



THEN & NOW

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Letter to the Society

After I decided to run for president, I attended one of the monthly board meetings to let the board know that if I am elected, I plan to make changes. The Society has become stagnant, especially with our membership activities. It is noticeable in our attendance decline over the years. I know some of that has to do with our busy schedules and so many other things on offer, but these aren't the only reasons. I can't say my suggestions will help things, but it doesn't hurt to try. If one or two of them are successful and make a positive difference, then it will be worth the effort.

Three things that will continue are the Frederick S. DeMarr Library of County History, the publication of the Society's newsletter, *Then & Now*, and participation in lectures. I believe the DeMarr Library is the heart of the Society and should be its focus. In order for it to be the best, sooner rather than later we are going to have to have a dedicated individual to oversee its operation. That is just the reality. Our truly wonderful volunteers can only do so much and we need someone with experience, energy, and dedication to make the library a premiere resource. The newsletter helps to show some of the Society's personality. Its articles range from the serious to fun facts, as well as announcing events and highlighting people, places and things. The newsletter is continually evolving. If you like what you see, let us know. The same goes if you don't like something. We can't improve if we don't hear from our readers as to what they want to read. Our partnership with the Prince George's County Memorial Library System and county historic sites for lectures has been successful and is a membership benefit I would like to see continue.

We need to do something to shake up the Society and infuse energy and excitement into the organization. Doing the same old same old membership activities isn't working well anymore. Is it different events, fewer events, more events, partnering with

other organizations, what do we need to do? I want to work with other county sites and organizations both to support each other and to get our name out there so we can be recognized and show we are more than a dusty pile of books. Partnerships are great, but only if the goal of the event is achieved. Did we educate our audience? Did we expand awareness of a project? Did our members enjoy the event? Did we support our needs? We have to be judicious as to what we participate in and with whom. All of this requires money and time. So how do we do it?

There are several county historical societies in Maryland that seem to be successful. What is their magic? One of the first things I am going to do is to talk with them to see what makes them tick. How do they grow, keep their members involved, basically, what works for them. A key to a lot of this is money. Some of the local historical societies have county funding, corporate sponsors, and a healthy and growing membership. We are going to have to spend money to change direction and have the Society be more dynamic and relevant and be an organization people want to be a part of.

I am going to be blunt. The events we charge for don't make the money needed to keep us going. Membership, sponsorship and donations only carry us so far, especially if we want to be better and more supportive of the Society's objectives. We realize that your expendable income is limited and we try to keep the prices we charge to a minimum, but that comes as a detriment to the Society. The St. George's Day awards is one example of costing the Society money. Sometimes the expense over and above what we charge is minimal and other times it isn't. We will still continue to present the St. George's Day awards because we think the recognition of individuals and organizations that support

Continued on page 3

THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THEN & NOW is published quarterly. You are invited to submit a relevant article for print (subject to space limitations).

All Society members are invited and welcome to attend the monthly Board meetings. Please check our website for dates, times and location.

If you would like to volunteer your time and talents to the Historical Society in any capacity, please call us. All ages are definitely welcome!

FREDERICK S. DEMARR LIBRARY OF COUNTY HISTORY

Greenbelt Library Building, Lower Level

11 Crescent Road, Greenbelt

301-220-0330

Hours: Saturday, 12-4 PM

By Appointment at Other Times



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The Society would like to thank our generous sponsors for their support. Their donations help to fund various Society programs, its newsletter, website, and the Frederick S. DeMarr Library. Thank You!

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NEW MEMBERS

Leila Boyer
Anthony Engel
Kevin Fries
Edward Leddy
Melissa Rojas

our county's history is very important, but it may no longer be done as a separate event. Our annual Prince of a County in September is supposed to be a fund raiser for the Society. We do make money, but it is usually several hundred dollars and not the thousands we really need. I have noticed other organizations hold well-received and successful, but pricey, galas. However, those groups have paid staff as well as volunteers that can dedicate the time and effort to pull off a successful event. The Society is a volunteer organization with most of us holding full-time jobs on top of having a family and other activities that we have to juggle. That makes it difficult for us to undertake and execute an event that is entertaining for you and worthwhile for us. Ideas are percolating, so expect to see some new ways for you to support the Society in the coming year.

The Society needs to get involved in the community and get exposure. How do we do that? The obvious is to participate in events that have a wide and diverse audience. However, that takes manpower and time. Just like you, the board is limited in its availability. Are you willing to be an advocate for the Society? It might be as simple as taking information to put on a table at an event or sitting at the table to talk about the Society. Different methods of advertising and social media will also probably be the key. Public relations isn't really our thing. We have the basic knowledge, but we will need help. Not every board encompasses the talent needed to run it successfully. Sometimes we need to rely on others to help us out. Do you have a few hours a month to update and maintain our website or assist with PR? Would you like to be the editor of the newsletter? Do you want to write articles on Prince George's County history that can be published in *Then & Now* or on our website? Do you have several spare hours a week or month to come to the library to work on a project such as scanning photos, cataloging what we have in the library, or organizing files? Sometimes we need legal or financial advice. Do you have that kind of expertise so we can pick your brain or get your opinion? Do you have an idea for an event that you would like to organize and run? Better yet, do you want to be on our board? We are always in the market for someone who has an interest in the Society and would like to volunteer. Please let us know.

One thing weighing us down is the structure of the Society, which is heavy and outdated. I would like to modernize it. Our by-laws will be revamped to accommodate the reality of today's world and to give the board the flexibility needed to carry out the Society's activities. Of course, common sense and reason will be incorporated, but we need to be able to move at the speed of light when we have to and not plod along and wait until we have a quorum at a board meeting. Even though we are a historical society, we have to bring ourselves into the 21st century by using email, on-line surveys, and conference calls to be able to get things done. At the moment our by-laws limit what we can do when the board needs to vote, especially if it entails something of a financial nature. The rewriting of the by-laws is somewhat of any easy fix, but it needs the membership to vote on the restructuring. Some of the changes will probably alter the way the membership is a party to how the Society works. We do not want to minimize the membership's role in the Society. Instead, the membership should be involved in ways that enhance the Society, yet not be a burden to them. We greatly appreciate your input and want you to continue to freely provide it.

I have been honest and I hope I have given you something to think about. I and the Society are open to suggestions as to how we can make your membership experience better. What do groups and organizations that you belong to do to make your membership worthwhile? Tell us about it. Send us a letter, an email to members@pghistory.org, or give us a call. We want to hear from you. Without you, the Society can't prosper and flourish. I want to make the Society an organization to be proud of. We have been around since 1952, and my direction is for the Society to be able to continue in a healthy, functional, and respected way. Please help us in achieving that endeavor in whatever little or big way you can. Thank you.

-Donna Schneider



If you have renewed your membership or sponsorship—THANK YOU!
If you haven't, please consider doing so. The 2018 membership renewal period ends on March 31. If you want to continue to receive this newsletter and be invited to lectures and events, please do not let your membership expire. You can renew by mail (see back cover) or through our website: www.pghistory.org. Please renew today.

Presidential Award Nominations

The Prince George's County Historical Society is soliciting nominees for this year's President's Preservation Award. The award will be presented at the annual preservation month reception to be held in May.

There are many unsung heroes in the area of preservation and we want to honor someone who supports the preservation of our county's history outside the efforts of the Society. Efforts can be, but aren't limited to, the preservation of a historic structure, publications, art projects, outstanding volunteerism or activism, special projects or research.

This award requires input from you! Do you know someone who fits the description? If so, nominate that person. Please note that Society board members are not eligible for this award. The nomination process begins on February 1, 2018, and closes on March 15, 2018.

Please submit the name of your nominee, the nominee's contact information and in no more than 250 words, why your nominee should receive the President's Preservation Award. Don't forget to include your name and contact information too. The nomination can be sent to members@pghistory.org or by mail to PGCHS, PO Box 1513, Upper Marlboro, MD 20773-1513. Thank you!!

Prince George's County Tidbits

The Lake Artemesia Fisheries

Many of our members are familiar with, and regularly read, *John Kelly's Washington* column in the *Washington Post* – several friends have told me that it is the first thing they look for when their *Washington Post* is delivered. I'm happy to say that John Kelly contacts me, and has even visited our library, when he is chasing down a story in Prince George's County. I got one of his friendly e-mails late in November asking about the Lake Artemesia fisheries here at Lakeland – he had written an article about the Dept of Commerce aquarium a week earlier, which had provoked an inquiry about the Lakeland fish ponds.

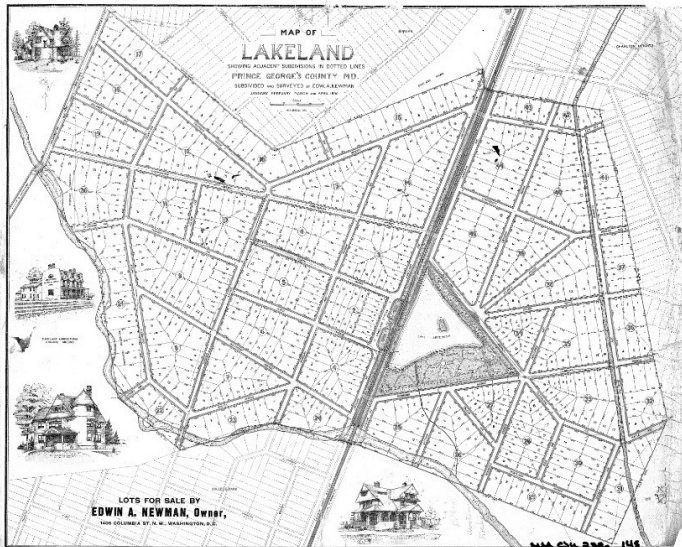
I sent him a bunch of plats, aerial photos, newspaper articles, and other bits and pieces about early Lakeland and the Artemesia ponds, and he was able to find other interesting details about the goldfish breeding at the beginning of the 20th century. We knew that goldfish had been bred and raised in the ponds which now form Lake Artemesia, but John found out quite a bit more about Baltimore pet store entrepreneur, Henry Bishop (a.k.a. "the Goldfish King") and his goldfish breeding project at Lakeland. John published his column on the Lake Artemesia fisheries in the Sunday, 3 December 2017, issue of the *Post*. If you missed it, go to: https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/breeding-ponds-in-college-park-md-once-kept-the-us-awash-in-goldfish/2017/12/01/b4ea8568-d6e4-11e7-a986-d0a9770d9a3e_story.html?utm_term=.001e6a0f6c2b.

It's a fascinating story, but there's a lot more, and I thought that it might be timely, while the subject is fresh in our minds, to give our members a few more details.

In 1890, Edwin A. Newman of Washington, D.C., purchased approximately 80 acres of land, some of which had been the northerly acreage of the Riversdale plantation. This land lay to the east of the Maryland Agricultural College, separated from the college by the Washington-Baltimore Road. It was well watered by the Paint Branch, a tributary of the Eastern Branch of the Potomac. The construction of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad some 50 years earlier had caused this wetland area to form ponds and a small lake in this area. Newman envisioned the development on his new property of a resort community which he named *Lakeland*, with the lake (a triangular body of water of approximately 5 acres, lying directly east of the B & O tracks) as a community amenity. He called this amenity Lake Artemesia, after his wife, Clara Artemesia Newman. He had the area platted and subdivided, laying out streets, installing gas lights, curbs and gutters, and began to sell lots. The community was divided by the line of the Baltimore & Ohio railroad (see plat on page 5).

