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**STORY**

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# 5 New Objects + 5 Transformative Years: Montgomery History 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition

By Sammie Hatton & Sarah Hedlund





Montgomery History envisions an active intellectual life rooted in an understanding and appreciation of our individual and collective histories. Its mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and share the histories of all of Montgomery County's residents and communities.

*The Montgomery County Story*, in publication since 1957, features scholarly articles on topics of local interest. It is the only journal solely devoted to research on the rich and colorful past of Montgomery County, Maryland.

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Montgomery History was founded in June 1944 as the Montgomery County Historical Society, a local branch of the Maryland Historical Society. Its meetings operated similarly to other shared-interest clubs of the time, where members discussed national and world history amongst themselves, and invited guest speakers to educate them on various general history topics. This evolved into a desire to better understand local Montgomery County history, as well as an interest, starting in the mid-1960s and continuing over many decades, in collecting historically significant artifacts. Today, Montgomery History cares for nearly 10,000 objects in its permanent collection, in addition to over 1,000 cubic feet of paper-based special collections and more than 15,000 images.

With appreciation for our roots as a close-knit group of history enthusiasts, Montgomery History has, within the last five years, moved its collecting focus away from the static interpretation of an individual property to the acquisition of more dynamic and culturally relevant objects that reflect the experiences of a larger proportion of today's Montgomery Countians. Concurrently, the societal shifts instigated by the COVID-19 pandemic have pushed us to adopt new ways to deliver our programs and provide services. Our online programming, which continues to increase in popularity, engages enthusiastic audiences with weekly webinars on historical topics, and provides dynamic online exhibits and digitized collections material available to all. These changes have allowed us to further our commitment to accessibility, inclusivity, engagement, and relevance while positioning our library and artifact collections at the cornerstone of the organization.

To the last point, we present in this special anniversary edition of the *Story* a curated sample of the newest items from our museum and library collections that exemplify our evolving vision. For our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019, our curator and members of our Collections Committee assembled 75 items from the objects in our care that physically represented a broad spectrum of notable events, time periods, and cultural changes across Montgomery County's history, presented in an online exhibit called "75 Objects + 75 Stories." This year, for our 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we are highlighting five more objects, added to our collections in the last five years, that represent key elements of our mission and collecting strategy as our organization continues to share and interpret the history of Montgomery County into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## PRIDE FLAG

This rainbow flag symbolizing LGBTQ+ Pride became the first Pride flag ever to be flown from the Montgomery County Executive Office Building in Rockville, when it was raised on June 10, 2019. It was donated to Montgomery History by Councilmember Evan Glass at the annual History Conference in January, 2020. “We live in a beautifully diverse community and the Pride flag is a symbol and reminder of the ongoing civil rights struggle for members of the LGBTQ+ community,” he said in a speech given at the conference. “Today, more than ever, every resident of Montgomery County deserves to feel safe living their lives as they truly are. I am proud to donate this historic symbol so that years from now, residents of Montgomery County can reflect upon the progress we have made.”

Montgomery County today is generally perceived as a progressive place, although that current atmosphere has been hard-won over time, established by those who fought for recognition, rights, and protections for its LGBTQ+ citizens. The county has always been slightly more progressive than the state of Maryland, which specifically prohibited same-sex marriage in 1973. Only eleven years later, Montgomery County’s Council passed a law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation, adding it to the existing anti-discrimination policy on February 24, 1984. The state of Maryland did not provide similar anti-discrimination protections until 2001. Montgomery County’s first Pride celebration was held on June 26, 1993 at Parklawn Park in Rockville, and attended by more than 200 people. Organized by the Montgomery County Gay and Lesbian Interests Consortium (GLIC), Montgomery’s Pride celebration was considered a low-key and family-friendly event compared to the livelier parades that were held in Washington, D.C., and Baltimore. After taking place in several different venues for its first few years, Montgomery Pride was moved to Lake Needwood Park in 1996 and to the campus of Montgomery College in 1999. Typical of the ongoing balance between celebration and struggle for the LGBTQ+ community, these early Pride festivals took place concurrently with a decade-long fight to extend domestic partner benefits for government employees to same-sex couples, legislation which was introduced in 1990 and was finally passed by the council in 1999. Reversing its 1973 law, the state of Maryland legalized same-sex marriage in 2013, ahead of the 2015 Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges* that guaranteed same-sex couples the right to marriage nationwide. In 2019, the County Council passed the “LGBTQ Bill of Rights,” expanding the anti-discrimination code to include HIV status and gender expression, particularly banning discrimination in healthcare.



