



## President's Message

Dear Museum Members and Friends,

The Oxford Museum closed for the season on November 12 after a successful spring, summer and fall. But that doesn't mean we'll be idle.

As you see from the other articles in this newsletter, we are hard at work on our new "Watermen's Wall," and on our next exhibit which opens on Oxford Day 2018. We've already started planning next year's popular Piga-figa-licious event.

Other new projects in the works for next year:

- ◆ We've begun work on a video about Oxford's watermen--their lives and livelihood. The video includes interviews with three of our living watermen.
- ◆ A tentatively planned lecture event on the history of churches in Oxford and the surrounding Delmarva Peninsula. Watch for more on this event.



Oxford Watermen from left: Billy Carpenter, Tex Bringman, Judd Vreeland

And of course, most immediately, our annual holiday party on December 8 in the Parish Hall, Holy Trinity Church in Oxford. We look forward to fellowship with all of you and your friends and neighbors.

And, as is the case every November, we will be sending out our annual giving appeal letter. As a non-profit, charitable institution, the Museum depends on your financial support – to fund our exhibits, programs and events, as well as our continuing operations.

Thank you for a great 2017, thank you for your support, and I wish you all a happy holiday season.

Lisa Harrington, President



The Oxford Museum is now closed for the winter and will re-open on Oxford Day, April 28, 2018. If you need to reach Museum staff, please call 410-226-0191 and your call will be returned. Thank you for your support and have a good winter!

### THE OXFORD MUSEUM, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### The Oxford Historian

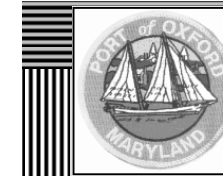
Editors: Rebecca Gaffney, Ellen Anderson  
Contributors: Steve Goldman, Lisa Harrington, Pat Jessup



The Oxford Museum, Inc.

*A special place.  
A special heritage.*

100 South Morris Street  
PO Box 131  
Oxford, MD 21654



1683

Fall/Winter 2017

# The Oxford Historian

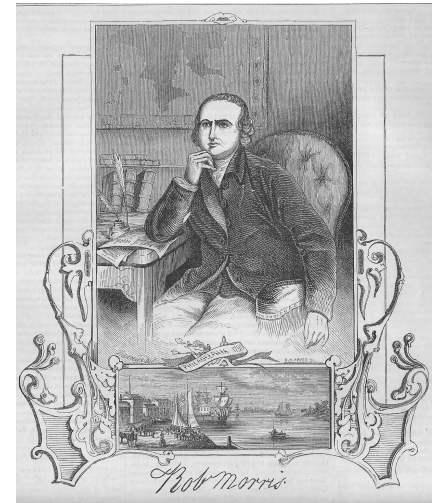
The Oxford Museum  
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410-226-0191 (phone), 410-226-0225 (fax)  
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## More on Oxford's Notable Robert Morris

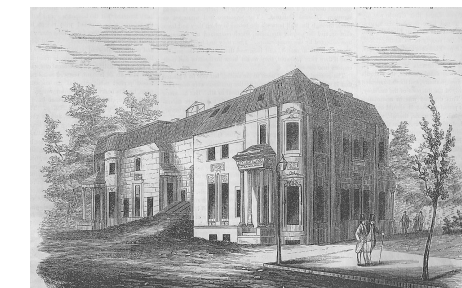
Robert Morris, Sr. was arguably the most famous resident to live and work in Oxford over the past 330 years. His son, Robert Morris, Jr. may be considered to be the most famous non-resident to pass through Oxford on his way to fame as a "founding father" of the United States – that of his being a signer of the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the U.S. Constitution and a financier of the American Revolution.

Local Oxford legend has it that Robert Morris, Jr. was born in 1734 as the illegitimate son of Robert Morris, Sr. and Elizabeth Murphey in Liverpool, England. Morris, Sr. did not publically acknowledge Morris, Jr. as his son, and even referred to Jr. in his will as "...a youth now living in Philadelphia...known there by the name of Robert Morris, Jr..." Senior arranged for Jr. to come to America in 1748 at the age of 13 but shortly thereafter sent him to live with a Philadelphia merchant named Robert Greenway.

