

# 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 2021

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

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### FUN FACTS FROM THE PAST

#### • EARLY DAYS AT THE LIBRARY

Roenna Fahrney arrived in Harford County in 1958 to take on the daunting challenge of running the County's library system. The County's main library was on Main Street in Bel Air in an old stone church building with stained glass windows. There was a historical book collection kept behind locked doors; open shelving for adult books; and a single metal office desk for all public services. A sign was often placed on the front door saying "We are not closed. The door sticks." The entire library consisted of eight chairs and three tables to accommodate patrons.

The basement held offices and tables used for mending, cataloging and bookmobile homework. Books and deliveries came through the cellar doorway. Since most of the library's collection came from donations, Literary Guild and Book of the Month selections lined the walls.

The bookmobile served most of the county outside of Bel Air. Ms. Fahrney would occasionally ride with the bookmobile or in an emergency drive the bookmobile to each location. On one of these trips to Edgewood, she met Edna Goldberg and soon began to count on her to determine how to spend the library's book budget. Ms. Goldberg regularly read the Sunday Book Review column and each week was ready with requests for books reviewed there. Although she never knew about her influence on the library collection, she played a major role in the early days of the library development. Edna went on to become a noted reporter for the Baltimore Sunpapers.

Recognizing a real need for new facilities, Senator William James and Library Trustee, Julia Cameron requested and received a state appropriation of \$150,000 for library buildings in Harford County. Ultimately new buildings resulted. Aberdeen already had a new

*Cont'd on page 10*

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I have good news and bad news. The good news is that the Society has found a way to hold a meeting despite the continuing Covid spread and the restoration projects at both the Hays House Museum and the Society's Headquarters continue to move ahead. The bad news is that the general meeting must be held outdoors and would not be conducive to conducting this year's election since the picnic at Harford Glen will be open to both members and non-members. Still, having a chance to meet on a Sunday afternoon for a picnic, a presentation of the archeological finds at Joppa and a museum tour is pretty awesome. I hope we will see you there and that you will take this opportunity to bring along your family and friends. Harford Glen Park is a beautiful facility that has undergone an amazing transformation in the recent past, one that capitalizes on the historic value of the buildings and the beauty of the landscape.

Restoration efforts continue at the Hays House. Patching of the north wall, plumbing improvements and electrical work are completed. The Building committee met with potential contractors about the repair of the north wall and porch repair projects. We expect bids in the near future.

The restoration of the windows at headquarters continues although progress has been somewhat slow. The lobby restoration is also proceeding with the demolition of the drop ceiling and modern wall additions, asbestos and lead paint abatement and electrical work completed, we hope to issue a contract for the masonry repair and painting in the near future. As yet, there is still no specific timeframe for reopening. This will depend on completion of the construction.



*North Wall of Hays House*

Thanks to all of the people who participated in the Hundred X survey project and a special thanks to Board Member, Kat Shilko for organizing this fundraising effort which raised in excess of \$3,200.

Due to continuing pandemic concerns, the Board of Trustees was unable to meet the annual deadline for creation of a nominating committee and election program. For this reason, we had to postpone the election timing slightly. A notice will be sent out soon announcing the officers for 2022-2023 along with a list of Board of Trustee candidates for the 2022-2023 terms. A virtual election will be held in October 2021.

*Bill Walden, President*

### NOMINATING COMMITTEE - BOARD OF TRUSTEE ELECTIONS

The Historical Society's Board of Trustee nominations and officer elections are normally held in August with voting at the Society's Annual Meeting in September. For the last two years, the pandemic has wreaked havoc with many things including the Society's voting schedule and procedures. Making matters more complicated, the Society's headquarters has been unavailable for meetings due to ongoing

restoration work. That said, the Board determined that once again this year, Trustee elections would need to be conducted virtually.

Appointment of a nominating committee is currently expected by early September. The Committee will then identify potential Board members for the 2022-2023 terms. If you or someone you know is interested in serving on the Board, please contact the Nominating Committee Chair, Jacquelyn Seneschal at [jackieseneschal@gmail.com](mailto:jackieseneschal@gmail.com). All names will be forwarded to the nominating committee for consideration.

Once candidates are identified by the nominating committee, an email notice will be sent to all members along with notices on the Society's Facebook page and website listing candidates and a formal vote will be conducted via email in October.

