

The HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HARFORD COUNTY, Inc.

Preserving Our Past For Your Future



143 N. Main Street
Bel Air, MD 21014

Society News

May / June 2026

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The Historical Society of
Harford County, Inc.,
headquarters.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends of the Historical Society!

There is much to celebrate at the Society now that we are into the Spring event calendar!

We enjoyed two very well-attended book signings presented by local authors, and it was a pleasure for me to see and greet so many members and friends. There are many more educational and fun events planned for the year, both at the History Center and the Hays House. Please go to www.harfordhistory.org to see the lineup and read a summary about each. We also have a social media presence on Facebook and Instagram. For some of these enrichment events, there is an admission fee. In those instances, there will be a member discount which reflects one of the direct benefits of being a member.

On May 20th at the Maryland Golf and Country Clubs, the Third Class will be inducted into the Society's Harford Sports Hall of Fame. This is a FUNDRAISER for the Society and is always well attended. Please visit the website for information and tickets.

The Collections Committee has been meeting, and much preparation and work are being done to make our vast archives and artifacts safe and accessible. We are running out of space and need to carefully reorganize and modernize. In that regard, we have recently received a Dresher grant, a very philanthropic foundation and great friend of the Society, to contract an architectural firm for a master plan. In that plan, there will also be recommendations for making the History Center ADA compliant with bathrooms and handicap access. Also, we recently completed the installation of a fire security system at the Center thanks to a wonderful grant from Harford Mutual.

I will close by thanking our small but mighty staff, our very dedicated historians and volunteers, and the Board of Trustees, all of whom are also volunteers. Our membership continues to grow! Please spread "The Word" about what is happening at the Society.

cont'd on page 2



HARFORD MUTUAL
INSURANCE GROUP

The Historical Society of Harford County newsletter is funded in part through a gift from Harford Mutual Insurance Group.

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Lastly, The History Center on Main St will be opening one Saturday a month very soon. It will give all another opportunity to visit the Museum or do some research. Reminder: please request an appointment for research on any day that the Society is open to be sure a historian will be available to help you.

Best Always,

Charles (Chuck) J. Castoro, M.D., President

AMERICA 250

The countdown to July 4th continues with Semiquincentennial Events across the county! For a full listing, visit www.helloharford.com/calendar and select the America 250 Calendar.

America 250 Harford County Celebration Trail: Celebrate the 250th birthday of the United States in Harford County! Explore museums and historic sites across the county to discover the stories of the people who came before us. Visit <https://letsrallie.com/events/harford-county-celebration-trail> to learn more and download the Let's Rallie app.



Harford County Ag-Stravaganza: Saturday, April 25th, 10 am to 3 pm, 3519-3525 Conowingo Road, Street – Celebrate Agriculture, America 250 and Earth Day! This lively event brings together local farms, environmental organizations, and community partners to highlight the importance of agriculture, Earth Day, and history. Highlights will include music, food trucks, friendly farm animals, historic crafts, tours of the Joesting-Gorsuch House, and a visit from Mack, "The Dog Who Saved the Bees!"

Armed Forces Weekend: Saturday, May 16th, 11 am to 6 pm, downtown Aberdeen - A full day of celebration along West Bel Air Avenue and at Festival Park, featuring PorchFest performances, family activities, and community showcases. The American Legion will host Revolutionary War reenactments that highlight our region's deep military lineage. A classic and custom Car Cruise rounds out the day. Visit Aberdeen250.org for more details.

Revolutionary Baseball: Aberdeen IronBirds v. Team Canada: Sunday, June 14th, 2 pm, Ripken Stadium, Aberdeen. Get to know the MD Two Fifty team and stop by the MD Two Fifty table to answer trivia questions, win giveaways, and learn about historic sites in your community. Purchase tickets at <https://www.mlbdraftleague.com/aberdeen/tickets>.

The Washington–Rochambeau Parade: Saturday, June 27th, downtown Aberdeen - Honor Aberdeen's place along the National Historic Trail by bringing together reenactors, heritage groups, and community partners for a vibrant commemorative march. The day begins with a Freedom 5K followed by the march leading to our Rails, Cans, and Community Family Fun Day. This event blends Aberdeen's history and industry with hands-on activities, music, and kid-friendly programming, making the Revolutionary era and Aberdeen's Industries accessible and engaging for all ages. Together, the parade and festival anchor Aberdeen's America 250 storytelling with authenticity and community pride. Visit Aberdeen250.org for more details.

