



## Damascus Heritage Society News

THE DEVOTED CURATOR OF DAMASCUS HISTORY

WINTER 2012

VOL. 6 No. 1

### From The Editor

Happy New Year, Damascus. Where does the time go? Weren't we just worrying about Y2K? The years are just zipping by.

We had a great year at the museum. We celebrated our second anniversary on November 17, 2011. During these two years we had more than 3,000 visitors; 3,000 visitors in our little museum in Damascus. Can you believe that? We had over 700 visitors for the Miniature Exhibit alone. Each day we are open we have people who come in with interesting stories to tell or old items to loan or information to share. It has truly grown into a community asset of which we are proud. How lucky we are that everything has fallen into place and gone so smoothly for us. And the reason is you, our members, our community, and our wonderful support. A big thank you to everyone who makes this happen.

We are busy planning our new year now, as we speak. Our Third Annual Tea is coming in February, our Fourth Annual Golf Tournament is coming in May, we will participate in Montgomery County Heritage Day in June, Celebrate Damascus is in July, and the Community Fair happens in September. In addition to all these activities, we have our exhibits to plan and open. March 7 will see the opening of "From The Attics of Damascus", which you will read about later in this newsletter, and July 7 will be the opening of "Model T's", thanks to Darron Long and the Model T Clubs. November will bring another new exhibit that is just now in the planning stages and that you will hear more about in the near future.

We are busy, we have fun, we meet people, we share our discoveries, and we provide a service

to the community. It doesn't get any better than this. Come on in and see for yourself.

So, see you at the museum.

Linda Olsen, President and Editor

## *It's Tea Time* *Third Annual Tea* *February 18, 2012*

The Third Annual Damascus Heritage Society Tea is coming soon. Tony Edghill, Damascus Senior Center Director, will graciously open his beautiful facility for the Heritage Society's Third Annual Tea on Saturday, February 18, in the Center's dining room. And again we will be entertained by the local Sweet Adeline group known as Escapade.



**-Escapade-**

One of the hottest quartets in the mid-Atlantic, Escapade generates energy and excitement everywhere they perform. They were so well received last year at the tea that we asked them

to come again to entertain us with their singing and their stories. We are very pleased to have them join us for our Third Annual Tea.

The invitations will be in the mail soon but you can call now to make your reservation for February 18, 1:00 PM, at the Senior Center dining room, at 9701 Main Street, Damascus. Seating is limited so get your reservation in early by calling Linda or Ray at 301-253-1811.

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## **LETTERBOXING HAS COME TO THE MUSEUM**

### **“History is Fun”**

Letterboxing is a hobby for the entire family. It's free, it's easy, and it takes you on a treasure hunt in public places, all around the world. We now have a letterboxing site in the museum, thanks to museum visitors, the Varley family. Jim, Mary Ann, Jackson and Lauren Varley came into the museum a couple of months ago and told us about their hobby. After we decided that it might be a good way to bring additional people into the museum, they set the box up and will maintain the contents. It is very simple. We have a journal and a stamp. The stamp was hand carved by Mr. Varley and looks very much like our logo of the sunburst. The letterboxing visitor has a journal and a stamp. The visitor stamps our book with his stamp and stamps his book with our stamp. A comment or a date is added and the mission is complete. The really fun part is that in order to find these letterboxes, you must solve a puzzle or follow some clues. Information is available on line (the way of the future, of course) and if you look, you will find letterboxes in almost every country and city around the world.

The origin of letterboxing can be traced to England in 1854. William Crossing in his *Guide to Dartmoor* states that a well known Dartmoor guide placed a bottle for visitor's cards on the northern moor. Later, hikers on the moors began to leave letters or postcards inside a box along the trail, sometimes addressed to themselves, sometimes a friend or relative.

Hence the name "letterboxing" was born. The next person to discover the site would collect the postcards and post them. The first Dartmoor letterboxes were so remote and well-hidden that only the most determined walkers would find them, allowing weeks to pass before the letter made its way home. Until the 1970s there were no more than a dozen such sites around the moor, usually in the most inaccessible locations. Increasingly, however, letterboxes have been located in relatively accessible sites around the moor and the "game" has expanded to the pastime we know today with thousands of letterboxes around the world. Smithsonian Magazine had a letterboxing article in a 1998 issue when letterboxing became popular in the United States.

