

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 2006

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President's Message

2006 will be a banner year for Queen Anne's County and the Isle of Kent: Both are celebrating important anniversaries in Maryland's history.

Queen Anne's County will be commemorating the 300th year of the Maryland Provincial Assembly's proposal of the formation of a county that would become the Gateway to the Eastern Shore. The Isle of Kent, the first settlement in Maryland and the third oldest settlement in America, will be celebrating the 375th anniversary of its founding by William Claiborne in 1631.

The commemoration of our anniversary will be to sponsor the biggest and best Kent Island Day ever. It will be held on Saturday, May 20 from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. The day will be highlighted by a community parade that will start from Kent Island Elementary School and travel through Historic Stevensville.

The Queen Anne's County Tricentennial Committee has been busily scheduling activities and commissioning special commemorative items that include all facets of life in Queen Anne's County. See Calendar of Events on page ?? for just a few of the activities that have been planned as of this date.

A Passport to Our History: A Tricentennial Activity Book will be distributed to all third- and fourth-graders in Queen Anne's County and to others who obtain a Birthday Kit from various area merchants. Other celebratory items to be offered will be a commemorative coin, glassware,

Continued on page 7

Kent Island's Involvement in the War of 1812

The upcoming KIHs general meeting (see box below), as well as the following general meeting on June 13, will explore Kent Island's involvement in the War of 1812.

By John Bonner

Events leading to the United States Declaration of War against Great Britain on June 18, 1812 may sound eerily contemporary.

The Runup to War

James Madison had recently ascended to the presidency, succeeding the moderate, thoughtful and cautious Thomas Jefferson. A vocal minority of those newly elected to Congress was agitating for confrontation with Great Britain and annexation of Canada, believing they had a fundamental right to keep foreign powers out of North America, some still harboring ill-will against Britain from the American Revolution.

Britain was behaving in an in-your-face imperial manner with blockades to prevent free trade with Napoleonic France and unjustified and excessive

Continued on page 2

Mark Your Calendar

Kent Island Heritage Society GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, March 8

Kent Island Free Library

7:00 p.m. Refreshments

7:30 p.m. Program: "The Battle of Slippery Hill: Kent Island's Place in the History of the War of 1812"

Presentation by a Fort McHenry
National Park Ranger

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Cemetery Identification & Preservation

Lora Lake

Editor

John Bonner

War of 1812

Continued from page 1

boardings of unarmed American merchant ships at sea, ostensibly searching for British Navy deserters. This action was not without basis, since better pay on American merchants was luring many opportunistic seamen to desert.

Opportunists saw value in Canada's fertile land and expansive forests. While British restriction of trade disadvantaged some, most citizens were unconvinced of the justification for war.

Ultimately, war trumped diplomacy as the tool of first resort. Congressional War Hawks, led by Henry Clay and others, connived a Declaration of War. But a wary majority in Congress refused to authorize funds needed to build and equip an army.

Britain, its attention and resources demanded by the ongoing war with France, could ill-afford to divert either to prop up its Canada garrison of only 4,400 soldiers.

The following account of the British invasion of Queenstown was written by DeCoursey Wright Thom of Blakely, Queenstown. Source and date of publication are unknown, but style of prose and typography place it in the first half of the twentieth century. It is a newspaper article, lacking scholarly citations of authorities and sources. Its claim of a British encampment of 3,400 soldiers on Kent Island is suspect. The article has been edited (extensively reconstructed, really) to enhance readability and comprehension.

Another account, which calls this the Battle of Slippery Hill, claims that the militia fired upon the British "who panicked and fired upon themselves." Still another claims that the Battle of Slippery Hill "took place in Grasonville at the corner of Bennetts Point and Rte. 18."

A British land force encamped on Kent Island under command of Sir Sidney Beckwith and a British naval squadron under command of Sir John Warren — a combined force of about 3,400 placed under Warren's command — set out to engage an American militia unit of 400 commanded by Major Nicholson, encamped at "Warrington," located on a farm about one mile east of Queenstown. It is important to note that Warren's command, though impressively large, contained neither cavalry

nor artillery.

