

The HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HARFORD COUNTY, Inc.

Preserving Our Past For Your Future



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Society News

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IN MEMORIAM

James T. Wollon, AIA (1938-2022)

Jim Wollon was born in the old Havre de Grace Hospital near his home and lived in Harford County on the property his great, great, great, great grandfather built in 1778. From an early age, Jim was fascinated with architecture and graduated from the University of Virginia Architecture program in 1962. He was admitted to the American Institute of Architecture in 1971, establishing his architectural practice in Havre de Grace in 1972. From the outset, his true love was historic preservation and solving the mysteries surrounding these historic properties. In 1976, Jim became the President of the Historical Society of Harford County, serving two successive terms. This was the beginning of service to the Society that lasted his entire life. Of course, that was only part of his tremendous contribution to the county and beyond. As a member of the American Institute of Architects, the Baltimore Architectural Foundation, the Maryland Historical Society, the St. Andrews Society and chair of the Historic Architects Roundtable, better known as the *Dead Architects Society*, and numerous other groups, Jim excelled in every way, giving his all to each group he joined.

When I first learned of his passing, I reached out to several of his friends asking for comments to include in this article memorializing his many achievements. The response was overwhelming, but two stories stood out above all others, and I wanted to share them with you as a true tribute to the man that Jim Wollon was.

Marta Noe, a local architect, worked with Jim for many years. I was truly moved by her comments and will share them with you here as she describes her experience as a rookie architect under Jim's tutelage. Charlie Duff, President of Jubilee Baltimore Inc., worked closely with Jim on numerous projects, a self-described 'Watson' to Jim Wollon's 'Holmes', as they researched architects and buildings for the *Dead Architects' Society*.

Cont'd page 2

Wollon: cont'd from page 1

I hope you appreciate their tributes as much as I do and come to see Jim through their eyes as a very rare and special individual.

-Ed

Tribute to Jim Wollon written by Marta Noe

I interviewed and accepted a job with Jim in 1986 when I was a student in the School of Architecture at the University of Maryland. I had ZERO experience in the field, only college credits under my belt. Jim was the most patient teacher I have ever known. In hindsight, I should have been paying Jim for the experience, instead of the other way around. Jim taught me to measure buildings and draft, but more importantly, nurtured my respect for historic buildings. His love for preservation was contagious, and he was a well of knowledge so deep that I never stopped being amazed. I learned more from Jim than from any college course.

I had the privilege of working on projects in Maryland and along the east coast. My most vivid memories are our 5-hour road trips to Petersburg, Virginia, with Jim driving his Honda with his knees, coffee in his left hand, a notepad on the dash, always ready for a jotted note in pencil (always in pencil), and a cell phone as big as a shoe between us.

Jim walked from his home at historic Friendship to his home office on the farm daily, with his coffee cup in hand. The door was purple, antique chimney pots lined the path, and the office interior was filled with antique cast iron stoves. Working in the office was idyllic, with views of the farm in every direction and a coffee maker at the ready. We were often joined in the office by his dogs. There was an "open door" policy for his stepsons and for my son as well. Jim let me set up a corral in the corner for my son, when he had chicken pox and couldn't go to day care.

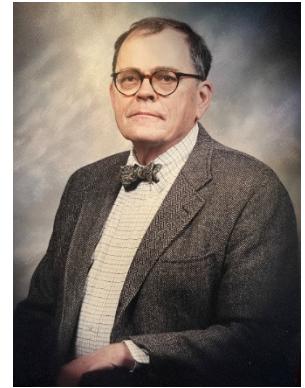
Procedures at the office were "old school", drafting on mylar with plastic lead, and running blueprints in the attic over the office. Try as I might, my drawings never reached the quality of Jim's. His line weight and lettering made every drawing art; even his signature was magnificent. After my drafting skills evolved, I was able to produce HABS drawings for the Overseer's House at Hampton Mansion, under Jim's direction.

Jim was a gentleman, and the kindest employer I ever worked for. He never criticized. Years after I left his office, we talked about my early days there. He commented that, when he told me to draw a square, I asked him what corner to start at. I still smile at that exchange, because it was classic "Jim ". Just an observation, not a criticism.

