

# The Inkwell

FALL 2019

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**Volunteer!**  
**410-398-**  
**1790**

*Renew  
your  
membership  
today!*

## Mount Aviat *By Rusty Eder*

From its quiet location among the farm fields of Childs, Mount Aviat Academy holds a special place in the hearts of many Cecil Countians, especially those with a connection to its storied educational history, or a taste for cream puffs! Both have their origins in the earliest mission of the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales, the Catholic order which has run the school since the early 1950s.

Founded in France in the mid-nineteenth century, the Oblate sisters were originally committed to providing guidance and education to the young women working in the many factories of that century's Industrial Revolution. Education for these young women was a natural outgrowth of that mission and by the middle of the next century, the Sisters were operating a number of schools in Europe, South America, and Africa. It was on a tour of one of these schools, that Mother Jean de Sales was asked to send some of the Oblate sisters to America, specifically to Childs, to assist the Oblate Fathers who had established a novitiate

there. Thus, in 1951, Srs. Bertha Gonzalez (Superior) Jane Stanislaus, and Mary Bertha came to America and worked with the good fathers, mostly in the seminary kitchen.

In 1952, the small order took over the old county almshouse and asylum and established their first convent in the United States, still known as Villa Aviat. The buildings were in poor shape, but the Sisters relied on faith (and a lot of elbow grease) to convert them to a useful facility. Once the buildings were ready, they opened their first school, a kindergarten with an initial class of three young students. In 1960, the Oblates took the next step, opening Mt. Aviat Academy, a day and boarding high school for young



# President's Corner

Hello Members,

The Society is a beehive of activity with two major projects in progress. You will see more details about the DeWitt Military Museum renovation and the Duke Log House Restoration further along in this issue. Obviously, both of these projects will require funding and we are currently researching applicable funding agencies where we can apply for grants. We are also sending solicitation letters to major and local businesses.

The Cecil County Arts Council is helping with the fundraising for the Duke Log House Restoration and donors will receive the following incentives: every donor receives a log

house button showing that you helped save a piece of Cecil County history; a donation of \$100 will receive a T-shirt; \$250 receives a T-shirt and memberships to the Historical Society and the Arts Council; \$500 receives a frameable drawing of the Duke Log House and for donations of \$1000 or more, we will put your name into a drawing for a one-of-a-kind handmade log cabin bird house by Jeff Powers.

I am pleased to announce that we have received a \$12,000 grant through the Cecil County FY2020 Video Lottery Terminal Local Community Grant

Program to partially fund the DeWitt Museum renovation. We have started to dismantle the museum and are cleaning and accessioning every artifact. Cameras were installed when we started this process and in the end we will have a time lapsed video posted to our website for all to see.

The Market at 135 was established this year as the result of a random conversation between the staff from the Historical Society, Arts Council and Cecil Land Trust. We discussed how to make our building a destination and after including Maureen O'Shea,

## Officers

- ◆ PAULA NEWTON – PRESIDENT
- ◆ BETH MOORE—VICE PRESIDENT
- ◆ DEBBIE STORKE – TREASURER
- ◆ MIKE DIXON – HISTORIAN
- ◆ CAROL DONACHE – LIBRARIAN
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- ◆ MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY
- ◆ LISA DOLOR – CURATOR

***HSCC wants to email the Inkwell to as many members as possible! Please send us your email address to receive future issues via email.***

## Trustees

- ◆ GARY HOLMES
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- ◆ RUSTY EDER
- ◆ TRACY JENTZSCH
- ◆ MARGIE BLYSTONE

***Do you want to get involved? Contact us! cecilhistory@gmail.com***

Cecil's Agribusiness Coordinator, a farmer's market was created. Currently there are goods from Luff Family Farms, Chesapeake Gold Farms, Rumbleway Farm, Stafford Angus and Milburn Orchards, all Cecil County farms. Farm fresh products include honey, jams, beef sticks, eggs, cheese, pickled beets and peppers, relish and new items are added regularly. This is a tremendous opportunity for our farmers to directly connect with the public. Through our efforts we will raise awareness around the impact agriculture has on our economy, preserving our quality of life and securing a future for our children through protected lands. Farmers are on hand during each "First Friday" in Elkton to talk about their products with samples. The Market at 135 is open and welcomes the public to stop by Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and Saturday 1 a.m.-2 p.m.

