

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 2021

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

IN THIS ISSUE

Tribute to Two Outstanding Members	1
President's Message	2
Th Lafayette Trail	3
Coming Events	-
- Genealogy Workshop	4
- Brown Bag Lunch Series	4
- The Ma & Pa Railroad	5
- Oh, The Stories We Can Tell	6
Clark's Chapel M.E.	7
Slavery in Harford	8
Membership Drive	10
Harford Heritage	-
- Make Your Story Part of Our Story	10
- Harford 250 Logo Contest	11
2021-1Q Calendar	11

TRIBUTE TO TWO OUTSTANDING MEMBERS

The Society is fortunate to have many amazing volunteers. Two of the most outstanding are a husband-and-wife team, Page and Jeff Smart. Both are history graduates of San Jose State University where they met in the microfilm room. In 1984, Jeff was offered his "dream job" as a historian for the Department of the Army at Aberdeen Proving Ground. His office on the Edgewood area of APG grew from a single file cabinet to more than 350 filing cabinets of reports original documents, photographs and other media during his tenure at the base. While Jeff documented the history of the military in Harford County, Page worked as a reference librarian at the Harford County Public library

Adding to these active lifestyles, both volunteered at the Historical Society. They are the best kind of volunteers, ones who will do whatever needs to be done – moving and assembling furniture, painting the entire paneled area of the headquarters, helping with the annual yard sale and representing the society at conventions and public exhibitions.

Individually, Jeff initially joined the Society as part of the publications committee and served as editor since 1993. During that time, he authored ten issues of the *Bulletin*, principally involving the County's involvement in the Civil War, including its most recent publication, *Divided Union: A Military History of Harford County in the Civil War in 1863 – 1865 (Part 2)*. With the unique challenges of 2020, Jeff agreed to speak in the Society's first attempt at a virtual presentation. This outstanding program transported viewers to life in Harford during the Civil War. This was only one of the many presentations Jeff provided during his tenure on behalf of the Society. He regularly entertained audiences with tales of Harford's history at the Society and at such venues as the Harford County Library, the Hays-Heighe House, church congregations and service clubs.

Cont'd on page 2

TRIBUTE - cont'd from page 1

Page was equally involved bringing her extensive experience as a librarian to professionally organize the Society's large collection of books, genealogical records, pamphlets and more. For years, Page served as a Board Trustee in the role of Corresponding Secretary, responding to the vast array of donors and members. She organized the Annual Giving Fund and other fundraising events, served on numerous committees, made sure baked goods were provided for Society events, assisted with genealogical research, oversaw projects for the library volunteers and could always be counted on to find just the right book or document to help even the most problematic research need.



In December, Page and Jeff achieved their long-time goal of returning to the West Coast to be near their two children, a soon to arrive first grandchild and the home that they love. While we are very happy for them, they will be sorely missed and deserve the thanks of all Society members for their many years of devotion and dedicated service

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year!

I sincerely hope that the coming year will bring an end to the pandemic and allow us to resume life as usual. In the meantime, I want to thank all the Trustees, volunteers and members who helped make 2020 a successful year for the Society. With all its challenges, the last year brought many of us closer together and initiated new ways of operating that proved highly successful, if at times challenging. For now, we will continue to do our best to provide research assistance via telephone, email, or snail mail.

I hope you have taken the time to attend some of the Society's virtual events. They have been truly outstanding and there are more to come. For now, the plan is to continue all our activities virtually until we can meet again safely. I encourage you to visit the Society's website to learn more about upcoming events and to register for those of interest to you. All events are free for now. You may also want to check out the Society's Facebook page. The Photo Friday project on Facebook continues to draw large numbers of visitors and the highlighted pictures are guaranteed to take you down memory lane.

The window restoration project at headquarters is progressing well and we hope to begin the lobby restoration this spring. That will lead the way for creation of a museum at the Headquarters building highlighting Harford's history. For now, I encourage you to visit the Society's website to learn about all upcoming programs and to renew or join the Society during the January Membership Drive.

Finally, thank you for your continued patience, support and understanding as we move through this unprecedented time. I look forward to working for you in the coming year. Please stay safe.

Bill Walden, President

THE LAFAYETTE TRAIL

On November 6, 2020 Maryland's Lt. Governor Boyd K Rutherford, Havre de Grace Mayor Bill Martin, and the French Consul General in Washington D.C. met with the President of the Lafayette Trail Project, Julien Icher, to dedicate a Lafayette Tour sign in Havre de Grace. This will become part of the designated trail commemorating Lafayette's 1824 Tour of America, encouraging people to learn more about our country's early history by following the trail from Boston through the 24 states that made up the United States in 1824.

