

2026 MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORY CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 7, 2026 | GERMANTOWN, MD



Session Descriptions and Speaker Bios

Morning General Session

The Summer of 1787: The Men, and Committees, Who Invented the Constitution

David O. Stewart

Fifty-five delegates met at the Philadelphia Convention to create the world's first constitutional democracy. Fiery rhetoric articulated their many conflicts that underlay the hard bargaining that invented a government to meet the crises of the not-quite-united states - huge debts, hostile neighbors, armed rebellion, and the very real prospect of dissolving into three nations or more. It was a desperate balancing act. The people should have power, but could they be trusted? Would a strong central government leave room for the states? And what of the grinding compromises over slavery, America's original sin?

David O. Stewart has published eleven award-winning and best-selling books of history and historical fiction winning seven "best book" awards. In 2023, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Washington Independent Review of Books. His most recent book is *The Democracy We Must Keep: Seven Founders, Nine Documents, and the Ideas That Shaped America*. His most recent fictional series, *The Overstreet Saga*, is inspired by family stories his mother told. He lives in Maryland with the light of his life, Nancy Floreen; they have three children and six grandchildren.

Morning Concurrent Sessions

"There's Nothing Wrong With Me": A New Look at Disability in Montgomery County

Brenna Ryan

What do Oprah Winfrey, Eric Carpenter-Grantham, Mattie Stepanek, Sharyn Duffin, and Eunice Kennedy Shriver have to do with the story of disability in Montgomery County? Find out in this session named after a quote from Sharyn Duffin, who despite an illness that left her blind and paralyzed, declared “There’s nothing wrong with me.” Beyond the star-studded and newsworthy flashes, Montgomery County’s history of people with disabilities mirrors the American experience. Ryan takes us through pre-colonial Indigenous ideology, colonialism, slavery, state intervention, eugenics, punitive sterilization, civil rights, and the push toward accessibility and inclusion, featuring the stories of Montgomery Countians with disabilities.

Brenna Ryan is a historian that specializes in post-Reconstruction-era United States including the intersections of gender, race, and disability. She has additional research experience related to international views of US democracy, international relations, international security through a strategic cultural lens, and U.S. political narratives. Brenna is currently the Director of Development at Montgomery History where she is committed to ensuring public access to accurate and diverse history resources and programming (like this conference!). She earned a BA in History from Utah State University.

The Man in the Gray Hat: A Pictorial History of FDA Inspections and Food in the 1910s

Frank Riccio

John F. Earnshaw (1868-1952) was one of the first cohort of inspectors of the Bureau of Chemistry tasked with enforcing the 1906 Food and Drugs Act. Uniquely, Earnshaw was directed to photograph his work as an inspector offering us a rare glimpse of daily life in street markets, factories, and grocery stores in the Washington/Baltimore area. Frank Riccio discusses the invaluable historical resources of Earnshaw-Olmstead Photos, and what it tells us about food in the early 20th century.

Frank Riccio is the Archivist of the Food and Drug Administration’s History Office where he works to collect and preserve the history of the agency. A graduate of Colby-Sawyer College and a current master’s student at Indiana University, Frank’s passion for history is translated into his work as an archivist and historian. A New Hampshire native, he lives in Washington, D.C., with his wife Elizabeth, and their cat, Maple Leaf.

***The Noodge*: Exploring the History of the Save our Scotland Movement**

A new book unveiling by authors Joyce B. Siegel and Paul B. Tukey, with Knight Kiplinger

Join authors Joyce and Paul in a discussion about their new book moderated by Knight Kiplinger. Sixty years in the making, *The Noodge* is equal parts Joyce Siegel's memoir from her time working with the historic Scotland community of Potomac, Maryland, as well as 20 chapters focused on the varied cast of characters who helped the Save our Scotland movement change America for the better.

Joyce Bernhardt Siegel is a longtime Montgomery County community activist whose determination helped transform Scotland, a historic Black community in Potomac, into a national model of interracial cooperation and affordable housing. Her work in the 1960s brought together residents, government officials, philanthropists, and civic leaders around the belief that a community could preserve its identity while creating new opportunities for its families. **Paul Boardway Tukey** is an award-winning author, journalist, and nonprofit leader who has spent years telling stories of people and communities that have shaped American life.

Montgomery County Stories from the U.S. Colored Troops

Julianne Mangin

Among the thousands of African Americans who served in the U.S. Colored Troops (USCT) during the Civil War were men who had a connection to Montgomery County, Maryland. Using military, pension, and genealogical records, Julianne Mangin has pieced together stories of their lives before, during, and after the war. Some USCT veterans played key roles in the formation of the African American kinship communities of Montgomery County.

Julianne Mangin is an independent researcher, writer, family historian, and cemetery preservation advocate. She is a retired librarian who worked as a website developer at the Library of Congress from 1998 to 2011. Prior to that, she worked at the National Agricultural Library from 1984 to 1997. She holds a master's degree in library science from Catholic University. Ms. Mangin gives talks on the history of the Aspin Hill Pet Cemetery; the Woman's Commonwealth of Washington, a feminist commune in Colesville; Will Adams, the fiddler of Ken-Gar; and the Montgomery County Poor Farm and Almshouse.

