

1683

January 2008

The Oxford Historian

The Oxford Museum
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From the President

*Welcome to the premier issue of the Museum's newsletter. We're especially excited to launch **The Oxford Historian** in 2008, as our inaugural activity to celebrate Oxford's 325th anniversary. We look forward to sharing Museum news and tidbits of history with you each quarter. As always we solicit your feedback and hope you find **The Oxford Historian** interesting and informative.*

At this time of celebration, we recognize the value of the foresight and effort of the small group who formed the Museum in 1964. They preserved for us (the community) the stories of our heritage. As we move on through the celebration and in the years to come, we hope our stewardship will help those planning Oxford's 350th celebration.

Oxford's 325th (or More!) Anniversary

When to celebrate? Why not 2008? No one knows for sure when Oxford was first recognized as a place. It appears on maps by the middle of the 17th century and was a settlement of some sort well before that. But official status usually rests on 1683, when Oxford was designated a Port of Maryland by the General Assembly. So 2008 makes it at least 325 years.

To further the cause, a 325th Anniversary Committee has been formed, chaired by Marguerite and David Webster, to coordinate the activities of the Museum, OCC, TAP,

OBA, TAYC, OVFD, the churches and others in planning and implementing a series of events throughout the year.

Oxford has a rich heritage as a center for agriculture, international commerce, oystering and crabbing, boat building, recreation and a hundred other activities unique to the Eastern Shore. Each month the Town's organizations are planning educational and entertaining events to honor, celebrate and commemorate that heritage. Yes, it will be fun!! So stay tuned for specific dates and projects.

Meet People from Around the World

If you have a few hours to commit to the Museum, we'd love for you to consider being a docent.

Training is provided and it's a fun way to learn and share your love

of Oxford and its rich history with the more than 4,000 people who visit each year from nearly all fifty states and around the world.

For further information, contact Docent Committee Chair, Carol Patterson at 410-226-5041.



Museum Hours

The Oxford Museum is now closed for the winter. We will re-open on Saturday, April 26, which is Oxford Day.

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The Doug Hanks Preservation Award

Xan Hanks and Jeanne Foster (back) are pictured with 2007 Award Recipients, Ed Cutts Jr. and (front) Dick and Susan Deerin and Ed Cutts Sr.

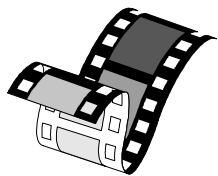
will be made on May 15, 2008. For more detailed information and a nominating form, call the Museum office at (410) 226-0191 and leave your name and mailing address.

The Museum launched the Hanks Preservation Award in 2006 to recognize extraordinary efforts of individuals and groups in preserving the unique history and heritage of Oxford and the surrounding area.

This year awards can be given in three categories as follows:

- **Restoration Projects**
- **Service**
- **Stewardship**

Nominations should be sent to the Oxford Museum Executive Director, Box 131, Oxford, MD 21654 by March 31, 2008. The award

“The Way We Were”

The Museum is pleased to have made immediate progress in our effort to collect

oral history through video-taped interviews, under the project name “The Way We Were.” Thanks for this success goes to Joan Levy, a new volunteer, Museum curator Leo Nollmeyer, videographer Warren Brey and past President Bill MacFarland who cleverly named the project. Joining the team in

late January is long time Oxford resident, Diane Schulte. Joan reports that several interviews are already “in the can” with many more slated for 2008. Joan and her husband Simon Arnstein are new residents in Oxford, spending weekends enjoying their cottage on South Street. During the week Joan is Director of Marketing Communications for John Hopkins. Simon, a professional “voice” also volunteers for the Museum. As narrator, he will team with Larry Myers, scriptwriter, and Bob Hopler, photographer, to create CDs of Museum exhibits and special stories. The CDs will be on sale

at the Museum gift shop when completed. Look for them later this year.

Become a Member

The opportunity to become a new member or renew your membership is coming up soon. Current memberships expire at the end of April 08. In mid-March everyone in the 21654 zip code area will receive a mailer with information on how to become a new member, or renew your current membership. Wouldn't it be great to have bragging rights that everyone in the entire community is a member! Help us achieve the dream. We might make the record books.



