



# THE LEGACY

NEWSLETTER OF THE HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Spring 2018, Volume 55, Number 2*

## GRANVILLE "SONNY" WEHLAND, FORMER SOCIETY PRESIDENT AND LONGTIME BOARD MEMBER, PASSES

BY JOAN M. KASURA

A few days before spring made its wintry entrance this year, the last of HCHS's Wehland presidents departed into history. Granville Wehland, known as "Sonny" to one and all, died on March 18, at age 83. All agree his gregarious enthusiasm for history will be sorely missed. As described by his son Matt Wehland, Sonny was known for his capacity "to bring people together and there were always parties [at his house] with folks standing around the piano."

Most famous of those parties, and usually heavily attended by many members of the Society, were the annual Christmas parties held by Sonny and his wife Connie, who died in 2016. And, in an interesting twist of six degrees, Matt noted that Ambrose Cross, another longtime Ellicott City resident who was profiled in the Winter 2018 issue of *The Legacy*, "used to bartend all the parties that my parents would have."

Matt also remembered his Dad playing the pipe organ at the church which then served as the Society's headquarters, now, of course, the Historical

Society Museum. And, while Matt didn't remember whether or not Sonny played for audiences per se, a September 1974 issue of the newsletter confirms that he did indeed do so. An announcement about an upcoming lecture on the Declaration of Independence by one of the local academics stated "Mr. Granville Wehland will play several musical numbers on the pipe organ, some of these to express the patriotic theme of ... [the] lecture."

During his tenure as president in the early 1980s, Sonny was instrumental in accomplishing several projects on behalf of the Society. For instance, along with other Society members, Sonny worked with both the Governor's Office and the Office of the [Howard] County Executive to have the Society designated the Official Representative of the State of Maryland to place a memorial to John Eager Howard on behalf of the State of Maryland during the Bicentennial Celebration at Cowpens Battlefield, Cowpens, South Carolina in January 1981. And, in classic Sonny fashion, he also worked



with Society member Colonel Knorr to put together "an exciting journey," a "three day bus tour to South Carolina for Society members and friends to participate in the dedication of the Battlefield" (Sept. 1, 1980 Newsletter, 2; April 2, 1980 Newsletter, 2).

A few months later, in another newsletter, Sonny reported, "The Society has taken the lead in saving Belmont [Manor], one of our most valuable,

*Continued on Page 5*

### HCHS MUSEUM

8328 Court Ave., Ellicott City, Maryland 21043  
(Formerly First Presbyterian Church)

**(410) 480-3250**

Hours: Friday, Saturday and Sunday:

1:00 – 5:00 P.M.

[www.hchsmmd.org](http://www.hchsmmd.org)

### HCHS LIBRARY

New location: The Charles Miller Branch Library and Historical Center  
9421 Frederick Rd., Ellicott City, Maryland 21042

**(410) 480-3250** (voice)

Hours: Monday and Tuesday, 1:00-8:00 P.M.

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 1:00- 5:00 P.M.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

STEVE CASTRO



One of the exciting things about working at the Howard County Historical Society (HCHS) is that there are always new projects on the horizon. Our current initiative is the renovation of the Ellicott's Quaker School located next to our HCHS Museum on Court Avenue. The Ellicotts were known for their positive approach towards the education of all children regardless of race or religion. They personally founded, constructed and contributed to many schools in Ellicott City and the surrounding area. This implemented the foundation of the strong educational system in Howard County today.

Our goal at HCHS is to add to the educational curriculum by offering programs for children and adults to broaden their scope of Howard County history. The renovation of the Ellicott Quaker School was cultivated from our children's education program. Our goal is to restructure the building to display a "Life in a Mill Town" exhibit during various times in history. This new project will feature historic artifacts, photos, documents, clothing and furniture from different eras in our history to tell the story of America's First Factory Town.

An additional goal is to work with the Howard County government on the renaissance of Capitoline Hill and the upcoming 250th Anniversary celebration of Ellicott City in 2022. The Quaker School will be the jewel in the crown of Capitoline Hill.

We have completed the first phase of our project plan by acquiring an architectural appraisal of the building to determine the cost of renovation. Our Executive Director, Shawn Gladden, is currently writing grants to fund this major project. This summer we will be planning an aggressive campaign for superb fund-raisers to support the funding. We are also looking for in-kind donations for construction labor and supplies, home remodeling and furnishings.

