

“A BRIEF REVELATION”

The Newsletter of Historic St. Mary's City

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Hello, St. Mary's City! I want to start my first column by thanking all of the wonderful people who have made my wife Liz and me feel so welcome since we arrived in early January. This is a terrific community, and we feel privileged to have joined you. Part of what drew me to this new position was a long professional admiration for the careful research, painstaking archaeology, and vibrant living history and education programs at Historic St. Mary's City. Three months in, I have to say that it is all the more impressive when seen from within. The people, the resources, and the programs are truly world-class and I can't tell you how thrilled I am to be here!

As you read this, spring is in the air, and that is an apt metaphor for the blossoming of the City. If you have visited us recently, you will have seen the new visitor center, Maryland Heritage Interpretive Center, rising from the ground and new ghost frame buildings going up. In the following pages, you'll read about more site improvements that are happening and on the way. In addition, there are new discoveries at St. Mary's Fort that have made international news, and our guides and interpreters always have new information to share. As we start our new season of programming, we are full of optimism and excitement that we are eager to share. Please stop by soon, whether for one of our many events or for a casual visit - I hope I'll see you on the grounds!



John L. Seidel, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Historic St. Mary's City

LATEST NEWS "A-BOAT" WINTER WORK

HSMC site supervisors teamed up with *Maryland Dove* crew to work on some of the wooden parts of the ship. Together, they sanded down the areas that needed attention, carefully wiping them clean to ensure they were free from debris. Once the wood was prepped, a fresh coat of stain was applied to help preserve it for the upcoming season. Oh "buoy," what a great team!



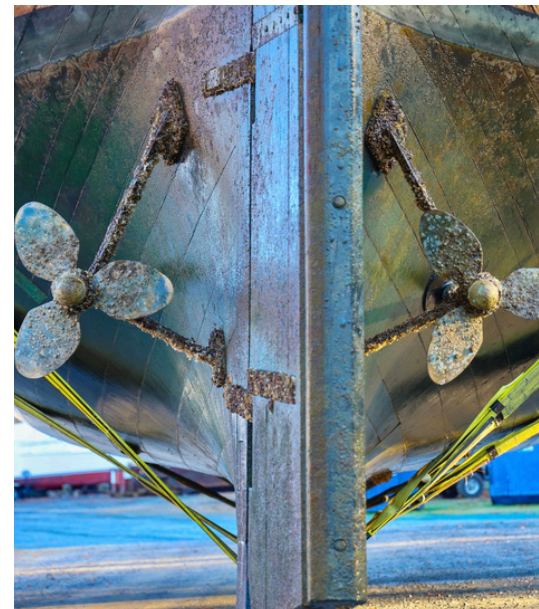
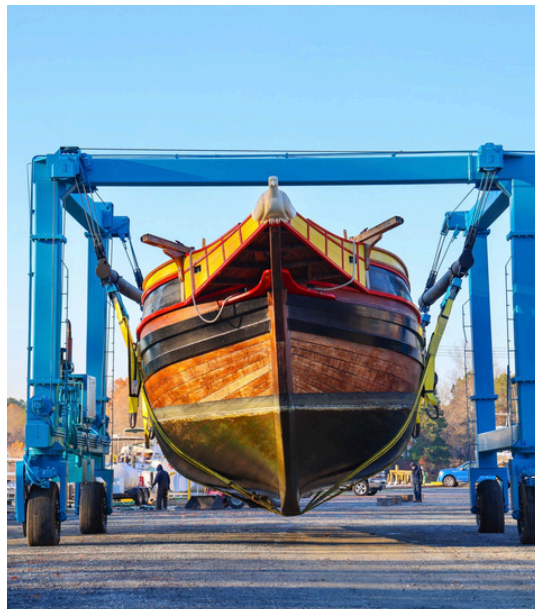
MARYLAND DOVE

Hand Out



Maryland Dove is hauled out every winter - once the outdoor exhibits are closed, the ship is downrigged and travels to a local marina where it is hauled out of the water by a lift (this year it's at Dennis Point Marina & Campground). Exposing the hull (outer body) of the ship, *Maryland Dove* staff and crew are able to begin their annual winter inspection and maintenance. This involves several critical tasks, such as scraping the bottom of the ship free of marine life, making note of chipping paint, applying new coats, caulking the seams between planks, replacing fasteners, and checking for other damage.

