

# Isle of Kent - 1631

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

NEWSLETTER OF THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC.

SUMMER 2026

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The Grand Opening of the Kent Island Heritage Center in Stevensville was held on Kent Island Day on May 16. Pictured from left are Kristin Green, Jack Broderick, Bob Lowe, Linda Collier, and Joan Stoer. They, along with Lou Crouch and Harrison Van Waes spent many hours preparing the new Center to share Kent Island History. See article inside for more details on the new center.



## President's Message

**What a day!** On Saturday, May 16, we celebrated our iconic Kent Island Day, with a patriotic flair celebrating America's 250th Birthday. It was clearly our biggest and best Kent Island Day yet. One of our Board Members commented during the day, "Don't you just love it when a plan comes together!" Well, it sure did. The weather sparkled throughout the day, enhancing our celebration. During the opening ceremony Delegate Steve Arentz presented a special citation from the Maryland General Assembly in recognition of the Heritage Society's celebration of our Nations'

250th. Commissioner Chris Corchiarino read the original Governor's Proclamation of Kent Island Day from 1977. KI High School Student Landon Rosekrans played a stirring trumpet rendition of our National Anthem. Then the big Parade, announced by special Town Crier and Parade Announcer, Rick Culotta, of the Sons of the American Revolution. The Parade was as big as ever, with the unique hometown mix of classic cars, Heritage docents, scouts, historic military reenactors, music, horses, jeeps, skateboarders, first responders, and many colorful local units and guests. And in this election year we had a number of elected leaders and candidates sharing our event and enjoying the opportunity to interact

(Continued on page 2)

with the spectators. Our Grand Marshall was Doug Bishop, retired teacher and retired reporter for the local Bay Times newspaper. Doug has been a valuable and respected KIHS member and supporter for years. Doug also had riding with him, special friend, Jim Brown, founder of the Grasonville Community Center. It was a privilege to honor both of those stalwart community members and contributors. During the day-long event in Historic Stevensville we hosted nearly 120 vendors and exhibitors, kids' activities, food trucks, music in the Park, and open historic sites. We estimate well over 2,000 visitors enjoyed our celebration. We congratulate and thank our professional Vendor Coordinator, Emily Brown, who went well above and beyond throughout the lengthy preparation process and throughout the event, working to ensure all aspects of our success - even adding a patriotic balloon option for vendors to enhance the mood of celebration! I also want to praise the tremendous team effort of our Board and Heritage Society Members and students who pitched in wherever needed throughout the day to get the job done. It was a real Team Effort again this year! Thank you! Please enjoy our KI Day pictures in this Newsletter.

In addition to our successful traditional Kent Island Day activities, this year we celebrated a landmark event during KI Day, the Grand Opening of our new Kent Island Heritage Center. It's our newest historic site, three years in the making. The 1870 building was the first public schoolhouse in Stevensville and was moved from its original location to its current site in 1910. We were able to purchase it through the generous financial gift of our former Treasurer, Lynne Riley Coleman. After extensive renovations, we were finally ready to open as planned on KI Day. Our Heritage Center / Museum features unique exhibits and artifacts telling various interesting aspects of Kent Island's story, including the founding by William Claiborne; extensive displays and artifacts depicting our original Native Americans; a millstone from Crayford Plantation where Claiborne resided; the ship's bell from the John M. Dennis, largest of the Matapeake ferry fleet before the Bridge; the large original Kent Island duck decoy collection documented in the book "The Forgotten Seven"; a display of early school artifacts and stories from the days of public education in the very building you are standing in; and many other unique Kent Island stories. It's a "must see" for our members and guests. We'll be open on each first Saturday and other special days to be announced. We extend a huge thank you to our team, headed by Bob Lowe, our Heritage VP, for their tireless dedication and commitment to ready the Heritage Center for ribbon cutting on KI Day. Check out our story and pictures here in the Newsletter.