Major Nicholson withdrew his forces from Queenstown to rolling ground that provided more effective cover. British Captain Robertson recounts that the militia's captain of artillery returned under a flag of truce and invited the British to fight, even suggesting single combat between the two of them. This was in apparent contravention of Nicholson's direct order to avoid fighting. Though the militia's artillery were safely beyond the range of British muskets, Nicholson understood the ultimate futility of 400 attacking 3,400.

The arriving British naval squadron shelled Queenstown, damaging several buildings. They went ashore only to take on stores and departed without engaging the American militia.

After spending the morning in Queenstown, the British expedition returned to its camp on Kent Island.

On August 12, 1812, a British attack force of 250 men landing about four miles from St. Michaels was faced by 500 men and a "few guns." Permission to attack "to clear them of the Queenstown business" was denied. American militia saw them back to their boats.

Fort Point, a high earthwork fortification, was constructed on the bank of the Corsica River by Colonel Vickers' regiment to protect the town of Centreville. When the British sloop *Surprise* ventured upriver it was met by a barrage of fire and promptly reversed course. Next day the Brits landed on the opposite shore and established a headquarters in a brick farmhouse. They apparently lost interest after several days and left.

Sir John Warren's Naval squadron and that of Admiral Cockburn, which had returned from a mission along the coast of North Carolina, were brought together again for the battle of North Point and the attack on Fort McHenry.

Cockburn — alone among these British commanders — favored and practiced marauding, a tactic consistent with the British strategy to terrorize American citizens prior to major engagements to come.

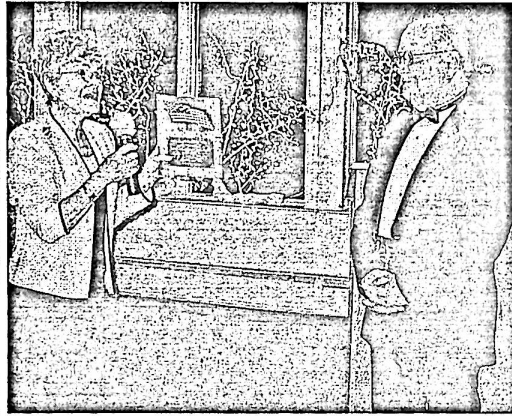
On to More Strategic Targets

Aggressive U.S. forces had invaded Canada, where undermanned British garrisons successfully beat them off. Indians, fearful of seemingly unending expansion into their territories, sided with the British.

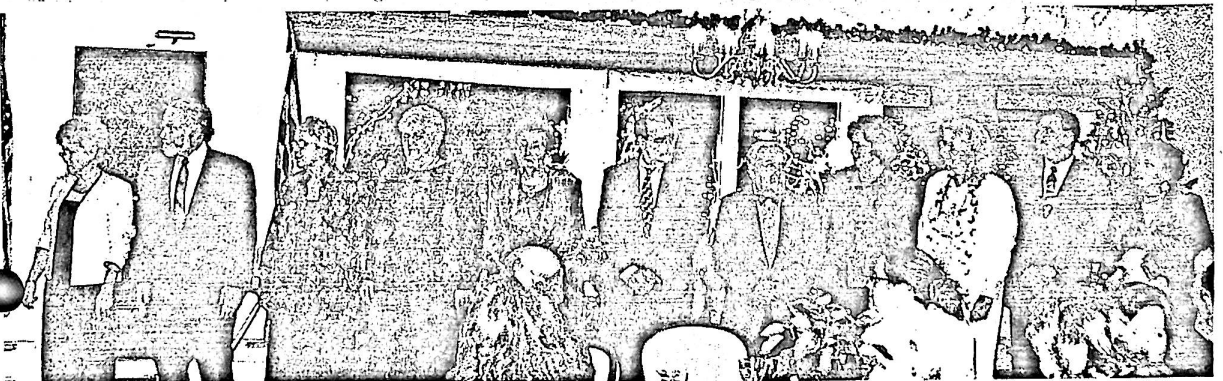
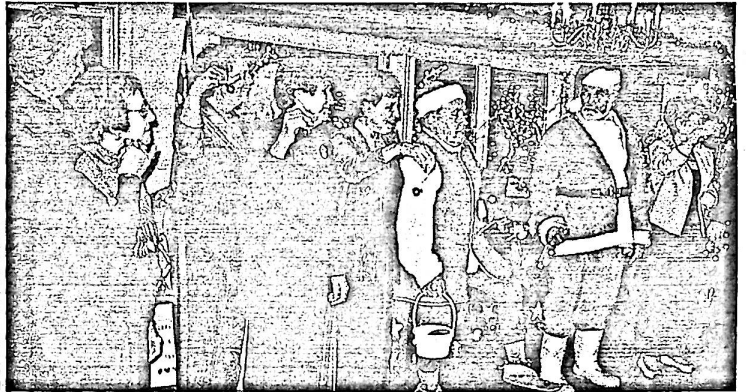
This tentative and half-hearted confrontation in Queenstown suggests that