First Pride flag flown from the County Executive Building in 2019. Now in the collection of Montgomery History. Donated in 2020.

Donor Evan Glass was the first openly LGBTQ+ person elected to the Montgomery County Council when he took office in 2018. He was instrumental in both the inauguration of Pride Month the following June as well as the flying of the Pride flag to commemorate the celebrations. There was public backlash based on a misunderstanding when the Pride flag was raised that day on a pole that traditionally flew the POW/MIA flag at the Executive Office Building. Many angry Montgomery County residents assumed the Pride flag had “replaced” the POW/MIA flag, but in fact the proper hardware did not exist on any of the poles to allow for more than one flag. This oversight was quickly remedied the following day and the POW/MIA flag was again flown in its typical place, alongside the Pride flag. However, the misinformation persisted and Councilmember Glass’s office in particular received a significant amount of hate mail following the ceremony—a reminder that progress is always a series of forward and backward steps.

This particular Pride flag represents the original six-color version standardized in 1979. For Pride Month in 2021, Montgomery County raised the Progress Pride flag, which contains color bands representing LGBTQ+ people of color as well as trans identities. Most recently, in 2024, the Intersex-Inclusive Pride flag was raised, which in addition to the above color bands includes a yellow space with a purple circle.



Councilmember Evan Glass (at right) at the 2020 History Conference, donating the Pride flag to Montgomery History's Matt Logan.

Visit our online exhibit [\*LGBTQ+ Heritage in Montgomery County\*](#) to learn more about LGBTQ+ history in Montgomery County.

## ODESSA SHANNON CAMPAIGN POSTER

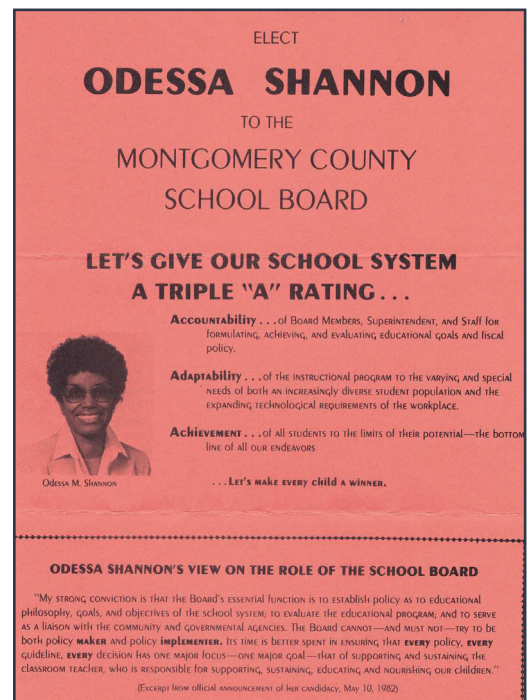
This campaign poster with the slogan “Shannon for Sure” was used during Odessa Shannon’s successful campaign for the Montgomery County School Board. She was elected on November 2, 1982, becoming the first Black woman to hold a policymaking political position in Montgomery County.

