Unlike African American History Month, which grew over several decades from a grassroots “Negro History Week” campaign in the 1920s to a national, month-long celebration in the 1970s, the idea behind Women's History Month took hold relatively quickly (although it also started as a week). The seeds were sown in 1978, when the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women proclaimed a “Women's History Week.” The week of March 8th, International Women’s Day, was chosen and the resulting local events and parades met an enthusiastic response in communities and schools. The small but growing number of women’s historians at universities took note and began organizing larger women’s history week efforts.

In February 1980, President Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation recognizing the week of March 8th as National Women’s History Week. That same year, Maryland’s own Senator Barbara Mikulski, then serving in the US House of Representatives, and Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), co-sponsored a Congressional Resolution for National Women’s History Week in 1981. The bipartisan measure indicated the growing, broad-based support for honoring the history and achievements of American women. Within a few years, thousands of schools and communities were celebrating women’s history week with new curriculum materials, essay contests and public programs.

The calendar week surrounding March 8th, however, changed each year, requiring an annual round of lobbying efforts, proclamations, resolutions, etc. The idea of making the entire month of March a time to embrace women’s history took hold among advocates. By 1986, fourteen states had declared March to be Women’s History Month. In 1987, the US Congress designated March Women’s History Month in perpetuity, settling the matter for good.

Baltimore County can claim its fair share of remarkable women in its over 350-year history and HSBC wishes all a happy Women’s History Month!

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 there. Tours last approximately one hour, and are offered on Wednesdays and Saturdays, by appointment only. Please contact Pat Routson at HSBC headquarters at 410-666-1878 to schedule your tour.

First Thursdays each month: April 6, May 4, June 1, July 6, August 3, 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.

Sun., March 12, 2017, 2:00-4:00pm @ HSBC Almshouse Headquarters

B&O RAILROAD DURING THE CIVIL WAR ($5.00 per person, free for HSBC members)

Speaker: Dan Toomey

When the Civil War began, the Baltimore & Ohio quickly became the most important railroad in the nation. Located entirely within Maryland and the present state of West Virginia, it provided the only direct rail link between Washington, DC, and the loyal states. Its destruction was a constant Confederate objective throughout the war. Dan Toomey will explore this “First Front” idea based on his book, The War Came by Train: The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad During the Civil War.

Sun., April 2, 2017, 2:00-4:00pm @ HSBC Almshouse Headquarters

*CO-SPONSORED WITH THE PRESERVATION ALLIANCE OF BALTIMORE COUNTY*

MARYLAND VOICES OF THE CIVIL WAR: UNDERSTANDING THE CIVIL WAR EXPERIENCE ($5.00 per person, free for HSBC and Preservation Alliance members)

Speaker: Charles Mitchell

The Civil War deeply divided families, friends and communities. Through the lens of the civilian experience, this talk will examine the animating themes of Maryland’s Civil War story, such as the fate of civil liberties in time of war, the impact of military operations and the role that slaves themselves played in ending “the peculiar institution.” Mr. Mitchell’s award-winning book, Maryland Voices of the Civil War (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), is the product of twelve years of research, and draws on more than a thousand letters, diaries, and period newspapers (many previously unpublished) to portray the passions of a wide variety of people: merchants, slaves, soldiers, politicians, freemen, women, clergy, slave owners, civic leaders and children who were caught in the emotional vise of war.

Sun., April 23, 2017, 2:00-4:00pm @ HSBC Almshouse Headquarters

ANOTHER SUNDAY ($5.00 per person, free for HSBC members)

Speaker: Cynthia Strauff Schaub

It’s historical, so it has to be factual, right? It’s a novel, so it’s fiction, right? And how do you pin down all those details? Cynthia Strauff will share her adventures in writing, researching and completing her historical novel, Another Sunday. Come along with her as she visits sites and websites, history nuts and historians, libraries, historical societies, and train and streetcar museums gathering details for her novel of Baltimore in the 20th Century.
YOU MAY HAVE MISSED...

Sunday, February 12, 2017 @ HSBC Almshouse Headquarters
SPARROWS POINT (Sunday Speakers Series)

Speaker: Bill Barry

In a thoroughly illustrated and deeply researched talk, Bill Barry discussed the development of steel-making at Sparrows Point in the late nineteenth century, the golden age of Bethlehem Steel's huge facility in the middle decades of the twentieth century and, finally, the economic struggles and changes of ownership that brought the decline and end of steel at the Point by the twenty-first century. A labor scholar, Mr. Barry placed particular emphasis on the hardships that workers at Sparrows Point confronted: the dangers of steel work when jobs were available and changes with the plant's decline, including the loss of jobs, health coverage and other benefits. He also stressed workers’ resilience in the face of these challenges.