Despite this 18<sup>th</sup> century "scandal" playing out in Oxford, MD, Morris, Sr. always seemed to help his illegitimate son with financial help and to get a job and a position in a banking house in Philadelphia.



Robert Morris as pictured in the Gleason Pictorial Drawing Room Companion.



The Morris Mansion, Philadelphia, PA

It is interesting then that local resident Steve Goldman has discovered an illustrated newspaper, *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion* (Boston, MA) dated August 6, 1853, with a long biography of Morris, Jr. written nearly 45 years after his death in 1809. The biography writes of Morris, Jr's early life: "... (he) was born in Lancashire, England, 1734, of respectable parentage. His father embarked for America (Oxford, MD) and caused him to follow at the age of thirteen... He received only an English education, and before he reached his fifteenth year was placed in the counting house of Mr. Charles Willing...one of the first merchants of Philadelphia..."

So, was Robert Morris, Sr. the father referred to in 1853 as the "...respected parentage..." or was there some other explanation such as "fake news," 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century sensitivities about an illegitimate son, or a "puff piece" with a political "spin"? You decide!!

## No Place Like Home - Next Up for Spring 2018 Exhibit

### \*Call for Photos

Local residents passing by the Oxford Museum may have noticed that the window display for the 2017 rotating exhibit, "Sports of Oxford," has now been disassembled to make room for the Museum's next feature exhibit - to open in April of 2018. The new exhibit is titled: "**Oxford - There's No Place Like Home.**"

It is a "then-and-now" photographic retrospective on how much (or how little) Oxford has changed physically over the past century. It's a chance to see the changes - and perhaps see what your home looked like a century ago.



Historic Byeberry



The Academy House

In addition to the above-mentioned exhibit, the Museum will also unveil a "Watermen's Wall" exhibit. Reaching back some 150 years, the "wall" will display photos, artifacts, models and memorabilia from Oxford's rich watermen tradition, and the importance of watermen and their catch, to the town.

Lastly, new to the Museum...and on display in April 2018 - a huge detailed 1965 map of Oxford, containing the names of all of the property owners at that point in time. So be sure to come by the Museum when we open in the spring - to check out our new exhibit. See who owned YOUR property - and what it looked like - over a half-century ago.

**\*SPECIAL REQUEST:** Anyone who has an old photo (generally 50-150 years old) of their house located in or near Oxford is encouraged to contact Steve Goldman (phone: 410-925-1137 or email: Sagnoldnews@msn.com) to see if YOUR property may be featured in the upcoming exhibit. We would love to include original old photos that may not be in the Oxford Museum's files and that may never have been seen before by the public.

We look forward to seeing all of you in the spring!

## Bell Portraits Returned to the Bratt Family

The Oxford Museum has been graced with two beautiful portraits for many years. It was thought they were the portraits of Mary Anne and Samuel Bratt; however, it was later learned that the portraits were the parents of Mary Anne Bratt--Henry and Jane Waters Bell. They lived in the Academy House (the Bratt House) which was in the Bratt Family for 109 years.

George Pillorge, who lived on North Morris Street for some years in Oxford, contacted Ellen Anderson, Museum Director, and indicated he knew Ann and Hank Couch, who were related to the Bratts. Ann Couch is the great great granddaughter of the Bells and she is the only still-living member of the 4<sup>th</sup> generation down, through the Bratts. Henry Bell owned ships and today would be described as an importer. He and at least one of his ships

accompanied his friend Admiral Perry in 1814 when they successfully negotiated with the Emperor and opened Japan for trade. Henry Bell and Tench Tilghman were long-time friends.

Space constraints led the Museum Board to make the decision to de-accession the portraits to the Bratt family. Ellen contacted Ann Couch, who was indeed interested in receiving the portraits. She and her husband came to Oxford in early November and took these family heirlooms back to New York where they will be part of their family collection. They have heirs who will continue to keep the portraits for years to come. We are gratified they are back in family hands.

