

Isle of Kent - 1631

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

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

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Oral Histories
Jane Sparks, Dan Hopkins, Brent Lewis
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Library Files - Myrtle Bruscup, Mary White
Scholarship - J. Sparks
Social - Janet Denny

President's Message

The 2005 Kent Island Heritage Society Board of Directors held its first meeting of the new year and, with 18 of our 20 members present, is enthusiastically "off and running" with many projects on the agenda.

One of those projects, Kent Island Day, is under the able direction of board members Jack Broderick, Fran Peters and Flora Sossi. Scheduled for May 21 (rain date May 22), the event will begin with a parade through Historic Stevensville and feature a day filled with activities, food, entertainment, artisans and craft vendors.

Applications for food and craft vendors accompany this newsletter. If you know of anyone suitable for our event, please pass an application on to them.

A Scholarship Application is also enclosed. If you know of a senior graduating from Kent Island High School who meets the qualification listed on the application, please pass it on to them.

As The Society prepares for the May celebration of the 374th anniversary of the founding of Kent Island, the first English-speaking colony in Maryland, Queen Anne's County is planning for its 300th anniversary. The steering committee is chaired by Mr. Bob Friday. Activities will culminate in April 2006 with official recognition ceremonies.

The tricentennial logo was designed by Stevensville resident Mary Ann Donnelly, selected from

Continued on page 2

New Board Plans Retreat

By Greg Nizza

One of the new 2005 KIHS board's first orders of business was to approve a retreat for strategic planning, which is scheduled for March at Kirwan House. Board members will submit two proposals in advance—one signed; one anonymous—which will form the basis for discussion of organizational objectives and the development of strategies to accomplish them.

Driving this exercise is the need to divest the president's position of much of its burden during Nancy Cook's announced final year as president.

The transition to greater participation has already begun with the delegation of more responsibility to committees. An energized Kent Island Day Committee is starting early to make things happen.

The Kirwan House Committee has set goals for 2005, which include increasing and improving parking. It also is seeking a potbelly stove and Victorian-era parlor stoves.

I have set as personal goals the inclusion of Kirwan House in the Kent Island Day celebration and increasing attendance at Historic Sites Consortium's Open House Saturdays.

Mark Your Calendar

Kent Island Heritage Society GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, March 8

Kent Island Free Library

7:00 p.m. Refreshments

7:30 p.m. Speaker: Jere O. Howell

"On the Trail of Lewis and Clark"

(See details in box on page 2)

On the Trail of Lewis & Clark

In 1804 a stalwart band of men set out to explore, map and find a water route to the Pacific Ocean through the unknown territory known as the Louisiana Purchase. They were sent by President Thomas Jefferson with an additional mission to establish peaceful relations with the Indian nations in the Northwest.

This one-hour presentation consists of a description, including little known facts, of an important undertaking in American history. It is accompanied by slides picturing various points along the path followed by Lewis and Clark.

The commentary and slides will show how 200 years of civilization have wrought interesting changes in the Missouri, Yellowstone, Clearwater, Snake and Columbia Rivers.

Jere O. Hamill is a Baltimore native and retired insurance executive. He is a graduate of Loyola College. During World War II he served as an officer aboard a U.S. Navy tanker in the Pacific Theater.

President's Message

Continued from page 1

20 submissions. Special license plates have been created, and many special events are being organized. As many county organizations, schools, businesses and historic sites will be involved as possible.

The Society looks forward to supporting and participating in the events that celebrate Queen Anne's County in Maryland's and the nation's history.

Nancy M. Cook

Homemade Baked Goods Needed for Kent Island Day Bake Sale on May 21 or 22

- Cakes • Cupcakes
- Pies • Cookies
- Breads • Rolls
- Pastries

If you can't bake, perhaps you can volunteer to help staff the bake sale tent. Please call Myrtle Bruscup at 410-643-5596.

KIHS Genealogy Records

By Myrtle Bruscup

Mary White and I are still busy finishing up moving folders to make them easier to get into. Received some articles from the Willard Thomas family on the ferries and also material on Kirwan history.

The following booklets have been purchased and added to our collection: Obits and Marriages 1900-01; 1902-03; 1904-05; 1906-07; 1908-09; 1910-11; 1858-97; 1876-1942; 1865-1942; 1910 census; and 1930 census.



