



THEN & NOW

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME XLIX NO. 1

January—March 2020

The Roaring Twenties History

It seemed like a lot of 2019 New Year's Eve parties had a Roaring Twenties theme. So to commemorate the new decade, here's a look back 100 years at some of the highlights from the 1920s, courtesy of History.com editors.

The 1920s were an age of dramatic social and political change. For the first time, more Americans lived in cities than on farms. The nation's total wealth more than doubled between 1920 and 1929, and this economic growth swept many Americans into an affluent but unfamiliar "consumer society." People from coast to coast bought the same goods (thanks to nationwide advertising and the spread of chain stores), listened to the same music, did the same dances and even used the same slang! Many Americans were uncomfortable with this new, urban, sometimes racy "mass culture;" in fact, for many—even most—people in the United States, the 1920s brought more conflict than celebration. However, for a small handful of young people in the nation's big cities, the 1920s were roaring indeed.

The "New Woman"

The most familiar symbol of the "Roaring Twenties" is probably the flapper: a young woman with bobbed hair and short skirts who drank, smoked and said what might be termed "unladylike" things, in addition to being more sexually "free" than previous generations. In reality, most young women in the 1920s did none of these things (though many did adopt a fashionable flapper wardrobe), but even those women who were not flappers gained some unprecedented freedoms. They could vote at last: The 19th Amendment to the Constitution had guaranteed that right in 1920. Millions of women worked in white-collar jobs (as stenographers, for example) and could afford to participate in the burgeoning consumer economy. The increased availability of birth-control devices such as the diaphragm made it possible for women to have fewer children. And new machines and technologies like the washing machine and the vacuum cleaner eliminated some of the drudgery of household work.

The Birth of Mass Culture

During the 1920s, many Americans had extra money to spend, and they spent it on consumer goods such as ready-to-wear clothes and home appliances like electric refrigerators. In particular, they bought radios. The first commercial radio station in the U.S., Pittsburgh's KDKA, hit the airwaves in 1920; three years later there were more than 500 stations in the nation. By the end of the 1920s, there were radios in more

than 12 million households. People also went to the movies: Historians estimate that, by the end of the decades, three-quarters of the American population visited a movie theater every week.

But the most important consumer product of the 1920s was the automobile. Low prices (the Ford Model T cost just \$260 in 1924) and generous credit made cars affordable luxuries at the beginning of the decade; by the end, they were practically necessities. In 1929 there was one car on the road for every five Americans. Meanwhile, an economy of automobiles was born: Businesses like service stations and motels sprang up to meet drivers' needs.



Photo courtesy of Free Library of Philadelphia

The Jazz Age

Cars also gave young people the freedom to go where they pleased and do what they wanted. (Some pundits called them "bedrooms on wheels.") What many young people wanted to do was dance: the Charleston, the cake walk, the black bottom, the flea hop. Jazz bands played at dance halls like the Savoy in New York City and the Aragon in Chicago; radio stations and phonograph records (100 million of which were sold in 1927 alone) carried their tunes to listeners across the nation. Some older people objected to jazz music's "vulgarity" and "depravity" (and the "moral disasters" it supposedly inspired), but many in the younger generation loved the freedom they felt on the dance floor.

Prohibition

During the 1920s, some freedoms were expanded while others were curtailed. The 18th Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1919, had banned the manufacture and sale of "intoxicating liquors," and at 12 A.M. on January 16, 1920,

Continued on page 6

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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Newsletter Editors: Susan G. Pearl and Donna Schneider

Newsletter Contributors: M-NCPPC, Preservation Maryland, Donna Schneider, Jack Thompson,

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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By Appointment at Other Times



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Ken Schneider
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NEW MEMBERS

Rhoda Chilcoat
Angela Porter
Susan Proctor

President's Corner

Happy New Year!

The Frederick DeMarr Library will reopen on Saturday, January 25, 2020.

Preservation Maryland and the Maryland Historical Trust awarded to the Friends of Historic Mount Nebo Preservation Corporation a \$5,500 Heritage Fund grant for a geophysical survey at Mt. Nebo A.M.E. Church Cemetery in Upper Marlboro. The grant will be used to fund ground-penetrating radar to help identify unmarked burials to add to the existing burial and land documentation. For more information about the additional projects supported and the Heritage Fund grant program, go to presmd.org/hf.

Thank you to everyone who has already renewed their membership or sponsorship. Just a friendly reminder if you haven't already renewed that your membership or sponsorship will expire on March 31, 2020.

A big THANK YOU to our vice president, Jack Thompson, Junior, for opening his historic home, Beechwood, for our holiday party.

Donna

Fundraising

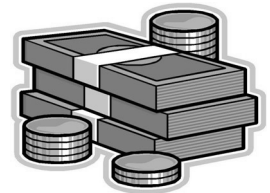
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John M. Essex Memorial Fund—provides financial assistance to scholars, authors, graduate students and doctoral candidates wishing to research the architectural heritage of the County

DeMarr Library—helps to purchase books and other items needed to aid researchers and others in learning more about the County's history

A contribution of any size is appreciated and tax-deductible. Please send your donation to:



PGCHS
PO Box 1513
Upper Marlboro, MD 20773-1513

President's Award

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 deadline for nominations is March 31, 2020.**

Please submit the name of your nominee, the nominee's contact information and in no more than 500 words, why your nominee should receive the President's Preservation Award. Don't forget to include your name and contact information too. The nomination information can be sent by email to info@pghistory.org or mail to PGCHS, PO Box 1513, Upper Marlboro, MD 20773-1513. Thank you!!

Preservation Maryland Six-to-Fix

Preservation Maryland announced new projects in their Six-to-Fix program:

- ♦ Investing in the Historic Jonathan Street Community, Hagerstown, MD
- ♦ Engaging the Public in Protecting Cemeteries, Anne Arundel County
- ♦ Honoring the Railroad History of Brunswick, MD
- ♦ Continuing Orchard Street Church's Community Service, Baltimore City
- ♦ Mapping the Underground Railroad across Maryland, Statewide
- ♦ Supporting Chesapeake Conservation & Culture, Easton, MD

Following is an excerpt of information from Preservation Maryland on updates for Glenn Dale Hospital, one of the 2014 Six-to-Fix projects:

Alexander Company has been selected to explore redevelopment opportunities on 60 acres of the former

Glenn Dale Hospital property. This is a follow-up to the 2018 market feasibility study that described the difficulty of the redevelopment as a continuing-care facility; that deed restriction has since been lifted.

The deed restriction was lifted by HB662. This legislation still ensures that the historic campus is adaptively reused.

There was a meeting on October 17, 2019, about the future reuse of the Glenn Dale Hospital. A report from Alexander Company about the preservation of the buildings, conservation of the setting, open space, community amenities and more is expected to take seven months to prepare and will be presented to M-NCPPC.

To learn more about any of the Six-to-Fix projects, visit: <https://www.preservationmaryland.org/programs/six-to-fix/>. To learn more about the history of the Historic Glenn Dale Hospital Campus visit: <https://glennedalehospital.com/history/>.

Calendar of Events

January 25 - African American Women in Music: The Music of Dinah Washington

Dinah Washington, 1924-1963, was a singer who was extremely popular in the 1950's. She performed, jazz, blues, R & B, and traditional pop music. In 1959, she had her first top ten pop hit, with her version of "What a Diff'rence a Day Made."

February 8 - Black History Month Presentation: The Green Book, Travel in Prince George's County and Beyond

Join historians Susan Pearl and Anne Bruder as they discuss *The Green Book* which was published from 1936 to 1966. The book listed accommodations available to traveling African Americans in Prince George's County, Baltimore, and beyond.

February 22 - African American Women in Music: The Music of Sarah Vaughan

Sarah Vaughan, 1924-1990, nicknamed, "Sassy" and "The Divine One", was the winner of four Grammy Awards, which included the Lifetime Achievement Award. In 1989, she was given the NEA Jazz Masters Award. Her career spanned 1942-1989.

March 14 - Women's History Month Presentation: "Maryland's Mother of Civil Rights: Gloria Richardson and the Cambridge Civil Rights Movement"

Join historian, Artura Jackson, as she discusses the life of Gloria Richardson, civil rights activist and leader. Gloria Richardson was the leader of the Cambridge Movement, a struggle for civil rights in the early 1960's, located in Cambridge, MD. Her activism garnered national attention, shedding light on the Civil Rights Movement on Maryland's Eastern Shore. She, along with five other women leaders, were seated on the stage at the August 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

March 28 - African American Women in Music: The Music of Della Reese

Della Reese, 1931-2017, was an American jazz, R & B, pop, and gospel singer, an actress, and an ordained minister, with a career spanning seven decades. Her career took off in 1959, with her hit single, "Don't You Know". She was noted to be the youngest singer to have the same vocal range as Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan. \$5/person (ages 8 & up)

The lectures are held at Marietta House Museum at 1 PM, \$5/person (ages 8 & up).

Upper Marlboro Schools Site Status

As mentioned in the last issue of Then & Now, The District Council adopted CR-72-2019 to initiate a minor amendment process to remove the Old Marlboro Primary School (Historic Site 79-019-15) and the Old Marlboro High School (Historic Site 79-019-52) from the Inventory of Historic Resources.

