



Somerset County Historical Trust **Tribune**

Preserving the Legacy of Somerset County

Welcome to our first Trust newsletter !

On the anniversary of the passing of Gale Yerges, we hope to share with you how we plan to continue her legacy with several new initiatives.

We now have 15 board members devoted to preserving the heritage of literally hundreds of antique properties in our area. Historically, the Trust has been a **successful cohesive group** committed to protecting these historical structures and the traditions that surround them.

Board members are now meeting in committee remotely and in person to coordinate several new projects.

Communications Committee

This working group is led by Shawn Carlson and focuses on different ways to provide timely information to Trust members and the public. They have been quite busy this year working on the following:

- ◆ **Quarterly Newsletter:** The committee has produced this (our first) quarterly newsletter, the **Trust Tribune**. Our intention is to use this forum for general announcements, interviews, and articles about historic preservation. Members will be able to submit their own stories about history and saving historical structures. We plan interviews with members who have met the challenges of protecting aging properties from decline.
- ◆ **Website:** In November, we developed a professional public website thanks to the efforts of Gina Gerhard and Jim Theiss, and Alison Medland (daughter of board member David Medland) who designed our new logo now used in all our marketing communications.

Our new website — **schtrust.org** — is now open to **everyone** — and we encourage you to check it out. If you are a Trust member, you can log in and check your membership status, renew your membership online, print membership cards, check your contact information, and more.

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Important notices

- Dues will resume in January 2021; you can renew now (go to **Join Us** webpage for info)
- Meetings may be virtual for now until Covid has passed
- There will be “how to” articles or advice on how to tackle a project. Any ideas or wants? Email us at info@schtrust.org
- Every Trust member will receive information by mail and email. You can always find up-to-date information on our website **schtrust.org**.

For those without access to the internet, we hope this newsletter and mail announcements will keep you generally informed. The newsletter can be read at your leisure and saved for reference,

Stewardship Committee

This team is headed by Dr. David Medland. We have been working on a database of nearly every significant property in Somerset County that will be made available to members and the public. And our website now features historic homes newly on the market and others that are at risk or undergoing renovation with intent to sell. Check out the listings on the **Featured Properties** page of our website.

Preservation has always been the general theme of the Somerset County Historical Trust, but by serving as a watchdog for all endangered properties we will be in a better position to bring awareness to our membership and the entire community of the extent of heritage loss and our commitment to preservation.

Public Relations Committee

In an effort to make Somerset County's historical treasury visible outside our area, we are actively engaged with several real estate agencies to introduce our area to a national audience.

Grants Committee

We are continuing our tradition of serving as a conduit for state and national grants. As our committee members become increasingly familiar with the intricacies and restrictions of outside funding, we will be able to provide guidance to those seeking preservation easement grants.

Letter Project Committee

Elizabeth Upshur Teackle (Mrs. Teackle) has left us a trove of personal letters reflecting on life in Somerset County in the early 1800s. This year, with the financial help of our members, we plan to complete the transcription and interpretation of the letters and publish them in a hardcover book.

Gale Yerges and Paul Touart have worked toward this goal for a decade, and now their efforts will finally come to fruition in 2021. Check out the **Letter Project page** on our website for more information and how you can make a donation to support this effort.



Fairmount Academy

One of the only remaining historic schools on the Eastern Shore has been preserved at the Academy Grove Historic District in Fairmount. In recent years, the two large buildings constructed in the 1860s and 1870s have fallen into disrepair, but now the period classroom and local industries museum are undergoing a burst of renewal.

The Trust has supported the Fairmount Academy since 1990. This past year, we provided grant application assistance for repairs and preservation and will continue to support the return of the annual 1880s Festival.

Directory of Contractors and Services

On the website, there is now a directory of contractors and service providers for all things historic.

When repairing or restoring an historic house, it is important to find experts who employ materials and methods that ensure authentic restoration. Please note that the listings are based on member recommendations and that we have no process for further validating them.

This resource is growing quickly and is overly large to be included in the newsletter. Please go to schtrust.org/directory to view and print out the directory.