For questions or comments, e-mail the America 250 Harford Committee at historic@harfordcountymd.gov.

COMING EVENTS

❖ **Third Annual Sports Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, MD Golf & Country Club**
Wednesday, May 20, 2026, 6 pm 1335 E. MacPhail Road, Bel Air, MD 21015

Harford County athletes, coaches, and sports administrators bring attention and pride to all county residents through their talent and performances. Each year, the Historical Society of Harford County, Inc., recognizes several of these individuals by inducting them into the Historical Society's Sports Hall of Fame. You are invited to help recognize these talented individuals and possibly relive some of those exciting games from yesteryear, at a formal ceremony on Wednesday, May 20, 2026, at 6 pm at the Maryland Golf and Country Club. The program will include dinner, videos of each inductee, and an opportunity to meet and greet some of these outstanding men and women. This year's honorees are:

- **Tom Amrein:** Amrein collected accolades in both football and track and field at Bel Air. The multiple-time All-County football player set records in the high jump for the Bobcats. Amrein then attended the University of South Carolina, where he was a three-year starter at running back for the Gamecocks.
- **Jeff Grantz:** Grantz was a three-sport star for Bel Air. Despite being drafted by the hometown Orioles in 1972, Grantz moved on to the University of South Carolina to play baseball and football. He was a second-team All-America quarterback for the Gamecocks in 1975 and finished ninth in the Heisman Trophy voting. He played on three NCAA Tournament baseball teams, including the 1975 team that went to the NCAA College World Series finals.
- **Carson Kalama:** Kalama starred in both soccer and lacrosse at Bel Air and earned High School All-American honors in both sports. Kalama moved on to Salisbury, where he was a key part of two national championship teams in 2016 and 2017. He is currently an assistant lacrosse coach at Harford Community College, where the team has won three straight NJCAA Men's Lacrosse Championships.
- **Lin James:** James was a graduate of the University of Tennessee and a teacher at North Harford for 46 years. During her time at North Harford, she coached multiple teams, particularly the Girls' Basketball team. She is considered the winningest girls' public school coach in the state's history, with 608 wins.
- **Mac Lloyd:** Lloyd was a multi-sport standout who starred on North Harford's state championship-winning basketball team in 1962. Lloyd went on to become the sports editor of *The Aegis* and later co-founded and edited *The Sporting Times*.
- **Teri Smith:** Smith earned state championships in several track events for Bel Air. She is considered Harford County's greatest female track athlete. Smith went on to win multiple Ivy League track championships in her four years at Brown University. Smith was the first female track athlete to become a Division I All-American at Brown. She went on to compete at the 1988 and 1992 U.S. Olympic Trials and was inducted into the Brown Hall of Fame in 1996.
- **Barb Solberg:** Solberg was a multi-sport, four-year varsity starter for Aberdeen, winning four state championships, two in field hockey and two in softball. After high school, Solberg went on and starred in softball at the University of Minnesota. She served as a team captain and earned All-Big Ten awards as well as Academic All-American and team MVP honors. Solberg was inducted into the University of Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame.
- **Sonya Wilmoth:** Wilmoth was a pitcher for three softball state championship teams at C. Milton Wright. She amassed a 61-3 career record, including an undefeated senior season. Sonya played volleyball and softball for La Salle University and earned All-Conference First Team honors twice as a

pitcher. Subsequently, she served as the softball coach for 19 years at West Chester University and the University of North Florida.

The cost is \$100 per person. Space is limited, so pre-registration is required at www.harfordhistory.org. Sponsorships are encouraged.

❖ **Harford County's Forgotten Heroes – The Legacy of the U.S. Colored Troops, 10th Annual Sgt. B. Hilton Fundraiser**

Saturday, June 6, 2026, 2 pm

The History Center, 143 N. Main St., Bel Air, MD 21014



Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton Memorial in David Craig Park, Havre de Grace

Join Us on June 6, 2026, at the 10th Annual Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton Fundraiser presented by the SGT Alfred B. Hilton Memorial Foundation. The program will include presentations by guest speaker Sue Nappi, an Abraham Lincoln reenactor, Duke Thompson, music by A Cappella Journey, and a delicious meal by Mission BBQ.