## Museum Garden: Almost Ready for Winter Slumber

We hope everyone enjoyed the renovation of the Museum garden this year. The Museum made some big changes - including replacing the Nellie Stevens holly with a crab apple, continuing the walking path around the tree and extending the picket fence across the back of the garden.

The Oxford Garden Club scheduled October 27 as clean-up day for the Museum garden as well as the ones it maintains at the Oxford Community Center and library. Participating members split up amongst the gardens to weed, cut back dead plant material and generally ready them for the coming winter.

What we didn't plan for or expect was the extended warm weather. People arrived at the Museum garden on the appointed date, armed with clippers, debris buckets, and rakes, only to find much of the garden still in bloom. What to do?

No gardener wants to cut back a beautiful blooming plant just because the calendar says it's time. So, we pulled a few weeds, cut back the iris and peonies, and left the rest intact for the time being. Some plants that appear spent, like coneflower and rudbeckia, have heads that are a food source for birds and other pollinators. So we left them - for the time being - for our feathered friends.

We still have a "to do" list, of course: Plant bulbs under the crab apple tree, and bring the Russian sage under control -- no easy task as it involves moving benches, paving stones, and a lot of heavy digging. Strong backs needed! Meanwhile we're letting the leaves, Mother Nature's blanket, stay until spring to insulate the beds over the winter. If the weather warms up another day or two, we'll endeavor to plant the bulbs and finish the end-of-season clean-up.

Thanks to everyone who helps keep our side garden colorful and flourishing!

## Volunteers Needed

Do you know anyone who would be interested in serving in an active volunteer role at the Oxford Museum? The Museum is actively looking for volunteers in several areas, so would welcome your help or suggestions of folks whose skills might match our needs.

Here are the roles we have ongoing for volunteers at the Museum, and a brief description of their activity.

- ◆ Serve on or support a key committee. These include:
  - ◆ Finance - help oversee the financial operations of the Museum
  - ◆ Development & membership - support us in ensuring adequate funding for the Museum, and help grow membership

- ◆ Buildings and grounds - ensure buildings and grounds are maintained in a safe and sound operating condition
- ◆ Exhibits and programs - curate special exhibits and help develop programs
- ◆ Publicity/publications - ensure the Museum receives maximum coverage in local press and other publications
- ◆ Curatorial - responsible for the acquisition, cataloging, maintenance and storage of museum artifacts
- ◆ Docents/volunteers - help manage the Museum's volunteers and docents
- ◆ Chair a Committee
  - Certain committees chair positions do not require you to be a board member. Duties are project-based, typically, and do not necessarily require a big time commitment. We especially need help on our exhibits--planning and executing them!
  - ◆ Exhibits and programs
  - ◆ Publicity/publications
  - ◆ Curatorial
  - ◆ Docents/volunteers

Please consider joining our team. Your creativity and support would be much appreciated. Contact me or leave a message at the Museum if you have suggestions or wish to volunteer.

**Lisa Harrington, 410-725-6198; [lisa@lharringtongroup.com](mailto:lisa@lharringtongroup.com)**

**The Oxford Museum, 410-226-0191; [theoxfordmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:theoxfordmuseum@gmail.com)**

## In Memoriam

**Dr. Charles (Chuck) McIntosh** served faithfully as a board member for many years. He had a profound love of history and of Oxford and was very dedicated to the Museum, using his talents to help the Museum secure important artifacts. He will be missed throughout our community.

A bench, dedicated to the memory of Dr. McIntosh, will be placed in the Museum Garden and will serve as a reminder of Chuck's generous service to the Museum.

**Marguerite Owen Webster** had just joined our Board of Directors earlier this year and passed away in October. She was a strong supporter of the Museum and also committed to the preservation of the history of Oxford. As was often said, almost everyone in Oxford was related in some way to Marguerite. Her roots went back many years and she was a strong leader in the community and dedicated to helping those in need. We will miss her and her friendly smile.

**Our sympathy is extended to the families of these two well-known Oxford citizens and friends of the Museum.**

 **Oxford Museum  
Holiday Party**

**Friday, December 8  
5:30 p.m.**

**Holy Trinity Parish Hall**

**Members and Guests Invited**

**rsvp: December 3, 2017**