

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC. SUMMER 2010 www.kentislandheritagesociety.com

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President's Message

HIS SUMMER has brought many surprises to Kent Island, especially our weather. After one of the coldest and snowiest winters on record, our summer has set records in the other direction. We have seen and felt - one of the hottest on record. First it was very dry; then very wet. But the great news has been the terrific run of crabs throughout our waterways all around the Island. Many believe these are the best crabs we've seen in a generation. Here's to some great crab feasts around Kent Island this summer!

After our successful Kent Island Day in May, we redirected the Heritage Society's efforts to some long-term planning. Our June General Meeting/Publick Forum featured a presentation by Chester River Association representatives Marcy Ramsey and Allison Duckworth. They shared information on the Chester Riverkeeper Program and their scorecard on the health of the river. Since the quality of the Chester and our other surrounding waterways are so important to our heritage, our quality of life and our future, we hope to develop a long-term partnership with the Chester River Association. We anticipate mutually-beneficial efforts in the near future.

We are also focusing attention on long-term maintenance projects Continued on page 2

PUBLICK NOTICE TO

John Paulson, a noted maker of documentaries, is producing one for Maryland Public Television about the impact the Chesapeake Bay Bridge has wrought upon our lives on Kent Island. He seeks photographic depictions of our prior bucolic lifestyle—both candid still photos and 8 mm home movies—that surely sit in Kent Island closets, attics, and garages in great abundance. For this purpose, he will find your original negatives more useful than faded prints, for there is valuable detail in even your old Kodak Verichrome film that drug store processing could not reproduce. Photos, negatives, and movie film will be carefully cleaned, scanned, and returned to you in pristine condition.

I expect that almost anything related to "Smokey Joe" or the famous Love Point Hotel will be of great interest. There surely will be much more definitive information on this developing project later.

You've likely seen some of his recent productions on MPT, such as *The Chesapeake Bay By Air* and *Eatin' Crabcakes—The Best Ever*. Click on his Website john@paulsonproductions.com to view his impressively long list of accomplished productions.

More to come. We'll keep you posted.

KI Heritage Picnic Sept. 26, Kirwan Farm See page 8 for details

KIHS Wins \$4,000 Grant

By Hal Wilson KIHS director

"Vision without action is a dream. Action without vision is simply passing the time. Action with Vision is making a positive difference."

-JOEL BARKER

The Maryland Historical Trust, an agency of the Maryland Department of Planning, has awarded KIHS a \$4,000 grant to hire a consultant to facilitate and guide us in the development of a strategic plan.

This process is expected to involve KIHS board members to evaluate the mission and vision of the organization; review its internal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; and then do the same with the external environment in which it operates.

From this analysis, goals will be established and methods determined to reach those goals. The consultant may also assist focus groups of members to do the same.

Our need for a strategic plan is both mercenary and visionary.

The mercenary reason is simple: Having a strategic plan is a prerequisite for future grants for capital projects and management initiatives.

The visionary reason is that Kent Island, as the corridor linking the Eastern Shore to the Washington-Baltimore-Annapolis Megalopolis, is changing rapidly from rural to urban. Our mission "To Discover, Identify, Restore and preserve the Heritage of Kent Island" is at great risk of falling behind.

VP Dan Hopkins will chair this initiative. If you would like to participate in a focus group or if you have questions about the grant or the process, please call him at 410/643-2853.

President's Message

Continued from page 1

necessary to preserve and protect our historic sites. Our priorities are windows and painting at the Stevensville Train Depot, painting Cray House and its fence, and weatherizing the windows and roof of Kirwan House. We thank Tom Willey for his generous professional support and volunteer efforts to insure the success of these projects. And thanks also to Jay Gibson for honchoing our maintenance team. We will be seeking special donations to help with materials for these projects, such as the load of used patio bricks that KI Garden Club member Denise Swayne recently acquired for the new butterfly garden at Kirwan Farm.

Also this summer, we have taken an important step forward in long-term strategic planning for the Society. Thanks to the determined efforts of Vice President Dan Hopkins and board member Hal Wilson, we received a \$4,000 grant from the Maryland Historic Trust for development of a strategic plan. We are indebted to Sen. E.J. Pipkin and Del. Dick Sossi for supporting this grant.

