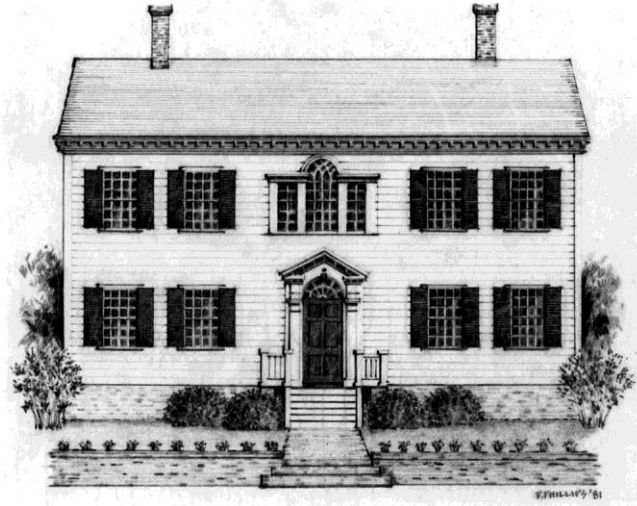


**Handy's Memo**  
**From the Friends of Poplar Hill Mansion**  
117 Elizabeth Street  
Salisbury, Maryland 21801  
Newsletter No. 4, summer of 2006



**Poplar Hill Welcomes Two  
New Board Members**

**Mr. Bill Gore** is a native of Salisbury and has degrees from Gettysburg College, and the University of Maryland, College Park. He retired after working in the Wicomico, Somerset, and Worcester County Public School systems in a variety of positions. He and his wife Cindy have two grown sons, a daughter-in-law,

and a grandson. Mr. Gore has always had a strong interest in music, art and architecture. He has also worked with the Wicomico County Historical Trust. Mr. Gore says he is looking forward to serving on the Board and helping preserve and promote the Mansion as a local treasure. **Mrs. Marge Duer** moved to Salisbury about 3 years ago. She attended the College of William and Mary where she received a B.F.A. and also attended Old Dominion University where she did graduate studies in Special Education. Mrs. Duer has experience in fundraising, decorating, gardening, and museum management. For several years she served as acting president of the Eastern Shore Historical Society. Mrs. Duer is looking forward to serving in different capacities on the Board and contributing to the ongoing work performed by the Board of Directors of Poplar Hill.

**It's A Newtown Afternoon!**

The Friends of Poplar Hill Mansion and Salisbury's Newtown Association will proudly host a **Newtown Afternoon** on July 15<sup>th</sup> 2006...

- Guided walking tours of certain Newtown homes
- Tours of Poplar Hill Mansion
- A slide exhibit of Salisbury's historic Newtown
- A historic postcard exhibit featuring Newtown homes
- Book promotion of *A History of Poplar Hill Mansion 1795-2005*
- Refreshments and light fare

The event will be hosted at Poplar Hill Mansion, 117 Elizabeth Street Salisbury, and will run from 2pm until dusk. A great family event! Pay at the door, \$10.00 for adults, \$6.00 for children 10 and up. Free for children 9 or younger. Prices include tours, food, and exhibits! Call 410-749-1776 for more information!

### **Excerpts from *A History of Poplar Hill Mansion 1795-2005***

*... Major Levin Handy was baptized at Trinity (Anglican) Church in Newport Rhode Island in December 1764. The Annals and Memorials of the Handys and their Kindred refer to his first marriage to Ann Russell in 1784. The couple had two children, Ann Russell and Joseph, but their mother, according to the Providence Gazette, died in Mendon, MA at the age of 22 in July 1787. Handy met his second wife Nelly Hitch after he migrated to Maryland...*

