

Summer 1998

Isle of Kent - 1631



Newsletter of The Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc.

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

STEVENSVILLE POST OFFICE--BEFORE,
DURING, AND AFTER GENEVIEVE

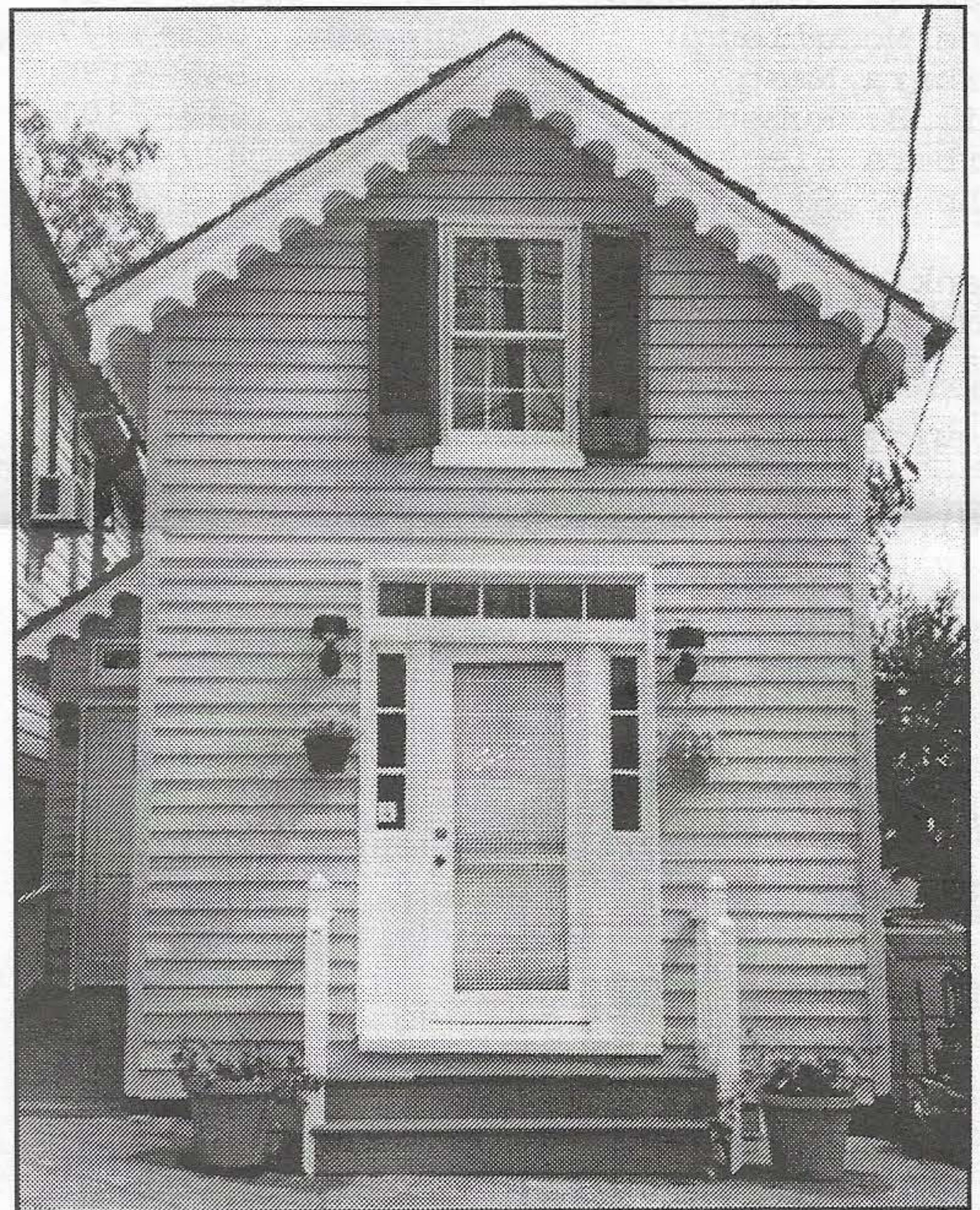
By Ralph Hoyt

Editor's Note: The following article appeared in the Bay Times, 10 September 1975. Retired Postmaster Genevieve Long tells the story of the Old Stevensville Post Office and its postmasters. Permission to reprint given by the Bay Times.

Bald-headed Jim Farley was Postmaster General of the United States in the Roosevelt administration. He was also one of the foremost politicians of his day. Now a man of considerable age, he is taking life easy in a much deserved retirement.

What, you may ask, does Jim Farley have to do with the history of the Stevensville Post Office? Simply this. Though it was one of the smallest offices in his great coast-to-coast chain, he was quite well acquainted with its busy Postmaster, Genevieve Long. In fact, they met on several occasions at various Post Office Conventions. Gene, as she is known by her countless friends, worked for Uncle Sam as Postmaster at Stevensville for 39 years.

Receiving her Commission from
See p. 3.