Construction of houses began, and by 1894 there were approximately 18 houses on the west side of the railroad, and 10 on the east, the western section populated by white families, and the east by black. One of Newman's daughters, Artemesia Newman Drefs, (in a 1972 interview when she was in her 80s) reminisced about those

Continued on page 5



Continued from page 4

days at the end of the 19th century; she said that the five-acre Lake Artemisia was stocked with bass, but that later her father rented the lake to a family that used it for raising goldfish. I found this 1903 lease among the Prince George's County land records, from the Aquarium Fisheries Company of Prince George's County, Inc. (Edwin Newman, president) to Henry Bishop, for 26 ½ acres of land and water - "for the purpose only of a goldfish farm or hatchery . . . all lands, ponds, lakes or bodies of water now existing or hereafter to be constructed in the subdivision of Lakeland, with rights of ingress and egress to and from . . ." Bishop had the right to use "water of the Paint Branch and to conduct it to and from said ponds, lakes and bodies of water." And the owner of the land, Aquarium Fisheries Company, retained the right to collect ice from the ponds.

The lease was to extend for 10 years, from 1 May 1903 to 30 April 1913. Three years later, in June 1906, another document was filed in the PGC land records, this one dealing with Lake (or Pond) #5 which Bishop had constructed on the west side of the tracks, south of the train station in an area which had not been developed with housing. This document permitted Bishop to construct two more lakes adjacent to Lake #5 within the next seven years (i.e., up to the end of the original 1903 lease). Henry Bishop was not able to carry out the larger plans for his fisheries project; he died in 1907, and the obituary from the *New York Times* credits him with having developed "the largest goldfish industry in the country. His breeding lakes at Lakeland cover acres. From them he supplied parks in New York, Detroit, Washington, and other cities with specimens. He also shipped these fish to New York and other places to be used for destroying the larvae of mosquitos."

We haven't discovered just what happened after Henry Bishop died, but we know that within a fairly short time the United States government was operating the fisheries at Lakeland. John Kelly has found a government report from 1915, reporting the success of fish breeding in the Lakeland ponds. And we have several interesting reports from the *Washington Post* (1924) that indicate that the government was still running a productive fishery there at that time. One 1924 article informed fishermen that Uncle Sam was going to keep all streams within 100 miles of Washington well stocked with favorite fish. "On the road to Baltimore, near the Maryland Agricultural College (*sic*), the government has leased a tract of land which will be used for the breeding of fish for use in stocking the streams throughout a large part of the East. Utilizing a pond system that had been used for raising goldfish, the bureau of fisheries has 23 acres . . . under water for breeding purposes. The millions of crappie, bluegill, bream, and large-mouthed black bass . . . will be distributed in the creeks and rivers of Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York." "The bureau stocked the 23 acres of ponds with 105 black bass, 8 crappie, and 12 catfish. Six months later, exactly 34,255 crappie, 2945 catfish, and 37,085 black bass had put in appearance . . ."

In the same year, the *Washington Post* recorded the visit by Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce, to the Lakeland fisheries (The Bureau of Fisheries operated under the Department of Commerce from 1913-1939). "The secretary visited each of the half dozen ponds. He helped draw in seines of small bass . . . part of the supply of 200,000 fish . . . which have been hatched at Lakeland from 250 large-mouthed bass with which the ponds were stocked."

As the 20th century reached its midpoint, Lakeland had become a comfortable black residential suburb, and the lakes and ponds were becoming overgrown, but they had clearly been an exceptional source of fish during the first part of the century. Today visitors may still enjoy fishing at Lake Artemesia, now open to the public as parkland by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The M-NCPPC began buying up property around Lake Artemesia in the 1960s, during the period of Urban Renewal in Lakeland, including also a block of lots donated by Artemesia Newman Drefs in 1972. During the 1976 construction of the Metro rail along the line of the old B&O tracks, sand and gravel for construction was removed from the wetland area in exchange for developing today's Lake Artemesia Natural Area. When we walk the two-mile trail in this attractive park, we may see fishermen enjoying their sport at the enlarged and attractive 38-acre Lake Artemesia, calling to mind the story of the Aquarium Fisheries Company of historic Lakeland.

-Susan G. Pearl

Collaboration

In an effort to work more closely with some of our sister organizations in Prince George's County, we would like Society members to be aware of several that we already partner with.

- ♦ **The Afro-American Historical & Genealogical Society, Inc., Prince George's County, MD Chapter (AAHGS-PGCM)** promotes black history in Prince George's County and encourages the historical and genealogical studies of African Americans currently residing in the county. For more information, visit www.pgcm.aahgs.org.
- ♦ **The City of Bowie Museums'** mission is to preserve, collect, interpret and celebrate for the public's appreciation the history, architecture, city plans, and people of Bowie, Maryland through education and exhibition, archaeology and advocacy of its diverse heritage. To find out more about its historic sites and museums, visit www.cityofbowie.org/106/museums.
- ♦ **Maryland Milestones/Anacostia Trails Heritage Area Inc.** highlights the first and "unique" moments which have occurred (or are occurring) in the Maryland Certified Anacostia Trails Heritage Area. It seeks to preserve and promote the history, culture, natural resources and arts in the Route 1/Northern Prince George's County region. Go to www.anacostiatrials.org to learn more about this heritage area.
- ♦ **The Prince George's County Genealogical Society** collects, preserves, and disseminates genealogical knowledge and information, particularly material that deals with Prince George's County, MD. The Society's library is housed at 12219 Tulip Grove Drive in Bowie. It is open on Wednesdays from 10 AM to 5 PM. To learn more, you can visit their website at www.pgcs.org.

UMD Newspapers Database

On Monday, October 2, the University of Maryland Libraries released phase one of the UMD Student Newspapers database, <https://www.lib.umd.edu/univarchives/student-newspapers>.

The database, which covers issues from 1910 to 1971 from the Diamondback and its predecessor newspapers, provides both keyword and date access to article titles and content. Users can search names and topics across all the issues, as well as focusing in on a particular day, month, or year of publication or publication title. Content can also be isolated in an individual issue and saved as a jpg file, using the clipping tool provided on the website. A more detailed explanation of the database functions appears on the website's About page.

This is truly a transformational project for the University of Maryland Archives, allowing current students, faculty, and staff, UMD alumni, and anyone anywhere in the world who is interested in the history of the University of Maryland ready access to the primary student newspaper whose coverage of

events provides an invaluable perspective on campus, national, and international events, issues, individuals, and organizations.

Much of this work was funded by a Launch UMD campaign in 2015. A second Launch UMD campaign was launched to raise the funds needed to complete the digitization of all remaining issues and to ensure that the hard copy of the paper will continue to be digitized as long as it is published, which concluded on December 13.



Congratulations and Welcome!

The Society held its annual election at our holiday party at Belair Mansion on Sunday, December 10, 2017. We welcomed two new directors, **Amanda Elliott** and **Kathy Bryant** to the board. **Donna Schneider** and **Jack Thompson, Jr.** returned to the board after a hiatus of several years. For a complete list of the officers and directors, please see page 2 of the newsletter.

The board will be engaged on some changes to how the Society works so we can better serve our members. We look forward to hearing from you with suggestions!



Shirley Baltz: An Appreciation



This past autumn, the Historical Society lost one of its longest and most dedicated members, Shirley Baltz. Shirley died on September 29 at age 95. She had been a long-time member of PGCHS, and a frequent lecturer and contributor, but was best known as the official Historian of the City of Bowie. A pioneer in the Belair-at-Bowie community, she lived for more than 35 years in a house from which she could gaze at the mid-18th-century Belair Mansion, and she spent many years researching everything about Belair – its history, its architecture, its families, etc. Her publications, *A Chronicle of Belair*, and *Belair from the Beginning*, are familiar to most of our members. Her two-volume *Marriages and Deaths in Nineteenth Century Newspapers* which she completed with the help of her husband, George, is one of the most consulted sources in our Historical Society library.

I met Shirley soon after we moved to Bowie in the early 1970s. I attended one of her lectures, hoping to learn something about my new community, and the detailed and enthusiastic way that she talked about the history of Belair was quite infectious. I stayed afterward and talked to her for a long time, and was invited to go with

her to the Maryland State Archives in Annapolis, where she instructed me on all the Maryland resources and how to access them. It was the beginning for me of what became a career in historical research. When we started the Bicentennial archaeological project at Belair in 1976, I had a chance to return the favor, and show her something about archaeology – she became the most faithful and enthusiastic of our volunteer excavators. In fact Shirley and I were both hired, from the edge of our Belair trenches, to join the History Division (M-NCPPC) doing all sorts of research and writing about historic places in Prince George's County.

Shirley left Bowie in 1999 and moved to New Jersey where two of her daughters lived. She missed all the activities at Belair but returned often during those first years, and kept up with everything that was going on here. After having worked so closely with her for nearly 25 years, I missed her badly, but we talked regularly and often, and she was always eager to hear what was going on in the historical community here. After her eyesight began to fail (a terrible thing for a person so immersed in reading and research), she insisted on hearing about everything I was working on. I had a wonderful hour-long conversation with her just two weeks before she died, during which she delighted in hearing about some of the unusual inquiries we get at our Historical Society library. She will be long remembered in Prince George's County!

- Susan Pearl

Emily Saunders Plummer, Once Enslaved in Prince George's County, to be Honored by the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame 2018



Photo Courtesy of the
Smithsonian's Anacostia Community Museum

In a ceremony in Annapolis on March 15, Emily Saunders Plummer joins a distinguished group of women that includes Donna Edwards, Harriet Ross Tubman, Virginia Beauchamp, Katie Ledecy, Barbara Mikulsky, Jill Moss Greenberg, and dozens of other important Maryland women. Each year the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame recognizes up to five Maryland women who have made "unique and lasting contributions to the economic, political, cultural, and social life of the state and provide models of achievement for tomorrow's female leaders." They have done so since 1985.

For 2018, I nominated Emily Saunders Plummer, a relatively unknown woman. What follows is an explanation of who she is and how I framed my nomination, but more importantly, why I nominated her.

Sadly, the legacy of slavery remains with us, for despite the removal of legal barriers, we have yet to truly overcome the color line that runs through our nation's schools, churches, and neighborhoods. As we struggle to come to terms with aspects of that legacy, we explore and recover parts of it and honor what we can. We work to right wrongs by renaming buildings and streets, removing statues, and memorializing people like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman. And we try to recover and share the stories of enslaved African Americans.

The poet Nikki Giovanni writes that "whatever human beings are, we are storytellers. It is our stories that give a light to the future." And that is especially true for antebellum enslaved African Americans. Telling their stories offers a way to recognize and honor them, to grant them respect and dignity, and to see them as inspirational role models. The unfortunate part, however, is that we have so few stories to tell. Because literacy empowers people, it was discouraged and even outlawed among slaves. As a result, the stories—both sad and triumphant—of most enslaved women remain untold. But with Emily Saunders Plummer, the situation is different.

