

Isle of Kent - 1631

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

NEWSLETTER OF THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC.

SUMMER 2013

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President's Message

Kent Island Day is our signature event of the year, celebrating the unique cultural heritage of Kent Island. Planning and running this event is always an adventure – this year was even more so. I was unable to participate due to a serious illness in my family (I'm happy to report we are now home and healing). The activities I would normally perform as president and parade chair were ably picked up by willing team members. My deep personal thanks go to Nancy Cook for stepping up to host the opening ceremony, for hosting the on stage entertainment, and for resolving a number of last minute "Murphy's Law" moments. This was in addition to coordinating all the docent and open site activities of the day. My special thanks also go to Toni and Jay Gibson for stepping up to coordinate the parade, and to Dr. Earl Chambers who agreed to serve as our very able parade announcer. Congratulations and thanks to our great Kent Island Day planning team – Flora Sossi - Chair, Joyce Woodford, Gary Walters, Carl Gerg, and to all Board Members, Society volunteers, and patrons who contributed to the overall success of Kent Island Day. There were a lot of extra efforts behind the scenes this year. You guys were great!

Several thousand folks, including families and friends, shared the day and enjoyed the open historic sites, docents, historic demonstrations and exhibits, as well as artisans and crafters, community groups, great local food, and great entertainers. Our parade honored Grand Marshall, Butch Collier, retiring Heritage Society Board member. Butch served for a generation as an unsung hero on our Board. He is a retired Kent Island postman, still serves as a docent in the Historic Stevensville Post Office and is an expert on the US postal heritage of Kent

Island. Congratulations, Butch, and thanks for your many years of service. We extend our special thanks to First National Bank who generously agreed to be our major sponsor this year and helped defray the growing costs for the event. We look forward to a continued partnership with them. We hope you enjoy the Kent Island Day pictures, as we look forward to planning for next year.

We want to take a moment to recognize a Kent Island icon who shared her last Kent Island Day entertainment show with us. Ms. Wally Dashiell is retiring this month after having served the Island and our greater community through her Dashiell School of Dance. We extend our thanks for her many years as a strong, positive influence on our community and wish her the best of health and happiness in her retirement.

We also want to welcome the newest member of our Kent Island Heritage Society Team, Candy Long, who has graciously accepted the post of our Newsletter Editor, beginning with this newsletter. Candy is a former Kent Islander and descendant of the Legg family, with considerable writing experience. She comes highly recommended by Brent Lewis, famous local Kent Island author and prior KIHS Board member. Candy will be picking up from the temporary tenure of our Corresponding Secretary, Carole Frederick. Carole has served as our "newsletter coordinator" since the death of longtime editor John Bonner. Carole has done a wonderful job of coordinating a real team effort by our Board to bring this quarterly message to our membership. We offer our sincerest thanks to Carole and a warm welcome to Candy.

As you plan your summer activities, don't forget to include a visit to our historic sites which are open for public tours the first Saturday of each month through October (noon to four). Our enthusiastic docents will bring our history alive as they share their

Docents

Nancy M. Cook,
Coordinator

Historic Stevensville

Fran Peters
Butch Collier
Marilyn Wilson
Anne Marie Bouchal
Michael Bouchal
Josh Bouchal
Flora Sossi
Hanna Wall
Chris Kilian
Janet Denny
Jay Gibson
Toni Gibson

Historic Christ Church

Carole Frederick
Ernestine Kopley

Kirwan Museum - Chester

Linda Collier
Cameron Sewell
Taylor Harmon

Committees

Caboose Restoration

Tom Willey
T. Humphries
Wayne Humphries
Nancy Cook

Cemetery Preservation

Picnic

Butch Collier
Jay Gibson
Hanna Wall
Carole Frederick
Linda Collier
Toni Gibson

Annual Dinner

Toni Gibson
Linda Collier
Carole Frederick
Flora Sossi

Historic Records

Myrtle Bruscup

Development

Hal Wilson

Kent Island Day

Joyce Woodford
Jack Broderick
Flora Sossi
Toni Gibson
Gary Walters

Oral History

Brent Lewis

Public Relations

Membership

Carole Frederick
Nancy Cook

Website

Carole Frederick
Amanda Jenkins

passion about each of our sites. It can be a great experience for your whole family and a special memory for your summer visitors. Our sites are also available, by appointment, to groups and individuals for special tours. For our Stevensville sites, call Nancy at 410-827-2502. For the Kirwan Store, call Linda at 410-643-2731.

