



HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BALTIMORE COUNTY



NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2015

NEW TOURS OF THE ALMSHOUSE !

Our volunteers are ready to take you on a new walking tour of our Historic Baltimore County Almshouse. Schedule a time, on either a Wednesday or a Saturday, to discover the who, what, where, when and why of life in a 19th and early 20th century home for the sick and destitute.



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- *Almshouse Tour*
- *Miniature Show*
- *Upcoming Events*
- *You may Have Missed*
- *The Historic Almshouse*
- *Just for Fun*
- *Volunteer Corner*
- *New Publications*
- *What is this?*
- *Did You Know...?*

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. Please contact Sharon at sharonleggin@hsobc.org or 410-252-6622 to schedule your tour.

NOVEMBER MINIATURE SHOW HAS HOLIDAY THEME



Once again, it is time for our biennial miniature show by Maryland Miniatures Unlimited and the Historical Society of Baltimore County . We invite you to join us for a miniatures exhibition and a day of fun and history at the historic Baltimore County Almshouse!

This November exhibit will have a Holiday theme this year and will feature dollhouses, miniatures, his-

torical exhibits, and a free children's activity. The Historical Society will feature some of their own collection of miniatures, and two historic dollhouse replicas, The George Wythe House (Williamsburg), and the Betsy Ross House (Philadelphia). There will also be a return of the Montebello House in this, the 100th anniversary year of the Montebello Filtration Plant. Many other intricate dollhouses, room boxes and miniatures will be shown in different scales. The kids can enjoy a free make and take project. A sales table in another area gives the opportunity to purchase some miniature items! Admission is \$8 for adults and children six and over. Children under six are free. All door proceeds will benefit the Historical Society of Baltimore County.



THE CITIZENS OF BALTIMORE COUNTY

UPCOMING EVENTS

First Thursdays: October 1, 2015; November 5, 2015; December 3, 2015; Jan. 7, 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. Bring your laptops with you! Let us help you to explore the areas of family history that interest you.

Learn various methods of::

- Conducting Oral History
- Preserving your Family's History and Military History
- Organizing a Research Strategy

Learn how to access the basic documents :

- Federal Census Records
- State Vital Records – Birth, Marriage & Death– Military Records
- Online Databases and Connecting with other genealogists

Sun., October 18th, 2:00–3:15 pm @ Catonsville Historical Society (free)

RUMOR OR FACT: A TOWN UNDER LOCH RAVEN RESERVOIR?

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 on October 18th. A speaker from the Historical Society of Baltimore County will present facts and pictures about Loch Raven Reservoir and Warren, MD

Sat., November 14th @ Back River Treatment Plant Auditorium (free)

BALTIMORE, FROM SANITARY TO SUSTAINABLE METROPOLIS: A HISTORY OF OUR SEWAGE SYSTEM

Our 4th annual jointly sponsored program with the Baltimore City Historical Society titled, *Baltimore, from Sanitary to Sustainable Metropolis: A History of our Sewage System*, will feature the following guest speakers: Morgan Grove, Baltimore Ecosystem Study; Paige Glotzer, Johns Hopkins University; Kurt Kocher and others from Baltimore Department of Public Works. Free admission and parking.

Sat., Nov 21 11.00 am—4:00pm; Sun Nov 22, 11:00am—3:00pm @ HSBC Headquarters

MINIATURES SHOW AND SALE

Join us for the bi-annual miniature exhibit presented for the HSBC by Maryland Miniatures Unlimited. The joint exhibit will feature dollhouses, miniatures, historical exhibits, and a free children's activity. and dollhouses from the HSBC collection. Admission is \$8.00 for adults and children six and over. Children under six are free. All door proceeds will benefit the Historical Society of Baltimore County.

YOU MAY HAVE MISSED...

MARYLAND STATE FAIR

There were nearly 4,000 guests who stopped by the HSBC booth this year at the Maryland State Fair, up[392 from last year's numbers. Our exhibit was in the Museum building again but in a better location; in direct view of visitors entering the building. Featured were books for sale, and displays for the upcoming fundraising events such as the Bus Tour , Concert at Sotir Farm in October, and the Miniature Exhibit in November.

