President’s Message

Nancy M. Cook

Once again another year begins, and with it an agenda that is a full one. But before we move on we must take time for remembrances and resolutions.

Remembrances . . .

☐ The 400 school children and other tour groups who have visited the Train Depot, the Cray House and the Old Stevensville Post Office through the year.
☐ The 2001 Kent Island Days, which began with one of the best parades in several years.
☐ The first October weekend “Pathways to Our Past” event, where all the historic sites in Queen Anne’s County were open to the public.
☐ The oral histories that were recorded by Dan Hopkins, Jane Sparks and Fran Taylor.
☐ The Bond Bill awarded to the Society for the restoration of the Cray House.
☐ A successful first day of Kent Island Days (the rains came on Sunday, the second day).
☐ Awarding of the first Kent Island Heritage Society Scholarship.
☐ Adoption of amended and restated Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.

Resolutions . . .

☐ To complete the restoration of the Cray House in 2002.

Old Graveyard Gets A New Life

Margot Molsberg

Broad Creek Cemetery in Stevensville has stood quietly down a road just off Route 8 since 1652. On Feb. 18, the oldest public graveyard in Maryland will come to life for the first time in 99 years for the funeral of a man whose dying wish was to be buried there.

Erika Roof of Stevensville will grant the wish of her late husband, James Roof, a member of Christ Church on Kent Island who died in 1998, by burying his ashes in the same graveyard that the church’s founders were buried in.

In the next several months, the ashes of two more parishioners who died several years ago will join his.

All three made the requests, having faith that the 400-member congregation could eventually complete a long-awaited restoration of the graveyard.

“It’s a historical site that is part of our legacy to the community,” said the Rev. James Shand, pastor of the church, now farther down Route 8 at 830 Romancake

Continued on page 2

Margot Molsberg is staff writer for The Capital, which has given permission to reprint this article from its Feb. 2 edition

Mark Your Calendar
Kent Island Heritage Society QUARTERLY MEETING
Tuesday, March 12
Kent Island Branch Library
7:00 Refreshments
7:30 Guest Speaker Eric Mills
“Chesapeake Bay and the Civil War”

Continued on page 6
Old Graveyard
Continued from page 1

Road.

The restoration not only protects the graves of the church's founding members, but it also gives all parishioners the opportunity to bury their loved ones in the tranquil setting, protected by a white wooden fence and sheltered by large oak trees.

"We wanted to mend the past with the future," said DeeDee McCracken, a Bloody Point resident who took over the project last year. The congregation has paved the dirt road that leads to the graveyard—and put up a formal sign announcing the historic graveyard's existence.

"Now we are getting visitors who had heard about the graveyard but didn't know where to find it," Mrs. McCracken said.

The members, with the help of Boy Scout Troop 1631 of Stevensville, have collected $9,000 in donations from the congregation and set up a memorial garden where a majority of the graves are.

They have also begun plotting the remainder of the unused land at the 4-acre cemetery.

"It's neat to be able to offer the congregation a nice quiet place that is historically significant," said Joe Thompson, who has been watching over the graveyard for more than two decades. He decided in 1985 to protect the remaining headstones from further damage by vandals by storing them in his garage.

But church members aren't even close to being done with their work. They are still trying to find out who is buried there.

With county officials and state archaeologist Richard Irvine backing them, the parishioners have asked for a $50,000 grant from the Maryland Historical Trust and a $6,000 grant from St. Margaret's Church in St. Margaret's to search the property with radar and eventually do an archaeological dig.

"Our main goal is to preserve any artifacts we find," Mrs. McCracken said.

In the meantime, parishioners are seeking any records that mention the church, such as old newspaper clippings or family Bibles. A church fire in the mid-1800s destroyed many of its records of early Kent Island settlers.

Based on records that survived the fire and the few remaining headstones, the congregation knows of only 14 people who are definitely buried there. They include several infants and Robert Wilson, who died in 1746 at age 47—making him the oldest known grave.

Christ Church, originally called Christ Episcopal Church, was built on the first settlement established on Kent Island by William Claiborne in 1631. It is the oldest continuous Christian congregation in the state.

