

2016

Preservation Matters

Celebrating Charles County's Historic Places



CHARLES COUNTY GOVERNMENT
Planning & Growth Management
www.CharlesCountyMD.gov



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PLANNING & GROWTH
MANAGEMENT

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Mission Statement – The mission of Charles County Government is to provide our citizens the highest quality service possible in a timely, efficient, and courteous manner. To achieve this goal, our government must be operated in an open and accessible atmosphere, be based on comprehensive long- and short-term planning, and have an appropriate managerial organization tempered by fiscal responsibility. We support and encourage efforts to grow a diverse workplace.

Vision Statement – Charles County is a place where all people thrive and businesses grow and prosper; where the preservation of our heritage and environment is paramount; where government services to its citizens are provided at the highest level of excellence; and where the quality of life is the best in the nation.

Equal Opportunity Employer – It is the policy of Charles County to provide equal employment opportunity to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religious or political affiliation or opinion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity or expression, or any other status protected by law.



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A Planning & Growth Management Publication

The information contained in this annual publication "Preservation Matters" has been brought to you as a public service by the Charles County Department Planning and Growth Management to support historic preservation in Charles County.

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Be a part of the news...

Would you like to be featured in an upcoming issue of the Historic Preservation newsletter?

Please call Beth Groth at 301-645-0684, or send an email to GrothB@CharlesCountyMD.gov

A New Year in Historic Preservation

Franklin A. Robinson, Jr.

Welcome to our second issue of Preservation Matters, the Charles County Historic Preservation Commission magazine.

2016 is our sixth year as a volunteer, county-appointed board charged with preserving and protecting Charles County's irreplaceable historic assets. The past year has seen amazing strides in preservation initiatives within our county. Let me highlight a few of them.

An ongoing preservation victory is the restoration and rehabilitation of historic Rich Hill. This property, coupled with county owned properties: Stagg Hall, Zekiah Fort, and Maxwell Hall, continue to move the county positively forward in preserving historic sites important to the history of the county, the Southern Maryland region, and the nation. Archaeology has already uncovered the long gone service wing of the house. The interior has been stripped of unsympathetic renovation and the bones of the structure are an amazing sight. Through dendrochronology the original house has been dated to circa 1729, much earlier than previously thought. A generous grant from Preservation Maryland will allow the Historical Society of Charles County to develop ways to interpret this now protected treasure.

There has been increased activity at the Port Tobacco historic site. Esther Read, the county's part-time contract archaeologist, spends many hours in Burch House clearing away the backlog of care and documentation for artifacts stored there. Over the last year she involved students and the public on digs in Benedict, Rich Hill, and Port Tobacco. Port Tobacco has part-time interpreters and is on its way to becoming the crown jewel in the county's historic property diadem.

The initiative to designate a Pomonkey Historic District is moving forward with enthusiastic community involvement. The stories, structures, and people that this district represents are being preserved and researched, ensuring that the long history of this place will not pass from memory.

Finally, I want to extend a public "thank you" to our staff support in Planning and Growth Management; Beth Groth, Sheila Geisert, Cathy Hardy Thompson, and archaeologist Esther Read. Without them and their expertise the Commission would be sorely handicapped.

Our county continues to be blessed with numerous individuals and organizations dedicated to preservation and history. As preservationists we seek not only to protect and preserve historic structures, their settings and contents, but the stories, people, and events those places represent. These sites and stories define who we are and inform our journey forward. The Charles County Historic Preservation Commission continues to be a tool for ensuring our history is documented and protected for us and those that come after us.

**2016 Historic
Preservation
Commission
Meetings**

October 24

November 21

December 19

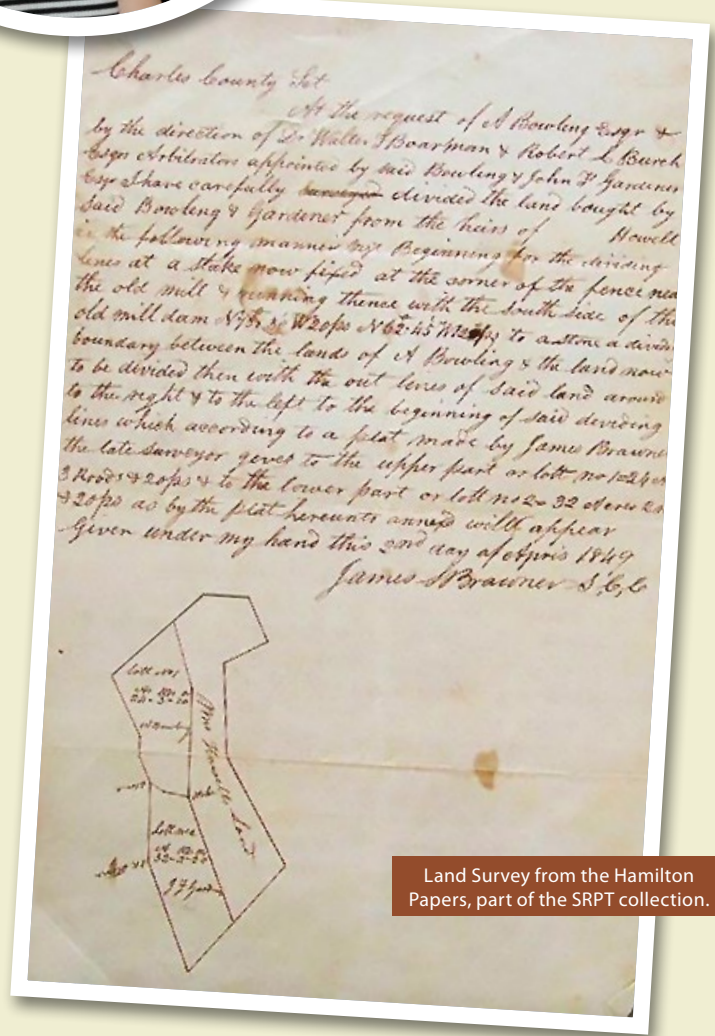


INTERNS HELP... PRESERVE HISTORY

This summer, **Drew Altman** and **Angela Bailey** worked as interns for the Department of Planning and Growth Management. Both were tasked with organizing the growing amount of information on the County's inventory of historic sites and archaeology.