Best regards,

*Paula*

Paula Newton  
President

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Above: Grotto

Right: Entrance to current building

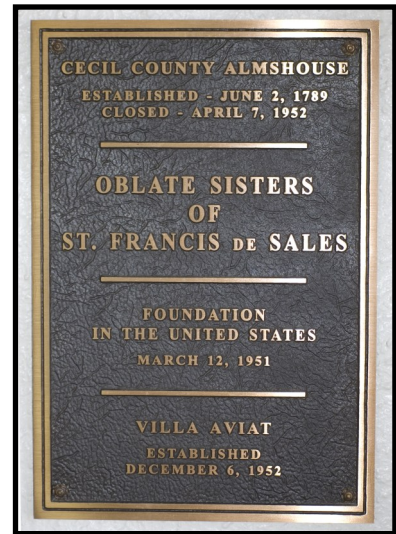
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*From page 1...*

women under the direction of Principal, Sr. Francis Marguerite. They graduated their first class of 24 students in 1964. The Academy did well for several year, but by the late '60s, it was apparent that competition from other schools in the area was shrinking the available student base, so the Sisters began the process of converting from an all-girls high school to a co-educational elementary school. The high school graduated its last class in 1972, but beginning in 1969, the Oblates added one grade a year to the existing kindergarten, and in 1977 graduated their first 8<sup>th</sup> grade class.

Over the years, the Oblates have expanded their facilities, adding on to existing buildings and erecting new ones as needed. Today they teach a full curriculum at Mt. Aviat in Childs (named a Presidential Blue Ribbon School of Excellence) and have even been asked to help out in such diverse communities as Drexel Hill, PA, Fredericksburg, VA and most recently Baltimore, MD. Oh, and about the cream puffs! Sr. Jane Stanislaus, one of the first three





sisters to arrive, took over the kitchen for her community, and one of her specialties were hand-made cream puffs. Over time the tradition of using the pastries as a fundraiser evolved and today, using her original recipe, the Sisters sell anywhere from 4-5000 of these delicacies (still made by hand) to the general community twice a year, maintaining the long-standing tradition of feeding the body as well as the soul.



## *DeBoard Scholarship Supports History Students*

The scholarship was founded to remember Kermit DeBoard, a local history enthusiast, who was a founding member of the Round Table, a group interested in learning about and promoting local history in Cecil County. When DeBoard died, the Round Table disbanded and donated their remaining funds to local history organizations. The Historical Society of Cecil County was asked to be the steward and create and administer a scholarship fund in DeBoard's memory. The \$500 scholarship is awarded to a high school senior showing outstanding achievement in history that plans to pursue a degree in American history or a related field of study. The 2019 recipient of the scholarship is Jeffrey Ricketts, a senior at Rising Sun High School. Jeffrey is very knowledgeable about antique furniture and artifacts and has been running his own antique business for several years. He has used his knowledge to help catalogue the collection at the Historical Society working with Curator Lisa Dolor. Jeffrey will be attending the University of Delaware in the fall.



# VOLUNTEER NEEDED

## TREASURER POSITION AT HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CECIL COUNTY

This is a volunteer position that is also an officer position making the volunteer a member of the Board of Trustees.

The duties are:

Present monthly financial report to the Board of Trustees at the monthly Board meeting which is held the third Wednesday of each month (except July & December) at 7:00 p.m.

Be familiar with bookkeeper's computer program and be able to access it.

Meet with bookkeeper to approve expenditures and review finances;

Sign checks; Reconcile bank statements.

Manage Paypal, Square and Go Fund Me accounts as needed.

Monitor bank accounts and CDs.

Maintain cash box and replenish postage stamp stock.

Liasion with Columbia Bank and Cecil Bank.

Keep inventory and manage gift shop.

If you are interested, please contact the Historical Society at 410-398-1790  
or by email at [cecilhistory@gmail.com](mailto:cecilhistory@gmail.com).

## **Become a Member!**

Joining the Historical Society of Cecil County is a great way to support the Society's undertakings.

All members are invited to attend meetings and functions sponsored by the HSCC, receive discounts on books and items, use the HSCC library for free and get a subscription to *The Inkwell*, our newsletter.

For over 75 years, we have connected people with Cecil's past by collecting and preserving the county's history and we count on membership dues to help fund this endeavor.

Through your membership you help connect people to the county's past through our library and its significant collection of rare books, manuscripts and photographs; our outreach services, helping others understand county history; a website that attracts hundreds of visitors monthly; our museum, which contains fascinating displays; and our widely distributed print newsletter.

