



HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BALTIMORE COUNTY



# NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2016

## HOLIDAY CHEER AT SILO HILL FUNDRAISER

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- *Holiday Fundraiser*
- *Upcoming Events*
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- *Just for Fun*
- *Volunteer Corner*
- *Did You Know?*
- *What Is It?*



Photo by Jeff Higdon

We are pleased to announce that *An Evening of Holiday Cheer at Silo Hill*, our largest fundraiser of the year, will be held on Saturday, December 10, 2016 from 6-9 PM. Silo Hill is a cozy, rustic barn with a beautiful stone fireplace located at the Sotir Farm in Phoenix, Maryland. The evening will be a gathering of friends and supporters celebrating the holiday season. We are excited that the new STEINWAY & SONS SPIRIO, the world's finest high-resolution player piano, will be entertaining us.

In addition, our hostess for the evening, vocalist and TV host Carolyn Black-Sotir, will sing a few holiday classics accompanied by pianist Dr. Matthew Bachmann. HSBC will take you back in time as the evening ends with an old-fashioned Christmas carol sing-along by the roaring fire. Wine & craft beer, hors d'oeuvres and desserts will be served. Tickets are \$25 per person and available online at [www.hsobc.org/2016eveningofcheer](http://www.hsobc.org/2016eveningofcheer), or by completing the enclosed order form or contacting HSBC at [info@hsobc.org](mailto:info@hsobc.org) or 410-666-1878.

During the evening, the winning ticket for the *Cart of Cheer Raffle* will be drawn. These tickets are being sold separately for \$5 each or 5 for \$20. They may be bought ahead of time at HSBC or at the event. Please note, you do not have to be there to win. So please encourage your friends and co-workers to buy them as well. Good luck!

Lastly, we are selling sponsorships. There are three levels of sponsorships available: bronze (\$100), silver (\$250) and gold (\$500). We are publicizing this event through mailings to our membership, throughout our social media network, on our website, through mass e-mails and more. We need the help of sponsors to make this event a great success. Please reach out to your contacts and ask them to consider becoming a sponsor. Sponsorship forms that describe each level and its benefits are enclosed.

If you are unable to attend the party, we understand but hope that you will find a way to support us through the purchase of raffle tickets, a sponsorship or donation.

The proceeds from this event will assist HSBC in its mission of collecting, preserving, and interpreting the entirety of Baltimore County history by offering lectures, oral histories, bus tours, a research library, genealogy classes, regular publications, and much more. Please stop by and see us.

Thank you for continuing to support HSBC and we hope to see you for some holiday cheer!

—Vicki Young and Jeffrey Higdon  
Co-Chairs, 2016 Holiday Fundraiser Committee



Silo Hill barn interior – Photo by Jim Long



THE CITIZENS OF BALTIMORE COUNTY

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Wednesdays and Saturdays: by appointment only @ HSBC Almshouse Headquarters**  
**ALMSHOUSE TOURS (\$8.00 per person, free for HSBC 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 Pat Routson at HSBC headquarters 410-666-1878 to schedule your tour.

**First Thursdays each month: Nov. 3, 2016, Dec. 1, 2016, Jan. 5, 2017, Feb. 2, 2017, 10:00am-2:00pm @ 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. Walton-Raji is the author of *Black Indian Genealogy Research: African American Ancestors Among the Five Civilized Tribes*. The instructors have a wealth of general and niche genealogy knowledge, experience, and resources to share.

**Sat., October 22, 2016, 9:00am-5:00pm @ HSBC Almshouse Headquarters**

**HSBC LEGACY BUS TOUR VI: EARLY BALTIMORE COUNTY (\$75 HSBC members, \$85 non-members) (Sold out)**

This year's tour will visit Historic Fork, Kingsville, Franklinville, Jerusalem Mills and include a buffet lunch at Mountain Branch Grill. After lunch we will enjoy a walking tour of historic Jerusalem Mill Village, including the Museum, Blacksmith Shop and General Store. Be sure to wear your walking shoes and bring your camera. The area within the Gunpowder Valley is most scenic.



*The Patapsco, HSBC Coll. PO10032*

**Sat., Nov. 12, 2016, 2:00-4:00 pm @ HSBC Almshouse Headquarters**  
**5th ANNUAL JOINT PROGRAM OF HSBC AND BCHS: "WADING IN THE WATERS OF AN UNSUNG RIVER" (Free to all)**

This 5th annual joint program of the Historical Society of Baltimore County and Baltimore City Historical Society is entitled, "Wading in the Waters of an Unsung River: The Life and Times of the Patapsco, Baltimore's River of History and River of Hope." Presenters are Alison Kahn, author, and Peggy Fox, photographer, of *Patapsco: Life Along Maryland's Historic River Valley* and Paul Travers, author of *The Patapsco: Baltimore's River of History*. They will discuss the culture, environment, history and people of the Patapsco.