In addition to our great Kent Island Day celebration and the Grand Opening of our Heritage Center, we've had a busy and successful spring. At our March General Meeting at Historic Christ Church, we hosted renowned local author, Marty Bollinger, who discussed his new book about ferries on the Chesapeake Bay, entitled *When Claiborne Crossed the Chesapeake, the Rise and Fall of the Ferry Era*. He presented a fascinating look at the Bay's ferry era including the impact on Kent Island in those last decades before the Bridge. In March, thanks to Hanna Wall, we held another training session for docents and welcomed a new group of docents to help us open our sites and meet and greet our visitors. In March we also participated with an exhibit at the Kent Island Kids and Family Connection hosted the Update Newspaper, to share our heritage stories with young families - our future!

In April, in addition to gearing up for Kent Island Day, we began our First Saturday Open Sites program which runs 12:00 - 4:00 on each first Saturday through November. We had large numbers of visitors to our sites in both April and May, when many of our new docents were able to join veteran docents and actively engage in meeting our visitors and sharing our stories. We attribute the increase in visitors to the outstanding PR support we are receiving from our County Heritage Tourism Coordinator, Penny Young -Carrasquillo and Public Information Officer, Beth Malasky. Thank you both! We also worked with QACTV to do a couple commercials in support of our First Saturday Open Sites and Kent Island Day. In May we took our Heritage display to the Kent Island Library and set up in the lobby wall display case for the month of May to help share our Heritage stories with the many patrons of the Library. This spring we continued our exciting new program partnering with Kent Island High School. We presented several heritage classes to students, presented docent training to interested students and engaged them in our activities during open sites and at Kent Island Day. We look forward to continuing and expanding this program this next school year. Shortly after Kent Island Day, on May 20, we participated in the Kent Island High School Awards Ceremony. I had the honor of presenting our annual Heritage Scholarship to an outstanding young woman, Claire Ransom. We congratulate Claire. The competition this year was extraordinary. What a class! View her picture and winning heritage essay here in this Newsletter.

In June, we've been invited to do a community presentation on Kent Island History at Symphony Village. That was an outgrowth of a presentation done in May at a Veterans' Group in Centreville. We also look forward to a June visit to our new KI Heritage Center by a "content creator" and radio host from Mix 106.5 in Baltimore. Another unique opportunity to share our story about this great Island that we call home!

In November and December, we will repeat our three presentations on Kent Island History that were so successful last year at the Centreville-based Institute for Adult Learning. Course information on a wide range of subjects will be available in early August at <https://www.instituteforadultlearning.org/classes>. The program also includes a visit to KIHS sites.

This summer, we are planning a new adventure to celebrate our Kent Island Heritage, at the recommendation of several of our Board Members. We are planning a July afternoon boat cruise out of Kent Narrows down Eastern Bay, along Kent Island's eastern shoreline, with narration highlighting various aspects of our storied history along the way and back. The

cruise will be on the new Chesapeake Water Tours catamaran sailing from the dock of the Hyatt at the Narrows. Light buffet snacks and a cash bar will be available. Check out our invitation and if you'd like to join us on July 22, please RSVP quickly, as seats will be limited.

Of course, this fall we will host our annual Fall Heritage Picnic in September at the beautiful Kirwan House and Farm in Chester. In December, we plan to participate again in the annual Queen Anne's County Holiday Train Show to highlight our Kent Island Railroad heritage, and we'll plan to hold our annual Holiday Luncheon and Board Elections. We welcome and encourage your participation in all of our upcoming events.

At the broader community level, I mentioned the tremendous support from the Queen Anne's County Heritage Tourism Office. We appreciate Penny's proactive efforts to coordinate the County-wide Historic Sites Consortium in which we participate. We also welcome their support to our Historic Stevensville Arts and Entertainment District (HS A&E) in which we are active members. We also coordinate with the Kent Island Federation of Arts (KIFA) and encourage their support of our unique heritage through the medium of art.

We want to extend a note of heartfelt appreciation and thanks for your continuing support as we look forward to continuing our year of activities and events in support of our mission to discover, identify, restore, and preserve the heritage of Kent Island.

Stay cool. Enjoy your summer and some great steamed crabs! Enjoy those America's 250th fireworks at the Narrows on July 1. Hope to see you 'round the Island and maybe out on our cruise!

