

# The HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HARFORD COUNTY, Inc.

*Preserving Our Past For Your Future*



143 N. Main Street  
Bel Air, MD 21014

## Society News

September/October 2022

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

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Harford County newsletter is  
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### ALFRED B. HILTON HAS COME A LONG WAY FROM SEPTEMBER 29, 1864

By Jim Chrismer

The 158<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of New Market Heights and related events are coming soon.

It was foggy dawn on September 29, 1864, in the fourth year of the American Civil War. United States Colored Troops (USCT) and Sergeant Alfred B. Hilton bearing the nation's flag led the way as elements of the Union Army attacked Confederate troops entrenched atop New Market Heights, part of General Robert E. Lee's defense of Richmond. Commanders expected two charges would be required to displace the veteran Confederates from their extensive fortifications.

The initial thrust began as Sgt. Hilton of the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment USCT led the brigade through a forest, across a ravine, and out into wetlands. The troops incurred enemy fire as they crossed a swamp and began to ascend the 150-foot Heights before being immobilized by blasts of shellfire likened to hailstones and by lines of rebel abatis comprised of sharpened felled trees and intertwined branches. The rebels held but had been so weakened that the second USA assault an hour later ousted the Southerners. It had been a bloody morning for the USCT.

Regiments of the USCT paid a dear price for their triumph, reflected in the loss of 11 of their twelve color sergeants. Litters bearers carried Hilton off the hill and transported him to a Union hospital. He eventually underwent amputation of his infected right leg and lingered until October 21, 1864, when he succumbed to his injuries. On April 6, 1865, the Army posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military honor, to Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton was one of only sixteen men of the approximate 180,000 USCT troops during the war to receive the MOH.

*Cont'd page 8*

## COMING EVENTS

### BROWN BAG LUNCH SERIES

- *The Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary War Trail*

Tuesday, September 13, 2022, at 12:30 pm

The September Brown Bag Lunch program will feature author and scholar, Dr. Iris De Rode who will share the fascinating story of the Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary War Trail. This 680-mile trail between New Hampshire and Virginia tells the story of the beginning days of our Republic. Dr. De Rode will share a very unique perspective on Harford County's portion of the trail.

While working on her Ph.D. in France she met some descendants of Francois Jean de Beauvoir Chevalier de Chastellux, principal liaison officer, member of Academie Francoise, third in command of French forces at Yorktown during the American Revolution, and personal friend of President George Washington. Acting as Adjutant General to Rochambeau, Chastellux accompanied him on his journey through Harford County on the way to the Battle of Yorktown, keeping a journal along the way. Dr. De Rode gained access to this journal while researching Chastellux's papers at the home of his descendants. Her talk will include details from these journals as well as the story of the Washington Rochambeau Trail which will soon be part of the national trail system transversing through Harford.

This talk promises to be an eye-opening experience as we learn of a firsthand account of Harford County during the Revolution. To register for this free virtual presentation, please visit the Society's website at [www.harfordhistory.org](http://www.harfordhistory.org). If you register and cannot watch the presentation at the inaugural time, a link will be provided to watch later at a time more convenient for you.



- *The Archeology of the Bush Tavern*

Tuesday, October 11, 2022, at 12:30 pm

In 2016, archeologists with the State Highway Administration initiated an archeological dig at the Bush Tavern on Route 7 in Abingdon. During the Revolutionary War, the tavern was part of the settlement known as Harford Town, the county seat from 1774 to 1791. French troops under Rochambeau camped nearby during the War. The Bush Declaration was signed here by several county residents at "the risqué of our lives and our fortunes".

Aaron Levinthal, a state archeologist, and lab director involved with the dig noted, "A slew of artifacts 'that are related to every aspect of daily life,' has been found. They include food remains, such as animal bones, tableware, cookware, construction items, wine bottles, thimbles, buttons, pieces of tobacco pipes, pieces of pens, even slate pencils." In his presentation,



Aaron Levinthal

Levinthal will share his findings and that of others involved in this exploration of Harford's historic past.

To register for this free virtual event, please visit the Society's website, [www.harfordhistory.org](http://www.harfordhistory.org). If you register and cannot watch the presentation at the inaugural time, a link will be provided to you to watch later at a time more convenient for you.

