

# Isle of Kent - 1631

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

NEWSLETTER OF THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC.

FALL 2023

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## Stevensville Invaded by Friendly Pirates

The streets of Stevensville were swarmed by Pirates more interested in knowledge than plunder in late August. Eight merry bands of teachers and staff from Stevensville Middle School, home of the

Pirates, visited historic sites where they mingled with docents from the Kent Island Heritage Society. The tour was part of a "back to school" team building exercise planned by the middle school's top pirate Dr. Jennifer Schrecongost and the KIHS docent team. The Pirates learned about Kent Island's special history and several commented that they had seen the historic buildings before but had never visited them. The teams received tokens related to pirates at each site, with the most popular being gold doubloons which could be exchanged for ice cream at Tasty Toucan. The tour was followed the next day by a teacher and staff discussion of information and practices learned that they will be able to integrate into some of their classroom work. KIHS looks forward to a working with all Kent Island educators on future events.



## President's Message

It's been a busy and productive summer for the Kent Island Heritage Society. In June, still basking in the glow of our memorable Kent Island Day Celebration, we welcomed Dr. John Seidel, Professor Emeritus from Washington College for a fascinating presentation on Shaping the Chesapeake Landscape – Archaeology – People – and the Environment. If you were not able to attend in person you can view his entire presentation through a video link on our

KIHS Website ([kentislandheritagesociety.org](http://kentislandheritagesociety.org)). We hope to partner with Dr. Seidel on future projects. In early July, in addition to opening our historic sites for the monthly first Saturday

(Continued on page 2)

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openings, we welcomed to the Cray House Green a unique, well-attended Pet Parade, sponsored by the Historic Stevensville A&E District. Enjoy the picture of the wonderful pets and their proud families. In late July, the planned "Thursday in the Park" concert on the Cray House Green, sponsored by QA Center for the Arts, was "weathered out" due to 100-degree heat and threatening thunderstorms. Good call!

In August we hosted a first of its kind event on the Green for some very young members of our Kent Island community, a special Yoga class for Pre-School kids presented by Ms. Olga Hofmann. The kids loved it and afterwards were treated to a hands-on visit to the Stevensville Train Station. Also in August, we began a significant new relationship with our neighboring Stevensville Middle School, at the enthusiastic invitation of Principal, Dr. Jennifer Schrecengost. We hosted a visit of all the school's teachers, with informative docent-led briefings at each of our Stevensville historic sites. This fall we will present in-school classes to all the eighth grade students on Kent Island's fascinating history. The students will later be given in person on-site tours of all of our historic sites. We are grateful to Dr. Schrecongost for creating this exciting opportunity to share the history and heritage of Kent Island with so many of our future citizens.

Meanwhile this summer, at our new "old" heritage building at 310 Love Point Rd. in the heart of Historic Stevensville, our select committee, spearheaded by VP Bob Lowe, has been coordinating with contractors for necessary rehab work and developing plans for the future of the building. You may recall from our last Newsletter, we were able to purchase the 150-year old building, the first public school building in Stevensville, through the generosity of our former Treasurer, Lynne Riley-Coleman. We anticipate that it could become our new heritage headquarters, museum, records storage, and research center. In August, we were visited at the building by Dr. Darrin Lowery, our Archaeology partner to show us a small sample of the Native American artifacts from the famous Love Point Marks Collection. He is temporarily holding the collection for the Kent Island Heritage Society at the request of the Marks family and has redocumented the artifacts. We anticipate that they will become part of the permanent display in our new museum. Check out the pictures on our website.

We are looking forward to a number of upcoming events this fall. On September 24 we will welcome the Kent Island Running Group as they make their way through town for the Historic Stevensville Metric Half Marathon. This year the race medal will bear the likeness of the newly refurbished Stevensville Train Station. We understand that Geoff MacLeay, the benefactor whose family made the Train Station renovations possible, will be running in the race this year. Thank you, Geoff, and good luck! On September 27, we will be welcoming the QAC Chamber of Commerce in Stevensville for their monthly Chamber Mixer. We'll be joining our partners in the Historic Stevensville A&E District to welcome and greet our business leaders and share some heritage stories. On September 28, we'll be participating in a book release event at Silver Swan at Queen Anne Marina for local photographer and

author Dale Hall. Her new book, "Kent Island Waterscapes", magically captures and portrays the timeless natural aspects of our Kent Island heritage.

