

# Isle of Kent - 1631

*The Newsletter of the Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc.*

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

## President's Message

*Hugo G. Gemignani*

Dear friends of the Heritage Society: The long hot days of the summer of '95 are over. Some of us lost the last remnants of our youth with the passing of Mickey Mantle. Perhaps in the ebb and flow of life, memories of our boy (girl) hood heroes are what keep us going.

It's been an interesting summer. Work continues on the Cray House. I am reviewing grants in order to apply for restoration funds.

Progress on the Kirwan farm is slow. Several newspaper articles on Miss Kirwan were written this summer. Cataloging of the thousands of items will begin this fall. Believe me, I need volunteers desperately to help identify all the various items left to the Society. If you could spend an hour a week, it would help a great deal.

Another item I have been investigating is to locate a caboose for our train station. I have been in contact with officials from CSX and the owner of the caboose located in Barclay, Maryland. Meetings have been very preliminary, but some progress has been made. The major stumbling block

appears to be how do we move a caboose from point A to our train station in Stevensville. Any ideas, suggestions or "pearls of wisdom" will be greatly appreciated.

Please don't forget to clean your house and collect all the pennies you find lying around. I will cheerfully collect all you have. I am really trying to make "our pennies for the Cray House" work, but again I need YOUR HELP.

## December Meeting

*Eva Thompson*

The Dinner Meeting of the Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc. will be held on Thursday, December 7, 1995 - 6:00 PM at the Kent Island Yacht Club, Chester, MD.

The Chairman for the Dinner is Mrs. Linda Legg Jefferson 643-5164, and her committee members are Mrs. Shirley Severa 827-8565, Mrs. Linda Severa Collier 643-2731, Mrs. Elaine Scharnus 643-6495 and Mrs. Patricia Jones Dennis 632-0505.

The invitations will be sent to the membership two weeks prior to the dinner. Please attend this most enjoyable social event and begin you Holiday Season the Kent Island Heritage Society.

## Audrey Hawkins "Beautiful Volunteer"

Audrey Hawkins, treasurer of the K.I.H.S. was named the Queen Anne's Co. 1995 Maryland You Are Beautiful Volunteer during the September 5th County Commissioners meeting.

"Her tireless effort is the glue that holds the Kent Island Heritage Society together" wrote our President Hugo Gemignani in his nomination to the Visitors Service.

Audrey usually spends about 25 to 30 hours a week, sometimes more, volunteering her services as treasurer and saleswoman, as well as publicity coordinator. Gemignani also wrote that "her undying commitment has formed the backbone of our society."

Her volunteer commitment also includes time spent with the Kent Island United Methodist Church in Chester, where she has been an active member for 32 years.

As a resident of Kent Island for 39 years, serving the area comes naturally to Audrey Hawkins, Queen Anne's Most Beautiful Volunteer.

**Congratulations Audrey!**



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**Heart felt sympathy goes out to KIHS President Hugo Gemignani for the loss of his mother, Jennie Gemignani on September 19, 1995.**

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## **IN MEMORIAM: Rev. Robert Gourlay**

The Rev. Robert Alexander Gourlay of Chester died Saturday, Sept. 16, 1995 at the Memorial Hospital at Easton. He was 75.

An Episcopal priest, he was the rector at Grace Church in Elkridge, retired from being rector at Christ Church in Stevensville, and was active in the diocese of Easton.

He was always very helpful to the KIHS and will be missed by the residents of Kent Island.

## **Letter to the Editor Kent Island Facts**

Dear Editor: "To Discover, Identify, Restore, and Preserve the Heritage of Kent Island" is the motto of the Kent Island Heritage Society, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in May.

All members must take that motto seriously, regardless of their particular interest. History is fact, not someone's lazy "translation" or plagiarized version. Writing history is an accountable discipline.

At the risk of sounding like cranky old biddies, a number of interested members

can no longer sit quietly and read incorrect information being printed in numerous island publications as "fact". Too soon uninformed people will accept such nonsense as the truth.

In 1980 a steering committee charged with planning Kent Island's 350th Anniversary petitioned the legislature through Queen Anne's Delegate Carter Hickman to declare that Kent Island was Maryland's First SETTLEMENT. Representatives of St. Mary's County insisted Kent Island was only a "Trading Post" set up by Virginian William Claiborne.

