

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 2021

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

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A BIOGRAPHY OF A MARRIAGE:

THE LIFE OF HARRIET AND ISAAC HILTON©

by Jim Chrismer

Writing a biography of the parents of an unlettered hero serving in the United States Colored Troops (USCT) during the Civil War would seem an extremely difficult task. Harriet and Isaac Hilton, whose son Sergeant Alfred became Harford County, Maryland's only native-born recipient of the Medal of Honor, left behind an unusually large number of records. Census schedules, public documents, military records, and even newspaper notices and accounts (it helps that the community regarded Harriet as the area's oldest resident) provide sufficient evidence to describe the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Hilton with a good degree of confidence.

The Hiltons at the time of the Civil War were free but illiterate, hardscrabble, small farmers living in the northeastern section of Harford County, near Havre de Grace. The couple married in 1813 when both were in their late teens. In the years that followed, they had at least fourteen offspring, most of whom remained close to where they were born. Edward, the couple's first child, appeared in 1817; their last, Amanda, seems to have been born in 1852. Alfred B. (possibly for Bond) came along in the late 1830s/early 1840s.

Not surprisingly, the legal status at birth of both Harriet and Isaac Hilton is less than fully clear. Isaac (b.1795) very likely was enslaved at birth, as no hint of evidence yet uncovered exists to challenge or contradict such a probability in a state in which black servitude remained strong into the 1820s. A few years after Isaac's death in 1881, a family friend and neighbor recalled the two having played together as children while enslaved on the nearby Stump estate.

Mrs. Hilton's legal status at birth (also in 1795) is a bit more straightforward. One published report of her death asserted that Harriet was born free but contended that she was "bound out" by her parents to

Continued on Page 8 ...

A FOND FAREWELL

For almost 20 years, Director Maryanna Skowronski has been the face of the Historical Society of Harford County. She could be found almost every day of the week greeting patrons and volunteers, overseeing the Society's many events, developing displays, organizing day to day operations at Headquarters and the Hays House Museum while seeking the necessary funding to keep the ever-growing Society afloat.

As many of you know Maryanna has a very special attachment to My Lady's Manor and the equine activities in the area. She recently received an offer that she couldn't refuse. She will soon take over as Director of the Manor Conservancy. This is an amazing opportunity for her, and we are very happy for her, but acknowledge that she will be dearly missed at the Society.




Maryanna has overseen incredible growth in the Society's membership and collections during her tenure, organizing the current restoration of Headquarters and development of a brand-new museum that will allow the Society to feature its many treasured objects for the public. We hope you will join us in wishing Maryanna the very best in this new venture in her life and join us in thanking her for her years of dedicated service to the Society.

NEW MEMBERS

Cate Isert

Mariah Soriano

Jane DeCourcey




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: \$40
FAMILY MEMBERSHIP: \$50

Contact
Us
Today!

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THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HARFORD COUNTY, INC. • www.harfordhistory.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fall at the Society has been incredibly busy this year. It seems every day brings new challenges and possibly opportunities our way. I am very sorry to announce that we are losing our long-term Director, Maryanna Skowronski, but at the same time extremely happy for her. Ms. Skowronski will begin her new career as Director of the Manor Conservancy, allowing her to pursue her lifelong passion for the Manor and Maryland's horse country.

To help us with this transition period, Christine Potts, one of the society's Trustees has agreed to step in as Interim Director until the end of the year to allow the Society's search team adequate time to find a new Director. Ms. Potts comes with outstanding credentials as a lecturer, teacher, former non-profit Director, storyteller and more. She has worked closely with Ms. Skowronski allowing the Society to move forward seamlessly. During her tenure as Interim Director, Ms. Potts will take a temporary leave of absence from the Board of Trustees.

Meanwhile, the Headquarters Building Restoration project is moving ahead. In the next month contractors are projected to complete the restoration of the grates, plaster work, crown molding restoration and proceed with finalizing the window restoration. Once this is completed, contractors will move on to the floor cleaning and repair. If all goes as planned, construction on the museum display cases should begin by January and we will be able to determine a completion date for the restoration project.

At the Hays House Museum, repairs are being scheduled for the porches and the fencing. The Society is working with the Maryland Historical Trust and area contractors to determine the best way to proceed with repair to the north wall of the building and hope to have a solution identified shortly.