This winter work is essential not only to keep the ship in good condition but also to practice the skills required to keep a wooden sailing ship afloat and in good order.





Costume Shop

The costume department is an integral part of Historic St. Mary's City, as it plays a vital role in bringing the characters to life at our living history museum. During winter break, the department organized their closets and storage spaces to take stock of what they have, what needs to be replaced, and what can be repaired.

Mending and sewing can be time-consuming tasks, but with the help of dedicated volunteers, the costume department is sure to get the job done. Thank you for repairing the pile of outfits to ensure the costumes are in good condition and looking their absolute best for opening season!



PROJECTS HAPPENING *at HSMC*

Historic St. Mary's City is in full swing with exciting projects underway, and numerous operations having been completed over the last several months, in preparation for the 2024 season. Our historic grounds at HSMC are abuzz with activity as visitors from all parts of the East Coast and beyond explore our rich history dating back to over 10,000 years. Here's a brief glimpse of the vibrant operations currently underway at HSMC:

- Maryland Heritage Interpretive Center (MHIC), the new visitor center: Our visitor center construction looks beautiful! We are on schedule to have construction completed by fall 2024.
- Farthing's Parking Lot: Excitement mounts as construction kicks off spring 2024 and we are projecting completion by fall/winter 2024.
- ADA Paths: Witness progress as construction of ADA paths is underway. The meticulous work includes milling and utility markings which began in spring 2024, with repaving slated throughout the summer months.
- Ghost Frames: The 15 iconic Ghost Frames have been meticulously rebuilt to their former glory. A fresh coat of stain is on the horizon after they dry.
- Chapel Exhibit: Delve into history as the chapel Exhibit project progresses. Stay updated through our website and social media with these exciting advancements of this monument to the Liberty of Conscience.
- Struggle for Freedom Exhibit: Anticipation rises for the building to be climate-controlled, an important upgrade expected in summer 2024.
- Farthing's Public Restrooms: Mark your calendars for the complete renovation of Farthing's public restrooms, anticipated by the end of summer 2024, enhancing visitor experiences one facility at a time.
- The barns at Godiah Spray Plantation: Witness history come to life as the renovation of the barns progresses swiftly.
- ADA Accessible Pier at Chancellor's Point: final approval waits for the ADA Accessible Pier project. Design and construction will kick off summer 2024 with a grand completion scheduled for early fall 2024.

Experience the bustling energy of Historic St. Mary's City (HSMCC) as it continues to preserve and showcase centuries of remarkable history for visitors from near and far.

Peter B. Carroccio
Chief Operating Officer
Historic St. Mary's City



A NEW FIELD SEASON *at St. Mary's Fort*

With spring comes a new field season at the site of St. Mary's Fort and we could not be more thrilled to get back to it. The winter months were spent processing artifacts from the site and conducting detailed analysis of the findings from the 2023 season. As part of that effort, we determined that a timber-framed building that we have been excavating since 2020 originally served as Maryland's first public building: a large storehouse. The storehouse was approximately 56 feet long by 21 feet wide, including a cellar likely covered by a shed roof on the building's north end (see Figures 1 and 2). Much of the 2023 season was spent excavating a quadrant of cellar. This work yielded some incredible finds, including fragments of European ceramics, glass trade beads, rare metallic threads, and an iron tasset (part of a set of body armor designed to protect the wearer's thigh; read more about the tasset in this issue of *A Briefe Relation*) (Figure 3).