On September 17, 2019, the Prince George's County Planning Board, in conjunction with the Prince George's County Council, sitting as the District Council, held a meeting on September 27, 2019, inviting public comment on the minor amendment. On October 10, 2019, the Planning Board held a public work session approving the amendment. The District Council conducted a public work session on October 29, 2019, and also approved the proposed minor amendment to the 2010 *Prince George's County Historic Sites and Districts Plan*.

The following was adopted on November 19, 2019:

MINOR AMENDMENT

Amend the 2010 Prince George's County Historic Sites and Districts Plan to remove the Old Marlboro Primary School (Historic Site 79-019-15) and the Old Marlboro High School (Historic Site 79-019-52).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any proposal for redevelopment of the subject property seek to retain historic building fabric from the two school building to the extent practicable and to commemorate the history of the property through interpretative signage or other visual elements; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Dr. William and Sarah Beanes Cemetery (Historic Site 79-019-22) be preserved in place and protected from any redevelopment of the subject property, including through delineation of an appropriate environmental setting....

Laurel Celebrates 150 Years

In 2020, the City of Laurel will be celebrating its 150th birthday all year long. Many activities are planned throughout the year focusing on the theme "Laurel is." Some of the event highlights include Laurel Museum's 150th exhibit opening, a passport program, a scavenger hunt, a time capsule opening, a gala, a run/walk, a holiday house tour, and more. Visit <https://150.cityoflaurel.org/> to learn about all of the events.

Volunteers are needed to work at the DeMarr Library. There are a variety of tasks, such as welcoming visitors, scanning photos and documents, document collections, organizing files and more. Please contact us if you are interested.



Used books for sale. Stop by and see our selection:

Paperbacks	\$0.50 each
Hard Cover	\$1.00 each
Coffee Table	\$1.50 each

Do you have any yearbooks you are willing to donate to the DeMarr Library? We are accumulating a nice collection from county schools and we would like to add your contribution!

Maryland House & Garden Pilgrimage 2020

The Prince George's County tour will kickoff this year's Maryland House & Garden Pilgrimage (MHGP) on Saturday, April 25, 2020, from 10 AM to 5 PM, rain or shine. The tour will start in Upper Marlboro and wind its way north through Mitchellville and Bowie showcasing both historic and more modern houses and will conclude in Glenn Dale.

The tour proceeds will be used for interior plaster repairs and painting of St. Thomas' Church in

Croom. A boxed lunch for \$13 will be available and "Port Tobacco Pickers" will provide live entertainment at Beechwood.

The remainder of the 2020 MHGP tours will visit Dorchester County on May 2, Talbot County on May 9 and Calvert County on May 16.

Please visit www.mhgp.org to purchase tickets and lunch information and more details about each tour.

Grigsby's Station Log Cabin, Glenn Dale



Fairview, Bowie



Continued from page 1

the federal Volstead Act closed every tavern, bar and saloon in the United States. From then on, it was illegal to sell any "intoxication beverages" with more than 0.5% alcohol. This drove the liquor trade underground—now, people simply went to nominally illegal speakeasies instead of ordinary bars—where it was controlled by bootleggers, racketeers and other organized-crime figures such as Chicago gangster Al Capone. (Capone reportedly had 1,000 gunmen and half of Chicago's police force on his payroll.)

To many middle-class white Americans, Prohibition was a way to assert some control over the unruly immigrant masses who crowded the nation's cities. For instance, to the so-called "Drys," beer was known as "Kaiser brew." Drinking was a symbol of all they disliked about the modern city, and eliminating alcohol would, they believed, turn back the clock to an earlier and more comfortable time.

The "Cultural Civil War"

Prohibition was not the only source of social tension during the 1920s. The Great Migration of African Americans from the

Southern countryside to Northern cities and the increasing visibility of black culture - jazz and blues music, for example, and the literary movement known as the Harlem Renaissance - discomfited some white Americans. Millions of people in places like Indiana and Illinois joined the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. To them, the Klan represented a return to all the "values" that the fast-paced, city-slicker Roaring Twenties were trampling.

Likewise, an anti-Communist "Red Scare" in 1919 and 1920 encouraged a widespread nativist, or anti-immigrant, hysteria. This led to the passage of an extremely restrictive immigration law, the National Origins Act of 1924, which set immigration quotas that excluded some people (Eastern Europeans and Asians) in favor of others (Northern Europeans and people from Great Britain, for example).

These conflicts—what one historian has called a "cultural Civil War" between city-dwellers and small-town residents, Protestants and Catholics, blacks and whites, "New Women" and advocates of old-fashioned family values—are perhaps the most important part of the story of the Roaring Twenties.

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. **\$30.00**
- ___ **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. **\$30.00**
- ___ **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. **\$15.00**

Shipping and handling is \$5.00 per order. If ordering more than one copy of books with an asterisk (*) add \$3.00 for each additional book.

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VOLUME XLIX NO. 2

April-June 2020

Historic Preservation Month Reception

Due to the uncertainty of the impact of the COVID-19 virus, the organizations working on this reception are still going forward with plans. However, please check www.pghistory.org for any updates or if you are a Society member, you will receive an email with any updates about the reception.

The 2020 Historic Preservation Month Reception will be held on WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2020, from 6:00-8:30PM at Newton White Mansion, 2708 Enterprise Road in Mitchellville, MD. The keynote will focus on the work program of the Prince George's County Parks Department and the projects affecting their historic property portfolio. Historic site plaques will be presented by the Prince George's Historical Preservation Commission and awards will be presented by various county organizations. Invitations will be sent closer to the event date.

The Newton White Mansion is a fine example of an early 20th century estate house, one of few in Prince George's County. Neo-classical in style, it was designed by noted architect William Lawrence Bottomley for Newton H. White, commanding officer of the U.S.S. Enterprise. Commander White purchased multiple parcels of land during the 1930s, historically the home plantations of several generations of the Waring family. On this land he developed a model dairy farm, and had this handsome house, with its expansive wings and whimsical interior and exterior decoration, designed and built in 1939. The 585-acre *Enterprise Farm* was purchased in 1971 by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and is now a popular golf course and reception venue.

Newton White Mansion (Historic Site 73-006)

Photo courtesy of M-NCPPC



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Barbara McCeney
Benjamin & Diana McCeney
Douglas & Susan McElrath
Donald Powers
Ken Schneider
William Thomas III



NEW MEMBERS

Cary Coppock
Kathryn Caliendo
Lisa Pfueller Davidson

President's Corner

The DeMarr Library phone and voicemail service have been experiencing significant problems. Unfortunately we were not able to rectify the problem before the library had to close as of March 16. If you need to contact us, please send an email to info@pghistory.org. We will do our best to respond to you while we are closed.

Errata: On page 6 of our last issue, we mislabeled a picture as "Fairview" when the house is named "Fairwood." We apologize for this error.

Unfortunately, the Society has lost three long-time members in less than a month. Our condolences to their families. First, is Society life-member and former director, Mildred Ridgley Gray. Susan Pearl shared a presentation on page 6 about Mrs. Gray from October 2015 when a historic marker was dedicated for the Ridgley community,

Laurie Verge, the long-time director of the Surratt House Museum passed away on February 23. Laurie taught history and government in the Prince George's Public Schools. She began working at the Surratt House in the mid-1980s and became a leading authority in the Civil War, the Lincoln Assassination and local Southern Maryland history.

On March 10, Patricia Williams passed away. Courtesy of the DC Preservation League, where she was a founding member, Patricia had a passion for preserving and interpreting cultural heritage, which was evident throughout her career and life. A DC native, Patricia moved to Mount Rainier, MD, and helped found the Mount Rainier Community Preservation League which successfully advocated for the designation of Mount Rainier as a National Register Historic District. Pat was also a founding member of the Maryland Heritage Alliance and served on the board of Preservation Maryland, along with many other organizations.

Thank you to everyone who has renewed their 2020 membership or sponsorship. Just a friendly reminder if you haven't already renewed that your membership or sponsorship expired on March 31, 2020, and this is your last issue of *Then & Now*.

-Donna

Fundraising

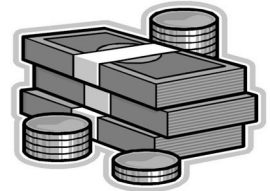
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PGCHS
PO Box 1513
Upper Marlboro, MD 20773-1513

Society Elections

On February 4, 2020, the Society held elections for the officers and the directors whose terms expired in 2019. All of the officers and these directors were re-elected: **Christine Garcia, Stacey Hawkins, and Sealaini Weiner**

We would like to thank **John Brunner** for his many years of service as a Society board member and we are welcoming **Damon Austin** as a director. Damon is a librarian with more than 20 years of experience in library information studies and education and we look forward to his assistance at the DeMarr Library. He is also a professional tennis coach and performance consultant, working with Top 100 athletes in international competitions.

