

# The Monocacy

# MONOCLE

*Keeping an Eye on Local News*

A Biweekly Newspaper

March 5, 2021 • Volume XVII, Number 1



Poolesville slave Phillip Johnson left a profound oral history. Learn more in Foundations on page 3.



Dickerson's Jerry Liu received national recognition for his local volunteer work. Read more in Focus on Business on page 5.



This local artist had Whalen Commons all to himself. Learn more about him in Tidbits on page 8.



"Sam," a juvenile red-shouldered hawk that grew up in the yard of the Garretts of Poolesville. More on our local hawks on page 14.

## Confusion Reigns as Town Manager Resigns

By Link Hoewing

The Town of Poolesville commissioners met for their regular meeting on March 1 amid continuing confusion about the reasons behind the town manager's abrupt resignation and the actions planned by the commissioners to cope with the situation.

The commissioners released a press statement over the weekend that simply affirmed that they had accepted the resignation of Seth Rivard, the town manager, who had barely served a year since he was hired. They went on to thank him for his service and wished him well in his future endeavors.

At the meeting, they announced that Barbara "Bobbie" Evans, the town clerk, would act as town manager and they committed to acting quickly to hire an interim town manager who can oversee town projects "while we conduct a thorough search for a permanent town manager."

While the resignation did come about in a seemingly sudden manner, it has been known for several months that there were concerns about the performance and, in some instances, the inappropriate nature of comments made by the former town manager with regard to others, including—in at least one instance—a citizen. There have also been ongoing concerns about the impacts of the town manager's management approach on staff morale.

At the meeting, the commissioners discussed next steps with regard to ensuring effective leadership during the process of searching for a new town manager. It appeared that the approach that is being favored is to install Evans as temporary town manager while work is done to identify an interim manager who can take over during the time it takes to complete a search and identify a new candidate to manage the town.

It has been learned since then, however, that there is a disagreement among the commissioners about the wisdom of such an approach. It appears that at least some commissioners want to bring prior town manager Wade Yost back to serve on an interim basis. The thinking is that the town faces several serious challenges right now from managing the town during the ongoing pandemic to preparing and ensuring the enactment of the next fiscal year budget to helping launch the process for writing a new Master Plan which should be getting under way now to improving staff morale.

During the meeting, another possible hint of Rivard's shortcomings was revealed when it was announced that Commissioner Jeff Eck had prepared a draft COVID management plan that all town staff are now expected to sign. The preparation of such a plan by Eck

**Continued on page 17.**

## PHS Students Grapple with Return-to-School Plan As County Reopens

By Andrew Sojka

On February 9, Montgomery County Public Schools announced that March 15 would be the new start date to phase in classroom learning. The plan had been initially to begin phasing in students by February 1, but following the January 12 Board of Education meeting, during which it was determined that the county hadn't met the health metrics to return (positivity rate under five percent, fewer than fifteen new cases in Maryland), it was decided that the county would reevaluate at a later date when students and staff would return.

As early as August 28, Governor Hogan and Maryland State Superintendent Dr. Salmon had authorized for Maryland Public Schools to be reopened, but it wasn't until the county Board of Education meeting on February 9 that it was decided by

county officials that it was finally safe enough for students to return.

On November 11, parents and guardians were given a survey allowing them to select their preference for returning to a partial in-person model or to remain fully online. Families were given one final opportunity to change their minds, with the final date for opting in or out being February 26.

For many students, the decision to go back doesn't make sense for multiple reasons. Whether for safety or practicality, many students would prefer to stay online rather than face the challenges of returning in-person.

"I found out it would be hybrid and that the bus schedule wouldn't change, so I chose to stay online," said senior Pragya Jha. "Also, I feel like a lot of Poolesville community (namely

people from Clarksburg) did not truly quarantine."

**Continued on page 15.**

### Latest News on White's Ferry

Just before our deadline, Chuck Kuhn of JK Moving reported the following to the *Monocle*: "We are working diligently with Loudoun County, Montgomery County, and the states of Virginia and Maryland to get the ferry reopened. Nothing has been confirmed as of yet, but everyone is working hard to make it happen." Any further reports on the issue will be forthcoming.



# Family Album



*At last! PHS sports began practices for a pandemic-shortened season.*



2021

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### FARM EVENTS & PROGRAMS

- Family Pizza Nights
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## Foundations

### The Enslaver and the Enslaved: The Crossed Paths of Dr. Stephen Newton Chiswell White And Phillip Johnson

By Kenny Sholes

"I was born down on de river bottom. I belonged to ole Doctah White. He owned a lot o' lan' down on de bottom. I don't know his first name. Everybody called him Doctah White." These memories, recorded in 1937 as part of the Works Progress Administration's Slave Narrative Project, came from Phillip Johnson. Born into slavery in 1847, Phillip was one of many enslaved peoples owned by Dr. Stephen Newton Chiswell White, a successful doctor, landowner, and politician who lived his entire life in the Ag Reserve.

Throughout the 1800s, the White family was one of the most prominent in the area, owning a significant amount of land and heavily involved in local politics. Stephen was born in 1800 to parents Nathan and Margaret White—likely at the White-Carlin Farm near Boyds (the farm was built by Nathan in the last decade of the 1700s). There's little record of Stephen's upbringing, but given family connections, it's likely he spent significant time on a number of historic farmsteads throughout the western portion of the Ag Reserve and in Poolesville. At twenty-three years old, Stephen married Ann Belt Trundle.

The Trundle family was also prominent in the area having benefited from the wheat boom of the early 1800s. Ann's father, Samuel Trundle, had used his wealth to build Annington in 1813, and it was of this stately home that Stephen and Ann took possession after their marriage.

In addition to owning significant land, the White family owned many enslaved persons across the Ag Reserve, and Stephen was no different. While enslaved labor was used to cultivate the wheat, corn, and oats in the fields around Annington, Stephen ran what appears to have been a successful medical practice in Poolesville while also serving as a Republican state representative for Montgomery County.