Sparkling with new paint for Kent Island Days 1998, the Old Stevensville Post Office now headquarters the Kent Island Heritage Society. The Post Office served Stevensville until 1951.

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Isle of Kent correspondence to Marilyn Wilderson, Editor, 419 LovePoint Road, Stevensville, MD 21666

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Cray House & Train Depot: Hostesses, Events, and Tours	Audrey Hawkins	643-5969
	Eva Thompson	643-5368
	Roland Bruscup	643-5596
	Gil Dunn	643-5414
Cray House Furnishings	Myrtle Bruscup	643-5596
Cray House Gardens: Island Garden Club	Ellen Klages	643-5687
Christmas Dinner	Emma Thomas	643-5584
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Grants	Nancy Cook	758-2502
Kent Island Days	Chair, Eva Thompson	643-5368
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President's Message

Dear friends of the Kent Island Heritage Society:

Well, another "Kent Island Days" has come and gone. I wish to thank all who helped make the day a success.

Special thanks go to Eva Thompson, who chaired the Kent Island Days Committee.

I would like to thank John Smigo and George McCough for helping me with the set-up and clean-up.

I would also like to thank the Kent Island Lions Club, the Kent Island Rotary Club, and Sonny Schultz for all their contributions and help.

Hugo Gemignani

President Kent Island Heritage Society

Kent Island Heritage Society President Hugo Gemignani is available for speaking engagements on the Chesapeake Bay and the Kent Island Heritage Society. Call him at (410) 643-1690 to make arrangements.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, after being appointed by the State Central Committee and stating to work on May 3, 1935, she lived, slept, and ate Post Office for the next 39 years, retiring on December 21, 1973.

"I knew Jim Farley well," said Genevieve Long. "I'll never forget the day he visited the little Post Office building across from Frampton's store. Sirens were screaming, and motorcycles led the parade as his caravan swept into town. Of course nearly everybody was on the scene in a matter of minutes. Such excitement in those days created quite a stir. He walked into our little office, chatted with everybody for a few minutes, then took off for Denton. He was on a tour of the Shore, singing the praises of FDR, who was running for his third term as President. I have his and Roosevelt's pictures on my dining room wall, both of them autographed personally for me." (Before I left her house she made it a point to show me the pictures in question, both of them addressed to her as Postmaster of Stevensville Post Office, and properly signed by her distinguished friends.)

"Jim Farley was a man of considerable talent. He was an author of ability, and wrote a book on politics which he called "Behind the Ballots." I had two copies of it, but gave one to the former Principal of the high school. I suppose he put it in the library. It was a good reference book on politics of the thirties."

Clinton Jones preceded Miss Long as Postmaster at Stevensville. Other well-known names "delivering the mail" from this old office were Miss May Cook, Postmaster, assisted by Miss Sue Tolson (Legg) as clerk. Wilford Carter was the Rural Carrier with John Henry Tolson acting as substitute carrier. While these names were those of the oldtimers of half a century ago, one of them stayed on to become a "household word" for over 40 years. John Henry Tolson of Stevensville served the Post Office department faithfully and well until his retirement in the early sixties.

"I didn't need newspapers during the years I worked in the Post Office.

All I had to do was listen to the regulars who came in every day. You can bet they knew what was going on everywhere. Men like old Mr. Barnes Legg, Walter White, Walter Price, and Clayland Price, Sr. They knew it if it happened, and they spent hours arguing about the "facts." Others of the same period joined them on occasion, and some pretty heated arguments developed. But no one ever got hurt. They were good friends engaging in the favorite sport of the day--gossiping!"

Back in the "good old days" the Star route carrier was Frank Thomas, local funeral director who met the trains twice a day, 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., with all outgoing and incoming mail. "Frank hit the bottle pretty good in those days," said Gene, "and he sometimes would wind up in somebody's cornfield on his way to or from the railroad station. The Baltimore and Eastern Railroad carried the mail, and for many years it was delivered to the post office by horse and wagon. The rural carriers used the same means to deliver the mail to the farmers from Kent Point to Love Point. In the wintertime it could be pretty rough, even after the automobile came into regular use. The roads were dirt and sand and could present quite a problem for the Rural Carrier."

The Stevensville Post Office was moved in 1951 from the little building on the east side of the main street, to the big corner building now housing an antiques shop. John Henry Tolson didn't want to leave the old building, according to Gene. He liked the little building and had worked there for so many years. It took a lot of persuading on Gene's part to get him to let them move his desk to the new corner location. Once settled there he soon became acclimated, and things settled down to a smooth routine. Evelyn Fairbank was a clerk in the office in those days. Retired now (January 1973), she is living quietly in Stevensville, "remembering the days in the Post Office, which I enjoyed very much." Annette (Nettie) Aaron was a clerk then and is still employed in the new office.

