

Preservation Trust of Wicomico, Inc.

TRACES

News about Preservation in Wicomico County, Maryland

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Happy 50th Birthday to the Preservation Act of 1966

October 2016 marks the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the federal legislation establishing a structure to preserve historical and archaeological sites in the United States. This act created the National Register of Historic Places, the list of National Historic Landmarks, and the State Historic Preservation Offices.

Preservation Trust of Wicomico, Inc. owes its existence to this structure, due to its connection with Maryland's State Historic Preservation Office, the Maryland Historical Trust.

And at the end of 2015, Governor Larry Hogan appointed Wicomico County native Elizabeth Hughes as Maryland's State Historic Preservation Officer and confirmed her appointment by the Board of Trustees as the Director of the Maryland Historical Trust.

The Governor's announcement described her background:

"Hughes grew up on Maryland's Eastern Shore and, as she describes it, was surrounded by history. Even though her 20-year career has been in Maryland, she has a broad national perspective in historic preservation having served on the board of the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers since 2004. She was elected the president of that organization in 2013, serving until 2017, and represented it on the presidentially appointed Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Hughes holds a master's degree in architectural history from the University of Virginia and an undergraduate degree in American Studies from Georgetown University."

Hughes began at the Maryland Historical Trust in 1995 as Administrator of the Local Government Preservation Program. From 1996 to 2000, she was Administrator of the Statewide Preservation Programs. From 2000 to 2002, she was Chief of the Office of Heritage Planning and Outreach. From 2002 to October of 2015, she was Deputy Director of Operations Management.



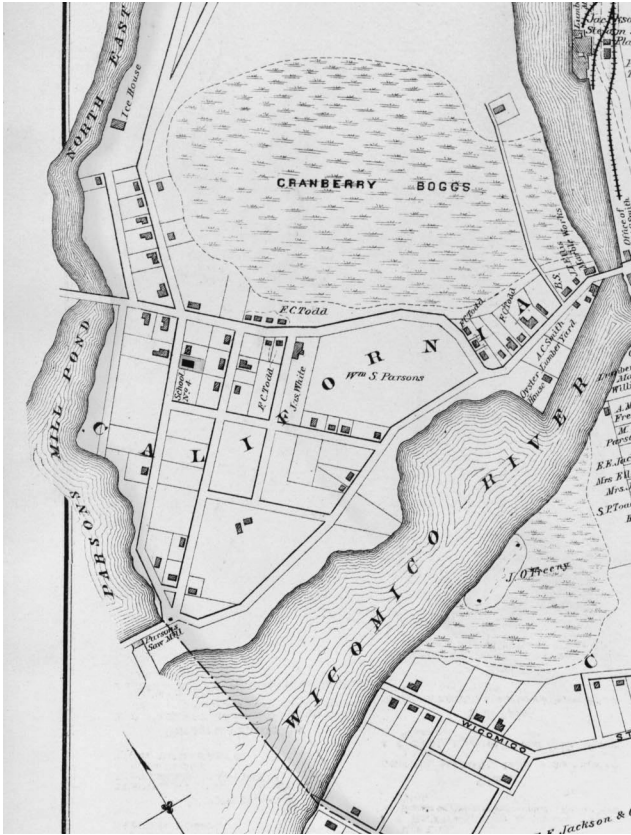
She rose to the position of Maryland's State Historic Preservation Officer in time for the 2016 commemoration of the Preservation Act's 50th anniversary.

To locally celebrate the Preservation Act's 50th, we have invited Elizabeth Hughes for a meet-and-greet with the Preservation Trust of Wicomico in October. Not only does October mark the auspicious Preservation Act birthday, it marks the first full year of Elizabeth Hughes' new position as Maryland's State Historic Preservation Officer. We look forward to October!



Jehu Parsons' California

By Linda Duyer



The “California” name for the west side area of Salisbury is familiar to many. But the area has been a source of confusion for some. Someone once said to me that the street names, or rather numbers, somehow meant this area was the earliest location of Salisbury. That is an easy assumption for those who do not know the earliest history of Salisbury, given the west side street names of First, Second, and Third Streets known for that area.

The name “California” has been attributed to the 1870s time period because of the name on the atlases of that time. And everyone speculates that the name was a nod to the California Gold Rush as well as the western location of this Salisbury neighborhood.

As it turns out, that nod to the gold rush is closer than we thought. The late historian John Jacob tracked down the first known reference to the name, in a April 18, 1850 deed by which Jehu Parsons sold the first parcel of land in the area he hoped to be known as California Town.