I have been working diligently to identify grant funding sources to complete these repairs and have been able to obtain several grants that will help with these initiatives. The majority of the funding is now in place, so we are focusing on obtaining bids to complete the remaining projects in a timely manner.

This leads me to our Annual Giving Program and the annual membership drive. In the near future, you will receive a letter reminding you that it is time to renew your membership and a letter announcing the Society's Annual Giving Program. Membership dues are a major source of our funding for day to day operations. We hope that you will consider renewing your membership and possibly consider giving a gift membership to a friend or family member. The Annual Giving Program is crucial to maintaining staff and the Society's collections. With the inability to hold our regular programs due to the Covid pandemic your help is needed more than ever. So I ask you to be generous and give what you can.

The Society offers a unique opportunity to learn more about your local history, research your genealogy, listen or attend unique programs through the society's Brown Bag Lunch series, Lectures and Teas and special programs throughout the year. These things cannot happen without your support.

Thank you for your continued support.

Bill Walden, President

NOMINATING COMMITTEE/BOARD OF TRUSTEE ELECTIONS

The following slate of officers was approved in September by the Board of Trustees for the 2022 – 2023 term:

President	William Walden
Past & Vice President	George Harrison
2nd Vice President	Christine Potts
Recording Secretary	Elizabeth Lehmann
Corresponding Secretary	Nancy Kroupa
Treasurer	Brianne B. Norris

The Nominating Committee submitted a slate of potential candidates for the 2022-2023 Board of Trustees at the Board's October 4, 2021 meeting. The approved nominees are:

- Bernadette Low, Ph.D.
- James Karmel, Ph.D.
- Charles Castoro, M.D.
- Jacquelyn Seneschal

Each of the candidates is highly qualified. The following is a brief description of their individual qualifications.

Bernadette Low, Ph.D.

Professor Emerita Community College of Baltimore County, Dundalk Campus, teaching writing and literature, retired.

- Ph.D., University of New Mexico, English
- Currently teaching writing at University of Maryland Global Campus.
- Board member Garrett Jacobs Mansion Endowment, and docent at Evergreen
- Author of several pieces on Mary Frick Garrett, the house, and other aspects of life there.
- Made many presentations to groups on the Garretts and Baltimore.
- Published many articles for the Salem Press that were directed to students, which included works about Johns Hopkins, George Peabody and John Work Garrett.
- At CCBC, developed and offered several online courses in British Literature, Writing 102, Native American Literature, Service Learning

James Karmel

Professor of History with a strong interest in supporting student success throughout his 20+ year career in higher education. With a doctorate in American History, he has connected a lifelong passion for history with an equally strong interest in education. Dr. Karmel specializes in oral history, public history, distance learning, business history, the 20th century civil rights movement, and adjunct faculty development. He served previously on the Harford County Historic Preservation Commission.

- B.S., State University of New York, College at Brockport

- M.A., State University of New York at Buffalo (University at Buffalo)
- Ph.D., State University of New York at Buffalo (University at Buffalo)

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- American business history: banking, casinos & gambling, politics
- Civil rights
- Oral history
- Distance learning

Charles Castoro, M.D.

- B.A. – Chemistry - Summa Cum Laude, Washington and Jefferson College, Washington, PA, Member: Phi Beta Kappa
- Doctor of Medicine – Magna Cum Laude, Georgetown Medical School, Washington, D.C., Member: Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society
- Board Certification, Diplomate American Board of Ophthalmology
- Professional Affiliations:
- American Academy of Ophthalmology
- American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery

Jacquelyn Seneschal

- BS. Political Science, Economics, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
- MS. Urban Planning and Policy Management, The Johns Hopkins University
- Retired community and transportation planner and project manager with over 40 years of experience providing project and organizational management, policy and planning services to a variety of public and private organizations. She has facilitated citizen advisory committees, public hearings, public opinion surveys, advertising campaigns and press briefings.
- Member of the Harford County Historic Preservation Commission

HSHC Activities

- Past President of the Historical Society of Harford County
- Currently serves on the Board of Trustees, Class of 2020
- Hosts the monthly virtual Brown Bag lunches
- Serves on Events Committee, Nominating Committee, and Director Search Committee

On October 11th a list of nominees was distributed to all society members electronically, asking for any additional names for consideration as potential Board nominees with responses due by October 18th.

Names were collected and a list of nominees distributed to all members who were asked to respond to the final list of nominees by submitting their vote electronically during the week of **October 25-November 1**. The final results of the election will be announced on or before November 5th. New Board members will take office January 1.