We hope you'll plan to attend our June general meeting on **Wednesday, June 19th, 7:00 p.m., at the Queen Anne's County Heritage and Visitor Center at Kent Narrows.** We'll be hosting the author and documentary producer, **Steven Torriano Berry** for a special presentation on **Black Watermen of the Chesapeake** - honoring a special part of our Kent Island Heritage. We hope to see you then.

Jack Broderick

2013 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

How pleased the Society was to award the 2013 Kent Island Heritage Scholarship to **Kendal Nicole Ruth!** On the evening of Wednesday, May 29, at the Kent Island High School Awards Assembly, Nicole was presented with the scholarship award of \$1000 to be used at the college of her choice.

To be eligible for the scholarship an applicant must (1) be a Kent Island native, (2) have at least one parent or grandparent who is a native of Kent Island. (Nicole's mother, Kim Ruth, and her grandmothers, Bonnie Pierson and Brenda Ruth are all Kent Island natives), (3) have a 3.0 GPA, (4) have performed community service, and (5) have submitted a one page essay on the importance of preserving the heritage of Kent Island (the first paragraph of which should contain a brief biographical sketch).

Ms. Ruth will be attending Anne Arundel Community College and then plans to become an architect and/or interior designer.

Congratulations, Nicole!



Announcements

Exhibition of Alex Johnson's Work

The Kent Island Heritage Society has a display at the Chesapeake Heritage and Visitor Center. Also included in the exhibit are displays by organizations of the Historic Sites Consortium, who open their historic sites on the first Saturday of the months of May through October. The display would not have been possible without the artistic endeavor of **Mr. Alex Johnson!** He has built, in miniature, each of our historic buildings to create a wonderful exhibit to entice the spectator to visit our unique sites. Many thanks to you, Alex!

On Saturday, July 6, from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., all of the KIHs historic sites will be open; but in Stevensville, in the area by the Cray House, there will also be an estate antique sale. If there are other persons who wish to sell their antiques, please contact Nancy Cook, 410-758-2502 for more details.

Save the date...

BLACK CAPTAINS OF THE CHESAPEAKE

Black Captains of the Chesapeake explores the lives and work of a group of African American Head Boat Captains sailing out of Kent Narrows, Maryland who for over 50 years have been carrying out fishing parties on the Chesapeake Bay.



S. Torriano Berry will be the guest speaker at our general meeting on June 19, 2013, 7:00 p.m., Queen Anne's County Heritage and Visitor Center.

S. Torriano Berry is an award winning filmmaker and associate professor at Howard University's Department of Radio, Television and Film.

Welcome to Our Fourth New Board Member

by Nancy Cook

Lynnda S. Kratovil was born in Baltimore and graduated from Towson High School. She earned her under graduate degree from Western Maryland College (now McDaniel College) in sociology and biology then earned her master's degree from the Schools of Social Work from the University of Pennsylvania and Howard University.

She retired in 2003 after working for thirty-four years at the Board of Child Care (of the United Methodist Church), an agency serving Maryland, Washington, D.C., Delaware, and three counties in West Virginia. During her tenure, she was a social worker for adoption and provided counseling for young women considering placing their babies for adoptions. As Director of Social Work, she supervised social workers in foster care, adoption, and residential treatment facilities for adolescents. She also set up emergency shelter for adolescents in Baltimore, Western Maryland and on the Eastern Shore. She also provided parenting training and anger management training for groups throughout the state of Maryland.

Lynnda served as president of the College Park chapter of the Business and Professional Women's Foundation. This organization, formed by two women in 1919, continues to promote women in the work-place, gives scholarships to single mothers, and is politically active concerning women's issues.

