

BALTIMORE

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Bunkum Routed At Professor Power's History Workshop

By Lori Romer

University of Maryland

At the second annual workshop for Baltimore historians, exposing myths and outright lies about the city and Maryland was the business of the day, and for several hours on May 12, history came alive at the University of Maryland School of Law's Westminster Hall.

BCHS member and conference organizer Professor Garrett Power has examined the origins of the land system in Maryland and the development of the city. "Each new generation of researchers seeks to correct the misstatements in the historical record and to better explain the human motivation behind historical events," he said.

His work as president of the Westminster Preservation Trust includes stewardship of the historic Western Burying Ground, which is the site of Edgar Allan Poe's grave, and the operation of the restored 19th-century Westminster Hall. He also works closely with the Office of the Maryland State Archives to make legal records accessible for historical study in a digital era.

Power gathered four experts to expose "Baltimore Bunkum and Maryland Myths:"

❖ David Taft Terry, director of Collections and Exhibitions at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African-American History and Culture, focused on the plantation underground in antebellum Maryland. The story of the Underground Railroad and the help those white abolitionists gave slaves once they crossed into the North is well documented, said Terry, but little is known about the support that was given to runaways as they made their way out of the South. He said the widely held belief that enslaved blacks were too fearful or unwilling to help those who were on the run is incorrect.

"Evidence suggests that slaves had a major role in helping other blacks escape over the Mason-Dixon Line," said Terry. The greatest conductor of the (Cont. on page 3)

Marburg House Recalls A More Elegant Epoch



Photo by Lew Diuguid

Marburg's passion

1890, he spent much of a family fortune derived from tobacco to make a veritable embassy of the house, built 47 years earlier by George Small, a shipper.

Marburg House now is headquarters of Agora Publishing, which operates out of five mansions in Mt. Vernon and other sites— an international printing and sales organization working on- and off-line. Marburg's embellishments remain intact. He added one and a half floors to what had been a three-story town house and rendered it opulent with imported wood trim, the city's first residential elevator—operated hydraulically then but electrically now—and glass-front cabinetry to display his costume collection. A Tiffany also owned the house and a skylight has been so attributed.

Citing Maryland Historical Society records, Agora's website notes that "Ambassador Marburg and President Woodrow Wilson drafted one of the Covenants to the League of Nations in the library." A 1951 biography of Marburg by Henry Atkinson said, "the abode of a man of rare culture and excellent tastes . . . has been the scene of many social festivities. Around the dining table have gathered some of the most distinguished men and women of the 20th century.

Marburg was born in Baltimore County and educated at Princeton, Johns Hopkins, Oxford and in Paris and Heidelberg. He was president (Cont. on page 4)

Sixth Mayor's Reception To Salute Nine Historians

Members and friends of the Baltimore City Historical Society are invited to the sixth annual Mayor's Reception on Sunday, October 8, at noon in Marburg House, 14 West Mt. Vernon Place—the grand residence of an ambassador more than a century ago and now the headquarters of the Agora international printing complex.

Nine historians will be honored, including Prof. D. Randall Beirne of the University of Baltimore; Prof. Sherry Olson, author of "Baltimore: the Making of an American City"; and Judge James F. Schneider, historian of the Circuit Court. Authors will sign copies of two recent Baltimore books: "Then and Now: Baltimore Architecture," by Charles Duff, and "Look Again in Baltimore," by John Dorsey and James DuSel.

At 1:45PM, attendees will tour the Baltimore School for the Arts, immediately west across Cathedral Street. Leader will be Rima Mamek of Cho Benn Holback, the architectural firm in a \$29 million project that is integrating a classic brownstone townhouse at 704 Cathedral Street into the acclaimed public charter arts high school.

Attendees are asked to contribute \$35 each on Reception Day, or \$30 in advance, to benefit revival of the Peale Museum as a history center. Checks can be mailed before October 2 to: Baltimore City Historical Society, c/o The Charles Theater, 1711 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21201.

Living History Honorees include Ethel Llewellyn Ennis, nationally acclaimed jazz singer and pianist who remained in the city as a community activist; Nanette Mitchell, co-chair of the centennial committee of the Du Bois Circle, an African-American women's club established in 1906; and Paul S. Sarbanes, in his fifth term as U.S. Senator.

Honorees in memoriam are Samuel T. Daniels, executive director of the Baltimore Council for Equal Business Opportunity for 20 years; Norman G. Rukert of Rukert Terminals Corp. whose preservation efforts in Fell's Point won numerous awards; and Dr. J. Tyson Tildon, neuroscientist, advocate for public education and director of pediatric research at the University of Maryland.

