

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

# 2021

for the

## ABERDEEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

January – December 2021  
Ruth Peters, President

### I. 2021 In Review

*In 2021 the Museum maintained the forward direction it began in 2020. As the Museum's leadership continued pursuing several notable, positive actions, both the internal governmental structure and the public view of the Museum changed radically.*

*We are very excited to have accomplished or made progress on all of our goals for 2021, with the exception of the Richard Morton Art Show, which was postponed to 2022 due to COVID. Herein is an overview of the significant factors affecting the Aberdeen Historical Museum in 2021.*

#### A. Revamp of Museum Library

The Museum's Library makes up a meaningful segment of the Museum's resource information. We used a portion of the time the Museum was closed due to COVID to reorganize its contents and refurbish its shelves.

##### 1. **Sorting**

Books, periodicals, and other Library resources were reviewed and sorted according to relevance and interest factors. Some items were shifted to the Museum's Archival Collections, some to displays. Books not meeting Museum criteria were donated to one of Aberdeen's Little Libraries. A number of books formerly held in storage were added to the Library.

##### 2. **Repairs and Protection**

As needed, books were mended and protective covers added.

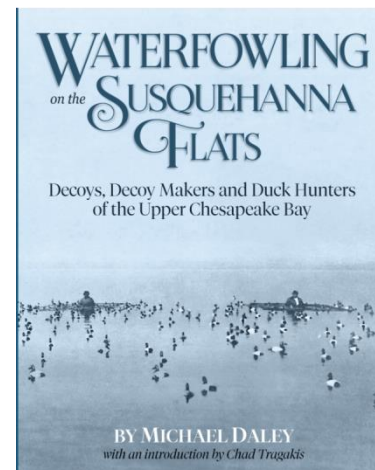
##### 3. **Cataloging**

Each item in the Library was given a Dewey Decimal number and cataloged both digitally and in hard-copy for easy reference.



#### 4. **Distinctive Book Added**

Michael Daley's book, *Waterfowling on the Susquehanna Flats*, (published by *decoy Magazine*) was received from the author and added to the Library's collection. The personally autographed book contained a grateful "thank you" to the Museum for assisting the author last year by supplying information and photos from our files.



#### 5. **Library Bookcases Painted & Local History Discovered**

In the process of removing the shelves from the bookcases for painting, volunteers made the discovery that 5 of the shelves were cut from a sign discarded by the Harford County Office Building that had once hung on the repurposed Aberdeen Elementary School on Rt. 40. For the purpose of preserving history, only one side of those shelves was painted, and the shelves were reinstalled in the bookcases, with the historic signage still visible on the underside.



#### **B. College Volunteer**

Much of the Library project described above, particularly the cataloging was accomplished by college volunteer, Kayleigh Gallagher. At the end of the project, the Museum gave her a letter of recommendation for her work to be used in future schooling and/or job search.

#### **C. Museum Reopened for Research**

In March the Museum reopened on a limited basis for in-house research by persons working on specific, time-sensitive projects of significance. Two noteworthy projects for which researchers used the Museum were:

##### 1. **Women's Suffrage**

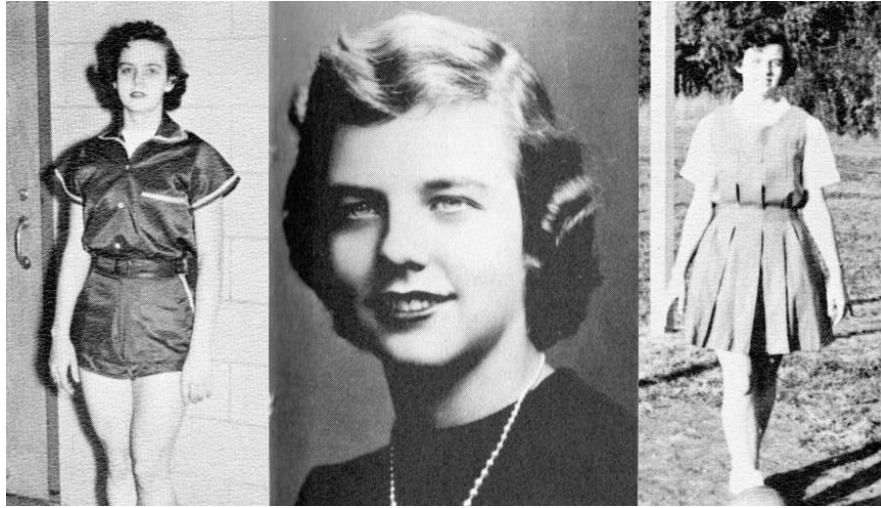
Amy Rosenkrans of the Maryland Women's Heritage Center used Museum resources to help document suffragists from Aberdeen that were included in a presentation/exhibit.

