

# Isle of Kent - 1631

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

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC. ■ SPRING 2005

## OFFICERS

**President**  
Nancy M. Cook  
**Vice President**  
Forrest P. Chisman  
**Corresponding Secy**  
Carole P. Frederick  
**Recording Secretary**  
Flora S. Sossi  
**Treasurer**  
Audrey B. Hawkins  
John Wayne Morris

## DIRECTORS

Joel D. Berger  
John E. Broderick  
Myrtle A. Bruscup  
Francis K. Collier  
Janet C. Denny  
William E. Denny III  
Charles "Gil" Dunn  
Florence M. Dunn  
John E. Gerber  
Daniel T. Hopkins  
Brent F. Lewis  
Gregory J. Nizza  
Frances L. Peters  
Jane G. Sparks

## COMMITTEES

**Docent Coordinator**  
Audrey Hawkins  
**Kent Island Day**  
John Broderick, Fran Peters, Flora Sossi  
**Fundraising** - Gil Dunn  
**Programs** - F. Chisman  
**Kirwan Property**  
Joel Berger, Jack Broderick, Bill Denny, Ned Gerber, Dan Hopkins, Wayne Morris, Greg Nizza (Caretaker)  
**Cray House**  
Janet Denny, Bill Denny  
**Old Stevensville P.O.**  
F. Collier, Fran Peters  
**Train Depot** - Florence Dunn, Gil Dunn  
**Publicity** - Greg Nizza  
**Oral Histories**  
Jane Sparks, Dan Hopkins, Brent Lewis  
**Membership**  
Mae Hutchison  
**Library Files** - Myrtle Bruscup, Mary White  
**Scholarship** - J. Sparks  
**Social** - Janet Denny

## President's Message

As you can see in the following pages of the *Isle of Kent*, The Society has truly had a busy spring:

- The Kirwan House Strategic Planning Committee—Joel Berger, Jack Broderick, Forrest Chisman, Bill Denny, Dan Hopkins—has met several times to explore and discuss uses for Kirwan House. Under consideration are rebuilding lumber, cooper and blacksmith facilities; an educational and exhibit center; and forming partnerships to fulfill the potential of this great property.
- Flora Sossi's Kent Island Day committee with Jack Broderick as parade chair and Fran Peters as chair of artisans and food vendors, and Lynne Riley-Coleman's Patrons Committee with Florence Dunn, Jane Grafton, Flora Sossi and Fran Peters, worked diligently to present the 2005 Annual Kent Island Day.
- Brent Lewis is filming oral histories of our native Kent Islanders. [See article, next column.]
- A fantastic presentation on the Lewis and Clark Expedition with slides and narrative was given by Jere O. Hamill at the March General Meeting.

The present board is perhaps the most involved and dedicated with which I have been privileged to work in the past seven years. BUT, the 19 board members cannot possibly

*Continued on page 5*

## Oral History Committee Begins Video Initiative

By Brent Lewis

Since Christmas, the Oral History Committee has videotaped interviews with three notable Kent Islanders.

**Melvin Clark** was interviewed in December. Mr. Clark is a well-known craftsman of the tools for the waterman's trade. Melvin was born in Stevensville in 1922. He remembers horse and buggies, traveling salesmen and dirt road main streets. With his close connection to the local seafood industry, Melvin watched—and laments—it's decline over the years. He laughs about the way large construction firms were of mixed feelings about hiring Kent Island guys. On one hand they were hard workers, on the other—come oyster season—"you're going to lose them."

**Mrs. Eva White Thompson** was interviewed after the first of the year. Another lifelong resident, Eva is admired by many Kent Islanders for her friendly smile and positive personality. She cherishes music and the memories it provides—from teaching piano to numerous young locals to playing in locations around the world. Her church has been a major influence on her life. She believes what makes life fulfilling is to "give of yourself and you'll always

*Continued on page 6*

## Mark Your Calendar

### Kent Island Heritage Society GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, June 14

Kent Island Free Library

7:00 p.m. Refreshments

7:30 p.m. Speaker: Ms. Linda Collier  
"Mourning in American Customs and  
Artifacts of the Past"



## *"Docents Are "Lights of Service"*

Twenty-one of our 26 docents attended the First Annual Docent Tea hosted by Mr. and Mrs. William E. Denny III at their home on March 31. Docents provide guided tours of our historic sites — Cray house, Stevensville Train Station, Stevensville Post Office, Christ Church (now owned by Queen Anne's County) and Kirwan House.

