

# Isle of Kent - 1631

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

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC. ■ SUMMER 2004

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## President's Message

As you will note in the box below, our guest speaker at the Sept. 7 General Meeting will be Mr. Michael K. Day, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Office of Preservation Services, The Maryland Historical Trust. His topic will be the tax incentives for the rehabilitation of historic structures.

Letters are being sent to those residents in the Stevensville historic area and to those who own historic Kent Island homes. Having a speaker of Mr. Day's expertise could not have been more timely for our efforts and plans for historic preservation, which are very much in the forefront of the changing character of the Chester/Stevensville area.

The Kent Island Heritage Society has become most concerned about the preservation of existing homes and buildings in the historic area featured in our brochure *A Walking Tour . . . Historic Stevensville* and other homes not included as well. The newly-formed Chester and Stevensville Citizens' Advisory Committee will update the Chester and Stevensville Community Plans (rendered in 1994) and present them to the Queen Anne's County Planning and Zoning Commission. We ask that the focal point of the historic aspect of the plan be about establishing a commission to preserve the historical integrity of this area.

There presently are no county preservation ordinances. Neither The National Historic Register designated

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## Cray House Redux

By Janet Denny, Chair

Cray House has been cleaned and polished and prepared for tours on the first and third Saturdays of each month through October. New signs are on the front lawn and on the newly refurbished smoke house, which is soon to open as a gift shop.

On the third Saturdays we plan to have some activity of interest for our guests to enjoy. We have authentic costumes to wear.

All the furnishings have been accessioned (cataloged, photos taken, valued). But we are still in need of period-appropriate furnishings and accessories. Our wish list includes: wooden bowls and trenchers; four ladder-back or Windsor chairs; wash bowl and pitcher; pie safe; floor stand candle holder; pewter plates; tableware (2- or 3-prong forks, wide-blade knives); jelly cupboard; old toys for child's room; old baskets; rush light; S-hooks; old guns; spy glass; anchor; grass or hemp rope; sword; old locks/latches; oars; old boat models; ships items, i.e., sextant, carpenter tools; old crocks; feather pillows; bolster pillow.

Committee members are: Elaine Arnold, Sally

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## Mark Your Calendar

## Kent Island Heritage Society GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, Sept. 7

Kent Island Free Library

7:00 p.m. Refreshments

7:30 p.m. Speaker: Michael K. Day

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

The Maryland Historical Trust

"Tax Incentives for Rehabilitation of  
Historic Structures"

## President's Message

*Continued from page 1*

areas in Stevensville and Centreville, the State Historic Register areas in Crumpton and Church Hill nor the rural historic districts of Fincastle-Prickett and Needwood-Content follow any mandated guidelines to control zoning or preservation of these areas (i.e., even though "downtown" Stevensville has been designated historic, the zoning does not preclude a commercial structure being built without any restrictions).

The Society has sent a letter to Queen Anne's County Planning and Zoning urging the Commission to establish a committee that will: establish a commission that will study the need for historic preservation guidelines; adopt ordinances that are tailor-made for our county; and formulate procedures and laws that will ensure that these areas be maintained. Local government must formulate these ordinances because it is not in the domain of the National Historic Register nor State Historic Register to mandate ordinances in various localities.

Eastern Shore Heritage Inc. recently certified heritage areas in Kent, Queen Anne's, Caroline and Talbot Counties. One of its primary objectives is to preserve, fund and publicize historic sites in these counties. Grant monies will be available through this organization as its objectives are achieved. ESHI gives an even greater impetus to the formation of a local preservation commission with mandated guidelines and standards of things historic.

Attending the CAC meeting held at Kent Island High School on July 28, I did learn that the committee members had discussed the historical aspect of community planning and that "establishing greenways, parks, open spaces, and historical sites" rated very highly on the community opportunities ranking. Developing guidelines and standards to which present and prospective owners must adhere should be of utmost importance in any historic preservation discussions.

The following is an excerpt from **A Vision for Stevensville and Chester - Section VIII: A place where**

historic resources have been valued and preserved (in case, the reader did not attend the community-wide CAC meeting):

"New commercial and low-density development and rehabilitation projects have been designed to complement historic buildings, rather than clash with them. All Islanders, young and old, are able to see the reminders of our Island heritage and take pride in it. The county and private landowners invested in preservation, restoration and improved access to previously endangered or neglected historical buildings and sites. A "heritage tourism" industry has developed along the Kent Island History Trail. The County has taken advantage of state matching funds to appoint a County Archaeologist/historian with review authority over all new development and the larger task of comprehensively surveying and documenting the archaeology and history of the Island, as well as identifying structures and sites for preservation, restoration and improved access/recognition, and of leading the efforts to achieve these goals. The Kent Island Museum in Stevensville (with interactive exhibits from pre-history through the 20<sup>th</sup> century) is a major attraction of the History Trail. A life-sized statue of William Claiborne presides over the enlarged Stevensville Village Green, along with a bandstand where residents enjoy Saturday night concerts in the park. Special recognition of black history is provided throughout the Island, focused on a Black Heritage Center near the refurbished Ezion Church and cemetery at Batts Neck along the Heritage Trail and bike path."

