

## Take a Tour!

Our Museum Curator, Leo Nollmeyer, is the true Oxford historian. When groups visit town by bus on Dockside Express tours or aboard American Eagle Cruise Lines, Leo, assisted by his wife, Jean, guides them, giving them an ample serving of Oxford history and some interesting tales. The Nollmeyers generously donate their time; all fees and donations are given to the Museum.

The public is invited to Leo's next tour on Saturday, July 31. Those interested should meet at the ferry dock at 10:30 a.m. A \$5 donation to the Museum is requested. Bring a friend. You'll be taken back in time to the mid-1600s for the easiest history lesson you've ever had.

## Annual Meeting Election Report

This year our 20-member board had no resignations. The following members' terms expired in May, and they were re-elected to another term: Bill MacFarland, Jan Mroczek, Stuart Parnes,\* Larry Myers, and Doreatha Rasin. Elected as officers: President, Gordon Graves  
Vice President, Jan Mroczek  
Secretary, Pat Jessup  
Treasurer, Bob Valliant

Many thanks to all who serve on the Board of Directors and all those who volunteer at the Museum.

\*Stuart Parnes has subsequently resigned from the board because of a new job in Connecticut.

## Annual Membership Drive Comes to a Close

Oxford Museum memberships expire April 30 of each year. Membership dues enable us to pay our everyday bills such as utilities, insurance, and repairs. Without our members, we could not continue to keep the Museum open. We are most grateful to hundreds of Oxford residents who have renewed their memberships.

If you would still like to renew or if you're not sure if you have renewed, please call the office at 410-226-0191. There's still time to support and enjoy your Oxford Museum.

### 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.

### THE OXFORD MUSEUM, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gordon Graves, *President*  
Jan Mroczek, *Vice President*

Pat Jessup, *Secretary*  
Bob Valliant, *Treasurer*

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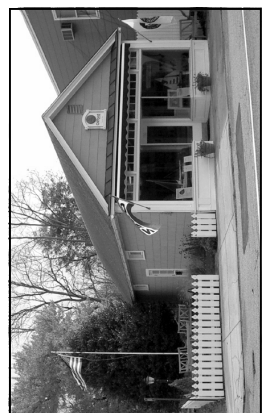
Doreatha Rasin  
Beth Schucker  
Nancy Wilson

Ellen Anderson, *Executive Director*  
Leo Nollmeyer, *Curator, Board Emeritus*

### *The Oxford Historian*

Editors: Beth Schucker, Rebecca Gaffney  
Contributors: Ellen Anderson, Pat Jessup, Gordon Graves, Jay Bunting

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1683

July 2010

# The Oxford Historian

*The Oxford Museum*

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410-226-0191

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## From the desk of the President: Mortgage Burning in 2014

When I became President in 2009, the museum faced a major financial hurdle. We had a \$200,000 interest-only mortgage that was 9 years old. Only \$21,000 of the principal had been repaid and 25% of our annual budget was required to service the debt. For the long-term survival of the museum, this was not a good situation.

I felt eliminating, or at least reducing, the mortgage was imperative. The Museum's officers and board were solidly behind that idea. Thus in December 2009, when the museum received a bequest of \$25,000 from the John T. Benjamin estate, the board approved allocating \$20,500 to the mortgage. *But we still have a balance of \$158,500!*

What started as neighborly chit chat among friends of the museum, suddenly veered creative, thanks to the nudging of Simon Arnstein. "Let's sell naming rights for the eleven bar stools at Pope's Tavern at the Oxford Inn," he proposed. "Why not," asked Lisa MacDougal and Dan Zimelman, the Inn's proprietors, who quickly opted to include a gourmet wine dinner, and this and that and more. We at the Museum felt adopted by a guardian angel. A committee took charge. Read about the outcome of its efforts in the article below, "Countdown to 2014."

## Countdown to 2014

Much like King Henry II's plea for someone to rid him of "this meddlesome priest," referring to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Beckett, museum President Gordon Graves issued a similar entreaty regarding the museum's mortgage. More than one heard his plaintive cry and took up the cause, staging the first sold-out fundraising event to raise monies to retire the mortgage in celebration of the Museum's pending 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2014. (con't on pg 2)



Museum President Gordon Graves, Oxford Inn hosts Dan Zimelman and Lisa MacDougal, and Committee Members, Jan Mroczek, (Ellen Anderson, Executive Director), Joan Levy, Simon Arnstein, and Brooke and Larry Myers.