### RESEARCHERS NOTE

#### LOOK BACK IN TIME WITH HARFORD COUNTY'S HISTORIC INTERACTIVE MAPS

Maps of Harford County dating to the 1800s are now online and interactive, giving citizens the opportunity to look back in time.

The historic maps are a new addition to Harford County government's WebGIS Data Viewer, developed by the department of planning and zoning, and published under the Maps & Apps section of the county website.





The application allows anyone to search, view, and print maps of Harford County without having specialized GIS software. Users simply enter an address and select a base map on which it will appear. Layers can also be selected to identify features like watersheds and public parks.

The new historic map collection includes *Jennings & Herrick's 1858 Map of Harford County, Maryland*, *S.J. Martenet's 1878 Map of Harford County, Maryland*, early 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. Geological Survey topography and election districts maps. Modern-day aerial maps are also available in the base map gallery, which are accessed by clicking on the third icon (orange and white) at the bottom of <https://hcggis.harfordcountymd.gov/planning/harfordgis/>.

### **HARFORD COUNTY ADOPTS DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

Harford County recently adopted official design guidelines to protect the county's historic architectural and archeological resources.

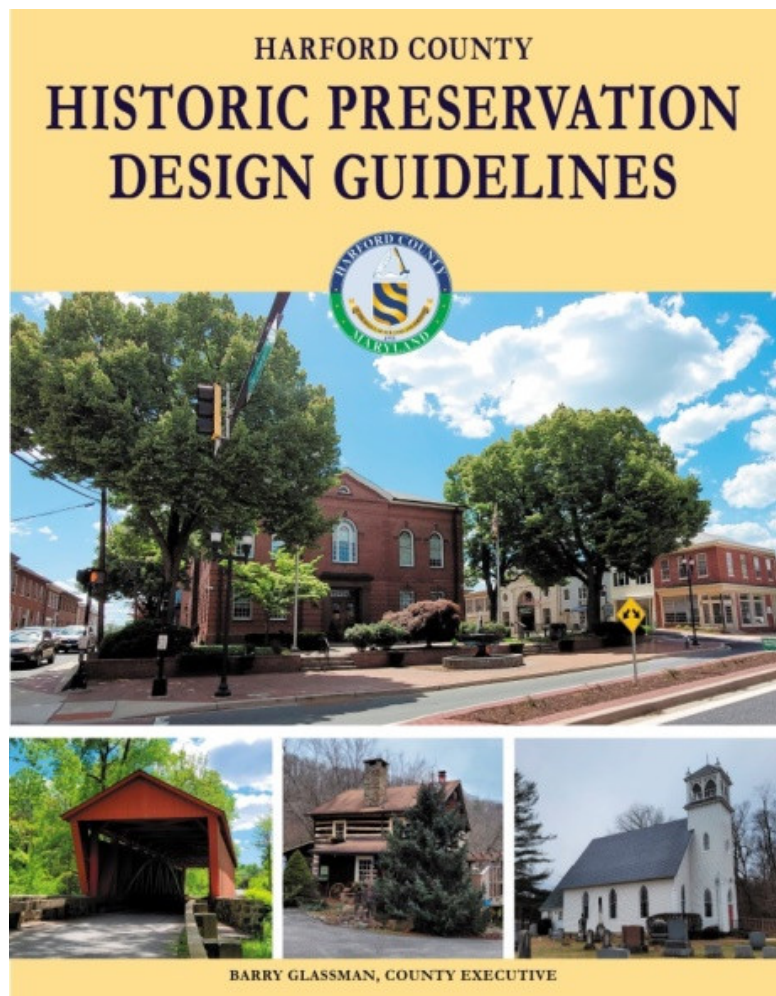
The guidelines outline best practices for rehabilitating historic properties and will serve as a tool for property owners, Planning & Zoning staff, and the Historic Preservation Commission when making decisions on how to best protect the places that make Harford County unique. Previously, decisions were made using federal guidelines, which are not specific to Harford County.

"These design guidelines will help us safeguard the physical links to events and people that shaped the communities we know today," County Executive Barry Glassman said. "I would like to thank our Historic Preservation Commission and my Planning & Zoning staff for establishing these guidelines to help us preserve Harford's history."