In expressing The Society's appreciation for their efforts, docent chair Audrey Hawkins called them "Lights of Service."

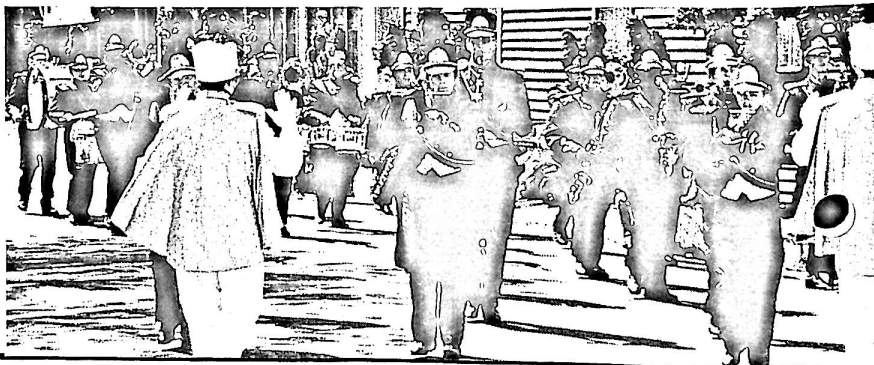
Each docent was given the new 2005 Guide Map of Historic Sites on the Scenic Eastern Shore of Maryland published by The Historic Sites Consortium of Queen Anne's County under the auspices of the Department of Business and Tourism.



Photos clockwise from left: Fran Peters; Flora Sossi; Butch and Linda Collier; Barbara Marmion; Gil and Florence Dunn.

Docents not pictured are: Hanna Wall, Rebecca Ringgold, Mrytle Bruscup, Sally Boden, Joetta Denny, Missy Denny, Fran Taylor, Michael Denny, Greg Nizza, Mae Hutchison, Carole Frederick, Dick and Eileen Dadds, Joe Thompson, Audrey Hawkins, Twyla Hirrlinger, Bill and Janet Denny and Nancy Cook.

Kent Island historic sites will be open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on May 7, June 4, July 9, Aug. 6, Sept. 3 and Oct. 1.





# April Fools' Day 1965

By Brent Lewis

Looking through a suitcase full of old newspapers and magazines the other day, I ran across a 45-year-old copy of the Centreville Record Observer. Dated April 1, the front-page news was shocking. And provides us something of an alternate history.

The top story was that Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, the Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston of their moment, announced plans to build a home on a marsh island off Turkey Point on Cox Neck. This ultra-modern love nest was to include "two indoor swimming pools, a tennis court, a golf driving range, a 28 boat garage and an underground-underwater railway tunnel to Friendship Airport." Costs for this Eastern Shore paradise were estimated at a then-outrageous half million dollars.

Another big announcement was "Kent Island Changes Name To Attract More Tourists." Seems the state legislature voted to approve the name

change after so many people coming off the Bay Bridge confused us for Kent County. This hip new happening name might have really done the trick, too, as far as those tourists were concerned. After all, who wouldn't want to visit "Bermuda"?

Almost as a sidenote: "Stevensville School Burns To Ground." The blaze lasted 13 hours and was started by local forest ranger, Smokey Joiner. Smokey was demonstrating for an assembly of students how to put out forest fires. The high school fire started with a cigarette that Ranger Joiner forgot to extinguish. Five hundred students cheered as the building burned to the ground.

Kent Narrows was awarded a state commendation for health and hygiene.

Kent Island wasn't the only place such strange events were reported. The Tuesday before, an oil well was discovered under the county courthouse in Centreville and a spaceship

landed in Sudlersville last Sunday night.

At the far right hand bottom of the page there was a notice: "If you have managed to read this far—April Fool!"

On the back page and inside was the real news.