Julien P. Icher is a 27-year-old Frenchman who is President of The Lafayette Trail, Inc. (thelafayettetrail.org), a nonprofit organization. The corporation is the result of an idea which he first developed while interning as a Junior Diplomat at the Consulate of France in Boston in 2017. The company endeavors to document, map, mark, and promote General Lafayette's 13-month visit to the U.S. in 1824-1825 known as his Triumphant Tour or Farewell Tour. According to Icher, Lafayette's visit brought back a living memory of the Revolutionary War era, set in motion across the nation for the year-long tour. He was a link between two generations, and a unique figure reminding Americans of the common thread uniting them all as members of the same national family.

Lafayette's travels through Harford County are well documented both during the Revolutionary War as he took his troops across the northern part of the county to Route 7 and on to awaiting ships for the trip to the battle that led to the end of the War, and on his 1824 Tour as he visited friends and acquaintances in the county on his journey back to France. Mr. Icher's organization is seeking primary source material documenting Lafayette's time in Harford County. We know that General Lafayette presented some local residents with medals and letters of appreciation during his time here and hope to locate these to help expand the story of Lafayette's time in Harford. If you know of any such memorabilia, you are encouraged to notify the Historical Society so we can share the information with the Lafayette Trail Organization.

The Society is planning a celebration of these historic times for the 200th anniversary of the Tour. Anyone interested in assisting with plans for the yearlong celebration should send us an email with your contact information at 250celebration@harfordhistory.org. This is the contact site for both the 2024 Lafayette Tour project and the 2023 County's 250th anniversary.



*Dedication of the Havre de Grace
Lafayette Tour sign November
2020*

COMING EVENTS

Currently, the Society plans to continue providing virtual presentations in lieu of in person events due to the pandemic. The event calendar for the upcoming months is packed full of fascinating programs that we hope you will view and enjoy. Each of the events is free and will certainly entertain. To register for any of these programs, visit the Society's website www.HarfordHistory.org and stay informed by following the Society's Facebook page where you are encouraged to share your favorite photos of Harford County on Photo Friday.

- **GENEALOGY WORKSHOP**

Genealogist, Mary Schweers will present the first Genealogy Workshop of the 2021 season on Wednesday, February 10 at 7 pm. The topic is *Finding Scholastic Records for Genealogical Research*. While you may not be able to see their report cards, your ancestors left records of their carefree days in school. From one room schoolhouses to the ivy-league colleges, join us as we discuss where to research and what is available online. Please visit the Society's website, www.HarfordHistory.org to register for the workshop



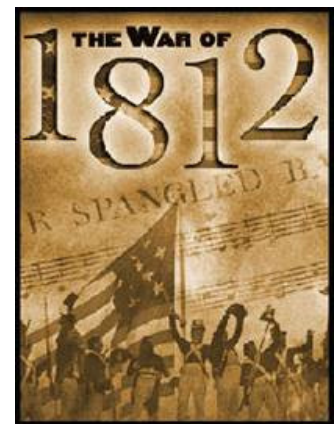
- **BROWN BAG LUNCH SERIES**

January: *Harford County Soldiers in the War of 1812*

This year's virtual Brown Bag Lunch series opens on Tuesday, January 12, 2021 at 12:30 pm with a presentation by Dr. Sandra R. Wallis. Her topic is *Harford County Soldier's in the War of 1812*.

Most Harford County residents know about the British attack on Havre de Grace during the War of 1812, but there is so much more to this story. Dr. Wallis will relate the tales of the men who volunteered to serve in the war against England after the British troops burned Havre de Grace and attacked along the shores of the Chesapeake. Local men rushed to enlist and join the battle in Baltimore, a deciding factor in this War that ended British claim to the former colonies.

