

◆ Museum Awarded Preservation Grant

The Museum has been awarded a grant from the Maryland Preservation Society to acquire a marker identifying Oxford as the point of debarkation for slaves from Talbot and surrounding counties who served in the Union Army during the Civil War in exchange for their freedom.

While Oxford's history as a colonial port of entry is widely known, its significance concerning the role that the area's African American population played in the Civil War has not been broadly acknowledged. The location of the Oxford marker will be listed on the Civil War Trails' website. As the third official Civil War Trail Marker in Talbot County, it will be an important link for civil war historians and heritage tourists visiting the area. The other two signs are located in Trappe and in Unionville.

The Maryland Preservation Society grant provides 90% of the cost of the marker which will be placed near the ferry dock. The exact location is being determined and details of the dedication ceremony are in the planning stage.

Our gratitude to those whose inspiration, ideas, research and support helped make this possible, especially Marguerite Webster, Rev. Jay Bunting, the Town Commissioners, and the Maryland Preservation Society. If you would like to help plan the dedication event, please leave a message for us at the Museum (410) 226-0191.

◆ In Memory of Col. Foster

The board approved the purchase of a teak bench now in the garden in memory of Col. James B. Foster Jr. He and Jeanne have been long-time members and Jeanne is past president and current board member. The inscription reads:

COL. JIM FOSTER
HIS HOME PORT OXFORD
1919-2009

MISSION STATEMENT

The Oxford Museum collects, records, interprets and shares materials relating to the history of Oxford, Maryland and the surrounding area. Founded in 1964, this nonprofit volunteer organization provides resources for historical research and sponsors a variety of programs, activities, and exhibits to foster knowledge and appreciation of this community's people and history.

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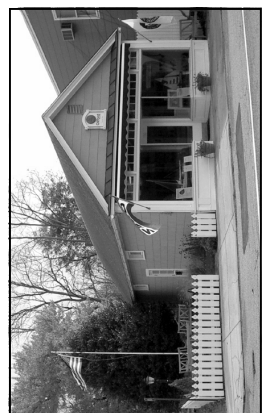
The Oxford Historian

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A special heritage.*

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The Oxford Historian

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Note from the President: MAPP

2009 marked the start of a program to evaluate the Museum and its activities by a collaborative Program of the American Association of Museums and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Earlier this year the Museum completed a comprehensive application for an institutional assessment. The Museum had three goals for this review: guidance on 1) effective use of limited space to create exhibits with maximum impact at minimum cost; 2) how to position the Museum to compete successfully with other local organizations for finite community resources; 3) financial stability for future growth.

This fall the American Association of Museums notified us that our application had been approved. The assessment process began with selecting our assessor, Deborah Smith, a grants and contracts specialist at Kennesaw State University in Georgia who was assigned to the Oxford evaluation. She is regarded as one of AAM's most experienced assessors. Mrs. Smith spent several days reviewing the Museum's operations and in meetings with Board members collectively and individually. She was gratified to see such a strong Museum board turnout during our opening session.

Earlier this month we received her comprehensive 47-page assessment report, covering all areas of the Museum operations, with emphasis on the following areas: mission and planning, governance, finances, interpretation and education, collection stewardship, marketing and public relations, human resources and facilities and risk management.

As expected we received a number of positives on our operations as well as some glaring deficiencies. One major problem is the excessive lighting, both overhead and window, which has damaged some of our artifacts. She also pointed out that our debt service for the mortgage was too high for our operating budget.

One of our noted strengths is the support of the Board and the community at large. In addition she felt that the recent decision to focus on mortgage retirement was an important step forward for the long-term viability of the Museum. The fact that the Museum regularly partners with other community organizations was also a source of strength and benefits everyone. Two examples were the Skipjack acquisition by the Museum with its display and permanent home at the Oxford Community Center, and the recent Civil War Lecture which was co-sponsored with the Historic Society of Talbot County. Mrs. Smith was also impressed with the fact that the staff is very aware of our shortcomings and wants to actively address them. She noted that for museums of our size, it's rare for a staff to want to move forward.

Finally it was suggested that we apply for a Conservation Assessment to assess our collections. The Museum plans to pursue this in 2010-11. This focused assessment will better position the Museum to obtain future grants for collection conservation and preservation by demonstrating that we have done our homework and are serious in our mission to preserve Oxford's history.

◆ Yes, Oxford, there IS a Santa Claus!