See p. 4

The new Post Office, located on the south side of Route 50 at Thompson's Creek Road, is a modern, quite adequate facility. In startling contrast to the old buildings, the new office serves twice as many rural patrons now than it served as recently as 1971. The new Postmaster, Henry Wilson of Tunis Mills (ten years service in the Easton Post Office), was the rural carrier when he came to the Stevensville office in 1971. Carolyn Annette Aaron was the officer in charge until March of 1974, when Mr. Wilson became Postmaster. Also working in the office as staff members are Betty Snyder and Marian Corrison. There are now two rural routes serving the "out of town" patrons (including residents of Stevensville) working out of the new location. Rural Route 1 is served by James Cummings with William Eckstorm as Substitute Carrier. Route 2 is the responsibility of Mary Hammerer, with Mildred Weddin acting as substitute carrier.

Forty-two hundred (4,200) residents of Kent Island get their mail from the Stevensville office. Of the several hundred boxes available for rent in the office, 140 are now rented. The office serves fifteen families via General Delivery.

An interesting observation which may give us "food for thought" may be found in the following statistics: In February of 1971, 465 families on Kent Island were serviced by a Rural Carrier. Today, two carriers deliver mail to a total of 1,077 families, more than double the patronage in a little more than four years.

Quite a difference from the days in the little old building in the middle of Stevensville that was rented to the government for \$18.75 per month. The heating bill climbed to the astronomical figure of \$25.00 per year.

Jim Farley and Franklin Delano Roosevelt would go down in a dead faint if they motored into the Stevensville Post Office of 1975. Their noisy motorcade with all its hoopla wouldn't cause one of today's sophisticated eyebrows to quiver one tiny bit.

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Minutes

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, March 19, 1998

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 P.M. by President Hugo Gemignani, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Hugo noted that because the minutes of the last meeting were printed in our newsletter, they were not read but approved as printed.

The Treasurer's report was given by Audrey Hawkins and accepted as read.

COMMITTEES

Kent Island Days chair Eva Thompson noted that this event will be held one day this year, with a parade and a pageant of the 350th Anniversary of the founding of Kent Island.

Florence Dunn is the contact person for this year's Patron Ads.

Myrtle Bruscup is the contact person for the Bake Table on Kent Island Days and she reminded the membership of the need for baked goods.

OLD BUSINESS

Hugo proposed accepting the new Bylaws as written. Bill Denny motioned, seconded by Audrey Hawkins, and a unanimous vote was rendered.

The Cray House will be closed to the public for safety concerns as printed in the newsletter. The Society currently has \$30,000 in the restoration fund, with a total of \$100,000 needed for repairs. Hugo has asked for donations from organizations and any help the members could give in getting donations.

NEW BUSINESS

Hugo proposed changing the Society's business year from a fiscal (July to June) to a calendar year, in order to notify the I.R.S. Bill Denny motioned, seconded by Audrey Hawkins, and a unanimous vote was rendered.

The evening's guest speakers, Trish Surles and Dottie Phillipe, authors of Clough's Chance, were then presented.

Eva Thompson presented a copy of the book to Myrtle Bruscup for the KIHS genealogy collection at the library.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Jones
Recording Secretary

Treasurer's Report

Audrey Hawkins



January 1--March 19, 1998

Beginning balance in Checking Account \$29,991.19
Accounts Receivable
(Includes membership dues, bank interest, sales income, sales tax, K.I. Days patron ads, K.I. Days refund 1997, scholarship fund, and miscellaneous) \$ 4,315.68

Total Receivables & Checking Account Balance \$34,306.87

Disbursements

(Includes purchases for resale, Cray House electric, sewer, postage, office supplies, donation to Stevensville Middle School band for Dec. concert at Cray House, Post Office heat and maintenance, Kirwan House storage, legal fees for Cray House title search, and miscellaneous) .. \$ 2,542.99

Balance in Checking Account (3-19-98) \$31,763.88
Balance in Fund-Raising Savings Account \$ 7,465.65
Balance in CD Savings \$ 692.25
Balance in CD Savings \$13,950.98

March 20--April 30, 1998

Beginning Balance in Checking Account \$31,763.88
Accounts Receivable
(Includes dues, bank interest, sales income, sales tax, patron ads, stock dividend, vendors, scholarship fund, and K.I. Days book ads) \$ 4,073.58
Total Receivables & Checking Account Balance \$35,837.46

Disbursements

(Includes Cray House & Train Depot expenses, postage, printing, office supplies, donations, K.I. Days supplies, Post Office expenses, storage, refreshments, copies of pictures) \$ 3,658.97

Balance in Checking Account (4-30-98) \$32,178.49
Balance in Fund-Raising Savings Account \$ 9,771.37
Balance in CD Savings \$ 700.78
Balance in CD Savings \$13,950.98

KENT ISLAND DAYS 1998



Members Audrey Hawkins, Olive Lowe, and Myrtle Bruscup watch the KIHS booth on Kent Island Days 1998.