On the first Saturday in October, we will have our sites open for the annual Artoberfest celebration sponsored by the A&E District. The popular and growing daylong event will feature myriad arts and crafts vendors, entertainment, and great local food and refreshments.. On the first Saturday in November, we will be open for the annual A&E Classic Car Show in Historic Stevensville. In December we plan to have our popular KI railroad heritage display at the Queen Anne's County Holiday Train Show. Our final event of the year will be our annual Holiday Brunch and Elections, on Sunday December 10 at beautiful Cascia Vineyards. We can't emphasize enough the importance of building up our team of docents to be our in-person heritage representatives for our many visitors. We also want to reach out to our members to consider joining our Board to help with the important work of fulfilling our Kent Island heritage mission.

As we shared in our last Newsletter, we are initiating a special online fundraising event, courtesy of one of our Kent Island Day sponsors, PRS Guitars. We'll be auctioning off a beautiful PRS guitar to a lucky winner. Check out our website for details on how you may become the lucky winner!

I want to share news about an interesting research and book project we are involved in. This summer we were approached by a group of active and retired history professionals who have formed a volunteer group to research and publish a book on Queen Anne's County's architectural history from the early colonial era thru the mid 1800's, to include Kent Island. The book will be based on significant research by iconic architectural historian, Orlando Rideout. Mr. Rideout made significant contributions to the 1981 Kent Island book "Of History and Houses" by Mildred Schoch, one of the original founders of the Kent Island Heritage Society. Mr. Rideout did extensive research on historic architecture throughout Queen Annes and many other Maryland Counties. In most counties his work was published in large "coffee table" type books. However, the Queen Anne's County work remained unpublished at the time of his death a number of years ago. This project, spearheaded by colleagues and friends of Mr. Rideout, aims to bring that publication to fruition. We were approached as a well-known, active, and successful non-profit in Queen Anne's County. We agreed to partner with this group to apply for a Maryland Historic Trust grant to support the project. It appears to be of significant value both to Kent Island and to Queen Anne's County as a whole. We hope the grant request will be successful.

And now with a slight feel of fall in the air, we turn our attention to our own special fall event. We'll be celebrating our Fall Heritage Picnic over at the Kirwan Place on Sunday September 24. It's a great old fashioned country picnic with all the trimmings, at a great place, among old and new friends – with hayrides, apple cider, and chickens! Check out our Picnic flyer here in this Newsletter and please respond with your information. We hope to see you there.

Jack Broderick



## IT'S TIME AGAIN FOR AN OLD-FASHIONED PICNIC

*Join Kent Island Heritage Society Members and Guests*

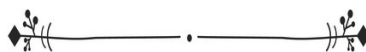
**The Kirwan House and Farm**  
**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2023**  
**1:00 – 5:00 p.m.**

*Please Bring A Covered Dish and Lawn Chairs for comfort*

*KIHS Will Provide*

*Fried Chicken, Hot Dogs, Iced Tea, Lemonade, Coffee  
And HOME-MADE ICE CREAM!!!*

*Join us for Games, Conversation and Displays*



PLEASE RESPOND BY SEPTEMBER 21

PROVIDE RESPONSE WITH INFORMATION BELOW  
by Email to [kentislandheritagesociety@gmail.com](mailto:kentislandheritagesociety@gmail.com)  
or mail to KIHS P.O. Box 321, Stevensville MD 21666

Names of Adults (for badges):

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Names and ages of children (for game planning):

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Phone number and email in case of inclement weather:

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# WILLIAM CLAIBORNE: PIRATE OR PATRIOT?

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By John L. Conley

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To paraphrase a common cliché, “One man’s pirate is another man’s patriot.” Kent Island’s own William Claiborne and some of his supporters were called pirates by our Calvert friends across the Bay. Those on this Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake Bay who saw Claiborne as a defender of their Virginia property and rights and settled three years before the ships of Lord Baltimore arrived to establish the new colony of Maryland in 1634, might have begged to differ.

Preservation Maryland ([preservationmaryland.org](http://preservationmaryland.org)) states unequivocally that, “In 1635, William Claiborne gained notoriety as the first documented pirate in Maryland History.” As our readers know, Mr. Claiborne and Kent Islanders did not exactly lay out the welcome mat for the Calvert Clan when they established St. Mary’s City across the Bay, especially after titanic political changes in England resulted in support of Lord Baltimore’s claim that the largest island in the Chesapeake Bay lay within his patent for the new colony of Maryland.

