. 14 to Jan. 6

\$5 adult and children under 12 free

FALL GENEALOGY SERIES.

Mary Worthington Schweers

The genealogy group has informed us of classes they want to see, and we have planned to meet their demands in our future offerings. On November 14th, 2018, Genealogist Mary Schweers will present a class on how to read old records. Terminology and handwriting styles have changed throughout the years and we will provide information on how to decode those confusing terms. There will also be a short introduction to legal terminology offered as a preview to a later offering.

On December 12th, 2018 Chris Smithson and Mary will team up with the Society's preservation and restoration team to present a workshop on how to preserve documents and records. Maintaining your family's archives can present challenges. Here at the Historical Society we do it every day. Join us as we reveal some of our secrets and provide you with information on some simple techniques that you can use at home.

Our Winter 2019 Series will start on January 9th with a Back to Basics night. Genealogist Mary Schweers will present a Basic Genealogy Course that will guide the budding genealogist in the search for their ancestors and provide a review for those more established in their research.

On February 13th, Genealogist Chris Smithson returns with "Getting your Ducks in a Row". Organizing your documents and family history information can be the most challenging part of genealogy. Join us as Chris demonstrates solutions to shaping up your family tree without killing a forest.

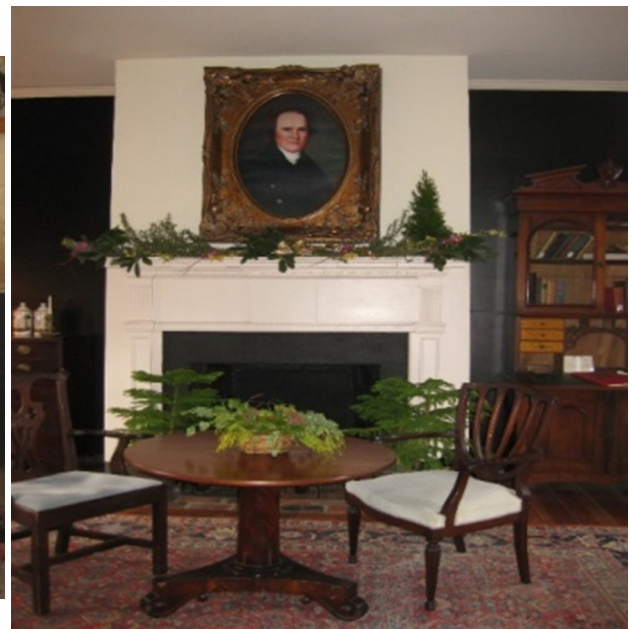
All classes begin at 7:00 pm and conclude before 9:00 pm, pre-registration is not necessary, but it is encouraged to facilitate planning. There is a charge of \$10 per person to cover expenses to the

Historical Society in presenting the class. If you have any questions, please contact the Historical Society of Harford County at (410) 838-7691.

HAYS HOUSE HAPPENINGS

As autumn leaves start falling, volunteers are planning the last events of Hays House 2018 season. On Sunday November 11, Historic Foodways Interpreter Pam Williams will once again bring us her knowledge of 18th century cooking. As she cooks over the crackling fire and prepares a meal appropriate to this bygone era, she will tell visitors about the foods that were available and discuss the culinary customs of our ancestors. Visit from 1-4 pm. Cost is \$5 for adults, \$3 for seniors and students. Children under 4 are free.

On Saturday and Sunday, December 1 and 2, Hays House will celebrate the start of the holiday season with its annual Christmas Open House. Founded in 1948, the Country Garden Club of Harford County is marking its 70th anniversary. The garden club will once again decorate the historic house museum with fresh greens and seasonal arrangements. On Sunday, the Catherine Street Consort will play holiday music on period instruments. Visit from 1- 4 pm each day. Admission is free.



NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members:

William Martin and Paule Audebert

Margot Rome and Nancy Beatty

James B. Rutledge III

Lance and Wendy Scarff

Ken Wells

ON DOING HISTORY

By Jim Chrismer

A FIELD TRIP TO OLE VIRGINNY

What student of history doesn't enjoy a good field trip?

Readers of this column are likely aware of my abiding interest in historic preservation, the process of writing history, and changing perceptions of the past. A logical question is to what extent have these changes affected presentations at historical sites. So, in combination with a trek south for a family wedding, my wife Carolyn and I arranged a trip that took us to several presidential homes in Virginia. We'll deal here with the two most notable -- Thomas Jefferson's *Monticello* and James Monroe's *Montpelier*, both owned and operated by private, non-governmental foundations.

Aside from the sheer pleasure of just being at places of such national significance, we especially wanted to assess how these landmarks have handled some of today's prevailing historical issues, notably racism and sexism. Our travels in the past had taken us to both locations, and we wanted to observe how programming had (or *had not*) changed in light of recent historical findings. Our survey considered the site's overall approach, treatment of the principal personalities, and the nature of its tours, publications, displays, and exhibits.

Monticello

Visitors to Thomas Jefferson's home throughout most of the 20th century effectively encountered a shrine to an American icon and genius. Following its 1923 acquisition of the site from previous owners, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation stressed Jefferson's wisdom, liberal ideals, historical accomplishments, refined taste, and architectural skill and innovations. Tours of the grounds emphasized Jefferson's interests in natural history, agriculture, and botany; and his management style and progressive treatment of his labor force. Visitors left Monticello with the clear impression that Jefferson was America's flawless Renaissance Man, the embodiment of all that was enlightened and good about the world's greatest republic.

Beginning in the 1960s, historians undertaking research on the role of racism and sexism in the country began to challenge traditional views of many American institutions. Indeed, Monticello's experts conducted studies of their own and, in coordination with the academic community, arrived at a number of insights and conclusions that gradually led to modifications in programming clearly evident to veteran observers in 2018.

- The owners of the property have dropped the word *Memorial* from their corporate identity and are now legally entitled The Thomas Jefferson Foundation.



- House tours and exhibits in the Visitor Center present Jefferson in a more human and nuanced manner and the house as the center of the numerous activities of a highly talented man.
- Rooms in the House have been redecorated and, in some cases, repurposed to provide a more likely use of its spaces during Jefferson's life.
- Whenever feasible the phrased *enslaved person* has replaced the term *slave*. Jefferson evinced a variety of responses to the institution of slavery and the question of race.
- Archaeological studies and accompanying historical recreations portray a picture of Monticello as a working plantation. Tours now include specific locations and industrial activities associated with the laborers, reproduction housing, and an extensive, marked slave burial ground.
- Mulberry Row, a 1000-foot-long garden and series of outbuildings, previously presented as evidence of Jefferson's interests in agriculture and production, has been refocused to credit the work of some 150 enslaved laborers, craftsmen and women.
- The Foundation has affirmed that Jefferson's 38-year relationship with Sally Hemings, an enslaved woman and half-sister to the widowed Jefferson's deceased wife Martha, was sexual in nature. On June 6, 2018, it opened a new exhibit to her in a room believed to be her quarters in the outside south wing and declared, unequivocally, that Jefferson was the father of her children. The issue, it asserted, is a "settled historical matter."

In a word, and with the pun very much intended, a "revolution" has taken place at Monticello in the last half century. The interpretation of Jefferson and his mountaintop home is now multi-dimensional in nature and far broader and more realistic, than when Carolyn and I first visited Jefferson's "monument." As graduate history students at the University of Virginia, we literally sat on the floor and at the feet of a statue of "Mr. Jefferson" in a living metaphor while Dumas Malone, the nation's foremost Jefferson biographer, extolled the unparalleled virtues of *The Sage of Monticello*. No longer.