KIHS Members In the News

■ **Bill and Janet Denny** were featured in the Jan. 26 issue of *Kent Island Update's* Meet Your Neighbor column, which profiles "people, places and faces of our community. We learn, for instance, that Bill began his business career as a boy trapping muskrats in the marshes near Kent Manor Inn and that Janet grew up in a New England French-speaking community and didn't learn English until age 11.

■ **Alex Johnson's** chance encounter with **Paul Placek** at a KIHS function resulted in his construction of a 3-foot square model of the circa 1850s Robert White House on Rte. 8 owned by Placek, as reported in the November 24 issue of *The Bay Times*. Alex has also made smaller models of several KIHS properties, which are on display at the Old Stevensville Post Office. His skillfully-crafted woodwork has been on display in his booth at previous Kent Island Days.

Welcome New Members

Donald Anderson, PA
Grasonville, Md.

Michael & Joann Anderson
Chester, Md.

John W. & Antoinette Gibson Jr.
Chester, Md.

Mary Kerr
Stevensville, Md.

Julian G. Samuels Jr.
Stevensville, Md.

Mr. & Mrs. Harry J. Sanders
Kingsville, Md.

Mr. & Mrs. Scot Sanders
Joppa, Md.

Henry K. & Marie A. Schmidt
Chester, Md.

New Honorary Life Members

Audrey B. Hawkins

Eva White Thompson

Audrey Hawkins and Eva Thompson were honored for their service to The Kent Island Heritage Society in proclamations read before the members at the Annual Meeting on December 11. Copies of the proclamations are included as an insert to this issue of Isle of Kent.

Annual Meeting Highlights

▣ The Society's new officers and directors for 2005 were installed by Queen Anne's County Commissioner Gene Ransom at the annual meeting on December 11.

▣ The Kent Island Volunteer Band with vocalist Dee Orr carried us back in time with an enjoyable variety of mostly 1940s torch and swing numbers. Those of us who still could danced the night away.

▣ The auction had a variety of intriguing items for the auction, donated mostly by KIHS officers, directors and committee members. A new twist this year was a "Chinese auction" in which one purchased tickets, which were deposited in containers beside the items desired. At the end of the evening the winning ticket was drawn for each item.

▣ The cuisine served by the Yacht Club's culinary staff continues to be excellent..

▣ An enjoyable time was had by all.

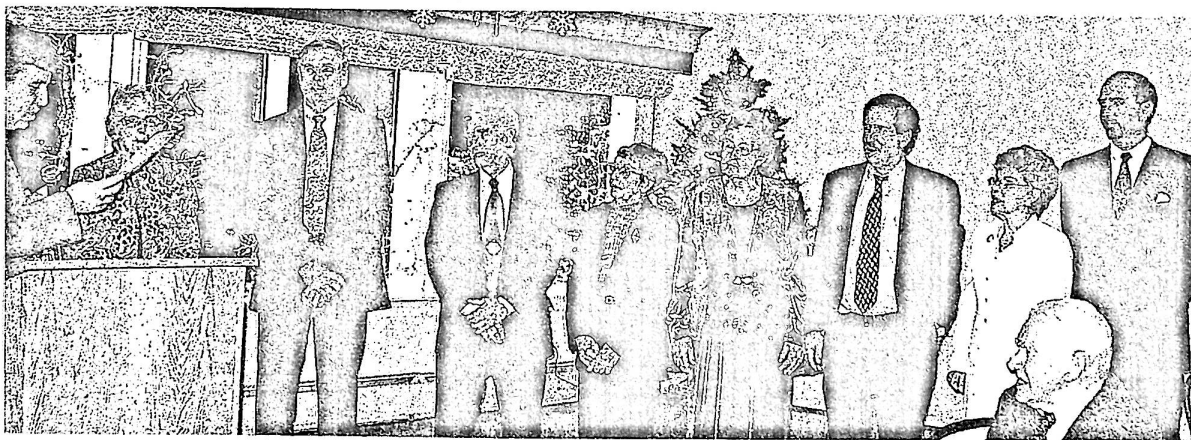


Joel Berger reads winning ticket for duck.



Jean Leathery shows glass ball she won at auction.

Photos provided by Jean Leathery



County Commissioner Gene Ransom installs new KIHS officers and directors. From left: Flora Sossi, recording secretary; John Wayne Morris, co-treasurer; Dan Hopkins, director; Florence Dunn, director; Audrey Hawkins, co-treasurer; Forrest Chisman, vice president; Nancy Cook, president; Greg Nizza, director.

