

The HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HARFORD COUNTY, Inc.

Preserving Our Past For Your Future



143 N. Main Street
Bel Air, MD 21014

Society News

March / April 2022

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

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SOME THINGS JUST AREN'T WRITTEN IN STONE

by Todd Holden

In this day and age, we see old businesses, that are family operations, slowly fade into the past and disappear from our community as other, new, unfamiliar businesses spring up on a monthly basis. We are a growing community, faster paced than the era I grew up in and unfamiliar in many ways with the providers of the new businesses and the services they provide.

Historically one of the oldest professions, besides the one that just came to your mind, is that of the Locksmith. Locksmithing dates to Roman times, and to this day is still a vital part of everyday life for most of us. Such is the case when it comes to the oldest locksmithing business in Harford County. This would be Bel Air Locksmiths, after opening in 1969 and going strong for forty-one years with only one transition of ownership ... from the man who started it all, Leo Arthur Hoshal.

Mr. Hoshal hit town landing with both feet running. He sold Charles Potato Chips, managed the Bel Air Theater and started repairing and installing locks of every description. Described by many as a man who "provided a service and would not hesitate to give you a lecture as to why you needed him in the first place."

Partly truth, partly fiction, Leo Hoshal was a walking contradiction, to put it mildly. Those years managing the Bel Air Theater were tumultuous to say the least. He didn't favor long haired hippies. He ran a tight ship ... no monkey business. But all along the way the man from Minnesota took care of his mother, Stella and worked day and night building his locksmith service, operating throughout the county.

In 1981, another locksmith, Keith Alan Holbrook, who was 19 and learning the trade walked into Mr. Hoshal's store, which was directly behind the Bel Air Theater and introduced himself. "Leo

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wasn't too encouraging about me and my future as a locksmith," Holbrook recalls.

Health issues, along with macular degeneration, were a turning point for both Hoshal and Holbrooke. "He wasn't such a bad guy. He knew the business and was a good businessman. I liked him, he was tough and once you got through the hard exterior, he was really a good man, and I saw where he needed some help, and he would call me when he couldn't see well enough to do his life's work. We worked together, we got along, and we became good friends. His mother had died. He was lonely, and when I finished up my own growing business work for the day, I would stop by and just see if he needed anything." Keith explained adding that "Near the end, there wasn't anyone stepping up to help him out... I did what I felt was the right thing, for someone who I had basic human compassion for... He's gone now, I miss him, and I want his business to continue on in the tradition of quality and service and dependability. Hopefully, I can continue and maybe, who knows, someday another locksmith will come in the door and want to work like I did so many years ago."

Mr. Hoshal died in February 2009 and Bel Air Locksmith closed shortly thereafter. The accounts were transferred over to Town Security where Keith Holbrook now works, continuing in Mr. Hoshal's footsteps providing this traditional service to county businesses and residents.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Headquarters building restoration project moved into a new phase in the last couple of months. Most of the basic reconstruction work is completed and development of the museum portion of the project is underway. Ashton Design is currently preparing plans for an immersive visitor's experience consisting of both static and rotating displays intended to attract patrons on a repeated basis. Static features will include "all-star features from early history and twentieth century topics (canning, racing, railroads), petroglyphs, arrowhead collection and much more." Society volunteers and Board members are identifying content from the existing collection and possibly additional materials from outside sources. The designers will use this information to design display cabinets and finalize display area plans. If all goes as planned, the museum will open early in 2023.

While restoration work progresses at headquarters, the Society is facing added challenges at the Hays House Museum. This building is a very important part of the Society's mission, providing visitors with a glimpse into the earliest days of the County Seat's past, as well as a venue for many of the Society's outreach programs. The north wall of the building suffered serious deterioration in the past couple of years. Luckily, we were able to obtain a grant from Maryland Historical Trust to repair the wall and hope to begin this restoration work shortly. Meanwhile, the cedar roof has deteriorated, partially due to squirrel infestation. We are in the process of seeking funds to repair/replace the roof. Once this is done, we hope to reopen the house museum to the public. Meanwhile, we are seeking volunteers to act as Docents and to assist with day-to-day activities at the Hays House Museum. Please let us know if you are interested in becoming part of the Hays House team.