The lambs in Janet and Bill Denny's pasture joined the chorus as the Kent Island Community Band played selections from The Music Man and Sousa. The opening ceremony at 11:00 began with an invocation by Ken Valentine, followed by Nancy Cook's beautiful rendition of the National Anthem.

Hugo Gemignani, KIHS president, introduced guest speakers Delegate Wheeler Baker, Commissioner George O'Donnell, Register of Wills Winsie Cannon, and Clerk of Circuit Court Scott MacGlashan. All praised the efforts of KIHS to preserve the heritage of Kent Island.

The Stevensville Middle School Band led the parade at noon. A blow-out on the Kilian's Model T added some excitement to the parade and an extra challenge for Chris, who managed to change the tire in the middle of the parade.

The Society's strawberries and ice cream concession and Bake Sale were popular, and no one went hungry or thirsty with hot dogs, crab cakes, chicken fingers, popcorn, iced tea, and soft drinks available from vendors.

Organizations with booths included KIHS (at the Old Post Office), Chesapeake College, and Queen Anne's County Department of Social Services.

Crafts under tents ranged from star halos with streamers to pottery, fine-art photography, and plants. "The Little Trains" ran through the town center, and children's activities, organized by Bobby Nash, buzzed around the Cray House.

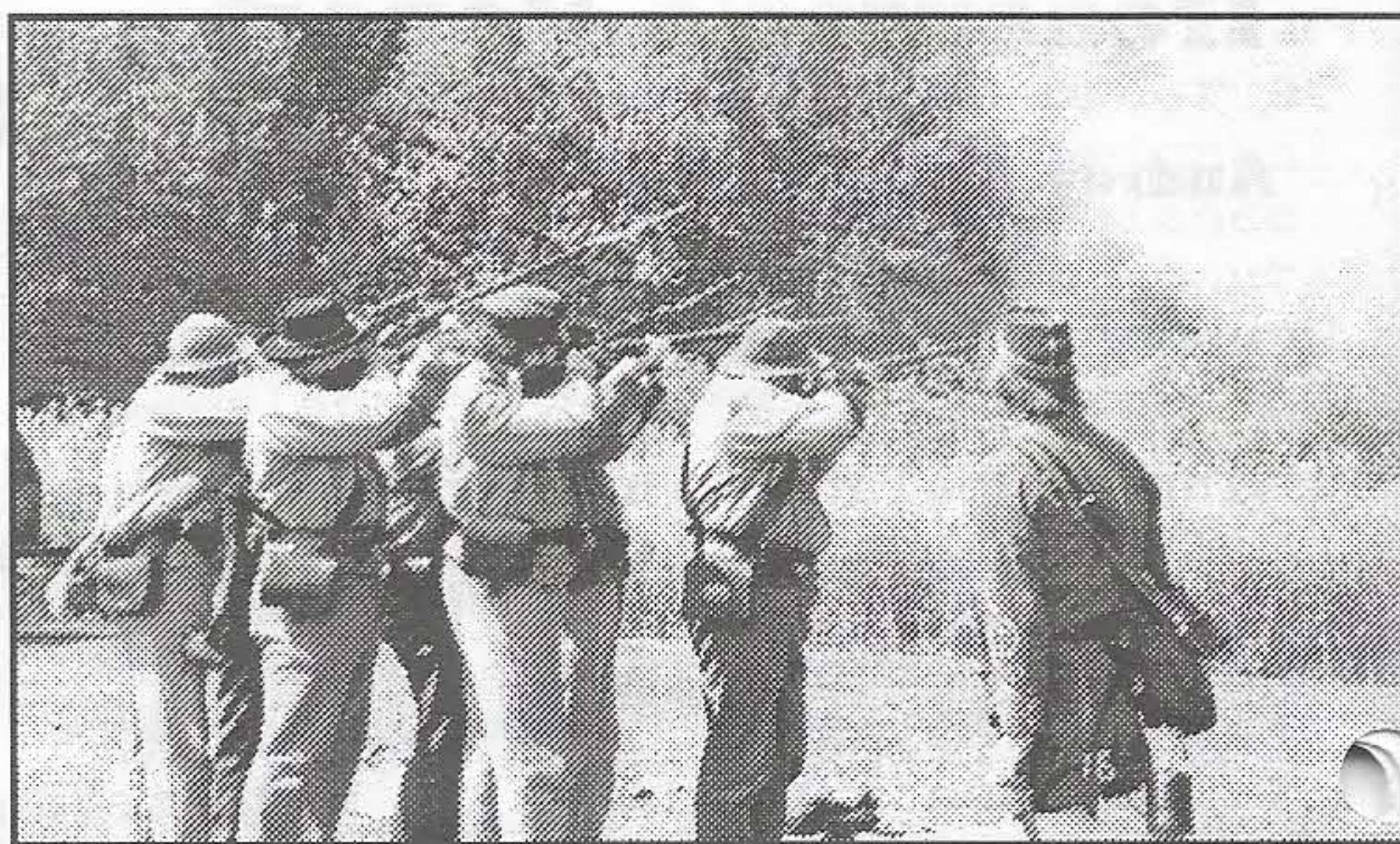
Dancers and gymnasts from Meg Yoast's "Dance Connection," Dashiell School of Dancing, and Island Gymnastics performed on the stage near the Stevensville Train Depot. Also performing was the SMS Jazz Band.