Jack Broderick

**Kent Island Heritage Society**  
**July Heritage Cruise**  
**Join us for an afternoon cruise on Eastern Bay**  
Share Kent Island's rich four century history  
from the Wading Place to Kent Point and back  
Narrated stories of our history along the Eastern Bay Shoreline  
where it happened from the viewpoint of the water  
**Aboard the Chesapeake Water Tours Catamaran**  
**Sailing from the Hyatt at Kent Narrows**  
**WEDNESDAY, JULY 22**  
**3:00 – 5:00**  
**\$50 per person**  
Buffet snacks, cash bar  
**RSVP by July 10 (seating limited)**  
*Reserve your place today by check to KIHS, Box 321, Stevensville, MD 21666  
or email to [kihtreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:kihtreasurer@gmail.com) and pay at the dock*

## 2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**JULY 22**  
SUMMER MEMBERSHIP EVENT  
KENT ISLAND EAST BAY CRUISE

**SEPTEMBER 27**  
MEMBERSHIP PICNIC  
Kirwan Museum

**OCTOBER 3**  
ARTOBERFEST Stevensville

**NOVEMBER 7**  
CLASSIC CAR SHOW Stevensville

**DECEMBER 6**  
KIHS MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON  
AND ELECTIONS

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**KIHS BOARD MEETINGS**  
are held on the third Wednesday  
of the month at the Kirwan House.  
All Society members are welcome  
to attend or suggest topics for  
consideration.

**FOR INFORMATION** on these and  
other events, visit our website  
**[kentislandheritagesociety.org](http://kentislandheritagesociety.org)**

THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE  
SOCIETY MAINTAINS A SOCIAL  
MEDIA PRESENCE ON-LINE AT  
**[kentislandheritagesociety.org](http://kentislandheritagesociety.org)**  
and on Facebook , X (Twitter,)  
YouTube, Instagram, Tiktok,  
Pinterest, Hashtags, and E-Mail.

*Welcome*  
**New Members** ★

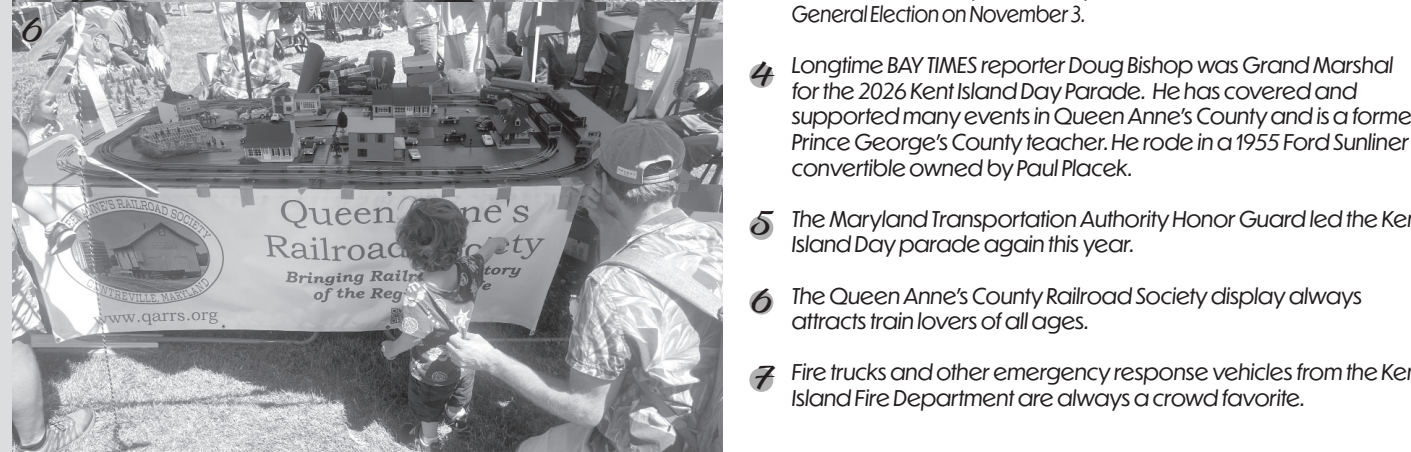
Beth Malasky, *Individual*

# KENT ISLAND HERITAGE CENTER

## KIHS Heritage Center Opens in Stevensville

The new Heritage Center will be open on the first Saturdays from April to November and for special events. KIHS hope it will be able to open the Center more frequently in the future and welcomes new volunteers to help share Kent Island history.