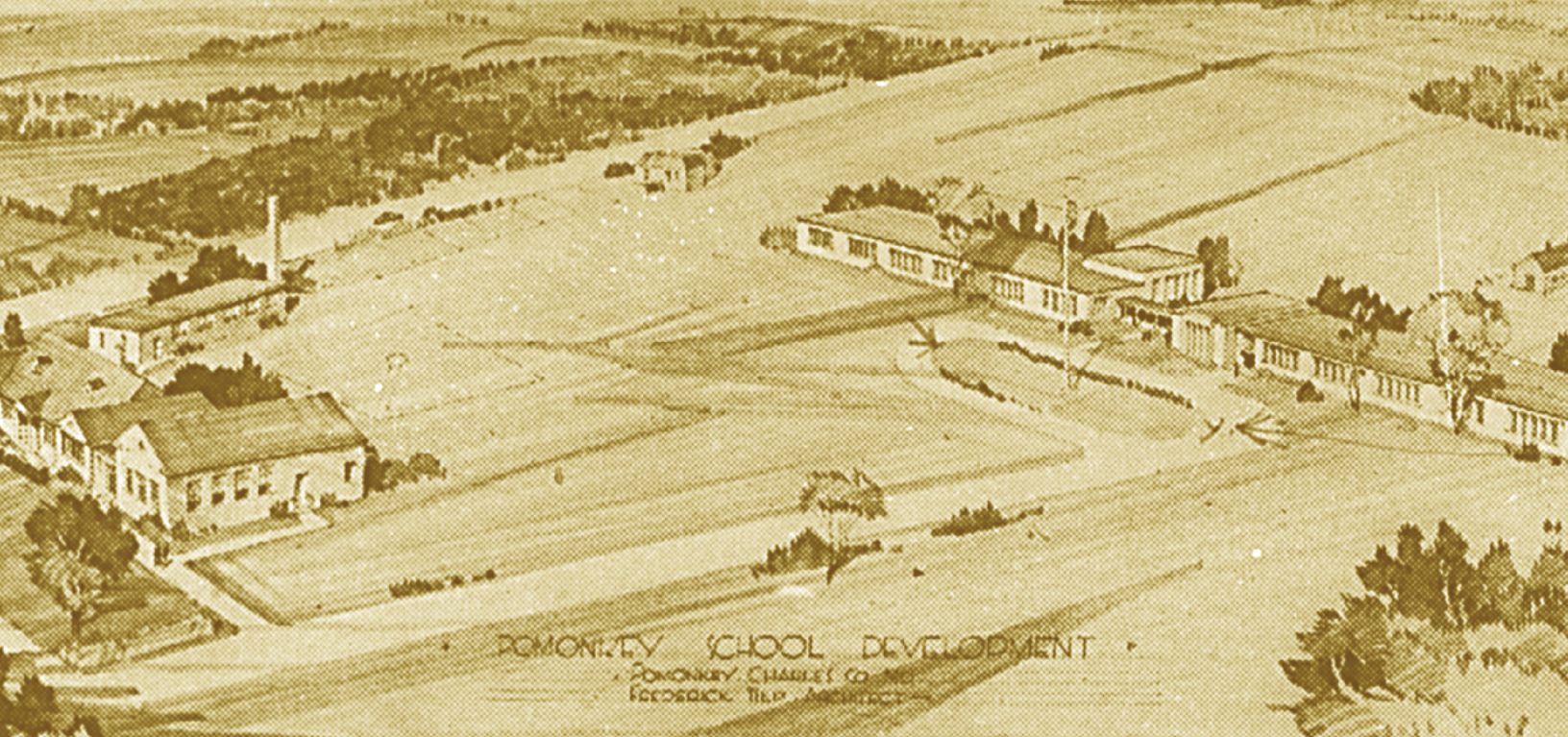
Drew is a recent graduate of the University of Maryland Library Science program, making him the perfect candidate to assess and organize the historic documents in the Port Tobacco Historic District. One of his favorite assignments was processing the Hamilton Papers, a collection of papers that spans the 19th century. Drew also created a library cataloging system for the bulging collection of County research, reports, and studies on various historic sites. This will ensure that the information is not lost, but is accessible to researchers well into the future.

Angela, a student at the College of Southern Maryland, has a strong interest in archaeology. Over the summer she organized information on the various excavations that have taken place in Port Tobacco since the 1960s. Angela compiled all existing notes and reports, and generated finding aids to assist future researchers. She also accompanied county archaeologist Esther Read to Rich Hill as they finalized work, and had the opportunity to research and catalog various items in this archaeology collection.



Land Survey from the Hamilton Papers, part of the SRPT collection.

Both Drew and Angela are Charles County residents and have enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about the rich history all around them. In the process, they have gained valuable work experience and we were able to tap into our local talent. We hope they enjoyed their time with us. We wish them well and look forward to following their work as future preservationists!



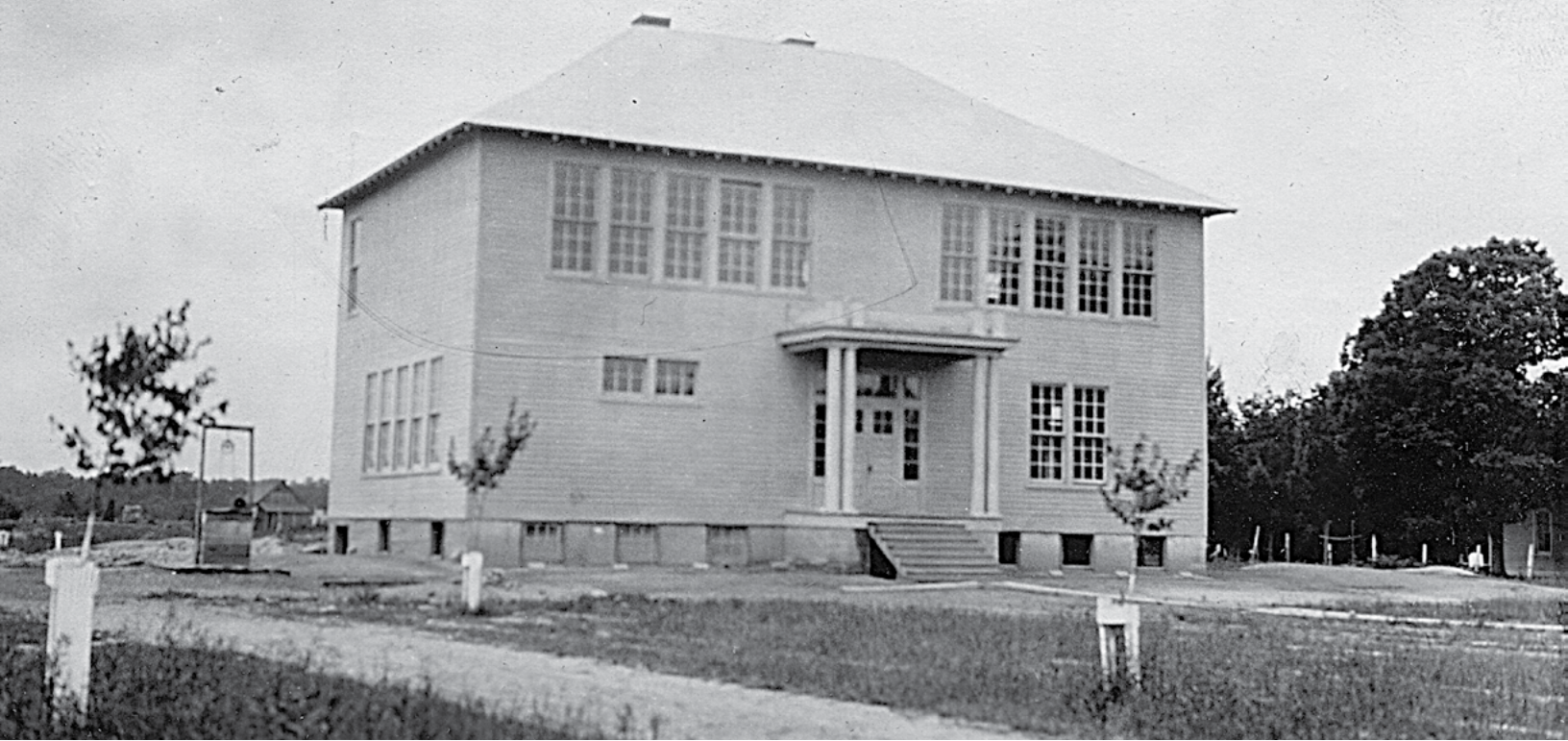
Frederick Tilp rendering of the Pomonkey School Complex, Courtesy of the Banneker-Douglass Museum, Herbert Frisby Collection