In 1652, the church moved to Broad Creek Cemetery. In it, Innkeeper Dennis Shakan—who claims not to believe in ghosts—nevertheless hastens to clarify that this ghost is "something of a lady's man," more like Casper than the malevolent Steven King variety.

Shakan attributes only playful events—lights that won't stay off, a TV that won't stay on, doors that won't stay closed, banging noises, disembodied footsteps, the pungent aroma of pipe tobacco—to the ghost of Alexander Thompson, who, in his more corporeal times, married three times but never had any children.

This "would come as a surprise to his eight children," again rejoins the indefatigable Jean Lee Earleckson.

"Surely the success of the Inn does not need grossly inaccurate stories upon which to base its reputation and to attract guests."

The Earlecksons were so pleased with the Inn's restoration, which had fallen into a state of disrepair, that they donated copies of family documentation and research they had compiled over the past 30 years to the new owners. They also contributed their own photo of Alexander Williamson Thompson, for whom Thompson Creek is named, which now hangs in the lobby of the Inn.

But they are distressed that the memory of their revered ancestor is tarnished for what they believe is crass commercialism.
GREETINGS FROM KIRWAN HOUSE

Greg Nizza
Kirwan House Caretaker

Things are proceeding nicely here at historic Kirwan House in Chester. I just finished packing away the decorations from the Christmas season, which saw fresh new decorations brightening up the Kirwan House both inside and out.

Evergreen bunting was hung outside on the fence. Candlelight decorations accented with red bows were in the windows. Greens were hung over pictures and doorways in the Victorian tradition. A theme of angels and cherubs decorated the rooms.

I wasn’t able to follow Catherine Kirwan’s tradition of placing a stuffed Santa on the front porch swing, but we’ll work on that for next year.

The Christmas decorations were a nice way to celebrate a very productive year of restoration work at Kirwan House. The year 2001 saw many significant projects completed.

Major projects include replacement of roofs on the main house and the workshop. A complete tear off of all old asphalt and cedar shake shingles was done down to the original rafters. All new plywood was laid and flashing replaced. The new roof is a 30-year architectural shingle in a weathered wood look. Kudos to Billy Denny for coordinating with the roofers on this huge project.

Another major project completed was removal of the old, outdated oil burner and installation of a new high-efficiency furnace.

Also, as you may have read in the summer issue, The Kent Island Garden Club, with help from Eagle Scout Steve Rafter, completed a significant overhaul of part of the gardens. New landscaping beds now complement a new brick pathway to a large new white arbor, which many of you may have noticed out back.

Continued on page 4

Caretaker Gregory Nizza, who also is a KIHS director, will provide a regular update of progress on this ambitious project.

Certificates of Appreciation in recognition of their contributions to the Society during 2001 were presented at the Annual Meeting on December 8 to:
(left to right) Myrtle Bruscup, William Denny III, Janet Denny, Florence Dunn, Fran Taylor, Willard Thomas, Diana Bonner, John Bonner, Eva Thompson, Ellen Klages, Caryn Trinkley, Gil Dunn and Audrey Hawkins.
Kirwan House Update
Continued from page 3

Interior work in 2001 included the continuing cleaning and restoration of several main downstairs rooms. The dining room has now been restored and painted in a soft Victorian pink. The downstairs bathroom was repainted. The front living room, part of the original 1870s house, was finished in 2001 and painted a pastel Victorian aloe green.

The original plaster ceiling medallion has also been accented. All trim work throughout the house is being finished in pearl white. In addition, in 2001 a new security system was installed.

Current work at Kirwan House includes stripping of old, peeling wallpaper in the two original upstairs bedrooms and the upstairs foyer. I anticipate completing this project in March.

Once these rooms are readied, a professional refinisher specializing in historic homes will refinish all the old pine floors in the original part of the house, including the staircase. I'm looking forward to completion of this step, which will really brighten up the house and make it glow with the warmth of its original charm.

When the floors are finished and have cured, plans are in place to return the original furnishings, currently in a warehouse in Delaware, to the house. At this point the true feeling and character of the old Kirwan family will really begin to emerge.

Once the furniture is back, our attention in late spring and summer will turn to restoration of the historic Kirwan store to its original condition. Much cleaning and sorting has been done, but much more remains.