### GENEALOGY PROGRAMS

- *What to Do When the Courthouse Burns*

September 14, 2022, at 7 pm

Christopher Smithson will do a free virtual presentation on Wednesday, September 14, 2022, at 7 pm. This is a repeat of an earlier presentation designed to help locate lost documents and records. This is your chance to review this material again or possibly to catch a presentation you missed. Register at [www.harfordhistory.org](http://www.harfordhistory.org).

- Annual Genealogy Workshop: *Finding the Story*

October 15, 2022 – 10 am – 3 pm



This year has seen the return of the genealogy program "Who Do You Think You Are" (WDYTYA) which has touted the art of genealogy and the wonderful stories it can reveal. The show is sponsored by Ancestry.com but a lot of the seekers are sent to repositories to find out more information. In truth, there is only so much you can find online, even though more information is being added every day. To find answers you have to go to the repositories to find local records, court records, and other evidence.

On October 15th, join us at the Historical Society of Harford County to review the WDYTYA methods and find the resources available to you. Discussions will include societies such as the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), National Archives, State Archives, and other resources. Time for research of our archives will be provided in the afternoon.

The program will also include a genealogy book sale, offering an opportunity to find specialized resources for your future research.

The cost is \$20, pre-registration is required.

Mary Schweers, Society Genealogist

### ANNUAL GEORGE W. ARCHER LECTURE

*The Inside Story: Harford's Court Houses, Judges, and Lawyers* by Judge William O. Carr

Thursday, November 3, 2022, at 6:30 pm

Each year the Historical Society concludes its Speakers Series with the Archer Lecture, named for one of the society's prominent founding members. The speakers are generally chosen from local authors who have contributed in a very special way to our understanding of Harford's history. We are pleased to announce this year's speaker will be Judge William O. Carr, author of the *Biographical Encyclopedia of Harford County, Maryland 1774-1976* (co-author Henry Peden).

Having served on the Circuit Court of Harford County since 1984, Judge Carr has a unique knowledge of the courthouse and the judges and lawyers who have served in Harford County.



Harford County Courthouse

We invite you to join us on Thursday, November 3, 2022, at 6:30 pm for an evening at the historic Ceremonial Courtroom in Harford County's Circuit Court, 20 West Courtland Street in Bel Air to share an evening with Judge William O. Carr as he leads a tour of the portrait gallery and the court's "holding cell". He will then regale attendees with the history of the courthouse and the stories of the judges and attorneys who made much of this history. The evening will start with a wine and cheese reception followed by a tour and a very special presentation.

The cost is \$10, pre-registration is required. To register, please visit the Society's website at [www.harfordhistory.org](http://www.harfordhistory.org). Space is limited so early registration is recommended.

### ANNUAL FALL YARD SALE AND VOLUNTEER OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, October 22, 2022 - 9 am – 2 pm

It's been a while since we could all get together and explore the Society Headquarters, and the Society's ever-popular yard sale has been on hold for two years. So, we've decided to combine these great events and do things slightly differently this year. The Historical Society will be open for visitors and you will have an opportunity to learn about all of the departments' activities, and possible volunteer opportunities and to see the restoration work that is nearing completion.



Outside, in the back parking area, you will be able to wander among individual vendors, check out the food truck specialties and meet and greet your friends. If you are interested in being one of these vendors, we encourage you to register online at [www.harfordhistory.org](http://www.harfordhistory.org). Ten by ten spaces are available for \$25. The deadline for registration is October 10, 2022. Applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. For more information call the Society at 410-838-7691 or email us at [info@harfordhistory.org](mailto:info@harfordhistory.org).

### NEW MEMBERS

William Ancell  
Richard Brand  
Aaron Jarvis

Howard Strouse  
Tyra Shelley

Susan Deeney  
Eric Mease  
Richard Yeager



## WHAT'S NEW AT THE HAYS HOUSE MUSEUM?

Susan K. Wooden, Acting Chair



Our previous article talked about emptying drawers and cupboards as the first step in our housecleaning adventure. In the process, we're discovering quite a few items with old accession numbers. An inventory completed in January 1993 is helping us identify the items and determine how best to store or display them. We think you'll enjoy reading about some of these treasures.