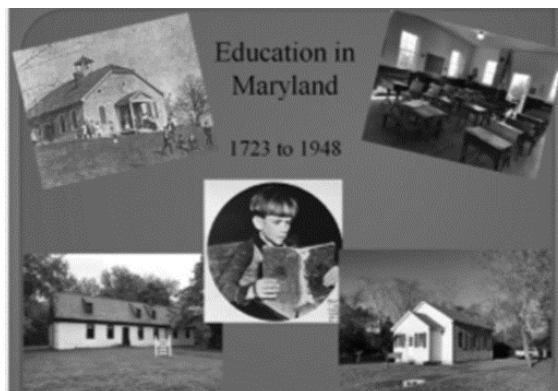
Education in Maryland, 1723 to 1948

Our Historical Society will partner in April 2020 with the Town of Upper Marlboro History Committee in presenting a lecture entitled **“Education in Maryland, 1723 to 1948.”** The lecture will be given by Susan G. Pearl, who serves as Historian for our Society, **at 1:00 p.m., Saturday, April 18, at the Town Hall, 14211 School Lane, in Upper Marlboro.**

Starting with Maryland’s 1723 *Act for the Encouragement of Learning and Erecting Schools in the Several Counties within this Province*, Susan will then cover the establishment of the Academies in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, concentrating mostly on the Marlborough Academy that served that area of our County. The lecture will include material from letters and diaries (1850s) written by governesses who were imported from the northern states to teach plantation children, and their preparation of these children for higher education at American colleges. This will lead up to the es-

tablishment of the Boards of County School Commissioners in 1865, and the building of rural and community schools for white children and for black children in the years immediately following. Susan will take as an example the village of Nottingham in Prince George’s County, established in 1706, and leading to the building of the Nottingham school in 1875, pulling everything together through a virtual visit to the present Nottingham schoolhouse, built in 1911 on the site of the 1875 school, and now open to the public as a school museum. This lecture is based on the paper which Susan presented at last year’s national conference in Frederick, Maryland, of the Country School Association of America.

In this period of uncertainty, please check with the Town Hall (301-627-6905) to be sure that this lecture will actually happen. We will also post any cancellations on our website.



Calendar of Events

DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ALL MARIETTA HOUSE MUSEUM ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN POSTPONED AND ARE ATTEMPTING TO BE RESCHEDULED. PLEASE CONTACT MARIETTA AT 301-464-5291 OR VISIT WWW.PGPARKS.COM TO FIND OUT STATUS.

April 18 - Education in Maryland, 1723-1948, 1 PM
See details in article above.

April 25 - Maryland House and Garden Pilgrimage in Prince George’s County . The entire 2020 Pilgrimage has been postponed and plans are to have the same tour destinations in 2021.

July 25 - Racing Through History-Historic Horses in Prince George’s County, 9 AM-4 PM

Please join us for a tour of Thoroughbreds in Prince George’s County, as we tour Marietta House Museum, home of the racehorse, Argyle, and a tour of Belair Mansion and Belair Stable Museum, home of two Triple Crown winners, the only father/son duo to win the Triple Crown! Then off to Laurel Race-track for a special group tour, race watching, and lunch. Presented by Marietta House Museum, the City of Bowie Museums, and the Prince George’s County Historical Society. Snacks will be provided on the bus; lunch is on your own at the Racetrack. Reservations are required. Please call 301-464-5291 to reserve your space. Ages 21 and up. Fee \$\$/person

From the Library

It's been a very difficult time for all of us, but it was of course necessary for our Historical Society library, as part of the County library system, to close until the Covid-19 emergency has been resolved. We will miss seeing and working with all of you during this difficult time. But, until we are able to reopen, I am pleased to give you some interesting and even some happy news from the Frederick S. DeMarr Library of County History, located in the Greenbelt Branch Library.

I am still working with Professor William Thomas of the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, in his study of the enslaved residents of Prince George's County who sought (and frequently won) freedom through the District of Columbia courts in the years before the Civil War. In seeking connections with these freedom cases, we have been able to draw together a group of families still resident in the County, and he has met with them on several of his trips to the Washington area. In this connection, I am still trying to track down some of the early residents of Duckettsville, a late nineteenth century black farming community near Huntington/Bowie. And all of us are looking forward to the publication of Professor Thomas's book on these freedom cases later this year!

Much of my recent attention has been focused on research regarding the Thomas G. Clemson family of South Carolina, who lived for nearly a decade in the Bladensburg area before and during the Civil War. Responding to a question from a member of the Clemson University staff, I'm now deep into the family letters and diaries, and the land, probate, and tax records of the Clemson

family, in search of one of the family's young slaves who apparently remained in Prince George's County after the Clemsons returned to South Carolina in 1864. Research is more difficult, and we pursue more on-line resources, now that our Historical Society library and the Maryland State Archives are closed. It is fascinating stuff - and quite amazing to lose oneself in the horrors of a century and a half ago and forget for a while the troubling uncertainties of today.

Actually we can celebrate a grand new acquisition by our library, which I hope that you can take advantage of before too much longer. I received a call in February from the editor of the *Prince George's Sentinel* (which as you probably know ceased publication at the end of January), inviting us to add to our collection a large number of bound volumes of the *Sentinel*. They had to be out of the *Sentinel* office within a few days, so several of us met there to carry 93 heavy bound volumes down a long flight of stairs, and transport them in several cars to our library - then arranged them in order on several bookcases. We already had bound volumes of the *Prince George's Post* (from 1941 through 1978) which are very popular with our library visitors. Now we have a near complete run of the *Prince George's Sentinel* from 1968 through 2007, and a few more issues (1979-1984) of the *Prince George's Post* which the *Sentinel* had taken over in the early 1980s. So when our library opens again (soon, we hope), you can do some serious research into local events of the last 80 years, and will have a lot of fun doing it!

-Susan Pearl, Historian

Volunteers are needed to work at the DeMarr Library. There are a variety of tasks, such as welcoming visitors, scanning photos and documents, document collections, organizing files and more. Please contact us if you are interested.



Used books for sale. Stop by and see our selection:

Paperbacks	\$0.50 each
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Do you have any yearbooks you are willing to donate to the DeMarr Library? We are accumulating a nice collection from county schools and we would like to add your contribution!

In Memoriam - Mildred Ridgley Gray

Ridgley Community Historic Marker Dedication 10 October 2015

On January 13, 1981, I was sitting at a joint public hearing of the County Council and the Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (you know it simply as "Park and Planning"). These two bodies were hearing testimony regarding the adoption of the proposed Historic Preservation Plan, the County's effort to recognize and preserve some of the features of our County's history. It was a long hearing, with many individuals and groups scheduled to speak either against or in favor of the plan. Those of us on staff were busily taking notes but getting a bit tired and fuzzy-headed after quite a few long hours. And then a tall, elegant, business-like lady with a very clear voice, stood up and commanded our attention, to tell us about the historic black community of Ridgley - in particular about its historic Methodist church, and her hopes of preserving it. I remember sitting up sharply, suddenly, and thinking - here is an historic post-Civil War black community that I didn't even know about, and here is the person from whom I will learn about it!

That was nearly 35 years ago - that is how long I have known Mildred Ridgley Gray. Since then, I have had the privilege of working with Mildred and members of her family. After many hours of interviews and archival research, we've learned much about the Ridgley community, including the Methodist church that her grandfather established here in 1871. We learned that the church had been destroyed by fire in 1921, and was replaced in that year by the present church. Very soon after Mildred's testimony, and as a direct result of it, the Ridgley Church was recognized as a County Historic Site. Then in 1989, the little church building was moved back from, and to the north of Central Avenue to protect it from the process of widening the road; the building was restored and rededicated in 1990. Then 10 years ago, because of its significance in the history of Prince George's County, the Ridgley Church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

We learned about the farm property of the large Ridgley family, and the leading role that this family played in the development of the Ridgley community. We learned about the Ridgley family home place, and Mary Eliza Ridgley's kitchen garden, and the field of lilacs that supplied the market, and the barn where community dances were held, and began to get a feeling for what life was like in this close-knit community. We learned of the benevolent society hall that also served as a classroom, we

learned of the new Rosenwald School in 1927, so it was clear that this Ridgley community had and was held together by all those elements that make up and are essential to a small, residential farming community.

The new school of 1927 was one of 27 schools in our County built with the financial support of the Julius Rosenwald fund. It was Mildred's mother who had deeded the 2-acre parcel of land to the Board of Education, and Mildred was a member of the first class held in that school. She later taught there, and served as the school's principal after it became a school for children with special needs. After Brown vs. Board of Education, the school was closed, and became the bus dispatch center for the County's public schools. In 2004 a group of interested individuals from Park and Planning, from the Board of Education, from the County, and from various historical groups, began to meet, making plans and seeking funds for the restoration of the school building. It took seven years and a lot of work, but in 2011, a beautifully restored Ridgeley School was opened to the public as a museum. And earlier this year, Ridgeley School was listed in the National Register of Historic Places! And I am grateful to be celebrating all of this with Mildred Ridgley Gray!

It is true that Mildred's grandfather would not recognize his rural farming community today - the road is now paved and greatly widened, and quite a bit of commercial and light industrial development replaces the trees and fields that he knew. But there remain these two very visible landmarks, the church and the school that were the essential and beloved anchors of the community - and now we have this historical marker to let us all remember the very special historic community of Ridgley.

-Susan G. Pearl
10 October 2015



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. **\$30.00**
- ___ **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. **\$30.00**
- ___ **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. **\$15.00**

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THEN & NOW

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME XLIX NO. 3

July– September 2020

COVID-19 Pandemic Now Part of Prince George's County History

The COVID-19 pandemic is now a part of Prince George's County history. We will probably never forget this period of time and how we dealt with it and (hopefully) lived through it. Many of us adopted completely new ways of living while we worked from home, discovered new ways of obtaining essential supplies, communicated in new ways with people whom we would normally have met face-to-face, and educated and entertained ourselves through previously unfamiliar electronic platforms. As many now expect, things may be very different after this pandemic recedes, and life may never quite go back to the ways of yesterday.