Going to the Post Office

By Fran Peters

To me, going to the Post Office meant I would go with my daddy into town. And if I was good and polite I might be able to pick out some penny candy from the grocery part of the store while daddy talked to the postmaster in the Post Office part of the store.

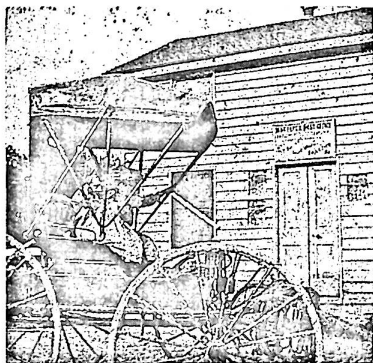
The sign on the building read:
MATTAPEX POST OFFICE

J.H. Porter Post Master
Dealer of Dry Goods, Notions,
and Groceries

In 1883 Mattapex Post Office was at the south end of Kent Island and was run by John H. Porter. "At the time he filed his application, John H. Porter was 64 years old. He was the scion of a large Porter clan that lived on Kent Island and elsewhere in Queen Anne's County. In 1877 he was farming a parcel along Kent Point Road, just north of Craney Neck. He and his wife, Mary E. Porter (b. 1828) had two children: Joseph B.V. Porter and Mary E.S.A. Porter. Porter's union was a late-life marriage, and he had late-life children. It appears that he turned to store-keeping as a way to support his family in his declining years."

In 1904 when Rural Free Delivery was introduced on the Island, the Mattapex Post Office closed and Stevensville took over servicing the whole Island. Chester was the other post office in the area.

We are very lucky to have a



Mattapex Post Office

WUT ZIT FITZIN?

By Gil Dunn

It has been several months since I last cut the grass, but the warm, rainy spring weather has activated the lawn grass. Grass-cutting days will soon arrive.

The old Gravely lawn mower out in the barn that used to handle that matter now needs a new spark plug. So I carried the old spark plug down to Denny's Garage to get a new one. Denny's is located only about 200 yards west of the barn.

Filmore Johns was working the front counter. I handed him the old plug and told him I wanted a new one. He took it back to the stockroom and returned in ten minutes, not with a new plug but with a question. "Wut zit fitzin?" he asked.

"The Gravely," I answered.

He went back into the stockroom and returned shortly with a new spark plug.

I returned home, installed the new plug in the Gravely, turned the key, and BINGO! It started with a bang.

All I had to do was answer Filmore's question: "Wut zit fitzin?"

picture of the building with a buggy and two children showing the Mattapex Post Office sign. Audrey Hawkins recently located an envelope with the Mattapex postmark and a cancelled 2-cent stamp. The stamp is green with a profile of Washington looking left. This will be on display in the Historic Stevensville Post Office when we open in the spring.

What do you remember about going to the Post Office? I looked up Post Office on the Internet the other day and was just astounded at what I found. I even found I could print out a map from my house to the café across the street from Historic Post Office in Stevensville. It was ten miles. It also listed the miles to Chester and Queenstown Post Offices. Now I wonder why it didn't give me the "real" Post Office in Thompson Creek.

Yes, time and postal services have sure moved on.

Little School Bus Memories

By Francis "Butch" Collier

I would like to say that I had to walk the mile or so distance from home to school in the small town of Grasonville. No so. It was out the door and across the road to the bus stop. Not more than 200 feet.

Doesn't matter. This story is about the small school bus that — from 1940 to 1945 — took me to a four-room, seven-grades, three-teacher school.

The bus came from Kent Island, making no stops until it reached Grasonville. It was a pre-World War II V8 Ford, with conventional seating setup, but only six or seven rows. Twenty-four to 28 kids ranging in age from 7 to 13 rode the bus.

A privileged spot was to be the boy who stood in front by the driver and opened and closed the door at each stop. I graduated to this position when an older kid moved on to high school. Once you claimed this job, it was yours until you finished 7th grade.

There were so few children riding the bus that on the half dozen times it broke down the driver came in her 1941 Plymouth sedan, making several trips with eight or nine kids crammed in at a time to get us all to school, albeit a little late.

Once when the bus wasn't running well we stopped at a local filling station. The station man and our driver propped up the hood and started looking at the engine.

All of us kids had crowded up front to see, which is probably what jiggled the prop off its catch causing the hood to fall on her head.