Our Oxford community certainly gave the Oxford Museum much to be thankful for in 2009. We are grateful for bequests from the Betty Billingslea and John Townsend Benjamin estates. These two wonderful and generous residents exemplified the true sense of charitable giving to their Oxford neighbors.

The Museum has just completed its 2009 year-end annual giving campaign, and the Board of Directors was thrilled with the results. In this time of economic concern for many, our community stepped up to the plate and provided necessary funds to keep us operational. Adding to these funds in the spring, we will have our annual Membership Drive. These two fund-raising activities enable us to pay our bills and preserve Oxford's precious history. Our deepest appreciation to everyone who supported us in 2009.

◆ Fifth Annual Douglas Hanks Jr. Preservation Award

The coveted Hanks Oxford Preservation Award is now in its fifth year of recognizing significant preservation efforts. The award, to be presented in May at the Museum's Annual Meeting, honors Douglas Hanks Jr, who came to Oxford as a small boy and spent his life here preserving its heritage. Nominees may be an individual, group, organization, business or civic institution and need not be residents of Oxford as long as the activity specifically relates to Oxford and the surrounding area.

To obtain a nomination form outlining the four categories of recognition, call the Oxford Museum at (410) 226-0191 and leave a message. The Museum Preservation Award Committee is available to assist you as necessary. The Committee will make the final decision. Nominations must be received in the Museum Office by March 30, 2010.

◆ Yankee Pedler Stars Again



On a cold, damp, overcast October 17th the skipjack, *Yankee Pedler*, was dedicated at the Oxford Community Center. A hardy group of people were there to share in the dedication, including state senator, Richard Colburn. Others in attendance were the donors of the skipjack, Steve and Alice Zalik; maintenance fund donor, Diane

Flagler and her family; and Cheri Fisher, daughter of the boat's builder, Curtis Applegarth.

The *Yankee Pedler* has a permanent home, thanks to this joint venture between the Oxford Museum and the Community Center. Also, a note of thanks to the many volunteers who helped with this enormous project, including Larry Murray, Tom Campbell and his boatyard staff, and many others. Tom Campbell and his staff built the cradle and moved the boat as a donation to this project.

The boat will be lighted annually during the Christmas season and will bid a festive welcome to everyone heading into town during the holidays.

◆ Museum Closed for Winter

Yes, we are closed to the public now until Oxford Day (April 24), but that doesn't mean that activity has ceased. We continue our daily business activities and will be doing small maintenance projects over the winter. Calls are answered and the mail is picked up every couple of days. Our director, Ellen Anderson, responds to calls whenever needed. Efforts are underway for new exhibits and events in 2010. Watch for information in the spring newsletter.

◆ Museum Announces 2010 Lecture Series

The Museum's 2010 lectures series was kicked off on Wednesday, January 13, 2010 by Larry Denton, whose talk elaborated on his recently published book:

William Henry Seward and the Efforts to Prevent The Succession Crisis. Jointly sponsored with the Historical Society of Talbot County, the lecture was held at the Oxford Community Center and was attended by a standing-room only crowd. Our thanks to Oxford's Latitude 38 restaurant for their support by donating a portion of their evening's proceeds to the two sponsoring organizations. The lecture series continues through March at the Oxford Community Center:

- On Sunday, March 7, at 2 pm, Bob Shannahan will present "Some Early Houses of Talbot County." His talk will focus on historic preservation with some local history and will be illustrated with slides of historically old houses in varying states of repair, including furnishings and early portraits. The Shannahan family enjoys a long and prominent history in Talbot County dating back to William Shannahan's purchase of a 300-acre tobacco plantation in 1663.
- On Saturday, March 27, at 2 pm, Rev. Jay Bunting will wrap up the series with an informational talk about "Tilghman's Railroad to Oxford," which details how the railroad was founded and how it was funded by "confederate gold." Rev. Bunting is the pastor of the Oxford Methodist Church and author of the recently published book *Oxford: Class of 1850*, the story of 33 cadets who graduated from Oxford's Maryland Military Academy started by the railroad's founder, Gen. Tench Tilghman.

Our sincere thanks to Board member Jan Mroczek for organizing this year's lecture series.

◆ Error Unfolds New Information

We appreciate your feedback, especially when it corrects errors and provides new information about Oxford's heritage. (Of course we also appreciate hearing that you enjoy reading *The Historian*!)