February was an exciting month at the Society for events. We were delighted to present Dr. Iris Leigh Barnes talk, *The Untold History of Belle Vue Farms*. Dr. Barnes is a celebrated historian and a gifted speaker. She told the tale of the Davis farm that dates to the earliest days of county history and the enslaved people who lived there. Belle Vue Farms is the most recent County Parks & Recreation Department

acquisition and will provide area residents with unparalleled local access to the Swan Harbor Peninsula, both a historic and natural treasure. If you missed the presentation, I encourage you to visit the Society's website to view the recorded version.

February also brought the ever-popular, Walter Holloway's presentation on the Ma & Pa Railroad. More than 85 people attended the program at the Chenoweth Center in Fallston, helping to broaden the Society's reach and continue our efforts to partner with other local agencies.

The March and April Society event venues should be equally fascinating. Descriptions of each are included in this newsletter. I encourage you to attend all that interest you and to enjoy the variety of entertaining opportunities offered to members by the Society.

Finally, plans for the Harford 250 celebration are proceeding. More information follows later in the newsletter. For now, I encourage you to visit the event's website www.harford250.org to learn more about our planned programs and possibly to become involved in the planning committees and donation programs for this anniversary program.

Bill Walden, President

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

If your musical talent is anything like mine, tuneless, tone-deaf, and in the key of a screeching cat, you know that just because some of us can't create music doesn't mean we don't delight in the magic of those who do. And after a long hard winter, delighting in an evening of a little musical magic is just what all of us - songbirds and stray cats alike - will surely be ready for this March.

And so, in honor of women's history month, the Society will be holding a concert celebrating *The History of Women in Music*. The concert will be held March 23 from 7-9 pm at the historic St. Ignatius chapel in Forest Hill and feature a lineup of eclectic instrumental and vocal performances all composed by women.

Our first in-person musical event in over two years, we are eager to gather and looking to celebrate the many women in Harford County who have brought us music-- as music teachers, choir directors, church organists, soloists, accompanists, and garage band members alike. And we need your help.

Please send us the names of noteworthy musical women in your own lives and tell us something about who they were and the gifts they shared that filled your classroom or church hall or backyard with song. You can send your tributes to the contact page on our website at www.harfordhistory/contact/ for us to display at the event, or even better, invite your musical heroine along with you to the concert, and let us applaud her in person.

So, mark your calendars and reserve your tickets soon because seating is limited, and we want to see and celebrate with you there!

Chris Potts, Interim Director

COMING EVENTS

- Women's History Month Concert**

The History of Women in Music Featuring the Ladies Six

As noted in the Director's message, the Society is celebrating Women's History Month this year with a concert honoring *A History of Women in Music* on Wednesday, March 23 from 7-9 PM at the St. Ignatius Chapel, 533 E. Jarrettsville Road in Forest Hill.

From 12th century organ selections by German Benedictine prioress and mystic Hildegard von Bingen to eclectic pieces performed by The Ladies Six ensemble of the Deer Creek Chorale, all selected works will be by female composers. And we will pay special tribute to the women in Harford County who have brought the joy and magic of music to generations of Harford Countians.

So, join us! Tickets are \$25.00 and are available for purchase on our website at www.harfordhistory.org. But seating is limited, so place your orders soon.



The Ladies Six Ensemble

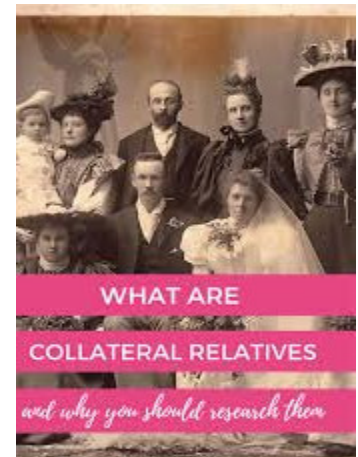
- Genealogy Workshops**

Researching Collateral Lines to Find Answers

Wednesday, March 9, 2022, 7 pm

The Society's Genealogy workshops continue with a program to help you through those frustrating research moments when there just seem to be no answers. Join Genealogist, Mary Schweers on Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 7 pm to learn what to do when you hit a brick wall and have no idea how to continue. She will explain how it is sometimes best to work out of the lines. There are tricks of the trade including pursuing other relatives, those who share a common ancestor but are not directly related to us – collateral relatives, to find information on direct ancestors. These tricks can make all of the difference, so plan on joining us for this fascinating detective story.