**Sun., Dec. 10, 2016, 6:00-9:00pm @ Silo Barn at Sotir Hill, 14601 Cooper Rd., Phoenix, MD**  
**FUNDRAISER: AN EVENING OF HOLIDAY CHEER AT SILO HILL (\$25.00/person)**

Please see cover page for event details and ticket information.

## LOOKING FOR GIFT IDEAS FOR FRIENDS, CLIENTS OR EMPLOYEES? HSBC IS OFFERING A NEW GIFT SUBSCRIPTION

With the holidays just around the corner, HSBC is pleased to announce a new gift subscription available individually or for groups. The \$10 subscription will include:

- A one-year subscription to our public history journal, *History Trails*, delivered by post
- A one-year subscription to our newsletter delivered via email
- One free admission to either our research center or a Sunday Speakers Series event (normally a \$5 value)

Purchasers will receive a certificate to present to the gift recipient. For more information, please contact HSBC at [info@hsbc.org](mailto:info@hsbc.org) or call us at 410-666-1878.

## YOU MAY HAVE MISSED...

### **DAM JAM 2016 - August 20, 2016**

Despite the sweltering heat, we had approximately 280 visitors stop by the HSBC and BCHS booth at this year's Dam Jam. A shuttle brought people to us at the Loch Raven Dam from the Cromwell Valley Park. There was great interest expressed in the history of Baltimore City and County. Our photo board displays and handouts generated discussion. The public also enjoyed the rare opportunity to once again see the reservoir from the observation deck and see the inside of the gatehouse. Thanks to all of our volunteers, Allen Hendrickson, Cynthia Mann, Kathleen Barry, Tom Graf and Martha Hendrickson. We enjoyed as always doing the event with the Baltimore City Historical Society. We also thank the DPW, Kurt Kocher and Mike Luh.



Photo by Martha Hendrickson

### **PUBLIC HISTORY > LOCAL HISTORY > YOUR HISTORY**

#### **Speaker: Ruth Mascari - August 21, 2016**

According to Ruth Mascari, "While academic history that is taught inside the classroom is critical, it lacks the elements of spontaneity and hands on opportunity. Public history is there to touch and see and be part of." Ms. Mascari used photographs and artifacts to prove her point. She had many artifacts that we could see and touch after her presentation. Among the objects that she displayed were an old black dress, a casket handle and a red toy truck. She also encouraged the audience to share the objects that they had brought along.

#### **HSBC ANTIQUES APPRAISAL FAIR @ Alex Cooper Auctioneers - August 23, 2016**

HSBC Board member Brian Cooper and appraisal staff of Alex Cooper Auctioneers in Towson donated their time to appraise antiques and benefit the Historical Society. Numerous appraisers with varying specialties were on hand to shed light on family treasures and heirlooms, with all funds raised supporting HSBC. Attendees enjoyed not only the appraisals, but also the thousands of interesting objects on display in Alex Cooper's elegant, newly renovated galleries. Thank you, Alex Cooper Auctioneers!



Photo by Jim Long

#### **STATE FAIR - August 25-September 5, 2016**

The Historical Society of Baltimore County had a booth at the Maryland State Fair again this year. The booth was located in the Exhibition Hall near the race track. There were volunteers manning the booth for seven days with approximately 2,800 visitors. Many of the people who stopped by received a free 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Map or a lollipop. The volunteers reported many interesting discussions with the visitors about Baltimore County history. People enjoyed old photographs of Baltimore County farms and the State Fair on display. Many visitors enjoyed hearing about the Fall Bus Tour, and the Sunday Speakers Series. There were also raffle tickets on sale for the Holiday Event at Sotir Farm.