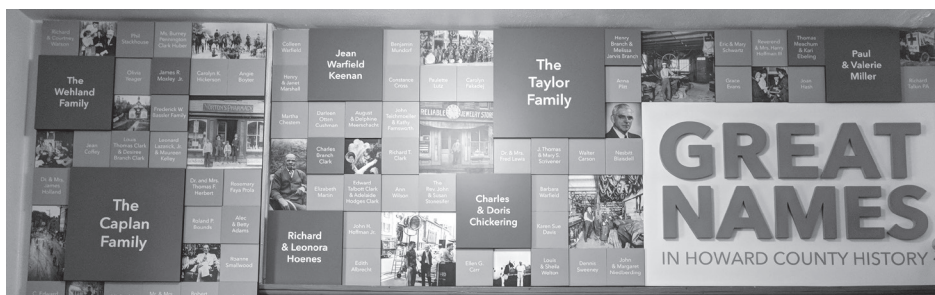
If you are interested in helping us with the renovation - whether monetary, construction or volunteer time, please contact us at 410-480-3250 or [director@hchsm.org](mailto:director@hchsm.org). The Society sincerely appreciates all donations and it is tax deductible! ♣

## EDITOR'S NOTE

JANET KUSTERER

The lead story in this issue remembers the contributions of Sonny Wehland. I first met Sonny and his wife Connie in 1997. I was general chairman of Historic Ellicott City, Inc.'s Decorator Show House, Lilburn, that year and the

Wehland's graciously offered me a parking spot on their driveway right across the street. I got to know them a little bit and even went to a party at their house. I felt like I was transported to the south, surrounded by seersucker and mint juleps in silver cups. They were warm and welcoming and also a lot of fun. They are missed. ♣



GREAT NAMES IN HOWARD COUNTY HISTORY DONOR WALL

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## SEND US YOUR ARTICLES

Anyone interested in contributing articles or photographs or anything of interest to the Society, please call the Library at 410-480-3250 or email Janet Kusterer at [janetkusterer21042@gmail.com](mailto:janetkusterer21042@gmail.com)



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

SHAWN GLADDEN



I begin my report this month with a heavy heart as the Historical Society has lost a few treasured members of its family. Since the last issue of *The Legacy*, former Board Presidents Granville "Sonny" Wehland and Barbara Warfield both passed away. Whereas I did not know Sonny and Barbara very well personally, their legacy and contributions to the Historical Society cannot be understated. Thanks to Joan Kasura, our feature article this month is on Sonny Wehland. We plan on doing a follow up article on Barbara Warfield for the summer issue. We also plan on installing in the lobby of the museum, a Past President's plaque and portrait of Sonny and Connie (who passed away last year). The Wehlends and Barbara Warfield were instrumental in the Society's history and we feel strongly about not only honoring Howard County's history but our own organizational history as well.

By the time this newsletter hits your mailbox, we will have installed two new exhibits at the Museum of Howard County History, *Main Street Ellicott City Through the Years* and *Great Names in Howard County History*. We are having an exhibit opening for both exhibits on Sunday May 6th from 2:00-4:00 at the museum. Refreshments will be served and it is open to the public. The Ellicott City exhibit will feature maps, images and artifacts from our collection dating back to the 1880's. The *Great Names in Howard County History Exhibit* is a part of a project started in 2011, honoring long-time supporters of the Historical Society. This "donor wall" will be a permanent part of the Museum Lobby and will give new donors an opportunity to add their name to the wall. We are grateful to the generosity of The Taylor Family, The Kaplan Family,