For the 2024 dig season, we will be returning to where our excavations at St. Mary's Fort began: the west bastion. In 2019, we located much of the bastion and excavated a section of the palisade wall north of the bastion. This year our work will be spent excavating more of the palisade that formed the north and south walls of the fort on either side of the bastion. In order to access these sections of the palisade, we will also be targeting late 17th-century features related to a home occupied during the last quarter of the century. The house itself was constructed on top of where a portion of the fort's south palisade wall had previously stood, indicating that the fort was no longer present when the home was built. Artifacts recovered to date during our initial investigations of this area—wine bottles, decorative buttons, horse furniture (metal objects used to ornament horse tack), a bone bodkin top, and a personal seal made of brass—suggest a household of means.

Our purpose for returning to the west bastion is as exciting as the excavations promise to be: we will be reconstructing the west bastion and portions of the adjacent palisade wall. This will mark the first aboveground reconstruction erected at the St. Mary's Fort site. The project is funded by a grant from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority and is scheduled to begin in late 2024. We look forward to using the reconstructed bastion to augment interpretation at the site as it will provide visitors with a clearer sense of the fort's construction, size, and position.

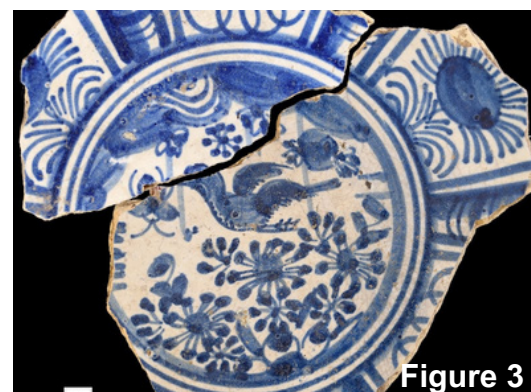
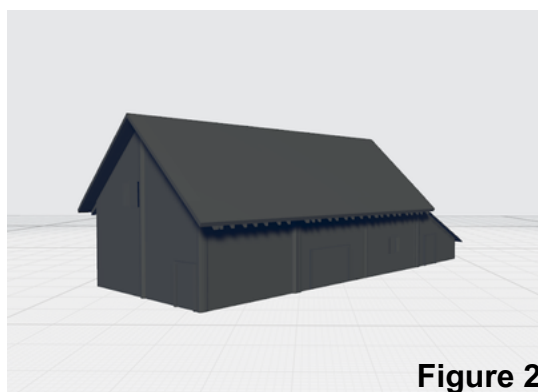
Come to HSMC to see our progress by taking the Changing Landscapes tour, offered Tuesday- Friday at 1:00 p.m. Reserve a spot at the Visitor Center or The Museum Shop. You can also follow us on our Instagram (@digHSMC) to see what we are discovering from this incredible site.

Travis Parno, Ph.D.
Director of Research & Collections
Historic St. Mary's City

Figure 1 – Excavation of the storehouse in progress circa 2022.

Figure 2 – 3D model of the storehouse at St. Mary's Fort (Credit: Stephanie Stevens).

Figure 3 – Tin-glazed ceramic plate fragments found in the storehouse cellar.



ARCHAEOLOGY at HSMC

An exciting artifact was uncovered from the St. Mary's Fort site at the end of the field season last year, which was recently highlighted in *The Washington Post*. This artifact, an iron tasset, is part of a set of body armor that attaches via hinges to the bottom of a breast plate, near the hips, covering the thigh area. The artifact was discovered during the excavation of a cellar associated with Maryland's first storehouse.

The tasset was brought into the archaeology lab and placed on a plastic tray for handling. The artifact is roughly the same size as a cafeteria tray! It was then put straight into the X-ray machine for a quick visual of what the large metal item might be. When the X-ray appeared on the computer screen, the staff were all overjoyed at the details that were revealed.

Conservation treatment began relatively soon after the tasset's arrival to the lab. The X-ray was examined closely to determine which areas might be prone to breakages or showed preexisting cracks. Foam supports were put in place to brace the tasset due to its curved design, to alleviate any pressure that might be applied during the treatment process.