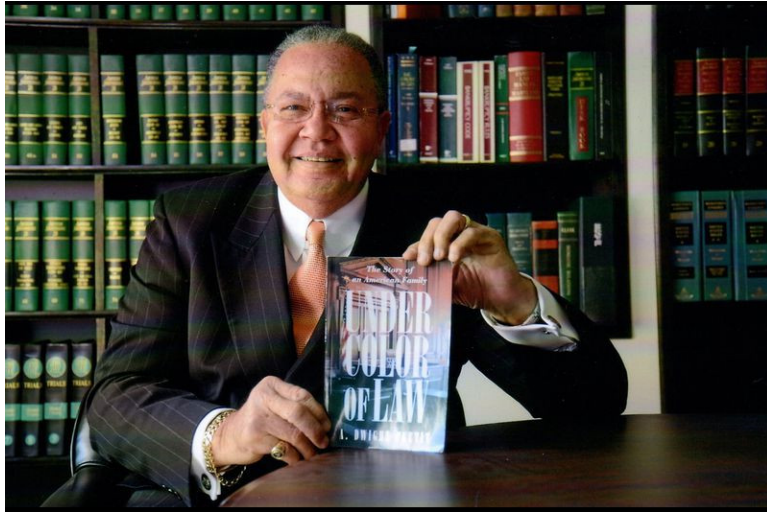
Dr. Wallis' presentation will outline the adventures of these brave veterans and describe a current ambitious project to document the burial sites of these unrecognized heroes.



*Harford County soldiers
in the War of 1812*

February: *Under Color of Law*

On Tuesday, February 9, 2021 at 12:30 pm, the Society will welcome attorney, author and political operative, A. Dwight Pettit, Esq. as our Brown Bag Lunch guest speaker. A native of Harford County, Pettit will share the story behind his book *Under Color of Law* relating a remarkable childhood, outstanding career and his father's brave fight to assure Dwight received the education he deserved in the waning years of school segregation in Harford County.



Under Color of Law by A. Dwight Pettit

In a February 26, 2014 *Baltimore Sun* article Krishana Davis explained that throughout the second half of the 1950s and into the middle of the 1960s, leaders of Harford County's white establishment did everything they could to keep black children from attending any of the county's all-white schools.

In those days, the black children were sent to one of two blacks-only consolidated schools, Central Consolidated, on the site of the current Hickory Elementary north of Bel Air, or Havre de Grace Consolidated, on the site of the current Roye-Williams Elementary in Oakington. Roye-Williams

was so named for the two principals of the consolidated schools, Percy V. Williams at Central and Leon S. Roye at Havre de Grace.

According to archival news articles and subsequent historical research and writings on the subject, one of the dodges used locally was the establishment of the blue-ribbon committee on school admissions, members of which were to determine the suitability of any black students seeking transfer to an all-white school.

The panel might not have been used at all, except Harford faced an additional pressure beyond the federal courts: Several of its all-white schools were the closest ones to a large, racially integrated military and civilian population living on or near Aberdeen Proving Ground and the then-Edgewood Arsenal. Among them was the George Pettit family.

Through his lawsuit, which was litigated by the future U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, Pettit's father eventually won his son admission into Aberdeen High School, where Pettit said he excelled and was a favorite, as a top athlete, and experienced little personal racial discrimination from his classmates. He was, however, still among a very few black children, most of them in Edgewood or Aberdeen area schools, who broke Harford's color barrier in the early 1960s.

To register for this presentation and learn more about this timely story, please visit the Society's website www.HarfordHistory.org or call 410-838-7691.

- **WALTER HOLLOWAY: *THE MA & PA RAILROAD***

For all the railroad buffs out there, we have a special treat in store. On Saturday, February 13, 2021 at 2 pm, Walter Holloway, the Society's resident Ma & Pa Railroad historian will present the story of the railroad's 120-year history concentrating on the era from 1901 to 1999 when the railroad merged with York Rail to become York Railroad Company. The presentation will include photographs of equipment and places along the rails in that timeline and promises to be both informative and a visual delight as the Ma & Pa traversed some of the most scenic countryside of both Harford and Baltimore Counties.



The Ma & Pa Southbound at Pylesville 1943

For reservations visit the Society's website at www.Harford.History.org.

- **QUARTERLY LECTURE SERIES: *OH, THE STORIES WE CAN TELL***

Each year the Society presents four lectures. Usually, the January and April lectures are accompanied by a Tea, but this year like most everything else, the lecture and tea programs required some adjustments. Since we can't gather for a high tea, we will present a unique lecture series in the format of an interview with long time Harford County residents.

On Saturday, January 23, 2021, Board Trustee, Chris Potts, will interview Carol Deibel, former Bel Air Director of Planning and Community Development, about the major events and programs in Bel Air during the 80s, 90s and early 2000s, a time of extreme development pressure and change throughout Harford. Please plan to attend and submit your questions for the Q & A session after the interview. Your stories are also welcome, so we encourage you to share.

