

The HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HARFORD COUNTY, Inc.

Preserving Our Past For Your Future



143 N. Main Street
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Society News

May / June 2021

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

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FUN FACTS FROM THE PAST

➤ In an article found in the July 4, 1902 *The Aegis*, Mr. Henry Horn of the Rocks, submitted a story from the Baltimore Evening Post that told of the correspondence between Captain John Montgomery of Bel Air and President Thomas Jefferson offering the services of the Bel Air Light Dragoons, against the British who were then "creating trouble "which afterwards led to the War of 1812. "This is but additional proof of the warm patriotism that has always existed in Harford County. Preceding and during every war this county has been loyal in its support to the Government and has never failed to furnish troops whenever a call to arms was issued."

The article went on to provide a copy of the letter and President Jefferson's response.

Sir:

The troop of Belle Air Light Dragoons, participating in the indignant feelings of their patriotic fellow citizens, excited by reiterated British outrages and recent murders, and entertaining a muting presentment that any prompt demand upon the government for honorable atonement and ample concession will be insolently rejected, and that the folly and baseness which now predominates in the councils of the English attain, will precipitate the United States into unavoidable war: Do hereby tender their services, in that event, in defense of the rights, liberties and territory of their country, pledging themselves to act upon the shortest notice when the President of the United States may order.

In behalf of the troop, JOHN Montgomery, Capt.

To the President of the United States.

To which the following reply was sent by the President.

To CAM. JOHN MONTGOMERY, and the troop of Belle Air Light Dragoons.

Cont'd on page 2

FUN FACTS, cont'd from page 1

The offer of your services in support of the rights of your country, merits and meets the highest praise; and whenever the moment arrives in which these rights must appeal to the public arm for support, the spirit from which your offer flows, that which animates our nation, will be their sufficient safeguard. To the Legislature will be rendered a faithful account of the events which have so justly excited the sensibilities of our country, of the measures taken to obtain reparation and of their result; and to their wisdom will belong the course to be ultimately pursued.

In the meantime, it is our duty to pursue that prescribed by the existing laws: towards which, should your services be requisite. This offer of them will be remembered.

I tender for your country the thanks you so justly deserve.

THOS. JEFFERSON.

August 17, 1807.

**NEW MEMBERS**

Melissa Horton-Grebe

Martha Nichols

Pat Sturdivant

Clifford Kiracofe

Sharon Kachur

Zachary Stripling

Jimmie McClune

Kathleen Whitehead

Nancy Gunther Snyder

Zachary Stripling

Kathleen Whitehead

Jane A. Simmons

Tamie Wainwright

Gene P. Cochran

Dr./Mrs. Dennis Kirkwood

IN MEMORIAM

It is with great sadness that we recognize the passing of Ellen Hopkins on March 25, 2021. Ellen was a long-time member of the Historical Society, a civilian employee at APG and the host of Afternoon Classics which aired on WHFC every Saturday for 20 years.

Ms. Maryanna Skowronski, Director of the Historical Society, expressed the Society's sadness stating, "Ellen was a loyal supporter of the Society, always in attendance at our annual dinners and never failing to compliment us on the events she attended. We looked forward each holiday season to the yearly Christmas cards that Ellen would send to us, always delightfully illustrated with a drawing of her cats. She will be greatly missed."

COMING EVENTS

- **Brown Bag Lunch Series** - Jacob Bensen: *Historic Preservation in Harford County*

Have you ever wondered what the county's historic preservation program was all about? What is the difference between a historic survey and a designation for a historic property? What is the Harford County Historic Landmark Program and how does it assist property owners? All of these questions and more will be answered at the upcoming Brown Bag Lunch program celebrating Historic Preservation Month.

Join us on **Tuesday, May 11, 2021, 12:30 pm** when the Society will present a Free Virtual Brown Bag Lunch program featuring Jacob Bensen, Harford County's Historic Preservation Planner. Mr. Bensen previously

served as an architectural historian for a Baltimore Engineering firm, a museum assistant for Harford Community College and the Historical Society's administrative assistant. His knowledge of Harford County's varied history, its architectural offerings and the programs available to help local property owners maintain these monuments to our past is extensive. Learn how you can become a part of this countywide effort to preserve Harford's buildings, participate in the county tax credit program and take this opportunity to ask questions of this knowledgeable speaker.