I have marveled at the changes we have had to undergo, grieved and worried just as the rest of you have, but, as an historian, I feel a responsibility at least to attempt to record some of what we are going through. And this has kept me very busy – there is of course a blizzard of statistics, difficult to sort through and make sense of, but I will try to put some of it in writing, so that when things appear to return to normal, we may have some record of what happened here in Prince George's County a quarter of the way through its fourth century.

The first confirmed case in Prince George's County was reported during the week beginning on February 23rd, 2020, with 8 more during the week of March 1, and 34 more during the week of March 8. The first and second deaths were reported during the week of March 15, and it was that week (March 16) that schools, offices and many stores and gathering places were shut down; during that week, 182 new cases were reported. During the week of March 22, 431 new cases were reported, as well as 12 deaths; and during the week of March 29, 834 cases and 22 deaths were reported. The numbers went up steadily and steeply during the month of April, and it wasn't until the beginning of May, that we saw the first small signs of relief resulting from the shutdown. The following staggering April statistics were reported: during the week of April 5, 1055 confirmed cases and 49 deaths; during the week of April 12, 1573 cases and 61 deaths; during the week of April 19, 2003 cases and 74 deaths; and during the week of April 26, 2422 cases

and 73 deaths. Prince George's County recorded the highest number of casualties of any jurisdiction in Maryland. (All statistics from *Prince George's Covid 19 Dashboard*.)

At this point, after seven weeks of quarantine, shutdown, and expanded testing for the virus, Prince George's County began to show signs of "flattening the curve." During the week of May 3, we began to see a slight decrease both in confirmed cases and in deaths: 2343 cases and 70 deaths were reported. And during the week of May 10, the numbers went down again: 1987 cases and 69 deaths were reported. During the week of May 17, 1941 cases and 60 deaths were reported, and during the week of May 24, 1413 cases and 52 deaths were reported. During the week of May 31, 1035 confirmed cases were reported, and 47 deaths. As we go to press, the numbers have decreased to 792 confirmed cases and 26 deaths for the week of June 7 through June 13. It appears that the processes of shutdown, masking, careful hygiene, and social distancing are beginning to show their good effects. At this point Prince George's County has begun the process of cautious reopening, including allowing houses of worship, restaurants and some other places to open at reduced capacity. At the same time other tragic events have brought masses of people together in large crowds, and we wait to see whether these circumstances have slowed down or reversed the progress made over more than three months of shutdown. We hope, of course, to see better and better numbers through the next few months, which should put us in a stronger position if, as expected, a second wave of the virus, possibly 35 worse than the first, manifests itself in the fall. By June 13, Prince George's County had recorded 18,174 confirmed cases, and 629 deaths.

Also in Prince George's County, certain trends have become clear - the factors of age, sex, and race. They follow the same pattern as shown throughout the country; the highest frequency of death occurs among those above retirement age. Likelihood of infection is near

Continued on page 4

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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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!

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President's Corner

When the last issue of *Then & Now* was being written, the local area just started staying home from work and school because of COVID-19. Who knew that more than three months later we would still have modified restrictions of going to work and school, shopping, and dining at restaurants? The pandemic has added to our everyday vocabulary such expressions as "social distancing," "coronavirus," and "PPE" (personal protective equipment), and that hand sanitizer, washing hands for at least 20 seconds, and face masks would be necessary when we do venture out and return home. Saying thank you to the medical personnel, first responders, and all of the individuals on the front lines helping us deal with this crisis is not enough for what they have sacrificed to keep us safe and healthy, but it is the least we can do, so THANK YOU!

Unfortunately, we still don't know when the DeMarr Library and places we partner with will be reopening or when lectures and programs can continue, so visit our website www.pghistory.org or our Facebook page to learn the latest.

It has taken me awhile to think about what to write in response to the death of George Floyd and the resulting protests about social injustice that have occurred not only in the United States, but across the world. What happened to Mr. Floyd was inexcusable, but it sparked a movement for something that is a long time coming in this country. I hope it does create change for the better, an understanding of all people, and many teaching moments. I know the Historical Society has a reputation of being a group of old white people and for many years that was true. However, the current board of the Society is racially diverse with black, white and Hispanic board members. The Frederick DeMarr Library is a library of Prince George's County history, but it does have information on black and Hispanic history, on civil rights, segregation, and Rosenwald Schools. We are not perfect, but then no one is. We do try to be diverse in our programming and supporting events such as Juneteenth and Maryland Legacy Day. The Society has also participated in Hispanic and Afro-American celebrations, lectures and book signings. I can echo what other local and national groups and organizations have said and done in response to what has occurred. But the bottom line is that all lives matter and we are equal, no matter who you are, what the color of your skin is, or your history. We can learn from everybody and should be tolerant and understanding of each other. The United States is a melting pot of diversity and the Washington metropolitan area is a great example of that. Let's learn from these events and be better for them.

-Donna

Fundraising

Everyone seems to be bombarded by appeals to help support one project or another. The Historical Society is no different. We have three on-going donation opportunities:

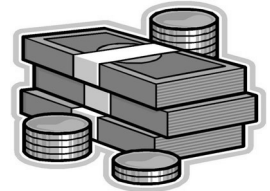
John J. Petro Fund—which supports placing ghost structures and signage at Mount Calvert Archaeological Park

John M. Essex Memorial Fund—provides financial assistance to scholars, authors, graduate students and doctoral candidates for research on the architectural heritage of the County

DeMarr Library—helps to purchase books and other items needed to aid researchers and others in learning more about the County's history

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Many organizations, museums and historic sites have posted virtual tours, are hosting lectures, and have activities while we are social distancing. Maryland Milestones has gone to various locations within Prince George's County and created 3-minute Milestones YouTube videos showcasing interesting and unique places in the county at www.anacostialtrails.org/3-minute-milestones.

Below are a few other websites to visit to see what is on offer (some may involve a fee):

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equal among males and females, but males are somewhat more likely to die from the infection. In regard to race and ethnicity, deaths of African-Americans and Hispanic individuals are significantly more frequent than among whites.

The expectation of a second wave is based on the history of earlier outbreaks of disease. This pandemic may be the first of our lifetimes, but is not the first for our parents and grandparents, and for the sake of history, it is wise for us to look at the most obvious precedent, just over a century ago - the pandemic of 1918-19. The greatest and most obvious difference between the 1918-19 pandemic and our current COVID-19 is that the pandemic of a century ago took place when the world was at war, making its appearance in the spring of 1918, and lasting well beyond the Armistice of that November that put an end to World War I. This pandemic was worldwide in its assault, and was, in general, much worse than COVID-19 has been so far. There were at least 500 million confirmed cases throughout the world, and at least 50 million (possibly near twice that number) deaths. In the United States, at least 675,000 died, more than the total of American soldiers who died in all the wars of the twentieth century. The disease came in three waves: the first, starting early in 1918 was fairly mild and short-term, but it mutated and came back in the late summer of 1918 far more lethal - by far the majority of deaths from this pandemic came during this second wave. The virus mutated again, and returned in the spring of 1919 in milder form and was essentially dying out by the end of the summer.

The 1918-19 disease is referred to as the "Spanish Flu," not because it started in Spain, but because it was first written about and publicized by Spain. Spain was neutral during World War I, and could therefore report on the seriousness of the spreading threat, while governments engaged in the war tended to suppress reporting on the effect it was having on their fighting forces. Even so, the name "Spanish Flu" has survived now more than a century.

The time and location of the Spanish Flu's first appearance is uncertain, but in the United States it was first detected early in 1918 at Camp Funston (now Fort Riley) an Army base in southeastern Kansas. Camp Funston, thrown together in 1917 as part of the United States' war effort, held more than 50,000 young troops. The first case at Funston was reported on March 4, and within three weeks more than 1100 soldiers had been hospitalized there. From this training camp, soldiers, as yet asymptomatic, were sent east to other camps, and by April 1918, on to the battlefields of Europe and beyond. The war effort required greatly expanded manufacturing, and those overcrowded factories and steel mills, and the ports from which men and supplies were shipped, were breeding grounds for disease. Soldiers



were moving constantly, many unknowingly infected, carrying the infection with them.

Camp Funston 1918

The disease raged, in its three waves, throughout the world, until, after nearly two years, it finally faded out. Even though the first wave had subsided in the United States during the summer of 1918, it returned with a vengeance, and for 14 weeks in the fall of 1918 this second wave of the Spanish Flu was at its most lethal. In August 1918, a ship returning from Europe to Boston harbor brought approximately 7000 soldiers, and the first record of this more powerful strain in the United States. By early September the influenza had overtaken much of the population (of approximately 45,000 men) at Camp Devens near Boston, and from there it spread. At that time, 300 sailors were transferred from Boston to Philadelphia, a city overcrowded with workers in shipbuilding and other war efforts, with a city government which assured its citizens that this influenza was nothing to worry about, and a public health director who approved the marching of a Liberty Loan Parade, with thousands marching and hundreds of thousands watching, on September 28. Within three days after the parade, every bed in the city's 31 hospitals was occupied, and hundreds of Philadelphians were dying each day. On the fifth day, October 3, the health director ordered closed all churches, schools, theaters and public spaces. It was too late, and Philadelphia then became one of the most seriously affected cities in the United States.

