



THE LEGACY

NEWSLETTER OF THE HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Summer 2011, Volume 48, Number 2

FREED SLAVES IN HOWARD COUNTY

by Theresa Donnelly



Amidst the quiet confines of the Howard County Historical Society (HCHS), a box labeled “Courthouse Records: Black History Collection, Manumissions, Bills of Sale: A-M” roils with life. Sifting through this box late this Spring, I stumbled upon two documents that vividly illustrate the varied experience of early 19th century African Americans and raise many interesting questions along the way.

The first document to catch my eye was the manumission record that freed twenty-eight year old Benjamin Allen Chess on December 2, 1855. In graceful sloping script, Benjamin’s former owner, George W. Dobbin (prominent Howard County judge and co-founder of the Maryland Historical Society), writes that for “diverse good causes and considerations” Benjamin Chess is “released from slavery, liberated, manumitted, and set free.” Though Chess would have had to reckon with the looming fear of a return to slavery if Dobbin fell on hard times (under Maryland law manumission was tied to the financial solvency of one’s former

owner) or through kidnapping and would have been further constrained by the multitude of restrictive laws affecting free blacks in the 1850s, that chill December day undoubtedly brought great change to his life.

With Lincoln’s 1863 Emancipation Proclamation eight years off, we are left to wonder why George W. Dobbin joined the ranks of the multitude of Maryland slave owners who freed thousands of slaves, by deed or will, in early and mid- nineteenth century Maryland. The shift, from a crop (tobacco) that required year-round (mostly slave) labor, to grain which required a large labor force at harvest time but very little help at other times, was, for many slaveholders, strong reason to manumit slaves they could no longer afford to house and feed. It is unlikely, considering Dobbin’s financial security, prominent standing, and position as a judge (versus a plantation owner) that this shift was behind his decision to free Benjamin Chess. Dobbin’s standing and economic position perhaps point to another reason for choosing to liberate Mr. Chess. Could Dobbin have been affected by what some historians have termed a “culture of manumission” created by the presence and influence of abolitionist Quakers and Methodists in the region? Dobbin would have provided the vital “patronage” that made economic viability possible for many of Maryland’s freed slaves.

Though Chess’s freedom and the new life it perhaps made possible allow us to imagine that by the 1850s the Revolution’s egalitarian promise was shared with at least some African American Marylanders, the next document I encountered offered a sobering reminder of reality. A mere four years after Benjamin Chess was freed, Jacob Mitchell,

– continued on page 4

HCHS MUSEUM

8328 Court Ave., Ellicott City, Maryland 21043
(Formerly First Presbyterian Church)

(410) 750-0370

Hours: Tuesday and Saturday:

1:00 – 4:00 P.M.

www.hchsmmd.org

HCHS LIBRARY

8324 Court Ave., Ellicott City, Maryland 21043
(Located next to the Museum in the old Weir Building)

(410) 750-0370 (voice & fax)

Hours: Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday 12:00-4:00 P.M.

Wednesday 11:00-3:00 P.M.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lauren McCormack

Only a few months remain before our much-anticipated move to the new Charles E. Miller Branch and Historical Center of the Howard County Public Library system in Ellicott City, MD. Our new space will feature state-of-the-art storage and computer systems to help you get the most out of your visit to HCHS. Whether you are conducting family research, looking for a photograph of your childhood home, or interested in learning more about a topic in Howard County History, our resources will be at your disposal. Plus, we have a fabulous and dedicated crew of volunteers who will stop at nothing to find answers for you.

We always welcome new volunteers at HCHS. We will especially need help staffing our new Library and Archives. If you are interested in helping out, we will provide training and support. We have flexible hours, and you will be surrounded by a knowledgeable, friendly, and supportive team. Please contact me if you are interested in helping out in any capacity.

