

# Scuttlebutt

December 15, 2010

## Meet The New Members Of The Museum Board

Six new members were introduced at the most recent meeting of the Ocean City Life-Saving Station Museum Society's Board of Directors held on October 20. Here is what each of them shared about their backgrounds, their interests and their support for the continuing mission of the Society.

**AMANDA CROPPER** Amanda lives near Berlin, Maryland. For thirty years she co-owned and ran a paint business in the Midway Shopping Center on 8th Street in Ocean City. After she retired from the paint business, Amanda opened a shop in Berlin specializing in primitive furniture and architectural pieces found in barns and out buildings, as well as interior decorating. In her spare time she enjoys cooking and entertaining, collecting antiques, reading and "walking my beauty princess dog, Stella Mae Marie (Stella to her friends)". Amanda was a member of the original Board when the Museum was first established, and was delighted to be asked to serve once again. She particularly enjoys the personal stories of Ocean City's early pioneers, "the movers and shakers and builders of the town" along with "the characters that we had. According to tales from my parents and others, we had no shortage of them."

**GORDON KATZ** Gordon lives in Ellicott City, Maryland with his wife Cindy, where he works in the Finance Department of a large national health care company. He has written several articles on the history of Ocean City which appear on the Museum's website and has published other Maryland historical pieces in various specialty journals. When he's not working or engaged in one research project or another, Gordon enjoys collecting postcards and Maryland postal history, playing tennis, cooking and getting to the beach as often

as possible. He credits his interest in the history of Ocean City to former Museum curator Sue Hurley, who he says has inspired and encouraged him to delve into the town's fascinating past. "I am deeply honored", he adds "that I was asked to join the other members of the Board and to be able to share their collective enthusiasm for the town, its people and its history."

**HUNTER MANN** "Bunk" Mann lives in Ocean Pines with his wife Shari. He is a partner in Mann & Gray Insurance Associates located in Fruitland, Maryland, with



**New board members from left; Gordon Katz, Bunk Mann, Amanda Cropper, Maggie Steimer, Lou Parsons and Melanie Merryweather**

clients all over the Lower Eastern Shore. While in high school and college he spent his summers in Ocean City working as a beach boy for Rhem Lane's Ocean City Beach Service, a busboy at the English Chicken House and as a waiter for three years at the Embers Restaurant. His father was a partner of Dr. Frank Townsend at the 10th Street Medical Center in the 1970s and 1980s, and his mother still lives on Bayshore Drive. Bunk's hobbies include travel, photography, following University of Maryland football and basketball and collecting fire department memorabilia. He has a strong love of local history and joined the Board to help preserve and expand the

Museum's outstanding collection of photos and artifacts. He is currently working on a book entitled "Vanishing Ocean City" which will include photos and personal memories of many Ocean City locals. Bunk notes that "I have always loved Ocean City and spent some of the best times of my life there!"

**MELANIE AYRES MERRYWEATHER** Melanie says "I was pleased to be asked to serve on the Board of the Ocean City Museum Society." She is a native of Worcester County and has lived in Dorchester County for the past forty years with her husband, E. Thomas Merryweather, Esq. A graduate of St. Mary's Junior College and the University of Maryland, Melanie feels fortunate to have been able to devote a great deal of her life to non-profit work. Her community service includes roles as the current president of the Grand National Waterfowl Association in Cambridge, state registrar of National Society Colonial Dames of America in Maryland and treasurer of the Eastern Shore Committee. She is also chapter librarian for General Levin Winder Chapter DAR, past Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Dorchester County

Historical Society, chairman of the committee to create a life size sculpture of a Great Blue Heron known as "the Patient Fisher" at Long Wharf Park, membership chair for the Friends of the Dorchester County Library and the compiler of several Worcester and Dorchester County family genealogy reference books. In addition, Melanie is currently a member of the Standing Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Easton in Maryland and former member of the Diocesan Council, a director of the Old Trinity Church Association and the compiler of graveyard record

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## ***Board of Directors***

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**Thomas D. Wimbrow**

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**Melanie Merryweather**

**Joseph E. Moore, Esq.**

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**Margaret Steimer**

**Robert T. Stevens, III**

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*City Council Liason*

## Museum Society Holds First Annual Locals and Membership Appreciation Week

The Ocean City Museum Society held its First Annual "Locals and Membership Appreciation Week" from October 24 through October 31.