Disputes between St. Mary’s City and Kent Island came to a head in 1635. Claiborne’s brother-in-law John Butler seized a Maryland boat laden with materials destined for trade with Indians on the Eastern Shore and took it and its crew to Kent Island. Claiborne released the vessel and crew to return with a message of “displeasure” to the recent arrivals in St. Mary’s. Donald G. Shomette’s classic 1985 book *Pirates of the Chesapeake Bay* records this seizure as the “first act of documented Pyracie on the waters of the Chesapeake Bay” in a chapter aptly titled “Grievous Crimes of Pyracie and Murther.”

Later, the Calvert’s returned the favor when Kent Island’s Captain Thomas Smith and his pinnace *Long Tayle* were captured while taking materials to an Indian village on the Patuxent River. Claiborne considered this a clear act of piracy. These tit for tats resulted in a battle in which Claiborne’s sloop *Cockatrice* was lost to Calvert’s *St. Helen* and *St. Margaret* in what is considered the first naval battle on North American waters where both sides had English roots.

Political and actual wrangling continued as Claiborne tried and eventually failed to secure his claim that Kent Island was still part of Virginia. In 1637, Governor Calvert’s troops invaded Kent Island and John Butler, Edward Becker and Thomas Smith were arrested. They were charged with, among other things, the crimes of “sedition, pyracie and murther.” Butler was eventually released, but Smith was later captured in another action and convicted and sentenced to hang in 1638 for piracy and murder for his actions in the 1635 battle where a St. Mary’s officer was killed.

William Claiborne and his cohorts also receive significant coverage in a new book *Pirates of the Chesapeake Bay: From the Colonial Era to the Oyster Wars* by Jamie H. L. Goodall. Her verdict on Claiborne appears at the beginning of the first chapter that, “We know that William Claiborne’s piracy was born of a conflict between the inhabitants of Virginia and settlers of Maryland over territory and resources.” She reports that in 1638 “a grand inquest was held at St. Mary’s to determine Claiborne’s role when the *Cockatrice* ‘feloniously’ attacked the *St. Helen* and *St. Margaret* ‘as pyrates and robbers.’”

A Bill of Attainder in the Maryland House of General Assembly in 1637 listed many charges against “William

Cleyborne, Gent” who was “notoriously known for having committed sundry contempts, insolences, and seditious acts against the dignity, government and domination of the Lord Proprietarie of this Province.” It concluded that, “said William Cleyborne be attained of the crimes aforesaid . . . and that he forfeite to the said Lord Proprietary all his goods and chattells which he has within the Province at present.”

Claiborne returned to Jamestown having lost his land but not his influence on Kent Island. He did go to England to continue to argue his case in 1637, with no success. However, he does re-appear later in Shomette’s book in coverage of another “pirate in the eyes of the beholder” Richard Ingle. The English Civil War with the fight between King Charles I and Parliament forces led by Oliver Cromwell had repercussions in Maryland and Virginia. Ingle supported Cromwell and in 1641 entered the Chesapeake Bay where he eventually tangled with the Calvert loyalists to the King. His adversaries included the then acting Governor Giles Brent who owned a large piece of land on Kent Island. Claiborne aligned with Ingle and returned to Kent Island in 1644, reestablished authority, and briefly seized Brent’s property.

Meanwhile, Ingle was charged by Maryland with “carrying out certaine treasonable and pyratieall offenses.” Those charges were eventually dropped. Claiborne continued his efforts to gain formal control of Kent Island, but his efforts failed as Cromwell never removed the Calvert’s authority to govern Maryland, nor later did King Charles II after he was restored to the throne following Cromwell’s death when Kent Island was formally part of Maryland. Claiborne never gave up on regaining possession of Kent island. In 1777, shortly before his death, he again petitioned the king to restore his rights to Kent Island, but died before any action could be taken.

