

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 2006

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President's Message

THE ISLE OF KENT IS CELEBRATING ITS 375TH ANNIVERSARY!

In commemoration of William Claiborne's 1631 settlement of Kent Island, the Society will be actively engaged in featuring Kent Island's importance to the history of our state and nation.

For the benefit of visitors and residents alike, we will be showing our historic buildings and displaying our expanding database of genealogy files, historic documents and records, photographs, artifacts and oral histories (both audio and video).

Historic sites include:

- Historic Stevensville Post Office [1877]
- Cray House [1809]
- Stevensville Train Station [1902] and newly acquired caboose
- Kirwan Store Museum [1890]

Volunteers are needed to serve as docents, to work in the library genealogy files and to perform accessioning tasks (documenting our artifacts, including photos).

Please become an invaluable participant in this celebration by volunteering to preserve the wonderful history of Kent Island.

COME HELP US CELEBRATE OUR 375TH BY VOLUNTEERING TO PRESERVE THE WONDERFUL HISTORY OF KENT ISLAND!

Nancy M. Cook

CAPT. JOHN SMITH SAILS THE CHESAPEAKE ... AGAIN

A replica of Capt John Smith's 1608 boat, "Barge of Discovery," sits under the rotunda in the Maryland State House. The 30-foot open boat, known as a shallop, is part of a major educational exhibit marking the 400th anniversary of Smith's voyages around the Chesapeake Bay.

The original boat was constructed in two pieces so it could be shipped below deck from England. It was assembled and launched from the fort at Jamestown.

The replica was constructed in two pieces in Chestertown to be authentic, which fortuitously allows it to fit through doorways for exhibits at museums in Baltimore, St. Michaels, Washington, D.C., Solomons, Newport News and Norfolk.

The boat, as before, will be assembled and launched at Jamestown in May 2007. Powered only by sail and oar, the shallop's crew will follow the new Capt. John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Water Trail, which replicates Smith's epic 1,800 mile Chesapeake Bay voyages, with visits to 20 locations connected to Smith's voyage.

Mark Your Calendar

Kent Island Heritage Society GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, June 14
Kent Island Free Library

7:00 p.m. Refreshments

7:30 p.m. Program

"Explorer Capt. John Smith and The
Capt. John Smith Chesapeake National
Historic Water Trail"

COMMITTEES

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Queen Anne's County's Tricentennial Tea Commemorative Ceremony

By Nancy Cook

WHAT A GLORIOUS DAY Tuesday, April 18 was for the premiere events of Queen Anne's County's Tricentennial Celebration!

More than 400 people attended The Tricentennial Tea, many in costumes representing historical eras throughout our 300 years. The Tea was held at The River House at Queenstown Harbor Golf Course on the Chester River.

The Tea was sponsored jointly by The Kent Island Heritage Society, the Queen Anne's Historical Society and the Tricentennial Committee. Ms. Juanita Kohn, executive director of The Queen Anne's

Historical Society, presented the commemorative coins and the commemorative stamped postal envelopes available for purchase that day; Ms. Amanda Apple, the county heritage coordinator, spoke about the role of the Historic Sites Consortium in the County; and I commented on the historic significance of the day.

Photographs of many historic sites in Queen Anne's County were on display, including sites in Kent Island, Queen Anne, Church Hill and Centreville. Free birthday kits and several Tricentennial publications were available. Among the items displayed that could be bought at other venues were Tricentennial Christmas balls, wine glasses and special-labeled Tricentennial wine.

The Tricentennial Com-

memorative Ceremony began at 6 o'clock in Queenstown, which was the first county seat in 1706. Among the speakers were Gov. Erlich's representative Ms. Adele Acosta Representative Richard Sossi, and county commissioners.

The highlight of the ceremony was the performance of the Chesapeake Youth Chorale under the direction of Ms. Ann Turpin. The song they performed, "We Plow the Fields and Scatter," written by Donald McCullough, was especially commissioned to celebrate the Tricentennial of Chestertown and Queen Anne's County.

This event begins the year-long celebration of the Maryland Provincial Assembly's proposal for the formation of the county that was to become Gateway to the Eastern Shore.



KIHS VP Jack Broderick and Linda Collier.



Kerry Lake, Lora Lake,

Linda Collier, Butch Collier.

Queen Anne's County Tricentennial Concert Queen Anne's County Arts Council THURSDAYS IN THE PARK CONCERT

featuring

The Queen Anne's Chorale
Pride of the Bay Barbershop Ensemble
The Kent Island Big Band

Thursday, June 8

Kirwan Country Store Museum opens at 6 p.m.