The Foundation's mission is to preserve SGT Hilton's memory, establish a memorial in his honor, educate the public about Harford County's only native Medal of Honor recipient, and highlight the impact of the nearly 185,000 United States Colored Troops who valiantly fought during the Civil War. We can do this by honoring not only Sgt. Hilton's memory, but also by honoring the 305 U.S.C.T. soldiers connected to Harford County, and ensuring their stories are never forgotten.

After the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, nearly 185,000 Black men enlisted in the Union Army as part of the United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.). They comprised roughly 10% of the Union force, and many historians believe their service was decisive in securing Union victory. Yet the historical record is uneven. African American soldiers' service was often poorly documented, misidentified, or omitted entirely from wartime and postwar records.

Sergeant Alfred B. Hilton is the most well-known of Harford County's U.S.C.T. soldiers, remembered for his extraordinary courage at the Battle of New Market Heights (Chaffin's Farm), Virginia. He remains Harford County's only native-born Medal of Honor recipient. But Hilton's story is just one among many. Most of Harford County's U.S.C.T. soldiers have remained unknown – hidden in scattered records, unmarked graves, and fading community memory. These men—both free and formerly enslaved—stepped forward during the Civil War to preserve the Union, end slavery, and claim their own freedom.

The SGT Alfred B. Hilton Memorial Foundation, a Harford County-based nonprofit, was recently awarded a grant from the Drescher Foundation to address this historical gap. Through extensive research, the Foundation has identified **305 U.S.C.T. soldiers with ties to Harford County**—men who were born here, lived here, enlisted here, or are buried here. Their service records, pension files, hospital cards, casualty sheets, slave

claims, and final statements have been gathered into a comprehensive research database. From this work, powerful patterns and stories have emerged.

What the Research Reveals

- **67 Harford County U.S.C.T. soldiers (22%) never returned home**, dying from battle wounds, disease, drowning, or imprisonment. Disease was the deadliest threat: for every one man who died from battle wounds, **2.4 died from disease**.
- **38 of the fallen have no known burial**, likely placed in mass graves with little or no identification.
- Among the survivors, burial sites have been located for only about half. In Harford County, **49 burials have been confirmed**, but only **26 have headstones which have been located to date**. For **23 men**, the cemetery is known, but their exact resting place within it is not.

Stories of Service and Sacrifice: The research has uncovered remarkable individual stories. These are a few examples:

- **Private Lewis Harris**, likely born into slavery, enlisted at age 19 in the 30th U.S. Colored Infantry. After the war, he became a Buffalo Soldier and was one of 60 members of the 10th Cavalry who carved their names into a stone monument honoring President Garfield at Bonita Canyon, Arizona. Misidentified by the Army as a camp bake oven, the monument deteriorated until a local family dismantled it and incorporated all sixty engraved stones—including Harris's—into a fireplace at Faraway Ranch. The fireplace remains intact today at Chiricahua National Monument.
- **Private Lewis Stump**, likely enslaved before the war, enlisted at age 35 in the 9th U.S. Colored Infantry. He was captured near Petersburg, Virginia, and sent to Salisbury Confederate Prison in North Carolina. Designed to hold 2,500 prisoners, Salisbury swelled to more than 10,000 by late 1864. Overcrowding, starvation, disease, and exposure produced a death rate exceeding 25%. There is no record of Stump's survival. If he died there, he lies in one of the mass trench graves now part of Salisbury National Cemetery, where 11,700 unknown Union soldiers are interred.
- **Private John Parker** of the 29th U.S. Colored Infantry is one of three Harford County U.S.C.T. soldiers who died by drowning. Parker drowned in the Rio Grande River on July 20, 1865, while attempting to collect water. His burial site is unknown—an all-too-common fate for soldiers who died far from home.

Families Who Served Together: Many Harford County families sent multiple sons to serve in the U.S.C.T.:

- **Sergeant Alfred B. Hilton** served alongside his brothers, **Corporal Aaron Hilton** and **Sergeant Henry Hilton**. Alfred is buried at Hampton National Cemetery in Virginia; Aaron and Henry rest at Green Springs Cemetery in Darlington.
- **Corporal Lewis Bowser** and **Private Sandy Bowser** walked from Harford County to Pennsylvania to enlist. Both are buried at St. James A.M.E. Church Gravel Hill Cemetery in Havre de Grace.

