

Milton Historical Society

Common Ground

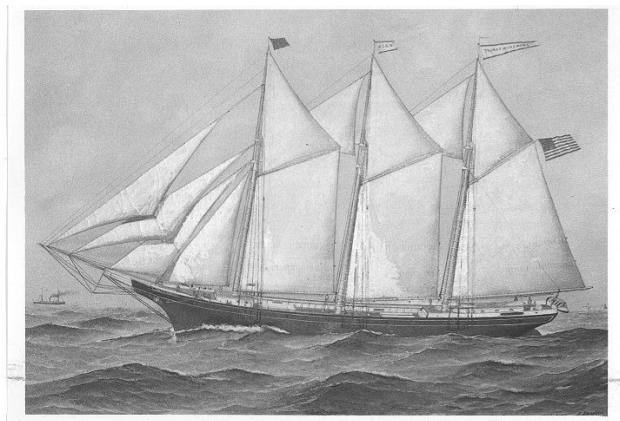
Winter 2011

Captain Conwell's Milton Exhibit Highlights 2011

The Milton Historical Society is pleased to announce the upcoming exhibition *Captain Conwell's Milton*.
Opening Reception, Friday, March 4th, 5-7pm.

Captain Conwell's Milton tells the story of shipbuilding and seafaring in Milton through the lens of Captain James Carey Conwell (1861-1931).

Conwell was a prosperous ship captain who lived in the shipbuilding village of Milton, Delaware with his wife, Clara (1864-1950) and daughter, Ethel (1903-1938). They purchased a home at 119 Federal Street in the late 19th century. This home was lived in by members of Captain Conwell's family until very recently.



The schooner *Thomas Winsmore* was built in Milton in 1890. James Carey Conwell was captain of this ship.

In Captain Conwell's time, the shipbuilding industry employed many people in different occupations. There were shipbuilders, shipwrights, blacksmiths, rope makers, and corkers. Many young men from Milton also worked as sailors and cooks on the ships that traveled to distant and exciting places all over the world.

Captain Conwell was the captain of the schooners *A.P. Nowell*, *Laura Anderson* and *Thomas Winsmore*. These ships carried cargo like coal and lumber from such major ports as Philadelphia and New York all the way to Cuba. On the return trip the ship brought back goods like sugar and fish scraps.

Capt. Conwell's wife Clara sailed on many voyages with her husband and was herself an investor in the ships. On the *Thomas Winsmore's* first voyage Clara Conwell owned a 1/32 share. In the log book of *A.P. Nowell*, another schooner captained by James Carey Conwell, Clara Conwell's entries describe the weather and events on the trips. She was called "Captain Clara" by her friends at home in Milton.

The exhibit corresponds with a walking expedition created for school children and funded by the Carl M. Freeman Foundation FACES grant program. The kids walking tour, which kicks off this spring, focuses on the life and times of Captain Conwell and his family. The walking expedition incorporates national, state and local history, art and architecture, and encourages students to become observant and informed citizens of the man-made as well as the natural environment. The tour also offers the added benefits of physical fitness and fresh air. Classes will visit (the exterior of) Captain Conwell's home on Federal Street, learn about Milton's shipyards on the banks of the Broadkill River, and finish the tour at the museum. While at the MHS, students will see actual artifacts and documents related to Captain Conwell's Milton and act out a play about building the ship *Thomas Winsmore* written by volunteer Mimi Walls especially for this program.



Delmarva Roots Film Series

A documentary film series exploring our local landscape and culture in partnership with the Rehoboth Beach Film Society. Held at the Milton Fire Company. Tickets are \$4. Show starts at 7pm.

Thursday, January 20th
Vanishing Voices of World War II

Friday, February 18th
Voices of Greenwood/Wood Shavings to Hot Sparks

Friday, March 18th
Mayor Cupcake

See the enclosed flyer for details



Sunday, February 13th, 12-5pm
Annual Salon Milton Fundraiser
for the Museum featuring a
Community Valentines Day
Bake Sale and Salon Services

Come and enjoy refreshments and meet your neighbors, purchase a yummy baked good, and/or receive a salon service.

\$25.00 suggested donation for any of the below services:

Aveda Conditioning Services, Haircuts (by John Potocki & Roi Barnard), Hand relief massages & Manicures (by Mia)

All of the proceeds collected for the above services will be donated to the Milton Historical Society.

Call Salon Milton at 302-684-1880 to reserve your preferred appointment time.

SPEAKER'S SERIES 2011

Talks begin at 7pm at the museum. FREE!

