

# South Mountain Tidings

April 2016



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SMHS Partners with MWAHS to preserve unique artifact

South Mountain Heritage Society

*Dedicated to the Preservation and Interpretation  
of the History of Burkittsville*





**South Mountain Heritage Society**  
*Executive Committee*

President: Catherine Cox

Vice President: Jody Brumage

Treasurer: Robert Young

Secretary: *Vacant*

Members-at-Large

Bill Susa, Mary Garwood, Jean Galey,  
Maurine Young, and Shelby Beaver

Historian and Curator: Jody Brumage

We are excited to welcome you to a new museum season at South Mountain Heritage Society. Each spring, the historic Resurrection Reformed Church prepares to welcome visitors who will tour the exhibits, explore the unique architecture and art of the church, and learn something new about the history of our town. With several much-needed preservation projects now completed, thanks to the support of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority and the generosity of many donors, we are now looking forward to shifting our focus towards outreach and innovative programming in the coming year. This year will be an exciting new page in the society's history as we take a new approach to exploring Burkittsville's story and work to engage new audiences in our programs and events.

We invite you to join us in our continuing effort to preserve and interpret the history of our community. This issue of *South Mountain Tidings* will feature stories about new projects and approaches to reaching our community members and beyond.



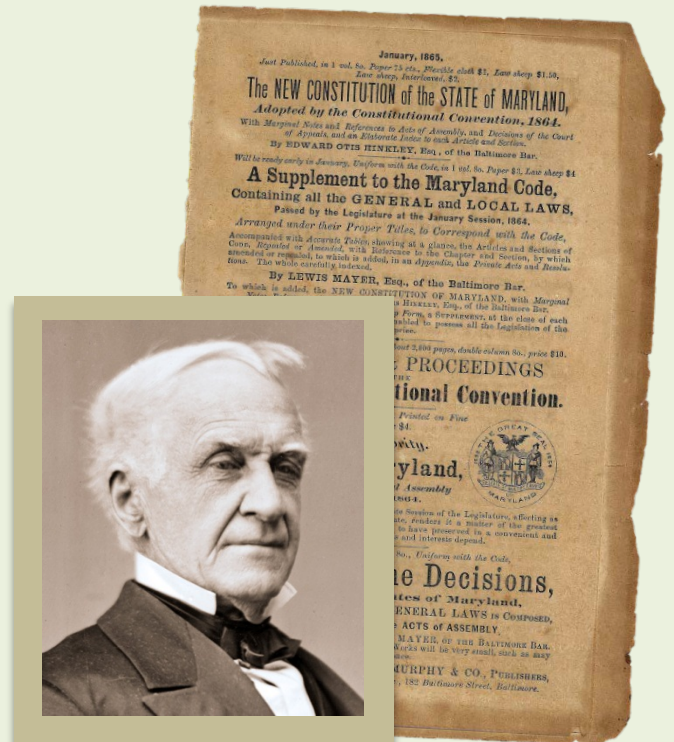
Cover Image: "Battle of South Mountain:  
Franklin's Corps Storming Crampton's  
Pass" by A.R. Waud, *Harpers Weekly*  
October 25, 1862



# New Discoveries

## IN BURKITTSVILLE HISTORY

Preparing for this year's special exhibit, "The Story of Burkittsville in 30 Objects" has shed light on many new stories about our town's citizens over the past two centuries and their impact on the local, state, national, and international communities. Previously, many of our exhibits and publications at SMHS have taken a thematic approach to our town's history. Our current permanent exhibits explore themes including the Civil War, Religion, Commerce/Industry, and African American history. However, in this year's special exhibit, we are taking a new approach and viewing the history of Burkittsville in a chronological sense, and as a result, we've happened upon some very interesting discoveries!



While we have long known of the first Maryland governor to hail from the Burkittsville area, Thomas Sim Lee, we are excited to share new insights in the other leader of our state to come from our community, Governor Francis Thomas.



