

THE RECORD



Volume 117, No. 3

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

October 2022

Ronald G. Brown, President

Mary Ann Scott, Editor

Fall Dinner Meeting

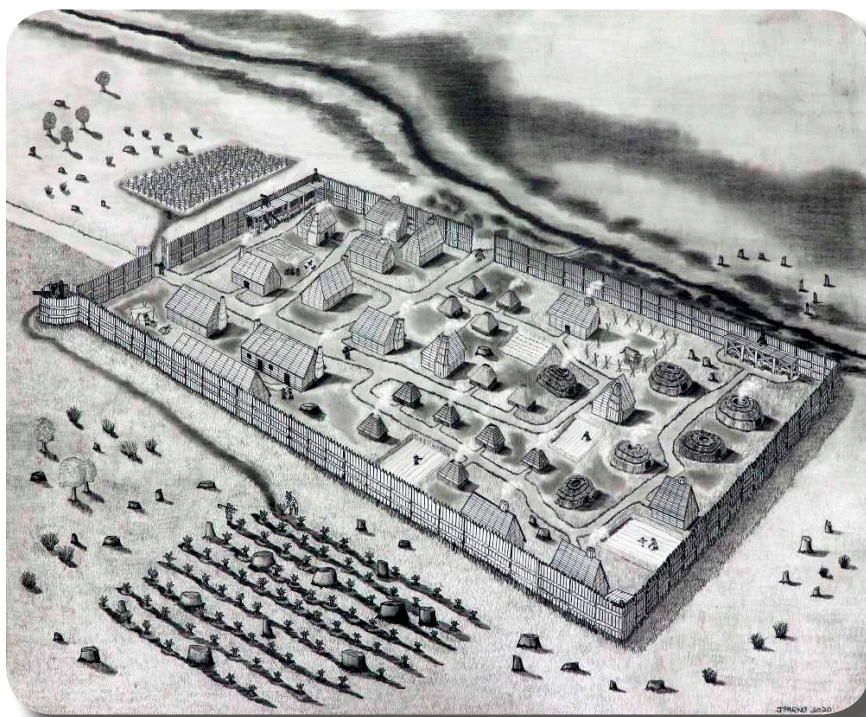
Saturday, October 29, 2022 – 5:00 pm

Dr. Travis G. Parno

*Director of Research and Collections at Historic St. Mary's City
will present*

*Unearthing
St. Mary's Fort,
The Founding Site
of the Maryland Colony*

Maryland Veterans Museum
11000 Crain Highway
Newburg, MD



Menu:

*Hickory Smoked Chicken • Fried Catfish • Southern Fried Okra
Sweet Potato Souffle • Fire-Grilled Vegetable Medley • Sweet Corn Muffins • Banana Pudding*
\$28.00 per person

*Please r.s.v.p. no later than October 20, 2022 to Carol Donohue, 16401 Old Marshall Hall Road ~Accokeek, MD 20607
Please make checks payable to: The Historical Society of Charles County*

School Memories

We would like to hear from you.

Send us the Charles County school(s) you attended and a memory about your time there.

We will feature these memories in upcoming issues of The Record.

Email us at charlescountyhistorical@gmail.com

Hughesville School

By George Howard Post

The Hughesville School opened in 1927 and for the first twenty years of its life included all grades from 1 through 12. My mother started there in 1927, (after two years in the 2-room school at Benedict), and graduated from Hughesville High School in 1937. By the time I started there in 1955 the school only went through the ninth grade, with students then going on to La Plata, and I chose to go to La Plata. I was one of only four in my class (of about thirty) to do this. The rest stayed at Hughesville for their ninth year.



The school was located on the south side of Hughesville, just off of Route 5, on what is still today called Hughesville School Road. It was closed in 1967, then the T.C. Martin School opened in Bryantown, and the building was torn down. Today the site is the location of two baseball fields.

The school did not face the road (Route 5). This was probably because of the need to accommodate the school, playgrounds for the lower grades, athletic fields for the upper grades and turn-around space for the busses, all on a somewhat limited parcel of land.

When the school bus turned off of Route 5 onto Hughesville School Road, it went up a short (but steep) hill, and then turned left onto a long oval, which ran along the elementary side of the school. Busses used this oval to turn around when they were heading out from the school. Each Spring, the elementary classes would hold their May Day festivities on the lawn inside the oval, with each class giving a presentation.