Continued on page 7

Scenes from the Annual Christmas Dinner Meeting



Photos by
Jean Leathery



Kent Islander Profiles

From Kent Island Historical Society's oral histories project

By Brent Lewis

Oscar "Sonny" Schultz

Oscar "Sonny" Schulz is one of those Kent Islanders everybody knows.

He's a prominent businessman. A longtime civic leader. He's the proud dad of three enterprising, community-minded sons and granddad to eight.

But there's always more to everybody's story.

Sonny was born in Dominion on June 25, 1933. His mother's family, the Cloughs, were of local heritage, but his paternal grandparents had emigrated from Germany. In Germany's strict social class system, Sonny's grandfather was considered a peasant, whereas his grandmother's status was more that of an aristocrat. America offered a young couple in love the freedom to pursue their happiness.

Oscar and Maude, Sonny's parents, had two children before Sonny was born. A sister, Charlotta, died at the age of 4 after eating a peach that had been sprayed with arsenic — a commonly-used pesticide at that time — and Dr. Sattlemeir was unable to get to the child in time. Sonny later learned that losing her daughter, "almost killed my mother." Brother John was much older than Sonny. He passed away at the age of 50.

Sonny's father was an oysterman and a carpenter who struggled with his health. He had been attacked with mustard gas while fighting in World

War I. Though the immediate exposure proved not to be fatal, the long-term affects were progressively debilitating.

When Sonny was 11, his father died.

Despite the financial difficulties facing him and his mother, Sonny was able to graduate from high school. He was one of just four boys in the first senior class of Kent Island High School.

He has always been ambitious. "I'll never forget the first day I made \$5," he says. "Billy Schulz, my cousin, had a bicycle he was going to sell because he bought a car. He wanted \$5 for it. So mother said whatever I made that day I could put toward the bicycle. I picked 100 bushels of tomatoes. Made \$5."

Out on the Chesapeake Bay, mentors like Teany Jones and Robert Horney helped him establish himself as a waterman. "Teany was like a second father to me."

Sonny served in Korea. "Went over, came back, and wasn't [yet] 21 years old." When he returned to Kent Island, Sonny went right back to work. Oystering. Road



construction. Painting. Chartering fishing parties. Whatever it took to make a buck.

Mother Maude Schulz was industrious, too. She was employed by the Thomas family, that owned a little business

at Kent Narrows. Downstairs was a restaurant. Upstairs were four guest rooms. They called the place Fisherman's Inn.

Betty Thomas also worked for her parents in the original business, and when Sonny was 25 the two of them married. "Betty's a great person," Sonny says. "A great mother, a great partner." He smiles when he talks about her. "She always has been."

Betty stayed involved with her family business while Sonny worked on the water. Eventually, her father divided his Kent Narrows property between her and her brother. Sonny remembers that "traffic was increasing eight to ten percent a year and business wasn't increasing at all. We decided in 1969 to take a chance and build a new restaurant. We opened the Monday after Mother's Day 1971."

Sonny thinks about that for a moment, and adds.

