



THE LEGACY

NEWSLETTER OF THE HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Winter 2018, Volume 55, Number 1

AMBROSE CROSS A LONG-TIME FIXTURE ON ELLICOTT CITY'S MAIN STREET

BY JOAN M. KASURA



If you're a longtime resident of Ellicott City, particularly the Main Street area, there's a good chance you've either heard of or knew of Ambrose David Cross, a lifelong Ellicott City resident who died in December 1991 at the age of 80. If you were around during those ubiquitous 1950s, you probably encountered Cross when you went to pick up your mail at the Main Street Post Office, where Cross worked beginning in 1936 as first a part-time, and then in 1941, a full-time special delivery carrier and custodian. And, if you were a member of Ellicott City's denizens who populated the Howard County courthouse from the mid-1970s through the end of 1991, you would also have encountered Cross, who after his retirement from the Post Office in May 1976 continued as a part-time deputy sheriff and bailiff, where his legendary work habits continued to impress even the most dedicated Type As and his gregarious personality brightened the days of everyone he met. And yet the most significant contribution Cross made to during his life of service to his

beloved Ellicott City, came during the months following the D-Day invasion of Normandy and General Patton's breakout advance on Paris beginning in August 1944.

Enlisted in December 1943 at the seemingly advanced age of 32, Cross left behind his wife and three daughters, and like other African Americans who were restricted from participating in combat, was assigned to the Army's Quartermaster Service. When queried about Cross's age and marital status, his son-in-law Charles Hollis—himself a Marine veteran of the Korean War—explained that by that time during World War II, no one “had [any] idea about [its] outcome and when the war would wind down. As the war got older, a lot of the [enlisted soldiers] became older and married because they were bringing over whatever troops needed to shore up the lines.”

By mid-August 1944, Patton's enormous success breaking through the German lines and his aggressive

Continued on Page 4

HCHS MUSEUM

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

(410) 480-3250

Hours: Friday, Saturday and Sunday:
1:00 – 5:00 P.M.

www.hchsmnd.org

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New location: The Charles Miller Branch Library and Historical Center
9421 Frederick Rd., Ellicott City, Maryland 21042

(410) 480-3250 (voice)

Hours: Monday and Tuesday, 1:00-8:00 P.M.
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 1:00- 5:00 P.M.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

STEVE CASTRO



The Spring is coming fast and that means our super popular Spring Fundraising Gala. This event is becoming so popular and well-known that people are already asking about this year's event!!

"Mysteries of the Unknown Masquerade Ball" is our theme this year, on Friday, April 13, 2018 at the ElkrIDGE Furnace Inn. Yes, that is Friday the 13th so come wearing your most unique mask and enjoy all the mysterious happenings that will occur!

Come and be beguiled by psychic readings, magicians, gaming tables, tours of the ancient ElkrIDGE Furnace Inn and back by popular demand – the Whiskey Tasting and Premium Cigar tent. Come and enjoy the marvelous food of the ElkrIDGE Furnace Inn and the *Blood Black Currant Punch!* Wear an awe-inspiring costume of your favorite choosing – fantasy, macabre, glamorous, historic or whimsical – whatever strikes your mood. It will be a fanciful evening of music by Eli August, delicious food, varietal whiskey, silent auctions and who knows what enchanted events will occur.

Please come and support the Howard County Historical Society and have a fun and entertaining evening. Tickets can be purchased at our website www.hchsmd.org or in person at the Historical Society in the Miller Branch Library. Early bird tickets are \$85 per ticket and \$150 per couple; after March 13, 2018 \$100 per ticket and \$170 per couple. If you have any questions, please contact us at 410-480-3250 or email info@hchsmd.org.

I hope to see you there! ♣

EDITOR'S NOTE

JANET KUSTERER

The lead story in this issue is about Ambrose Cross, a fixture on Ellicott City's Main Street for decades. I never met him but once had a long conversation with his widow, Gladys

Stanton Cross, and a granddaughter, Debbie Temple. Our chat took place at their home on Columbia Pike, which was a log cabin on a dirt road when Gladys and Ambrose first moved there in the 1930s. It is amazing how much things can change in such a short time, and it's important to remember. ♣

DID YOU KNOW?

