



# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



*preserving our past for your future*

The Historical Society of Harford County, Inc. collects, preserves and interprets the rich diverse history of the Harford County area in its regional context from prehistoric origins to the present for the education and enjoyment of current and future generations.



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## **WELCOME!**

The Historical Society of Harford County is an organization run primarily by volunteers like you, under the guidance of a small, dedicated staff. Your time and experience are valuable, and we want to ensure that your work with the Society is work that you enjoy.

To that end, this Handbook has been written to provide you with a little background information about the Society as well as the organizational structure of the Society. If you have questions and cannot readily find the answers, information in this booklet may be able to point you in the right direction.

As volunteerism within the organization grows and changes, there may be a need to modify the practices, procedures, and other information described in this handbook. When such changes occur, you will be notified by an announcement or update.

Again, thank you for contributing your time and talents to the Historical Society of Harford County!



## **MISSION**

The Historical Society of Harford County, Inc. collects, preserves, promotes and interprets the rich and diverse history of the Harford County area in its regional context from prehistoric origins to the present for the education and enjoyment of current and future generations.

## **VISION**

The Historical Society of Harford County, Inc. seeks to be the preeminent and most user-friendly source for an individual to obtain historical information about the county and genealogical information about its inhabitants.



## OUR HISTORY

Our Historical Society was established at the County Courthouse in 1885, and is the oldest county historical society in Maryland. We incorporated in 1961 and became the Historical Society of Harford County, Inc.

Initially, the Society focused on quarterly meetings where members and others presented historical papers they had written and accepted items of historical importance for a growing archive. One of the more interesting items donated in 1886 was a cannon ball alleged to have been fired by the British on Havre de Grace in 1813. In 1995, the cannon ball, used as a door stop at the Society, was found to “be alive”. The Society had it detonated at APG and now stores some of the remaining pieces.

Throughout its history, the Society worked closely with the Maryland Historical Society (MHS) and actually had offices at the Baltimore location for many years, storing records and archival material there until 1973. Some of these records can still be found at their site on Charles Street in Baltimore, but most are now housed in Bel Air at our headquarters. Among the shared materials are the historical writings of Dr. George W. Archer, one of the early founders of the Society. Dr. Archer served in the Civil War. Returning as a disabled veteran, he retired from his medical practice and focused on Harford County history and genealogy studies. He was the era’s most prolific documentarian of Harford County’s past.



Between 1920-1938, J. Alexis Shriver almost single handedly kept the Society going by storing, organizing, and cataloging the Society's collection both at his home on Old Joppa Road and at the MHS in Baltimore. He, as a Society representative, started the Maryland Roadside Marker Project with the State Roads Commission. The first three signs in the state were erected in Harford County; commemorating Joppa as an early county seat, Old Cokesbury College and the birthplace of Governor William Paca in Abingdon. The sign program is still in effect today boasting numerous historical markers throughout the state.

Over the years, the Society sponsored many historical programs, publications, tours and preservation efforts. Some of the more significant include the 1931 celebration at the Rigbie House where Lafayette's troops camped on their way to the Battle of Yorktown. This event brought hundreds of visitors including the French Ambassador, several Governors and dignitaries to Harford. Additionally, the Society fought for the preservation of the Hays House in 1960 when demolition threatened as "progress" called for the loss of the Kenmore Inn and the historic Hays House for the development of a shopping center. The Society arranged for the relocation of the Hays House and started its operation as a house museum offering many programs throughout the year.

Over time, the Society expanded its role, developing a quarterly bulletin, preserving and cataloging County Court Records dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, establishing a Research Library which includes vast genealogy resources and expanding its archival collection which now includes more than 50,000 photographs as well as paper records, textiles, artifacts and artwork detailing the story of Harford County.



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These ambitious efforts made finding a permanent location essential. In 1994, after many years in numerous temporary sites, Harford County transferred the old Bel Air Post Office to the Society. This historic building (headquarters) now houses all of the departments that make up the Society: Archives, Artifacts, Art, Textiles, Court Records, Research Library, Genealogy, Online Sites, Exhibits, and Gift Shop.

Our permanent location allows the Society to offer a wide variety of special events each year and to assist patrons with research. This research has led to the publication of articles and books, such as C. Milton Wright's *Our Harford Heritage*. Visitors are encouraged to stop by and explore the county's rich past.



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

The Society's Mission ***Preserving Our Past for Your Future*** is both challenging and exciting. This preservation includes collecting the stories of the people and places of Harford County and the objects they left behind – the artwork, clothing, furnishings that chronicle the lives of Harford County's residents from the earliest settlements to the present day.

