

THE RECORD



Volume 109, No. 3

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

October 2014

Mary Pat Berry, President

Mary Ann Scott, Editor

Fall Dinner Meeting

Saturday, October 25, 2014 – 6:00 p.m.

Durham Church Hall & Ironsides, Maryland



Re-Creating an 18th Century Carpenter Shop

*Presented by Mr. Rod Cofield, Deputy Director, Development and Museum Programs
Historic London Town & Gardens*

Menu

*Beef Au Jus & Pork Loin & Parsley Potatoes & Green Beans & Carrot Souffle & Sauerkraut
Applesauce & Beets & Rolls & Butter & Ice Tea, Coffee, & Ice Water & Angel Delight*

\$25.00 per person – Please R.s.v.p. to Carol Donahue at
16401 Old Marshall Hall Road, Accokeek, MD 20607 by October 17, 2014

Families of Friendship Exhibit Opens



The new exhibit in the Cellar Museum opened in June with a grand two-weekend event. *The Families of Friendship* exhibit highlights those who owned and have lived on the Friendship House tract from 1657 to the present.



The exhibit consists of 12 panels of documented information and photographs from Nicholas Gwyther, the Dents and the Grays, to the Karlsson and Juhle families, as well as 2 large "pull-up" genealogies of the Dent family and the Gray family.



Last summer the cellar was painted a very bright yellow and trimmed in a dark blue. In the fall committee members began to work diligently on the text for the panels and genealogies: information for the Dent panels was submitted by Anne Boone, for the Gray panels by John Morris, and for the Karlsson and Juhle families by Evie Merritt. Betty de Keyser worked on the Dent genealogy and John Morris on the Gray genealogy. Joyce Candland helped edit all of the panels and genealogies. The information then went to graphic artist John Price for design. John is also the webmaster for our website. After final edits, comments and changes, all panels and pull-ups were produced and made ready by March. A mural of rows of tobacco was painted by members of the theatre department of the College of Southern Maryland and a new tile "brick-like" floor was installed in May. The College of Southern Maryland placed new spot lights in the cellar to highlight the exhibit and a new air system was installed in May as well.



The Friendship House Foundation committee has been planning and working on this exhibit for over a year. Funding for the exhibit was provided through the Southern Maryland Heritage Area Consortium, the Friendship House Foundation, and the generosity of our Historical Society Members.

Descendants Attend Opening of Cellar Exhibit



On Saturday, Mike Mazzeo led the group on a tour of Friendship House. Descendants were particularly interested in the alphabet sampler of 1831, hand stitched by their ancestor Catherine Gray. From there they travelled to historic Durham Church where John Morris explained their connection to the Parish and to Colonel William Dent. A lunch hosted by Board and Foundation member Evie Karlsson Merritt was held at her



beautiful home, Friendship Farm, part of the original Friendship tract. Guests enjoyed greeting each other and exploring their connection to the families of the Friendship. Participants also had the opportunity to visit the original site of Friendship House, now owned by the County as part of Friendship Farm Park.

On Sunday morning, guests attended Durham Church where the communion silver bequeathed by Colonel William

Continued on Page 4

Over 50 descendants of *The Families of Friendship* attended the opening of the Cellar Museum May 31 and June 1.

Beautiful weather prevailed as those descended from the Dent, Gray, and Karlsson families assembled for two days of history and the grand opening of the Cellar Museum Exhibit at Friendship House. Guests, who came from Maine, Illinois, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Delaware, Washington, D.C., Virginia, and Maryland, enjoyed this special reunion and sharing their connection with Friendship House.





Dent and inscribed "*The Gift of William Dent, Esq., to Durham Parish*" was used for this memorable service.

In the afternoon, Board Members joined all the families of Friendship for the dedication of the Cellar Museum. President Mary Pat Berry welcomed everyone and introduced Board Members in attendance. Mike Mazzeo gave a history of the Cellar Museum Project. Joyce Candland introduced those who were descended from the Dent family, John Morris introduced those descended from the Gray family, and Evie Merritt introduced members of the Karlsson family. The following weekend Friendship House and the Cellar Museum was open for Historical Society members and guests. A grand time was had by all.



John Morris confers with Hilda Karlsson Roderick

President's Message

Dear Society Members,

Summer is fading quickly into Fall, especially with the beautiful weather we have been experiencing. This is one for the history books!

What a fantastic Friendship House weekend we had in June. Opening our new cellar exhibit, touring the original Friendship Farm, the marvelous lunch hosted by Evie Merritt are just the highlights! The Cellar Museum's *Families of Friendship Farm* is our new permanent exhibit. I do hope if you haven't seen it, you take any opportunity to do so. Lots of hard work, elbow grease, genealogy exploring, and plain fun went into its creation. To all who had a hand in it, my thanks and congratulations for a wonderful job.

