

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 2005

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President's Message

A rather astounding 500 people have visited our Society's historic sites—Cray House (1809), Kirwan House and Store Museum (1877), Stevensville Train Station (1902), and old Stevensville Post Office (1877), as well as county-owned Christ Episcopal Church (1880) for which we provide docents—since April of this year. That's an impressive increase in the level of interest, especially considering the limited hours we can staff our sites to keep them open. Here's what's behind this burgeoning interest:

The Historic Sites Consortium of Queen Anne's County (a division of the Department of Tourism under the aegis of the Department of Parks and Recreation) asks that all county historic sites be open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the first Saturdays of May through October, and they energetically promote this countywide availability. [See article on right.]

We keep our historic sites open for an hour longer, until 4 p.m. We gain some attendance from patrons of Love Point Cafe.

The Consortium—with help from several dedicated county teachers who integrated the site visits into the school curriculum for grades 3 and 4—coordinates field trips in all areas of the county each spring.

The Tourism Department brought four busloads of visitors who combined shopping, dining and

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New Historic Sites Coordinator

Amanda Apple drove all the way from Oregon to interview for the job as head of Queen Anne's County's Historic Sites Consortium. Her qualifications fit the job requirements like hand-in-glove.

She is pleased to have arrived in time to work on Queen Anne's County's 300th anniversary celebration next year. "I want to see good things happening at all our sites," she explains.

Apple expresses particular interest in cultivating oral history, an important initiative of The Kent Island Heritage Society.

She has a BA in history and a master's in historic preservation, as well as highly appropriate work experience. She brings considerable expertise in archival and library research, experience in architectural surveys, project management, working with communities and fostering historic preservation through volunteer support.

Information about the consortium is available on the Internet at www.historicqac.org. Or just call them at 410-604-2100.

Mark Your Calendar

Kent Island Heritage Society GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, September 13
Kent Island Free Library

7:00 p.m. Refreshments

7:30 p.m. Business Meeting

7:30 p.m. Program

Railroading In America

Presented by a Spokesperson from
Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum

President's Message

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visits to our historic sites as part of their day's activities.

Our sites are also open by appointment by calling 410-643-5969. We had five such groups this spring.

And, of course, The Society's annual Kent Island Day brings many first-time visitors to our sites.

These coordinated efforts result in more visibility for our sites and attract many visitors from out-of-state, as well as from Maryland's western shore.

Audrey Hawkins is coordinator of the docent program and deserves many kudos for her long hours of volunteer labor in setting schedules and obtaining docents for our marvelous historic buildings. A docent training session will be held in January 2006 for anyone who wishes to learn about the history of Kent Island and what being a docent entails.

We honor our docents with a Docents Tea in the spring, for without their willingness to provide docent service, one of The Society's most valuable services to the public would not occur.

Nancy M. Cook

Scholarship Winner

The Society is proud to award its 2005 scholarship to John Hamilton of Stevensville. His mother, Betsy Kinna-mon Hamilton, and grandmother, Mary Palmer, are both native Kent Islanders.

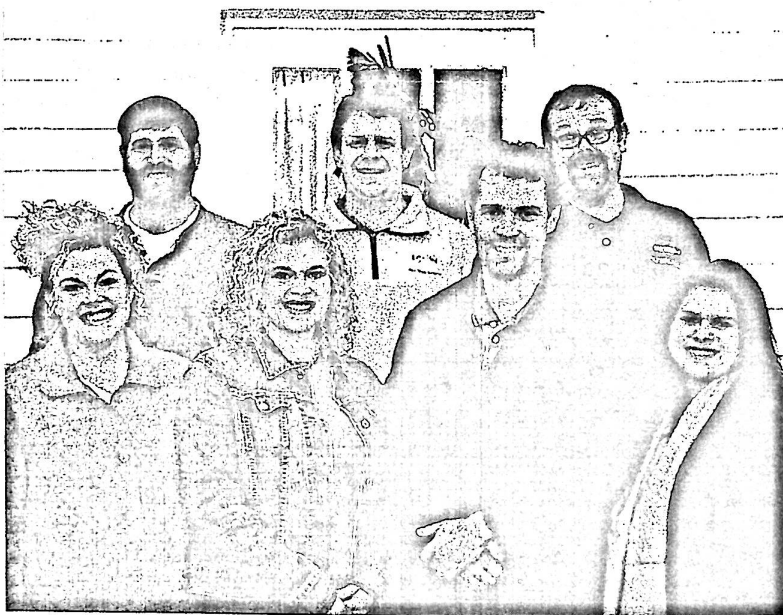


John will be attending Anne Arundel College in the fall and the University of Maryland in January. He devoted much time and effort working with the Kent Island Garden Club to ren-

ovate the pond and build an adjacent portion of brick sidewalk at Kirwan House as part of the requirement for his Eagle Scout badge.