To accommodate his successful medical practice, Stephen built a home in the center of Poolesville around 1830 that he also used as a doctor's office.

In 1835, Ann unexpectedly died following an unknown illness that lasted ten days. Her obituary notes that "she has left a disconsolate husband and three small children, with many near and dear friends to deplore their painful bereavement."

Two years after Ann's death, Stephen married Elizabeth Gott Chiswell, a cousin. While there is no clear evidence, it's believed that Elizabeth and Stephen spent much of their newly-married lives at the home in Poolesville (I suspect, but don't know for sure, that there was a bit of awkwardness around bringing his new bride to Annington given the continued presence of Trundle family members in the area). It was to this home that Phillip Johnson was sent in the 1850s by Elizabeth out of concern that the Annington overseer (an unnamed individual responsible for managing and disciplining the enslaved) was excessively cruel to young Phillip. Remembering the overseer, Phillip noted that the "missus took me away from de bottom when I was a little boy, cause de overseer he was so cruel to me. Yessah, he was mean. I promised him a killin' if I ever got big enough."

Stephen died in 1860, but Phillip continued working for the family at the Poolesville residence throughout the Civil War. Phillip stated, "I saw all that fightin' around Poolesville. I used to like to watch 'em fight. I saw a Yankee soldier shoot a Confederate and kill him."

Following emancipation in 1864, Phillip went on to play a role in the formation of the Sugarland African American Community. His home, which no longer stands, was on the south side of Sugarland Road. He married Rachel Ann Beander in 1877; the couple appears to have had two children. Phillip died in 1938 and is buried in the St. Paul Church cemetery.

To learn more about the legacy of slavery in the Ag Reserve and the formation of our vibrant African American communities, please visit the Sugarland Ethnohistory Project: [www.sugarlandproject.org](http://www.sugarlandproject.org).

Note: The quotes taken from the WPA's Slave Narrative represent important historical documentation of the experience of enslaved peoples in America; however, readers should note that the slave narratives are likely biased and influenced as a result of predominantly white men interviewing African Americans during a time of deep segregation in America.

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## Rande(m) Thoughts Getting a Second Chance to Get it Right

By Rande Davis

With the resignation of Seth Rivard as Poolesville's town manager, we should be able to thankfully move on toward a better future. We should be, but I am skeptical that we can. I remain concerned that the commissioners are trying to cram too much too soon into their search for not only an interim town manager, but at the same time, a permanent one. To include professionalizing the town's human resources systems with that search is ill-advised. Let's slow down and get it right this time.

The process of finding a new town manager, even if it goes smoothly, can be expected to take between four to six months, with the bulk of that time being filled by an interim manager. Right now, the commissioners are expecting the town clerk and town attorney, already with demanding workloads, to carry the ball. It's unfair to them and the public.

There is little need at this point to rehash the examples of poor judgments and, in certain instances, incompetence of the past due to lack of managerial experience on the part of some commissioners. Had the simple yet important process of the scheduled six-month review of Rivard's performance been completed, the complaints and concerns about his managerial style by multiple town employees would have surfaced at a very early stage. That review would have given voice to their frustrations short of the formal complaint process initiated at a later date. From that simple oversight, all other problems escalated. Some claim that a decision to terminate after the six-month review would have been too costly due to the contractual terms. If that is true, then the contract for his employment was very poorly negotiated. Any contract of employment must always include the right to terminate due to moral turpitude, and this should supersede any other terms of separation.

Moving forward, the commissioners need to take a breath and take things one step at a time. First, they need to reassess how well they handled the last search for a new manager and determine the areas in which they need to improve. Call this a self-generated employee improvement plan if you will. They can try to defend the past, but the public expects improvements and no repeat of past blunders. Then they need to find the right interim

manager—someone whose experience can give us the essential time to thoroughly vet and hire a permanent manager. Any discussion of major revisions to the town's human resources without participation of the upcoming town manager is not preferred. While I can agree there is much need for improvement in town human resources, I also believe it can at least await the few short months of finding the right permanent person to oversee such a development. Again, let's find the right interim first.

Ideally, that interim manager would have a thoroughly proven track record of running a small-town government. He or she would have verifiable and exceptional managerial skills proven to positively motivate employees to exceptional performance, build esprit de corps into a working team concept, and establish a sense of trust between management and labor, such that any reluctance by employees to share the kind of frustrations previously experienced would be a far less problem than it was in recent months.

Hopefully, the new interim would come with an intimate understanding of all the operational issues facing the town. He or she would possess the knowledge of the role of the town manager and its responsibilities. The new interim would have a proven ability to work well with the commissioners, the town attorney, and the general public.

It might seem that such a person would be extremely hard to find—except we have that person right at hand. The ideal interim just happens to be tan, rested, and ready to step in to do all those things. That person is Wade Yost.

For over fifteen years, I observed Yost's talent as a small government town manager. During that entire time, he proved to be managerially talented and thorough. His work product was always exceptional. He was open, honest, and trustworthy in his dealing with everyone. During his entire tenure here, while divergent opinions could be expressed on the whole range of divisive issues, the one person everyone had confidence in was Wade Yost.

Amazingly, some in a position to decide now to seem to think the problems with the previous town manager can be at least partially blamed on Yost, as he didn't create a more professional human resources system. The audacity of that blame-shifting is stunning, and the desire to shift any blame about employee mistreatment by Rivard is galling beyond reason.

I spoke to Yost, and I learned he would be willing to return, with

reasonable limitations, as interim town manager until a permanent one can be found. To hesitate because of a desire to develop a new HR department at the same time is short-sighted and unjustifiable. To believe that we do not have the time to await a new town manager to help create and manage a new professional approach to HR is inexplicable.

I sent a note to all the commissioners on this matter first. So far, Brown and Eck stated confidence in hiring Yost to be the interim. It appears the majority prefers to at least seek someone else first. For me, this is, as they say, a no-brainer. Hire Yost for now, then hire a permanent town manager.

