

Kent Island - 1631

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

STIMICA

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC. ■ SPRING 2003

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President's Message

What a wonderful day June 28 was for The Society's reception for owners of historic homes on Kent Island! The weather was just perfect, the gardens were lovely (thanks to the Kent Island Garden Club), the food delicious (catered by David Perry's Casual Caterers), the Kirwan House most presentable (thanks to caretaker Greg Nizza) and the attendees enthusiastic about the nascent stages of the James E. Kirwan Store Museum and meeting others owning Kent Island historic homes.

Our thanks to Florence and Gil Dunn who drove the breadth and depth of the Island identifying present homeowners and addresses using the invaluable "Of History and Houses—A Kent Island Heritage" by Mildred C. Schoch as a guide.

Literature was made available about researching historic homes, applying for National Historic Register status and applying for tax incentives as part of restoration in historic areas.

To continue our emphasis on the historic homes in our area, our next general meeting on Sept. 16 will feature Mr. Michael Dixon, whose topic will be "If This Place Could Talk: Researching the History of An Old House."

Owners were asked to bring a recent picture of their home with them to the reception, and these will be displayed at the general meeting.

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Kirwan House Openings A Success

BY GREG NIZZA

Kirwan House Curator

Our two inaugural events were quite successful in showcasing Kirwan House and Kirwan Store. On June 28 we hosted a reception for owners of historic homes; an open house was held on July 12.

Kirwan Store was quite presentable, most of the original items having been retrieved from storage. The surround built to conceal the furnace blends in quite well, thanks to Bill Denny for contracting for the duplicate wainscoting which makes the surround look perfectly original. Missing items, such as a potbelly stove, are being researched and located as we strive to bring the store back to its original setting.

Several visitors related interesting stories and tidbits from their memories of Catherine Kirwan and Senator James E. Kirwan. Many residents of the Dominion area recited stories and memories of times they spent in the Kirwan Store, which operated until the 1950s. Many visitors provided valuable insights about the original layout of the store and about the outbuildings and the gardens.

Another visitor, an expert in Victorian interiors and restoration has volunteered her assistance in

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Mark Your Calendar

Kent Island Heritage Society QUARTERLY MEETING

Tuesday, September 16

Kent Island Branch Library

7:00 Refreshments

7:30 Presentation by Michael Dixon
"If This Place Could Talk: Researching
the History of An Old House"

Reports on Geneology Activity

BY MYRTLE BRUSCUP

Mary and I have spent many hours moving file folders in order to make more space in each drawer and putting materials into our new cabinet. In doing this, we came across blueprints of the Kent Manor Inn. After a phone call, we delivered them to Mr. Shakel, who was delighted to get them.

Information from our files was provided to those interested in histories of the Osborne, Akels, Jones and Young families. They were advised that in-depth research was not possible and invited to review the books, pamphlets, etc. available in our files.

A history of Indian Springs and the very early Copedge family was given to us by Mr. Billy Lane.

I spent a very interesting afternoon with Mr. Robert Bunch and his sister, whose grandparents lived on the farm across from Alvin Grollman on Grollman Road. Boats also stopped at their pier, as they did at the Love Point Pier, to deliver produce, etc.

Melvin Clark, who happened to be in the library, knew the older Bunch family. He answered their questions, gave information and stories from long ago and told them that their grand-parents home on Cox Creek stood on ground now occupied by the pumping station. They exchanged email addresses. They were asked to provide us with information from their old family records.

Our work with the geneology and history files and records would benefit from having an electric typewriter small enough to store in a file drawer. If you have one you can donate, please call Myrtle Bruscup at 410-643-5596.

BY MARY WHITE

A question about the founding of the Kent Island Heritage Society came up in one of our meetings with Lori Rossbach. She asked if there are any photographs of the five founders. I was forced to confess that, to my knowledge, we were never photographed together. Nor—as I am the only surviving member—shall we ever be:

Emily Roe Denny died in 1979

Mildred Cook Schoch died in 1983

Marian Price Steuart died in 1991

Annie Mae Price died in 2001

I started my quest to find photos of our founders by calling Evelyn Price, wife of Anna Mae's brother, John T. Price. (Incidentally, our own Chip Price is their son.) She invited me to look through her photos for one that might be appropriate. She allowed me to have it copied.

In the course of all this she showed me the very extensive history of the Price family that was researched by Charles Clayland Price, Annie Mae Price and Katherine Price Barwick. She kindly allowed me to copy this history.

Both the photograph of Annie Mae Price and complete Price family history are now available to researchers in our library files.