We hope to see you at the Museum this summer or our Library and Archive. Thank you for your support. ♣

Lauren

BECOME A FAN OF HCHS ON FACEBOOK

For up-to-the minute news on happenings at the Society, become a fan on FaceBook. In addition to finding out what we are up to, you can also post comments, questions and photos of Society events and Howard County history. If you aren't on FaceBook yet, sign up today at www.facebook.com. ♣

PAULETTE LUTZ LIBRARY VOLUNTEER

Judy Boman



Questions abound at the Howard County Historical Society Library and Museum. Some arrive on the lips of visitors searching for their family's roots in Howard County. Others come via email - from across the pond in Merry Olde England, while still others are housed in homework assignments. The answers to the inquiries come cloaked in different personas as well, thanks to the many volunteers who staff the Society's museum and library during opening hours.

Western Howard County resident and history lover, Paulette Lutz, had a question of her own: What does one do after spending a lifetime working for the government; you know, after travel and catching up with family and friends. Fate intervened when Lutz, who worked at the Social Security Administration for 34 years, met Howard County Historical Society President, Shelley Wygant, at a meeting of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. "While attending a meeting to donate our Maryland Company A application documents....Shelley encouraged the members to join the Howard County Historical Society and volunteer, so I spoke to Shelley about volunteering at the meeting," Lutz said.

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HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

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SEND US YOUR ARTICLES

Anyone interested in contributing articles or photographs or anything of interest to the Society, please call the Library at 410-750-0370 or email Shelley Wygant at wgdirect@mac.com

HCHS WISH LIST

- Volunteers to research and write history-oriented articles for The Legacy
- Volunteers to serve as docents at the Museum on Tuesdays and Saturdays
- A volunteer graphics artist to lay out the newsletter
- Planned gifts that will help you create a lasting legacy for you or a loved one and help make the future of the Society more financially secure

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Shelley Wygant

Exciting times continue at the Howard County Historical Society in the wake of our successful launch of our first annual *Antiques Appraisal Fair and Rare Books Sale* in May. Almost 200 excited attendees brought their treasures in to be evaluated by the experts at Peenstra Appraisers, browsed and bought a wide variety of books, and patronized the booths of our vendors. By all accounts, everyone had a terrific time and we are looking forward to holding this fundraiser again next year.

August brings two big happenings for the Society: our booth at the Howard County Fair and the publication of our *Images of America: Howard County* book. This year we'll be featuring a variety of photos from the book—many retrieved from private collections and the recesses of the Society's photo archives at our fair booth—so stop by and check them out.

The book itself will be released the week of August 22nd, but you can purchase an advance copy at the fair or by sending in the enclosed order form and save up to 20% off the regular retail price. Look forward to an invitation to a signing party at the Society soon.

I'm also very pleased to announce that board member, Paul Miller has been named Honorary Chairman of our upcoming *Great Names in Howard County History* library fund drive which we are launching to put the Society on firm financial footing for our upcoming move. Board members are currently contributing to a challenge grant fund which Society members and others in the community will be invited to "match" with your own donation. In addition to the satisfaction of supporting the Society, you, your company or your organization will also have the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be recognized in a video installation or on a permanent wall plaque in our new space. Details to come soon.

Also coming this fall will be the re-launch of our website which is currently being revamped, updated and enhanced by the interactive group at Euro RSCG Discovery at no cost to the Society. In addition to incorporating all the bells and whistles the current websites feature, we will also be adding e-commerce capabilities which will allow you to renew your membership, purchase publications and gift items, donate and more online.

One last bit of news, the Society will also be participating in and benefiting from the 2012 *Maryland Home and Garden Pilgrimage* which will be held on May 19th of next year and feature fine homes and magnificent gardens of Howard County. It's a great fundraising opportunity for the Society as well as a very enjoyable event, so let us know if you'd like to volunteer to have your property on the tour or to help coordinate the event. As I said, exciting times continue at the Society and I hope that you will continue to be a part of them in the coming weeks and months.✚

SAVE THE DATE

AUGUST 6-13

HCHS at the Howard County Fair

Visit our booth at the Howard County Fair for a sneak peak at HCHS's new publication, *Howard County: Images of America*, to be released August 21, 2011. August 6 through 13, 8am –11pm Daily Howard County Fairgrounds, 2210 Howard County Fair Road, West Friendship www.howardcountyfair.com

AUGUST 28

A History of the Covered Bridges of Howard County and Central Maryland

A dynamic introduction to the art and design of covered bridges, as well as an exploration of covered bridges past and present in Central Maryland. Jim Smedley, Covered Bridges of Maryland Sunday, August 28 at 2:00pm in HCHS Museum, 8328 Court Ave., Ellicott City \$3 HCHS Members; \$5 Public

SEPTEMBER 10

An Evening with Karyn Oliver, an Acoustic Concert. Friday, September 10, 8:00pm in HCHS Museum \$18 HCHS Members; \$20 General Public A portion of the proceeds benefit HCHS.

