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## *He Was Lost But Now He's Found*

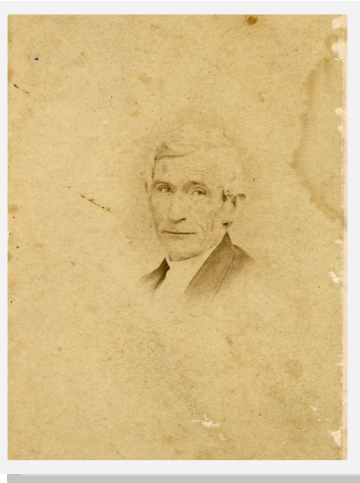
By Karen Peterson

New genealogical discoveries are always exciting moments in our big family.

One of those moments can make everything we set out to do that day suddenly and justifiably get bumped down the priority list and put on hold until later. We immediately head for the telephone, cell phone, iPad, laptop or desktop keyboard to share the excitement with the family.

Sometimes as we "fast-forward" into the past trying to grasp all the newest genealogical resources available, we put aside discovered tidbits for later only to re-experience "one of those moments" again years later even as many as 40 years later.

Recently during a typical unexciting morning at work, I received a short email from my sister with simply "old photo" in the subject line and the old photo was attached to the email.



Reverend Joseph Brown



Detail on back of photograph

*Karen  
I just found this photo today in a box of old papers. Have you ever seen a photo of Rev Joseph Brown?  
Geraldine*

I almost jumped out of my chair. For me, this was "one of those moments". It was difficult to remain quiet in the silence of the office. My mind was shouting "SAY WHAT?" but my composed, unexcitable persona remained intact and I did not disrupt my co-workers or give them cause for alarm. I remained calm, silently funneling my excitement through my fingers on

the computer keyboard. NOOO! I have not seen a photo of Rev. Brown, I replied! It was very difficult to experience "one of those moments" and not utter even the tiniest "Oh my gosh" of excitement.

Now in order to justify this random act of excitement over this seemingly insignificant photo, let me take you back in the not-so-distant past to November 2013. If you are a Historical Society of Cecil County member, you may recall that in the fall of 2013, the Society held its Annual Meeting and Program at Cherry Hill United Methodist Church. As a

*Renew  
your  
membership  
today!*

# President's Corner

There was no down time for the volunteers at the Society this summer. We were busy erecting a new exhibit "Fish Tales" that corresponded with the BassMasters Tournament, the Chandlee clock has been getting some new/old parts and the fully restored clock will be making its debut soon, and some volunteers have been writing stories for your pleasure, as you will see in this issue.

We have regrettably said goodbye to some faithful volunteers and joyfully welcomed some new ones. Just like there is a foot for every shoe, we have a job for every volunteer.

Our program committee has an all-star lineup for this Fall so we hope everyone will make the effort to attend.

You will be pleasantly surprised at how much fun you can have with history. We just recently began participating in Elkton's First Fridays celebration.

JoAnn, who is our resident foodie, puts on a mighty good spread so you should stop by and indulge in good eats, drink and conversation.

The Fall programs will start off with

something to get you in the Halloween spirit when they talk about death traditions, we are combining our annual meeting and election with a professional performance of Rosie the Riveter and then to whet our whistles just in time for Christmas, we will celebrate Repeal Day with a romping Bootleggers' Ball.

Please come and join the festivities and enjoy all the wonders the Historical Society has to offer.

Help us keep your history alive,  
*Paula Newton, President*

## *Officers*

- ◆ PAULA NEWTON – PRESIDENT
- ◆ DEBBIE STORKE – TREASURER
- ◆ MIKE DIXON – HISTORIAN
- ◆ CAROL DONACHE – LIBRARIAN
- ◆ BETH MOORE – CORRESPONDING SECRETARY
- ◆ KAREN LOFTHOUSE – MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY
- ◆ LISA DOLOR – CO-CURATOR
- ◆ BRIAN MCCANDLESS – CO- CURATOR

## *Trustees*

- ◆ GARY HOLMES
- ◆ MILT DIGGINS
- ◆ BILLIE TODD
- ◆ ERIC MEASE
- ◆ KAREN PETERSON

*INKWELL DESIGN BY FRAZIER WALKER*

***We need your email addresses!***  
***Please submit to @ [kloft@udel.edu](mailto:kloft@udel.edu)***

# 2015 Schedule of Events

Oct. 3, 2015—2PM

## Death and Burial Traditions

Learn about the evolution of funeral customs and the undertaker business and how modern cemetery recordkeeping has affected genealogy. Presented by James H. Turner, a 4th generation retired funeral director at Turner Funeral Home, Inc. (est. 1880).