Exiting the bus, students would walk along the elementary side of the school, turn right and go along the north-facing “front” of the school, then turn right again, go up the steps and in the front door. The school was painted a bright white (over stucco, I believe). There were shrubby plants along the walls. There was an archway over the entrance and the front door was recessed slightly inside the archway.

When you stepped inside the door there was a small space, probably the foyer. To the left of the foyer was a school secretary’s office and the principal’s office. (Fortunately, I

was never sent to the principal’s office during my eight years at the school. One fifth-grade recess I decided to see if it was really true that you could use your glasses to focus sunlight and start a fire, but the principal never heard of that experiment.) To the right of the foyer was the school store where you could buy school supplies and penny candy such as Mary Janes. (I wonder today how all that sugar may have affected the student’s classroom performance and behavior, but no one seemed to make that connection back then.)

If you walked straight ahead through the foyer you stepped into a large, square, high-ceiling room which served as our auditorium and then, when the cafeteria was installed, as our lunch room. The walls were painted a light green and there were linoleum tiles on the floor. Straight ahead was an elevated stage with a dark red curtain and steps on either side by which you could access the stage.

The school was a U-shaped structure. When it was first built, grades one through six ran along the west side of the building and grades seven through twelve ran along the east side of the building. The first two classrooms on each side opened onto the auditorium and the remaining classrooms opened onto a long hallway in each wing of the school.

After the school was cut back from twelve grades to nine grades, the first two classrooms on the “Junior High” side of the building, the ones which opened onto the auditorium, were re-purposed. The first room became the library and the second room became the kitchen.

I do not remember exactly which year school lunches were introduced, but I believe that it was either second grade or third grade. Before that everyone brought their lunch from home, either in a paper bag or a lunch box. (I had a Roy Rogers lunch box.)

You ate your lunch at your desk. Everyone had a piece of oilcloth, (a waterproof fabric largely unknown today), which they kept rolled up in their desk. At lunch time you would get out your oilcloth and unroll it out over the top of your desk, so that if you spilled anything it would not get the desk sticky. At the end of lunch, you would roll up the oilcloth again and put it away until the next day.

When the kitchen was installed, our lunch routine changed. Each morning, after attendance and the pledge of allegiance, the teacher would take the “lunch count” and the “milk count”—how many students were buying lunch and how many were buying only milk. (I always bought lunch.) Lunch was 30 cents and milk was 2 cents. Later this was changed to 35 cents and 3 cents. The teacher would then collect the money and send a

School Memories, continued on page 3

student to the cafeteria with the money and the count. This told the cafeteria ladies how many lunches they needed to prepare. A few minutes later the student would come back with the lunch tokens and the milk tokens.

The lunch tokens and milk tokens were plastic. Milk tokens were about one inch square, green, and had "Milk" printed on them. Lunch tokens were slightly larger, round with a scalloped edge, red, and had "Lunch" printed on them. Everyone got their token and kept it until lunch time. (Some students would chew on their tokens. I never saw anyone do this, but it was obvious because some tokens were chewed up pretty badly. I don't know if the tokens were ever washed or sanitized.)

At lunch time you would walk in the door of the kitchen, give your token to the cafeteria lady, turn left and pick up your tray and utensils. A stainless-steel serving line ran along the length of the room and was open to the food-preparation area behind it. You would get your food and your milk and then exit into the auditorium/lunch room area where the tables were. The tables had metal frames with built-in seats and bright yellow formica tops. The tables folded up and had wheels on the bottom so that they could be rolled away when not in use.

Not everyone bought lunch. There were a considerable number of poor families who could not afford thirty cents a day. I don't know how it was handled, but everyone got milk. (My guess is that there was some sort of government program to provide poor children with milk.) I remember that there was one girl in our class who came from a large family and who never bought lunch. Every day, after she had finished her sandwich, she would neatly fold up the wax paper that the sandwich had been in and put it back into the paper lunch bag to take home. She used the same wax paper and the same paper bag day after day. Her family was poor, but she was always neatly dressed and never complained. I saw her, years later, at the 20th high school reunion and she was doing very well. I didn't say anything, but I was quietly happy for her that she had prospered.

The classrooms were large and well-lit. Long rows of fluorescent lights hung down from the ceiling and the outside wall was almost entirely made up of huge, double-hung windows. In warm weather, we would have the windows open and the classroom door open and let the breeze come through. In cold weather radiators kept us warm. (We had better heat at school than at the house where I lived.) The boiler for the radiators was located in the basement, under the stage.