Montpelier

Not surprisingly, the changes at Monticello have echoed at Montpelier, a short 28-mile flight for the proverbial crow. To be sure, celebrating James Madison and his role in formulating the New Republic initially drove the original decisions for the inspiration, expenditures (\$24 million!), and energy behind the exhaustive restoration of the house.

Having acquired the property in 1983 from heirs of Marion DuPont (yes, those DuPonts) prior to the historical profession's new emphasis on social and cultural matters, the National Trust for Historical Preservation expected its work to concentrate on the public life of the famed Constitutionalist, Secretary of State, and President. Indeed, to be immersed in the story of Madison's years in Philadelphia and Washington, to learn of his scholarship and consummate role in writing the Constitution, to stand in his law library, and to linger in the room where he died is very compelling.

In the last twenty years, however, administrators have undertaken an extensive examination of the untold story of the property's enslaved persons – the people who literally built Montpelier, served the wishes of the family, and worked the plantation that supported the bounteous lifestyle of its owners. The most visible result of the Trust's broadened mission has been the reconstruction and interpretation of the homes of the domestic staff in the property's South Yard.

As it turns out, our arrival at Montpelier coincided with the opening of Montpelier's newest permanent exhibit, "The Mere Distinction of Colour." Following a decade of active archaeological and archival research, combined with the gathering of oral histories from the plantation's "descendant community," the new exhibit seeks to accomplish two major objectives: to tell the story of the nation's troubled history of slavery and, as much as possible, to reveal the rich material culture and unique human identity of those persons who toiled for several generations of Madisons and beyond.

Spread over the mansion's two cellars and out into the reconstructed homes, "The Mere Distinction of Colour" employs audio panels, computer monitors, artifacts, testimonies, recordings of relatives, and copies of original documents to detail the life of individuals who labored into the mid-19th century and to connect the stories of Montpelier's enslaved community with the harsh legacy of slavery in modern America. Along the way visitors learn about the staff's family life, interests, hobbies, and skills, along with their trials, hardships, and worries. The stories of the teenage Ellen Stewart and the freed George Gilmore are particularly evocative.

A *Washington Post* writer proclaimed that the new exhibit "treats the people who were enslaved at Montpelier as if their lives were as worthy of historical examination as that of the man who owned them."

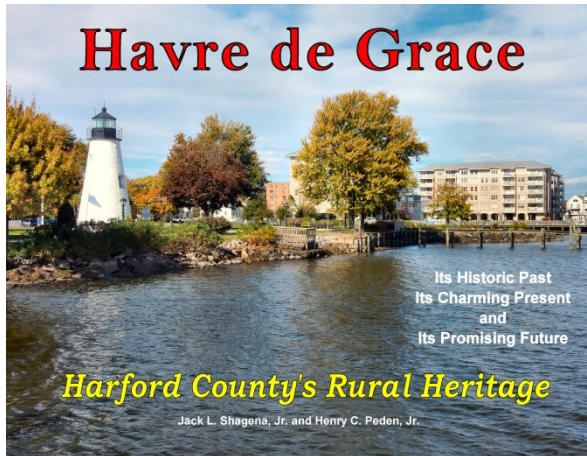
Other than Roosevelt's Hyde Park, Montpelier puts more emphasis on the role of the president's spouse than any presidential site that we've ever visited. Given modern-day insights and using the most recent scholarship available, the Dolley Madison who emerges at her country home is a historically substantial figure far removed from the trifling social butterfly, portrait-saving lightweight of children's biographies. She is a conscious player of politics who used her social skills to promote her husband's presidential agenda while helping the nascent country establish the neo-classical identity that connected it to the ancient republican ideals of Greece and Rome.

Montpelier's website sums up Dolley Madison in this manner:

"It's easy to romanticize or trivialize Dolley Payne Todd Madison. Like most women of the nineteenth century, her public facing life was focused on husband and home. But she was also a woman who played a major role in an extraordinary period of our nation's history as a formidable partner to her husband, President James Madison. Half a century after she first moved to Washington D.C. [1801], a newspaper obituary referred to Dolley as the 'first Lady in the land,' and so she has been called America's first First Lady."