In 2014, I had the privilege of serving on the Historic Preservation Commission of Harford County and saw Jim receive the Preservationist Honor Award that year. When I nominated Jim for the award, I attached his vast resume to the application. If that application is still on file in the HPC archives, it provides a wealth of information about his education, work experience and projects.

In 2019, Jim's secretary, Carole Tharpe, and I were able to pack and donate Jim's drawings and archives to the University of Maryland at College Park. The Wollon Collection is being catalogued and stored there, for access by historians and architects. Jim also kept meticulously labeled photographs of his projects and other historic buildings in Harford County. Those notebooks were donated to the Historical Society of Harford County and remain available to researchers.

Jim's impact on my life is priceless. He was my mentor, but more importantly, my friend. He will be missed.



A Tribute to James T. Wollon, AIA as written by Charlie Duff

*Baltimore is largely a Victorian city, but as recently as 30 years ago no one knew who had designed most of Baltimore's Victorian buildings. Jim Wollon, from Craig's Corner Road in Churchville, changed that. The standard book *The Architecture of Baltimore*, published in 2005 by the JHU Press, would have a big hole in the middle if it hadn't been for Jim.*

*Jim died last week after a long and very painful decline. But it's fair to say that for 20 years before his illness, he was the center of architectural research in Baltimore. Jim organized and ran a volunteer group that eventually identified the architects of more than 10,000 buildings. I can't remember who decided to call the group *The Dead Architects' Society*, but I'm glad the name stuck.*

*I was lucky enough to be Jim's partner in the *Dead Architects* enterprise for many of those years. I'm not exaggerating when I say that he and I talked on the phone for an average of two hours on every weekday between 1995 and about 2002. He always had news, because people from all over the place would call him whenever they made an architectural discovery. He would then call me to report and start a conversation. Suppose that someone had just discovered that some church in Virginia had been designed by one of "our Dads," as he called them. I would then learn a lot about that particular Dad, and about that church, and about churches in general, and maybe about Virginia, a state that he knew encyclopedically. He made it all fun and fascinating.*

*In those years, *Dead Architects* put on a series of three lectures every spring at the Walters Art Museum. I did the talking, and Jim kept me well supplied with things to talk about. If I needed to know who had designed a building in Hanover Street in 1851 or Catonsville in 1874, Jim either had enough information or knew how to get it. He was production, I was sales. Along the way he gave me a first-rate education in architectural history.*

Jim was the perfect antiquarian. He approached the history of architecture as a birder approaches a forest or a swamp. His senses were always alert, he took lots of quick notes, and he didn't allow personal likes or dislikes to get in the way of good investigating. "Who was the best architect in Victorian Baltimore?" people would often ask him. "Oh, I don't know," he would say, looking down, and then changing the subject. Except in extreme cases, he didn't care whether a building was beautiful or ugly. If it was there, he was interested in it.

This made him unusual among architects. I've always been amazed at how few architects seem to care about the history of their profession. Many of us had to keep reminding ourselves that Jim wasn't a historian but was in fact a practicing architect with a large body of work. If only there were more architects like Jim.

You probably don't need me to tell you that he loved his home county. He was either the sixth or the seventh generation of his family to live and work on his land, and he was devoted to the Harford County Historical Society. He had a charming fondness for the two Harford County architects who made good careers in nineteenth-century Baltimore: William Reasin and George Archer. He always called them "my homeboys" and spoke of them with particular pride.

Of course, none of this would have mattered much if Jim had been nasty or egotistical or anti-social. Luckily, he was a delight to be with and a perfect gentleman: tweed jacket, bow tie, muddy boots, and an infectious delight in any work that you or anyone else might be doing. When you offered him an idea or a suggestion, he had a way of saying "Yes" that I still try to imitate. You really felt "Yes." Hundreds of people probably smile when they hear the word "architect" because Jim Wollon was the architect they knew best.

This was the Jim Wollon I knew as well, always ready with a kind word, willingly sharing his amazing knowledge and skills. As Marta Noe says, "He will be missed."

Jim Wollon is survived by his wife, Gregory Dodge Wollon and stepsons, Nathan Yeardley Stowell of Torrance, California, Charles Parker Stowell of Berkley, California and four grandsons.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

If a picture is worth a thousand words, an artifact can tell a thousand stories, or raise a thousand questions, or inspire a thousand ideas.

