



## SOUTH DORCHESTER FOLK MUSEUM NEWSLETTER



29 July 2011

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### **President's Message:**

Since the first days of the United States of America, born of the War of Independence also called the Revolutionary War, the local Militias have been and remain an essential element of our defense.

Major General James A. Adkins is the Adjutant General of Maryland. He is responsible for formulating, developing and coordinating all policies, programs and plans affecting seven thousand men and women who make up the state of Maryland Military Department. The Military Department includes the Maryland Army National Guard, Maryland Air National Guard, Maryland Emergency Management Agency and the Maryland Defense Force. He will speak at the South Dorchester Folk Museum, Wednesday September 7, 7:00 pm, Robbins Heritage Center, Cambridge. His topic will be "Two Centuries of Neighbors Protecting Neighbors." There is no cost and all are welcome.

America's founders distrusted standing armies. Instead, they had placed our security in militia companies like Dorchester's 48th Regiment of the War of 1812. These militias would be called on to defend the nation from domestic or foreign threat. Many Militia members lacked proper uniforms and weapons, and occasional regimental drills might be only very occasional. But when the call came, these men answered.

In the days after the September 2001 attacks on America, I traveled to Salt Lake City, Utah. The airport there was guarded not by the US Army soldiers or Marines. The military personnel all wore the insignia of the Utah National Guard. Similar scenes played out across our Nation. We were kept safe by our National Guard – from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Texas to North Dakota, the State units that form the National Guard stood duty.

The history of their bravery dates from the American Revolution. In Dorchester County during the Revolutionary War, some men joined the Flying Camps and the Continental Line whose soldiers were sent out of the County. The men of Delmarva were part of the 1st Maryland Regiment, also known as Smallwood's Regiment, led by Colonel William Smallwood. Author and Maryland Historian Linda Davis Reno has written that the 400 young men of Smallwood's Regiment sacrificed themselves to save the Continental Army at the Battle of Long Island on August 27, 1776. Holding back 20,000 British and Hessian soldiers, they allowed their comrades to retreat and may have saved the Revolution from immediate defeat. By the end of the battle, 256 of the Maryland 400 lay dead. More than 100 were wounded or captured.

*Lynne Schulman, President*

## SDFM LECTURE SERIES

### Recent Past!

#### ▶ **May 14<sup>th</sup> – Country School Days, Friends and Memories – A gathering with Classmates, Friends and Family.**

The Country School Gathering event on 14 May was a huge success. Over 120 folks gathered at Old Salty's Restaurant (the building is a former Hoopers Island school) to share memories, stories, photos, and remember a time when school in South Dorchester was where you walked with your sister or brother and the children next door. The festivities began with a lunch prepared by Old Salty's consisting of their best: ham, fried chicken, fried soft crab, Maryland crab cakes and all the fixings. It was truly delicious as is traditional at Old Salty's.



After lunch the festivities began with some opening remarks by our President, Lynne Schulman, followed by folks in the audience, including former teachers and students, extemporaneously related their stories and memories of their schools, primarily on Hoopers and Taylors Islands. The accounts were very interesting and speakers excited to relate their experiences going to and from school, in the classroom and recess time. One recalled a time when a boy turned up missing after lunch recess. After a short search he was found in the "outhouse" where he unexpectedly spent a part of the afternoon accidentally (?) locked in at the end of recess.

There were also displays provided by various members of the gathering of mementos, copies of programs from Christmas pageants, old photographs and things that recalled Country School days.

#### ▶ **By popular demand, an encore performance on – June 1<sup>st</sup> by Bill Foxwell & Friends, Musical Traditions of South Dorchester.**

On 1 June the SDFM presented an encore performance of the November 2009 performance of Bill Foxwell and friends presenting a little history of the local musicians and performing some of the old traditional songs. This was the music that was played years ago by the different musical groups of South Dorchester...and it is still played today. These musicians were watermen, boat builders, farmers, carpenters, etc., 99% of them were self-taught and could not read music. They played by ear. In other words, they played it like they heard it, the same way we do today. Again, the group gave a stellar and very entertaining performance. **And the best news - the video and audio on the recorded DVD are of very good quality, definitely worth purchasing for enjoying at your leisure whether or not you attended the performance.**

The Group consisted of:

Bill Foxwell, guitar, vocal  
Georgie Hern, vocal  
Burley Slade, mandolin  
Cathy Timmons, guitar, vocal  
Freddie Timmons, banjo  
Sam Timmons, bass  
Gary Weber, fiddle



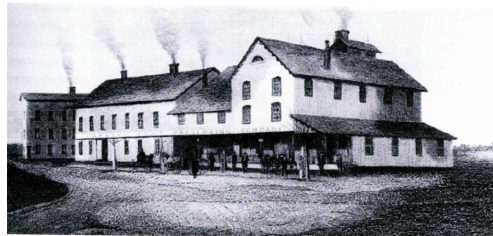
Coming Next !