Ms. Mary Alexander of the Maryland Historic Trust was on hand at our July Board meeting to present the good news. Nice articles followed in The Bay Times and other local papers announcing the grant. We look forward to the selection of a special consultant to work with us on the strategic plan and to gleaning ideas and suggestions from board members and our general

membership. So if you have a suggestion you think we should consider, please call me at 410-643-6452 or email me at jackbb@atlanticb b.net. We will commence our planning effort this fall.

I'd like to

extend thanks to several board members for their "above and beyond" efforts in the past several months.

Nancy Cook, past president and current board member, has stepped in help in several key areas. Following the loss of our beloved and very active Miss Audrey Hawkins in March, Nancy has coordinated our docent program. This summer's historic sites open house events have been well done and very well attended. Nancy has also been instrumental in developing our new budget for FY 2011. Thank you, Nancy!

I also want to extend special thanks to our previous treasurer, Wayne Morris, and to our new treasurer, Lynne Riley-Coleman. Wayne, who partnered with Miss Audrey as co-treasurer for many years, had planned to step down last December but agreed to stay on until a replacement was found. Lynne stepped up in May and assumed the responsibility. Thank you, Wayne, for your years of unselfish and dedicated service. Thank you, Lynne, for helping us move forward with this critical responsibility.

As we turn the corner from summer into fall, we are preparing for our oldfashioned fall heritage Picnic, on Sunday September 26. Check out the details on page 8, and please don't forget to register. Thanks to Linda Collier for coordinating our picnic team this year. This has grown to be a wonderful celebration of our Kent Island heritage for our members and guests, and we hope you'll plan to join

See you in September.

Jack Broderick



Docents' Days By Fran Peters

HE SATURDAY that began our long Memorial Day weekend dawned warm and sunny with a nice breeze. All Kent Island Historic sites opened at noon. Docent Nancy Cook was substituting for Carole Frederick at Christ Church, Barbara Marmion and Christopher Killian were substituting for Hanna Wall and Janet Denny at Cray House, George Marmion was station master at the train depot, Marilyn Wilson was at the Stevensville Bank, Kirwan Museum Curator Linda Collier was at Kirwan House in Chester, and I was at the Old Stevensville Post Office.

Traffic through Historic tevensville on this holiday weekend was uncommonly heavy with cars, vans, motorcycles, bicycles, and all kinds and sizes of trucks. Most of the meager pedestrian traffic was headed

to the restaurant there. This likely explains why we had fewer than the usual number of visitors.

By midafternoon, a couple of us from the Main Street sites pulled up chairs in the shade of the historic ginko tree. Sitting there in our period costumes it was sv for maginations to wander and wonder how this scene might have appeared 110

years ago at the turn of the previous century.

The cars and trucks would have been buggies and wagons; bicycles would have been horses; the macadam street, clay; and the cement sidewalks, wooden.

Downtown Stevensville was a busy, bustling center of commerce in 1900. In addition to the bank and post office, there were grocery, dry goods, and drug stores.

On such a lovely holiday weekend streets would have been crowded with Stevens-ville locals, Kent Island farm families, drummers selling the latest fashions from New York's garment district staying at the nearby Lowrey and Goodhand Hotels, as well as vacationers who had taken the ferry from Baltimore to spend some time at the storied Love Point Hotel.

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Most of the meager

pedestrian traffic was headed

The curious confluence of
Main Street, East Main, Love
Point Road and Cockey Lane

was the social center of Kent Island. Memorial Day was then called Decoration Day, a special day for "decorating" the graves of Civil War dead as well as those of the ongoing Spanish-American War.

At 4 o'clock we rolled up our flags, pulled down our shades, locked our doors, and fast-forwarded our minds 110 years to the here and now. Being a docent is about taking a time machine back in time. We do this because we love doing it and because it is interesting meeting people and telling them about our long and fascinating island history.

If you would like to consider becoming a docent, please give Nancy Cook a call at 410-758-2502. She is a long-time Heritage Society member as well as our immediate past president. She will be pleased to talk with you about it.

