



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
of
KENT COUNTY

UNLOCKING OUR PAST

2022 Winter Newsletter

Welcome to 2022!

2021 was quite a year! As it closes out and we welcome 2022, we have good news and big plans.

Our New Executive Director is Here

First and foremost, after a search that spanned the Internet and local news outlets, we have a new Executive Director. Erika Quesenbery Sturgill, who recently relocated from Harford County, is officially here. Erika has almost everything on her resume: writer and columnist for regional newspapers, historical society manager at Port Deposit, economic development director for Havre de Grace and Elkton. The single thread throughout Erika's professional life has been her love of local history and community. Welcome Erika, we are so pleased to have you join us! Contact Erika at director@kentcountyhistory.org or our office at (410) 778-3499.

Erika was introduced to members at our December 12 holiday reception. Luckily, the reception was before Omicron took off, so Erika was able to meet about 40 of our members in a beautifully decorated Bordley History Center museum. Many thanks to Cynthia Saunders and Kurt Smith for the wonderful decorations and to Cynthia Saunders (again) and Susan Percival for a lovely reception.

Special thanks too to the Executive Director Search Committee of Barbara Jorgenson, Joan Horsey, Erik Gulbrandsen, and Darius Johnson.

THANK YOU MARYLAND HUMANITIES!

We are also very excited to report that we have received a \$10,000 operations grant from Maryland Humanities Council. We were one of 91 entities in Maryland to receive this grant. This grant will enable us to refocus our energies on programming for our members and the community.

... & THANK YOU

STORIES OF THE CHESAPEAKE!

Stories of the Chesapeake, the local branch of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority and a longtime and valued supporter of our activities, has provided us with a \$4,000 grant to expand our window and museum exhibits for 2022. Our plans include four exhibits, in addition to our traditional Legacy Day exhibit: Kent County Alms House, century-old farms, an expanded and updated African American sites walking tour, and Kent County's former flourishing agri-businesses such as peaches, canning, and seafood. Our hope is to create exhibits that can travel around the county and even the Eastern Shore, telling Kent County's stories. This matching grant requires us to match every dollar received with a volunteer hour or dollar of our own.

We Launched Our Video Series

After several unavoidable delays, we launched the Steve and Sandy Frohock Program Series on October 8 with the first "Inside the Bordley" interview. The interview was live-streamed via Facebook and is now available on the Society's own You Tube channel. An excerpt of the interview was also broadcast by *The Chestertown Spy*. (We may be about history but our techniques are truly 21st century!)

Van E. Gosse, professor of history at Franklin & Marshall College was interviewed about his new book, *The First Reconstruction: Black Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War*. The lively conversation centered on the political activism in the years before the Civil War by Reverend Henry Highland Garnet, who was born enslaved in Kent County but escaped and rose to international fame as an abolitionist and fiery orator. Garnet was also the first African American to preach in the House of Representatives. Gosse's book is available for purchase at the Bordley History

Center for the reduced price of \$30.00.

This event could not have been accomplished without the keen eye and ear of Jane Nevins, who found Gosse and persuaded him to be interviewed; the technical team work of Jim Dissette of *The Chestertown Spy*, Erik Gulbrandsen, and Gibson Anthony; the hands-on logistical support of Kurt Smith; the generosity of The White Swan Tavern for hosting Gosse and hosting the post-interview reception; the gracious hospitality of Susan Percival and Cynthia Saunders who curated a wonderful post-interview reception; and the coordination by Barbara Jorgenson, who even stepped in at the last minute and interviewed Gosse when the original interviewer took ill. All in all, a real team effort and a prototype for 2022!

We Expanded Hours at Bordley

As the late summer progressed towards year end, our museum and gift shop schedule expanded to three days each week: Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. This schedule continued through Christmas Eve. We enjoyed record number of visitors during this time —people were ready to be out and about and were totally cooperative with our policy requiring masks.

The museum and gift shop will now be closed until sometime in February , a brief hiatus to give the current COVID resurgence time to abate and for our staff to reorganize for 2022. The library remains open only by appointment.

Our Bordley Center successes in 2021 would not have been possible without Stephanie Gosman for her continuing creation of excellent exhibits both in the High Street windows and the first-floor museum; to Kurt Smith and Jane Nevins for serving as volunteer shop managers, scheduling other volunteer docents, and keeping the gift shop stocked; and to docents Robert Bryan, Mary Celeste Cunningham, Barbara Brown, and Mary Ann Moran. Special thanks to our neighbor, David Singer, for a charming display of his vintage train and village.

A Special Thank You to

Those Who Gave on Giving Tuesday...

For the first time, we participated in national Giving Tuesday on the Tuesday after

Thanksgiving 2021. We greatly appreciate the generosity of so many who gave through that program.

As 2022 begins, we remind you that our programs still need your help. Funding for our exhibits requires matching funds. Our digitization project continues in its first phase of sorting and culling. While the Maryland Humanities grant will provide a small part of this funding, we need additional help for the next phase of actually scanning part of the collection. Our virtual program series started in October has production equipment but needs funding for production personnel and research staff. Please help in any way you can by donating on our website at www.kentcountyhistory.org or by mail to P.O. Box 665, Chestertown, Maryland 21620.

Hold Onto Your Hats...

2022 is Going to be a BIG Year...

We have big plans for 2022. We promise to keep you apprised and invited by these newsletters. So stay tuned and HAPPY NEW YEAR!

We count on your generosity to fund our museum, library and programs. Any gift you are able to make is greatly appreciated!

Donate Securely Online via PayPal

**If you need to reach the Society for any reason
please send an email to
director@kentcountyhistory.org**