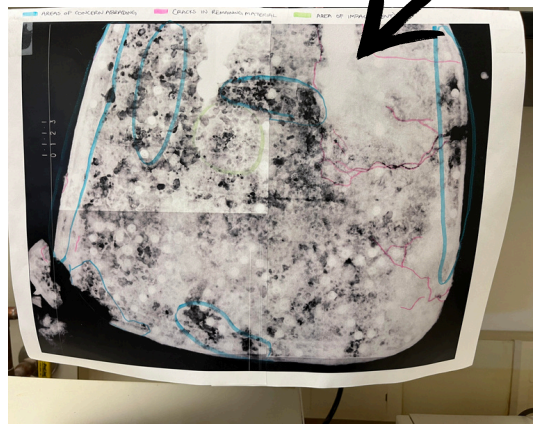
To begin, a stiff-bristled brush was used to carefully wipe away the loose dirt. This was highly effective in removing the majority of the occluding elements attached to the surface of the artifact. There was some thicker concretion which was successfully removed using dental picks. As the corrosion came off, the details shown in the xray were revealed. Rivets were still in place, hinges were still well attached, and the individual bands of metal that were welded together to form the tasset could be seen as horizontal ridges. It was also noted that there was a slight, round indentation on the left front side of the tasset.

During this process however, some of the tasset came apart in pieces along break lines that were previously noted in the X-ray; they had been held together by the thick corrosion. These pieces were used to test how well the tasset overall might handle air abrasion (micro sand blasting using aluminum oxide powder), which is our typical treatment method for iron artifacts. I was concerned that, due to the thinness of the metal, the abrasive powder and air pressure might simply puncture the remaining material of the tasset. With a copy of the X-ray placed above the work area, air abrasion testing began with the lowest air pressure and powder levels possible and were progressively increased as we determined that the tasset could indeed withstand the treatment method.

The tasset is still undergoing air abrasion treatment in the conservation lab. Every day, progress reveals more of the amazing details that were first noticed on the X-ray. Plans for the future include possible desalination (removal of salts and chlorides via a series of bath soaks in 2% sodium hydroxide and water), reattachment of the pieces that have come off of the larger piece, followed by the application of protective coating layers. We will continue to keep you updated. You can also follow us on Instagram at @digHSMC for more updates on the tasset as well as all the other ongoing projects in the department.

Stephanie Whitehead
Conservator
Historic St. Mary's City

The annotated X-ray hanging above the air abrasion work station



Tasset front after brushing and dental tools but before air abrasion

Tasset back and front as they currently are, mid air abrasion process

GOVERNOR MOORE PROCLAIMS 2024 AS



Maryland's Year of Civil Rights

“Studying history isn’t just about knowing what happened in the past. It’s about knowing our power in the present. That’s what Maryland’s Year of Civil Rights is about,” said Gov. Moore. “And so, my message to Marylanders is simple- get out into our communities and take advantage of the programs being offered during Maryland’s Year of Civil Rights. Let’s practice our history, let’s protect our history, and let’s participate in our history, by making history of our own.”

In light of Gov. Moore’s declaration to celebrate civil rights, we hope you will use this year to visit and “take advantage” of our programs at Historic St. Mary’s City. Why here at HSMC? One can argue that the seeds of what we call American civil rights or human rights began here almost 400 years ago: these included the first man of color to vote in a governmental proceeding (Mathias De Sousa), the first woman to ask for a vote (Margaret Brent), and the Act Concerning Religion, which codified the concept of liberty of conscience allowing Europeans to worship as they saw fit without government interference. These are just a few examples of how our ancestors made laws granting and taking liberties from the people living in the colony.

Even with these progressive firsts mentioned above, including the infancy of the separation of church and state in our government, equal rights for all were far from achieved. After all, Margaret Brent was not granted the right to vote, and Mathias De Sousa didn’t thrive after he voted. Worse, some of the laws passed when St. Mary’s City was Maryland’s first capital took away rights. From race-based slavery to the forced removal of Piscataway and other Indigenous people from their ancestral homelands, the juxtaposition of those who have rights and those who do not can be witnessed here.