We wish to thank the 33 volunteers who helped work the booth and especially the volunteer recruiters, Johnna Suter and Sally Riley. Also, thanks to all who gave extra time to set-up and take down the displays. Finally a very special thank you to John Gasparini who was instrumental in getting us into the fair. *(Photos by Robert Levine)*



MONTEBELLO 100

We had a great turnout for the Montebello 100 event due in part to TV and radio advertising by the Department of Public Works. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting the visitors who stopped by the history section and the HSBC booth in front of the gatehouse at Lake Montebello. The public was very interested in learning about water history in the city and county, and examined our items and photo displays with interest. The miniatures



at our table attracted children and adults alike. All of the partner history exhibitors made this section a success with fire trucks, ladies in period costumes, postcard paintings, antique cars, historic photos around the lake, and a look inside the gatehouse.



The highlight of the day was the unveiling of the historic marker for Montebello with Mayor Stephanie Rawlings Blake, Director of Public works Rudolf Chow and other dignitaries present. Thanks to Baltimore City Historical Society and to Kurt Kocher of DPW for inviting us to participate, and for organizing the event. Many thanks to our volunteers, Martha Hendrickson, Allen Hendrickson, Cynthia Mann, Pat Routson and Earl Hines.

REMEMBERING WINTERS LANE



Louis Diggs spoke about the history of the "Winters Lane" community and brought along many slides for his talk at the HSBC Almshouse on September 27, 2015. Everyone enjoyed an interesting presentation. The event also included a book sale and signing by Mr. Diggs for his book "African Americans who served in the Civil War". There are a few of these books left, and they are available at the HSBC headquarters. Contact us by phone or stop in for your copy! *(Photo by Jim Long)*

THE HISTORIC BALTIMORE COUNTY ALMSHOUSE : AN INVITATION

By Sharon Leggin

While most people are aware that the *Historical Society of Baltimore County* is located in a building known as the Almshouse, how many have heard about the rich history of this building? According to the dictionary, an *almshouse* is described as: ‘*a locally administered public institution for aged and homeless persons without means*’, often operated in tandem with a farm, in order to supply the inmates with their dietary needs, and also to sell the surplus for support of the institution.(1)

Our Baltimore County Almshouse operated as a refuge for indigent and ill persons from the late 19th century through the middle of the 20th century. From its beginning, it was intended to operate as a farm, and was open to all races, all ages, and both genders of adults. Residents, referred to at the time as ‘inmates’, were required to help work either inside the Almshouse or on the farm, if they were physically capable of doing so.

Supported by county and state taxes, the people who resided in the Almshouse were usually dispatched there by either the County Commissioners, or other public servants of the county, such as the sheriff or the Health Department.(2) In the early years, the Almshouse also operated as a depository for people who were labeled insane *and* destitute.(3) In fact, when the building was first erected, iron shutters were installed on the 3rd floor windows, in order to curtail insane inmates from falling or jumping out.(4)

You may have noticed, while viewing the Almshouse from the side parking lot, that the front/west wing of the building is two stories high, while the back/east wing is three stories high with dormer attic. Why are these two sections of one building different heights? Were both sections built at the same time? Is there a reason for the difference in height?

What activities constituted daily life for different classes of residents, and what happened to this beautiful limestone building when it closed its doors as an almshouse in the middle of the 20th century? This historic building abounds with mysteries. While our research has uncovered many, other secrets are yet to be discovered.

We invite you to come and learn more about the various superintendents and the former inmates, all of whom called the Almshouse home. Our docents stand ready to guide you through the building, with stories and photos, to enliven your understanding.

Notes:

1. *Encyclopedia Britannica* online, s.v. “Almshouse”. March 11, 2015
2. “Local Matters”, *The Union*, Towsontown Md., May 6, 1873
3. “Affairs in Baltimore County – Towsontown Md.” *Baltimore Sun*, September 29, 1880
4. “New County Almshouse”, *Baltimore Sun*, January 8, 1874

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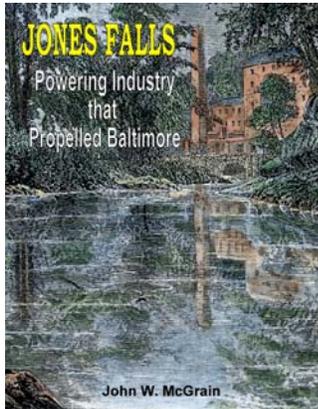
VOLUNTEER CORNER

VOLUNTEERS, THANK YOU! A big thank you to all the volunteers that organized and helped with State Fair, Montebello 100, the Catonsville Tour , the Concert Benefit and the Sunday lectures series. Its great to have you on the team !