A bit of bittersweet news, our treasurer Robert "Bob" Pender has stepped down. Bob has been a diligent overseer of the Society's finances for years, and I am sad to accept his resignation. I understand his wants to spend more time traveling, so my well wishes for his new adventures. You can rest assured, though, our finances will continue to be well managed, as Howard Post has accepted the position of Treasurer pro tem. Join me in welcoming him aboard.

The County's War of 1812 Bicentennial Celebration took place on August 30th. It was a Grand Success! Our own Nicole Stewart displayed her colonial portraits in Maxwell Hall, she is an amazing artist and has donated a portion of her proceeds to the Society. Howard Post and his new book, *Benedict on the Patuxent*, was also a fixture at the celebration and then on Sunday, Howard conducted a walking tour of Benedict to convey the War of 1812 story. I was on site with the US Daughters of 1812 doing living history about the Keech family, and Mike Mazzeo helped coordinate the La Plata High students who presented the Wedding of 1812. Your society members at work! It is unbelievable how much history lies right here in our backyards! I hope you had a chance to go, it won't come around again for another 200 years!

School has started, the days are cooling, and the County Fair is on the horizon. Our Fall Dinner at Durham Church can't be far away. Please make your reservations and as a special thank you for coming, each family will receive the 2014 Kiwanis ornament that this year features Friendship House! The ornament will be debuted in September and go on sale to the public for \$10.00, we will have additional ones for sale at the dinner if you need to purchase more.

The church is a lovely setting, the meal is always delicious and our speakers very informative. What a great way to spend an evening.

In making history happen,
Mary Pat Berry
Your humble President

Friendship House Foundation

The Friendship House Foundation was established to preserve, refurbish and promote this unique treasure of Charles County. Donations will help to maintain the historical integrity of the house through its furnishings, tours and educational programs, and to honor those who have devoted countless hours of volunteer time in the preservation and promotion of this Maryland Tidewater Home.

Today, Friendship House sits proudly on the campus of the College of Southern Maryland. Please join the Historical Society of Charles County in contributing to the preservation of Friendship House for many generations to come.



Friendship House Foundation Contributors

FRIEND

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Mr. & Mrs. Ernest L. Irish

Friendship House Foundation In Memory of

<i>Warren E. Barley</i>	<i>Katherine S. W. Mitchell</i>
<i>Philip L. Griffith</i>	<i>Kathryn C. Newcomb</i>
<i>Eleanor Higdon</i>	<i>Velva Perrygo</i>
<i>Sue LaHood</i>	<i>Watson Perrygo</i>

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.	

The Families of Friendship

A Gray Connection

Letter from Lottie Dorsett (Charlotte Matilda (Gray) Dorsett) to Rev. Harry Speake Cobey and Tillie (Gray) Cobey

June 20, 1955

Dear Harry & Tillie:

Please accept my deep sympathy in the loss of dear cousin Carrie. She lived to be a goodly age, yet, even though, we hate to see our loved ones pass beyond the veil. Surely enjoyed our correspondence the last few years.

I understand Dr. Milton Cobey has had three operations. Surely hope they prove successful. Marshall told me he had a quite nice home in the county, & often attended Durham Church.

It was sad about Marshall. Haven't heard from any one whether there is a chance of his recovery. Can you tell me?

Norma Brawner drives me to Nanjemoy now & then. It grieves me to see what was once Dad's property in the sad condition today. The school at Cross Roads has improved that neighborhood. Mr. Wright's home, once about to fall, is now an attractive cottage. Mary (Craft) Ward must have made money for she has built many homes renting them to teachers, etc. I surely enjoyed the dinner at Durham last summer & hope to go Aug. 13 this year. They serve delicious meals & plenty of same.

June 1st, I attended a luncheon given by my D. A. R. Chapter at Chaptico. Served deviled crabs, meat, salads, etc. Last Sunday, Mrs. Wm. Walton Brown (Zelda Branch) had Norma & me to a luncheon at Howard Johnson's Restaurant in La Plata. She is leaving the County for good – for Tennessee – & this was a farewell luncheon. She seems fond of me & says she is writing a book & dedicating it to me. Am anxious to see it & feel quite complimented. After our luncheon, Norma took me to Friendship & it was my first visit for many years. I felt I would liked to have stayed longer & reminisced. They have a lovely bathroom at end of front hall, & the room next to parlor (Aunt Fannie used as a guest room) they have fixed as a den. She took me through the house. The shed room next to kitchen has been torn down & the old kitchen next to dining room has another window & modern kitchen furniture, so it was attractive. Mrs. Karlson works here for the Gov. & I am sure she will make improvements as she can. Her children have been well educated & are assets to the County. She has one girl about 12. The other one is grown and very attractive. They and I want to get the history of Friendship.