I must say that our Founding Mothers would be very happy to see the extent to which our files have grown and are being used. Our Library Chairman, Myrtle Bruscup, should be commended for the time and energy she has devoted to making our files so effective for genealogical and historical research.

[Perhaps with the donation of a typewriter. —Ed.]

Kirwan House

Continued from page 1

restoring the two upstairs bedrooms. With all the original Kirwan Furniture now back in the house, I will be working on further interior cosmetics over the next six months. The downstairs of Kirwan House was open for both events and was enjoyed by many. The original furnishing and portraits have added the missing ingredient to what is becoming a real historic treasure.

The new parking plan worked well for both events and easily accommodated the number of cars present. My thanks to Ashley Davis of Shore Sign Company for supplying the signs that directed visitors to parking areas. We utilized the old roadbed that originally led back to farm buildings, including a blacksmith shop, a lumberyard, a cow barn, and several others.

The Kent Island Garden Club did a great job sprucing up the yard and flowerbeds, and Long Fence did an excellent job installing the new fencing along Dominion Road. The new picket fencing was extended in front of the Kirwan Store entrance and around to the parking area to allow safe entry into the store. This new configuration proved very successful during the two events, as visitors were able to flow freely and safely into the storefront without being in harm's way from passing traffic.

Local Boy Scout John Hamilton helped clean and refill the garden pond, where I have installed a fountain that adds a nice touch. I'm working again on the original concrete walkways that outlined the extensive gardens and provided clear walking areas over the low-lying, often-wet grounds. I will also be working over the fall and winter to clear overgrowth from more

of the original garden areas.

A special thanks goes out to President Nancy Cook, who spent countless hours organizing the events, coordinating details and sorting through boxes of stored items. Special thanks also to volunteer Julie Smasal, who worked side by side with Nancy for two weeks to organize the Kirwan Store. Julie also helped with cleaning the downstairs of Kirwan House and worked the day of the events as docent and greeter.

Welcome New Members

Thomas G. Ross
Centreville, Md.

William E. Lane
Stevensville, Md.

Life Member

David Perry
Stevensville, Md.

Kent Island

A HISTORY OF HOSPITALITY, Part One

By Brent Lewis

*Then I commended mirth,
because a man hath no thing better under the sun,
than to eat, than to drink, and to be merry.*

— Ecclesiastes 8:15; Luke 12:19

Kent Island has a heritage of landmark restaurants and taverns. From the beginning these establishments have been an important thread in the fabric of our community.

Ordinaries were more than just taverns. They were integral to colonial life. The ordinary was the center of regional economic, political and social activity. Typically situated at crossroads or other busy points, ordinaries served both locals and travelers who brought news from the outside world. The innkeeper also often functioned as postmaster, entertainer, real estate agent, auctioneer, arbitrator and referee.

According to Fredrick Emory's history of Queen Anne's County, which first saw print in editions of the 1886 and 1887 Centreville Observer, the first ordinary in the county was located at

Broad Creek on Kent Island. From the earliest days a busy ferry to Annapolis operated here and was therefore an obvious location for such an establishment.

In September 1658 a permit was granted to Francis Bacon of Kent Island to open an ordinary. Only one state license was issued sooner and that was for a tavern in Saint Mary's County. There is evidence, however, that Mr. Bacon's tavern was in operation by at least 1655. Kent Island's first ordinary may have been built while Claiborne and Lord Baltimore were still feuding over proprietorship.

Later, other tavern keepers were licensed to operate at or near Broad Creek. This group included Phillip Connor whose father was an influential planter and commander of Kent Island, and Benjamin Sutton, a ferryman who lost a son to the Chesapeake

Bay.

Another hot spot for inn keeping was the Wading Place, now known as Kent Narrows. John Hart was granted a permit to run an ordinary here in 1735, though he might have soon moved up the Chester River to Kingstown. Thomas Elliot Hutchings stayed a little longer, from 1759-1763.

Early American life was hard and practical. The first taverns reflected this fact. But as the region grew more populated and the pursuit of leisure grew more acceptable, vice grew more problematic. As early as 1702, the Maryland General Assembly passed an act that levied a stiff penalty against any tavern owner that permitted tippling, drunkenness or gambling. No alcohol could legally be sold on Sunday.

Consumer protection laws got an early start with regards to the operation of ordinaries. An act of

legislature in 1780 required all ordinaries to provide and maintain "six good feather beds...with sufficient covering for the same, and Indian corn, oats, hay, straw and stabling for ten horses at least." It was also mandatory the innkeeper "sell only by sealed measures, except bottled cider, perry, quince drink and strong beer of the produce of this State, and such liquors as shall come into this State in bottles."