A native of Washington, D.C., Odessa M. Shannon was born July 4, 1928 to Gladys and Raymond McKenzie, and educated in the D.C. public schools, graduating as valedictorian of her high school class. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts and began her public career as a teacher in the Baltimore Public Schools, later transitioning to a career in the federal government. She rose from the ranks to attain one of the highest non-political positions in the Senior Executive Service, that of National Program Director for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The 1982 Montgomery County school board elections were politically charged owing to recent unpopular actions taken by the majority-Republican incumbent Board, led for the previous two years by Marian Greenblatt. Under “the Green Machine,” the Board had proposed controversial school closings that, according to an ACLU report, “tended to increase the percentage of racially isolated schools,” effectively reversing previous efforts at sustaining integration. Litigation ensued, at the expense of the taxpayers, and the State Board of Education ultimately ruled against the county board’s plan. This was the backdrop to the 1982 election, in which four of the seven seats on the county’s school board were up for grabs. This election was also influenced by the formation of the grassroots Educational Political Action Committee (known as EDPAC), a bipartisan coalition of voters supporting certain candidates for the school board who “share our desire for higher educational standards and basic political fairness,” according to its president, Jon Gerson. EDPAC endorsed a slate of four candidates that included Odessa Shannon, along with Marilyn Praisner, Bob Schoenberg, and Jim Cronin. Odessa Shannon campaigned on a platform of “Accountability, Adaptability, and Achievement” and a strong belief that the board should establish policy, not implement it. The four EDPAC candidates swept the top spots in both the primary and the election, overturning the previous majority and indicating voters were ready for a change.



Odessa M. Shannon’s 1982 campaign poster for the Montgomery County Board of Education. Now part of Montgomery History’s Jane Sween Research Library and Special Collections. Donated in 2021.



Flyer advertising Shannon’s campaign goals, 1982.

Asked about her history-making achievement, Shannon said, “I have been the only Black something or the other, or the only woman something or the other, practically all of my adult life, so that it does not present me with any problems whatsoever. Nor does it present me with any problems to be an advocate for the Black community...nor does it present me with any problems to be an advocate for all children.”

During Shannon’s tenure, the board’s primary accomplishments included hiring superintendent Wilmer S. Cody as well as establishing a plan of action to address student performance and respond to changing technology, while contending with record-low enrollment by 1983. Less than two years into her four-year term on the school board, Odessa Shannon was offered a position as Special Assistant to County Executive Charles Gilchrist (she was also the first woman to hold this position). She resigned her school board seat in August of 1984, and Dr. Jeremiah Floyd was selected to serve out the remainder of her term, amidst controversy between board members and the local NAACP.



Odessa Shannon (right) talks with Superintendent Wilmer S. Cody at the Board of Education meeting on September 24, 1984, where she resigned her seat. The Board presented Shannon with a collage commemorating her two years of service.

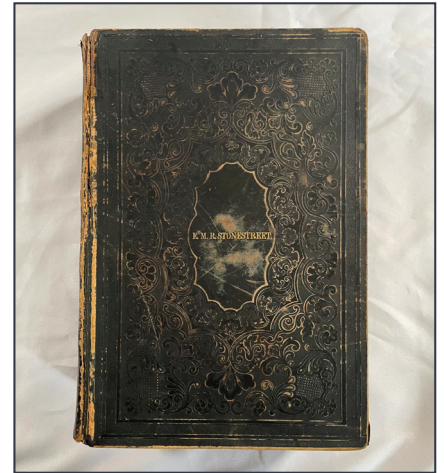
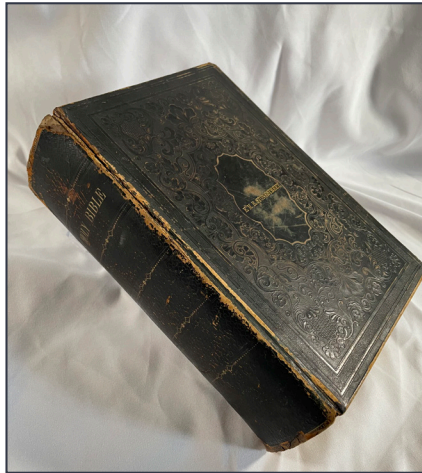
Following her post under Gilchrist, Shannon served as Deputy Director of the Department of Family Resources, and from 1995-2008 she was the Executive Director of the Montgomery County Human Rights Commission (previously the Human Relations Commission). She was involved in numerous civic and community activities throughout her career and served on the board of directors of several organizations, including Montgomery Housing Partnership, Harriet’s List, United Way, the Montgomery County Arts Council, the Regional Institute of Children and Adolescents, and Positive Shades of Blacks. She was also one of the original directors of National Political Congress of Black Women, founded by former presidential candidate Shirley Chisholm, and the recipient of multiple awards for her political and community service.