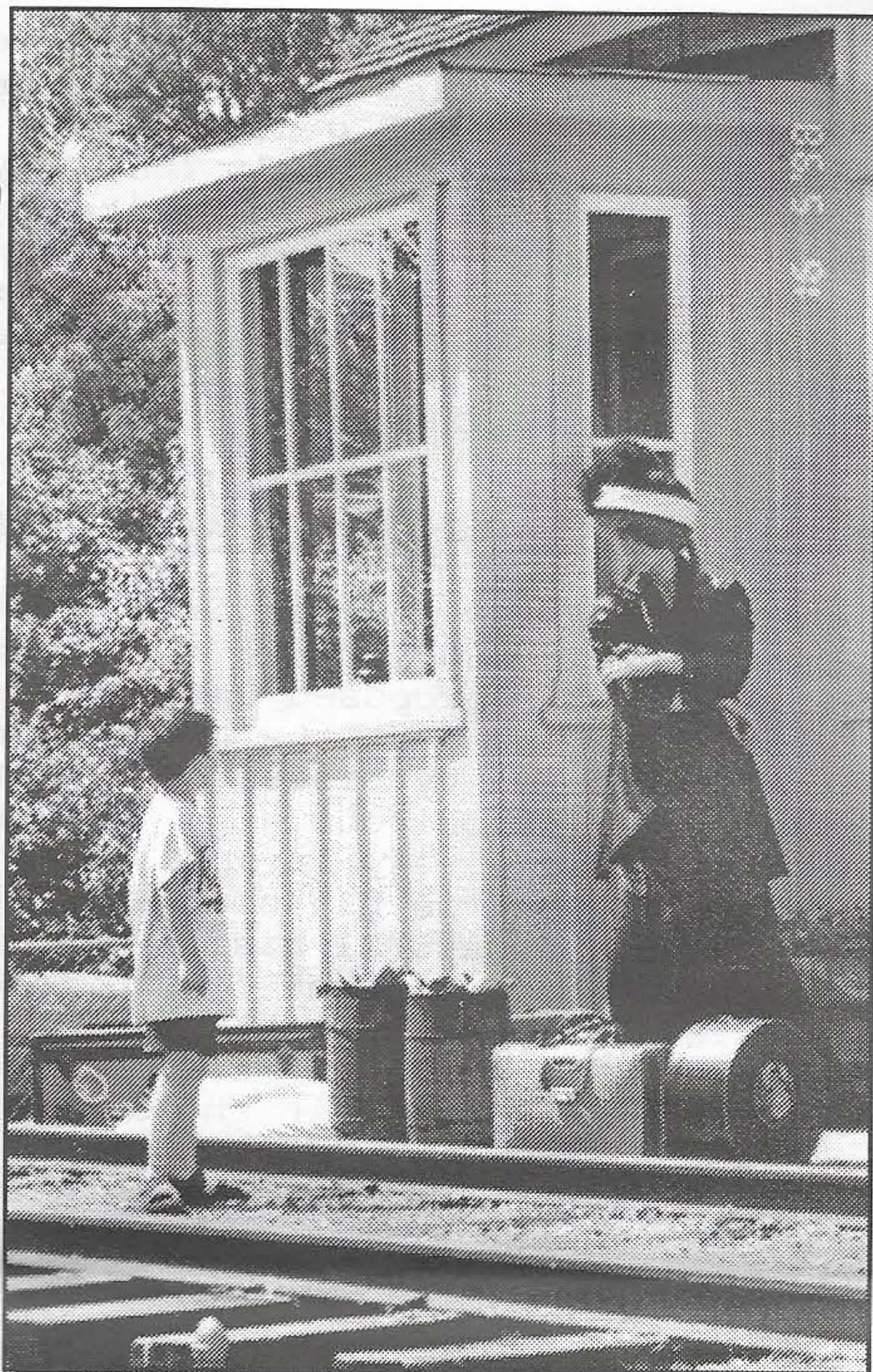
The Kilian family sang and performed small ensemble music along with Hal Cesna, Terry Grant, and Sharon Volm at various sites during the day.

At Christ Church sanctuary, a video, A Patent for Conflict: The Founding of Kent Island, ran continuously between 11:30 and 4:00.

Bright, sunny weather again graced Kent Island Days. See you next year--May 15, 1999!

The 9th Virginia, Confederate States of America, demonstrate Civil War military tactics, Kent Island Days 1998.





A young visitor and one from yesteryear eye each other at the Stevensville Train Depot, Kent Island Days 1998.

A special thank you...

