

From the Schoolhouse Desk...

Three years ago, on September 15, 2006, the Historic Sykesville Colored Schoolhouse was rededicated to the many students and teachers who had shared the quest toward learning within its walls. In 2009 it continues to teach a new generation of youngsters, as well as their parents and mentors. Its powerful message of courage in the face of poverty and segregation has inspired school classes, scout troops, church groups, and civic organizations. Additionally, the building affords a terrific venue for garden clubs, alumni groups, reunions, etc. While the schoolhouse is owned by the Town of Sykesville, it is operated by volunteers as a not-for-profit educational site; a nominal fee helps defray costs. If your group is looking for something special, please phone schoolhouse coordinator Pat Greenwald at 410-489-6540; e-mail her at patgreenwald@comcast.net.

To complete an ecology course, Sykesvillian Suzanne Packard spent hours of hard labor renewing the Schoolhouse Rain Garden of Native Plants. Stop by to see it! Suzanne followed in the footsteps of her son, Stephan, who created the raised bed and walkway at the front of the building as his Eagle Scout project in 2008.

Town Treasurer Irma Bast has been stitching diligently on a four-block quilt, each square representing a design used as a directional sign for slaves traveling on the Underground Railroad. She will donate the quilt to the Schoolhouse as part of the October 3 Open House.



Visit the Schoolhouse!

OPEN HOUSE
Saturday, October 3
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

- Nature Crafts for the children
- Refreshments of Yesteryear for all.
- Rain Garden of Native Plants
- Presentation of the Underground Railroad Quilt



Children enjoy role playing in the restored schoolhouse, comparing great-grandpa's schoolbooks to their own and playing the games once enjoyed by great-grandma.

Membership Renewal Time

Last year the Museum staff was remiss in not getting out a newsletter in December. As a result we failed to offer a reminder and opportunity for our friends and supporters to renew their Museum memberships; that is, unless they already held a "Life Time Membership." So this year we are starting early here in September to encourage our supporters to renew their memberships at \$25 per individual, couple, or family. In appreciation, the Museum will be sending you a "thank you" gift of a set of five postcards of the old Baldwin Train Station on a snowy day when it was still active. Checks should be made out to the Gate House Museum. In these lean times the Museum is very much in need of your financial support. If this is not a good time for you, another reminder will appear in our December issue of "At the Gate House." Send your checks made out to the Gate House Museum to the museum at **7283 Cooper Drive, Sykesville, MD 21784**.



At the Gate House

Town of Sykesville Gate House Museum of History
Quarterly Newsletter - Vol. 8 No. 2 - Fall 2009



Feature Article: The Dinky Railroad



Evidence of the old Dinky Railroad are still around as portions of exposed track can be seen behind the Gate House Museum and in front of Sykesville Middle School, and the trestle that hovers over Spout Hill Road. The approximately three-mile spur connected Springfield Hospital with the Main Line of the old B & O Rail line. This short

stretch of rail, affectionately called the "Dinky" Railroad was essential to the daily operation of the hospital.

The Hospital accepted its first patients in 1896, but building this spur was not started until 1905, and was finally completed in 1908. The delay was due to buildings that were still being built for the hospital as well as the grading of fields, finding water, and the construction of the hospital powerhouse.

The "Dinky" provided goods and materials, especially coal for firing the powerhouse boilers until they were converted to oil-fueled burners that were more economical. Three engines pulled the cars and hoppers from the Main Line to the hospital. The first was a steam "Dinky", a Baldwin tank engine, hence this curious name. When coal hoppers became larger and heavier, the "Dinky" was no longer able to pull the cars up the steep grade (5% in places.) It was replaced by Engine No. 2, a Plymouth gasoline operated engine. It was replaced after a few years with a diesel engine, Engine No. 3, which a past assistant superintendent at the hospital, Dick Springer, dubbed "The Big Black Smoke Burner." After 64 years of service, it was retired in 1971. As of 2002, it was reported that this No. 3 engine was still in operation in Huntington, West Virginia at a construction site. Until the spur was closed, the B & O Railroad provided a diesel engine to pull coal hoppers and freight cars to the hospital.

Over the years the tracks have been paved over, or have become overgrown with weeds, but for many years it passed through the backyards and through the streets of the Town. The remaining tracks are silent reminders of a by-gone era and a time when life moved at a slower pace.

Searching! Can you help?

Were you aware that at one time Sykesville had an airport, with two or three hangars for housing and servicing small planes? If you have any information or pictures regarding the airport, the museum would like to know about it.

Did you also know that Sykesville had a Fish and Game Club with a hall that was used by locals for civic and family celebrations as well as club events and meetings? We believe they had a shooting range too.

Anyone having pictures they are willing to give to or share with the museum for copying would be appreciated. It is believed the club was located near the American Legion.