EDITORIAL: Clouds Rim City's Master Plan

The Planning Commission has approved a final draft of its "Master Plan" for consideration by the Mayor and City Council. It can be regarded as one would a beautiful summer day with faint storm clouds in the distance. The beauty lies in its comprehensive organization into four segments: Live, Earn, Play and Learn. Within each segment are laudable, and more or less achievable, goals intended to enhance the living conditions of residents (*Live*), strengthen the City's economic base (*Earn*), make Baltimore enjoyable for residents and visitors (*Play*), and improve and take advantage of educational resources (*Learn*).

The faint storm clouds, which could clear as the City Council considers the Plan, are generated by the over-arching practical reach of the Plan—to change zoning principles in Baltimore to accommodate and facilitate new development. One objective, for example, is to "Modernize zoning codes to meet current needs." This is elsewhere translated as more "flexible" zoning. What does this mean on the ground, in the historic neighborhoods, particularly in light of draft language seeking to simplify "time-consuming...processes" in zoning?

Those processes are often our greatest protections. This is troublesome because the history community was removed from the Plan development. As our chairman, John Carroll Byrnes, noted in his April 13 letter to the Commission: "Given the importance of Baltimore's historical characteristics, it was surprising to see the following not mentioned among the recited 'stakeholders' [in the Plan] . . . : The Baltimore City Historical Society, Baltimore Heritage Inc., Greater Baltimore History Alliance, Historic Neighborhoods Council, Maryland Historical Society and Preservation Maryland."

We applaud another stated objective: "Protect and Enhance the Preservation of Baltimore's Historic Buildings and Neighborhoods." This objective would be accomplished by seven tasks: (1) Update City-wide historic preservation guidelines;

Challenging Times For Historical Societies

By Robert B. Kershaw

President of BCHS

With the July arrival of our host Maryland Historical Society's new executive director, W. Eric Emerson, we embarked on a new and hopeful chapter in the history of both MHS and BCHS. We are grateful that MHS will continue to host our Society and support its mission to advance public awareness of Baltimore City's rich past.

We are also sadly aware of the fiscal challenges facing MHS, necessitating the painful downsizing of its staff by one third. MHS is closing its administrative offices in the former Greyhound Bus Station and relocating them, as well as BCHS, to the Pratt House and other locations on the MHS campus. Our mailing address will remain the same: BCHS; c/o MHS at 201 West Monument Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201.

Rising utility costs, falling museum attendance, and raging competition for charitable contributions converge to make the way forward challenging for MHS in its statewide historical mission and for BCHS in its Peale Project and aspirations for a City History Center there. But let us not lose sight of the core strengths of the history-minded community. MHS recently raised \$30 million in a successful capital campaign. BCHS is gratified by participation in our Historians' Workshops and member renewals.

MHS and BCHS will continue to build on their strengths and turn challenging times into new opportunities to celebrate and explore history—State and City. Keep faith in history and institutions that encourage its appreciation.

(2) Promote use of Maryland Building Rehabilitation Code; (3) Simplify, and actively pursue the local historic district designation process; (4) Create, expand and promote the historic structure tax credit programs for local historic districts and landmarks; (5) Strengthen Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation ordinance enforcement by providing dedicated staff to proactively enforce CHAP guidelines; (6) Implement a program that physically demarcates the City's locally designated historic districts; (7) Create a fund/program that provides rehabilitation loans for low income families in locally designated historic districts.

With BCHS Website, Electronic Worlds

By Michael L. Cooper

Editor, BCHS Website

Although the Internet, as a public utility of sorts, is 13 years old, until two years ago I was wary of historical information on it. Then, as an author of historical narratives, or trade books, for young people, I found myself spending less time in the Library of Congress and the National Archives and more in my home office staring at the computer screen.

Among the mixed blessings, I now have easy and relatively cheap access to many far-flung archives. Thanks to the World Wide Web I camped out, virtually, at the British Library while researching two books coming out this fall: "Hero of the High Seas: John Paul Jones and the American Revolution" (National Geographic Books) and "Jamestown, 1607" (Holiday House Books). Now, for me, as well as for other writers, scholars, students, and the merely curious, the Web is the first place to go for research. For BCHS, a strong presence on the Web is the best way to serve current members, attract new ones, and to make Baltimore history available locally and around the world.

Marilyn Julius has done an excellent job of getting BCHS onto the Web by designing a handsome site located at www.historicbaltimore.org. Now we have dozens of possible avenues. I've found, on the Web, "Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web," by Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig. It has pointed me to sites that suggest what's possible for BCHS.