An important component of this vision should be mandated standards and guidelines for historic sites, and this should be a concern of those wishing to maintain the historic integrity of the area. The Society will continue to be a voice for advocating thoughtful, well-defined ordinances involving historic districts in Queen Anne's County.

*Nancy Cook*

## Know Your Board

### GREGORY NIZZA

I have lived in the State of Maryland almost my entire life since the age of six, growing up in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C., in Prince George's County. I moved to the Eastern Shore in 1994 and lived in the village of Williston, where I worked on the restoration of an 1863 Italianate farmhouse named Memory Lane. We restored the house, researched its history, painted it in a historically-correct Victorian color scheme, researched and restored the landscaping, and eventually turned it into a successful bed-and-breakfast. I also researched, wrote and successfully nominated the house to the National Register of Historic Places.

I graduated in 1990 from the University of Maryland at College Park with a degree in Journalism/Public Relations and Business. My professional background includes time in marketing for Rosecroft Raceway (1986-91); as a columnist and advertising executive for the Journal Newspapers (1991-94); advertising manager for WCEI radio in Easton, Md. (1994-97); mainstreet manager for Historic Downtown Denton, Md. (1998); associate publisher for the Prince George's Journal (1999); and my current position as public information officer for Queen Anne's County (1999-present).

My hobbies include sports (especially coaching and playing

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## Cray House Redux

*Continued from page 1*

Bodin, Bonnie Bolin, Diana Bonner, Myrtle Bruscup, Millie Charlton, Linda Collier, Joetta Denny, Missy Denny, Michael Denny, Florence Dunn, Jim Ewing, Twyla Hirrlinger, Lisa Hummel, Barbara Marmion, Alice Mason, Bobbie Nash, Becky Ringgold, Ann "Sugie" Summerflet, Hanna Wall.

Call me at 410-643-5869 if you would like to join the fun and be a docent or on the Cray House Committee.

## KIHS Genealogy Records

By Myrtle Bruscup

Mary White and I are still busy getting our new file cabinet filled and in good order. We are going through our school files, adding new folders, putting all previous folders in good order and, where necessary, putting small articles into acid-free plastic sleeves. Also in the near future we will be going thru all the folders from A to Z, making additional folders where necessary as folders fill up, and also putting small articles into plastic sleeves to keep them from being torn or bent.

As previously requested, please bring us your family Bible records and your family history charts. We will photo copy them while you wait. Also, if you have any family articles or stories we would love to have them for our files so the next generation will know what Kent Island was like in the past.

Please, even you many not be an original Kent Islander, you are now a resident and your records will be helpful to those in the future if your life histories and Bible records are in our files. If you cannot get to the library, just call me and I will come to you or make arrangements to meet you.

In the near future, as we go thru each file, help would be appreciated so we could get finished quickly. If you would like to help, please call me at 410-643-5596. I'll call you when we are ready to start.

By Mary White

I am pleased to report that within the last three to four months we have received some very interesting and important additions to our files. After his third trip to England, Mr. Richard Winchester has provided us with a draft copy of his findings in London dating back to 1583.

From records found in the Society of Genealogists in London, evidence exists that our John Winchester was the grandson of the earliest Winchester on record there, was married at St. Vedast Church in London in 1603. By using a form we have for determining relationships I found that my late husband and Dick Winchester would be 9th cousins. Incidentally this also applies to Dennys, Ringgolds, Cooks and other Whites, etc.

Most evidence of John of Kent Island began to appear in the Maryland State Archives in 1647. He is believed to have been on Kent Island several years earlier, when he styled himself as a Cordwainer [a maker of cordovan leather shoes]. The names John and Isaac were used over and over in the history we already have. Dick's branch of the family later moved to Cecil County, while Isaac's descendants stayed here on good old Kent Island.

We are hoping that Dick will provide us with additional information.

I am also very pleased to report that we have copied records from two more family Bibles—Cook and Horney—bringing our total to 126. These were brought to me by young Bill White, who is the son of William Cook White and Betty Ruth Horney. I enjoyed his visit and was able to provide him with some information, pictures, etc that he didn't have.