COMING EVENTS

• Genealogy Workshop

On Wednesday, **November 10, 2021** at 7 pm Genealogist, Mary Schweers will present the Society's monthly Genealogy presentation. Her subject will be *Follow the Trails*, a fascinating journey that will help find those ancestors who could not stay in one place. Early settlers and even recent ancestors tended to spread out. Some took the more familiar routes like the Oregon Trail, but many took lesser known trails. Learn how to track these ancestors along their journey and find that elusive final destination. Reservations for this virtual meeting are available at www.harfordhistory.org. Admission is free but donations are appreciated.



• Brown Bag Lunch Series: A Life Devoted to the Power of Singing and Serving

Join us on Tuesday, November 9, 2021 at 12:30 pm for a discussion with award winning teacher and visionary artistic director, Martha Banghart as she invites us to her music studio. Learn about her decades-long devotion to music education and the power of the choral arts. Through stories, photographs, playbills and recordings, Marty will share memories from her thirty-seven years in the classroom, establishing Harford County's guitar program and producing North Harford High School's celebrated musical revues. And she will discuss the choral artistry and community service mission of the Deer Creek Chorale, the intergenerational choir she founded in 2007, which has grown to include over 80 members from the greater Baltimore area. From choral performances in Beijing to conducting in Carnegie Hall, Marty's musical adventures and humanitarian efforts span the globe. Reservations for this virtual event are available at www.harfordhistory.org.



Conductor, Martha
Banghart at Carnegie Hall

• Brown Bag Lunch Series: The Dan Meyer Choir

The Dan Meyer Choir was founded in 2009 to sing original compositions and arrangements celebrating life in Baltimore City. Over the years, the choir has performed at Artscape, Free Fall, the Miss Baltimore Competition, Fluid Movement Water Ballet, the Star-Spangled Spectacular and the 100th anniversary of the last death in World War One. Its performance venues have ranged from the Ottobar to the Old Otterbein Methodist Church! The choir has also traveled to Annapolis, Bel Air, Frederick, Takoma Park and Havre de Grace to perform.




The Dan Meyer Choir is made up of volunteer singers from all walks of life and all experience levels. The one thing that they hold in common is their joyful enthusiasm of singing and the bonds it builds between them. The Choir will perform virtually for the Society's **December 14, 2021 Brown Bag Lunch at 12:30**

pm featuring music for the season as well as some of the unique selections they are so well known for. Visit the Society's webpage at www.harfordhistory.org for reservations and enjoy this incredible music in your own home.

REMEMBERING THOSE CHRISTMASSES LONG, LONG AGO

Toyland-6th Floor

The American Toy Store



The grand, glittering, sparkling array of Toys and Dolls in Toyland this year is a sight over which even grownups are enthusing and a characteristic feature is everything shown is American made and the skillful way the things are made shows the Yankee adaptability to unmistakable advantage.

Although our assortments now are very extensive and complete we advise selections without delay inasmuch as it will be impossible for us to duplicate orders in many instances.

Selections Made Now Will Be Held and Delivered When Desired

A few suggestions

A B C Blocks.....	25c to 98c	Horse and Wagon.....	39c to \$3.98
American Flyer Trains.....	98c to \$3.98	Humpty Dumpty Circus.....	76c to \$4.98
Automobiles.....	\$5.98 to \$35.00	Iron Toys.....	59c to \$7.98
Beaver Beasts.....	98c	Lead Soldiers.....	50c to \$3.50
Bell Toys.....	50c to 98c	Painting Outfits.....	25c to \$2.98
Children's Chairs.....	69c to \$4.50	Rolly Dolls.....	25c to 98c
Christmas Stockings.....	25c to \$1.50	Sandy Andy's.....	50c to \$1.00
Christmas Trees.....	50c to \$5.98	Shoo Flys.....	\$2.50 to \$4.50
Dolls.....	50c to \$15.00	Stuffed Animals.....	50c to \$7.98
Doll Beds.....	50c to \$2.98	Ten Pin Sets.....	25c to 98c
Doll Carriages.....	98c to \$15.00	Ticker Toys.....	50c
Doll Trains.....	\$1.50 to \$4.50	Tool Chests.....	60c to \$10.00
Dresses.....	25c to \$1.75	Toy Dishes.....	10c to \$5.00
Electric Trains.....	\$2.98 to \$7.98	Toy Pianos.....	50c to \$10.00
Express Wagons.....	25c to \$15.00	Tricycles.....	\$7.50 to \$17.98
Games.....	25c to \$5.98	Velocipedes.....	\$3.75 to \$17.00
Horns.....	25c to \$1.00	Wheelbarrows.....	39c to \$1.39
		White Enamel Doll Furniture.....	98c to \$7.98

If our merchandise and service satisfy you, tell others. If not, tell us.