We invite you to learn about this dichotomy in our society through the many programs that are offered at HSMC: The Changing Landscapes Tour discusses the complicated evolution of Colonial-Settler/Indigenous relationships from 1634 to the present; the Struggle for Freedom Exhibit allows you to explore and learn how African Americans survived through enslavement and post-enslavement as they navigated the challenges of a society in which their newfound freedoms were not equal to the freedoms of others. There are also seasonal tours such as the Adults Only tour that address many of the ideas of civil rights that were being debated at the time that resonate with so many of today’s civil rights issues.

As Gov. Moore states, we need to “protect,” “participate,” and “make our own history,” so that we can continue to strive for an ideal of equality for all our citizens. We believe there is no better way to honor this Year of Civil Rights than to visit our beautiful landscape and learn how civil rights were given and taken over the last four centuries.

Peter A. Friesen, Director of Education, and Aaron Meisinger, Interpretive Programs Manager.
Historic St. Mary’s City

Preservation Efforts

OF NATURAL HABITATS AT HSMC

An Environmental Studies student intern from St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) is helping the HSMC Grounds Supervisor conduct a survey of two plots of land in the meadow and forest landscapes at Historic St. Mary's City.

By recording environmental factors like temperatures, winds, sunshine levels, and Growing Degree Days, the team can gain valuable insights into the ecological dynamics of these areas. Cataloguing the diverse flora and fauna - including plant density, the mix of grass and flowers, and animal tracks such as paw prints- will provide an understanding of the biodiversity present in the area.

One of the primary objectives is to build upon the data collected by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) last year regarding the native bob-white quail that inhabit the surrounding meadows. This documentation will not only serve as a valuable resource for academic research but also contribute to the conservation and preservation efforts of the natural habitats at Historic St. Mary's City.

Photos of SMCM Student Intern, Caitlin Lennon-Puthoff (left) and Kim Holloway, HSMC Grounds Supervisor (right)



MUSEUM SHOP

SMCM Interns!



The shop has three new St. Mary's College of Maryland interns for this semester: Casper Kinzie, Xavier Lewis, and Emma Bourne. Please stop in and say hello. They are moving the shop into the 21st century by helping us create an e-commerce shop, which we are hoping to launch this summer.



CASPER KINZIE

Casper Kinzie is a sophomore English major with a minor in museum studies. He has been in dance his whole life and is currently part of the dance club at St. Mary's College of Maryland. Over the summer he will spend two weeks in England studying Shakespeare.



XAVIER LEWIS

Xavier Lewis is a sophomore who is on the soccer team, but enjoys all sports, gaming, indulging in delicious food, new movies, and traveling the world. He has been to Brazil, Japan, Denmark, Portugal, and Trinidad.



EMMA BOURNE

Emma Bourne is a graduating senior majoring in History with a focus on American history and a minor in Dance. This Spring she is performing and helping with the choreography for the spring Concert. Not one to sit on her laurels, Emma started this winter as a tour guide for Historic St. Mary's City.

A FARTHING FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

The book club will meet on the second Wednesday of each month from 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Between the pages of a book at Historic St. Mary's City is a wonderful place to be: lose yourself, find yourself, and go places!



Iris Ford, Wayne Karlin and Ginger Newman-Askew

Historic St. Mary's City Community Book Club, A Farthing For Your Thoughts,

welcomed their special guest, Wayne Karlin, who wrote the book that the club read for their debut meeting, *A Wolf by the Ears*. The members had a great time chatting with and asking questions of the author himself.

The discussion of last month's book, *Stolen*, included a Q & A with the author, Dr. Richard Bell, who will also be giving a lecture at HSMC on May 16 about the subject.

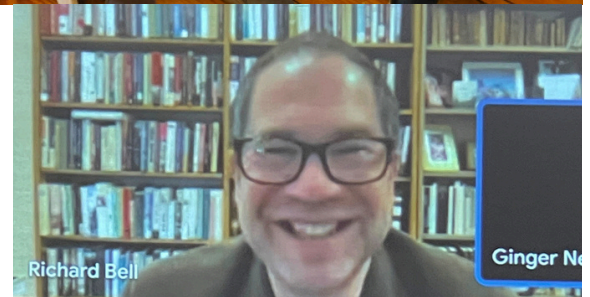
Join the book club on May 8 from 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm to meet local author Christine Trent and discuss her book "St. Clement's Bluff."