I had a phone call from Eunice Harris Chance who was at the home of Bill and Sis Harris and their guest, Rodney Summerford, who is tracing the Harris family. They had decided to ask if I could be of any assistance to him, and I really tried to do so. I was pleased to see that he really had a striking resemblance to Jerry Harris.

I gave him what information I could and was pleased to receive a copy of his research for our files. This was taken from the Maryland Archives, Indexes Prerogative Court and County Court Records, 1635-1777. The information listed the county, dates and type of record. The earliest date for Queen Anne's County was an Administration account for Edward Harris in 1717. The earliest date our files have for the Harris family are taken from the Kingsley Cemetery in Chester for Frances E. Morgan, wife of Thomas H. Harris, born Sept. 1827, died Feb. 1870. Thomas H. Harris, died May 28, 1895, aged 64 years. Our records also indicate he was married four times. We're hoping to get more information from Mr. Summerford. However, the information he gave us will be a big help to anyone in the family wishing to record earlier facts.



*Photo by Doug Bishop, The Bay Times*

Janet Denny, Michael Denny and Hanna Wall in the Early American costumes they will wear to greet visitors to Cray House.

# Oral History What Is It Really?

By Brent Lewis

Most folks have heard of "oral history," but what does the term really mean? A lot of us might assume that oral history could include reminiscences, folklore and traditions handed down from one generation to the next. It might imply that anything a person talks about that has historical implications would qualify. In the loosest sense of the phrase, these presumptions are probably true. But to historians, oral history describes a specific, but fluid, approach to chronicling the past.

One of the primary goals of any oral history project is to record living people, talking in their own voice and from their own point of view, so that future researchers will know more about their lives and their perceptions of personal and public events of their time. Oral histories live in the past, the present, and the future.

Another main objective is to try to get the story behind the story.

Oral history projects are undertaken to document the stories of many different types of communities, groups, and

events. A nation, a region, a state or an island, are all geographical areas that could be the focus of an oral history. But recording the history of a family, an ethnicity, a profession, a church, or civic organization could be the principal purpose of a project. Events like a political race, the building of a monument, a flood, scandalous crime or scientific discovery might also serve as a theme.

Resources are important. Organizers need people, time and tools. One of the first jobs is to identify the people to be interviewed. Most historians start with the oldest and most notable individuals. Then research must be done so that the interviewer is prepared enough to ask questions that are significant to the person sitting across from them. A productive interview may take a couple hours to conduct, and some subjects may require follow-up sessions. Once the interview is complete, a transcription is necessary to properly document the work. The process is time consuming and not inexpensive.

Oral history projects

suffer when ambitions exceed resources. It's better to have a few well researched, competently conducted and properly transcribed interviews than a whole bunch of inconsequential talk on tape that no one ever has time to organize.

Specific knowledge and skills are required of those taking part in oral history projects. Interviewers are typically responsible for research, conducting the interview and editing. Volunteers from within the community or group have an advantage perhaps in the research department and in establishing rapport with their interviewees, but these folks are often untrained in the interview process itself. The number one rule in interviewing might be: Be prepared, but be flexible. The novice might not be ready for all the twists and turns an interview might take.

Transcription can also be a struggle. Volunteers often enjoy the interview part of the job but balk at the more mundane, but most necessary task, of getting the interview session down on paper. Many organizations must hire out this part of the

process.

Equipment, whether you're using ancient reel-to-reel audiotape or state of the art digital cameras, has to be reliable. The proper tape for your recorder might seem like an obvious requirement. A good microphone is essential. The interviewer must be proficient in the use of the tools. Always test the equipment and keep an eye on it during the interview session. A backup battery is always a good idea, too.

This primer is far from being all you need to know to start or join an ongoing project—a workshop, book or computer course is recommended for that. Rather it has endeavored to whet your oral history appetite. To get you excited about the possibility of giving something important to the world that nobody would have otherwise. To show you a way for regular people to make their mark on history.

But seriously, don't forget that backup battery.

*Brent Lewis recently joined the Oral Histories Committee and felt compelled to do some homework.*

## Treasurers Report

Fiscal Year 2003 - 04

Audrey Hawkins, Treasurer

July 1, 2003 Checking Acct. Balance	\$43,798.36
Total Income . . . . .	\$56,895.07
Total Disbursements . . . .	\$65,327.59
June 30, 2004 Checking Acct. Balance	\$35,365.84

## ISLE OF KENT

John Bonner, Editor

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# Rumor Mongrels

By Skeeter Philpot

We were sitting out on the porch the other evening having a beverage or six and talking about work. Tammy Sam has worked for the state for over 20 years, and sometimes she wishes the Eastern Shore would secede. She says we'd be the only state in the union with an official beer can—the ten ounce. The first day of rock season would be a legal holiday. And she wouldn't have to work under the direct supervision of a chicken-necker named Conrad Mann.