Regardless of what happens, the residents should have some say in the matter. It's not enough for the commission to provide a three-minute time slot to voice opinions on Zoom. The commissioners need to be willing to participate in public dialogue on the matter with some give and take. They need to do this if openness and transparency are to have any meaning at all.

If you have faith in the decision-making by the commissioners going back to the beginning of this nearly year-long fiasco, then you might be inclined to give them the nod to do whatever they want now, but if you, like me, are a skeptic, you really need to let them know your thoughts. You

need to send them an email, not just shout out on facebook. The call is simple: Bring Back Yost.



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*Keeping an Eye on Local News*

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## Focus on Business

### Liu Wins Prestigious National Award

By Rande Davis

Jerry Liu of DG Liu Design and Renovations has been awarded the national volunteer of the year by Rebuilding Together. He was chosen from over 120 nominees by Rebuilding Together affiliates across the United States.

“On behalf of everyone involved with Rebuilding Together Montgomery County, (RTMC), we congratulate Jerry on his recognition. We thank him for his efforts, and we look forward to working with him for many more years to come,” said Maurey Peterson, executive director of RTMC.



*Jerry Liu of Liu Design and Renovations has volunteered for Rebuilding Together for over twenty years.*

“There is no one more deserving of this recognition than Jerry. In his three decades of service with RTMC, Jerry has proven himself to be a stellar and resourceful volunteer,” stated Maurey Peterson, from RTMC. “Jerry is truly a jack of all trades and has done everything from coordinating construction projects to providing ongoing counsel to our team. He’s served as a board member, a team captain, and a lead generator.

“He maintains a humble and unassuming demeanor in his various roles, with a laser-focus dedication to helping the people he serves. He approaches his service with a smile, and he infects all of us with his positive energy and passion for a neighbor-helping-neighbor approach to solving community issues.

“No one can precisely tabulate the many, many hours Jerry has committed towards our cause. He’s given his all towards helping the low-income residents of Montgomery County. Jerry is the epitome of a community leader.”

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## Senior News

### Poolesville Seniors Present Virtual Programs

Visit the Poolesville Seniors website, [poolesvilleseniors.org](http://poolesvilleseniors.org), to see the wide variety of virtual programs that are open to the entire community.

#### Mondays

**Tai-Chi** with Maureen Ivusic, 10:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

#### Tuesdays

##### Trivia Game Night

If you love Trivia, come join a team with Poolesville Seniors. Email [info@poolesvilleseniors.org](mailto:info@poolesvilleseniors.org) for more information. 7:00 p.m.

#### Wednesdays

**Chair Yoga** with Twyla Insalaco. 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

*\*\*There will be no class on March 10.\*\*  
Classes will resume on March 17.*

#### Zumba Gold

The Zumba Gold Class is temporarily on hiatus. Please check the Poolesville Seniors website weekly to learn when the class will resume.

#### March 11

##### Author Presentation

Barnesville resident and author, Steve Vogel, will speak about his latest thriller, *Betrayal in Berlin*. Learn about the details behind the story of the construction of a tunnel into East Berlin to tap into Soviet telecommunication lines and the operation's betrayal by dangerous British spy, George Blake. 7:00 p.m.

#### March 13

##### Virtual St. Patrick's Day Party

Open to the community! Wear your green and gather the whole clan for a big virtual St. Patrick's Day Party! Invite family and friends of all ages to partake of all things Irish, including songs, bingo, trivia, party favors while they last, and a few other surprises. Check the Poolesville Seniors website for updates and registration information. Don't miss this sure-to-be-fun-filled event! 7:00 p.m.

#### March 18

##### History of the Agricultural Reserve

Kenny Sholes returns for his seventh presentation in his series about historical sites, properties, and people of the Ag Reserve. 7:00 p.m.

Continued on page 7.

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Continued from page 6.

Senior News

March 22

Monthly Book Club

The book for March is *Praying for Sheetrock* by Melissa Fay Greene. All are welcome to join this lively social and intellectual discussion. 7:00 p.m.

March 25

Martinsburg Voices and Artifacts

Rev. Chuck Copeland continues his discussion about the free black community of Martinsburg. He tells about the life changes faced by former slaves, their efforts to build a new society, and the roles of the schools and the Methodist Church in forming their community. 7:00 p.m.

Pop-Up Walks with Jon Wolz

Back by popular demand, Jon will be leading and narrating more walks in the coming months. These will be planned and based on a three-to-five-day weather forecast. Completing the Poolesville Seniors Liability Release Form on their website and emailing it to them will indicate your interest. Then watch your email, the Poolesville Seniors calendar, and their Facebook page for dates, times, locations, and registration information as the walks are scheduled.

For more information or to register for any of the programs listed here and receive the Zoom link for each, visit the Poolesville Seniors website: [poolesvilleseniors.org](http://poolesvilleseniors.org). Many of these presentations are also streamed live on their facebook page and recorded for later viewing on YouTube.

Did you know that you don't need a computer to participate? You can join the Zoom presentation using your smartphone or just listen in using the local telephone number from Zoom and the Poolesville Seniors meeting ID and Password. Call or text them at 301-875-7701 to learn how.

**Fun Fact...**

The stormy March is come at last,

With wind, and cloud, and changing skies;

I hear the rushing of the blast,

That through the snowy valley flies.

— William Cullen Bryant

<https://discoverpoetry.com/>



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# Tidbits

## ZTA Solar Array Update

The County Council session just ended and voted on ZTA with the amendments that the agricultural stakeholder work group recommended: Requiring the conditional use approval process and the protection of class I and II soils.

