

Isle of Kent - 1631

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

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC. ■ SUMMER 2009
www.kentislandheritagesociety.com

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President's Message

It's been an active summer for many of our members. Ms. Audrey Hawkins has kept our dedicated team of docents busy during our historic site open house tours on the first Saturday of each month from May through October. She has also hosted numerous special tours of our sites, through the County Office of Tourism. Thanks to Ms. Audrey and to all of our talented and knowledgeable docents. You put a living face on our history!

In June, we participated in the Delmarva Chicken Festival at the County 4-H Park, with an information display of artifacts and information. We met hundreds of folks and hopefully gained a few new members. Thanks to Carole Frederick for the success of that effort. It was fun, and the chicken from that giant frying pan really was good!

Also in June, we supported the new "Art in the Park" event in Historic Stevensville, by opening some of our sites. We are grateful to the Kent Island Arts and Entertainment Committee for their thoughtful donation to the Heritage Society after the event. We look forward to supporting it next June.

Nancy Cook has moved the

Continued on page 2

KIHS Establishing Member Email Address Database

By Jack Broderick
KIHS President

The good work of The Kent Island Heritage Society to preserve our heritage is accomplished through the efforts of a too-small cadre of volunteers. Calls for volunteers largely go unheeded, perhaps because members are wary of committing significant amounts of time. But there are many organizational needs that require only episodic commitment of limited amounts of time.

We seek to initiate a paradigm change to broaden member participation. We hope to create a way to tap into the pool of expertise among our membership who can't commit to ongoing involvement, but who are willing to handle an occasional ad hoc task.

We have no idea what skills, talents and interests most of our members have to offer. So we don't know whom to ask. Examples of fields of interest include accounting, architecture, building trades, clerical, construction, grants, event coordination, fund raising, horticulture, law, marketing, organizing, research, and more.

We would like to start this initiative by collecting members' email addresses, not only to provide a more rapid communication system to keep members informed, but to begin an inventory of members' special skills and interests.

Please contact me at 410-643-6452 to discuss the possibilities or email jackandlizzie@atlanticbb.net.

Continued on page 2

Mark Your Calendar

Kent Island Heritage Society An Old Fashioned Picnic

1 to 5 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 20
Kirwan Farm

See page 6 for details.

DOCENTS

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

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 •Lora Lake, 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 •Mary White

AUDIT

•Lynn Riley-Coleman

•Jane Sparks

QAC HISTORIC SITES

•Nancy Cook, Coordinator

DEVELOPMENT

•Kerry Lake •Hal Wilson

CEMETERY ID & PRESERVATION

•Lora Lake

FARMERS MARKET

•Laura Keene

WEBSITE

•Carole Frederick

•John Bonner

PUBLIC RELATIONS

•John Bonner, Editor

President's Message

Continued from page 1

Caboose restoration project to a whole new level, thanks to the dedicated effort of gifted historic preservation craftsman Tom Willey. After Tom donated many professional hours to spruce up the Old Stevensville Post Office in time for Kent Island Day, he turned his attention and his tools to the old Caboose in Stevensville. The new historically-accurate bead board, which Tom manufactured himself, and the brilliant new red paint give us a hint of what the full preservation project will look like. That sparkling old caboose was featured in a Bay Times front page article this summer. Thank you, Tom and Ms. Nancy. We look forward to more collaboration on the project in the future.

We want to extend thanks Laura Keen for her undaunted efforts to organize the Stevensville Farmers Market again this summer for the benefit of the Heritage Society. It's been a challenge to attract growers and vendors to the Market, but one that we think is well worth it. It's a great community event that we hope to welcome back next year on the Cray House Green.

We have been involved in the County's effort to update the Comprehensive Master Plan. The Historic Preservation Topic Committee, which several of us served on, has drafted a strong recommendation for a new Historic Preservation Ordinance and a Historic Preservation Commission with a role in future land use planning and decisions. We'll follow the process closely as it comes before the Planning Commissioners and ultimately the County Commissioners for final approval. The Heritage Society has been a strong advocate for years for such an ordinance to help preserve and protect our many vulnerable historic structures throughout our county and particularly on the Island. We're hoping for success.