Location

The Museum Shop
Historic St. Mary's City
47414 Old State House Road
St. Mary's City, Maryland 20686

Contact

Iris Ford
icford@smcm.edu



In Memoriam



MARY BOHANAN

I thought long and hard about putting into words a memorial article about our dear co-worker, Mary Dyson Bohanan. Mary passed away on October 11, 2023, after battling cancer. And what a warrior she was. Not a single person who met Mary for the first time ever realized she was ill. What a quality to have! Outwardly, she was a conqueror. She faced everything with knowledge and grace. She worked so hard to keep going and finish every event she contracted for Historic St. Mary's City.



I met Mary in 1987 when I first moved to St. Mary's County. I only knew her on the periphery, through her family store, through her husband John, but not as co-workers. Fast forward many years, and Mary came to work for Historic St. Mary's City as the Events Manager. What a perfect job for her. Mary approached each event as if it was for her own family. She made you feel secure. She had a way of celebrating everyone. She made you understand you were incredibly important and the only one who mattered at that time. I believe her superpower was making everyone feel welcome. Those are just a few of her unique qualities.



Mary and I quickly found many commonalities. She loved her family and the beach. She had a zest for life, a life well lived. Everyone who came to know Mary would probably say the same thing, and we were lucky to have her on our team.

There is a quote I love written by Kahlil Gibran, "For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun? And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance."

It is my belief that Mary is truly dancing now and as she dances through the afterlife, I can bet she's making everything perfect, and everyone feel welcome!

Rest in peace my friend and co-worker, you deserve it. May perpetual light shine upon you.

Porzia M. Purves
Director of Business Enterprises
Historic St. Mary's City

Welcome!



GINGER NEWMAN-ASKEW

If you have been wondering what is happening with the membership at Historic St. Mary's City, we have exciting news. Ginger Newman-Askew is our new Membership Coordinator! You may recognize her from the gift shop, where she was the manager for three years. Now she is working on building the membership base.



ERIN FISCHER

Erin has worked with the museum over the past few years, beginning as a museum guide and then moving to interpretation. Her latest move? To assist Public Programs Manager Marlee Putnam in her new position of Public Programs Coordinator.



MARLEE PUTNAM

Marlee Putnam began her career at Historic St. Mary's City in 2019, after completing her master's degree in history at Virginia Tech. As Public Programs Manager, Marlee's major role is to develop and implement a wide variety of educational programming, from school tours centered around state curriculum standards to creative workshops and presentations that engage a diverse range of audiences. Having studied maritime and public history, as well as having worked at several living history and historical institutions, Marlee has found her niche at HSMC.

JENNIFER ACKER

Jennifer, the Facility Rental Coordinator for Historic St. Mary's City, is the primary contact for those looking to host weddings and private events. Her move to St. Mary's County from Northern Virginia in 2004 marked the beginning of a new chapter. With a solid educational background, holding a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary and Special Education, Jennifer spent nine years contributing her skills and compassion as a Special Education teacher within St. Mary's County Public Schools.

Her transition from education to event planning at Historic St. Mary's City seems to be a perfect blend of her passion for the community and her love for this beautiful historic site. Historic St. Mary's City, known for its stunning landscapes and rich history, offers a unique backdrop for any event, making it a sought-after location for weddings and private gatherings. Jennifer's enthusiasm for HSMC, combined with her dedication to service and planning, ensures that each event is not only memorable but also seamlessly organized.

For all event rental inquiries, please reach out to Jennifer by emailing her at jennifer.acker@maryland.gov



Update!

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Join us as we wish Joi Lowe best wishes as she seeks a career change. Joi has been our volunteer coordinator for a year and she approached this position with a ferocity we have not seen in a long time. Whatever Joi chooses to do next, she will be an incredible success, and we were lucky to have her as our Volunteer Coordinator.