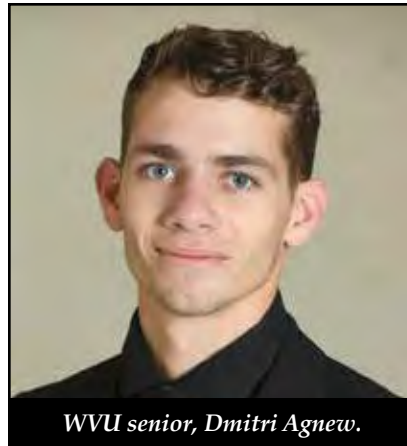
The new office of agriculture mapping study shows 4,500 acres of land available that meet all the provisions of the solar industry.

Another very important but not much heralded provision of the ZTA is allowing everyone—farm, home, and business in the Ag Reserve—to put up to 200% of their needs in solar arrays on their roofs and properties.

## Local West Virginia University Student Earns Honor

Dmitri Agnew of Boyds, PHS Class of 2015, has been named to the President's List at West Virginia University for the Fall 2020 semester. A student must maintain a 4.0 grade point average for the semester to be named to the President's List. Agnew is a senior majoring in Mining Engineering.

West Virginia University is the premier land-grant institution in the twenty-



WVU senior, Dmitri Agnew.

first century and delivers high-quality education, excels in discovery and innovation, models a culture of diversity and inclusion, promotes health and vitality, and builds pathways for the exchange of knowledge and opportunity between the state, the nation, and the world. Founded in 1867, WVU is home to more than 30,000 students and has nearly 200,000 graduates shaping our world each day.

## Yeah, but Can He Paint a Selfie?

Local artist James Vissari was recently spotted all alone in Whalen Commons painting the Poolesville scene looking west toward old town hall. James has painted many local scenes and much

Continued on page 9.



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*It's hard to believe it's been a year since Covid-19 entered our world, and to some, this past year may seem like it was several years long. Either way—March is here with rising temperatures and longer days—and we're already seeing the first signs of spring.*

*Despite the pandemic, the real estate market has remained strong, with home values growing at a fast pace. After this year of hefty appreciation, if you'd like to find out what your home is worth, contact me for a complimentary comparative market analysis.*

*Likewise, if you're in the market to buy a new property, just let me know how I can help.*

*If you have additional questions, I'm happy to assist you with your real estate needs.*

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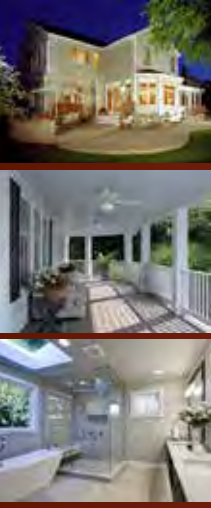
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# Monocacy Health Update

## COVID-19 Update as Of March 2, 2021

By Sam Hardwick

Wear masks or two masks (optional), keep social distance of six feet, wash hands often, and avoid group gatherings as much as possible.

COVID-19 test now available at CVS Darnestown and doctors' offices. The Poolesville Family Practice (301-972-7600) has not currently been supplied with the vaccine, but they have the rapid fifteen-minute test available.

Vaccine appointments may be registered at [montgomerycountymd.gov](http://montgomerycountymd.gov).

**Montgomery County**  
(source: [Coronavirus.maryland.gov](http://Coronavirus.maryland.gov))  
Total of all cases reported positive: 63,395  
Total deaths: 1,367

Cases of reported positive tests for COVID-19 by zip code:

Zip Code	Cases	Deaths
20837 – Poolesville	218	3
20838 – Barnesville	<15	0
20839 – Beallsville	53	3
20841 – Boyds	359	7
20842 – Dickerson	68	2

### County Deaths by Age:

Under 30: 0  
30-39: 4  
40-49: 15  
50-59: 20  
60-69: 55  
70-79: 125  
Over 80: 380

*Now pre-registering persons over 65.*  
To determine if you qualify for a vaccine, visit [montgomerycountymd.gov](http://montgomerycountymd.gov).

### Status of Vaccination in County

(source: [Coronavirus.maryland.gov](http://Coronavirus.maryland.gov))

**Phase 1A-1C:** Frontline healthcare workers, staff and residents of nursing homes, first responders, residents 65 and older, and those with specific medical conditions.

### Schedule of Vaccination Schedule of implementation

**Current: Phase 1A**  
Frontline healthcare workers, staff and residents of nursing homes, and first responders.

**Phase 1B**  
Residents over 75, frontline essential workers.

**Phase 1C**  
Residents over 65, those with specific medical conditions.

### Coming soon

**Phase 2:** People with critical infrastructure roles.

**Phase 3:** General population.

Continued from page 8.

### Tidbits

more of his work can be viewed at <https://jamesvissari.weebly.com>. He can also be located on facebook and he is available to paint your favorite spot in Poolesville. We will get you more on him in a Center Stage article in a future issue.

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## Garden

### March into Spring 2021

By Maureen O'Connell

It was approximately one year ago this month that the world and its peoples were turned upside down with the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic and its ensuing effects on our health and the world economy. There now seems to be a glimmer of hope on the horizon with mass vaccinations against this deadly virus. Time will tell.

Everyone's world has been narrowed with lockdowns and its restrictions. Many people are working from home, and children are attending school virtually via a computer screen. Fatigue and boredom have slowly crept into our lives. During these past months, I have spent more time taking care of my home, including my houseplants. At the risk of anthropomorphizing them, their continued vigorous signs of good health have brightened my days inside the house. It was as if they knew I needed that extra boost. My two moth orchids (*Phalaenopsis*) that I bought last December are still in glorious bloom; the two Thanksgiving Cacti are soldiering on in a blaze of pinkish-red blossoms; my twenty-year old *Clivia miniata* is right on schedule and is producing several clusters of orange trumpet-shaped flowers nestled within its long, bright green, strap-like leaves. He demands patience as it can take from two to five years for a clivia to bloom for the first time. Mine took four years. Pretty soon, though, we will be welcoming the flowers of spring.