## **Eastern Shore Canneries, Ed Kee Wednesday, August 3, 2011, 7 PM**



The next lecture to be held by the South Dorchester Folk Museum presents Ed Kee, Delaware Secretary of Agriculture, in a lecture covering the history of the canning industry on the Delmarva Eastern Shore. Mr. Kee's expertise in the canning industry has developed from his long personal interest and experience as Agriculture Secretary. Factors contributing to the success of the industry on the Eastern Shore in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were a high demand for quality vegetable and seafood products in the big cities along the coast of the US, the rich farmland on the Eastern Shore, the abundance of seafood and good transportation by boat and rail. Dorchester County played a major role in this industry.

The lecture is to be held on Wednesday, August 3 at 7PM at the Robbins Heritage Center, Dorchester Historical Society, 1003 Greenway Drive, Cambridge.



## **Two Centuries of Neighbors Protecting Neighbors, Jim Adkins Wednesday September 7, 2011, 7PM**

The September lecture to be held by the South Dorchester Folk Museum presents Jim Adkins, Adjutant General of Maryland, in a lecture on the history of the militia in Maryland and their role in our defense. Please see the "Presidents Message" on page 1 for more details.

The lecture is to be held on Wednesday, September 7, at 7PM at the Robbins Heritage Center, Dorchester Historical Society, 1003 Greenway Drive, Cambridge

## ITEMS OF INTEREST

▣ Pat Neild wrote this article based on his aunt's, Hester (Neild) recollections about life on Taylors Island in the very early 1900's..

### “TAYLORS ISLAND AS IT ONCE WAS”

As I get older, it becomes apparent to me that I grew up in a time and place that only a few living today remember. My grandchildren have no knowledge of life without paved roads, television, refrigerators with freezers, a school bus that comes right to your door, electricity, cell phones, and on and on. I considered writing about my experiences growing up on Taylors Island. But I recently came across some letters that my aunt, Hester A. Neild, wrote to my mother, Mabel Neild in the 1960's.

Some of you will remember my “Aunt Hester”. She was teacher and principal at East Cambridge School for more than 50 years, finally retiring only because she had to at the age of seventy. She loved to read, tend her flower garden, and write letters. She was born in 1902 and lived on the Island directly across from the general store. Some of her letters are real history lessons. Those about Taylors Island are treasures to be enjoyed, and that is why I offer them for your enjoyment. These are her words.

“Sometimes my thoughts go back to the early days at Taylors Island, and in my mind I can still look across the road from my house and see the old Chapel of Ease, and horses lined up there for shoeing, and I may walk on past the Chapel to the Slaughter Creek shore to the small wooden building where old Charlie Balderston – a genial Negro – sold a quart of shucked oysters for about \$.15. I remember the Old Chapel being used, at other times, for Church Suppers, Strawberry Festivals, or Socials for the Island churches. Now it has been restored and moved to the grounds of the Grace Episcopal Church, where I was organist for 15 years during my early days of teaching. When the Old Chapel was used as a blacksmith shop, Mr. Bill Dashiell kept the forge hot and ready for shoeing the horses, and for repairing the iron accessories for boats and farm implements.

“Another memory so clear is that of the sprawling old tomato cannery not far from Slaughter Creek. In the summer and fall, there was always a tangy smell in the air from the cooking tomatoes, and there were long lines of trucks and horse-drawn wagons loaded with tomatoes, waiting to be unloaded. They were unloaded for weighing, scalding, skinning, canning, labeling, and then the filled cans were loaded for hauling away on the Old Emma Giles steamboat, which came to the Island twice each week. Later, after the new “State Road” was built to the Island, hauling was by truck. From our house, we could hear the talking and singing of the Colored workers above the clatter and hissing of the machinery and the steam used for scalding. It was quite an adventure to walk through that busy hive of industry, and be warned “don't come too near the hot furnace, or belts driving the machinery, or the conveyors carrying the buckets of tomatoes and cans”. It does not seem possible that all this has vanished and exists only in our memories.