Nov. 7, 2015—2PM

## Rosie the Riveter

Enjoy a performance by award-winning actress Mary Ann Jung as she portrays Rose Leigh Monroe who worked at the largest factory in the world - Willow Run in Michigan. Watch as Rosie presents, chooses audience volunteers, and teaches about women in WWII.



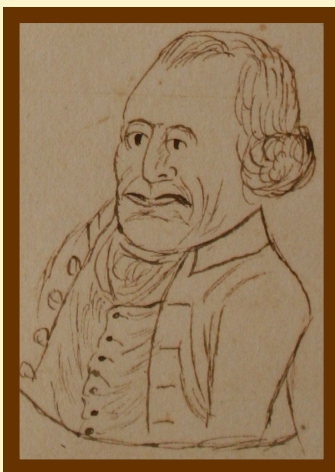
Dec. 5, 2015—2PM

## Repeal Day Celebration

Come celebrate the repeal of prohibition at our second Bootleggers' Ball.

All programs are held at Historical Society of Cecil County  
135 E. Main Street, Elkton— 410-398-1790

Cost is \$5.00 for non-members. **MEMBERS ARE FREE!**



**Who is this  
distinguished fellow?**

***Check back with us  
for more information!***

***HSCC wants to email the  
Inkwell to as many  
members as possible!***

***Send your address to  
kloft@udel.edu***

***The Inkwell is published  
three times per year***

***Volunteer!  
410-398-1790  
remembrance@hsc.org***

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***join the history  
conversation***



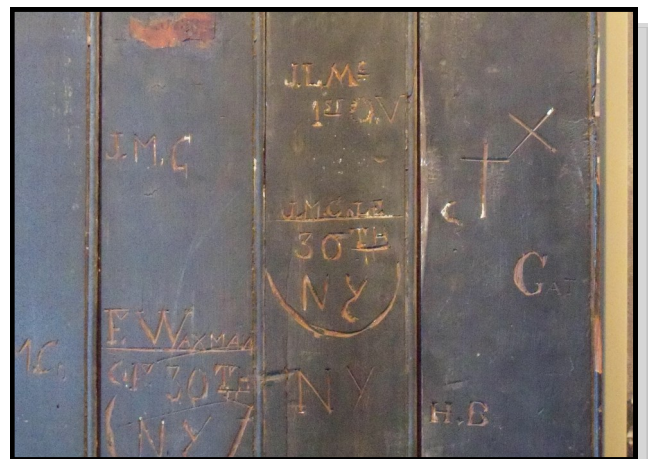
Libby Prison Door

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member of the church I volunteered to be on the planning committee. The theme of the program focused on “Rev. Joseph T. Brown”, who would be portrayed by Rev. Bert Jicha, former Cherry Hill UMC minister and the Libby Prison Minstrels band from New Jersey would provide authentic Civil War music (I think they are awesome!). Several stories have already been written about Rev. Brown but I wanted to find out more about him for our program. Certainly there must be a photograph of this highly esteemed man somewhere out there on the World Wide Web and I was determined to find it. I searched and searched but to my dismay, it was in vain, no photo. I was not even able to find the names of his parents. Well, back to the photo. Sensing my textual excitement, my sister

called me and said she had been looking for chair cushions in the attic and found this small box which she assumed had been untouched for almost 40 years. Inside she found the photo with the name of Rev. Joseph Brown handwritten on the back. Along with the photo and a few other items was a religious booklet entitled *Daily Food* with the name of our great-great- grandmother Esther A. Brown written inside. Could we possibly be related to Rev. Joseph T. Brown? Was it simply a coincidence these items were stored away together or was this a clue to a Brown family connection? I asked my sister if she would be home that evening, as I couldn’t wait to see the photo! She invited me to come for supper (a bonus) and when there is genealogy there is always dessert, iced tea and coffee, it’s the culinary part of family tradition for us! Could this little picture be worth a thousand words? We must be related, I had to find the answer.