Among a plethora of white and ecru crocheted cotton doilies stashed in a dresser, one doily was neither white nor ecru, and its thread feels too silky to be cotton. We were right about the thread, which is linen that Gertrude Francisco spun from flax on an ancestor's pre-1800 spinning wheel. She then crocheted the pinwheel design doily specifically for the Hays House and donated it in 1981.

A sizeable square shawl of fine red wool with hand embroidered motifs in white silk thread puzzled us because some of the embroidery was on the wrong side in an odd configuration. Turns out that the shawl was meant to be folded diagonally to form two separate, luxurious bands of embroidery, as shown in the picture.

Part of Mrs. Christian Chekey's mother's wedding trousseau, this shawl, and two others "were tucked away, all nicely boxed and sealed, in the attic eaves of the mother's house in Shaker Heights, Ohio." We'd love to know more! We're also curious about a white linen bed sheet with narrow hand-rolled hems and the mark "M C Fulford No 1." The sheet is in very good condition, measures 92" x 96," and was woven in one piece. Antique sheets we're familiar with are made of two equal pieces whip-seamed down the middle, because early power looms could not accommodate the full width of fabric needed for bed sheets.

The oldest item we found is by far the most extraordinary and exciting: a lightweight, hand-loomed wool blanket comprising two panels sewn together as described above for bed sheets. The blanket was made in 1773 and is "said to be made by slaves of the Moore family at Moorlands." We hope to exhibit these amazing treasures, along with more details, in special displays at the Hays House Museum in the future, so please stay tuned.

If you have questions or would like to offer some expertise, information, or other help, please send an email to [susan.wooden@outlook.com](mailto:susan.wooden@outlook.com).

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Thank you to everyone who helped make our second Annual Hundred X fundraiser a success. Members and their friends were asked to share feedback online about companies and brands that they use throughout the year. This information helps businesses better meet the needs of their customers and provides non-profits with an income source. For each response, the non-profit receives two dollars. The Society was able to raise \$2,682 in this year's effort and allowed some of our members the opportunity to praise or vent about experiences with everything from restaurants to insurance companies and car dealers.

Restoration efforts continue at both the Society headquarters and the Hays House. We are currently seeking contractors for the display materials for the museum at headquarters and are evaluating bids for roof replacement and the north wall repairs at the Hays House. Once these details are resolved, we hope to provide you with reopening schedules for both facilities.

Meanwhile, this fall promises to bring some very exciting programs. The Society's Annual meeting will be held on September 18<sup>th</sup> at Harford Glen Park. This promises to be a very special event. In addition to the standard program catching everyone up on the Society's accomplishments, we will have an accomplished guest speaker sharing the stories of Harford's Revolutionary War heroes, a surprise award program, annual Trustee elections, as well as tours and displays. I hope you will be able to attend this year's Picnic in the Park and bring your friends. Other fall events will include an open house and yard sale, a genealogy workshop, a continuation of our Brown Bag lunch series, and a night at the Harford County Courthouse with Judge William O. Carr as our Archer Lecturer. More details are included in the Coming Events section of the newsletter.

Finally, I want to put out a call for anyone interested in serving on the Society's Board of Trustees. We are currently seeking nominees for the Class of 2023-2024. Trustees serve a two-year term and help direct the overall operation of the Society. If you think you may be interested or need more information, please contact me at [president@harfordhistory.org](mailto:president@harfordhistory.org).

-Bill Walden, President

### FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

History is a public chronicle of kingdoms and conquests, heroic feats and horrific crimes, but it is also a personal tale of small towns and high school sweethearts, church suppers, a long line of "Juniors," and baby girls named for their grandmothers.

History is a family affair, and the stories of our ancestors' lives can create a fascinating group portrait of personal origin. We can come to better understand who we are through discoveries of who our ancestors were. And for many budding genealogists, once the process of tracing a family tree begins and those discoveries start unfolding, researchers can get hooked on the hunt.

Unsurprisingly, one of the most popular areas of research at the Historical Society (HSHC) is genealogical, and when it comes to helping people explore the multiple branches and myriad stories of their family trees, we are ready for questions and eager to assist.

Throughout the year, our genealogy librarians field questions sent to our website contact page by men and women in search of ancestors with connections to Harford County. We offer a popular series of virtual talks on an array of genealogical research topics and tips. And our marriage indexes, family files, property records, obituaries, and access to genealogical databases can help researchers not only determine names and dates but also to discover something even better—details.