The Harford County Historic Preservation Design Guidelines can be viewed and downloaded at: <https://www.harfordcountymd.gov/2029/Historic-Preservation>

If you know of a property that should be designated a Harford County historic landmark. You can find more information about the program and nomination process at

<https://www.harfordcountymd.gov/2413/Harford-County-Historic-Landmarks>



## COMING EVENTS

### • Genealogy Workshops

On Wednesday, September 8, 2021 at 7 pm, Chris Smithson will do a virtual presentation on *Abstracting & Transcribing Genealogy Records*. Attendees will learn how to abstract and transcribe genealogy records and how to determine what to include and what to discard when researching your family's history. Sometimes the most difficult part of family research is deciding what information to keep and what is extraneous. This workshop will help immeasurably with this dilemma.



On Saturday, October 9, 2021, the Society will host a special Genealogy Conference, entitled *Skeletons in Your Closet*, celebrating Family History Month. Sessions will start at 10 am – 12 pm, then resume from 1 – 3 pm. Host and Society Genealogist, Mary Schweers, will initiate the program followed by guest speakers. Speakers will be announced in the near future. Please check the Society's Facebook page or website for more information.

Reservations for both or either of these virtual events are available at the Society's website [www.harfordhistory.org](http://www.harfordhistory.org).

### • Brown Bag Lunch Series



Tom Fink, President of the Junius B. Booth Society and Director of Tudor Hall Museum will be the featured speaker for the Society's Brown Bag Lunch program on **Tuesday, September 14, 2021 at 12:30 pm**. His topic, *Junius Brutus Booth and Tudor Hall*, will trace the story of Booth's arrival in America in 1821. He became the greatest Shakespearean actor in America. The eccentric, complex and colorful actor

made his home in Maryland. Fink will look at how Booth made his summer home on 177 acres in Bel Air, which he dubbed "The Farm," where most of his children, including John Wilkes and Edwin Booth were born. Eventually on this property, Junius built Tudor Hall, A grand Gothic Revival house in which he planned to live out his retirement from the stage.

The Brown Bag Lunch series will continue to be offered virtually due to ongoing restoration work at the Society's headquarters. Reservations are available at [www.harfordhistory.org](http://www.harfordhistory.org), the Society's website



- **Old Joppa Town on the Eve of the American Revolution**



*Ground Penetrating Radar used by Dr. Zach Singer at Joppa Dig Site*

On Tuesday, October 12, 2021 at 12:30 pm, The Society will host Dr. James Gibb, Director of the Smithsonian Environmental Archaeology Laboratory and Dr. Adam Fracchia, research associate and practicing archaeologist at the University of Maryland and the Smithsonian Institution. The speakers will provide a general history of the rise and fall of Old Joppa Town (1727-1768) as it is currently understood based on past and current archaeological work in the town and describe how those discoveries contribute to our understanding of the American Revolution. Reservations for this virtual presentation are available at [www.harfordhistory.org](http://www.harfordhistory.org).

- **Paint 'N Sip**

The Society will host an in-person fundraiser on **October 14<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm** at *Unlimited Art* in Havre de Grace. Artist and proprietor, Shawn Forton, will lead participants in a project featuring a little Harford history with a touch of Halloween thrown in for fun! Tickets are \$30 per person and all art materials, snacks, and non-alcoholic beverages will be provided. (BYOB for other drinks). Unlimited Art is located on the 100 block of N. Washington Street in downtown Havre de Grace. Reservations are required and seating is limited. Tickets may be purchased online at [www.harfordhistory.org](http://www.harfordhistory.org).

- **Annual Meeting - Picnic in the Park**

Join the Historical Society at Harford Glen Park for the 2021 Annual Meeting on September 12, 2021, at 1 p.m. Bring a picnic lunch and escape the many months of Covid confinement. Enjoy tours of the mansion, the icehouse and park grounds; learn about the fantastic archeological finds in Harford County and hear our guest speakers Dr. Jim Gibb and Dr. Adam Fracchia describe ongoing archeological projects in Joppa. Check the attached flyer for details.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HARFORD COUNTY, INC.

ANNUAL MEETING 2021



Picnic  
in the  
Park

The Historical Society of  
Harford County, Inc  
**2021 Annual Meeting**

Join us for an afternoon of tours,  
entertainment and adventure!  
**Special Guests:** The Archeological Society  
of the Northern Chesapeake

Bring a  
picnic lunch,  
beverages will  
be provided.

