

# Isle of Kent - 1631

*"To Discover, Identify, Restore and Preserve the Heritage of Kent Island"*

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC. ■ SPRING 2010

[www.kentislandheritagesociety.com](http://www.kentislandheritagesociety.com)

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## President's Message

*Ah*, spring! After the incredible winter that added a dramatic new page to our Kent Island heritage, spring really has felt quite warm and welcomed. Our historic sites look inviting, thanks to the hard work of our maintenance crew and the women of the Kent Island Garden Club. It all came together for Kent Island Day, when the weather was perfect and the crowd was one of the best ever. Historic Stevensville never looked better.

The big parade and the new kids entertainment, together with great local food, crafts, and historic demonstrations, drew the largest number of kids and families we have seen. The new old Caboose was officially dedicated, thanks to the persistent effort of our past president Nancy Cook, talented and generous contractor Tom Willy, and their Kent Island "Caboozers." It is now open for visitors and was packed all day long during Kent Island Day. Nestled next to the Train Depot on the Cray House Green, the Caboose is a great addition to our historic venues.

Also new this year is the small Kent Island Decoy Museum in the Historic Stevensville Bank, made possible through a generous donation of his native decoy collection, by Hugo Gemignani, past president of The Heritage Society. The new museum also holds local Indian artifacts from Billy Baxter and other fascinating

*Continued on page 2*

## KIHS's First Publick Forum A Success

Our bylaws require quarterly meetings for members. But even with competent speakers on interesting topics, they rarely attract more than a small number of the usual suspects.

When VP Dan Hopkins arranged for a presentation based on intriguing research by history professor Clara Small who was willing to travel from Salisbury University for our March 10 meeting, we felt concern that only the few regulars would show up. So we quickly developed a new strategy: We declared it open to the public, moved it to a larger facility at Fisherman's Inn, and promoted it aggressively.

It worked. We almost filled the room with an enthusiastically engaged audience, which included a lot of prospective new members. [See crowd photo, page 2.]



Dr. Clara Small and President Jack Broderick confer after presentation

### Mark Your Calendar

## Kent Island Heritage Society Publick Forum

**7 p.m., Wednesday, June 9**  
**Fisherman's Inn, Lighthouse room**

### SPEAKER

**Marcy Ramsy**  
Treasurer, Chester River Association  
*"Saving The Chesapeake Bay  
One River At A Time"*



## DOCENTS

•Nancy Cook •Joanne Anderson •Myrtle Bruscup •Butch & Linda Collier •Dick & Eileen Dadds •Bill & Janet Denny •Gil & Florence Dunn •Carole Frederick •Jay & Toni Gibson •Chris Kilian •David & Jean Leathery •Geo. & Barbara Marmion •Fran Peters •Louise Price •Flora Sossi •Joan Stoer •Fran Taylor •Hanna Wall •Joyce Woodward

## KENT ISLAND DAY

•Joyce Woodward •Toni Gibson •Gary Walters

## KIRWAN PROPERTY

•Joel Berger •Bill Denny •Dan Hopkins •Wayne Morris •Hal Wilson

## KIRWAN INTERIOR

•Midge Kirwan •Myrtle Bruscup •Jane Sparks •Emma Thomas

## KIRWAN STORE MUSEUM

•Linda Collier, Curator

## CRAY HOUSE

•Bill Denny •Barbara Marmion

## STEVENSVILLE P.O.

•Francis Collier

## TRAIN DEPOT

•Florence & Gil Dunn

## CABOOSE RESTORATION

•Nancy Cook •Richard Dadds •"T" & Wayne Humphries •Tom Willey

## STEVENSVILLE BANK

•Bill Denny •Jay Gibson

## ORAL HISTORIES

•Brent Lewis

## MEMBERSHIP

•Mae Hutchison

## LIBRARY FILES

•Myrtle Bruscup •Fran Peters •Sally Morgan •Nancy Sadler

## AUDIT

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•Jane Sparks

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•Nancy Cook, Coordinator

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•Hal Wilson

## CEMETERY ID & PRESERVATION

•Josh Willis

## FARMERS MARKET

•Laura Keene

## WEBSITE

•Carole Frederick

•John Bonner

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

•John Bonner, Editor

# President's Message

*Continued from page 1*

gems of Kent Island's heritage.

