



## **2021 Montgomery County History Conference Session Descriptions**

**Saturday, January 23, 2021**

### **Morning Keynote**

*First Americans and England's Potomac Frontier, 1607 to 1676*

Dr. Stephen R. Potter

In 1607, most of the Algonquian-speaking peoples of the Potomac River Valley not only were involved in their own alliances and squabbles, they also were linked with other peoples through a complex web of trade, alliances, and conflict that stretched far beyond the banks of the Potomac. This tumultuous native political landscape affected the development of relations with the invading Europeans and the course of colonial and imperial powers in the region from the Great Lakes to the Virginia Capes. Dr. Potter will draw on a combination of ethnohistorical, historical, and archaeological data to offer new perspectives on the critical decades following the establishment of Jamestown, Virginia, and the founding of St. Mary's City in Maryland.

### **Afternoon Session 1**

#### **Option 1:**

*Emprendimiento hispano en el condado de Montgomery/Entrepreneurship in Hispanic Montgomery County*

Moderated by Carmen Larsen, CEO of Aquas, Inc.

Panelists will include local Hispanic entrepreneurs

Hace 40 años, muy pocos residentes del condado sabían lo qué era una pupusa o reconocían la diversidad de culturas agrupadas bajo el término hispano/Latinx. En la actualidad, los residentes hispanos constituyen más del de 20% de la población. A medida que la comunidad hispana creció, hubo una mayor demanda de negocios y servicios hispanos. Este panel discutirá y contará historias sobre la historia única del emprendimiento hispano.

Forty years ago, few county residents knew what a *pupusa* was or recognized the diversity subsumed in the category Hispanic/Latinx. Hispanic residents today comprise more than 20% of the county's population. As the county's Hispanic community has grown, residents created a greater demand for Hispanic businesses and services. The assembled panelists will bring their business expertise to discuss and tell stories about the unique history of the county's Hispanic entrepreneurs.

**Option 2:**

*Periodical Cicadas in 2021: An Intersection of Natural History and Human History*  
Clarence "Corky" Hickey

Montgomery County has some lesser known, yet very numerous, native residents: the 17-year periodical cicadas that visited us with great gusto in 1987 and 2004. The reappearance of the periodicals every 17 years suggests a certain measure of stability in our local environment, a natural sign for us. As these cicadas offer a unique opportunity for observing and studying nature in our own backyards, this presentation will demonstrate the intersection of cicada natural history and human history as we look ahead to the spring of 2021, when we expect to welcome these native Montgomery Countians back to our neighborhoods.

**Option 3:**

*A Bump in the Road: A History of Our Local Post Roads*  
Bob Hines

This talk will cover the early evolution of the post roads and their impact on the development of the country. Historian Bob Hines will focus on our county's post system, the early road known as the Brookeville Turnpike, and how post roads shaped the future of our country.

**Afternoon Session II**

**Option 1:**

*Rationing Fashion*  
Elizabeth Lay

During World War II rationing was introduced in the U.S., Britain, and France, but the impact of the war was different in each region. Germany wanted to move its fashion capital to Vienna or Berlin, away from occupied Paris. London actively sustained bombing raids that required the longest and most restrictive rationing policy. Meanwhile, New York saw an opportunity to throw off the dominance of Paris fashion and bring American designers to the forefront. Ms. Lay will illustrate how each country's

fashion industry developed plans to survive the war and the extraordinary efforts made following the conflict to rebuild with limited materials.

**Option 2:**

*The Cider Barrel*

Susan Soderberg and Laura Richman

Ever since its Prohibition-era construction in 1926 to sell sweet non-alcoholic cider, the Cider Barrel has been a familiar sight for people driving on Frederick Road. Even though apples and cider are no longer sold there, this historic example of roadside novelty architecture has come to be identified with Germantown. Historian Susan Soderberg will describe the history of this unique structure, and entrepreneur Laura Richman will present her plans for the future of this iconic landmark.

**Option 3:**

*Gibson Grove: Gone but Not Forgotten*

Dr. Alexandra Jones

The historic African American community of Gibson was built on self-reliance, education, faith, and mutual support in a time when African Americans were discriminated against and prevented from attending schools, obtaining insurance, and being buried in the same cemeteries as their European American counterparts. This community has all but faded in the memories of many in Montgomery County, and today the few remaining historical sites are being threatened by the expansion of the Beltway. However, a new community of advocates has stepped in to save these sacred spots. This talk will explore the history of Gibson Grove and the actions being taken to save the two sites associated with this community.

**Wednesday, January 27, 2021**

**Keynote**

*Confederate Monuments and Race in America*

Kevin Levin

Americans are in the midst of a reckoning with the history and legacy of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Since June 1, 2020, approximately 85 Confederate monuments have been removed across the country with no end in sight. This captivating talk will focus on the history of Confederate monuments with an emphasis on why they were dedicated and why they remain controversial to this day.