SEPTEMBER 17

A Celebration of Oakland Manor's 200th Birthday Sponsored by the Town Center Community Association in cooperation with the Columbia Archives and Howard County Historical Society Family fun and activities, historical tours and talks Saturday, September 17, 11am-4pm, FREE Oakland Manor, 5430 Vantage Point Rd, Columbia

OCTOBER 22

An Evening with Rob Lytle, an Acoustic Concert October 22, 8:00pm in HCHS Museum \$18 HCHS Members; \$20 General Public A portion of the proceeds benefit HCHS.

Call 410-750-0370 or email info@hchsm.org for more information about these events

EDITOR'S NOTE

Janet Kusterer

I am sure all of you are marveling, as I am, at how fast the summer is slipping by. I hope to see you at the Society's booth at the Howard County Fair in August, and at other events at the Museum. Please contact me with your ideas for future articles. Call 410-750-0370 or email me at janetkusterer@juno.com.

UPDATE ON LAST ISSUE

Thanks to much hard work and perseverance, Howard County has agreed to update the Howard County Cemetery Inventory to include the cemetery containing Mr. Remus Lyles' ancestors. Mr. Lyles and Ms. Ellen Packard-Wilcox, author of the related story in the last issue, received official notification from the Director of the Department of Planning & Zoning via letter on May 17, 2011.

FREED SLAVES IN HOWARD COUNTY

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a resident of Howard County, was sold by James Cooke to Georgiana Williams for \$600. Dated March 13, 1859, this bill of sale, perhaps appropriately, is written in a crabbed hand and offers no “considerations” of the years of service Mitchell had doubtless provided. James Cooke labels Mr. Mitchell “a slave for life” and though penned over a century ago, this document, which outlined the sale of one human to another, stops us cold. Why was Mitchell’s fate so different from Chess’s? It is perhaps important that we allow Mr. Mitchell’s story to remind us that though pre-Civil War Maryland did indeed have a large, varied, and vibrant free black community, many, many, Marylanders, whose voices have perhaps never been heard, remained enslaved long after our nation’s founders declared that “all men are created equal.” To begin your own discovery of our state’s diverse and vital history, follow me to that tidy shelf in the HCHS, take down the box, and lift the lid. ✚

PAULETTE LUTZ LIBRARY VOLUNTEER

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In the eighteen months since that meeting Lutz has showed up every Thursday afternoon and an occasional Saturday to help others fill in the blanks in their family history - a job she finds rewarding and fulfilling: “I show them how to research Voter Registration documents, Cemetery records, Deed and Mortgages and the Vertical Files (a file containing newspaper clippings) as well as the volumes of books we have on Howard County,” Lutz said.

Variety is one aspect of the job Lutz loves. One volunteer project had Lutz recording and documenting the books used at the Patapsco Female Institute (PFI) during the 1800s. “I was amazed at the subjects the young ladies were required to study. Most people don’t think of women in the 1800s as being well educated, but these ladies had to

RECOMMENDED READING:

Barbara Jeanne Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century

Christopher Phillips, Freedom’s Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860

Bio: Theresa Donnelly is a graduate student in the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and an intern at the Society’s Library.

LIBRARY ON TRACK FOR LATE 2011 OPENING

Susan Stonesifer

The finishes have begun in the new Miller Branch Library and Historic Center. As you can see when you drive down Frederick Road, all of the exterior glass is up. Primer is being put on the walls, and some of the tile in the entrance is being installed, too. Lauren and the company that is providing the movable shelving have been inside to check out the location.