STEWART & CO.

In Connection With James McCreery & Co., New York.

If our merchandise and service satisfy you, tell others. If not, tell us.

CHRISTMAS ADVERTISEMENT, STEWART'S DEPARTMENT STORE. In 1901, Louis Stewart bought the Posner's Department Store building at Howard and Lexington Streets, and a Baltimore tradition was born. The toys in this 1930s advertisement seem expensive for a town struggling to come out of the Depression. But even those without money had love, and every Christmas Eve, kids listen for the jingle bell sounds that mean Santa is at their house. Nikki Languis writes about that time, when she and her sister listened: "Shela and I still laugh about it every year. And we know that the jingle jingle jingle sounds that we heard was our Dad, standing out on the back porch, shaking the bells, right under our bedroom window. And we know he would have been smiling all the while, because he knew we were up there listening, waiting for Santa's sleigh. He was doing it on purpose. He was doing what had to be done. He was making magic and memories for his children. He was a good man, my father." (Courtesy the Historical Society of Harford County, Inc.)

The advertisement, left, was featured in Bill Bates 2006 book, *Images of America, Havre de Grace*. Many Harford Countians made the trip to Howard Street on the Ma & Pa train to wander through the magical toy collections at Stewarts, Hutzlers and the May Company. Those were the days of artfully decorated store windows featuring snowmen, trains, toys and elves; next day delivery service; and dreams yet to be fulfilled. Enjoy the nostalgia of a time passed and be sure to check out the prices – a Christmas tree for 50¢!

Continued from page 1 ... [HILTON](#)



Photo of restored flag carried by Alfred B. Hilton, son of Harriet and Isaac Hilton

a middle-aged woman of a locally prominent and extremely affluent family.

A few years earlier, on the occasion of Harriet's becoming a centenarian, newspaper accounts made no mention of her parents. Two state simply that she was born enslaved to the Stump Family. A third noted more specifically that Harriet "belonged to Mrs. Cassie [for Cassandra] Stump for many years, although she was not a slave for life." That original sources such as these are able to cite Mrs. Hilton's birthdate as occurring precisely on August 20, 1795, suggests that Harriet was part of a well-documented labor force, and thus very likely enslaved at the outset of her life. In 2014, Peter W. Byrd, the family historian, matter-of-factly refers to his third great-grandmother as Harriet Stump (Hilton).

Cassie's husband, John Stump, Jr. (1752-1816), regarded by historian Walter W. Preston as "probably the leading merchant and manufacturer of his day in the state," owned land throughout Harford County. The couple, with their children, resided in an area known as Stafford, located south of Darlington MD on a rise overlooking the Susquehanna River. Their lands comprised today's Maryland State Park and much of the commercial area south towards Havre de Grace, and included mills, furnaces, forges, wharves, and ocean-going ships. Other Stump properties existed on the Bush River to the south.