Photo by Jim Long

#### **PAPER MONEY AND THE NATIONAL BANKS OF BALTIMORE COUNTY**

##### **Speaker: Armand Shank - Sept. 25, 2016**

Mr. Armand Shank spoke to a very engaged audience about the history of paper money and who issued it, especially in Baltimore County. He showed a number of slides of the various forms of dollar bills in assorted denominations which have been used by Maryland citizens



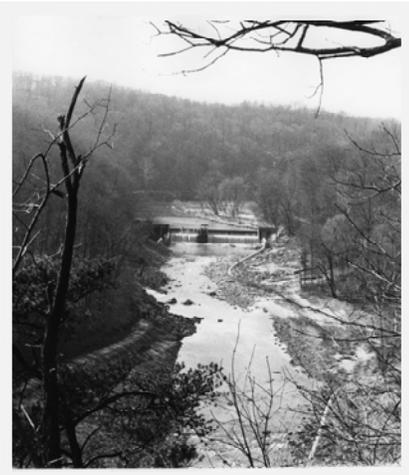
Photo by Jim Long

from colonial times to the mid-20th century. Mr. Shank also shared several little known facts about currency with his audience.



Photo by Jim Long

## UN-HARNESSING THE PATAPSCO RIVER – BLOEDE DAM



*Bloede Dam from Buzzards Rock, 1980's,  
HSBC Collection P010043*

Bloede Dam is located in the Glen Artney, Avalon and Orange Grove area of the Patapsco State Park. It is scheduled to be taken down sometime in 2017. Considered a marvel of engineering technology when it was constructed in 1906, it was one of the last attempts to harness the power of this Elkridge to Daniels section of the Patapsco River.

Through the better part of two centuries, the Patapsco River Valley powered the industrial revolution. The production of precious commodities of paper, flour, iron, and textiles aided the American Revolution, War of 1812, the Civil War, and the growth of Baltimore. In the early 1800's the valley was the largest producer of iron and flour in the world. After the floods of 1866 and 1868, however, a large majority of the mills, most of which resided on the Baltimore County side of the river, were destroyed, never to be rebuilt. Eventually, the rest of the water-powered mills succumbed to repeated flooding and fire, as well as

changing technology. By the 20th century, water-powered mills were outdated and electricity was in.

With the growing need for electricity in the Ellicott City, Ilchester and Catonsville areas, one of Catonsville's prominent residents, Victor Bloede, saw an opportunity for a private utility. Most of this service area was out of the range of the current Consolidated Gas, Electric and Light Power Company. Victor Bloede was an innovator in the area of gum and dyes. After making his money by inventing the adhesive used on postage stamps, he moved to Catonsville in 1877 to start a manufacturing firm producing inks, dyes, and adhesives. He became the main force behind the formation of the Patapsco Electric Power Company in 1901 and became its president.

The construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Patapsco presented problems at first. A new dam and power plant was constructed in 1901 at the site of the former Gray's Mills (between Ilchester and Ellicott City). By 1902, it was realized that this plant was not supplying enough power. Plans to develop a bigger plant below Ilchester were developed. The idea of building a much higher dam to produce the amount of electricity needed was cost prohibitive and the dam backflow would have affected upstream communities. To solve the problem, the electric power generating machinery was located within the hollow interior of the dam, utilizing maximum hydraulic power of the water. Thus, the nation's first underwater hydroelectric plant was built.

Paul Travers, in *The Patapsco: Baltimore's River of History*, sums it up this way: "At the time of its completion, the dam represented a milestone in construction technology. Not only was it among the earliest reinforced concrete dams built in the United States, it was also the first to use the technique of housing electricity-generating machinery in its hollow interior. Bloede's Dam was recognized as the first underwater hydroelectric plant. The dam was described in many scientific and engineering journals, both in the United States and Europe."

An additional benefit to having machinery inside the dam was that it could be operated year-round; since the water intake was 6 feet below the surface and would not freeze. The dam was 220 feet long, and 40 feet wide at the base, and rose to 26.5 feet. Originally there were 19 concrete buttresses supporting a deck or walkway that rose 10 feet above the spillway. The hollow enclosed portion of the dam below the spillway accommodated the turbine machinery. There were portholes on the overflow side to let light in through the flowing water. Water was fed to the turbines through steel pipes passing through an upstream spillway shell. Each turbine was directly connected to an alternator. The two 30-inch, 500hp horizontal Samson Turbines were capable of a electromotive force of 11,000 volts. The water was discharged by draft tube into the base of the dam, dropping into a well some three feet

*(Continued on page 7)*

# JUST FOR FUN-

For you puzzlers out there, we have put together a little brain teaser. Answers on page 6. Good Luck!

## JUMBLE

The autumnal Holiday season is near; soon we'll indulge in family cheer

Unravel the clues and fill in the blank, here's a hint: think of harvest, and ghosts, and of thanks.