If you look on line, you can find the history and a wide variety of information about letterboxing. You will find our museum on [atlasquest.com](http://atlasquest.com), then search on Damascus, MD, then look for "History is Fun" where you will find a puzzle to solve that will give you all the information that you need to find our box.

Even if you don't pursue the game yourself, you can learn about it and hope that it brings additional visitors into the museum; visitors that will look and enjoy our exhibits and spread the word about our mission in Damascus.

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### **“Country Stores”**

Have you been in to see the current exhibit? You won't want to miss the "Country Stores". If you have been in already, you may want to come back because we add a little item or two every week.

That is the nice thing about the museum these days - many people who come in know a little something, bring a little something, or loan a little something, and right away we add it to our collection or the current exhibit or our research area. One story seems to lead to another and the next thing you know, we all discover that we have a connection of some kind or a common interest.



The country store exhibit was ready for the opening.

this newsletter.) Have a look in the pot bellied stove from the Clarksburg Store that comes with original coal clinkers still in the bottom. See numerous generations of pictures of the Hawkins family from their seventy years of ownership of the Etchison Store, meticulously documented by Steve Hawkins, great, great grandson of the original Hawkins owner who purchased the store from Mr. Etchison. We have a lot of info and interesting items, making your visit worth the trip.



Cub Scouts visit the country store exhibit.

“Country Stores” runs through February 29, 2012, on Wednesday and Saturday from noon until 5:00 PM. Don’t miss it.

So, see you at the museum.



Gary Richard and Steve Hawkins chat at the opening of the country store exhibit. Steve came from Pittsburgh for the opening night.

You must see the can collection from the local canneries that is on loan from Gary Richard. You will want to see the fruit cake belonging to Robert Allnut that is from the Etchison Store. The fruitcake was made by Nettie Hawkins in 1931 for sale in the store. It did not sell that year so was displayed each year after until the Hawkins family sold the store in 1961. Mr. Allnut purchased the fruitcake at that time. When he loaned the fruitcake to us he made us promise not to sample it before we returned it to him at the end of the exhibit.

Check out the short histories and pictures of several of the stores that line the back wall of the museum. (The Etchison story is printed later in

## YEARBOOKS

We just added another yearbook to our collection, thanks to the High School who had an extra copy of 2005. Museum visitors seem to love the yearbooks! Come on in and sit a spell and look up old friends and family. It seems to be a real source of delight for the younger set to find Grandma or Grandpa in their high school finery.

Our collection is growing slowly but we still need the following years:

**1966, 1975, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1996,**

2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011.

Donate your old yearbooks today.  
The museum visitors thank you.

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## “From the Attics of Damascus”

Our next exhibit opens on March 7, 2012 and will be called “**From the Attics of Damascus**”. We are asking you, our friends and neighbors, to help supply the items in the exhibit. We will not have a theme as we usually do, like stores, churches, or business, but instead will have assorted items or collections of items that you have hidden away in a closet and never have a chance to share with anyone. If you have something that you want to loan, get it out, dust it off, and call us. We will pick it up, provide the documentation for display if you tell us about it, and get it back to you when the exhibit closes. We want assorted stuff - any kind of assorted stuff. Check around your house to see what you have that you could show off in the museum. Remember, some people are interested in the most unusual things.

Give us a call at **301-253-1811** if you have something to loan.

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## EPHRAIM AND THE POTATO SACKS

Check out these two pictures. Our treasurer, Ephraim Salins, was born and raised in Washington, DC, where his father was a wholesale produce distributor. In the first picture you will see Ephraim at age 14, hoisting a fifty pound sack of potatoes, looking like he is hard at work at his father’s market. In the second picture you will see Ephraim just a few (?) years later, at our current exhibit on Country Stores, hoisting a 1 pound sack

of crumpled newspapers, again looking like he is hard at work in the museum. What goes around, comes around?



Ephraim Salins, then ▲ and now ▼.