**Sunday, September 12**

**1:00 – 3:30 p.m.**

**Harford Glen Park**

502 Wheel Road, Bel Air

**\$5 Adults | Students & Children Age  
25 and Under are FREE**

For Reservations, visit  
**[www.harfordhistory.org](http://www.harfordhistory.org)**  
or call **410-838-7691**.



Learn about the Society's accomplishments over  
the past year and Society plans for 2022, while  
enjoying tours of the Harford Glen  
Park Mansion, Ice House and park grounds.

Guest speakers will include the Joppa's  
Professional Archeological Team of Dr. Adam  
Fracchia, University of MD and Jim Gibb, Gibb  
Archeological Consulting who will describe the  
exciting finds to date and how you can  
become part of this project.

143 N. Main Street • Bel Air, MD 21014 | [www.harfordhistory.org](http://www.harfordhistory.org)

- **Harford Heritage Celebrations**

Everyone is invited to attend the Harford 250 Planning Session, Harford Heritage Committee's first of the year, on Thursday, September 16, 2021, at 10 am at the Bel Air Armory, 37 N. Main Street in Bel Air. This is your opportunity to be part of this exciting project, to share your ideas, plans and experience with the planning committee and other participants.

The meeting will start with a brief overview of the committee's accomplishments and the planned activities to date, followed by a charrette session where small groups will gather to discuss plans for the Harford 250 Kick-off event in January 2023, the Grand Finale in March 2024 and individual event ideas that participants are planning throughout the celebratory year. All ideas will then be presented to the full group and documented to allow the Harford 250 Committee to finalize plans, begin organizing events, guest speakers, publications and sponsorships.

The project's website is now online at [www.harford250.org](http://www.harford250.org). The site gives a countdown to the anniversary year along with up to date information about the group's activities. The Society is still collecting stories for the 2023 Harford History Anthology. Visit [www.Harford250.org](http://www.Harford250.org) for more details.

### NEW MEMBERS

Evelyn Edmunds  
Jean Gover  
Jason Rodriguez

Becky Clark  
John Coard

Rob Six  
Mary Soller  
Kathleen O'Brien

### IN MEMORIAM

Long-time member, Donald Scarff Preston, 98, passed away on June 15, 2021. He was born on April 30, 1923, in Bel Air, MD, the only child of the late R. Stanley and Alice Marshall (Scarff) Preston. Mr. Preston was a graduate of Bel Air High School as well as The George School, in Newtown, Bucks County, PA. He enlisted in the US Navy during World War II and served in the Communications Division as a Signalman on a variety of Liberty Ships in the European, India and Pacific Theaters. At the close of the War, he returned to Bel Air and married his high school sweetheart, Elizabeth (Betty) Wright. At the same time, he joined his father in the family business, Preston's Stationery Store, which had been established at 33 South Main Street in 1926. Upon his father's retirement, Don became President of the business and moved the operation to a new building at 319 South Main Street where it remains today. Over the years, he was involved in a number of community and business organizations. He was a kind man, a true gentleman and will be missed.



*Donald Preston*



### YARD SALE – FEATURE ITEMS



These collectibles are now available in the toy section of the online yard sale on the Historical Society's website [www.harfordhistory.org](http://www.harfordhistory.org). Check the site for these and many other bargain items from household goods to gift items to toys and more.

### EXCERPT FROM: THE MARYLAND SCENE: EVENTS, PEOPLE AND PLACES CONTRIBUTING TO THE STORY OF THE STATE

by Charles Thomas Duvall

The Historical Society houses many fascinating out of print books telling the story of the county and the state. Occasionally, we like to share passages from some of these forgotten treasures. This book was first printed in 1943 and contains many photographs and poems relating the story of Maryland from its early days (1634) to life in the state during the 1930s, all told through photographs and poetry. Here is a sample:

A short distance above Belair, in Harford County, Deer Creek, a clear, swift-flowing stream, has cut through a rocky barrier and left a considerable Gorge to make its passage. This region of rugged cliffs and scattered boulders is called The Rocks.

#### THE ROCKS OF DEER CREEK

Northward from Harford's county seat,  
Ten miles as flies the crow,  
High o'er the waters clear and fleet,  
The Rocks of Deer Creek show.

Uneven shapes of scattered stone,  
They fill the green hill's crest;  
Their origin and age unknown  
Their purpose, too unguessed.

All semblance of a plan is lost,  
Or sign of human skill,  
So long the powers of rain and frost  
Have on them wrought their will;

Save that a rudely fashioned seat,  
The highest spot thereon,  
Still lifts, a throne for storm god meet,  
Or priestess of the sun.