Documenting A Community's Recent Past

Debra McClane

*Standing at the busy intersection
of Livingston Road and Metropolitan Church Road...*

In the small enclave of Pomonkey, you are likely to hear the lively chatter of children from one of the nearby schools — J.C. Parks Elementary and Matthew Henson Middle. Perhaps a soccer match will be underway at the municipal fields or a group will be gathering at the Metropolitan United Methodist Church for a meeting. You may also hear neighbors call to one another across the way, or from passing cars as patrons stop for the lunch-time special at Walton's Market. For over 100 years, this intersection has been an important commercial center serving the larger Pomonkey region and has special significance for the county's African-American community, many of whom established the institutions and commercial enterprises still thriving there.



Pomonkey Rosenwald School, Courtesy of Fisk University, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Special Collections, Rosenwald Database, 2001

Pomonkey – Continued from previous page.

Recent documentation efforts have focused on bringing to light the history of this tight knit community, and its significance to Charles County's past and future.

Over the past year, the Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management and The Ottery Group have been working within the Pomonkey community to document and record historic structures and sites and to collect memories from various individuals with long ties to the area. The historic community is also being evaluated to determine whether it qualifies as a historic district. Documentation has focused on the institutional, religious, and educational buildings grouped around this intersection, many of which are historically associated with the African-American community. Although the region's history stretches back to the 17th century, the project's efforts have focused on developments of the recent past and how the buildings and sites embody the community's history. Located along a major transportation corridor, Pomonkey was a logical location for economic development due to its accessibility, but the crossroad also became the location of social and religious institutions and schools.

At the heart of the district is the Metropolitan United Methodist Church, which has its origins in the years following the end of the Civil War when the area's black residents began holding prayer meetings in local homes. In 1868, a congregation formed and trustees, including Henry Datcher and Coates Slater, purchased two acres of land for

the purpose of erecting a building that would be used as a church and school. The commingling of religious and educational uses in a building was a common practice among black congregations. The Pomonkey congregation became part of the "Charles Circuit" of the Methodist Episcopal Church and under the leadership of Rev. Charles Price, the church became known as "Price's Chapel." In the late 19th century, the chapel was designated as "Pomonkey Chapel," but at the turn of the 20th century, church members Cecilia Carter and Cordelia King suggested the name of the church be changed to Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1968, following denominational reorganization, the church became known as Metropolitan United Methodist Church. The present brick church building, constructed in 1976 with additions in 2001, replaced the circa 1910 frame church built on the same site. As a way to connect the new with the old, the historic bell from the church tower was retained and is now located in front of the present church.

Another significant building located at the center of the district is the Old Pomonkey High School, only a portion of which now stands. Education in Charles County, like other areas of the country, remained a private pursuit until the mid-19th century. Until that time, children were taught at home by private tutors or at small schools established on private property. It was not until the 1850s that Charles County began purchasing land and constructing schools. By the turn of the 20th century, 30 of the 72 county schools were specifically for black students. These schools, however, provided

only elementary level education. In 1921, the Joshua Lodge of the Order of Good Samaritans donated a parcel of land to the County's Board of Education for the purpose of erecting a school for African-American children. The 16.75-acre site lay on the south side of the public road "leading from Pomonkey Warehouse to the Bumpy Oak."

The school, built in the 1920s, was a two-story frame building and was known as the "County Training School." Financing for the school's construction came, in part, from the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Rosenwald, who was president of Sears, Roebuck and Company from 1908 to 1924, was one of America's great philanthropists and a proponent of the education of black citizens. His efforts were encouraged by Booker T. Washington, and in 1917 he established a fund that specifically aimed at the visible, physical production of school buildings for black children, especially in the rural South. The fund provided seed money for school construction and the rest was provided by local or state governments, and each local black community was required to match the contribution of the fund in either cash or in-kind contribution such as lumber or labor. Joseph C. Parks, Superintendent of Colored School for Charles County, was instrumental in soliciting assistance from the Rosenwald Fund. In the 1940s, a fire destroyed the building, which was then being used as a grade school for black children.

By 1938, a new and larger senior high school had been constructed on the school lot and fronted onto Metropolitan Church Road. The new building consisted of a one-story

classroom wing, and was similar in design to the Bel Alton High School (built in 1937). Around 1968, the classroom wing of the Pomonkey High School also fell victim to fire and the wing was destroyed, leaving only the entry bay and the 1950s auditorium wing standing. The Pomonkey High School Alumni Association has been very active in fostering the reuse and interpretation of the Pomonkey High School for its role in Charles County education. The association was instrumental in obtaining the roadside historical marker that recognizes the significance of the school.