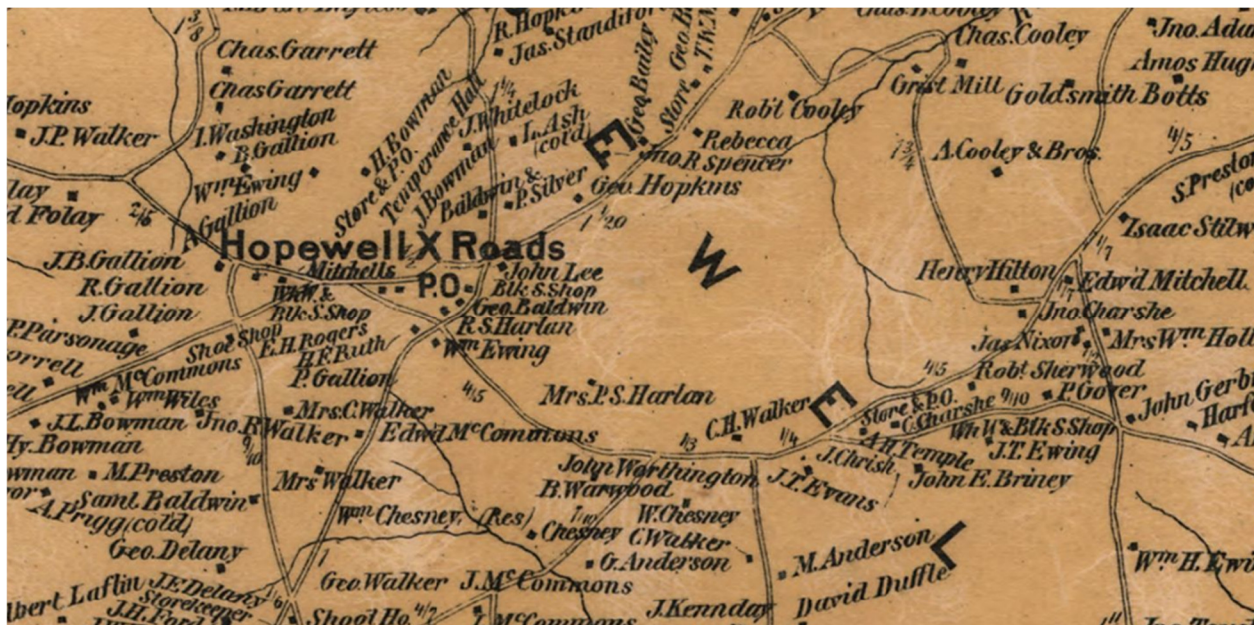
So how did Isaac and Harriet become free? Given minimal need for chattel slavery in the field of commerce and the declining trend in Tidewater Maryland of forced servitude from the 1820s, the strong possibility exists that John Stump's "final will and testament" (he died in 1816) provided for the actual

or conditional release (e.g., in a given year or at a certain age) of the married couple. Indeed, Cassandra, whose father Henry “was a Quaker of much influence,” probably held the actual title to the Hiltons, and could have released them at any time.

Whatever their original status, both Isaac and Harriet Hilton had obtained their freedom by the early 1830s. The federal census of that year cited Isaac as the free head of the household, living with a free colored female in the 24-to-35-year-old range. Two male and two female free colored persons under the age of ten were also part of the household. Similarly, the “Harford County, Maryland, Census of Free Blacks,” created in 1832 at the urging of the Maryland Colonization Society, identified Isaac and Harriet Hilton as living with children Edward (10), Mary (8), Phoebe (6), Lloyd (4), and 2-year-old Henry.

Other than the two-years (1863-1865) when sons Alfred, Aaron, and Henry were serving in Company H, 4th Regiment, USCT, the Hiltons lived surrounded by most of their immediate family. Newspaper and census accounts cite numerous close relatives living in communities such as Hopewell, Garland, Level, Webster, and Gravel Hill – all within a short ride or walk of each other. Two married daughters resided in nearby Baltimore.

The 1860 census, the first decennial record to associate individuals with their assets, noted that the Hiltons possessed a modest \$200 of real property and an equal amount of personal property, while living with seven dependents. In late June 1866, son Henry, not quite a year removed from the army, purchased a small plot for his growing family near his parents' farm, described in an 1870 tax transaction as consisting of 15 acres, a dwelling house, a corn house, a hen house, and a small orchard. Another public notice referenced farm implements and livestock.



1878 Martinet Map showing the Hopewell section of Harford County

Like most residents of rural Harford County, the Hiltons were subsistence farmers. No doubt better off than many families in their community, the evidence clearly suggests that as they aged, the family grew less economically secure, specifically in its ability to meet tax and mortgage obligations. During the 1890s,

several newspaper notices involving the Hiltons refer to county and individual efforts to obtain back revenues, occasionally involving forced sales and auctions “at the Court House door in Bel Air.”

There is little to suggest that Isaac and Henry’s income derived from any sources other than the sale of agricultural products. Oddly, there is no evidence that the parents (for the death of son Alfred) ever received a pension from the government. The federal government in 1868 did agree to provide the now-elderly couple with \$90 in back payment (actually \$100, minus agent fees) due Alfred at the time of his death. During the last years of her life, Harford County government paid Harriet an “outpensioner” fee of approximately \$15 a year for living with her family rather than moving to the county almshouse.