George Alfred Townsend "GATH" may be remembered best for his writing or his magnificent arch atop South Mountain, but he also played a significant role in the commercial development of our town in the 1890s.

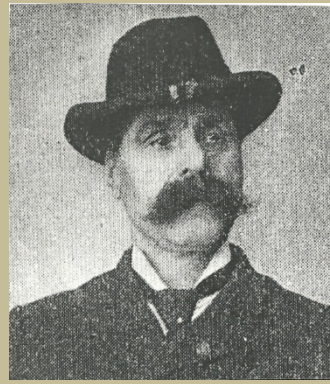
The namesake of our town, Henry Burkitt, died in 1836, but his will was not executed until 1839 and in reviewing the equity docket, a plat of Burkittsville in that year was discovered, revealing how the town grew in its earliest years.



1862  
Burkittsville Nov 8<sup>th</sup>

Dear Mother

I recieved your long looked for kind and welcome letter this afternoon and with what joy did I read those cheering words. Therein contained what I expected to hear that you were moved before this. yesterday it snowed here (right smart as the south says) but as I would call it. It snowed like sleet the first snow we have seen in Maryland you wished to know what I ment Sam H to C well I will tell you when we first came here there was 14 different hospitals in this place every old hut was used for one and as you must know they had to see same regulation and so all the hospitals were lettered from A to O. in the first place I was in I then H then I was taken Sick and then I was taken to E where I am now.



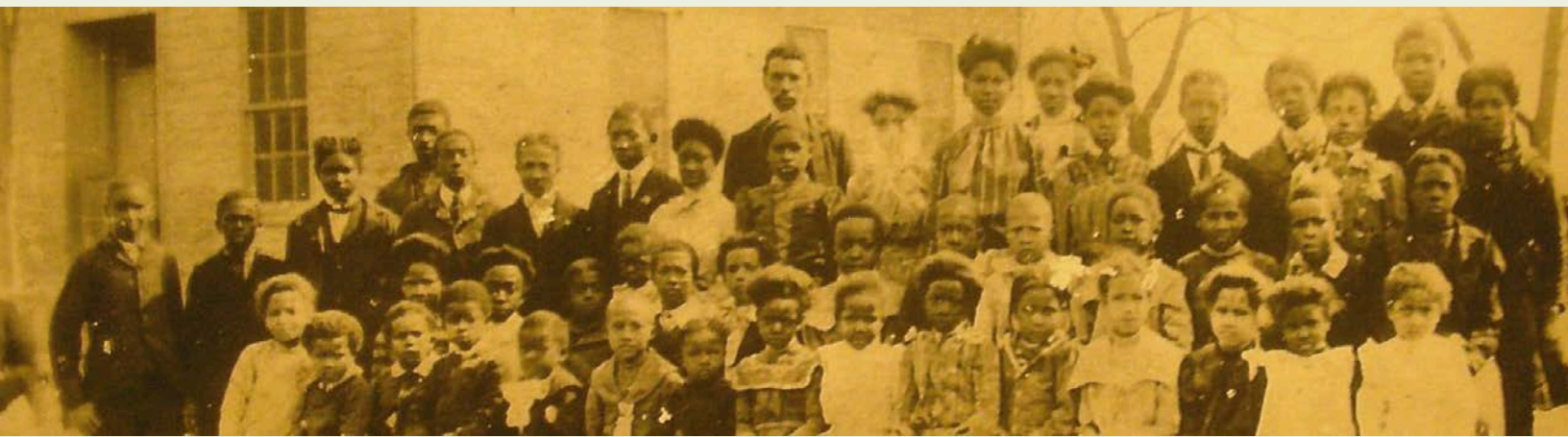
Close inspection of letters written by two brothers from New York, John and Allen Lovejoy, revealed how soldiers and citizens worked together during the weeks and months after the Battle of South Mountain to treat the hundreds of northern and southern wounded soldiers who filled over a dozen buildings in town.