Reflecting on Rev. Brown from previously written stories, I knew he was born January 4, 1810. The census records tell us that he was born in Maryland and resided in Cecil County. It was in the small village of Cherry Hill where he lived, worked, married, raised a family and faithfully attended the little church up the road. He is buried in the cemetery on the crest of the hill overlooking the village. Even this newly discovered photo of him had traveled less than two miles from his Cherry Hill neighborhood. He was trained as a shoemaker by John



Detail of Libby Prison Door.

Kennedy of Newark, Delaware. I found a Rev. John Kennedy listed in the 1830 census in New Castle County, Delaware. Was this the same man Brown was apprenticed to? Could this Rev. Kennedy have inspired him to become a minister?

Through my research, I learned about the six children of Rev. Joseph and Millicent Brown.

Catherine, 1836-1917 - married 1<sup>st</sup> to Spence Brown and 2<sup>nd</sup> to John Thomas Holt.

Mary E., 1839-\_\_\_ - Her name is on the back of Rev. Brown's photo. She married Sgt. Joseph T. Cantwell who was in the Loudoun Rangers (Virginia partisan cavalry).

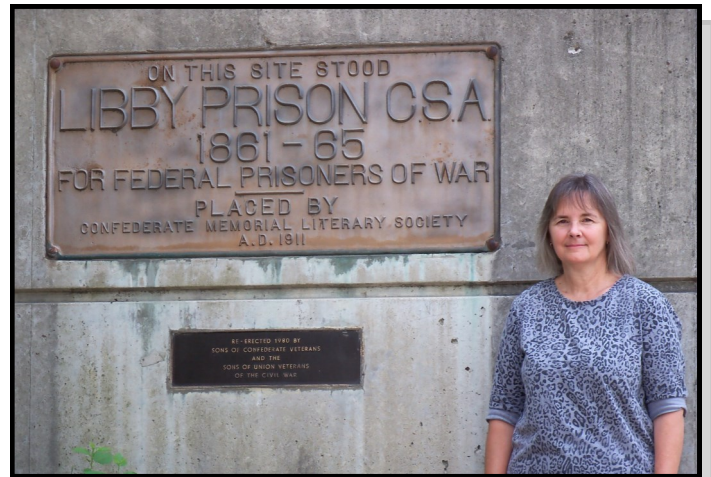
Harriet A., 1841-1922 – married Corp. James H. Mahan of Co. K 6<sup>th</sup> MD Infantry

Joseph Gassoway, 1845-1929 – Private, 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment, MD Infantry. He was a bank teller and married Mary Clark West.

Thomas Bond, 1849-1918 – married Mary A. Smith

John Wilmer, 1851-1915 was a postmaster – married 1<sup>st</sup> Mary Rebecca Crossgrove, married 2<sup>nd</sup> Rachel Crossgrove. His son with Mary was Gassoway "Bond" Brown who was a graduate of the University of Delaware, class of 1918.

I learned about Rev. Brown, the person, from his Civil War diaries, a humble, religious man who loved God and family. His dedication and duty to his country took him away from his home and family for a brief yet what must certainly have been the longest period of his life. Enlisted as a chaplain in the Union Army on October 23, 1862, his life took a destined path that day. He was captured in June 1863 and sent to Libby Prison in Richmond, VA where he spent four months under inhumane conditions difficult for us to imagine today. While in prison Rev. Brown was selected to draw the names of two Union Officers to be executed, a cruel task to put on anyone. The first name drawn was Henry Sawyer of New Jersey. In the end, the officers were not executed. I discovered that Henry Sawyer went on to live a full life in Cape May, NJ. If you ever visit this seaside town, look up the Chalfonte Hotel, it was built by Henry in 1876. The members of the Libby Prison Minstrels band knew the story of their local New Jersey hero Lt. Col. Henry Washington Sawyer but did not know the Rev. Brown side of the story, so they were shocked to learn that he is buried here in Cherry Hill. After performing their concert at our Annual Meeting, they visited Rev. Brown's monument and spent some time there. Was Rev. Brown calling us all