Other educational buildings in the study area included the J.C. Parks Elementary School and Matthew Henson Middle School. The current elementary school, built in 1962, replaced an earlier elementary school that was also named for the county superintendent. Henson, named for the Charles County native and famed explorer who reached the North Pole with Admiral Peary in 1909, originally opened in 1958 as a new high school for black students. The building was used in that capacity until integration of the county school system in the 1960s, which sent area high schoolers to Lackey High School and La Plata High School.

Social institutions also are part of the area and include the Pomonkey Elks Lodge and the Bee Hive Lodge No. 66, which hosts an annual shad planking that has become a community tradition. Commercial enterprises in the area that were established by African-American residents include Walton's Market, Thornton's Funeral Home, and the Palador Club. In the 1930s, Benjamin Walton moved to Charles County from



Walton's Market built in 1939 has been a community 'gathering' place for decades and is one of the surviving historic buildings in the Pomonkey Historic District.

Continued on next page 



Planning participants in front of the Pomonkey High School now under renovation.

Pomonkey – Continued from previous page.

McKeesport, Pennsylvania, and worked with the Civilian Conservation Corps in Indian Head. Walton purchased a three-acre parcel on the east side of Livingston Road and built a stand where he sold fresh vegetables and fish. In 1939, he built a small store on the property, which he later enlarged and renovated. Walton's Market provided meats, produce, dry goods, seafood, and gasoline for county residents. The store also supported local school events and allowed residents to trade on a credit basis. Walton's owned one of the first televisions in the area and many residents recall seeing their first broadcasts in the store. Benjamin Walton and his wife, Roberta, operated the store, and after Mr. Walton's death in 1984, Mrs. Walton and her sons continued the business until 1990. After a brief time, the family reopened Walton's Markets as Walton's Seafood in 1995 as a carryout restaurant. The family also continues to occupy the Walton family home (ca. 1940), located behind the store.

During the period of segregation, these local commercial enterprises were welcoming to black residents who recall being turned away or denied service at other county stores and restaurants. Many residents recall other commercial enterprises located within the larger Pomonkey community that operated during the mid- to late-20th century including florists, barber shops, hairdressers, small grocery stores, and bars and restaurants. Some of these businesses were owned and operated by local African Americans, but served all of Pomonkey's residents.

The region's love for amateur baseball was part of this intersection. On a now heavily wooded lot stood the Pomonkey Ball

Diamond, which hosted numerous regional games between black teams from Maryland, District of Columbia, and Virginia. This was one of several baseball fields in the area, including those in Pomfret and one further south along Livingston Road where the Pomonkey Browns played. These amateur games continued into the 1970s.

A unique advantage enjoyed by this rural community is the presence of the Maryland Airport, which was established in 1945 by Charles A. Bauserman and is the only public airport in Charles County. During World War II, Bauserman, who had moved to the area in the late 1920s from Manassas, Virginia, operated an ice delivery business as well as a timbering business. In 1941, as the U.S. entered World War II, Bauserman became a charter member of the Charles Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol. It was during this time that Bauserman established the Maryland Airport. The airport, now operated by Bauserman's son Gil, is a privately owned, public use facility with a 3,740-foot paved airstrip, hangar space, tie downs, and fueling for regional recreational pilots and landing space for charter planes.

In 1946, Bauserman was instrumental in attracting the Mulco Spoon Factory to Pomonkey. Bauserman's lumber business supplied a large number of sweet gum trees to a similar factory in Delaware, and so he enticed John Mulholland, owner of Mulco, to move his factory to Pomonkey to a building Bauserman built on the west side of the Maryland Airport property along present-day Bumpy Oak Road. The factory operated around the clock and employed 50 to 70 employees, including many women. The factory produced coffee

stirrers, popsicle sticks and ice cream spoons (the company held a special patent on its spoon design), tongue depressors, and plant markers. The Pomonkey Spoon Factory received national attention when an article on its manufacturing process was featured in Popular Science magazine in 1949. In 1951, noted Baltimore Sun photojournalist Aubrey Bodine visited the plant and photographed the facility's operations. The plant closed in the late 1960s; today none of the buildings or structures associated with the factory are remaining. Still, many residents recall the sight of the plant's water tower and the sound of the 7:30 a.m. whistle.

Public input has been instrumental in these documentation efforts. Long-time residents have graciously offered their memories of Pomonkey through oral history interviews and public meetings, and residents have eagerly shared their personal photographs, school year books, and newspaper clippings. Documentary research has been undertaken at various

repositories, including the Southern Maryland Studies Center and within the collections of the Banneker-Douglass Museum in Annapolis.

The next steps in the project will involve gathering additional community input to develop preservation strategies, economic incentives, and community development strategies to ensure that this important historic community is not lost as the Bryans Road and Indian Head areas continue to grow. Pomonkey area residents recall fond memories of the schools and stores located at this bustling rural crossroads. For the county's black population, who remember the area as "the hub" of African-American life, Pomonkey is a reminder of how the community survived and thrived during the period of segregation. Through these documentation efforts, Charles County seeks to retain what is unique in Pomonkey and to ensure that the community's heritage is preserved for future generations.



Built in 1910, the former United Methodist Episcopal Church was an important landmark in the village.

BENEATH THE SHADY OAK

The Burying Ground

Franklin A. Robinson, Jr

Stone family cemetery at Habre de Venture where Thomas Stone, signer of the Declaration of Independence is buried.



One common theme encountered while studying family and local history from the colonial era into the 20th century is that many persons tended to be buried on their own land away from a formal churchyard or public cemetery. These small out of the way burial grounds may be found throughout Charles County and this phenomenon is not exclusive to the county or Southern Maryland region.

Burying Ground – Continued from previous page.

Cemeteries have been lost or forgotten after a farm was sold, a church closed, or due to shifting population centers. This article highlights a few private cemeteries within the county and gives a brief general history of burial on private land and cemeteries.