Afternoon Concurrent Sessions

Jim Crow in Montgomery County, Maryland

L. Paige Whitley

For African Americans in Montgomery County, until the 1960s constant restrictions and potential dangers affected everyday life. Jim Crow, a system of laws and social practices aimed at keeping the races separate and Black citizens subordinate, affected how African Americans were educated, what jobs they could have, where they could live, whom they could marry, and more. And against this restrictive backdrop loomed threats of violence and intimidation. Jim Crow operated through a quiet web of laws and social customs working hand in hand. This talk will outline how Jim Crow manifested itself in Montgomery County in legislation, schooling, economics, and housing and through everyday slights, rejections and violence, and how in the 1950s and 1960s the county chapter of the NAACP and others began pressuring for change as the Civil Rights movement gained momentum. Jim Crow finally began to fracture as greater resistance to segregation, new attitudes towards race, and the county's Public Accommodations Act of 1962 outlawing racial and religious discrimination in places of public accommodations brought about social changes.

L. Paige Whitley is an independent local historian and researcher who specializes in bringing to light little-known African American history in Montgomery County, Maryland, and the greater Washington, D.C. area. Her research includes, but is not limited to, the deep, multi-decade connection between American Red Cross founder Clara Barton and Emma Jones, a housekeeper and midwife from the historic Black community of Gibson Grove/No. 10 in Cabin John; the history of Black benevolent societies during segregation; and the story of the Reverend Jacob Ross, an itinerant preacher based in Georgetown who served nascent Black communities in and around D.C. during and after the Civil War. Recently she wrote and directed the short documentary film "Help Us to Help Each Other, Lord: The Story of Morningstar Tabernacle No. 88 in Cabin John, Maryland" for Friends of Moses Hall.

Montgomery County's Deep History

Cassandra Michaud

Long before Montgomery County was established, generations of Indigenous peoples lived in and traveled through this region. Their presence and experiences are reflected in the archaeological record, offering insights into how people navigated changing environments, engaged in trade, and maintained social connections over thousands of years. This

presentation draws on archaeological research from across the county to explore those stories and highlight how ongoing investigations continue to expand our understanding of the region's deep history.

Cassandra Michaud is the Cultural Resources Stewardship Supervisor for Montgomery Parks. She holds an M.A. in Archaeology from Boston University and a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Maryland, College Park. She has nearly 30 years of archaeological experience, with the past 15 devoted to leading archaeological investigations for Montgomery Parks. Her research spans sites throughout the county and includes the Josiah Henson site and the Ednor Soapstone Quarry. Through that work, she focuses on connecting archaeology, local history, and the landscape to deepen understanding of the past and demonstrate the value of preserving and sharing our collective histories.

Why isn't Bethesda a City?: Municipal Incorporation and its Absence in Montgomery County, Maryland, 1930-1960

Amanda Lehman

Why are there so few cities, towns, or villages within Montgomery County? Why are so many government functions carried out at the county level? Amanda Lehman will argue that there has been so little municipal incorporation because the state and local governmental institutions created before mass-suburbanization made incorporation in Montgomery County an unusually high hurdle, for an uncommonly small reward. The talk will detail the structural factors established before the 1940s and then examine a series of incorporation attempts between 1930 and 1960, investigating why the residents wanted to incorporate, what they tried, and why most of them failed.

Amanda Lehman is a middle and high school teacher and a graduate student in history at the University of Maryland. She is writing her master's thesis on the governmental structure of Montgomery County and its role in shaping the recent history of the area. She has lived in MoCo since 2020.

Creating a National Park to Commemorate Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools

Dorothy A. Canter

Dorothy Canter will cover the activities to establish the multisite Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park, with emphasis on an interactive map and the extensive database of all Rosenwald Schools confirmed to still exist. An important focus

will be the 54 Rosenwald Schools that remain in Maryland. The map and database, which will be officially launched on October 13, will be available to the public free of charge and will be an important research tool and a means to rally support for the National Park and help preserve more Rosenwald Schools.

Prior to her retirement **Dorothy A. Canter, Ph.D.**, was an expert on the decontamination of anthrax and other bioterrorism agents and in preparedness activities for responding to and recovering from attacks with weapons of mass destruction, first at the Environmental Protection Agency and then at the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory. She received both a B.S. in mathematics and a Ph.D. in biophysics from The George Washington University. She has been a volunteer for the National Parks Conservation Association for 38 years, serving on its Board of Trustees for nine years. She currently is the President of the Campaign to Create the Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park. She served on the boards of the Shenandoah National Park Trust and the Capital Jewish Museum in Washington, D.C. She has visited 341 National Park sites.

Closing General Session

FreedomWalk2026: Retracing the Underground Railroad in the 250th Year of Our Nation's Independence

Anthony Cohen

Join historian Anthony Cohen as he recounts his 800-mile journey from Maryland to Canada from May 4-July 4, 2026. Cohen will share the inspiration behind the project, along with images and footage captured along the way, revealing how the efforts of previous generations continue to propel the present toward truth-telling and transformation.

Anthony Cohen is a historian, author, and explorer of the American past. An early purveyor of experiential history, he launched his career in the spring of 1996, embarking on a two-month journey to explore the Underground Railroad, the secret network that thousands of enslaved Americans traveled to attain their freedom. Cohen is founder and president of The Menare Foundation, Inc., a national nonprofit organization dedicated to “Preserving the Legacy of the Underground Railroad,” and operates the Button Farm Living History Center, a 40-acre farm that depicts 1850s plantation life in Maryland.