We extend our hearty thanks to the Kent Island Day committee, Joyce Woodford and Gary Walters, for their magnificent teamwork in making it all happen. Thanks also to Toni and Jay Gibson, Linda Collier, Carol Frederick, Nancy Cook, and John Bonner for their valuable roles on the team.

Myrtle Bruscup's Bake Sale Team had its best KI Day ever. And thanks to all who baked your "special something" for the table – a popular part of the Island's Heritage.



**The indomitable Audrey Hawkins at Kent Island Day 2009**

Thanks to all of our docents who spent much of the day in one of our historic sites in the all-important "meet and greet" role.

The on-stage entertainment rounded out a great day. We thank our entertainers: The Chesapeake Bay Community Band, The Daschiell School of Dancing, and the Bay Country Gentlemen for sharing their wonderful talents. All in all, a great celebration, in a great place.

As we move into the summer, the focus of our board will be on strategic planning, budgeting, increased fundraising efforts, and ongoing maintenance and improvements at our unique historic sites. We have applied for a grant from the Maryland Historic Trust to help with our strategic planning effort. We invite Heritage Society members to consider offering your time and talents if you can help in any of these important areas.

A special note of thanks to a very special lady, Miss Audrey Hawkins. In

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## In Memoriam

**VIRGINIA GREEN**

**AUDREY BRUSCUP HAWKINS**

NOVEMBER 1, 1918 ~ MARCH 20, 2010

**EUGENE MARION THOMAS III**

MARCH 23, 1934 ~ MAY 3, 2010

*The society is very thankful for and will miss the interest and support shown our organization by these members. Continuing our shared mission honors their memories.*



**First Publick Forum, Fisherman's Inn, March 10, 2010**



## GRAND OPENING

# New Mini-Museum Features a Growing Collection of Kent Island Duck Decoys and Related Items

Previous KIHS President Hugo Gemignani recently gifted us with a wonderful collection of decoys by four of the seven Kent Island carvers – Kirby “Choo-Choo” Thompson, Jim and Frank Cockey, and Holten Legg – featured in his book “The Forgotten Seven.”

Kirwan Curator Linda Collier and Docents Butch Collier and Toni and Jay Gibson, with helpful guidance from Billy Comegys, created an attractive museum in the back room of the Old Stevensville Bank.

In addition to decoys, a vintage post card display was assembled from the Kirwan Collection, from a recent donation by the Severa family, and from previous donors. Also included were some Indian artifacts donated by Billy Baxter years ago.

This tiny museum debuted on Kent Island Day. For that day only, its collection was supplemented with

memorabilia from Melvin Clark; a child’s rocking swan made by Sonny Nash (mentioned in Gemignani’s book) was loaned by Art Oertel; and a recently-restored 1929 A5 Browning shotgun from Carl Wagner.

His business card says “Hand Carved Working Decoys - Carved in the Eastern Shore Tradition.” He grew up on Kent Island but now lives in Church Hill. His display table was, by chance, right by the Old Stevensville Bank’s back door where Docent Toni Gibson was winding down her day. He ducked in to see what his customers had been raving to him about.

Gibson showed his he display, attributing the various donations. He offered to loan us one of his own. She explained that our insurance doesn’t cover loaners. He left.

A few moments later he returned with a beautiful Canvasback – which he donated to The Society.



**Docent Toni Gibson accepts decoy from donor Chris Martin.**

This collection is missing pieces carved by Phil Kemp, Orville Nash, and Capt. Johnny Nash, whose carvings are also memorialized in Gemignani’s book. Anyone considering a tax-deductible donation will find a willing recipient. Please contact Curator Lida Collier at 410-643-2731 or [lsc@atlanticbb.net](mailto:lsc@atlanticbb.net).