The classroom door was at the back of the room (except in sixth grade). At the front of the room was a black slate chalkboard. In first grade there was an alphabet running across the top of the chalkboard. In third grade there was a similar alphabet but it was in cursive, since it was in third grade that we learned to write in cursive. Above the chalkboard, in the center of the wall, was a picture of George Washington. At the top right corner of the chalkboard there was a flag and every morning we would face the flag and say the Pledge of Allegiance. (In Junior

High there was one teacher who also made us say the Lord's Prayer after the pledge, but none of the other teachers made us do this.)

The recess play area for the elementary grades was on the south side of the building. The area for grades 1 through 3 was "down the hill" and had swings and see-saws to play on in addition to an open area in which we could run around, play tag, etc. I remember that the swings and see-saws were rather primitive by today's standards. The see-saw was just a long piece of lumber which was secured at a center point. The play area for grades 4 through 6 was "up the hill" and had a merry-go-round, a "jungle gym" to climb on and "monkey bars" to swing from.

On the south side of the play area there was woods. The teachers always told us not to go into the woods, but we always did anyway. To a kid that age the woods were irresistible. You just had to make sure that you listened for the bell that would ring to signal that recess was over. If you didn't hear the bell and didn't come in on time, you would get in trouble. (When I was in Junior High, they moved the elementary play area to the north side of the building—getting rid of the problem of the enticing woods.)

In Junior High we used the field to the east of the school for Phys Ed. We played soccer in the fall and baseball in the spring. I was never much good at either of these games.

Between the school and the athletic fields there was the "Shop" building. All the boys took Woodshop and all the girls took Home Economics. You didn't get a choice. The gender roles were set. The Woodshop building was not torn down when the school was torn down. It is still intact today next to the baseball fields.

I started first grade in September of 1955. We did not have Kindergarten or any type of preschool back then. This was the first time that I had been away from home with anyone other than my family. It was a totally new experience.

We had an unusual situation in first grade. Our first-grade teacher, Miss Edna Dyson, had been at Hughesville School since it opened in 1927 and, according to what I was told by another student, she had reached the mandatory retirement age for teachers and was being forced to retire. She didn't want to go, my source said, but was being forced out.

I remember Miss Dyson as being very stern. She seemed to always be in a bad mood and had little patience with the children. She would hit your knuckles with a ruler if you made a mistake. I don't know if she was always like this or if it was because she was being forced out of her job.

At the back of the classroom there was a "reading table" where one group of students would read while the rest of the class worked on an assignment at their desks. I remember one day we were back at the reading table and one boy couldn't read what Miss Dyson wanted him to read. She got angry and said, "You're going to sit here at recess until you read that." I remember the hurt, wounded look on the boy's face, and I felt so sorry for him. And she did keep him in at recess.

We had Miss Dyson for the first part of the year—until Christmas—and when we came back to school in the new year we had a new teacher, Miss Ryon. When Miss Ryon arrived, everything changed.

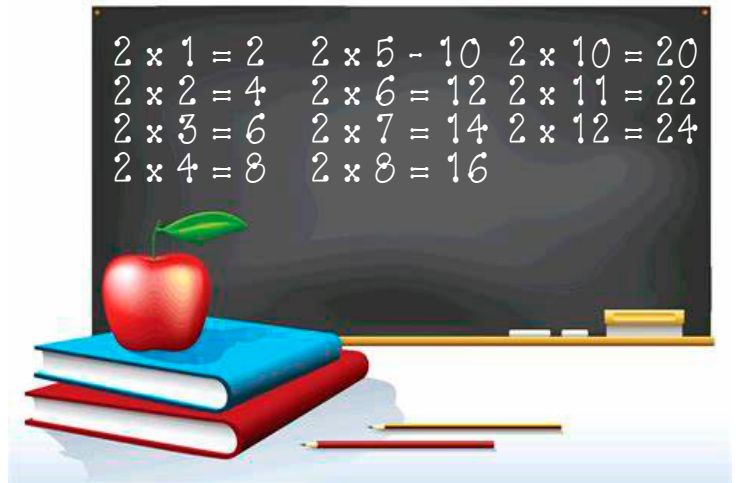
Miss Ryon was young—fresh out of college—and we were her first class. The mood in the classroom was completely different. In addition to doing our basic lessons, she had us doing projects and art and creative things. We had one lesson about the different plants and animals that lived in the sea. After the textbook part of the lesson Miss Ryon rolled out a large piece of paper on the floor and each student drew one of the plants or animals that we had in the lesson book and then colored it in. I drew a coral. It was fun. We all liked Miss Ryon. The second half of first grade was much better than the first half.