**Unscramble these jumbles- one letter to each square to unravel the names of a few we have chosen from the meritorious many.**

Clue #1- Remember the dead and the saints and the martyrs, and all of the faithful now dearly departed  
 On this first of three days of Christian observance, yet now rarely practiced by all but the fervent  
 Or by children in costumes and begging for treats, or indulging in sly childish whimsy

○		
LAL		

○						
SHOWALL						

○	
VEE	

Clue #2 - Give thanks for the blessing of a harvest of bounty, as families gather in both city and county  
 Loved ones returning to hearth and to home, assuring that no one will be left alone  
 So many shall pause to give thought and reflection to family, friends and their heartfelt affection

○	○	○							
VIKINGSGNATH									

Clue #3- From a colorful gourd and some spice and confection this exquisite pie is the height of perfection

○	○				
KIPNUMP					

		○
EPI		

Clue #4- Whether leg or thigh or wing or breast this savory bird is considered the best  
 Whether thigh or leg or breast or wing, this native bird is just the thing

○		
OMT		

○	○	○			
KETYUR					

**Now arrange the circled letters to form answer suggested by the final clue.**

**Final Clue:**

It's hard to consider in our modern day  
 With all of the time that we fritter away  
 That our forefathers toiled from sunrise to set  
 At this time of year to thwart starvation's threat

○	○	○	○	○	○
---	---	---	---	---	---

○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

- Jumble by  
 Allen Hendrickson

## VOLUNTEER CORNER

### From the Director – Praise for Volunteers

As we catch our breath after a busy stretch of events, I want to sing our volunteers' praises. They are second to none in their commitment to the Historical Society and in their knowledge and enthusiasm about local history. I have been wanting to write this column since August 20<sup>th</sup>, when HSBC board president Tom Graf and I staffed a booth along with volunteers Cynthia Mann and Martha and Allen Hendrickson at Dam Jam 2016 at Loch Raven Dam. I was not at all surprised to see how friendly and knowledgeable Cynthia, Martha, and Allen were in fielding visitors' question, but it was still impressive to watch them work and to hear the interesting questions and observations people had. Martha deserves a special note of thanks for bringing display boards of her own on the history of the water system and patiently offering repeated mini-lectures to curious visitors (in some serious August sun, I should add).

At the State Fair, no fewer than twenty-five of our volunteers, board members, staff, and members turned out to represent HSBC at our booth, many working multiple shifts and braving the heat walking to and from the parking areas. Again, visitors had lots of questions and our volunteers had lots of answers, drawing on their deep knowledge of Baltimore County history. I was inspired by the thoughtfulness of all the historical conversations that took place around our booth. Thanks, everyone, for helping us put our best face forward to more than 2,800 Marylanders. Special appreciation is due to our volunteer coordinator Jim Long, who did an extraordinary job of organizing our presence at the Fair beforehand and throughout the event, and to HSBC board member John Gasparini, who arranged yet again for our donated space in the Exhibition Hall. —*Kathleen Barry*

#### HSBC'ers who worked at the State Fair (alphabetically)

Nancy Anderson	Tom Graf	Dale Kirchner	Mike McCarthy	Mike Stilwell
Kathy Aspden	Patrick Hanley	Susan Kirchner	Taylor McKenna	Pat Stilwell
Kathleen Barry	Jeff Higdon	Tom Lonegro	Mike Pierce	Johnna Suter
Charles Clifton	Earl Hines	Jim Long	Sally Riley	Valerie Thaxter-Grant
Bud Cornell	Len Kennedy	Cynthia Mann	Pat Routson	Cassie Thompson

## DID YOU KNOW?

### **That in 1941 the date of Thanksgiving was made a Federal Law due to conflicting observances?**

Although Thanksgiving had been observed as a harvest day and day of thanks since the first settlers, it wasn't until 1863 that Abraham Lincoln declared that Thanksgiving would be a national day of prayer to be observed the last Thursday of November. Afterwards all his successors followed suit by annually declaring the last Thursday of November to be Thanksgiving, until 1939. In that year there were five Thursdays in November and Roosevelt declared that Thanksgiving would be on the fourth Thursday. Following the Great Depression, when it was considered inappropriate to shop for the Christmas Holidays before Thanksgiving, it was thought that giving an extra week to the holiday shopping season would help the economy. Controversy followed, and Thanksgiving was observed on different weeks in different parts of the country. Finally in 1941 it was resolved. At first, both houses of Congress passed a resolution to observe it on the last Thursday. However, in the same year, it was amended by the Senate to be the fourth Thursday, which would satisfy both sides, since the fourth Thursday is usually the last Thursday and only sometimes next to last. The resolution was signed into law in 1941 by President Roosevelt.