*Karen Peterson at Libby Prison*

together? Was this a reunion, a mending of the pain of drawing lots at Libby Prison? I visited Richmond, VA in 2013 and stood on the site of Libby Prison. I visited the American Civil War Center in which there are artifacts from the prison. I stood in full view of reality upon seeing one of the remaining doors from the prison with many names carved on it. It was a connection to the past that I could almost reach out and touch. How many soldiers had been confined behind that door? Had Rev. Brown been one of them? Rev. Brown had an impact on the lives of young men by teaching them the shoemaking trade and at different times there were three known shoemakers lodging in the Brown household. According to the 1850 census, William Jeanes, age 22 was listed as a shoemaker with the Brown family. He was listed as a shoemaker in the following three census years in various Pennsylvania locations and eventually supporting a family of his own. John Myers, age 36, shoemaker was also listed with the Browns in 1850. William Anderson, born in Ireland, was 22 years of age and living with the Brown family at the time of the 1860 census. By 1870 he was a shoemaker in Reading, PA with his own family. The community where Rev. Brown lived has told me a lot about him. He was dedicated to his faith and to education and was one of the first trustees of the Cherry Hill Church, Cherry Hill School and Sabbath School. A testament to his respect in the community is memorialized in the stained glass window in the church and by the towering obelisk monument on his grave, given by those in the community whose lives he touched. So what am I to tell about this story of the photograph? Would readers be as excited as me? What could they possibly take away from a story about a tiny photograph of a middle-aged man? On a recent off-Sunday stop at the church for weekly cleaning duties, I had an idea to stroll through the cemetery.

*...Continued on page 11*

# My Old House

*By Travis Humiston*



I pulled into the driveway late in the afternoon in October and thought “this is home”. After looking at five other houses that day all over Harford and Cecil Counties the house seemed to speak to me.

For those that don’t know, I am a Maryland transplant. I moved here for work in 2004. Previously I had lived in an apartment building, with its repetitive mundane features and utilitarian efficiency, until 2010 on that day in October when I pulled into the Renn house.

For many people the sheer age of the house had been a turn

off, not to mention its many ailments. But after seeing the picturesque cross gabled red brick house against the foliage of the falling orange and yellow maple leaves I had to fight to contain my excitement. Fearing I had blinders on I quickly went to the library and researched buying old homes to make sure I wasn’t getting in over my head.

I was getting in over my head.

The library books pointed out the many reasons not buy the house. You know silly things like, rotten window sills, old floors with cracks so big that you could use the basement as a dustpan and more additions over the years than I

*Continued from page 6...*

have fingers. But the books could not dissuade me. The house seemed to radiate character and had a historical significance I could not ignore.

Now, this was my first house, and prior to seeing it I hadn't been any sort of history buff. In fact I despised the subject in grade school. But something about the prospect of being part of the "Renn Homestead", as I would see it called in a later document, was very exciting. So maybe it's me, it's very possible that I am just that one person who loves the story behind a house (or anything for that matter) but I don't think that is true. In fact I am certain most of us value the character aspect of houses or there wouldn't be so many darn T.V. shows about it. So on that day after I pulled into the driveway it was one of the first things I asked: "Can you tell me about the house?"

I was quickly brought up to speed that the house was owned by a single family since it had been built around the time of the civil war. The area I was in was called Zion and that it had been a farming village since the early 19th century.

Not very long after that I closed on the house. But as I told my friends and family about my endeavor I was riddled with questions about the architecture and the area and the family of the house and I quickly ran out of answers. In fact, besides all of my inquisitors, after I moved in I quickly amassed what I judged to be a mountain of questions about the house. "Were the floors original? The wood grain is different in this room so was it a replacement? When was this addition put on? When did they install electricity? Plumbing? Heat?" I thought, and the list when on and on.