Refined Focus for the Historical Trust



Randy George

Randy George, Chairman

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Though the Trust Board has concluded that we are not prepared for construction projects at this time, we are serious about continuing our mission of preserving Somerset County's historical and architectural legacies.

The Somerset County Historical Trust is dedicated to preserving the legacy of Somerset County's past by stewarding historic properties, providing information and resources, and promoting our tangible wealth of history on the Eastern Shore.

The renewed focus of the Trust's activities will revolve around:

1 Stewardship – Gale would emphasize that we are the stewards of the historic homes of Somerset County, not just owners, but passionate preservers of the story and context of our properties.

We have decided to become a watchdog for all intact and endangered valuable properties in the county. With the input of our membership community, we have the ability to document the extent of heritage loss and our commitment to preservation.

2 Information & Resources – We are uniquely qualified to provide information and resources for others who are looking for sources and craftsmen who are sensitive to the issue of preservation and conservation of old homes.

3 Promotion – The rest of America is largely unaware of Somerset County and the magnitude of valuable historical properties here on the Eastern Shore. To this end, we will establish robust relationships with local and national real estate agents, brokers, and advertisers in an effort to promote our area and attract anyone interested in restoring and owning an historic home.

Your Part

The Somerset Trust is made up of like-minded people who understand why we should honor the past and those who came before us. We remember fondly the galas, 'Evenings At', annual fundraisers and other events, and will need your help in restoring these traditions as soon as we are released from 'quarantine.' In the meantime, we can still correspond actively by phone, mail and internet. History helps to round out our lives. Please contact us at schtrust.org to participate.

Gale Yerges — Her Continuing Legacy

It has been just over a year since the passing of Gale Yerges, longtime chair of the Somerset County Historical Trust. We choose this time to reflect on her life and impact on our community.



Gale Huntington Yerges was born in Ann Arbor Michigan and cherished her deep Michigan roots throughout her life, spending summers at her beloved Higgins Lake cottage, maintaining contact with friends from school, and of course rooting for University of Michigan football.

She graduated from the University of Michigan in 1950 and a year later married Howard Yerges, another Michigan graduate. They moved to St. Louis and lived there for nearly 30 years. During that time, they raised two daughters and Gale became increasingly active in community service. She received recognition from many organizations and was president of the Landmarks Association, one of the nation's most successful historic trusts. In St. Louis she acquired the affectionate nickname "The Velvet Bulldozer".

In 1981, Gale and Howard moved to Somerset County and purchased Hollyhurst on the Manokin River. Gale quickly learned that Somerset County was rich in historic buildings and heritage. She immediately joined the Somerset County Historical Trust and was elected chairperson in 1982, a position she held for 37 years until her death. It did not take long for the State of Maryland to discover her talents, and in 1985 Governor Harry Hughes appointed Gale to the Maryland Historical Trust to represent Somerset, Worcester and Wicomico Counties. She was continuously appointed to 4-year terms and ultimately served five different governors in that capacity.

In 1998, Gale joined the board of the Friends of Teackle Mansion and was elected its president in 2000. She served countless hours on many boards, exhibiting passion and dedication to historic preservation and demonstrating leadership and commitment to completing projects that have had a lasting effect on the town, the county and the state, and most importantly, on future generations. Gale had a special ability to persevere through any obstacle, all the while demonstrating courtesy and humor.

Gale's beloved husband, Howard, predeceased her in 2000. She and Howard were inseparable. Since then, it was the number and depths of relationships that Gale made that inspired and energized her for the next 19 years. What Gale left as her enduring legacy is a sense of a community and the relationships that sustain it. The Board's effort in creating a website, newsletter, and returning to life and activities after COVID, is all part of maintaining the sense of community



Regina Bell says it best: A year before her death, more than 100 family members and friends of a lifetime gathered in Princess Anne at a gala dinner to express their appreciation and affection for Gale Yerges. The gala's organizers asked attendees to contribute an entry to a memory book they were assembling for Gale.