Registration is required. Register at www.harfordhistory.org or call 410-838-7691 for more information. The website also hosts all previous virtual presentations on its YouTube channel. Select the red arrow/online lectures on the webpage and enjoy these stories on your own time at your own pace.

Note: Due to program scheduling issues, the June Brown Bag Lunch program is postponed. The planned program, *Harford's Poets: Rhyme, Rhythm and Meter* will be rescheduled for a later date. The rescheduled date will be announced in the next newsletter edition.

To whet your appetite for this future presentation, here is a poem from Al Morey, a former Bel Air High School teacher and long-time member of the County History Club who passed away on February 26, 2021 at 91 years of age. Mr. Morey, like so many local residents shared a talent for poetry. Here is a final gift.

Share, by Al Morey

Let us share the good times,
Those hopes and dreams that are
Worthy of fulfillment,
That bring pleasure to each
That cause us to see humor and fun



Bon Air, a Harford County Landmark in Fallston

In the life we lead together and apart
So we think on many things
And --
Let us also share
The unhelpful times
It is a true test of one's mettle
To accept
And really hear
Another's fear,
Anger,
Passion,
And central core of truth.
Not all
Can do this.
Let's try!

HAYS HOUSE REMINISCENCES

by Betsy Lehmann

Since we are unable to invite patrons to the Hays House Museum during the pandemic, we thought it would be fun to share the story of a past exhibit. We look forward to the day we can open and once again share items from the Society's collections, but for now, we hope you enjoy this trip down memory lane.

The early days of the 21st century marked a busy time for the historic Hays House as we volunteers turned our attention to the collection of antique and vintage clothing donated to the historical society over the years. For some time, we had envisioned displaying some of the beautiful items in storage, and in 2005, we created an exhibit entitled *Fashion and Finery*, which won an award from the Harford County Historic Preservation Commission.

While selecting items for display, we realized that we had several wedding dresses – a large enough number to justify a stand-alone exhibit in 2006. We entitled this exhibit *With This Ring*, and with the addition of several Harford County wedding dresses on loan for the exhibit, we were able to create a timeline of wedding attire from 1861 to 1970. The oldest dress in our collection identifiable as a wedding dress was a Civil War-era dress. This was a silk tan and brown plaid two-piece dress in the style of the times since in the 19th century most wedding dresses were simply one's Sunday best. The white dress we visualize today was not common until Queen Victoria popularized the concept along with the use of orange blossoms, either real in season or as wax replicas.

Our display moved through time - from bustles to the Gibson-girl era of the 1890s, the high-necked Edwardian era and the delicate white lacy-tea dresses prominent through World War I, on to the white satin of the 1930s and 40s – right up to a short, almost mini-dress from 1970.

When word got around that we were exhibiting wedding dresses, many Harford County ladies decided to donate their heirloom wedding dresses to the Society, and by the time we opened the exhibit, we had

27 dresses to display along with several flower-girl and maid-of honor dresses and accessories we used to create wedding ensembles. We also had a number of bridal photographs and wedding invitations to go with the dresses. One wedding dress along with the formal, printed invitation in our collection dated to 1888.

No wedding display is complete without flowers, and the Country Garden Club of Harford County stepped up to provide suitable floral displays and bouquets to accompany the exhibit. A faux wedding cake and champagne glasses added to the ambience!



Volunteers Kathy Scholl (l) and Betsy Lehmann (r) setting up the Wedding Gown Exhibit in 2006



Samples of wedding finery through the ages

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Work continues at Society headquarters as our major restoration project proceeds. Currently, contractors are restoring the windows, the lobby, postmaster's office and developing the new museum space. As with all restoration efforts, there have been some surprises along the way, but most have been resolved. For now, all events and public meetings are proceeding virtually. This is somewhat of a mixed blessing. We can reach a much larger audience, but it would be so nice to be able to welcome you in person. For now, the Society will remain closed due to Covid restrictions and to the ongoing construction at least until next year. Events will be held virtually or off-site during this time. Currently plans call for allowing departmental volunteers back into the Society very soon. They will be required to wear masks and maintain social distance restrictions for the time being.

The Board of Trustees and several Committees continue to meet virtually to assure the business of the Society is addressed. One such meeting was hosted last month with the volunteers from each department. This was the second such session designed to allow me to share information about the ongoing construction, the pandemic impacts on the Society, various policy concerns and most importantly to learn more about what each of the volunteer groups does and what their needs are.