We do know it was once a Dent property, then to Samuel McPherson who sold it to g.g. grandfather Joseph Gray, d. 1820. He bought it in 1817. Also Middleton from Robt. Ferguson at same time. Later our grandfather Joseph Clagett Gray left Lower Friendship to Uncle Clagett, & a tract from gate (going to Lower Friendship) passing in front of Thos. Samuel Dent's home to an old mill (on border of Chinquapin)



Top right is Rev. Harry Speake Cobey, the son of William Winter Cobey and Ellen Elizabeth Carpinter. He is holding his daughter Matilda Elizabeth Cobey. Seated in front is Josephine Matilda ("Tillie") Gray Cobey, the wife of Rev. Harry Cobey and the daughter of George William Gray and Fannie Temple Davis. The boy in her lap is their son Harry Speake Cobey, Jr.

to his sister Matilda Dent (this from his will in LaPlata). The question is did Thos. S. Dent buy Upper Friendship from Joseph Clagett Gray, d. 1880, or did her grandfather Joseph Gray, d. 1820, leave it to her? I think Aunt Benedicta owned a part of it. If so, guess she left her part to your father, Geo. Wm. Gray? I think Uncle George bought it from Aunt Matilda Dent.

Continued on Page 7

Is this so? I know from the latter's will, Uncle George would have been her heir, should Aunt Tillie have died without heirs. Our g. grandfather Robert Gray, left Aunt Matilda Dent only one dollar. She ran away and married against his wishes. I copied Joseph C. Gray's will, also his father's will, in LaPlata.

Uncle George told me that Friendship was originally patented by Guyther, yet in Mrs. Brown's statement, it was patented to a Hoskin. Which is correct? From an item I have and have given Mrs. Karlson, the historian said Guyther was patented to Thos. Dent, 1662, & passed on to his son Col. Wm. Dent & on down the Dent line. There are more than one "Friendship" & she could have made a mistake. & as we know Dents were buried there. The historian was correct. The statement said Guyther was named as the patentee. Guyther I take it – that Friendship was once composed of 3 parts – namely, "Upper" and "Lower Friendship" and "Chinquapin". Harry, is this correct? I have heard that the patent to Guyther was presented to the D. A. R. Headquarters in D. C. by cousin Carrie. Is this correct?

Harry, we do know that your grandmother Catherine (Gray) Cobey was born at Chinquapin in 1817, which shows our great grandfather Capt. Alexander Gray, was living there then & it was the home of his brother John F. Gray. In John F. Gray's will in 1830, he gives "Chinquapin" and 80 acres of "Middleton" to his brother (& our g. grandfather) Capt. Alex. Gray, d. 1839. I judge he (Alex. Gray, d. 1839) bought the rest of Middleton from the other heirs – as his grandfather Joseph Gray, d. 1820 bought in it 1817.

Harry, from whom did Cousin Billy buy it – or did he heir it? I have heard it once belonged to Richard Price, brother of our g. grandmother Elizabeth (Price) Gray. Did she sell it to him & how long did he own it?

If you can give me any data on Friendship and Chinquapin, I shall appreciate. I note that Middleton was composed of about 3 places and one part bought by Dr. Brown 1st from Thos. Dent (Tillie's & my ancestor).



George and Fannie (Temple) Gray with their children Paul Gray, Mary Frances Gray, Virginia Lee Gray, Emma Moreland Gray, Helen Davis Gray, Josephine Matilda Gray, Thomas Davis Gray, Fannie Temple Gray and Marshall Clagett Gray.

Bettie has fallen off a great deal. Her heart gives her trouble & she has to be careful of her diet. I have gone back terribly this year & suffer greatly with arthritic arms, almost unbearable at times. Elizabeth bathes her & dresses her & gets her off & on the wheelchair. I take care of her by night, but can't help her as I did last year.

Saw Preston & Nellie lately. They came here for a few hours & are very happy.

Have written an epistle. Please write soon.