That's why the artifacts we house at the Historical Society are so precious: they are repositories of intrigue that connect us with the everyday lives of people who came before us, people both known or unknown to us who left clues to their lived experiences contained in a single object.

Often those clues are unintentional, someone casually stows an old farm tool in a shed or child's toy in a spare closet, and its only chance discovery years later that brings the past into our present by happy accident. But sometimes, a group of history-loving, forward-thinking individuals intentionally save, preserve or even create an object for us--a gift of interest and beauty that tells us something about who they were and the history we share together.

July's Brown Bag Lunch presentation will feature just such an object by showcasing one of the treasures of our textile collection: the Norrisville Quilt. In 1976, members of the Norrisville Homemaker's Club set out to document the places and experiences of their beloved community as part of the country's bi-centennial celebrations. Under the creative inspiration and artistic direction of Mrs. Flora Wiley, members of the group assembled squares of individual images that stitched together created a portrait of Norrisville's history—an artistic creation, an educational object, a gift.

Tune in on July 12 and hear founder and former president of the Norrisville Homemakers Club Judith Billingslea tell the story of the Norrisville Quilt and let this special, singular artifact spark a thousand memories, questions and inspirations for you.

-Chris Potts, Executive Director

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This is truly an exciting time to be part of the Historical Society of Harford County. The Society has spread its wings and is partnering with organizations and programs throughout the county as it works to reach its goal of being the premiere historical organization in the county.

We recently initiated partnerships with the Anita Leight Center to present Bob Chance's talk on the County's Environmental Movement; the Little Falls Friends Meeting to present Amy Rosenkrans' talk on the County's Suffrage Movement; began talks with the Town of Bel Air, and the Liriodendron Foundation to develop partnerships on future projects.

Meanwhile, work continues on exhibits at the Joesting Gorsuch House and development of the Society's Museum which will open to the public next year. Additionally, plans are in progress for the improvements at the Hays House, along with possible partnership with the Harford Community College's Hays Heighe House Museum.

This summer is filled with exciting opportunities to attend Society events. More about these later in the newsletter. Additionally, the Society is planning its Annual Dinner for this fall, on Sunday, September 18th. Once again, we plan to make this a picnic outing with tours, a guest speaker, presentation of the George Archer Award and Trustee elections for the Class of 2023-2024. A Nomination Committee is working on a slate of possible officers that will be forwarded to members before the Annual meeting.

Once again, this year's event is expected to be a great opportunity for an entertaining Sunday afternoon, so we hope you will be able to attend.

Of course, one of our major initiatives is ongoing – Harford 250. This celebration will encompass much of our efforts between now and the March 2024 Finale. Not only will the Society present three major events; an opening in March 2023, a 2023 Fall Festival at Ripken Stadium and a Grand Finale in March 2024, it will publish a compilation of stories written by County residents about life in Harford, hold a year-long trivia event and partner with numerous organizations and museums to showcase the fascinating story of Harford County. I encourage you to check our website, www.Harford250.org to learn more about the events and also to consider becoming a sponsor or a volunteer.

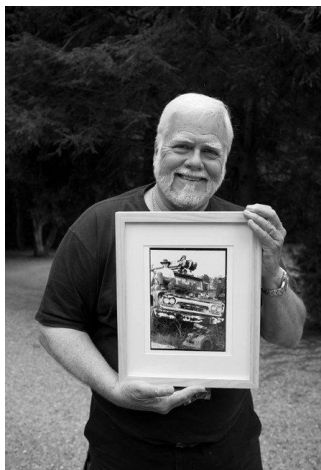
Finally, I want to once again make a plea. If you have time, even just a few hours a week, that you could spare to volunteer at the Society, we really need you. Covid had a dramatically negative impact on our volunteer base, and as you can see from the list above, we have much going on, we need your help. We will tailor your volunteer work to your interests and availability, so please give us a call at 410-838-7691 or send your information to info@harfordhistory.org.

Thank you for your consideration.