Jehu had purchased a number of properties in this area and laid out the streets, though a plat he devised has not been located. His first lot sold was to boat captain Major T. Ruark.

“...a lot of ground lying and being in Somerset County Maryland and part of a tract of land called Corke land on a piece of land laid out for a Town by the said Jehu Parsons to be called California on the South side of the County road leading from Salisbury to Spring Hill and on the west side of the road or street called third street the said lot being one hundred feet square together with all and singular the buildings improvements woods ways waters water courses rights liberties privileges benefits advantages.....”

Jehu had been instrumental in getting the area incorporated by Salisbury, and he had acquired from the Handy family the dam and mill which created Parsons Mill Pond.

While there is no known written explanation for the name, this early 1850 date places the naming to within two years of the mad gold rush that gripped the nation’s imagination. Perhaps Jehu was inspired by California’s newfound riches.

Jehu Parsons’ apparent big dream of a “California Town” never materialized in the manner he hoped, but the results of his speculative venture are still evident.

Commemorative Plaques for Historic Structures

By Anne Clay

PTW is offering upgraded plastic-wood, oval, size 8 1/2” x 11” plaques, each of which displays the name and date (or circa) of a local structure. Plaques are currently featured on the exteriors of many buildings in the Salisbury, Quantico, Whitehaven and Pittsville areas. A plaque is available to any owner who has a building dated by architectural historian Paul Touart or by another qualified historian.

The cost is \$70.00. To order, please call Anne Clay at 410-742-2820 weekdays between 5 and 7 PM. A copy of the plaque order form is attached.



PROPERTY PLAQUE ORDER FORM

Order your unique, made-to-order property plaque today to commemorate the history of your property, offered exclusively from the Preservation Trust of Wicomico. Your oval shaped 8 ½ x 11 plaque will feature the Preservation Trust of Wicomico logo & verifiable date of your historic property. Also included will be special screws to secure your plaque. Your personal plaque will enhance and add to the beauty of your property for years to come!

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Email: _____

Name of the Property as you wish it to appear on plaque:

Address of Property: _____

Verifiable date through Wicomico Historical Inventory: _____

Questions? Call Anne Clay at 410-742-2820

When will I receive my personal plaque?

Orders will be fulfilled 2-3 weeks after P.T.W. submission to plaque maker. You will be called when it is ready and be notified of date and location for pick up. Plaques will not be mailed.

Thank you for supporting the Preservation Trust of Wicomico!

THE CITY HALL OF SALISBURY, MARYLAND: a History

By Anne Kennerly Morris Clay

Note: This article was written in 1976 and a lot changed since the writing of the article. For example, the museum once housed in the old City Hall ceased long ago. And the building today is owned by St. Peters Episcopal Church. But readers might be interested in the early history of this magnificent landmark.

The City Hall of Salisbury, MD, stands on the south side of West Church Street, which runs parallel to [Business] U. S. Route 50 in Salisbury. Built toward the end of the nineteenth century principally as a Firehouse, the structure has housed the city government of Salisbury from that time until the spring of 1976.

Salisbury was founded in the summer of 1732 through an Act of Colonial Assembly signed by the English Royal Governor, Samuel Ogle. Until 1869, the city had been governed by a three-man Board of Town Commissioners. On April 10, 1869, the first meeting of the new five-man board of commissioners was held at the School Board Office in the old Dorman and Smythe Building, where the Thomas R. Young Piano Company building is situated today on Main Street. Over the next several years, Board meetings were held in various stores and offices in the downtown Salisbury area.

On September 12, 1887, the Commissioners established a committee to draw up a new charter for the Town and recommended that the future government of Salisbury would be best effected through a Mayor and City Council. Accordingly, on April 16, 1888, the first Mayor and City Council took over the job of governing Salisbury, adopting the emblem of the phoenix, which was especially appropriate as Salisbury had been twice greatly damaged by fire, in 1860 and again in 1886.

A citizens' committee was appointed on September 6, 1895, to choose a lot upon which to build a Firehouse, with rooms also for the City government. The lot selected was bought from George C Hill for \$1000.00 on June 16, 1896. Hill had purchased the lot on February 10, 1896, from John Tracy, who had previously bought it on July 25, 1866, from Thomas B and Margaret C Smith. On January 16, 1896, a bill was sought from the Wicomico County Legislative Delegation for a \$4000.00 bond issue to finance construction of the building. Taxpayers were invited to inspect the plans drawn by the Contractor, Thomas H Mitchell, and the construction bid made by Slemmons and Lankford for \$4985.00 was accepted.