Groundbreaking on the new county high school had taken place. Arch-rivals Centreville and Sudlersville were blasting open the scholastic baseball season that upcoming weekend and there were two big coon dog

events scheduled.

Kentmorr Marina Restaurant was already "FAMOUS FOR CHESAPEAKE BAY SEAFOOD." Under the Yum Yum Tree was playing at the 213 Drive-In Theatre, a 1961 Mercury four-door hardtop went for \$1,095 and jumbo shrimp was \$1.09 a pound.

I don't know about you all, but next week, when we go to Dick and Liz's annual spring fete on Bermuda, I'm bringing shrimp.

## In Memoriam

PATRICIA ELLEN NORBERT BAXTER

ROBERTA TAYLOR RISLEY

SANDRA GEMIGNANI

WIFE OF FORMER KIHHS PRESIDENT HUGO GEMIGNANI

MARGARET THOMPSON

KIHHS CHARTER MEMBER, HISTORIAN AND DOCENT

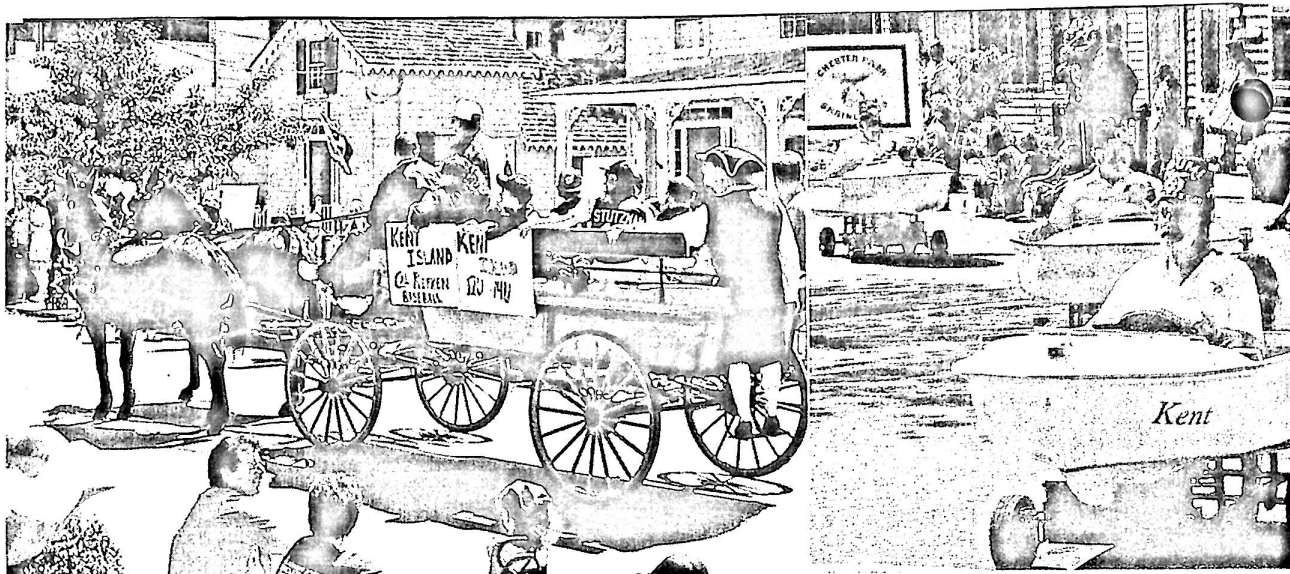
THE HONORABLE ELBERT N. CARVEL

KIHHS CHARTER MEMBER

FORMER GOVERNOR OF DELAWARE







### Kent Island Garden Club

## **Cray House and Kirwan House Gardens Judged "Bay-Wise"**

By Denise Swayne

The herb garden at Cray House and the garden at Kirwan House have measured up: They have been certified "Bay-Wise" by Queen Anne's County Master Gardeners.

The Bay-Wise Yardstick measures sound environmental practices for gardens and yards, giving each item an individual score. We passed the test.

Just a few smart practices in each of our yards or gardens can improve the quality of the Chesapeake Bay. Little things add up to the biggest impact.

For more information about this important program, call the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service at 1-800-342-2507.