With her thorough research, Mrs. Mildred Schock proved to the General Assembly that Claiborne and his settlers established far more than a mere trading post. Maryland's first church, Christ Church, complete with minister and a reader of Prayers was built. Three woodcutters provided the three sawyers and eight carpenters ample lumber to build not only the church, but the fort stockade, the meeting house, homes and fences for six laborers, six maidservants, two blacksmiths, a hogkeeper and a gardener, three butchers, seven traders and assorted seamen, boys and associates of Claiborne himself. Those people (some of whose ancestors are still on Kent Island) created the SETTLEMENT on Kent Island. It was so resolved in 1981 by the Maryland General Assembly, echoed by Congressman Paul Sarbanes.

For the Kent Island Heritage Society to sponsor a scavenger hunt naming Kent

Island as a trading post belittles the KIHS members' efforts for "First Settlement" recognition.

Twenty years ago the Kent Island Heritage Society was founded by five local women: Marian Steuart, Mildred Schock, Anna May Price, Emily Roe Denny and Mary White; NOT Mildred Schock alone. Mrs. Steuart was the initiator and the society's first president. Since she, Mrs. Denny, and Mrs. Schock are all deceased, we will fight to preserve the truth in their memories.

In 1990 a large committee of volunteers headed by Mrs. Mary White worked all spring and summer at the new Kent Island Library to catalogue, file, and store fifteen years worth of accumulated Kent Island and county records - including Mildred Schock's voluminous original research and Mary White's collection of original Kent Island families. All issues of the quarterly newsletter, "The Isle of Kent", are included. Much original historical information has been printed since 1990.

This data is available as reference and resource material to anyone willing to do proper research before writing any article in any publication on any facet of the history of Kent Island. We only request that such "writers" use the data before publishing incorrect material. Additionally, during the past five years, Mrs. White's History and Genealogy committee has continued collecting Kent Island Bible records and printed books of marriage, cemetery, will and deed records

that maintain forever Kent Island's genealogical heritage.

For more sophisticated research, all Queen Anne's records are intact and currently being organized for genealogical use by new Clerk Scottie MacGlashan in the County Courthouse. Earlier records are at the Hall of Records in Annapolis.

To set the record straight: no sea battle was ever fought at Kent Island. Maryland's first sea battle was waged between Claiborne's Kent Islanders and Governor Calvert's men at the mouth of the Pocomoke River in April, 1635 followed by another encounter in May. Maryland Archives: 4.)

Despite Emory's "History of Queen Anne's County", Stevensville and Broad Creek were NEVER the same town. Broad Creek was the 17th century village at the mouth of Broad Creek where the early ferry landed (Phillip Fithian) prior to Stevensville's establishment after the Civil War. The second and third Christ Church buildings were at Broad Creek where the Graveyard is still maintained. Those foundations, though covered, are still there and were excavated and documented by Dr. Reginald Truitt and a Christ Church Committee. The post office was moved from Broad Creek to Stevensville, in 1876. (Deeds)

For the record: the Cray House was donated to the society by the living heirs of Mrs. Nora Dixon Cray, widow of James Franklin Cray, Sr., represented by the administrator

of the will, Thomas R. Ewing. The house was never donated by the Ewing Family alone.

In 1976 those living heirs were: Eva Cray Brown's heirs: Madison Brown Jr., Milford, Leonard and Myrtle; Helen Cray Sapp's children George Jr. and Katherine; Thomas Dixon Cray Jr.; and Katie Cray Ewing's Heirs: Thomas R., James (Jimmy) and Ray. There is a plaque in the Cray House acknowledging the deed of gift of Nora Cray's heirs to the Kent Island Heritage Society.

As former head of the Historical committee of the Library Committee and as former editor of the Society's newsletter, I am almost personally offended when I see blatant mistakes being printed in celebration of Kent Island Days or even misspelling of Catherine Kirwan's name in describing her bequest to the Kent Island Heritage Society of which she was a twenty year member. So we must be vigilant in upholding the Society's motto to "preserve the Heritage of Kent Island." It's taken us 364 years. Let's get it right. *Bettye Speed*

## June 15th Membership mtg.

The meeting was opened by the President at 7:30 PM. He introduced Mike Foster, who talked about and answered questions about the Kirwan estate. Mike described the parts of the estate: land, stocks, artifacts, and furniture. Mr. Elmer Thompson is attorney for

the estate.

Mike described the terms of the life estate given to Mr. Walter Coppage. Mr. Coppage is ill and unable to live in the house, is currently in a nursing home.

The immediate interest of the KIHS has been to secure estate items of historical interest. An estate inventory has been made and some items appraised and sent to storage. Nothing which was owned or used by Mr. Coppage was included. The security of the house itself is of concern. Hugo has gotten estimates for a security alarm system, but needs permission of the estate and it is hoped the estate can absorb the costs of the system.