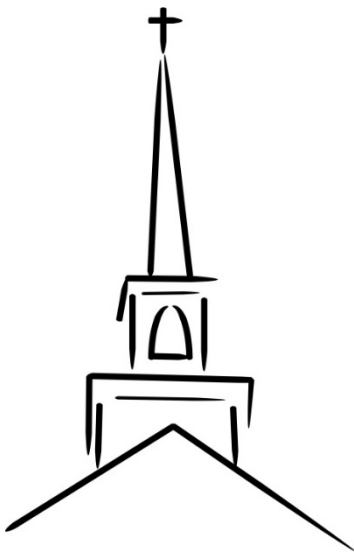
The April presentation is still in the planning stages. The speaker will be announced in the March/April newsletter. Hopefully, by September we will be able to hold the regular quarterly lecture at the Society's Annual Dinner. For now, we ask you to stay tuned.

For reservations visit the Society's website www.HarfordHistory.org.



Main St. in Bel Air 1970s

A HARFORD COUNTY LANDMARK



Clark's Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church, currently known as Clarks United Methodist Church, on Kalmia Road near Bel Air is one of, if not the oldest traditionally African American congregations in the Bel Air area, tracing its formation to the enslaved persons who worshipped from the balcony of the Watters Meeting House/Thomas Run Church (HA-49). The congregation purchased the property from the Clarks, a free African American couple, for \$1 in 1855, including "Clark's Chapple" a building in use as a community meeting place. This building was shown on the 1858 and 1878 maps of Harford County and was labeled a "coloured church" in 1878. Circa 1880s, the earlier building was replaced by the current historic church building, a vernacular fieldstone church clad in stucco circa the 1930s. A graveyard, with both marked and unmarked burials, is adjacent to the historic church and a modern church building is located on the property to the northeast.

The church played a significant role in the lives of many of Harford County's families for the last 165 years. It is now under consideration for County landmark status, a truly well-deserved designation.

SLAVERY IN HARFORD

February is national Black History Month, so it seemed fitting to share a few stories about a difficult time in our nation's and our county's past. For many, it is difficult to comprehend the existence of slavery in our community, but it did exist. Enslaved persons were routinely sold at the county courthouse until 1863. Here are just a couple of their stories as described in documents found at the Maryland State Archives.



Hazzard "Had" Harris (b. circa 1790 - d. circa 1860), a black Harford County man, allegedly assisted numerous runaway slaves cross the Susquehanna River from the 1830s until the 1850s. Born into slavery about 1790, Harris received freedom in 1832, at the age of 43, from his Harford owner, Joseph Prigg. By 1850, Had Harris lived near William Worthington, a Quaker, and reputed agent of the Underground Railroad in that area of Harford County. The two men collaborated several times, with Harris escorting fleeing slaves across the Susquehanna at night from "Worthington's Landing." Harris' house stood near the canal in the area where the Susquehanna Power and Paper Company later built a plant. According to a Harford County history, Worthington's and Harris' activities enjoyed the participation of many local folk. When fugitives came to the area seeking aid, someone would approach Worthington: "Uncle Billy, they would say in coded language, "there're people on the hill." Worthington would direct food and provisions to the fugitives, who remained hid in his cornfields." At night, the runaways would be led to Harris, who would provide the transportation.

Margaret Morgan was born into slavery in Harford County sometime around 1800. Her parents were owned by John Ashmore, whose property lied in the Dublin District of the county. Though no official manumission had been granted to the enslaved family, they were effectively freed from service before Margaret's birth. She may still have been one of the two females recorded as slaves under Ashmore's household in the 1820 Census. In the following decade she met and married a local free black man, Jerry Morgan. They remained in Dublin, raising a family free from any condition that might resemble slavery. Neither she nor her parents were included in the 1824 inventory of John Ashmore's property.

In 1832, Margaret and Jerry decided to move the family into the adjacent "free state," Pennsylvania. This was not considered controversial at the time, as the Morgans had long been living independently of John Ashmore and his heirs. There was no runaway advertisement declaring that Margaret and her children had escaped from service. However, their decision to move just north to York County eventually led to a series of events, which had significant repercussions for the nation's fugitive slaves and their owners. While they did not consider themselves fugitives, the Morgans may have migrated due to the less tolerant climate that prevailed after Nat Turner's 1831 revolt in Virginia. This bloody rebellion of enslaved and free blacks caused already suspicious Maryland whites to crack down even more on the rights of those African Americans in their midst.

Journal of York County Heritage

THE REPUBLICAN.
YORK, Pa.
Wednesday, March 22, 1837.

