



The Queen Anne's Chronicle

CELEBRATING QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

INFORMING THE CITIZENS

COUNTY ROADS TAKE ME HOME

– “A PREDOMINANTLY RURAL COUNTY WITH SMALL TOWNS CONNECTED BY CREEKS AND COUNTY ROADS THROUGH FIELDS AND FOREST” – Vision, 2010 Comp Plan

Returning from the Western Shore on a late winter afternoon, we pulled into the Park and Ride just this side of the Bay Bridge. There we picked up the Knowledgeable Passenger – or “K.P.”, as he likes to be called.

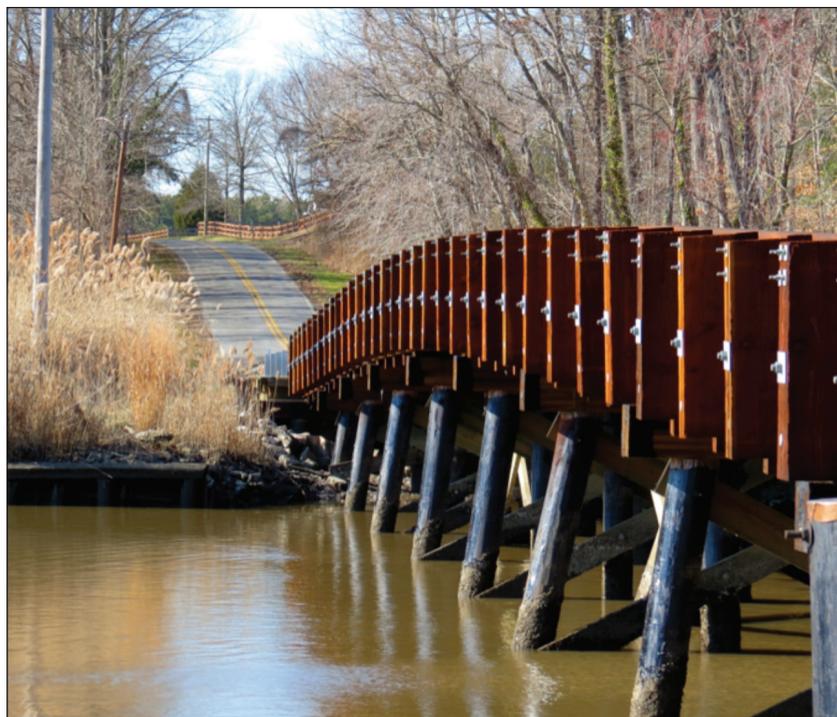
We got back out on US 50/301 going east, and as we had hoped, K.P. began to share with us his store of knowledge about the roads of Queen Anne's County.

Numbers and Names

The best place for you to start, said K.P., is to remember that if a road has a number, it's either an Interstate or US highway or a State road, while if it only has a name, it's either a County road or a town or private road.

Take the road we're on: the numbers 50 and 301 on the signs are in black-and-white shields which means it's a US road. (Numbers in red and blue shields indicate a highway is a part of the quite superior Interstate Highway system.) On Route 18 that is running alongside us now, or on Route 213 that we're going up to, the numbers are in rectangles with a bar across the top – that

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The handsome new Island Creek Bridge near Church Hill was opened at the end of October of last year. The last of a series of County bridges replaced since the 1990's, the old bridge, built in the late 1940's, had first been weight-restricted and then was finally shut down in July 2010 after its regular two-year federal inspection showed worsening rot beneath the deck. The replacement bridge is in a timber-style like its predecessor, but with a longer life expectancy of between 75 and 100 years. The \$1.3 million cost of the project was 80% covered by federal funds.

– Chronicle Photo

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE HERE IN QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

The July/August issue of the *Chronicle* carries articles listing and celebrating our wonderful farm stands and their just-picked local fruit and vegetables – the kind of fresh produce people who live in cities want and pay extra dollars for.

In recent years, an additional way to enjoy our local bounty has become available: you can purchase a season's share of vegetables and fruit directly from a local farm engaged in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

What is Community Supported Agriculture?

A farmer engaged in Community Supported Agriculture sells a “share” of the farm's products (usually fruit and vegetables, but could include eggs and other farm products) to “subscribers” who in return receive a box of fresh produce each week throughout the 20- to 22-week QAC farm season. The shares are available as a full share (a half-bushel box) or a half share.

A growing movement, CSA began in Germany in the 1960's and spread to the U. S. in the mid-1980's. It has grown so in popularity that by 2007 there were over 12,500 CSA farms

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QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY ROADS BY THE NUMBERS

State Maintained Roads (Miles): 230

County Maintained Roads (Miles): 550

County Maintained Bridges: 32

Annual State Funding FY 2006-09 for County Road Maintenance: \$5.2 Million

Annual State Funding FY 2010-12 for County Road Maintenance: \$258,000

County Roads Backlogged for Preventive Resurfacing (Percent of Total Miles, 2012): 90%

County Maintained Bridges Closed or Weight Restricted: 0

County Roads Division Phone: (410) 758-0925

State Highway Administration, Centreville Shop Phone: (410) 758-0700

(Sources: <http://www.qac.org/default.aspx?pageid=348&template=3&PageLevel=2&toptlevel=34&cid=75>; Personal Communications.)

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A rainbow of carrots from Homestead Farm Photo Credit – Homestead Farms, Inc.

in the U.S. Many, but not all, CSA's are formed by farmers; others have been formed by consumers.

Community Supported Agriculture provides the farmer with the advantage of being able to complete marketing the farm's products before the time-consuming process of tending the fields gears up. An additional advantage is that there is money up front to buy seeds, potting soil, etc., which eliminates the need for a loan from the bank to start the growing season. Not only do shareholder consumers enjoy having a weekly box of very fresh seasonal food, but also important to many of them is the sense of connection they have from knowing that their food comes directly from a known nearby source.

CSA in QAC

Here in Queen Anne's County we have Homestead Farm – a CSA farm in Millington that markets certified organic produce. In its eleventh year as a CSA farm, it has four pick-up or distribution points in the County. Those who live outside our County can pick up Homestead Farm's fresh organic food at one of 12 additional locations on the western shore and in other Eastern Shore counties.