Odessa Shannon passed away in May 2020 at the age of 91. The current Odessa M. Shannon Middle School in Silver Spring (formerly named for E. Brooke Lee) was rechristened in her honor in 2021. Her daughter Lisa donated her mother’s scrapbooks and documents, as well as this poster to Montgomery History that same year.

## STONESTREET BIBLE

This is the Stonestreet family Bible, presented to Dr. Edward Elisha Stonestreet and his wife Martha Rebecca (Barry) Stonestreet by her father, the Rev. Basil Barry, in 1856. Edward E. Stonestreet was born in 1830. His study of medicine, typical of the time, began with a two-year apprenticeship, alongside Dr. William Bowie Magruder (1802-1873) of Brookeville, and continued at the University of Maryland Medical School, where he graduated in 1852. He set up his practice in Rockville shortly after and served mainly as a

country doctor, traveling to homes and farms all over Montgomery County in addition to treating patients in his home. During the Civil War, he served as an Examining Surgeon for the Union Army, determining if young men were fit for duty, as well as a Contract Surgeon, treating wounded at the courthouse in Rockville. After the war, he returned to private practice, tending to the medical needs of his community.



Stonestreet family Bible, now in the collection of Montgomery History's Jane Sween Research Library and Special Collections. Donated in 2022.



The Stonestreet family, c. 1885. Back row: Ella Magruder Stonestreet (Linthicum), Martha "Mattie" W. Stonestreet (Abert), and Edith May Stonestreet (Lamar). Center row: Mary Adelaide "Addie" Stonestreet (Green), Dr. Edward E. Stonestreet, Martha Rebecca (Barry) Stonestreet, and Caroline "Carrie" Hall Stonestreet (Thomas). Front: Elizabeth "Bessie" Rebecca Stonestreet (Prettyman).

Edward and Martha Stonestreet were married in 1852, and had six daughters and one son—all six daughters married prominent local men. As a young man, their son, Edward Stonestreet Jr., was training with his father to practice medicine, but tragically died of typhoid when he was only 21. Following the loss of his son, Dr. Stonestreet instead trained his son-in-law Otis Linthicum to take over his practice, although the two operated contemporaneously for many years. He was also assisted in his later years by a nephew, Dr. Washington Waters Stonestreet, who subsequently set up his own practice in Frederick, Maryland. Dr. Edward Stonestreet died in 1903, after serving his community for more than 50 years.



The Stonestreet family Bible was published c.1850 by the American Bible Society of New York. It is monogrammed on the front in gold: "E.M.R. Stonestreet" (presumably E. for Edward and M.R. for Martha Rebecca). Although Edward always preferred "E.E." rather than a single E as an abbreviation of his name, the space allotted for the monogram appears too narrow to include any additional letters. The cover is embossed with a fleur-de-lis design in gold, with the pages also edged in gold. On the family pages, in the middle of the book between the Old and New Testaments, are handwritten entries recording the births and marriages of all the couple's children, as well as the deaths of Martha's parents and their son Edward. Under the entry for Edward's death is written a common 19th century mortality sentiment:

*Altho' the links are breaking  
In the family band  
A chain is forming  
In the better land*

And alongside the edge of the page,

*"Our only son."*

Donors Jack and Davina Smith spotted the Bible at a 2022 estate sale in Rockville, recognized the Stonestreet name, and purchased it for \$2, immediately offering it as a donation to Montgomery History's collection. Their knowledge of local history and recognition of the Bible's significance led to the preservation of an important artifact connected to one of Montgomery County's most celebrated residents.