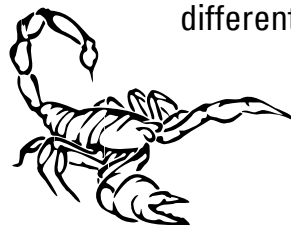
Curator's Corner

I'm looking for one special person skilled in putting together Power Point presentations. The Museum will soon be getting a used, but in good condition, desk top PC. It is my hope that a number of Power Point presentations can be placed on this PC for visitors to access. These would include pictures from our various collections with a script or accompanying sound track describing different subjects; namely, the 1831 Railroad Riot, historic Main Street scenes, the Dinky Railroad, and previous tours and walks. There is no telling how many different presentations we could place on this PC to intrigue, inform, and tantalize our visitors. It would be an easy way for us to take a step up in being more technologically attuned to the younger generation. Do you know who that special someone is? If you have a name to nominate, give me a call (410-549-5150) or drop me a line at my email address esmith@sykesville.net. Thanks.



Service with a Smile

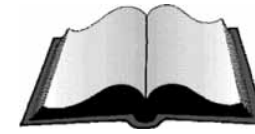
At the request of the new Sykesville Middle School principal, the museum has provided eight enlargements (13 x 19") of historic Sykesville postcards that will be framed and on permanent display in the school hallways starting this fall. This is one more example of the kind of services the Museum is capable of providing to community organizations, institutions, and individuals. Some of our reproductions currently hang in several different Eldersburg restaurants.



New Initiatives

The Museum will be working with the downtown Post Office staff on a new initiative this fall. Jean and her coworkers are in the process of identifying older seniors, many of whom live alone, who are long-time Sykesville residents. They are planning on getting these folks together on a monthly basis on a Tuesday morning from about 10:30 a.m. to noon to reminisce and reflect on their memories about growing up and living in Sykesville. Unconfirmed plans are to then meet at the Sykesville Colored School House in November and the Museum in December. The Museum curator and volunteers will be partnering with the Post Office folks on this new venture, with the hopes of gathering some important oral histories as well as providing a new social network for our seniors.

With this issue the museum is making an effort to expand its readership by becoming a regular insert in the quarterly town newsletter, with a full page section on the Sykesville Colored School House. We are happy to welcome Pat Greenwald as a contributor as she will be keeping all of us current with events taking place in this beautifully restored school house. The museum is also increasing our mailing list to friends and supporters who live outside the town limits. If you do not wish to be on the mailing list please leave a message on the museum phone at 410-549-5150 or email the Curator at esmith@sykesville.net.



Recommended Reading...

Any SGHM member or volunteer can submit a review. Please send your review of a historical non-fiction book, with no more than 300 words, to the Museum as a review is published in each newsletter. This issue's review is from the curator, Errol G. Smith.

America's Hidden History

Kenneth C. Davis

HarperCollins Publishers, 10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 1022

(\$15.99 paperback)

Over the last 20 years or so a small genre of history books has rolled off the presses that really humanize the typical sterile class room history textbook. Sifting through the journals, letters, biographies, autobiographies, and newspapers of days long ago, interesting pieces of information have been identified and documented by writers interested in the more human side of history. Kenneth Davis' book is one such gem.

Did you know that John Hancock really wanted to be commander of the American forces and felt highly insulted when his friend John Adams proposed to the Continental Congress that George Washington be selected for the command? Did you also know that Paul Revere not only made silver utensils, but false teeth? He made a set for a young doctor by the name of Dr. Joseph Warren who was an officer killed in the fighting at Bunker Hill (actually Breed's Hill.) Dr. Warren and another soldier were hastily buried by the British after the battle. A couple of months later his grave was found and Dr. Warren was identified by the false teeth Revere had fitted for him, the first instance of forensic dentistry in American history. And did you know that the message that Paul Revere (along with William Dawes and the young Dr. Samuel Prescott) used to alert the people of the countryside between Boston and the towns of Lexington and Concord, was not "The British or Red Coats are coming!" but "The regulars are coming out?" The regulars, of course, were the local militia or minutemen as they were dubbed.

This previous *New York Times* Bestseller lives up to its subtitle: *Untold tales of the first pilgrims, fighting women, and forgotten founders who shaped a nation*. If history is your thing, you might find other books among Davis' references for your future reading in his extensive set of end notes and bibliography, especially if you are really interested in pre-colonial and colonial times. Being a non-intimidating paperback in size it makes for a fun and easy read.

8th Annual G.I. Jive World War II Era Dinner & Dance



This year the Sykesville-South Carroll Rotary Club has assumed sponsorship for this popular night of dinner and dancing that honors local World War II veterans. The Rotary Club will be working in partnership with the Gate House Museum, with the Museum benefiting from the proceeds of this popular event. Tickets will be available from both the Gate House Museum and members of the Rotary Club. Kari Greenwald, former director of the Gate House Museum and a Rotarian, is chairing this event as a volunteer. As usual the 1940s era music will be by The Thom Roland Dance Band, and the event will take place at the Sykesville Fire Hall with World War II veterans as guests. Tickets will go on sale in late September.

Saturday, November 14th 6 - 10 pm