It appears that Prince George's County was mostly spared until late September 1918. The Washington area was greatly affected by the existence of military bases in the immediate area. Thousands of soldiers were crowded into bases such as Camp (now Fort) Meade in Maryland, and Camp Humphreys (now Fort Belvoir) in Virginia. At these camps infections spread so rapidly that the government postponed a call-up of new troops. The first recorded death in Washington, D.C., was reported on September 21, and by the middle of October, more than 50 people were dying each day.

Schools and churches were closed, and federal offices moved to staggered schedules to alleviate crowding. People were told to avoid crowds altogether, and street-car drivers were urged to keep windows open, regardless of the weather. Toward the end of October, the number of cases and death began to level off, and schools and churches reopened on November 4. The illness would return on and off through much of 1919, but had become a much milder strain. Over the course of the pandemic, the number of confirmed cases in the District of Columbia was around 33,000, and deaths totaled approximately 2800.

We can follow some of the progress of the disease outside the District in the local newspapers. Prince George's County, and in particular the Laurel area, was greatly impacted by the proximity of Camp Meade which came to be the epicenter of the Spanish Flu in Maryland. The first cases at Camp Meade appeared September 17, 1918, and the first deaths came soon after. By the beginning of October this virulent strain had appeared in Laurel, and the *Laurel Leader* reported that the malady "has created a serious condition, and resulted in the loss of many lives, both among civilians and the army." By October 12, the *Baltimore Sun* reported that at Camp Meade alone there were 11,000 cases of the influenza, with 525 deaths. Maryland authorities acted late, failing to follow the earlier example of major cities that had closed schools, theaters, and churches, but they finally did so by the first week of October. Following the action taken by the Health Commissioner of Baltimore on October 8th, Prince George's County's Health Officer, Dr. John Sansbury, "ordered all schools, churches, moving picture parlors, and public places CLOSED and to stay CLOSED until ordered by him to re-open. This action is taken to combat the spread of Spanish Influenza

throughout the county." Public schools and almost everything else closed across the state of Maryland.

Reading the local newspapers during the month of October 1918 (*The Baltimore Sun*, the *Annapolis Evening Capital*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Prince George's Enquirer*) means reading pages and pages of death notices. Lists of new cases and of deaths were reported daily, peaking around October 10-11. When on October 12 the *Baltimore Sun* reported only between 500 and 600 new cases of influenza as compared to 1000 the day before (and only 31 deaths in Baltimore City and only 95 deaths at Camps Meade, Edgewood Arsenal and Fort McHenry), there was premature rejoicing that relief must be as coming.

But the news overall, during the whole month of October, was devastating. In the *Prince George's Enquirer*, published in Upper Marlborough, we find constant sad news among many familiar families in the Upper Marlborough area. Many names of young Prince Georgians are listed among the dead at Camp Meade. Edmond Coolidge Bowie, step-son of Effie Gwynn Bowie, died of the influenza at the age of 31. The judges adjourned the October term of the Court, and the meeting of the Democratic State Central Committee was cancelled, as well as the crucial meetings of the Red Cross. The prominent family of Marion Duckett (of Bladensburg) was devastated during this month – within two weeks, his daughter, Violetta Duckett, died at age 30, and his son, Allen Bowie Duckett, died at age 27, leaving a bride of only a few weeks.

An unusual and interesting notice in the *Prince George's Enquirer* involved the family of John and Estella Ridgley, who lived just northeast of Upper Marlboro on the old road between Upper Marlborough and Florenceville. Their three older daughters, Mary, Bernadette, and Rosie Ridgley served as the telephone operators in Upper Marlboro, but all three came down with the influenza, and were quarantined at home. Their two younger sisters, Marguerite and Loretta (16 and 12 years old) took over their posts at the telephone exchange. In the October 11 issue of the *Prince George's Enquirer* there appeared the following: "Our three local telephone operators are quite sick with Spanish Flu and they have requested us to ask the public to make only necessary calls . . . that no calls be made after 10 p.m. except in cases of sickness. At present the exchange is being operated by Misses Marguerite and Loretta Ridgley, small sisters of the operators, and they are working heroically. However, the task is very heavy and at night these little girls' throats are completely exhausted. The public should be willing to relieve them as much as possible."

These notices of illness and death highlight another major difference between the Spanish Flu of 1918 and COVID 19 of today. Whereas our current virus is most deadly among the older population, it was the younger population between ages 20 and 40 that was most



Prince George's Enquirer Headline, October 12, 1918

Continued on page 6

vulnerable during the pandemic of 1918-19. The virus spread lethally through military camps, sickening and killing thousands of vigorous young men, a statistic exacerbated of course by the terribly overcrowded living conditions of these servicemen. But young adults were endangered everywhere; it is believed that older adults had been at least partially immunized by less dangerous viral incidence at the end of the 19th century, whereas younger adults had been born too late to have gained that protection.

Another difference between these two pandemics is that, as noted above, the Spanish Flu tended to rage through a community population for a relatively short time, and then die down. This is illustrated in the local newspapers – by the end of October 1918, after little more than a month, the assault of the influenza had noticeably weakened, as it mutated, and came back in much milder form through much of 1919. The November 1, 1918, issue of the *Prince George's Enquirer* reveals: "Dr. John T. Sansbury, health officer, has given permission to open churches on Sunday, November 3rd,

public places and public meetings on Monday, November 4th, and schools on Monday, November 11th. . . . The health officer urges that every precaution be taken to keep down the disease in this county and any further spread of same, which is now reported on the decline." This marked the end of the worst part of Prince George's County's experience with the terrible Spanish Flu of 1918.

So COVID 19 has become a part of Prince George's County's history. By the time this issue of *Then and Now* is in print, it will have been 4 months since the first case was confirmed here. COVID 19 seems to be not quite as lethal as the "Spanish Flu" of a century ago, but slower moving, and it is difficult to know how its course will run from this time on. We are now in the early stages of reopening from a shut-down existence, and we wait to see whether reopening at this stage is wise or unwise. Whether the virus moderates and fades away, or becomes more virulent, we will attempt to record the full course of its onslaught, and its part in the history of Prince George's County.

-Susan G. Pearl, Historian

Help the Library Archive the County's 2020 Pandemic Experience

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) announces a new community-based digital collection called "Archiving the Pandemic," which seeks crowdsourced contributions to document the local response to COVID-19. The events of 2020 are transforming the country, and the resilience and unity in Prince George's County is visible on a daily basis. All Prince Georgians have an important role in helping the Library document the history the community is living right now so that future generations will have a better understanding of this time.

The shared experience of living through the COVID-19 pandemic has touched all Prince Georgians. Despite this connection, it can be difficult for a community to reflect upon what it is facing in the moment. Community members may share their stories, photographs, artwork, music, short videos, audio testimonials, crafts, virtual hangout screenshots, recipes, and more with the Library to establish a community digital archive.

Many personal experiences from the 1918 influenza pandemic—that recount the devastation, pain, loss, and resilience during the crisis—have been lost to history. "Archiving the Pandemic" will ensure that the personal stories related to the COVID-19 pandemic here in Prince George's County stand the test of time.

Community members may share their stories, photographs, artwork, music, short videos, audio testimonials, crafts, virtual hangout screenshots, recipes, and more with the Library to establish a community digital archive.

The project will have a permanent place in the Library's digital collections. A selection of submissions will be displayed on pgcmls.info and social media beginning in summer 2020.

How to Submit to "Archiving the Pandemic"

Go to the Library website: pgcmls.info;

Enter "Archiving the Pandemic" in the search box

Select first option (Archive Submission)

Complete the [online form](#); and email the submission files to pr@pgcmls.info with the subject line "Archiving the Pandemic."

In Memoriam

The Historical Society is mourning the loss of three of our most longstanding and faithful members.

We are very sorry to report the death of **Lansdale Ghiselin Sasscer, Jr.**, a longstanding member and supporter of the Historical Society. Member of a multi-generational Prince George's County family, Mr. Sasscer practiced law in Upper Marlboro for many years, having served two terms in the House of Delegates in the 1950s. He lived with his wife, Anne, in the Digges-Sasscer House in Upper



Marlboro – the house where his father, and then he himself had grown up, and where he and Anne raised their family. At this beautiful historic house, they welcomed our Historical Society for one of our *Prince of a County* receptions. Ghiselin Sasscer was always a delight to talk to about historic Upper Marlborough, which he knew intimately, and he and Anne were steady supporters of the Historical Society's efforts. Mr. Sasscer died on April 13, 2020.

Eugene Bowie Roberts, Jr. was for many years one of the Society's most willing and generous supporters. Family and local history were two of his greatest passions, and through his family he connected us with many of the most famous and influential Prince Georgians and Marylanders of our history; he was particularly involved with everything about Riversdale, being a direct descendant of the Stier-Calvert family. His father, Eugene Roberts, Sr., was one of the founding officers of the Historical Society, so it was not surprising that Eugene, Jr., joined and became active with the Historical Society



soon after he returned to Maryland in the late 1980s; he served as vice-president for many years. With his wife, Lynn, Gene graciously hosted many events at his own historic home, and made it possible for our Society to visit and learn about other im-

portant places connected with his family. Gene was also a trustee of the National Colonial Farm/Accokeek Foundation where he applied his agricultural expertise to advise and support the farming and heritage breed livestock program reflecting the life of a 1770s yeoman farmer. Gene was a true Maryland gentleman, whose maxim was that we must learn from previous generations, and then do better. Gene Roberts died on April 18, 2020, and we will greatly miss his humor, wit, and generosity.