Lost Cemeteries and Displaced Burials: Research has also uncovered painful stories of cemetery removals that resulted in the loss of U.S.C.T. graves:

- **Laurel Cemetery** and **Govanstown Cemetery** in Baltimore were both removed, with many African American burials—including U.S.C.T. soldiers—lost or mishandled.

- The cemetery associated with **Union Chapel African M.E. Church in Michaelsville** was displaced when the Army established Aberdeen Proving Ground. Burials were reinterred at what is now Union Methodist Church Swan Creek Cemetery in Aberdeen, though many identities were lost in the process.

Preservation and Restoration Efforts

The Foundation is now undertaking a county-wide headstone restoration initiative. Many markers require cleaning, repair, or replacement. Two headstones were found detached from their bases. At Asbury Cemetery in Churchville, the headstone of **Sergeant George W. Barrett**, 39th U.S.C.T., is detached and bears no notation of his Civil War service. Several headstones are leaning over - at Green Springs United Methodist Church Cemetery in Darlington, a leaning, weathered stone is believed to mark the grave of **Private Richard J. Turner**, 4th U.S.C.T. Cleaning and restoration are needed to confirm his identity.

The Foundation is also partnering with the City of Havre de Grace and other organizations to restore two long-neglected African American cemeteries—each containing one U.S.C.T. burial. These sites are so overgrown that late fall is the only practical time to access them. Clearing and restoring these sacred spaces is essential to ensure these veterans' final resting places are no longer hidden by time and neglect.

To ensure permanent recognition, the Foundation plans to install signage at each of the **18 Harford County cemeteries** where U.S.C.T. soldiers are buried, listing their names so that all are remembered—whether they have a headstone or not.

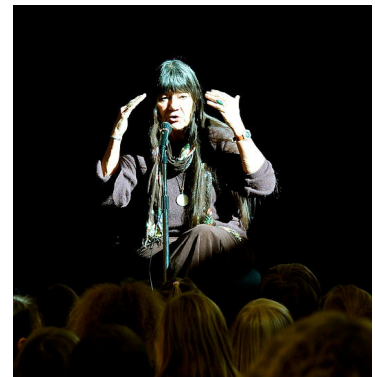
Nearly half of the 305 identified soldiers have no known burial. These men fought for a country that did not yet recognize their full rights as citizens, yet they believed in its promise. The Foundation's long-term goal is to establish a **countywide memorial** listing the names of all 305 U.S.C.T. soldiers with Harford County ties. Such a memorial would ensure that every man—documented or lost, marked or unmarked—receives the honor he deserves and is never forgotten.

Tickets are \$40 and are available at sgtalfredbhiltonfoundation.org. No tickets will be available at the door. Pre-registration is required.

Sue Nappi is a Board Member of the SGT Alfred B. Hilton Memorial Foundation, a nonprofit organization supported by community donors, annual sponsors, and generous grants.

❖ **America 250 Speakers Series: Indigenous Peoples Program Featuring Storyteller, Dovie Thomason** **Saturday, June 13, 2026, 2 pm** **The History Center, 143 N. Main St., Bel Air, MD 21014**

The Historical Society is excited to announce this upcoming presentation by renowned storyteller Dovie Thomason. In preparing her presentations, Ms. Thomason imagines herself as a river, fed by many streams: Lakota, Apache, and Scot Traveller ancestry, urban Chicago, rural Texas, international travels, the Internet, and Indigenous elders, family teachings, kitchen table wisdom, and university classrooms — and draws on those contrasts and cultures in her work. Conveying these stories respectfully and responsibly is Thomason's calling and has made her one of the most respected and admired storytellers of her generation. When she adds personal stories and untold histories, the result is a contemporary narrative of Indigenous history and identity in North America told provocatively with elegance, wit, and passion.



She has been featured at countless prominent global events, including the Kennedy Center, National Museum of the American Indian, the Smithsonian, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, and festivals from Tennessee to

Estonia, New Zealand to New Mexico. She has shared storytelling as an Artist-in-Education on many state rosters for over thirty years. She is a recipient of the National Storytelling Network's Circle of Excellence award and the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers' Traditional Storyteller Award.

Register at www.harfordhistory.org. Members \$10, Non-members \$25. Children 12 and under are free.

WHAT'S NEW AT THE HAYS HOUSE

The Pollinator Garden is blooming. Herbs are popping up in the herb garden. Lots of "new growth" at the Hays House.