Visit the Society website at www.harfordhistory.org to register for this virtual event.



Famous & Infamous People with Links to Harford County

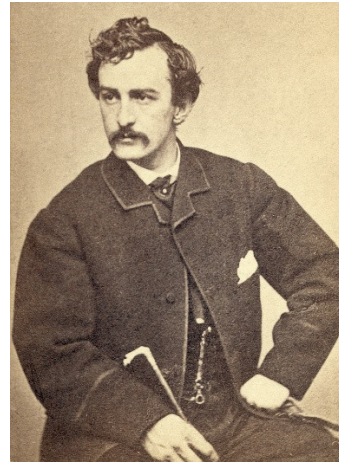
Wednesday, April 13, 2022, 7 pm

Everyone is fascinated to find that they are related to famous and sometimes infamous people. That is part of the fun of seeking our roots. On Wednesday, April 13, 2022 at 7 pm, the Society will offer a rare opportunity for local genealogists to explore the links of Harford County families with these celebrated and sometimes reviled individuals. Please join Society Genealogist Christopher Smithson for this fascinating virtual presentation about some of our forebears in Harford County. His virtual talk will focus on Harford County families and their relationships to such people as the infamous John Wilkes Booth, the famous Edwin Booth, Wallis Simpson, the Duchess of Windsor and U.S. Presidents Nixon and Obama.

Register now by visiting the Society's website www.harfordhistory.org.



Edwin Booth, world famous Shakespearean Actor



John Wilkes Booth, world famous assassin

- **Brown Bag Lunch Programs**

Restoration of the Martha Lewis

Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 12:30 pm



The Maryland Skipjack is a traditional Chesapeake Bay fishing boat used primarily for oyster dredging. These sailing vessels are renowned for their seaworthiness and quality construction, as well as their straightforward and no-nonsense design.

On Tuesday, March 8, 2022 the Society's Brown Bag Lunch program will feature Karl H. Fockler, the President of the Chesapeake Heritage Conservancy, as he describes the role of the Skipjack Martha Lewis in Harford's history and the restoration process that brought her back to her former glory. The Chesapeake Heritage Conservancy is a steward of the skipjack Martha Lewis and responsible for the restoration project. Join us to learn Martha's story – her history, restoration, and future.

Mr. Fockler is a lifelong resident of Cecil County, having graduated from the University of Virginia with a BA in history and government, and subsequently received his juris doctorate from the Widener University School of law. Mr. Fockler is a former Deputy State's Attorney for Cecil County, and currently has a general law practice and real estate brokerage firm in Elkton, Maryland. Having overseen the restoration process of the Martha Lewis, he has quite a story to tell.

To register for this virtual presentation, please visit the Society's website at www.harfordhistory.org.

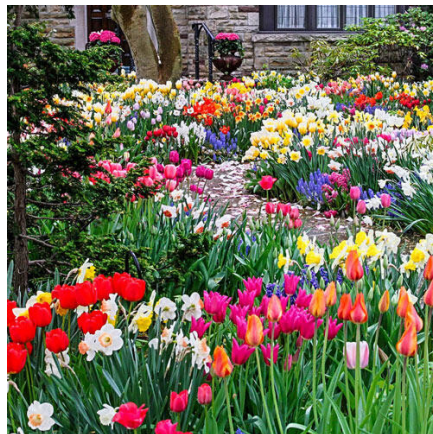
The Flowers That Bloom in the Spring

Tuesday, April 12, 2022 at 12:30 pm

It's that time of year. Our thoughts turn to the warm days of spring and the excitement of planning this year's garden. One staple of these gardens is the bulb. Daffodils, tulips, hyacinths, and crocuses promise

the end of the long cold winter. Yet, what a history these garden charmers have. They have brought joy to the hearts of winter-weary gardeners since ancient Greece and culinary delight to gourmet chefs. But there's a darker side to these harbingers of spring -- including financial mayhem, political intrigue, and clandestine romantic liaisons.