Lynnda is married to retired Prince George's County Administrative District Court Judge, Frank M. Kratovil, Sr. They have three children, Frank, Connie and Terri. Frank and his wife Kimberly live on Kent Island; Connie also lives on Kent Island; Terri currently in Geneva, Switzerland. Lynnda enjoys being involved in community activities and doing her eight grandchildren's many sports and school activities.

We are so fortunate to have Lynnda join the Board and look forward to working with her for the next few years.

Nice to "Meet" You!

I was raised on the sunny shores of Kent Island before moving with my family to the Blue Ridge Mountains of Southwest Virginia. Local history and genealogy have always fascinated me – so much so that even as a child, I read Mildred Schoch's *Of History and Houses* many, many times!

I was brought up in a family of watermen and spent several summers clamming to earn spending money before going to work for Lowery's Produce.



If you happen to remember buying Silver Queen corn from the cute little shop girl manning Mr. Lowery's wagon way back when it sat in front of Kingsley Church Cemetery, then you've already met me! – My family tree is deeply rooted on Kent Island and is centuries strong – perhaps I am related to you?

The island's rich maritime history and preservation is very close to my heart.

I am delighted to be able to serve as editor of this fine publication and honored to have a small role in preserving our local history. My husband is John, the director of a local history museum as well as a history professor in our hometown, Salem, Virginia. Although once a librarian, I now stay at home with our five children. In addition to genealogy and local history, my interests include writing, traveling, and quilting. Please feel free to email me anytime (hi5torygrl03@gmail.com) and I can easily be found on facebook. I look forward to the many stories to come!

Candy Long

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Amy and Ronald Blackman
The Bouchal family
Rick Morris and Darrah Chambers
Sally and Tim Hoyt
William Key and family
Sarah F. Lewis
Barbara Seward
Suzanne and Bryan Wieland



Maryland Transportation Authority Color Guard

demonstrated at Kent Island Day. The School of Dance will continue under the management of a former student. We are looking forward to having them participate in future Kent Island Days.



Flora Sossi displays one of the new reproduction era flags donated by Dr. Earl Chambers.

Day for Ms. Dashiell, who is now officially retired. We appreciate the many years of quality dance performances that Ms. Dashiell's students have



Butch Collier rests on the railing of the Old Post Office

Docents manned the old Stevensville Post Office, the Stevensville Bank, the Cray House, the Train Station, the Caboose, the Historic Christ Church, and the Kirwan House from noon to 4PM. They provided historic information about these historic sites and about the new flags hung just in time for Kent Island Day. Earl Chambers arranged for US Flags to be made that reflected the time frame of each site.

Artisans this year included quilters, the Treasure Hunters, and local authors, including Nick Hoxter



Nick Hoxter chats with a friend at his book table

Kent Island Day

by Flora Sossi

After a year of planning and organizing, the big day finally arrived. Weather prediction by NOAA was possible showers after 2PM - luckily that didn't occur! The opening ceremony at 10AM featured a welcome by Nancy Cook, Vice President of the Kent Island Heritage Society, followed by her beautiful rendition of the National Anthem. Former Delegate Richard Sossi read the Proclamation issued by the General Assembly declaring the third Saturday in May as Kent Island Day.



Carlene Hurd, from 1st National Bank, presents Nancy Cook with the sponsorship check.

Nancy Cook thanked 1st National Bank (formerly BankAnnapolis) for their sponsorship of Kent Island Day for the second year. Carlene Hurd represented 1st National again this year.

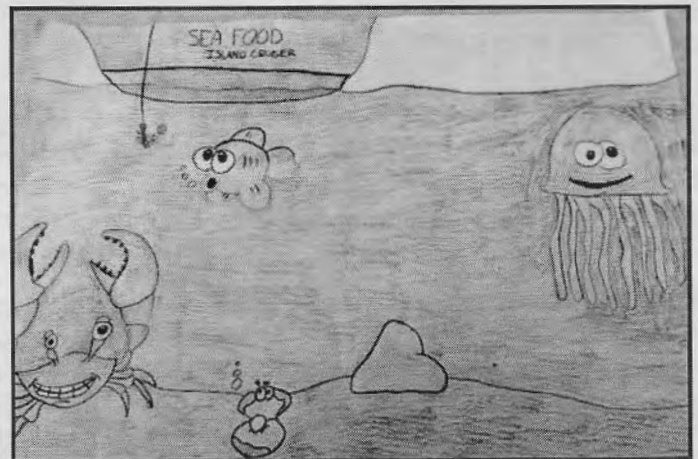
Nancy Cook also noted that the winner of the 2013 poster contest, "What I like about Kent Island", would be announced at noon. Toni Gibson (KIHS Board member) and Curtis George (teacher at Matapeake Middle School and KIHS Board member) collaborated to bring about this contest. Jacob Gibbs, Matapeake Middle School student, was the winner of \$25.00 and a family membership to the Kent Island Heritage Society.