So, if you are thinking of going on a genealogical search, check us out. Our annual genealogical fall conference will be held on Saturday, October 15. This year's theme is "Finding the Story" and will be held in person. Treat yourself to a day of guest speakers and a session of assisted access to our research holdings and have some fun discovering your own family story. Register online at [harfordhistory.org](http://harfordhistory.org). Hope to see you there!

-Chris Potts, Executive Director

### ANNUAL MEETING

#### **Annual Meeting: Picnic in the Park**

**Sunday, September 18, 2022, at 2 pm**      **(Rain date Sunday, September 25, 2022)**



*J. Scott Watkins,  
actor, writer, producer*

Everyone is invited! Join us for an afternoon of tours, entertainment, and adventure at Harford Glen Park at 502 W. Wheel Road, Bel Air, MD 21015 on Sunday, September 18, 2022, at 2 pm. Bring along a picnic lunch, beverages will be provided. Explore the park grounds, mansion, and ice house. Enjoy the performance of actor, writer, and producer, J. Scott Watkins as he relates the story of the Liberty Tree Wye Oak Senate Gavel that is dedicated to the Maryland 400. This group of brave Marylanders played a unique role in the Revolutionary War and the creation of the early Republic. Learn about Harford County's militia and its role in the Revolutionary War's historic battles.

The Annual Meeting will also include awards ceremonies, a state of the Society presentation, and the election of Society Trustees for the Class of 2023-2024. The rain date for this event is Sunday, September 25<sup>th</sup>,

same time, same place.

The cost is \$10: Free for students and those under 25. For reservations, visit [www.harfordhistory.org](http://www.harfordhistory.org) or call 410-838-7691.



*Wye Oak Gavel*

### ANNUAL ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

The Society's nominating committee is seeking potential Board members to serve on the Historical Society's Board of Trustees. Board members serve a two-year term and meet monthly to oversee the activities of the Society and plan for its future. The nominating committee's recommendations will be forwarded to the current Board for concurrence and then an email notification will go out to all Society members by September 4<sup>th</sup>. The final election will take place at the Annual Meeting on September 18<sup>th</sup> at which time the Society President will call for a vote on the committee's recommendations and should there be any nominations from the floor, these will also be considered.

If you are interested in serving or would like more information about the responsibilities of the position, please contact the chair of the Nominating Committee, George Harrison at [geohpcinc@comcast.net](mailto:geohpcinc@comcast.net) no later than September 2<sup>nd</sup>.

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*"Hilton", cont'd from page 1*

So, who was this Alfred B. Hilton? Virtually no one knew much about him until the Fall of 2000. It was then that the Historical Society of Harford County published a 60-page issue of its *Harford Historical Bulletin*, "Above and Beyond: The Civil War Careers of Alfred B. Hilton and Charles E. Phelps." \*

With the publication of the Society's *Bulletin* students of the Civil War nationally and Harford County residents, in general, began to learn the story of the twenty-some-year-old illiterate farm laborer whose tenant farmer parents had been born into slavery in the Havre de Grace area and who, to this day, remains Harford's sole native-born recipient of the Medal of Honor.

In the 20+ years since the publication of "Above and Beyond," much has been accomplished to advance the public's awareness of the significance of Hilton and the Battle of New Market Heights. Among these are the following actions:

1. Harford County Public Schools revised its U.S. History curriculum to include Hilton and the role of USCT soldiers in preserving the United States and in ending slavery.
2. Harford County Department of Parks and Recreation renamed its Gravel Hill Park as Alfred B. Hilton Memorial Park, and subsequently erected a Civil War-themed playground for children.
3. The Maryland Department of Transportation designated its overpass on Route 22 at Kennedy Highway as the Alfred B. Hilton Memorial Bridge.
4. Civil War Trails, a nonprofit advocate of heritage tourism, erected two wayside markers at Hilton Park on Gravel Hill Road.
5. American Legion Post #55 in Bel Air amended its name to Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton Memorial Post No. 55.
6. Harford County Government featured Sergeant Hilton in its 2020 Black History Month video, giving recognition also to the approximately 200 Harford-related USCT soldiers for their outstanding service to the country.