KIDNAPPING.—A free negro woman named Morgan and six children residing in Lower Chanceford township, York county, were recently seized by a constable and kidnappers, as slaves, and taken to Maryland, where it is ascertained they have been sold to a slave driver to be taken South. Application has been made to the Governor for a requisition upon the Governor of Maryland for their release; but it is probable that they will be out of the reach of the executive power of Maryland before he can be apprized of it.—*Penn. Telegraph.*



Margaret and Jerry may simply have been pursuing a better life for their children, who would not have to be exposed to slavery in Pennsylvania, where the institution was nearly extinct. The couple had at least one more child in the 1830's, born after the move. It was not until 1837 that Margaret Ashmore, the former owner's widow or daughter, decided to pursue the black family across state lines. She hired her in-law Nathan Bemis and fellow Dublin resident Edward Prigg to find the alleged fugitives. Two more men, Jacob Forwood and Stephen Lewis, joined them in the hunt. As stipulated by an 1826 state law, the men were required to "apply to any judge, justice of the peace or alderman" who would issue a warrant for the "person held to labor or servitude." They were indeed granted the permission by local justice of the peace Thomas Henderson, who referred the group to York County constable William McCleary.

Prigg and company found the Morgan family, apparently capturing everyone in the household as they slept. This included the free-born Jerry and at least one child who had been born in Pennsylvania. They were quickly loaded into "an open wagon in a cold sleety rain, with scarcely their ordinary clothes on." When they returned to Henderson's house, he "refused to take further cognizance of the case," perhaps questioning the legality of the capture. Thomas Hambly, the York County lawyer who would prosecute Prigg, published his argument and version of events in 1842. Hambly would claim that Henderson realized that he did not have jurisdiction to approve the capture according to the 1826 state law. The slave catchers ended up releasing Jerry Morgan, perhaps with the assurance that he could plead the family's case for freedom the next day. However, Prigg and Bemis did not give him that opportunity, instead crossing back into Maryland once the husband departed.

Hambly further contended that the mother and children were then taken before Judge Stevenson Archer of Harford County, who sanctioned the sale. However, they were immediately pursued and the Pennsylvania governor was alerted to the matter. Thomas Culbreth's correspondence with Maryland governor Thomas W. Veazey confirms that detail. In a letter dated June 28, 1837, Culbreth claimed to have met with Margaret at the jail in Bel Air, "where she was not confined but had liberty to see her children." Hambly may also have attempted to bring the Morgans back to Pennsylvania through the legal channels, but this effort was apparently unsuccessful. The lawyer also recounted the sad fate of Jerry Morgan, who was distraught at losing his family. Afraid to enter Maryland, Jerry instead went to Harrisburg to lobby the Pennsylvania governor for support. On his way home from the capital, he was on board a boat headed for Columbia. When a white man's jacket was at some point lost, the crew and passengers immediately blamed Jerry who "was on board the boat and only *a Negro*." He jumped overboard to escape the violent threats but was taken underneath and drowned.

Edward Prigg and his associates were subsequently indicted by Pennsylvania grand jury for violating the state's 1826, "Personal Liberty Law." The states then engaged in a political standoff, with Maryland leadership being initially reluctant to hand over the defendants. York County prosecuted the group in 1839, finding all four men guilty of kidnapping under the state law. However, they appealed all the way to the United States Supreme Court, which decided in their favor in 1842's *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*. Bemis, Prigg, Forwood, and Lewis would not be severely punished for their immoral actions toward the Morgan family. The court's decision, essentially nullifying local stipulations on the slave retrieval process, would also make it more difficult to prevent similar incursions by slaveholders. Margaret Morgan's move north was therefore indirectly responsible for the federal Fugitive Slave Law that was enacted in 1850.

There is very little evidence of what became of her after the kidnapping and confinement in the Harford County Jail. In October of 1837, Thomas Culbreth learned that the Morgans freedom petition was denied

by the county court, and "in favor of Mrs. Ashmore's claim to them as her slaves." However, Margaret Ashmore scarcely appears in the local records in the ensuing years, nor is she recorded as a Harford County resident by the Federal Census. She may have sold the newly enslaved blacks as originally intended, though there is no official record of the transaction. The fate of Margaret Morgan and her children is therefore unknown.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The Historical Society of Harford County welcomes individuals, families, and organizations of all backgrounds, ages, and degrees of interest and involvement. The only requisite for membership is a genuine commitment to the county and its people, and the payment of annual dues. The Society encourages all members to become as active as they can. The Society is run mostly by volunteers. Members receive Society publications, meeting notices, use of Society research collections, admission to the Hays House Museum, Headquarters museum, advanced invitations to Society dinners, programs, and activities, and the Newsletter free.