-Bill Walden, President

COMING EVENTS

- **Postponement Notice: *Oh, the Stories We Can Tell – Adventures at the Aegis***



S. Todd Holden

Adventures at the Aegis, a special presentation by S. Todd Holden was unfortunately postponed due to illness. We are pleased to announce that the program has been rescheduled for **Saturday, August 20th at 4 p.m.** at Brooms Bloom Dairy, 1700 S. Fountain Green Rd., Bel Air, MD. Everyone who purchased tickets for the earlier presentation will be notified of the new date.

Meanwhile, additional tickets are available at the Society's website www.harfordhistory.org. We encourage you to register for this event which promises to bring back many memories; enjoy our speaker's many fascinating stories about his time with the Aegis; and gaze upon some photographic gems from those years.

Tickets are \$10 and attendees are asked to bring a lawn chair. We hope to see you there. Rain date is Saturday, August 27th same time and place.

- **Brown Bag Lunch Series - Harford History in Textiles: The Norrisville Quilt and More**

The Textile Department of the Harford County Historical Society holds over two thousand items in its collection, including hats, gloves, military uniforms and an array of men's, women's and children's clothing that combined help tell the story of daily life in Harford County through the years. One gem of the collection is a quilt made in 1976 by a group of Norrisville homemakers who were determined to chronicle the historic places in their beloved community for the education and enjoyment of future

generations.

On **Tuesday, July 12, 2022** at 12:30 pm, Executive Director, Chris Potts will share the story of the “Norrisville Quilt” as told by Judith Billingslea, one of the quilt’s creators, and introduce viewers of the virtual Brown Bag Lunch program to the many textile treasures that the Society houses and preserves.

Visit the Society’s website at www.harfordhistory.org to register for this fascinating virtual program and learn more about the history of Harford through textiles.

- **The Story of the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway**

At 12:30 pm on **Tuesday, August 9, 2022**, Brigitte Carty, Director of the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway will be the Historical Society’s Brown Bag Lunch guest speaker. Ms. Carty will tell the story of the development and accomplishments of the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway (LSHG) program and provide information about its plans and programs.

The concept of the LSHG was initiated in 1992 by a group of local, state, and business partners with the goal of linking three communities by way of a trail network. Since its creation in 1992, the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway (LSHG) has become one of Maryland’s leading conservation organizations. Its focus is on the Upper Bay region where staff and volunteers work with both the public and private sector to advocate for the protection and restoration of the area’s natural resource and cultural heritage as well as the creation of a land and water recreational trail system. The trails are the physical linkage that unites the waterfront communities in Harford and Cecil County, Maryland. They represent the historical connection and the economic leverage created by working together to create a regional identity and tourist destination.

The goal of LSHG is to stimulate local economic activity by developing a linkage between the region’s natural, historic, and cultural resources. This linkage is created in a series of land and water recreational trails that weave together the past and future of the region while promoting an understanding and appreciation of the region’s character. The LSHG manages a designated Maryland State Heritage Area, Maryland State Scenic byway and three national historic trails, Captain John Smith Chesapeake Trail, the Star-Spangled Banner trail and the Washington-Rochambeau trail.

To learn more about this exciting program, please join us for this virtual presentation by registering at www.harfordhistory.org.



Judith Billingslea and Chris Potts displaying the Norrisville Quilt





Liberty Tree Wye Oak Tree

Save the Date - Annual Meeting: Picnic in the Park

Sunday, September 18, 2024

(rain date Sunday, September 25, 2022)

The Society will hold its annual meeting in September at Harford Glen Park. Plans are underway to make this a memorable experience including a presentation by our Guest Speaker, Scott Walker. His talk will be centered on the Liberty Tree Wye Oak Senate Gavel that is dedicated to the Maryland 400. The Maryland Regiment played a brave and unique role in the Revolutionary War and the creation of the early Republic. Walker will share the stories and adventures of the Maryland 400 in the

Revolutionary War, including references to some of the soldiers from Harford County families. Come learn about these brave men who helped create our nation. The event will include tours of the mansion house, ice house, special presentations, the announcement of this year's George Archer Award, Class of 2023-24 election and more.

Watch for more details in the next edition of the newsletter. Meanwhile, a list of candidates for the Class of 2023-24 is being prepared by the Nominating Committee and will be emailed to you separately before the meeting. If you or someone you know is interested in serving as a Society Trustee, please contact us at info@harfordhistory.org.