In the meantime, once a week she drinks half a \$15 bottle of red wine chosen by how pretty the label is. My tolerance is a bit higher, so I usually finish it for her. Purely so it won't go to waste.

"How come you didn't tell me Wayne Tyde is getting married again?" T.S. can change the subject on a dime.

And she's always discovering stuff I forgot to tell her. Maybe I didn't find my culler's brothers' pending civil ceremony all that interesting. Maybe I knew she would. All I do know is, every time she fusses about my inability to pass on crucial gossip, I

smile. Guess that explains it.

"Doesn't seem fair", I said. "Big ol' Wayne gets a new wife every couple years and Ebb can't even get a date." This type of conversational diversionary tactic works almost every time.

Not this time. "It's like that time you forgot to tell me Bebe Leodd got her . . . surgery. Then we saw her at a party and I stared so long she said I should take a picture."

"Our realtor had something done? Hmm, I never noticed." I took a long sip.

T.S. finished hers off and said, "Want another?" I did and was about to say so when a look of recognition broadened her smile. Then I heard it, too. Burle Shoalwater's pickup truck sounds like an old boat.

"Better bring them all." She looked out the driveway, laughed and went inside.

Ebb Tyde was driving.

The two of them got out as the motor plap-plap-plapped itself to death. Even after the hardest day of work Burle always looks like he's going to the ninth grade cotillion. Ebb's far less dapper.

Tammy Sam came out

with a fresh glass of wine, two beers, an iced tea for Ebb and an ornery streak. "How come you didn't tell me your brother was getting married?"

She knows how nervous she makes Ebb.

Burle answered for his jittery little buddy. "Tam, you know us men don't talk about other people's business."

"You got a lot of nerve, Burle Shoalwater. You want everybody to think all you talk about is fishing and hunting, but I know you're fishing for juicy gossip and hunting for a way to spread it without looking like that's what you're doing. And down to the slips you all are at your worst. Don't tell me. My daddy and grandpa worked on the water all their lives. They survived on rumor. Still do."

And she went on. "I can only imagine what it was like back in the old days when everybody knew everybody else's business. At least now there are so many people running around here, nobody knows anybody. The people you work with, your neighbors, your cliques. Nobody else knows or cares much about anybody else because they're so wrapped up in

their own lives. At least until you do something so scandalous you end up in the Bay Times. Or Heaven forbid, the Star Democrat."

Burle started to say something else, but Tammy Sam moved back to us specifically. "Who knows what baloney you old dogs used to talk up to the pool hall or Grollman's. I bet more rumors start in places like that than ever started in any beauty parlors."

"I sure miss Grollman's," I said.

T.S. turned back to Ebb. Before she could get a word out though, Ebb pulled a bent-up envelope from his back pocket. "Wayne asked me to give this to ya'll a few days ago. I forgot." He blushed and finished his tea. "It's an invitation to the reception."

She flopped down in her chair. "Tell him we'll be there."

The boys got back in the truck and backed out the drive. We heard them for about a mile down the road.

I waited a minute or two before I asked, "So what did you ever do with those pictures you took of our realtor friend's . . . uh . . . surgery?"

She smirked and finished her wine. "Internet," she said.



## Know Your Board

*Continued from page 2*

basketball) and antiques (especially Victorian furniture). I also have a great interest in historic restoration and historic houses. I am certified by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Historic Real Estate.

I currently am resident and caretaker at the KIHs's historic Kirwan House in Chester, where I am working on interior and exterior renovations, as well as helping interpret the history of the property.

### MYRTLE BRUSCUP

I was born and raised in Baltimore City, an alumni of Eastern High

School. I worked as a bookkeeper at the Diamond Cab Co. For several years.

I met and married Roland Bruscup on April 5, 1942. We had almost 62 years of a happy married life when he passed away in January 2004. We have two sons: Ronald, who lives with his wife, Lori, and son in Prospect Bay, and Randy, who lives in Pasadena, Md.

I went back to work in 1957 at a manufacturer of plastic household items as a clerk and accounts payable bookkeeper. I retired in 1980 when the company changed owners and went bankrupt.

From 1983 through 1986 I worked during the tax period as a pre-edit clerk

for the Maryland State Income Tax Bureau

Since 1983 I have been a docent and, along with Mary White, custodian of furnishings and care of the Cray House until its closing for renovation. I am presently a docent for the Cray House and train station and wherever else I may be needed.

I have worked with Mary White in setting up the genealogy and history files of Kent Island, which we maintain in the Kent Island Library.

For the past several years I have worked at the Visitor Center at Kent Narrows as a business and tourism office assistant, along with eight other seniors who staff the office on week-ends.

**The Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc.**  
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