We are very fortunate to have two unique, historic properties in which to showcase these collections and share these resources with the public. Of course, being historic also means needing constant care, upkeep and making improvements. All of these are made possible due to the generosity of our members, volunteers and several philanthropic organizations as well as State and County grant funding sources.

Collection and restoration efforts are only part of our mission. The Society showcases its collections and shares these treasured stories on a regular basis. Exhibits are on display at both the Headquarters Building and the Hays House. The Society has hosted the Harford County Heritage and Music Festival and has celebrated the Southern heritage of many of the county's citizens by collecting family stories and oral histories, and creating exhibits. Regular events include our monthly *Brown Bag Lunches*, and *Quarterly Lectures and Teas* at the Society's headquarters and the *Learning Bee Series* at the Historic Hays House Museum.

Finally, I must thank our many volunteers who make all of these activities and events possible. Moving forward we plan to continue our restoration efforts and expand our volunteer programs to better maintain our collections and tell the story of our county. We are excited that you wish to be a part of this journey.





## **THE BOARD**

The Historical Society is run by an Executive Board and a Board of Trustees. Members who serve on the board are volunteers.

The Executive Board consists of the following officers:

- President
- Vice President
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President
- Treasurer
- Recording Secretary
- Corresponding Secretary

The Board of Trustees consists of the officers and several members.



## **MEMBERS**

Approximately 600 residents, former residents and organizations hold membership in the Society.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers are one of the greatest resources we have at the Historical Society. Approximately 70 volunteers perform various jobs to help the society fulfill its mission.

Our volunteers participate by:

- Serving as board members and trustees
- Serving as department chairmen
- Maintaining our computer systems
- Maintaining our website and FaceBook page
- Maintaining our collection of historical items
- Staffing The Hays House Museum
- Organizing and participating in special events



## **LOCATIONS**

- Headquarters: 143 N. Main Street, Bel Air, MD 21014  
410-838-7691
- Hays House Museum: 324 Kenmore Avenue, Bel Air, MD 21014  
410-838-7691

## **DAYS AND HOURS OF OPERATION**

- Headquarters: Open to the public Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 10AM to 3PM and also the last Saturday of the month from 10AM to 2PM.
- Hays House Museum: Open to the public the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays from March to mid-December, 1PM to 4PM and also the 1<sup>st</sup> Friday from May to August: 5PM to 8PM. The Hays House Museum is closed on Holiday Weekends.



## **DEPARTMENTS**

### **COURT RECORDS**

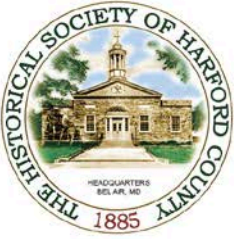
The Society maintains Harford County's Court Records dating back to 1795. These very fragile, handwritten and difficult to read documents are conserved, cataloged and indexed by volunteers for research use and posterity. Some of the finds they have made are amazing. One volunteer logged a case against John Wilkes Booth dating to his early teens. There are manumission papers and some fascinating court cases as well.

### **ARCHIVES**

This department is responsible for the accession, analysis, repair, preservation, organization and cataloging of all paper-based items in the Society's collection, the majority of which are original documents, and photographs. These materials focus on the history of Harford County and its immediate surroundings. Volunteers are currently digitizing all previously existing and new photographs.

### **ARTIFACTS**

This department maintains non-paper items deemed to be of historic value for the Harford County region. These objects include military memorabilia, railroad items, advertising and other business-related artifacts, dolls, furnishings, farm implements, household items and the like. These objects help tell the story of our forebears and are used in historical exhibits that bring life to county history. Volunteers evaluate, accession, and oversee the proper storage of the Society's collection.



## TEXTILES

The Society maintains a Textile department to accession, properly store and display the many pieces of vintage textiles that have been donated, and continue to be donated to the Society. Many times, vintage clothing, uniforms, quilts and other textiles require special care. Trained volunteers not only accession the items, they repair, clean and properly store these unique treasures and organize future exhibits.

## HAYS HOUSE MUSEUM

The 1788 Hays House, the oldest house in Bel Air, continues its ongoing mission as the living-history museum of The Historical Society of Harford County. Staffed by volunteers, this house museum gives visitors the opportunity to travel back to the early days of Harford County and experience 18<sup>th</sup> century life's pleasures and tribulations. Visitors are able to glimpse the life of Harford County's rural gentry in the early years of our country and view the home of one of Bel Air's founding fathers.