"We burned down December 23, 1980. That was a bad Christmas."

"We left here a little after 10. When the alarm went off around midnight, we came back down. It was so cold the ladder truck froze. When they made a hole in the roof, the windows exploded. A week later we had to burn it down again to finish the job. We hauled out 90 truckloads of debris."

Reconstruction started the first of February 1981, and Fisherman's Inn reopened a short five months later.

Local politics beckoned in the late 1970s and early '80s when Stevensville merchant and civic booster Julius Grollman encouraged Kent Islanders to get more involved with their government. Power was historically based up-county, in Centreville and Sudlersville. "Little people didn't have much of a chance of getting involved," Sonny says. But the Bay Bridge changed things. More people were settling on Kent Island, supporting businesses and increasing the tax base.

Established area leadership resisted the Kent Island upstarts and wouldn't allow them on the party tickets. "So we started a new ticket. Got enough signatures on a petition to get on the general election. Next year the state legislature passed a bill you couldn't do that anymore."

Continued on page 7

Joe "Flash" Gordon

By Gil Dunn

March winds bring April showers. April showers bring May flowers . . . and *baseball*.

The 1938 spring training baseball season for the New York Yankees is over, the team will head back to their base city and get ready for Opening Day. The team would stop in Baltimore on their way north to play an exhibition game against the Brooklyn Dodgers. It would give me a chance to see Joe Gordon play again.

The past baseball season of 1937 Joe Gordon was the regular second baseman for the Newark Bears, the Triple A farm team of the New York Yankees. When the Bears played the

Baltimore Orioles I went as often as I could to see them play. After the game I would wait at the players exit to see Joe Gordon. I waited to see him, not for his autograph, but to merely say "Hi, Joe!"

Now that Joe Gordon was the starting second baseman for the New York Yankees, I had a chance to see him play again. I went out early to Oriole Park where they were to play. I got to the ballpark a long time before game time. I wanted to see the Yankee team arrive, particularly, Joe Gordon.

After a short wait the taxi cabs started arriving, bringing the Yankee team dressed in their baseball

uniforms, four to a cab. I waited and watched for Joe Gordon, but he didn't show up. I was ready to leave when another cab pulled up carrying only one ball player. Out jumped Joe Gordon!

When I saw him, I waved and said, "Hi, Joe." He was surprised to see me. We chatted as we walked along 29th street. He asked if I had a ticket to the game. When I answered "No," he beckoned toward the FOR PLAYERS ONLY gate and told me to go ahead. I started through the gate but was stopped by the gate attendant. Joe turned to him and said, "He's okay, he's my brother!"

I was allowed admittance and went up into the grandstand, found a seat and watched the game. After the game was over, I stayed at the players exit to thank Joe for his kindness and tell him goodbye.

For the following 11 baseball seasons Joe Gordon was the regular second baseman in the American League, and I have deep regret that I never saw him play again.

That was 68 years ago. It always brightens my day when I recall Joe Gordon's words to the gate attendant: "He's okay, he's my brother." Little wonder that I would remember Joe Gordon.

Sonny Schultz

Continued from page 4

"None of us got elected," he continues. "But later, next 4 years, Jules [Grollman] got elected. I was treasurer for 8 years and county commissioner for 8 years."

By this time, Betty and Sonny's three boys, Andy, Jody and Tracy, were grown. They inherited the family's gene for hard work and took more responsibility in the business.

Sonny's an activist in the best sense of the word. He's a past president and active board member of the Maryland Restaurant Association. Past president of the Maryland Charter Boat Association. He was instrumental in starting the county's first tourist board and has won awards for his

successes in economic development.

Among the many philanthropic endeavors undertaken by the Schulz family is the donation of the Chesapeake College training kitchen and the approximately \$30,000 they raise every year to help in the fight against multiple sclerosis.

Fisherman's Village, which includes Fisherman's Inn, the Crab Deck, and Seafood Market, employs about 200 people in the summer. The weekly payroll is in the tens of thousands of dollars. That's a lot of money generated into the community from what was once a little family business.