I talked further with the Renn family and they helped answer some questions. Neighbors helped answer others. But what they had

really done was form the outside edge of a puzzle and I wanted to complete it. Having just moved to the county I didn't really know where to turn or whom to turn to, so, how was I to proceed? I was by no means an active person in any of the local communities and so I certainly did not feel very connected to any resources. I launched my first attack by reviewing books on historic architecture. This helped give me some perspective on how the house was built and taught me some of the language of historic homes but it did not answer many questions. As a matter of fact, now that I had learned a little, I had raised even more questions. So I just "googled". I mean you can find anything on there right? At first I didn't know what to search for so I just used keywords from what little information I had and just followed where the results led. And wouldn't you know it, the Historical Society of Cecil County came up in the results.

Of course! It hadn't even occurred to me that there would be an organization like the Historical Society. A group that focused on preserving the historical elements of the area. I guess I'll have to chalk that up to youthful arrogance.

Well, I headed down to Main Street in short order during the societies next open library hours. I met two wonderful women named Beth and Darlene and they had me swimming in deeds and climbing through family trees in no time.

For anyone that is like "pre-historic" me and thinks they can find everything online, you will be in for a delight when you visit; the resources at the Historical Society really are incredible. For me, the vertical files of county families, original tax records, and believe it or not their collection of Newspapers were my greatest resources. But I remember leaving after my first visit with a homework assignment: to read a book titled "Red Top Boots", authored by a Cecil county great named George Prettyman. So I read that book, and to my surprise, it contains many stories about George's childhood in Zion. It turns out that George was friends with James Renn (a Renn Homestead resident) as a child and in the book he relates several stories about the Renn family and the house. As a side note, I learned, through reading the book that Mr.

*...Continued on page 11*

# Thank You and Farewell Volunteers

By Carol Donache

Almost eight years ago, a couple came into the Historical Society and asked to become volunteers. Little did they know what they were in for! Margie and Dick Glover started out answering research queries. However, in the ensuing years they did just about everything anyone could do in a small museum and research library. They organized, scrubbed, measured, hauled, catalogued, polished and generally made themselves useful. They were always willing. The Glovers' last big project involved replacing hundreds of plain manila file folders for more visible blue ones, transferring their contents and relabeling each one. Yes, you read that correctly, their *last* project: Margie and Dick will be starting a new adventure an hour or so north of here in a retirement community closer to family. We miss them terribly at HSCC, but they promise to come back and visit, as Margie would say, "God willing and the creek don't rise." That creek better stay put.

HSCC is also saying goodbye, after four years, to volunteer Steve Higham. You may remember seeing a profile of him and the projects he worked on in the *Whig*, in our blog, and in the *Inkwell*. Steve specialized in creating digital "products" for us by linking images of documents with their transcribed information contained on spreadsheets.

An example can be found on our website, under the "Research" tab: Cecil County in the Civil War – Civil War Pension Book. More of his creations can be found at Society headquarters. Steve will begin enjoying life at the beach on a permanent basis very soon. Steve and his massive music collection will be greatly missed, especially at Christmas. We miss him and wish him the very best.



Dick & Margie Glover



Librarian Carol Donache and Steve Higham examine the Cecil County Civil War Bounty digital research product.



# Happy 341st Birthday, Cecil County!

by Beth Boulden Moore

On June 6, 2015 the historical society celebrated Cecil County's 341<sup>st</sup> birthday. "Happy Birthday, Cecil County" was a roaring success! Reverend Duke's log cabin was open to the public and a handmade replica of the log cabin was raffled off. Special thanks go to Jeff Powers, the artisan who created the log cabin model. The raffle raised over \$1,900 for the ongoing projects of the historical society. Ice cream and cake were served to the guests and Reverend Duke himself

(AKA Gary Holmes) made an appearance at this special celebration. Local dignitaries, including Cecil County Executive Tari Moore, Councilman Dan Schneckenburger, and Elkton Mayor Rob Alt, attended the event. Special proclamations from the county and the Town of Elkton were presented to historical society president Paula Newton. The society plans on making this an annual event, so mark your calendars now for June 4, 2016!