Mr. Barry spoke to a group of nearly seventy avid listeners. There were many people from the Dundalk area and those who worked at Sparrows Point in the audience. Their comments and reminiscences of their time at the plant added a special dimension to the presentation.

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Before Olive Dennis's employment by the B&O Railroad in 1921 as their first woman service engineer, travel was not as comfortable or accommodating as we enjoy today. She introduced features such as partially reclining seats, dimmable ceiling lights, stain resistant fabric, head rests and windows with special air vents to keep out dust (which she patented). Later, after she grew an interest in refrigeration, she developed the first air conditioned passenger compartments with B&O mechanical engineers in 1930. These and other innovations spread to other railroads and finally airlines as competition for passengers increased. The resultant luxury passenger train travel had its heyday in the 30's, 40's and 50's. Some of her luxury additions include a special china service for the B&O, which she designed, and special accommodations for women with children and babies, such as bottle warmers, stewardesses and maid services. She simplified the over-complicated time tables. She also improved train service menus, making them lighter and better for travelers' needs. "No matter how successful a business may seem to be," Dennis said, "it can gain even greater success if it gives consideration to the woman's viewpoint."

Dennis was born in Thurlow, Pa., and moved to Baltimore as a child. Her interest in engineering developed from there. Fred Rasmussen of the Baltimore Sun wrote of her childhood, "While her parents gave her dolls, she was more interested in constructing doll houses and furniture than sewing doll clothes. When she was 10, she built her brother a model streetcar with trolley poles and reversible seats."

Olive Dennis graduated from Goucher College in 1908 with a Bachelors of Arts Degree. The following year, she earned a Masters degree in math and astronomy in at Columbia University. After teaching for a while, she decided to finally pursue her interest in engineering. In 1920, she became only the second woman to earn a civil engineering degree from Cornell, a significant achievement in a time when few women had access to a college education. She was hired by the B&O Railroad, starting as a draughtsman to help design bridges. When Dennis asked for a promotion to engineering, she later explained to the Sun that there were two obstacles in her way: "One simply that I was a woman. The second was no experience."

When the President of the B&O Daniel Willard wanted to upgrade the passenger service, he realized that since more than half of passengers were women, Dennis with her woman's perspective and engineering background would be right for the job. He created the position of service engineer and promoted Dennis. She remembered, "I was told to get ideas that would make women want to travel on our line. After all, if women went on it, men would follow."

Dennis thus became the first service engineer for the railroad. Engineering historian Kurt H. Debus described her as the first service engineer in America. She was also the first female member of the American Railway Engineering Association.

Dennis travelled 50,000 miles a year on the rails, noting needed areas of improvement and creating and testing innovations. Her work spanned thirty years. She retired in 1951 and died in 1957. The B&O Railroad Museum characterizes her as a "true pioneer." —Martha Hendrickson

JUST FOR FUN  Try your luck with this jumble. Answers on page 6.

JUMBLE

The B & O Railroad has an amazing tale to tell.
For years, this pride of industry and folks it served so well
Helped grow the town of Baltimore – whose future was unclear,
By breaking through the Alleghenies into the new frontier.

Unscramble these jumbles- one letter to each square to unravel the
tnames of folks linked to our nation’s first iron rail.

Clue #1- I laid the railroad’s cornerstone in 1828.
Although I’d made my fame and fortune well before that date
As a Senator from Maryland, and before that with a quill,
When I signed the Declaration that would lead to Bunker Hill.

SCEILAR  LCLROR

Clue #2 - As a banker and philanthropist, my wealth and fame did grow.
And soon I was first President of the mighty B & O.
I lived at Montebello under skies so fair and clear,
Where future folks would benefit from the water filtered near.

NHOI  KWRO  TGTARER

Clue #3- Born in Pennsylvania, I moved to Maryland as a child,
Back in the day of horse-threshed hay; the countryside so wild.
My claim to fame: the B & O’s first female engineer,
Refining car amenities for folks of yesteryear.

EOVIL  SDTNEN

Clue #4- I was born at Glen Ellen “castle”, who’s ruins at water’s edge,
Can still be seen by intrepid hikers amongst wild rose and sedge.
Though praised by some for railroad raids in those uncivil years before,
I became Police Commissioner of Baltimore after the Civil War.

LEONLO  YHARR  ROIML

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

Final Clue:

Before the Railroad I was king: of my grandeur, folks would sing.
Pulled by mule or oxen teams, I fulfilled the country’s dreams
Of Westward march of man and cattle. The B & O was my first battle.