With much love for you both. Fondly,

Lottie

Did I tell you of my correspondence with a descendant of our g. g. Aunt Priscilla (Gray) McConnell? (She was sister to my two Gray g. grandfather's – Robert & Alex Gray) He, Mr. Jones, works in the Pentagon. He spoke of our g. g. Aunt Claire Gray, wife of James Gray, & her address at one time was "Efton Hills". It seems this James Gray was extremely handsome and most of his relatives had a picture of him. They say she was so proud, one had to almost give their pedigrees to enter her home. They were cousins (James & Claire). She being a g. aunt through Dad & a cousin through my mother. Mother spoke of her as cousin Claire. Her husband died when only 42 & is buried at "Mansion Hall". She lived until about 1905 (so this gentleman said) & died in Baltimore.

CMD

Quite an account is given in a Md. Historical Magazine, of the part taken by our Chas. Co. men at the battle of Harlem Heights, among them Capt. Thos. Price. Of course, I told you our g. g. grandfather Joseph, d. 1820 fought in the Rev. War, under Capt Parnham (taken from Nat'l Genealogical Magazine).

CMD

I would write on & on, but know you are tired ere this.



Rev. Harry Speake Cobey and Josephine Matilda (Gray) Cobey in 1952 with three of their children, Matilda Elizabeth Cobey Morris, William Gray Cobey, M.D. (with his wife Florapearly Armstrong) and Caroline Cobey Goodwin and with their three oldest grandchildren, Elizabeth Cobey (Betsy) Morris, John S. Morris, III, and Richard Clagett Morris.

Tobacco Growing on Friendship

Rita and Arthur Karlsson immigrated from Europe in 1925 and settled on Friendship Farm in Nanjemoy. Rita, at the age of 90, wrote this description of the early days of tobacco growing for her children.



There are usually a few warm days in January. Patches with sunshine have been carefully chosen in the woods for tobacco seedbeds, and work can begin. Each bed measures 10X10 yards, the trees are sawn off at about 6 inches, and the land is carefully prepared with grubbing hoe and rake until there is a smooth surface. Fertilizer is spread. The seeding is a ceremony: 3 tablespoons of seeds from last year's best plants are mixed with fine ashes and sprinkled over the square, probably lightly covered with a layer of soil. Seeds of radishes, lettuce, and tomatoes are sown in a corner of the beds—all very exciting. Then the area is covered with small pine branches for protection. By the time the plants are sprouting, the brush is removed and a piece of cotton of the right size is stretched over the beds, supported by arches of twigs to allow for air space. When the tobacco plants are developing the beds have to be weeded, a backbreaking job, while, of course, the other farm work has to be taken care of also.

Now the weather was watched with anxiety anticipating the great event of planting. A huge rake pulled by a horse would make straight rows across the field well prepared by plowing, disking, raking, and fertilizing. Then, after a rain, with a bag full of plants around their waists the men took a short, pointed stick, made a little hole in the moist soil, and with the same stick pressed the roots into it. Hard work, but you were so glad for each little plant to be secure. It took about 7,000 plants for one acre. Eventually we got a planter, pulled by horses or a tractor. Two people were sitting on a low bench, taking the plants from a box, laying them in the row. The best feature of the planter was a little spout to deliver water from the barrel, and then the soil was pressed tight from both sides. Of course, you would plant only as much land as the barn room allowed. Six acres of tobacco required a huge barn. There was only a small barn near the horse stable and a medium-sized barn farther away, the "Lower Barn", which Arthur repaired carefully. To have more barn space was essential. Arthur and Sam Montgomery started

cutting lumber and hauled the logs by wagon to the sawmill that was set up near Chinquapin. Every beam and board was sawn to order: the framework of solid oak, weatherboards of pine, and posts of locust. The hip roof construction was unique, Arthur's pride and joy, ready for the 1929 crop.

To come back to the planting: Arthur always tried to be finished by June 7th, Hilda's birthday. Imagine, one year in all the excitement of planting, we even forgot her special day!

In 1930 there was great anxiety about the weather, no rain between Decoration Day and Labor Day. We carried water from the spring in the woods on Lower Friendship to use in the household. We needed rain desperately. Ever so often dark clouds came up in the west, but since the Potomac flows around our peninsula—the only part of its long course flowing northeast is from Maryland Point to the Nanjemoy and Port Tobacco Creeks—thunderstorms would follow the river. The clouds would circle from west to east, not granting us enough moisture "to comb your hair". In 1931, however, it was raining all the time. The weeds would choke the little plants and we pulled weeds by hand that year in great quantities. Even in normal years weeds were growing faster than the plants, so the fields were "cultivated" with a narrow machine pulled with one horse. But that was not enough, it still took endless hours to weed by hand with hoes.