We all thought this hilarious. But our laughter was cut short in mid-giggle when she cast a look on us that meant she was not as amused as we were. There was dead silence for the remainder of the trip to school.

The diminutive bus came to be known as the "Bean Can." The children were the "beans." The door operator was the "can opener." The driver was named for the piece of pork found in the bottom of the can. The best part of the story is that this ample lady was named Mrs. Potts.

KENT ISLAND

Kind of One of a KIND

By Brent Lewis

There's no Kent Island like our Kent Island, but you might not know there is at least one other Kent Island out there. Instead of being located in the Chesapeake Bay, this other Kent Island is in the Bay of Fundy, between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Canada.

It's the southernmost vegetated island in the Grand Manan chain, is less than two miles long and at the most, half a mile across. The northern third is a forest of spruce, fir and birch. The rest of the island is mostly treeless. There is a marsh and some old fields, a freshwater stream and scrub vegetation habitats.

For centuries, indigenous people hunted seal on Kent Island. In the 1930s a research facility and seabird sanctuary was established. About 200 bird species have been recorded at the station. Fifty-five species have

nested there. The island is a stopover for tens of thousands of migratory shorebirds. Birds far outnumber the small human population.

Canada also has a Stevensville. It's in Ontario. In the United States, there's a Stevensville in the Bitterroot Valley of Montana and one along the banks of Lake Michigan.

There's a Chester in Canada, too. But the original is in northern England. It's well known for the ancient Roman walls that surround the city.

Back home, at least 18 other states contain a Chester within their boundaries, including Massachusetts, West Virginia, Nebraska and California.

And though I'm sure those places are nice enough, none can claim to be the gateway to the Land of Pleasant Living. Tough luck for them.

LATE WINTER NATURE

By Brent Lewis

As we the people look forward to the spring thaw in our various ways, other critters are engaged in their late winter routines too.

Muskrats are among the busiest. They're living in burrows or lodges they've built. Their fur has grown thick and glossy. And they're looking for food. They prefer roots of various plants, but if necessary will eat clams, grass shrimp and such.

Most fish have gone deep or left the Chesapeake for winter. As the weather begins to warm, white and yellow perch are the most active. Roe is developing, and their spawning cycle is beginning. The rockfish will be following suit soon. You'll know winter is over when the bluefish, spot and croaker return from the Atlantic Ocean.

Tough, well-insulated sea ducks have migrated to the Chesapeake for thousands of years. The relatively shallow waters of the bay have always

been a winter haven for these visitors. They thrive on the small shellfish that live on oysters. However, declines in water quality and oyster populations in the bay have also reduced the number of ducks.

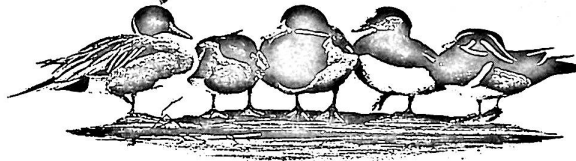
Tundra swan are getting ready to go back to places like the Arctic coast, and Osprey are returning from their holidays in South America.

Great blue herons are headed to the privacy of their rookeries for mating season.

Eagles are beginning to lay and incubate eggs.

Lots of nature is still asleep, though. Crabs are inactive, settled in the deepest trenches of the bay. Oysters and clams have slowed their metabolism down to the minimum. Snapping turtles and Diamondbacks are buried deep in mud. They've closed up shop until the temperatures rise and spring has sprung.

You can go ahead and admit to yourself how good that sounds.



Isle of Kent

John Bonner, Editor

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Kent Island Day

May 21
(Rain date May 22)



THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC.

Founded 1975

P.O. Box 321

Stevensville, Maryland 21666-0321

PROCLAMATION

Whereas, Audrey B. Hawkins was a charter member of The Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc.
and

Whereas, Ms. Hawkins, served as President of The Kent Island Heritage Society for three years 1990, 1991 and 1992
and

Whereas, Ms. Hawkins served as Treasurer for thirteen years- 1987-1989 and 1995-2004
and

Whereas, Ms. Hawkins was Docent Chairperson for fourteen years
and

Whereas, Ms. Hawkins has given her time and talent in community service to the Isle of Kent

Be it therefore

RESOVED that the BOARD OF DIRECTORS grant an HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP to Audrey B. Hawkins as an expression of sincere appreciation for her years of service.