In 2021, the March equinox will occur on Saturday, March 20 at 5:37 a.m. EDT. This event marks the astronomical first day of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. Now though, I am already watching it slowly march into my garden plots. Recently, on one of my gardens walks with Spencer and Winnie, I noticed a handful of small bright green snowdrop and daffodil tips poking their heads through the ice-covered snow. Early spring might kick off with the arrival of snowdrops, but for me, it is their successor—the golden daffodils—that really begin to brighten up spring.

Every year, I like to add some new and unusual plants to my garden. With the arrival of garden catalogues in early January, there is usually much to tempt me. The challenge is to curtail my appetite (I try by reminding myself that I will have to plant them when they arrive). This year, I threw caution to the wind and ordered three each of three different plants from White Flower Farm and Wayside Gardens.

I usually only recommend to my readers plants that I have already grown in my Barnesville backyard. That way I can predict their behavior in our climate and soil conditions, but this year, the three plants I am going to mention are new to my gardens; it will be an experimental run.

*Philadelphus* is a genus of about sixty species of shrubs from three to twenty feet tall, native to North America, Central America, Asia, and southeast Europe. It shares the common name mock orange. It is beautiful, extremely fragrant with double white flowers, and very hardy, blooming in late spring to early summer. While this strong-growing old favorite is magnificent in bloom, it tends to fade into the background the rest of the year. It can also grow to an enormous size, making it a poor choice for an average backyard space. This changed in 2019 with the introduction of the variety 'Illuminati Tower.' It breathed new life into this classic favorite, combining a landscape-friendly size with a totally unique space-saving habit. It naturally grows in a very narrow upright way, each sturdy stem a stack of rugged, deep green leaves that look like a four-sided tower. It grows three to four feet tall with a spread of eighteen to twenty-four inches. It is drought tolerant and pest, disease, and deer resistant and grows best in sun to part sun. In this category is its cousin 'Illuminati Arch.' It is larger than the Tower, topping off at both four feet tall and in spread. Its fragrant white flowers cascade over arching branches. To save on garden space, I ordered three of the Tower variety.

*Astrantia* is a genus of herbaceous plants in the family Apiaceae, endemic to Central Europe, Eastern and Southern Europe, and the Caucasus. There are eight to nine species which have aromatic roots, palmate leaves, and decorative flowers.



*Clivia miniata* in bloom.

Continued on page 16.



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## In Your Own Backyard

### Woods Lock

By Jon Wolz

When I was a Boy Scout in troop 246, in 1968, we hiked by this lock at mile 39.37. I remember the wood-framed lockhouse, the large maple tree, and the farm field behind the lockhouse. In 1969, the lockhouse burned down, a victim of arson. Today, only the stabilized stone foundation remains of the house, and the farm field is now a forest. In the late 1980s, the lock was filled in by the C&O Canal National Park with dirt to stabilize the lock walls. While the landscaping was being done, the gray granite mounting block that once stood in front of the lockhouse was dumped in the woods on the edge of park property. The mounting stone remains in the woods to this day. The largest silver maple tree in Montgomery County stands between the lock and the foundation of the lockhouse.

Lockhouse 26 was built in 1832 next to the Trundle farm. A farm road led from behind the lockhouse through the farm and up the hillside. Nearby stone structures, including the red sandstone lock and a bypass flume, were finished in 1832. The lockhouse was one and a half stories with end-chimneys that sat on rubble. The foundation was red sandstone and the windows had six over six lights. It had a porch on the side facing the lock. There were two bedrooms on the second floor, and on the first floor, a kitchen and dining room. It also had two separate cellar rooms with an exterior door and window for each cellar room.

In books about the C&O Canal, including Thomas Hahn's *Towpath Guide* and Mike High's *C&O Companion*, Lock 26 is known as Woods Lock; however, the books do not say who Woods was. Often, a lock was named after the current lockkeeper at that lock. In researching this story, I have found several lockkeepers and their families and others who once lived at this lock. Through my research, I discovered the identity of Woods.

The lock was also once known as Fitch's Lock and at other times Milk Lock. There were no lockkeepers with the name "Milk" that I could determine.



*Preparing for a swim at Lock 26, circa 1900.*

Possibly Dickerson area dairy farmers brought their milk to the canal before the Metropolitan Railroad line was constructed. At the canal, the milk may have been loaded onto canal boats for delivery up and down the canal. The lockhouse was built between the lock and the bypass flume, so when the canal prism was watered in 1834, the house was surrounded by water and was situated on an island. There is a bridge that crosses the bypass flume that connected the island with the Trundle farm.

On the C&O Canal Association's website, I found payroll records that were transcribed by association member William Bauman from records that are at the

Continued on page 16.

## SUSTAINABLE POOLESVILLE AWARDS ANNOUNCEMENT

**The Poolesville Town Commissioners and the Sustainable Poolesville Committee invite you to participate in the Environmental Awards Program. Through the awards, the Town looks to recognize and show appreciation for those who give back to the environment and encourage others to get involved!**

**ELIGIBILITY:** Open to any business based within Poolesville limits.

Awards are either for a project(s) in 2020 or over a period of years (2020 and before).

- Awards may be for new initiatives and/or certifications for the year of 2020.
- Awards may be for continuing efforts beyond regulatory requirements.

**SCOPE OF THE AWARDS:** Examples of environmentally-friendly programs and projects include but are not limited to:

- ✓ Use of integrated pest management to minimize the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides.
- ✓ Pollution prevention and green purchasing.
- ✓ Expansion of source reduction, reuse, and recycling efforts.
- ✓ Energy and water conservation measures.
- ✓ Tree planting and management.
- ✓ Invasive species management projects.
- ✓ Greenhouse gas emissions reductions.
- ✓ Generation or purchase of alternative energy.
- ✓ Other innovative environmental enhancement ideas or projects.

**DEADLINE:** Early submission is encouraged!

The deadline is 5 p.m. on August 20, 2021.