Homestead's farmers, Alison and Luke Howard, appreciate their shareholders' flexibility and adventuresome spirit, because it is the Howards and the vagaries of growing vegetables that determine what goes into the box each week. Sometimes a crop will fail; a hailstorm will devastate a planting; or the Howards'

experiment with a new – or heirloom – variety doesn't produce as expected. There are, however, always five to eight different kinds of vegetables or fruit on offer.

The CSA Connection

Like other CSA's, Homestead's CSA subscribers benefit from opportunities to become familiar with the source of their food. Homestead Farm provides three annual events for their subscribers, who, with their children and often their friends, enjoy and experience the activities of the farm.

The Howards particularly like watching children when they visit the farm and see first-hand where their food is coming from. Here they become willing to try new foods by eating them right off the plant!

The pleasures and benefits of farm visits are not limited to the children. Grown-ups see the modern farming techniques that result in their food, learn all that is involved in becoming

a certified organic farm, and perhaps discover the differences in varieties of a particular vegetable or fruit. The connection of your food to this one farm is reinforced by a weekly newsletter, *The Homestead Farm Hoopla*, issued throughout the growing season; by a blog; and by lots of recipes for good ways to prepare all those veggies.

CSA subscribers aren't the only ones who enjoy the yield of the Homestead Farm. The Howards sell their produce to a variety of Washington, D.C. restaurants, and they sell their grain to organic feed mills in Pennsylvania, where it is used to make certified poultry and dairy feed.

To find out more about Homestead Farm's CSA shares, visit their website www.freshorganicvegetable.com, or email Alison Howard at alisonhoward@gmail.com. There is a lot of information about the Community Supported Agriculture movement available on the internet.



Just-watered spring greens at Homestead Farm.

Photo Credit – Homestead Farms, Inc.

ANNUAL QAC RAINFALL? 44 INCHES – BUT WATCH THE MONTHLY VARIATION!

After our article last summer on QAC rainfall, the *Chronicle* was contacted by Michael Newell, Horticulture Crops Program Manager at the Wye Research and Education Center (WREC) in Queenstown. He wrote:

"We monitor some weather activity for use here at the Center, rainfall being one type of event we record. You can view this data at wrec.umd.edu -- look for the Weather Data link on the left."

After getting his email, we hastened to the website and found that WREC had indeed posted monthly rainfall measurements back to the year 2000. After doing a little arithmetic, we found that from 2000 through 2011 the average annual rainfall at that location – about 4 miles south of Queenstown as the crow flies – was just a shade over 44 inches.

Earlier this year, we checked in again at the WREC website and found that they had posted

their numbers for all of 2012: 47.1 inches. That result pushes the WREC average annual rainfall since 2000 a little bit further above 44 inches.

We like that number, because it coincides with what we were guessing based on recent data from nearby locations outside the County. Those numbers, as we reported (*The Rain of Queen Anne's*, July/August 2012), suggested that the commonly-cited 42-43 inch average for QAC (based on older data from Centreville) was now out of date and that our average annual rainfall had increased by an inch or more.

But as we also reported, averages are just averages. The WREC numbers tell us, for example, that we had 60 inches of rain in 2003, but four years later in 2007, only 36 inches. Or take one month, August: a meager one inch in that month in 2008, but in August of 2011, courtesy of Lee-Irene, over 15 inches! And in 2012, August delivered again: over 11 inches, helped out by a torrential 7.69 inches on a single day (August 26).

When you look at the numbers over the years, you see the monthly variations within each year that the averages conceal. Sometimes the annual total is near the average, but within the year there have been extremes of drought and deluge. In 2012, close to an average year overall, there were four months with less than 2 inches of rain, and two with more than 11.

One reason for the apparent increase in irrigation equipment on County farmland in the past few years must be this drastic monthly variability in the amount of rainfall that we are getting.

QAC WELCOMES MARYLAND HOUSE AND GARDEN TOUR

The Maryland House & Garden Pilgrimage, this year marking its 75th anniversary, arrives in Queen Anne's County on Saturday, April 27, 2013, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Twelve fascinating sites, each presented by knowledgeable volunteer docents, will fill up a day of site-seeing, rain or shine.

Tickets for the Pilgrimage are \$30 in advance at www.mhgp.org, or \$35 at the sites on the day of the tour. A detailed, informative guide book is included in the price of the ticket. The proceeds go as usual to support a preservation project in the host community, in this case partly as a matching grant to repair damage from Isabel to Tucker House, Site #10.

The QAC tour begins at two sites in Queenstown, the **old Courthouse** dating in part to 1708 and a **1907 home on Second Avenue** with window designs inspired by Jefferson's interest in natural light.

On the way to Centreville, the next stop is **Reed Creek Farm** on Wright's Neck, a stately brick Georgian manor house from the mid-18th century with a host of interesting interior features and a grand walled garden designed by Barbara Paca that has been added by the current owner. The **River House**, at the head of the Corsica River just before the bridge into Centreville, is a fully restored wooden frame and cladding home, also from the mid-18th century, with a guest cottage constructed in character with the main house, plus several gardens and a "living shoreline".

In Centreville, the first two stops are a three-story American foursquare at **205 Water Street**, built in 1911 by the town pharmacist, and around the corner, the varied **gardens of a 1794 house** at 102 South Liberty.

The Pilgrimage suggests parking at historic **St. Paul's Parish Church** for lunch (\$12) and then walking to the remaining sites close by in Centreville. The mother church of a parish covering most of three present-day counties, St. Paul's was established outside Centreville by 1692 and then was reconstructed in 1835 at its present location in Centreville after the town was established.

Exiting St. Paul's and turning right, the garden tour proceeds through the secret gardens of the **Roberts House (1918)** and the **Holton House (1824)** and on to **Tucker House**, one of the first homes built in the new town of Centreville, c. 1792. Tucker House is headquarters to the Queen Anne's County Historical Society and features gardens designed by the Queen Anne's County Garden Club with popular colonial bulbs, perennials, and roses, as well as a meat house.