We have begun soliciting bids for the repairs funded by a Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) grant. We're hoping that work will begin in early summer. We are planning a new herb garden location on a sunny bank near the kitchen door. Evergreen Garden Club is working on a new design and new location. The herb garden will feature colonial herbs and aid in our interpretation of early medicine and cuisine.

Our programs in May and June will continue the themes established this year. As America's 250th anniversary approaches, many programs will focus on life in Revolutionary Harford. All programs listed below are held at the Hays House Museum, 324 Kenmore Ave., Bel Air, MD 21014. Please join us!

Revolutionary Harford: From Sheep to Wool Sunday, May 3, 2026, 1 pm

Come see how sheep are sheared and how wool is turned into cloth. Help get the wool ready to spin! This is a fun adventure for all ages and a chance to get hands-on experience preparing wool for the spinning wheel.

Register at www.harfordhistory.org. Members Free, Non-Members \$5.

What's Behind the North Wall? Sunday, May 17, 2026, 1 pm

Presentation by Peter Allen and Jacob Bensen

Celebrate National Historic Preservation Month with us, with two outstanding presentations. First, learn about the materials and construction of the north wall of the Hays House, which dates to the late 1700s. Preservation contractor Peter Allen will share what makes the wall so unique and what he discovered during his 2025 repair. Historic Preservation Planner, Jacob Bensen, will share information about historically designated properties in Harford County and the County's Historic Preservation program. Learn how you can participate in these preservation efforts and the associated tax credit programs.

Register at www.harfordhistory.org. Members Free, Non-Members \$5.

The Evolution of Our American Flag Sunday, June 14, 2026, 1 pm

Presentation by Dr. Sandra Wallis

How did America move from the British Colonial Flag to our American symbol of freedom and unity? Why is June 14 considered "Flag Day"? Learn about the many forms the American flag has taken and the fascinating stories behind its design.

Register at www.harfordhistory.org. Members Free, Non-Members \$5.

Open House Sunday, June 28, 2026, 1 pm

The Hays House Museum will be open to visitors on Sunday, June 28 from 1 – 4 pm.

No reservations required. Members Free, Non-Members \$5.

Dr. Sandra Wallis, Chair, Hays House Committee

IN MEMORIAM

THE REVEREND REGGIE BISHOP HAS GONE HOME

It was a cruel winter for the Historical Society. Among the members we have lost in the last several months were George Harrison and Nancy Cassilly. More recently, Reginald M. Bishop, universally known as Reggie, lost his battle with diabetes and sickle cell anemia on March 1, 2026, at age 61.

Reggie graduated from Havre de Grace H. S. in 1982, attended Harford Community College, and completed the course of study at the Stratford School of Business in Towson. He worked as an accountant for several local companies, including Von Paris Moving and Storage, until his health forced him to retire. In 2007, the A1C Champion Program employed Reggie as a motivational and educational speaker, sending him throughout the country to persons seeking to manage their diabetes.

Bishop attended Washington Bible College/Capital Seminary (now Lancaster Bible College, PA) and was ordained as a deacon in the AME church in 1990. He served in many local congregations, especially his home church, St. James AME Gravel Hill, where he focused on ministering to the youth and incarcerated, held weekly Bible studies, and once served as an advisor to the Baltimore City Health Department.

Reggie's great interest in History and Genealogy led him into a variety of activities. In 2012, he authored *The Bishop Bond: Finding Yourself Through Your Family Roots*. Additionally, he made presentations on African American Churches of Harford County for the Historical Society, served on the County's Historic Preservation Commission, and was a former member of the Board of Directors with the Susquehanna Museum of Havre de Grace. His genealogical interests also extended to historical burial sites (especially African American Cemeteries), and he was treasurer of the Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites. In 2025, the William Paca Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution presented Reverend Bishop with its Community Service Award.

Reggie Bishop was a genuine, unfailingly kind, vibrant, passionate, and generous individual whom the Society will greatly miss. RIP

Jim Chrismer

BOOK REVIEW

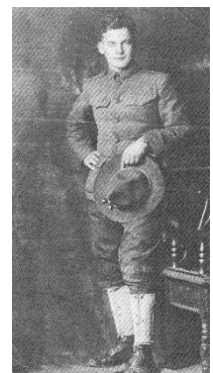
LIFE AND DEATH THROUGH THE EYES OF A HERO

The Diaries of Herbert Ray McCommons, 1932 – 1940

Transcribed and Compiled by Ken Sterner

I'll freely admit that I never thought the day would come. As a longtime volunteer of the Historical Society of Harford County (HSHC), I've watched for perhaps fifteen years as hard-working persons of interest, talent, and goodwill wrestled with this project: to bring the fascinating Society's post-World War I (WWI) diaries of disabled veteran Herbert Ray McCommons to print.

