



HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BALTIMORE COUNTY



# NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2015

## SUNDAY LECTURE SERIES TO BEGIN IN JANUARY

HSBC is having a Sunday speakers series starting in January. Join us every month during 2016. There will be a speaker one Sunday a month at the HSBC Almshouse building. The date may vary due to the availability of the speaker and holidays. Some of the programs we have scheduled are: "Rumor or Fact: a Town under Loch Raven Reservoir", "History of Herbs and Spices", and "Cockeysville, Then and Now". See the enclosed flyer for a full listing of our programs, dates and times.

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- *Lecture Series*
- *Diggs Johnson Museum*
- *Almshouse Tour*
- *Upcoming Events*
- *You may Have Missed*
- *Historic Markers and Maps*
- *Just for Fun*
- *Volunteer Corner*
- *Publications*
- *What is this?*
- *Did You Know...?*

## DIGGS JOHNSON MUSEUM OPENS



With the November 14th ribbon cutting a major milestone for the Louis Diggs – Lenwood Johnson Museum in Granite, Md. was celebrated. More than 60 guests helped mark the official opening of the museum of African American History for Baltimore County. The exhibits "My Grandmother's Trunk" and "Benjamin Wilson WWI" were the first showings at the re-

stored Historic Cherry Hill AUMP church on Offutt road, in Granite, M.D..

The booklet given out at the opening indicates that "Cherry Hill A.U.M.P. Church was built in 1887 on land granted by Brazil J. Dorsey for a Colored meeting house for local Black laborers in the community, a burying grounds and possibly a school for Black youth." When attendance declined in the 1960's, one of the surviving trustees, Mrs. Helen Johnson would bring people in from other communities such as Catonsville. When Mr. Diggs was writing one of his books, she asked him to include a history of Granite. The idea for 15 year project developed from there. Mr. Diggs and Lenwood Johnson both members of ASLAH (Association for Study of African Life and History Inc.) formed "Friends of the Cherry Hill A.U.M.P church" organization which found grant money to restore the building. The museum promises to be an important resource for educating the public about African American History.

### ALMSHOUSE TOURS ARE ONGOING- ARRANGE YOUR TOUR TODAY!

Find out the interesting history of our Almshouse and learn about some of the people who lived here. Tours last approximately 1 hour, and are offered on Wednesdays and Saturdays, by appointment only. Cost is \$8.00 per person; Free for members and accompanied children under 12.



THE CITIZENS OF BALTIMORE COUNTY

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Wednesdays and Saturdays : by appointment only @ HSBC Almshouse Headquarters**

**ALMSHOUSE TOURS (\$8.00 per person) free for members**

Find out the interesting history of our Almshouse and learn about some of the people who lived here. Tours last approximately 1 hour, and are offered on Wednesdays and Saturdays, by appointment only. Please contact Sharon at sharonleggin@hsbc.org or 410-252-6622 to schedule your tour.

**First Thursdays: ; December 3, 2015; Jan. 7, 2016; Feb 4, 2016**

**10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. @ HSBC Almshouse Headquarters**

**GENEALOGY INSTRUCTION (Free to all)**

FREE, MONTHLY, GENEALOGY INSTRUCTION at the Historical Society of Baltimore County with local genealogist Noreen Goodson, and professional genealogist Angela Walton-Raji, BA, M.Ed.. Angela Walton-Raji is the author of *Black Indian Genealogy Research: African American Ancestors Among the Five Civilized Tribes*, and has a wealth of general and niche genealogy knowledge, experience, and resources to share.

**Thurs., Jan 28, 7:00pm @ Owings Mills Branch, Baltimore County Public Library  
10302 Grand Central Ave.**

**MILLING AROUND OWINGS MILLS HISTORY**

Kathy Aspden of HSBC will be giving an illustrated presentation of the history of the Owings Mills area. It will explore early land patents, frontier church, Native American interactions, black settlements, mills, transportation and more!

**Sun., Jan 31 , 2:00–400 pm @ HSBC Almshouse Headquarters (Speakers Series)**

**RUMOR OR FACT: A TOWN UNDER LOCH RAVEN RESERVOIR? (\$5.00 for non-members, Free for HSBC members)**

***Speaker: Sally Riley***

Ever drive over the Warren Road Bridge crossing the Loch Raven Reservoir and wonder if the large water expanse has always been there? Ever wonder what else could have been there? Ever met anyone who once lived in Warren, MD and wondered where it was? Come to find out the answers to these questions and some other interesting facts about Warren, MD.