Email submissions to [townhall@poolesvillemd.gov](mailto:townhall@poolesvillemd.gov) with the subject 'Sustainable Award'.

**JUDGING:** The Sustainable Poolesville Committee will evaluate the nominations based upon program effectiveness, innovation, and endurance. The winner will be announced during the Commissioners' Meeting on September 13, 2021.

**AWARD PRESENTATION:** Awards will be presented at a special awards ceremony during Poolesville Day.





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## Monocacy Nature and Wildlife

### Hawks Are Thriving in the 'Hood

By Susan Petro

Poolesville is not just an idyllic community for the more than five thousand residents who call the town home, but it's also becoming increasingly welcoming to area wildlife, including an abundance of hawks. There are five common hawk species found in and around town: red-tailed, red-shouldered, Cooper's, sharp-shinned, and northern harriers. Other species of hawks migrate through the area, as well.

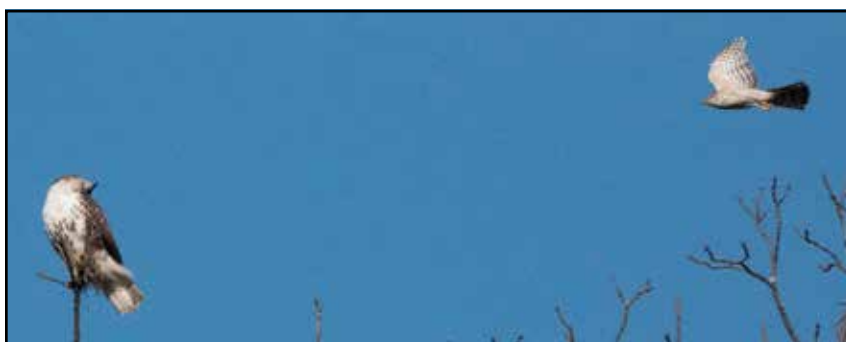
Red-shouldered and red-tailed hawks are often found sitting on the power lines on the outskirts of town. From their lofty perches, they scour the fields below for a variety of prey: grasshoppers, worms, amphibians, small mammals, and reptiles.



Red-tailed hawk soaring over a local farm field.



A mature Cooper's hawk.



Sharp-shinned hawk (right) approaching a much larger red-tailed hawk.

The red-tailed and red-shouldered hawks are similar in appearance, but each has distinguishing features that make identification a bit easier. The red-shouldered hawks are slightly smaller in size, have an orangish-tinged breast and shoulders, and dark striped tail-feathers. These hawks spend more of their time searching for prey in the forests; however, they also seem to enjoy the mature trees and the small ponds that dot the town of Poolesville. It's not uncommon to find a red-shouldered hawk or two taking up residence in the nearby woods.

The red-tailed hawks are larger than the red-shouldered hawks, with wingspans reaching over four feet. They are more likely to be seen hunting over local fields than in the woods. One distinguishing feature of this species is their distinctive red tails that are visible as they soar over their territory in search of prey.

Two additional hawk species, the Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks, also thrive in and around the Poolesville and surrounding area. They are known for their high-speed flying skills as they glide through dense woods in pursuit of smaller birds. Because of their dietary preferences, the Cooper's and sharp-shinned species are sometimes unwelcome guests around area bird feeders. Although it can be upsetting to lose a songbird to one of these hawks, their most common prey are starlings and pigeons which are both invasive species. The presence of

Continued on page 15.

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Continued from page 14.

**Hawks Are Thriving in the 'Hood**

these hawks is beneficial for keeping the population of certain birds in check.

If one is concerned about too much raptor activity at their feeders, they should take them down for a few weeks until the hawk moves on. Preferably, feeders should be placed near trees and shrubs where songbirds can retreat for quick cover if necessary.

Mature Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks have gray-feathered caps and long striped black and gray tail feathers. Sharp-shinned hawks are smaller than the other species. The immature hawks are more difficult to identify as they each have similar features.

While not common in residential neighborhoods, the northern harrier can be found scouring area fields for prey. They can easily be distinguished by a solid white stripe at the base of their tailfeathers. Additionally, the northern harrier has flatter facial features that resemble an owl.

Local Poolesville residents, Michael and Pilar Garrett, have enjoyed the presence of a pair of red-shouldered hawks for many years. The hawks built a nest in a thicket of mature maple trees in their backyard. Starting in the late winter months, the hawks return to the same nest, and by spring, they can be seen feeding their offspring. Last spring, the presence of eggs was confirmed when a local tree company worker noticed the nest occupied with at least two eggs while working in the neighbor's backyard. They assured the Garretts that the nest was undisturbed and in good order.

Soon afterwards, three offspring emerged. The Garretts love to sit on their back porch to enjoy the hawk youngsters and adults flying about their yard. Just recently, the couple recently discovered the hawks are again nesting in their usual spot. They are eagerly anticipating another season of hawk-watching.



*Northern Harrier, aka Grey Ghost Hawk, with distinctive white band on tailfeathers.*

Continued from page 1.

**PHS Students Grapple with Return-to-School Plan as County Reopens**

"I chose to stay online since it would be much safer compared to returning to in-person learning," said sophomore Jeffrey Xu. "Although the county is trying to do everything to prevent transmission in schools, there is still a risk of it happening, and I chose to stay home to avoid that."

Another common complaint is that the back-to-school plan appears rushed and may not adequately protect students and staff from the risk of infection.

"Something that worries me is that I feel like the motion to go back to hybrid school was a little bit rushed. I feel like, personally, the decision was a little rushed with minimal preparation, but I hope the county executives and teachers can pull it off," said sophomore Sara Cho.

For many other students, especially seniors, going back to school would be their last chance to experience high school before they take the next step into adult life. "I chose to go back because I'm a senior, and it's probably the last time I can see teachers and the school before I graduate," said senior Angelina Sachar. For many students like Sachar who are returning to school, contracting COVID is their main concern. "I'm worried about getting COVID or passing it on to my parents, being stuck in the classroom all the time, or the school experience being the worst."