Warren "Dusty" Rhoads was a fixture with the Historical Society for decades. He held many Board positions, (serving as president in 1987), organized popular bus trips to historic places, and acted as emcee, photographer, and bartender at many Society events. He kept track of all of our St. George's Day awardees, and organized and maintained our Society files, including elections, minutes of Board Meetings, events, and lots more. He was an essential part of our Library staff, working steadily with the files, but also making coffee and bringing in goodies for the staff. Not least, he was the creator/provider of his renowned "Artillery Punch" which he served at countless holiday parties. Dusty and his wife, Julie, worked tirelessly at events held at Riversdale and Marietta; this photo shows Dusty as docent-in-costume



playing the piano at a Marietta event. Dusty Rhoads died on May 3, 2020, and we will miss him greatly.

Historic Preservation Month Reception

On Wednesday, May 27, 2020, Maryland Milestones, Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission, Prince George's County Historical Society and the University of Maryland hosted a virtual Historic Preservation Month reception: A Past Worth Preserving. Viewers brought their wine and cheese to their computer screens and we shared highlights from our programs. Donna Schneider started the program by mentioning that the Society is still responding to research inquiries and doing collaborative research on major projects with several university scholars. She also announced plans for a virtual lecture on the Burroughs Diaries, which were written during the Civil War by a plantation owner near Upper Marlboro, and further lectures planned during the summer.

Next, Tom Gross, from M-NCPPC's Historic Preservation Section, offered updates on preservation planning in the county. At a glance, Prince George's County has:

- 452 locally designated Historic Sites
- 92 unclassified Historic Resources
- 4 locally designated Historic Districts
- 100 National Register Listings
- 17 Nation National Register Historic Districts
- 6 National Historic Landmarks

In 2019, Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church and Cemetery in Brandywine, Star-Potts Hall in Mount Rainier, and the Washington, Baltimore & Annapolis Electric Railway Bridge in Bowie were designated as county historic sites. The Teed House in College Park is pending designation. Cheverly and the Moyaone Reserve in Accokeek are in the process of becoming National Register Historic Districts. The capital grant program awarded \$300,000 in grants to ten properties for 2020. The non-capital grant program awarded \$25,000 for Moyaone Reserve documentation, \$12,000 for Old Greenbelt Theater exhibit space, \$20,000 for the ATHA Boundary Expansion Study, and \$3,371 for a Town of Upper Marlboro virtual walking tour. In the last year, the Historic Preservation Commission approved over \$113 thousand in tax credits for 14 properties. Archaeological highlights for the year include search for a cemetery site at Locust Hill; preserving in place a cemetery and house site associated with the Branch Avenue MXT project; three sites were identified around the Butler House in Oxon Hill; at Traditions at Beechfield several house sites, a slave cabin later turned into a tenant house, family and slave cemeteries and possibly a greenhouse were discovered; the house site previously discovered at Toaping Castle in Greenbelt will be preserved in place; Calm Retreat in Brandywine had a house built prior to the Civil War and what is thought to be a slave cabin that was converted to a tenant house, with documentation showing that for-

mer slaves continued to live on the property; and Mill Branch in Bowie was recently excavated and many artifacts, a house site with a deep cellar, several outbuildings, shallow ash-filled pits, and three privies were found. What might not be as well-known is that the Historic Preservation staff continues to photograph and document properties known as Prince George's Modern, which are buildings from the mid-twentieth century. To learn more, visit: <http://pgplanning.org/494/Prince-Georges-Modern>.

Dennis Pogue, Interim Director, from the University of Maryland's School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation, shared what the historic preservation program did in the last year. They worked with M-NCPPC on documenting buildings at Compton Bassett in Upper Marlboro and another project focused on damage mitigation at Bostwick House in Bladensburg. Their Studio program is entitled Changing Landscapes Farmsteads & Resort Towns. There are four themes: Tobacco and Reconstruction, Religion, Education, and Resort Towns. The 2019 project focused on the farmsteads and resort towns in the Aquasco area, including Cedar Haven and Eagle Harbor. The project team did site visits, researched and documented what they learned, and interviewed community members. The project resulted in the creation of a trail guide that documented points of interest, such as Truman Point and Sunnyside; a route map, identifying site markers, such as Villa de Sales and the Cedar Haven Hotel; ideas for theme kiosks, such as education in Aquasco, and an audio tour. The team learned how to generate a collaborative product, create an effect heritage trail, and learned the history of three communities. The community benefitted from the project because it celebrated the residents' sense of place, it boosts the local economy, and increases awareness and helps bring people into the communities. To learn more, visit: <https://www.arch.umd.edu/hisp/historic-preservation>.



Cedar Haven Hotel

Ed Day, Lead Historic Preservation Officer from M-NCPPC's Department of Parks & Recreation ("DPR") began his presentation with a summary of the historic assets in Prince George's County that he oversees.

There are 46 historic properties that consist of:

- 176 buildings
- 14 National Register of Historic Places
- 2 National Historic Landmarks
- 35 County Historic Sites
- 7 properties with Maryland Historical Trust Easements
- 100+ archaeological sites

The county is one of the largest in the country in historic property ownership, when compared to the largest being the National Park Service with 27,000 historic structures nationwide, the National Trust for Historic Preservation owning 26 properties nationwide and the City of Baltimore owning 14 historic landmarks. In the spring of 2017, DPR began the process of evaluating 66 structures at 27 sites after discussing the properties that have maintenance deferred and hired an architectural firm to perform the assessment. The firm identified 3,169 individual items and prioritized them by a timeframe ranging from one to ten years as well as recurring maintenance tasks. This evaluation showed the need to have a group to coordinate the efforts and of funding for the projects. In FY19 and for the next four years, \$5 million a year is dedicated toward maintenance of these structures. Several projects have been completed or are being worked on, which include the restoration of the chapel, brickwork repairs of the smokehouse and stabilization of the house at Compton

Bassett; new siding and roof and exterior trim repair at Abraham Hall; and rebuilding of piers and railing at the front entry of Newton White Mansion. Currently work is being done on the restoration of Chelsea Barn, masonry work at Marietta Mansion, and various exterior work at Riversdale Mansion.



Chelsea Barn

Aaron Marcavitch, from Maryland Milestones, wrapped up the evening by discussing the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area ("ATHA") expanding its boundaries. The ATHA Heritage Center has been home to lectures, videos, and tours at the Pyramid Atlantic Arts Center. Their outreach activities are currently focusing on trails and 3 Minute Milestones. Current projects include the County's Civil Rights Trail, milestone markers, trail tourism, awarding grants, how to move forward during COVID-19, and much more.

New Marietta House Historic Site Manager

Dr. Julia (Julie) Rose started at Marietta House as their new Historic Site Manager on June 29, 2020. She was the director/curator of Homewood Museum at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD. Previously, Dr. Rose was the director at West Baton Rouge Museum, an AAM accredited regional history museum. Her primary research interests focus on interpreting difficult histories and documenting historic enslaved plantation communities for museum interpretations. Currently, Dr. Rose serves as a board member for the Baltimore National Heritage Area and Hammond Harwood House. She teaches museum studies in the Museums and Society Program and the Johns Hopkins University. Her current curatorial project is a forthcoming exhibition, "The Natural Order of Things: Women at Homewood" which will open in 2021. Dr. Rose was Chairman on the Council for the American Association for State and Local History and council member from 2010 to

2019. She received a Ph.D. from Louisiana State University, a Master of Arts in Teaching in Museum Education from the George Washington University, and a B.A. in Fine Art and Education from State University of New York at Albany. She is on the editorial board for the Journal of Museum Education and serves as a peer reviewer for the American Alliance of Museums. She has held positions at the Washington D.C Historical Society (formerly the Columbia Historical Society), East Tennessee Historical Society, and Magnolia Mound Plantation. Rose was also an assistant professor teaching museum studies at Southern University of New Orleans and Louisiana State University. Her recent book, "Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites" (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), addresses museum learning and historical oppression.

Please welcome her the next time you visit!

A Prince George's County Journey Puzzle

The words in **BOLD** can be found in the puzzle below.