## **Welcome New Members**

Clifton and Norma Coursey  
Centreville  
James F. Ewing Jr.  
Chester  
Joan Sellers  
Chester

Monica L. Tegeder  
Stevensville

Gary Walters  
Chester

# **HOPE ME DIE**

By Gil Dunn

The month of April signals a temporary closing of the oyster season. Many Kent Island watermen lay down their oyster tongs, take a break from the water and search for work around the community — house painting, carpentry, plumbing, grass cutting, etc.

Our house was in need of an outside paint job. I looked for my friend, Mel Crouch, one of those watermen looking for work.

He took the job and showed up bright and early Monday, ready to go. He painted the entire working day, all eight hours. Then on Tuesday and Wednesday I saw nothing of Mel.

When he came back Thursday I asked him where he had been, because I was looking for him.

"MY GAWD!" he replied, "HOPE ME DIE, IT RAINED A FLUD!!!"

"Oh,," I said.

Mel continued the paint job. When he completed the painting and before leaving, he said, "THE HOUSE LOOKS PURTY GOOD. HOPE ME DIE."

I took a look, and I, too, thought I looked PURTY GOOD, even though the painting was interrupted by a FLUD, HOPE ME DIE.



## THE CHORE

Gil Dunn thought his porch steps  
Would look good  
Painted forest green.

So down to Grollman's store  
He charged  
Eager at his chore.

"Why you vant gveen?"  
Papa Grollman asked.  
"Everbody izing vite."  
Papa chuckled.  
"See here."

Pointing to row on row  
Of white paint cans  
Lined up like Sentries  
Guarding the back door.

"No green?" questioned Gil.  
"No gveen! Hov to order!  
"Take six weeks!" said Papa.  
"Everbody using vite!"

Gil's bent-over walk home  
In the twilight  
Seemed to take forever  
Mostly, but not completely,  
Because he was burdened,  
Carrying two cans of "vite."

*This sample is from member Alex  
Johnson's new book of poetry,  
"Kent Island Blues."*

## President's Message

*Continued from page 1*

carry forth all the many projects that  
are part of The Society's agenda of  
discovering, identifying, restoring and  
preserving the heritage of Kent  
Island.

CALL ME, CALL ME, CALL ME  
... if you would like to become  
involved in restoration of the Kirwan  
House and Museum, in being a guide  
(docent) for our sites, working with  
future Kent Island Day events, or  
entering computer data. The Society  
needs your talents.

CALL ME at 410-758-2502.

*Nancy M. Cook*

### TREASURERS REPORT

Audrey B. Hawkins, Treasurer  
Jan. 1 through April 30, 2005

Checkbook balance	
as of Jan. 1	\$49,553.74
Income	\$15,719.85
Disbursements	8,646.72
Checkbook balance	
as of April 30	\$56,626.87



MARY J. WHITE  
FOUNDING MEMBER  
OF  
THE KENT ISLAND  
HERITAGE SOCIETY

## Philpot's Front Porch

# You Can Always Go Home

By Skeeter Philpot

**T**ammy Sam and I like to travel. Mostly around the U.S. In New Orleans, a guy approached me on Bourbon Street. He bet me twenty dollars he could tell me where I got my shoes. I knew he'd never guess the outlet stores. He said, "Now, don't get mad. I didn't say I'd tell you where you *bought* those shoes. I told you I'd tell you where you *got* those shoes. You got those shoes on Bourbon Street, in New Orleans, in Louisiana." I paid the man his twenty bucks and went and had another Hurricane.

In western Montana we drove up Going To The Sun Road towards Canada. Well, we went most of the way. At a certain point our flatlander DNA kicked in, and we had to turn around and go back. There were people snow-skiing in bikinis.

In Key West we had one of the world's most amazing meals. We were with great friends, we ate off everybody's plate, and our waitress was above the call of duty tolerant and sweet. We were in an old bordello.

When someone we loved died, we went to the Mississippi River. We visited Elvis' house in Memphis. We worshiped at Sun Studios (the birthplace of rock and roll), partied on Beale Street (the most soulful place on earth) and ate a fried peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

We had the biggest cheeseburger ever in California, saw a kid in Seattle that could have been my daughter and mourned at New York's Ground Zero.