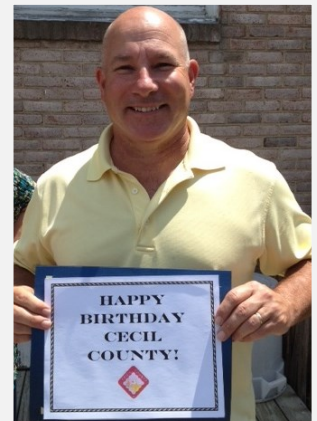
County Executive Tari Moore



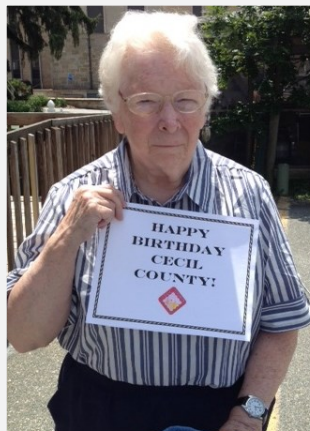
County Councilman Dan Schneckenburger



Reverend Duke



Elkton Mayor Robert Alt



Sally McKee



Jeff & Marcia Powers



Dick & Margie Glover

## Welcome HSCC Members!

- Michael Alexander, Doswell, VA
- Angela Blaschke—Elkton, MD
- Iris Barnes—Havre de Grace, MD
- Charles Coleman—Caulfield, OH
- Tom and June Cooper—Marco Island, FL
- Peggy Cotton—Pegosa Springs, CO
- Michael Dawson—Perryville, MD
- Leigh Fleming—Martinsburg, WV
- Dave Fordyce—Elkton, MD
- Chuck and Linda Foster—Chesapeake City, MD
- Kimberly Franklin—Elkton, MD
- Albert Fuller, Jr.—Atglen, PA
- William Graham—Elkton, MD
- Lisa Hudson—Bear, DE
- George Kaplan—Colora, MD
- Cynthia Mangini—Wilmington, DE
- William McLain—Newark, DE
- Kelly and Marilyn McMillan—Newark, DE
- John Miller—Rising Sun, MD
- Gerald Sligh—Elkton, MD
- Dorothy Schwemmer—Berlin, MD
- Michael and Sharon Vecera—Marriottsville, MD
- Norman Wehner—North East, MD
- Jacqueline Walls—New Castle, DE



Debra Barton won the log cabin birdhouse raffle! *Your donation allows us to continue our research to others. Donate by check or on our website via Paypal. Thank you for your support!*

***Annual Raffle Basket chances available soon. Last year's basket contained over \$700 in gift cards and gifts.***

***The winner will be drawn at the Bootleggers Ball on December 5.***

Perhaps if I walked the rows of stones near the lot of Rev. and Mrs. Brown I might find other family names or some kind of clues to help me discover who his parents were and a possible connection to my own family. Standing in awe of his monument and reading the script as I have done on other occasions, I stared at his death date, May 8, 1865 and as I stood there I suddenly realized that today was May 8, 2015, exactly 150 years after his death. Was this simply a coincidence or something more? This was not “one of those moments” of genealogical discoveries, this was a personal moment. Rev. Brown was perhaps lost, perhaps forgotten. Was he reaching out to be remembered?

Am I related to Rev. Joseph Brown genetically? I may never know. Am I related to him personally? Oh yes. We’ve shared the same church for most of our lives. He was an early member who helped build up the church that has become a rock within my family. A memorial stained glass window in the church bears his name. For me, this etched name in the window has always been the face of Rev. Joseph T. Brown but now, a new face that was lost has been found.

Perhaps I have been searching in vain for clues to the Brown family connection. Perhaps the simple realization is that Rev. Brown was lost, but was meant to be found as a face that helped build our church and our community, the face of a man who sacrificed his own life for our country and a face to remember the faceless soldiers of 150 years ago. Cherry Hill Cemetery is the final resting place for 46 Civil War soldiers and one chaplain, some survived the war, some did not. They all sacrificed for our country and for future generations.

As I am finishing my story it is the 2015 Memorial Day holiday. What better time to remember those Civil War soldiers and chaplains who have been lost for 150 years. Perhaps one man who was found can be a face for many.

