

THE RECORD



Volume 110, No. 3

A Publication of the Historical Society of Charles County, Inc.

October 2015

Mary Pat Berry, President

Mary Ann Scott, Editor

Fall Dinner Meeting

Saturday, October 24, 2015
11:00 a.m.

The Surratt House & Museum
9118 Brandywine Road
Clinton, MD 20735



Noted Historian Dave Taylor will present:

**On the Trail of the Assassin:
John Wilkes Booth and his escape through
Rich Hill and the Garrett Farm**

*Plus . . . a special demonstration
by one of the docents on
how a lady of that era dressed!*



Menu:

Assortment of sandwiches:

*Turkey • Grilled Chicken Breast • Chicken Salad & Tuna Salad
Relish Tray • Pasta Salad • Tossed Garden Salad • Fresh Fruit Salad • Dessert*

Space is limited. Please Rsvp to Carol Donohue by October 10, 2015. Price is \$21.00.
16401 Old Marshall Hall Road • Accokeek, MD 20607 • 301-283-6414

The Surratt House & Museum is located at 9118 Brandywine Road, Clinton, MD 20735 • 301-868-1121
Luncheon meeting will be in the James O. Hall Research Center, which is the third building (farthest back)
on the property. The direct line into that building in an emergency is 301-868-6185.

THIS PLACE MATTERS

These excerpts are taken from the Summer 2015 edition of "Preservation Matters" Charles County Government Planning & Growth Management www.CharlesCountyMD.gov



Every single person in the country has places that are important to them...

Places they care about. Places that matter. Charles County is joining the National Trust for Historic Preservation by participating in the This Place Matters Program.

Get Started Today! It's simple...

- 1 Contact our office to pick up the This Place Matters sign, or download and print at SavingPlaces.org/ThisPlaceMatters.
- 2 Take a photo with the sign at the places that matter most to you.
- 3 Share your photos with us and online with hashtag #ThisPlaceMatters.
- 4 Look for your photo in the National Trust gallery, and stay tuned to @SavingPlaces on Instagram and Twitter as we spotlight our favorites.

Additional Details: 301-396-5815



ON THE TRAIL OF AN ASSASSIN

A Journey to Rich Hill

Dave Taylor & Cathy Thompson

During the wee morning hours of April 16, 1865, two men and their guide approached the door of a darkened, Charles County, Maryland home called Rich Hill. "Not having a bell," one of it's sleeping occupants later recalled, the door was, "surmounted with a brass knocker." One of the three men on horseback, under the cover of darkness, reached out a hand and grasped the brass tool. He raised it upwards and, for the briefest period of time, the knocker was silently suspended in the air. In a fraction of a second, the handle would fall; striking the metal plate beneath it and "in the stillness of night the sound from this" would resound, "with great distinctiveness." The silence of the night would be shattered and the lives of the family sleeping within the house's walls would be changed forever. History was knocking at the door of Rich Hill and its harbingers were John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Lincoln, and David E. Herold, his accomplice.

David Taylor portraying John Wilkes Booth for an audience of hundreds over the course of the Lincoln 150th anniversary weekend. Taylor is an accomplished historian and creator of the popular blog www.Boothie8am.com.

Continued on next page

A Journey to Rich Hill
Continued from previous page.

Preservation along the John Wilkes Booth Trail – Rich Hill Historic Site

After leaving Dr. Samuel A. Mudd's house on April 15, 1865, John Wilkes Booth and his accomplice, David E. Herold, avoided Zekiah Swamp and made a wide arc around the village of Bryantown. Unsure of their surroundings, they soon enlisted the aid of a guide, Oswell Swann, who led them across the swamp to Rich Hill, the home of Samuel Cox. They arrived there shortly after midnight on April 16. According to Swann, Cox admitted the pair to the house where they remained "three or four hours." However, Cox later denied that they came into the house, and a young servant girl subsequently supported his testimony. Nevertheless, Cox did arrange to conceal the pair in a nearby pine thicket for several days, where they received food, newspapers, and information.