The plans included a 72 foot tower to contain racks upon which hose would be dried and three large, arched doorways on the first floor for entrance by two hose carts, two engines and a hook-and-ladder truck. In the rear of the building would be stalls for horses, fire-proof



compartments for oils, etc. On the second floor would be the Mayor's office, council chamber, and Fireman's hall. An iron vault would be fitted into the structure to provide safe-keeping for the city's documents.

On July 4, 1896, great festivities accompanied laying the cornerstone for the new Firehouse and City Hall. There was a parade of firemen followed by a masonic Ceremony performed by a delegation from the Salisbury Lodge of Masons. A tin box was placed within the cornerstone, which included the roll of officers and members of Masonic Lodge # 91; several 1896 coins; and a certified copy of the Act of General Assembly of Maryland authorizing erection of the building.

P. S. Shockley, a local surveyor, drew a plat of the lot, which was then recorded among the land records of Wicomico County. Subsequently, a small lot back of the new building was purchased for \$50.00 from S. Ulman for use as an alley.

For many years, well into the twentieth century, the structure doubled as Firehouse and City Hall. Then, in
(Continued City Hall on page 6)

The Senator Jackson House in Salisbury

By Anne Kennerly Morris Clay, 1975

Note: This article was written 1976 and a lot changed since the writing of the article. The structure has since been torn down. But readers might be interested in the early history of this magnificent landmark.

On the corner of Wicomico Street and Camden Avenue in Salisbury, MD stands an imposing, Queen Anne-style building, popularly called “the Towers” years ago, when it was owned by a prominent local family, the Jacksons. Today, the home is owned by St. Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church and is used as its Rectory.

United States Senator William Purnell Jackson built the house circa 1893 and often entertained, during his term in office, such distinguished guests as Governor Goldsborough and Vice President Marshall, as well as many bishops of the Methodist Church. In fact, Senator Jackson was an active member of Asbury Methodist church in Salisbury and was instrumental in building the church sanctuary on North Division Street.

Although the house itself is fewer than one hundred years old, nonetheless, the history of the property is rather old and varied and may be of some interest. Previous to the Jacksons, such families as the Disharoon, Parsons, and Winder families had owned the tract of land, which was known as “Sand plain” or “sandy plains”. At one time, there was a sand hill bank more or less at the point where Wicomico Street ends today at the Wicomico River.

From a study of the land records, it seems that the Winder family had possession of the property from 1771 until circa 1800, when Thomas Jones Winder, a doctor, sold his interest which he had purchased from John Winder of Northampton County, Virginia. As was recited in the last-mentioned deed, said John Winder had inherited the property through the last will and testament of one William Winder and had also purchased parts of the property from other heirs of William.

William Winder had owned the tract “sandy plains” before the Revolution, having bought it from Lord Baltimore’s Commissioners in 1771, out of a resurvey of “his lordships manner of Wecomoco,” but the property, along with the rest of the ungranted lands of the “Manner” aforesaid, was by Act of the General Assembly held in Annapolis on October 7, 1778, confiscated as British property, whereby the fee simple interest became vested in the state. In 1783, Nathaniel Ramsey, one of the commissioners for preservation and sale off confiscated British property, conveyed the land back to William Winder and confirmed the title he had acquired before the Revo-



lution. Thus, it would appear that the said William was either a British subject or a sympathizer and that the tract of land was not privately owned before his possession, as Lord Baltimore had controlled it. There is a possibility that “Sandy Good Will” owned by Winders since 1680 and acquired by a certain William Winder in 1762, because the oldest part of the City of Salisbury was built on part of “Pemberton’s Good Will” at the head of the Wicomico River, previously called the “Rokiawakin” where it divides itself and makes a fork, and because the lot and house today stand very near this location. In any event, the aforementioned William Winder must have been a relatively prosperous individual as he owned approximately 23 slaves, 28 black cattle, 5 horses, and 12 ounces of plate, which were kept on 686 acres of “Sandy Plains”.

Architecturally, there are a number of features in the building, primarily on the first floor, which clearly attest to an elegance and elaborate way of living in days gone by. To begin with, there are four floors on the ground floor, superimposed upon one another. When the house was built, a subfloor was laid, followed by a flatboard, number-one, heart-rift pine which would wear better as the grain and rings were vertical or turned on edge. It is almost impossible to have lumber cut this way today.

(Continued at Senator Jackson House on page 6)

City Hall

(Continued from page 4)

1928, the Fire Department built a new headquarters on South Division Street and moved all fire equipment and operations there. Since then, the office of the Mayor and several local officials, such as clerk-treasurer, city engineer and building inspector, have been located in City Hall. For a time even the Police Station was housed there.