Further up South Commerce Street is **Wright's Chance**, built in 1744, with an interior notable for the fine paneled fireplace walls in the principal rooms on both floors. The last stop is the **Queen Anne's County Court House**, erected on the plantation known as "Chesterfield," ancestral home of Judge Joseph Hopper Nicholson, brother-in-law of Francis Scott Key, to whom Nicholson is said to have suggested the music for the "Star Spangled Banner".

Much to see and enjoy! The annual spring tours of the Maryland House & Garden Pilgrimage

represent its effort to promote public awareness of Maryland's rich architectural and cultural heritage. As April 27 will show, our County makes a major contribution to achieving this goal.



Late April is lilac time in QAC

— Chronicle Photo

PLANNING COMMISSION

At its regular January and February meetings, the Planning Commission received briefings from County staff on the following items:

- Critical area mapping. Nancy Scozzari, Senior Planner, reported that staff is drafting proposed revisions to County law and regulations to conform to changes in the State's Critical Area regulation.

- Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012 ("Septic Bill"). Steve Cohoon, Director of Planning and Zoning, and Helen Spinelli, Principal Planner, briefed the Planning Commissioners on State legislation adopted in 2012 to preserve agricultural land by concentrating growth in areas served by public sewer. The legislation requires, as a condition of approval of any major subdivisions on septic, the adoption of a map dividing county lands into four tiers, as follows:

- Tier 1: lands currently served by sewer (e.g. County growth areas, municipalities);

- Tier 2: future growth areas planned for sewer service (e.g. lands planned for annexation by towns);

- Tier 3: areas not dominated by agriculture or forest land and zoned for large lot development and rural villages (e.g. established subdivisions); and

- Tier 4: preservation and conservation areas (i.e. undeveloped rural land) where no major subdivisions will be allowed on septic.

At the initiative of Chairman Barry Waterman, the briefing was abbreviated on the ground that adopting tiers would be of no benefit to the County and was not mandatory at this time.

- Southern Kent Island Sewer Project. (Chairman Barry Waterman recused himself on this agenda item.) Staff briefed the Planning Commission on the status of the proposal to extend sewer service to southern Kent Island. John Nickerson, Director of Environmental Health Services, described the causes and effects of failing septic systems on southern Kent Island. Jonathan Seeman, Finance Director, summarized his estimate of net costs and benefits associated with a proposal to extend service to all existing homes in nine affected communities and to an additional 1052 vacant lots. Steve Cohoon, Director of Planning and Zoning, reported that extending sewer to Southern Kent Island would yield nearly half the nutrient reduction required to be associated with public sewer under the County's Watershed Implementation Plan. He also described the regulatory process for effectuating an extension of sewer, including amendment of the Water and Sewer Plan, adoption by the Planning Commission of a finding of consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, and inclusion by the County Commissioners of funding in the capital budget. Todd Mohn, Director of Public Works, and Alan Quinby, Chief Sanitary Engineer, discussed capacity issues and answered technical questions.

Following the presentations, a motion was adopted asking the County Commissioners to push forward with their efforts to solve the problem of failing septic systems on Kent Island. The motion passed, Sheila Tolliver abstaining, Luke Howard absent, and Barry Waterman recused.

QAC ETHICS: FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

In 2010, the Maryland General Assembly enacted a law requiring counties and many municipalities to tighten up their rules on financial disclosure and conflicts of interest as they apply to elected local officials, including School Board members. Now these provisions of local ethics ordinances must be not just “similar” to State requirements, but “equivalent to or exceed” them.

The State Ethics Commission was given the authority and responsibility to review and approve the local revisions that would have to be made. Last November, after a number of exchanges between the State and our County Ethics Commissions, the State approved Queen Anne’s County’s revisions. Commissioner Dunmyer introduced Revisions to the Ethics Code, Ordinance No. 12-23. A hearing was held on January 22 of this year; no one came forth to comment on the revisions to the Code. It was passed unanimously on February 12.

The new financial disclosure provisions require considerably more information from our elected officials. As a result, the Ethics Commission is turning its attention to rewriting the financial disclosure form for elected officials for 2013 onward to reflect the required changes.

The Revisions to Ethics Code also include a few changes in the conflict of interest provisions of our Ethics Code, which were already close to being equivalent to the State rules.

The County’s conflict of interest rules apply to all officials, whether or not elected, and to all board or commission members and County employees. The Ethics Code describes the kinds of matters in which these individuals are prohibited from participating, which are, for the most part, matters in which they, or a family member, have a financial interest that is distinguishable from the interest that the public generally has in the matter. Thus, even though a County official is affected by a vote that raises or lowers taxes, he/she can vote on it because it also affects the public at large.

The new Ethics Ordinance will become law on March 30, 2013, 45 days after its passage.



Red-Winged Blackbird

Photo Credit – David Godfrey

The Queen Anne’s Chronicle

The Queen Anne’s Chronicle is published by Queen Anne’s Conservation Association.

Chris Pupke – Chairman of the Board

Jay Falstad – Executive Director

Mary Campbell – Editor

Queen Anne’s Conservation Association (QACA), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation, is the Eastern Shore’s oldest conservation organization. Its mission is to promote stewardship of Queen Anne’s County’s natural resources and to protect its rural character and small towns while encouraging the management of prudent and sustainable growth.

Queen Anne’s Conservation Association

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Back issues of *The Queen Anne’s Chronicle* can be accessed at www.qaca.org

QACA LOSES A FRIEND

Bill Winterstein passed away in February on his 75th birthday. Bill served on the Queen Anne’s Conservation Association’s Board of Directors from 2010 until his death.

A dairy farmer from Sudlersville, Bill was committed to farming in Queen Anne’s County. He was passionate about protecting the County’s farmland. In addition to his work at QACA, Bill was a member of the Queen Anne’s Agriculture Preservation Board, the Farm Bureau, and the Holstein Association.

QACA Board President Chris Pupke noted, “Bill was devoted to his family and his farms. I am grateful for the work he did on behalf of farmland conservation in Queen Anne’s County. His voice was well regarded in the community. He will be missed.”

Bill is survived by his wife Jean, six children, twelve grandchildren, and ten great-grandchildren. The Board and Staff of Queen Anne’s Conservation Association extend their condolences to his family.