**The winner of the Scavenger Hunt, Helen Wiley with her husband Michael.**

As a way of saying thanks, the Board Members of the Ocean City Museum Society invited all local Ocean City residents and

current Members to visit and enjoy the Museum and the special events that were planned for the week. Additional discounts in the gift shop

for members and locals were offered during the week. Daily events included George and Suzanne Hurley reading stories from their book, fish feeding, book signing, outdoor movie screening of "Violets are Blue" and a scavenger hunt. Some of the Museums of Worcester County were offering reciprocal free admission for our members. Many of the Board Members were on hand to greet and speak to visitors. Sixteen new members

were signed up during the week. Many visitors took home membership applications. A good time was had by all.

A special "Stormy Weather" DVD exhibit was unveiled during the week. This DVD shows previously unseen photographs from the Museum's collection of storms that have impacted Ocean City including the 1933 and 1962 storms. This special movie presentation will be on display through April 2011.

Mark your calendars for next year and we will keep you posted on plans for the Second Annual Locals and Membership Appreciation Week.

## New Members....continued

books for four Episcopal Churches.

**LOUIS S. PARSONS III**  
Lou is a resident of West Ocean City. He was born and raised in Ocean City, attending local schools there including the old high school that is now City Hall, and from where both of his parents also graduated. He took an early retirement from CSX in Baltimore a number of years ago and returned to the town where he had grown up. Lou's mother was born on the island and his paternal grandmother had a summer home in Ocean City at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His grandfather was a surgeon as well as an avid sports fisherman in the 1930s and 1940s until his early death in the 1950s, and his father was a founder of the Ocean City Marlin Club and its second president. Lou is a member of

the Atlantic United Methodist Church, Worcester County Humane Society and the Dunes Club of Maryland. His hobbies include gardening and photography. When asked about accepting a position on the Museum's Board, he said "I'm familiar with the town and the local families, so the Museum holds a personal interest for me."

### **MARGARET STEIMER**

Maggie was born in Ocean City and has lived here all her life. Now retired, for the past twenty years she had owned beauty salons named, appropriately, "Maggie's". Her earlier hometown business career included ownership of several gift shops and rental businesses, such as the Gordy Hall Apartments on 45<sup>th</sup> Street and Berkeley Hall on 5<sup>th</sup> Street, which was a rooming house for

young ladies working in Ocean City during the summer season. Her current pursuits include canvas paintings of local birds and other scenes. She was honored to be asked to serve on the Board of the Museum Society, adding that "I am interested in all areas of Ocean City history. As a member of the Showell family, our history also goes back to the beginning of Ocean City."



# Ocean City, Maryland Then & Now

By Gordon Katz

*This article is an introduction to the history of the 204 lots on the original plat of Ocean City. Future articles will trace the history of individual lots, from the original owner to the present day use and appearance.*

## INTRODUCTION

The resort town of Ocean City, Maryland began as a parcel of fifty acres on Sinepuxent Beach, across from Hammock Point. It was bounded on the north and south by what are now North Division and South Division Streets, with the Atlantic Ocean on the east and Sinepuxent Bay on the west. A plat of the new town drawn up in 1875 laid out north-south thoroughfares beginning with Atlantic Avenue along the oceanfront (now the Boardwalk) and continuing west toward the bay with Baltimore, Philadelphia and St. Louis Avenues. The streets running east and west began with Division Street on the town's southern border, and progressed northward with the names of Eastern Shore counties – Worcester, Wicomico, Somerset, Dorchester, Talbot and Caroline. The street along the northern border was unnamed at the time. The plat also marked off 204 building lots, numbered from 1 to 205 (number 8 was skipped for some unknown reason).

The fifty acre tract was conveyed by its owner Stephen Taber, a wealthy Long Island businessman, in three separate deeds formally issued in 1876. The first deed granted lot number 2 to the Atlantic Hotel Company, which had opened the Atlantic Hotel on the site a year earlier. It was the pre-

mier location in town – a full city block front and center on the beach between Somerset and Wicomico Streets. The company also received the twelve building lots on the south side of Somerset Street. Taber's second deed was issued to the Wicomico & Pocomoke Railroad, which had established a rail link between Salisbury and Berlin in 1868 that was extended in 1874 to the western shore of Sinepuxent Bay. A private firm called the Ocean City Bridge Com-



**The Atlantic Hotel on the Boardwalk at Somerset Street circa 1915**

pany built a wooden trestle bridge across the Bay in 1875 allowing the railroad to run its trains all the way into Town to a depot on Baltimore Avenue. The railroad was given title to seventeen lots in the southwest corner of the town demarcated by Division Street, Baltimore Avenue, Worcester Street and the Bay, as well as a right of way down the middle of Division Street and Baltimore Avenue. The third and final deed assigned all of the remaining lots to three trustees, Hillary R. Pitts, B. Jones Taylor and George W. Purnell, to sell and invest the proceeds as they saw fit.