In 1952, reconstruction began on the rear of city Hall to remodel the area formerly used for the stables of the Firehouse and to build additional office space. During reconstruction, the city police used the Fire Department as headquarters while some City Hall offices used the upstairs of the Harris J. Riggin Building at the Southwesterly corner of West Church and North Division Streets. After completion of the addition, the City Hall was reoccupied in the summer of 1952, with the police department using the basement until circa 1964 when it moved across the street to the building on High Street, formerly used by the Wicomico County Library.

With the growing size and needs of the Salisbury and Wicomico County communities, it became apparent by 1962 that additional and more functional office space was needed for both City and County governments. In 1967, a committee consisting of members of the City and County Councils was formed to plan construction of the proposed Office Building Government Plaza on the south-easterly corner of North Division and East Church Streets.

Groundbreaking occurred on February 5, 1974, followed by cornerstone-laying ceremonies on October 29, 1975. The new structure was completed February 14, 1976, and various offices including those in City Hall began their move the last week of February, 1976.

After removal of all offices occupying the old City Hall to the new government office building, a useful purpose for the empty Hall had to be found. Thus, the City Hall Museum and Cultural Center is being planned, with the official opening set for Saturday, April 16, 1977. On the top floor will be exhibitions of a changing nature, to be replaced monthly and of a permanent nature, to include displays by the Archaeological Society, background of the building, and rooms especially for children to learn of local history and their forebears. The lower two floors will be devoted to classes, lecture rooms and a ceramics studio. A volunteer staff will operate the Museum until such time as funds may become available to hire a permanent director.

So it may be seen that the City Hall which has served Salisbury faithfully for three-quarters of a century

will continue to be in use serving the City and County Communities as a much-needed forum for exploring the past, learning about the present, and planning for the future.

The Salisbury city Hall is a fine example of the Queen Anne style and is important in illustrating a certain period in the city's overall architectural heritage. The building has the textural variations and surface patterns, asymmetrical plan and picturesque massing, as well as a prominent tower. As a key element in The Salisbury skyline, the city hall's tower echoes the campanile of St. Peter's Episcopal Church next door.

[From Collection of Wicomico County Histories, by Anne Kennerly Morris Clay, 1976. Printed 1990]

Senator Jackson House *(Continued from page 5)*

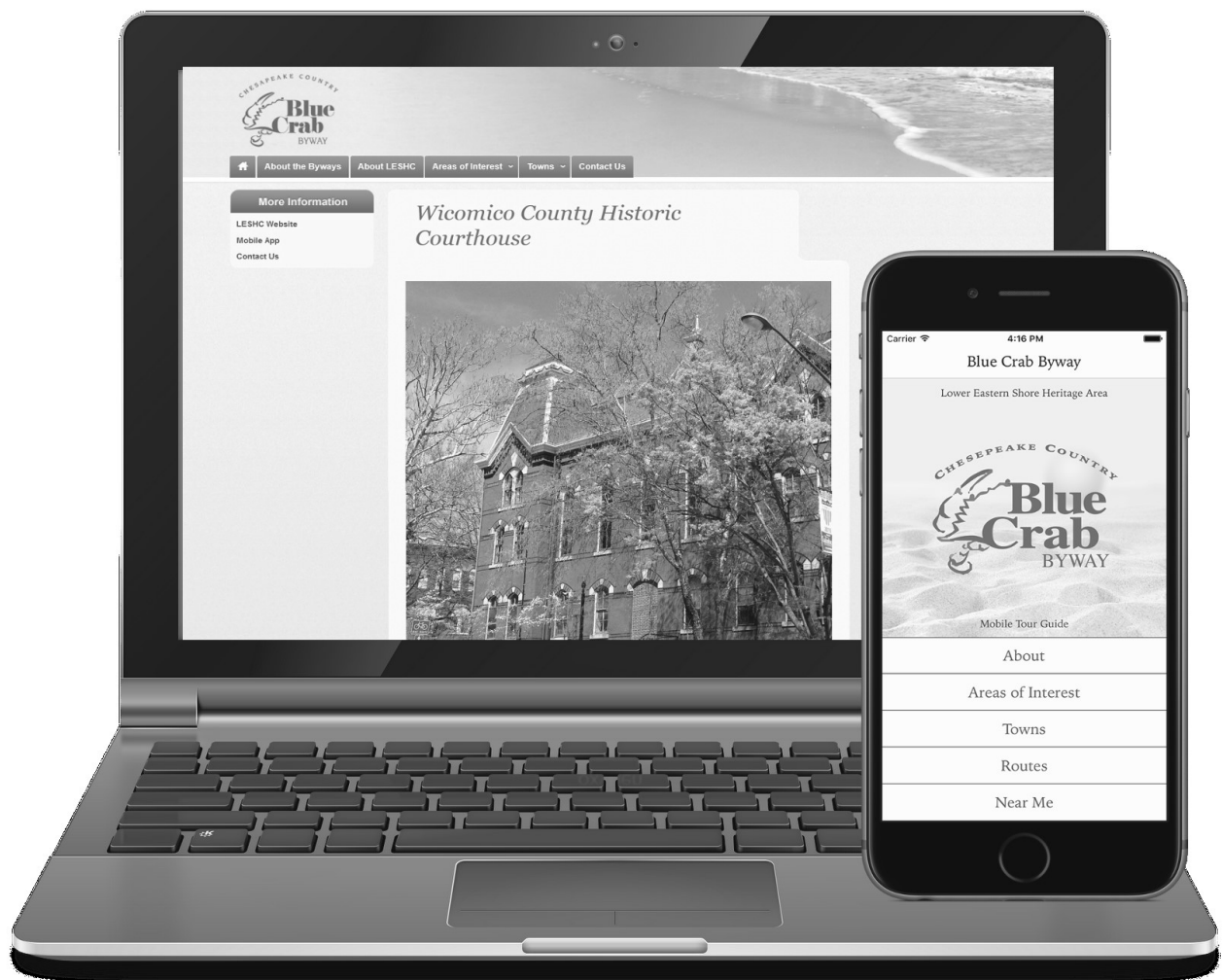
Circa 1930, a ½ to ¾ inch quarter-oak floor was added. Highly waxed oak floors had become very popular by the early 1930s.