Calendar of Events

Sunday	Oct. 2, 05	Crab Feast Fundraiser, \$40 per person Friends of Historic Christ Episcopal Church Call 410-604-2100 for more information
Saturday	Oct. 22, 05	Octoberfest, Historic Stevensville
Saturday	Dec. 3, 05	Winterfest, Historic Stevensville
Saturday	Dec. 10, 05	Annual Dinner Meeting The Kent Island Heritage Society Kent Island Yacht Club
Sunday	Apr. 30, 06	Queen Anne's County House & Garden Tour
Saturday	May 20, 06	Kent Island Day (rain date May 21)



**Great, Great Grandchildren of Nora Cray
Pose In Front of Cray House**

From left: Jordan Baker Songer, Jason Wheeler Baker, Gideon Baker Archey (children of Holly Ewing Baker), Mitchell Cray Andrew (son of Cissy Ewing Roseberry), Thomas Ward Ewing, Justin Jory Ewing (children of Thomas Jory Ewing), and Katie Cray Roseberry (daughter of Cissy Ewing Roseberry). All are descended from Mrs. Nora Cray through Katie Cray Ewing and her son, Thomas Ewing.

Kent Islander Profiles

From Kent Island Historical Society's oral histories project

By Brent Lewis

Bill Denny

"If I sneezed in school, they knew about it before I got home." That's William E. "Bill" Denny III describing how Kent Islanders looked after one another.

And one another's kids.

Born in 1932—delivered by the legendary Dr. Sattelmair—Bill Denny personifies small town life on the Eastern Shore. He's relaxed, yet full of spirit.

"Everybody knew everybody." Bill says about growing up here. Adults in the community took particular interest in the behavior of children. They were supportive and protective, but if you were bad, "they'd give you a whipping. I had like twenty-five or thirty mothers and fathers."

Bill graduated from Kent Island High School, then went to Randolph Macon Military Academy and the University of Maryland. He married Joyce Chance and had four sons. Instead of pursuing his love of farming, he decided to help in his father's booming, but stressful, garage business. "If I didn't back him up who would?"

W.E. Denny & Son sold and serviced vehicles and farm equipment in Stevensville for decades.

After the loss of his first wife, Bill married Janet Ellis in 1994.



In the late 1950s, Bill bought the old Methodist Protestant Church next door to his home. He rented it out until 1997 when he and Janet opened Ye Olde Church House Antiques where "we have

our sheep and our chickens. The kids stop by here and feed my sheep and chickens, and they always ask if it's okay, and I always tell them if you don't feed them, I've got to."

Bill gets a lot of joy out of those children, chickens, and sheep.

Bill Denny can trace his family's Kent Island connection back to at least the 1700s. Ancestors include members of the distinguished Eareckson and Gibson families. He was born, and has lived, in the heart of Stevensville virtually all his life. He was a prominent businessman and has raised his family here. As a boy he even went "buck bathing" in the bay.

You don't get more Kent Island than buck bathing in the bay.

Wes Thompson

Wes Thompson is a familiar character from Chester with a way with words. Born Kenneth Wesley Thompson in 1924, Wes is well known on the water, in construction, and as a hunting guide. Thompsons have lived on Kent Island since 1684. Wes says, "They told me they owned half of Kent Island." Wait a beat. "Didn't leave enough to bury me in."



His parents were Earl and Adelaide Coleman Thompson. He's the oldest of three children. Pearl was his sister. Bobby's his brother.

Wes's Grandfather Thompson was superintendent of Chester's Kingsley Church for 28 years. "When I was a little boy he wouldn't carry me

fishing unless I went to church. Of course, I'm on the front row. Couldn't wait for it to be over, but I was going to be there."

Wes, like most of boys of his generation left school to go to work. Wes went crabbing. When he was eighteen Uncle Sam called.