Regina Bell, whose privilege it was to introduce Gale, chose to read her entry: "When we bought Harrington in 1985, we left a tight-knit community in Salisbury, and some of our neighbors warned us that we would hate it in Somerset County – living out there in the sticks, not knowing anyone, no social life. At first, it seemed that they were right. And then Gale, you made your move. "You must join the Trust", you said. You implied that this was obligatory for owners of National Register properties, as was attendance at the annual meeting at Hollyhurst. We were very young. We obeyed. We went to the meeting, which turned out to be a really nice party. We were embraced. We met all sorts of people who seemed very interested to meet us. They either owned old houses, or liked old houses. It was magical. It wasn't long before I found myself in the thick of fundraising, helping with an antique show, working on Smithsonian bus tours...then the Brittingham House, and then the Littleton Long House...the endless stream of your projects has kept me busy for 33 years.

What I learned from you, Gale, and what I've tried to do myself ever since, is to make that first move. To create a community by welcoming new people I encounter, introducing them to each other and to old timers they might enjoy. We were all new people once, even you. But you showed us how it's done. We used to say a prayer at St. Andrews about striving to become an inviting and welcoming people. I like to think that Somerset County is a more inviting and welcoming place because of you."

Featured Property ...

One of the historic properties currently shown on our **Featured Properties** webpage

Beckford

One of the finest houses in Somerset County



11700 Mansion Street, Princess Anne, MD 21853
Built 1803
On National Register of Historic Places

4 bedrooms 4 bathrooms
5,445 square feet
7.9 acres

Beckford is arguably one of the finest houses in Somerset County, the first to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The late-Georgian two-and-a half story home was built in Flemish bond in 1803 by John Dennis, Sr. on a rise above the Manokin River. It currently sits on 7.9 acres at the edge of the historic district of Princess Anne.

The interior of the main house contains very fine plaster work and moldings, lately restored to their original coloration. The southwest drawing room is especially noteworthy for its large ceiling medallion and cornice of grape clusters and tobacco leaves. The large central stair hall and other features share many design characteristics with the Teackle Mansion next door. Extensive paint analysis has enabled the duplication of the original interior paint colors. The original smokehouse still stands near the main house.

Beckford and Teackle Mansions share common origins and history. Both were built by wealthy merchants and planters on a 500 acre tract called Beckford which was surveyed by William Stevens in 1679. The Maryland Act of Assembly in 1743 set aside 24 acres of Beckford for the founding of the town of Princess Anne. The land was eventually sold to John Dennis, the uncle of Littleton Dennis Teackle, the builder of Teackle Mansion. John Dennis, who was born at the Beverly estate on the Pocomoke River, built his mansion in 1803. At age 25 he became a 2-term member of the Maryland House of Delegates and was a Federalist U.S. congressman from 1797-1805. Remarkably, he joined three other Federalists in 1801 to transfer his vote for President to Thomas Jefferson, a Democrat, and seal the defeat of Aaron Burr. His son, John Dennis, Jr., was born at Beckford in 1807 and was also a Maryland House delegate and Whig congressman in the 25th and 26th Congresses. He was a delegate to the State Constitutional Convention in 1850 and died at Beckford.

For real estate info: Search for 'Beckford' on Circa (<https://circaoldhouses.com>) and Realtor.com

Somerset County Historical Trust, Inc.

The Somerset County Historical Trust is dedicated to preserving the legacy of Somerset's past through research, education, preservation & restoration.

Through advocacy and active participation in Maryland Historical Trust programs and grants, we continuously seek to promote the stories and rich history of Somerset County.

IT'S TIME TO RENEW

Please help support the Trust with your membership! Go to our Join Us page - schtrust.org/join - for info on how to renew.

Be part of the continuing legacy of the Trust

The Somerset County Historical Trust was created in 1969 as a local committee of the Maryland Historical Trust, a statewide preservation agency of the Department of Economic and Community Development. While the Trust has done tremendous things in the last 51 years, we need to make sure that we can continue to be a force for preservation of Somerset County historical properties for the another 51 years.

To achieve that goal, consider making a charitable gift to the Somerset County Historical Trust. Your gift of funds, securities or personal items can become a permanent endowment for support of the Trust. If this is advantageous to your financial planning goals, please contact your financial advisor and any member of the Trust board so that we may assist.

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