“Close to the cannery and on the same side of the road, I recall that there was a long, gray, wooden country store. It bordered on the Island's oyster shell road. If one approached the store from the cannery, the rear of the store was reached first. You might walk over the “stile” (up two steps – over – down two steps) and reach the path leading to the front porch of the store. Or, if you wanted to walk further and go past the broad back of the store to the big gate used by the wagons, one could then go into the side door of the giant warehouse called the “grocery”, or onto the front porch of the store. This path took you by a narrow building that was a “carpenter shop” used by the local undertaker, Mr. Henry Lambdin, to build and store coffins. It was fun to go through the gloomy interior of the “grocery”, so full of all kinds of things for the store. Then into the fascinatingly cluttered “store” with its long, long counters, its bins of flour, chicken feed, hog feed, horse feed, etc., and the gleaming glass showcase with its assortment of penny candy. There were horehound drops, stick candy encircled with gaudy rings, little tin pans of white candy with a blob of yellow to make it appear like a “fried egg”, and rainbow coconut ribbons. It is nice to recall the chocolate “Penny Pigs” that sometimes had a real penny inside. For the sake of finding that hidden penny, we sometimes spent several pennies. And I like to remember the Prize Boxes for a nickel, and the glass showcases of ribbons, and the counters loaded with bolts of cloth to be bought by the yard, or half-yard, and the horse blankets, and horse collars, and harness, and stationary. Then there were barrels of peanuts in the shell, and a showcase with cigars, pipe tobacco, and chewing

tobacco. It always seemed the people who bought the old "plug tobacco" were getting a special treat. There were oblong blocks of the brown "delicacy" and the men would get a generous slice for a nickel, then quickly begin chewing it with delight. It really was a wonderful place, and I know we were all sad in 1916 when that old store was destroyed by fire.

"It burned sometime around 1916 or 1917 when I was going to school on the Island, and it seems to me that Mr. A. L. Stevenson was the teacher. I remember that we all left the school grounds and hurried down toward the "big blaze", with our teacher cautioning us not to go too close. It seems they were experimenting in the store with "gasoline lights" in hopes that they could replace the old "coal oil" lamps.

"When using my shiny new refrigerator that makes ice cubes with such little effort, I often think of the "dairy houses" on stilts that were in every yard on the Island. Inside the cool little enclosures, there could be found a delicious homemade pie or cake, or "hogshead cheese", or cornstarch pudding, or eggs laid by the family's hens. The folks on the Island all had their own cows and plenty of milk. Plainly, in my mind's eye, I see the cheesecloth bags of "clabbered milk" hung on nails or hooks and draining beside the little house to make "smearcase". The making of "smearcase", now known as cottage cheese, was an everyday chore and an easy one. We ate the delicious "smearcase" covered with sugar, or molasses, or preserves, or just plain. No canned fruit has ever tasted as wonderful to me as the peaches, pears, cherries and apples it was just customary to prepare and "can" in those days. Never have I been fortunate enough to find or make a "molasses" pie as good as my mother made with black molasses bought from a barrel at the country store and topped with slices of lemon.

"By fishing, crabbing, oystering, farming, building, and processing, the people of the Island were always sturdily self-sufficient in those days before the "State Road" was built in 1916. It took a long time to go to Cambridge over the old oyster shell roads. I remember how, when my father served on the jury, he often stayed overnight with his sister's family at Church Creek rather than drive the long miles through the dark "big woods" and over the desolate road from Madison to the Island after dark. That sister was Mrs. William Willis. If my father planned to return home that night, I sometimes went with him as far as Church Creek, and stayed to play all day with my cousin Eleanor. As a child I thought "How I will enjoy driving a horse when I grow up!" But at 16, I had an automobile operator's license and could drive the car my father had bought when the new road was built to the Island. We mainly used the car for the 16-mile trip to Cambridge, and no longer had to use the horses and carriage for that trip. I never derived the pleasure from driving a car that I anticipated I would have had driving our horses "George", "Maude", and "Bess". The barn where the horses stayed was a place of pleasure. It held the horses and cows, wagon, carriages, the surrey, corn and hay.

"Then there were the pig pens we had for raising hogs to be slaughtered for food in the fall. Meat was processed into hams, spareribs, lard, sausage, liver pudding, and scrapple. The fat was cut into small cubes and cooked to make the lard and "cracklings". Corn bread made with cracklings was a delicacy. Of all the things I loved about Island life, I wanted nothing to do with the killing of the hogs. The squealing of the doomed "sources of food" was nerve-wracking, and my mother would suggest that I "go play the organ as loud as you can to drown out the horrible noise". "Slaughter Creek" is the body of water that separates Taylors Island from the mainland. My mother use to tell me it was named that because folks drove their beef cattle to the creek to slaughter them. The outgoing tides would then take away most of the unwanted results of the slaughter.