The April Brown Bag Lunch presentation will explore the good and the bad of bulbs, including some tips on what to plant and how to get the most out of your spring, summer and fall bulb displays. Meg Algren, the Society's guest speaker, is a Harford County Master Gardener and former Historical Society Board member. Please join us for this fascinating tale.



To register for this virtual presentation, visit the Society's website at www.harfordhistory.org.

ON DOING HISTORY

Most Significant Events in Harford County History: One Individual's Selection©

Jim Chrismer

The impending celebration in 2023 of Harford County's 250th anniversary of its founding provides an opportunity for a lively historical discussion. What factors, more than others, have contributed most to the growth and development of Harford County as a prosperous and dynamic region, albeit flawed, that continues to draw persons to its confines. Here is one man's list.

1. Separation from Baltimore County in 1773 – Founding of Harford County
2. Establishment of Aberdeen Proving Ground in 1917
3. Construction of U.S. Route 40 and Interstate 95
4. Decision by county legislators in Annapolis to remain loyal to the Union in 1861,
5. Desegregation of Harford County Public Schools in the mid-1960s
6. Building of the PW&B (Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore) and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroads
7. Popular support to adopt the Maryland Constitution of 1864
8. Consolidation and reform of Harford County Schools after World War II
9. The impact of BRAC after 2005 and the diversification of the mission of APG
10. Founding of the Harford County Public Library in 1946
11. Building of the Tidewater Canal from Havre de Grace to the PA Line
12. Harford County's becoming a charter form of government in 1972.
13. Migration of families from North Carolina and Virginia in the 1930s
14. Establishment of Harford Junior/Community College in 1957
15. Building of Bata Shoe Factory in Belcamp in 1933

Each of us probably has our own idea of the most significant events in the county's history. Perhaps you would like to make your own list or debate this with friends and family. History, after all, is personal.

[Excerpt from January 1930 *The Aegis* article on "Exceptional Businesses in Harford County"]

Poole's Garage: Willys, Knight and Whippet Sales and Service Station



Willys Overland Whippet Roadster

Poole's garage in Forest Hill is the local sales and service station for the well-known Willys, Knight and Whippet cars which are among the most popular throughout the country. Every car sold by C. W. Poole, proprietor, is serviced here, and along with this general repair work is done on all makes of cars and trucks.

Powered by an engine that develops 65 horsepower, producing a speed of 72 miles an hour in high and 48 miles an hour in second, the new

Willys Six is announced by the Willys Overland Company as one of the most powerful cars in its price class.

With this power achievement, the Willys brings to the low-priced field a surplus of speed for all demands of modern motoring. In appearance, the new car offers a style development as pronounced as its exceptional performance and is seen as a significant bid by Willys Overland for outstanding leadership in the Willys Six price class.

SOCIETY'S WISH LIST

There are many ways that you can help the Historical Society that may not, at first, seem evident. From time to time, we will be including items in our newsletter wish list that are needed to continue our mission and to preserve the Society's collection. If you are able to help with these, we would be most grateful. The Society is a 501.c.3 non-profit, so your donation may be tax deductible. To donate or for further information, please call the Society at 410-838-7691 or visit our website at www.harfordhistory.org. Donors will be recognized on event programs, Facebook and website for their generosity. Thank you for considering helping the Society continue these and other programs.

For now, the Society is seeking sponsors for our numerous events and publications. Here is a partial list for your consideration:

- Brown Bag Lunch Series – Annual series \$1,000/individual program \$150
- Tea and Lecture Series - Annual series \$1,000/ individual event \$350
- Genealogy Workshop - \$500
- Annual Genealogy Conference - \$1,000
- Oh, the Stories We Can Tell – Annual Series \$2,500/individual program \$500

GIFT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Society's photographic collection is mesmerizing. It includes more than 50,000 images dating from the earliest days of photography to the present. Still, we are always seeking new images and were extremely pleased recently to receive photographs for scanning from Deborah Coale Rezek's collection. Her father, Bob Coale, was the manager of the Girls' Softball Team sponsored by Bel Air Post 39 of the American Legion. Ms. Rezek provided treasured photographs from 1977, 1978, 1990 and 2001 when the team furnished many local girls the opportunity to show off their batting skills. These photos help tell the story of life in Harford through the ages and are greatly appreciated.