Claiborne did have his defenders who disputed the pirate claims. In his book about his famous ancestor *William Claiborne of Virginia* written in 1917, Dr. John Herbert Claiborne argues that William Claiborne had legal rights to Kent Island from the beginning. He notes that the charter granted to Lord Baltimore included the conveying language “a certain region in parts of America not yet cultivated and in possession of savages or barbarians having no knowledge of the Devine Being.” We will leave it to others to decide if today’s Kent Island is cultivated and free of barbarians, but it did seem to be so in 1631 when it even included a church.

Regarding the taking of Claiborne’s pinnacle *Long Tayle*, Claiborne writes that the legal claim to Kent Island had

not yet been settled and that “His ship was taken, and his goods confiscated, and they were never returned. This was an act of unjustifiable force of robbery, of piracy, and not the result of due legal process.” He concludes that “... on this occasion, it was not Claiborne who was guilty of piracy, but Baltimore’s men who were under instruction from Baltimore or his accredited representatives.”

To the question of whether William Claiborne was a pirate, his loyal descendant wrote: “This the reader must agree that this is no man for prejudiced historians to dismiss incontinently with the epitaphs of rebel, pirate and of murderer.”

Another cliché is that when it comes to battles and territorial disputes, “Winners write the history.” If that is so, then the judgement is that, alas, “William Claiborne walks the plank.”

## Shaping a Landscape: The Archaeology & History of People in the Chesapeake



John L. Seidel, PhD  
Senior Fellow, Director Emeritus  
Center for the Environment & Society  
Washington College



**Dr. Seidel's interesting  
presentation which includes  
information on Kent Island  
can be viewed at our website  
[kentislandheritagesociety.org](http://kentislandheritagesociety.org)**

1 SMS math teacher Rachael Kamm learned that the most important number is 1631 from legendary Kent Island educator Nancy Cook.

2 The new Kent Island Heritage Society Center in Stevensville welcomed Donna Brown, Kent Island Heritage Society docent, Jennifer Schrecengost, and (l-r) Brian Birkeland, Heather Sowell, Elyse Steinhice, and Kelly Allen. The building includes the original Kent Island School #2. District 4 (1870-1909) that was moved to the Stevensville site in 1910.

3 Carole Mylander, Donna Hoyt and SMS Counsellor Charlotte Driscoll shared the history of the Cray House which was built about 1810 and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

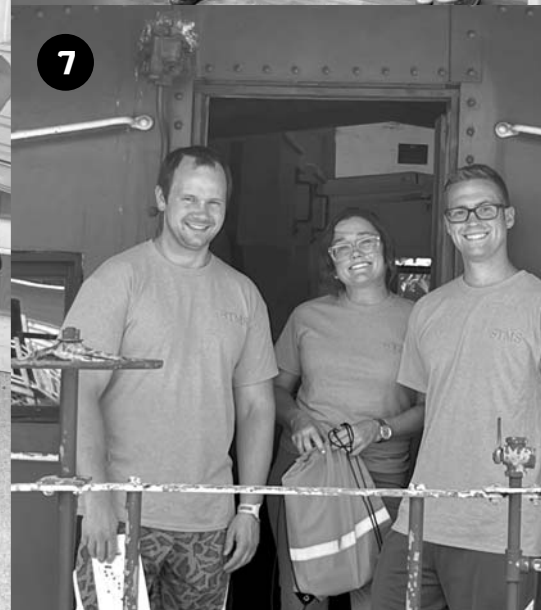
4 KIHS Docent Tom Tate delivered the history of the Old Stevensville Post office which served Kent Islanders from the late 1800s to 1951.

5 Pirates who survived the tour of all sites were rewarded with ice cream by Tasty Toucan owner Nicki Neboshynsky.

6 Stevensville Middle School Vice Principal Brian Kelly and Reading Specialist Nicole Zimmerman joined KIHS Vice President Bob Lowe as docents and kept scores of the eight visiting teacher groups for later bounty.

7 The Stevensville train station caboose served as a land ship for SMS Pirates Erik Narvesen, Danielle Deremer, Jim Claborn and Andrew MacIntire.

8 The Principal and the Privateer: Stevensville Middle School Principal Dr. Jennifer Schrecengost took a break with KIHS Privateer and President Jack Broderick during visits to eight historic sites in Stevensville. The tour was part of the school's Student Engagement theme for this year.