The opening ceremony was followed by the Kent Island Day Parade at 10:30AM. The parade was led by the Color Guard from the Maryland Transportation Authority. Butch Collier, long time member of the Kent Island Heritage Society and former Board member, was the Grand Marshal for this year's event. Joyce Woodford and Flora Sossi carried the KIHS banner. Earl Chambers, Board member, announced the participants in the parade as they went by. A special participant was Bob Marsteller as "Uncle Sam". Mr. Marsteller leases the bank to the Kent Island Heritage Society.



Toni Gibson announces Jacob Gibbs as winner of 2013 poster contest

At noon, the Chesapeake Community Band began their concert and was followed by Ms. Dashiell's School of Dance at 1:00 and Sherman Martial Arts at 2:00. This was the last Kent Island



Jacob Gibbs' prize-winning poster contest entry



and Mark Lidinski. Mark graciously donated his sales for the day to the Heritage Society. The Heartland Quilt Guild sold the eagle pattern from the heritage society's oldest quilt and also generously donated all the proceeds to the Society.

The 18th Century Encampment once again demonstrated skills required to live during that period.

The train display was, as always, a big hit with kids and "big kids" alike.

Vendors and food vendors sold their goods and



Boy Scouts enjoy food vendors' wares

fare while non-profit groups explained how their services benefitted the community.

We were sorry our President Jack Broderick was unable to attend this year, but we are very happy to announce that his wife is now at home after having had a very serious illness.

ERA FLAGS IN PLACE FOR KENT ISLAND DAY

Thanks to one of our newest Board members, Dr. Earl Chambers, each of our sites has the historic flag that represents the era in which they were built.

- ♦ **The Cray House (1809)** has the flag designed with 15 stars and 15 stripes to represent the 13 original states plus Kentucky and Vermont and was made by Mary Pickersgill and her daughter. In 1812, the flag was flown over Fort McHenry and inspired Francis Scott Key to write *The Star-Spangled Banner* poem that was later put to music and would become the national anthem of the United States of America. George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Monroe all served under this flag.



- ♦ **The Stevensville Post Office (1877) and The Kirwan House (1890)** both fly the 38-Star American Flag. One star was added to the flag for the admission of Colorado. Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, Chester A. Arthur, Grover Cleveland, and Benjamin Harrison all served under this flag.



- ♦ **The Stevensville Bank (1907) and The Train Station (1902)** both wave the 45-Star American Flag for the admission of Utah. Grover Cleveland, William McKinley, and Theodore Roosevelt served under this flag.

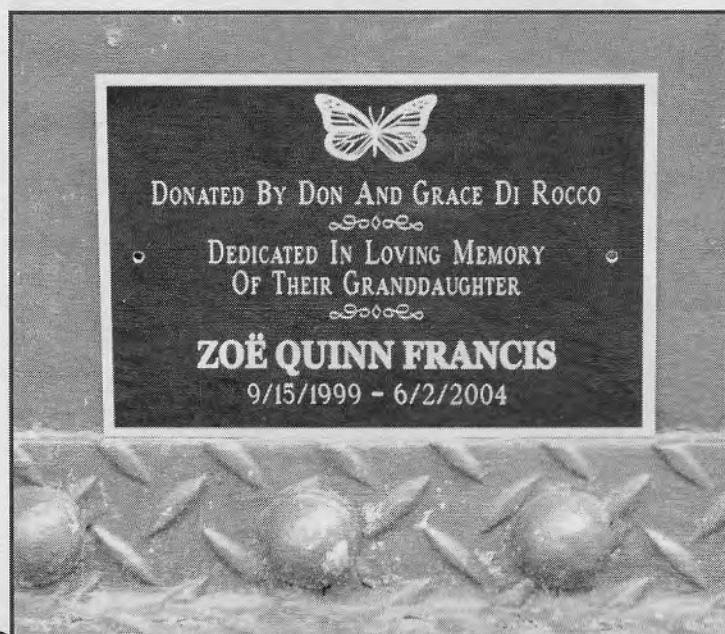


facebook

Have you "liked" us on facebook yet?