HARFORD HERITAGE CELEBRATIONS

The Historical Society is the lead agency in developing plans for the County's upcoming 250th anniversary. To make this happen, the Society is reaching out to other county organizations, museums, businesses and individuals in an attempt to plan a year-long celebratory year starting in March 2023 to March 2024. Everyone is invited to be a part of this grand celebration. To date a 12-person steering committee is in place to initiate planning and organize events and fundraising initiatives.

On February 3, 2022, the Harford 250 Steering Committee held a general meeting to share the group's plans and learn more about what other county agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals are planning for 2023. This was a well-attended virtual meeting that elicited several ideas and plans for the upcoming celebratory year.

The Committee is focusing on three major events:

- March 31/April 1, 2023 an opening event entitled *Commemorating 250 Years of Community* to be held at Harford Community College Arena
- A fall festival, *The History of Sports in Harford County*, September 2023
- A closing event at the County Court House, *Celebrating Tomorrow – Make Harford History Now*, March 2024

Participants shared their current plans and some ideas for the Steering Committee to consider. Harford County Historic Preservation Commission will focus its 2023 Historic Preservation Awards program on the Harford 250 theme. County planners are developing a series of story maps, one of which is based on a Work Progress Administration guide from the 30s and 40s on tours through Maryland along with maps on several historic trails and a heritage trail program in the southern portion of the county highlighting Harford's colonial history.

The Maryland Center for the Arts is planning a Plein Aire Festival featuring images of historic sites in Harford and working with Bel Air and Havre de Grace on developing an Arts Week program. Adam Fracchia and James Gibb, professional archeologists working in Joppatowne, are developing a public archeology project that will introduce Joppa's history to local residents and allow public participation in the actual archeological dig.

Liriodendron will be celebrating its 125th anniversary in 2023 and will incorporate events promoting both of these celebrations. The Liriodendron Museum is upgrading exhibits and museum space in anticipation of these events. The Town of Bel Air will be celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2024 and is developing

plans to coordinate both events throughout the year. Laura Bianca-Pruitt, a private citizen, is developing a live webinar on the history of Harford's highways and the Historical Society of Harford County, Inc. is planning publication of the *Harford 250 Anthology*, a year-long Facebook Trivia program and a speakers' series along with the grand opening of its new museum featuring artifacts and stories encompassing major elements of Harford's history. These are just a few of the programs planned to date. The committee is encouraging everyone to share their plans and to be part of this celebratory year.

In other Harford 250 news, 112 articles were submitted for the Harford 250 Anthology project telling the story of life in Harford County in the 20th and early 21st century. An editing committee is now reviewing all submissions and plans to have the Anthology printed and ready for distribution in early 2023.

Meanwhile, if you are interested in helping with any of the events or would like to be a sponsor for a Harford 250 program, please contact us at 250celebration@harfordhistory.org. Also, individual donations to help fund the project can be made at www.harford250.org. Just click on the Donate button. Your help is greatly appreciated.

A HISTORY OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Excerpt from 1961 Talk by David G. Harry, Jr. then President of the Harford County Board of Education Harford County I.M.P.A. Program

As early as 1671, colonists in Maryland attempted to enact legislation which would have established free school – but the bill was lost. In 1695, there was a “tax levied upon skins exported for ...support of free schools” and an “act for the establishment of which was passed in 1695” – but there is no evidence that such free schools were established nor that the acts were heeded at all.

A letter from the Governor of the Province, dated 1683, tells of the sparseness of settlement – the distance between homesteads – and offers the opinion that people weren't interested in the common school methods of education.

In 1812, certain funds were set aside by the Maryland legislature to assist in the schooling of the children of parents too poor to pay tuition. In 1826, an act was passed that provided for setting up public schools throughout the State. The inadequacies of this act are verified by the act of 1864, which established a State Board of Education, with accompanying county boards. Records indicate that members of the county boards were appointed by the Judge of the Circuit Court – until 1892, when board appointments were legally put into the hands of the Governor. The new Constitution of 1867 diminished the power of the State Board of Education and placed education in the hands of the counties; by 1868, the county was the supreme power in Maryland educational affairs in that its Board is an autonomous group, working within a very general framework of State Board regulations.

