



The RECORD



Volume 100, No. 1

A Publication of the Historical Society of Charles County, Inc.

January 2006

Kaye O'Kelley, President

Jackie Zilliox, Editor

January 2006 Meeting Notice

Saturday, January 21, 2006 – 2:00 p.m.

La Plata United Methodist Church

Speaker: Mary Kathryn McIntosh

A Brief History of Tobacco Growing in the New World



The next General Meeting of the Charles County Historical Society will be at 2:00 p.m. Saturday, January 21, 2006, at the La Plata United Methodist Church, on Route 6 across from Archbishop Neale School. Our speaker will be Mary Kathryn McIntosh who will give "A Brief History of Tobacco Growing in the New World." This program will discuss the significance of tobacco on the early colonies in Maryland and Virginia and the economic impact of tobacco both then and in the next century. Find out about Mr. Bonsack, inventor extraordinaire! Tobacco has moved into a new phase in American farming with the government buyout programs. It is appropriate to recognize its contribution to our past. Coffee and cookies will be provided. No admission for this meeting.

On Saturday May 20, 2006, we will meet at Linden, on Mitchell Road (between Hawthorne Drive and College of Southern Maryland) for a tour of the home (on the National Register of Historic Places and dates back to 1783). Period Costumed Docents will give tour before dinner. Following dinner, there will be a riding demonstration by the Maryland Light Dragoons. This is a reenactment

group which depicts the actual Maryland regiment during the War of 1812. The time (probably late afternoon) and cost will be in the next newsletter.

The October business meeting and activity is scheduled for Saturday, October 21, 2006. Location and program will be available in the next newsletter and at the May meeting.

If any member has a suggestion for future meeting locations and/or activities, please contact :

Suzanne Carr
301-645-5203
smcarr@verizon.net

UPCOMING EVENTS

Reserve These Dates on Your Calendar!

General Meeting Sat., Jan. 21

Meeting Sat., May 20

Business Meeting Sat., Oct. 21

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AND
COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

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Mount Aventine At Chapman Fores

By Jackie Zilliox – 2005



In 1750 Nathaniel Chapman acquired acreage along the Maryland shore of the Potomac River and built a ten-room house. The 580 acre tract was originally known as “Grimes Ditch” which had been granted by the third Lord Baltimore, Charles Calvert, to Luke Gardiner of St. Mary’s County. Prior to that it was part of an Indian reservation called “Pomonkey Indian Land” until 1697. So who was this Nathaniel Chapman?

The Chapman family came from England in 1610. They settled in Northern Virginia and became good friends with the Mason, Washington, and Fairfax families. Nathaniel Chapman was an “iron master” and general manager for the English owned Principio Iron Works that produced pig iron that was shipped back to England. He worked with George Washington’s father, Augustine, at the iron furnace situated on land Washington owned on Accokeek Creek, six miles north of Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Nathaniel was a founding member of the “Ohio Company of Virginia” which formed in 1747 to develop land west of the Alleghenies. He was its first treasurer. He was also a member of the Chapman Company, which was instrumental in the founding of Alexandria as a seaport for the export of products they expected to market from the Company explorations.

Elmer Biles, Chapman Forest Foundation Historian, tells me, “Initially Nathaniel built a ten-room home near the water’s edge, but it was damaged by fire prior to 1840. When Nathaniel’s great-grandson Pearson Chapman inherited the property he built the antebellum house that you see here today. The main section was built in 1840 and expanded in 1860.”

“The view from the back porch offers a great panoramic vantage of the Potomac River. With binoculars one can see the tips of the Masonic Temple in Virginia and the top of the Washington Monument in the District of Columbia,” says Bonnie Bick, President of the Chapman Forest Foundation.

Mount Aventine, (there is no documentation as to when or how the home was named), is a three story mid-nineteenth century Greek Revival styled house. The largest and central section is made of brick. When you open the front door you enter a wide breezeway with a set of rooms to the left, the library and dining room. And to the right, the addition of 1860, is a large living room with two fireplaces and deep set six over six windows. At the back of the breezeway is a set of

doors that, when open, allows a cool breeze to pass through the house.

“The small section to the left, or west wing, was once free-standing. It predates the main house and is made of stone, probably built some time in the eighteenth century,” Bonnie says. “To the right is a two-bay brick garage added in the twentieth century. It is now used for a visitor center for groups that come to visit.”

The Chapman family owned the property until 1914. In 1998 the State of Maryland, with the help of private conservation funds, purchased over 2,250 acres known as Chapman Forest.

The park’s focus is to preserve and educate about the history, the native flora and fauna, and the importance of bio-diversity. Bald eagles fly over the pristine mature trees that provide habitation for nesting. Deer run across the great expanse of lawn down toward the river’s edge. Guided nature walks identify the native plants that thrive here in the many types of habitat.

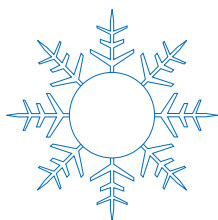
“We have a globally rare environment in one of the finest examples of a coastal-plain shell-marl ravine forest,” Bonnie says. “It’s a combination of

shells that have mixed with marl, a gray clay. Together they create a unique eco-system. Therefore the vegetation is rare and endangered. We also have an area of old-growth forest with an impressive variety of oaks and one of the few places in Maryland to see the critically endangered Glade Fern.”

Chapman Forest joins the tidal-freshwater Potomac River on its north; the area designated Chapman State Park. Mattawoman Creek is on its south, designated Glendenning Natural Environment Area. There are over eight miles of pristine streams; some still used by the depleted spawning Blueback Herring and Alewife. Many paths will lead the nature lover through untouched woodlands and meadows. The walk-in gate is open everyday until dusk. Open houses are held once a month from spring to late fall and include guided walks, educational programs and guest speakers.

“Come and be rejuvenated by the immense quiet and natural beauty of our park,” says Roberta Dorsch, Volunteer Coordinator for Maryland State Parks.

*For more information go to:
www.chapmanforest.org*



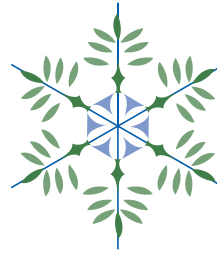
*May the New
Year find you
safe, happy, and
warm!*

Membership

Renewal notices will be sent to members in January. Please remit your money by the deadline so the Historical Society can avoid incurring the expenses of reminder notices and additional postage. It is helpful if members include any change in name, address, or phone number on the return envelope so we may keep our database current. Lifetime members may send any changes to:

Michael Ruth, Chairperson
P.O. Box 2806
La Plata, MD 20646

You may also call him at 301-934-5717.



Inclement Weather

Please call one of the officers or Board members for information regarding inclement weather.

EDITOR'S NOTE

If you would like future newsletters sent to you by e-mail, please send us your e-mail address. Articles of historic interest on Southern Maryland are requested for possible publication in future issues of *The Record*. Please send your typewritten manuscripts to: The Historical Society of Charles County, Publications, *The Record*, P.O. Box 2806, La Plata, Maryland 20646.