Caboose Dedicatory Plaque

Of all our historic sites, the one the children like the most is the little red caboose which has been newly renovated and now is situated on the



grounds owned by The Kent Island Heritage Society where the Stevensville Train Depot is located.

The Society has the DeRocco family of Severna Park to thank for the caboose that once was the office for their landscaping business located on Veteran's Highway in Millersville, Maryland. In 2006 they donated the C-2099 Class 'I-5D' caboose that was built between 1924 and 1929 at the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Company's Mt. Clare Shop in Baltimore.



The plaque, as pictured left, is located inside the caboose, and we feel privileged to be the recipients of such an interesting and unique place to visit.

Dedication of Ellen Klages Memorial Herb Garden At the Cray House

The Kent Island Garden Club took time out of their busy Kent Island Day activities to dedicate the Herb Garden at the Cray House in memory of one of their charter members, Ellen Klages. The Club recently installed a sign (much to the delight of Nancy Cook) that shows the layout of the culinary, dyer and medicinal herbs in the garden.

Ellen was actively involved in the original gardens at the Cray House, which were removed when the foundation was restored. Along with Garden Club member Sally Boden and friend June Burton, Ellen helped design and plant the herb garden.

Ellen was always so enthusiastic about her Garden Club activities; her spirit, joy and love of gardening live on in this special project that helps make historic Stevensville such a special place to visit.

During the spring, summer, and fall you'll find the Garden Club ladies maintaining the Cray Garden, the barrels at the Train Station, and the planters in front of the Post Office. You'll also see them in front of Historic Christ Church and the Kirwan Gardens with their rakes, hoes, shovels, knee pads, and smiles. Stop to say, 'Hi' or give a wave; they promise not to put you to work (maybe)!



The Kent Island Garden Club dedicated the herb garden at the Cray house in memory of charter member, Ellen Klages.

The Kent Island Heritage Society Board of Directors is pleased to announce that the following members were

Patrons of Kent Island Day

These donations helped to defray the cost of holding this event.

Lorraine and Bobby Aaron
Phyllis and George Abendschoen
Patty Baker
Holly and Wheeler Baker
Carol and Bob Bateman
Sally and Daryl Boden
Diana Bonner
Janet and Theophilus Breeding
Deborah and Richard Britt
Liz and Jack Broderick
Myrtle A. Bruscup
Ida Jean and Joe Buckel
Pat and Francis Carnes
Dr. and Mrs. Earl Chambers, Jr.
Curtis Chance
Forrest Chisman
Debbie and Spencer Clarke
Linda and Butch Collier
Nancy MacGregor Cook
Alice and Gordon Crouch
Louis Crouch
Clara B. Davidson
Norman Davidson
Janet Claire Denny
William E. Denny, III
Marie and Larry DiPietro
Carolyn T. Dobyns
Gil Dunn
Mr. and Mrs. Leo Wm. Dunn, Jr.
Rena and Roger Dye
Linda and Steve Elias
Mary Ford
Carole Price Frederick
Evelyn Colonna Garcia
Mr. and Mrs. Carl Gerg
In memory of Jack and Dora Gibson
Katherine, Audrey and John Green
Dorothy Jeanne Guidera
M. Hamilton & Sons
Amy Harmon
Jerry Harris
Historical Restoration
Tracie and Tony Holtman
Ava and Lathern Honeycutt
Ann Parry Horvath
Wayne Humphries
Mae Hutchison
Alice Imler