Our second-grade teacher was Mrs. Wilkerson. The thing that I remember most about Mrs. Wilkerson's class is that we did a lot of arts and crafts projects to reinforce our lessons. In November, for example, we learned about the Pilgrims and the First Thanksgiving. And then we made a diorama of the First Thanksgiving that covered the entire top of the long bookcase that went across the back of the room. We made little Pilgrim houses and Indian teepees, and paper figures of the Pilgrims and Indians themselves. We made trees for the woods in the background. We made a little table and paper cut-outs of turkeys and deer for the table and everything for the Thanksgiving scene. In December we learned about Christmas customs in other lands and made lots of decorations. In Spring, we made lots of paper flowers—tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, etc.—and the room looked like a flower garden. It was great.

Mrs. Wilkerson kept her art supplies in a cabinet in the cloakroom and the cabinet had a squeaky hinge. Hearing the squeaky hinge was the big tip-off. You would be doing an assignment at your desk and then you would hear from the back of the room "S-Q-U-E-E-A-K" and immediately you would think: "Oh boy—she's going into the art cabinet! We're going to do something fun!" I have lots of good memories of Mrs. Wilkerson and second grade.

Third grade was a lot more "work" and a lot less "fun" than second grade. Our teacher was Mrs. Roberts. Like Miss Dyson, Mrs. Roberts had been at the school since it opened in 1927, (although she was not married when she first started, my mother told me). She did not hit your knuckles with a ruler as Miss Dyson did. She was nice—but the way she taught was old-fashioned. For example, in third grade we learned our multiplication tables—and we learned them by rote. By repetition. We said them out loud, over and over again until they stuck in your brain whether you wanted them to be there or not. We learned them—but it was a lot of work and no fun.

It was the same way with cursive writing—what they used to call "penmanship." Third grade was where we learned cursive, and Mrs. Roberts taught us cursive writing using the "Palmer Method"—a method which dated to the previous century. At our desks we practiced making smooth-flowing swoops and curls—line after line and page after page of smooth-flowing



swoops and curls. And then we learned how to make our letters using these swoops and curls, so that everything flowed together smoothly and beautifully. Once again it was rote—mind-numbing rote—and no fun. As a person, Mrs. Roberts was nice, but the main thing I remember about her class was the rote learning. It was sheer drudgery.

Aside from the rote learning, one other thing sticks in my mind from third grade. Right after Christmas, Mrs. Roberts told us that we could bring in something that we had gotten for Christmas and use it for "Show and Tell." I brought in an airplane that I had gotten. Another boy brought in a little train—and I recognized it. I said, "Mrs. Roberts, that's the same thing that Ray brought in last year," and no sooner were the words out of my mouth than I realized what had happened. Ray hadn't gotten any toys for Christmas. Ray looked embarrassed, but didn't say anything. I felt terrible—wishing that there was some way that I could take back my words, but of course there wasn't. The incident made a big impression on me. It was the first time that I realized that not all children were as fortunate as I was. I always got new toys (and clothes) for Christmas. Some children didn't. It made me realize that I was more fortunate in my home situation than some others were, and that I should be sympathetic toward those who are in less fortunate situations. It is a lesson which I never forgot.

My recollection of fourth grade is rather strange. I remember one incident with great clarity and detail, but next to nothing about what went on throughout the rest of the school year. Our teacher was Mrs. Lucille Dyson—the second of three Dyson teachers in the elementary school.

Every year we would have a May Day celebration on the oval lawn in front of the school and each class would put on a presentation. The fourth grade always did the traditional dance around the May Pole. There was a pole, about seven feet tall, with streamers attached to the top and eight students, each with a streamer in hand, would do an intricate dance around the pole, weaving the streamers down the pole as they danced. Then everyone would do the same steps in reverse order until the streamers would be un-woven and everyone was in their

original position. We practiced and practiced until we had the whole dance memorized perfectly.

