

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Membership

NEW MEMBERS and LIFE MEMBERS

We have had a significant increase in new memberships, however, due to the large quantity of material in this issue, we will hold off on the complete listing of new members, life members and changes in the Board of Directors.

Presently, our total membership is 323, but we are always interested in gaining a few more.

The Historical Society will hold a membership drive at our "new home," the La Plata Train Station, on September 23 from 2 to 5 p.m.

The Society is looking for new members to participate with us in pursuing an aggressive agenda of activities such as historical site visits, genealogy research trips, and recordation of Charles County cemetery locations.

A small fee will be charged for this catered event. Please plan to attend and bring a prospective Society member with you.

More specific information will be published in local newspapers soon. If anyone is interested in helping with this event, or needs more information, please call Judy Ruth at 301-934-5717, or Wayne Winkler at 301-934-0025.

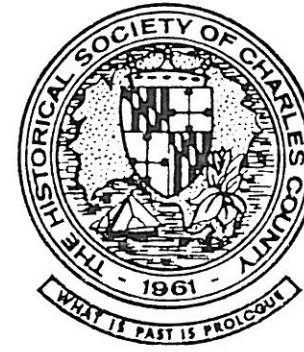
Let's see a crowd at the Train Station for this!



The Historical Society—A Great Crowd—Join In!

Southern Maryland InThe Civil War

Many maps of the Washington area show a blank space for Southern Maryland Counties because they do not share a border with DC. But, Charles County, Calvert and St. Mary's Counties are called Southern Maryland because they sided with the Confederate Cause in the Civil War. Because Virginia had seceded from the union, Abraham Lincoln did not want the D.C. Capital surrounded by Confederates, so he put the entire state legislator of Maryland under house arrest. Therefore, the counties of Maryland were free to vote to fight for north or south. The Southern Maryland counties went with the south, while the rest went with those damned yankees!



News and Notes from The Historical Society of Charles County

A Supplement to **The RECORD**

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Historical Society Fall 2001 Dinner Meeting

Our fall dinner will be held at the Episcopal Old Field Fall in Hughesville on Saturday, October 27th. Mary Ann Gung will be in costume and speaking on the life and times of Mistress Margaret Brent. History tells us that she was the first woman, on January 21, 1648, unsuccessfully claimed two votes in the Maryland Assembly; one as a landowner in her own right; the other as the attorney for Baltimore. Learning of her relationship with Governor Leonard Calvert should be interesting. Mistress Brent led a colorful life, so this program should be fascinating.

PLEASE VOLUNTEER

Could we have a few hours of your time? We don't need much. We have a couple of committees which only meet once or twice a year for a couple of hours each time when we need help from them. Once a year, membership gets together at the Train Station to send out yearly bills. Another function is to work on the yearly membership drive. This will be a catered event, so you do not need to cook or set up a tent; just help pull all the pieces together to make it happen. Judy Ruth is heading this committee.

Another need for volunteers is on the Program Committee. This committee meets once a year to determine what would be interesting programs for the coming year. Lloyd Bowling is the program chairman and you would work with him. I once worked on this committee and it was fun!

Another committee is the Nominating Committee which meets once every year for about one hour and makes nominations for board membership and every other year, for officers.

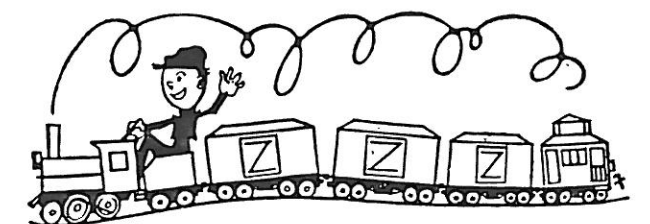
Also, we need people to work on our newsletter. I think the format needs to change to make it more fun to read and we need more articles. This committee could also meet at the Train Station and use the computer and printer, etc.

We also need docents to work at the Train Station on Saturdays and Sundays from now until the end of October. This function pays \$7.50 per hour or you can volunteer your time. If enough people sign up, it will only require you to work one day every other month, and I guarantee it will be fun! You would greet people and tell the the history of the Train Station and show a 20 minute film of La Plata and Charles County. The hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. We have a microwave, refrigerator, and computer for your use, and a bathroom is now under construction.

If you could possibly help out, give me a call at the Train Station, 301-934-2564. If I'm not there, please leave a message with your name and number and I will get back to you.

Please help if you can. Many hands make light work. Thanks.

—Wayne Winkler, President



The Historical Society of Charles County
Post Office Box 261
Port Tobacco, Maryland 20677

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Milton Somers House Is In The Way of County Government And Must Come Down!