- 1 KIHS Docent Green welcomed people to the new Heritage Center with display on early Kent Island history.
- 2 KIHS Docent Linda Collier shares history with visitors. Special efforts will be made to include introducing children to their region's history.
- 3 Kent Island's maritime history, including a display on the Ferry Era, is celebrated throughout the Heritage Center. They include the ship's bell from the ferry John M. Dennis.
- 4 Displays include historic artifacts, some which have been donated by local residents over the years.
- 5 The contributions of the railroad established on Kent Island at Love Point in 1902 are featured in the new Center as well as at the historic train station site in Stevensville.



- 1 Hanna Wall and Ericka Kriegisch sell Kent Island Heritage Society items and promote membership in front of Stevensville historic post office site.
- 2 The Chesapeake Community band played patriotic music.
- 3 Candidates from both political parties marched in the parade in advance of the Maryland Primary which will be held on June 23 and General Election on November 3.
- 4 Longtime BAY TIMES reporter Doug Bishop was Grand Marshal for the 2026 Kent Island Day Parade. He has covered and supported many events in Queen Anne's County and is a former Prince George's County teacher. He rode in a 1955 Ford Sunliner convertible owned by Paul Placek.
- 5 The Maryland Transportation Authority Honor Guard led the Kent Island Day parade again this year.
- 6 The Queen Anne's County Railroad Society display always attracts train lovers of all ages.
- 7 Fire trucks and other emergency response vehicles from the Kent Island Fire Department are always a crowd favorite.

Kent Island Day 2026



# CLAIRE RANSOM IS 2026 KIHS SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

## CLAIRE RANSOM KIHS SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY

Looking through the history of Kent Island, I can trace my family back several generations. I am a lifelong resident of Queen Annes County and attended both Stevensville Middle School and Kent Island High School. I have had a very successful academic career, being in the top two percent of my class and a member of several honor societies in which I hold leadership positions. This year I received the Fall Scholar Athlete Award which is given to one boy and one girl who have showed the most success in their academics and sports. I have played high school volleyball for four years. My family has a lifetime membership in the Kent Island Heritage Society. I have attended many Heritage Society events over the years and was even a paper boy in one of the Kent Island Day parades.

My family has instilled in me the importance of preserving the environment and culture on Kent Island to ensure future generations can enjoy this wonderful place. Kent Island has marshlands full of local creatures such as muskrats and diamondback turtles. Many bird species and even a few bald eagles are found on Kent Island. The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries around the island are home to all sorts of aquatic life. This ecosystem is open and accessible and worthy of protection.

The Bay also provides jobs for many watermen in the area. My great grandfather was a waterman. During my great grandfather's time as a waterman he found several Indian artifacts such as arrowheads and clay pipes showing how far back people have called Kent Island home. Kent Island's waterman heritage is a way of life for some residents today as it was hundreds of years ago. The unique culture of Kent Island's watermen can be seen in the Kent Narrows marina museum.

There is a sense of community on Kent Island where over the years everyone has come together to protect our unique way of life. People have come together to protest anything could ruin our way of life such as the proving grounds (in 1917) or dumping dredged materials in the Chesapeake Bay.

Kent Island is still a place where everyone knows everyone and there is always fun things to do. I love going for walks to Terrapin Beach and riding bikes on the many trails. This year I have started going to the library a lot, whether to do schoolwork or teach a craft with the National Art Honor Society. When I was younger, my grandmother was in charge of the library, so I was always there for story time. It is very special to now be the one helping create fun memories at the library just as was done for me.

Going to such a small high school, we have many unique opportunities that everyone is involved in. It doesn't matter if it is Art Scene, Spanish Heritage Night, of a play, everyone in the school or local community will attend. I am very lucky that I got to grow up in such and involved and loving community.