"Saving The Chesapeake Bay One River At A Time"

June's Publick Forum at
Fisherman's Inn drew an
enthusiastic but small
audience, largely because of
inadequate time for outreach.
A serendipitous outcome was
our discovery of areas of
common interests that may
lead to future mutuallybeneficial collaboration.

We expect to continue this new series next year. Your suggestions of topics and presenters are welcome. Please contact President Jack Broderick at 410-643-6452 or email him at jackandlizzie@verizon.net



Allison Duckworth, watershed coordinator, and Marcy Ramsy, treasurer, Chester River Association, with KIHS President Jack Broderick.

From Claiborne to Dearborns

A Tale Told by an Exceptional Young Student

Article developed from contemporaneous short narratives written in delightfully proper cursive many years ago by then-student Evelyn Thomas Jones (since deceased), aunt of Willard Thomas (also deceased). Emma Thomas passed them to Myrtle Bruscup, who loaned them to me. Some inconsistencies and gaps remain unresolved. One must marvel at how teachers somehow managed to deliver quality education under exceedingly challenging circumstances. Evelyn Thomas Jones' destiny was to become a one-room school teacher herself. This should become required reading for kids who whine about perceived hardships. —Ed.

Kent Island

Kent Island's first inhabitants called it "Island of Monoponson," the name of their small tribe. Their village was located at the south end of the island on property now known as Indian Spring or Mattapex.

Captain John Smith of Jamestown had previously sailed past Kent Island, but Captain William Claiborne was the first white man to set foot upon it in 1629. He named it "Isle of Kent" for his English shire. He established a trading post near Kent Point for trading furs and skins with the Indians. In 1631 he established a settlement of about 100 people on the southern tip of the island near Kent Point. He built a manor house he named Kent Fort near a cove known as Kent Creek. It had palisades to protect it from enemies. There were mills for grinding grain.

Kent Island was the first English settlement in Maryland. After many years the settlement grew. There were barns, stables, smoke houses, cabins for Negro slaves, small houses a mile or two apart, and a chapel.

Among the first houses build was Kent Fort Manor, which had its own blacksmith shop and mill, and which still stands.

Many books have been written about this house, the most famous being "Richard Carvel" by Winston Churchill.

The first post office on Kent Island was at a tavern near Broad Creek. The mail was brought from Annapolis by boat.

Kent Island's first church, built near Broad Creek in 1652, was affiliated with the Anglican Church of England [which, coincidentally, had medieval challenges with the Pope in Kent]. It was replaced by the Episcopal



Christ Church built in Stevensville in 1880.

Stevensville, Kent Island's largest town, was once a farm owned by two Stevens brothers, Jim and Charles. John Cray's house was the first one built in Stevensville.

Chester is the next largest town. Originally called "Sharktown," it is located at the site of Kingsley Church near the Chester River.

Dominion was originally named "Devil's Dominion" because some people living there did bad things. After they did better, the first part was left off.

Love Point got its name from a love affair between an Indian man and a woman out in a boat on a moonlit night.

Turkey Point was named for the large flocks of turkeys raised there.

Bloody Point was the place where many people were killed and much blood was shed.

Matapeake — once a busy ferry

terminal connecting Kent Island with Sandy Point — was named for the Indian tribe that lived there.

Romancoke was named for William Claiborne's estate on the York River. A ferry — Governor Emerson C. Harrington — ran from Romancoke across the Eastern Bay to Claiborne on Tilghman Island from May 1938 to the last day of 1952.

Kent Island is said to have been 21 miles from Kent Point to Love Point and about 7 miles wide. Now it is 16 or 17 miles long and 6 miles wide.

The Chesapeake Bay

The Chesapeake Bay affects our lives in many ways. Most important, I think, is that many of our fathers make their living from the Bay's extensive water resources, such as fish, oysters, crabs, clams, snails and eels. In addition to being a sportsman's paradise, the bay provides swimming, fishing, and water skiing for all to enjoy. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge connecting Maryland's Eastern and Western Shores is one of the longest in the United States.

In windy, stormy weather the bay is a dangerous place for small boats. They are imperiled by icy waters, and caution must be exercised when crossing the channel because of the large ocean liners and freighters with which they share the Bay. Waters surrounding Kent Island are the Chesapeake Bay, Chester River, Prospect Bay, Crab Alley Bay, and Eastern Bay.

