



Session Descriptions

Morning General Session

Flee North

Presented by Scott Shane

Scott Shane's *FLEE NORTH* tells a very local story of both tragedy and triumph. It unearths the lost story of Thomas Smallwood, born into slavery, who bought his freedom, educated himself and became a shoemaker in Southeast Washington, a short walk from the U.S. Capitol. In 1842, Smallwood began to organize mass escapes from slavery by the wagonload, with the help of a young white partner, Charles Torrey -- and wrote about the escapes in extraordinary satirical dispatches for an abolitionist newspaper in Albany. It was Smallwood, Scott Shane discovered, who gave the underground railroad its name. But Smallwood's daring operation took place against the very dark background of the domestic slave trade, which thrived on Washington's mall and at Baltimore's Inner Harbor, shipping thousands of people every year away from their families to the cotton and sugan plantations of the deep south. The book's third major character, Baltimore's Hope Slatter, was the era's dominant slave trader, operating from his private "slave jail" near the city's harbor. The domestic slave trade, still too little understood, became an engine driving the underground railroad.

Morning Concurrent Sessions

Option 1

History of Hip Hop

Presented by Kenneth Smith

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Montgomery County Public Schools
Hip Hop as a musical genre is a multi-billion dollar component of the entertainment industry. Once an underground, marginalized culture, today Hip Hop is central to mainstream pop culture. Hip Hop's global reach and influence is undeniable in the lives of young people all over the world. It has even been accepted into the academy of higher education, where hundreds of colleges and universities teach some aspects of Hip Hop at their institutions. Yet, its educational value has not been fully accepted in k-12 public education...until now. Montgomery County Public Schools was one of the first large public school systems in the country to recognize the academic value of Hip Hop culture. Come and learn about MCPS's popular and dynamic course that is offered as a Social Studies elective as delivered by its' creator and visionary teacher Mr. Kenneth Smith.

Option 2

Latvia Regains Its Freedom in 1990!

Presented by Rita Laima Rumpetere-Berzins, Aija Celma-Evans, Helena Viksnins, Uve Hodgins

Moderated by Renate Gravers

The Latvian Museum in Rockville, Maryland, shares the compelling stories of Latvian immigrants and their journeys to Montgomery County. In collaboration with Heritage Montgomery, this session will explore the complicated history of Latvia, a country strategically located in northern Europe, during the twentieth century. It is the story of periods freedom and sovereignty, as well as periods of occupation by foreign powers. Hear firsthand accounts from those who witnessed the events that led to the proclamation of independence on May 4, 1990, as they recount their experiences and celebrate that moment of triumph.

Option 3

Building Community: Bethesda Big Train Baseball's First Quarter Century

Presented by Bruce Adams

In 1998, Bruce Adams had an idea: maybe he could use his love of baseball as a platform for his passion of building a stronger community. After 25 seasons of Bethesda Big Train baseball at Shirley Povich Field, Bruce is going to tell us how it went.

Option 4

Historic Medley District: The Far Side of Montgomery County

Presented by Knight Kiplinger

Knight Kiplinger, a longtime student of county history and a preservationist, will explore the complex heritage of the Medley District, which was the county's farthest western election district in the 19th century, bordering the Potomac River on its south and west. It has always been the heart of the county's agricultural economy, the "Breadbasket" of Washington and the downcounty suburbs. Today it is the core of the county's 93,000-acre Agricultural Reserve, which severely restricts development, so the Medley District is the least-populous portion of an urban county of more than one million residents. Like many other rural areas in America, where family roots go back many generations, the Medley District has long been culturally, politically and demographically distinct from the densely populated downcounty MoCo communities whose citizens arrived in the county relatively recently. Due to the absence of development in rural western MoCo, the Medley District is uncommonly rich in historic farms, villages and buildings, where Montgomery's history is visible and palpable. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of Historic Medley District, Inc., the vibrant historical society of the western county, based in the largest town of the region, Poolesville. For five decades, on a shoestring budget with volunteer leadership, HMD has done great work in preserving the physical and historical heritage of the western Ag Reserve, with lectures, tours, living-history classes and exhibits at its three properties, the John Poole House (1793), Seneca Schoolhouse (1866) and Poolesville Bank/Old Town Hall (1907)."

Afternoon Concurrent Sessions

Option 1

Out of the Home Will Come the Citizen” The Romeo and Elsie Horad House
Presented by John Liebertz

The Romeo and Elsie Horad House at 2118 University Boulevard West reflects the efforts and achievements of the Webster, Sewell, and Horad families to improve conditions for African American residents of Montgomery County. Romeo Horad, an African American lawyer and realtor, challenged racial restrictive covenants in the District of Columbia, demanded and lobbied for improved educational facilities and infrastructure for Black communities in Montgomery County, established a groundbreaking candidacy for the Montgomery County Council, and coordinated voter registration of African Americans in Maryland. All these actions occurred while the Horad family resided at the house, which served as a social and political meeting place in the mid-twentieth century.