**Saturday, January 30, 2021**

**Morning Keynote**

*Josiah Henson Museum and Park*

Shirl Spicer

Scheduled to open in early 2021, the Josiah Henson Museum & Park will commemorate the life of Rev. Josiah Henson (1789 – 1883). Renowned as an Underground Railroad hero, abolitionist, and author, Henson was enslaved on the former Riley plantation in Montgomery County, now the site of the new Henson Museum. After his escape to Canada, Henson published his 1849 autobiography that became inspiration for Harriet Beecher Stowe's landmark novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Join Shirl Spicer, countywide museum manager with Montgomery Parks, on a visual exploration of the 12-year project to establish one of Maryland's newest museums of African American history.

**Afternoon Session I**

**Option 1:**

*Montgomery County in the 1970s: Trends, Changes, Struggles, and Celebrations*

Robert Bachman

Montgomery County experienced major national trends of the 1970s such as the "baby bust," increased diversity, growth limits, environmental protection, historic preservation, affordable housing, women's expanding roles, citizen activism, and the celebration of the nation's and county's 250th birthday. This presentation will discuss how the county changed during this tumultuous decade.

**Option 2:**

*"I Have Started for Canaan": Telling the Sugarland Story*

Gwendora Hebron Reese, Suzanne Johnson, and Jeff Sypeck

At its height, the African American town of Sugarland in the northwest corner of Montgomery County was home to a church, a school, a store, a post office, and a practice hall for the town band. In this session, the team behind a new book that traces the history of the town from emancipation to the present will discuss the 150 years of documents, photos, artifacts, and interviews that provide a candid and enlightening look at rural African American life. The panel also will describe ongoing preservation efforts and speculate about some of the intriguing historical questions that remain to be explored.

**Option 3:**

*A Tangled Web: Researching the Enslaved in Maryland*

Robyn Smith

Slavery research is difficult under almost any circumstance. By 1860, Maryland had more than 80,000 free Blacks; it was the largest population of free Blacks of all the states. How and why did this happen? How did a slave society operate alongside such a large free Black population and how did that affect slaveholders? In this lecture, Ms. Smith offers an overview of the history of African Americans in Maryland. Through case studies she provides examples of the rich records available to those researching both the enslaved and Blacks freed before emancipation.

**Afternoon Session II****Option 1:**

*In Search of the Ballfields of Montgomery's Black Communities*

Bruce Adams

Rev. Tim Warner says that for many of Montgomery County's Black communities, "History is buried with the people." Along with churches and schools, baseball was the center of civic life for many of the county's small towns for much of the first half of the 20th century. Nearly every Black area had a town team with the community's name on the jersey such as Clarksburg, Emory Grove, Germantown, Poolesville, Rockville, Scotland, Stewartown, and Sandy Spring. On Saturdays and Sundays after church, hundreds would turn out to support their teams. On Memorial Day, a thousand fans would descend on Emory Grove for a picnic and ballgames at the county's finest ballfield, Johnson Park. The purpose of this talk is to explore the story of these town teams and the meaning to their communities during the decades when Negro League baseball was thriving across the country from the 1920s through the early 1960s.

**Option 2:**

*Displacement and Erasure: Gentrifying Travilah Road*

Teresa B. Lachin

Situated in the crosshairs of institutional, commercial, and residential development, a two-mile stretch of Travilah Road sustained a radical transformation from a rural country lane to a grandiose suburban enclave. From the late 1980s through the early 2000s, the gentrification process displaced a long-established community of working-class residents and farm workers. This effectively erased many traces of its cultural and historical identity by re-branding Travilah Road and surrounding areas with new place names, large upscale housing, and new commercial, recreational, and civic enterprises serving an amenity-driven population. This presentation examines the effects of rural

gentrification on the Trivilah landscape and the transformative power of socio-economic and cultural change.

**Option 3:**

*Endowment of Tears, Hope for Reconciliation*

Dr. Stephen Ochs

This talk will describe how Georgetown Prep, the nation's oldest Jesuit Catholic high school for boys, has sought to confront and reconcile with its slaveholding history and the descendants of those enslaved by the Maryland Jesuits. Dr. Ochs will draw upon an exhibit produced by the school entitled "Endowment of Tears, Hope for Reconciliation," which first opened in May 2018 and continues to be displayed each year at the school. The talk also will include other materials and programs developed by the school to challenge and encourage its students to relate Prep's history to the current situation in our country as well as to reflect upon how they individually and collectively might best promote racial justice and reconciliation within our society.

**Closing Performance**

*Old-Time Music in Montgomery County: Will Adams and Beyond*

Jake Blount

This performance and presentation will go in-depth in describing the fiddle and banjo traditions of the Montgomery County area throughout history, with special focus on the music of Will Adams, a Black fiddler from Kensington, Maryland. Topics will include the early folk music of the Chesapeake Bay region and the modern bluegrass and old-time scenes that developed in D.C., Baltimore, and the stretch in between.