In 1881, at age 86, Isaac Hilton died, having helped raise fourteen children and working fifty or more years in his fields. After Isaac’s death, Henry purchased the family homestead for \$260 at a tax sale, and Harriet remained with him, his wife, and their eight children. In the following years Harriet watched as grandchildren and great-grandchildren arrived on a regular basis. In 1895, 152 descendants “including children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren joined with her in celebrating her 100th Birthday.”

Harriet Hilton died September 2, 1897, in the home she had shared with Isaac for over 60 years. Ironically, at that very time Bel Air lawyer Henry Wilson Archer, Jr. was in the process of attempting to secure back pension payments due her for son Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton’s military service and death. The newspaper account of her passing estimated that receipt of such a pension would have amounted to approximately \$5000. Henry Wilson Archer, Jr. was the great-grandson of Cassandra Wilson Stump.

Fittingly there are no public memorials or monuments to Isaac and Harriet Hilton. In all probability they rest in unmarked graves with some of their children in the humble cemetery on Green Spring Road in rural Level, MD.

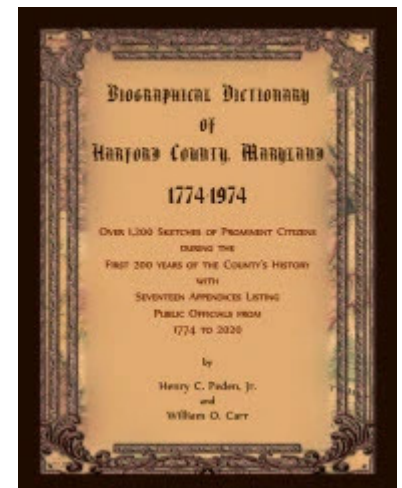
BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF HARFORD COUNTY, MARYLAND 1774-1974

Henry C. Peden, Jr. and William O. Carr

Harford County, Maryland was separated from Baltimore County by an act of the Maryland Assembly in the fall of 1773, but the county government was not in place until March 1774. In the first two hundred years from the time of its creation on the threshold of the American Revolution, Harford County was fortunate to have strong effective leadership. The goal of this book is to honor the memory of individuals who in some way made a contribution to the history of the county and attempted to be of service to their fellow citizens. Attempts have also been made to recognize the contributions of women and Black Harford Countians, two groups who until fairly recently were to a large degree marginalized by those in positions of authority, but still contributed significantly to the well-being of the county in many important ways.

The book contains more than 1,200 biographical sketches and is intended in some way to give our lives meaning by giving us a sense of continuity with the past. It also provides a record of the accomplishments of the many people who served Harford County over the last two hundred years.

Copies of the book are available at heritagebooks.com. The cost is \$53.00





Left, Betsy Lehmann and Kathy Scholl describe how to preserve heirloom textiles.

TEXTILE DEPARTMENT SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

The Society is looking for volunteers to help with its ongoing work to accession and care for vintage clothing and household textiles. Interested volunteers should have a willingness to learn proper handling and storage of fragile materials and learn how to document and display historic clothing

and accessories. Some knowledge of fabric and clothing style is a plus, but training and supervision will be provided.

Volunteers work as a small group a few hours a week to catalog, store, and maintain the Society's textile collection. Please call the Society (410-838-7691) or Textile Department Chair Betsy Lehmann (410-592-8693) if you are interested in volunteering. We welcome your interest.

HARFORD HERITAGE CELEBRATIONS

Plans continue to evolve for the Harford 250 celebration. At a charrette held in September, representatives from all segments of the county met to discuss ideas for the 2023 celebration. In the coming months, a Steering Committee will meet to finalize plans based on the many recommendations made that day.

For now, plans include a grand opening event, most like to be held in the spring 2023. The exact timing, location and activities for this event and a Grand Finale will be hammered out in the next few months. Following that, the Committee will begin budget development and initiate planning with businesses, museums, organizations throughout the county to assure participation by all in this year-long celebration of Harford's 250th Birthday.

If you would like more information, please visit the Harford 250 website, www.harford250.org.

The Society Headquarters and the Hays House Museum continue to be closed both due to the Covid emergency and the ongoing restoration work. Should you need information or help with research, you may still reach out to the Society at 410-838-7691 or contact us at info@HarfordHistory.org. We encourage you to visit the Society's Facebook page or the Society website for more information.

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Christine Potts

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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.