**KIHS President Jack Broderick and Past President Nancy Cook were invited to explore Kent Island history with the Eighth Grade classes at Stevensville Middle School in early September. The classes will visit the KIHS historic sites in Stevensville in October. The Kent Island Heritage Society considers working with local schools and educators as one of its most important objectives.**





## “WE NEED YOU!”

The Kent Island Heritage Society continues to receive requests and to find new ways to share the unique history of our special island. Those opportunities are sure to increase when we open our new Kent Island Heritage Center in Stevensville.

*We need more volunteers to serve as docents, to help host events like Kent Island Day, work on committees, contribute to the newsletter, increase membership, and serve on our Board of Directors. Please consider getting involved to help KIHS meet its mission to research, preserve and share local history.*

*We especially need more docents so we can continue to open all of our sites on the first Saturdays of the month and on special occasions like the teacher visit seen in this issue.*

Docents can quickly learn enough information to provide interesting details to visitors who come not just from the local area, but from all over the United States and other countries. Stop by our sites to learn more about becoming a docent.

We need you to help make Kent Island Heritage Society an even stronger resource to our Kent Island community. Please contact any Board Member, send an email to [kentislandheritagesociety.com](mailto:kentislandheritagesociety.com), or call John at 703/216-0449 or Jack at 410/829-7760.





# **“Hail Isle of Kent”**

By Alice Hopkins Matthews

*(Note: This poem was written in the early 1900s as a tribute to Kent Island. Alice was the wife of Edward Atwell Hopkins of Benton's Pleasure on Kent Island. The poem is shared from the Hopkins Family Papers by KIHS member Carol Mylander who has asked that the poem not be shared beyond this newsletter. (The poem was written in the language of the times.)*

Hail “Isle of Kent—grown rich by toil,  
Our Fathers plowed your native soil—  
So why should we not sing a lay  
Of what you stand for this good day?  
For surely at Kent Island's Alter  
Our love—our faith should never falter.  
Hurrah, hurrah, for your old story  
Is framed in history's honored glory.

Hail “Isle of Kent”—unequaled spot  
A landmark ne'er forgot—  
You linger still in peace and quiet  
After hostility and riot  
Your early turbulent years but show—  
Now fair, now green, your acres grow.  
Hurrah—hurrah, Dixie's good flag,  
O “Isle of Kent” can you brag.

Hail Kentish Isle—The Chesapeake  
In peerless chivalry doth speak  
In water-language a refrain  
That sister-rivers make quite plain,  
Upon your glory-crowned shore  
That Claiborne first did brave explore;  
Hurrah, Hurrah, your records stay  
Important for your honored day.

Hail Monoponson—Indians gave  
You this old name that charters save;  
For Indian tribes warlike endowed  
Traditional lore that time has bowed  
Within the dust of white man's will  
Trammeled, alas, by force and skill,  
Hurrah, hurrah, development  
Burns like a fire on “Isle of Kent.”

Hail Maryland's first settlement  
With lyric leafage I'm intent  
To frame your beauty in a lay  
For your good patriotic day.  
For O my heart doth swell with pride  
And truly I am justified.  
Hurrah, hurrah, let's loud engage  
To sing of your green heritage!

Hail Pioneers, who've gone before,  
My poem seeks to clear restore  
For you the honors fair and brave  
That live beyond the silent grave.  
For interlaced with love, each word  
I've written here, has been deep stirred.  
Hurrah, hurrah, let all who may  
To “Isle of Kent” now pen a lay.

Hurrah, hurrah, development  
BURNS LIKE A FIRE ON “ISLE OF KENT.”

# On The Cray House Green



1



2



3

The Pet Parade sponsored by the Stevensville Art and Entertainment District drew a large crowd of pet lovers and vendors in July. (photo by Becky Placek)

A yoga class for pre-schoolers got these kids off to a healthy start. (photo by Olfa Hofmann.)

The Historic Stevensville Car Show will be held on the streets of Stevensville and at the train station on Saturday November 4 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thirty trophies will be awarded at the always popular event. Contact Paul Placek at 410/739-6883

## WHAT IS THAT WHITE HOUSE?

We get calls from people wanting to know what that historic-looking white house they see from the Bay Bridge or on Marina Club Rd. off Rt.8 is. The building is the Earreckson House which was constructed about 1854 by Dr. Roderick W. Earreckson. It was built on land known as Broad Creek and originally granted by William Claiborne. According to Mildred C. Schoch's book *Of History and Houses* which is available from the Kent Island Heritage Society, the building was unusual in that its principal façade faces to the south rather than to the east or west. A variety of buildings from its time as a farm have long been removed.