"I remember other diversions we had on the Island. I doubt that present day children get any more satisfaction from their many modern recreations than we did from setting our rabbit traps (called rabbit gums, in those days), and going through the thickets of blackberry and huckleberry bushes, and through close growing cedar and pine trees to see if our trap was "sprung". It was exciting, and there was a sense of satisfaction when my brother (J. Stapleforte Neild) said, "We've caught one!" I suppose I have never admired the courage of anyone more than his courage when he raised the trap door and, somehow, managed to grasp that squirming rabbit by its hind feet. Then we would go back through the woods and up the lane to the house to receive the praise of our mother. We knew the rabbit would be a delicious supper the next day.

"Besides catching rabbits, the neighborhood children would fish, crab, find turtles and watercress, gather eggs, and many other fun things, and those things gave us a sense of adequacy and satisfaction. The fact that our parents were always home in the evenings to help with our homework and direct activities gave us a feeling of security that was real and deep. There was never a need for a psychologist

or psychiatrist that I can recall. And we did not suffer poor education. I remember how my mother drilled me in the "multiplication tables" and in "spelling". We were never exposed to "phonetics" during our entire school life, and yet, spelling and reading seemed very easy. We had "spelling bees" in school every day and got to be good spellers. At the end of my fifth grade school year, we had our final "bee" and I won. I went on to a contest in Cambridge and competed with all the local winners in the other county schools. I won second place behind Frances (later Mrs. Harry Keenan) of Madison, who got first place. My "second place" won \$2.50 for our Taylors Island one-room school. I use to wonder how two children from one-room schools could win over all those from graded schools.

"Looking back at my quiet, unexciting early life on the Island, with its three schools for white children and one school for colored children, I now realize how fortunate the children were in not having so many diversions and so much interference. Some of the children that attended the Taylors Island one-room schools, and the consolidated school built in 1915, went on to get college degrees, finding that the foundation of knowledge gained at the one-room schools, supplemented by their parents' insistence on doing the right things, was adequate and good."

(Transcribed by John S. "Pat" Neild, Hester Neild's nephew.)

#### ▶ The Canning Industry by Chuck Mock

This a brief article to describe the importance of the canning industry to Dorchester County and the Eastern Shore. Also, this is to give you some background for the presentation by our August 3 speaker, Ed Kee, who is currently the Delaware Secretary of Agriculture. He has had a long career in agriculture in both the private sector and the Cooperative Extension arm of the University of Delaware as a State Vegetable Crops Specialist. Ed has also authored a book about the industry *Saving Our Harvest: The History of the Mid-Atlantic Canning and Freezing Industry*.

Canning became a reality in 1810 with the awarding of a prize by Napoleon to someone who could provide a process that would preserve food for his troops. This initial effort was done in sealed glass containers but it was soon discovered how to use sealed tin canisters. Shortening canister we get "can". By the later part of the 19th Century canning was well established in Baltimore primarily for oysters. Around 1870 a cannery was established on Cambridge Creek to process oysters and fruit.

In 1902 Phillips Packing Company was founded and grew rapidly establishing plants throughout the Mid-Shore and Delaware. By 1929 the company was incorporated and was ultimately listed on the American Stock Exchange. Phillips packed everything, beans, soups, tomatoes and more. They were a major influence in Cambridge with their canning factories, Hardware division, and a can making plant. All this came to an end in 1963 when the company was sold and shut down causing economic distress for many years.

In spite of Phillips specular success there were many others who entered the packing business in the county both north and south. According to Lee Burton's book *Canneries of the Eastern Shore* there were 187 Canneries in Dorchester County, at one time or another, between 1870 and 1960. Many of the smaller operations were devoted exclusively to canning tomatoes. Of interest to the SDFM are the activities in South Dorchester. I have often said that there was a cannery at every cross roads on the Eastern Shore and sometimes in between. It would seem that this prevailed in South Dorchester as well. Canneries were located at Golden Hill, Crapo, Wingate, Robins, Elliott's Island, Salem, Vienna, Hoopersville, Madison, Church Creek and Swards. Some of these plants are still standing (some just sort of); others remain with a renewed life as restaurants or manufacturing plants

Only one cannery remains in Dorchester today. A non-traditional crop, mushrooms, canned by Mushroom Canning Company on Woods Road. Other exotics have come and gone; Chun King (Chinese food) and Bumble Bee Tuna.