In May 1676, Reverend Mr. John Yeo, an Anglican priest writing from the Patuxent region to Gilbert Sheldon, Archbishop of Canterbury, expressed the need for consecrated Anglican churches and churchyards so that Christians “might be decently buried together,” instead of on isolated plantations. It seems it was the social function of the church in bringing people together was desired both in this world and the next. When 2 acre lots were laid out for Anglican churches after the passage of the Establishment Act of 1692 it was with the express purpose of giving the parish enough land for the building and a graveyard. We are lucky in that many of our Roman Catholic and Anglican colonial churches and graveyards still exist, are cared for and documented.¹

Graveyards (usually at a church) and cemeteries (usually not at a church) in the 18th century were quite different than their later Victorian and Modern era descendants. During the colonial era, there was the opinion that a lower socio-economic

level of person was buried in the churchyard whereas planters and their families maintained private burying grounds on their own estates. Usually, the south side of a churchyard was larger than its north side allowing ample space for the majority of burials. The north side of a church, considered the devil’s side, was most often reserved for the graves of the non-baptized, victims of suicide, and the like. In Great Britain, common folk were often buried in the family plot – a small patch of ground at the local church where a body would be buried and then some time later the bones were dug up and moved to an ossuary leaving the plot ready for the next unfortunate member of the family. On occasion, older graves were cleared to make way for newer graves.² Nobles were often buried within a church or chapel or in burying grounds on their own estates. In the colonies, since land was plentiful burial on one’s own land became an option for a broader segment of the population. Graves of prominent colonials were sometimes opened within a church, the privilege often being paid for.

Seldom was a gravestone or grave slab put in place. Memorials were expensive and in Southern Maryland, indigenous stone from which to carve them, was not immediately available.



Outdoor graves, whether slave or freeman, were often marked with a simple wooden cross or fieldstone. In some private family cemeteries of the wealthier, land-owning families a traditional flat, engraved, table-like grave slab was sometimes used. Examples of this style of marker are the three grave slabs laid down for members of the Crabb family in the early 18th century. Their cemetery is now located in the Davenleigh development near Benedict. These limestone slabs were imported from elsewhere, possibly England. The three Crabb family members, Thomas, Ralph and his wife Priscilla, lie on a slight rise. Once surrounded by tobacco fields they now rest amidst suburban homes. Both Thomas and Ralph sat in the colonial legislature and were involved in mercantile trade.ⁱⁱⁱ Examples of this type of monument may also be found in the Stone family cemetery located at Habre de Venture near Port Tobacco.

A window into the colonial mindset about death, burial, and memorials is found in the journal of Philip Vickers Fithian, tutor to the children of Robert and Ann Tasker Carter at Nomini Hall across the Potomac in Virginia's Northern Neck. Fithian relates a conversation with Carter and his wife, "... when all had retired but Mrs Carter, Mr Carter & Myself, the Conversation being on serious Matters, Mr Carter observed that he much dislikes the common method of making Burying Yards round Church, & having them also open to every Beast – He would have them at some small distance from the Church, neatly & strongly inclosed, and the Graves kept up decent, & plain, but would have no splendid, nor magnificent Monument, nor even Stone to say "Hic Jacet." – He told us he proposes to make his own Coffin & use it for a Chest til its proper use shall be required – that no Stone, nor Inscription to be put over him-And that he would choose to be laid under a shady tree where he might be undisturbed, & sleep in peace & obscurity-He told us, that with his own hands he planted, & is with great diligence raising a Catalpa-Tree at the Head of his father who lies in his Garden-Mrs. Carter beg'd that She might have a Stone, with this only for a Monument, "He Lies Ann Tasker Carter." This is perhaps one clue to the dearth of markers for colonial era graves.^{iv}

The recently discovered burial ground at Serenity Farm in Benedict yields different clues as to the burial customs of the enslaved population of the county. Dating from between 1790-1810 it is the resting place for 23 individuals, men, women, and children. Randomly buried over a small area overlooking Smith's Creek, Maryland state archaeologists found few remaining artifacts. No above ground memorials, either wooden or stone, remained. Within the graves were found shroud pins, a few buttons, and amazingly a fish scale! But, the tale told by analysis of bone and teeth paints a picture of hard labor, vitamin deficiency, and childhood disease. After



Franklin Robinson explores the three ledger stones in the Crabb family cemetery. The stones date to the first quarter of the 18th century.

having generously given up their secrets to scholarship these individuals were returned to their resting places.^v

With the Victorian era, the approach to memorializing the dead and the care, upkeep, and usage of cemeteries changed. In addition to a place for memorializing, cemeteries and graveyards became a place of pilgrimage, rest, and contemplation – some Victorians reportedly held picnics at the family plot. In cities such as Baltimore and District of Columbia garden cemeteries were opened, replacing the old Spartan colonial burial grounds with picturesque landscapes, broad walks, and elaborate follies.^{vi}

The random fieldstone or old wooden cross gave way to marble and granite. With the marketplace's increasing fluidity and access to transportation networks, gravestones could be ordered from a variety of purveyors and installed anywhere by a good stonemason or bricklayer. Many of the gravestones

Continued on next page 



The St. Ignatius cemetery at Chapel Point serenely overlooks the Port Tobacco River.

Burying Ground – Continued from previous page.

found throughout Southern Maryland placed during the mid to late 19th century were supplied by Baltimore merchants and delivered by steamboat to a nearby wharf. Those cemeteries located inland away from water transport could rely on the local railroad to bring in gravestones ordered through mail order catalogues or the local dry goods store. The humble fieldstone may still have been used but those not satisfied with Mother Nature's handiwork could purchase a gravestone as large as their means might allow. Some gravestones were not merely content to state name, date of birth and date of death but sported a litany of decoration and style, so that the symbolism of a gravestone might be as intricate as a foreign language. Lilies, doves, weeping willows, fraternal symbols and many more decorations found their way onto the stone monoliths.^{vii}

