

## *News from our Delmarva Heritage Partners...*

### **Please Help Save Wheatley Church**

Wheatley Methodist Church is one of the few 18<sup>th</sup> century community houses of worship surviving on lower Delmarva. Built in the latter 1700s, it has served eastern Dorchester County for almost 2 ½ centuries. But until recently, most of the members of this little community church thought it was built in the 1800s as a Methodist Church. Recently, examination of extant deeds show the church in fact was originally Wheatley Methodist Episcopal Church, built in 1784 and became Wheatley Methodist Protestant Church only in the 1880s. The families from Galestown and other nearby villages have been attempting to restore it, bit by bit, in recent years. Depending on donations of money, time, and labor from church members and friends, they made commendable progress. Until a recent shocking discovery!

During preparations for the 235<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, serious structural damages were exposed! While removing late-1800s Victorian-style wall panels, workmen were amazed to find 18" wide, horizontally placed pine boards resembling late-1700s Episcopal style church décor! Experts in local historic architecture confirmed these boards date from ca. 1785, but most are in need of serious – and expensive – restoration or replacement. The foundation was in such bad shape that the stability of the building was questionable!

Plans are to preserve and leave revealed parts of the structure from both historic eras. But meanwhile the entire building restoration project has been put on a "slow-down/hold" as tarps and other coverings wrap the old timber, and the Restoration Committee is pursuing grants and other monetary sources. The simple little "fix-up" has become a major historical restoration project! The Committee leading the effort can use some help! Anyone who would like to assist with monetary gifts or other kinds of help would be most welcome!! If you are interested, send donations to Joan Wheatley, Treas., 240112 Shufelt Rd., Seaford DE 19973, making checks payable to the Wheatley Church Building Fund. On Aug. 24 there will be a

fundraising Art Show and Luncheon from 10 to 2 at the church Community Hall, and the Church can be seen at that time. AND – on Sept. 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> they will be celebrating **Hog Yard Heritage Days** – a celebration of the 144<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Community House and of the 235<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Church! This is a most commendable project and we wish them well! We will be following their progress with great interest! On Saturday will be fun activities [even a dunking booth], music, exhibits, and of course FOOD – from 8 am to 2 pm. On Sunday beginning at 11 will be a Homecoming Service followed by lunch and a gospel sing. Lt. Gov. Rutherford is scheduled to attend the Sunday events. Oh – and about the "hog yard" name?? Well, in their research, the folks have found that the land where the church stands was originally, in the 1700s, named "Hog Yard."! Come out and help these folks. It is a heritage undertaking deserving all our help.