Born in Lanham around 1815, Emily was enslaved in Prince George's and Howard Counties, and for several years in Washington, DC. Devoted to family and faith, she demonstrated extraordinary spirit, resilience, and courage. Fortunately, we can access much of Emily's story, but her illiteracy means that we learn it indirectly. We have a diary kept by her husband, Adam Francis Plummer, begun on their wedding day, May 31, 1841 (now at the Smithsonian's Anacostia Community Museum and available at http://anacostia.si.edu/exhibits/Plummer/Plummer_Home.htm). Even more detailed is the 1927 spiritual memoir penned by Emily's youngest daughter Nellie Arnold Plummer, *Out of the Depths or the Triumph of the Cross*.

Plummer family descendants call Nellie's memoir "THE BOOK," and what a treasure it is! Nellie relates stories about her family that allow us to know Emily, Adam, and the eight of their nine children who lived to adulthood. Much of what Nellie relates is family lore, and so it is biased and, yes, sometimes flawed (dates, spelling—not always accurate). But it is the best we have, and we can support much through research in federal documents, state and local archives, and newspapers.

Continued on page 9

On its own, Emily's story is special for its ordinariness—she's a devoted daughter and sister, then a happily married and loving mother, coping with the daily trials and tribulations that make up anyone's life. But it is also special for the extraordinary awfulness that is part of that life because she is a slave who not only suffers herself, but also sees loved ones mistreated, sold away, and separated from one another. Nellie's recounting offers hope that even those "discouraged from a different cause might prove faithful by doing right, and thus overcome."

The institution of slavery victimized everyone associated with it, and in particular ways, women. All Southern women faced gender and class issues, and African American women dealt with the additional and significant issue of race. There is much to be learned by exploring how enslaved women like Emily lived and coped with life, dealt with happiness and sadness, and, most importantly, found power and strength. There is also much to honor as their compelling stories provide inspiration allowing them to serve as role models. For these reasons, Emily Saunders Plummer is an important addition to the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame, not just for the telling of her own story, but as a representative for other Maryland enslaved women. Through her, we can also honor the memory of those women whose stories cannot be known.

-Leigh Ryan

Calendar of Events

Saturday, March 10, 1 PM at Marietta House Museum , Glenn Dale Historic African American Architects

Please join us for the first in our lecture series on the works of African American Architects. Author and lecturer Dreck Wilson will discuss Robert Robinson Taylor (1868-1942). Mr. Taylor was the architect of many buildings on the campus of Tuskegee Institute, including Science Hall (Thrasher Hall), completed in 1893. Light refreshments will be served during a meet and greet with Mr. Wilson following the program. \$5/person

Sunday, March 11, 3 PM at Belair Mansion, Bowie Unearthing the History of Prince George's County by Kristin Montaperto, Chief Archaeologist, M-NCPPC

Prince George's County has a rich history that is further understood through its archaeological discoveries. Join Department of Parks and Recreation archaeologist Dr. Kristin Montaperto to discuss what has been unearthed in the county, and how local communities and descendants have assisted archaeologists in bringing history to life. Discover how you can help too!

Wednesday, March 28, 7:30pm. at the Hyattsville Branch Library "Prince George's County Historic Waterways" by Archaeologist, Stephanie Sperling.

Archaeologists have discovered sites in the Chesapeake Bay watershed that span at least 12,000 years of human history. From Native American camps, to colonial plantations, to fishing wharves, to beach resorts, these sites tell the story of the myriad ways people interact with the water. The effects of climate change threaten to erase much of that history through erosion, sea level rise, and storm surge. Learn what archaeologists in the region are doing about this and how you can help. Stephanie Sperling is an archaeologist with nearly 20 years experience in the Middle Atlantic. She is a recognized expert in the region excavating and advocating for coastal sites, and now works with the Natural and Historical Resources Division of Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation.

Fill-a-Shelf Appeal

The Frederick S. DeMarr Library is endeavoring to complete its collection of the *National Intelligencer* and Prince George's County land records in 2018. Our Fill-a-Shelf goal for this year is \$1,000. Gifts are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please send your donation to PGCHS – Fill-a-Shelf, PO Box 1513, Upper Marlboro, MD 20773-1513. Thank you!



County Heritage Fund Recipients

Through the cooperative efforts of Preservation Maryland and the Maryland Historical Trust, a Heritage Fund has been established to provide direct assistance for the protection of historical and cultural resources and promote innovative projects that can be successfully replicated to meet Maryland's historic preservation needs. Congratulations to the two county organizations that received assistance!

Planning in Piscataway Park: Connecting People and Landscapes

Organization: Accokeek Foundation

Piscataway Park, across the Potomac from George Washington's Mount Vernon, seeks to tell the story of the relationship between the humans and the natural world. It has been 50 years since the dedication of Piscataway Park, giving the organization a perfect opportunity to develop a comprehensive long-term interpretive plan. The process will include both internal and public dialogs resulting in a guide for the Accokeek Foundation's further work at Piscataway Park. The Accokeek Foundation received \$5,000 for the \$20,000 project. The Foundation is seeking additional funds from state and national agencies as well as private foundations.

Historic Greenbelt & Maryland Documentaries: Telling our Stories: 80 Years in 80 Seconds

Organization: Old Greenbelt Theatre

The Old Greenbelt Theatre, a single-screen movie theater, has been entertaining the area since its construction in 1937. The non-profit Friends of Greenbelt Theatre has been operating the theater since 2015. As the City of Greenbelt and the theater itself approach their 80th anniversaries, the Friends of Greenbelt Theatre will produce a series of short documentaries that will highlight Greenbelt, regional, and statewide history and promote awareness of preservation and share personal histories of area residents. The Friends of Greenbelt Theatre will receive \$5,000 towards their total project budget of \$7,000, using funds from their organization to cover the rest of the costs.

County Preservation Tax Credit Update



Councilmember Deni Taveras introduced CB-48-2017 to extend the County's Preservation Tax Credit amortization period from 5 to 10 years. The bill became effective on December 20, 2017. Together with the potential 25% tax credit, these County incentives are helpful financial tools for owners of the designated historic properties in the county.

Publications

- ___ **Prince George's County: A Pictorial History*** – The history and essence of Prince George's County come alive in words and pictures in this beautiful collector's edition, with more than 350 photographs, maps, and illustrations. Author: Alan Virta. 1998 - Revised and updated edition. Hardcover, 308 pages. **\$42.95**
- ___ **Historic Prince George's County: A Confluence of Cultures*** – A cultural history of Prince George's County, with many photographs from private collections. Authors George D. Denny, Jr., Nathania A. Branch Miles, Donna L. Schneider. Printed 2011. Hardcover, 192 pages. **\$39.95**
- ___ **Calvert of Maryland** – This fact-based novel shows the home life of the colonists from a child's viewpoint. This story is told in the first person by young George Calvert, godson of the first Lord Baltimore, George Calvert. Reprint of James Otis Kaler's 1910 publication. Hardcover, 166 pages. Pen and ink illustrations. **\$5.00**
- ___ **Atlas of Fifteen Miles around Washington including the County of Prince George Maryland** – Compiled, drawn and published from actual surveys by G. M. Hopkins 1878 including "historical" sketches. Indexed. Reprint 1979. Soft cover, 32 pages. **\$10.00**
- ___ **Atlas of Prince George's County, Maryland 1861** – Atlas was adapted from Martenet's Map of Prince George's County, Maryland, with information from 1860 federal census for each election district. Indexed. Reprint 1996. Soft cover, 32 pages. **\$10.00**
- ___ **Prince George's County, Maryland, Indexes of Church Registers 1686-1885** – Volume 1 - Protestant Episcopal Church, King George's Parish, and Queen Anne's Parish. Author: Helen W. Brown. Reprint 2000. Soft cover, 200 pages. **\$20.00**
- ___ **Prince George's County, Maryland, Indexes of Church Registers 1686-1885** – Volume 2 - Protestant Episcopal Church, St. Paul's Parish, and Prince George's Parish. Author: Helen W. Brown. Reprint 2000. Soft cover, 196 pages. **\$20.00**
- ___ **Out of the Past – Prince Georgians and Their Land** – Chronicle of everyday life in Prince George's County, Maryland, from the time of its founding in 1696 until the beginning of the Civil War. (Information for this book was gleaned from public records, newspapers, and private papers.) Author: R. Lee Van Horn. Reprint 1996. Hardcover, 422 pages. **\$15.00**
- ___ **Tricentennial Cook Book** – Contains recipes collected from Prince George's County residents as part of the tricentennial celebration. Compiled and edited by Dorothy Rainwater and the Tricentennial Celebration Committee. Printed 1996. Soft cover, spiral bound, 150 pages. **\$5.00**
- ___ **Prince George's County Maryland** - A pictorial history of the county, an Arcadia Images of America book by Katharine D. Bryant and Donna L. Schneider. Soft cover, 128 pages. **\$18.99**

Shipping and handling is \$4.00 per order. If ordering more than one copy of books with an asterisk (*) add \$3.00 for each additional book.

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THEN & NOW

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME XLVII NO. 2

April—June 2018

Historic Preservation Month Reception



Circa 1992. Courtesy of M-NCPPC

Thursday, May 24, 2018

6:30-8:30 PM

Publick Playhouse

5445 Landover Road

Cheverly, MD 20784

The Publick Playhouse opened in 1947 and is one of two surviving Art Deco theatres in Prince George's County. It is known as one of the best performing arts venues in the area and has great acoustics. It is a popular venue for music, dance, theater, historical drama, educational programs, and events for seniors.

This year the theater will play host to the county's annual Historic Preservation Month reception. Professor William G. Thomas III will be our guest speaker. He will present a film about Ann Williams from Bladensburg, MD, and her fight for freedom. This film evolved out of research Professor Williams has done on the Prince George's County freedom suits and slavery in the early republic. In addition to the film, several history and preservation awards will be presented.

Invitations will be sent later this month. The reception is free; however, please RSVP as requested on the invitation.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Phone: 301-220-0330

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Newsletter Editors:	Susan G. Pearl
	Donna Schneider
	John Peter Thompson

Newsletter Contributors: Christine Garcia, La Verne Gray, Stacey Hawkins, Maryland Historical Trust, M-NCPPC, Susan Pearl, Preservation Maryland, Leigh Ryan, Donna Schneider,

Webmaster: Vacant

THEN & NOW is published quarterly. You are invited to submit a relevant article for print (subject to space limitations).

All Society members are invited and welcome to attend the monthly Board meetings. Please check our website for dates, times and location.

If you would like to volunteer your time and talents to the Historical Society in any capacity, please call us. All ages are definitely welcome!

FREDERICK S. DEMARR LIBRARY OF COUNTY HISTORY

Greenbelt Library Building, Lower Level

11 Crescent Road, Greenbelt

301-220-0330

Hours: Saturday, 12-4 PM

By Appointment at Other Times



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The Society would like to thank our generous sponsors for their support. Their donations help to fund various Society programs, its newsletter, website, and the Frederick S. DeMarr Library. Thank You!

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NEW MEMBERS

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Rev. Joseph Doyle
Svend Schmidt

President's Corner

I want to thank everyone who read my letter in the last issue and provided support, encouragement, and comment. It is difficult to make changes, but it seems as if I wasn't the only one who thought it was needed.