On June 8th, 1944, Wes, as part of the Army's 79th Division, went ashore on Omaha Beach. Two days after D-Day, the young man from Kent Island joined others like him from around the world in the Allied Invasion of Europe. He says, "We didn't have to fight our way ashore. They told us we had better go ahead and dig foxholes. I was tired so I just rolled in a hedgerow. I thought I ain't digging no foxhole. After they cut that stuff (enemy artillery) in there that night, the next morning they had to drop me a rope. I was still digging." His laugh is just about that deep. "That weren't no place to be, on top the ground."

His unit saw the horror of war up close. In Wes's view, "anybody who says they weren't scared are lying or weren't there." When a Lieutenant asked him once why he was running, Wes told him, "I'm running, because I can't fly."

Wes went to construction school in Baltimore on the G.I. Bill. When he eventually moved back home, he went crabbing until his masonry/construction business took off. He was in business over 40 years.

An avid hunter, Wes maintains his Master Guide license and still takes out hunting parties. He recently sold his workboat and bought a boat for fishing.

And he's one of the funniest men around. Wes Thompson's got a real Kent Island sense of humor.

The Legendary Miss Beatrice

By Gil Dunn

September of 1924. Opening day at PS 211 in Gardenville, a suburb of Northeast Baltimore.

The school yard was alive with children of all ages happy to see friends and classmates after their three-month summer vacation.

Except for a small, subdued group of first graders. I was one of them. We were apprehensive about meeting our teacher, Miss Beatrice, who was a legend at PS 211.

Miss Beatrice had a fast step and a commanding voice. She was known to have absolutely zero tolerance for misbehavior or swearing.

She taught us first graders how to read and write, to be respectful and to have good manners. She was a caring, competent, dedicated and popular teacher.

*Fast
Forward
Fifty-four
Years*

I was at my Kent Island pharmacy looking through the Baltimore Sun when I noticed an obit for Beatrice Jones of Kent Island. Could it be my Miss Beatrice? I never knew her last name.

Some time later my mother confirmed that Miss Beatrice's last name was Jones. Then I was totally dismayed.

Beatrice Jones of Kent Island had her prescriptions filled at my pharmacy. She always came in dressed in full Victorian attire and a bonnet. I never had the slightest idea that she was my Miss Beatrice from PS 211.

She is buried in the Stevensville cemetery. I go there and stand by her gravestone and meditate about those carefree, fun days I had in her first grade class. I place a small bouquet of flowers on her gravestone.

On the way back to my car I have the wonderful feeling of having just met a friend I knew 81 years ago when I was six.

END OF SUMMER

By Brent Lewis

Fall is coming. Mother Nature is preparing for her winter's nap.

Temperatures, air and water, will begin to drop.

Wild rice is maturing on the banks of rivers and creeks.

Rock and bluefish start feeding on smaller fish on top the water, getting fat. Seagulls and terns swoop down on the same baitfish. Smart fishermen cast their lines in that direction.

Crab harvests will peak. Our favorite crustaceans will be spending the cold months buried in the bay's deep mud.

Oysters and clams begin to slow down their metabolism.

Yellow eels turn silver before heading out to sea to spawn.

Migrating flocks of waterfowl from the north will soon be passing through.

Shorebird nests are empty. Muskrats and snapping turtles keep right on having babies, though.

Time goes on, and we get older. But there are constants in this world.

Sixteenth century French essayist Michael Eyquem de Montaigne wrote, "Let us permit nature to have her way: she understands her business better than we do."

Seasons change.
It's nature's way.

IN MEMORIAM

**E. HARRY GARDNER
GEORGE A. JONES JR.
EDGAR L. PYLE JR.**

COMMISSIONER RODNEY NIEDOMANSKI

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

TREASURERS REPORT

Fiscal Year Ended June, 2005
Audrey B. Hawkins, Treasurer

Checking Account Balance 7/1/04	\$35,365.84
Income	\$93,276.63
Disbursements	\$79,358.24
Checking Account Balance 6/30/05	\$49,284.23

Isle of Kent

John Bonner, Editor

Isle of Kent is published quarterly by The Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc., a nonprofit corporation chartered by the State of Maryland, P.O. Box 321, Stevensville, MD 21666. Every effort is made to assure the accuracy of published information, but no responsibility is assumed by The Kent Island Heritage Society Inc. or the editor in the event of claim of loss or damage from any article. Statements attributed to individuals do not necessarily reflect official policy of the KIHs. Send correspondence regarding newsletter to Editor, 324 Columbia Lane, Stevensville, MD 21666. Email: jlbanner@myshorelink.com

Going to the Post Office

by Fran Peters

"Grandmother Jodie! It's 10:30. Do you need anything from the Post Office? Everybody will be there."