For now, these sessions are held monthly, but will eventually move to quarterly meetings, once I become more familiar with the workings of each department and what everyone's needs are. If you are a volunteer and have not yet attended one of these sessions, I encourage you to do so and to consider sharing your recommendations. What works? What is needed in terms of policy changes and program improvements? What would help you as a volunteer to be more effective? How can we improve your experience as a volunteer?

Meanwhile, I also encourage each of you to consider attending one of our upcoming virtual Brown Bag Lunches, visit the Society's Facebook Page and website to learn more about upcoming events and participate in the Photo Friday project on Facebook.

The Society continues to coordinate plans for Harford 250, a year-long celebration in 2023 commemorating the establishment of Harford County in 1773. The planning group is slated to meet in April to announce the Steering Committee members, the winning logo entry and to initiate plans for coordinating events among the numerous organizations now involved in the planning effort.

The logo contest concluded on March 30, 2021 and a logo was chosen from the 25 exceptional entries. This logo will be used to promote the activities planned throughout the county. As part of this project, the Society initiated *The Share Your Story* project, and is continuing to receive fascinating memoirs from individuals, local firehouses, churches, businesses and organizations. For more information on the Harford 250 Memoir project, visit the Society's website and please consider sending us your story. The Anthology will capture the essence of Harford County in the 20th century for future generations and will be available to the public in January 2023. Finally, if you or your organization is interested in helping plan programs for Harford's 250th anniversary year, please contact us at 250celebration@harfordhistory.org.

Thanks to all our members who signed up for Amazon Smile. Because you listed the Society as your favorite nonprofit, the Society recently received donations totaling \$433.47. For more information on this program, visit Amazon Smile and consider listing The Historical Society of Harford County, Inc. as your favorite nonprofit.

Bill Walden, President

NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH

May is National Historic Preservation Month, a time when local preservation groups, historical societies, businesses and civil organizations across the country celebrate by holding events that promote historic places, heritage tourism and the demonstrated social and economic benefits of historic preservation. As stated by the National Trust for Historic Places, "This is a time to get excited about the history around us, the places, the stories and the people behind them – even the ones that haven't been discovered yet. Stitching every story together – every single one – creates a richer, more complete picture of our nation."

There are many ways that you can be part of this preservation effort. Here are just a few of the suggestions from the National Trust.

- Visit a museum or tour a place you've always wanted to see.
- Investigate a story your grandparents told you or better yet record their story.
- Learn about volunteer opportunities in your area for rehabilitating historic buildings or sorting through archived material.
- Check your attic, basement, garage or other outbuildings. Do you have historical documents or photos that may contribute to your community's history?
- Visit local museums and learn the history of your community. Then learn even more. Find out about the heritage of the area before your town was established.
- Explore the history of a single building. What businesses took up shop over the years? How has it transformed and how has it been preserved?
- Discover parts of your county you've never seen before! Get lost and study the architecture; speak to the people in the neighborhood; seek out the stories in your county you didn't know before.
- Join a preservation organization.

Another consideration is to write your story or the story of a person, place, organization or business that you know well and send it to the Society at 250celebration@harfordhistory.org. The Society is collecting these stories for an Anthology that will be published for the county's 250th anniversary in 2023. For more information, visit the Society's website.

HARFORD HERITAGE CELEBRATIONS

Plans are proceeding for Harford 250, the 2023 celebration of the establishment of Harford County. A twelve person steering committee is coordinating efforts to produce this year long, countywide celebration. Over the last three months many local artists submitted renderings for consideration in the Committee's logo contest. An unveiling of the winning logo is planned for late April. The submissions were numerous and very competitive, so it will be exciting to see the final winner.

Memoir submissions are coming in from across the country. Former residents tell of their memorable days and adventures in the county. Current members, businesses and organizations are also providing unique insight into Harford County's history in the 20th and early 21st centuries. Everyone is encouraged to share your personal story or the story of your business, club, organization or a beloved place in Harford County. Stories should be submitted to 250celebration@harfordhistory.org. They should be typed, double-spaced and include 500 - 2,000 words. Pictures are encouraged. The Society plans to collect

the stories as an anthology to provide future readers with a glimpse of Harford County during this time. This is a chance to save your story for perpetuity. A twelve-person review committee will choose all the stories to include in the Anthology, but even if your story is not included it will be retained in the Society archives. We hope you will consider sharing your story.