Seafood is packed in large quantities and transported to nearby cities. We can help the Bay keep producing by not keeping perch under 7-inches, rock over 11-inches or up to 16 pounds, clams under 2-inches or hard crabs under 5-inches.

Kent Island's Schools

The first school on Kent Island was rivate school on the road from Stevensville to Matapeake. Parson Thompson was the teacher.

A one-story public school with four classrooms was built in Stevensville in 1909, replacing a two-room school built in 1870. It had two elementary teachers and one high school teacher. Children from all parts of Kent Island walked or rode horses and buggies to and from this school. In 1913 a second story was added to accommodate the growing number of students.

[The 1870 school building was sold and moved to Love Point Road next to Peace of Cake Bakery in 1910. The 1909 school became Old Schoolhouse Antiques in 1961 and is now a church, a fitting use for a place where students once prayed for passing grades.]

The school's heating system was changed from a separate stove with a g stove pipe in each classroom to a antral furnace in about 1915.

The first lighting system was very poor. Classrooms had to depend on sunlight. Cloudy and stormy days strained teachers' and children's eyes. The lower hall had a brass bracket lamp over the front door, the Assembly Hall a pair of six-lamp brass chandeliers, that were used only for night events. A lantern was hung outside the door to help folks see the steps. Electric lights installed in our school in December 1934 were a real Christmas gift.

Children used to bring their lunches to school in paper bags, tin buckets and lunch boxes, which they kept in their desks, the cloakroom or under the teacher's desk. During lunch hour they ate at their desks or outside, weather permitting. In the spring of 1938 a cafeteria was installed. First operated by the Women's Club of Kent Island, it later was run by the county, which

cents, and now 25-cents [remember, "now" was long ago] We all ate in the cafeteria, whether buying or packing, to demonstrate proper table manners.

The next school improvement was indoor drinking fountains. Children used to have their own drinking cups, and they had get a bucket of water from a neighbor for each classroom. Later, water coolers in classrooms were kept filled. A wash basin was in each classroom but wasn't used as often as necessary because water had to be hauled in. Since 1937 or '38 school children have enjoyed water supplied by an artesian well driven at the northeast corner of the school property.

Students used outdoor toilets in all kinds of weather. The Women's Club of Kent Island, with help of the school and the county, brought children indoor toilets in 1942–43.

Elsewhere on Kent Island during this period, six additional public schools were built in Kent Point, Matapeake, Love Point, Cox's Neck, Chester and Dominion. [Unmentioned, is a parallel black school system.] As these outlying schools were closed, enrollment in the Stevensville School increased, making it necessary to add a teacher in 1919. Another teacher was added in 1930 when the high school pupils moved to a new school.

From Dearborns to Motor Buses

Closing Middle District School near Matapeake and Kent Point School in 1921 and the Cox's Neck School in 1923 required transporting children to the Stevensville School in horse-drawn open wagons driven by Joe Hoxter and Dan Hopkins. The wagons were called "dearborns." [Named for their designer, Gen. Henry Dearborn, they were in almost universal use from 1819 to 1850 in the United States by truck farmers, peddlers and people traveling for pleasure.]

Motor buses later replaced the dearborns. Hopkins drove one until 1931, replaced by John Miliner. who was succeeded by Percy E. Thomas.

Dominion children were bussed to Chester School. Grasonville High School children were brought to Stevensville High School in a motor bus operated by William E. Denny Jr. in 1925. Love Point children were transported by motor bus driven by Mitchell Davidson. In 1935 Zell Baxter took over and also transported Cox's Neck children.

[A succession of principals served from 1910 until 1930 when completion of a new high school was mentioned. It went only to 10th grade. In 1945, the county adopted the 12-year system of instruction, which appears to have been finessed by skipping 10th grade. As late as 1948, grades at the high school progressed from seventh, eighth, ninth, Junior, Senior.

— Source: "The Islander," Stevensville High School's 1948 Yearbook]

Afterword

After graduating from the State Normal School at Towson, I taught all seven grades for three years in a oneroom school in Carmichael, which was not the typical "Little Red Schoolhouse" one would find in our country at that time.