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**We have sweatshirts  
for winter.  
Lots of sweatshirts.  
Just your size.  
Support the museum.  
Get your sweatshirts today.**

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## **Brownies enjoy the Miniature Exhibit**

We have had many groups call us for special museum tours over the last two years and most recently we had numerous scout groups visit the Miniature Exhibit. This group from Clearspring appeared to have a wonderful time in our mini world.



Brownie troop 3092, from Clearspring Elementary

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## **MUSEUM HOURS & LOCATION**

Museum hours are Wednesday and Saturday from noon until 5:00 PM or by appointment by calling the Olsen's at 301-253-1811. We are located on the grounds of the Library/Senior Center at 9701 Main Street.

So, see you at the museum.

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# **Golf is coming.**

## **Monday, May 21, 2012**

### **The Links at Challedon**

**A full day of fun in the sun.**

## **Watch for details.**

## **Check out our Web Site**

Thanks to **Tim Hyatt**, our web site is always up to date with the latest exhibits, newsletters, and activities.

Check it out at:

**[www.dhsm.org](http://www.dhsm.org)**

**Thank Tim when you see him.**

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## **“Country Stores” & “Model T’s”**

Darron Long, Damascus Fire Chief, told us a story the other day about the Etchison Store, the Woodfield Store, and Webb’s Store in Lewisdale. It seems that back in the early days of the 1900’s, these three stores carried parts for the Model T. As you know, the country stores supplied the community with everything for the individual, the home, the farm, the church, and the kids.

As the story goes, when the three stores closed or changed hands and discovered that it was no longer profitable to supply the parts for the Model T, they contacted Russell Long, Darron’s grandfather, to offer the leftover parts to him. (Model T’s seem to run in the Long family.) So, Mr. Long acquired all of the Model T parts and used a few and stored the rest.

Darron, the grandson, has the same interest in Model T’s and has several of them, belongs to more than one Model T club, and has agreed to organize an exhibit for the museum on Model T’s that will open on July 7, 2012.

The interesting part of this story is that Darron has used many of the parts from these three stores in his own cars and he still has a good supply, in the original packaging, on hand for his future cars. Some of these parts from the country stores will be on display in the Model T exhibit.

Small world.

(The exhibit “Country Stores” runs through February 29, 2012, “Model T’s” opens July 7, 2012)

## In Memory of and In Honor of

We have a few dedications since the last newsletter that we would like to share. Remember, when you join the Heritage Society, you can dedicate your membership to friends or family and we publish that dedication here in this newsletter. Also, when you are in the museum, we have a book, actually two volumes now, where we print a full page with your dedication as it appears below. Please look at those books, find your dedication, and read and enjoy the others you find there. It is a wonderful way to remember that special person.

*Steven G. Hawkins*

*In memory of*

*G. Kenneth & Elaine Zepp Howes,  
neighbors, friends, and ardent  
supporters of the  
Hawkins family reunion*

*Ruby Irene Sakai*

*In memory of*

*John Purdum,  
born 11-09-1739 and  
Kezia 'Darby' Purdum,  
born 07-25-1742*

*The Henry Abrahams Family*

*In memory of*

*Joseph and Pauline Abrahams*

*Dale and Bonnie Maue*

*In memory of*

*Grace Marie Ward,  
Bonnie's grandmother  
and daughter of John E. Ward, Jr.*

## **Support our friends at the Agricultural History Farm Park**

as they provided many items for our Farm Exhibit and continue to support us with articles in their newsletters encouraging their members to come to our museum. They have many events throughout the year, all free and open to the public. In April they have a Gas and Steam Show where you can check out all the old tractors and farm equipment from the past, they participate in Montgomery County Heritage Day in June, there is a big Bluegrass event in September (actually, you may need tickets for this event), a Harvest Festival in October, a Blacksmith and Traditional Arts Show in November, and Christmas on the Farm in December. It truly is a wonderful resource for the agricultural history of Montgomery County. They are located at 18400 Muncaster Road in Derwood.

Check it out.