Gloria and Louis Kelley
Ernestine and Al Kepley
Joyce and Hunter Kerlin
In memory of Ellen Klages
Harry E. Klages
Karla and Eddie Larrimore
Jean and Dave Leathery
Mary Jane Leaverton
Cory Legg
Katherine and Weldon Legg
Mark L. Lidinsky
Rawle Mannix
Delores C. O'Brien
Karen and Art Oertel
June Palmer
Norma and Bill Patton
Paula's Fine Jewelry
Fran Peters
Mary Lou Pierson
Lisa and Chip Price
Mildred F. Price
Tim Price
Queen Anne's Museum of
Eastern Shore Life
Lewis R. Raszewski
Sandy Reinhard
Lynne Riley-Coleman
Mary A. Rouchard
Dr. and Mrs. John L. Seidel
Shirley Severa
Jarrett and Frank Smith
Flora and Richard Sossi
Jane G. Sparks
Joan and Nick Stoer
Iantha Teat
Dorothy Tolson Thompson
Kay Shawn Thompson
Rosalie and Richard Tillman
Sara and Robert Towers
Mindy and Mike Voelker
Dottie and Carl Wagner
Bob Walker Pest Control
Hanna Wall
Joann and Gary Walters
Pauline K. White
Joyce Woodford
Ruth Wyatt

THE BEST OF TIMES ON THE CHESAPEAKE BAY LIVED BY CAPTAIN LAWRENCE SIMS

Written by Robert L. Rich, Jr.
Published by Schiffer Publishing, Ltd.

reviewed by Alex Johnson

Larry Sims, the only president the Maryland Watermen's Association has ever had, was honored, but anxious after having been invited to introduce President Bill Clinton at Baltimore's Living Classroom in 1998. His nervousness soon subsided once he noticed previous speaker Senator Barbara Mikulski's stepstool by the podium. Sims stood on it to reach the microphone placed there for Vice-President Al Gore and other taller dignitaries who had preceded him. "Only in America," Larry Sims noted, "could a lowly fisherman be called on to introduce the President of the United States to such an important audience."

Captain Larry Sims was called upon many times for advice and for his opinions concerning the Chesapeake Bay and its seafood industry. For fifty years his answers were always in the highest traditions of conservation and preservation of the country's largest estuary. His story, superbly written by Robert L. Rich, Jr., describes the early life of Sims' great-grandfather, Willie Stevens, near Rock Hall, Maryland, where Larry also grew up and lived his entire life.

From the chapters on fishing and crabbing, to the collapse of the oyster industry, to the highs and lows of the rockfish rebound, and from "Agnes" to "Irene", there is something here for every reader. Moreover, this book is beautifully illustrated by the drawings of Anne Crane Harlan.

Sadly, Larry Sims passed away earlier this year. However, his story will live forever. If the Chesapeake is ever to recover, we will need people like him and the Watermen's Association to argue their side of the story.



From Far Off

by Alex Johnson

From far off he could see
his eel pots bunched
not scattered
as he had left them.
Nature could not do that
but human nature could.

Rounding Eastern Neck he saw them.
Big men, seine haulers they were.
He knew them, and knew
they had moved his pots.
Cutting his engine, he drifted
in on the wind.

Three men were sitting
on black beach logs
around a ground fire.
Across the water one called
out to him.
"Capt'n Charlie, come in
for a piece of bre'fast."
He anchored off and waded in,
a tired Ulysses,
another adventure thrust
upon him.

They had a big fry pan going,
sitting on a grate
over the fire,
cooking sausage and sliced potato.
Biscuits were baking in a Dutch oven.
A colored man cleaned and cut
some eels,
putting them in the pan.
They passed a jug of cold tea around.

The dark man handed Charlie
a paper plateful
from the pan.
The sausage was spicy and
covered up the taste
of the eel, some.

Them eels you're eatin', Capt'n,
come from far off, from the Sour Grass sea
I hear tell".

Charlie thought they might have come
just a little way,
right from one of his pots.
"And then they go back to breed and die.
The little ones come back here".
There's some right here on this beach
that ain't going back,
thought Charlie.

"We had to move your pots some, Capt'n,
to haul our seine," said the man.
"Don't pay it no mind,
the breakfast was good,"
said Charlie.