Permanent utilities are now available and the elevator installation is almost

study botany, biology, philosophy and mathematics – as well as literature and deportment...young women from all over the world traveled to Ellicott City to attend the Patapsco Female Institute and I can understand why.”

An aspect of volunteering Lutz loves is all she learns about the County and herself. She explains: “I thought I knew a lot about the County until I started volunteering at the Howard County Historical Society. I learn something new every day. My love of history led me to research my own family roots, which allowed me to join the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Mary Carroll Caton Chapter...I am now a certified DAR genealogist which helps me with research at HCHS.”

Currently there are 12 volunteers and three summer interns working in the Historical Society’s Library and Archive, according to Lauren McCormack,



THIS PHOTO, TAKEN IN JUNE, HIGHLIGHTS THE LIBRARY’S DRAMATIC STONE ARCHED WALL WHICH WAS DESIGNED TO EVOKE THE DISTINCTIVE ARCHITECTURE OF THE THOMAS VIADUCT.

finished. The first work on the Enchanted Garden on the west side of the building will begin in the middle of the month. The parking lot has its almost final paving and the westernmost entrance to the current library area, near the mail box, will be closed off in the next month to allow for the curbing for the exit from the new building. ✚

executive director but there’s always room for more. Says McCormack, “They (the volunteers) are an invaluable help to a small organization such as ours with a limited budget.”

Shelley Wygant, Historical Society president, remembers how enthusiastic and interested Lutz was at their initial meeting, and had this to say about her contributions: “I encouraged her to make contact with Lauren and put her talents to work. And boy has she! She’s a terrific example of how much someone can contribute – and hopefully enjoy – volunteering their time and talents to HCHS, If I had the power to clone her 100 times, I’d do it in an instant!” ✚

Until Wygant has the power to clone volunteers there’s still more work to be done. If you would like to help out in any way, you can call Lauren McCormack at 410-750-0370.

IN MEMORY OF:

PAST PRESIDENT HELEN S. JONES



When Helen Stromberg Jones passed away on February 27, 2011 at her beloved Bowling Green Farm in West Friendship at the age of 96, the Howard County Historical Society not only lost a dedicated past president, but a committed community activist and a dear friend as well.

The daughter of farmers, Mrs. Jones was born and raised on a farm in Marriottsville. After graduating from West

Friendship High School in 1931, she earned a teaching degree three years later from what is now Towson University. She married her high school sweetheart, Ridgely Jones, in 1935 and moved to the 320-acre Bowling Green Farm, which had been in his family since 1730.

Mrs. Jones taught fourth grade at the McDonogh School until the birth of her first child in the mid-1930s. After that, she was a full-time farm wife, raising chickens, milking cows and keeping the books for the farm, according to her daughter, Ann Holmes Jones of Ellicott City.

She loved the farm life. As she said, 'No two days are ever the same on the farm'. And she loved the land, and the fact that she could pass that love on to her family where the 10th generation continues to farm Bowling Green.

She and her husband were long active in civic affairs, advocating for policies that would preserve agricultural land in Howard County. When Mr. Jones was nominated to serve as a member of the first Howard County Council in 1968, she was his secretary and confidante. They were a regular fixture at County

Council meetings for close to 40 years. Mr. Jones died in 1996.

During the 1960s, Mrs. Jones served as a member of the Howard County Board of Education's Citizens' Curriculum Commission. She was co-chair of the language arts section, where she advocated for small class sizes and exposure to classical literature. She was an active PTA member and a longtime member of the League of Women Voters. During her tenure as president of the Howard County Historical Society, she led the way in the acquisition of the Wier Building, which housed the society's library prior to its move to the new Miller Branch Library and Historic Center slated to open later this year. She also had served as a member of the Social Services Board of Howard County, which helped improve nutrition of county residents. Mrs. Jones was an avid reader and ballroom dancer.

"In a somewhat interesting twist, we took her coffin from the church to the farm, where we have a family graveyard, in a tractor and wagon," said Ms. Jones. "If there was one thing Mom loved, it was the farm." ♣

IN MEMORY OF:

FOUNDING MEMBER JOSEPH HOPKINS CLARK



Joseph Clark, the youngest son of Alda Hopkins Clark and James Clark, died on June 10, 2011 at his home in Vero Beach, Florida at the age of 84. He was a descendent of the Ellicott Brothers, founders of Ellicott City, and of the Johns Hopkins family.