We had a very successful Bake Sale at Kent Island Days due to the greatly appreciated cash donations and the great response to our requests for baked goods, all of which were delicious looking.

A big Thank You to Virginia Donaldson, Jane Grafton, and Grace Jones, who helped me at the cake table and withstood the heat and humidity of that day!

It was a very successful effort; we'll have to do it again next year!

Myrtle Bruscup

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.

Dear Kent Islanders,

Please accept our sincere "Thank You" for a job well done!! Each one of you helped to make KENT ISLAND DAYS a very special celebration by giving the best of all gifts--yourself.

Sincerely,

Eva, Emma, Jane, and Bobby Ann



The Kilian Family Players--Geoff, Terry, and Chris--perform Mozart for Kent Island Days 1998.

LIBRARY REPORT

Myrtle Bruscup

Henrietta Grollman helped me take an inventory of our books in the library reading room, and to our dismay we found that our two copies of Tombstones of Queen Anne's County, vol. 1, were missing. The Kent Island Heritage Society has given us one copy for replacement.

The following books have been donated to our collection:

Nick Hoxter, Growing Up on Kent Island and Nick Hoxter, A Walk Back in Time--donated by the author

Gene Williamson, Chesapeake Conflict--donated by KIHS member Edward Yealdhal

Trish Surlles and Dottie Phillipe, Clough's Chance--donated by the authors

All have been sent letters of appreciation by me.

GENEALOGY REPORT

Myrtle Bruscup (410-643-5596)

The following books have been purchased by the Kent Island Heritage Society and presented to the genealogy collection:

Queen Anne's County Marriages and Obituaries:

1851-1853	1920-1921
1898-1899	1922-1923
1915-1916	1924-1925
1917-1919	1876-1942 (obits and marriages in misc. Md. newspapers)

If anyone noticed, two banks of files were off their racks and jammed against one another. After a little pulling on the racks, I finally got them back in line, and now all hang upright and neat.

I have answered inquiries, met people at the library to show them our records, cut any and all pertinent information from the newspapers (events, marriages, deaths, new churches, and new businesses, etc.), and put them in the library files.

Any information, records, pictures, or newspaper articles you may have and wish to donate to our genealogy collection would be greatly appreciated. We can photocopy items and return the originals to you.

So, those who haven't already done so, get busy and research your family tree.

PLANNING MEETING FOR CHESAPEAKE EXPLORATION CENTER AT VISITORS' CENTER

Audrey Hawkins represented the Kent Island Heritage Society at a planning meeting for the proposed Chesapeake Exploration Center at the newly opened Queen Anne's County Visitors' Center at Kent Narrows on February 26, 1998.

Opened to visitors in April, the Visitors' Center is planning a museum of history and natural history in a downstairs room adjacent to the main room. Ideas about what should be included in the exhibit were solicited from the participants in the day-long program.

The workshop was directed by Kathy Magruder, Marsha Fritz, and Peggy Burke. Discussion ranged from the natural environment and history to the arts, all of which are important aspects of attracting visitors to the Eastern Shore and Queen Anne's County specifically.

Also attending the workshop was Darrin Lowery, who conducted the archaeological survey of Kent Island for the Kent Island Heritage Society several years ago.

DOCENT TRAINING PROGRAM HELD FOR QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY HISTORIC SITES

KIHS members Audrey Hawkins, Nancy Cook, Gil and Florence Dunn, Kathy Magruder, and Marilyn Wilderson attended the docent training workshop put on by the Historic Sites Consortium of Queen Anne's Co. at the QAC Visitors' Center March 14, 1998.

Organized by Jo-Ann Murphy, Docent Training chairperson, and Marsha Fritz, Consortium Administrator, the workshop attracted representatives from historical organizations and sites and people interested in

volunteering opportunities in the county.

The program began with a slide talk by Jeannine Disviscour on 18th-century furnishings from Eastern Shore homes in the Maryland Historical Society's collection. Of special interest to KIHs members was a dining room sideboard (c. 1790-1810) owned by Dr. Samuel Thompson, who had a clinic for small pox vaccinations on "Medical Hill" on Kent Island.

The next speaker was Dr. Charles Boas, a geography professor retired from York College, who is now associated with the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore.

His talk on railroads on the Eastern Shore delineated the two major periods of construction: 1832 to 1870, when railroads aligned north to south in order to get seafood and farm products to Philadelphia and northern markets; and 1870 to 1906, when railroads expanded west to east, connecting Baltimore ferries to Love Point with tourist destinations at Ocean City and Lewes, Delaware (ferry to Cape May, NJ).

During lunch, representatives from Queen Anne's Co. historic sites described their facilities and programs: Wye Mills Grist Mill, Kent Island Heritage Society, Queen Anne's Co. Historical Society, Queen Anne's Museum of Eastern Shore Life, Sudlersville Community Betterment Club, Tucker House, and Queen Anne's Co. Court House.

