Happy Women's History Month!

March 18, 2022

Digital Archives Staff Recommendations

Meeting minutes, 2004.0018.0012

Patricia’s Pick: Meeting minutes: Mutual Improvement Association, January 6, 2000

Have you read through any of the various clubs minutes now available at the click of a mouse on DigitalMaryland.org? One only has to take a look to be rewarded with hidden treasures.

In commemoration of Women’s History Month, I chose to highlight the January 6, 2000 Mutual Improvement Association’s minutes, No. 1572. Reading through these

Photograph, 1981.0011.0064

Sara’s Pick: Photograph: Sherwood School girls tennis team, ca. 1911

As the weather gets warmer, many of us get more active in outdoor activities. This photo shows the girls’ school tennis
minutes, you will learn of medical advances, history, horticulture, local stories, and more. This particular meeting caught my attention as they discussed the niece of a member who invented and built her own plane, complete with a parachute - just in case! Having sold her first, she began to build her next airplane.

I leave you with this tidbit found on page 3. As the date was January 6, the Epiphany, the members posited that, “If the Wise Men were women, they would have cleaned the stable, arrived on time, brought sensible gifts, and delivered the baby.” Pretty funny, huh?

I have to imagine at that time, the opportunity to play tennis may have been a new option for female students at Sherwood School. Their tennis outfits are a bit different from the uniforms we see these days, but the equipment remains similar. It is inspiring to think of the long history of girls playing sports such as tennis and how that has led to the success of female athletes in the modern era, such as the Williams sisters or Billie Jean King.

If you flip to the reverse of the photo, you will see many familiar last names of students who were members of the team. Becoming an athlete in any sport is impressive and shows dedication built through practice. We celebrate the young female athletes who paved the way for the rest of us.

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**Curiosities from the Collection**

**Gas Powered Iron, early 20th century**

Ironing fabric is seldom considered a risky venture unless you were a launderer in the early 20th century.

Adoption of electricity brought an onslaught of new household appliances that made even the most mundane and tedious tasks slightly more bearable. The electric iron was a massive improvement over its predecessor. So great were the advancements that even those yet to adopt household electricity were eager to replace their heavy, dirty, oven-heated flatirons for a revolutionary product boasting an internal heating element that warmed a clean, polished ironing plate. Thus the evolution of the fuel-powered iron that variously employed alcohol, kerosene or, like this one, gasoline!

The adoption of electricity in Sandy Spring mirrored that of the rest of the country; by 1925 only half of all households in the U.S. had made the switch. In fact, the electric grid did not even extend to Brighton until 1929 and the Sandy Spring Meeting House held out until 1938 before bringing an incandescent glow to its interior. Given the number of Sandy Spring’s social events, the need for a convenient ironing appliance like this is not surprising.
On this day in 1851

On this date in 1851, the Brookeville Store saw a bustling midweek business. The store did $25.52 (equivalent to $940.31 today) in sales and settled two accounts. The first account was paid in cash for the whopping amount of $100 ($3864.62 today) and the second, settled by two sacks of salt, for the much more modest sum of $3.50. ($129.96 today). Coffee, molasses, tobacco, and a variety of fabrics were the popular items on that spring Tuesday.

Of the fifteen customers coming into the store on March 18, two were free Black residents of Brookeville, seven were white enslavers, and six were white non-enslavers. The store’s merchant is presumed to be Alban Gilpin, a Quaker who later ran the store in Ashton but appears in the 1850 census as a bachelor-merchant living beside the store at The Brookeville Academy.

This unassuming general store, in an unassuming town, on a random day serves as a stunning microcosm of the complicated social context of mid-19th century Maryland. Free Black citizens sharing space with enslavers, all contributing to the wealth of a Quaker merchant whose faith condemned slavery but who directly benefited financially from a plantation economy.

Explore any date in this ledger and you will see a similar scenario play out each day. Store ledgers may, at first blush, appear tedious and sterile yet, with a little digging, my goodness what poignant and enlightening stories they tell!

Love being transported to Sandy Spring of yesteryear?

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Upcoming Transcribe-a-Thon:

Friday, April 1, 10am- 3pm

Explore the history of Sandy Spring through transcription!

For this month’s transcribe-a-thon, we are celebrating April Fool’s Day with the silly side of our collection, featuring
items from three historic local children’s camps, which were active from the late 19th century through the early 20th century. Read and transcribe along to learn about their many shenanigans.