Following his graduation from McDonogh School, he enrolled in the Merchant Marine Academy, and was assigned to Army Transport Service during World War II. He made five transatlantic crossings carrying troops to and from the European theater. After the war ended he completed his education at the University of Florida.

Clark was a founding member of the Howard County Historical Society, the Howard County Conservancy, and

Historic Ellicott City, Inc. He was also a member of the Engineering Society of Baltimore, the Water Pollution Control Federation, the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, the Howard County Farm Machinery Club, and the Moorings Club.

He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Ginger Clark, his children Drew and Scottie, and grandchildren Joseph, Olivia and Robert. In keeping with family tradition, Olivia now volunteers at the Society's Library. ♣

(Both are adapted from obituaries, courtesy of the Baltimore Sun.)

HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S 1ST ANNUAL ANTIQUE APPRAISAL FAIR AND RARE BOOK SALE

SPONSORED BY CLARK'S ACE HARDWARE



JACK NIEBERDING WAS ONE OF THE TWO HUNDRED ATTENDEES WHO BROUGHT TREASURES TO BE APPRAISED.

On Saturday, May 21, 2011, the Howard County Historical Society held its brand-new fundraiser, an *Antique Appraisal Fair and Rare Book Sale*, at All

Saints' Hall, St. John's Parish Day School, in Ellicott City. This event raised funds for the relocation of the Society's Library, Archive, and offices to the new Charles E. Miller Branch and Historical Center of the Howard County Public Library System in Ellicott City in late 2011.

Professional antique appraisers, Todd Peenstra of Peenstra Antique Appraisals and Lyndi McNulty of Gizmos Art were available to provide verbal estimates for antiques and collectibles, including artwork, silver, jewelry, furniture, decorative arts, tools, ceramics and books.

There were also were hundreds of rare and used books for sale on various topics, including Maryland History, local histories, gardening, fiction, Civil War, genealogy and architecture.

In addition, visitors had the opportunity to purchase fine antiques donated from the personal collections of the Howard County Historical Society's Board of Directors and members.

We thank all who participated and look forward to this event becoming an annual affair. ✚



OH BABY! HCHS MEMBER ELLEN CARR CRADLES A FAMILY HEIRLOOM AT THE SOCIETY'S SUCCESSFUL *ANTIQUÉ APPRAISAL FAIR AND RARE BOOK SALE*. MAKE PLANS NOW TO BRING YOUR TREASURES TO NEXT YEAR'S EVENT.

HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND ENJOY MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS THAT INCLUDE A SUBSCRIPTION TO THE LEGACY, INVITATIONS TO EXCLUSIVE EVENTS, A 10% DISCOUNT ON PUBLICATIONS, PLUS A HANDSOME HCHS CAR MAGNET EMBLEM IF I JOIN AT THE CHARTER MEMBER LEVEL OR HIGHER.

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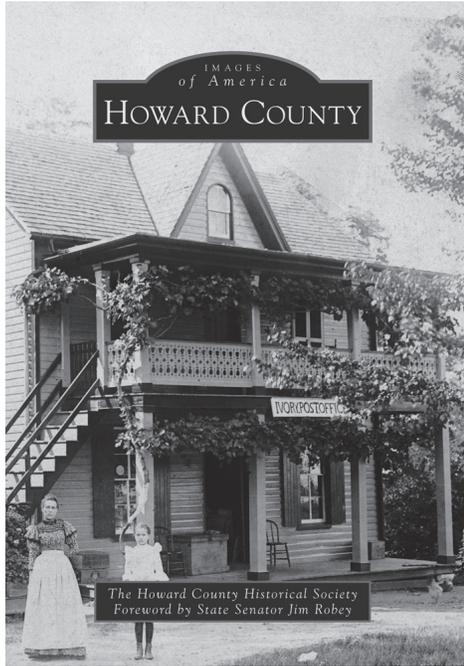
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