## FINE ARTS

Thanks to a gift made by Ann Woodward in memory of her parents Arthur and Mary Woodward, the Society was able to create a room dedicated to the conservation and storage of Fine Arts. Volunteers in the Fine Arts department care for the Society's growing collection of paintings and sculptures.

## RESEARCH LIBRARY

Our library performs a unique function for the county providing access to books, pamphlets and documents about Harford County and state history that are often found nowhere else. The majority of these items are donated, requiring accessioning procedures by our volunteers. Additionally, the library maintains family histories, obituary files, scrapbooks, yearbooks, periodicals, vertical files, notebooks and original church, funeral home and medical ledgers and much more to help researchers learn about county residents, places and happenings.



## GENEALOGY – FAMILY HISTORY DEPARTMENT

We have one of the most proficient genealogy departments in the state. Staff and volunteers provide classes on a wide variety of topics and regularly assist callers and visitors with their family's genealogical research. Our staff and many of our volunteers are Harford County natives who have a vast knowledge of our county's people and history.

## TECHNOLOGY

The Society's collection is incredibly rich in quantity and quality. The use of *PastPerfect*, a cataloging and research system, makes it possible to track the collection and make it accessible to the public. Volunteers are trained to use *PastPerfect* for their specific projects.

## ONLINE SITES

Our website can be found at [harfordhistory.org](http://harfordhistory.org). Patrons can view details about upcoming events, access our bi-monthly newsletter, and perform research by accessing our digitized records. Links to other research sites such as the Maryland Historical Society can also be found on the site.

The Society also maintains a Facebook Page (The Historical Society of Harford County) which notes day to day information about events and activities at the Society and the Hays House Museum.

Our YouTube Channel hosts our Virtual Events, such as, the Brown Bag Lunch Series, Genealogy Workshops and other featured lectures.

We encourage our volunteers and members to visit both of these online sites to learn about the many events and discoveries posted throughout the year.



## **VOLUNTEER INFORMATION**

Volunteers provide support to the various departments to fulfill the Society's mission.

Assignments are given to volunteers with consideration of their talents and interests.

Some training may be required and will be provided by volunteers or staff experienced in that particular area.

- If for some reason you are going to be late or are unable to be present on a day you are scheduled to volunteer, please call the Society at 410-838-7691 to let the staff know.
- Most volunteer activities occur when the Society is open to the public.
- The Historical Society of Harford County observes national holidays and is closed on those days.
- All Historical Society's building's are closed during inclement weather. Typically, if Harford County Public School are closed, our buildings will also be closed. Notices will be posted on [harfordhistory.org](http://harfordhistory.org) and our FaceBook page.
- Volunteers should park in the parking area behind the building and enter through the back door.
- All volunteers at the Society's Headquarters are required to sign in and sign out on the Volunteer Sign-in Sheet kept near the kitchen.
- Volunteers can store their lunches in the refrigerator in the kitchen.
- Volunteers should not eat or drink in unauthorized areas.



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- No smoking is allowed in the Historical Society buildings.
- The use, possession, manufacture, and distribution, dispensation or sale of illegal drugs, alcohol, or any controlled substance on Historical Society grounds is strictly prohibited. Violation of this policy may be cause for immediate termination of volunteer duties.
- It is prohibited for any volunteer to be under the influence of illegal drugs, alcohol, medical marijuana or any controlled substance on Historical Society grounds or program sites, during working hours. Violation of this policy may be cause for immediate termination of volunteer duties.
- Volunteers are requested to keep their contact information current. Contact any of the staff or your department chairman to update your information.
- All volunteers are to dress appropriately to present a positive image for the Historical Society.
- All volunteers will be given a tour of the building they will be volunteering at which will include the location of fire alarms, exits, first aid kits and telephone locations.
- If you chose to leave our organization, please inform your department chairman or the director of The Historical Society of Harford County.
- If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the President, Director or the chair of your assigned Department.