Online learning also presents its own challenges, some of which motivate students to return to school. "I have been getting more sleep, but the blur between my workspace and my relaxing space has made it hard for me to unwind," said Jha. "I also feel like it has been hard to truly learn the material for classes since it feels like each class is moving really fast during the Zoom lectures."

In terms of what school will look like for students returning in person, they'll come back in rotations, switching between in-person and virtually every other week. The county stated that all schools have had updated HVAC systems and have been provided additional personal protective equipment (PPE) to have on hand. The county also plans to employ a voluntary surveillance COVID-19 testing system, in which groups of students will be regularly tested at random to ensure no one has contracted the disease. Students and staff must wear masks during the school day, water fountains will be turned off (though stations to refill reusable bottles will be open), upperclassmen will not be allowed to get lunch off-campus, and depending on the school, students may be required to quarantine in one room the entire day. Poolesville high school has yet to release such guidance.

The first phase of students returning includes those in specific education and career programs, grades pre-K to twelfth, alternative and specific education programs, and the Career Readiness Education Academy. As health metrics allow, the county plans to permit additional groups of students to return throughout the remaining school year.

Cho, Xu, Sachar, and Jha all hope that next year will be normal.

"My hopes for next year are to be able to return to normal and to meet friends I made this year over online school in person," said Xu.

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Continued from page 12.

### Woods Lock

National Archives. Canal payroll records are incomplete and begin with 1839. That year shows James Fitch as the lockkeeper making \$150 a year. James was born about 1782 in Virginia and, in 1802, he married for the first time to Hannah Bradfield in Frederick County. In 1828, James married again to Ann Copelin in Frederick County. I do not know what happened to Hannah. In the 1840 Census, living with James were four other people. The census for 1840 only identified the head of the household by name and not the inhabitants. The census did identify other occupants by sex and age. The other occupants were all female: one under age five; one aged 15 to 19; one 20 to 29; and one 30 to 39. All of the occupants were white. James was identified as being 50 to 59. The canal payroll records show James as the lockkeeper making \$150 a year through 1850. In the 1850 Census, living with James, was Frances Fitch, 25, Mary Fitch, 9, William Fitch,

7, John Fitch, 5, and James Fitch, 3. Mr. Fitch's second wife Ann was not listed in the census as living with him. Frances was born in Virginia, and the other children were born in Maryland. Frances may have been a daughter-in-law of Mr. Fitch. Mr. Fitch's will was written on March 16, 1852 and executed on April 27, 1852. His will did not mention a wife. I could not find the burial location for James Fitch. His son William later served in Company B 35th Virginia Cavalry during the Civil War. As of June 1, 1853, lockkeepers' salaries were increased to \$200 for a single lock.

In 1860, Thomas N. B. Benson appears as the lockkeeper at Lock 26. His full name was Thomas Ninian Beall Benson. He was 34, born in 1826 in Maryland. Living with him were Deborah Kindle, 40, and John Turner, 14. Deborah could not read or write. Deborah and John were both born in Maryland. On January 31, 1863, Thomas married Mary A. Owens in Frederick County, Maryland. Thomas appears in the U.S. Civil War Draft Registration for the 3rd District, Montgomery County. His birthyear given was 1820, and his age given was 43. He was listed as a farmer. There are no records of him serving in the Civil War.

In 1863, the lockkeeper was Herman Lapold. At the lockhouse, a soldier from the 10th Vermont Regiment married the lockkeeper's niece, Mary Gastor. During the Civil War, armies from both sides spent some time at Lock 26. The Confederates never stayed very long; however, the Union soldiers were

stationed in the area for most of the war and were frequent visitors to Lock 26.

This is the end of part one of a two-part story. Part two will include the resolution to the conundrum of Woods's identity.

Continued from page 11.

### March into Spring 2021

They are commonly known as great masterwort. Its flowers are unusual looking as they are a group of petal-like bracts. The leaves look a little like Italian parsley or carrots, which is not surprising as it is in the same family as the carrot. It grows to about twenty-four inches tall with a sixteen-inch spread. Plant in sun to part shade. It grows best in moist soil with plenty of organic material. This is not a low-maintenance plant; it needs to be watered frequently in dry weather. To me, *Astrantia* is worth the effort for its intricate detail of this unique flower. It is also attractive to a host of pollinators. I bought the variety 'Sparkling Stars Pink' with strawberry pink and cream flower clusters bursting from the center like mini fireworks.

Gardening in the shade can be a challenge for many gardeners. For years, hostas have been the go-to plant for shady areas. There are many other perennial options. Let me introduce you to the last new plant I just bought: *Bergenia* Dragonfly 'Sakura.' This hardy spring-blooming perennial groundcover has dense clusters of rose-pink flowers above thick rosettes of heart-shaped, glossy-leathery leaves that turn shades of red and purple in fall and winter; it is evergreen in warmer climates. Introduced to garden cultivation from Siberia in 1779, they are tough and robust, and they will grow virtually anywhere, coping well with exposed sites or dry conditions. Its nickname is pig squeak, as its thick leaves squeak when rubbed together. Another name is Elephant Ears for its large, rounded leaves. 'Sakura' is just one of the cultivars in the Proven Winners Dragonfly Series. 'Sakura' means cherry blossom in Japanese, and the rosy pink clusters of semi-double blooms in spring are as welcome as the blossoming cherry trees.

I have some challenging work ahead of me, but it is something very good to look forward to. Look to your garden catalogues now and find something new and unusual for you and your garden.

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Continued from page 1.

**Confusion Reigns as Town Manager Resigns**



suggests that a satisfactory written plan did not already exist. This should have been among the responsibilities of the town manager.