Having visited the Madisons' plantation for a third time, it's easy to agree with the *Post's* author that the Trust's broadened emphasis makes "Montpelier a more beautiful and vibrant place, as well as a more honest one." Real historians love the honesty and truth that come from broad and deep efforts to produce inclusive and true accounts of the past.

The visits to Monticello and Montpelier constituted the highlight of the Chrismers' summer presidential field trip. Despite having to maintain a rapid pace over a relatively short period of time, we came away buoyed with the realization that the work of two generations of historians has born practical, highly visible results that will serve to entertain and educate the public to a fuller and more accurate picture of their national heritage.



NEW PUBLICATION FEATURING HAVRE DE GRACE

Jack Shagena and Henry Peden, Jr. recently announced release of their newest publication, *Havre de Grace: Its Historic Past, Its Charming Present and Its Promising Future*. The book is part of the authors *Harford County's Rural Heritage* collection. This 452-page hard bound volume is available by contacting Mr. Shagena at 410-569-0988 or at the Bahoukas Antique Mall at 408 N. Union Avenue in Havre de Grace, 410-942-1290.

PERSONAL HISTORIES FROM THE VIETNAM WAR ERA



The Historical Society is in the business of collecting and preserving the stories of county residents, documenting their personal experiences and the legacy they leave behind. It has been 50 years since the TET offensive which many consider the turning point in the Vietnam War, resulting in a year of reflection about that time in the country's history. Memories of the War are still raw for many, and even more people have no memory and little knowledge of the upheaval that befell the nation in 1968.

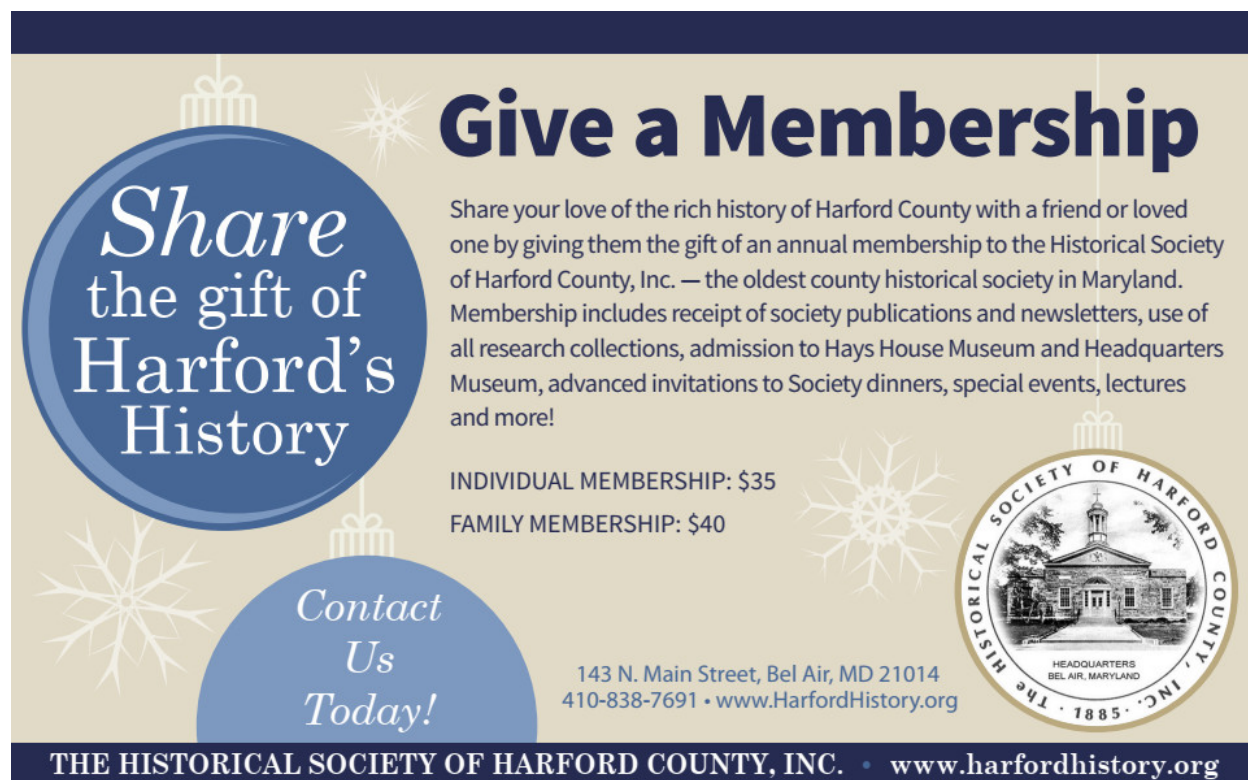
Last year the society collected stories about the men and women who served in World War I. In many ways, we waited too long since most of those who served had passed. To avoid losing this particularly meaningful part of the county and nations' history, we are asking anyone who is interested in sharing their story about the Vietnam War to submit it either via email at admn@HarfordHistory.org or by mail to the Historical Society Newsletter, 143 N. Main St., Bel Air, MD 21014.