Our first item of business is fundraising. The first fundraising opportunity we announced was in the last issue of *Then & Now*—the **Fill-a-Shelf** appeal for the DeMarr Library (see to the right). The next one we have established is the **Founders Legacy Society**. This is the Society's planned giving campaign. Please visit our website, www.pghistory.org and click on the Contribute tab or contact us at info@pghistory.org to learn more. We have several other ways we plan to fundraise that we will be rolling out during the rest of the year, so stay tuned.

Save the Date!! We will be offering a bus tour on October 13, 2018, where we will explore the county's history along the Patuxent River. More details will be in the next issue of *Then & Now*.

There are plans for some different activities and with new partners in 2019. We hope you will be as excited and interested in them as we are.

One change you may note are the new names of our sponsorship categories. We wanted to commemorate a piece of our history. We are the historical society after all. The titles reflect the four locations that have been home to the Society since our inception in 1952.

We have updated our mission statement:

To collect, record, organize, restore, and preserve historical information, artifacts, ephemera, and all associated materials relevant and related to Prince George's County in order to foster an understanding and appreciation of the County's history, heritage, and culture.

I plan to write this column for every newsletter because it is important for our membership and sponsors to know what is going on behind the scenes, as much as to see our public face through lectures and events.

As always, feedback is very important to us. Please email or write to us about any ideas or thoughts you have about our events, projects, or anything we have or have not done and that we should be doing. Thank you!

Donna

Society Membership

Have you renewed your membership yet? The deadline for calendar year 2018 member and sponsorships was March 31, 2018. If you have not renewed yet, this will be your last newsletter.

Renewals can be made through our website at www.pghistory.org or by completing and returning the back page of this newsletter.

Please renew today! For those that have already renewed—thank you!!

Fill-a-Shelf Appeal

The Frederick S. DeMarr Library is endeavoring to complete its collection of the *National Intelligencer* and Prince George's County land records in 2018. Our Fill-a-Shelf goal for this year is \$1,000. Gifts are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please send your donation to PGCHS – Fill-a-Shelf, PO Box 1513, Upper Marlboro, MD 20773-1513. Thank you!



Yearbooks Wanted

If you are doing spring cleaning and looking for a new home for yearbooks from county schools, colleges, or universities, please give them to the DeMarr Library. We are acquiring quite a collection of yearbooks with the goal of digitizing them. We are also accepting old telephone books too. Contact the library at 301-220-0330 or info@pghistory.org to find out how to donate.

A Special Day with Mildred Ridgley Gray

When Prince George's County Historical Society scheduled its annual Prince of a County Reception and Fund-raiser for 2017 on September 24, the Board of Directors didn't know. When Director Nathania Branch-Miles suggested the Goodloe House at Bowie State University, she didn't know. But what all came together on that day provides an opportunity to celebrate an icon of our county.

Mildred Ridgley (later Gray) was born on September 24, 1920. She was the thirteenth child born to Arthur and Mary Ridgley. She began her public school education at the Ridgeley Rosenwald School in Prince George's County when it first opened in 1927. At that time the school was known as "Colored School # 1 in Election District 13."

Rosenwald Schools

In 1912, Booker T. Washington approached philanthropist Julius Rosenwald with a concept for building the rural schools so desperately needed for African American children across the segregated South. The partnership between Washington and Rosenwald would eventually create more than 5300 schools, vocational shops, and teacher's homes across 15 states in the South and Southwest from 1912-1932. (National Trust for Historic Preservation)

The Rosenwald Fund was an important product of the Washington-Rosenwald partnership. In 1917, Julius Rosenwald and his family established the Fund for "the well-being of mankind." By 1948, it had donated over \$70 million to public schools, colleges and universities, museums, Jewish charities, and African American individuals and institutions.

As one of its most powerful legacies, the Rosenwald Fund provided seed money for African American communities to help build schools. An African American community's contribution might include a combination of labor, land, materials, or additional cash. Local governments and the Fund provided the remaining 2/3 cash. Working together, the communities and the Fund built critically needed schools, shops, and teachers' homes for African Americans throughout the segregated South and Southwest.

The Ridgeley Rosenwald School

The Ridgley family and community were known as strong supporters of education for their children. In 1875 Lewis Ridgley, Mildred's grandfather, was pastor of the Ridgley Methodist Episcopal Church. There, in the church, he opened a school for the education of the children from that community called the Ridgley Church

School. Lewis Ridgley and later his son, Arthur Ridgley (Mildred's father), served as Trustees for the Church School. Arthur's wife (and Mildred's mother), Mary Eliza Dyson Ridgley, was a teacher in the church school.

Mary Eliza Dyson Ridgley provided two acres of her land for the construction of a school as part of the Ridgley community's partnership with the Rosenwald Fund. The school that resulted from that forward-thinking gift opened in 1927 and was named after that community. (The spelling "Ridgeley" is based on the spelling of Mary Ridgley's name as written in the deed that transferred the land to the Prince George's County Board of Education.) After graduating from Ridgeley School in 1933, Mildred attended Highland Park High School, another Rosenwald School, from which she graduated in 1937.

Mildred Ridgley Gray's Professional Life

Encouraged to be an educator, Mildred Ridgley Gray attended the State Teachers College at Bowie, now Bowie State University, a member institution of the University System of Maryland. In 1940 Mildred received a certificate for the 3-year program of special instruction, Advanced First Grade Teachers. When the State Teachers College at Bowie instituted a 4-year program for teacher education, she returned to Bowie and was awarded a Bachelor of Science in Education degree in 1946.

Miss Mildred Ridgley married William S. Gray, also a graduate of Bowie State Teachers College, in 1943. Both graduates went on to have impressive careers as educators. They raised one daughter, La Verne Gray.

Mrs. Gray began her career as a teacher at the one-room Sharpersville Elementary School, located in southern Prince George's County, Maryland. In the 1950's she became devoted to teaching and guiding the education of those we now know as "special needs" children. As a pioneer in the field of Special Education, Mrs. Gray worked as the principal of Ridgeley School and later, as principal of the Princess Gardens Special Education Center.

Mrs. Gray helped with the architectural design of the Princess Gardens Center to ensure that it accommodated children with special needs, helped develop a curriculum for the school, and served as an inspirational leader. In 1984, the Princess Garden-Margaret Brent Society recognized Mrs. Gray for her untiring efforts throughout the years. In 2010, the Council for Exceptional Children Prince George's County Chapter 263 honored her with a

Continued on page 6

From the Library

Lots of interesting people come into our library, often with interesting and unexpected questions, but our visitor on a Saturday this past fall, walked in with a new and different question: “Am I in Greenbelt?”

This man was from Boston, driving to Washington, D.C.; when he saw the sign directing him to Greenbelt, he followed it – he said that he stopped here because he had driven through Greenbelt about 40 years ago, remembered a few interesting things about it, and wanted another look. We couldn’t resist, of course, and told him several things that he could look for in a short visit, and sent him off with directions. He came back after an hour or so, delighted with his visit to the Art Deco school (now Community Center) and the 1930s Roosevelt Center where he had found afternoon sustenance. Before continuing on his journey, he sat down for a while to look through several publications on Greenbelt history, and we hope that he stops in again!



*Greenbelt Community Center
Courtesy of www.greenbeltonline.com*

We had a call from the Sojourner Truth Room at the Oxon Hill Library, wanting to learn more about what we have in African American history in the County, communities, schools, churches, etc. I invited them to visit, which they did later in the fall – three of their librarians came and spent some time looking at our collections, taking careful notes on the items that they do not have, and planned to acquire then. They expressed an interest in partnering with us on some lectures, and they are especially anxious to sponsor a lecture by Omar Price after his dissertation on Freedmen’s Bureau Schools is complete (see “THEN & NOW, Vol. XLVI, No. 3, July-September 2017). I assured them that we would like to do this.

On a gorgeous day at the end of October I accompanied M-NCPPC naturalist Chris Garrett on his Champion Tree Tour! Three vans full of old-tree lovers visited County and State Champion trees at Dr. Beanes’ cemetery, Kingston, His Lordship’s Kindness (Poplar Hill), Mount Calvert and several places in the Nottingham area.. My job was to relate historical facts and stories about the places that we went – it was good fun! By far the most gorgeous were the immense Cucumber Magnolia at Kingston, and the glorious American Magnolia at Nottingham.

I continue helping researchers from the Georgetown Memory Project, trying to trace the families of enslaved individuals who were sold by Georgetown University in 1838, especially those from Whitmarsh in Prince George’s County. We now have established a connection with several families who were the first to settle the town of North Brentwood in the 1890s – VERY exciting!

We’ve been contacted by a member of the Hoban family from Ireland, doing research on James Hoban (architect of the White House) and looking for possible connections in Prince George’s County. I’ve sent the researcher information about Hoban’s work at Compton Bassett, and things are getting very interesting!!!

We also had a visitor searching for information about her family members who were part of the labor force at the Bowieville for many generations.. We’re hopeful that, through various connections in Bowieville research, we can trace the family back to the period before emancipation – always difficult but quite exciting!

One of our visitors, who now lives in California, but graduated from Fairmont Heights High School here in 1970, came to our library nearly two years ago to do research for his thesis on the desegregation of schools in Prince George’s County. This month I received his completed thesis, and it will soon be accessioned on our shelves. Since we have many visitors in search of just this subject, I am sure that it will see a great deal of use, and we are delighted to have it!

A reporter from WAMU/NPR called with questions about colonial Bladensburg. He’s doing a feature on the Anacostia, and wanted to include information about the 18th-century town. I’ve given him some descriptions that I hope will conjure up visions on the radio.

In February I worked with a reporter for the *Washington Times* for her feature on Thomas Boyne, a Buffalo Soldier from Prince George’s County. She wrote a very nice piece which appeared in the February 28 issue; you can find it at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/27/thomas-boyne-buffalo-soldier-has-medal-of-honor-my/>

And of course, as it bounces back and forth from court to court, the issue of the Peace Cross draws a lot of visitors to our library. There will soon be a documentary film released about the history of the monument and the current controversy – we will let you know when it is released.

And speaking of films, we now have a copy of the excellent documentary “Rosenwald” which was released in 2015. The Bowie Library is interested in partnering with us, probably in September, for a screening and discussion of local Rosenwald schools at the library. We will soon let you know the exact date.

And finally, most recently I spent an afternoon at the library with a man who had come from Kansas to work on his family genealogy. I showed him everything that was even remotely connected with his family, and he happily photographed everything, even though much of it was only tangentially related. When he left, saying that he might come back, I told him that though we’d be happy to have him return, I was pretty sure that we had nothing more to show him. I loved his response! – he said that he’d been to the Library of Congress, the Maryland State Archives, the Maryland Historical Society library, and the libraries of several other Historical Societies, but he was pleased with everything he saw in our library, and had felt more comfortable here than in any of the others. We welcome him back any time!

-Susan G. Pearl

Continued from page 4

lifetime achievement award for her dedicated service to improving the quality of life for children with disabilities.

Her Later Career

Upon retirement as a teacher, Mrs. Gray went forward to advance education through the Mitchellville Kiwanis Organization. In addition, she continues to serve on the Foundation of Bowie State University.

Today Mrs. Gray's goal is to educate everyone about the rural community known as Ridgley that was founded by former African American slaves who had lived on various plantations in that area of Prince George's County. She has virtually taken on a second career as a historic preservationist of African American History. When, in January 1981, the County held its public hearing to determine whether it should embark on an historic preservation program, Mrs. Gray was there, and presented powerful testimony supporting the recognition and preservation of her century-old Ridgley community. Many of those who heard her were inspired to follow her example and the Historic Preservation Ordinance was enacted in 1981.