Ken Sterner has accomplished what was thought to be nearly impossible. He has steeled himself, spent months on end with the diaries in front of him, strained his eyes, and sat virtually chained to his computer, transcribing and running organizational patterns through his mind to overcome the difficulties that had bedeviled previous efforts at bringing McCommons' daily observations to new life.



First, there is the physical diary itself, consisting of a small series of brittle, 90+ year old volumes. The writing is often in pencil, virtually fading even as Sterner worked, and increasing the difficulties of deciphering early 20th-century, at times shaky, cursive handwriting. Additionally, diarist McCommons expressed himself occasionally in spurts of a stream-of-conscious manner.

The diary's content, as to be expected, varies from day to day over the course of twelve years, seldom developed sufficiently to be understood by anyone other than the author himself. McCommons wrote principally to "keep track" of changes in his physical condition, never really intending to detail life in small town Havre de Grace, whose population ranged from approximately 3,500 to 5,000 persons in his lifetime.

So how did Ken Sterner accomplish the improbable where others had failed? My answer is that Sterner's success lies largely in the organizational structure he adopted, dividing the author's content into four subtopics that provided a more fully developed insight into aspects of McCommons' life over the course of a dozen years. The subtopics, as cited in the Table of Contents, are 1. Personal and Family Health, 2. Fishing and Gunning, 3. Service and Social Organizations, and 4. Home, Family, and Friends. The result is that Sterner, in essence, presents an ordered mini biography of a damaged man in his 30s and 40s as he grapples with life in the Era of Franklin Roosevelt, the New Deal, and American reaction to the rise of fascism in western Europe.

So just who was Herbert McCommons? He was a regular guy, a member of a family of modest income living in rural Havre de Grace during a time of domestic and international upheaval. His father, Charles McCommons, was a clerk for a telephone company; his mother, Nannie May Ward McCommons, was a homemaker and operator of a boarding house. Herbert, born on January 8, 1898, three months prior to America's entry into the Spanish-American War, lived with two siblings near Forest Hill before moving at age seven to Havre de Grace. Here he attended school, performed odd jobs, and developed an interest in sports, most notably fishing and waterfowl hunting.

America's entry on April 6, 1917, into WWI against Germany and its allies changed Herbert McCommons' life forever. At age nineteen, in the following August, he journeyed by train to Elkton, where he enlisted as a private in the 1st Maryland Infantry, part of the famed 29th, Blue/Gray Division. After basic training at Camp McClellan (AL), McCommons' regiment sailed from New York to France on July 5, 1918. Within weeks, young Herbert McCommons found himself embroiled in battle as part of the Ambulance Corps and confronted Germany's poisonous *gas* in the horrendous Meuse Argonne Campaign over parts of three months, September to November 1918. This prolonged series of battles led to Germany's demise and the signing of the Armistice in November of 1918 that ended the so-called "War to end all wars."

Now 21 years of age and a Sergeant, a significantly changed Herbert McCommons left Europe by ship on May 11, 1919. He returned to the United States eleven days later and received his Honorable Discharge and final pay at Camp Meade (MD) on June 2, 1943.

Despite regular in-and out-patient visits to Perry Point, for the next two decades, amid incidents of dizziness, fainting, coughing spells, difficulties in breathing, and fits that involved chewing his tongue or hitting his head on the ground, the physically and emotionally disturbed McCommons lived life as best he could. On January 26, 1943, at age forty-five, Herbert Ray McCommons died, very appropriately, at Perry Point Veterans Administration Hospital.

Life and Death Through the Eyes of a Hero is an impressive work of history. In addition to the yearly introductions he provides, Ken Sterner writes his impressive annotations and endnotes in a clear, direct, and swift-paced manner that carries readers along as they follow the diary's individual entries (fortunately, McCommons himself wrote in a mostly understandable yet, at times, grammatically flawed manner).

