



# Somerset County Historical Trust **Tribune**

*Preserving the Legacy of Somerset County*

## **Annual Meeting 2023**

Our Trust members gathered again for our Annual Meeting on Saturday, September 30th held at Kingston Hall, the home of Ben & Jenny Alder. Prior to the business meeting, guests socialized and toured the beautifully restored manor house and grounds. Randy called the business meeting to order, and officers were re-elected for 2024 — Chairman Randy George, Vice Chairman John Orth, Treasurer Regina Bell and Secretary Gina Gerhard.

Dr. Ray Thompson delivered an update on the Teackle Letter Project, and Randy presented this year's Preservation Award to Jim & Charlotte Sharf (see page 2). Thanks to all who attended and to all our Trust members for support of our activities and projects in 2024.

## **Kingston Hall**

Kingston Hall is a Georgian style two-story brick house located on the Big Annemessex River in Westover. The house was built in 1755 by Thomas King on an 860 acre parcel of land known as "Conclusion". At the time, the property included the main house, a 2-story brick kitchen wing, dairy, blacksmith shop, granary, two barns, a "negro house", stable, carriage house, corn house, 3 log houses and a smoke house. These outbuildings typically do not survive, however the smokehouse and a rare circular ice house can still be found on the property.

After Thomas King's death, his daughter and son-in-law Henry James Carroll resided at Kingston Hall. Their son, Thomas King Carroll inherited the property and became governor of Maryland in 1830. His daughter, Anna Ella Carroll (1815-1894) was an American political activist, lobbyist and author of anti-slavery pamphlets. She played a significant role as an adviser to the Lincoln presidential cabinet during the American Civil War.



Thomas King Carroll's accumulated debts forced the sale of the property in 1835 to John Upshur Dennis who held ownership until the early 20th century, followed by various owners. The property was purchased and restored in 2015 by Jim & Simone Theiss and is now under the loving care of Ben & Jen Alder.

***Our sincere thanks to Ben & Jen Alder  
for hosting our Annual Meeting!***



# PRESERVATION AWARD 2023

- ◆ OUTSTANDING RESTORATION OF AN HISTORIC PROPERTY
- ◆ OUTSTANDING ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS
- ◆ COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

## Jim and Charlotte Sharf

Each year the Somerset Trust celebrates individuals who have made exceptional contributions to our architectural heritage. In the past we have honored people for their work in three areas: historic preservation, repurposing historic structures, and community stewardship. But this year, the Trust board encountered the happy conundrum of not being able to give an award for any one of these categories, because ... this year's honorees merit recognition in all three areas!

### This year we give our thanks to Jim and Charlotte Sharf!

Hailing from Washington D.C. and parts beyond, they brought with them to Somerset a love of place and their commitment to doing good works for the betterment of their new home and community. Since coming to the Shore in 1995, the Sharfs have given of themselves in ways not easily quantified. When they arrived here on vacation 28 years ago, they stayed at the Murphey's Washington Hotel and were smitten with the aura of the place, the town, and its ancient history. And so, they settled in. They found a 1750's colonial house called 'The Reward' on the Pocomoke River and began the long labor of restoring it. Eventually, with the help of historical architect Michael Bourne, they brought it back to its original form and now have one of the most beautiful architectural treasures in the county.



Simultaneously, they set out to do what they could to improve the face of Princess Anne and its economic prosperity.