VOLUNTEER NEEDED

Assistant Librarian for the HSBC Library Research Center. We are seeking an additional volunteer to work with our librarians in maintaining our library collections and assisting our patrons in locating materials. This volunteer opportunity will require computer experience. Preferred volunteer days Friday or Saturdays. A great opportunity to learn as well as help others!

NEW PUBLICATIONS



JONES FALLS; POWERING INDUSTRY THAT PROPELLED BALTIMORE

by John McGrain (available exclusively at HSBC) \$21.00

Baltimore County Historian John McGrain has just published his latest book on the Industrial History of the Jones Falls which covers the development of the valley, the many mills along it, and the floods. This newly published book "Jones Falls, Powering Industry that Propelled Baltimore" is available exclusively from HSBC. The price is \$21.00 tax included. You may purchase copies now through the HSBC Library in person, by phone with credit card or on our website. 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? ANSWER

This metal container, which holds two dozen eggs, was used to ship eggs from the farmer directly to a customer without having to go through a grocer. This mailer contains the original paper insert showing packing instructions, mailing rates and price lists. It says you could insure the eggs at 5 cents each up to a \$5.00 value. The post office paid for broken eggs. A shipping label was affixed to the instruction paper and positioned underneath the open label slot in the lid of the carrier. It was manufactured by McNiff Horticultural Co.(The photo is of a duplicate of the object shown last issue. This one in better condition. This egg box was donated by Mrs. George E. Gompf)



ID no. 1977.26.01

JUMBLE ANSWERS
- #1 The Gold Bug (O,G) #2 The Pit and the Pendulum (P,E,L,) #3 The Raven (A,N)#4 The Tell Tale Heart (E,L,A,R) #5 The Cask of Amontillado (A,D) FINAL ANSWER:-EDGAR ALLAN POE

DID YOU KNOW?

That according to nineteenth-century funeral rituals and superstitions, the clock in the room of the home where a person died would have been stopped at the moment of his or her death ?

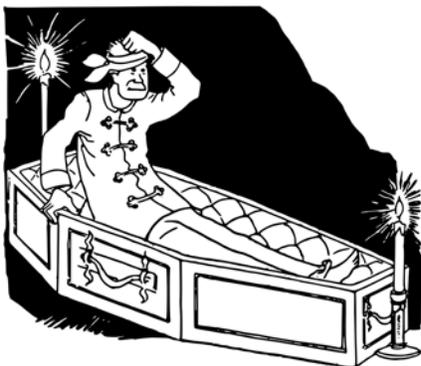
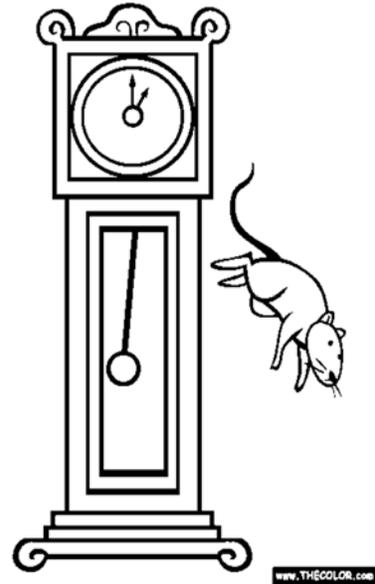
The clock would not be restarted until after the burial. Not stopping the clock meant the family of the household would have bad luck. Since superstitions abounded in this time period, anything reflective or shiny, including mirrors and glass, would be covered in order to prevent the soul from being trapped and thus hinder the deceased from passing to the other side. If a mirror in your house was to fall or break by itself, it meant that someone in the home would soon die. Crepe might also be draped over fireplace mantels, windows, shelves, and especially in the bedroom of the deceased. Typically, family photos were turned face down to prevent any of the close relatives from being possessed by the spirit of the dead.

To show the community there was a death in the family, the front door of the deceased's home was commonly draped in black crepe with ribbons or in white if it was the death of a child. Ribbon or flower-covered wreaths were hung on doors, windows and mantels. Curtains and shades were drawn, and shutters were closed.

The fear of burying someone who was not dead but in a coma gave birth to the custom of "waking," and so the body was watched over every minute until burial. Most wakes lasted several days to allow relatives to arrive from far away. Also, before embalming became popular, flowers and candles helped to mask unpleasant odors in the room.

It was also believed that carrying the dead out of the house feet-first prevented the spirit from looking back into the house and beckoning another family member to follow him.

-Linda Haynes



HSBC HISTORICAL SOCIETY
of BALTIMORE COUNTY

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Research Library Hours:

Fridays - noon to 4 p.m.

Saturdays - 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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