Many years after the tenure of the Cox heirs, Rich Hill began to suffer from neglect. Recently, it was acquired by the Charles County Commissioners in hopes of preserving this infamous chapter of Charles County's heritage. Historians and archaeologists are now working to plan for the site's preservation and understand the historic farm as it appeared in 1865.

The rescue of Rich Hill represents several years of work by the Historical Society of Charles County who mobilized the acquisition in preparation of the Civil War Sesquicentennial.

"It is important to preserve this part of the John Wilkes Booth Escape Trail," Mary Pat Berry, president of the Historical Society of Charles County commented. Prior to the county's obtaining possession of the property, the Rich Hill Historic Site was part of a 121-acre residential subdivision. The house today is located on a 2.4 acre lot

gifted to the county in 2014. Not only does the county plan to restore the home but hopes to expand the size of the property as well.

To kick-start preservation efforts, a state bond bill of \$750,000 was secured with the support of Senator Mike Miller. Charles County recently contracted with Ottery Group, who have extensive experience in working with local governments to develop sound preservation strategies for historic properties under their care. Preliminary documentation and a structural assessment were initiated in April 2015. The first phase of the site rehabilitation will be to demolish 1970's-era interior finishes in order to assess the condition of the historic frame.

According to architectural historian and consultant David Berg, "the Ottery Group is genuinely excited to assist in the preservation of Rich Hill. Now that we have determined that the house is structurally stable, we have begun to look at both the documentary and physical evidence to determine the construction and appearance of the house as it existed both during Booth's time and in the eighteenth century. These investigations will enable us to make informed recommendations for the preservation and interpretation of this important historic resource for future generations."

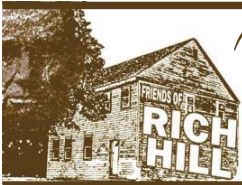
Research is also underway to understand the 1865 appearance of the property. As part of the 150th anniversary of President Lincoln's death, archaeologists explored the remnants of the outbuildings as they appear in the historic photo to below. These investigations will inform future decisions about site development and preservation. Archaeological and historical investigations will continue as plans move forward to rehabilitate this property. Part of the county's research will be to speak to family members or persons who may remember the property and its history.



Lincoln 150 Commemoration Weekend – April 17-19, 2015

RICH HILL HISTORIC SITE





The Friends of Rich Hill

Supporting the Rehabilitation of a Historic Property

Historic Southern Maryland

Friends

The **Friends of Rich Hill** was established to preserve, refurbish, and promote a unique part of Southern Maryland’s History. Rich Hill was built in the late 18th century by the Reverend Richard Brown. More notably, however, it was the home of Colonel Samuel Cox, who helped to hide John Wilkes Booth and David Herold in his “pine thicket” in the days following the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln in April of 1865.

The Purpose of the Friends of Rich Hill is to:

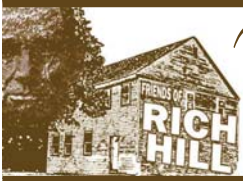
- Develop Partnerships with other organizations.
- Host events for “Friends.”
- Fundraise for interior furnishings & accessories.
- Sponsor special awareness events.
- Provide updates on the rehabilitation progress.
- Record pertinent information, documents, and photographs as part of the Historic Sites file at the Southern Maryland Studies Center, College of Southern Maryland, La Plata Campus.

Tax-deductible donations will help to maintain the historical integrity of the house through its furnishings, tours and educational programs.

Levels of Giving

Friend	\$ 5 - \$ 99
Captain	\$ 100 - \$ 199
Major	\$ 200 - \$ 499
Colonel	\$ 500 - \$ 999
General	\$ 1,000 +

To donate, please make checks payable to the *Friends of Rich Hill*
c/o the Historical Society of Charles County,
PO Box 2806, La Plata, Maryland 20646.