- Jumble by
Allen Hendrickson
ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING AN HSBC BOARD MEMBER?

We are looking for interested and capable candidates to join the Board of Directors of the Historical Society of Baltimore County, beginning in July 2017. Our Directors provide guidance and governance for HSBC: establish strategic goals, support operating plans, lead fundraising efforts, and serve as a liaison to the business community. Typical Director skills and experience are in the areas of nonprofit development, academia, finance, marketing, public relations, management, construction/renovation, and related capabilities, or simply a love of public history. Our Directors serve a three-year term, renewable for one additional term.

Our vision for 2017 and beyond is to expand our interpretive programs into other areas of the county, complete the renovation of our museum exhibition space, and grow our alliances with other history-minded organizations in the region. The challenges that face us are common to many nonprofits: attain stable funding, increase staffing to support growth, retain and grow our membership, and continue to engage with the community to advocate for the value and relevance of local history to our everyday lives, leading to a more historically minded, educated, and aware society.

If you are interested, please contact Board president Tom Graf at tomgraf@hsobc.org.

SPECIAL THANKS TO SAINT MICHAEL CHURCH

HSBC is most grateful to St. Michael Lutheran Church in Perry Hall for its very generous donation of $4,633.50 in December. The money was raised as part of the church’s Restore-Revive-Rejoice Capital Campaign. The three-year campaign’s primary purpose was to fund restoration of the church’s 1926 chapel and aging organ, but four lucky non-profits also received large donations. Along with this past December’s donation, the church also gave HSBC $2,625.00 in April of 2014, at an earlier stage of its R-R-R campaign. Many, many thanks to St. Michael, whose generosity will go a very long way in funding our programs and caring for our collections. To learn more about the historic church, founded in 1859, and its work, please visit www.stmichaelperryhall.org.

WHAT IS IT?

Can you guess what this is?

This object is in our barn and it is related to farming and animal husbandry. (The picture on the wall provides an additional clue.)

(see answer next issue)
LAND PRESERVATION BY THE
GUNPOWDER VALLEY CONSERVANCY

We at HSBC are proud to be a supporter of the Gunpowder Valley Conservancy (GVC), and to call GVC one of our supporters in turn. GVC has been around since 1989. The Gunpowder Valley Conservancy is probably best known to most primarily for its water-related environmental projects, like stream clean-ups and encouraging the use of rain barrels and rain gardens. But as GVC understands, the protection of our water resources goes hand-in-hand with the protection of our land resources in Baltimore County – and land preservation dovetails with historic preservation. As GVC explains, “Preserving land sustains forests, safeguards productive farmland, ensures recreational trails and open space, and maintains the rich historical landscape that we call home.” Currently, GVC is working with land trusts and other groups on mapping that combines a variety of information on natural features and historic sites and structures in order to prioritize preservation efforts. To date, GVC has preserved more than 1,600 acres of land in the Gunpowder watershed, and their goal is to preserve 3,000 acres by 2025. For more on GVC’s projects and goals, please visit the website at gunpowdervalleyconservancy.org and follow them on Facebook (@GVC25). Kudos to GVC for their great work!


DID YOU KNOW?

Who is St. Patrick and why do we celebrate his death with a parade?

St. Patrick was born in Roman Britain in the fourth century into a wealthy family. He was captured by Irish raiders and taken to Gaelic Ireland as a slave. After six years, he had a conversion experience, fled for home and eventually he became a priest. He then went back to Ireland to convert the pagan Irish to Christianity. Tradition tells us that he died on March 17 and was buried in Downpatrick. Eventually he became Ireland’s foremost saint.

So why a parade? March 17 became a religious holiday, after it was placed on the universal liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church. Ireland celebrated St. Patrick’s feast day as a national day and businesses and schools were closed. Over the years, parades were started to celebrate Irish Pride.

In America the first parade was held in New York City on March 17, 1762. This parade was comprised of a group of Irish ex-patriots and Irish military who were serving in the British Military. The “wearing of the green” was a sign of Irish pride, however it was banned in Ireland at that time. In the 1762 parade the marchers were delighted to be able to speak Irish, wear green and sing Irish songs and play the pipes. These activities were all meaningful to the immigrants of that time. The first official New York City Parade was in March of 1851. There has been a parade in New York every year since. Around 1851 the “Irish 69th” lead the marchers, followed by the Ancient Order of Hibernians, who became the official sponsor of the parade. The marchers are made up of many Irish societies.

Similar parades are found in many cities in the United States. Baltimore, for one, has its own St. Patrick’s Day Parade to celebrate its many Irish immigrants. —Patricia Routson

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Research Library Hours:
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