Quilt Raffle Reaps Rewards

As a new resident in Oxford, Bonnie Ford wanted to do something to help the Museum. Drawing on her skills as an interior decorator and her passion for appliqué quilting, she decided to create a quilt that the Museum could raffle. More than 120 hours later, the spectacular “Chesapeake Bay Life” quilt was hung in the Museum, and tickets sold from the Museum’s opening on Oxford Day, 2007 until closing at the end of Waterfowl Festival Weekend.

The winner of the raffle, Carol Hecklinger, was ecstatic at receiving the news. “I had a feeling I was going to win!” She and her husband have been collecting quilts since the 1970s. “Bonnie’s inspired quilt of the Chesapeake Bay has found a loving home with us,” she added, referring to their new home in Tilghman, following their recent return from eight years abroad where Mr. Hecklinger served as Ambassador to Thailand. The Museum is delighted to know the quilt will have a home on the Eastern Shore.

We are grateful to Bonnie for her generous contribution. Not only did she create the quilt, but she traveled to many craft shows, and quilting events, showing the quilt, selling raffle tickets, and indirectly brought us in touch with new friends, including the Hecklingers. According to Bonnie’s wishes, the nearly \$2,000 raised from the raffle will be used for artifact restoration.



Bonnie Ford draws the winning ticket for her “Chesapeake Bay Life” quilt.

Quilts are not Mrs. Hecklinger’s only passion. She also has an extensive collection of Quimper, a faience pottery that has been produced in Brittany since the 1600s. Quimper pottery and dinnerware are widely collected by those who are fans of “French Country” design, and has many fans in Oxford as well as the mid-shore area. Mrs. Hecklinger has lectured on Quimper to collectors in Paris and other locations and generously offered to give a talk and showcase a portion of her collection, including antique pieces, as a benefit for the Museum. Look for more details about this exciting program in the next issue of the newsletter.



New Exhibits Planned for Oxford Day Opening



Rev. Thomas Bacon, Oxford Resident,
1700-1768

In recognition of Oxford's 325th anniversary, the Museum is planning special exhibits and window displays to tell stories about an Oxford first family, a notorious resident, and the history of local tobacco plantations.

A window exhibit will feature the history of the Valliant

family, Oxford residents since the 1600s. The second will tell a more risqué story by spotlighting the nefarious Rev. Thomas Bacon. Though he was more renowned for his *joie de vivre* than his sermons, you will learn he was not entirely without virtue. Later in the year, a special talk is being arranged that will rejoin the Valliants and Rev. Bacon on center stage – something to look forward to.

By 1683 Oxford was officially declared a port town, firmly establishing its *raison d'être*. Tobacco was both the coin and economic mainstay of colonial life. Reflecting this, the opening exhibit of the season will feature twelve of the tobacco plantations that were thriving locally by the 1670s. Because of the Museum's limited space, the exhibits will rotate during the year, showing a few plantations at a time, beginning with Plimhimmon and Otwell. These displays will

be enhanced by talks by Oxfordians who are connected to them. The always-entertaining Tot Myers O'Mara will tell stories of growing up on Plimhimmon (though we doubt she remembers as far back as 1659!). Sharing the stage with her, Cindy Reed will talk about her family's history at Otwell. Watch for flyers detailing exhibits and speakers at the Post Office, Library, Oxford Market, and other locations in early April.

EARLY OXFORD AREA PLANTATIONS

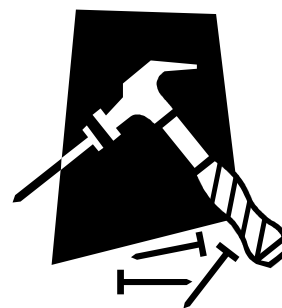
- Plimhimmon
- Otwell
- Anderton
- Combesbury
- Canterbury Manor
- Plain Dealing
- The Isthmus
- Tilghman's Fortune
- Job's Content
- Peach Blossom
- Ratcliffe Manor
- East Otwell

Museum Will Have a "New Look" in 2008

Come see our "new look" on Oxford Day 2008. Thanks to the pro bono services of Laura Greenberg, museum exhibit consultant, and Oxford's own Ned Crabb, the Museum is continuing to reinvent itself with more interesting and interactive active displays.