The Friends of Rich Hill

Supporting the Rehabilitation of a Historic Property

Historic Southern Maryland

Friends of Rich Hill

Name:

Email:

Phone #:

Address:

Donation Amount: \$

Areas of Interest: (check all that apply)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American History | <input type="checkbox"/> Furnishings & Accessories |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology | <input type="checkbox"/> Furniture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brochures | <input type="checkbox"/> Genealogy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rev. Brown & Colonial Exhibit | <input type="checkbox"/> Grants for research & brochures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cemetery Research | <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civil War Trails | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consultants | <input type="checkbox"/> Tours & Encampments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibits & Displays | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Raising | |

President's Message

Dear Society Members,

Where do I begin? Though the membership has not been together, your HSCC board and others have been hard at work!

First, let me thank Mike Mazzeo for stepping in and covering for our April 11th meeting at Friendship House at literally the last minute. I hope all who attended had a grand time.

Your president and members Danielle Webber and Howard Post attended the Nonprofit Institute's Fifth Annual Conference, Friday, May 1, held at CSM La Plata campus. I was honored to be able to sit on a panel that dealt with "Managing the All-Volunteer Organization." One of the sessions, *Tapping Fresh Resources for a Dynamic Volunteer Program*, gave me a lot of new ideas and resources.

On May 7th, Howard Post and I attended another workshop sponsored by CSM, this time at the Prince Frederick campus. *Best Practices for Oral Histories* was presented by Dr. Barry Lanman, UMBC. It was a fun, and again, an enlightening day. This will help me prepare as HSCC plans to conduct oral histories relating to Rich Hill.

Howard Post managed our table at Market Days in May at the Port Tobacco Courthouse and distributed information on the HSCC and how to become a member. Applications are always available for the asking or online. Encourage your friends to join.

Michael R. Roblyer, Attorney for the Estate and Trust of Betty C. Taussig contacted HSCC in May. She had recently passed away and before her passing, she had executed a Revocable Trust. One of the assets in the Trust was a set of four paintings of historical homes in Charles County: Ellerslie, Mulberry Grove, Rose Hill, and one for Charlotte Hall. Her Trust left these paintings to the HSCC.

At the same time, HSCC was contacted by Maryland Partners Bank (a division of Virginia Partners Bank). With Mike Mazzeo's help and direction, some of Ms. Taussig's painting are on loan and now hang their lobby. Please stop in and see them!

RichHill! The Rich Hill steering committee has been activated and a flurry of activity has surrounded it ever since. In the newsletter you will find how to become a friend of Rich Hill. The first meeting of this committee was held June 18 at CSM. (And again I do wish to acknowledge CSM's commitment to partnering with us and hosting HSCC Board meetings). The county, through Cathy Thompson has been wonderful about keeping the HSCC in the loop. You may access Preservation Matters Newsletter at http://www.charlescountymd.gov/sites/default/files/pgm/planning/PreservationMattersNewsletter_2015_web.pdf

Here are some of the ways you can stay in touch with the rehabilitation of Rich Hill:

- On Facebook: Historic Rich Hill

- Through a Friends of Rich Hill blog: <http://richhillfriends.org/> and
- a new link on the Historical Society's own website: www.charlescountyhistorical.org

In a matter of no time, email traffic went from zero to 100, and we have been blessed by donors through the efforts of the Surratt Society and their willingness to share our information to their members.

On August 13, Rich Hill committee members were given a tour of Rich Hill, highlighting the county's progress. The interior has been stripped bare of the 1970's plaster walls. It was fascinating looking at the building techniques and conundrums presented by the architecture. I hope you also saw the Maryland Independent article featuring our own Mike Mazzeo and Rich Hill. We were also amazed at the gigantic wasp nest that has built in the attic over the decades. Assured that the insects have been removed, it is a grand conversation piece!