Concert from 7 to 9 p.m.

Kirwan House, Route 552, Chester, Md.

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

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Jean N. Houghton
Stevensville

Donna Jones
Grasonville

Kent Islander Profiles

From Kent Island Historical Society's oral histories project

By Brent Lewis

Wilbur R. Garrett Sr.

Queen Anne Colony is one of Kent Island's oldest subdivisions. The people who live there feel fortunate to be able to call this tight-knit neighborhood home. Most of the thanks for that goes to four forward-thinking men who envisioned creating a recreational haven for their friends.

Wilbur Garrett is the lone survivor of the four original developers.

It was the early 1960s. Mr. Garrett, along with partners Lisle Lipscomb, Pat Slater and R.L. Willis, had recently completed an apartment project on the Western Shore. Successful professionals all, the group decided their next endeavor would be to build a family-oriented vacation community. When both population density and prices on the other side of the bay proved too high, they headed east.

Now at 92 years old, sharp and gently humorous, Mr. Garrett says, "So we came over and got a Realtor." The investors were shown "a 100-acre piece of land between Stevensville and Love Point. We bought that — and it was a good hunting place too. We fiddled around with it trying to figure what we could do. Couldn't get many homes on it, but it had a magnificent view

of the bridge."

While they were fiddling, their agent alerted them to a property on Romancoke Road that had been put on the market.

Known as the Grollman Farm, the piece was the site of the Price House, a brick manor home that dates back to 1634. Wilbur surmises, "The bricks probably came over from England as ballast." The parcel was suitable for significant construction and included land on both the Chesapeake and Price's Creek.

This was the spot the partnership had been looking for.

They plotted out about 250 lots. Dredged a spit of land that separated Price's Creek from the bay to make the small tributary navigable. In line with the original concept, the first improvements centered around the new marina. A clubhouse and a pool. Shuffleboard. A four-unit boatel adjacent to the marina where people could stay while considering purchasing a lot. Asking price? About



Wilbur and Bertha Garrett

\$300 inland. Waterfront was less than \$1,000.

Back then, the bayside beach had not yet all but disappeared from erosion.

Golf was planned from the beginning.

All the streets were named after famous courses.

When asked how the group came up with the name of their subdivision, Wilbur leans forward and smiles, "Well, it was Queen Anne, and we had to name it something."

Marketing only to people they knew, he proudly notes,

"We managed to start this colony with no public advertising at all. We had no advertising expense. Just friends. Then their friends. It had a great affect on how this community turned out."

The developers hosted parties at the marina. They provided food and drink and fun. Hop in the jeep and

show potential buyers around. Three of the four partners built their own homes here. R.L. Willis, a contractor by trade, put up the first new home in the neighborhood.

In deference to the Price House, Mr. Garrett says strict architectural covenants were partially conceived because the developers "leaned toward construction that would be complimentary to the old house in the middle."

Wilbur Garrett remembers good relationships with noted locals. He talks fondly of Julius Grollman, John "Fountain" Davidson, and calls Earl Seward, "Quite a guy." Bill Denny and Gil Dunn are merchants he patronized. He liked shopping in Bobby



Queen Anne Colony developers Pat Slater, Lisle Lipscomb, R.L. Willis, Wilbur Garrett

Aaron's shop. Trying to come up with the name of another friendly native he says, "It'll come to me, but you can't wait that long."

Noting how Romancoke Road has changed, Mr. Garrett says, "We'd come back in the evening, the coon hunters would have their trucks parked out there, drinking whiskey and listening to their hounds out in the woods. We'd only see two or three cars."

Now he sees no end to Kent Island's growth. Maybe the big companies aren't as intimately connected to the land as earlier developers. Maybe the land is just too valuable. Either way, he says, "In 20 years you won't know the place."

A recent public amenity Mr. Garrett considers "great" is the Cross Island Trail.

In all the time the Garrett family has lived in their neighborhood, no natural event compares to the tidal surge from Hurricane Isabelle in 2003. The morning the storm hit there was 6½-feet of water in places where there had never been water before.

But it didn't faze him. "Been here over 40 years." He chuckles. "Think we're going to stay." ■

2006 Historic Sites Consortium

Weekend Schedule for Historic Sites

**Saturdays
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.**

**May 6
June 3
July 1
August 5
September 2
October 7
November 4*
(*Tricentennial)**

What Is A Docent?