All the stories collected will be preserved in the Society's Archives. We hope to share a few of these in upcoming issues of the newsletter. If you don't want your story published, please let us know and your privacy will be protected. Please consider sharing your experiences from this time, and help the younger generations gain a better understanding of life in 60s America.

Here are some possible questions to get you started, but feel free to describe your experiences however you choose.

1. Were you in the military? If so, what branch? Drafted or enlisted?
2. Where was your training? What did it include?
3. Where were you stationed?
4. What was day to day life like- the things, people, places, ideas that made up your day?
5. How did protests at home affect you?
6. How did the war experience affect your life after the war?

GIFT IDEA FOR THE HISTORY BUFF ON YOUR LIST



Give a Membership

Share your love of the rich history of Harford County with a friend or loved one by giving them the gift of an annual membership to the Historical Society of Harford County, Inc. — the oldest county historical society in Maryland. Membership includes receipt of society publications and newsletters, use of all research collections, admission to Hays House Museum and Headquarters Museum, advanced invitations to Society dinners, special events, lectures and more!

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP: \$35
FAMILY MEMBERSHIP: \$40

Contact Us Today!

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HEADQUARTERS
BEL AIR, MARYLAND

IN MEMORIAM

It is with deep sadness we recognize the deaths from cancer of two long time members of the Society, Joseph Tydings and Mary Edey McGuirk. Senator Tydings represented Maryland in Congress from 1964-1970. He served in Germany in World War II and was a noted author and speaker. Mary McGuirk, an outstanding athlete, owned the Harford County Tennis Club, worked as a researcher and swimming coach as well as a Home School principal. She was married to attorney Gregory Szoka.

NORTHERN CHESAPEAKE ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Wednesday, November 7, 2018

- The Prehistoric Tool Kit of the Upper Bay. Dan Coates and Dave Peters. Perryville
- Public Library, Perryville

Friday, December 7, 2018**

- Subject / Speaker TBA, ASNC Elections & Dinner Meeting.
- I.O.O.F. Hall, Aberdeen

RESERVATION FORM

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u># Tickets</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Nov 10	Archer Lecture & Tea with John Paulson	\$10.00	_____	_____
Nov 14	Genealogy Workshop: Terminology & Handwriting	\$10.00	_____	_____
Dec 6	Holiday Paint and Sip Night at the Museum	\$25.00	_____	_____
Dec 12	Genealogy Workshop: Preserving Documents & Records	\$10.00	_____	_____
TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED				\$_____

Name: _____ Ph. or E-Mail: _____

Tickets for events with fees can also be purchased via PayPal on the Society's web page.

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.

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The Historical Society
of Harford County, Inc.
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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.