- 2000 Stabilized, replaced the roof, flooring, electrical, plumbing of a house at William & Church Streets in Princess Anne, now a beautiful home.
- 2005 Bought Independence Hall, an historic building on Somerset Ave. Told it had no historical significance, they found otherwise when they began restoration and discovered its 1880s fabric. They also found that nothing met current building codes! Over 15 years they updated all systems, created 8 residential apartments, and formed or housed a total of 11 different businesses, including Petite Fleur, Barefoot Baby, Rebecca's Ice Cream and now Squeaky's and O Grace and Glory clothing store.
- 2006 Formed an investment group to restore the oldest continually operating Inn in Maryland – The Washington Hotel. They found investors, facilitated its purchase, negotiated State support for the renovation, and found an operator for the renamed Washington Inn and Tavern.
- 2006 Jim headed a significant restoration of roof, foundation, windows and doors of the Manokin Presbyterian Church, founded in 1682.
- 2007 Acquired the Old Bank of Somerset, stabilized the foundation, windows, replaced the roof, repointed brick, and designed an upstairs apartment. The ground floor became their office for 16 years.
- 2007 Took the lead with Jim & Simonne Theiss and Ben & Jen Alder to establish the Main Street Program, whose goal was structural improvement and business development in downtown Princess Anne. Charlotte was the program's chairperson for 10 years.
- 2009 Purchased the Fontaine-Fitzgerald-Lecates House on Prince William Street, replaced the roof, foundation, porch, added insulation, and repainted it inside and out. The home now graces Princess Anne's historic district.

And now perhaps one can understand why the Trust was unable to categorize their work. The Sharfs have done it all.

Jim and Charlotte have been gentle leaders, personal friends, and generous motivators for dozens of others. They have attracted like-minded people who value special things and pride of place. How do you thank people like that? The best answer is that we're doing it already—we who have the same goals for our community, we who are rolling up our sleeves, taking care of our aging historic relics, and honoring our local traditions. We are paying it forward.



# Colonial Bricks by Randy George

## Part 2—Reading the Bricks

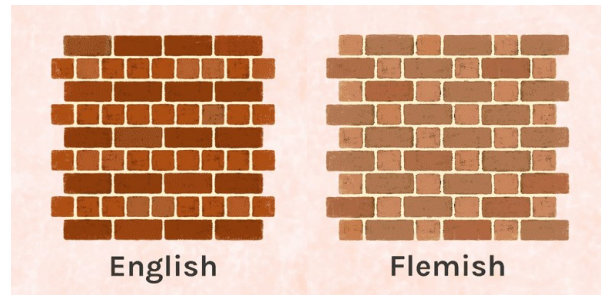
Someday, stand in front of one of our many colonial brick homes and spend a few minutes studying what you see. Though no two buildings are exactly alike, they do have enough similarities in their construction to make them distinguishable at a glance from our modern houses.

In Somerset County the oldest colonial buildings were English, drawing their style and construction almost entirely from the mother country. Brick manufacturing techniques and masonry styles on the Eastern Shore reflect traditions which had evolved over centuries in England, with contributions from other countries in Europe, especially Holland. All our 17th century houses have faded back into the earth, but many 18th century examples persist to make this region exceptional for the number of its hidden treasures.

Buildings and garden walls were constructed for durability. The arrangement of their bricks determined their character, but also their longevity. In the Middle Ages, bonding — the way in which bricks are laid — was haphazard, but in Tudor times a consistent practice was generally adopted where bricks were laid in alternating courses of headers (brick ends) and stretchers (longest edges). This arrangement was called **English Bond** and was the primary construction technique of our earliest colonists.



Headers and Stretchers



During the 17th century the **Flemish Bond** appeared, and in the 18th century became standard. Here, every course was made up of alternating stretchers and headers. The vertical joints were never laid exactly over another, for reasons of strength, but this allowed an added aesthetic advantage.

The traditional process of brick making resulted in approximately 15% of the bricks being glazed, where the oven heat literally melted the sand into a glassy surface of various colors. Ornamental detail was



achieved by alternating glazed and unglazed brick headers and stretchers. Square and diamond-shaped patterning of glazed bricks, called **diapering**, was used to distinguish some early gable ends (some Somerset examples are Beauchamp House and Makepeace).



Sometimes, just beneath the gable shingles, a barge board was dressed by a diagonal row of glazed headers. Occasional finer homes sported walls with all headers glazed (Waterloo is an example), but typically the glazed headers were placed randomly. Gradually, after about 1800, glazed headers were retired from use.