By Audrey B. Hawkins
DOCENT COORDINATOR

According to Webster, "a docent is a tour guide, as in a museum." Perhaps. But *our* docents are much more important to the experience than that. They are an essential part of the ambience of their site. They transport visitors back in time to see, to feel, to understand a simpler but more unforgiving life before iPods and Blackberrys.

April was a very busy month for bus tours scheduled by the Queen Anne's County Dept. of Tourism for our Heritage Society in Stevensville:

Apr 5 The Prince William County (Va.) Bluebirds, 44 visitors.

Apr 26 Students from Mattapeake Middle School, 3 busloads.

Apr 27 The Chesapeake Ramblers Lothian, Md., 49 visitors.

Apr 28 The C and Bea Tours & Cruisers, Pilesgrove, NJ, 33 visitors.

Future tours are scheduled for June 24, July 12 and Oct. 12.

The Md. House and Garden Tour on Sunday, April 30 produced more than 100 visitors to Historic Stevensville properties.

In addition, parents and their home-school children were shown the sites on April 21.

Our sites are open on the first Saturdays of May through November. (See box on left.) In addition, they will be opened throughout the year by appointment.

Properties involved are Cray House, Train Depot, Old Post Office and county-owned Christ Episcopal Church in Historic Stevensville and Kirwan Store Museum in Chester.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our docents: Joann Anderson, Myrtle Bruscup, Butch and Linda Collier, Nancy Cook, Dick and Eileen Dadds, Janet, Michael and Missy Denny, Gil and Florence Dunn, Carole Frederick, Mae Hutchison, Donna Jones, George and Barbara Marmion, Greg Nizza, Fran Peters, Louise Price, Becky Ringgold, Flora Sossi, Fran Taylor and Hanna Wall.

Our sites require more than one docent during tours and open houses. We need more docents.

If you would like to become a vital part of this important initiative, please contact me, Audrey Hawkins, at 410-643-5969. We will brief you on the process, provide you with necessary scripting and background information, dress you in authentic period costume, and convert you into an 18th century sage.

When was the last time you allowed yourself to yield to your imagination? To pretend? Why not give it a try?

Calendar of Events

□ **May 20**

Kent Island Day. [Rain date May 21.]

□ **June 8, 7-9 p.m.**

Tricentennial Concert at the Kirwan House in conjunction with Queen Anne's County Arts Council. Queen Anne's Chorale, Pride of the Bay Barbershop Ensemble, The Kent Island Big Band will be showcased.

□ **June 11**

300 Years of Faith. All county churches simultaneously celebrate and highlight their congregations' history and development in the community of faith in Queen Anne's County.

□ **June 14, 7 p.m.**

KIHS quarterly meeting, KI Library

□ **July 4**

Independence Day celebration, Centreville

□ **October 11, 7 p.m.**

KIHS quarterly meeting, KI Library

□ **November 4, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

Historic Sites Bus Tour by Queen Anne's Historic Consortium.

□ **December 1**

Tricentennial Time Capsule Planting, Christmas Parade.

□ **December 9, 6 p.m.**

KIHS annual meeting, KI Yacht Club

Springing to Life

By Brent Lewis

Spring is all around us. Savor it. Soak it in. Folks around here are working in their yards and on their boats. Seasonal businesses are opening. Weekend traffic's increasing. More people are out walking and riding bikes. The days are longer and the nights perfect for open windows. There's a lot more color in the world. We can feel the season in our bones.

And we aren't the only ones.

Fish like spot and croaker that have recently spawned at the mouth of the Chesapeake are headed our way. They spend the warmer months feeding in the bay's shallower water, getting larger and larger, preparing for the

day they head back south, ever faithful to nature's cycle. That's if something doesn't eat them first.

Predators abound. There are always bigger fish — blues, rock, trout and more. Ospreys and great blue herons have returned and are hungry. Their babies want their share, too. Gulls and otters and terrapin also feed on these young fish. And once they're big enough to no longer be threatened by those fishermen, they taste real good fried with a slice of homegrown tomato and cornbread. Bad luck for them.

Eating isn't the only natural response to spring. Like the shorebirds, almost every creature in, on and around the bay is getting

ready to mate, is in the middle of mating, or has just finished mating.

Even one of the world's oldest critters knows what time it is.

Thousands of horseshoe crabs come ashore this time of year to lay millions of eggs. These prehistoric throwbacks, beautiful in their ugliness, have been welcoming spring with the rebirth of their species for something like 400 million years. According to scientists, horseshoe crabs existed before there was a Chesapeake Bay, or even an Atlantic Ocean.