BY PAULETTE LUTZ

According to the *Baltimore Sun*, the very first telephone line was installed from Baltimore to Ellicott City on July 31, 1879 to the office and mills of C. A. Gambrill & Co. The line was constructed along the Frederick Turnpike and then followed a line to the Orange Grove Mill (belonging to C. A. Gambrill & Co). The Gray's and Union Factories will avail themselves of the plan and an office is spoken of in Ellicott City for public messages. ♣



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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 410-480-3250 or email Janet Kusterer at janetkusterer21042@gmail.com

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

SHAWN GLADDEN



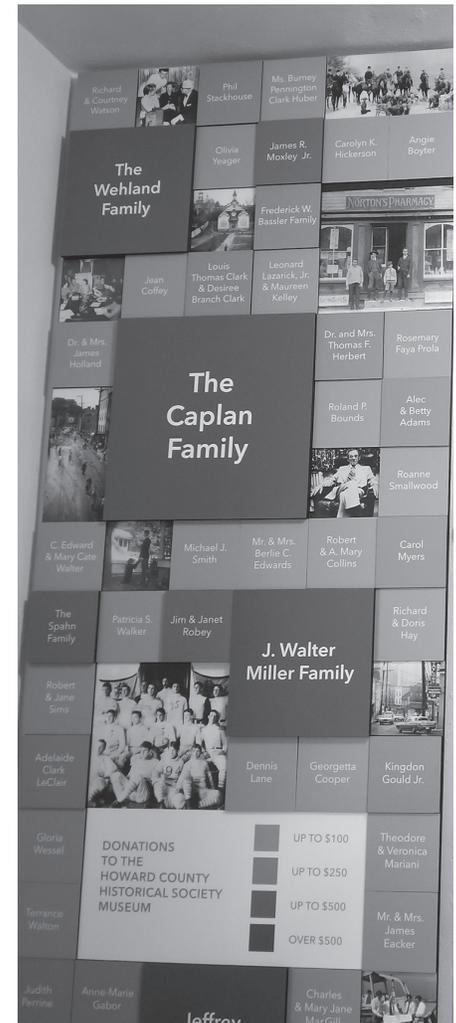
The first few weeks of the New Year are always very busy as we work on brochures, museum maintenance, exhibit and program

planning, annual meeting preparation, Howard County Grant submission, and of course...Fundraising! This winter we were hit with an unexpected maintenance issue as the steam/gas boiler at the museum met its untimely end after 30 years of service. Thanks to **J.A. Smith Plumbing, Electric, Hydronic Heating**, we installed a brand new boiler. Steady and reliable heat at the museum has been attained!

2018 promises to be another wonderful year for the Historical Society and the Museum of Howard County History. We are working on many archival and research projects, including research on the Reconstruction era (1865-1900) in the county. We hope to incorporate this research into a lecture program, exhibit and possibly a book for 2019. Meanwhile at the museum, we are moving forward on some improvements and new exhibits. By the time you are reading this, we will have installed our *Great Names of Howard County History* donor board in the lobby of the museum. This board will recognize Howard Countians who have supported the Society with charitable giving over the course of the past 6 years. This fabulous new donor board was made possible by the generous donation by the Taylor Family, the Caplan Family and the Spahn Family. There will be squares available for sponsorship once the board is installed, so there will still be an opportunity to

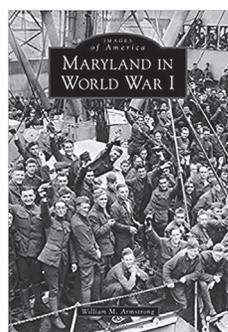
add your name to the "Great Names". We will also be installing a new exhibit in the auditorium of the Museum on Ellicott City. This exhibit will feature, images, maps, sketches, drawings, and artifacts from Ellicott City Main Street and the Historic District. This will be a permanent exhibit flanking the large stained glass window on the south wall of the museum. Both of these exhibits will be installed by March and we plan on having a reception for members and donors on March 17th at the museum. Invitations will be sent in February, mark your calendars in the meantime.

We have another great year of programming and events planned for 2018, a spectacular Lunch Lecture Series and Library Lecture Series, monthly Children's programs, the always popular Spring Fundraiser and Holiday House Tour, our annual County Fair exhibit, and much more. Thank you for all your support as we continue to collect, preserve and interpret our county's wonderful history, culture and heritage. 🍀



Annual Membership Meeting Eat, Think and Engage.