##### 2. **Harford Civil Rights Project**

James Karmel, Harford Community College Professor of History and Director of Harford Civil Rights Project used Museum resources in his research of the civil rights era (1945-1975) in Harford County. We were able to supply him with not only material from our library and files, but also leads of persons he might interview.

#### D. Window Displays

The Museum continued to use its window displays of local history to engage passersby. One significant display this past year gave tribute to Aberdeen icon Vi Ripken, and included several previously never-before-displayed snap-shots from the Museum's own collection.



#### E. Reorganization of Exhibit Area

During 2020, the Museum cleaned and reorganized its back storage areas. In 2021, we began the reorganization of the Exhibit Area. This included:

1. Decluttering the Exhibit Area of items that needed to be stored elsewhere
2. Painting several more display cases; adding doors to open shelves used for storage
3. Rearranging displays that had become cluttered and "tired" and adding new signage
4. Creating several new displays



#### F. Assisted Local Historical Organization

The Museum met with members of the newly-formed Historic Havre de Grace Foundation and advised them on best practices for archival methods and procedures.

### **G. New 501(c)(3) Formed for B&O Train Station Restoration**

In 2016, ownership of STARRS (a 501(c)(2) corporation organized to restore the historic Aberdeen B&O Train Station) was transferred from the Historical Society of Harford County to the Aberdeen Museum.

A new 501(c)(3) corporation (Friends of the Aberdeen B&O Train Station) was formed in

June 2020 to continue the restoration project that STARRS began, without any connection with the Museum. This separation of interests was hailed by both corporations as the most effective means of allowing each organization to focus on its own mission. The final legal separation from the Aberdeen Museum was completed in August of 2021.



### **H. Governmental Restructuring**

After the separation of the two corporations, the Museum began the process of the necessary internal restructuring. This opened the path to many good changes in operation, including the hiring of a Museum Director (*discussed below*).



### **I. Museum PT Director Hired**

In September, the Museum Board hired Charlotte O'Shaughnessy to be its part-time Director. Charlotte holds an MA in History with a Certification in Museum Studies. She has worked in various roles at such notable museums as Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library (Winterthur, DE), Fort Delaware State Park (Delaware City, DE), and Valley Forge National Historic Park (King of Prussia, PA). Charlotte has also volunteered locally at Steppingstone Farm Museum (Havre de Grace, MD), Historic Jerusalem Mill Village (Kingsville, MD), and Hays House Museum (Bel Air, MD), and others.

Since Charlotte began at the Museum only a couple of months ago, she has brought many positive changes, some of which are discussed below.

**J. New Presence on the Internet**

Thanks to the work of our new Director, the Museum now has a:

1. **New Logo**
2. **New Website** ([www.aberdeenmuseum.org](http://www.aberdeenmuseum.org))
3. **New Email Address** ([info@aberdeenmuseum.org](mailto:info@aberdeenmuseum.org))
4. **New Facebook Page and is now on Instagram**  
([@aberdeenhistoricalmuseum](https://www.instagram.com/aberdeenhistoricalmuseum))



These new and upgraded means of communication have proved to be valuable in connecting with old and new friends of the Museum, researchers, and contributors.

**K. Rebranding Continued**

The Museum felt that the official, legal name “Aberdeen Room Archives and Museum, Inc.” was a bit cumbersome and confusing, and that the oft-used shorter version of “Aberdeen Room” lacked sufficient description of what type of entity that name represented.

Therefore, several years ago the Board voted to change the Museum’s name to “Aberdeen Historical Museum”, but it was not until last year that the Museum applied to the State of Maryland for that trade name to be legally registered.

*UPDATE NOTE: In January 2022, the Museum received notice from the State of Maryland that it may now legally use its “DBA” (“Doing Business As”) name of “Aberdeen Historical Museum”.*

**L. Annual Christmas Street Open House**

After the previous year’s City event was cancelled due to COVID, we at the Museum were excited for the opportunity to once again participate in Aberdeen’s annual Christmas Street Celebration.