As the eighteenth century ended, our fledgling federal government organized while another war with England loomed. Centreville succeeded Queenstown as the county seat. And taverns continued to maintain their importance to Kent Island's developing social structure.

Brent Lewis believes that the proper way to serve soft crabs is on Saltines and that scrapple is a delicacy.

President's Message

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Kent Island has such a rich heritage of history, as well as houses, and The Society is constantly striving to make our Kent Island residents and visitors aware of that.

MANY THANKS TO ...

- ▣ Sally and Daryl Boden for spice containers, antique soap strainer.
- ▣ William Baxter for old bottles.
- ▣ Friel Lumber Company for labeled corn cans.
- ▣ Janet and Bill Denny for hats and hat boxes.

- ▣ Julie Smasel for her assistance in cleaning and preparing for the initial opening.
- ▣ Carl Wagner for an antique shotgun made by the Browning Gun Company of Orem, Utah.
- ▣ Ashley Davis for museum signage.

Nancy Cook

My Reminiscences of Cray House

By Holly Ewing Baker

After reading so much about the newly opened Cray House, I decided it was time for me to reminisce about my recollections of it. My father, Thomas Ewing, was the grandson of Mrs. Nora Dixon Cray and son of Anna Katherine Cray Ewing, her daughter, better known to many as Miss Katie.

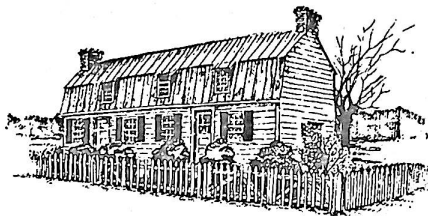
As a young teen, our family had Wednesday dinner at Mom-Mom Katie's home in Grasonville. After dinner the adults would turn to talk of the "good old days," as we all do as we begin to rise in years, I have listened many hours to the discussions of Grandmom Cray and the many stories about her life.

Mrs. Cray was a very ordinary women of meager means. She lived at the Cray House with two bachelor sons, Richard "Buddy" and John Cray. Richard and John are both buried in Stevensville Cemetery, as is Mrs. Cray. We still visit their graves and keep flowers on them for the holidays.

Both sons worked on the water, and Mrs. Cray depended on her sons work for her existence. Mr. Cray died many years before when the Crays lived at another location on Kent Island and is buried there. Mrs. Cray was without a doubt a very colorful, caring and giving person. People were drawn to Mrs. Cray and her home because of her sweet, jovial personality.

After my mother, Mary Jory Ewing, and father married, the Cray House became a favorite place to visit, not only for family but for many townspeople of Stevensville that gathered at her home.

My maternal grandmother, Daisy Evans Jory, owned and operated a grocery store in Grasonville at Jory's Comer, now the corner of Evans Avenue and Main Street. The store was serviced by Russell Bell of Easton, who was the driver for Koester Bread Company. Mrs. Cray used to hitch a ride from Stevensville to Mom-Mom Daisy's store in Grasonville with Mr. Bell. After a short exchange of pleasantries with



everyone at Jory's Comer Mrs. Cray walked to Dunn's Hazzard Farm, presently across from the Grasonville Elementary School on Rte. 18, where her daughter Katie lived with her husband Raymond and three boys, Thomas, Jimmy and Ray. That was where they lived when Daddy graduated from Stevensville High School in 1936.

Pop-Pop Raymond was a tenant farmer for Mr. Charles Goodhand from Chester. Many years later my Dad bought the farm from Mr. Goodhand, and my aunt and uncle, Ray and Mary Lou Ewing, lived on and tilled the farm until just a few years before his death in 2001.

Uncle Jimmy is married to Isabel Lowery Ewing, and they live in Marling Farms in Chester. Uncle Jimmy owned the Circle Restaurant (currently Burger King in Chester), and Mom-Mom Katie was a waitress for him for many, many years. My Dad, Thomas, built Holly's Restaurant in 1955.

At her home in Stevensville, Mrs. Cray had one of the only open wells in the close vicinity. She shared the water with many people in the town. I can remember my Aunt Catherine Senseney talking about her husband, Charles "Buck" Senseney, getting water for their house from Mrs. Cray's well. As a young bride and groom they would walk over each day to get water for their home and for the barber shop Uncle Buck operated adjacent to where Mrs. Dashiell dance School is now.