## Garden Club Helps Prepare for Kent Island Day

**By Linda Collier**

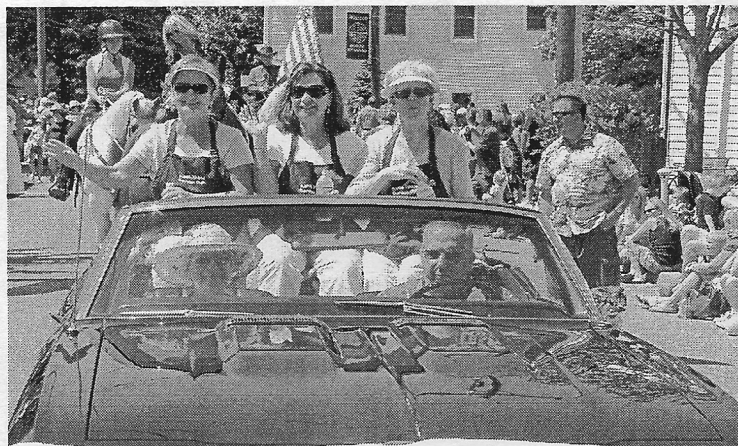
KIRWAN MUSEUM CURATOR

Kent Island Garden Club members work closely with KIHS in the spring, particularly in preparation for Kent Island Day. They spruced up floral plantings at our properties in Historic Stevensville, paying particular attention to the authentic herb garden they planted in Cray House’s back yard, which has become a popular feature on Kent Island Day.

A major initiative at Kirwan House is planting of a large number of hydrangeas, which old photos show were once plentiful there.

Kirwan Docent Hal Wilson and his wife Marilyn cleaned out the pond, planted some water lillies and restored the fountain to working order. KIHS member Rena Dye has offered to do some weeding and watering of the newly-planted hydrangeas and has donated some petunias. Nash’s Plant Farm donated some Impatiens.

Between 25 and 30 people visited the Kirwan Store Museum on Kent Island Day. It went beautifully.



# Kent Island Garden Club



# The 39th Annual Kent Island

Sponsored by The Kent Island Heritage Society





# nd Day Celebration - 2010

Photos by Jean Leathery & John Bonner





# Kent Island Days: A Docent's View

By Fran Peters

Being a docent is fun, helpful, exciting, and even historic. Being a docent is about being transported back to "the good old days" of the Eastern Shore, which I find enjoyable even though I'm a transplanted Texan. Ours is a heritage worth passing on.

In a way, I'm glad I didn't live in those "old, old, old, days. There were no cars, fast-food or computers. Or self-adhesive stamps for the letters I like to write. As you might guess, I'm a docent at the Old Stevensville Post Office.

When I arrived this Kent Island Day dressed in my 1900s working-girl costume the morning was beautiful, sunny with a blue sky. A light breeze stirred around Main Street. Lots of activity was happening all around me.

I waved to Butch Collier, already at the Post Office, as I delivered my offering to Myrtle Bruscup at the Bake Sale table, her docents all dressed in colonial finery. Tents and tables were in place, people were busily setting up displays of arts and crafts and children's activities. The big stage sat empty awaiting the day's full program of entertainment. Smoke waft from food vendors' fires. When I walked into the Post Office I became the "post mistress."

The parade will be starting soon, and foot traffic will be the only traffic on Main Street for this event. I hoisted the Stars and Stripes and put out the "Open" flag

that used to communicate to town folks that the post office was open for business.

On the tall slant-top desk, typical of post office furniture of the day, is a guest book that tells us that our visitors are from far and wide. Authentic combination postal boxes line the counter. "Have you come for your mail?" I ask them to their surprise. We hand them an envelope with a route stamp attesting that they are in Stevensville, Md. in 1910.

Visitors often recall childhood memories of going to the post office with their parents to pick up their mail. In Stevensville, RFT — Rural Free Delivery — didn't start until 1929. They're often impressed that this 131 year-old building is in such good shape.