7. The Sergeant Alfred B. Hilton Memorial Foundation in 2021 revealed the essential design of a planned monument to Hilton and other Harford-related USCT soldiers.
8. The Historical Society of Harford County 2017 initiated futile efforts through the office of Congressman Harris to secure an actual 1865 Medal of Honor that the Army acknowledges it cannot prove was presented to the Hilton Family.
9. The Bel Air Cultural Arts Commission and the Bel Air Downtown Alliance partnered in 2021 with Post #55 to add a mural dedicated to Hilton and the Battle of New Market Heights to an exterior wall of its Bond Street headquarters.
10. The Hilton Foundation made contributions in Sergeant Hilton's honor to support the education of children at Edgewood Elementary School and Old Post Road Elementary School.

The next major step -- and the most dramatic achievement - in recognizing Hilton, the Battle of New Market Heights, and other local USCT soldiers will occur this Fall with the dedication of the memorial the Hilton Foundation revealed last year. Originally proposed for Tydings Park, the monument's substantial dimensions made the expansive David Craig Park, adjacent to the Susquehanna River and the Joseph L. Davis Post 47 American Legion, a more appropriate location. The Hilton Foundation expects to announce the date of the dedication later in September.

#### Epilogue:

*\*Colonel Charles E. Phelps, was a transplanted Vermonter whose professional parents saw to his education at Princeton and Harvard and his establishment as a lawyer in Baltimore. Phelps became the commander of the Seventh Maryland Volunteers organized in Bel Air in 1862. In May 1864 Phelps rallied US troops, was wounded, captured, and escaped at the Battle of Laurel Hill outside Spotsylvania. Elected to Congress and made a judge in Baltimore, in 1898 he received the Medal of Honor.*



*Rendering of Alfred B. Hilton Monument. Reveal scheduled for Fall 2022*

### HARFORD 250 CELEBRATION

Plans are progressing for next year's Harford 250 Celebration. The opening event, *Commemorating 250 Years of Community*, will be held on Friday, March 31, 2023, and Saturday, April 1, 2023, at the Arena at Harford Community College. A team of volunteers is working to assure this will be an outstanding program complete with celebrity appearances, entertainment, and fascinating activities for young and old. Non-profit groups are encouraged to participate in this event by developing a booth display telling the story of their organization. Contact us at [Harford250@harfordhistory.org](mailto:Harford250@harfordhistory.org) if you are interested in registering for a booth. We will forward registration information as soon as it becomes available.



A second committee is working on a mid-year event at Ripken Stadium with the theme – *The History of Sports in Harford*. If you are interested in helping plan this event, please contact the Society's Executive Director, Chris Potts at [DirectorHSHC@harfordhistory.org](mailto:DirectorHSHC@harfordhistory.org).

The grand finale for Harford 250, *Celebrating Tomorrow – Make Harford History Now*, is scheduled for Saturday, March 23, 2024.

This will conclude our celebration of Harford's first 250 years! This event will look to our county's future and the people that will lead us there. Join us for youth music performances, the unveiling of the Harford 250 public art piece, a display of items for the Harford 250 Time Capsule selected by high school student government associations to represent their unique school communities, and the sounding of bells – the courthouse carillon, church bells, firehouse bells/sirens, any bells available – throughout the County at noon.

For now, you can participate by helping us select a theme for the planned public art piece. The theme of the Harford 250 public art piece will be selected through a public vote held online and in person at locations throughout the County this fall. Keep an eye out for details on this opportunity to contribute your voice to Harford 250.

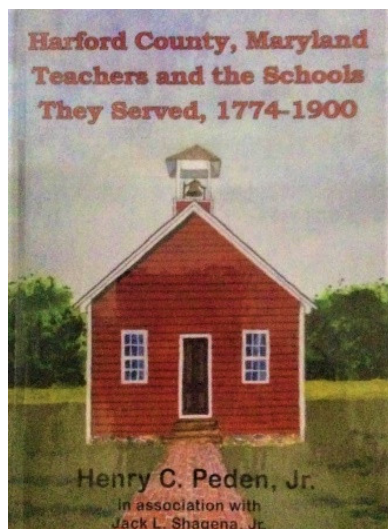
### WHAT BOOK AM I REVIEWING THIS MONTH

By Jim Chrismer

Its cover features an appealing, full-color work of art by Neil Snodgrass of Chesapeake City. It comes in hardback only. It deals alphabetically with individuals of a particular profession who worked in north central Maryland County from the late 18<sup>th</sup> until the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It includes 1800+ entries, of white, black, female, and male personages and contains 150 black & white photos. Most entries include a biographical section, a section on professional experience, and references used by the author to create the item. It comprises 381 pages and concludes with a syndicated newspaper cartoon of a modest building depicting gleeful young people in late spring pouring out the door and jumping out of windows - "School's Out."