Option 2

50 Years of Peerless Rockville
Presented by Nancy Pickard and Eileen McGuckian

Join this session to learn about Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation and its work in the community as the nonprofit marks a half century. Founded by citizen activists on the heels of explosive mid-century growth that brought sweeping changes, and an Urban Renewal Project that transformed Rockville’s core, Peerless Rockville has a built a legacy as the voice for history and preservation. Today Peerless Rockville is a vibrant community-based non-profit, working to protect historic and cultural resources, educate the community, and celebrate the heritage of Rockville, seat of Montgomery County.

Peerless Rockville staff, volunteers, and community members have advocated for the built environment, the value of historic preservation in Rockville and worked to save significant historic structures throughout the city, such as the B&O Railroad Station, the Dawson Farmhouse, and Frieda’s Cottage, now a National Historic Landmark! Along the way Peerless Rockville has built an archive of images, artifacts, and stories about special places and significant people, as well as a public history mission to share the rich and diverse history of the city with residents and visitors. Executive Directors Nancy Pickard and Eileen McGuckian will share the mission, memories, stories of successes, and challenges as we look to continue to celebrate Rockville’s history and heritage into the future.

Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation Ltd. is supported in part by a grant from the City of Rockville and funding from the Montgomery County Government and the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County.

Option 3

“My Name is Not Tom:” The Life of Reverend Josiah Henson
Presented by Susan Soderberg

“My Name is Not Tom” – those words come from a speech given by Rev. Josiah Henson in Scotland in 1877 as he was trying to disassociate himself from the connection to the fictional character Uncle Tom promoted by his publishers. More than a dozen biographies have been written about this man, but all are based on his autobiographies, which, except for the first, were embellished and modified by his publishers and leave out much of his life’s journey. This talk will dispel many myths and reveal much new information about the man, giving a whole new perspective on his character.

Option 4

The Archeology and Plural Heritage of Emory Church in the Brightwood Neighborhood of Washington, DC.
Presented by Matthew M. Palus

The Emory Fellowship’s Beacon Center in Northwest Washington, DC resulted from redevelopment of the historical Emory Church property, which was home to its congregation since 1855. The property also contains a portion of the historical site of Civil War Fort Stevens, and the construction of the new facility required extensive archeological work to evaluate and then address the consequences of the project for intact, historical features and deposits concealed beneath the ground. The Ottery Group of Silver Spring, Maryland carried out a program of archeological and historical research beginning with an initial assessment of the project in 2008 and culminating with intensive excavation work from August-October in 2016. Assisted by a mechanical excavator, The Ottery Group was able to identify buried portions of the earthworks associated with the original Fort Stevens, which famously came under attack during the Confederate raid on Washington in July 1864. Archeology also yielded many artifacts deposited in the cellar and vicinity of a former parsonage for the church. Today, the Emory Fellowship hosts a Pan-African Methodist congregation, but historically Emory Church was aligned with Southern Methodism, and had a segregated white congregation until the beginning of the 1960s. Discoveries made as part of the redevelopment of the property to match an expanded mission for the church were embraced by its congregation, and the site hosts a plural heritage that is part of the historical importance of the land where together stand Emory Church, and the reconstructed Fort Stevens, operated by the National Park Service and rebuilt by the WPA during the 1930s, both occupying land that was home to free African Americans living along Rock Creek and the major road connecting the City of Washington with Montgomery County.

Option 5

Places of Worship: Suburbanization and Mid-Century Religious Architecture in Montgomery County

Presented by Teresa Lachin

Like many other areas throughout the country, Montgomery County experienced unprecedented population growth during the post-World War II era, fueling the demand for new social, educational, commercial, and religious facilities. This paper surveys Montgomery County's mid-century religious architecture, examining varying ways that modern architectural theories and technologies were adapted to and compatible with the liturgical and social needs of new and existing religious denominations.

Afternoon General Session

Ten Days in September 1956

Presented by Joey Geehreg, Panel Discussion to Follow

"Ten Days in September 1956" is a documentary that revisits the desegregation of Poolesville High School in Maryland during the Civil Rights movement. Set in September 1956, the film explores the challenges and victories experienced by the school and its community over a crucial ten-day period. Through a combination of archival newspaper reports and in-depth interviews with historians, the documentary provides valuable historical context and insight into the broader struggle for racial equality. Personal accounts from students, teachers, and community members who witnessed or participated in these events offer an intimate and powerful look at the fear, hope, and determination that marked this era. By reflecting on this key moment in history through a local lens, the film highlights the significance of desegregation in shaping the future of public education and civil rights in America.