All in all, canning was important to Dorchester County providing employment to factory workers, farmers

and others that supported the industry. Canning and food processing is an industry whose heyday is probably over in Dorchester County.  
Submitted by Chuck Mock

▶ The following is a “heads up” from Mary Calloway

Below is a release regarding an historical site inventory being conducted in Dorchester County. The outcome of this 5+ year project will be a book that provides information on the important sites in the county. You may find Mr. Touart knocking on your door to do a site survey of your property. If you should have any questions, please let me know. *Mary Calloway*

#### County Wide Historic Properties Inventory

Cambridge – The Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage & Economic Enrichment for Dorchester, a Maryland non-profit entity doing business as “CCHP”, Chesapeake Country Heritage Preservation, is conducting Phase III of the Dorchester Historic Sites Inventory. Paul B. Touart, an architectural historian, is under contract with the organization to serve as an independent consultant. In cooperation with the Maryland Historical Trust and CCHP, Mr. Touart will undertake a County wide architectural and historic structure inventory to achieve preservation goals in Dorchester County.

Various areas in Dorchester County are scheduled for survey, including the Linkwood, Bucktown, and East New Market election districts, as well as a portion of the City of Cambridge. As a result of Phase I & II, a total of 157 properties have been surveyed through this ongoing initiative. The completion of these phases allows the organization to move in to the third segment that will include another 30 properties. Work on this phase will continue through September 2012.

CCHP hosted a public presentation at the Dorchester County Historical Society on Wednesday, July 13th at 6pm where Mr. Touart explained the process and the outcome of the Historic Sites Inventory and its value to residents and the community. The discussion also featured the benefit and basics steps in submitting a nomination to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

▶ From the July 6, 2011 Trustees meeting --

The Board of Trustees approved the Nomination Committee charged with the nomination of candidates for 2011-2012 officers and candidates to replace trustees whose terms of office expire in 2011. The election of trustees and officers will take place during the up-coming annual membership meeting on 2 November 2011. The following were selected to serve on the committee:

Mary Calloway, Chair - Phone:410-221-7727  
Wayne Sandberg - Phone:410-221-6350  
Martha Habermann - Phone:410-397-3706

If anyone has any suggestions for trustees or officers, please contact one of the Nomination Committee members.

▶ A note from the editor —

In addition to our regular postal mailing, I am sending this newsletter attached, as a PDF file, to an e-mail to those members with an e-mail address in our records. If you would prefer getting the newsletter by e-mail, please let me know. If you didn't get the e-mail and have an e-mail account, please send me an e-mail with “Newsletter” in the subject line and we will record your address.

Thank you,  
Larry Davies  
410-901-2477  
[larry.davies@comcast.net](mailto:larry.davies@comcast.net)

## Recent DVD Presentations

The following is a list of recent DVD presentations that are available for sale. For a complete list of the SDFM collection, visit our WEB site at [www.sdfmuseum.net](http://www.sdfmuseum.net) and click on **Orders and Information**.



78	01-Oct-08	Charles Marshall	"Cambridge Regattas"
79	05-Nov-08	Tommy Gootee	"The Gootee Family of Golden Hill"
80	04-Feb-09	John Lewis & Jim Lewis	"John Lewis Store - A College of Knowledge"
81	01-Apr-09	Philip Jackson	"Hunting and Trapping - Dorchester Traditions - Past and Present"
82	06-May-09	Jacqui Hedberg	"Barren Island and the Flowers Family"
83	05-Aug-09	David Lewis & Midge Ingersol	"Handsell - Saving History"
84	02-Sep-09	Rev. Robert Gribbon	"Old Trinity - 1692 and Today"
85	04-Nov-09	Bill Foxwell	"Musical Traditions of South Dorchester"
86	03-Feb-10	David Owens	"Roscoe Leonard-1st WWI Fatality in Dorchester"
87	05-May-10	Scott Todd	"Restoration of the Lady Katie Skipjack"
88	02-Jun-10	Jack Brooks	"History of the Oyster & Crab Industry in Dorchester"
89	07-Jul-10	Jim Clark	"Between Ocean and Bay - A Photographic Record"
90	04-Aug-10	Brice Stump	"Unusual Tombstones in Dorchester County"
91	01-Sep-10	Melvin Hickman	"The Nathan -- The Story of Building a Skipjack"
92	03-Nov-10	Ralph Eshelman	"Life and War 200 Years ago in Dorchester"
93	02-Feb-11	Robert Tolley	"My Paintings and the Tolley Family"
94	02-Mar-11	ED Okonowicz	"Gohst Stories of Dorchester and the Eastern Shore"
96	01-Jun-11	Bill Foxwell & Friends	"Music Traditions of South Dorchester- An Encore!"

DVD recordings are \$21.20 including State Sales Tax. Shipping if required is \$5.00 for up to three (3) DVDs, \$10.00 for four to six (4-6) DVDs, etc.

Mail orders to: SDFM

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