Sonny Schulz remembers a Kent Island that provided "a carefree life." A Kent Island of vegetable gardens and soft crabs and hen houses. A

place where young men shot marbles and wore old hand-me-down Pittsburgh Pirates wool baseball uniforms — "I could wrap it around me three times," he exclaimed. Where locals would spend pretty Sundays on the hill at Matapeake watching the ferries come and go, observing people, and looking for faraway license plates. "Cars would back up from Matapeake to Bill Denny's. That's how the firehouse got started, selling sandwiches and sodas to people down there."

Talking to people like Sonny can help those who didn't live here then imagine that Kent Island.

It also reminds you that there's always more to everybody's story.

Even to those you think you already know.

New KIHS Cemetery Initiative

Lora Lake and a group of volunteers will be identifying and cataloging Kent Island cemeteries and burial sites to establish a database for historical and preservation purposes. They seek to collect information on location, size, number of graves, genealogical information on grave markers and overall condition of each cemetery.

If you know of any such burial site or have information you think might be helpful to this committee, please call Lora Lake at 410-643-4755.

You Say You Want A Resolution?

By Skeeter Philpot

My wife, Tammy Sam, caught me right at half-time. "You make any New Year's resolutions?" she asked.

She knows that's a loaded question. She knows New Year's resolutions aren't for me. She also knows that I make New Years resolutions just for other people. "Why do you do this?" I asked, clicking mute on the remote even though I didn't want to.

"You always put so much thought into I," she explained. "I think it's a shame your genius"—she rolled her eyes so wildly, I thought they'd roll away—"isn't shared with the world."

"Always makes you mad though."

"Doesn't make me mad. How can you be mad at the village idiot?"

"Okay." I ate a couple Old Bay chips and took a swig of beer. "Just remember you asked for it."

"You better do me first."

"Okay. After all these years together, you know I think you're perfect." I gave her my all-purpose Cheshire cat grin. She wasn't buying. I sighed and went on. "You resolve to listen to everything I say. Undivided attention. Even if it's the dumbest thing I've ever said."

"That's going to be pretty darned dumb."

"You're right, it will be." I plowed on. "You also resolve to learn

something about football other than that we can talk at halftime. You resolve to only make meatloaf once a month. You resolve to stop telling that story about my underwear dance"

"That's it for me?"

"You get off easy."

"Thanks. I'll make note. Our daughter?"

"Debra Winger resolves to stop being so strong-willed and opinionated. She resolves to start making a living, preferably one that will enable us to retire soon."

"She's 12."

"I know. When's she going to start showing some interest in that tennis racket I got her for Christmas?"

"It's January. Miss Lil?"

"Mom resolves to keep making the best crab dip on earth."

"Your buddies?"

"Burle Shoalwater resolves to help me lose weight instead of challenging me to crab dip eating contests. Ebbitt Tyde resolves to not ask so many stupid questions all the time. Wayne Tyde resolves to stop getting married. Slimm Chance resolves to pay me back the money he owes me, and his brother Fats resolves to cover Slimm's debt if he has to. Oh yeah, and Burle resolves to lose every game of poker we play this year."

"That all?"

"Well, the oysters resolve to recover, the hard crabs resolve to

come on strong this year. Tourists resolve to bring their dollars and their respect. The developers resolve to stop developing everything. The politicians resolve to stop politicking everybody. Mother Nature resolves to be less temperamental. And the teams I root for resolve to be winners."

"Interesting." Tammy Sam had her own sly smile on. "Now it's your turn."

"What're you talking about?"

"New deal this year. This year you've got to match everybody else's resolutions. This year it's not 'do what I say, not what I do'. This year it's 'don't do what you do, do what you say.'"

"Huh?"

"You know what I mean. Start."

"Awww. Do I have to?" I would have drank some more beer but I was already having whine. "I resolve to listen to everything you say unless I zone out. You know I've got that ATT, or whatever. So cut me some slack. I resolve to learn about, I don't know, those Lumpaburper baskets or something. Once a month I resolve not to complain about meatloaf. I resolve to never, ever do the underwear dance again."