At previous meetings, it was brought out that Rivard was being mentored by two of the commissioners, Ed Reed and Martin Radigan. Their work was guided by an Employee Improvement Plan (EIP) which is a common management tool used to help poorly-performing managers improve their performance. The existence of an EIP with regard to the town manager suggests that his performance had been subpar and left serious questions in the minds of commissioners. That an EIP program was even needed is concerning since Rivard was the top pick of the commission just a year ago after the commissioners interviewed at least four other candidates.

The lack of much information beyond these facts leaves town residents without much to go on and with concerns about the future management of town operations. These concerns have been noted online on a number of occasions and in public comments during the last few commission meetings. Some of these concerns are also being generated by the fact that at least two evaluations were conducted regarding the town manager's performance and actions, including one by an outside law firm. While the details of personnel evaluations are rightly not released due to privacy concerns, not even high-level summaries of the key findings have been made public to date.

In a separate item discussed at the town meeting, Commissioner Jim Brown indicated that he was on a Zoom call with state delegation leaders like Sen. Brian Feldman and Del. David Hidalgo as well as County Councilmember Andrew Friedson regarding the continuing impasse at White's Ferry. Brown noted that the new owners of the ferry have not yet been able to strike a deal with the Virginia landowners who control the strip of land where the ferry lands. Brown added that while a deal has not been struck, he is pleased with the continued high level of attention the issue is receiving.

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**Thank you!**

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## Police Blotter: Past and Present

By Jack Toomey

### Present Crime

**Theft:** 20800 block of Peach Tree Road.

**Vandalism:** 18700 block of Barnesville Road; Oxley Farm Road; numerous reports of vandalism to houses under construction in the Westerly Grove subdivision. Police suspect neighborhood youths.

Residents are asked to call the Rockville detectives at 240-773-6084 with information.

### Past Crime: 1920 to 1925

Sheriff Clay Plummer was given the unenviable task of investigating an incident that happened on the golf course at Chevy Chase Country Club. It was reported that Senator Robinson of Arkansas and Dr. James Mitchell, a well-known surgeon of Washington, clashed over some dispute while on the links. Up to then, the sheriff had interviewed employees of the club who all said that no fisticuffs had occurred.

Rumors spread like wildfire concerning the murder of Harry Adams. Truxton Goodrool was charged in the murder, but rumors indicated that other bodies were buried on the property of Goodrool. States Attorney Dawson, Sheriff Moxley, and a deputy went to the property and made a thorough search and were satisfied that no other bodies were there.

The police again visited the Conduit Road, this time to investigate several complaints of loud noise and carousing coming from a certain house two miles from the D.C. line. Not only did Sheriff Nicholson go, but he brought three of his deputies, five specially-sworn-in deputies, a detective from Washington, and another from Baltimore. They did find a loud party in progress and intoxicating liquors being sold. The owner of the house was arrested and charged with various alcohol-related crimes. Also arrested were a number of partygoers, some from Washington and others from Montgomery County. One of the attendees attempted to escape, but Mrs. Ferrar, a specially-sworn deputy, sent a bullet whizzing by his head; he changed his mind.

The sixteen-year-old daughter of Deputy Sheriff Harris escaped from the house of John Larcombe, a thirty-eight-year-old Rockville man. Elizabeth said that she had been taken there against her will, and when Larcombe made indecent proposals, she escaped. Larcombe was held on \$10,000 bail and charged with various crimes.

States Attorney Dawson and Sheriff Nicholson were in Toledo, Ohio trying to determine if a man being

held there was part of the holdup gang that robbed the Sandy Spring Bank and shot to death the manager Francis Hollowell. Montgomery County authorities were slightly overwhelmed with the complexity and seriousness of the case and had to call in assistance from both the Washington and Baltimore detective bureaus.

*Some of the material in this column was obtained from the archives of the Washington Post.*

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## Celebrating 32 Years of Service

### Being Aware of Changes to Your Older Pets

Adapted by Peter H. Eeg, BSc, DVM, CVLF

While we don't like to think of our pets getting older, there are certain things which can help to slow down their aging process and cognitive decline. From a balanced diet to regular moderate exercise and mental stimulation, these can all help to keep our furry friends healthy right into old age.

Like us, dogs and cats are capable of having senior moments and developing health issues. We do not have to accept it as inevitable. Watching for signs and being proactive can help their old age not be a disease but a great time during their life with you.

**Older pets may show added evidence of changes to their wellbeing, especially during big temperature swings. Older pets may need extra support. Some common signs of this can include "senile moments" around the home.**

1. Getting lost in the home
2. Not seeming to recognize or walking by family members
3. Lagging behind on walks due to increased joint stiffness from the cold
4. Struggle to jump up on or down from furniture
5. Increased water intake
6. Decreased appetite
7. Seeking out-of-the-way places to hide/sleep
8. Sleeping on the heating/cooling vents or closer to the fireplace or dark cool spot than usual
9. Seeming like grumpy old men and women
10. Changes to their fur, nails, and feces.

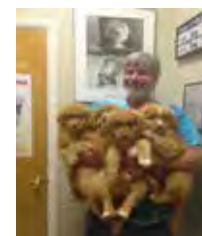
**Here are several tips on helping your four-footed crew stay ahead in the age game.**

- See your veterinarian if any of the above changes are chronic
- Keep them active
- Discuss with your veterinarian about increasing or altering their nutrition
- Help them keep up with grooming
- Discuss your pet's joint issues with your veterinarian (not the kid at the pet store)
- Keep your home uncluttered and don't move things around. Older animals have reduced eyesight and hearing in most cases. Their sense of smell also drops some (one of the reasons they may walk by you)
- Reduce their stress level (don't fight in front of the children, furry or not; don't take up the drums; play single-instrument type music [not drums!] in the home; check the sound level on your television)
- See where they like to rest and put their bed, crate, or soft cushions in that spot; make it easy for them to find it
- Paying attention to your pet and making little changes around your home can give your aging friends a much better quality of life, thus giving you a better, less stressful quality of life.

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