After lunch, "Salty" Joyner, a tourism consultant, provided entertaining information and encouragement for "first person narrators" at historical sites. "The blue-collar workers of the cultural world," museum volunteers are "teachers" who have the most direct and interactive contact with museum visitors. As she talked, Salty transformed herself from a 90s woman to Mary Clocker, the indentured servant of Margaret Brent, a lawyer and advocate of voting rights for women in 17th-century St. Mary's City, Maryland.

Persons interested in becoming docents were encouraged to sign up at the historic sites' display tables.

ARCHITECTS, HISTORIANS TOUR CRAY HOUSE

Fog shrouded the Chesapeake Thursday morning, 7 May, as three busloads of professional historians, architects, and architectural historians rolled into Stevensville at 8:30 A.M. to tour the Cray House.

Members of the Kent Island Heritage Society were on hand to greet the participants in the nineteenth annual conference of The Vernacular Architecture Forum, a group devoted to the study of "common, non-architect-designed buildings."

According to Orlando Ridout V, an architectural historian with the Maryland Historical Trust and a leader of the tour, the Forum is "the only professional organization of its kind focused on field research on local architecture," "attracting a multidisciplinary membership of students, historians, architectural historians, architects, geographers, anthropologists, and regional preservation planners."

The ninety-five visitors to the Cray House came in three shifts and went through the house a few at a time, guided by Kent Island Heritage Society founding member Mary White. A continental breakfast was served to guests outside by KIHs members Eva Thompson and Emma Thomas.

Myrtle Bruscup guided visitors through the restored Stevensville Train Depot and Audrey Hawkins greeted them at the Society's new headquarters in the old Stevensville Post Office. Also on hand were KIHs vice-president Nancy Cook and members Mordecai Gibson and Florence and Gil Dunn.

The Cray House was the first stop on the Central Eastern Shore tour (Queen Anne's and Talbot counties), with sixteen subsequent stops planned in the Wye Mills, Centreville, and Easton areas.

"The Cray House," Ridout explained, "is a great place to begin a tour of vernacular architecture in the area because it is an example of a small, early

house with exposed areas showing construction details." In addition, the contrast between the original house of 1809 and the Greek Revival room added in 1842 is very clear-cut and informative.

The three-day conference in Annapolis drew participants from all over the United States and also the United Kingdom. Other groups of the 390 registrants were touring sites on the Lower Eastern Shore (Dorchester, Wicomico, Somerset, and Worcester counties and Laurel, Delaware) and the Upper Eastern Shore (Chestertown and Kent and Queen Anne's counties).

Kristie Baynard, a 1992 graduate of Queen Anne's County High School, says the organization encourages student participation. She attended the conference in Ottawa, Canada, in 1994 and Lawrence, Kansas, in 1996 while a historic preservation student at Mary Washington College in Virginia. Baynard will begin graduate work in historic preservation this fall.

Last year's conference was in Portland, Oregon, and Georgia will be the site for 1999.

A guidebook for the architectural tour, Architecture and Change in the Chesapeake: A Field Tour on the Eastern and Western Shores, was written by Michael Bourne, Orlando Ridout V, Paul Touart, and Donna Ware and published by The Vernacular Forum and the Maryland Historical Trust Press.

Permission for this special tour was given by the Queen Anne's County administrator's office. The Cray House is currently closed to visitors while the Kent Island Heritage Society raises funds for the first phase of the planned preservation of the historic house.

The Stevensville Train Depot and Post Office, however, will be open the third Saturday of every month through October with other historic sites in Queen Anne's County.

Editor's Note: A copy of the guidebook to architectural tours of

the Eastern Shore produced for the Vernacular Architecture Forum conference is available for members to look at in the KIHS office in the Old Post Office in Stevensville. This article appeared in the Bay Times on 13 May.

TOURING

1998

HISTORIC

Queen Anne's County

M A R Y L A N D

On **6 SPECIAL DAYS** in 1998
Queen Anne's historic sites will open
their doors to
visitors.

Colonial Court House 1708



Restored 1979 Queenstown, Maryland

Spend the day
- or just a few hours -
touring Queen Anne's OPEN FARMLANDS AND
SMALL HISTORIC TOWNS on six days in 1998
when the County's twelve historic sites jointly
open their doors to visitors. Admission is free.

Open the Third Saturday of Every Month:

- May 16 - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- June 20 - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- July 18 - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- August 15 - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- September 19 - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- October 17 - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.



The Historic Sites Consortium of
Queen Anne's County

CRAY HOUSE RESTORATION FUNDS NEEDED

One of the most important projects of the Kent Island Heritage Society is now taking place - plans to restore the Cray House, reportedly one of only two existing post and plank buildings dating from the early nineteenth century (circa 1809-1817) in the state of Maryland.