Speaking of historic structures, as we work up our budget for this year it is painfully evident that several of our historic buildings "need more fixin' up than we have money to fix 'em up with," to put it simply. We are seeking new fundraising efforts and ideas and will be appealing to our members for your help.

We are sorry to learn that the State Highway Administration has again delayed their plans for much needed road improvements in Historic Stevensville. They had planned to begin work this summer to redo Main Street between the fork and the corner at Love Point Road, but that will have to wait for the State budget crisis to ease up. I won't hold my breath.

On a happier note, Hal Wilson has been hard at work this summer on the Kirwan House grounds, along with the talented and generous ladies of the Kent Island Garden Club. Thanks to Hal and the Gardeners, the Kirwan House Lawn and Gardens should look great for our upcoming picnic.

We hope you plan to attend our Fall Heritage Picnic, on Sunday, September 20, starting at 1:00 p.m. The picnic has grown to be a new and special tradition, celebrating the best of our unique Island heritage, with fried chicken, your favorite potluck dish of vegetables, hors d'oeuvres, or desert, and some great local music by our neighbors down the road, "The Little Creek Boys." We hope to see you there.

Jack Broderick

Email Database

Continued from page 1

Isle of Kent would also like to hear from you if you have a Kent Island story inside of you trying to get out. Writing skill is not a requirement. That's what editors are for. Contact John Bonner at 410-643-6779 or jlbonner@verizon.net.



Laura Keene and Diana Bonner tour Farmers Market at Cray House Green.

A Special Tribute to The Kent Island Heritage Society's Surviving Founder

Mary Jones White

*T*his November, the sole survivor of the original organizers of the Kent Island Heritage Society, Mrs. Mary White, will celebrate her 95th birthday. Mrs. White, along with Marian Steuart, Emily Denny, Mildred Schoch, and Annie Mae Price established our society with the goal "To Discover, Identity, Restore and Preserve the Heritage of Kent Island." Without the efforts of these early trailblazers much of our history and culture would have been lost.

Back in 1975, as Americans were preparing to celebrate our nation's 200th birthday, towns and districts across the country were working hard to be identified as a Bicentennial Community. Recognizing Kent Island's historical importance as the third English settlement after Jamestown and Plymouth, a committee was formed with the aim of achieving this prestigious designation. "That's how it started," Mary White says. "Marian Steuart called me to see if I would help, and I said, of course."

Soon after being awarded the Bicentennial recognition, the committee acknowledged that Kent Island was changing drastically. A way of life that had stayed the same for generations was now disappearing before their eyes. They believed in our haste to embrace the future we were too eagerly letting go of our past. With future generations in mind, they formed the Kent Island Heritage Society and set forth on their new mission.

The Kent Island Heritage Society and its

members have accomplished much in the last 34 years. Mary White is an inspiring figure in the group's continuing efforts to have a positive impact on an ever-changing community. Mary is a meticulous keeper of records with an eye for the everyday happenings and objects that many of us tend to overlook. Among other achievements, she was the driving force in creating the historical and genealogical files at the library in Stevensville and the original editor of this very newsletter.

Born Mary Jones, her family moved from Cecil County to Centreville when Mary was ten years old. Her father was a Water Street merchant who occasionally loaded up his two-door sedan and drove to Kent Island to sell his wares. Mary graduated from Centreville High School. She married Island farmer Alfred White in 1932, and the young couple was blessed with two daughters.

Mary White and the other co-founders of the Kent Island Heritage Society provided vision and leadership during a time when vast amounts of knowledge were threatened with careless abandonment. They deserve our thanks.