Siblings **Emily** and **Paul** are tired of social distancing at home. Their parents suggested a car ride to see what places in **Prince George's County** they can visit after the quarantine has been lifted. They started their journey by walking along the driveway at the home of the Mistress of **Riversdale**, Rosalie **Calvert** and seeing the **garden** blooming. Next they visited where the **Wright Brothers** taught army aviators to fly at **College Park Airport**. The family cruised through **Greenbelt**, the first **community** in the United States built as a federal venture in housing, on the way to the **Dinosaur Park** in **Laurel**. Paul said he wanted to come back and hunt for **fossils**! Mom wanted to find where **Montpelier** Mansion was located so she could take classes at the **arts center** there. Since the **Patuxent** Research Refuge was open, Dad suggested getting out to stretch their legs to see some local **wildlife**. To satisfy Emily's love for horses, the family headed to **Belair Stables**, the home of the only father/son horses to capture the Triple Crown, **Gallant Fox** and **Omaha**. Nearby is the **Bowie** Railroad Museum, where the family stopped to watch trains chug by along the busy **rail** corridor. The family continued driving south to **Upper Marlboro**, the county seat since 1721, where they walked up the steep driveway to **Darnall's Chance**, home to an annual gingerbread **house** show. Emily and Paul said they had a great idea for this year's contest. Driving the scenic roads found them by **St. Thomas' Church**, the home church of Bishop Thomas John **Claggett**, the first Episcopal bishop consecrated on American soil. Mom wanted to show the kids a **one-room** schoolhouse, so the family found **Nottingham School**. Since it was a nice day for a road trip, the family found themselves at the town of **Eagle Harbor** on the Patuxent River. It was founded in 1925 and became a historic African American summer **resort** destination, as well as being the county's smallest municipality. The next to the last stop was National **Colonial** Farm, a living **history** museum in **Piscataway** Park on the **Potomac** River in **Accokeek**. Paul and Emily were excited about coming back to see the cattle, pigs, sheep and chickens. The end of the day found the family at the **Surratt** House Museum in **Clinton**. This family home was a **tabern**, public dining room, and hotel for traveling gentlemen, but its claim to fame was for the role it played in John Wilkes **Booth** assassination of President Abraham **Lincoln**. The kids were excited to tell their friends about what they saw on their **journey** and mom and dad were already planning their next county **adventure**.

Please note that some of the locations mentioned may not be accessible during this time and are used for illustrative purposes only.

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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. **\$30.00**
- ___ **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. **\$30.00**
- ___ **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. **\$15.00**

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THEN & NOW

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME XLIX NO. 4

October-December 2020

Thomas Law's Home in Prince George's County

Although our library has been closed since mid-March 2020, we still get plenty of “visitors” by e-mail, and some of the e-mail queries have been very interesting and challenging! Probably my favorite of this summer was the question about the location of Thomas Law's mansion in Prince George's County. I was embarrassed to admit that I had not known that Thomas Law had ever lived in our county, but I was determined to find out about it. With help from colleagues, we now know almost exactly where Mr. Law's house stood, and quite a bit about it.

Thomas Law (1756 – 1834) was born in Cambridge, England, youngest son of Edmund Law, the Bishop of Carlisle. As a young man, he began to work for the East India Company, and travelled to India in 1773. He became a revenue collector for the Company, devised a system of taxation and land tenure, and served as a magistrate in the province of Bihar. While in India, he had three sons with an Indian woman.

Thomas Law made a fortune in India, and then returned to England, a very rich man, in 1791, bringing his three sons with him to begin their education. In 1794 he went to the United States where he began working with the Greenleaf Syndicate in the development of the city of Washington, investing much of his considerable wealth. In 1796 he married Eliza Parke Custis, grand-daughter of Martha Custis Washington. Thomas and Eliza Law became people-to-know in the Washington society of the day. We in Prince George's County have come to know Eliza Custis Law and her husband through her close friendship with Rosalie Stier Calvert of Riversdale.

A daughter was born to the Laws in 1797, but in 1804, Eliza and Thomas Law separated, and Eliza came to live with the Calverts at Riversdale for near-

ly half of that year – we learn from Rosalie Calvert's letters something about this unusual (at that time) situation. Rosalie considered that Thomas Law had always been a bit crazy, and that perhaps Eliza was too – and that Eliza was the opposite of her husband in character, and could not put up with his oddities. Rosalie wrote to her sister, Isabelle, in Antwerp that Eliza had married Mr. Law against the wishes of her family, and that they stayed together as long as Eliza's grandmother (Martha Washington, whom Eliza dearly loved) was living. But after Mrs. Washington died in 1802, Thomas Law went to England, and as soon as he returned the couple agreed to separate. Rosalie thought the whole situation was the strangest thing ever. We learn also from her letters, that her husband, George Calvert, had the disagreeable task of managing the Laws' affairs regarding the separation. Law settled on his wife support for her lifetime, its value to be reconveyed to Law himself and his heirs at her death. The couple officially divorced until 1811. Eliza died on the last day of 1831, and Thomas nearly 3 years later.

During the years after the separation, Law continued his development work, building residential structures, a hotel, a sugar mill, and investing in other buildings – particularly in the area near the White House and Capitol, the center of political life. He was an eccentric individual, an intellectual who took an interest in the theater, published poetry and moral philosophy, and was one of the founders of a learned society (the Columbian Institute for the Promotion of Arts and Sciences), the membership of which included the names of just about all the prominent leaders of the period.. Thomas Law supported the abolition of slavery, and also the colonization in Liberia. He invested heavily in the development of Washington and was frequently on the verge of bankruptcy.

Continued on page 4

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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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Julie Rose

President's Corner

As I am writing this column, we have been dealing with the effects of COVID-19 for more than six months and unfortunately it seems like we will continue to do so for many more months. However, we have gone virtual for several lectures presented by our Historian, Susan Pearl. We hope you had a chance to see them. Many thanks to our partner, Maryland Milestones, in assisting us with them.:

Old World Master Paintings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1p8djlAbA8>

Civil War Diaries: <https://youtu.be/3kf8k86Z54o>

Two Centuries of Education in Maryland: <https://youtu.be/mzb1ik3rrkE>

I am going to sound like a broken record, because, we still don't know when the DeMarr Library and places we partner with will be reopening or when in-person, albeit socially distanced, lectures and programs can continue, so visit our website www.pghistory.org or our Facebook page to learn the latest.

Best wishes to Aaron Marcavitch, the former Executive Director of Maryland Milestones/Anacostia Trails Heritage Area. Aaron is leaving us to be the Executive Director of Connecticut Landmarks. Aaron has done a lot to promote Prince George's County and he will be missed! The Society has partnered with Aaron and Maryland Milestones/ATHA for many events and we want to thank him for his support.

Shortly it will be the time of the year for membership or sponsorship renewal. The Society appreciates your continued support, especially during the pandemic.

The Society is working on plans for a virtual holiday gathering. Details are still being discussed, so more information will be forthcoming as we get closer to the season.

I hope everyone who reads this remains healthy and well.

-Donna



To celebrate the gift giving season, the Society is offering free shipping on all book orders postmarked by December 31, 2020. This offer is not available for on-line orders.

Memberships are great gift ideas too!

Happy Holidays!

Fundraising

Everyone seems to be bombarded by appeals to help support one project or another. The Historical Society is no different. We have three on-going donation opportunities:

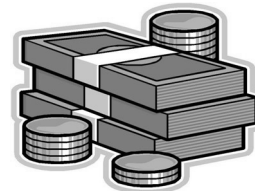
John J. Petro Fund—which supports placing ghost structures and signage at Mount Calvert Archaeological Park

John M. Essex Memorial Fund—provides financial assistance to scholars, authors, graduate students and doctoral candidates for research on the architectural heritage of the County

DeMarr Library—helps to purchase books and other items needed to aid researchers and others in learning more about the County's history

A contribution of any size is appreciated and tax-deductible. Please send your donation to:

PGCHS
PO Box 1513
Upper Marlboro, MD 20773



COVID-19 Update

When we went to press just after the week ending June 13, Prince George's County was reporting a total of 18,174 confirmed cases of Covid-19 and 629 deaths. The numbers had begun to improve at the beginning of May when, after two full months of steady increase in the number of confirmed cases and the number of deaths, we began to see a plateau followed by a fairly steady decrease in both numbers. From a peak of 2439 new cases and 78 deaths during the last week of April, the following weeks reported steadily decreasing numbers; the last week of June reported only 467 new cases and 19 deaths. The numbers rose again immediately following the Fourth of July weekend - 835 new cases and 10 deaths during the week of July 12 through 18th. It stayed in this general range through the rest of July to mid-September, with confirmed cases numbering

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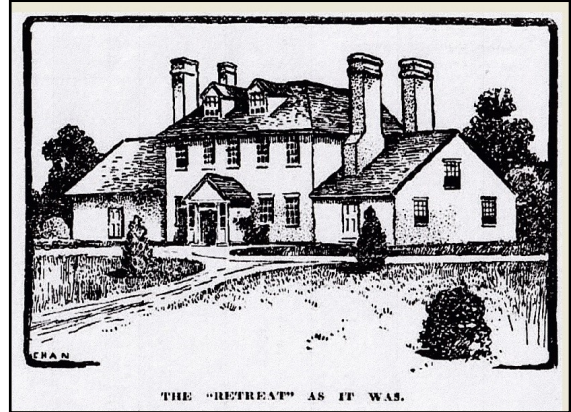


Miniature of Thomas Law by Anna Claypool Peale, 1824

After the official divorce from Eliza, Thomas Law decided to establish a country estate; in 1816 he purchased parts of two tracts, Brothers Joint Interest and Silver Hills, amounting to about 240 acres in Prince George's County, a short distance east of the Eastern Branch. On the prominent high point of the property he had his country house built, and called it "The Retreat" (also known as "Tusculum"). By spring of 1817 he was advertizing in the *National Intelligencer* to engage someone to make "100,000 bricks, 2 miles from the Eastern Branch. Wood will be provided." The house was large, two-and-one-half stories in height, of wood frame construction, with a view of the developing city of Washington. (Note: The architect of Law's house at "The Retreat" is as yet unknown. The similarity between some interior features of *The Retreat*, with some features of *Bowieville* in Prince George's, which was built within the same few years, makes one think that both houses could have been designed by the same individual, but *Bowieville*'s architect, also, has not yet been identified.) Thomas Law began to dabble in agriculture, attempting to grow various crops with limited success – Law is quoted as saying "When I began farming I knew not wheat from rye, nor rye from barley, but I well know what are the benefits of farming." He became active in the Prince George's Agricultural Society, at one time serving as its president.