The inventive "Who Killed William Robinson? Race, Justice and Settling," uses primary and secondary sources to explore race and imperialism in the mid-1800s frontier for a plausible conclusion to the murder of a black in British Columbia. What historical mysteries does Baltimore hold? How about the plot to assassinate Lincoln as he passed through the city on his way to his first inauguration in Washington? Sounds like a mystery that would be fun to explore. I'd like to see simple exhibits on immigration, the city in the Civil War, the fire. We can start small and grow.

Let's talk. Any and all ideas are welcome. Please send them to ML_Cooper@Comcast.net. Also send me whatever links to other sources on Baltimore history you think should be listed on the BCHS website.

Bunkum Put to Rest

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Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman, went deep into the South to pull slaves out.”

❖Edward Papenfuse, state archivist and an adjunct professor at the School of Law, debunked a Lincoln assassination plot. On Feb. 11, 1861, President-elect Lincoln boarded a train in Springfield, Ill., for a whistle-stop tour of 70 towns, including Baltimore, on the way to his inauguration in Washington. Papenfuse said Lincoln was informed of a plot to ambush his train and assassinate him on Feb. 23, as it passed between the Calvert Street Station of the Northern Central Railroad and the Camden Street Station of the B&O Railroad.

Lincoln decided to alter his travel plans, and he passed through Baltimore in the middle of the night. On the next afternoon the crowd gathered to see him found only Lincoln’s wife Mary and their sons aboard the train. “Why did Lincoln avoid Baltimore?” asked Papenfuse. “A man named Cipriano Ferrandini is the person most often named as the leader of a terrorist plot to assassinate Lincoln as his train passed through the city.” But even before word of the reported plot, Ferrandini had the attention of lawmakers.

“On Feb. 5, 1861, he appeared before a congressional committee investigating alleged hostile organizations against the government,” said Papenfuse. Ferrandini admitted to training militia to prevent northern troops from passing through Baltimore, “but there is no smoking gun about a plot to assassinate Lincoln.”

❖Prof. Larry Gibson debunked “one of the biggest lies about the life of Thurgood Marshall,” the Baltimorean who served on the Supreme Court 1967-91. Marshall was not rejected for admission to the University of Maryland School of Law, he said. “He never applied. It is true that if he had applied, he would have been rejected,” said Gibson. In 1935 Marshall did sue to integrate the school on the behalf of client Harold Seaborne, who had applied in 1933.

Marshall is frequently described as the lawyer for the Baltimore branch of the NAACP. That’s not exactly true either, according to Gibson, who has organized an oral history project about Maryland’s African-American lawyers. William A.C. Hughes was the branch’s lawyer from 1931 to 1967 and handled the local chapter’s legal work. Gibson said that Marshall did become associated with the local chapter in 1935 as part of a massive campaign drive.

Winning Essay -- A School of Industry Never to Be

By Jay G. Merwin, Jr.

Contending visions of what makes people poor, and how government should respond, were as vibrant in early 19th century Baltimore as in the last few decades in Congress and state houses across the country. Underlying the debate were competing perspectives on what makes people poor—external forces, from which the poor deserve relief, vs. bad personal habits, for which the poor deserve a mix of penalty and reformation.

Seth Rockman, an assistant professor of history at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, frames this early public policy struggle as it occurred in Baltimore over the first quarter of the 19th century in his article on the brief but lively debate over the city’s proposed School of Industry. His article, “Work, Wages and Welfare at Baltimore’s School of Industry, was the unanimous choice of the judges of the 2005 competition for the Joseph L. Arnold Memorial Prize for Outstanding Writing on Baltimore History, \$500 awarded by the Baltimore City Historical Society through the generosity of Thomas C. and Nancy B. Martel.

As Professor Rockman describes, with a keen eye for shifts in the politics and local and national economy of the period, the School of Industry was conceived as a project to aid and train, and at times reform, Baltimore’s poor. The project started, languished and revived at several points, all with great fanfare and the backing of leading Baltimore citizens. However, the proposal never came to fruition. Its main legacy is as an intriguing reflection of changing public attitudes toward the poor during the period.

Inspired by a project in Munich, Germany, that removed all of that city’s poor to a self-supporting workhouse, the School of Industry was first presented in Baltimore to relieve the seasonal deprivations of day laborers in the port. Winter clogged it with ice, halting commerce. Laborers living on a \$1-a-day wage to load cargo were thrown out of work until the ice melted. Harsh winters also chilled prospects of work for others who lived hand-to-mouth on wages from mills and manufacturing concerns.

Although Baltimore’s almshouses and private contributors of clothing and heating fuel sought to aid these seasonally unemployed, the School of Industry offered a way of addressing the problem comprehensively with employment and training in job skills and life habits.