Archivist Sarah Hedlund (at right) accepts the donation of the Bible from Jack and Davina Smith (at left) while docent and Stonestreet biographer Clarence Hickey (center) looks on, 2022.

## COVID-19 MASKS AND PATTERNS

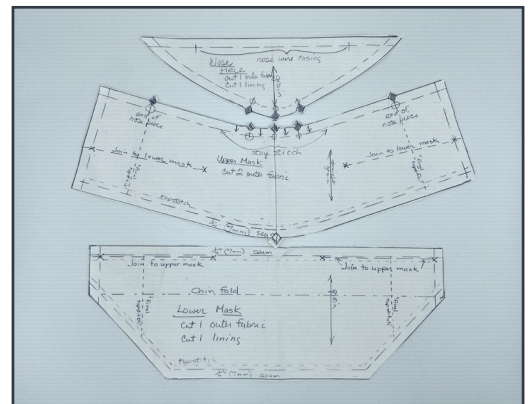
At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the world was in a panic when the government ordered stay-at-home mandates to stop the spread of the mysterious virus. Due to supply chain disruptions, N95 and regular surgical masks, along with many household cleaning essentials, were difficult to obtain. Many institutions even donated their existing supplies of masks, nitrile gloves, and disinfectants to essential workers during this period, including Montgomery History, which maintains a stock of nitrile gloves for use in handling collections material. Furthermore, the public was discouraged from purchasing masks, to ensure the limited availability of these supplies was reserved for essential medical personnel and food service professionals who could not work remotely. Once mask-wearing was determined the most effective way to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) advised citizens to create makeshift masks at home using bandanas or other fabrics. Those with sewing skills began to design masks for their families and friends; some even went into business selling their masks online.



Mask sewn by Montgomery County resident Sarah Weiner, now in the collection of Montgomery History. Donated in 2023.

Montgomery County resident Sarah Weiner, a freelance musician, plays oboe and recorder with various ensembles, including the Washington Bach Consort and the North Carolina Baroque Orchestra. She had also recently left her day job as a travel agent to start her own travel consulting business, but the next month, March 2020, the world shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Having sewn since she was a teenager, Sarah began using fabric scraps to make her own masks, adapting patterns she found online. Using craft foam and flower arranging wire, she made them structured around the nose and as comfortable as possible. When personal hygiene supplies were in low supply and high demand, she was able to locally trade her homemade masks for toilet paper and other hard-to-find supplies. She also sent them to her family members and donated them to friends and neighbors in her community.

To keep in practice, Sarah and her musical colleagues started playing chamber music outside and socially distanced; they also met on Zoom to keep in touch and play music for each other. She even created a special mask with an opening through which she could play her oboe. When musical ensembles tentatively began programming socially distanced concerts, Sarah recalled that wind and brass players (as well as vocalists) were often excluded, for fear of airborne transmission of the virus. Instead, the programming for this early return of performances would favor string instruments and keyboards only, which seemed less of a risk. As the pandemic wore on and testing became more widely available, the ensembles that she performed in started to require mandatory testing instead, relaxing rules about wearing masks. Eventually, the world crept closer to normal, and Sarah was able to resume a regular orchestral rehearsal, performance, and travel schedule.



Pattern and final version of a mask for oboe-playing, designed by Sarah Weiner.

## MARIA MONISERA RETIREMENT QUILT

This handmade quilt was a gift to Maria Monisera from her faculty and staff when she retired in 1982 as principal of New Hampshire Estates Elementary School in Silver Spring. After Maria's death, this quilt passed on to her daughter, Linda McKenna, who in turn gave it to Barbara Cronin, one of Maria's former colleagues and a close friend. Donated to Montgomery History with the quilt was Maria's life story in the form of a memoir she wrote for her daughter in 2002.