**Sun., Feb 28, 2:00–400 pm @ HSBC Almshouse Headquarters (Speakers Series)**

**HISTORY OF HERBS AND SPICES: A STORY WHICH SPANS THE HISTORY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION (\$5.00 for non-members, Free for HSBC members)**

***Speaker: Jerry Kahan***

A slide presentation by Mr. Jerry Kahan a retiree of McCormick & Co. where he worked for 38 years. During ancient times, transporting spices from far-away lands was bound to prove difficult and expensive, and that forms the basis of a saga filled with exotic lands, myths, legends, brave souls, and numerous adventures. Mr. Kahan will conclude his talk with a brief history of McCormick & Company.

### **TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!**

It is time once again to renew your membership. Continue to enjoy the membership benefits including the HSBC Newsletter, access to selected online HSBC research materials, reduced or free admission to HSBC events and the satisfaction that you are helping to collect, preserve and protect the history of Baltimore County. Renew today ! Use enclosed membership form or renew online.

## YOU MAY HAVE MISSED...

### ALMSHOUSE LEGACY BUS TOUR

Everyone who participated in the "Out West Catonsville at Large" bus tour on October 10, 2015 had a wonderful time. Our first stop was at the Benjamin Banneker Park and Museum. There we saw an informative movie about Mr. Banneker, who was a self-educated astronomer and surveyor. Later, we had a delicious lunch at Dimitri's Restaurant. The last stop was at the Old Salem Lutheran Church where we were entertained by an organ recital on an original hand pump organ.

Note: If you missed the bus tour you may want to purchase a copy of the tour booklet, *Out West Catonsville at Large Tour Booklet*. The exceptional booklet details the history of all the places that we visited in Catonsville and includes wonderful photos. In conjunction with the tour booklet a map book was published called, *Catonsville, Geographically Through the Years 1795-2015* which contains maps of the area. Both of these booklets are a great historical resource and are available for purchase at the Almshouse headquarters for \$10.00 ea. (top photo by Mike Hess; bottom photo by Bud Cornell)



### BENEFIT CONCERT



The HSBC Benefit Concert was held October 10<sup>th</sup> in the cozy and relaxed venue of Silo Hill at Sotir Farm. With the lower temperatures of October the stone fireplace in the post and beam barn was especially inviting.

This year's concert featured two musical acts. Returning was Americana performer Callaghan who delivered another outstanding selection of her original songs and a selection of her newest music. New to our area was Granville Automatic who presented a selection of historically themed County music performed by vocalist Vanessa Olivarez and guitarist Elizabeth Elkins. Many thanks to the volunteers who made the 2015 concert a success and to concert committee leaders Vicki Young and Jeff Higdon. (Photos by Jim Long)



### MINIATURE SHOW AND SALE



Exquisite miniatures and dollhouses were on display in the Galloway room at the Almshouse Headquarters Saturday and Sunday, November 21 and 22. Adults and children alike were fascinated by miniature scenes, houses and rooms in various sizes and scales. The young and the young at heart enjoyed making a miniature snow globes at the crafts table. We wish to thank Stacy Moser and the MMU (Maryland Miniatures Unlimited) members for organizing and creating the exhibits, kids projects and miniatures sales table.

We also want to thank the HSBC's Sally Riley, Jim Long and Johnna Suter, for helping with publicity, recruiting and organizing the volunteers, Allen Hendrickson and Jim Long for moving large dollhouses, Sally Riley, Pat Routson and Shelby Stierhoff for setting up the HSBC dollhouses with furniture, and, last but not least, all the volunteers that worked at the admissions table and monitored the exhibits including, Sally Riley, Cynthia Mann, Nancy Anderson, Pat Routson, Linda Haynes, Johanna Suter, Allen Hendrickson., Valerie Thaxter-Grant, and Helen Kemp. (Photo by Jim Long)

## MAPPING HISTORY WITH HISTORY MARKERS: IS THIS A MAP?

By *Albert Earl Hines*

David L. Ulin, a critic for the Tribune Newspaper comments: “Here’s what I like about maps. They offer clarity, a shape to the world. The routes and boundaries allow us to explore widely, even (or especially) if we don’t leave home. They speak of possibilities both in terms of places we may visit and those we will never visit.” In his book review of Simon Garfield’s *‘On the Map’*, he remarks that this book “aspires to be both a popular history of cartography and a loose meditation on the role of maps in human life.” He compliments the notion that history is the consideration of past events, while pondering their impact on the ‘here and now’.(1)

But when is a map not a map?