A special meeting was held at the Atlantic Hotel in Ocean City on August 31, 1875 during which each of the Atlantic Hotel Company's 103 stockholders was allocated a lot in

the new town. Lot numbers had been written on shotgun wads and placed in a jar. Lot numbers already set aside for hotels and the railroad were excluded. It also appears that the less desirable parcels closer to the bay side were also excluded. One by one, each stockholder drew a wad from the jar. Several large investors were allowed to draw twice. By the end of the meeting a total of 108 lots had been dispensed to the company's investors. Certificates of ownership were issued, which were formalized as property deeds once the purchase price of \$100 had been paid.

The three trustees appointed by Stephen Taber and their successors sold only three of their sixty-six lots between 1876 and 1890. Part of a fourth lot was given to the U.S. government in 1878 as a site for a life-saving station. A court decree issued in August 1894 stemming from a lawsuit brought by certain of Taber's heirs ordered the remaining properties to be sold. Public auctions of these properties conducted in 1895 and 1896 concluded the distribution of the original 204 lots.



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

### SUPPORTING

#### **Dale Cathell & Family**

Berlin, Maryland

#### **Amanda Cropper**

Berlin, Maryland

### FAMILY

#### **Joseph Flack**

Timonium, Maryland

#### **Paul Hutchinson**

New Orleans, Louisiana

#### **John & Linda Keefe**

Severna Park, Maryland

#### **Claudine & Geren**

#### **Mortensen**

Berlin, Maryland

#### **Pat Veitenthal**

Berlin, Maryland

### INDIVIDUAL

#### **Katherine Boswell**

Odenton, Maryland

#### **Nicholas Clemons**

Pocomoke City, Maryland

#### **Victoria Goeller**

Ellicott City, Maryland

#### **George Mengason**

Salisbury, Maryland

#### **Ed & Pat Grace**

Bishopville, Maryland

#### **Lillian Luciano**

Ocean City, Maryland

#### **Charles Lynch**

Bennettsville, South Carolina

#### **Dawn Murchison**

Charlotte, North Carolina

#### **Donna Sita**

Crofton, Maryland

#### **Jackie Spurrier**

Berlin, Maryland

#### **C. Tregoe**

### STUDENT

#### **Gretchen Johnson**

Whitehall, Pennsylvania

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Station Museum

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We're on the Web!  
[www.ocmuseum.org](http://www.ocmuseum.org)

The Times and Tides of Ocean  
City, Maryland



## Curator's Corner

By Sandy Hurley

In the last issue of SCUTTLEBUTT I used the photograph below to demonstrate the importance of provenance. I asked readers if anyone could possibly identify this building. Shortly after the issue came out, long time Museum Society member and past president, George Hurley, called us and informed us that the building was still in existence.



"Ocean City, MD 1928"

Collection of Della Andrew

### **Here is what he remembers:**

This photo was one of many donated to the Museum recently. It is dated 1928. The building which is located on the east side of Coastal Highway between 36th and 37th Streets was almost certainly built by a retired U. S. Army Cavalryman named Colonel William Mann. He had fought in the Indian Wars and in World War I in France. His principal residence was on the surf bank where the Castle in the Sand Hotel is today. The Colonel's love of Southwestern architecture was evident even in his home. His living room was decorated with pictures of Indian chiefs, lances and bows and arrows. Local citizens thought this building strange in that it was the only building in the area whose walls were completely covered in stucco. The fake roof support logs which protruded from the upper walls along with the stucco which



**The same building today located on Coastal Highway between 36th and 37th Streets**

covered them hints of Navajo adobe style architecture of the southwest.

In my youth the building walls were always painted pink and in fact many locals called it the "pink house." Mann was known to be a very large property owner in what was then far north of Ocean City. Research has shown that he was not related to any locals of that name.