A friend of Marguerite and David Webster, Laura Greenberg recently visited Oxford for the first time and like most was charmed by the town. A former anthropologist turned museum consultant, she offered her services to the Oxford Museum. You can guess how long it took us to respond with a resounding "Yes!"

In addition to Laura's exhibit expertise, the Museum will benefit from the skilled carpentry and woodworking talent of local contractor and Museum friend Ned Crabb who offered to build new display cabinets.





Winter Lecture Series: "ROOTS"

The Oxford Museum is pleased to announce its Winter Lecture series, all about "roots." Admission for all lectures is free. Seating is limited and reservations are recommended. Please call the Museum at 410-226-0191 for reservations and information. Though you will hear the message, "closed for the season," your reservation message will be taken.



February 28, 2008
Dr. Michael Dixon

"If This Place Could Talk: The History of Your House"

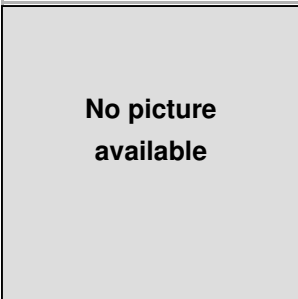
Dr. Michael Dixon will introduce the series with his intriguing topic, "If This Place Could Talk: The History of Your House." Just as families have a past, old houses and properties have histories. When was your house built? Who lived in it? How has it changed over time? And what are its stories? Dr. Dixon will present strategies for discovery, from organizing the research process, to finding available records and documents, to interpreting the findings. Here's that chance to find out how to research the roots of your old house. Don't miss this one! Lecture Thursday, February 28 at the Holy Trinity Parish House at 6:45 pm. Sponsored by the Maryland Humanities Council. Sign language interpretation is available with 2 weeks advance notice.



March 6, 2008
Dr. Clara Small

"The History of Slavery on the Eastern Shore"

March 6 the Oxford Museum, in partnership with the Historical Society of Talbot County, will present a program on the history of slavery on the Eastern Shore, including slave life during the early days on area plantations. Dr. Clara Small, the guest speaker, has been a Professor of History at Salisbury University since 1977. She is currently researching the history of African Americans on the Eastern Shore and we are honored that she will share her work in progress with us. Lecture, Thursday, March 6, at the Historical Society's Auditorium, Easton at 6:45 p.m.



April 17, 2008
Helen Seymour

"Tracing Your Family Roots"

April 17, the lecture series concludes with "Tracing Your Family Roots" presented by Helen Seymour. Mrs. Seymour is a member of the Upper Shore Genealogical Society and the author of several publications on the subject. She is also the owner of a genealogical research business, "Family Roots" based in St. Michaels and serves on the Board of the St. Michaels Museum at St. Mary's Square. Details on time and location to be announced.

Did You Know?

When most people think of Oxford, they think "18th century colonial" and names like Robert Morris (Sr. and Jr.) and Jeremiah Banning come to mind. But did you know the town was thriving and well populated long before Robert Morris arrived in 1738. In Dickson J. Preston's book, *Oxford: The First Three Centuries*, he reports that the town was being called "Oxford" as early as the 1670s and was on the map by then, both "literally and figuratively."