What I found most impressive is the amount of research Ken Sterner conducted in crafting the Section Introductions and the many informative and explanatory Endnotes. As I perused these units of the book at the end of each year of the diary, I sensed that I was evaluating a Master's Thesis. In all, Sterner provided 406 Endnotes (an average of 34 per year), utilizing primary and secondary sources, databases, subscription and non-subscription websites, microfilm, magazine and newspaper articles, and informational Facebook pages. Among these resources are *The New York Times* and *the Havre de Grace Republican*, Find A Grave, The Maryland Historic Trust, Ancestry.com, *The History of Perry Point Veterans' Hospital*, The Holocaust Memorial Museum website, Marita O'Connell's website "Historic Havre de Grace – Street by Street," and works by Henry Peden and Jack Shagena. Two of my favorite more eclectic references are the *History of Donkey Baseball* and Turner Movie Classics.

Anyone interested in the various aspects of the history of 20th-century Harford County during the era of Franklin Roosevelt will enjoy *Life and Death Through the Eyes of a Hero*. Among these are the history of Havre de Grace, the impact of WWI on enlisted men, the economic effect of the Depression on small-town Maryland, hunting, fishing, and gunning the Susquehanna River, mid-20th century entertainment, and the activities of the Joseph L. Davis Post 47 of the American Legion

But make no mistake: *Life and Death Through the Eyes of a Hero* is a very valuable addition to the historiography of Havre de Grace and Harford County, Maryland. The HSHC, its Board, administrators, volunteers, members, and supporters should be applauded for making it available to the public for its reading interest and research value. The Historic Havre Grace Foundation and the Joseph L. Davis American Legion Post No. 47 deserve special commendation for their financial support of the project. And, lastly, praises must go out to Kenneth David Sterner for proving "it could be done" and in an impressive fashion!

Ken Sterner is a native of Baltimore County who has lived in Harford County for nearly forty years. A graduate of Western Maryland (now McDaniel) College and the Johns Hopkins University Carey Business School, he describes himself as having "a broad interest in biology, medicine, information systems, quality management, and technical writing." He is an "usher and chorister" at Salem Lutheran Church and a life member of the Jarrettsville Volunteer Fire Company. Retired in 2023, he and his wife, Barbara Ketchum, live in Jarrettsville.

Jim Chrismer

Life and Death Through the Eyes of a Hero: The Diaries of Herbert Ray McCommons
is available at the History Center, 143 N. Main St. Bel Air, MD.
info@harfordhistory.org, 410-838-7691. Cost \$25.

NEW MEMBERS

Katy Dallam, Parker Mitchell, David Guzewich, Jeff Berg Family,
Susannah Archer Family, Charles Filburn, Dominique Lowrance-Snyder,
Denise Carnaggio, Michael Brown, Walter Renner

ARCHER AWARD NOMINATIONS

Each year, the Society recognizes one or more individuals with the George W. Archer Fellow Award for exceptional service toward the mission and goals of the Historical Society of Harford County. The criteria for the annual award are:

- Years of exceptional service
- Recognition of special projects or research
- In addition, the Archer Fellow may be awarded to those people who have striven to support the preservation of the history of Harford County outside the direct efforts of the Society. This effort may include outstanding activism, in-kind services, or volunteer efforts.

The Nomination Process begins in May and closes on July 31. If you know of someone whom the Society should consider for this award, please complete the following form and return it to the Society with your suggested nominee.

The George W. Archer Fellow Award Nomination Form

I nominate _____ for the George W. Archer Fellow Award.

Contact information of nominee:

Address: _____

Phone No. _____ Email Address _____

Please provide a brief narrative (250-word limit) explaining why this individual should be considered for the George W. Archer Award.

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

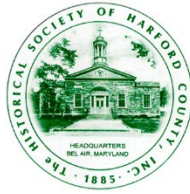
Phone No. _____ Email Address _____

Date: _____

Please forward the completed form and narrative to info@harfordhistory.org or mail to The Historical Society of Harford County, Inc., 143 N. Main St., Bel Air, MD 21014.

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The Historical Society
of Harford County, Inc.
143 North Main Street
Bel Air, MD 21014



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED
May / June 2026

DATED MATERIAL

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Tuesday
COURT RECORDS
9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Wednesday
ARCHIVES
9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Third Wednesday
ARCHIVES & HENRY
C. PEDEN Jr. LIBRARY
5:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.

Thursday
HENRY C. PEDEN Jr.
RESEARCH LIBRARY
9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Fourth Saturday
ARCHIVES & HENRY
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10:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.