Friday, January 21st

Duck & Cover: Remembering the Days of Sputnik, Conalrad & Fallout Shelters, Michael Dixon

This program examines Civil Defense from World War II to the time when planning for survival of a nuclear attack started fading into the past. Opening with an examination of World War II era blackout drills, plane spotter stations, and air raid wardens, the program quickly moves to the era when the stakes became higher – the nuclear age. This was a time when air raid sirens wailed signaling practice drills, Conalrad interrupted radio programs, government officials planned for the worst, and people contemplated building family fallout shelters. *Sponsored by the Delaware Humanities Forum.*

Friday, February 11th

Delaware Black History: Past & Present, Dr. James Newton

This presentation traces the history of African Americans in Delaware from the colonial era to modern times, including aspects of the social and cultural life of Black Delawareans. Several themes are examined including religion, education, Delaware's role in the Underground Railroad, civil rights, and cultural and folk traditions. *Sponsored by the Delaware Humanities Forum.*

Friday, March 11th

Doc, I Need a Drink, Ron Leshner

Featuring a special tasting with Milton's Dogfish Head Brewery in honor of the topic!

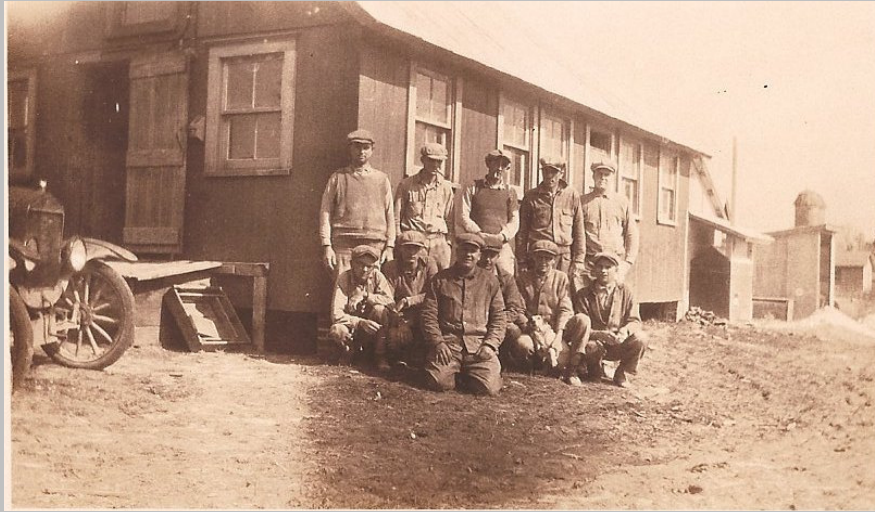
Although the United States was officially "dry," there were ways of obtaining "nonbeverage" alcohol. Priests could obtain wine for sacramental purposes; rabbis could obtain wine for use during the high holy days. Many doctors would write prescriptions for "spiritus frumenti" to cure what ailed their patients. Some even prescribed French brandy and champagne! The lecture will explore artifacts of the Prohibition Era and how taxation paid a role in how the states and federal government controlled the sale of alcohol for legal purposes.

Friday, April 15th

Unlocking the History of An Old House, Michael Dixon

Just as families have a past, old houses and the land they are built on have histories. This practical lecture is designed to show you how to uncover that past and answer questions such as when was the structure built, who lived in it, how has it changed over time, and what are its stories. The discussion centers on implementing an organized research process, what records are available, where to look for documents, and interpreting the findings. *Sponsored by the Delaware Humanities Forum.*

DELAWARE HUMANITIES FORUM GRANT AWARDED FOR STUDY OF BUTTON INDUSTRY



Excelsior Pearl Button Shop, Milton, 1929

We are pleased to announce the award of a grant from the Delaware Humanities Forum's Industrial History Initiative that supports the study of the button cutting industry in Milton. Grant funds will be used to capture oral histories on video, digitally preserve photographs, and identify, catalogue and photograph existing button making equipment and button making sheds. All materials will be digitized and made available online to scholars, researchers, students, and the general public. In partnership with the University of Delaware and a Wesley College intern, we will also locate and mark known button factory sites through GIS. Final outcomes include an enhanced, interactive button making exhibit at the museum, as well as an online exhibit posted on the MHS website.

DO YOU KNOW OF SOMEONE WE SHOULD INTERVIEW WHO HAS MEMORIES OF BUTTON MAKING? Please contact Melinda Huff at 302/684-1010 or info@historicmilton.org

CIVIL WAR CONVERSATIONS with Kevin Kelly...Coming this Spring!

During the next four years, this nation will revisit a seminal event in our history, the Civil War. As Shelby Foote observed, "Any understanding of this nation has to be based, and I mean really based, on an understanding of the Civil War." The Sesquicentennial Anniversary of the Civil War is upon us. Those people, places, and events of the years 1861 through 1865 which "defined us as what we are...and opened us to being what we became," are with us again.