Saturday, February 18, 2018
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.



Charles E. Miller Branch Library
9421 Frederick Rd.
Ellicott City, MD 21042

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER:
William Armstrong
Author of Maryland in World War I

Call or email to RSVP
www.hchsm.org ■ 410-480-3250 ■ info@hchsm.org

AMBROSE CROSS, A LONG-TIME FIXTURE ON ELLICOTT CITY'S MAIN STREET

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advance on Paris began to falter as “Patton stretched his supply line to near-collapse. Since an army without gas, bullets and food would quickly be defeated, the Army Transportation Corps created a huge trucking operation called the ‘Red Ball Express’ on August 21 1944” (Williams, 2002). Patterned on the freight railroads’ express cargo model that would clear the tracks for trains to give priority rush preference to perishable freight goods, the Red Ball Express was an enormous truck convoy system that operated in lieu of the ruined French railroads that the Allies had bombed in the weeks leading up to the D-Day invasion to prevent the German army from bringing up reinforcements in response to the Allies’ landings.

Although the Army Transportation Corps designed the convoy operation, the burden for its successful operation fell on the Quartermaster Service Corps; hence, three-quarters of its drivers were, like Cross, African American, who “U.S. commanders believed... had no mettle or guts for combat” (Williams 2002). Ironically though, the establishment of the Red Ball Express

quickly demonstrated these men’s true bravery as over the next three months, they drove thousands of 2 and a half ton Jimmys (GMC trucks) to ferry hundreds of thousands of tons of supplies between the Normandy port of Cherbourg and Chartres just outside of Paris, and back again.

Driving round trip after round trip of 700 miles and 54 hours, Cross and the many much younger men with whom he served during that cold, rainy, and muddy fall soon established a mythic reputation for their ability to drive overloaded trucks at sometimes breakneck speeds during all hours of the day and night. In fact, it was the cold and wet that Gladys Cross Hollis most remembers her father mentioning when he returned from the war. “He didn’t like being cold, and he often talked about how it was so cold,” Cross Hollis said. She also remarked on how Cross “hated when his food wasn’t hot” on his return home after the war “because they couldn’t get warm or hot food,” yet another sacrifice to the drivers having to almost constantly be on the road to keep the convoys moving. Indeed, he

valued those hot meals so much, she recalled that he would walk home from the Post Office for a hot meal at lunch rather than taking a lunch pail or other cold food options.

But, the worst was the nighttime driving. Driving with cat eyes—covers that reduced the truck’s headlamp beams to mere slits so the convoys would not be spotted by the German Luftwaffe—not only meant drivers such as Cross could hardly see the barely navigable road ahead, but also that they strained to hear any airplane’s approach to dodge the inevitable strafing run. The horrible strain of this terrible aspect of the operation surfaced during Cross’s years back at home when jets on final approach to Friendship Airport, now known as Thurgood Marshall Baltimore Washington International Airport, would pass over his house at night. As related by Cross Hollis, her father “would jump out the bed and start running, and [her mother] would have to call out his name to wake him up because otherwise he would risk falling down the stairs.” ✚



1944 GERMAN STURMGEGWEHR MP44 RIFLE, DONATED BY CHARLES HOLLIS OF CATONSVILLE. THIS WEAPON WAS BROUGHT HOME FROM WORLD WAR II BY AMBROSE CROSS.



April 13, 2018 • 7-11 PM
Elkridge Furnace Inn

Mysteries of the Unknown *Masquerade*

Wandering Wonders Magic by David London
Ouija Board Parlor
Psychic Readings
Whiskey & Cigar Tastings
Black Jack • Roulette • Craps
Live Music by
Eli August & The Abandoned Buildings
House Tours
Silent Auction
Costume Contest
Fabulous Food, Beer & Wine

Tickets at hchsmd.org
\$85/person
\$150/couple before
March 13
\$100/person
\$175/couple after.

UPCOMING EVENTS



EDDIE ROBERTS



DAVID CRAIG



PATAPSCO FEMALE INSTITUTE

FEBRUARY

2/18 — 1-3PM

Annual Membership Meeting

Special Guest Speaker: William Armstrong,
Author of *Maryland in World War I*

MARCH

3/2 — NOON-1PM

Lunch Date with History

“Footsteps – Commander Roberts, Gen.
George G. Meade Camp #5 Sons of
Union Veterans of the Civil War.”
– with Eddie Roberts

3/3 — 10AM-NOON

Children’s Program at the Museum

“Who was Andrew Ellicott?”