We extended the hours of our usual Open House to be 10 am to 5 pm. The added hours afforded more opportunity for guests to visit, enjoy goodies from the snack table, and explore a number of

new exhibits on local history. About 80 visitors stopped by the Museum that day. Remarks from visitors were extremely positive, with many commenting that they liked the new look of the room.

As part of the Christmas Street celebration, the Museum took part in the Window Decorating Contest. The Museum’s window took 1st place in the adult organizations category of the competition.



## II. Casting Vision for 2022

*As we enter 2022, we do so with eagerness and excitement. Much work is ahead of us, but as we lay out a plan and follow it, much can also be accomplished. The following outline includes the goals we wish to see accomplished at the Museum in 2022 so that we can better serve Aberdeen's citizens and surrounding community.*

### A. Governmental Review

Much has changed internally for the Museum now that it has fully separated from STARRS. With this change, governmental policies are being reviewed and adjusted, as needed.

#### 1. By-laws

Of utmost importance is a fit and comprehensive governing structure for the Museum. In 2021 we began the process of rewriting the bylaws to better suit the present and future needs of the Museum. We will continue the process of government review and change so the Museum may operate at its fullest potential.

#### 2. Strategic Plan

The Museum expects to draw up a new Strategic Plan that reflects its new direction.

### B. Reorganization and Improved Collections Management Systems

The task of taking inventory, decluttering and reorganizing all that has been collected over the past 30+ years is of enormous proportions.

Due to the magnitude of the task, the sorting and organizing process that was begun in 2020 is still on-going. We are extremely pleased with all that we have been able to accomplish thus far, which encourages us to continue.

As a result of our productive efforts in this area, we are now able to begin or expand our work to other areas of focus previously unavailable to us.



#### 1. New Exhibitions and Exhibit Area Renovations

As we declutter and sort items in the main exhibit area and rearrange the room, we are taking into consideration the following attributes, with the expectation of achieving them over a period of time:

- a. An overall attractive room
- b. Renovation of exhibits to include a cohesive story-line flow, eye-catching layouts, and interesting signage
- c. Best usage of space that takes into consideration future activities offered by the Museum and a good traffic flow pattern that takes into account ADA considerations

## 2. **Collections Inventory and Reorganization**

In 2022, we plan to focus on implementing improved methods of tracking, storing, and caring for our archives and collections.

### a. **Archival Inventory**

In 2021 the Museum focused on reorganization of the Museum's physical Resource Library. In 2022, we will begin the massive task of inventorying and reorganizing the Museum's archival collections. Due to the enormity of this undertaking, we expect the project to take several years to complete.

### b. **File Digitization**

The Museum has begun the on-going process of putting its archival files, photos, and Library information into a digital format that is more accessible for researchers and online audiences. We expect this process will continue in a more intensified manner in 2022.

### c. **Collections Management**

In 2022, the Museum will continue the multi-year process of inventorying, processing, and rehusing its collections objects while reevaluating its collections management systems. This process will allow the Museum to improve storage space organization, better care for its collections, highlight a diversity of objects in its new exhibits, and make objects more accessible for research and programming.

## C. **New Programming**

We anticipate the development of new interactive programs at the Museum to attract visitors and to build community engagement. We also intend to create outreach programs to reach audiences beyond the walls of the Museum. We plan to create these programs in conjunction with new exhibitions.

## D. **Richard Morton Art Show**

During FY 2019-20, the Museum was awarded a grant by the Harford County Cultural Arts Board (HCCAB) to display the artwork of the late, local artist Richard Morton. Before the museum was able to have the Art Show, the Museum temporarily closed due to COVID. HCCAB offered the Museum an extension of the grant, and the Art Show is now scheduled for the Spring of 2022.

We are in the process of creating space for Richard Morton's watercolors of Aberdeen. The Museum plans to display them for a 2- to 3-month period, with an Open House kick-off event.



### III. Concluding Remarks

*We are very pleased with the tremendous progress the Museum has undergone in the past 2 years, and are very excited about the future of the Museum. It is our desire to continue serving the Greater Aberdeen Area in the field of local history in new and fresh ways, and we will make every effort to do so.*

We trust you found this President's Report informative and interesting. Should you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please feel free to contact the Museum at [info@aberdeenmuseum.org](mailto:info@aberdeenmuseum.org) or stop by to see us during regular Museum hours.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ruth Peters, *President*