Other highlights include the 2 inch by 12 inch on 24 inch center joists which make the structure especially sturdy. The beveled siding is 5/8 inch, number-one white pine and the roof is constructed of slate brought in from Port Deposit, Maryland. The silver-plated hardware and tiled fireplaces are evidence of the wealth and craftsmen available so many decades ago.

To the rear of the house stand the picturesque stables. After the original stables burned circa 1915, they were rebuilt using the same pattern as the original. Their present use is as apartments.

It is hoped that a suitable buyer for the Jackson House will soon be found, one who will be able to care for the building, restore it well and keep it up in a style reminiscent of its rich past. To completely recreate such a structure today would well nigh be impossible, not only for expense involved but also for the lack of experienced artisans. The Mansion is truly one of a kind not only in the Salisbury area but also in the State of Maryland.

[From Collection of Wicomico County Histories, by Anne Kennerly Morris Clay., 1976. Printed 1990.]



The Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Area Council is happy to introduce their new Mobile Tour Guide for the Chesapeake Country Blue Crab Byway. This new iPhone app and internet website is especially designed to enhance your visit along the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Area.

Using the Mobile Tour Guide, you can search by towns or specific interest, making use of maps, photos and GPS settings to plan your trip. Within the app you can go to “Near Me” and search within a 2 mile radius of what sites are closest to you. Visitors and residents can explore the region of Wicomico, Worcester and Somerset Counties easily on smartphones with the new iPhone app or through the internet web page of www.bluecrabbyway.org.

This new, exciting Mobile Tour Guide provides information, and photos about historic sites, hiking and biking trails, parks, public water access, museums, historic markers, and more. The list is growing but now you have access to great information at your fingertips. Keep checking back for new listings.

Download the new, free Chesapeake Country Blue Crab Mobile Tour Guide iPhone app at the iTunes App Store. To learn more about the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Area visit www.lowershoreheritage.org.

About Us

With the formation of the Maryland Historical Trust in 1961, subsequently a committee was formed in Wicomico County to report back to the MHT about preservation issues in this county, the Wicomico County Committee. The first order of business was the restoration of Pemberton Hall with other historic landmarks following. Studies of historic sites were completed and by 1973 there were 75, only to eventually jump to 155. Historic Districts in Wicomico County were formed and maintained with the help of the Wicomico County Committee backed by the Maryland Historical Trust.

In the mid-1980's, the Wicomico committee and other county committees incorporated as an independent organization, the Wicomico County Historical Trust, Inc. It maintained the historic sites inventory, monitored preservation activities and promoted public awareness of preservation issues. In January, 1993 the Wicomico County Historical Trust became the Preservation Trust of Wicomico, Inc. to avoid confusion with other preservation organizations in the county.


Visit our website at www.preservationwicomico.org.

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