*...1974 and 1975 were two busy years for many dedicated individuals. It was a time of organization and restoration in anticipation of Poplar Hill's official opening to the public. Numerous tasks were undertaken including; restoration work, finding appropriate furnishings, scheduling tours, public relations, fundraising, and everything else needed to facilitate Poplar Hill's transition from private to public ownership. The Mansion was also a regular meeting place for five major organizations; the Wicomico County Historical Trust Committee, the Wicomico Bicentennial Committee, the local Archeological Society (who at the time was surveying areas in and around Poplar Hill), the Newtown Association, and finally the Friends of Poplar Hill Mansion...*

### **Upcoming Projects: Website Development and Interior Paint Analysis**

Over the next few months the Friends of Poplar Hill Mansion will be developing a website which will help the public gain better access to the mansion and the services it provides. Among many other options, visitors to the site will be able to see color photographs of the interior and exterior of the house, read about the mansion's history, and look up rates and hours of operation. The Friends hope to have the site up and running by 2007. The Friends have also approved to commence work on historic paint analysis in the entrance hall and main dining room in the spring and summer of 2007. This first phase of an extensive plan to restore the entire first floor of the mansion to its original paint scheme will allow visitors a chance to see how the mansion was painted at the time of its completion. The Friends of Poplar Hill Mansion are pursuing federal and local grant monies to subsidize these two projects.

### **Congratulations to Our Curator**

The Friends of Poplar Hill Mansion extend their warm regards to Jason Illari, curator of the mansion, and his future wife Rachel for their upcoming marriage on June 24<sup>th</sup> 2006. Jason and Rachel will be spending the first leg of their honeymoon with family in Plymouth, Indiana and will then spend time in Chicago, Illinois before returning to Salisbury.

## **Thanks To You!**

The Board of Directors would like to thank the following members of Poplar Hill for their dedication and financial support. These individuals have taken extra steps to help preserve the mansion for generations to come.

### **Members:**

Sushma Agarwal	Judy and Peter Jackson
Donna Anderson	Angela Judd
Jane Bailey	Sylvia and Harrison Langelier
Stephen Bassford	Charlotte Langrall
Barbara Benton	Pat Layton
Nancy and William Blank	Barbara Lindenkohl
Ellen and Charles Bloodsworth	Mary Beth Lindsay
Judy and John Brittingham	Connie Lupean
Margaret and Daniel Brown	David Macleod
Jeanette Brown	Silvia Mears
Peggy Buchness	Margaret Moulder
Jackie Cassidy	Louise and Ed Nock
Sharon Clark	Emilie and Frank Robinson
Jane Corcoran	Eunice Ruark
Edward Deacon	Joy Shamburek
Gen Deggendorf	Margaret Stewart
Steve Deggendorf	Eleanor Stump
Beverly Dombrowski	Morris Sumner
Marge Duer	Ann Suthkowski
David Elzey	Janet Taylor
Anita Foskey	Pat Taylor
David Ganoe	Barrie and Mat Tilghman
Tammy Gharbi	Rita Tiso
Mary Ellen Gentile	Joanne and Nevins Todd
Ellen and Thomas George	Brenda Walker
Judy Glenn	Erma Ward
Mr. & Mrs. John Golden	Pat Ward
Bill Gore	Dorothy Warner
Reba Goslee	Leonard Winkleman
Suzanne and Floyd Gray	Carol Winters
Kathleen and John Groutt	Betsy Wolfe
Patsy Guy	Elizabeth and Richard Wootten
Margaret Habliston	Mary and Marshall Zugehar
Ann Hankins	
Lisa Hicks	
Bob Hogg	
Betsy Hughes	

## The Ongoing Closet-Tax Debate

In case you haven't noticed Poplar Hill has closets in nearly every room. Many visitors to the mansion ask how the early owners of the home were able to afford closets since they were originally taxed as rooms. A common belief is that closet taxation was popular during the colonial period, but was abolished after the Revolution. Some believe that closet taxation simply became a dead letter over time. Others argue that the tax never really existed. The following article casts considerable light on this ongoing debate:

*Here at the Historical Society of Frederick County we have a very active docent training program and part of that is to investigate museum myths so that we do not pass on erroneous information. The closet tax myth was one of the first ones we attacked. It is indeed a myth, which like most myths, when you apply some common sense to the tale, it does not prove out. Also, historical research, when done correctly, is done with the premise of interpreting the presence of information - not the absence of information. So, when you do research you are looking to find information about taxes on closets - people now, and in the past will record the presence of things more often than the absence of them. For instance, you wouldn't write in your diary that you didn't fly on a plane today, instead you would write when you did indeed fly on a plane.*

*Whenever taxes are mentioned in relation as to why someone did or didn't do something, it should raise a red flag of skepticism. How many of us do, or don't do something because we have to pay a tax? When reading diaries or letters of people from the past how often do you find them writing about taxes? Also remember, up until the federal income tax laws in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were no, truly nation wide taxes in the US. States, counties and municipalities were able to tax their citizens as they saw fit. So, it would be highly unusual that every place in the US would tax the number of rooms in homes. To check if your locale did, just go to your county courthouse, or city hall, or state hall of records, or even your public library and look at the tax laws for the time period you need.*

*In addition to taxes, you also need to look at how people stored clothing in the past. The first hangers were invented by the Shakers and were wood with a leather thong to be hung on a peg, flat against the wall. Commercially-made hangers were not widely available until the turn of the century or later, depending on your locale. Reading women's proscriptive literature, like household management books (Catherine Beecher comes to mind), and magazines (Godey's, Peterson's, Leslie's, Arthur's) will help you find out how the "experts" suggested clothes be treated. Reading these books you'll find that most clothing was folded carefully and put into case furniture (blanket chests, chests of drawers, wardrobes, etc). Clothing that was worn daily was often hung on hook or pegs inside or outside of a closet. It is also interesting to note that in much of the homemaking literature in the late 19th century there were instructions on how to build closets in rooms where there were none and the encouragement of people to try and adopt hangers and hanging storage.*

*You also have to look at building practices. Closets are easiest built where there is a naturally occurring "dead space" in a room, such as next to a chimney or under stairs. Also remember, closets did not have to be a certain size or depth unlike modern closets that are built to accommodate the width of a hanger. Historically, the term "closet" could refer to something different than what we know it as, a closet could be a small room where someone works or lives. In addition, what we would today call a closet, people in the past also called a cupboard. We have found that doing careful, scholarly research into what people did do- usually dispels the myth in question.*

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### **Meetings**

The board of the Friends of Poplar Hill Mansion meets the third Wednesday of each month during the year with some exceptions during July and August. If you have suggestions or comments to share with the Board, please contact the curator at 410-749-1776.

### **Touring the Mansion**

Poplar Hill Mansion is open to visitors on the first and third Sundays of each month from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. Admission is free for Poplar Hill Members and their families. If you would like to arrange for a separate tour at \$3.00 per person, please contact the curator at 410-749-1776.

### **Friends of Poplar Hill Mansion Board of Directors**

Marshall Zugehar, Chairman  
David MacLeod, Vice Chairman  
Gina Boobar, Recording Secretary  
Stephen Bassford, Treasurer  
Dorothy Warner  
Gen Deggendorf

Tammy Gharbi  
Judy Jackson, Corresponding Secretary  
Louise Nock  
Mary Zugehar  
Bill Gore  
Marge Duer

Jason Illari, Curator

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### Membership Form:

The *Friends of Poplar Hill Mansion Inc.* oversee the restoration, decoration, furnishings, operation and maintenance of this beautiful historic home. All interested persons are invited to join our annual membership.

Name:..... Annual Memberships Individual \$25.00 \_\_\_\_  
Address:..... Family \$50.00 \_\_\_\_ Patron \$100.00 \_\_\_\_  
..... Life \$500.00 \_\_\_\_  
Phone:.....  
Email:.....

All members will receive our Poplar Hill newsletter and partake of numerous membership benefits including free tours of the Mansion.

Please make checks payable and mail to:  
Friends of Poplar Hill Mansion  
117 Elizabeth Street  
Salisbury, Maryland 21801

Thank You for your support!