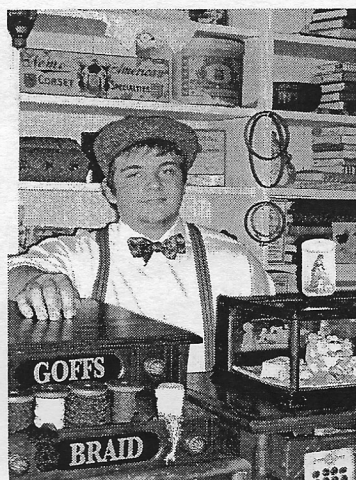
I remember our hometown post office as a social center where people would chat with neighbors and get the latest gossip. Letters were thoughtfully composed and eagerly awaited. Today emails, twitters, and instant messages span the globe at the speed of light.

Kent Island Day turns back the calendar and slows down the clock. More than 100 of our many visitors slowed down and signed our guest book.

This is what makes being a docent rewarding and so deep-down soul-satisfying. If you are one of those who regard typing with your thumbs as something less than a worthwhile social skill, then maybe you're docent material. And you get

to dress up in quaint costumes and pretend, very much like when you were five years old.

Call me, Fran Peters, at 410-827-5250, or Nancy Cook, at 410-757-2502. We'd like to hear from you.



**Docent trainee Cameron Sewell assists his grandmother, Linda Collier, tend Kirwan Country Store Museum during Kent Island Day.**



**BAKE SALE TABLE.** Mae Hutchison, Myrtle Bruscup, and Emma Thomas sold about 60 mouth-watering, freshly-baked cakes, pastries, and breads donated by KIHs members. They brought in \$404 to help support Kent Island Day. [Yellow bundt cake baker see p. 8.]

*Docent Fran Peters attributes this story to Wally Dashiell, who lives next door to our popular Historic Stevensville Post Office.*

Mrs. Dashiell looked down from her apartment next door and saw that the noise disturbing her tranquility was a woman pounding on the door of our Historic Stevensville Post Office. "That's a Historic Post Office," she yelled down to the woman and went back to her book.

The pounding resumed almost immediately. She went back to her window and yelled down to the woman again, "That's a HISTORIC Post Office."

"I know," the woman yelled back. "I need some stamps. What do you suggest I do."

"I suggest you go home, get a dictionary, and look up the word 'historic,'" advised the indomitable Wally Dashiell.



# Many Thanks to Our Kent Island Day Patrons

Robert & Lorraine Aaron  
Willis & George  
Endschoen  
Bruce & Mary Ann Avery  
Patty Baker  
Carol & Bob Bateman  
Aliya & Sara Berger  
Gisela & Nick Blades  
Nancy & Harry Bly  
Sally & Daryl Boden  
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Myrtle A. Bruscup  
Joe & Ida Jean Buckel  
Wanda & Kenny Bullen  
Francis & Pat Carnes  
Jane & Earl Chambers  
Curtis Chance  
Trish & Fred Chew  
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Mary Jane Leaverton  
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Peggy & Brent Lewis  
Rawle Mannix  
George & Barbara  
Marmion  
DeeDee & Kevin  
McCracken

Bill & Sally Morgan  
Nash's Plant Farm  
Delores O'Brien  
Karen & Arthur Oertel  
June Palmer  
Norma & Bill Patton  
Paula's Fine Jewelry  
Fran Peters  
Thelma Phillips  
Mary Lou Pierson  
Vincent Placek  
Faye Councill Polillo &  
Peter M Perhonis  
Annie May Price  
Chip & Lisa Price  
Louise Davidson Price  
Mildred Price  
Sandy Reinhard  
Lynne Riley-Coleman  
Kay Seward Roser  
Lori Rossbach  
Mary A. Rouchard  
Bill & Hass Russell  
Nancy Sadler  
Bernie & Dorotheann  
Sadusky

Elizabeth & John Seidel  
Cameron Kersey Sewell  
John & Shari Smigo  
Harold Smith  
Richard & Flora Sossi  
Jane Sparks  
Rose Grollman Spik  
Joan & Nicholas Stoer  
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Dorothy Tolson  
Thompson  
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Thompson  
Dick & Rosalie Tillman  
Robert & Sara Towers  
Mike & Mindy Voelker  
Honey Voermann  
Bob Walker Pest Control  
Hanna Wall  
Jim & Gayle Walls  
Shirley & Robert Walters  
Marilyn & Harold Wilson  
Bill & Madlyn Wooters  
Donald & Ruth Wyatt  
Charles & Bonel Zakarian