He waded out to his boat
swinging at anchor
and shining in the sunlight.
Motoring around he collected his pots,
dumped the eels into shallow buckets,
half filling them with river water.

Home for Capt'n Charlie was across
the Chester
and up Winchester Creek.
Halfway across he slowed
to look back.

The men were just little figures
moving on the beach.
Smoke from the fire was turning
from black to grey.

He watched for awhile;
then he reached over,
picked up his buckets,
and dumped his eels
back into the river.

Far off he could see
the little lighthouse
on the lawn of one of the
big Queenstown estates.
It marked the turn into his creek.
He would be almost home.

This poem won First Prize in the Eastern Shore Poetry Contest of 2013

USGS NEWS

The Upper Shore Genealogical Society of Maryland recently held a covered dish luncheon at their annual May meeting in the research center library located at 12156 Greensboro Road, Greensboro, MD. The luncheon was followed by a short business meeting and an election of officers for 2013-2014.

USGS will be celebrating its 40th anniversary in September, but details are not finalized at this time.

USGS has publications and e-books for sale, as follows:

Beneath These Stones – Tombstones of Caroline county

Tombstones of Talbot County

Queen Anne Remembers – Tombstones of Queen Anne's County

Tombstoning in Kent County

e-books of the 4 counties listed above (15 volumes)

Deaths Published in the Papers

e-books of Deaths Published in the Papers (7 volumes)

If anyone is interested in more information or wishes to purchase some of our publications or e-books, you may do so by contacting Joyce O'Neal at 410-438-3502 or joyce.oneal@verizon.net.

Also, if you would like to become a member of USGS, please fill out the following form:

Upper Shore Genealogical Society

Membership Application

Dues are \$25.00 annually, beginning July 1st and ending June 30th of each year

Name: _____

Address: _____

(Residence and mailing)

Email: _____ Phone No. _____

Surnames: _____

(Surnames of interest are limited to ten)

Please send application and check/m.o. to USGS, P.O. Box 275, Easton, MD 21601

Kirwan House Interview

with *Curtie Chance and Linda Collier*

(Part I)

Among other callings, James E. Kirwan (1848-1938) was a Chesapeake Bay boat captain, a businessman with a multitude of interests, an officer of the Maryland Oyster Navy, and a state senator. Known as Kent Island's Grand Old Man, Senator Kirwan's homestead store and farm were intrinsic to the lives of Chester residents for decades.

Today, through a generous gift from the senator's late granddaughter, Mary Catherine Kirwan, that Dominion Road landmark operates as the James E. Kirwan Museum and is the headquarters of the Kent Island Heritage Society. Linda Collier sits on the heritage society's board of directors and is curator and docent at the Kirwan Museum. The Kirwan property is paramount among Linda's many historical passions. She feels a connection to the family that lived here.

As a youngster growing up on Kent Island, Curtie Chance "always liked to talk to the old people." Curtie's love of history and his steel trap memory are among the traits that make him a great resource. He's also a pretty entertaining storyteller.

Linda and Curtie talked one afternoon in the Kirwan House parlor.

Linda: You were great friends with Miss Catherine Kirwan for many years, Curtie. How did you and she become so close?

Curtie: My mother and father lived here in Chester and Miss Catherine always took up, collected everybody's money, for the street lights. She'd always say hello. When I started coming down here in about second grade to visit my friend Alan Dadds, who lived with his family in the old farmhouse, I'd see her to speak to her. When we were old enough to hunt, she used to let us hunt here. When I finally got to talk to her somewhere and got a chance to ask her about her family and everything, I think that impressed and enthused her. "I'd see her, and she'd say I want to talk to you, and I'd come on down and we'd sit and talk."



Curtie Chance

I spent more time down here as I became friendlier with Miss Catherine and her boyfriend Mr. Walt (Coppage). One time Mr. Walt had to go to the hospital for a few days and she didn't like sleeping in the house alone, so I stayed here. After that, as they got older and needed more help, I stayed here right often.

Linda: One of the reasons I wanted to talk to you, is that you're like your mother Eunice; you have a very good memory for names and places, events, and family connections.