"Yes, child. If you see anything in Box 85, ask Mrs. Long to get it for you. Ask her if she has the new Arbor Day commemorative stamp in yet [issued about 1932]."

The train whistled its way into town around 7 a.m. every week day to leave the mail sack, boxes and bags—and sometimes people. Someone from the Post Office would be waiting to take the mail to their little yellow building.

By 10:30, the town folks would be gathering to wait for the mail to be sorted and to catch up on the latest news.

As I remember, stamps from the 1930s were usually purple and cost 3 cents for a regular letter. Grandmother Jodie collected commemorative stamps. She had some National Parks stamps that were printed in green, blue, brown and red.

Maryland was celebrating its 300th year, and there was a red Ark and Dove stamp. The "stickup" on the back of those stamps tasted awful to me. But they

did stick to the envelopes.

That was the beginning of my stamp collection. My grandmother used to say, "If it's alright for President [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt to collect stamps, so can we."

Benjamin Franklin was on our first stamp issued in 1847. It cost 5 cents. A mint copy of that stamp would bring \$4,000, \$700 if used. For those who don't get out much, the current price of a stamp is 37 cents.

Some of the visitors at our first Saturday open house at the Old Stevensville Post Office

were disappointed that we didn't sell stamps. Well, you *look* like a Post Office, they explained.

We invited them to become members of the Kent Island Heritage Society and suggested that they also visit Cray House, the Train Depot and Kirwan House.

Now, I really do have to go to the real post office to get a priority package labeled with a computer-generated stamp for its exact weight. Patrons now stand quietly in order queues. Sure do miss the gossip.

HILPOT'S FRONT PORCH

Visiting Ours

By Skeeter Philpot

Summer is about two things. Getting away and other people getting away to here.

I'm not talking about tourists. We don't know those people. How you feel about tourists is up to you. I'm talking about people we actually invite to come see us. And I guess how you feel about them is up to you too.

They might be your out-of-state parents, the neighbors that moved away, college roomies, teammates, old co-workers or your kid's Ecuadorian Spanish tutor from Ohio that reminds you of Oprah. No matter who we have, we all have summer visitors.

When I was a kid, my

grandparents used to have relatives visit from all over the East Coast. Every summer we'd see family from Pennsylvania, Delaware, Massachusetts. Sometimes from North Carolina and Florida. We rarely traveled. They always came here. There were cousins galore from June to September.

Kids around here lived outside all summer back then. Showing a Boston 12-year-old the joys of a trotline for the first time is a memory that stays with you.

When I was in the Navy, I'd often invite friends to visit. Usually guys I worked with or shipmates who grew up so far away from base they couldn't get home as regularly as I could. I never brought anybody to Kent

Island once that didn't come back time and time again.

Fishing and soft crabbing was of no interest to these fellows. They responded more to the cheerful people, the laid back lifestyle, and the pretty girls I went to high school with. I'm assuming.

We have a lot fewer summer guests than my grandparents used to. That might not be the case if we lived right on the water, though.

We see two of Tammy Sam's friends from her old Magnum P.I. Fan Club every July, a couple we met on our honeymoon once in a while, and an occasional grown-up cousin passing through. Some of those Navy buddies still visit too.

These days they bring their wives and kids.

Kent Island, the waters surrounding it, and the rest of the Eastern Shore provides us the opportunity to live in a unique and beautiful part of the world. The people we know here are gracious and loving. There's all kinds of fun to be had.

The scenery stirs the heart. The food has character. Local flavor runs deep. And most of us love to share and show all that off.

My grandmother used to say, "Those that come to see me do me honor; and those that stay away do me a favor."

God bless our visitors. And Grandma.

Welcome New Members

Mary N. Ford
Chester, Md.

John, Katherine & Audrey
Green
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Michael & Betsy Hamilton
Stevensville, Md.

Mark & Kathleen Meade
Chester, Md.

Lori Rossbach
Queentowns, Md.

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*

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