Birthday cards and notes can be sent to:

Mrs. Mary White
c/o Mrs. Mary Jane Leaverton
200 Woodbury Lane
Queenstown, MD 21658

Welcome New Members

Robert Schober
Grasonville, Md.

Rose Spik
Stevensville, Md.

In Memoriam

DANIEL CARROLL SHORTALL

ALSO ASSOCIATED WITH THE
MUSEUM OF EASTERN SHORE LIFE

The society is very thankful for and will miss the interest and support shown our organization by this member. Continuing our shared mission honors his memory.

Isle of Kent

John Bonner, Editor

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Old Dogs, No Tricks

By Skeeter Philpot

Saying goodbye to friends is never easy.

There've been other dogs. Growing up around here, most every family I ever knew had at least one. They weren't always inside dogs, and they usually lived on table scraps.

Trips to the vet were rare. If somebody's pooch got run over and there was a chance they'd make it, then maybe.

But neighborhood dogs were an important part of our childhood. My people alone had yellow mutts, black mutts, white mutts, and a Chesapeake named Deeohgee with curly rust-colored hair and one of that breed's peculiar smile — except bucktoothed and

crooked. There was a VIP, a Blackie, a Whitey, a Mac, a Max, a Neighbor, a Tippy, and a Steven.

But we're done for now. We just said goodbye to two old dogs we lived with for the last decade and a half.

Tammy Sam and I adopted Bruno back before our daughter Debra Winger Philpot was born. Relieved to be sprung from the rowdy pack of street dogs and orphans he was bunking with at the shelter, Bruno turned out to be a mellow prince, a snuggly lover of women and favorite uncles. Strangers always asked if he was a Husky. He looked like a wolf but had the personality of a lamb.

Bruno was quickly

followed by Shy.

Neighbors kept her tied to a tree with a short rope. The second time we asked for her, we came home with a dirty, sad, orange and black hound dog, a shanty-like doghouse, and a bone dry water bowl. She had heartworms and ticks and an ill-considered will to escape our clutches. Love, medicine, regular meals, and a dry place to sleep cured her of all that. For the majority of her life she sat around and barked orders like the Queen of All She Surveys. You never met a dog with more personality or a stronger will.

An old Kent Islander once told me that old, sick dogs are lucky to have friends who care enough to know when it's

time to say goodbye. The Islander said that every beloved dog leaves paw prints on your insides and are by your side forever, but when there's nothing left of a dog's body but its wounds, it's time to let them go.

And after 15 years, that's what happened. We all took one last trip to the vet together.

Yeah, I've counted a dozen dogs as family, and if time and circumstances allow, there might be one or two more. But we're done for now. Saying goodbye to friends takes a lot out of you. I think it was Will Rogers who said, "If there are no dogs in heaven, then when I die I want to go where they went."

Amen, Brother Will.
Amen.

**Many thanks to the following donors to our 2009 scholarship fund.
Scholarship winner to be announced in next issue of Isle of Kent.**

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Honey Voermann
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Garry & JoAnn Walters
Paula A. Warner
Mary White
Charles & Bonel
Zakarian

The Kent Island Federation of Art Its Beginning

By Gil Dunn

The Kent Island Federation of Art developed in the 1950s from a small group of ladies who had a strong interest in art. They met weekly at an old house in Stevensville, talked about their favorite subject and practiced their talent of painting and drawing.

Other artists joined the group, and their membership grew. A permanent home was found in town, an attractive two-story house on East Main Street. Extensive renovation created an art gallery on the second floor and the carport on the east side of the house was converted into a first floor gallery for those who had a difficult time going to the second floor.

The exterior was repainted a vibrant coral. An outside flight of stairs was erected on the west side of the house to afford an emergency exit.

The site's many mature trees provide a great shade area for the summer camp students. An eye-catching 100-year-old linden tree near the front entrance is a landmark, along with a sizable offspring of the famous Wye oak tree. A full grown walnut tree is on the west side of the house, and a large mulberry tree on the rear of the property join three large maple trees.