## **Ways to Join**

Become a member online or send your payment by mail (the old-fashioned way!). Membership renewal is on an annual, calendar year basis.

Members joining on or after August 1st will receive credit for the remaining months of the year of receipt as well as a full 12 months in the following period.

## **By Mail**

Membership  
Historical Society of Cecil County  
135 E Main St.  
Elkton, MD 21921

## **Online Payment with Paypal**

Select the appropriate category and click on the "buy now" button. It will take you to a secure PayPal page for payment.

You will receive your membership package within about two weeks.



# WANTED

## **Historical Society of Cecil County Officers and Trustees**

If you are looking for a fun and fulfilling way to serve your community, consider becoming a board member.

We always welcome new talent from our community.

The Historical Society of Cecil County Board of Directors comprises leaders who are dedicated to the organization's mission. Serving on the Board of Directors is an extraordinary opportunity for an individual who is passionate about Cecil County History.

If you are interested, please contact the Historical Society at  
410-398-1790  
or by email at [cecilhstory@gmail.com](mailto:cecilhstory@gmail.com).

## *Welcome, New Members!*

**Do you know someone who should become a member? Let us know!  
Send us an email or give a call.**

First Name	Last Name	Join Date
Brenda	Sexton	1/1/2019
Jerry	Startzel	1/1/2019
C. Philip	DeWeese	1/1/2019
Denise	Marvel	1/1/2019
Brenda	Algard	1/1/2019
Michelle	Montiel	1/1/2019
Marlene	Brown	1/16/2019
Elaine	Boston	1/25/2019
Randall H.	Hollingsworth	1/31/2019
Scott	Markley	2/3/2019
Celinda C.	Scott	2/4/2019
Charles & Alena	Givens	2/10/2019
Lee	Lewis	3/1/2019
James	Gasparo	3/1/2019
Dorothy	Williams	3/7/2019
Glenn & Lois	Love	3/21/2019
Joy	Temple-Ray	3/25/2019
Leslie	Broomell	3/25/2019
Martin	Schenck	3/28/2019
Dianne M.	Temple	3/28/2019
Gail	Smith	5/21/2019
Charles N.	Calvert	6/3/2019
Eric	Loveless	6/7/2019
Kathleen	Piersall	6/25/2019
James L.	Sprole	6/27/2019
Aaron	Butler	7/8/2019
Barb	Grayjek	7/16/2019
Paula	Conoscenti	7/21/2019
Debra	Hall	7/22/2019
Melinda	Laird-Kilian	7/25/2019
Bob	Owens	7/25/2019



## *Volunteer Spotlight*

### **Name and where you are from:**

Anne Fazio  
Port Deposit, Maryland

### **What did you or do you do in your working life:**

Retired after 24 years as Clerk/Treasurer of the Town of North East

### **What is your job at the Historical Society:**

Library volunteer and researcher

### **What encouraged you to volunteer at the Society:**

My love of history and the importance of preserving history

### **What are your interests or hobbies::**

Volunteering at Church  
Gardening  
Traveling



## ***Donations — Thank You!***

*The Historical Society would like to thank everyone for making our fall fundraising event successful. Every contribution is important to help us meet our goals of preserving the history of Cecil County.*

The Historical Society of Cecil County would like to thank the following patrons for their generous donations:

- American Legion, Elkton —\$1,000
- Rising Sun Middle School — \$250
- John T. and Jutilia M. Wilson — \$200
- VFW Post 8175, Elkton - \$1,500
- Loyal Order of Moose Lodge 851, Elkton - \$500
- Susquehanna Post #135, American Legion, Perryville - \$250.00

**Have you found  
answers to your  
Cecil County family  
history mysteries?  
Share your Stories!**

***cecilhstory@gmail.com***



## **The Sheriff John F. DeWitt Military Museum: Saving Cecil County's Military History**

The Historical Society of Cecil County is moving forward with the refurbishment of the Sheriff John F. DeWitt Military Museum. John F. DeWitt, the only Sheriff in the history of Cecil County to be elected for four consecutive terms, started collecting military memorabilia when he was eleven. His dream was to open a military museum when he retired. Three months after his retirement, while finalizing those plans, Sheriff DeWitt died suddenly on April 24, 1991. A group of his friends fulfilled his dream and opened the Museum on May 7, 1992 at the Historical Society of Cecil County. This museum is in memory of Sheriff DeWitt and is dedicated to Cecil County veterans of all wars.