The washer and dryer will be relocated. A partition will be constructed to conceal the new furnace. When restoration and repainting is completed, the original furnishings restocked with the original merchandise will transform the store's ambiance to the way it was when it was a bustling center of commerce in the early 1900s.

The sense of the past continues to delight me. Just the other day I came across Catherine Kirwan's 1937 Washington College yearbook, The Pagasus. Here's an excerpt:

Mary Catherine Kirwan, Chester, Md. “Caki” is that gay, cheerful person who has had the necessary “stick-to-itness” to get her degree after several spells of severe illness. She is also one of those delightful hostesses, who help uphold the Eastern Shore hospitality tradition. With her carefree, agreeable, sympathetic nature it is a pleasure to chat with her. Possessing a beautiful voice, she has for several years been a great help to both the women's chorus and the now extinct chapel choir. Always she has pursued a college education—we think she has gotten it.

2002 Meeting Schedule

General Meetings
Kent Island Branch Library
Refreshments 7:00 p.m.
Program 7:30 p.m.
Tuesday, March 12
Tuesday, June 11
Tuesday, September 10

Annual Meeting
Kent Island Yacht Club
Christmas Dinner 6:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 14

New Pamphlets

- The new Queen Anne's County Visitor's Guide for 2002 is a 52-page, 4-color comprehensive guide to attractions, recreation, dining and accommodations in the county. It has been made even more helpful by the addition of an 8-page year-out Calendar of Events and Festivals. It also has a handy map with points of interest clearly marked.

Our Heritage Society's historical sites are prominently featured, along with a photo of the Old Stevensville Post Office. The Calendar section promotes Kent Island Day.

Anyone who has had to entertain house guests for a period of time will appreciate what a valuable resource this booklet can be.

You can pick up a copy at the Chesapeake Exploration Center at Kent Narrows, Kent Island Branch Library, Kent Island Federation of Art, Kent Manor Inn, Hemingway's Restaurant and Narrows hotels. Or you can request a copy by telephone (410-604-2100), by fax (410-604-2101) or by e-mail (tourism@qac.org).

- The new pamphlet enclosed with this issue is designed to promote interest in the Society's activities and the rich history of Kent Island. It will be available to visitors at the Chesapeake Exploration Center.

- In preparation is an 11x17-inch trifold pamphlet with a readable-size map to promote a walking tour of Historic Stevensville. Twenty-four structures of historic significance are described. It will be published in time for Kent Island Day.
Kent Island Days Becomes Kent Island Day

Members should take note that Kent Island Days will become a one-day event, beginning this year. It is scheduled for Saturday, May 18, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. In the event of rain, it will be held the following day. Mark your calendars now so you don’t forget.

As always, this popular community-oriented event will feature a variety of entertainment, children’s activities and food. Artisans, crafters and other vendors will demonstrate their skills and display their wares for sale. A vendor application is enclosed. Please pass it along to someone whom you think might be interested.

A new activity added to this year’s celebration is a tour of 24 sites of interest in Historic Old Stevensville. Originally planned as a walking tour, President Nancy Cook is working on a docent-guided mobile alternative.

Know Your Board

Wayne Morris is a native of Maryland. He grew up in Carroll County, but, while he was studying chemical engineering, family ties increasingly lured him to Kent Island to relax, crab and spend time with family.

His career took him away from Maryland to Illinois, West Virginia and New York, earning an MBA along the way.

Despite the distances, he, his wife, Pat, and children, Sean, Ian and Jaclyn, visited Kent Island regularly.

They bought property on Crab Alley Creek adjacent to the Kirwan Farm. They now live in a house they built only a few miles from the house his great grandfather built almost 100 years ago.

Francis K. “Butch” Collier grew up in Grasonville and graduated from Stevensville High School. He was a rural carrier for the U.S. Postal Service, retiring after 35 years.

He is a trustee of the Kent Island United Methodist Church. He and his wife, Linda, are very active in the Stevensville High School Alumni Association.

Butch’s hobby is restoring/customizing old cars. He says he “always had an interesting vehicle in some stage of completion.”

He has one child, two step-children and three grandchildren. He enjoys traveling, boating and entertaining friends.