"So far, so good."

"Let's see, I resolve to enjoy no crab dip like my mother's. I resolve to take some responsibility

for my daughter's — uh — overpowering personality. I resolve to buy her a karaoke machine if the tennis racket doesn't work out. I resolve to beat Burle in the next crab dip eating contest, I resolve to stop giving Ebb such stupid answers. Sometimes. I resolve to stop lending Slimm money. I resolve to stop looking at Fats like he owes me. I resolve to take all of Burle's card playing money."

"Go on."

"I resolve to keep doing what I do no matter what the oysters and crabs do. I resolve to be nice to tourists. Even when they stray from Kent Narrows. I resolve to support zero growth, unless I get a chance to make some money. I resolve to expect more out of politicians, unless they get a chance to make some money. I resolve to give Mother Nature more leeway." I took that drink of beer. "And, of course, I resolve to root my teams on, win or lose. Whenever they're playing."

"I see. Halftime over?"

"Just about. Anything else?"

"No, you did pretty good, I'll let you go." She kissed me on my bald spot. "Have a happy new year," she said as she headed out of the TV room.

I said, "I resolve to," and hit that clicker just in time.

War of 1812

Continued from page X

Soldiers on neither side were eager to die in a war driven by so vague and fuzzy causes it didn't even have a name.

These British forces were to regroup and prepare themselves for the famous attack on Fort McHenry.

Though neither side could vanquish the other, fighting continued even beyond signing of a Treaty of Peace on December 24, 1814 at Ghent. Fighting stubbornly continued until the Treaty was ratified by Congress on February 17, 1815.

Welcome New Members

Arthur A. & Patricia Craig
Stevensville, Md.

Judy Edelheit
Church Hill, Md.

Mary Haughton
Stevensville, Md.

Norma & Theresa Otto
Stevensville, Md.

Mr. & Mrs. Gary L. Walters
& family
Chester, Md.

Joyce Woodford
Grasonville, Md.

President's Message

Continued from page 1

Christmas ball, and a special stamped postal envelope.

The 300th Anniversary Committee, of which I am a member, is interested in seeking other means of

celebrating this very important time in the county's and Kent Island's history. If you wish to participate in planning an event or offering other suggestions that will focus on the history of the area, please contact me at 410-758-2502.

Nancy M. Cook

KIRWAN HOUSE WISHLIST

Would you please look in your attic and/or garage for any of the following items appropriate to 1890 - 1900? We would love to preserve them in the Kirwan Store.

- ✓ Ladies' high-button shoes
- ✓ Children's high-button shoes
- ✓ Pot belly stove, 4½-feet high
- ✓ Slate writing boards/slate pencils
- ✓ Feedbags
- ✓ Mason jars with seed-dispensing caps
- ✓ Washing machine, wooden or copper
- ✓ Wooden icebox
- ✓ Hand water pump for kitchen