Then, on the big day, disaster struck. One of the boys who had practiced didn't come to school that day and another boy, who had never practiced the dance had to take his place. The substitute, Louis, was actually doing pretty good until about half-way through when he dropped his streamer and another boy passed in front of him before Louis could pick his streamer up again. The streamers got woven down the pole, but when it was time to un-weave them, the dropped streamer was out of place and the intricate weave became a tangled knot. We were unable to complete the dance, and Mrs. Dyson became very angry with us.



Strange as it may seem, I have virtually no memory of anything else that happened in fourth grade. All I remember is the May Day disaster and Mrs. Dyson being mad at us. What did we do in our classes? I haven't a clue.

In contrast, I have lots of memories of fifth grade. Our teacher, Mrs. Barber, was very nice. She liked music, and made music a regular part of our curriculum. In fifth grade, everyone had to learn to play a recorder. We each had our own recorder. They were small, black plastic instruments and cost fifty cents. She taught the class how to read music and we practiced from music books at our desks. We did not play together; everyone was practicing on their own and it was quite a cacophony. In the Spring we had our "final exam" on the recorders and played in front of the class any song we wanted from the music book. I chose the second-hardest song from the book and didn't make any mistakes. Only one student played the hardest song in the book—so I ended up being the second-best player in the class.

I have lots of other memories of fifth grade as well. Mrs. Barber read us "The Little Lame Prince" and other stories, one chapter at a time. We loved it. Also, in fifth grade we got a television set in the classroom and we would get science lessons via the television. We learned how to take notes during

the science programs. It was all very new and interesting. I remember one of our books called "Heros, Heroines and Holidays" which had lots of stories about famous people and events in our nation's history. Fifth grade was chock-full of new and interesting things.

I also remember one day at recess when I learned a new word. It was the N-word. When I first heard it, I didn't know what the girl was talking about. I was ten years old and had never heard that word before. No one in our house talked like that.

Our sixth-grade teacher was Mrs. Margaret Dyson—the last of the three Dyson teachers in elementary school. Mrs. Dyson liked plants and had planters along the windowsills in her room. My desk was on the first row next to the windows and I liked to follow the progress of everything that was growing in the planter next to me—each new leaf and bud. To this day, I still enjoy watching plants go through their yearly cycle, and I believe it all started with the planter boxes in Mrs. Dyson's room.

I remember reading *Treasure Island* in sixth grade. I don't know if it was the full book or a condensed version, but I greatly enjoyed it. As part of our assignment, we had to write about the book and draw and color pictures illustrating scenes in the book. We then put all this together and made a booklet of our own—one that told about the book which we had read. It was fun.

In my memory, it is difficult to distinguish between seventh and eighth grade because we had the same teachers for both years. Mr. Warfield taught Math and Science. Mrs. Chichester taught English. Our Social Studies teacher, Miss Fortune got married during the Christmas break and came back as Mrs. Marsh. (She hadn't warned us!) Ms. Fortune/Marsh taught the girls Home Ec. and Mr. Carpenter taught the boys Agriculture and Woodshop. The two years all blur together as one Junior High experience.