Can one little picture tell a thousand words? Yes, it just has.



Prettyman was a long time contributor to a column in the Cecil Whig during his years and the book was mostly a collection of his columns.

Still, the knowledge of the members was even more important for my search to complete the puzzle. Through my visits to the society I was taught how to trace deeds, find marriage and death certificates. I was shown how to look up wills and had questions answered about antiquated customs that have been long forgotten (quit rents anybody?).

As I said earlier, the Renn house has been in the same family for several generations but it was mostly passed down from one woman to another and as such there have been several surnames ringing through the house during its history. Moving backwards through time, the house was occupied by the Renn’s, then the Mearn’s, the Carter’s and the Chandlee’s.

The parcel is on a land patent known as “Revolution” first granted in the late 18th century right after the revolutionary war.

The Society has helped me to become connected to the county and through volunteering I have learned a great deal about Cecil County and its history. I have met and continue to meet people from the area that I would never have otherwise. I love that I know so much about the Renn Homestead and the village of Zion, I can’t imagine living here without this insight. As I walk my dogs through the village I get a sense of what it must have been like here in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And as I work in the yard and I come across an old nail or piece of leather, I wonder if it was from when the house served as a tack shop, but many questions still remain, so I continue to work through the seemingly endless resources at the Historical Society so that one day I can complete my puzzle.



**Historical Society of Cecil County**  
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**Cecil's Heritage Keepers**

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### Who was Thomas McCreary?

*By Milt Diggins*

According to famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass, Thomas McCreary was the “notorious kidnapper from Cecil County.” I was searching through 19th century newspapers for my position as editor of the Historical Society’s Cecil County Historical Journal when I came across this reference in 2007. Questions immediately came to mind—who was Tom McCreary? Why did Douglass know about him and why did he call him a notorious kidnapper from Elkton. I asked around at the society and no one there ever heard of McCreary, and a quick search in the society library yielded nothing. Evidently, as I combed through the old newspapers, the easy answers came to light. But more questions and more digging through records followed. The following year I ended my editorship of the historical journal to devote more time to the project. At first the newspaper files, courthouse records, and other archives at the historical society provided voluminous amounts of material, but evidentially I had to go further afield. After seven years of research and writing, I had more than answers, I had a book. The Maryland Historical Society has published the book, *Stealing Freedom along the Mason-Dixon Line: Thomas McCreary, the Notorious Slave Catcher from Elkton*. The book takes a close up view of the slave catching and

kidnapping issue about a decade before the outbreak of Civil War. Throughout the book, McCreary and others are involved in a series of abductions, attempted abductions, and questionable arrests in three states. These aggressions and the reactions to them will increase understanding of why the slave catching issue was a contributing cause of the Civil War. This may be the only book on an American history topic in which Cecil County plays a central role. In Cecil County, McCreary was hailed as a heroic slave catcher by local politicians, editors of the Democrat and Whig, and local citizens. To Maryland politicians, including two governors, McCreary represented the Constitutional right of all slave catchers to capture fugitive slaves in other states without interference from those state governments. Pennsylvanians, and some Marylanders and Delawareans, including Thomas Garrett, reviled McCreary as a villainous kidnapper. As for McCreary, he wasn’t too concerned about the distinction between slave catching and kidnapping as long as he made a profit and stayed out of jail. Midway through the book, McCreary kidnaps two sisters several weeks apart in Pennsylvania, Elizabeth

Parker, age 12, and Rachel Parker, age 17, and accused them of being fugitive slaves from Baltimore. McCreary and Cecil County provide the story’s framework for examining this issue. But at this point in the book, the Parker sisters, their ordeal, the mysterious death of a witness, and the response of their community become the heart of this story. McCreary’s story has connections to major historical events—the enactment of Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, the Christiana Resistance in Lancaster County, the most violent reaction to the new law, and the subsequent treason trail. Historians have noted one connection between McCreary and these events, but other significant connections previously overlooked are presented in the book. I provide an overview of the book on my webpage, if you would like to refer to it [www.mdiggins.com](http://www.mdiggins.com).