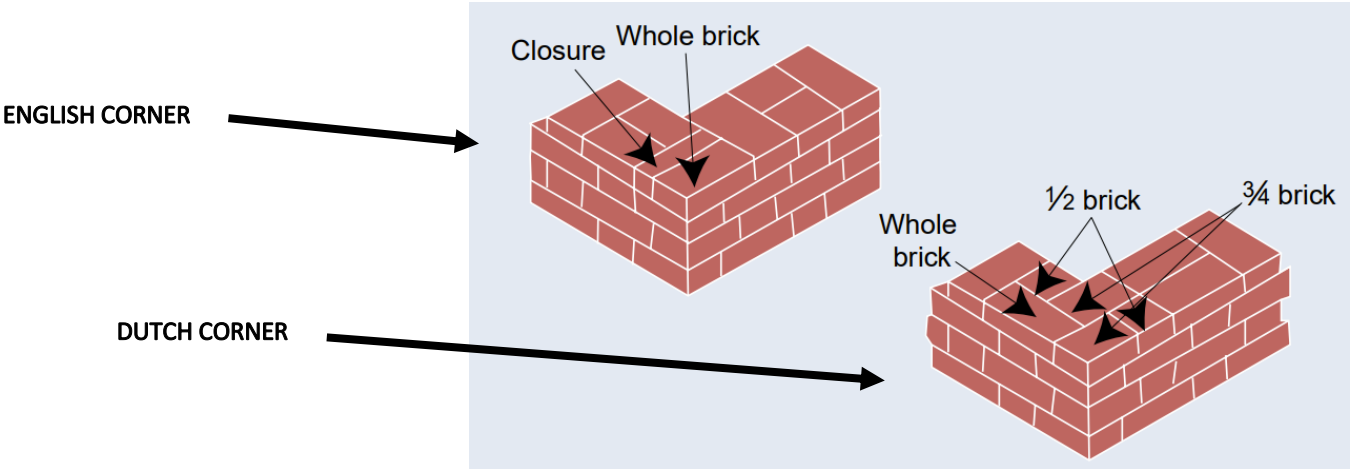
# Colonial Bricks (cont'd)



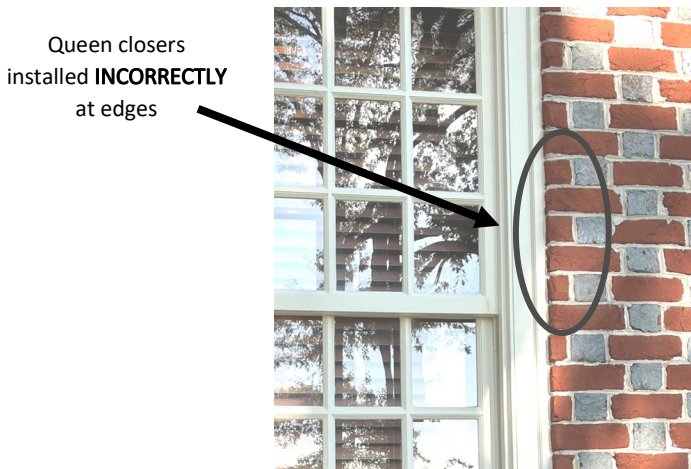
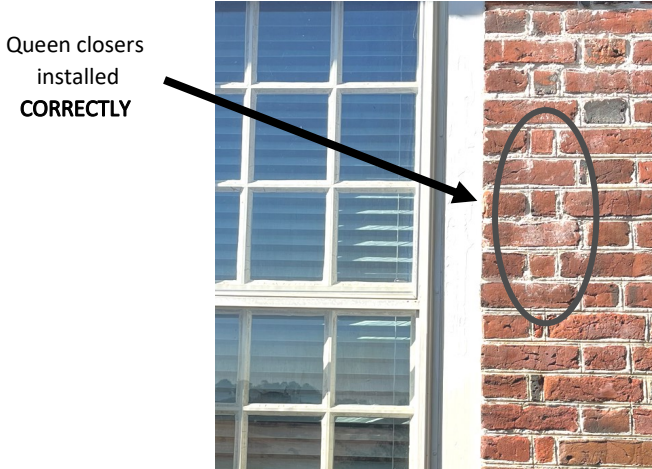
Bricks also were laid in various patterns at corners and at window and door edges and arches. In more elegant houses, arches displayed rubbing and gauging, a technique originally developed in the Netherlands.