Our favorite crustacean, the blue crab, has recently produced a new generation and these little guys are growing so fast they're busting out of

their shells. Literally. At this point, every young crab is sloughing off its hard shell once every five days or so. Blue crabs make an exact soft copy of themselves from the inside, then burst out their own back, and in about the time we put in a week's work, they've been a hard crab, a peeler, a buster, a soft crab, a paper shell, and back to hard crab again. Though the process slows as they get older, they shed their outer shells around twenty times over a two year life span. They grow bigger and fatter with each molting.

So, of course, all this talk about fried fish and fat crabs brings up one thought:

Summer will be here soon.

What's In A Name?

By Gil Dunn

A few days after my birth I was given the first and middle names of my mother's father, Charles Lewis Hay. During his lifetime he had received many nick names: Charley, Chuck, Buck. Buck stuck. He was known as Buck Hay for the rest of his life.

The week following my birth, visitors came to see my mom and also to take a look at me, the new baby. One happy-go-lucky lady visiting my mom took a look at me and exclaimed, "Oh!

Another little Buck."

My mother was shocked. She had nothing against the name, of course, but she apparently concluded that one Buck was enough. She penciled through the name "Lewis" on my birth certificate and wrote "Gilbert" in its place. From that moment on my name became Gilbert, or its diminutive, Gil.

When I became a school student the teachers were not satisfied my not having a first name and inserted the initial "C" in that

space. Everything was fine and dandy. Family and friends still knew me as Gilbert or Gil.

World War II interfered with that accommodation. When the enlisting officer directed "First name and middle initial. No exception," I became "Charles G."

That's when the confusion began. Was Charles G. The same person as C. Gilbert? All official correspondence and military matters were addressed to Charles G. Family and friends all knew me as Gil.

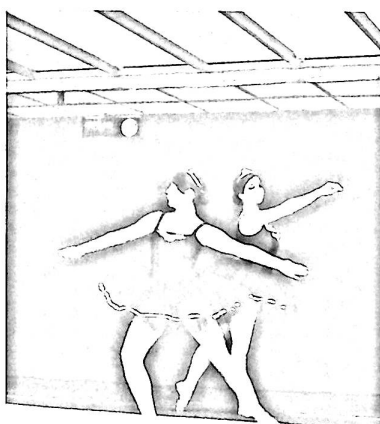
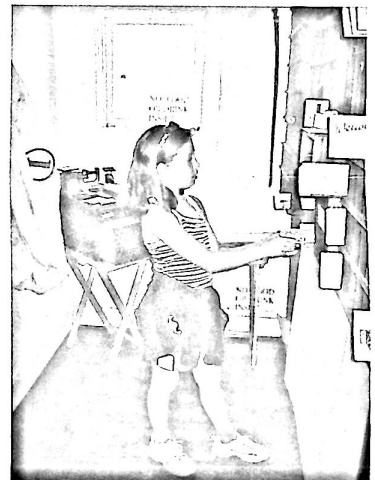
When I became a civilian again and free of the Army's requirement for uniformity, I became Chas. Gilbert, hoping to ease back to the person I was. It helped. Then came the clincher.