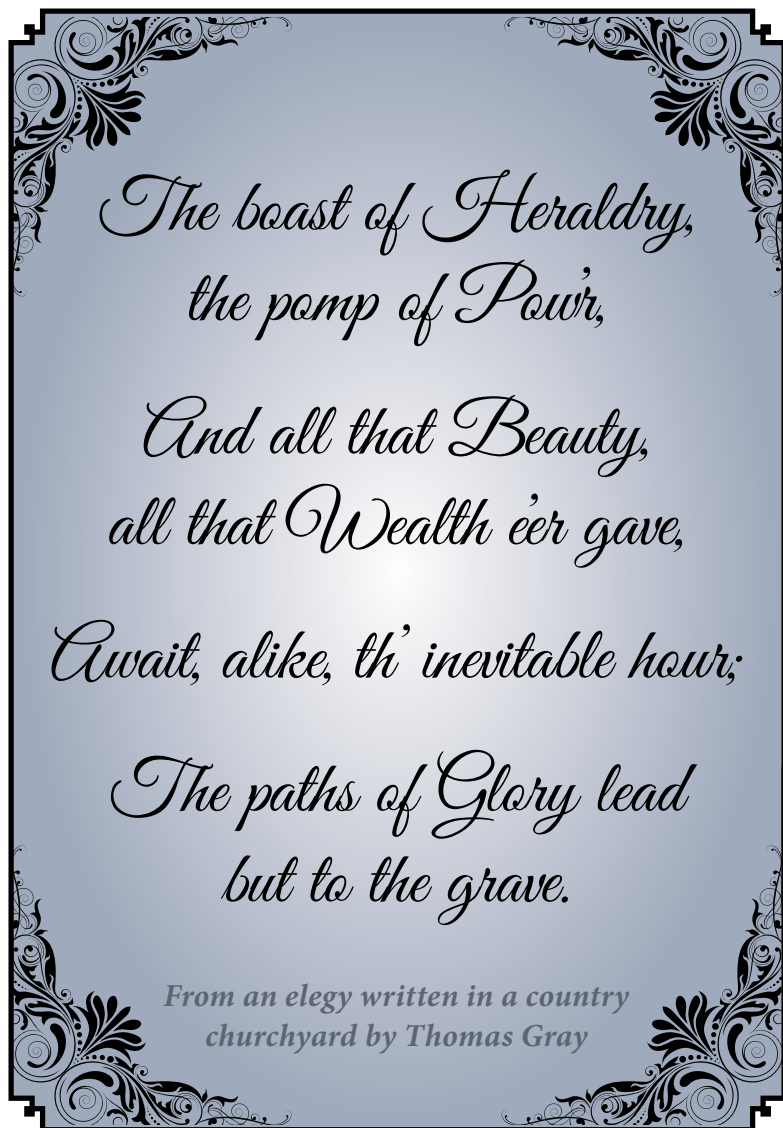
A small family burial ground southeast of Bryantown, the Gibbons Family Cemetery at the Turtle Creek development dates from the early 19th century. Recently declared a Charles County Historic Landmark, it is the first cemetery to be so designated. This tree shrouded haven is the resting place for Margaret and Oswell Gibbons and most likely some of their children. Located on land once called Wiltshire Plains

originally patented by Thomas Crabb in 1711. The now broken, marble gravestones bearing the popular Victorian image of a weeping willow were once upright and may have been imported from Baltimore. These remaining gravestones are the only surviving testament to this farming family and their time upon the land.^{viii}

Helen W. Ridgely in her search for historic graves in the early 20th century travelled to Charles County and explored many church graveyards and private cemeteries. Travelling from Port Tobacco to Benedict and all points in between, she noted that respect for resting places of the dead, whether they had been rich or poor, black or white, was many times a scarce commodity. She writes of fields of tobacco growing around broken tombstones, compost piles lying on grave slabs, and relates tales of stones being thrown into the Patuxent. Many of the Charles County gravestones whose inscriptions were recorded by Ridgely have disappeared from the landscape, victims of neglect, vandalism, or passage of time.^{ix}

Charles countians in their generations were not immune to changes in commemorating death and dealing with the dead. The site of ancient graves, overgrown, sporting a coat of brambles and briar rose have given way to resting places with

perpetual care and golf course green lawns. The old esthetic of being buried on one's own land has fallen out of fashion for all but a few. Many small cemeteries and burial places lie undiscovered throughout the county. From the Crabb cemetery with its monumental grave slabs, to the quiet simplicity of the burial ground at Serenity Farm, and the modest 19th century gravestones at the Gibbons Family Cemetery, residents of the county have left many and varied markers of their existence. May they rest in peace.



Come Join the Friends of Rich Hill!

The Friends of Rich Hill was formed by the Historical Society of Charles County to support the county's efforts in preserving Historic Rich Hill in Bel Alton, Maryland.

As the county goes forth with the rehabilitation of this historic site, the Friends group has been raising funds in an effort to tell the story of Rich Hill through exhibits, displays, furnishings, brochures and accessories; developing partnerships with other organizations; sponsoring special awareness events at Rich Hill and documenting the history of this site through information and photographs.

There are many stories to tell at Rich Hill, including...how John Wilkes Booth encamped on the Rich Hill property in the days following the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln; the 18th century construction of the house; Dr. Gustavus Brown and his illustrious descendants; the African-American experience at Rich Hill; the architectural change of the house over time; current discoveries through archaeological digs on the site; and so much more.

Help Preserve Southern Maryland's Rich Heritage

If you would like to become a part of this exciting endeavor, please send your tax-deductable donation, made payable to the "Friends of Rich Hill," to:

Historical Society of Charles County
P.O. Box 2806
La Plata, Maryland 20646

For more information visit
www.RichHillFriends.org or like us
on Facebook at Historic Rich Hill.

Burying Ground References:

- i Yeo to Sheldon, Archbishop of Canterbury, letter dated May 1676, Tanner Ms. CXIV, page 79, Bodleian Library, copy at Library of Congress, also found in Skirven, P., *First Parishes*, pages 26-27; Gilbert Sheldon, Bishop of London from 1660-1663, after 1676 Archbishop of Canterbury.
- ii Upton, Dell, *Holy Things and Profane*, pgs. 202-203; Hey, *Oxford Companion to Family History*, pgs. 71, 92, 205-206.
- iii Papenfuse, Edward C., Day, Alan F., Jordan, David W., & Stiverson, Gregory A., *A Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature, 1635-1789* (two volumes). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979; Ridgely, Helen W., *Historic Graves of Maryland and the District of Columbia*. New York, NY: The Grafton Press, 1908, pgs. 62-91.
- iv Farish, Hunter Dickinson. *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian*. Charlottesville, VA: The University Press of Virginia, 1957, pg. 61. Fithian was resident with the Carters between 1773-1774.
- v Draft "ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND CORRIDOR STUDY ALONG MD 231 BENEDICT, CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND", pages 165-194, Maryland State Highway Administration, 2015.
- vi Keister, Douglas. *Stories in Stone, A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography*. Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2004.; Yalom, Marilyn. *The American Resting Place*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008.
- vii *Ibid*.
- viii Gibbons Family Cemetery (18CH841), Charles County Historic Preservation Historic Landmark Designation Application, 2013-2014.
- ix Ridgely, Helen W., *Historic Graves of Maryland and the District of Columbia*. New York, NY: The Grafton Press, 1908, pgs. 62-91.



Well-made, possibly Native American gunflint recovered at the site.



Crude gunflint recovered at the site.

Photo Credits: Maryland State Highway Administration

From Ship Ballast to Gun Flints

Colonial-Era Flint Technology on the Patuxent Frontier

Aaron Levinthal

Recently, Maryland State Highway Administration archaeologists excavated along the Patuxent River near Benedict. They found Native American camp sites and other historic sites dating between the mid-17th through early 18th centuries. Archaeologists believe they found an early colonial plantation and possibly a trade site.