In quarterly gatherings of what I will call "conversations" stretched out over the next four years, beginning this spring, then continuing through 2015, I invite you to revisit those catastrophic four years of the mid-nineteenth century. The series is designed for all: those who know the uniform color of Berdan's Sharpshooters and those who last thought about the Civil War as they studied for a multiple choice test in their high school history courses; those fascinated by the battlefield and those curious about the home front; those older and those younger. To broaden appeal, to invite discussion, and to deepen understanding, our gatherings will make use of field trips when appropriate, re-enactors and guest speakers whenever possible, primary source documents and artifacts often, and readings and other recommended media throughout.

The quarterly gatherings will begin this spring at about the time, 150 years ago, that Abraham Lincoln delivered his First Inaugural Address; that Mary Chesnut heard and recorded in her diary the "heavy booming of a cannon" from the Charleston, South Carolina batteries at Fort Johnson fired upon Ft. Sumter; that heavy guns were delivered to the Union artillery garrison at newly rebuilt Fort Delaware; that Massachusetts infantry exchanged fire with secessionist civilians in Baltimore resulting in several deaths; that the U.S.S. *Saratoga* seized the slave ship *Nightingale* with 971 slaves on board; that Union Col. Elmer Ellsworth and Confederate Capt. John Q. Marr likely became the first officers on either side killed in action; that former slave Frederick Douglass asserted, "that the war now being waged in this land is a war for and against slavery." I hope you'll join us!

For many years Mr. Kelly taught Advanced Placement United States History in Fairfax County, Virginia and was the recipient of the United States Capitol/ Fairfax County Public Schools Teacher-Historian of the Year. He is a member of the Milton Historic Preservation Commission and trustee of the Milton Historical Society.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT A GLANCE

Thursday, January 20th, 7pm, Milton Fire Hall
Delmarva Roots Film Series, *Vanishing Voices of WWII*

Friday, January 21st, 7pm Milton Historical Society
Speaker's Series, *Duck & Cover*

Friday, February 11th, 7pm, Milton Historical Society
Speaker's Series, *Delaware Black History*

Sunday, February 13th, 12- 5 pm, Salon Milton
5th Annual Fundraiser

Friday, February 18th, 7pm, Milton Fire Hall
Delmarva Roots Film Series, *Wood Shavings to Hot Sparks*

Friday, March 4th, 5-7pm, Milton Historical Society
Captain Comwell's Milton Exhibit Opening

Friday, March 11th, 7pm, Milton Historical Society
Speaker's Series, *Doc, I Need a Drink*
Featuring a Tasting with Dogfish Head!

Friday, March 18th, 7pm, Milton Fire Hall
Delmarva Roots Film Series, *Mayor Cupcake*



FROM THE ARCHIVES

“The proposed closing of the twelve foot cut in the new jetty built at the mouth of Broadkill Creek as result of a survey of Chief of Engineers, in compliance with River & Harbor Act of 1905...has greatly incensed Milton residents which claim there will be no way to get to Broadkill Beach without going outside into the bay. They are to protest to the government.”

November 1, 1908- From the *Philadelphia Inquirer* courtesy of volunteer Harrison Howeth. Harrison adds Milton (and Sussex County) related news items to the NewspaperAbstracts.com database.



Milton Historical Society
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info@historicmilton.org

**DELAWARE HUMANITIES FORUM
GRANT AWARDED FOR STUDY OF
BUTTON INDUSTRY**

Excelsior Pear Button Shop, Milton, 1929

We are pleased to announce the award of a grant from the Delaware Humanities Forum's Industrial History Initiative that supports the study of the button cutting industry in Milton. Grant funds will be used to capture oral histories on video, digitally preserve photographs, and identify, catalogue and photograph existing button making equipment and button making sheds. All materials will be digitized and made available online to scholars, researchers, students, and the general public. In partnership with the University of Delaware and a Wesley College intern, we will also locate and mark known button

IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!

Use the enclosed envelope to mail in your annual membership dues. Memberships run from January – December of each calendar year. In addition to free admission to the museum and our quarterly newsletter, your membership dollars help us:

Present our popular Speaker's forum and *Delmarva Roots* film series;

Offer architectural walking tours in seasonable weather as well as a self-guided audio tour;

Mount exhibits, including those that explore key periods in our national, state and local history;

Host annual events like our members dinner, "Best of Milton" auction and party, Antiques in Milton fall show, and Governors Day;

Solidify relationships with the local schools through our Education Committee;

Conduct oral histories with residents; and

Catalog new donations to collections.