Maria Monisera was born in Alajuela, Costa Rica on January 8, 1920 as Maria Isabel Vargas Salas. Her father was a politician and diplomat and her mother was a schoolteacher and principal. In 1942, at the age of 22, Maria left Costa Rica on a scholarship to study in America, at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. The following year she started her master's degree at George Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee, where many U.S. Air Force soldiers were stationed during World War II. While serving these soldiers in the cafeteria, Maria met Frank Monisera. After a two-year friendship which both expected to end with the war and Maria's intended return to Costa Rica, Frank proposed to her in the summer of 1944, and Maria decided to stay in her adopted country with her new husband. The young couple moved to the Washington, D.C., area in 1945 and had two children, Richard and Linda. Once the children reached school age, Maria returned to work as a teacher.

In 1952, Maria was hired by Montgomery County Public Schools to teach at Twinbrook Elementary, a new school opening in Rockville. By 1965, she had transitioned into the administration side of the system, at which time she was appointed assistant principal of Jackson Road Elementary School in Silver Spring, followed by her appointment as principal of New Hampshire Estates Elementary School in 1967. To better serve the community and her students, a significant percentage of whom were the children of recent immigrants, Maria established a cafeteria that served breakfast, created robust after-school programs, and fought to have a gymnasium built to provide a safe environment for physical activity. Hers was the first elementary school in the county to have a dedicated gymnasium. After 15 years as principal, she decided to retire in 1982.



Handmade quilt made by the staff of New Hampshire Estates Elementary School and presented to retiring principal Maria Monisera in 1982, now in the collection of Montgomery History. Donated in 2023.



Frank Monisera and Maria Vargas Salas in 1944, shortly before their wedding.

In honor of Maria’s retirement, the teachers and staff of New Hampshire Estates Elementary School planned numerous special events and gifts to show their appreciation for her longtime leadership, including the memorial quilt pictured here. Each staff member created a single square with a personal message or symbol representing their connections to Maria, which were then sewed together to create this quilt. It was given to Maria at her birthday party that year. The school’s gymnasium that existed due to Maria’s tireless efforts was named the “Maria Monisera Gym” in her honor.



Gymnasium named after Maria Monisera following her retirement as principal.



Members of Maria’s staff posing with their individual squares to contribute to the final quilt, 1982.

**You can learn more about Maria’s story in “*The Immigrant Experience in Montgomery County*” **exhibit online.****

Looking ahead to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Montgomery County, we at Montgomery History remain committed to our mission to collect, preserve, interpret, and share the histories of all Montgomery County residents. As the only organization addressing the entire scope of county history, Montgomery History is hard at work every day to engage, inspire, and connect with all the people of this county.

We are making great strides toward becoming one of the nation’s most progressive and innovative historical organizations, and we look forward to building on this momentum to better serve Montgomery County and its residents for years and generations to come.

## About the Authors

**Sammie Hatton**, Director of Collections, began volunteering for Montgomery History in 2017, working with collections and later joining the Collections Committee. She became Collections Manager in May 2023. She oversees the daily care and safekeeping of the museum collections, maintains the object database, and processes incoming object donations. She received her Master of Arts in Museum Studies, focusing on Collections Management, from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. She has previously worked in collections for Dumbarton House, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, and the Ohio History Connection. Sammie lives in Rockville and enjoys reading and frequenting bakeries and boba shops in the area.

**Sarah Hedlund**, Archivist/Librarian, holds a Master of Library and Information Science from the University of Maryland with a specialization in archives and digital curation. She joined the staff at Montgomery History in the fall of 2016 as Archivist for the Montgomery County Archives, later adding the title of Librarian and Archivist for the Jane C. Sween Research Library and Special Collections in 2017. She also serves as the editor for the historical research journal *The Montgomery County Story*, in which she has also published several articles. Previous to Sarah's position with Montgomery History, she worked as a freelance contract archivist, a graduate assistant archivist for the University of Maryland's Special Collections and University Archives, and an archival intern in the Archives Center of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. Sarah moved to Rockville, Maryland in 2015, having worked in west Michigan for more than 20 years as a professional violinist and music teacher.

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