HISTORIC ST. MARY'S CITY FOUNDATION

BEERFEST

22
JUNE

HOPS
TO
IT!

12-6PM

HISTORIC ST. MARY'S CITY

HSMC FOUNDATION IS GEARING UP FOR THE RETURN OF OUR 12TH ANNUAL BEERFEST! WE HAVE AN AMAZING LINEUP OF MARYLAND MUSICIANS, BREWERIES, AND YUMMY FOOD TRUCKS. THE EVENT STARTS AT NOON WITH BILLY BRESLIN AND THE SWAMP WEASELS TO START THE PARTY. THE EVENT IS FAMILY-FRIENDLY, WITH ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES, EVEN YOUR FOUR-LEGGED FRIENDS!

BEERFEST IS HISTORIC ST. MARY'S CITY FOUNDATION'S LARGEST ANNUAL FUNDRAISING, WITH ALL PROCEEDS HELPING TO FURTHER THE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH EFFORTS HERE AT HSMC. ALL INFORMATION ON SPONSORSHIP AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES, TASTY TREATS, MUSICAL TALENTS, AND (BEST OF ALL) REFRESHING COLD BEER CAN BE FOUND AT [HSMCBEERFEST.ORG](https://hsmcbeerfest.org)

WE CAN'T WAIT TO SPEND A WARM SUMMER DAY WITH YOU!

FOR INFORMATION OR TICKETS PLEASE VISIT [HTTPS://HSMCBEERFEST.ORG/](https://hsmcbeerfest.org/)



HISTORIC ST. MARY'S CITY

47418 OLD STATE HOUSE ROAD
ST. MARY'S CITY, MD





SPRING SATURDAYS – INCLUDED IN ADMISSION

- **May 18. Comparing Kitchens, 10:30 a.m.**
- **June 1. Take a Gamble, 1:00 p.m.**

MAY 4. MAY DAY

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

JUNE 7 & 8. TIDEWATER ARCHAEOLOGY DAYS

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

MAY 16. LECTURE: THE REVERSE
UNDERGROUND RAILROAD: SLAVERY AND
KIDNAPPING IN PRE-CIVIL WAR AMERICA

Dr. Richard Bell

7:00 p.m.

Visitor Center Auditorium

JUNE 20. LITTLE PIRATES

Ages 3 - 4, 10:00 a.m.

Registration required.

JUNE 21. LITTLE PIRATES

Ages 5 - 7, 10:00 a.m.

Registration required.

HOMESCHOOL WEDNESDAY WORKSHOPS

May 15 & June 5

Registration required

Your choice of date & program

- **10:30 a.m. Cargo: What, Where, Why, and How**
- **10:30 a.m. Fishing in 17th Century Maryland**
- **1:00 p.m. Experimental Archaeology ARTventure**
- **1:00 p.m. Full STEM Ahead: Science Through the Ages**

LITTLE EXPLORERS

A preschool program

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

- **May 8. From Seed to Sunflower**
- **May 22. "Wear" Do You Find Nature?**
- **June 5. Ship to Shore**

For info, pricing, or registration:

hsmcc.groups@maryland.gov, 301-994-4371

Scan the QR code to view the calendar online



NEW FOR MEMBERS

"AFTER HOURS" PROGRAMS

May 7. After Hours: The Flora and Fauna of May

4:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m., for HSMC members only

Step into the fresh air with HSMC staff to discover the wealth of plants, insects, animals, and reptiles that inhabit the grounds.



BEER FEST

JUNE 22

NOON TO 6:00 P.M.

TICKETS



HISTORIC 
ST. MARY'S CITY

P.O. Box 39

18559 Hogaboom Lane

St. Mary's City, MD 20686

HISTORIC 
ST. MARY'S CITY

John L. Seidel, Ph.D.
Executive Director

**HISTORIC ST. MARY'S CITY
FOUNDATION, INC.**


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