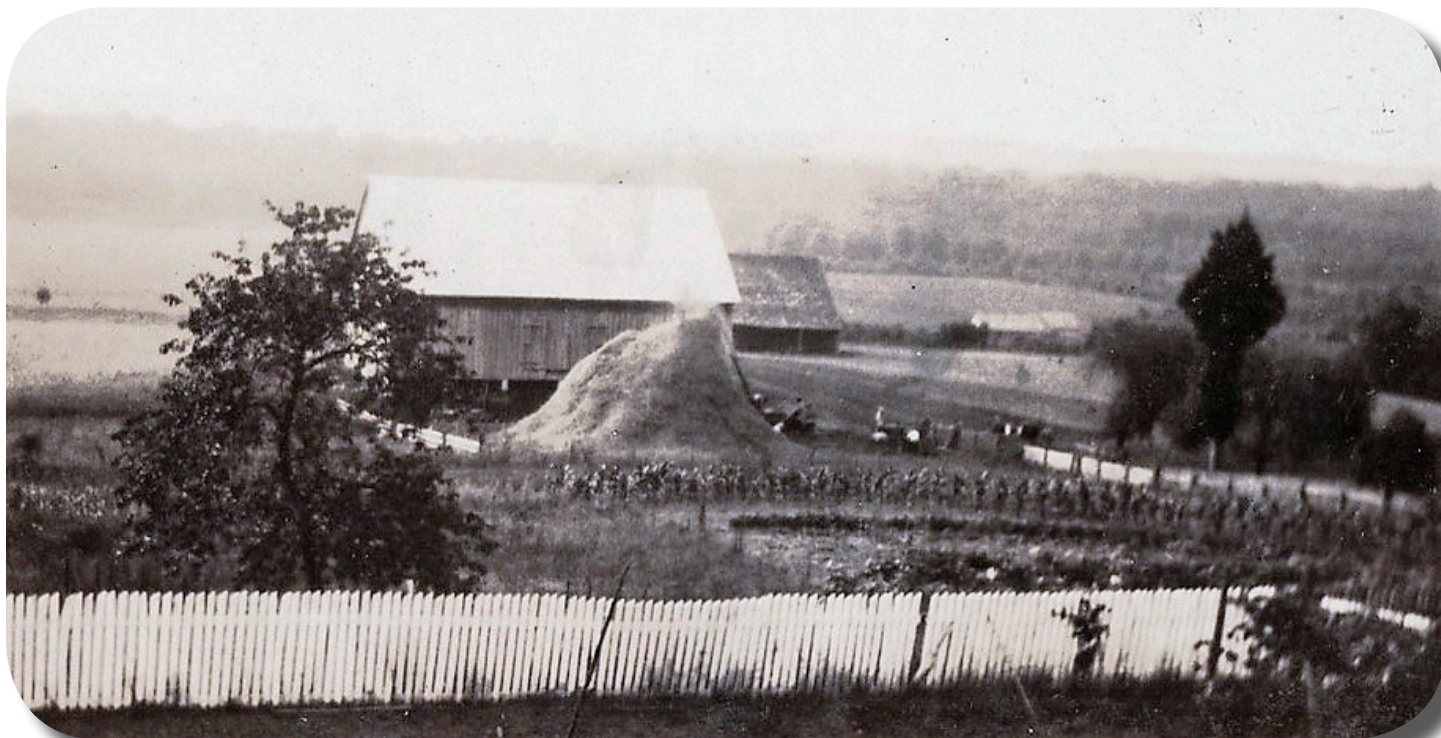
The main thing that struck me is how old-fashioned everything seems compared to today. In Math class we did all our calculations with pencil and paper. Hand-held calculators did not exist. In English class we spent a lot of time diagramming sentences. It was very important, our teacher said, to know our participles and our predicates and where each should go in a sentence. This is not what English teachers teach today. If we wanted information on some subject we went to the library and looked it up in the encyclopedia. Google it? Smartphones and personal computers did not exist. Nor did the verb "google."

But some things stay the same. The first school dance. The first time you had to get your nerve up to ask a girl to a school dance. Your first time getting turned down. I wanted to take Rebecca. I asked her. She said no. She wanted to go with Louis, but he hadn't asked her yet. She told me to ask Valerie. Seventh grade romance. Just as stressful back then as it is today.

Hughesville School no longer exists as a physical structure, but it is still a very real place to all who spent their formative years there. So many wonderful memories!

Threshing at Sunnyside Farm

By Edward B. Edelen, Jr.



This threshing scene dates to around late July, 1921 on Sunnyside Farm near Bryantown. The photo was taken from the home, Sunnyside, looking northwest toward Waldorf. A new cow barn had been built in 1920 for 35 head of Black Angus beef cattle shipped by train from Georgia. The cattle were driven from the train station in Waldorf down the dirt road, now Rt. 5, to Bryantown where they were driven to the farm via an ox-cart road through the Wetherald farm. Only one cow escaped into Zekiah Swamp. Most farms along Rt. 5 would have been fenced along the road.

In this scene, a threshing machine is behind and to the right of the straw stack, blowing straw upwards. Edward G. Edelen has borrowed Eddie Wetherald's threshing machine. Edelen's 1918 IHC 10-20 Titan was used to belt-drive the thresher. The wheat was cut with a binder in July and left to dry in bundles for several weeks. Neighbors would have brought their bundles of wheat to the farm to be threshed resulting in the huge stack of straw blown from the threshing machine. Horses pulling a wagon with wheat bundles can be seen to the right. A circa 1875 tobacco barn is behind and to the right of the cow barn. To the right of it is a hog house on a swamp field. Zekiah Swamp runs from right to left in the woods beyond the meadow fields.