Curtie: We have to understand that tales change as they get handed down and told, added in and taken out. I'm just going to tell you what others have told me. For instance, in the mid to late 1800s, on my mother's side of the family it's said that my great-great grandfather, came to this country from Germany (with some other men whose families settled here) in a 60-foot boat. Now, I don't know how true the specifics are, but I was told this many times over the years.

I had the privilege to grow up in Chester and live across the road from Mr. Holton Legg. Around the turn of the century, Mr. Holton's father worked on this farm and lived down in the old farm house when Mr. Holton was born. Mr. Holton and one of his brothers, Mr. Elton Legg, were born down there. Will Legg was their father. Mr. Holton would always tell me about living here, farming here.

There have been a number of different people who have lived on the farm and told me about it. A lot of the families that lived nearby were connected to the farm in some way at some time or the other.

Miss Catherine's mother's side of the family were the Golts. Elmer Golt owned what we call Marling Farms now. He offered my Great Uncle Hiram Lewis to leave working for Senator Kirwan and come down there. Uncle Hiram said when he told Senator Kirwan, the senator, known to be a stern man, looked at him and said, "Well, if the president dies tomorrow, somebody else will take his place." Buck Hill's grandfather, Wes Hill, was the blacksmith on the farm. There was a woman called Cazar (Casiah Watkins) who cleaned for Miss Maude, Catherine's mother, then stayed and worked for Miss Catherine. Supposedly, Mr. Lemuel (Senator Kirwan's son and Catherine's father) was sick and failing and he was lamenting, "Cazar, I'm just wasting away to nothing" and she said, "Well, Mr. Lem, that's better than blowing up."

Linda: There was another woman, a big woman named Tiny who worked for them. We have a picture of a man with Frisbee written on the back, but we can't identify him.

Curtie: I don't know Frisbee, but there were a lot of people

KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC.

Post Office Box No. 321
Stevensville, Maryland 21666

Address Service Requested



who worked here.

Linda: And this wasn't Senator Kirwan's only farm.

Curtie: Senator Kirwan owned a lot of farms. Now back then they had walking plows that were pulled by three mules, three horses, or two oxen. Mr. Jinx Legg told me he remembered his father, Oscar, (another son of Will Legg's) saying one time Senator Kirwan got behind down here for some reason and had to draw on men from his other farms. Mr. Will told Oscar that when the sun came up that morning there were eleven walking plows in that field. That's 33 mules or horses working. It had to have been an amazing sight.

There was a man named Aytch, Jake Aytch I believe, who used to break the mule and oxen. I heard the old ones talk about it. When you broke oxen it was crucial you trained them to walk, to work together because if one oxen pulled the wrong way, it could break the other one's neck in the yoke. That's why when you train them to start with, you start without the yoke. What you do is tie their tails together.

Linda: We have a yoke on display in the museum.

Part II of this interview to follow in the next issue.



James E. Kirwan House Museum

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A Trip to the Store

by Earl Price (2008)

Henry Elmer Cronshaw and his family lived on a farm called Parsons Island in Maryland on Kent Island.

This story went as follows and was told many times by Gertrude Cronshaw Price in my presence (son, Earl) as well as other members of the family over the years. In order to purchase needed supplies [it] required a boat to cross a body of water. (On very low tide, crossing could be done by horse and buggy.)

The day of the incident, Henry was going over to Kirwan's Store in the boat to purchase supplies and, as on most occasions, he chose Gertrude, his daughter, to go with him. She had a new sunbonnet and was pleased to show it off to Mrs. Kirwan.

Henry and Gertrude arrived at the Kirwan's Store, purchased supplies, and loaded the boat; but Henry talked longer than he probably should have. Mrs. Kirwan came into the store and said, "Henry, there is a storm arising and you best leave before it breaks."

Henry and Gertrude left and as soon as they started their trip across the water, the storm came. They did have problems. They had in the boat a barrel of flour so they had to put it overboard in order to save themselves. They were soaking wet and Gertie was heartbroken because her new sunbonnet was washed away.

Both arrived on the other side near the island and they saw a light on the shore. As they approached the shore, it was Henry's wife (Alice) who was holding a lamp there marking their way home. It was not quite pitch dark as they returned safely.