Louise Turner has decided to end her 50 year tenure as chairman of the Historic Sites files at CSM. There are no words to thank her for her dedication and attention to the site files all these years. Her shoes will be very hard to fill. Joyce Candland continues to work on the Files as "trained" by Louise and welcomes anyone who would like to help out, as Howard Post is now doing. Debbie Scroggins has taken under her wing answering genealogical inquires that come across our email.

While the Historic Preservation Commission of Charles County did not select the Families of Friendship Exhibit for a preservation award this year, they did feel that this project deserves recognition. They will present the HSCC a Letter of Commendation at their October meeting.

So many projects, so many ways, get engaged and join in the fun! I look forward to seeing everyone at the Surratt House October 24th!

In history's steps,
Mary Pat Berry,
President



In Remembrance

George William Picyk, longtime member of the Historical Society died June 21, 2015. George was a past President of the Charles County Antiques Arts Association, Archeological Societies of Maryland and Charles County, and numerous Railroad Historical Societies. George and his wife, Elsie, one of our Board Members, lived at "Harwood" and he took great pride in the restoration of this historic site. His devotion and attendance at our meetings will truly be missed.

Charles County Holiday Trail Keeps Season's Traditions Alive

From Friday, December 11 through Sunday, December 13, the third annual Charles County Holiday Trail will offer locals and visitors alike an opportunity to get into the holiday spirit, while visiting county landmarks. Admission costs, dates, and times vary with location. For more information and a detailed schedule, visit www.CharlesCountyHolidayTrail.com. The following are featured locations:

African American Heritage Society

7485 Crain Highway, La Plata

Celebrate the season, and learn at the same time as you view the artifacts from the William A. Diggs collection and other items of historical significance that depict the African American experience in Southern Maryland and the nation.

Kris Kringle Christmas Market and the Charles County Fair

8440 Fairgrounds Road, La Plata

Come visit the Charles County Fairgrounds transformed in to a winter wonderland of lights, greens, music, and shopping.

Christ Church Old Durham Parish

8700 Ironsides Road, Nanjemoy

Explore one of the oldest surviving Episcopal churches in Maryland. The brick church that stands today was erected in 1732. It replaced the original log structure. This holiday season, visitors are invited to tour and learn more.



Christ Church Port Tobacco Parish

110 Charles Street, La Plata

Get in the Christmas spirit at one of the area's most interesting churches. This parish existed in Port Tobacco as early as 1682 and showcases thirty one stained glass windows that grace the sanctuary and narthex. Some were created by the famed Tiffany Glass Company.

Friendship House

8730 Mitchell Road, La Plata

Located on the campus of the College of Southern Maryland, Enjoy holiday refreshments while touring one of Maryland's earliest surviving Tidewater dwellings.

Maryland Veterans Memorial Museum

1000 Crain Highway, La Plata

See historical exhibits and artifacts at the museum while visiting a holiday Civil War encampment on its Patriot Park grounds.

Mattawoman Creek Art Center

2750 Sweden Point Road, Marbury

For handmade and one-of-a kind gifts, this is an important stop to make. Located on the grounds of Smallwood State Park, the art center offers items you will not find anywhere else.



Maxwell Hall

17388 Teagues Point Road, Hughesville

Come see this historic house decked out for the season. Enjoy live entertainment, refreshments, holiday greens demonstrations, and children's crafts.

Mount Aventine, Chapman State Park

3452 Ferry Place, Indian Head

Located in Chapman State Park with breathtaking views of the Potomac River, Visitors are invited to enjoy, refreshments, nature walks, and the sounds of the season with performances from various music groups over the course of its two-day holiday celebration.



Mount Carmel Monastery

5678 Mount Carmel Road, La Plata

Come and tour the site of the first Carmelite monastery and shop in the fully stocked gift shop for the perfect holiday gift.



Port Tobacco Historic Village

8430 Commerce Street, Port Tobacco Village

See one of Maryland's earliest settlements as it stands today. With origins that date to 1634, Port Tobacco Historic Village was once Maryland's second largest seaport. Come and tour the Port Tobacco Courthouse, Burch House, and Stag Hall.