Before Jeremiah Banning there were many who served as customs or port officers. One of them was Samuel Chamberlaine. He and his brother John came to Oxford from Liverpool in 1714. John was 23 and Samuel was 17 years old at the time. John was a ships master and remained a mariner. Samuel became a deputy naval officer and a merchant, one of the Talbot County's wealthiest men. Dickson reports that Chamberlaine owned 5,000 acres of land and in his *History of Talbot County*, written in 1915, Col. Oswald Tilghman notes that Chamberlaine owned 76 slaves in 1793, another indication of wealth at the time. **One of Chamberlaine's log books from the 1750s is part of the Museum's collection and will be on exhibit in 2008.**

In addition to Chamberlaine, some other early notables were Robert (Squire) Ungle and John Pope. Writing about these two, Dickson says, "Pope....first appeared in Oxford records in 1686 when he took over lot number 13" (one of 100 one-acre lots

sold in Oxford in 1684). He opened a tavern with his wife Margaret, but by 1692 was "in bad favor with the Talbot County Court, which suspended his license 'for his evill deportment and ill manners,' and refused to reinstate it." It was later reopened with support from the newly installed royal governor, Sir Lionel Copley. The next incident occurred in March 1693 when several people, including Squire Ungle, were present in the tavern during a politically based "discussion" spurred on by a "few drams of rum." Pope's business once again survived and they went on to acquire more land in the Oxford area including the area surrounded by today's Plain Dealing Creek. Squire Ungle married Pope's daughter and became another of Oxford's prosperous merchants as well as a leading Talbot County citizen. "In his private life 'Squire Ungle,'.... was a typical Marylander of his rough and ready age, profane in speech, convivial, a heavy drinker. 'It is probable,' wrote...Dr. Harrison in his essay on Ungle, 'that, when among women, he was more than gallant – sometimes incontinent.'"

Squire Ungle died at Plain Dealing, apparently from a fall over a low baluster to the floor below which broke his neck. In 1832 when Plain Dealing was owned by Jeremiah Valliant, the story goes that one of Valliant's sons, as a child, recalled seeing a ghost. No one knows if the ghost was Squire Ungle or Samuel Chamberlaine, Sr. who also lived and died at Plain Dealing after marrying Mary Ungle, Squire Ungle's only daughter.

IN MEMORIAM

MARGARET P.
MYERS

A Dedicated Docent,
A Wonderful
Supporter,
A Dear and Devoted
Friend.

Don't Miss These Oxford Day Events...

Native History

Daniel Firehawk, a local native American, will entertain and educate in Town Park with a program about Oxford's first citizens! Alternate rain location to be determined.

Civil War Re-enactors

A group of civil war re-enactors will be marching in the Oxford Day parade and "encamping" in the area. This tangible look back at the Civil War will be introduced by a panel of local experts and Civil War enthusiasts sharing stories on how the Civil War impacted Oxford. Still in the planning stages, look for further details on this program in the April newsletter.



2007 Annual Giving

Each year the Museum has an Annual Giving Campaign which runs from mid-November through early January. Your Annual Giving support helps fund special programs and exhibits, and is distinct from Membership support which primarily underwrites operating expenses.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the following friends who contributed so generously to the Museum's 2007 Annual Giving Campaign. If you designated your gift for a specific purpose, it will be so honored. Thank you!

Anonymous	Hugo Dryland & Sandy Richardson	Al & Evelyn Leszczynski	Kathy and George Radcliffe
Anonymous	Donald and Bernice Duvall	Joan Levy and Simon Barritt Arnstein	Ellen Rajacich and Family
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James and Justine Cooney	Pat Ingram	Tony and Cammy Passarella	Nancy and Bruce Wallace
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John and Susan Devlin		Bill and Jerianne Pugh	John and Mary Yerrick
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Dietz			Magenta Yglesias
Libby Dobson			

Notes of Interest

Several people have asked us about reprinting Dickson J. Preston's book *Oxford: The First Three Centuries*. This "bible" of Oxford history was published in 1984 by the Historical Society of Talbot County and is now out of print. We're researching ways to affordably reprint (with permission) and will keep you posted. In the meantime, check www.amazon.com for availability of used copies.



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The
Oxford
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*A special place.
A special heritage.*

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**TO OXFORD AREA FRIENDS
21654**

**...in the APRIL issue of
*The Oxford Historian***

- May membership meeting
- Collections database project underway
- Museum grant applications
- New gift shop merchandise
- Update on 325th celebrations and activities
- June "Wedding in the Park" fundraising event
- Walking Tour Brochure available
- Did You Know?
- Meet the Board

....and more