HAYS HOUSE MUSEUM UPDATE

By Susan K. Wooden, Acting Hays House Chair

What's New at the Hays House Museum?

Despite remaining closed to the public, the Hays House Museum is alive with activity. The unexpected closure allowed us to analyze our operations at Bel Air's oldest house, starting with a critical area: the interior housekeeping.

Back in Thomas and Betsy Hays' day, spring cleaning would have been finished by...well, spring. We, volunteers on the other hand, are still hard at work, one room, corner, cobweb, and object at a time. First, we emptied the drawers and cabinets of our fragile antique sideboard and desks and then we asked Arthur Benser, our favorite furniture specialist, to repair their knobs, hinges, and decorative moldings. Over many decades, the house has accumulated more objects than it has space for, so now we are evaluating each one for appropriateness, current and potential use, accession status, and vulnerability. For example, we took vintage linens to the Historical Society's textile department, where they will be accessioned, digitally archived, and safely stored until we need them. We've done a lot more than can be told here, and we still have a lot more to do to achieve the bright, refreshed space we envision for a grand re-opening.

Another crucial component of our museum operations is *people power*. There are a lot of ways to participate that don't require a particular skill or an ongoing commitment. We intend to resume the

events that our visitors enjoy the most, and we also want there to be more activities for our diverse community. We can't do all of this, or do it well, without *people power*.

We have very cool ideas for the Hays House future, and we also want to hear yours. You can email susan.wooden@outlook.com directly or call the Historical Society at 410-838-7691. Please visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/thehayshouse> for the latest photos and updates.

p.s. The Historical Society is currently recruiting members for the newly established Hays House Committee, which serves as a liaison with our trustees and the community. The committee will also conceive a broader vision and mission for the Hays House Museum and will plan innovative ways to increase the use of the space. You can get in touch with Christine Potts at 410-838-7691 to find out more.

ON DOING HISTORY: Obituaries: Their Nature and as Sources of History

By Jim Chrismer

Published obituaries – in number, nature, and accessibility – just are not what they used to be. And, indeed, they are not all “equal.” When I was growing up in small town Bel Air in the 1950s and 1960s, it is almost as if the Town stood still until about 11:00 AM on Thursday, the day that the once-a-week *Aegis* appeared. Pretty much the same occurred in Aberdeen and Havre de Grace with *the Democrat* and the *Record* and in other communities in the county. Everyone either subscribed to or bought the local paper. Most weeks the feature that drew the greatest attention were the obituaries.

Obituaries at that time and far into the past concentrated on the public life of the decedent and followed a traditional formula. In addition to noting the date, cause, and place of the person's death, the account noted the deceased's parents, birth date and location, occupation and career, and survivors. If timing permitted, published accounts included church or other services, burial location, officiant, and active and honorary pall bearers. Obituaries, often written by writers from the newspapers themselves, tended to be very proper in style and to follow a standard arrangement. Only occasionally did these accounts include any personal memories.

It was these written accounts that typically served as the basis for biographical encyclopedias or dictionaries produced decades later as reference works. The best known in our area is the *Biographical Record of Harford and Cecil Counties* (1897). Most recently, Henry C. Peden and William O. Carr, seeking to provide an updated version of the earlier classic, published *A Biographical Dictionary of Harford County, Maryland, 1774-1974* (2021). Not surprisingly given the date of publication of the original tome and the chronological span of the latter, the public lives of prominent white men dominated both references.

Interestingly, Peden was immediately disappointed with aspects of his and Judge Carr's work upon its receipt from the publisher. The ever-energetic Mr. Peden set out to produce a changed version, and within a year produced *Portrait and Biographical Encyclopedia of Harford County, Maryland, 1774-1974* (2022). This volume included a greater variety of persons with a wider diversity of backgrounds and accomplishments. Peden gave more women, persons of color, and individuals of various faiths and occupations their rightful place in Harford's History. Readers were now able to learn about persons such as Katherine Anderson, Walter Banks, Mary Wright Barnes, Bill Brown, Barbara Day, Louis Getz, Jeannie Graybeal, Tony Hyde, Maurice Klein, Cornelia Meigs, Sarah Pate, Madison Mitchell, Stephen Moore, Inez Osborne, and Mary Risteau.