This refurbishment is to enhance the quality of the displays and better preserve the artifacts within the collection and to highlight the personal stories of the Cecil County men and women that have served our country and their role in our country's military history. The Society is also endeavoring to create an educational tool and a more interactive experience for patrons with children specifically in mind. We will be installing electronics that will present 3D images of the artifacts, video to explain the United States military history and audio to narrate personal stories from Cecil County residents. Artifacts will be identified using signage and signage rails will be used to give an overview of that period in time. The total project cost is approximately \$112,000 which will include new paint, carpeting, display cabinets, lighting and technology. The Society will be applying for grant funding, but this project will not be possible without community and member support.

In 1992 the Colonel John H. Magruder Memorial Award was presented to the DeWitt Museum in recognition of the Museum's display of military memorabilia representing veterans of Cecil County and its emphasis on Marine Corps artifacts that cover history from the Civil War through Operation Desert Storm as judged by the Marine Corps Historical Foundation. This award winning museum is a Cecil County treasure that needs our attention. We would appreciate any financial assistance you can give us allowing us to realize our goal of making the DeWitt museum an engaging and interactive history of Cecil County's military.

Checks should be made payable to the Historical Society of Cecil County, 135 E. Main St., Elkton, MD 21921. Please indicate on your check that this is designated for the DeWitt Museum Renovation.





## Save the Cabin!

By Eric F. Mease

There is a structure standing just off Main Street in Elkton, that looks a bit out of place. A log cabin sits amongst and between a modern garage, residential backyards, and several early 20<sup>th</sup> century homes. It's been sitting there since 1972 when it was moved from Bow Street, also in Elkton. While it may seem out of place at first blush, this very historic cabin fits right in on the grounds of the Historical Society of Cecil County. Why? Because of it and one of its famous owner's abundant history.

The "famous" owner is the Rev. William Duke. Now, what follows is nothing new. No head turning revelations about Rev. Duke or his cabin, but a defense, a plea, if you will, for support to preserve the cabin for future generations.

According to a county deed, the cabin is at least 200 years old. In fact, next year, 2020, is the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of when Rev. Duke purchased the log cabin in 1820. An 1801 deed is the first one to mention the existence of the structure on the property. Based on Rev. Duke's diary and letters, we know that he opened a school in late 1799. While he does not directly say so, he implies that he held classes in his home. At the time, Rev. Duke owned the Belle Hill property, a part of Bellconnell on the east side of the Big Elk River. His diary describes the 96 acre property as being very rural, more like a farm with farm animals and crops. In addition, the letters also reveal that in September of 1800, Rev. Duke moved the school to a "stone house" owned by a Mr. Moore.

The school would be short lived. Rev. Duke departed Elkton in 1803 and went to Annapolis for 3 years to be Professor of Languages at St. John's College and the

pastor of St. Ann's church there. He was twice employed at the Elkton Academy: first as a teacher in 1807 to 1812 and again in 1818 when he was appointed principal.

Rev. Duke was also an author. He wrote a pamphlet called "Observations on the Present State of Religion in Maryland" published in Elkton in 1795. He also wrote and published the small volume: "Hymns and Poems on Various Occasions" printed in Baltimore in 1790. Finally, he wrote the poem "A View of the Woods," "a description of the adventures and experiences of Western emigrants in the latter part of the last century."