The present dance studio was a Drug Store owned by Dr. Norris. Dr. Norris was the father to John Carr Norris and Harrison Hopkins "Hop"

Norris.

When listening to Aunt Catherine and my mother talk about their days "over the Cray house," they would talk about Mrs. Cray always sitting in the kitchen in her rocking chair at the window. She sat at the back of the kitchen where a small table was always filled with jams and jellies ready to be shared with visitors.

No one seems to ever remember anyone using the living room. The small center room of the Cray House was used for what we would call a den.

Mom recalls Mrs. Cray always talking about how cold the living room was when she went to bed. She used the living room stairway to reach her bedroom, while Buddy and John used the kitchen stairway to reach their respective rooms at the other end of the house.

The kitchen was heated by the fireplace and a cook stove. Some heat drifted to the den, but the living room was never heated.

Although I read about the herb garden being restored, the only garden Mom remembers is the vegetable garden which supplied most of their vegetables for the year.

As the winter drew close, Mrs. Cray would save all the cardboard boxes she could and insulate the plank walls in the kitchen with the flattened cardboard boxes to keep out the cold winter drafts.

After Mrs. Cray's death, Richard and John continued to live there. When Richard died, my Mom and Mom-Mom Katie went to view the body. Richard was laid out in the living room on a marble slab.

The undertaker, Mr. Frank Thomas, had not realized Richard was so tall and there was no coffin to fit him. One had to be ordered from Baltimore before the funeral could be held. Mr. Thomas must have forgotten to order a larger pine box to hold the longer coffin because after the funeral they had to knock the ends out of the pine box so the coffin would fit into it before being lowered

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PHILPOT'S FRONT PORCH

By Skeeter Philpot

It was blowing Friday, but Burle's truck payment was overdue. We met our culler Ebb down to the slip as the sun was coming up. Our boat, the nearly seaworthy *Hell's Belch*, couldn't even make it out to the channel without threatening to splinter into driftwood. We turned around and came on back in.

It was still pretty early. 2nd Choice Video wasn't open yet, so we rode around and talked awhile.

An hour or so later, Ebb said, "If they made a movie about Kent Island, who would be in it?" Ebb is always full of questions like that.

Burle is always full of something. Sometimes it's answers. "I've already thought about this. The obvious epic blockbuster is Claiborne's. He discovers Kent Island, he fights for Kent Island, and he loses—but with honor. He's a swashbuckling adventurer. There are Indian attacks and ships fighting in the bay and we'll put in a love story. Now, because of his memorable participation in other historic war dramas, you'd automatically think Mel Gibson. But you'd be thinking wrong. Gibson's too old. Claiborne was a younger man. You have to go with Russel Crowe. I see Nicole Kidman as the independent and beautiful Margaret Brent. James Woods is Lord Baltimore if he can handle the accent, one of those guys from *Lord of the Rings* is in if he can't. And there you go. Bing, bang, pre-revolutionary box office boom.

I had to disagree. All wrong. You make a period drama about the government trying to take over Kent Island in World War One. They wanted the island for weapons testing. Everybody who lived here was told they had to pack up and leave. A few folk fought city hall and won. And their leader's a local politician—Tom Hanks. My movie wins all the awards and becomes a classic.

"I kind of meant who was gonna play me," Ebb said. "I'm thinking Brad Pitt. Burle is Tony Soprano

crossed with Charlie Daniels and you're Billy Bob Thornton.

"Thanks. I'm thinking you're Brad Pitt after a thousand bar fights and radiation treatment gone tragically wrong, Burle's . . . you're right. And I'm George Clooney in white boots."

Burle laughed that barroom belly laugh of his. "Hey, Mr. Clooney, how about a loan? You do right good and I've got a couple of bills need taking care of."

I parked the truck and sent Ebb into Piece-a-Pizza's for two extra-large meat lovers extra sausage extra cheese and three diet Super Chug-n-Slurps. I slipped Burle two hundred fifty before getting out myself. Burle's good for it. I'll take twenty or thirty bucks out of his cut every day next week. He thanked me with that look.

That look goes back. We've been buddies since bible school. Plus my old man and his used to run around together. Heck, my grandfather probably borrowed money from his.

That's just the way it is around here. Favors get paid back over generations.

As we walked across the parking lot the open sign at the video store clicked on. Burle said, "You know, you do look like George Clooney a little. And I think we might want to put these movies on your account. Mine might have a couple late charges due."