Well, with that clue the rabbit emerged from the hat. Yes, the book's title is Harford County, Maryland Teachers, and the Schools They Served, 1774 – 1900. The author? Who else but Harford's wildly



productive Henry C. Peden, Jr., out with his “latest newest” book of 2022 (the third), on top of his 2021 biographical work with Judge William O. Carr. Per usual, the author acknowledges working “in association with Jack Shagena, Jr.”

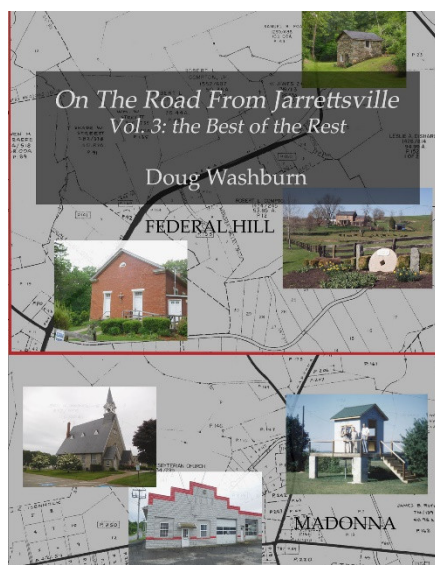
Typical of a work by Henry Peden, there is even more value here than the title suggests. As Mr. Peden writes in the Introduction, “Most of the young men and women only taught school for a year or two. The men moved on to other professions and became doctors, lawyers, judges, politicians, ministers, merchants, and farmers. Most women married and dedicated themselves to their families. Only a few turned teaching into a profession.” Consequently, *Harford County Teachers* includes information on hundreds of county persons from prominent and obscure families whose contributions extended far beyond the classroom.

One category of “teacher” that Peden included are artisans who taught their crafts to indentured boys and girls, black and white, often at the order of the Orphans Court. Among these individuals were coopers, weavers, seamstresses, carpenters, shoemakers, tanners, cutlers, blacksmiths, seamen, and wheelwrights. Since the court often noted the full name of the child, these entries are especially valuable to genealogists and family historians.

Social historians, likewise, will welcome the author’s nine-page listing of about 450 public and private schools (with locations and dates of establishment). Unfortunately, the volume lacks an index.

Henry Peden is pleasingly unique among prolific authors. Unlike “crank- ‘em-out” writers, most of whom deal in fiction, Peden generally self-publishes and is interested more in sharing information than in sales. His latest tomes, for example, have been published in numbers sufficient only to distribute as Reference Copies to libraries and archives.

In concluding the book’s “Introduction” Mr. Peden expresses the hope that “historians and educators will find my book to be a valuable research tool.” Of the author’s expressed desire, there is no doubt. Thanks once more, Henry.



### ON THE ROAD FROM JARRETTSVILLE, VOL. 3: THE BEST OF THE REST

*Vol. 3* of this series is expected back from the printer in mid-September. Unlike *Vol. 1* (Jarrettsville) and *Vol. 2* (Cooptown) this work covers five villages in the Jarrettsville Precinct of the Marshall Election District: Madonna, Black Horse, Shawsville, Federal Hill, and Taylor. The work continues to be largely based on Harford’s Land Patents and newspaper accounts. It contains new information for Bethel Presbyterian, the Black Horse Tavern, the Blue Rocks Inn, Traveler’s Rest Inn, the Elkridge-Harford Hunt Club, and the manor house at Ladew Topiary Gardens. Excerpts are available at [washburn47.wix.com/jarrettsville](http://washburn47.wix.com/jarrettsville).

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**TRUSTEES 2021-2022**

**TRUSTEES 2022-2023**

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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  
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