The section of current daily newspapers that deals with deceased individuals basically limits itself to two unsatisfactory types – a small number of featured obituaries – and an alphabetical compilation of scores of brief death notices that include a tiny photo and only the most basic information.

Obviously, the number of substantial accounts in printed form today is greatly limited compared to decades past. This fact poses difficulties for the seriously interested or even the just curious reading public. Rather than being able to turn to the ever-abbreviated or gradually disappearing community newspapers, concerned individuals must search online through numerous hits to locate (or not) accounts of the deaths of their friends, acquaintances, or distant relatives. Fortunate persons can sometimes quickly locate an obit, especially if they can determine what funeral home the deceased's family might have used. Most seekers are left to wander aimlessly in the wide digital world.

Internet accounts, whether provided directly by the funeral home or by a service to which a funeral home subscribes (e.g., *Tribute* and *Dignity*) generally are notably different from those of the past. Most significantly, they are much more democratic. The life stories of men and women (typically now with their given name as opposed to their marital title only), old and young, and prominent and everyday people of all races appear, as do the names of spouses, significant others, best friends, etc. This is often the product of the family itself actually writing the article (as did my sister and I for our mother, Cary Grant's greatest fan) or providing the information to the funeral home, often by prior arrangement.

Another notable feature of many internet memorials, especially those that invite comments by readers, is their uniquely personal nature. Unlike the rather staid death accounts of the past, present day obits often include references to the deceased's hobbies, memberships, activities (e.g., Louise Hopkins visited the sick with the Legion of Mary of St. Margaret's Church for over 30 years), interests (e.g., Arch Handy founded the Harford Stamp Club), personalities, and friendships. Reader comments often include work relationships, anecdotes, favorite stories, and interesting tidbits (e.g., Roger Rice was *Marylea Dairy's* first milk man) that provide a human dimension to the life of the person.

So, what does all this mean in terms of Doing History? It means that authors, be they serious-minded journalists, thoughtful researchers, or and especially historians, will need to utilize all types of obituaries, be they printed in newspapers or posted online, or whether called death notices, valedictories, eulogies, tributes, or epitaphs. It means that in order to produce written accounts of the lives of persons in the past that meet present-day social and historical expectations, writers will need to produce biographical accounts of the wider community or society, recognized at the time or not.

The Historical Society is well prepared to assist the modern researcher, whether members or occasional visitors. In addition to a comprehensive library of County and Maryland materials, patrons will find computers, a variety of biographical encyclopedias and dictionaries, compilations of unique biographies (e.g., *Lives of Harford County Persons of Color Who Lived To at Least 90 Years of Age*; *Harford County Soldiers in World War I*), a card index to *Aegis* Obituaries, lists of burials in every cemetery in the county (often with copies of the death certificates), microfilm of all major newspapers in the county's past; and vertical files of communities, schools, churches, businesses, organizations, and families.

As always, in using whatever sources they locate, researchers must remain "paragons of skepticism, trusting ultimately their own judgement."

The Society welcomes donations of relevant material at any time.

“BOOTH” by Karen Joy Fowler

By Tom Fink

Bestselling author Karen Joy Fowler’s latest novel is *Booth*. It’s about the family behind John Wilkes Booth and how his assassination of Abraham Lincoln affected them. In her author’s note Karen states that she “began thinking about this book during one of our American spates of horrific mass shootings. Among other things, like writers before me, I wondered about the families of the shooters—how would such a family deal with their own culpability, all the if-onlys?” She also states “... I did not want to write a book about John Wilkes. This is a man who craved attention and has gotten too much of it; I didn’t think he deserved mine. And yet there is no way around the fact that I wouldn’t be writing about his family if he weren’t who he was, if he hadn’t done what he did. The tension over this issue—how to write the book without centering John Wilkes—is something I grappled with on nearly every page.”

Being the president of the Junius B. Booth Society, the editor of the society’s newsletter *Booth History Spotlight*, and the director of Tudor Hall Museum (the Booth family home in Bel Air), I’ve been immersed in Booth family history for over a decade. Because of this I’ve been asked by friends and relatives what I think of Karen’s historical novel.