Be it also

RESOLVED that copies of this RESOLUTION be spread upon the minutes of The Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc. and be published in the next issue of the *Isle of Kent Newsletter*. Further, that a certificate and a copy of the resolution be presented to Ms. Hawkins with appropriate ceremony.

Dated this eleventh day of December in the year of our Lord two thousand four on Kent Island in the State of Maryland.

Nancy M. Cook, President



THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC.

Founded 1975

P.O. Box 321

Stevensville, Maryland 21666-0321

PROCLAMATION

Whereas, Eva White Thompson was a charter member of The Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc.
and

Whereas, Ms Thompson served as Vice President for The Society in 1981 and 1982
and

Whereas, Eva White Thompson served as President of the Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc. for two years, 1984 and 1985
and

Whereas, Ms. Thompson was instrumental in securing National Historic Status for the Stevensville Town Center
and

Whereas, Ms. Thompson has given her time and talent in community service to the Isle of Kent

be it therefore

RESOLVED that the BOARD OF DIRECTORS grant an HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP to Eva White Thompson as an expression of sincere appreciation for her years of service.

Be it also

RESOLVED that copies of this RESOLUTION be spread upon the minutes of The Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc. and be published in the next issue of the *Isle of Kent Newsletter*. Further that a certificate and a copy of the resolution be presented to Ms. Thompson with appropriate ceremony.

Dated this eleventh day of December in the year of our Lord two thousand four on Kent Island in the State of Maryland

Nancy Cook, President
The Kent Island Heritage Society

PHILPOT'S FRONT PORCH

Ya'll Are What Ya'll Eat

By Skeeter Philpot

Look at me and you know I like food. But, man, did I get fat last year.

Last January 1st I ate a sleeve of little chocolate donuts and never looked back. Now I'm flirting with 250. An eighth of a ton. I'm a husky guy, but once I start calculating my weight in fractions of a ton, it's time to move away from the buffet.

It's hard to tell because I hang around with Burle Shoalwater. I still look like a normal sized human being next to him. I made the mistake of mentioning to Burle that I needed to diet.

"Aww, Skeeter, how you going to do that? You're the only man I know can almost keep up with me. I don't think I've ever seen you without a sandwich nearby."

He kept on. "And the way you and Tammy Sam cook? You with that chili, and her crab soup's the best. I don't

know what she puts in it..."

"Celery salt and a bay leaf."

"... but mmm-mmmph."

He thought a moment. "I hope you don't expect me to cut back. You know I get hungry out on the boat. I eat my breakfast on the way out, and I have to have my snacks. The three C's cookies, cakes and crackers. We like them orange ones with the peanut butter, don't we, Skeeter?"

"We do."

"And what about your mom? Somebody's going to have to eat all the groceries she cooks up. The way Miss Lil makes old-time fried chicken with that one extra secret ingredient..."

"Old Bay."

"Uhm-uhm-uhm. And what about her pies? Banana cream's my favorite. What's yours, Skeet?"

"Sweet potato."

"But the white potato's real good too, huh?"

"Real good."

"Remember when we were little and your grandmother used to make snow cream? And hot rolls? And tomato sandwiches? How about when we used to pick watercress with my old man, and he'd make soup?"

"Never liked it."

"Yeah, forget that stuff. But what about the food you love? Oyster stew, stuffed rock, fried clams..."

"With bellies."

"Especially bellies. And crabs and beer? Cherrystones and beer? Surf and turf and beer? You're going to miss those."

"I..."

"Don't even say it. I want you to be happy, buddy, but I want you to live. You've got to partake in all our life has to offer. I may not have good taste, but I sure know what tastes good."

"I'm..."

"No, you're not. You're just rounding out. Frankly, Skeeter, I always thought you were a little on the skinny side. Put on a few pounds, maybe you won't be so high-strung. Be good for you."

The waitress stepped up. "What're you boys having?"

Burle did not hesitate. "I'll have the Shoreman's Breakfast, double eggs, double home fries and a strawberry shake."

"Skeeter?"

"I'll have the Shoreman's, too."

"Alright!" Burle celebrated.

"But hold the toast, potatoes and scrapple, and just scramble the egg whites."

"Arrghhh." Burle groaned.

"And make mine a chocolate shake. I'm on a diet, I'm not dead."

"That's my boy," Burle grinned and rubbed his tummy.

The Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc.

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Stevensville, Maryland 21666

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