## Countdown to 2014 (con't)

Those lucky enough to reserve a seat gathered at the Oxford Inn on the evening of July 8. Lisa MacDougal, executive chef, feted them with a fabulous four course dinner; host, Dan Zimbelman, upped the pleasure ante by pairing wines with each course. Proceeds from the silent auction items, included vacation destinations in Paris, Mexico and the Carolina coast; art in many forms; a hunting trip, dinners and dinner cruises exceeding expectations.

The evening culminated with David Webster's live auction of the naming right on the final bar stool at Pope's (the other ten had already been claimed). In a furious bidding battle amongst three contenders, the winning and surprising "barfly" was none other than his wife, Marguerite.

The check to Talbot Bank will read \$23,000...a grand first step in the campaign to "Burn the Mortgage in 2014."

Just like Henry II, Gordon may get his wish.

## Thanks One and All!

### AUCTION DONORS:

Barbara Paca and Philip Logan  
Bill MacFarland  
Brooke and Larry Myers  
Chris and Jennifer Rambo  
Dick Nolker  
Dorette and Larry Murray  
Hunter Harris  
Leo Nollmeyer  
Lisa MacDougal and Dan Zimbelman  
Maryam and Peter Garahan  
Masthead Restaurant  
Oxford Inn  
Robert Morris Inn  
Susie and Bill Dial  
Suzanne Litty  
Ward Bucher

### WINNING BIDDERS:

Anne Marie & Jay Borneman  
Bill MacFarland  
Gay and Tom Kyhos  
Judy and Henry Stansbury  
Kathleen Kurtz  
Kevin Kinney  
Marguerite Owen  
Marsha and Bob Lonergan  
Nancy Cook  
Nancy Wilson  
Peggy and Van Lott  
Sue and Larry Denton  
Tom Vollmer



## Beating the Brits: Oxford in the War of 1812

If you blink while driving by, you will miss one of the historical markers outside of St. Michaels on the way to Wade's Point. The marker is simply inscribed, "Second Defense of St. Michaels. Here, August 26, 1813, General Perry Benson, with 600 militia, most of them from Talbot County, halted a British force of 1,800. The Easton Artillery manned the road, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> infantry the woods, and the 9<sup>th</sup> cavalry the wings."

Curiously, we are much more familiar with the "first defense" of St. Michaels which occurred earlier on August 10, 1813. The British attacked because it was home base for many privateers of the Chesapeake. That first engagement is commemorated in a mural by John Moll, entitled "The militia of St. Michaels Maryland preparing to repel the attack of the British fleet during the War of 1812-15." The Tidewater Inn loaned the piece to the Museum for our recent Moll exhibit.

So what makes the "second defense" so special? American forces, outnumbered three to one, repulsed the British. On that day in late August 1813, a British force of approximately 2,100 men under the command of Colonel Sir Thomas Sidney Beckwith landed at Wades Point, about six miles from St. Michaels. His main body of troops headed east towards St. Michaels, while a detachment of 300 led by Rear Admiral George Cockburn headed south to attack the militia camp near Harris Creek. At a narrows bounded by Porter Creek on the north and Broad Creek on the South, about 1.5 miles from the town, Beckwith's force

of 1800 met 500 American infantry forces, supported by 100 artillery and cavalry. After a few shots were exchanged, the British withdrew. Perhaps they mistakenly thought a larger force awaited them, or they presumed that the local forces, though probably inferior in numbers, were superior in knowledge of the territory.

General Perry Benson commanded the forces that repulsed the British in the first and second attacks on St. Michaels. The first engagement is often referred to as "the Battle of St. Michaels," although according to military terms, since the American fighting force was so small, it was technically a "skirmish." The second action, though little known and without a common name, involved hundreds of men on each side and should therefore be labeled a "battle."

The Talbot County muster roles for 1813 listed the following Oxford names: Benson, Chamberlaine, Jackson, Valliant, Cox, Banning, Thompson, Stewart, Willis, Parrott, Brinsfield, Smith, Kerby, Price, Pritchard, Harrison, Perry, Martin, Stevens, Coward, Dawson, Nichols, Applegarth, Newnam, Whitely, Haddaway, Greenhawk, Richardson, Seth, Willis, Colston, and Tilghman. So if your ancestors had any of these local Oxford surnames, your ancestors might have fought in that second "battle" of St. Michaels.