COMMISSIONERS’ MEETINGS

Here are selected items summarized from the approved minutes and QACTV coverage of the County Commissioners’ meetings.

December 11, 2012. The Commissioners:

- Received, from Department of Public Works Director Mohn and Budget & Finance Director Seeman, and held over until the next meeting, a proposed funding plan for three major **capital improvement projects** “which are both needed and ready to be formally initiated”: (1) County Complex - Sheaffer Property Infrastructure (YMCA); (2) County Courthouse; and (3) Route 8 Sewer Extension (Southern Kent Island Sewer Service).
- Commended Sgt. Kevin Brenner, Paramedic Pam Wise, and EMT Alex Marvel for bringing honor to the County by 5 days of “above and beyond” emergency service in New Jersey following Hurricane Sandy.
- Agreed, upon a presentation by Chairman Jody Schultz and other members of the Kent Narrows Foundation, to restrict fishing on the walk ways under and adjacent to the Kent Narrows Bridge.
- Heard two persons speak at Press and Public Comment.

January 8, 2013. The Commissioners:

- Appointed 40 individuals to 10 boards and commissions, including:
 - TV journalist and environmentalist Alex Likowski, to the **Sustainable Communities Council**;
 - Towne Park Senior Vice President Steffan Sonneveldt, to the **Ethics Commission**;
 - Produce/flower business owner and crop insurance agent John Perkins, to the **Planning Commission**;
 - Stevensville manufacturing firm owner Dan Gross, to the **Economic Development Commission**, along with three re-appointments, all as recommended by the Commission; and
 - William D. Moore (appointed member 1994, chairman 2003), re-appointed again to the **Zoning Appeals Board**.
- Agreed, Commissioner Simmons opposed, to

move forward with the funding plan for the **County Complex/Sheaffer Property Infrastructure (YMCA)**, including a \$6 million FY2014 bond sale, and to direct the Department of Public Works to begin the formal RFP process to procure design services.

- Received, upon presentation by Rebuilding Together Board President Wesley Bodin, a report on this all-volunteer organization’s annual program of repairs to homes of low-income families, elderly or handicapped, within Queen Anne’s County.
- Heard, from representatives of the Church Hill Volunteer Fire Department and Emergency Services Department Chief Aftung, a proposal for a County-funded paramedic unit at Church Hill.
- Received an update from new Library Director John Walden.
- Heard, from Eastern Shore Land Conservancy Deputy Director Amy Owsley, a proposal to partner in fund-raising for a watershed finance expert to assist in meeting the requirements of the Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) mandated by the Bay clean-up program.
- Received a **financial review** from Budget & Finance Director Seeman reporting:

–a decline from three years ago of 10.5% in the most recent residential assessments in the central part of the County, but an increase of 1.4% in commercial assessments there (the only such increase on the Eastern Shore);

–for the FY 2014 Budget in preparation, a projected overall decline of property assessments of 2%, notwithstanding an upturn in overall QAC assessments that began in 2012;

–an increase in recordation tax revenue for the last six months of 2012;

–an increase over last year in income tax revenues distributed (quarterly) in November 2012 to the County by the State [*Chronicle* Note: according to the Maryland Board of Revenue Estimates as of December

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SIGNS OF SPRING

By JANE SCOTT

March is the first month of returning spring. We will know it is really here when the distant maples show a subtle wash of red, the warming soil has a pungent smell and there is a general feeling of softness in the air.

We may also hear the ringing “konk-a-lee” of a returning red-winged blackbird and thrill to the high-pitched love songs of the spring peepers as they emerge from the mud.

Peepers and Doves

Almost everyone has heard the peeper’s song, but few of us have ever seen one. They are tiny, brownish tree frogs, only about an inch long, with an irregular cross on their backs. They hide inside clumps of sedge or grass, or cling to the low bushes and trees that line vernal ponds and wooded swamps.

Silent during the daytime, the males begin their concert just after dusk. As the last rays of twilight disappear, the first one puffs out an air sac beneath his chin and produces a thin piping sound. Gradually, a few others join in until finally there is a full chorus of high-pitched ascending sound. Then they will mate, lay their eggs in the water and move back into the woods to dine on beetles, ants and spiders.

The plaintive coo of the male mourning dove is another sound of approaching spring. I am told that when he shortens his sad, soft song to a mere three notes, he has found his true love.

Often in spring you will see three doves flying in tight formation. According to the Cornell Ornithology Lab, the lead bird is the male of a mated pair, the second is an unmated male trying to chase him off the territory, and the third is the mated female, apparently just along for the ride!

Hawks and Woodpeckers

Both the kestrel and the hairy woodpecker are well along in their nest building by now. Both are cavity nesters and will move into hollow trees or convenient birdhouses. Woodpeckers, incidentally, do not sing to attract a mate, they drum. So when you hear that incessant tapping on a nearby tree, you can be sure that is what they have in mind.

The majestic red-tail hawk is also nesting now, and early spring is one of the few times you will see broad-winged hawks out in the open. One April morning last year, I heard a high-pitched scream and ran out to see two circling above the house.

Broad-wings are chunky birds, smaller than a red-tail, with three conspicuous black bands across the tail. These early arrivals are males. When the females follow in May, they will put on a spectacular courtship display and then move deep into the woods to raise their young.

The American Woodcock

When it comes to courtship displays, however, first prize will have to go to the American woodcock. Woodcocks are forest birds, colored the same mottled brown as the dry leaves that surround them. They have large, slightly protruding eyes, to help them see in the shade, and a long bill to probe the soil for worms and insect larvae.

For most of the year, woodcocks are so well camouflaged that they are almost invisible. Sometimes as early as February, however, the male leaves the safety of his hiding place to put on a conspicuous and unique display. On a soft spring evening, he will suddenly break out of the cover, spiral upward on whistling wings, and burst into a clear warbling song. Then, just as quickly he plummets earthward gain.

A single male woodcock may mate with several females, each of whom will then simply lay her eggs among the fallen leaves on the forest floor, relying on her own protective coloring to protect them from marauding predators.