Smallwood Retreat House

2750 Sweden Point Road, Marbury

Tour General Smallwood's house decorated for the holidays, learn about cooking in Colonial times, and visit with costumed interpreters while indulging in holiday treats around the fire.



Port Tobacco One-Room School House

7215 Chapel Point Road, Port Tobacco

Constructed in 1876, the school was used to educate students for 77 years. Now operating as a living museum, visitors are invited to stop by for some holiday cheer and see what school was like in years past.



St. Thomas Manor at St. Ignatius Catholic Church

8855 Chapel Point Road, Port Tobacco

Open to visitors for the holidays, St. Ignatius Parish is the oldest continuously serving Catholic parish in the United States. Founded in 1641, the current church was erected in 1798 and incorporates the old brick chapel built over 300 years ago.

Serenity Farm

6932 Serenity Farm Road, Benedict

Visit a working farm featuring a live nativity. The farm will hold a short program featuring animals from the petting pen and a live telling of the Christmas Story. Visitors are invited to make a natural decoration for one of the 23 graves dating from 1790-1810 in the historic burial place of enslaved African-Americans.



Thomas Stone National Historic Site

6655 Rose Hill Road, Port Tobacco

Enjoy a candlelight tour through the restored Haberdeventure conducted by costumed staff who will discuss the life of the Stone family during the midst of the revolution.

Friendship House Foundation

Friendship House sits proudly on the campus of the College of Southern Maryland. Please join the Historical Society of Charles County in contributing to the preservation of Friendship House for many generations to come.



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<i>Philip L. Griffith</i>	<i>Velva Perrygo</i>
<i>Eleanor Higdon</i>	<i>Watson Perrygo</i>
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Friendship House Foundation Levels of Giving:

Friend	\$ 25.00-\$ 99.00
Colonist	\$ 100.00-\$199.00
Patriot	\$ 200.00-\$499.00
Statesman	\$ 500.00-\$999.00
Renaissance	\$1,000.00 +

To donate, please make checks payable to the Friendship House Foundation, and mail to the Historical Society.

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If you would like future newsletters sent to you by e-mail, please send us your e-mail address. Articles of historic interest on Southern Maryland are requested for publication in future issues of *The Record*. Please send your articles and photographs to: The Historical Society of Charles County, Publications, *The Record*, P.O. Box 2806, La Plata, Maryland 20646. Or you can email your articles and photographs to Mary Pat Berry at bugs4berry@gmail.com.

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Ways & Means

Ruby Dyson
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Mark Your Calendar

- **December 12 & 13:** Charles County Holiday Trail.
- **Saturday, January 23, 2016:** January Meeting. Sara Rivers-Cofield will present *Small Finds, Big Picture: Artifacts of the Colonial Chesapeake as Bait for the Tobacco Trap*.
- **Sunday, May 22, 2016:** Spring Luncheon Meeting & Tour at *Historic Ellerslie*, home of Kevin & Denise Grote (rain date June 5th).



SAVE THE DATE!
Spring Luncheon Meeting at Historic Ellerslie
Sunday, May 22, 2016

THIRD ANNUAL
Kris Kringle Christmas Market
AT THE CHARLES COUNTY FAIR



LIVE TREES
LIVE GREENS
CHRISTMAS LIGHTS
LIVING NATIVITY
MUSIC
FOOD VENDORS
CRAFT VENDORS
SANTA CLAUS
AND MORE

DECEMBER 11-12, 2015


CHARLES COUNTY
2015 Holiday Trail
www.charlescountyholidaytrail.com
www.charlescountyfair.com



*Board Member Tom Pike
and the Charles County Flag visit the Grand Canyon*



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CHARLES COUNTY, INC.

P.O. Box 2806 • La Plata, Maryland 20646
www.charlescountyhistorical.org