Bricks were polished by rubbing them on brick or stone, and were deliberately tapered to create a precise fanning effect with tight mortar joints. This refinement began to disappear around the time of the American Revolution.

Corners and opening margins were laid in either the English or Dutch fashion.



Laying of courses required considerable artistry and calculation. Where a course of headers and stretchers ended too soon or too late at an edge, shortened stretchers or small partial bricks called **closers** were used to adjust the finish. Closers used just before the end of a course were deemed **Queen closers**. Frequently, in the panels between window or door openings or between these openings and corners, the adjustment was made with shorter bricks at mid-panel. Closers were deliberately not placed at edges.

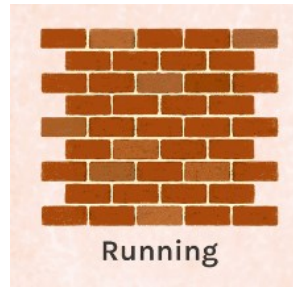




## Colonial Bricks (cont'd)

Chimneys were predominantly laid in **Running bond** where only stretchers were used, staggered to prevent overlapping vertical joints.

For decorative effect, a horizontal **belt course** with one or two rows of protruding bricks were often placed between the floor levels.

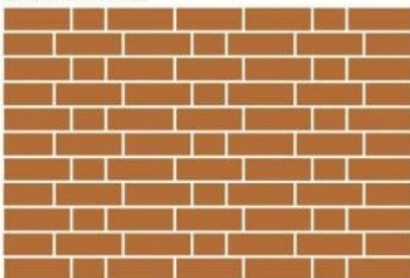


For reasons of strength, walls were made thicker at their base. Bricks were laid in a woven pattern one-and-a-half to two bricks in depth (12 to 16 inches). Several courses above ground level, the remainder of the wall was stepped back a half brick. This abrupt change was moderated with one or two courses of beveled, concave or convex headers, either molded or cut to shape. This row is called the **water table**, below which the bricks were laid in Flemish or English bond.

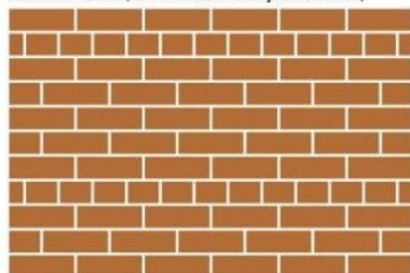
After the American Revolution, the Flemish bond was gradually replaced by newer styles. These included the **English garden wall** and **American (or Common)** bonds.



Garden Wall Bond



Common Bond (Full Headers every 6th Course)



As the 20th century approached, brick and mortar materials became stronger, walls became thinner, and the American bond — which originally had 3 stretcher courses for each header course — morphed into 5 and eventually 7 stretcher courses per header course.

In the 20th century, the strength of building materials — stronger bricks and harder mortar — permitted use of a single layer of the simpler Running Bond in most construction.

And so, what do you see as you gaze at the old house wall? The materials and patterns begin to make sense and to take on personalities of their own and of the masons that made them. And of their place in time.

***Part 3—in next Newsletter***

## Somerset County Historical Trust

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PO Box 863  
Princess Anne, MD 21853



**<http://schtrust.org>**  
**[somersethtrust@gmail.com](mailto:somersethtrust@gmail.com)**

## It's time to Renew ...

We hope you consider renewing your membership to the Trust  
- we rely on memberships to keep our activities going!

You can renew online or by mail -- see the enclosed sheet for all  
the details.



## Help spread the word . . .

We thank all of you for your ongoing support of the Trust. You can help us grow our membership by encouraging interested neighbors and friends to become members of the Trust.

Our website **[schtrust.org](http://schtrust.org)** explains the Trust's mission and ongoing work in the areas of preservation and stewardship. Go to our Join Us page **[schtrust.org/join](http://schtrust.org/join)** for info on how to open or renew a membership.