In 1933, Milton and Ethel Somers built their dream house on Washington Avenue in La Plata. Milton worked as a teacher for the school system at La Plata High and could walk to work. This was perfect. Living in a small Southern Maryland town, helping young students shape their future through education, raising a family, and having a beautiful home so close to work. Milton and Ethel spent hours working in the garden behind the house raising fruits, vegetables and flowers. They also spent countless hours on the front porch talking with their neighbors and watching their son Mack grow into a fine young man.

As time went on, Mack did grow into a fine young man and left home for college, and after getting his degree, he moved to one of the northern states to pursue his career. Mr. Somers rose to the level of Principal of La Plata High School and became quite a formidable educator and administrator. He taught during World War II and the Korean Conflict and saw many of his students give up their lives so we could live in freedom. He also had the opportunity to see many of his students go on to college and become leaders in local, and national politics. Many students stayed in Charles County and raised families and Milton Somers had the opportunity to teach their children.

As time passed, Mr. Somers retired and spent his latter years gardening, reading, and spending time with friends and family. He died in the mid-1950s. Ethel continued to live in the house until her health required her to move in with her son, Mack, in the early 1990s. The Somers house sat vacant for a short period of time. In 1995, the County Commissioners purchased it. Rumor had it that, at some point, they were going to build a District Court Building at that location. The house was rented out for a period of time then used by the County police for a short while. It now sits vacant.

Moving ahead to the present time, the County Commissioners are now about to demolish the wonderful old Somers house. They tried to get someone to move the house but had no response. I went to the County Officials last week requesting that the Historical Society be allowed to remove the doors, windows, mantels, moldings, and other items of historical value. My thought being that we could store these items and, later, allow them to be used when someone was restoring an old home in Charles County. This could give us a source of income as well as help us retain part of local history.

I hit a blank wall! I was informed that because of liability insurance we would not be allowed in the house. I was also informed that if they allowed us in they would have to let anybody in. I told the County Official that I was representing the Historical Society, and not just some individual out for personal gain. I still got nowhere.

On Tuesday, July 24th, I went to the County Commissioners to request that we be allowed to go into the building and see what we could salvage. They could not have been nicer. They told me we would have to move fast and sign a liability release form, but we could take what we wanted. I went in the Somers house and found that light fixtures and other items had been replaced, and the house was updated when the police moved in. The only items worth salvaging are the doors and some of the trim. We will remove them the weekend of July 28-29.

Prior to being demolished, Cathy Currey, Planner with the County Government will photograph the interior and sketch the floor plan for our historical records.

If you see any of the County Commissioners, especially Danny Mayer, please thank them for their help. Danny really kept me informed and gave me suggestions on how to accomplish this mission. Hopefully, this will open the door so we can salvage other buildings in the future.

—Wayne Winkler, President



La Plata Train Station Officially Opens July 4, 2001

The Historical Society of Charles County, Inc. officially opened the La Plata Train Station on July 4th. In attendance were the Mayor and Town Council of La Plata; County Commissioners and one of the Charles County State Delegates. The Mayor opened the ceremony with remarks about how the Town of La Plata obtained the Train Station and how it was moved to its current location. He was followed by a ribbon cutting, which was done by former Councilman, Frances Winkler and Liz Raymond. Both are also members of the Historical Society. After speeches were finished, and the Station was officially opened, tours were conducted from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. During the ceremony, the Town supplied hot dogs, drinks and ice cream. The Band, *Southern Drifters*, provided the music. There were about 400 people in attendance. The Train station will be open on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. through the end of October.

Many hours of hard work went into getting the Station open. Louise and Ed Sanders have loaned the original desk, chair, and ticket box which were beautifully restored by Bob Cooksey. Lloyd Bowling donated several train lamps. Paula Winkler donated a wonderful period wall telephone, while Doris Ryce donated

two trunks which were originally owned by Judge Dudley Diggs used while he was attending the University of Maryland Law School. Those trunks still have the La Plata Train Station labels from 1933.

At last, but not least, Kitty Newcomb donated her father's brakeman's hat which he was wearing when he was killed in a train mishap many years ago in New York. We also have several purchased items as well as other items from Friendship House.



Visitors to the Grand Opening of The Train Station



L-R: Roy Hale*, Bill Hillary*, Wayne Winkler, Liz Raymond, Tom Fritz*, Major Ecksman, Frances Winkler, Gene Ambrogio.* (Town Council *)

Future plans for the Train Station include having a handicapped bathroom installed; getting the screen doors; opening a door leading to the tracks; having a video made about the history of Charles County; considering obtaining a caboose or some other train car and having a full-sized train display.

If you would like to help with research or work on these projects, please let me know.

—Wayne Winkler, President