Spring Ephemerals

By early April, we may find bloodroot, spring beauties and trout lilies in the woods. These delicate flowers are known as spring ephemerals because they bloom, set seed, and relapse into dormancy in a matter of weeks. Plants need light in order to flower, and these have evolved to take advantage of the warm spring sunlight at the only time it

is available to them, before the leaves of forest trees and understory shrubs have fully developed.

I think I will take a page from their book and take time to enjoy these lovely weeks of spring while they last.

Jane Scott, a writer and illustrator, is the author of *Between Ocean and Bay: A Natural History of Delmarva* (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1991), and *Field and Forest, A Guide to Native Landscapes for Gardeners and Naturalist* (Blackburn Press, 2002), as well as other works. She traces her roots in Delaware back to the 1730’s and now lives on the Eastern Shore.



The bloodroot’s leaves are clasped around its stem as the plant emerges from the ground and starts to flower. The flowers close each night during the brief time this ephemeral member of the poppy family is in bloom. The poisonous red/orange juice of its underground root gives bloodroot its common name. It is considered an herb; its juice is a popular natural dye and was frequently used by Native Americans in the southeastern United States to dye baskets and clothing. Bloodroots’ seeds are spread by ants attracted to a fleshy structure attached to the seeds. The ants take the seeds to their nest where, protected and fertilized by the debris of the ant nest, they germinate.

Photo Credit – David Godfrey

CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH’S WIND SCALE

“CHAP. X. Proper terms for the Winds...

- “When there is not a breath of wind stirring, it is **A Calm** or a stark Calm.
- “**A Breeze** is a wind blows out of the Sea, and commonly in fair weather beginning about nine in the morning, and lasteth till neer night. . .
- “**A Fresh Gale** is that doth presently blow after a calm, when the wind doth beginneth to quicken or blow.
- “**A fair Loom Gale** is the best to Sail in because the Sea goeth not high, and we bear out all our Sails.
- “A stiffe gale is so much wind as our Top-sails can endure to bear. . .

The later Beaufort Scale may be more famous, but Captain John Smith of the Chesapeake Bay had his own rudimentary wind scale, as set out below from the 1641 edition of his Seaman’s Grammar and Dictionary, first published in London in 1627.

- “**It overblows** when we can bear no Top-sails. . .
- “**A Storm** is known to every one to be not much less than
- a **tempest**, that will blow down Houses, and Trees up by the roots. . .
- “**A Hericano** is so violent. . .that the Sea flies like rain, and the waves so high, they over-flow the low Grounds by the Sea, insomuch, that Ships have been driven over the tops of high Trees there growing, many Leagues into the Land, and there left. . .”

STAR SPANGLED BANNER TRAIL COMING TO QAC THIS SUMMER

By MARY MARGARET REVELL GOODWIN

The Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail is coming to Queen Anne's County to commemorate the enormous contributions made by so many men here during the War of 1812.

The Trail here in QAC begins at Broad Creek. Unfortunately, as so much of Broad Creek was filled in or its surroundings changed as a result of the airport on Kent Island, the two signs designating the history of the British takeover of Kent Island will be located at the historic Christ Church cemetery at Broad Creek. In 1812, the Creek actually came up to the land edging the church property.

Another point on Kent Island will be commemorated with a sign marking the nearby house used as British headquarters. The next sign on the Trail will mark the area near where the British crossed the Narrows on their way to attack Queenstown. It is also the site where one can stand and look down what used to be a thin strip of land through the marshes reaching firm land where Grasonville now begins.

A sign in the Grasonville Park next to the Elementary School will mark the road taken by the British towards Queenstown. The road then continues toward Slippery Hill, the site of the American picket guard attack on, and defense against, the British Royal Marines. Just before that point, there will be a new 1812 Memorial Park with three wayside signs and a double kiosk. The kiosk will have a painting of the British march on one side, and the names of all

300 QAC militia men on the other side.

Queenstown will have two signs, as well as the kiosk already there. One sign will present the story of the hijacking of the packet boat the *Thomas Jefferson*, and the other will give details as to what took place in Queenstown during the attack and retreat by QAC militia.

Centreville will have two signs, one detailing the story of the gathering of all the QAC militia men and another at the wharf to tell the story of Fort Point on the Corsica to defend the County seat by attack from the river.

One sign at Church Hill will present the remarkable story of a part of the Troop of Horse here in the County and how they stood up to the Governor against what they thought was insufficient leadership. The final sign will be in Sudlersville to commemorate the men there who were not only part of our County's defense, but also defended Chestertown on two occasions and went to Caulk's Field during the famous battle there as well.

The dedication of the new park and the presentation of the entire trail will be held in Grasonville on the 3rd and 4th of August.

Mary Margaret Revell Goodwin of Centreville is Executive Director of the Eastern Shore 1812 Consortium and Chair of the Queen Anne's County War of 1812 Committee. She is responsible for the Consortium's informative website at www.easternshore1812.org.

COMMISSIONERS' MEETINGS, *continued from Page 4*

13, 2012, "Individual income tax revenues are forecast to grow by 8.0% in fiscal year 2013, before slowing to 3.7% in fiscal year 2014."];

—a projected increase of \$270,000 in "Maintenance of Effort" in the FY 2014 budget, resulting largely from the phase-in of teacher pensions, partially offset by a small decline in number of students; and

—a schedule calling for submission to the Commissioners of a **draft FY 2014 Budget** on March 26, followed by release to the public on April 26 of the Commissioners' Proposed Budget, with hearings in May and final adoption in June.

• Approved a letter of support for designation of a Historic Stevensville Arts & Entertainment District.

• Agreed to appoint Mr. William Riggs Sr. to the open seat on the Queen Anne's Soil Conservation District.

• Voted down an ordinance to eliminate existing gross floor area limitations in the Urban Commercial (UC) and Town Center (TC) zoning districts.

• Received, upon introduction by Commissioner Dumenil, proposed ordinances relating to special events at bed-and-breakfasts and other rural locations.

• Heard one person speak at Press and Public Comment.

January 22, 2013. The Commissioners:

• Agreed to appoint Patrick Thompson as County Attorney for a one year term.

• Allocated \$15K received by Animal Control from an anonymous charitable foundation.