The children ranged in age from 5 to 12 (or 13) and came in all sizes and temperaments: short, tall, skinny, chubby, laughing, serious, and sometimes sad. For the most part, they were well behaved. Most of the boys and girls lived on farms in the surrounding area, and sometimes the older boys had to help with farm chores. They were very helpful at school, too. Along with other studies and the 3 Rs, we remember the good times we had playing dodge ball and other outdoor games. We enjoyed working and playing in our one-room school.

When the Middle near Matapeake a Point Schools of were brought to first in a horse 1921 and later in operated by Mr. operated by Mr. of Mr. Hopkins place When the Cox's closed the stevensvill open wagon cal

he Tipping Point

By Brent Lewis

A-CHANGING ON KENT ISLAND 25 YEARS AGO. Sure, when the first bay bridge was completed in 1952, that was a big deal. The Eastern and Western Shores had always harbored shared interests, but until the bridge opened the two halves of our state were physically separated and worlds apart.

HE TIMES THEY WERE

Their side was the seat of power, a growing metropolitan sprawl. Our side was made up of small towns and slightly bigger small towns, farmland, and hardscrabble communities peopled by watermen and their families.

Before the bridge, "The Sho" generally, and Kent Island in particular, had maintained the same rural character for generations.

One overworked steamship or ferry system or another had provided necessary trans-Chesapeake travel for a couple of centuries prior, but when that first car drove over the William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial Bridge, life would never be the same.

Predictions of an overnight onslaught of new homesteaders and businesses were inaccurate, however. Speculators were a bit ahead of their time.

Kent Island's population explosion occurred between 1970 and 1980 at the astonishing rate of 113 percent. In the early 1980s, sewer systems were installed on parts of the island to support and encourage the growth. New construction went up quicker than the natives had anticipated, even

though they had decades to prepare.

In 1984 Queen Anne's County adopted its first building codes. Planning and Zoning issued a record 1214 building permits that year. Three quarters of them were on Kent Island.

But a lot of things really seemed to change around here in 1985.

Queens Landing water tower was built.

That May, Richard and Marie Von Lusch, who had owned the Olde Schoolhouse Antiques in Stevensville since 1961, closed their doors for good. Their business was located in what sits, was razed in 1985. Built was once the original 1909 Stevensville High School and is today the home of the New Walk Community Church.

That spring of 1985, an auction for the contents of the antique store was scheduled but when the date came, Von Lusch halted the proceedings before they barely got started. He claimed his actions were to stop items from selling at "one- or two- percent of their real value." But the auctioneers hired to conduct the sale thought they were getting good prices and called the experience "complete chaos."

Von Lusch was known for displaying occasional irrational behavior, including such dangerous antics as shooting at planes as they flew overhead in the FAArequired approach pattern for landing from the west at Bay Bridge Airport.

The Von Lusch era had always provided interesting fodder for the local newspaper and it's easy to believe synonymous for "grocery at least some of his neighbors missed the excitement the antique store proprietor brought to Stevensville for almost a quarter of a century.

The investors who purchased the building in 1985 had big plans for Schoolhouse Commons. There were to be specialty shops, offices and an upscale but moderatelypriced restaurant. That never really panned out.

Jimmy and Isabel Ewing's landmark Circle Restaurant, located in Chester on the corner of Rtes. 50/301 and 552 where Burger King now in 1952 to coincide with the opening of the Bay Bridge, The Circle was a symbol of Island hospitality.

Some locals ate three meals a day there. Hunters were catered to with early morning breakfasts and hearty lunches.

The wait staff, including Myrtle Burns, Charlotte Mitchell, Mary Russ and Minnie McShane who'd been employed by Ewing since the place opened, worked there for years and served thousands of meals. No employee was ever fired.

Ground was broken for construction of nearby Kent Towne Market a couple weeks later. Soon a Safeway supermarket would anchor this new brick strip mall, bringing competition to the Philadelphia based Acme store. The one that had been located at the old Kent Island Shopping Center on the westbound side of the highway in Stevensville for decades and had become

store" in the minds of many Islanders.