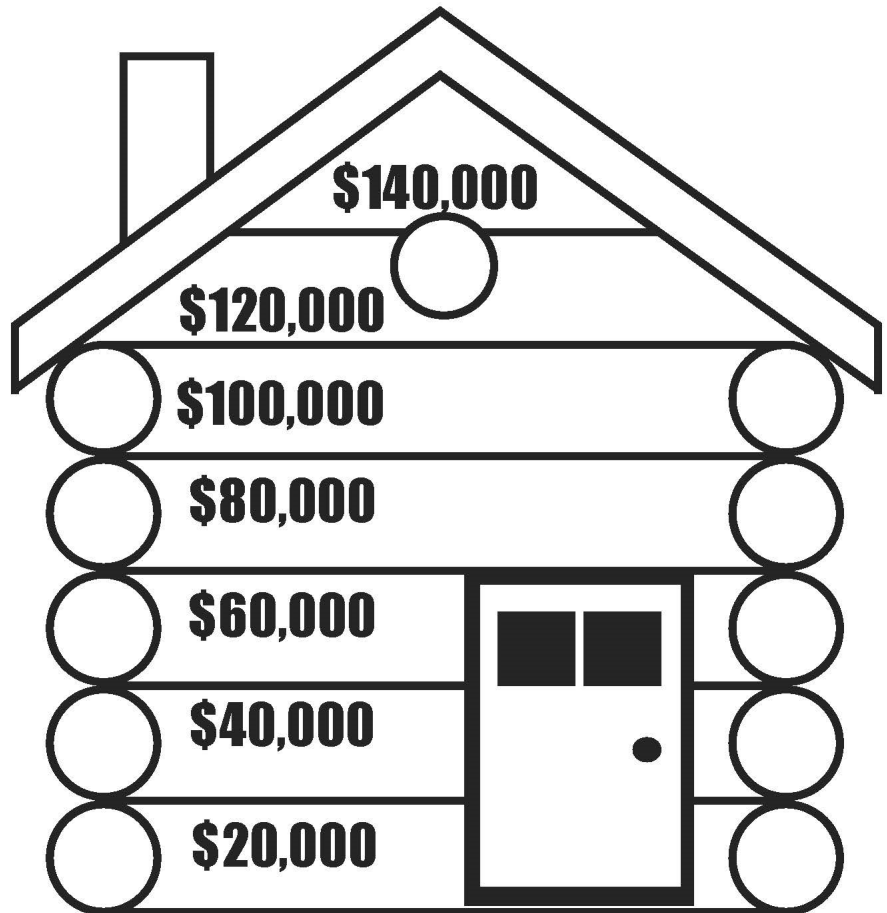
While Rev. Duke is best known as an Episcopal priest, he began his Christian ministry as a Methodist. As such, in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Rev. Duke traveled across southeastern Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia preaching at congregations along the way and learning the finer points of being an itinerate minister. At one point, in May of 1775, Duke was asked to open a session of the Continental Congress with a prayer. Can you imagine the taunting task of praying for a blessing upon the likes of Maryland's Samuel Chase, Pennsylvania's Benjamin Franklin, John and Sam Adams representing Massachusetts, and the Virginia delegation of Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and George Washington, just to name drop a few!

Later, when he had a run in with Methodist church leadership over the direction the church was going theologically, Duke was accepted into the Episcopal Church. Remember, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Methodist church was part of the Church of England or Anglican church which became Episcopal in the U.S. following the Revolutionary War. But this article isn't about church history. It's about a man who was a part of it. And as a man of the cloth, Rev. Duke *did not* hold the first Episcopal worship services in Elkton in his log cabin. He may well, however, have officiated at the first Episcopal worship services there, just not in the log cabin as that would have made them as late as 1820. Duke's diaries note how, several times, he preached at various locations in Elkton in 1792 and 1793. Those locations included the County Court House and the county "Poor House." An 1802 diary entry says that Rev. Duke preached "in the school room" which, at the time, was in Mr. Moore's stone house.

Rev. Duke was married to Hester Couden and they had a daughter, Hetty. All three are buried in the churchyard at St. Mary Anne's Episcopal Church in North East.

For more information on Rev. Duke you may reference the Historical Society of Cecil County's vertical files and you may contact the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland archives in Baltimore where many of Rev. Duke's papers reside and the archivist is VERY helpful. <http://episcopalmaryland.org/our-diocese/dioceasan-archives/>

As for the cabin, at over 200 years old, it's beginning to show its age. As is noted in another article in this edition of the *Inkwell* about the need to restore the cabin, the structure shows signs of falling down. Walls are buckled, floors have collapsed, windowsills are separating from the log walls, and many of those logs are showing signs of rot as moisture has slowly eaten them away over the centuries. It would be a shame to lose this fine example of log cabin construction from over 2 centuries ago. But worse yet, would be the loss of the opportunity to teach the history from inside the structure where Rev. Duke once lived, raised a family, and conducted similar classes for the betterment of his students all those years ago.



*Watch our progress on raising money for the Duke Log House restoration by following us on Facebook and seeing the "logs" fill up!*

**THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CECIL COUNTY**

135 East Main Street Elkton, MD 21921  
(410) 398-1790

**Hours of Operation**

Monday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm  
Thursday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm  
1st Saturday of each month  
10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Since 1932, the Historical Society of Cecil County Maryland has been the go-to resource for researchers, students and history buffs looking for answers about the culture and materials that defined (and continue to define) our county. We are a 100% volunteer-based organization.