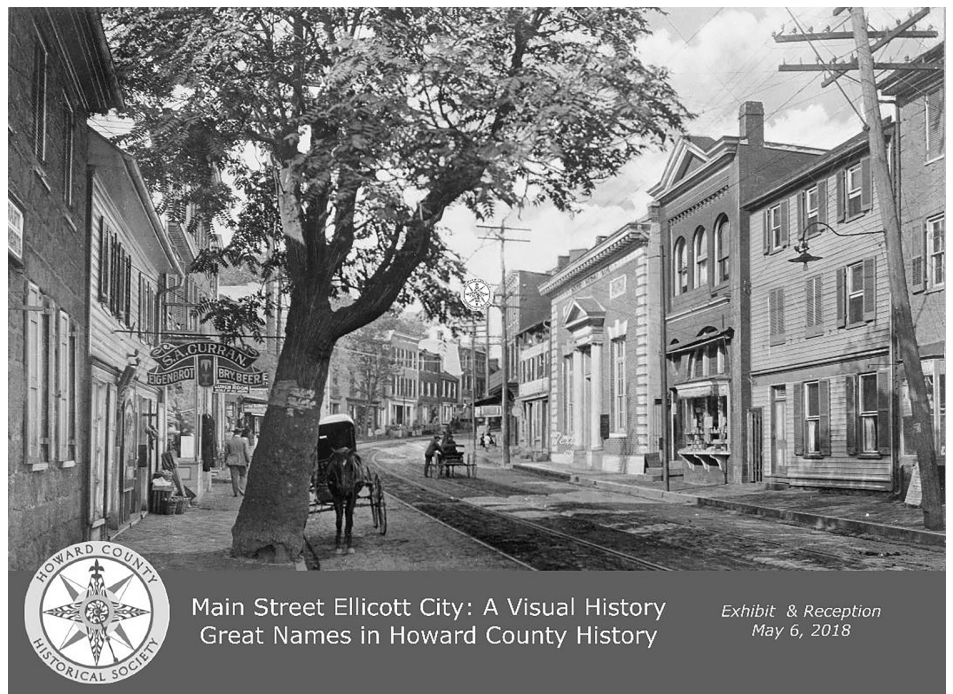
and Ron and Gail Spahn, whose support allowed us to complete this project.

As many of you know, we have been working towards rehabilitating the Quaker Schoolhouse (aka The Weir Building) and using it as an Education Center and a Children's museum. The Quaker Schoolhouse is located next to the Museum of Howard County History and, once completed, will also be open to the public and available for school field trips, scout activities, and home school programs. Thanks to Quinn Evans Architects, we have completed Phase 1 of the project, Design Development and Historic Structures Report (HSR). The next phases will be Construction Documents and then Construction, which we are targeting for 2019. We are actively fundraising for the next two phases and will be engaged in aggressive marketing to make the public aware of our project and hopefully attract business and construction sponsors who would be interested in sponsoring. We have included a rendering of the schoolhouse in this issue so our members and sponsors can see what the Quaker Schoolhouse will look like, once completed.



PAULETTE LUTZ

Lastly, I would like to announce that the Board of Directors has approved my request to hire longtime volunteer and Board member, Paulette Lutz as my Deputy Director. Many of you have met Paulette at one of our functions or at the archives. She is dedicated to the mission of the Society and invaluable to me as my "right hand". She will manage the archives for us as well as oversee a few other initiatives like wedding rentals at the museum. This is an exciting step for the Society and a great opportunity for Paulette who gets to do what she truly loves...do research and help people learn about our county's wonderful history. ✚

Main Street Ellicott City: A Visual History  
Great Names in Howard County HistoryExhibit & Reception  
May 6, 2018

# A MARYLAND DYNASTY: THE RHEE FAMILY AND THEIR 40-YEAR HISTORY IN MARYLAND

BY PATRICK Y. WHANG



A SELECTION OF OFFERINGS AT THE ELLICOTT CITY LOTTE LOCATION.

Following in the footsteps of one's father can be daunting. It's especially formidable when you're expected to flourish in a well-known family enterprise. But that is exactly what happened with two men – cousins, actually – in the Rhee (also spelled Lee) family. Growing up in Maryland, neither Alvin Lee nor Robin Rhee considered joining their family's enterprises. But now each man helms separate but related businesses, continuing a family legacy that has lasted over 40 years in the state.

Alvin Lee, President of Lotte Plaza Markets, was born in Seoul, South Korea in 1974. His family immigrated to the United States when he was young, first living in New York before settling in Maryland, where an uncle lived. It wasn't easy. On his first day of school another student picked a fight with him. Kids threw stones at him and called him names like "chink." On a lighter note, he remembered eating pizza at school for the first time and getting sick "because I never had cheese before," he said.

"Growing up as a small minority group at that time was very difficult," Lee said. "These days it's much easier. Even the immigrant parents tend to be much more educated, much more cosmopolitan, much better equipped to navigate in a foreign country."

When he was a young adult, Lee was not interested in joining his family's business, which was founded in 1976 and now includes 7 supermarkets in Maryland, 4 in Virginia. He worked as a lawyer for 10 years but his father eventually convinced him to come into the family fold. Since taking over the business, Lee has focused on not just catering to the Korean community but to "create a place where everybody feels welcome," he said.