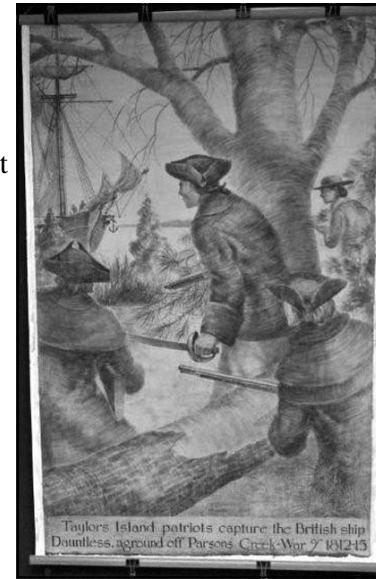
## Museum Presents the 5th Hanks Award

The John Wesley Church Restoration Project under the direction of a dedicated board led by President Kathy Radcliffe was the 2010 recipient of the coveted Douglas Hanks Jr. Oxford Preservation Award. The announcement was made by Jeanne Foster, who chairs the Hanks Award Committee.

The John Wesley Church is listed in the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties as one of the oldest African-American churches in Talbot County. Once home to a vibrant congregation, time had taken its toll on the church. In 2003, President Kathy Radcliffe and the board started the long journey that brought the church back to health. Through hours of labor, grants, donations, and help from many individuals, the church now stands tall on a new foundation with a strong roof and bright white exterior. At night the church serves as a beacon and spiritual welcome for travelers approaching Oxford.



Kathy Radcliffe (center) accepts the Hanks Award from Jeanne Foster, surrounded by John Wesley Church board members: Helen Chase, Pastor Alma Boulden, Paulette Albury, Doreatha Rasin, Virginia Gibson, Walter Rasin and James J. Hollis, Jr.



John Moll mural

## Acquiring History

It was a surprise! A joyful surprise that quiet morning in May 2010, when the villagers of Oxford learned their beloved Robert Morris Inn would reopen. "The Brits are back at the Robert Morris," was the rumble around town. The discovery that Mark Salter, world-renowned chef, and his wife, Ailsa, would be the new proprietors added sunshine to the day. Envisioning visitors dining once again on the veranda and gazing out at the harbor, locals conjured scenes of Robert Morris, the Inn's namesake, enjoying that same view of Maryland's first port-of-call 272 years ago – though in Morris' day, the view was much busier.

Both Morris and Salter were born in England. Arriving in Oxford in 1783, Robert Morris, took charge of the prosperous trade during Oxford's colonial days as representative of Cunliffe of Liverpool. The company provided quarters for him at the northern end of Morris Street where the Robert Morris Inn stands today. A bon vivant and dandy, outfitted in paisley and velvet with silver buckles on his square-toed shoes, he was self-taught, a man of mercantile genius, who loved the arts and sciences and judging from his girth, good food as well. His remarkably large library even included a book on "the art of cooking."

Mark Salter's love of food bloomed in the early 1980s, after joining the new wave of British chefs determined to lift their nation's culinary image out of the doldrums. In 1990, his kitchen at Llangoid Hall won the Restaurant of the Year Award and soon after, he relocated to the Inn at Perry Cabin and even greater fame.

Today's location of the Robert Morris has provided accommodations or lodgings of some sort since the early 1700s. Every century or so there were renovations, some of which incorporated elements from earlier structures. The current façade of the Inn resembles that of the Riverview Inn that was built just after the Civil War. The Salters and their partner, Ian Fleming, share a strong affinity for the Eastern Shore and old country inns. They jumped at the chance to buy the Robert Morris from Wendy and Ken Gibson, the Inn's stalwart guardians for almost forty years. Reflecting on their own enthusiasm and Oxford's rush of welcome, Salter said, "It's like a match made in heaven." The Robert Morris will not be Perry Cabin redux. "I'll be able to do my own thing," Salter said which translates to simply prepared high quality fresh food, from Chesapeake farms and waters whenever possible, with Salter's signature overtones and affordable prices. Aside from a freshening touch here and there, the Inn will remain as she is, a welcoming mistress of colonial warmth and charm.

The Tavern and Tap Room are open; the dining room (a tad more formal) will soon be and the town has resumed its subdued character. With the revival of the Robert Morris, locals realize how pleasant it's going to be to participate in the next chapter of the Inn's history.



The Salters--Ailsa and Mark