• Appointed, upon submission of Emergency Services Director Aftung, 12 persons to the Department of Emergency Services Advisory Council (DESAC).

• Issued a *Character Counts!* Proclamation for February 2013 declaring "Respect" to be the Pillar of the Month and encouraging citizens to consider mentoring a child or youth.

• Held a hearing on Revisions to the Queen Anne's County Public Ethics Law at which no public testimony was offered.

• Agreed, Commissioner Dunmyer opposed, to send a letter in support of proposed State legislation to expand Sunday deer hunting on private property, and further agreed to express support for State legislation expanding beer and wine events of various types.

• Agreed, upon presentation by Ms. Chrissy Aull, Executive Director of the Wye River Upper School, to write a letter of support for a State grant of funds for renovation of the Centreville Armory for use as a School building, and further, on motion of Commissioner Dunmyer, decided to try to find \$10K in County funds in support of the School.

• Heard no one speak at Press and Public Comment.

January 31, 2013. The Commissioners:

• Considered a proposed **Southern Kent Island Sewer Project** to connect 1500 existing homes currently on septic, and about 1050 potential new homes on now-vacant lots, to the KN/S/G sewer plant, incurring estimated capital costs of \$64M for the sewer service, \$12M for added school capacity, and \$55M for roadway/stormwater improvements; and heard 14 persons speak on the project at Press and Public Comment.

• Considered a proposed **Circuit Court House Project** to build a new court house at a cost of \$15M in addition to \$2.6M spent in 2008-2010 to acquire properties on Commerce Street, and heard 9 persons speak on the project at Press and Public Comment.

• Considered options to improve **EMS response time** to the northwest section of QAC (Church Hill and Kingstown) including relocating EMS crew now at the Sudlersville VFD to a new station on County property at Shine Smith Road at a capital cost of \$700K, and heard 2 persons speak on the options at Press and Public Comment.

• Received an overview from County Administrator Todd on plans, agreed at the January 8 meeting, for the two construction projects on the Sheaffer property outside of Centreville: (i) a **County Complex** for Planning and Zoning, the State's Attorney, and the Election Board

(cost = \$4.6M) and (ii) a **YMCA** (cost = \$10.4M), for a total cost of \$15M to be funded by \$6M in contributions from YMCA sources and \$9M in County funds, including \$6M in debt financing; and heard 3 persons speak at Press and Public Comment raising the issue of the impact on private local fitness businesses of subsidizing a YMCA that offers more than a swimming pool.

• Received an overview from County Administrator Todd on the County's decision to become an "interested party" in the relocation of the Easton Memorial Hospital, and heard one person speak on this subject at Press and Public Comment.

• Heard one person speak at Press and Public Comment requesting withdrawal of Commissioners' support for Sunday deer hunting because of its adverse effect on wildlife watching and equine activities.



Self-sown Eastern Redbuds and Lunaria (common name: money plant, or honesty) dot QAC's wooded areas with shades of purple in April.

— Chronicle Photo

County Roads Take Me Home, *continued from Page 1*

means those are State roads.

Suppose, we asked, a road has both a name and a number, like Love Point Road or Main Street, which are sections of Route 18. Are these State roads or County roads?

Any road with a number is not a County road, said K.P., even if it has a name. Look – many US and State roads have names as well as numbers, like US 301, which picks up the name “Blue Star Memorial Highway” as it crosses the Severn River and keeps that name all the way up to the Delaware line.

Did you know there are Blue Star Memorial highways all across the country? Some are US routes, some are State routes. All of them were marked after World War II, by the National Garden Clubs, to pay tribute to the U.S armed forces. The name and signage came from the blue stars that families were entitled to display on service flags if they had family members in a war.

We could see K.P. beginning to warm to his subject, which, somewhat to our dismay, seemed to be almost *any* road, not just our County roads.

US 50, he continued, is a major east-west (therefore even-numbered) part of the nationwide grid of US routes first laid out in 1926. It and all other US routes have always been maintained by the states. Here in Maryland, it's the State Highway Administration, or SHA, which is responsible for maintaining virtually all of Maryland's numbered highways, whether “Interstate”, “US” or “State”. Of course, Maryland does get about one quarter of its highway funding from the federal government.

Now you may be wondering, K.P. said (though actually we weren't), why US 301 has three digits and US 50 has only two. That's because US 301 is considered an auxiliary or “spur” of the old north-south (therefore odd-numbered) US 1 – and some spur it is! US 301 runs over a thousand miles from Delaware to Florida. In this part of the world, as you know, US 301 joins US 50 at Bowie and diverges from it at “the split”.

Maintaining County Roads

K.P. was wandering farther and farther away from what was of most interest to us, and indeed why we had asked him along for a ride – namely, our *County* roads. So, raising our voice just a bit, we remarked: *We Have a Lot of Unnumbered Streets and Roads in Queen Anne's County, Don't We?*

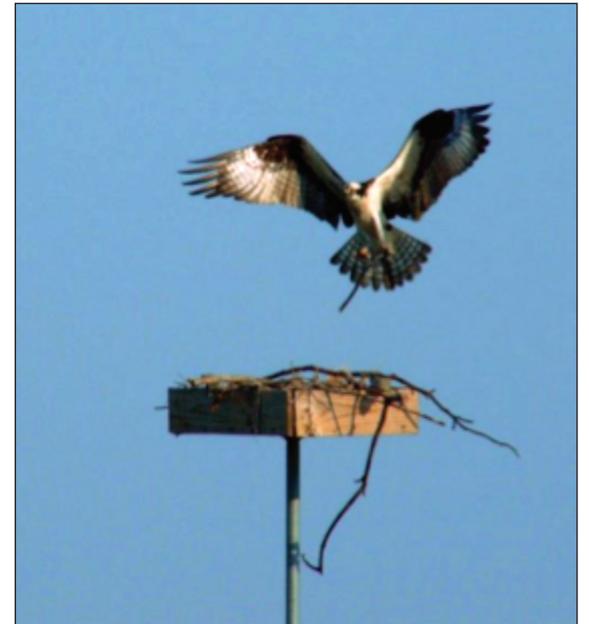
Yes, you do, said K.P., deftly changing gears, you have 550 miles of them. Mileage-wise, over two-thirds of all the roads in QAC are County roads. These are roads that the County, not the State, maintains. And since you bring it up, would you like me to tell you what maintaining a County road involves?