(Continued from page 4)

below the riverbed. The dam was constructed by Emmerson Ferro-Concrete Company of Boston and described as being an Amberson Hydrylic Construction Company (Boston-type) reinforced concrete slab and buttress dam. The consulting hydraulic engineer was H.J. van Schon of Detroit and electrical engineers were Newton and Painter of Baltimore.

Eventually the Maryland Public Service Commission refused the company license to continue as an electricity supplier and in 1913 the dam was purchased for the Consolidated Gas and Electric and Power Company of Baltimore. It operated to supply electricity to Baltimore County and parts of Baltimore City until it was discontinued in 1924 after better power plants were developed. It went into disrepair, and the inner workings were removed. The 1972 flood of Tropical Storm Agnes created more damage to most of the super structures on top of the dam, but the portholes can still be seen. It still resides in the Patapsco Park between the Orange Grove area and Ilchester.

Today, plans are being made to dismantle the dam as part of the Patapsco River Restoration project. Reasons for doing so are several fold. First is safety; despite posted warnings, repeated drownings have occurred at the dam. Second is costs; comparative costs to keep the unused dam in repair to meet federal safety standards were prohibitive. Third is recreation; creation of a free-flowing river will create greater recreational opportunities in the park. Fourth is natural balance; restoration of balance of nature will improve the health of the river. This last is likely the paramount reason to eliminate this and other outdated dams on the main branch of the Patapsco\*. Silt and impedance of fish migrations have affected the natural life of the river. Restoring the main branch of the Patapsco back to a natural balance before man interfered will be a lasting legacy.

According to the Department of Natural Resources website, work is scheduled to take place from August 2016 until December 2017, and as a result parts of the grist mill trail will be closed. The history of the dam will be recorded and part of the dam may be preserved. —*Martha Hendrickson*

\*The Liberty Dam on the North Branch of the Patapsco near Reisterstown is necessary for our public drinking water supply. Liberty Reservoir has a capacity of 43 billion gallons.

#### Sources:

Paul J. Travers, *The Patapsco: Baltimore's River of History*, 2nd ed. (Atglen, Penn.: Shiffer Publishing, 2016).

Henry Sharp, *The Patapsco River Valley: Cradle of the Industrial Revolution in Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2001).

Neal Brooks and Richard Parsons, *Baltimore County Panorama* (Towson: Baltimore County Public Library, 1988).

Department of Natural Resources, "Patapsco Valley State Park" (<http://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/central/patapsco.aspx>) and "NRP, Howard County Divers Recover Body of Patapsco Swimmer," June 8, 2015 (<http://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2015/06/08/nrp-howard-county-divers-recover-body-of-patapsco-swimmer>).



## WHAT IS IT? ANSWER

If you attended the Agricultural Day or our State Fair exhibit you may already know that the object pictured is an **asparagus buncher**. Details about harvesting are mentioned in the *Farmers' Bulletin* of August 1917:

"The shoots are usually taken to a packing shed where they are graded, bunched and packed. They are often sorted into two or three grades, fancy of extra,

primes, and seconds. The fancy, or extra, grade consists of large straight shoots of good length; primes are smaller shoots, but may be as long as the fancy grade; seconds consist of short or slightly deformed shoots."... "After separating the shoots into the different grades they are place in a bunching machine with the heads all one way, only one grade being put into a bunch. When the bunching apparatus is full, the metal clamps are closed by means of a small lever and the asparagus is tied at each end with raffia or similar material. The butts are cut off evenly with a sharp knife and the bunches are often placed upright in a shallow tray containing about an inch of water. All the shoots in a bunch should be uniform in size and appearance. For a local retail trade it is an advantage to put up asparagus in small bunches that will retail at 5 to 10 cents."

Source: H.C. Thompson, "Asparagus," *Farmers' Bulletin* no. 829, United States Department of Agriculture (August 1917).

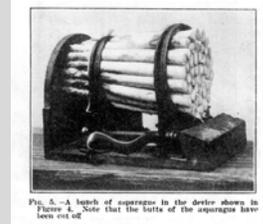


FIG. 5.—A bunch of asparagus in the device shown in Figure 4. Note that the butts of the asparagus have been cut off.

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

Vicki Young  
Jeff Higdon  
Kathleen Barry



**Research Library Hours:**

Fridays - noon to 4 p.m.

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

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