Thanks to member Bob Shannahan, the October issue corrected an error in Dickson J. Preston's book on the history of Oxford, which identifies the image of the Hon. John Leeds Kerr as being that of Samuel Chamberlaine Sr.

Reading about that mix-up, Sally and Chip Akridge, Museum members and supporters, informed us that the Hon. John Leeds Kerr is buried in a family gravesite, which today is surrounded by Akridge property. At the turn of the 19th century, Kerr was a lawyer in Easton. He led a militia during the War of 1812 and was elected to the United States Senate in 1841. He died in 1844. The Akridges maintain his gravesite. We thank them for this information and a photograph of Kerr's headstone.



LARRY DENTON



BOB SHANNAHAN



REV. JAY BUNTING

◆ Leo's Socks Knocked Off

At this year's Museum holiday event, Leo Nollmeyer, curator and Board member Emeritus, had his "socks knocked off" by an unexpected gift. Gordon Graves, Museum President, presented him with an oyster can from his father's packing house.

For those who don't know, Leo's dad had a seafood packing business, Oxford Packing Company, on the site of what is now Schooner's Landing Restaurant. On the side of the building, William Nollmeyer and his wife, Ann, also offered "carry-out" meals. Those who were living here at the time claim you couldn't find better food anywhere and that Mrs. Nollmeyer served the best iced tea, bar none.

In addition to serving some of the best, most reasonably priced food in town, untold numbers of cans of oysters and crab were packed and shipped as far as the mid-west. When the canning operation closed in the mid-sixties, all the excess cans were tossed. Who would have thought they might someday have value?

Leo later wished he had some of those cans, both as a memory of his father's business and because of their rarity and increasing value. Occasionally one would surface for sale at exorbitant prices.

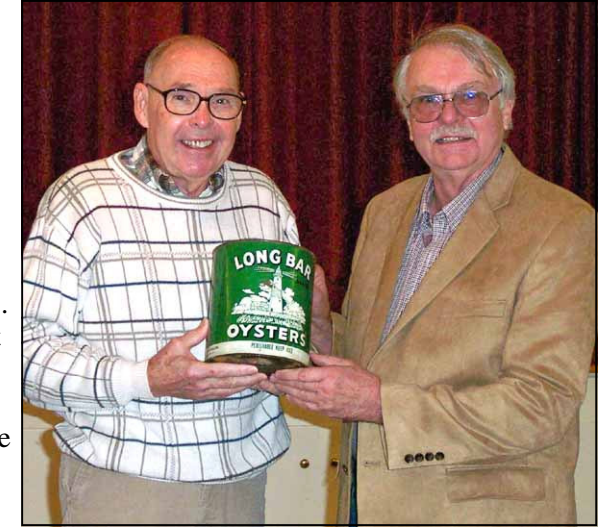
"I saw one of our cans once on eBay," he said. "It was \$600. I thought that was ridiculous. Sometime later, I looked again and it was \$1000. All I could think of was that Dad had to fill 800 of these cans back then to earn \$1000!"

Thanks to the efforts of Gordon Graves, who found the can at a cost less than a gold bar, the Museum was thrilled to present Leo with his early Christmas gift as a token of our appreciation for his ongoing support and commitment to the Museum. He was greatly touched. Gotcha Leo!

◆ Did You Know?

History always reminds us of how little some things change over time. One of them is the challenge of finding interesting topics and speakers for lecture series. We were aptly reminded of this listening to a recording of Curtis Applegarth's winter "talk" given to Museum members on February 17, 1980. Applegarth was a renowned Oxford boat builder and President of the Museum from 1968-69 and 1973. Excerpts from that "talk":

Another night I remember, musta been about '68 or something, last year I was President. One night up here we was supposed to have a man come in from uh, up around Federalsburg or somewhere. And around 3 o'clock in the afternoon he called me up and said "Mr. Applegarth, can't make it." I said uh, oh. And about that time we were havin' about 50, 60 people up. I said what we gonna do now? Well, I had made a speech over to St. Michaels Yacht Club to power squadron on the five different kinds of boats on the Bay and had made up easels and put celatex on it with all the various pictures and then would take this pointer and describe each one of 'em. I got that stuff all together right quick and put it up right across here and boy we had a big time that night. We answered questions and I didn't get home till about ten o'clock. So, sometimes I say uh, your own members can put on a better program than you can go out and git."



LEO NOLLMEYER and GORDON GRAVES