KIFA has become a great addition to the Kent Island cultural community. Many members come from distant locations to participate in activities and enjoy the facilities.

In the interest of full disclosure, KIFA purchased this house from the author, Gil Dunn, who gained a wonderful neighbor from the transaction. —Ed.

...Once Told Me...

By Brent Lewis

School has started, and that got me thinking . . .

Billy Denny once told me, "When I first went to school, who should be teaching but Miss Bessie Bright, who later on became Miss Bessie Benton. One day I was sitting in her class and she was teaching the sounds of different letters and words. She was pronouncing the C-H sound. She and the rest of the class moved on but I must have liked that ch-ch-ch sound. I was breaking up the whole class, getting laughs from all the little girls. I thought it was the funniest thing in the world, 'ch-ch-ch.' After telling me about three times to stop, she got up and slapped me right across the mouth. Scared the heck out of me, but I didn't ch-ch-ch anymore!"

Reggie Jones once told me, "After we moved from Grasonville, I went to Chester School. There was a coal stove and outhouses. When I first walked in I was the new kid from somewhere else. Bobby Timms, Teddy Lee, Tucker Lee, they were all my cousins but none of us knew it. Nobody would let me sit down. Billy Baxter was the one who slid over and gave me a seat. We ended up great lifelong friends.

"I got my only two lickings there. Once we were all out on the playground fooling around and made out we were going to throw one of the Austin girls down the hole in the boy's outhouse. I took a licking for that one."

Wes Thompson once told me, "I remember the first day I went to Chester School. My mother took me up in a Model T Ford. My cousins Cliff and Dick Coleman came up and carried me in. Made sure I got there. It was a two-room school. Miss Covey had one of the rooms, and she was the principal. Miss Evelyn Jones was the

other teacher. When we went to 6th grade we went up to Stevensville with Miss Larrimore. Now she'd beat your butt, boy. I never made it through 7th grade, didn't stay the whole year. Went out and got on a boat. I did that until Uncle Sam needed my services."

Eva White Thompson once told me, "First I went to Chester School. Miss Catherine Jones was one of my teachers. So was Miss Evelyn Jones. Then was Mary Larrimore after I started going to school in Stevensville. I remember her so much.

"I graduated in 1937. Our class had 19 or 20 students — all girls except for Harry Dadds, Jimmy Marks, and John Palmer. A lot of young men didn't graduate. By 8th grade many went to work on the water or a farm. Back in those days, passing 8th grade was a high water mark. When we graduated 8th grade, Charlotte Spry and I; our parents bought us permanents. We had to go to Annapolis to get them. We came back on the ferry and got on the wrong one! We found out too late we were headed to Claiborne. We were scared to death. You can't imagine two little 8th grade girls — we weren't big as biscuits — realizing they were on the wrong ship. We had our permanents, and we were pretty, but we were going the wrong way. The captain let us have supper with him. There was a minister and his wife onboard. They took us to Easton and called our parents. Daddy drove down to Easton and brought us home. That was some adventure, let me tell you."

That's what those Islanders once told me.

Author Brent Lewis's new book, Remembering Kent Island: Stories from the Chesapeake, is selling well and receiving rave reviews.

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**The Kent Island Heritage Society
Invites you to AN OLD FASHIONED PICNIC
at Kirwan Farm
Sunday, Sept. 20, 1 to 5 p.m.**

**Please bring your signature hors d'oeuvre,
salad, covered dish or dessert to share**

**KIHS will provide
Fried Chicken
Hot Dogs
Iced Tea and Lemonade**

*** Hay Rides * Horse Shoes * Games
* Demonstrations * Displays**

**♫ Music by
The Little Creek Boys**

Bring Your Own Lawn Chairs

RSVP by Sept. 16

**Call Carole Frederick at 410-643-3776; email her at cpfred@verizon.net;
or mail the below form to her at 521 Love Point Rd., Stevensville, MD 21666**

Names of adults attending _____

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