Below the white picket fence in the backyard is a garden at the top of the field. Tobacco is growing in the field below the garden. Whitewashed board fences to contain the cattle can be seen to the left of the straw stack and at far right.

The new barn was a bank barn with a steep road winding up to the rear door. The straw would later be loaded onto an oxcart, and moved to the rear of the barn. Once inside, a trolley system was used to lift the straw from the cart with a mechanical fork, moved to bays at either end of the barn, and released by pulling a rope.





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Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Volman
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Ms. Linda Monroe Williams
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Friendship House Foundation In Memory of

Warren E. Barley
Philip L. Griffith
Eleanor Higdon
Madelyn Griffith Irish
Sue LaHood

Katherine S. W. Mitchell
Kathryn C. Newcomb
Velva Perrygo
Watson Perrygo
Anita Wood

Friendship House Foundation Levels of Giving:

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Friend | \$ 25.00-\$ 99.00 |
| Colonist | \$ 100.00-\$199.00 |
| Patriot | \$ 200.00-\$499.00 |
| Statesman | \$ 500.00-\$999.00 |
| Renaissance | \$1,000.00 + |

To donate, please make checks payable to the Friendship House Foundation, and mail to the Historical Society.

Officers, Board of Directors, and Committee Members

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| Vice-President | Michael J. Mazzeo, Jr. |
| Secretary | Debra R. Scoggins |
| Treasurer | G. Howard Post |

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| W. Preston Williams | 1967-1968 |
| John H. Mitchell. | 1968-1970 |
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| Richard E. Heise, II | 1985-1986 |
| Michael J. Mazzeo, Jr. | 1986-1992 |
| Dr. Lloyd Bowling | 1992-1998 |
| Wayne Winkler | 1998-2004 |
| Kaye O'Kelley | 2004-2008 |
| Joyce B. Candland. | 2008-2012 |
| Mary Pat Berry. | 2012-2016 |

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Genealogy and Research:

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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 publication in future issues of *The Record*. Please send your articles and photographs to: The Historical Society of Charles County, Publications, *The Record*, P.O. Box 2806, La Plata, Maryland 20646.

Friendship House Committees

Foundation

Michael J. Mazzeo, Jr., Chair

Joyce Candland

Alex Cobey

Evelyn Karlsson Merritt

John S. Morris, III

Cellar Museum & Shop

James H. Berry, Jr.

Mary Pat Berry

Ways & Means

Ruby Dyson

Sandra Mitchell

Furnishings

Louise B. Turner



Upcoming Events

- **October 15 & 16, 2022**

Colonial Faire & Fall Festival at Historic Maxwell Hall,
10am to 3pm.

- **Saturday, October 29, 2022**

Historical Society's Fall Dinner Meeting.

- **Saturday, April 29, 2023**

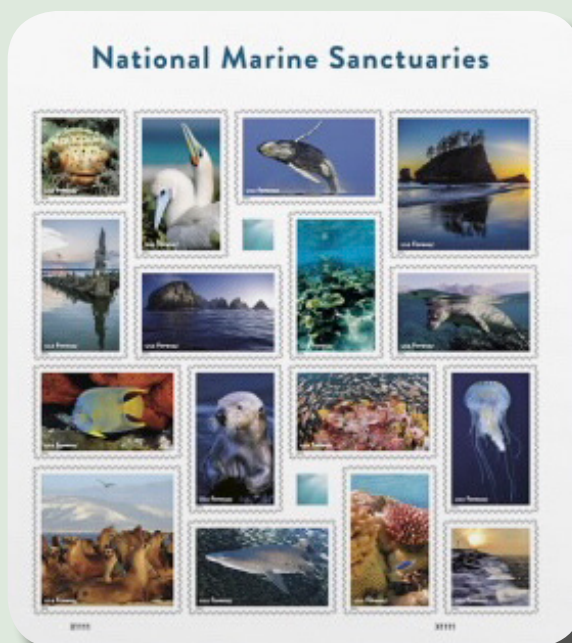
Maryland House & Garden Pilgrimage in Charles County.

- **Saturday, March 25, 2023**

Historical Society's Spring Meeting featuring Peter Turcik,
photographer and designer of the new National Marine
Sanctuaries Stamps, including Mallows Bay.

- **Thursday, May 18, 2023**

Historical Society Spring Trip.



**THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF CHARLES COUNTY, INC.**

P.O. Box 2806 • La Plata, Maryland 20646

www.charlescountyhistorical.org