The Maryland State Highway Administration archaeologists (*pictured*) recovered approximately 550 flint artifacts. Close inspection of recovered artifacts suggests Maryland colonists, and perhaps Native Americans, manufactured gunflints and other tools from discarded English ship ballast. Here, rounded cobbles, discarded from the hulls of ships, were collected and transformed into crude gunflints, strike-a-lights, and other types of stone tools. A smaller number of well-made and finished gunflints are also found on the site, but these appear to have been either shipped in from Europe or perhaps crafted by skilled Native American flint knappers onsite or elsewhere.

During the colonial period, firearm technology evolved from the matchlock to the wheellock gun, and finally to the flintlock. The flintlock required a stone chip, securely fitted between the jaws of a musket's hammer, as a vital part of the powder-ignition system. These early gunflints ranged in shape, style, and size.

The historic record suggests that Michael Swift and later, Richard Jenkins, owned and/or occupied the site between the mid-17th and early 18th centuries. It is possible the flint tools and waste material are evidence of their arms maintenance activities.

Since few archaeologists have analyzed early gunflints and tool making waste from colonial contexts it may be difficult to determine exactly who was knapping the ballast here. At a minimum, the presence of this unique artifact type urges archaeologists to not only look closer at historic period flint, but to consider the transfer of stone tool technologies between European and Native American people. Only when we consider the interaction of cultures can we fully appreciate early Maryland history. In Benedict, we have an opportunity to consider the Charles County colonist's interaction with and reliance upon the skills of the native population.



Flintlock with gunflint in jaws of the hammer. Photo courtesy of The Yankee Collector. Circa 1741 Dutch musket and the photo is from *Of Sorts For Provincials: American Weapons of the French and Indian War* by Jim Mullins. Copyright 2008 by Track of the Wolf, Inc. Elk River, MD

BEAUTIFUL BONES

Rich Hill Revealed

Cathy Thompson

When Charles County recently acquired Rich Hill, the 18th century historic property had been neglected for decades. In 2014, a State bond bill was awarded to rehabilitate the historic farmhouse. One of the first steps was to undertake a detailed Historic Structures Report (HSR) which was completed by the cultural resource firm Ottery Group earlier this year.

Throughout 2015 and early 2016 research was conducted, architectural features were documented, and the physical and historical integrity of the structure was assessed. Ottery's work provides essential guidance and recommendations on ways to stabilize, rehabilitate, and interpret one of Charles County's most alluring landmarks.

Rich Hill was remodeled in the 1970s when earlier plaster walls were removed and replaced with modern support framing and drywall. Therefore, when the initial assessment began, most of the interior framing was hidden behind non-historic finishes, making it impossible to determine the extent and condition of the original frame. One of the first initiatives was to carefully remove the modern material in order to properly document the structure and plan for the future restoration. Garner Construction completed the selective demolition and carefully documented the removal process step by step. They took hundreds of photographs and preserved all the trim to be evaluated and culled later. With the drywall gone, the beautiful bones of Rich Hill were once again revealed.

The earliest framing was axe hewn and smoothed with an adze and uses mortise joints for the studs and plate junctions and hand forged nails throughout. The first floor heavy timber frame included down braces at every corner to support the frame. Brick nogging on all first floor walls including those on




1901 photograph of Rich Hill that shows the existing row of outbuildings which have since been demolished. Photo by Osbourn Oldroyd.

the interior provided further rigidity as well as a sound barrier and insulation. Brick nogging was relatively uncommon and only used on the finest 18th century homes.

Both the first and second story largely retain their original 18th century configuration. Some original second story doors and door trim survive as well as the "T" shaped hall and original room sizes. The room that recently functioned as an indoor bathroom appears to be part of the original house configuration as well.

Although the existing gable roof dates to the late 18th or early 19th century, evidence of the original hip roof is documented in the survival of a single roof rafter at the south corner. One of the most interesting facets of the house was the discovery of vaulted ceilings which would have raised the height of the

Continued on next page 





Rich Hill Revealed – Continued from previous page.

ceiling above the wall top plate up to the height of the hewn rafters.

Once the frame was exposed, Michael Worthington (*pictured above*) from Oxford Tree-Ring Laboratory was called in to complete dendrochronology to assist with dating the structure. Prior to this analysis, the original construction dates were not conclusive and spanned from the early to late 18th century. Ten white oak timbers in total were sampled, including six studs, three rafters, and a post. All of the samples were taken from exposed timbers on the structure's second floor and from the primary phase of construction. Seven retained complete sapwood, which provided felling dates of the summer of 1728, the winter of 1728/9, and the spring of 1729. Buildings of the early 18th century are rare in Maryland. In Charles County there is only one other property firmly documented to be earlier and that is Sarum, built a decade prior in 1717.

Rich Hill is best known for its association with the John Wilkes Booth Escape Route, however, recent research, the discovery

of an impressive amount of original 18th century building material, and conclusive evidence of its 1729 construction date, makes Rich Hill truly an architectural treasure.

Credits: The Historic Structures Report was prepared by The Ottery Group, Inc. for the Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management. The lead historic preservation specialist was David C. Berg. Mr. John DeKraker, and Mr. Ryan Salmon from the firm of Robert Silman Associates Structural Engineers (Silman) provided structural analysis of the building. Alt Breeding Schwarz Architects, Inc. (ABS Architects) of Annapolis, MD prepared cost analyses. Garner Construction performed the selective demolition. Michael Worthington (*pictured above*) from Oxford Tree-Ring Laboratory was called in to complete dendrochronology of the frame to assist with dating the structure.

Architectural historian J. Richard Rivoire completed extensive documentation for Rich Hill in 1975 and 1987. These studies served as a basis for an updated assessment in 2015.

Historic Preservation

IN CHARLES COUNTY



2016 Preservation Awards Event

The Charles County Historic Preservation Commission hosted a Preservation Reception and Awards Ceremony on Saturday, May 7, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

The Historic Preservation Award is presented annually to an eligible individual, business, organization, or project that deserves recognition for outstanding achievements in historic preservation. Awards are presented in two categories – Preservation Projects and Preservation Service.

The **Preservation Service Award** recognizes outstanding achievement in and support for furthering the aims of historic preservation in Charles County, including: education, research, development, planning, advocacy, and community leadership.

The **Preservation Project Award** recognizes excellence in the preservation and restoration of historic buildings, as well as the adaptive reuse of historic structures.