“I accepted a position on the board,” he explains, “because I am interested in preserving the character of Kent Island.”

Paul W. Wilderson III joined KIHS when he moved to Kent Island in 1986. He served on its board 10 years ago, organized the parade for Kent Island Days for two years, and oversaw the society’s archaeological survey of Kent Island.

His wife, Marilyn, who passed away in 2000, served as recording secretary for a number of years.

Paul is an historian, holding a Ph.D. in early American history from the University of New Hampshire. He is executive editor at the Naval Institute Press, a book publisher in Annapolis.

He is author of a biography of John Wentworth, the last royal governor of New Hampshire and co-author of a history of movie actors who served in the U.S. Army and Air Force.

Before coming to Maryland, he and his wife lived in Colorado, New Hampshire and Nebraska.

TREASURERS REPORT, 2001
Audrey B. Hawkins, Treasurer

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| DISBURSEMENTS     |            |
| Merchandise for resale | 920.04    |
| Printing/office sup. | 1,577.78  |
| Mailing           | 979.40     |
| Kent Island Days  | 4,503.04   |
| Annual meeting    | 2,290.16   |
| CPA accounting services | 1,500.00  |
| Miscellaneous     | 3,630.70   |
| Old Post Office maint. | 4,000.17 |
| Cray House expenses | 12,994.01 |
| Cray Hse/Depot maint. | 1,761.11 |
| Kirwan House      |            |
| Maintenance       | 33,616.95  |
| Furn. storage     | 2,856.70 36,473.65 |
| Total Disbursements | $68,262.06 |

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President’s Message
Continued from page 1

- To continue to record audio-visual histories of persons involved with Kent Island’s history.
- To continue to restore the Kirwan House with the original store opened as a mini-museum.
- To continue the annual Kent Island Day on May 18 (rain date May 19).
- To involve more persons in the Society’s events and activities (a membership brochure and a walking tour of Old Stevensville brochure will be available at month’s end to aid in this resolution).
- To establish a docent program.
- To continue to discover, identify, restore and preserve the heritage of Kent Island.

As always, the Society is in need of volunteers for our various projects. Won’t you please call me at 410-758-2802 and volunteer to help?

Genealogy Records

Myrtle Brucup

Five volumes of marriages and obituaries covering 1881 through 1892, and four volumes of obits only from 1926 through 1933, are recent additions to our growing collection of genealogy records that we maintain at the Kent Island Branch Library.

These valuable resources provide names, dates of birth and death, places of burial, names of spouses, children and sometimes parents and siblings.

I met with Mr. and Mrs. Benson, who are researching the Shep family. Our reading room books provided quite a bit of information for them. Mr. Benson’s ancestors came over with Claiborne and were quite prominent on the Island.

I also met with Mr. Carter McCall, who resides in Cove Creek. He brought a large volume (no. 2 of 4) that provided a history of the Pearsall branch of his family. This ancestor came with Claiborne but never settled here. Evidently he was a trader of tobacco, etc. and went back and forth between England and the colonies. There were various mentions of Kent Island throughout this volume.

Mary White and I spent time at the library photo copying material she had accumulated that will be useful in our files.

Our files always need some going over. Your help would be greatly appreciated. Just call me at 410-643-5506.

Welcome to New Members

David Bonner
Stevensville
Fred & Patricia F. Chew
Stevensville
James Greg
Chester
Dr. & Mrs. William Kirwan
Chester
Jo Anne Wilcox
Stevensville

New Life Member
Gene M. Ransom III
Grasonville

Honorary Life Member
Mrs. Alfred White
Stevensville

[Accidentally omitted from list published last issue.]

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 loss or damage from any article. Statements attributed to individuals do not necessarily reflect official policy of the K.I.S. Send correspondence regarding newsletter to Editor, 334 Columbus Lane, Stevensville, MD 21666. [e-mail: jbonner@island.net]

In Memoriam

Roger W. Eisinger
Mary A. Larrimore
Mrs. Thomas O. Hoxter

The Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc.
Post Office Box No. 321
Stevensville, Maryland 21666

Address Service Requested

MR. AND MRS. ROLAND BRUCUP
1415 QUEEN ANNES DRIVE
CHESTER, MD 21619