Membership Options:

- | | | | |
|--------------|------|--------------|-------|
| • Student | \$15 | • Benefactor | \$100 |
| • Individual | \$40 | • Heritage | \$250 |
| • Family | \$50 | | |

Membership dues may be sent to the Historical Society, 143 N. Main St., Bel Air, MD 21014, or you may go to the Society website, www.HarfordHistory.org, click on Support Us, Membership and pay by credit card.

HARFORD HERITAGE PROGRAMS AND CONTESTS

• HARFORD 250: MAKE YOUR STORY PART OF OUR STORY

The Historical Society of Harford County is publishing an anthology of local stories in 2023 to honor the county's 250th anniversary. Be part of this collection of stories by and about past and present County residents. Write a compelling story about your experience of the people, places and events that make up life in 20th and 21st Century Harford County.

Memoir Submission Guidelines

Submission acceptance dates: January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021.

Selection: A committee made up of three members of the Harford 250 Anniversary event will choose which submissions to include in the final document. The society will notify those whose stories have been selected for publication.

Submission limitation:

- Stories from current and former Harford County residents only
- True stories related to an event, person, or place in Harford County
- Submissions are limited to 2,000 words or less
- Electronic submissions with photographs preferred

How to submit: Email to: 250celebration@harfordhistory.org

OR Mail to: The Historical Society of Harford County, Inc.
c/o Carol Deibel
143 N. Main Street
Bel Air MD 21014

Submission Understanding: All submissions will be retained in the Society's Archives. Submission constitutes the individual's agreement to allow the use of the story in the anthology and acknowledges that extracts / pictures may be used for publicity purposes. It is also understood that no payment, monetary or otherwise, will be given for use of the stories/pictures.

- **HARFORD 250: LOGO CONTEST SUBMISSION GUIDELINES**

The Harford Heritage Committee is planning a year-long celebration in 2023 for Harford County's 250th anniversary. One of its first tasks is to develop a logo that will act as the official emblem of the "Harford 250" celebration. The logo will be featured on anniversary year memorabilia and at all the many programs and events planned to celebrate Harford's 250-year history. The committee is seeking graphic submissions of potential logos that will become the "face" of the Anniversary Year. The logo will potentially be used on pins, plates, letterhead, and various other materials, so this should be considered in developing a design.

Submission acceptance dates: January 1, 2021 to March 30, 2021

Submission parameters: Proposed logo should be submitted as a color rendering of approximately 8" X 10" to allow for easy duplication. A brief description of the idea behind the proposed logo is encouraged.

Where to send submissions: Email submissions to 250celebration@harfordhistory.org. Include your name, address, telephone number and email address OR you may send 3 color copies of your proposal along with contact information to The Harford Heritage Committee, c/o The Historical Society of Harford County, Inc., 143 N. Main St., Bel Air, MD 21014.

Results: All submissions will be retained by the Harford Heritage Committee. Three members of the committee will choose the winning logo submission and award a \$100 prize to the successful applicant. The Committee will notify the winning applicant and award the prize as soon as a selection is made.

Submission Understanding: Submission constitutes the individual's agreement to allow the use of the proposed winning logo and also acknowledges that graphic renderings of the winning logo may be used for publicity purposes. It is also understood that no additional payment, monetary or otherwise, will be given beyond the initial prize money for use of the logo.

2021 QUARTERLY EVENTS CALENDAR

Tue, **Jan 12**, 12:30 pm– Brown Bag Lunch, Dr. Sandra R. Wallis – *Harford County Soldiers in the War of 1812*

Sat, **Jan 23**, 2021, 2 pm - Quarterly Lecture Series: *Oh, The Stories We Can Tell*

Tue, **Feb 9**, 12:30 pm – Brown Bag Lunch, A. Dwight Pettit, *Under The Color of Law*

Wed, **Feb 10**, 7 pm – Genealogy Workshop, *Finding Scholastic Records for Genealogical Research* - Mary Schweers

Sat, **Feb 13**, 2 pm – Virtual Presentation on the *Ma & Pa Railroad* – Walter Holloway

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.

Third Wednesday

ARCHIVES & HENRY
C. PEDEN Jr. LIBRARY
5:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.

Thursday

HENRY C. PEDEN Jr.
RESEARCH LIBRARY
9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Fourth Saturday

ARCHIVES & HENRY
C. PEDEN Jr. LIBRARY
10:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.