We quickly said yes, and K.P. happily launched into the subject of road maintenance in Queen Anne's County.

Road maintenance, said K.P., actually involves quite a wide variety of activities. There's road patching and re-surfacing, of course, but there's also maintenance of guardrails, ditches and storm drains; there's signing and pavement striping; there's grass mowing, snow removal, tree-trimming, clearing of litter and debris; and there's taking care of 32 bridges that get a federal inspection every two years.

The Roads Division and the Giant Funding Pothole

In QAC, this maintenance work is done by the Roads Division -- part of the Department of Public Works. The Roads Division has about 40 full-time staff, a half-dozen contract staff, and over



THEY'RE BACK! *Returning from a winter spent in warmer southern climates, tree swallows and ospreys are among the earliest arrivals back in Queen Anne's County to begin the job of building nests and raising young. Some folks here swear that they regularly see their first osprey of the year on St. Patrick's Day. Ospreys are usually solitary migrators, very occasionally seen in small groups of four to eight. Swallows can form huge flocks that twist and turn, dipping and swirling about and constantly changing formation. Both tree swallows and ospreys readily use man-made structures for nesting, and both species are monogamous. Not happy with seeds, berries, or worms, they both are expert fliers and acrobats who catch elusive, moving meals – whether in the air or in the water.*

Photo Credits – David Godfrey

100 pieces of equipment. That staff head count is down by a third from what it was, and the average age of the equipment is now up to 16+ years. Those are the results of the Great Recession and the County losing the funding it had been getting from the State.

Did you know that it used to be, in QAC and all Maryland's rural counties, that maintenance of county roads was covered completely by Highway User Revenue (“HUR”) distributed from the State's Transportation Trust Fund? Queen Anne's County was getting \$5-7 million annually from the State, and then *bang!* it disappeared.

In August of 2009, the County's share of HUR was cut by over 90% – all at once and after the FY 2010 budget had been adopted. The County went from having all of its road maintenance paid for by the State to having almost none of it paid.

Since you live here, K.P. went on, you know about the fiscal challenge this presented, at a time when other County revenue sources were also shrinking, or at least not growing. But you may not know about what this situation has meant for road maintenance – the results on the ground, so to speak.

The Importance of Tar and Chip

Let's start with “tar and chip” – do you know what that is? Not exactly, we said cautiously. K.P. plainly welcomed the opportunity to explain.

Tar and chip is the main weapon in the Roads Division's arsenal. It is a cost-effective way of re-surfacing a less heavily used road that isn't in too bad condition to start with. A thin layer of asphalt (“tar”) is sprayed on the road, gravel (“chip”) is spread over it, and rubber-tired rollers press the gravel into the asphalt. The vast majority of roads in Queen Anne's County are roads that have been re-surfaced by tar and chip – many times, because the life-expectancy of tar and chip is about 5 to 7 or 8 years.

Before the Great Recession and loss of HUR money, the Roads Division had roughly 500 miles of County roads on a 5-year tar and chip re-surfacing cycle: they were doing 100 miles of tar and chip on County roads each year. Then, disaster struck. 2008: no miles done; 2009: no miles done; 2010: one-fifth of one mile done; 2011: one-half a mile done.

Last year, 2012, with money now coming out of the County's general fund, 38.75 miles got tar and chip. This year, 2013, the miles re-surfaced should continue to rise. But, given what didn't get done over the past five years, you're over 90% back-logged on County roads maintenance.

When tar and chip roads wear out, aside from the potholes and the cracks that allow water into the road's foundation, the gravel gets worn off and the tar rises to the surface, making the road slick and potentially dangerous in wet conditions.

The Roads Division is coping with the challenge posed by the maintenance backlog with what might be called a first-aid approach. They focus their efforts on the especially bad spots, monitoring reports of slick conditions and accidents from the Sheriff's office, Emergency Services, and residents.

Another Technique

Now, unlike most County roads, the roughly 230 miles of State roads in QAC, which generally have heavier traffic, are all re-surfaced by a different technique: hot mix asphalt concrete, or HMA. With this technique, the asphalt and the aggregate are mixed together at a high temperature before the mixture is laid down and compacted.

HMA, which over time turns from a dark surface to a lighter one, is far more expensive than tar and chip – but it lasts much longer, like 20 years, and it doesn't have the rough surface and flying stones that people complain

continued on Page 8

County Roads Take Me Home, *continued from Page 7*

about with tar and chip. On the other hand, it does have to be treated with a shiny coat of “slurry seal” (oil and fine sand) every 7 years or so.

The Roads Division has done some HMA re-surfacing in some residential neighborhoods, and there are two major County HMA roads: Perry Corner Road in Grasonville and John Powell Road north of Church Hill. The Roads Division would love to be able to re-surface with HMA three heavily-used County “peninsular roads” – namely, Kent Point Road, Cox Neck Road, and Bennett Point Road. Actually, they have extended HMA a short way down Cox Neck Road, but there just isn't the money to step up from tar and chip on these roads, as desirable as that might be.

Of Subdivisions, Bridges and Towns

By this time we had long since passed Gibson's Grant off

the left, which had prompted K.P. to explain the process by which a developer first builds his subdivision roads to County standards and then ultimately dedicates them to the County to be maintained by the Roads Division.

A little later, we had passed under the bridge that carries westbound 50 over 301 at the split. There K.P. had talked about the ongoing deck replacement project, funded by \$3.5 million in State and federal money. The left lane had recently been completed and the traffic shifted to it as work began on the right lane. K.P. said they were on schedule to complete the whole job by early May as planned.

The conversation at that point being about bridges, K.P. began to talk about the Island Creek Bridge up near Church Hill. There the Roads Division had this past fall finished work on the last bridge in the County that was weight-restricted due to aging and deterioration. Now, said K.P., all 32 County bridges are up to

snuff and in good shape for many years to come.