The Ridgley Methodist Episcopal Church was one of the first group of sites recognized by the County to be of historic significance. You may visit the church at 8900 Central Avenue in Landover; it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2005.

In 2001, Mrs. Gray founded the Mildred Ridgley Gray Charitable Trust, Inc. to draw attention to the church, school, and farm that were the primary elements of the community known as Ridgley. The Trust, in partnership with 9 other organizations, earned one of the two Maryland Preservation Partnership Awards in 2012. The award was for the restoration of the Ridgley Rosenwald School, completed in 2011.

The Ridgley School rehabilitation project has been a textbook case in restoring, preserving, and repurposing a historic structure. The school now serves as a museum and community meeting space. The museum ex-

hibits include a story of the Ridgley community. In 2015, the building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The restored school, located at 8507 Central Avenue in Landover, is open to the public and is available for community events. For information about visiting the school, contact [history.pg parks.com/sites_and_museums/Ridgeley Rosenwald School.htm](http://history.pg parks.com/sites_and_museums/Ridgeley_Rosenwald_School.htm).

On that September afternoon at Bowie State University's Goodloe House, there were so many memories and achievements to reflect upon. There was no official announcement of Mrs. Gray's 97th birthday at the Prince of a County event, but she was visiting her alma mater during preparations for Homecoming. As the event wrapped up, she agreed to sit for a photo with Miss and Mister Bowie State University of 2017-2018. In the photo below Mrs. Mildred Ridgely Gray is seated in the front. In the back, right to left, are Chynna Johnson, La Verne Gray, and Kyle Jones.

-Christine Garcia and La Verne Gray



Photo Credit: Erica Johnson

Airmail Centennial Celebration

Did you know that the U.S. postal airmail service started at the College Park Airfield? The regular U.S. postal air mail flights were inaugurated on August 12, 1918. There is a weekend of events planned for August 10-12, 2018, with more celebrations to occur throughout the following year. More details to come in our next issue.

To learn more about the airmail service from College Park, visit <http://www.collegeparkaviationmuseum.com/1598/Airmail>.



Emily Saunders Plummer: Her Life in Slavery and Freedom

Recent recognition of Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass has focused on honoring the legacy of slavery by connecting past to present. Whether that past was the stories of the enslaved or the dirt and bricks of an archeological dig, historians, archeologists, politicians, and others have noted the importance of touching the past, of honoring those who were enslaved, and of finding life and healing in their activities and words. Inducting Emily Saunders Plummer into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame 2018 as a Prince George's County enslaved woman—and a representative of all enslaved Maryland women—honors their legacy. Her story is one of faith, courage, and love.

In the early nineteenth century, Sarah Ogle Hilleary (Miss Sallie) owned part of her family's Three Sisters Plantation on land east of what is now Flowers High School. Emily Saunders was born here in 1815. She never knew her father, for he was sold shortly after her birth and never heard from again. She grew up with her mother, brother, and the many siblings (23) her mother had when she remarried. Emily helped raise her siblings and worked for Miss Sallie, eventually learning to be a cook.

In 1839, Emily's Aunt Lucy visited her husband, coachman Will Scott, at Riversdale, owned by Charles Benedict Calvert. Falling ill, she remained to recuperate and her sister and niece called on her. On this visit, Emily met Adam Francis Plummer, who was also enslaved and had come to Riversdale in 1829 from Mount Albion, a Calvert tobacco plantation in Upper Marlboro. A romance began and two years later they married, then both returned to their own plantation homes.

Though limited to weekend visits, Adam and Emily enjoyed a close and loving relationship. He brought her household goods, fixed up her cabin, and they began their family. Both had kindly owners, but they longed for freedom. In 1845 they plotted a risky escape with their two young children, Miranda and Henry, to a free state or Canada, but a relative disclosed the plan to Miss Sallie. As punishment, she demoted Emily from house slave to field slave and eventually made plans to sell her at auction. When Emily became ill, her sister Henrietta was sold in her stead to the Duvall family at Marietta.

With Miss Sallie's death in 1851 came another sale at auction. By this time Adam and Emily had five children and they arranged that she and all the children be sold together. But Fielder Magruder, Jr., owner of Cheverly's Mount Hope Plantation and reputed to be a harsh master, expressed interest in purchasing daughter Julia. Feisty and courageous, Emily protested loudly. In retaliation,

two of her children—Miranda and Elias—were removed from the sale and kept at Three Sisters. Later Miranda would be sold south to New Orleans.

Emily and three children (Henry, Julia, and Saunders) moved to Meridian Hill in Washington, DC with new owners, Colonel Gilbert Livingston Thompson and his wife Mary Ann. Thompson proved to be a cruel master, especially to the children. He kicked and swore at them, and Emily "defended her little children from his fierce and brutal attacks, by telling them to flee. 'Run, run,' she would shout, 'Don't let him kill you!'" (N. Plummer 41).

Upon the death of Mary Ann Thompson's father, Thomas Beale Dorsey, former Chief Judge of the Maryland Court of Appeals, she inherited his Ellicott Mills homestead in 1855 and the Thompsons moved to Howard County. Now Adam could visit just twice a year.

In 1862, President Lincoln emancipated slaves in Washington, DC. Almost immediately, Henry escaped and made his way to an aunt's home in the Federal City, then joined the US Navy. Henry's escape caused Emily much distress and the following year, she escaped with her five remaining children—Julia, Saunders, Margaret, Nellie, and Robert. Captured in Baltimore, she charmed the jailor's family with her cooking. When the cash-poor Colonel Thompson lacked the money to cover the family's jail expenses and therefore could not reclaim them, Adam was allowed to bring his family to Riversdale. Within weeks, Emily and the older children found paying jobs—their first ever—in the Hyattsville area.

War's end saw the family together at last. Daughter Miranda returned from Louisiana to found St. Paul's Baptist Church (which still exists in Capitol Heights), and later a mission in nearby Hillandale in Montgomery County. The Plummer family got on about life—working, marrying, having children, attending school. Adam purchased ten acres of land for a family homestead and named it Mount Rose. When the first county school for African American children opened in Bladensburg in spring 1866, Henry and Elias Plummer were among the trustees. The family actively supported St. Paul's Church in Bladensburg; family members were in the choir and vestry and Henry became pastor. When a community member needed help with paying for a funeral at Gasch's Funeral Home in Hyattsville, Henry established the Bladensburg Burying Association to cover members' costs related to illness and death.

Henry attended Wayland Seminary in Washington, DC, and Emily watched him preach his first sermon in Bladensburg on January 2, 1876. She exclaimed, "Son,

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

you have preached my funeral sermon! God has given me all for which I have asked him! My cup runneth over! To think that my son has been elevated to the pulpit, and I have sat under his voice today!" (N. Plummer 121). Two weeks later, Emily died of pneumonia.

Emily's legacy is one of a strong woman, grounded by and devoted to her family and her faith. Through Adam Plummer's diary and Nellie Arnold Plummer's memoir, *Out of the Depths or The Triumph of the Cross*, we have Emily's voice in the inspiring tales that reveal her cour-

age, optimism, intelligence, and resourcefulness. Telling Emily's story helps to fulfill Nellie's wish to influence ". . . young people to show the gratitude due those who went before them" and inspire others who "discouraged from a different cause, might prove faithful by doing right, and thus overcome" (N. Plummer 3).

-Leigh Ryan

Plummer, Nellie Arnold. Out of the Depths or the Triumph of the Cross. New York, NY: G.K. Hall & Co., 1997. Introduction by Joanne M. Braxton. (originally self published, Hyattsville, MD, 1927)

Prince George's County Tidbits

Did You Know That....

Over the next several issues, the Prince George's County Tidbits will explore the history of some of the cities and towns within the county. Some of the items may be known and others might be a surprise. We are going to start with the county seat, Upper Marlboro.

The Town of Marlborough was named for John Churchill, the 1st Duke of Marlborough. It was renamed Upper Marlborough in 1744. It was later changed to Upper Marlboro when a postal clerk thought the "ugh" did not properly fit on rubber stamps being used at the time.

Mail first started coming to Upper Marlborough in 1757, together with the *Maryland Gazette* that was sent out by Jonas Green, editor of the *Gazette* and postmaster of Annapolis - once a week April to December, and once a fortnight January through March. In 1775 the Second Continental Congress authorized a Continental Post under Benjamin Franklin as Postmaster General. Bladensburg became the first official post office in Prince George's County, and Upper Marlborough became the second within a year. In that year, 1776, merchant Stephen West became the first postmaster of Upper Marlborough, followed by Samuel Hamilton after West's death in 1792.

In 1706 an act of the Province of Maryland named Marlborough as one of the ports in the county.

Marlborough became the county seat in 1721. Previously the county seat was at Charles Town, today known as Mt. Calvert.

Upper Marlborough had one of the earliest theatres in the Colonies. In September 1752 the "Beggars Opera" was performed here.

George Washington slept here! He lodged in Marlborough on August 31, 1774, on his way to the First Continental Congress. His first visit to the town was as a colonel of the Virginia militia in 1756 and his last as President of the United States in 1793.

In 1854 there was a meeting to protest the Act of the Legislature to remove the 'Seat of Justice' from Upper Marlborough to Long Old Fields (Forestville).

In 1865, Union United (Memorial) Methodist Church was organized in Upper Marlboro. "The church served as a school for black people in the community, and thus has the distinction of being one of the first public schools for the education of Negroes."

Reverdy Johnson, an Upper Marlboro lawyer, defended Mary Surratt in her trial before a military tribunal in Washington, DC, for her alleged conspiracy in the assassination of President Lincoln in 1865.

The Maryland Assembly approved an Act "to incorporate the Town of Upper Marlborough in Prince George's County" on April 4, 1870.

On October 18, 1965, a 250 years old house on Water Street called the High Sheriff's House (also known as the Sarah Buck House) was torn down.

Upper Marlboro's tobacco auction houses were where most of Southern Maryland's tobacco was sold until the early 2000's.

Source: "Souvenir Book Upper Marlboro 250th Anniversary County Seat 1721-1971" written by James Shreve.

Calendar of Events

Saturday, April 14, 11 AM at Marietta House Museum , Glenn Dale
Historic African American Architects

Historian, **Susan Pearl** will discuss architect, **W. Sidney Pittman** (1875-1958), who lived in Fairmount Heights, Prince George's County. Son-in-law of Booker T. Washington, Pittman was best known for his design of the Negro Building at the 1907 Jamestown Ter-centennial, and the 12th Street YMCA in the District of Columbia. Light refreshments will be served during a meet and greet with Ms. Pearl following the program. \$5/person

Monday, April 30, 7:30pm at the Laurel Branch Library , Laurel
***"Pirates & Privateers on the Chesapeake Bay"* with Richard Brown**

Learn about the activity of early pirates and privateers on the historic waterways of the Chesapeake Bay. **Richard Brown** is an historian with the Bladensburg Waterfront Park.

Thursday, May 24, 6:30 PM at the Public Playhouse, Cheverly
Historic Preservation Month Reception

Saturday, May 19, 12-4 PM at the Frederick S. DeMarr Library, Greenbelt
10th Anniversary Celebration

The Frederick S. DeMarr Library of County History is celebrating its 10th anniversary at its Greenbelt location. Stop by the library to help us celebrate!