*cont'd from page 1 ...*

building and was ready to activate. Havre de Grace had a private library in the police station and a part-time library in a local housing development. The idea of building a county library was initially rejected by Havre de Grace librarians, but when the city determined that the library room was needed for city purposes, the new library proceeded on an adjacent county owned lot.



*Bel Air Library Branch 2021*

Plans for Bel Air's new library originally called for demolition of the old church that had served for several years as the county library and construction of the new building on N. Main Street but these plans were abandoned in favor of the current site on Hickory Avenue. Once constructed, Boy Scouts were recruited to stack the books on the shelves and a grand opening was scheduled that included Mrs. Cameron's cousin, John Dos Passos, as the guest speaker.

- **Louis Azrael Says**

Azrael wrote a popular column for the Baltimore News-Post. The following article appeared in the Monday, August 5, 1946, edition lamenting the end of Prohibition.

*Good Old Days*

*The Harford Gazette (my favorite county newspaper) prints a letter about the fight some drys are making, in Harford, to bring prohibition back to the county. Part of the epistle is: "There was more good liquor in Harford during Prohibition than in any period in her honored history. Every glen and ravine had its still, indeed Deer Creek and Broad Creek had so many the woody smoke interfered with quail shooting.*

*'Harford Dew?', as it was called, became famous from Boston to the British Embassy in Washington. It was the official bar whiskey of the Maryland Club in Baltimore.*

*Ah, dear, dead days of Prohibition! If only we could recapture the past and have again a pot still in every Harford hollow and a keg in every kitchen chimney place. Those were the days."*



- **Reliable & Dependable – Harry Cochran's General Store Operates at Upper Cross Roads**

Excerpt from *The Aegis* – February 21, 1930

*People at Upper Cross Roads and the section surrounding it have been more than pleased with the service rendered by Harry Cochran since he took over the general store here some three years ago. He has transformed the old place into an up to date general merchandise store where one can select the best of*

*merchandise in groceries, dry goods, notions, hardware, etc. and be assured of getting a fair, square deal. This is the policy inaugurated when Mr. Cochran took hold of the business and one that has been adhered to, unswervingly, by him ever since. He is the type of man one can have the greatest measure of confidence in as he makes it a point to handle only merchandise of the finest quality which is offered the trade at consistently reasonable prices. This is made possible through careful and efficient management, which means buying at the right prices, and operating under low overhead expense. All of this works to the interest of the patrons of the store who find this a convenient and safe place to trade.*

*Mr. Cochran appreciates the liberal patronage that has been accorded him since he took hold of the store and will do everything humanly possible to merit the continuous patronage of the people of this section.*

*He buys butter, eggs, poultry, calves, etc. of the local farmers, paying the highest cash market prices. He also operates the school bus from Rutledge to Bel Air, maintaining prompt, dependable service to his many patrons.*

### CARING FOR YOUR HEIRLOOM TEXTILES

by Betsy Lehmann

Most of us have some keepsake textiles – baby clothes, a wedding dress, or grandmother's hand-embroidered table cloth - that we want to keep pristine even if the younger generation professes little interest in acquiring or using them. Here are a few tips to caring for these precious family items.

First, get these heirloom pieces out of bureau drawers and cedar chests! Furniture is made of wood, and wood is acidic and damages fabrics. Remove the item from the dresser drawer. Does it have brown marks or fold lines where it touched the wood? This is damage from the acidity emanating from the wood. For an inexpensive storage solution, buy a *Sterilite* plastic container from a discount store and store your item away from light sources. Cushion the piece with acid-free tissue paper, which can be purchased at chain stores such as Michael's or Joann's.

This is a good first step in the proper care of your family heirloom textiles. For more information, join a Zoom presentation in January that will talk more in depth about the care and storage of antique and vintage textiles. We will talk about how you can care for your family textiles and how we at the historical society care for some of the thousands of items that have been donated to the Society.





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*Christine Potts*

*Carol Deibel*

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*Maryanna Skowronski*

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*George Harrison*

***Corresponding Secretary***

*Nancy Kroupa*

**TRUSTEES 2021-2022**

**TRUSTEES 2020-2021**

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*Terry Trouyet*

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*William Carr, Esq.*

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*Mary Schweers*

**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.