The will's intention was to create a museum of the farm, farmhouse, and the contents-- to be administered by the KIHS when the house is no longer needed as residence. If the property cannot be maintained as the James E. Kirwan Museum by the KIHS, the land will go to Washington College.

The Kirwan estate has personal property valued at \$50,000 to \$100,000, \$500,000 worth of stocks, and property valued by Tidewater Properties at \$1.6 million. If the estate is taxable, taxes will use up all the money from the stock, one half of which was willed to the Kent Island Methodist Church. The status of the estate is still unknown, so it is not known yet what KIHS will actually inherit. Also KIHS must decide what to do with the property when the inheritance actually occurs. There are many problems. The area is a resource conservation

area, and institutional use is in question. Zoning or environmental limitations may prevent establishing a museum on the property.

Mike Foster summarized by stating that the clear intent of Ms. Kirwan's will is the establishment of a museum, but the KIHS may not be able to finalize this intent in any way in the near future.

The President then repeated his request from the NEWSLETTER to save pennies and donate them to KIHS for repairs on the Cray House.

**Kent Island Volunteer Band will be playing on the grounds of the Cray House on Sat. Oct. 28th from 2:00 to 3:00**

#### **Bake Table & Books Sales**

*Baked goods needed call  
Audrey Hawkins 643-5969*

#### **Treasurer's Report**

*Audrey B. Hawkins*

06/06/95 - 08/30/95

Balance in Checking	\$5462.95
Receipts	2458.84
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 7921.79</b>

Disbursements	\$4583.68
Bal. Checking	
08/30/95	3338.11
Bal. CD Acct.	
07/01/95	9334.13
Bal. MM Acct.	<u>2605.51</u>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$15277.75</b>

Mortgage Balance	
08/11/95	\$14520.42

**Volunteers need for Queen Anne's Days at the 4-H Park to help with the KIHS Sales Table . Oct. 21 & 22.**

#### **Officers**

**President**  
HUGO GEMIGNANI  
**V. President**  
NICHOLAS HOXTER  
**Treasurer**  
AUDREY HAWKINS  
**Rec. Secretary**  
LOIS COCKEY

#### **Board of Directors \***

Richard Dadds	1994-96
Charles "Gil" Dunn	1994-96
Robert T. Jones	1994-96
Eva Thompson	1995-97
Emma Thomas	1995-97

\*dates are inclusive

#### **Nominating Committee**

Richard Dadds  
CHAIRMAN  
Emma Thomas  
Eva Thompson

#### **Nominations**

**President**  
Hugo Gemignani  
**V. President**  
Nicholas Hoxter  
**Recording Secretary**  
Open for nomination  
**Corresponding Secretary**  
Eileen Dadds

#### **1995 MEMBERSHIP MEETING DATES** *Library 7:30 PM*

*\*December 14, 1995\*  
Christmas Dinner at  
Kent Island Yacht Club*

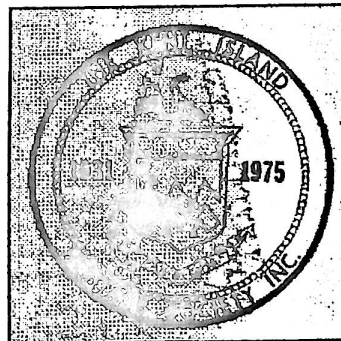
**ISLE OF KENT** is published quarterly by the Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc., a non-profit corporation, P.O. Box 321, Stevensville, MD 21666. Letters and contributions of material should be addressed to the Editor: Mrs. Kathy Comegys 1610 Seward Rd., Chester, MD 21619. Effort is made to publish accurate information, but no responsibility can be assumed by the Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc. or the Editor in the event of claim of loss or damage from any contribution. Statements attributed to individuals do not necessarily reflect official policy of the K.I.H.S., Inc.

Memberships  
\$10.00 Single, \$12.00 Family

Application for membership should be sent to:

Mae Hutchinson  
Membership Chairman  
Kent Island Heritage Society,  
P.O. Box 321  
Stevensville, MD 21666

**DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND OUR CONTROL, THERE WAS NO WINTER 1994 NEWSLETTER.**



**Kent Island Heritage Society  
P.O. Box 321  
Stevensville, MD 21666**

**Address correction requested**

**BULK MAIL  
PERMIT #11  
STEVENSVILLE  
MD. 21666**