In addition to these projects, the committee is working with people and organizations throughout the county to plan for the Anniversary year. If you or your organization would like to participate, please contact us at 250celebration@harfordhistory.org.

SPRING ACTIVITIES: EXPLORING COUNTY HISTORY

After a year of lockdown, many Society members are anxious to get out and explore the county's many historical sites and learn more about its complex and fascinating history. Since the Historical Society's headquarters will remain closed for many months yet due to ongoing construction, we are sharing some alternative opportunities for you to consider.

- The Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway Trail offers a chance to meander through parts of the county's most historic lands and see first-hand numerous historic sites. The trail runs from Rock Run north to Pennsylvania. Maps are available on line at [alltrails.com/trail>lowsersusquehanna](http://alltrails.com/trail/lowersusquehanna).
- Check out the Washington Rochambeau Trail. Maps are available online at <https://w3r-us.org>. Learn about Harford County's role in the Revolutionary War and about efforts to expand this story for future generations.
- The Lockhouse in Havre de Grace recently completely updated its exhibits. The new exhibit highlights the history of the Susquehanna and Tidewater Canal. The canal played a major, although short-lived role in county history.
- Explore the Lafayette trail in Havre de Grace. This is a self-guided trail featuring some of the rich history of the city. www.historichavredegrace.com/the-lafayette-trail.
- Visit www.harfordlandtrust.org for information on Passport Presentation in May. Harford Land Trust is once again sponsoring this fun "scavenger hunt" type event with 31 activities and prizes.
- The Havre de Grace Maritime Museum invites you to visit its indoor and outdoor museum exhibits including *The Underground Railroad: Other Voices of Freedom* and *The Rise and Fall of the Susquehannock Indians*. www.hdgmaritimemuseum.org.
- Consider a visit to Rockfield Park, and the Ma & Pa Trail or Liriodendron in Bel Air or Aberdeen's heritage walking tour.
- Visit Harford County's website to find information about the county's historic preservation efforts, 2021 Historic Preservation Awards recipients and to peruse story maps about county history.

These and so much more await you and will help satisfy the need for history tourism at least until the Society is able to reopen and invite everyone to see the transformation of the Historical Society's headquarters building and the new museum space.

TRIBUTE TO HARFORD COUNTY VOLUNTEERS

by C. Milton Wright

Several typed speeches that C. Milton Wright, a noted author, educator and Society member gave to various groups in the 1960s and 70s were recently donated to the Society' by the family of the late William Whiteford, former Director of Administration for Harford County.

Mr. Wright served as Superintendent of Schools in Harford County for 30 years. He then went on to serve as chair of the Harford County Boy Scouts; Superintendent of Bel Air Presbyterian Church 's Sunday School; treasurer of the county library board; and director of county probation, counseling delinquent boys, collecting back child support and even providing some marriage counseling. This speech was given in 1965 to Harford County volunteers and officials.

I am very happy to participate in this program to do honor to a group of people who are playing such an important part in the welfare of Harford County. They seem to be the forgotten ones, especially when the checks are handed out.

When our forefathers many years ago established this government, they wisely set forth in our national constitution a list of rights that every citizen should enjoy. That same principle was followed when our state constitution was adopted in 1867.

While not set forth in detail, those same documents implied that for those guaranteed rights there must be a corresponding set of duties and responsibilities if our government is to achieve the ends for which it is designed. Someone has said, "Surely one of the duties of the ideal citizen is to return to his community in faithful service at least as much as the community has invested in him."

Most of our people are proud of the underlying principles of our democracy. They are willing to cheer when the flag goes by, or stand when the StarSpangled Banner is sung, but some are found lacking when the call for service knocks at their door.

I learned long ago a little poem called the Lifters and the Leaners. It goes something like this:

*There are just two kinds of people on earth today
No more, no less I say,
The two kinds of people I mean
Are the people who lift and the people who lean.
And wherever you go you'll find the world's masses
Divided into just these two classes.
And oddly enough you'll find too I mean
There's only one lifter to twenty who lean.*

It therefore remains for the few like you to be the lifters, the active leaders and doers in those ideals of government which so many support only in emotions and lip service.

Each of us, whether office holder or private citizen has a place in the life of his community, and that community will reach its highest possibilities only as each exercises to the full his own opportunity for service and achievement. A recent report of the Harford County Governmental Study Commission quoted

one of the objects of dedication of our new office building a year ago, and I quote: "We dedicate it to the promotion of all those things that will make a well planned, well managed and well governed county, as we look forward to its progress and prosperous future."