After five years of effort, McDonald's was granted a sewer allocation in 1985. Company officials planned to have their Castle Marina Road franchise open before the next Memorial Day. Modern life - and a hamburger hawking redheaded clown - had officially come to Kent Island.

Things screeched to a halt in June when it was determined that there was no capacity left in what was almost a brand-new sewer system. Allocations were tabled and hundreds of projects, both residential and commercial, were put on hold. Though some of these projects never materialized, the ball eventually got rolling again, and other projects took their place.

By the end of the year, it was official: Queen Anne's was the most rapidly developing county on the Eastern Shore. Things would never be the same after 1985.

Calendar of Events

- ☐ September 26 Fall Heritage Picnic Kirwan Farm
- ☐ December 11 Annual Meeting Election of Officers & Dinner

MY ESSAY by Peter John Molnar III

My parents are Peter J. Molnar Jr. and Jennifer Crouch Molnar.

My maternal grandfather, Thomas "Jackie" Crouch was born and raised on Kent Island. Grandfather Crouch loved to work on the water catching crabs, fish, and oysters. The decline of the seafood industry resulted in a career change to police officer at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in 1991.

My great grandparents, parents, John Walter "Smitty" and Catherine Kersey Crouch, owned and operated Couch's Seafood and Store, a seafood packing plant in Dominion.

My great great grandparents were William and Mary E. Collier Kersey. She was born in Stevensville in 1877 and was Sunday school superintendent and teacher at the Kent Island



Methodist Church.

She was the daughter of Henry and Emily Porter Collier.

My great⁴ grandfather was ship's Captain John W. Selby, who resided on Kent Island after he retired from the sea.

I believe that Kent Island's heritage should be preserved. In the early 1900s

most of the jobs on the island involved either working on the water or farming the land. When the Chesapeake Bay Bridge was built a lot of people moved to the island, and a lot of farm land was sold to developers

The Chesapeake Bay became very polluted, which affected the seafood industry. Our island is changing. Our old way of life is slowly disappearing. Our heritage needs to be preserved so that my children's children can know and appreciate where our parents came from and how they lived.

I plan on attending York College of Pennsylvania to study nuclear medicine technology. After graduation I plan on returning to Kent Island and working at nearby medical facilities.

I would like to thank The Kent Island Heritage Society for this opportunity.

Peter Molnar III is winner of KIHS's 2010 Scholarship Award.

2010 KIHS Scholarship Fund

Many thanks to the following donors who made this scholarship award possible.

Patricia Baker Robert & Carol Bateman John & Diana Bonner Richard & Deborah J. Britt Jack & Elizabeth Broderick Myrtle Bruscup Patricia C. Carnes Earl & Jane Chambers Nancy M. Cook Janet C. Denny John W. & Antoinette Gibson Violet "Sis" Harris Ava Kelly Honeycutt W. Robins Jefferson T. Avin & Ernestine Kepley Charles & Eilleen Lacijan Owens & Rose Lane **Brent & Peggy Lewis** John & Lynn Mahoney ne Palmer

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Welcome New Members

Lori Guidon Stevensville, Md.

> Iantha Teat Ridgely, Md.

Paul Twigg Pasadena, Md.

In Memoriam

HENRIETTA GROLLMAN

JUNE 30, 2010

LAWRENCE KNOBBE JR. MAY 23, 1922 ~ JUNE 12, 2010

DOROTHY C. RYKER 1924 ~ AUGUST 2, 2010

JACK MILTON STOWE June 24, 1929 ~ August 4, 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. Address Service Requested

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FEATURING

Games, Demonstrations, Displays Contests, Raffle, Scrumptious Food Tour Kirwan Farm in a genuine John Deere manure spreader Music by The Little Creek Boys

BRING

Lawn Chairs and a Signature Dish to Share Hors d'Oeuvre, Salad, Covered Dish, or Dessert

KIHS PROVIDES

Fried Chicken, Hot Dogs, Iced Tea, Lemonade Old-Fashioned, Hand-Cranked Ice Cream

RSVP BY SEPT. 22

Send names of adults and names and ages of children attending to KIHS, P.O. Box 321, Stevensville, MD 21666 or email this information to lsc@atlanticbb.net