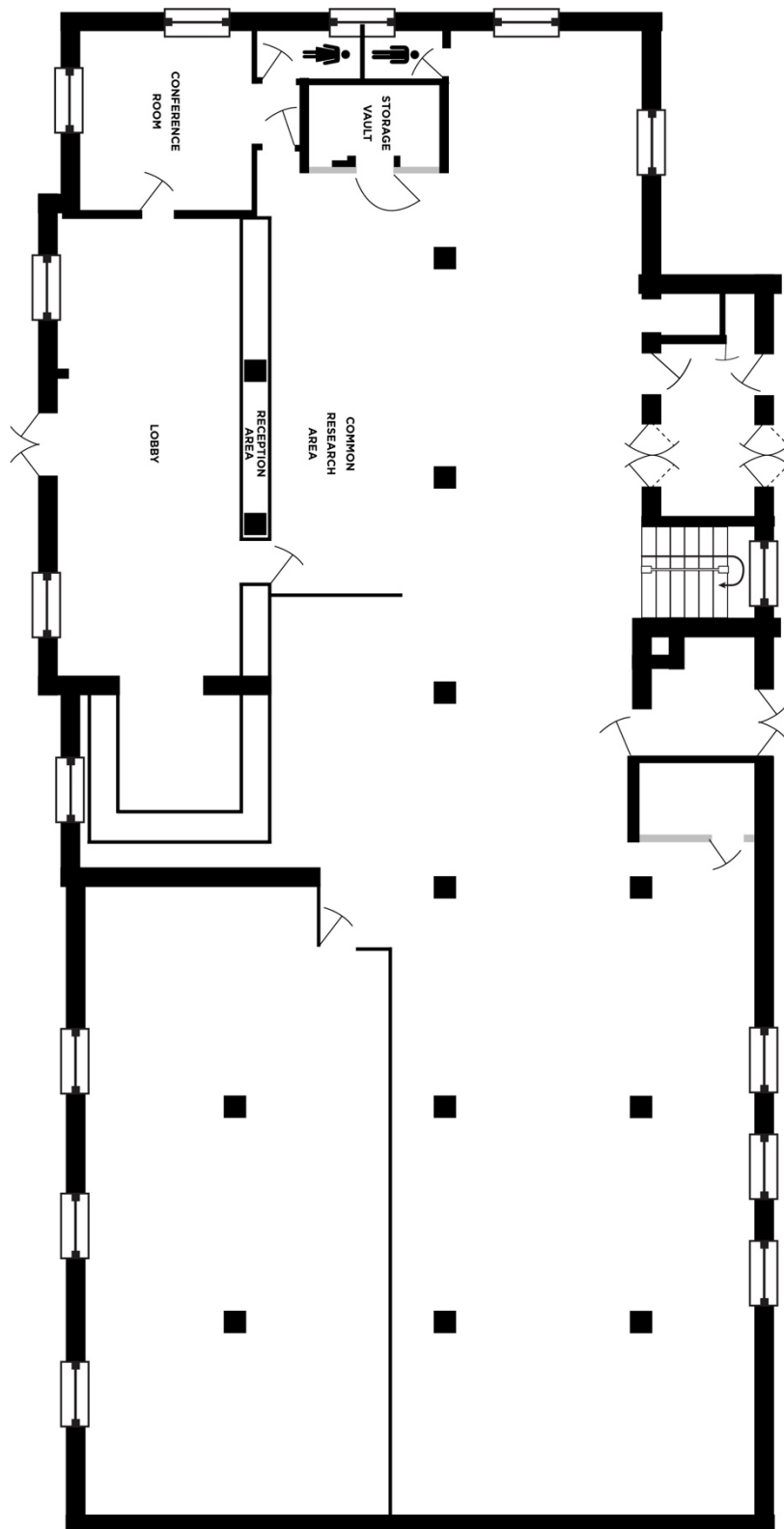
## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

- Medical Emergency: Call 911 if needed. Keep calm and reassure the individual that help is on the way.
  
- Fire: In the event of a fire, alarms are located [See Map]
  - Evacuate the building and proceed to the designated meeting location.
  
  - The meeting location for the Headquarters building is the furthestmost back parking lot. The meeting location for the Hays House is the parking lot.



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## FORMS

Volunteers are required to fill out the forms listed below before they can begin volunteering. All signed forms will be maintained by The Historical Society of Harford County.

- Volunteer Registration Form. This is important in case an emergency arises while you are providing volunteer services.
- Conflict of Interest policy that is required of all 501.c.3 organizations along with an Affirmation and Disclosure Statement, essentially saying that you received the Conflict-of-Interest Policy.
- Acknowledgement form indicating that you have received this Handbook.

**We are very pleased to welcome you to the Society and hope you will enjoy your time with us. Please feel free to contact the President, Board members or staff if you have any questions or concerns. We truly appreciate your willingness to be an active participant at the Historical Society of Harford County, Inc.**