Advocacy for the School began in 1804,



Seth Rockman

subsidized and revived several times thereafter into the early 1820s. As Rockman tells it, the urgency of seasonal unemployment at the port was overwhelmed by wider, chronic unemployment as immigrants flooded Baltimore, driving wages down, and by major downturns in the local and national economy. As these shocks occurred, advocacy for the School shifted at times from promotion of charity and uplift to social control of a larger, seemingly more anonymous class of people whose sufferings were attributed in the public mind to drunkenness, profligacy and other vices.

Although both perceptions were present, Rockman writes, “From the outset, the School proposed to instill industrial discipline in a morally-suspect population. Over the twenty-five year career of the project, punitive goals increasingly overshadowed both the rehabilitative and job-training components of the original plan.”

Eventually, the concept of non-denominational public schooling replaced the School of Industry as the engine of reform as Baltimore opened its first three public schools in 1829. But as the current public debate over public education in Baltimore and elsewhere indicates, that was hardly the end of the discussion. As suggested by the article, public policy on poverty, and the prospects of implementing any such policy, follows closely upon changing public perceptions as to who are the poor and how they got that way.

The prize awarded to Professor Rockman honors the late Joseph L. Arnold, a history professor at the University of Maryland Baltimore County for 35 years, known locally as the “dean of Baltimore historians.” Professor Arnold published books and numerous articles and essays, many of them dealing with regional history. At the time of his death in 2004 he was working on a definitive study of Baltimore.

The judges evaluating submissions for the most recent prize, announced in May, were: Matthew Crenson, professor of Political Science at The Johns Hopkins University; Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, professor of History at Coppin State University, and W. Edward Orser, professor of American Studies at University of Maryland Baltimore County.

Marburg: Man, Mansion

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of the Maryland Peace Society and early advocate of an international court. President William Howard Taft named him ambassador in 1912 but he served less than a year before resigning with the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson. Of German origin, "he bitterly condemned that nation's military classes and its militarism," said a Sun editorial quoted by Fred Rasmussen in a 1997 remembrance of Marburg in the daily.

When the Senate rejected Wilson's effort to bring this country into the League of Nations, Marburg called it "the most tragic blunder our country has ever made." Eighteen years later he railed against the ascension of Hitler and pressed for repeal of the Neutrality Act.

Locally, Marburg gave abundantly to enhance Hopkins and in 1940 he led the Municipal Art Society, which he had helped form at the turn of the century, in a campaign to limit building heights around Mount Vernon Place. He also played a role in creation of Leakin Park. In 1945 he witnessed the birth of the United Nations, fulfilling with only a year to spare the goal of his entire adult life.

BCHS Salutes Benefactors

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Krugs Hammer Away in 1810 Downtown Ironworks

"G. Krug & Son is one of the few companies left in Baltimore that can claim their ancestors helped in building Baltimore." That statement appears on the website of the oldest ironworks in the country. It rings as true on the electronic page as the clang of a blacksmith's hammer on her anvil. Yes, the sixth generation in the business at 415 W. Saratoga St. includes a female smithy, Alexandra Krug.

Director Johns Hopkins of Baltimore Heritage led two groups of about 20 each this summer to the downtown site for a tour of artistic ironwork in the making—since 1810. One of the three structures clustered by an alley dates to that year. The current proprietors are Peter and Stephen Krug, who is the father of Alexandra, and they stand by the work of their forebears. Indeed, much of their effort is restoration of classic Krug fences and grilles, from Otterbein to Mount Vernon and beyond.

In tending their trade, the Krugs have documented its history. Again from the website (www.gkrugandson.com): The initial owner "was listed in the Baltimore Directory of 1810 as Schwatka, Augustus, blacksmith, corner of Saratoga St. and Short Alley. The firm changed hands in 1830, when it was sold to Andrew Merker and renamed, Merker, A. Locksmith and



Bell Hanger, Eutaw St. and Saratoga."

Gustave Krug came from Germany in 1848, worked for Merker and became a partner, changing the name to the current one when Merker died in 1871. By the early 1900s the business operated ten forges—now down to two, which are fueled by natural gas not coke. The city then had several ironworks that produced many of the balconies destined for New Orleans. Asked if the current shop works in wrought iron, Alexandra explained that it is nearly pure iron and now is rarely used except in the most exacting work at Colonial Williamsburg. The Krugs' metal of preference today is malleable mild steel.

Alexandra demonstrated her hammer-and-anvil artistry in the midst of hoary pieces in for repair and bright counterparts newly built. Asked if Krug's long run on Short Alley was threatened by the city's west side redevelopment efforts, Stephen said the site "is on the National Registry of Historic Places . . . and we do plan to stay." The current staff is 14, including two ex-offender trainees.

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