History markers can be seen as a “connect the dots” exercise that produces a map of chronologically and geographically related events. The Maryland State Roads Commission and the Maryland Historical Society cooperate in the administration of a state-wide “history markers” endeavor.(2) Approximately 800 markers are remaining in the state since the inception of this program in 1933. In Baltimore County there are 71 markers.(3)

One such history marker (today in Harford County) entitled “The Joppa Road” notes that Joppa Town was the county seat of Baltimore County from 1712 to 1768. If you were to see Joppa today, now a 1960’s planned community, you may wonder how this could have been. An article by Jennie E. Jessop in the December 1969 issue of *HSBC History Trails* gives us an answer. It tells the story of “original” Joppa’s journey from being an “important shipping port” engaging in international trade in the tobacco market to being a phantom town. In 1768, some fifty years after its founding, Joppa’s fine harbor was considered a probability for becoming a recognized seaport. Unfortunately, Joppa’s location had its problems. Marsh land surrounding the harbor rendered it a target for near continuous deposits of mud and silt, apparently resulting from the up-river clearance of long standing forests. The silted harbor environment also proved itself to be a source for malaria.(4)



The Joppa Road .100ft West of Edgecliff Road  
Map Coordinates: N39 23 48 W76 34  
23 Mht.maryland.gov/historical markers

The short version of this story can be summarized thus: its geographic position where the Little Gunpowder Falls meets Gunpowder River near what is now known as Rumsey Island, made original Joppa Town an ideal location for a major port and “rival of Baltimore”(5) but by early nineteenth century, Joppa Town had completed its fateful journey from seaport to an abandoned “ghost town”. The county seat then moved to Baltimore Town,(6) which was part of Baltimore County until 1851. As we journey through history, geography and time, a final marker connecting these dots brings us to the “here and now”, the historical marker at the courthouse in Towson, the current county seat. It indicates that it has been the county seat since 1854, after Baltimore City and County became separate entities.(7)

1. David L. Ulin, *The Baltimore Sun*, A&E, Book Review: 2/17/2013, p. 4, Simon Garfield, *‘On the Map’* Gotham Press

2. Joe A. Swisher, Roger Miller, *Complete guide to Maryland Historic Markers*; Image publishing 1996, p11

3. “Maryland Historical Markers, History of Maryland’s Historical Markers program”, <http://Mht.maryland.gov/historicalMarkers>.

4. Jennie E. Jessop, “Ghost Towns of Baltimore County”, *History Trails*, Historical Society of Baltimore County, Vol. 4, No. 2, Dec., 1969. p1

5. Historical Marker “Joppa Road” [Mht.maryland.gov/historical markers/](http://Mht.maryland.gov/historicalmarkers/)

6. Neal Brooks, Eric Rockel, *History of Baltimore County*, Friends of Towson Library, 1944, p.29

7. Historical Marker “Baltimore County Courthouse” [Mht.maryland.gov/historicalmarkers/](http://Mht.maryland.gov/historicalmarkers/)



## VOLUNTEER CORNER

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

HSBC staff celebrated the 90th Birthday of two of our volunteers, Helen Kemp and Charlie Clifton. Helen and Charlie volunteer in our research library on Fridays and assist our library patrons with finding materials as well as helping to maintain our vertical surname files. Cheers to Helen and Charlie! *(photos by Robert Levine)*

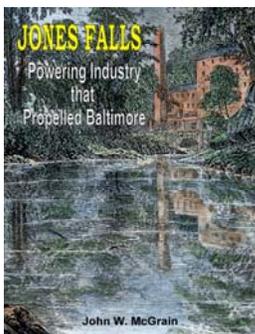


### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

**Almshouse Bus Tours** -The Bus Tour Committee is in need of volunteers to help plan our next tour. The first meeting will be on Saturday January 9, 2016 at 10 AM. If you are interested, please join us for coffee and donuts and share some ideas with us.

**Writers**– The newsletter committee is looking for short one page articles related to Baltimore County History for this newsletter . Please submit your well written, complete articles to Martha Hendrickson for consideration. Email : [newsletter@hsobc.org](mailto:newsletter@hsobc.org).

## PUBLICATIONS MAKE GREAT HOLIDAY GIFTS



### *JONES FALLS; POWERING INDUSTRY THAT PROPELLED BALTIMORE*

by John McGrain ( copies still available !)