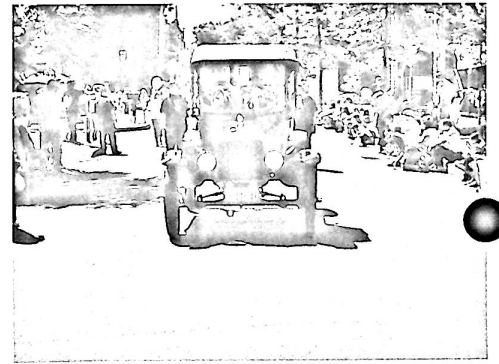
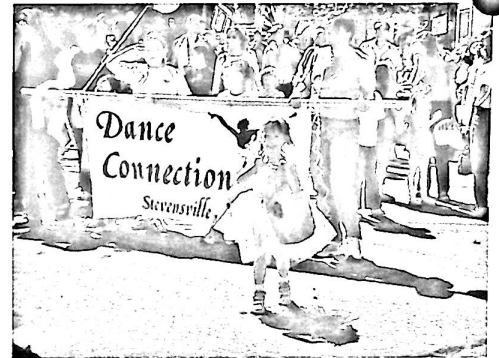
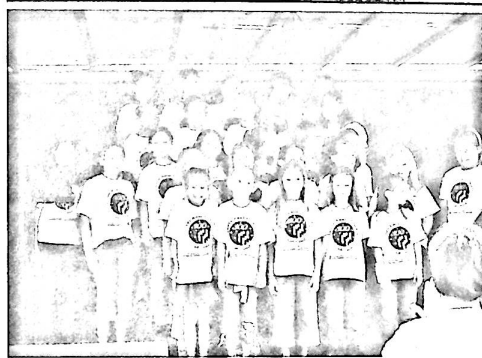
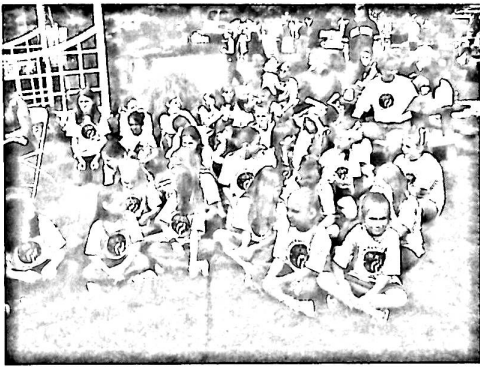
Two employees at the Post Office were examining a letter addressed to Charles G. Dunn. One asked, "Who's he?" "Could be Gil Dunn," the other ventured.

A few years later when we had a daughter, we named her "Florence" after her mother. But we call her "Bucky." Not quite sure why.

Kent Island Day 2006

Photos by Jean Leathery





HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YA'LL

By Skeeter Philpot

Queen Anne's County is 300 years old. How 'bout that? I swear the old girl doesn't look a day over 250.

My name's Skeeter Philpot, and I'm a tenth generation Kent Islander. One of my ancestors came ashore with Claiborne. We Philpots have been wading around these marshes ever since.

All my life I've been listening to stories. My mother's family were storekeepers. Back in the old days, general stores were the center of the universe. Everybody came around, and sometimes they stayed for hours. Nobody tells better stories than locals sitting around a general store drinking Yoo-Hoos. Except maybe watermen.

My old man was a waterman.

Watermen are of an untamable character. Independent. Stubborn. The personification of free will. Except for nature's schedule, structure and conformity are rarely defining lifestyle traits. It's always been a tough way to make a living though, and getting tougher. Good thing most of them know how to have a good time.

Few would ever be happy doing any other work.

Most farmers are like that too. Dad's father was a farmer.

Farm families tend to be close. Close to the earth, close to each other, and close to the community. Farming is in the soul. A calling, one of the rare ones, that gives human beings a chance to build a real relationship with Creation. Growing corn or milking cows, 300 years ago or

today, farming is the true art of life. The people of our county have dedicated their lives to farming for generations.

These are the people we spring from.

Three hundred years and the history that comes with it can't change some things.

This place, and the waters around this place, provide us the opportunity to live in an unique and beautiful part of the world. The scenery stirs the heart. The people we know are gracious and loving. Local flavor runs channel deep. Even the food has character.

There's all kinds of fun to be had.

History is a story about a place. A place, and the people of that place.

History is the story of us.

Publications For Sale by The Kent Island Heritage Society

**Of History and Houses
A Kent Island Heritage**
Mildred Schoch

\$\\$20.00

**The Forgotten Seven:
The Decoy Carvers of Kent Island**
Hugo Gemignani

\$15.00

**The Isle of Kent - The 350th Anniversary
A Commemorative History**

\$5.00

Burial Permits - 1900-1922 - Kent Island
Cause of death and burial site data
compiled by *Mary White*; prepared for
publication by *Mary Jane and Josuha*
Leaverton

\$10.00

*Plus tax, shipping and handling.
Call 410-758-2502 for information.*

KIRWAN HOUSE WISH LIST

*Would you please look in your attic and/or garage
for any of the following items appropriate to the
1890 - 1915 period? We would love to preserve them
in the Kirwan Store.*

- ✓ Old cereal boxes
- ✓ Baby's high-button shoes
- ✓ Old turpentine or kerosene containers, with labels
- ✓ Old advertising signs
- ✓ Spices in labeled containers
- ✓ Textile-printed flour sacks

Isle of Kent

John Bonner, Editor

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THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC.

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I wish to become a member of the Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc.
Enclosed is my check to cover dues of membership indicated below:
Life Membership ... \$250.00 Single Membership ... \$15.00
Organization Membership ... \$25.00 Family Membership ... \$25.00

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