Fortunately, there are some wonderful sources of information about Thomas Law, and we found a great deal about the house that he began to build in 1817. On the evening of December 4, 1900, the Columbia Historical Society met in Washington, and the highlight of the evening was a paper, prepared and read by George Alfred Townsend, the newspaper correspondent and author known as "GATH."

Its subject was Thomas Law; it covered much about Law's life and accomplishments, and included significant information about his home, "The Retreat." An article about the Society's meeting and the paper about Thomas Law appeared in the (Washington) *Evening Star* the next day, and included a drawing of "The Retreat.As It Was."



"The Retreat As It Was" (north façade),
Evening Star. December 5, 1900

Townsend's paper was published by the Columbia Historical Society a few months later, entitled "Thomas Law, Washington's First Rich Man," in the *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, Vol. 4 (1901), pp. 222-245. From the details of Mr. Townsend's description, I am inclined to believe that "The Retreat" looked recognizably like "The Retreat As It Was" printed in the *Evening Star*, though it had probably not been occupied by Letitia Brown (who had died during the year 1900) for some time. Townsend wrote the following description of the house:

The Retreat was a farm and forest upon the Maryland tableland two miles across the Eastern Branch of the Potomac. The road to it climbed a piney, gravelly hill and descended into the cove of a little stream called for the English Oxon at Oxford. A second hill was crowned with Mr. Law's wooden villa or "seat," a high, cone-roofed house with two dormers on each side of the roof-comb and four heavy brick chimneys which supplied fireplaces both to the central mansion of two stories and to one-story extensions. The full length of the ground floor was more than seventy feet by nearly half that width.

Its front toward Washington city, whose blue cavity could be seen but not the city itself, except from the two high garret window peaks, was ignominiously entered

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through a small pitch-roofed porch with a border-lighted door and brass knocker. The other, or south front, had a veranda covering the central mansion with a belvedere on its top..

The interior had eight rooms on the ground and four on the floor above, with garrets for domestics over the wings. The great room was made of the two front parlors, which, thrown into one by large dividing doors, gave a banquet hall of forty by sixteen feet, with fireplaces at the ends. Blind passages or small wardrobes further extended this room into the wings, one of which was a buffet or bar, the other a kitchen.

The motive of the house, public entertainment to large companies, was expressed by the big double room, whose corners were beveled at the folding door to admit by four doors people from the porch and from the back hall, which was only six feet wide and contracted by the stair, which opened above into the center of the house in another hall-way there.

In each of Mr. Law's 12 rooms were brick hearths for wood fires. The contracted corridors and porch robbed the Retreat of the airy spaciousness of Mount Vernon, Arlington, and other country seats on the Potomac. Except on festival occasions, there was no look of assembly or congregation in the many separated chambers. It seemed apparent that the fervent versatility of the proprietor had planned his house and ruled out architectural effectiveness in pursuance of an original plainness and materialism.

The views, however, had a Tivoli grandeur of atmosphere and Roman landscape, coves of campagna curving up through savage forest and pine to the bluffs which were washed down into the ravines. A mineral spring in the gorge nearest the house started a rivulet and gave Mr. Law a chalybeate bath. The oak and fir woodlands opened to show the Virginia high shores about Alexandria

A garden of much extent was on the plateau, which, in irregular form, had a large area, sinking down in all directions, but one, into gulches and forests The ground was poor but had a vineyard pliability and sunniness. Mr. Law raised celery here for market and imported English labor which disappointed him from its own and acquired habits of drunkenness.

Townsend introduced his description by quoting Attorney General William Wirt (who grew up in

Bladensburg, and attended at least one festive gathering at "The Retreat" during his term as United States Attorney General) – a description that strongly confirms the "motive" of this country seat as a place for public entertainment for large companies. Mr. Wirt wrote: "Such a splash at Mr. Law's (in 1820); near a hundred gentlemen, all the farmers of Prince George's County for many miles around and all the gentry from Washington. No more ceremony and quite as much festivity and playfulness as among a flock of children just broke loose from school. The English minister and servant mounted, rattling of carriages, clattering of hoofs. First, such a dinner. But before that such fine punch down at the spring. Such excellent songs after dinner. President Monroe laughed till he cried, and sat at table beating time with his fork. Mr. Law delivered a great speech. Mr. Adams said it was a love song about murder, an agricultural speech in praise of manufactures. Quite in his style; eccentric poetry inter-larded with - it is not possible to conceive of a more agreeable country party without any ladies." (William Wirt: letter to his daughter, Laura, 23 May 1820)

Thomas Law died in July 1834, having survived his wife and all four of his children. His will directed his estate to the children of his three sons and of his daughter. James Adams (of the Washington Bank) served as his executor.

His obituary appeared in the National Intelligencer on August 1, 1834: *The history of this gentleman, could it be committed to paper, would be more interesting and instructive than some histories of greater notoriety. Impelled by that enthusiasm which formed a part of his character in favor of the free institutions of the United States, he invested in lots and houses in this city the greater part of his funds. From that time he has been identified with this city as one of its oldest, most zealous and enlightened citizens . . . employing himself mostly in literary labors, and indulging with delight in such hospitalities as his narrowed means (for we regret to say his investments of money proved anything but lucrative) allowed him to exercise.*

Executor Adams sold the Retreat property to George Brown in 1837. George Brown devised the property to his son James Fendall Brown, who died at a very young age in 1859. James Fendall Brown had not written a will, so a division of the property had to be determined by the Prince George's Court of Equity – until the Maryland State Archives

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reopens for research, we cannot know the exact disposition of the property, but we do know that J. F. Brown's widow, Letitia Naylor Brown, continued to live in the immediate area (possibly remaining in Thomas Law's house at "The Retreat") until her death in 1900; she is buried at nearby St. Barnabas Episcopal Church.. Letitia Brown's property (94 acres, the dower portion of her husband's estate) was sold in 1905. This property was sold again in 1907 to Ella Bunker (91 acres), and after Bunker's death, was sold in 1936 to a Savings and Loan Company. At about the same time, other divisions of the Brown property were sold to Warwick Village, Inc. Altogether, several adjoining residential subdivisions were planned: Colebrook, the easternmost, was developed in the 1930s; Hillcrest Gardens which bordered Colebrook on the west was developed in the 1940s, and westernmost Good Hope Hills in the 1950s. Together these three residential subdivisions form a major part of the community known today as Hillcrest Heights.

In the fall of 1932, before the development activity began, architect Delos Smith, who worked during those years with the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), found and recorded what was left of the house at "The Retreat" ("Tusculum"). He photographed and measured what he called the "rotting ruin," and, gaining information from the Townsend description, sketched a possible restoration of the building. We know that Thomas Law greatly admired George Washington, and was said to want his country retreat to resemble Washington's iconic home; Smith's sketch, showing the long south veranda, suggests that connection with Mount Vernon. Fortunately for us, Delos Smith recorded his visit to "The Retreat" and published "A Forgotten Mansion – Tusculum" in *Records of the Colum-*

bia Historical Society, Washington, D.C., Vol. 50 (1948-50), pages 158-165, including his photograph of the ruins and his sketch. Smith speculated on whether one of the architects that Law knew might have had a hand in the design of the house, but "fancies that the design was conceived by Law himself. His long experience in building was informed by a cultivated taste."



"A Forgotten Mansion – Tusculum" (south façade)
Sketch by Delos Smith, 1932

So there are puzzles about *The Retreat* yet to be solved: first of all, its architect or designer, keeping in mind that it is always possible that Thomas Law undertook to design it himself. Careful study of the papers of Thomas Law, held by the Furlong Baldwin library at the Maryland Historical Society (which is scheduled to reopen soon) should reveal Law's interactions with some of the early architects practicing in Washington. I would like, when the Maryland State Archives reopens for research, to see Equity Case 448 which decided the disposition of James Fendall Brown's property. But we are lucky - now, if and when our library gets a request for information about Thomas Law's house in Prince George's County, we can tell the researcher almost exactly where it stood, quite a bit about its owner, and provide a substantial description of the house itself.

-Susan G. Pearl (with much appreciated assistance from Jennifer Stable and Alan Virta)

between 700 and 950, and deaths between 5 and 12.

Throughout, cases and deaths among African-American and Latino individuals are markedly higher than cases and deaths among whites. (It is difficult to state exact numbers, because by far the largest category of confirmed cases includes individuals of undetermined race.) Regarding age, the largest number of confirmed cases is in the 20 to 60-

year range, though deaths in this range are few (approximately 1%). Although confirmed cases are far fewer among those 60 and above, the percentage of deaths in that age range is much higher (approximately 12 %).

As this issue of *Then and Now* goes to press, in mid-September, the County reports a total, from the beginning in January, of 28,737 confirmed cases and 807 deaths.

-Susan G. Pearl

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. **\$30.00**
- ___ **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. **\$30.00**
- ___ **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. **\$15.00**

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