First of all, I have to state up front that I’ve never been a fan of historical novels. I don’t like fiction mixed with history, unless it centers on fictional characters with the history in the background. But that’s just me. Many people love historical fiction and there’s definitely a place for it. I tip my hat to Ms. Fowler for taking on the monumental task of exploring this extremely complex and fascinating family.

She chose to tell the epic story of the theatrical Booth family through the voice of three of John Wilkes’ siblings: Rosalie, Edwin and Asia. Rosalie, the eldest sister, is a good choice for historical fiction because little is known about her so it leaves a lot of room for the author. Edwin was the most accomplished actor of the three brothers who followed their father onto the stage and was a supporter of Abraham Lincoln. Asia, the younger sister, was the family historian who wanted to preserve and protect the Booth name while denouncing John’s dark deed. There is another voice that comes through, and that is the author’s, which is the voice of today.

The story follows John Wilkes’ father, actor Junius Brutus Booth, after his arrival in America in 1821 with his lover Mary Ann Holmes while abandoning his wife and son in England. After arriving in America Junius embarks on a very successful theatrical career and father’s ten children with Mary Ann before finally marrying her.

The story of the Booths is so complex on a grand scale. For years I’ve said you couldn’t make up their story in fiction because no one would believe it if it didn’t really happen. It’s that fantastical and shocking. Karen has done her research and tells the story in a style of her own. By combining history and fiction she attempts to explain how a family which is dysfunctional to begin with evolves during the greatest conflict of our nation’s history. She weaves the individual lives of the family members, servants, their Baltimore, Bel Air and other residences, turmoil, tragedies, struggles and accomplishments into her tapestry of how the assassination affected the family.

I feel the first part of the book is somewhat choppy and may be confusing at times for those not familiar with the Booth family history. The narrative improves later in the book. One thing I found distracting is

that the story is told through the lens of today. This takes away from looking at it through the lens of the nineteenth century.

The saga of the Booths is so grand that it is impossible to tell in one novel. In fact, there could be separate novels for each of the Booth family actors: Junius, Junius Jr., Edwin, and John. Karen admirably introduces the reader to the whole family using her special blend of fact and fiction. I feel she focused too much on the darker negative side of the family members tending to portray them as one dimensional.

This leaves a gloomy cloud. All in all, this is a great book for those who love historical fiction and opens the door to discovering the family of the assassin of Abraham Lincoln. The Booth family was truly a house divided and this novel reflects that.

On a personal note, I was honored to give Karen Joy Fowler and historian Terry Alford a private tour of Tudor Hall while she was doing research for *Booth*.

For those readers who want to know more about the Booth family members after reading Karen's novel, there are many good Booth history books and biographies out there. Harford County purchased Tudor Hall in 2006. The Junius B. Booth Society opens Tudor Hall to the public for tours and special talks about the Booth family and has turned the first floor into a museum. Most theatre historians say Junius Brutus Booth was the greatest actor in America during the first half of the nineteenth century and that Edwin Booth was the greatest American actor in the second half of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, John Wilkes Booth has cast a dark shadow over the family name.

GIRL SCOUT EVENT WITH TEXTILE DEPARTMENT VOLUNTEERS

Our textile department volunteers are keeping busy even during the Historical Society of Harford County's renovations. Edna Hynes and Kathy Scholl traveled to Pennsylvania to share our vintage Girl Scout collection of uniforms and accessories with Pennsylvania's Girl Scout Troop #20285.

When planning a celebration for "World Thinking Day", troop leader Sarah Grem remembered her mother, Edna Hynes, talking about the Girl Scout memorabilia she and the textile department were preserving and cataloging. She asked if they would bring the collection to Pennsylvania to display and share information about the collection with the Girl Scouts. Edna and Kathy were delighted to accept the invitation.

Edna and Kathy prepared the items for display with Kathy dressing the mannequins. Kathy also spent time on preparing a presentation for the Scouts.



On February 20, volunteers Rick Herbig and Gary Scholl helped load the van with the collection and Edna and Kathy headed for New Freedom, PA with Edna as navigator. On arrival, the Scouts helped unload and arrange the display. 60 girls were in attendance ranging in ages from 5-15. The girls were very attentive to Kathy's presentation and asked thought-provoking questions. A fun time was had by all.

The Historical Society
of Harford County, Inc.
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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.