Skeeter Philpot's ancestor was one of Kent Island's original settlers. He's a waterman, carpenter, mechanic, welder, painter, bricklayer and gardener. His wife Tammy Sam has worked for the state for over twenty years. His daughter, Debra Winger Philpot, is 12 and wants to be the first woman president.

Did You Know?

Broad Creek was the name of the first town on Kent Island.

Reminiscences

Continued from page 4

into the ground.

After John died the Cray House was rented to many local families in Stevensville. The house did not get much repair and was finally left empty.

The Cray House was left to the Cray family. Mom-Mom Katie was the last direct heir to the property. It was her wish that it be a living memorial to her family that had been natives to Kent Island for so long.

After her death in 1973, my Dad contacted all the living heirs, Catherine Osborne, Edgar Sapp, Tom Cray, all of New Jersey, Milford, Madison and Leonard Brown of Kent Island and brothers Jimmy and Ray Ewing and had the house given to the Kent Island Heritage Society.

The Cray name lives on in our family by way of Nora Dixon Cray's great-great-grandson Mitchell Cray Andrew, great-great-granddaughter Katie Cray Roseberry and great-great-great grandson Braden Cray Andrew.

Mitchell is owner of Love Point Deli and Liquors in Stevensville, and Katie lives in Stevensville and teaches at Kent Island High School. Mitchell's son, Braden, is 18 months old. Mitchell and Katie are the children of my sister Mary Cecelia "Cissy" Ewing Roseberry.

The Kent Island Heritage Society has lost some very special friends

IN MEMORIAM

GEORGE C. COOK
MARCH 2003

CLAYBORNE HOMER
PHILLIPS
MAY 2003

The society is very thankful for the interest and support shown over the years by these members in our organization and our community. We will continue to honor their memory by discovering, identifying, restoring and preserving the heritage of Kent Island.

Since I was Born . . .

By Clara Chance

Since I was born I have traveled the same roads of Kent Island, the roads my parents and grandparents traveled all their lives. I can remember driving down the road and seeing nothing but corn or soy fields. Riding past the farms I would see the generations of each family working in the fields, and they would wave as we drove by. We knew everyone we passed while driving down the road. When we stopped in a store, everyone would know us by name and ask how we were and wait for an answer. When we got to the old drawbridge, we could watch the fishermen in their boats working for the day.

Now I drive down the road alone and all I see are buildings and strange faces. All the farms are being

developed either commercially or residentially, and the families that have lived there for generations are now moving away. Being a waterman is a dying occupation, and the seafood industries are losing business. The island is becoming overcrowded and an expensive place to live.

All the memories my grandparents possess no longer exist. The things my parents grew up with have changed or disappeared. My childhood memories are quickly fading because everything I know is now changing. The island and the economy are changing for the worst. Stores are competing for business. Kent Drug has been the drug store used by my family for a long time and now there is a Rite Aid directly across the street taking business.

The island has become a strange

place to those of us who have lived here all our lives. We are in an age where everything changes quickly, including our hometowns. However, those of us who have lived here know this place is worth remembering and saving so that our experiences and memories can be shared with those who come after us. Also, those occupations that are essential to life—farmers and watermen—must be encouraged and preserved. What better place than Kent Island where it has been taught, practiced and appreciated for years?

Clara Chance is a freshman at Washington College. This essay was submitted in support of The Kent Island Heritage Society's 2003 Scholarship that she was awarded at its June meeting.



TREASURERS REPORT

Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2003

Audrey B. Hawkins, Treasurer

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Checking account balance on July 31, 2002 | \$17,448.34 |
| Total income | \$118,448.48 |
| Total disbursements | \$92,138.46 |
| Checking account balance on June 30, 2003 | \$43,798.36 |



In full native dress, Mr. Sewell Fitzhugh, representing the Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians, Inc., was speaker at The Kent Island Heritage Society's general meeting on June 10. His very informative presentation included much Indian lore and a history of Kent Island Indians.

The Kent Island Heritage Society

VOLUNTEER

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

I would like to volunteer in the areas of:

- ☐ Docent
- ☐ Research
- ☐ Writing

- ☐ Publicity coordinator
- ☐ Event organizer
- ☐ Grant writer

☐ Other _____

Please mail to: Nancy M. Cook, 124 Bryce Rd., Queenstown, MD 21658

THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC.

P.O. Box 321 • Stevensville, Maryland 21666-0321

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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

Name _____

Street _____

Town/State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

*Dues and contributions are deductible on income tax returns.
Membership period January 1 - December 31*



The Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc.

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