## President's Message

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late March our beloved Miss Audrey died at the age of 92, after several difficult months. Her legendary spirit and determination were an inspiration to all of us on the board. Miss Audrey's passion and energy are reflected throughout our Society, as our treasurer, past president, docent coordinator, knowledgeable board member, and mentor. She was one of those rare folks whose dedicated hand was involved in almost every aspect of the Heritage Society for a generation. We miss her dearly. We plan to hold a tree planting ceremony in September at the Cray House to honor her endless contributions to the Society and to this Island that she loved so deeply and worked so hard to preserve.

Meanwhile, we hope you'll consider attending our upcoming June general meeting. See meeting box on page 1 for details. This meeting will be open to the public, so consider bringing a friend. We hope to see you there.

*Jack Broderick*



Magnificent backlit photo by Jean Leathery.

## CLASSIFIED

### IN SEARCH OF

Will the person who baked the **yellow pudding bundt cake with fudge icing** please call Docent Myrtle Bruscup at 410-643-5596. She has several requests for your recipe.

### WANTED

A slab of light gray marble with dark streaks, about 2x3-feet or larger. Needed for teller's window at Old Stevensville Bank in Historic Stevensville. Please call Jay Gibson at 410-643-6483. Or email him at [jgibson@atlanticbb.net](mailto:jgibson@atlanticbb.net).





## Pap's Backyard

By Mitchell Vakerics

The first thing you notice in Pap's backyard is a rusted-out truck with flat tires. It clearly hasn't been road-worthy for years. But this is no ordinary truck.

This truck is a monument. Bold, black letters on both sides declare "Gil Dunn Pharmacy," the Kent Island drug store Pap ran for 25 years. It was a mobile billboard for Oriole tickets, Maryland State Lottery, physical fitness, baseball consulting, dancing tips, equestrian advice and air service.

In 1952 when the Bay Bridge was opened, Pap decided to drive across to see what was on the other side. He took the first exit to Stevensville, and 55 years later he's still here. Pap says with a grin on his face, "I never looked back."

Pap is a huge Baltimore Orioles fan. A section of his pharmacy was a shrine to his idol, Jimmy Foxx. One day two sports writers walked in and found a lot more than cold medicine. They later wrote an article headlined "You Never Know

Where You'll Find It," about the priceless Jimmie Foxx baseball memorabilia they found in Pap's drugstore.

As his monument grew, people began to talk. Before long, Jimmy Foxx heard about it. By the end of his career, Foxx would give Pap MVP awards, trophies and All-Star Jerseys, including one he wore when the team played in Japan that is so valuable it now sits in the Babe Ruth Hall of Fame.

The Gil Dunn Pharmacy was replaced by Rite Aid, then Happy Harry's, then Walgreens. But to many Kent Islanders it can never be replaced.

Pap is still known as Dr. Dunn. He was a friend to his patrons and knew them by name. Pap can't go anywhere in town without an old customer coming up to say "hi."

More than just a place to get prescriptions filled, Gil Dunn Pharmacy offered friendship and caring advice, not to mention priceless baseball memorabilia.

*Mitchell Vakerics is Gil Dunn's grandson-in-law.*

## Real Housewives of the Eastern Shore



Homegirls do us proud.

In February, Kirwan Store Museum Curator Linda Collier and Docent Toni Gibson represented the Kent Island Heritage Society at the 26th Annual Small Museum Association Conference at Ocean City. This year's timely theme was "Reality Check—Thriving In An Economic Downturn." Three days of classes covered all aspects of the survival of museums and properties, including security, grants (very limited this year) and bartering.

The final event was a dinner-dance where conferees dressed as their favorite reality TV show. Instead of "The Real Housewives of the Jersey Shore," Linda and Toni created an alternate reality: "The Real Housewives of the Eastern Shore." Linda also won the drawing for a \$400 software program for the second year in a row.

They can't deny having had fun, but they also brought home a lot of very useful information.