But, man, there's nothing like coming back across that Bay Bridge.

## Video Initiative

Continued from page 1

influence on her life. She believes what makes life fulfilling is to "give of yourself and you'll always receive." As a young girl, she recalls attending Strawberry Festivals, picking peaches on Parson's Island and buying fabric and sewing materials with her mother on a visiting Floating Theater. She went crabbing with her father. When she married and had children, she loved that her home was always a hub of activity.

**Mr. Alvin "Babe" Grollman** was our most recent interviewee. His nickname, originally "Baby," came from his being the youngest of Henry and Lena Grollman's five children. Henry Grollman was a prominent Kent Island farmer and merchant. Grollman's Store was a Main Street anchor for 74 years. Babe has farmed here all his life. A mischievous little boy, his mother would tell him, I'm not going to whip you, you're going to get your hard knocks outside." And he admits he did. Babe recently lost his beloved wife Irene and speaks adoringly of his six daughters. When the first, Deborah, was due, Irene went back home to her family to give birth. When she left she went over the bay on a ferry. She came home over the bridge. Times were changing.

One thing all three of these distinguished folk have in common is their love for Kent Island. Despite the changes they've seen over their years, they all still believe we live in a special place.

The proof of their opinion is this: A special place nurtures special people. People like Melvin Clark, Eva Thompson and Alvin "Babe" Grollman.

*Brent Lewis is a member of the Oral History Committee and was the off-camera interviewer on these videos.*







## KENT ISLAND DAY PATRONS

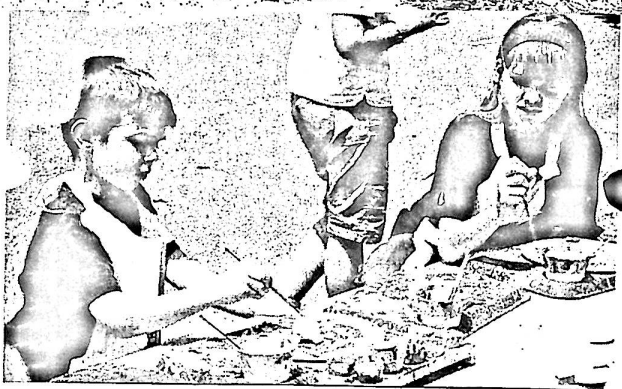
*Kent Island Heritage Society gratefully acknowledges financial support from the following patrons:*

Robert & Lorraine Aaron  
 Jack Ashley  
 Jason & JoAnne Baker  
 Holly & Wheeler Baker  
 Patricia Baker  
 Ray Baker  
 Lucie M. Baldi  
 Carol & Bob Bateman  
 Bill Baxter  
 Harry & Nancy Bly  
 Sally & Daryl Boden  
 Boender Properties Inc  
 John & Diana Bonner  
 John & Meg Borders  
 Ted & Janet Breeding  
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard C. Britt  
 Jack & Elizabeth Broderick  
 Myrtle Bruscup  
 Joe & Ida Jean Buckel  
 Elizabeth Bukowsky  
 Francis & Pat Carnes  
 Commissioner & Mrs.  
 Benjamin Cassell  
 Dr. & Mrs. Earl Chambers Jr.  
 Eunice & Curtie Chance  
 Fred & Patricia Chew  
 Richard & Cindy Chirumbole  
 Forrest P. Chisman  
 C. Melvin Clark  
 Spencer & Debbie Clarke  
 Jeanette Clevenger  
 Lois Cockey  
 Wm H. & Dolores B. Cockey  
 Linda & Butch Collier  
 Nancy MacGregor Cook  
 Barbara Crouch  
 Gordon & Alice Crouch  
 Commissioner & Mrs. Joseph  
 Cupani  
 Geraldine K. Czajkowski  
 Richard & Eileen Dadds