\$21.00

Copies of John McGrain’s newly published book "Jones Falls, Powering Industry that Propelled Baltimore" are still available (exclusively from HSBC.) The price is \$21.00 tax included. Get your copies now through the HSBC Library in person, by phone with credit card or on our website. While supplies still last. (makes a great Holiday gift!) Shipping can be arranged for \$5.00. Initially, a 3 copy maximum per patron.

### *OUT WEST: CATONSVILLE AT LARGE -TOUR BOOKLET*

\$10.00

These booklets were made for the Almshouse Legacy Tour V bus trip and are now available for sale. Full of photographs, maps and interesting information about the history of Catonsville it is a must have!

### *CATONSVILLE, GEOGRAPHICALLY THROUGH THE YEARS 1795-2015*

\$10.00

Interesting historic land plats and maps of the area of Catonsville make up this booklet, produced in conjunction with the Catonsville Bus Tour.

## WHAT IS IT?

Can you guess what this is?

Hint: it was used to prepare part of a Baltimore traditional Thanksgiving and sometimes Christmas dinner. (Answer will be in next issue)



**JUMBLE ANSWERS**  
 #1 Oh Christmas Tree (S,S,T) #2 Good King Wenceslas (G,G,E,S,S) #3 Rudulf the Red Nose Reindeer  
 (R,N,D,E)#4 We Wish You a Merry Christmas (I,O,E,S,A) ) FINAL ANSWER:-SEASONS GREETINGS

## DID YOU KNOW?

Oh my, it's that time of year again. Into the storage area we go. It's time to break out the Christmas decorations. Do we need new lights for the tree?

This is a time honored tradition for many families throughout the world. But do we know when and where the tradition began?

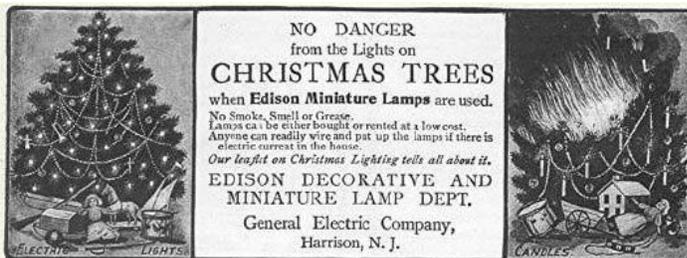
It probably began more than a 1000 years ago in Northern Europe. Tradition has it that the tree is of Germanic origin. There are many stories about the origin of the Christmas Tree set in Germany. One story is about St. Boniface, who was a missionary to Germany. He wanted to stop the pagan Germans from worshipping at an oak tree. So he cut down the tree and a young fir tree sprang up from the roots. Another story tells of Martin Luther who was walking through the forest one night and looked up and saw the stars shining through the branches of the fir trees. He thought this sight was so beautiful that he brought a tree into his house and put candles on the tree.

In Germany, the first trees were decorated with edible things, for example, gingerbread, nuts and gold covered apples. Later on glassmakers made small ornaments similar to what we use today.

The first Christmas trees came to Britain in the 1830's. They became very popular in 1841 when Prince Albert (Queen Victoria's German husband) set up a Christmas Tree in Windsor Castle. Originally, the trees were placed on a table not on the floor. It was not until the Christmas Tree came to America that the Victorians placed the tree on the floor.



THE CHRISTMAS TREE.  
The tree at Windsor Castle, from  
Godey's Ladies Book, 1850



1901 GE Advertisement, promoting sale or rental of Christmas light bulbs, from the November, 1901 issue of McClure's Magazine.

In Victorian times, the tree was decorated with candles to represent the stars that Martin Luther saw on his walk through the forest. Because of the threat of fire due to lit candles, a way to prevent this needed to be found. The advent of electricity solved this problem. In 1882, an associate of Thomas Edison, electrically lit a Christmas tree in his home. His name was Edward Johnson and was vice-

president of Edison's electric company. The tree which was in the parlor of his home, was located in the first section of New York City to be wired for electricity and featured multicolored lights that switched on and off on a rotating tree. Ralph Morris, who was an employee of the New England Telephone Company, also came up with an idea of tree lighting by using telephone switchboard lights to illuminate a tabletop feather tree in 1908.

There are many other stories associated with the origin of the Christmas tree. I have mentioned only a few. However, the one thing we do know is that the Christmas tree is the center of our holiday season.

**Happy Holidays!** —Pat Routson

Sources: [WhyChristmas.com/trees.shtml](http://WhyChristmas.com/trees.shtml)  
[oldchristmastreelights.com/history.htm](http://oldchristmastreelights.com/history.htm)

**HSBC** HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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**Contributors**

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Fridays - noon to 4 p.m.

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