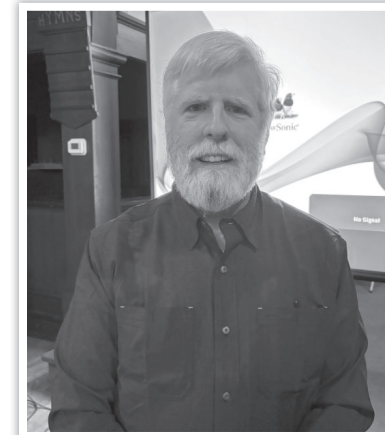
Claire Ransom is the winner of the Kent Island Heritage Society \$1,000 Scholarship which is awarded to a graduating Kent Island High School senior annually. She graduated in the top of her class with a weighted 4.3 GPA and has been active in many school and community activities. She will attend Newcastle University in England where she will major in Mathematics and Finance. Contest judges commented that there were several outstanding entries for the scholarship this year.

One of the selection criteria for the scholarship is to write an essay on the importance of learning about and preserving Kent Island history. Other criteria include academic performance, community service, and teacher/counselor recommendations. Portions of Ms. Ransom's essay are presented here. Members of the KIHS Class of 2027 are encouraged to apply for the Scholarship next year.

(Pictured above) KIHS President Jack Broderick and Kent Island High School scholarship winner Claire Ransom.

# Marty Bollinger Discusses Ferry Service on Kent Island at March Membership Meeting

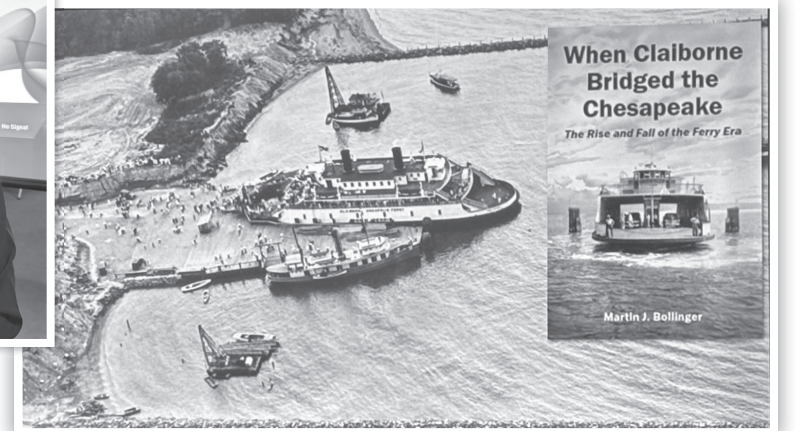
Marty Bollinger, Claiborne resident and author of *When Claiborne Bridged the Chesapeake: The Rise and Fall of the Ferry Era*, focused on Kent Island during his March 17 KIHS Membership Meeting presentation at Historic Christ Church. The earliest ferry connected Kent Island between Broad Creek (near today's Christ Episcopal Church on Route 8) and the Western Shore in the mid-1600s.



The Queen Anne's Railroad started operating from Love Point on Kent Island in 1902, and steamboats and other craft began frequent traffic to Kent Island from Baltimore and other destinations. Regular car ferry service between Baltimore and Love Point began in the early 1920s. The most famous ferry was Philadelphia which began the run in 1931 and following a transfer to New York in 1934, returned in 1938 to serve until 1947. It was a double-ended ferry which quickly became known as the "Smokey Joe" since the smoke from its stacks could be seen from a good distance. (There are models and pictures of the "Smokey Joe" in the restored KIHS railroad station in Stevensville.)

The major ferry route in the 1920s between Baltimore and Annapolis (later Sandy Point) with the Eastern Shore was to Claiborne, which had a major ferry pier and railroad access and had been a destination since the late 1800s. Eventually, competing interests began looking at Kent Island as an alternative. Perhaps the most aggressive approach considered was to construct a canal across Kent Island to shorten the trip distance to Claiborne and also to build a new terminal on Kent Island. In 1929, the Claiborne-Annapolis Ferry Company purchased farms along Route 8 to

build a canal. The most likely route would have been from what was known as the Carvel Farm to Eastern Bay, then to Claiborne. Bollinger provides detailed information on the proposal which was, obviously, abandoned and plans to build a new ferry building at Matapeake were announced in January 1930. The new Annapolis to Matapeake ferry service began in July



1930. As ferry service direct to Claiborne diminished, a new terminal was built at Romancoke on Kent Island in 1938. Passengers by car or using bus services travelled between Claiborne, Romancoke, Matapeake, and Annapolis/Sandy Point. Ironically, the last ferry to run shortly after the Bay Bridge opened was from Romancoke to Claiborne where so much of the ferry history service began.