Saturday, June 2, 1 PM at Marietta House Museum, Glenn Dale
Historic African American Architects

Author and lecturer **Dreck Wilson** will discuss architect **Paul Williams** (1894-1980), the architect of many celebrity homes, including Frank Sinatra, Lucille Ball and Barbara Stanwyck, as well as Saks Fifth Avenue in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles Superior Court, and Beverly Sunset Medical Center in Los Angeles. Light refreshments will be served during a meet and greet with Mr. Wilson following the program. \$5/person

Wednesday, June 6, 7 PM at Oxon Hill Library, Oxon Hill
Film and Discussion

Professor **William Thomas III** will screen a brief film about Ann Williams, a Bladensburg, Maryland, woman who fought for her freedom by leaping from the third floor window of a tavern after she was sold and separated from her family. After the screening, Professor Williams will lead a discussion about freedom suits and slavery in the early republic.

Wednesday June 13, 7 PM at Belair Mansion, Bowie
Lecture and Book Signing

Aaron Marcavitch will give a lecture and have a book signing for his new book, *Images of America: US Route 1, Baltimore to Washington, DC*. Books will be available for purchase.

Saturday, June 16, 8:30 AM—4 PM at Watkins Regional Park, Upper Marlboro
Juneteenth

The Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc., Prince George's County Maryland Chapter, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Society will jointly sponsor its Annual Juneteenth Seminar, "Footprints and Roots." The seminar will consist of a series of workshops and activities for children. It will be held in conjunction with the Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation family fun day. The workshops and family fun day are free.

2018 Maryland Preservation Awards

On February 1, 2018, at the 43rd Maryland Preservation Awards, the Maryland Historical Trust Board of Trustees recognized ten outstanding efforts in historic preservation, including education, restoration and revitalization projects, as well as organizational and individual leadership. Prince George's County won an award:

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission for Oxon Hill Manor (Prince George's County). Overlooking the Potomac River and National Harbor, Oxon Hill Manor stands out in the modern landscape. Under the stewardship of the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the neo-Georgian brick mansion retains its original 1929 structure and hosts nearly 300 private and public events throughout the year. (*Outstanding Stewardship of an Easement Property*)

For information about the other award recipients, visit https://mht.maryland.gov/awards_2018.shtml.

Heritage Fund Grant Recipient

In 2016, St. Thomas's Episcopal Church was awarded a Heritage Fund grant of \$5,000 to offset the cost of installing a tin shingle roof on the Chapel of the Incarnation, a reproduction of the original roof. The project helps to protect this Mission-style architecture in Maryland and is located on a prominent corner in Brandywine. The Chapel was built in 1916 by designer William J. Palmer for the Episcopal Diocese of Washington.

The project was completed in 2017 with a grant from the Heritage Fund and the support of private donations and the Church's maintenance fund. Steel shingles provided by Berridge Manufacturing were laid in a pattern matching the original and were installed by Bryan Blundell of the Dell Corporation. The old asphalt shingles were removed, rotten sheathing replaced, and the new shingles installed and touched up. The work focused on the narthex of the Chapel and will provide a model for the restoration of the remainder of the church's roof.



Courtesy of M-NCPPC

The Heritage Fund, a cooperative effort of Preservation Maryland and the Maryland Historical Trust, provides direct assistance for the protection of historical and cultural resources and promotes innovative demonstration projects that can be successfully replicated to meet Maryland's historic preservation needs. The Fund is intended to serve the needs of tangible cultural resources in Maryland. Historic sites, buildings, districts, objects, and archaeological resources are all eligible for funding. To learn more, visit <http://www.preservationmaryland.org/programs/heritage-fund-grants/>.

African-American Roadside Markers Tour

The Maryland Historical Trust has designed a guided tour of Maryland's African-American Historical Markers. These roadside markers highlight subjects important in Maryland's African-American history. Topics include people, communities, and education. Prince George's County has several: Bowie State University, the communities of Lincoln, Chapel Hill and Ridgley, Hall Station, St. Simon's Episcopal Mission, and the Woodville School. Visit mht.maryland.gov for more information.

Publications

- ___ **Prince George's County: A Pictorial History*** – The history and essence of Prince George's County come alive in words and pictures in this beautiful collector's edition, with more than 350 photographs, maps, and illustrations. Author: Alan Virta. 1998 - Revised and updated edition. Hardcover, 308 pages. **\$42.95**
- ___ **Historic Prince George's County: A Confluence of Cultures*** – A cultural history of Prince George's County, with many photographs from private collections. Authors George D. Denny, Jr., Nathania A. Branch Miles, Donna L. Schneider. Printed 2011. Hardcover, 192 pages. **\$39.95**
- ___ **Calvert of Maryland** – This fact-based novel shows the home life of the colonists from a child's viewpoint. This story is told in the first person by young George Calvert, godson of the first Lord Baltimore, George Calvert. Reprint of James Otis Kaler's 1910 publication. Hardcover, 166 pages. Pen and ink illustrations. **\$5.00**
- ___ **Atlas of Fifteen Miles around Washington including the County of Prince George Maryland** – Compiled, drawn and published from actual surveys by G. M. Hopkins 1878 including "historical" sketches. Indexed. Reprint 1979. Soft cover, 32 pages. **\$10.00**
- ___ **Atlas of Prince George's County, Maryland 1861** – Atlas was adapted from Martenet's Map of Prince George's County, Maryland, with information from 1860 federal census for each election district. Indexed. Reprint 1996. Soft cover, 32 pages. **\$10.00**
- ___ **Prince George's County, Maryland, Indexes of Church Registers 1686-1885** – Volume I - Protestant Episcopal Church, King George's Parish, and Queen Anne's Parish. Author: Helen W. Brown. Reprint 2000. Soft cover, 200 pages. **\$20.00**
- ___ **Prince George's County, Maryland, Indexes of Church Registers 1686-1885** – Volume 2 - Protestant Episcopal Church, St. Paul's Parish, and Prince George's Parish. Author: Helen W. Brown. Reprint 2000. Soft cover, 196 pages. **\$20.00**
- ___ **Out of the Past – Prince Georgians and Their Land** – Chronicle of everyday life in Prince George's County, Maryland, from the time of its founding in 1696 until the beginning of the Civil War. (Information for this book was gleaned from public records, newspapers, and private papers.) Author: R. Lee Van Horn. Reprint 1996. Hardcover, 422 pages. **\$15.00**
- ___ **Tricentennial Cook Book** – Contains recipes collected from Prince George's County residents as part of the tricentennial celebration. Compiled and edited by Dorothy Rainwater and the Tricentennial Celebration Committee. Printed 1996. Soft cover, spiral bound, 150 pages. **\$5.00**
- ___ **Prince George's County Maryland** - A pictorial history of the county, an Arcadia Images of America book by Katharine D. Bryant and Donna L. Schneider. Soft cover, 128 pages. **\$18.99**

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THEN & NOW

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME XLVII NO. 3

July-September 2018

Prince of a County – Beechwood



Beechwood. Courtesy of Jack Thompson, Junior

Save the Date: Sunday, September 30, 2018

This year marks our 30th and possibly last Prince of a County reception. In addition to membership dues, this reception was always a fundraiser for the Society. Unfortunately, the reception no longer generates the funds the Society needs to maintain its operations. That is why the Society will be exploring other fundraising opportunities.

The original house at Beechwood was built at the beginning of the 19th century by George Hilleary on a tract known as Moore's Plains. It passed in 1815 to Hilleary's son, George Washington Hilleary. He married Harriet Clotilda Gwynn in 1855. Mr. Hilleary died in 1863 and his widow married Benjamin H.C. Bowie in 1871. In March 1913, a fire consumed the entire dwelling. Shortly thereafter, the Bowies built the current house. When Clotilda Bowie died in 1928, she left the house to her niece and god-daughter, Effie Gwynn Bowie. Effie Gwynn had spent much of her childhood at Beechwood and in 1894 had married Richmond I. Bowie, the younger brother of Benjamin H.C. Bowie. After her husband died in 1923, Effie Gwynn Bowie returned to Beechwood as a companion to her aunt Clotilda. She published "Across the Years in Prince George's County" in 1947, which has become the standard reference on Prince George's County genealogy. After Mrs. Bowie died in 1950, her son, A. Gwynn Bowie, made his home at Beechwood with his family. Gwynn Bowie died in 1957 and his daughter continued to reside at Beechwood until 1987 when it was purchased by a development company for a residential community. In 2016, Beechwood was purchased by Jack Thompson, Junior, and Michael MacKnight, who in a matter of three months transformed the inside of the house from a wreck to a masterpiece. In its restored state, Beechwood is an outstanding example of an early twentieth century Neo-Classical style dwelling, with a Tuscan portico and Colonial Revival interior detail in its mantels and staircase, along with modern conveniences that complement today's lifestyle.

Please join us to see the transformation for yourself. Invitations will be mailed in late August.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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Webmaster: Vacant

THEN & NOW is published quarterly. You are invited to submit a relevant article for print (subject to space limitations).

All Society members are invited and welcome to attend the monthly Board meetings. Please check our website for dates, times and location.

If you would like to volunteer your time and talents to the Historical Society in any capacity, please call us. All ages are definitely welcome!

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The Society would like to thank our generous sponsors for their support. Their donations help to fund various Society programs, its newsletter, website, and the Frederick S. DeMarr Library. Thank You!

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President's Corner

We have been busy with activities - the preservation month reception (see page 4), the DeMarr Library's 10th birthday, lectures, and the Juneteenth celebration (see to the right), just to name a few. For the most part, this summer the board members are going to take a break and recharge our batteries. The one exception is the Air Mail weekend at the College Park Aviation Museum. If you attend, please stop by our table and say hi on August 11!

The DeMarr Library received two donations in June. The Toaping Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution presented us with a scrapbook of their 70+ year history. Please see the article on page 7 for more information. Then while attending Aaron Marcavitch's lecture about his U.S. Route 1 book, the staff at Belair Mansion offered to the library a collection of slides of Prince George's County from the family of Bowie historian, Shirley Baltz, who passed away last year.

In June the board met to plan events for the rest of this year and 2019. We will host our annual fundraiser, Prince of a County, on September 30 (see front page), several showings of *Rosenwald* (see page 8), our bus trip (see page 6), and the holiday party will be at Marietta in December. For 2019, a few things we are planning include an archeology month event at Mt. Calvert with M-NCPPC and another bus trip. We will continue our lecture series in the spring with Marietta, which is going to highlight African-American women in music. Stay tuned as more is revealed.

At this year's holiday party, in addition to the festivities, we will also be asking for the membership to vote on updated by-laws. The revised by-laws will be in the next issue for your review.

As with a lot of small groups, fundraising and volunteers are on-going concerns. One thing we will be doing is expanding our book selling capabilities by putting a few of our books on Amazon. We have boxes and boxes of them and they don't do us any good just sitting on our shelves. If you would like to help us with shipping orders, please contact us.

In an effort to be open and honest with our members, the Society experienced an "oops moment." Even though we have filed our tax returns with the IRS, we discovered there was an issue when we tried to file 2017's return. We have worked with the IRS and we are current with all of our tax filings. However while doing this, the IRS revoked our 501(c)3 status. When we were notified that the revocation occurred, we began the process of getting it re-instated. Hopefully by the time you read this, we are back in good standing or will be shortly.