When, in 1882, Board appointments became the prerogative of the governor (“by and with the advice and consent of the Senate”), one of the three members had to be chosen from membership within the minority party. This stipulation was changed in 1916 and appointments are now made by the Governor, “solely because of their fitness and character,” no party affiliation or ratification by the Senators being required.

In 1953, the membership of the Board of Education was increased from three to five, the latter being the present number. (Note: in 2022 the Board consists of 11 members. Three appointed by the

Governor; the Superintendent serves as an ex officio member; a student member; and the remaining members are elected by the public.)

From 1865 until 1916, the title "Examiner" was applied to the chief administrator of schools; the legislature changed that title to "Superintendent of Schools" during the 1916 session.

Since 1865, approximately -- and this is a very nearly accurate figure, if not exactly so -- 54 different Harford Countians have served as members of the Board of Education. Mr. W. Beatty Harlan, who served from 1915 to 1937 (a total of 22 years), ranks at the top of the list from the point of duration of term of office. Judge Steward Day, appointed in 1933, was a member of the Board until 1952 -- a total of 19 years. Dr. Martin L. Jarrett was a member of the Board from 1892 until 1908 (16 years). Mr. Charles W. Baker also served 16 years -- from 1898 -1914.

At the time this article was written in 1961, Board members included David G. Harry, Jr., President, Mrs. Jason T. Pate (Vice President), Mrs. Robert S. Fletcher, Clark D. Connellee, Charles H. Reed, Jr.

The article went on to list the men who served as "Examiner" or "Superintendent of Schools" since the Board's organization in 1865. They were as follows:

<i>The Rev. T.S.C. Smith</i>	1865-1869
<i>Robert Henry</i>	1869-1876
<i>William H. Harlan</i>	1876-1882
<i>Noble L. Mitchell</i>	1882-1887
<i>John D. Worthington</i>	1887-1889
<i>Thomas C. Galbreath</i>	1889-1902
<i>Charles T. Wright</i>	1902-1915
<i>C. Milton Wright</i>	1915-1945
<i>Dr. Charles W. Willis</i>	1945-present (then 1961, actual 1966)

Since this article was presented, several additional people have served as Superintendent including:

Dr. Alfonso Roberty, 1966-1992

Dr. Jacqueline Haas, 1992-2008

Dr. Robert Tomback, 2008-2012

Barbara Canavan, 2012 -2018

Dr. Sean Bulson, 2018-present.



Current Board of Education Building named for Dr. Alfonso Roberty

NEW MEMBERS

Jon Bellantoni

Joseph Papa

Neeta Basantkumar

YARD SALE NOTICE

Please note that the Society is **not** accepting items for a yard sale at the present time. Due to the ongoing construction project, the Society does not have storage space available for this activity. We will notify members if, and when, we determine whether to reinstate the annual yard sale, but for now no sale is planned.

THE GEORGE W. ARCHER FELLOW AWARD

Each year the Society recognizes one individual with the George W. Archer Fellow Award. The award is given to a member and others in the community who have demonstrated exceptional service toward the mission and goals of the Historical Society. The criteria for the award are:

- years of exceptional service
- number of volunteer hours
- recognition of special projects or research

In addition, the Archer Fellow may be awarded to those persons who have striven to support the preservation of the history of Harford County outside the direct efforts of the Society. This effort may include outstanding activism, in kind services or volunteer efforts.

The nomination process begins in March and closes May 31st. Please complete the following form and return to the Society with your suggested nominee:

I nominate _____ (please print) for the Geo. W. Archer Fellow Award.

Address of Nominee: _____

Please describe on a separate sheet of paper why you think your nominee should receive the George W. Archer Fellow Award. (No more than 250 words)

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No.: _____ Date: _____

Please send the completed form and recommendation to: George W. Archer Fellow Award, Historical Society of Harford County Inc., 143 N. Main Street, Bel Air, MD 21014

The Historical Society
of Harford County, Inc.
143 North Main Street
Bel Air, MD 21014



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED
March / April 2022

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The NEWSLETTER of The Historical Society of Harford County, Inc. is published bi-monthly.

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Christine Stearns Potts

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TRUSTEES 2022-2023

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ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

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.