Ferry operations ended in 1952 with the opening of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. While discussion continues of a passenger only ferry service to take tourists to Chesapeake towns on both sides of the Bay, the history and impact of the ferry and railroad system's role in the transformation of transportation on the Eastern Shore and Kent Island continues.

Bollinger's book can be purchased from its publisher The Maryland Center for History and Culture, the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum and on-line from Barnes & Noble and Amazon.



## SCAN KIHS QUICK RESPONSE (QR) CODE TO REACH OUR WEBSITE

You can reach our Kent Island Heritage Society website with most Smartphones which are equipped with QR Code readers in their cameras. Hold your Smartphone camera over the QR Code so that it is clearly on the phone screen. The phone will scan the code and connect to the site. Some phones might require you to take a picture of the QR Code.

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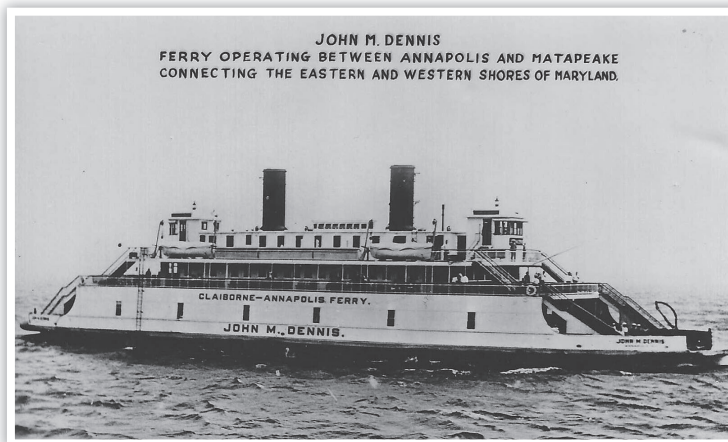
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## POSTCARD from Kent Island: KIHS Heritage Center Displays Ship's Bell from Ferry John M. Dennis

*From John L. Conley Collection*

The Kent Island Heritage Society was pleased to add the ship's bell from the Ferryboat John M. Dennis which connected the Eastern and Western shores from 1929 to the end of ferry service in 1952 to its new Heritage Center in Stevensville. John M. Dennis was an influential Baltimore banker who later became treasurer of the Claiborne Annapolis Ferry Company. The ship was constructed in 1929 in Portsmouth VA. It crossed the Bay several times a day, first from Annapolis and then in 1942 from Sandy Point to Claiborne and beginning in 1930 to Matapeake. Ferries from that period could haul from 75 to 100 cars and on summer weekends long lines built up from past Stevensville to reach the Matapeake terminal to return across the Bay. In what was at best "irony," the ferry ran into the Bay Bridge on one of her last trips back to Sandy Point. The bell was donated by Trudy Truitt Guthrie whose mother Mary Virginia Harrington christened the *John M. Dennis* and was given the bell after the ferry made its last trip to Matapeake. The Heritage Center opened in May on Kent Island Day and features other items that celebrate the Ferry Era.



JOHN M. DENNIS  
FERRY OPERATING BETWEEN ANNAPOLIS AND MATAPEAKE  
CONNECTING THE EASTERN AND WESTERN SHORES OF MARYLAND.



This bell was presented to  
Mary Virginia Harrington Truitt after  
the last run of the John M. Dennis on  
July 30, 1952, the opening of the  
Chesapeake Bay Bridge.

**LET US HEAR FROM YOU!!!!** Please contact KIHS if you have comments on items in [Isle of Kent 1631](#) or if you have questions about Kent Island history that we can try to answer. We welcome topics you would find of interest and especially information you can provide for future issues. Contact: John Conley: [jconcomm@gmail.com](mailto:jconcomm@gmail.com) | cell: 703-216-0449