Like Lee, Robin Rhee, Executive Director of Rhee Bros., Inc., one of the nation's largest distributors of Korean and Asian food products, had to be convinced to join the family







business. Born in Gaithersburg, Md., in 1975, Rhee had what he described as a normal upbringing. He helped with the business founded by his father, Syngman Rhee (unrelated to South Korea's first president, who has the same name). Rhee did everything from sweep the warehouse floors to bag groceries at the retail shops. But by college he "didn't want to have anything to do with this business." While he was living and working in California, his father visited him and, after two bottles of whiskey and a long conversation, Rhee promised his father he would join the family enterprise.

Since becoming executive director in 2012, Rhee has shifted the business focus from supplying the needs of the Korean community to being a "pan-Asian business" that is a "one-stop shop" for a variety of Asian foods. Rhee Bros.'s corporate customers now include companies such as P.F. Chang's, Costco, and US Foods.

Both cousins spoke about the future generations of Koreans in the U.S. "Second generation having third generation [Korean] children will be more 'mainstream' [American]" than earlier generations. But how to keep the balance with one's heritage? "Only time will tell... but I have a lot of hope," said Mr. Lee. ♣



TOP RIGHT: RHEE BROS., INC., IN HANOVER, MD

## GRANVILLE "SONNY" WEHLAND, FORMER SOCIETY PRESIDENT AND LONGTIME BOARD MEMBER, PASSES

*Continued from Page 1*

historical assets in Howard County by preventing its sale to some developer, by the Smithsonian Institute" (Sept. 1, 1980 Newsletter, 2). That same newsletter reported on the completion of the new entry way for the Society's then headquarters, and now Museum. Although he didn't recall "whatever entrance had been there beforehand," this project, according to Matt Wehland, was Sonny's

"most important accomplishment."

Paulette Lutz, current Deputy Director for the Society, agreed with this assessment, and explained that in contrast to the steep stairs leading to the original entrance on the other side, the 'red door entrance' "provided a short flat direct entrance to the building, and also gave a second entrance/exit out of the building." Lutz further noted that the

entrance anticipated the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act a decade later. Certainly not a surprise. As described by former Howard County Executive Ken Ulman, one of Sonny's former bosses during his tenure in county government, "Sonny exemplified the enlightened public servant and citizen as he fought for equality for all of our citizens." ♣

## UPCOMING EVENTS



STARVATION ARMY BAND



PATAPSCO FEMALE INSTITUTE

## MAY

5/4 — NOON-1PM

**Lunch Date with History**

“Greetings from Gettysburg” – Lecture and Book signing with Author David Craig

5/5 — 10AM-NOON

**Children’s Program at the Museum**

“Childhood Delights”

5/6 — 2PM-4PM

**Exhibit Opening**

“Main Street Ellicott City History” and the “Great Names in Howard County History.”

5/19

**Museum Concert Series**

Starvation Army Band (Dixieland Jazz)

5/21

**Miller Library Lecture Series**

The Appraisal Roadshow

## JUNE

6/1 — NOON-1PM

**Lunch Date with History**

“The Girls of Patapsco Female Institute.” with Marydele Donnelly & Karen Griffith of Friends of PFI

6/2 — 10AM-NOON

**Children’s Program at the Museum**

“Adventure with Downtown Brown”

6/2

**Museum Concert Series**

The History of Blues Part II with Jimmi Sexton (Blues)

6/16

**Museum Concert Series**

Shawn Legambi (Rock)

## JULY

7/6 — NOON-1PM

**Lunch Date with History**

“WWII Internment and POW Camp at Fort Meade.” with Kevin Leonard

7/21

**Museum Concert Series**

Durham Station Bluegrass Band (Bluegrass)

## AUGUST

8/3 — NOON-1PM

**Lunch Date with History**

“African American Schools in Howard County.” with HCHS Board Member Pat Greenwald & Bessie Bordenave

Call **410-480-3250** for more info or visit [www.hchsmd.org/events](http://www.hchsmd.org/events)

All **Concerts** and **Lunch Dates with History** will take place at the **Museum of Howard County History**, 8328 Court Avenue, Ellicott City, Md 21043.

The **Genealogical Help Desk** will be held at the **Miller Branch Library Historical Center**, 9421 Frederick Road, Ellicott City, Md 21043 on the **third Saturday of every month**.