Then the tobacco worms were a menace eating the leaves, you had to pick them off by hand. In later years you would dust to kill the worms. One year the cutworms bit off the young plants by the thousands and we had to replant as long as the plants lasted. So the summer went by: the corn had to be cultivated and the threshing machine would come to take care of the wheat. In August the tobacco plants are blooming, a beautiful sight, then the tops had to be broken off to let the lower leaves spread out.



About two weeks later harvesting began: while holding the big plant sideways it was cut off at the bottom with the long blade of a tobacco knife and left to wilt a little. The same day, using a steel point, 4-6 plants were speared onto each tobacco

Continued on Page 10

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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. Or you can email your articles and photographs to Mary Pat Berry at bugs4berry@gmail.com.

Mark Your Calendar

- Saturday, October 25, 2014: Annual Membership Dinner Meeting at Durham Church. Rod Cofield of Historic London town will present "Recreating an 18th-Century Carpenter Shop."
- Saturday, January 17, 2015: Mary Ann Jung's Performance of "Clara Barton, Red Cross Angel," at the La Plata Methodist Church Hall, 2:00 p.m.

Friendship House Committees

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George C. Dyson, Administrator
H. Maxwell Mitchell

Cellar Museum & Shop

James H. Berry, Jr.
Mary Pat Berry

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Michael J. Mazzeo, Jr., Chair
Anne Boone
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Ways & Means

Ruby Dyson
Sandra Mitchell

stick. These sticks were then set up in groups, packed crisscross on the wagon, and taken into the barn. It was most important to have a good supply of sticks and, fortunately, Arthur was very skilled with saw, axe, and wedge in making new ones. Pin oaks were sawn into logs of the exact size and then split lengthwise into sticks.

I loved to go along on the wagon into the barn and pass the sticks on to the next person. It took 4 men to pass the sticks story by story to the loft until the barn was completely filled. During the first few weeks the plants are very sensitive, they might rot if the air was too hot and humid. Then the weatherboards that were on hinges had to be opened. This was “curing” time. The leaves were changing color and you were hoping to see that famous “golden leaf” develop.

Now the weather set the pace again: “season” meant moisture. In dry air the leaves are brittle but in “season” they are soft like rags. After we got our first car in 1930, Arthur would drive to Lower Nanjemoy to look for strippers. Stripping was considered a happy pastime. About 5 people would sit in a circle on low chairs with the tobacco stalks in the center. Each person had a particular job: one pulling off the upper, smaller leaves, “tips”, someone else the center leaves, one the ground leaves, all assorted to size and color, then tied into bundles with a matching leaf. There was talk and laughter and storytelling and even a wood stove in a special stripping house to keep warm—a real good social time.

The next job was packing. Since early colonial days hogsheads were an ingenious way to pack and transport tobacco. Arthur had learned to build the wooden barrels himself: a flat round top and bottom held together by straight side boards bound with grapevine. A man would stand inside the hogshead and pack it bundle by bundle, all of the same quality, in a circular fashion, pressing it down with his feet, about 350 pounds. Two such barrels were then laid end to end, one open on both ends, and the contents pressed together into one hogshead

weighing about 700 pounds. Arthur had gotten hold of an old prize press and was very proud to have it installed and working in his own big barn. It worked with long iron levers, took lots of skill, must not be lopsided. Such a hogshead, when finished, was really an achievement. I went along once to the wharf in Liverpool with horses and wagon, not easy to slowly go down the hill with the heavy load. From there the hogsheads were shipped to Baltimore, where the big tobacco companies drew samples at the state-owned warehouse and then sent checks to the grower.

In the late 1930s auction markets were opened in Hughesville, Waldorf, and La Plata. There you could take the tobacco packed on baskets of about 60 pounds. You could be present when the auctioneer and the buyers passed along the rows and hear the highest bidder. If you were not satisfied with the offer, you could reject it, try again, or even take your baskets to another market. There were some miserable years. I remember accepting 9 cents or even 7 cents per pound, much less than had been invested in labor and cash. At other times you might be surprised by a better price than you had expected.

In later years Arthur built up a herd of Hereford cattle and concentrated more on growing corn and hay. He gave up growing tobacco in the early 1960s.

Before coming to the United States Arthur had studied viniculture in Germany and was employed at the College for Wine Culture in Geisenheim on the River Rhine. Here at Friendship he said once, “To grow tobacco is just as fascinating as working with grapes”—the highest praise. Certainly, tobacco growing had been a happy part of his life.

At the moment it is unbelievably beautiful here to see the sunshine over the snow-covered fields, blue sky, 10 degrees Fahrenheit!

14 December 1989.

With love to all who read this story, Mother.

Please add your own memories!



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

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

www.charlescountyhistorical.org