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## MUSEUM IS ALWAYS SEEKING ARTIFACTS

The museum would love to have your old stuff. If you have any pictures, newspapers, or old Damascus related items that you want to give away or throw out, throw it our way. We will find a use for it during an exhibit in the future or more immediately in our next exhibit, "From the Attics of Damascus". You would be surprised what old items that someone out there is interested in looking over. Remember, we are a 501c3 not-for-profit organization. Call us at 301-253-1811 or stop in the museum on Wednesday or Saturday, noon to 5:00 PM. We love to see you and we would love for your old stuff to become our old stuff.

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Join the Heritage Society today.

Help us preserve the history of Damascus.

## The Etchison Store

The Etchison Store is located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Rt. 108 and Rt. 650 in the area known as Etchison. Although the store has had several owners over the years, it still serves the community today and has done so since opening 135 years ago.

In 1876, Marcellus Etchison purchased two acres of land and built a store and a blacksmith shop and presumably the town of Etchison was born. Many additions were made to the original store over the years as the trade changed and grew. Interestingly, one of the first products for sale was whiskey. Mr. Etchison continued to operate the store until he sold the property in 1891 to Joseph C. and Randolph S. Hawkins. After several years of operation, a new store was built in 1915 to replace the original store on the same site, in the same footprint.

The property remained in the Hawkins family for 70 years, until 1961. At that time it was sold to Millard A. Oland who, along with his daughter, ran it until he sold it to Glenn K. and Hazel. J. Ellis in 1963-64. The Ellis family owned it until 2003 when it was sold to Rick Mencia who still owns it today.

The current store proprietor is Edwin Kerr, who has run the store for 10 years, first from Mr. Ellis and now from Mr. Mencia. Mr. Kerr was helpful with providing information from the last 50 years, along with information gathered from Bobby Allnutt, Heritage Society Charter member and Etchison resident.

Please stop in the museum to enjoy the many pictures and store items from the Hawkins years and many pictures of the Hawkins family itself, that have been generously provided to us from Steve Hawkins, great, great grandson of the original owners from 1891.



The first store in Etchison was built by Marcellus Etchison between 1876 and 1878, on land purchased in 1876 at the intersection of the Damascus-Sunshine Road and the road from Laytonsville. Prior to this, the area was known as Ragtown, because of the rags that people stuffed around windows to keep the winter wind out. The village known as Etchison can be dated from the building of the store. Marcellus Etchison built many additions over the years, as his trade changed and grew. The original building is likely the tallest part, in the center, with later additions to the left and right. His home, built about 1879, can be seen to the right of the store.

*Photo & commentary courtesy of Steve Hawkins*



This photo, taken in May, 1917, is the "new" Etchison Store that was built in 1915. Thomas F. Hawkins, the older of Nettie's sons and a partner in the business, is standing on the ground, hatless. The building was partially built on the foundation of the original 1876 store.

*Photo & commentary courtesy of Steve Hawkins*

## Future Meetings

Our meetings are open to everyone and we invite you to join us as a visitor or member at any time. We meet on the third Monday of the month in the large conference room (unless otherwise noted) at the Damascus Public Library at 7:00 PM, with the exception of January and February when we meet on the fourth Monday. The meetings are as follows:

**Monday, January 23, small meeting room**  
**Monday, February 27, small meeting room**  
**Monday, March 19**  
**Monday, April 16**  
**Monday, May 21, small meeting room**

Call 301-253-1811 for information.

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## BECOME A FRIEND OF THE DAMASCUS HERITAGE SOCIETY

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Mail to:

**Damascus Heritage Society Inc.**  
**P.O. Box 218**  
**Damascus, MD 20872**

## Memberships:

- Individual \$25
- Family \$35
- Business/Friend \$50-\$99
- Fellow \$100-\$499
- Sponsor \$500-\$999
- Patron \$1,000-\$4999
- Benefactor \$5000+

**All payments are tax deductible - we are a  
501c3 non-profit charitable organization.**

If desired, in Memory/Honor of:  
(circle one)

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## NEWSLETTER – Winter 2012

Damascus Heritage Society Inc.  
P.O. Box 218  
Damascus, MD 20872



*See you at the museum.*