## MUSEUM ARTIFACT SPOTLIGHT

BY PAULETTE LUTZ

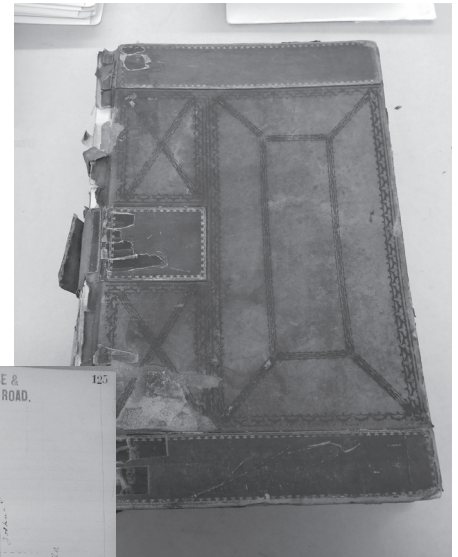
We have a wonderful new addition to our Archives this month. Matt Wehland donated a book that belonged to Sonny Wehland (our past President). We sincerely appreciate this donation, as this book is full of unique historic information.

"Road Book" is a hand-written documentation of the roads in Howard County from April 2, 1889 through August 15, 1906. The book contains the names of family properties, hand-drawn maps, names of surveyors and examiners, measurements and names of roads.

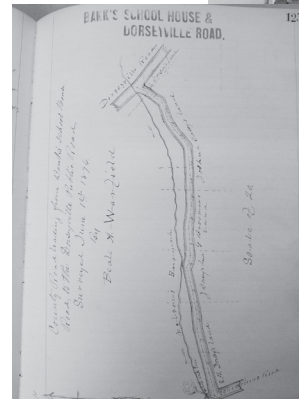
Some of the roads listed in the book; do not exist anymore such as Bank's School House Road and Dorseyville Road which was surveyed on June 1, 1896 by Beale A. Warfield. The public/community requested a short new road about  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles long to connect Bank's and Dorseyville Roads which would cut through the property of Joshua Warfield. We believe this property to be in Woodbine.

The Road Book contains specific details of properties and roads that will help us tremendously in our research of the county and to present valuable information in the development of the county. Some of the unusual road names that are no longer used are Bunker Hill Road, Dragonal Road, Hollofield Hill and Orem House Road.

The Road Book is currently being cataloged and accessioned into our collection and will be available for viewing in a few weeks. ‡



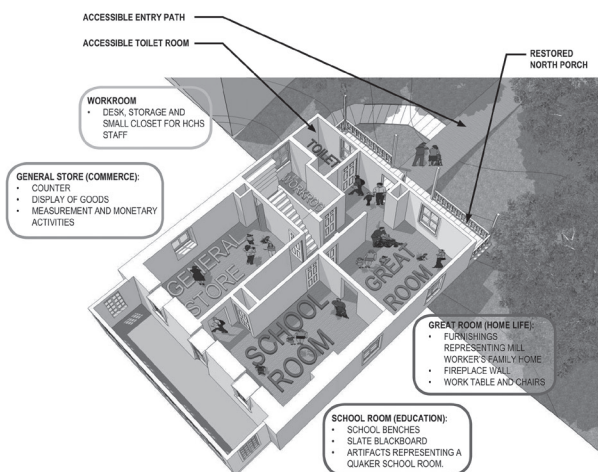
1889-1906 COUNTY ROAD COMMISSIONER'S BOOK, DONATED BY THE WEHLAND FAMILY



## WEIR BUILDING / THE QUAKER SCHOOL



The Howard County Historical Society is planning to expand its educational program into a newly renovated and restored Weir Building/Quaker School. The existing second floor, accessible via Park Avenue, will be converted into exhibit space designed to demonstrate to children, families and school groups what life was like in Ellicott City in the mid-19th century. Exhibits will include rooms explaining home life, schools and education, and commerce. The proposed scope of work includes exterior improvements and mechanical, electrical and plumbing upgrades throughout the building as well as new landscaping and signage at the north entrance on Park Avenue. Accessibility improvements to both the site and second floor exhibit spaces are proposed to allow for a more inclusive visitor experience.



PROPOSED AXONOMETRIC VIEW OF 2ND FLOOR PROGRAM SPACE REPRESENTING THE 1820'S



PROPOSED VIEW OF NORTH ELEVATION ALONG PARK AVENUE



EXISTING VIEW OF NORTH ELEVATION

Images provided by Quinn Evans Architects



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