The featured guest speaker, Franklin A. Robinson, Jr. was the Chairman of the Charles County Historic Preservation Commission from June 2010 until June 2016, and has served on numerous task forces and commissions throughout Maryland, District of Columbia, and Virginia. Mr. Robinson has been a leader in historic preservation efforts in Southern Maryland for more than a decade. His recent accomplishments include appointment to the board of the Maryland Historical Trust by Governor Hogan, and publication of *Faith & Tobacco, A History of St. Thomas' Episcopal Parish, Prince George's County Maryland*. In 2001 and 2014 he received the St. George's Day Award from the Prince George's Historical Society. In 2011, he received a Preservation Service Award from the Maryland Historical Trust. Mr. Robinson is employed as an Archivist with the Archives Center in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History and

resides at the Robinson family home, Serenity Farm, in Benedict.

For more information on Historic Landmark Designation, Historic Area Work Permit Applications, and the Historic Preservation Commission, please call 301-645-0684 or email GrothB@CharlesCountyMD.gov.

Award Recipients

James G. Gibb, Ph.D received a Preservation Service Award for his work on the Port Tobacco archaeology project, and for his efforts to promote public archaeology in Charles County.

A Preservation Project Award was awarded to Denise and Kevin Grote (craftsman; D.W. Langley and Sons) for the restoration of Ellerslie, a two-story Georgian style home built in the 18th century near Port Tobacco.



Pictured from left to right: Esther Read, Beth Groth, Sheila Geisert, Denise Grote, Cathy Thompson, Kevin Grote, James G. Gibb, Franklin Robinson, Jr., Michael Fleming, Maria Kane, Elizabeth Keller, and Nicole Tompkins

News from the County Archaeologist

Esther Doyle Read

April marked the beginning of my second year as your County Archaeologist. During my first year I concentrated on developing the subdivision review process. While I have continued to review subdivisions this year, I've also worked with the Charles County Archaeological Society of Maryland (CCASM) to create a public archaeology program. It has been an exciting two years and I'd like to share some of the highlights with you.

A year ago, CCASM and I kicked off our public archaeology program with an excavation at Rich Hill in Bel Alton. We arrived at Rich Hill in time for the 150th commemoration of the Lincoln assassination. While we were delighted to be part of the commemoration event, our main goal was to locate the footprint of former wings associated with the house. Our work was done so that restoration activity connected with the existing main portion of the house didn't have an impact on archaeological remains associated with the house. Dr. James Gibb and I laid out a series of 11 units along the east side of the house, hoping that we would locate at least one of the old wings. On the first day of the excavation we had the kind of luck that archaeologists love to have, we found the corner of the main wing of the house in the first unit! This wing is an important part of the Booth story as it was the location of the family's dining room and Samuel Cox's bedroom on the night that Booth arrived looking for help. We also located the foundations of at least three other buildings that formed a "streetscape" along the side of the house. Plans for the foundations call for them to be reburied so that they are preserved in place. In the future a brick outline of their location may be placed on the ground above the

foundations so that visitors can envision the full extent of the main house in 1865.

In addition to the wing foundations, we also recovered household and personal objects associated with the families who lived in the house over an approximately 275-year period. Part of the area also contained a Native American site dating to at least the Late Archaic Period (3750-1250 BC)! We plan to return to Rich Hill in the future to look for other outbuildings associated with the property, such as the kitchen, smoke house, and barns. We would like to find the homes of the enslaved people who lived on the farm from 1729 until emancipation, and of the tenants who lived on the farm after the Civil War. We would also like to clearly define the size of the Native American site and learn more about the people who stayed there. The site was probably a small camp overlooking a stream and its surrounding wetlands, an area rich in animals and plants that were used for food and medicines.

Over the past year we have also worked at Stag Hall in Port Tobacco. When you visit Port Tobacco today you see several 18th century buildings and large open spaces. What is missing from the landscape are the 60 some odd buildings that



The Charles County Archaeological Society of Maryland holds an open lab every Monday in the Port Tobacco Historic District. **Learn more: www.CCArchSoc.Blogspot.com**



once stood in the town: the shops, newspaper offices, liveries, wheelwright shops and blacksmith shops; the taverns, hotels and inns that were packed with people from all over the county on court days; and the homes of the town's residents and their churches and schools. Our excavation here is guided by research questions that we hope will help us to better understand what the town was like from the time of its founding into the 20th century.

Between 2008 and 2011, Dr. James Gibb and CCASM did a comprehensive survey of the town through the excavation of small shovel test pits that were spaced at regular intervals across the town. The types and numbers of artifacts recovered during these excavations give some clues as to the kinds of buildings that were located in the town. However, the earlier testing was not able to find the town's street plan or the foundations of most of the buildings that once stood in the town. We have a sketch map of the town, showing its buildings, streets, village green, and cemetery in the 1890s that was drawn many years ago by Robert Barbour from his memories of his hometown during his childhood. We do not have maps of the town from the Civil War Era, the early 19th century, the Revolutionary War Era, or from the earliest period of settlement. As we all know, towns change over time. New buildings

are built that replace old buildings or that have entirely new functions. Imagine what it must have been like when the first gas stations appeared in the county in the early 20th century. A quarter of a century earlier almost no one could have even imagined what a building like that would look like or that it was even necessary. Just as new buildings appear in a town, older buildings are torn down, burned to the ground, or are moved. The latter is what happened in Port Tobacco, the buildings "disappeared" after the county seat was moved to La Plata and the town became the location of tobacco fields.

Our hope is to explore the evolution of the town over almost 300 years through archaeological study and archival research. To date we have uncovered the foundations of a print shop that printed the town's newspaper during the Civil War. We have also found printer's type. Our excavation is still ongoing. Our analysis of the artifacts is also ongoing. We welcome volunteers! You don't have to have experience, we will share what we know with you. All we ask is that you be as excited about learning about the past as we are!



Every single person in the country has places that are important to them...

Places they care about. Places that matter. Charles County is joining the National Trust for Historic Preservation by participating in the This Place Matters Program. Get Started Today! It's simple...



- 1** Contact our office to pick up the This Place Matters sign, or download and print at SavingPlaces.org/ThisPlaceMatters.
- 2** Take a photo with the sign at the places that matter most to you.
- 3** Share your photos with us and online with hashtag **#ThisPlaceMatters**.
- 4** Look for your photo in the National Trust gallery, and stay tuned to @ **SavingPlaces** on Instagram and Twitter as we spotlight our favorites.

Additional Details: 301-396-5815