Donna

Best of Maryland

Congratulations to Aaron Marcavitch, Executive Director of Maryland Milestones/ATHA, Inc. for winning the Gearhart Professional Service Award from Preservation Maryland. He earned the award for being a leader in heritage tourism and preservation partnerships. He was instrumental in opening the Maryland Milestones Heritage Center in Hyattsville and in the state's War of 1812 bicentennial. He also recently published an Arcadia book about the U.S. Route 1 corridor. Congratulations Aaron!!

To learn about other Best of Maryland Awardees, visit: <http://www.preservationmaryland.org/best-of-maryland-awards-2018/>.

Juneteenth 2018

The Thirteenth Annual Juneteenth Seminar, Footprints and Roots, was held Saturday, June 16 at Watkins Regional Park. The day recognizes June 19, 1865, when Union General Gordon Granger announced freedom for all slaves in the Southwest. Texas was the last state that allowed slavery.

The celebration began with a dynamic keynote by Carroll R. Gibbs on "*Emancipation USA: Exploring Juneteenth in Texas and Emancipation in the DMV.*" The day continued with workshops on genealogy and how to use available records and data sources, sessions for children, family stories, as well as presentations on the USPHS Syphilis Study in Tuskegee and Macon County, Alabama, and the archaeology of the Belvoir Slave Quarter in Anne Arundel County.

The event is co-sponsored by the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, and the Society. It is held in conjunction with M-NCPPC's Juneteenth com-



Presenter Carol Smith with her daughter holding a skirt that belonged to a great aunt that dates back to the late 19th century. Photo courtesy of Carolyn Corpening Rowe.

2018 Preservation Month Reception

The Publick Playhouse in Cheverly played host to this year's annual Preservation Month Reception on May 24, with Planning Board Chairman, Elizabeth Hewlett, emceeing the evening's events.

The Society presented the President's Preservation Award to Patrick Gossett for his devotion and service to the Riversdale Historical Society and the Riversdale Mansion. An excerpt from his nomination:

Patrick has worked tirelessly to make Riversdale a highly respected county house museum. His dedication is the glue that keeps Riversdale thriving. He established close contacts with the Riverdale Park community and its schools, with College Park ... and a partnership with the University of Maryland. He has reached out to Calvert descendants to welcome them to Riversdale and develop their interest and participation in the house.



Elizabeth Hewlett, Patrick Gossett, Donna Schneider

This year the Society presented the St. George's Day Awards during the reception. The honorees are:

- ♦ **Sandra Emme** for *Celebrating 200 Years of Faith A Brief History of Trinity Episcopal Church Upper Marlboro, Maryland 1810-2010*
- ♦ **Judith Freidenberg** for *Contemporary Conversations on Immigration in the United States: the View from Prince George's County*
- ♦ **Kimberly Gatto** for *Belair Stud, the Cradle of Maryland Horse Racing*
- ♦ **Greenbelt News Review** in recognition of their 80 years in publication
- ♦ **Leslie Montroll** for her work on the 200th anniversary of the Old Parish Hall in College Park
- ♦ **Patricia Sluby** for *Inventive Spirit of African Americans*
- ♦ **Nancy Snyder** for the centennial celebration of the Boyden House
- ♦ **St. John's Episcopal Church, Broad Creek**, in celebration of their 325th anniversary
- ♦ **Del Quentin Wilber** for *A Good Month for Murder*



Donna Schneider, Patricia Sluby, Elizabeth Hewlett

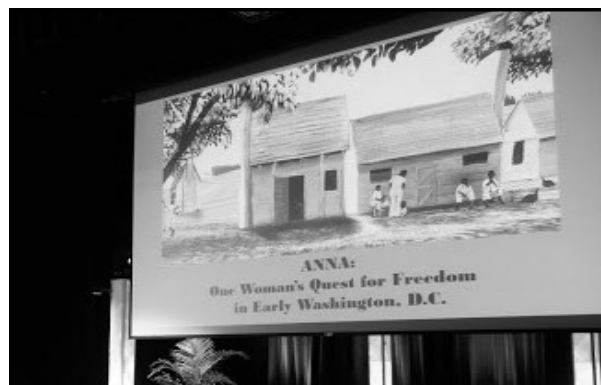
The county's Historic Preservation Commission historic site plaques were presented by Commissioner Lisa Pfueller Davidson to the:

- ♦ **Burgess House** in Hyattsville
- ♦ **Prince George's Bank** in Mount Rainier
- ♦ **Crumly-Murray House** in Temple Hills
- ♦ **Wagner House** in Accokeek

Aaron Marcavitch, Executive Director of Maryland Milestones/ATHA, Inc. gave awards to

- ♦ **Calvin Cafritz Enterprises** for Heritage Tourism & Public History
- ♦ **Venus Theater** for Heritage & Arts in Laurel
- ♦ **Krista Schyler** for *River of Resilience: Almanac of Life on the Anacostia* and Anacostia River Advocacy

Professor Donald Linebaugh, School of Architecture at the University of Maryland gave the Prince George's Fellowship Award to **Paula Jarret Nasta** for her work on the Bostwick House.



The evening ended with a keynote presentation by Dr. William G. Thomas III, professor of history at the University of Nebraska and a screening of the film, *Anna, One Woman's Quest for Freedom in Early Washington, D.C.*

Celebrating the Airmail Centennial: 1918-2018

It is summer 1918, a ½ gallon of milk costs \$0.28, the US House of Representatives passes an amendment allowing women to vote (*it would take almost 2 more years for America's leadership to ratify the amendment!*), and America is at war. The Great War exposed deep flaws in American airpower including outdated aircraft and too few pilots, both in quality and quantity. As a result, United States Post Office (USPS)* and military officials believed airmail could increase the speed of communication while also improving the skills of military pilots. By giving novice aviators the opportunity to fly the mail, they would have a chance to improve their navigation skills, albeit with hardly any instruments, and enhance their long distance piloting abilities. So, in the midst of World War I and after much persuasion, US Congress gave USPS \$100,000 to experiment with an aerial mail service.

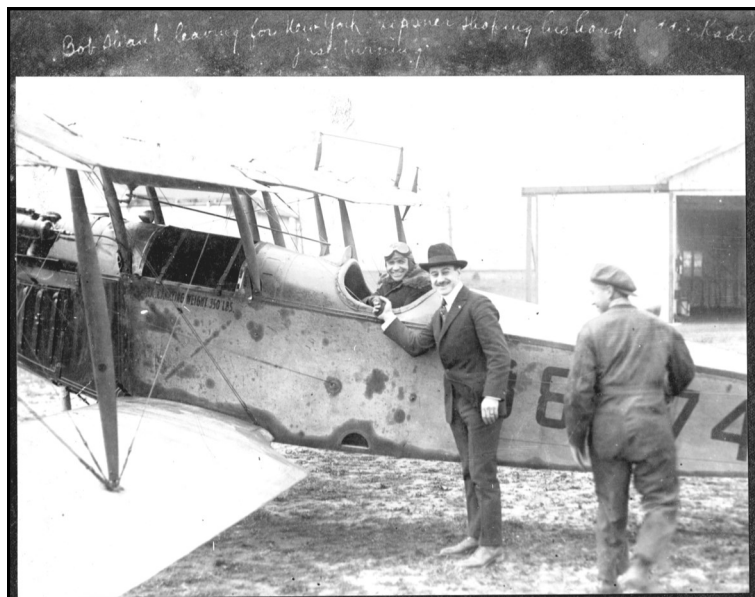
Airplanes, one of the hottest new-fangled innovations of the early 20th century, captivated the public. Innovators and forward thinking public officials such as Alexander Graham Bell, President Woodrow Wilson, Postmaster General Albert Burleson and Second Postmaster General Otto Praeger, to name a few, saw the potential of harnessing a new innovation, like airpower, to positively impact the future.

Working with US Army officials and pilots, the inaugural flight of airmail took off on May 15, 1918 from the Polo Grounds, known today as West Potomac Park, in Washington, DC. While the flight got off safely, rookie aviator Major George Boyle proceeded to get lost and flip his plane upon landing near Waldorf, MD when he stopped to ask for directions. Boyle and the mail from his plane were trucked back to Washington, DC.

Despite this hiccup, USPS officials kept pushing for scheduled airmail service. By midsummer, changes were afoot. Captain Benjamin Lipsner, the Army officer on temporary assignment to the Post Office to organize airmail, resigned from the Army on July 13, 1918. That same day, he became the Post Office's first superintendent of airmail. Lipsner saw his role as more than just making airmail successful, he also saw it as the beginnings of civil aviation. He oversaw all aspects including recruiting and training airmail pilots, creating rules and regulations for airmail operations, and working to maintain reliable aircraft. Under Lipsner's leadership airmail operations were established at the College Park Airfield, which had been in operation since 1909 when the Wright Brothers taught America's first military officers how to fly at the field.

One of the first civilian aviators recruited by Lipsner to fly the mail was Robert Shank. He learned to fly from Eddie Stinson, of the renowned Stinson Family. Shank came to Washington, DC and College Park, MD from Texas where he was serving as a flight instructor at Kelly Field in San Antonio. Shank arrived in Washington on Wednesday, July 31, 1918 and met with Otto Praeger. On August 1, Shank took the Post Office oath and began his work as a civilian airmail pilot on the College Park, MD to Philadelphia (Bustleton Field) to New York (Long Island – Belmont Park) route.

On August 12, 1918, the first USPS airmail flight took off from College Park Airport utilizing civilian aircraft and civilian



Pilot Robert Shank on his way to New York, with Capt. Lipsner sending him off. Eddie Randel is turning in the picture

Photo Credit: Charles Townley Chapman

pilots marking the beginning of a new chapter in mail, aviation, transportation and communication. The grand airmail experiment ultimately led to the birth of America's commercial aviation industry and drove the development of navigation and radio communication improvements.

The College Park Aviation Museum and College Park Airport, known collectively as the College Park Aviation Campus are launching a year-long celebration of the Airmail Centennial with the support of the Field of Firsts Foundation, an independent 501 (c)3 nonprofit organization, and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC).

The public is invited to take part in the Kick-off weekend on August 10 – 12, 2018. Events and programming include: an exhibit preview reception on Friday, August 10; a family day, USPS Stamp unveiling and new exhibit opening – **Delivering America: Airmail to Email** - on Saturday, August 11; and a reenactment of the original flight on Sunday, August 12 along with a pancake breakfast. To learn more visit: www.CollegeParkAviationMuseum.com and www.FieldofFirsts.com To donate and be a part of history, visit: www.FieldofFirsts.com/Airmail. Questions? Call: 301-864-6029

-Andrea Cochran Tracey, Museum Director

*Note: The United States Postal Service (USPS) underwent a few name changes over time. For the sake of consistency, we are using the term USPS throughout this article.