Clara B. Davidson  
 Hal & Libby Davidson  
 Norm Davidson  
 Janet & Bill Denny  
 Claude Di Giovine  
 Larry & Marie Di Pietro  
 Gil & Florence Dunn  
 Carole Frederick  
 Evelyn Colnna Garcia  
 Wilbur & Bertha Garrett  
 Hugo G. Gemignani  
 The Gerg Family  
 Dorothy Gibson  
 Jane Grafton  
 Grasonville Medical Center  
 Harry & Eileen Griffith  
 In Memory of Julius Grollman  
 Ralph & Amelia Hamilton  
 William & Viola Harris  
 Audrey Bruscup Hawkins  
 John A. Herndon  
 Jacqueline W. Horney  
 Kathy Hovland  
 Wayne T. Humphries  
 Mae Hutchison  
 Alice Cockey Immler  
 Jim & Judy Ireland  
 Rev. Joseph & Augusta  
 James  
 Ginger Jones  
 Grace S. & Robert Jones Sr.  
 Ches & Barb Kellam  
 David & Claire Kelley  
 Louis & Gloria Kelley  
 Al & Ernestine Kepley  
 Barbara Kettler-Mills  
 Michael Koval  
 Charles & Eileen Lacijan  
 William E. Lane  
 Eddie & Karla Larrimore  
 Dave & Jean Leathery

Mary Jane Leaverton  
 John W. & Ruth Legg  
 Brent & Peggy Lewis  
 Edna M. Lewis  
 Olive B. Lowe  
 Marguerite Mankin  
 Rawle B. Mannix  
 Mr. & Mrs. Kevin McCracken  
 William & Sarah Morgan Jr.  
 Stewart & Barbara Nash  
 Elizabeth M. Nelson  
 Marie Neuhauser  
 Commissioner & Mrs.  
 Rodney Nedomanski  
 Arthur & Karen Oertel  
 Old Time World-Com.  
 June Palmer  
 William L. & Norma Patton  
 Michael & Merna Pelczar Jr.  
 Fran L. Peters  
 Robert E. & Sandra Pezzoli  
 Roy B. & Thelma Phillips  
 Tom & Mary Lou Pierson  
 Mr. & Mrs. James Pippin Jr  
 Annie May Price  
 Evelyn Price  
 "Chip" Price  
 Louise M. Price  
 Mildred Price  
 Edgar & Frances Pyle  
 Gene Ransom  
 Nicole Ransom  
 Theo Ransom  
 Lynne Riley-Coleman  
 Harold & Rebecca Ringgold  
 The Russells  
 Bill & Emily Russell  
 Mrs Warren Sadler  
 Bernard & Dorotheann  
 Sadusky  
 Karen Salter, Century 21

Mr. & Mrs. Julian Samuels  
 Wm. Maurice & Ellen Sanger  
 Henry A. & Marie A Schmidt  
 Oscar Schulz  
 Tracy & Stacey Schulz  
 Mrs. Shirley Severa  
 Barbara J. Seward  
 Barbara Siegart  
 John & Shari Smigo  
 Mr. & Mrs. Frank Smith  
 Richard & Flora Sossi  
 Jane G. Sparks  
 Nick & Joan Stoeer  
 Frances Taylor  
 Mrs. Emma Thomas  
 Kathy Thomas  
 Donald Thompson  
 Mr. & Mrs. Joseph  
 Thompson  
 Kay Thompson  
 Roonie & Elmer Thompson  
 Ruth Thompson  
 Dick & Rosalie Tillman  
 Robert & Sara Towers  
 Mike & Mindy Voelker  
 Honey Voermann  
 Hanna Wall  
 James & Gayle Walls  
 Robert & Shirley Walters  
 Paula Warner  
 Jack & Pat Weston  
 Pauline K White  
 Paul Wilderson  
 Frederick V. Wilhelm  
 Harold & Marilyn Wilson  
 Jim, Bucky, Laura, Natalie Wills  
 William & Madlyn Wooters  
 Donald & Ruth Wyatt  
 Charles & Bonel Zakarian  
 Joseph Zimmerman  
 Pat & Alan Zoeckler



Photos by  
Jean Feathery  
John Bonner  
and Doug Bishop,  
The Kent Island Bay Times

The Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc.  
Post Office Box No. 321  
Stevensville, Maryland 21666

Address Service Requested

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
Paid  
Stevensville, MD  
21666  
Permit # 11