The Earreckson House has had many owners over the years and has been used to house commercial offices in recent times. It is now part of a development by Bay Manor Apartments and Shops which will have over 19,000 square feet of retail and office space and some 60 apartments. The developer has agreed to retain and upgrade the historic house for offices.





## Thank You Business Supporters

Chesapeake Light Tackle  
Harris Marine Financing  
Kent Island Learning Cooperative  
Kentmoor Marina Properties (*Life*)  
Kentmoor Restaurant  
Lundberg Builders  
Maryland CPR and Safety  
Michael Rosendale Realty  
The Grooming Place

## Welcome New Members



Nick Cline, *Individual*  
Fay and Tom Cook, *Family*  
Kelly and Tom Fiala, *Family*  
Austin Hennequin, *Life*  
Allison Kahane, *Family*  
Beth Peters, *Life*  
C. Richard and Frederica Struse, *Family*



Quick Response (QR) Code

### SCAN KIHS QUICK RESPONSE (QR) CODE TO REACH OUR WEBSITE

You can reach our Kent Island Heritage Society website with most Smartphones which are equipped with QR Code readers in their cameras. Hold your Smartphone camera over the QR Code so that it is clearly on the phone screen. The phone will scan the code and connect to the site. Some phones might require you to take a picture of the QR Code.

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

Enclosed is a check to cover dues for the membership indicated below:

- |   |          |  |         |
|---|----------|--|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Life Membership | \$250.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Single Membership | \$15.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organization Membership    | \$40.00  | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership | \$25.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Membership        | \$50.00  |  |         |

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

*Dues and contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.*

Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership period:**  
**January 1 to December 31**

Telephone (Home) \_\_\_\_\_

(Cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

**The Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc**  
**P.O. Box 321**  
**Stevensville, Maryland 21666**  
**[www.kentislandheritagesociety.org](http://www.kentislandheritagesociety.org)**

Your Interests:

History \_\_\_\_\_ Genealogy \_\_\_\_\_ Photography \_\_\_\_\_

Docent Program \_\_\_\_\_ Property Maintenance \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interest \_\_\_\_\_

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## POSTCARD from Kent Island: Margaret Brent, 1640s landowner and first Suffragette

*Submitted by John L. Conley*

This 1915 postcard is of the *USS Reina Mercedes* from which the Maryland Tercentenary First Day Cover shown was mailed from Annapolis in 1934. The cover features a painting by Edwin Tunis celebrating a presentation by Margaret Brent to the Maryland Assembly in St. Mary's City in 1648. Margaret Brent (c1601-c1671) at one time owned some 1,000 acres on southern Kent Island near today's Kent Fort Rd. She received the land from her brother Giles Brent in 1642 in payment for a debt. The Catholic Brents arrived in Maryland in 1638 with close ties to the Calvert's. Giles settled on Kent Island and was a leader in the new colony and served as a temporary Governor of Maryland. As a single woman, Margaret Brent was allowed to own land. She and her sister Mary, who also never married, owned some 2,000 acres in today's St. Mary's County.

The caption on the First Day Cover reads "Margaret Brent demanding "voice and votes." She is considered this nation's first Suffragette and woman lawyer. Maryland Governor Leonard Calvert named Brent his executor from his deathbed in 1647. She went before the Maryland Assembly and demanded two votes, one as a landowner and one as the governor's attorney. She was denied those votes. Today, the American Bar Association presents the annual Margaret Brent Woman Lawyers of Achievement Award to celebrate female lawyers and to honor Brent as the first female lawyer in North America.

The *USS Reina Mercedes* was captured in Cuba in 1898 during the war with Spain. She was brought to the U. S. Naval Academy in 1912 and served as a barracks and, at times a detention vessel to confine midshipman who had violated regulations. The ship was scrapped in 1957.



**LET US HEAR FROM YOU!!!!** Please contact KIHS if you have comments on items in [Isle of Kent 1631](#) or if you have questions about Kent Island history that we can try to answer. We welcome topics you would find of interest and especially information you can provide for future issues. Contact: John Conley: [jconcomm@gmail.com](mailto:jconcomm@gmail.com) | cell: 703-216-0449