On the Road Again... October 13, 2018

One of the things that the Society did for many years was to sponsor an annual bus trip. We decided it was time to bring it back and go "Into the Past Through Present Prince George's County." The sightseeing bus tour will begin at the "oldest continuously operating airport in the world" in College Park and meander our way to the first Prince George's County seat in Charles Town, also known as Mt. Calvert. The tour will explore three hundred years of history that is right here in our back yard and will finish with a stop at one of the county's wineries or microbreweries. The tour will include a boxed lunch, snacks and bottled water, as well as a glass of wine or beer. The tour stops and lunch offerings are still being finalized, but expect a day of history overload! Tour prices are: \$75/member, \$85/non-member, or become a Society member with a combo price of membership and bus tour of \$100. Seating is limited, so get your reservations in early! For reservations, please mail pay-

ment, name(s), an e-mail, address and/or phone number so we can contact you regarding your lunch choice. Please send your reservation(s) to: PGCHS Bus Tour, PO Box 1513, Upper Marlboro, MD 20773-1513. The deadline for tour reservations is October 1, 2018. The tour will meet at the College Park Airport, 1909 Corporal Frank Scott Drive, College Park, MD 20740. Please be there no later than 8:30 AM. The tour will occur rain or shine.



Prince George's County Tidbits

Did You Know That....

Our next installment exploring the history of some of the cities and towns within the county highlights Berwyn Heights.

Prior to 1896, Berwyn Heights was known as Charlton Heights. It was named by Edward Graves after he acquired the land for an urban residential community.

Berwyn Heights became the seventh incorporated municipality in Prince George's County.

It is not known how Berwyn Heights got its name. However, Berwyn is the name of a Midwest Indian tribe which may account for the use of Indian street names in the area.

In 1924 the Maryland House of Delegates repealed the town's 1896 charter and enacted a new one. The 1924 charter called for the election of five commissioners to be elected for a two-year term and to serve without compensation. It also allowed for women to vote and hold office, rights denied under the 1896 charter.

Alice O'Dea was the first woman elected to the town commission in 1960.

The property known as Sportland has some interesting history. The property became known as Sportland during the ownership of General Edward C. Carrington, who fought in the Mexican War and served in the Virgin-

ia legislature before being appointed Brigadier General of the District Militia in 1861.

Brigadier General Thomas Ewing, who served in the Union Army during the Civil War lived at Sportland from 1865-1881. He defended Mary Surratt in her trial for harboring John Wilkes Booth following the assassination of President Lincoln.

In the 1920s, boxing was becoming a favorite pastime popularized by World War I veterans. Capitalizing on the rising public interest, Berwyn Heights resident John O. Waters organized the Sportland Heights Athletic Club in 1922 to sponsor boxing matches in the town. Waters built an open air 4,000 seat arena on Sportland. The popular matches were held during the summers of 1922-1925, drawing large crowds. Community objections and conflicts with town and county commissions led to the closing of the ring in 1926.

When the H. Dale Smith family renovated the kitchen, a trap door was found. It led to an excavation below the house that contained a distilling operation, including green glass whiskey bottles, jugs and crocks. The still vent led to what had formerly been a shed.

Source: Berwyn Heights History of a Small Maryland Town by D.D. Skarda

Donation to DeMarr Library

The DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) Toaping Castle Chapter made a presentation to the Prince George's Historical Society of a specially created book for the Frederick DeMarr Library about the 70-year history of Toaping Castle. The chapter has collected scrapbooks dating back to the mid-1940s, when it was created from the Brigadier General Rezin Beall Chapter in Laurel due to the gas shortage during WWII. At that time, the Laurel chapter wanted to create a chapter near the Washington, DC, line during the gas shortage because members who lived in University Park, College Park, and Hyattsville could not travel to Laurel for meetings.

When Toaping Castle was created, it was started in University Park, and included members in College Park, University Park, and Hyattsville. Several years ago, Brigadier General Rezin Beall DAR Chapter in Laurel (created in 1922) folded and became part of Toaping Castle, an ironic turn of events. The Brigadier General Rezin Beall records are housed in the Laurel Museum. And Brigadier General Rezin Beall is buried in St. John's Episcopal Church Cemetery in Beltsville.

Toaping Castle was originally a castle in Scotland, but a replica was built behind the TGIFriday's in Greenbelt. The Walkers who owned Toaping Castle in Greenbelt played a prominent role during the Revolutionary War. The "castle" is gone, but the Walker cemetery still exists in a fenced in area on the wooded hill behind TGIFriday's, and the Toaping chapter does a cleanup of the cemetery every Memorial Day.



-Katharine Bryant

Courtesy: James C. Wilfong Collection

Glenn Dale Hospital Update

M-NCPPC held a community meeting to communicate the findings from an independent study to determine the feasibility of adaptively reusing the Glenn Dale property as a continuing care retirement community (CCRC) with complementary uses.

The study was conducted by the Alexander Company, known nationally for its adaptive reuse development of large scale institutional projects across the country, identified three distinctly different development scenarios to determine whether the CCRC use was feasible with or without the adaptive reuse of the historic facilities. Below are initial findings:

- ◆ The process of the Maryland Department of Aging approving the market study, marketing and obtaining deposits/contracts, and ultimately licensing a CCRC facility in Maryland, under a best-case scenario, can take years to accomplish.
- ◆ An additional two to three years which may be required for construction documents, building permits, and construction all combine to dictate that subscribers are expected to have their deposits held for four to five years or more.
- ◆ The issues of the timing and limitations of funding sources, interest rate changes, potential for legislative changes regarding availability of tax credits, transition rules, depreciation rules, etc., make financial projections for a project, that cannot realistically be placed in service for five years, unreliable.
- ◆ Millions of highly speculative dollars would need to be committed in the pre-development/pre-licensing phase for land use entitlements, architecture, engineering, environmental, marketing, applications, and legal costs.
- ◆ It is the study's conclusion that the deed restriction requiring the site to be used as open space or a CCRC use makes the project infeasible. Legislation to permit related uses should be obtained to open the doors for other funding sources and a higher density.
- ◆ The finding reported that the least financially viable outcome would be the total demolition, while the optimum action would be restoration and rehabilitation of the major structures if a more financially viable zoning use could be found.

Given this finding, M-NCPPC is reviewing options and potential next steps.

- Courtesy of M-NCPPC

Calendar of Events

**Saturday, August 11, 10 AM—4 PM at College Park Aviation Museum
Air Mail Day Celebration in College Park**

See page 5 to learn more. Photo to right is Robert Shank explaining to Capt. Lipsner about his flight. Photo credit - Robert F. Shank Family.



Saturday, September 1 - Frederick S. DeMarr Library, Greenbelt, will be Closed

**Tuesday, September 25, 6:30 PM at Bowie Library, Bowie
Rosenwald Film Screening**

Showing of 2015 film "Rosenwald" - the biography of Julius Rosenwald, entrepreneur and philanthropist, including his efforts supporting the construction (1912-1932) of schools for African-American students. Historian Susan Pearl will introduce the film and will lead Q&A session after the showing.

Opinion by "Rotten Tomatoes"

Aviva Kempner's Rosenwald is the incredible story of Julius Rosenwald, who never finished high school, but rose to become the President of Sears. Influenced by the writings of the educator Booker T. Washington, this Jewish philanthropist joined forces with African American communities during the Jim Crow South to build over 5,300 schools during the early part of the 20th century. Rosenwald sheds light on this silent partner of the Pre-Civil Rights Movement. Rosenwald awarded fellowship grants to a who's who of African American intellectuals and artists including: Marian Anderson, James Baldwin, the father and uncle of civil rights leader Julian Bond, Ralph Bunche, W. E. B. DuBois, Katherine Dunham, Ralph Ellison, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Gordon Parks, Jacob Lawrence and Augusta Savage along with Woody Guthrie. Inspired by the Jewish ideals of tzedakah (charity) and tikkunolam (repairing the world) and a deep concern over racial inequality in America, Julius Rosenwald used his wealth to become one of America's most effective philanthropists. Because of his modesty, Rosenwald's philanthropy and social activism are not well known today. He gave away \$62 million in his lifetime.

**Sunday, September 30, 2 PM at Beechwood, Upper Marlboro
Prince of a County**

See front page. \$50/person

**Saturday, October 6, Noon at Oxon Hill Library, Oxon Hill
Rosenwald Film Screening**

Same as the September 25 showing.. Photo to the right is Julius Rosenwald.



**Saturday, October 13, 8:30 AM at College Park Airport, College Park
Society Bus Trip**

See page 6 for details.

Fill-a-Shelf Appeal



The Frederick S. DeMarr Library is endeavoring to complete its collection of the *National Intelligencer* and Prince George's County land records in 2018. Our Fill-a-Shelf goal for this year is \$1,000. Gifts are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please send your donation to PGCHS - Fill-a-Shelf, PO Box 1513, Upper Marlboro, MD 20773-1513. Thank you!

Publications

- ___ **Prince George's County: A Pictorial History*** – The history and essence of Prince George's County come alive in words and pictures in this beautiful collector's edition, with more than 350 photographs, maps, and illustrations. Author: Alan Virta. 1998 - Revised and updated edition. Hardcover, 308 pages. **\$42.95**
- ___ **Historic Prince George's County: A Confluence of Cultures*** – A cultural history of Prince George's County, with many photographs from private collections. Authors George D. Denny, Jr., Nathania A. Branch Miles, Donna L. Schneider. Printed 2011. Hardcover, 192 pages. **\$39.95**
- ___ **Calvert of Maryland** – This fact-based novel shows the home life of the colonists from a child's viewpoint. This story is told in the first person by young George Calvert, godson of the first Lord Baltimore, George Calvert. Reprint of James Otis Kaler's 1910 publication. Hardcover, 166 pages. Pen and ink illustrations. **\$5.00**
- ___ **Atlas of Fifteen Miles around Washington including the County of Prince George Maryland** – Compiled, drawn and published from actual surveys by G. M. Hopkins 1878 including "historical" sketches. Indexed. Reprint 1979. Soft cover, 32 pages. **\$10.00**
- ___ **Atlas of Prince George's County, Maryland 1861** – Atlas was adapted from Martenet's Map of Prince George's County, Maryland, with information from 1860 federal census for each election district. Indexed. Reprint 1996. Soft cover, 32 pages. **\$10.00**
- ___ **Prince George's County, Maryland, Indexes of Church Registers 1686-1885** – Volume I - Protestant Episcopal Church, King George's Parish, and Queen Anne's Parish. Author: Helen W. Brown. Reprint 2000. Soft cover, 200 pages. **\$20.00**
- ___ **Prince George's County, Maryland, Indexes of Church Registers 1686-1885** – Volume 2 - Protestant Episcopal Church, St. Paul's Parish, and Prince George's Parish. Author: Helen W. Brown. Reprint 2000. Soft cover, 196 pages. **\$20.00**
- ___ **Out of the Past – Prince Georgians and Their Land** – Chronicle of everyday life in Prince George's County, Maryland, from the time of its founding in 1696 until the beginning of the Civil War. (Information for this book was gleaned from public records, newspapers, and private papers.) Author: R. Lee Van Horn. Reprint 1996. Hardcover, 422 pages. **\$15.00**
- ___ **Tricentennial Cook Book** – Contains recipes collected from Prince George's County residents as part of the tricentennial celebration. Compiled and edited by Dorothy Rainwater and the Tricentennial Celebration Committee. Printed 1996. Soft cover, spiral bound, 150 pages. **\$5.00**
- ___ **Prince George's County Maryland** - A pictorial history of the county, an Arcadia Images of America book by Katharine D. Bryant and Donna L. Schneider. Soft cover, 128 pages. **\$18.99**

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