Good government cannot be accomplished by elected public officials alone. It takes teamwork, the support and cooperation of an interested and enlightened citizenry. Thomas Jefferson said, "To follow the will of the people is the chief duty of those placed at the head." Only by careful study of its many problems and by our united service can we bring about those things that make that a well- planned and well managed government.

The article goes on to tell the stories of Nathaniel Utie, one of the county's first settlers in 1652; James Phillips and William Osborne who built the county's first Court House and Jail for "punishing evildoers"; the five justices who served as the county's governing body as well as judges for no pay; Benjamin Rumsey, John Dorsey, Thomas White and others who held office at the county seat in Joppa in the 1700s; and the brave men who signed the Bush Declaration saying "We most solemnly pledge ourselves to each other, and to our country and engage ourselves by every tie held sacred among mankind to perform the same at the risk of our lives and fortunes."

This history of volunteerism is alive and well today, but few could expound its virtues better than Mr. Wright as shown in this speech from 1965 for Harford County volunteers. If you are interested in exploring volunteer opportunities at the Historical Society, please contact Nancy Kroupa at NAHK@aol.com or call the society at 410-838-7691. For now, here are a few possibilities for you to consider.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Archives Volunteer: The Archives division of the Historical Society is responsible for evaluating, accessioning, cataloging, and storing original paper materials. These include documents, letters, diaries, photographs and more. Currently, we are seeking a volunteer to assist with our ever increasing collection of photographic images and related materials. The photographs range from the early 1800s to present day and offer a visual glimpse of Harford's history.

This position requires computer and clerical skills, an interest in working with images of varying types and a commitment of at least one day per week. Training will be provided.

Textile Department Volunteer: The Textile Department of the Historical Society of Harford County is charged with overseeing the textile collection of the Society. Volunteers work in a small group setting to accession, store, catalog and maintain the Society's household and clothing textiles. (Training and supervision will be provided.) Not suitable for people with severe allergies or asthma due to dust residue in materials.

Volunteers may assist with computer work to catalog items in the *PastPerfect Museum* software, or to help with caring for and exhibiting the collection.

Volunteer expectations:

- Donate approximately three-four hours on specified weekdays most weeks.
- Some knowledge of fabric and hand and/or machine sewing.

- Willingness to learn proper handling and storage of fragile materials.
- Willingness to learn how to document and display historic clothing and accessories.

Hays House Volunteer Description: The 1788 Hays House is the living-history museum of the Historical Society of Harford County. Manned entirely by volunteers, it illustrates the life of the rural gentry during the early years of our country. Volunteer docents greet visitors and provide tours of the house and special events and exhibits installed there from time to time. Special exhibits from the Society's collections, primarily textiles and vintage clothing are frequent. The house is also used as a venue for small private parties, club meetings, luncheons and teas.

Volunteer opportunities also include gardening and handyman projects on the property.

Volunteer expectations:

- Become knowledgeable about the history of the house and the Hays family, who occupied the house for over 150 years. (A docent manual will be provided.)
- Donate approximately 3-4 hours monthly on a rotating schedule, primarily on Sunday afternoons from March to December when the house is open to the public, to greet visitors and conduct tours with at least one other docent.
- Help with exhibits, teas and parties as skills and availability permit.



YARD SALE

With Covid restrictions still in place along with the ongoing construction at the Society's headquarters, the annual Yard Sale will not be held this year. However, there are still great bargains to be found. Go to the Historical Society's webpage www.harfordhistory.org and The photos provide just a glimpse of some of the treasures awaiting you. Books are also listed separately under SHOP. Enjoy!



RESERVATION FORM

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u># Tickets</u>
May 11	Brown Bag: <i>Historic Preservation in Harford County</i> , Jacob Bensen	Free	_____

For more information visit the Society's website at www.HarfordHistory.org, [Facebook.com/Harford County Historical Society](https://www.facebook.com/HarfordCountyHistoricalSociety) or call 410-838-7691. You may also return your Reservation form via mail to the Historical Society, 143 N. Main Street, Bel Air, MD. 21014. All events are scheduled as virtual programs for now. These events are free, but participants are asked to consider a donation to assist the Society in this difficult time.

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.

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.