In Memoriam

JOHN ASHLEY

NATHAN MORRIS

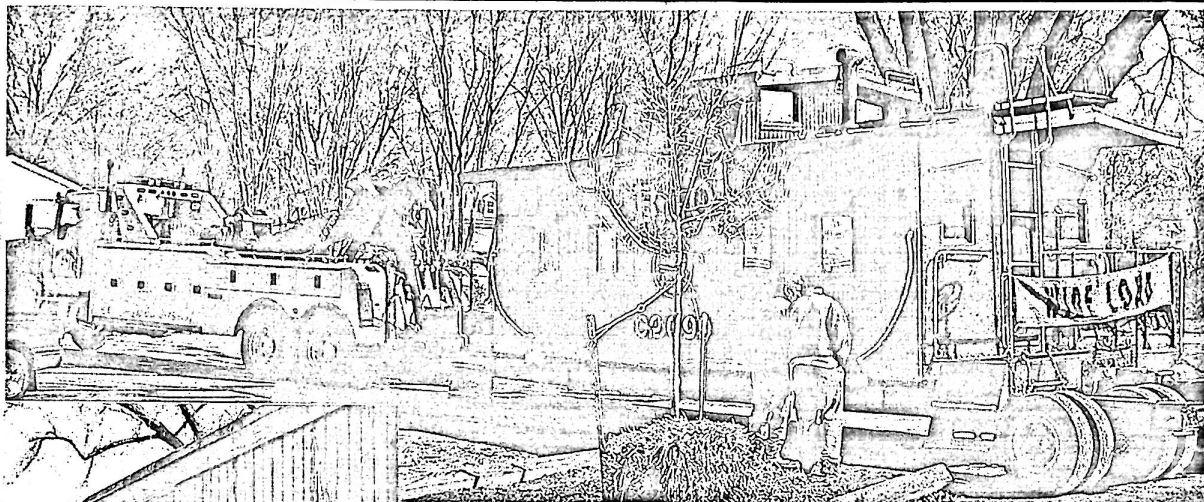
ELAINE SNYDER

JOE THOMPSON

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.

Calendar of Events

- **April 18, 3 - 5 p.m.** The Kent Island Heritage Society, The Queen Anne's County Historical Society, and the Tricentennial Committee present a Tea in Queenstown.
- **April 18, 6 p.m.** Official Commemoration at Queenstown Courthouse, the town originally established as the county seat.
- **April 21, 7:30 p.m.** Tricentennial Concert of Performing Arts Educators of Queen Anne's County Public Schools.
- **April 30, 10 a.m. 5 p.m.** The Maryland House and Garden Pilgrimage Tour. On Kent Island, Cray House (1809), the Stevensville Train Depot (1902, and the Historic Christ Episcopal Church will be open from 12:30 - 5 p.m.
- **May 20.** Kent Island Day. [Rain date May 21.]
- **June 8, 6:30 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 Chorus, The Kent Island Jazz 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.
- **July 4.** Independence Day celebration, Centreville
- **November 4, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.** Historic Sites Bus Tour by Queen Anne's Historic Consortium.
- **December 1.** Tricentennial Time Capsule Planting Capsule Christmas Parade.



ALL ABOARD!!!

On Thursday, Feb. 16, a 1924-29 vintage caboose was hauled over the Bay Bridge and onto the grounds beside the Old Stevensville Train Depot. For the past 15 years it had been used as an office in Millersville.

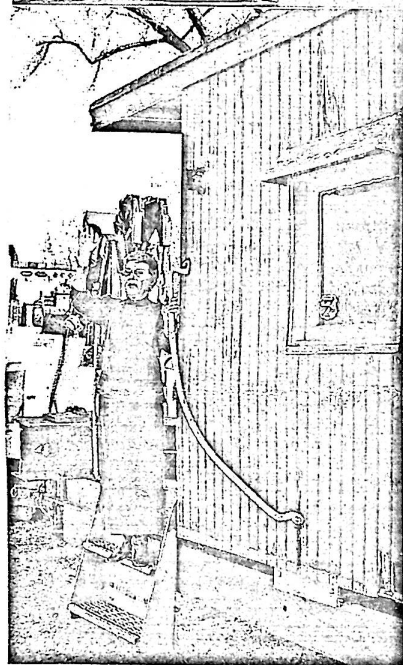
When Mrs. Grace DeRocco called the Railroad Museum in Baltimore looking for someone who wanted a caboose, they called us. A craftsman who restores trains provided us with a favorable evaluation. A condition of this generous gift was that we pay to haul it away.

The caboose requires a good bit of renovation to replace tongue-and-groove wooden siding and rotted trim. The interior is in pretty decent condition and has its original built-in furnishings and iron fittings.

The caboose has no undercarriage — wheels, axles, springs — for which the search will continue. Cement pilings are being prepared for it to sit on at the proper height.

This fascinating piece of history will enhance the train depot. We expect to have it on its pilings and cleaned up in time for display on Kent Island Day.

TRAIN ENTHUSIASTS WITH CARPENTRY SKILLS AND INTEREST IN HELPING RESTORE THE CABOOSE, PLEASE CALL NANCY COOK AT 410-758-2502.



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