3/17 — 6-8PM

Museum Exhibit Opening

“Ellicott City Main Street & Great
Names of Howard County History”

3/19 — 7-8:30PM

Howard County Library System History Lectures:

“Flour Power - America’s Industrial
Revolution” with Hal Sharp at Miller
Branch Library

APRIL

4/6 — NOON-1PM

Lunch Date with History

“Howard County and the Homefront of
WWI.” – with Cathy Eshmont Latrelli

4/7 — 10AM-NOON

Children’s Program at the Museum

“Spring Planting”

4/13 — 7-11PM

Fundraiser

“Mysteries of the Unknown Masquerade
Ball” at Elkridge Furnace Inn

4/19 — 7-8:30PM

Howard County Library System

History Lectures:

“The Fall of Saigon” with Tom Glenn at
Miller Branch Library

MAY

5/4 — NOON-1PM

Lunch Date with History

“Greetings from Gettysburg” – Lecture and
Book signing with Author David Craig

5/5 — 10AM-NOON

Children’s Program at the Museum

“Childhood Delights”

JUNE

6/1 — NOON-1PM

Lunch Date with History

“The Girls of Patapsco Female Institute.”
with Marydele Donnelly & Karen
Griffith of Friends of PFI

6/2 — 10AM-NOON

Children’s Program at the Museum

“Adventure with Downtown Brown”

Call **410-480-3250** for more info or visit
www.hchsmd.org/events

All Concerts and Lunch Dates with
History will take place at the
Museum of Howard County History,
8328 Court Avenue, Ellicott City, Md
21043.

The Genealogical Help Desk will
be held at the Miller Branch Library
Historical Center, 9421 Frederick Road,
Ellicott City, Md 21043 on the third
Saturday of every month.

TALES FROM THE ARCHIVES

BY PAULETTE LUTZ



Often during our research, we find interesting articles from old newspapers and magazines. I would like to share this one article that shows that even during the holidays in 1867 people had no more sense than they do today!!

Singular Freaks of Intoxicated Men

From the *Baltimore Gazette*
December 29, 1867

On Christmas Eve an occurrence transpired near Ellicott's Mills which might have been very serious in its consequences. It appears that two gentlemen, considerably under the influence of the "ardent" posted themselves on the railroad track, about 500 yards this side of the mills, one of them making a wager that the train would not pass over the track he was occupying, and the other that if it did pass over the track on which he stood he would stop it. It was not long before the cars came thundering along, and one of the gentlemen was suddenly snatched up by the cow-catcher and carried, in this perilous position, into Ellicott City. Several persons along the line of the road were witnesses of the scene, and concluded that the man would soon be a mangled corpse. Hurrying to the depot they found him, to their great surprise, unscathed, and as perfectly cool as if nothing unusual had transpired.

[Author Unknown]

Join the
**Howard County
Historical Society**
and the
**Mary Carroll Caton Chapter
of the Daughters of the
American Revolution**

for a bus trip to
**The Museum of the
American Revolution**
Saturday, April 21, 2018

We will travel by Eyre motor coach to Philadelphia, Pa. to visit the Museum of the American Revolution, lunch at the Historic 1772 City Tavern restaurant with time to shop in the historic district of Philadelphia or return to the Museum for additional viewing.

Tickets include the entrance to the Museum, lunch and coach fare.

Itinerary:
7:30 am - Depart Long Gate Park and Ride.
10:00 am - Arrive and tour the Museum.
12:45 pm - Lunch at City Tavern (included):
Tavern Country Salad w/ Raspberry Shrub Vinaigrette, Lightly Breaded Chicken Breast, w/ Sauce Bearnaise, Mashed Potatoes, Seasonal Vegetables, and the Pastry Chef's selection for dessert.
2:45 pm - Pick up at the Museum.
3:00 pm - Depart for Home.
5:30 pm - Arrive at the Long Gate Park & Ride.

Tickets are **\$100 for members** and **\$125 for non-members** and are available at www.hchsmd.org/events or at the **Historical Society at the Miller Branch Library**.

The Eyre bus will leave from the **Long Gate Park and Ride** at **7:00 a.m.** and return at **6:00 p.m.**

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