An architectural survey conducted in 1994 indicates the collapsing of the first level floor system, especially on the front side of the building due to rotting plates, sills and beams. As of **February 15, 1998 the Cray House was declared unsafe and is no longer open to visitors.**

The Cray House preservation plan consists of five phases which will occur over the next four years, the total cost estimated to be about \$200,000. Grants from Maryland Historic Trust and other sources are being sought, but your financial aid is greatly needed in order to begin the important first phase of the preservation plan, the foundation and chimney repair at the cost of \$46,000. We do need to seek matching fund monies in order to complete the task to save this very important example of nineteenth century history.

The immediate goal of the Heritage Society is to raise \$20,000 in order to provide matching funds for our grant requests. At the present time we have no monetary resources to underwrite this project.

Won't you participate in a project which will assist visitors to and the residents of Kent Island in understanding their historical and cultural heritage?

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____

\$100____ \$200____ \$500____ Other_____

The Kent Island Heritage Society
PO Box 321
Stevensville, Maryland 21666

KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY

GENERAL MEETING

Kent Island Library

THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 1998

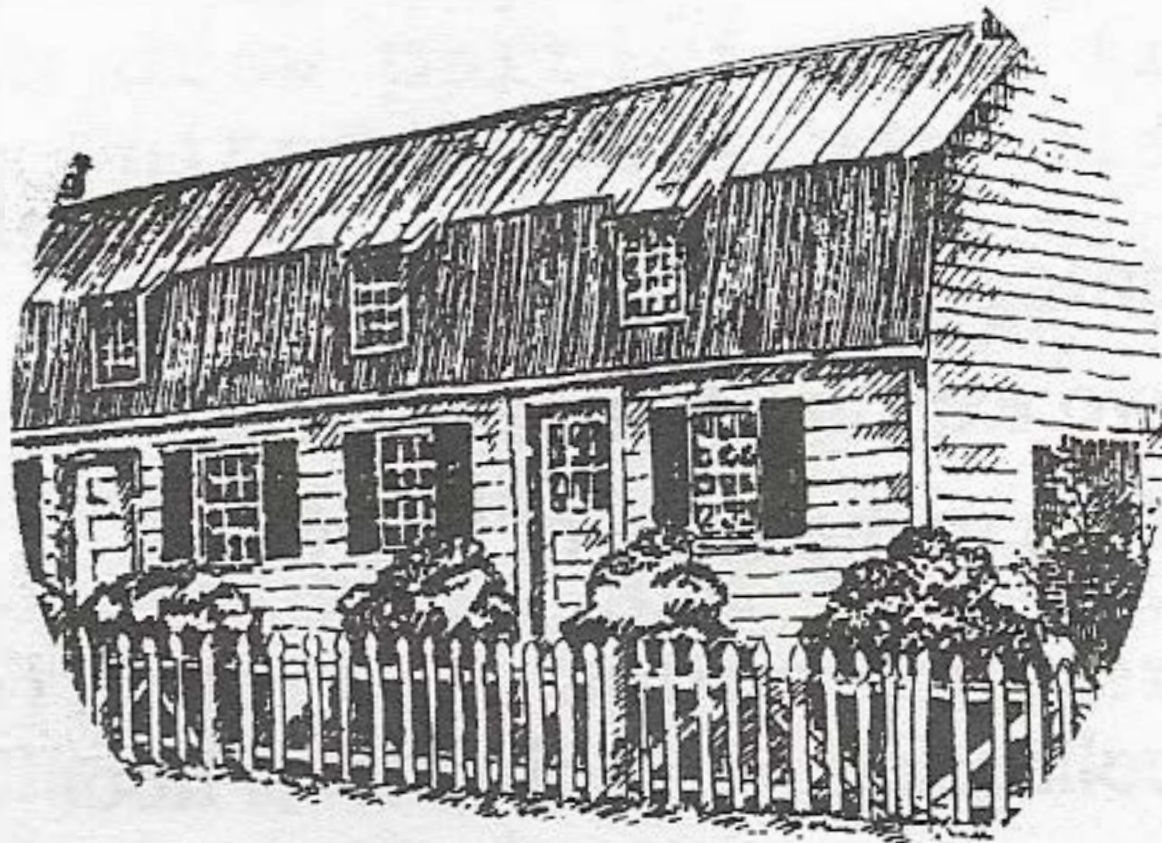
7:00 P.M. - REFRESHMENTS

7:30 P.M. - "THE STORY OF BENTON'S

CORNER" (before Rite-Aid)

Kathy Comegys - Speaker

Cray House, c. 1839



Stevensville, Maryland

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Membership dues are \$10 per person per year or
\$250 for a lifetime membership.

Name(s), address, telephone number & payment can be mailed
to **The Kent Island Heritage Society, Membership**
P.O. Box 321 • Stevensville, MD 21666

The Kent Island Heritage Society

P.O. Box 321

Stevensville, MD 21666

Address Service Requested

Bulk Rate Paid
Permit #11
Stevensville, Md.
21666

GENERAL MEETING DATES: MARCH 19, 1998 JUNE 18, 1998
SEPTEMBER 17, 1998