We exited onto Maryland 213 and headed into Centreville. K.P. observed that 213, like most State roads that go through municipalities, is maintained by the State, while the unnumbered town streets and roads are maintained by the municipality.

At the Court House we took a left onto Broadway and joined Chesterfield Avenue going out of town. It was marked as State 304. An unsettling memory came to us: wasn't it the town, not the State, that a while back had put in the new gutters and sidewalks on Chesterfield? We glanced at K.P. and he obviously knew what we were thinking.

Yes, said K.P., every rule has its exceptions. Route 304, entering Centreville from the east as Railroad Avenue and passing through it to Chesterfield, is indeed a numbered State route that is not maintained by the State. Some State, and Interstate and US, roads that run through municipalities are maintained by the municipality. Sorry about that.

Going Home

Proceeding down Chesterfield and crossing the bridge over the Corsica, we saw the “Begin State Maintenance” sign as we got onto Corsica Neck Road, still marked 304. A little over two miles later, the State road abruptly terminated at the intersection of two County roads and a farm lane.

The sun had set and it was now quite dark. In our headlights we could see an “End State Maintenance” sign, and a silver pickup truck parked nearby. We stopped and K.P. got out.

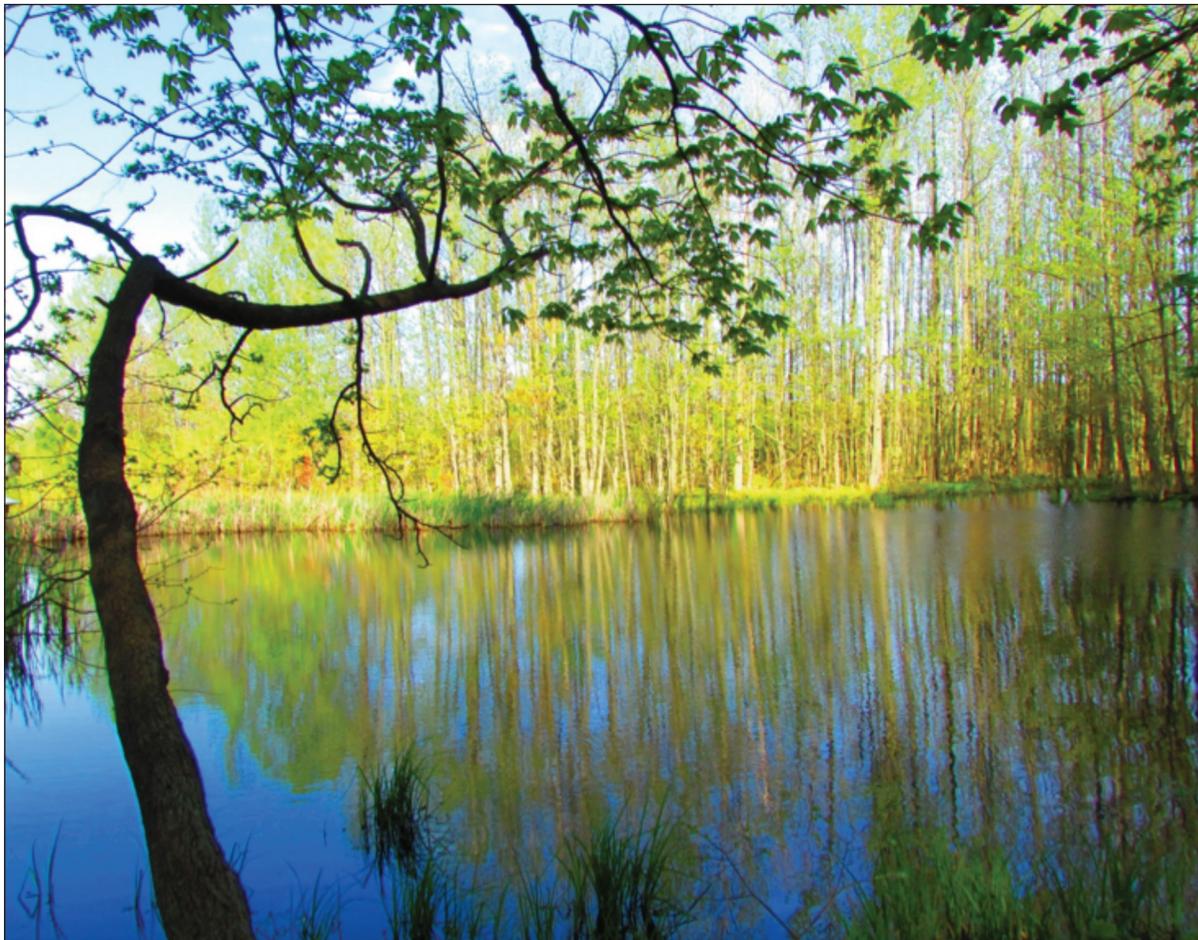
Now, he said, you've come at last to your County roads, the ones that take you home. I hope you take care of them.

K.P. got into the passenger side of the pickup and it moved slowly away into the night. We headed for home, with a new appreciation – and concern -- for the County road we were on.

It had been highly instructive to ride for a while with K.P., and we wondered whether we would see him again.

The Knowledgeable Passenger asked the Chronicle especially to thank Public Works Director Todd Mohn and Roads Division Chief Engineer Shane Moore for their contributions to his store of knowledge. (K.P. added that he alone is responsible for any errors, as well as opinions expressed, in what he told us on our road trip.)

*If citizens go to the County website, locate **Public Works** and under it **Roads Division**, and then click all the way out to **Roads FAQs**, they will find much useful information about our County roads and what number to call with a problem.*



The green of spring, reflected.

Photo Credit – David Godfrey

MARCH: KITE-FLYING

... Unfading recollections! at this hour
The heart is almost mine with which I felt,
From some hill-top, on sunny afternoons
The kite high up among the fleecy clouds
Pull at its rein, like an impatient courser;
Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,
Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly
Dashed headlong, and rejected by the storm...

– William Wordsworth
(from *The Prelude*, Book I)

APRIL: THE PASTURE

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
I shan't be gone long. – You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf
That's standing by the mother. It's so young
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.
I shan't be gone long. – You come too.

– Robert Frost

* A Calendar * Of Verses