Burkittsville's story is really a collection of stories, each told through the eyes of the people who visited, lived, worked, and died in our community. The special exhibit is divided nearly in half between the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> centuries and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, containing stories from the settlement of the town, its economic boom in the 1850s, the devastation of the Civil War and WWII, the perseverance of its African American Community, and its transition from commercial center to a historical destination.

In studying our town's story in a timeline approach, we can place many of the individual stories in greater context. This improves our understanding of how our community has come to be what we see and appreciate today.

As visitors explore the exhibit, we are encouraging everyone to take a small paper tag, place it next to their favorite of the 30 objects, and write a short explanation as to why they chose that particular artifact. With this feedback, we hope to continue shaping our future exhibits at SMHS around the interests of our community.

Students of the Horsey School in Coatesville, Burkittsville's African American community, with their teacher, Mr. George Whalen.





# Spook Hill Race

TO BECOME EVEN BIGGER!



Registration for the 2016 SMHS Spook Hill Cider and Wine 4 Mile Run is open now!

The field for the October 22<sup>nd</sup> race will be increased to 500 paid participants and we expect to sell out well before race day again.

If you're interested in participating but don't fancy yourself a runner, we have developed a "Couch to Spook Hill" 12 week training plan. The plan utilizes a proven run/walk strategy which gradually builds up from 1 minute walk/1 minute run in week one to a 5 to 1 run/walk ratio which will get you to the starting line of Spook Hill without overtraining. Look for the training plan on the race's website under the "Training" button on the home page.

In 2015 we enjoyed great support from townsfolk, with residents as participants, volunteers and as front (or back) porch cheering sections. We hope to see even more of you actively involved in the run this year! For information on the run, email Race Director, Bill Susa at [sillybusa@yahoo.com](mailto:sillybusa@yahoo.com) or check out the Spook Hill Cider & Wine 4 Mile Run website: [www.spookhill4mile.org](http://www.spookhill4mile.org)



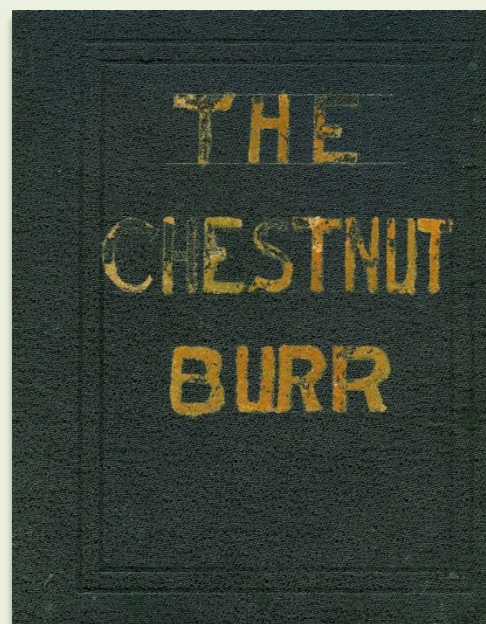


# Working Together

## TO PRESERVE A UNIQUE ARTIFACT

A few months ago, SMHS Curator Jody Brumage received a call from local historian and author Robert Savitt about a unique find that he had made while acquiring items for the collection of the new Myersville-Wolfsville Area Historical Society. The find happened to be the very first issue of *The Chestnut Burr*, the yearbook for Middletown High School. SMHS immediately lent a hand to preserve this important artifact for future study by offering to digitize the book and prepare copies of it for the valley's historical society museums.

Published by the class of 1928, the yearbook is actually a three-ring binder with about 100 handwritten pages inside, many including photographs of the students, teachers, and scenes of the school in Middletown. Among the graduate class of 1928 were two students from Burkittsville: Robert Ahalt and Mary C. Biser. Interestingly, each one is noted as having "transferred from Burkittsville High." This is the first documentary mention that we have found to date referencing a high school in Burkittsville.



The cover of the Class of 1928's yearbook, *The Chestnut Burr*.

Photographs of the school complex in Middletown in 1928. The building labeled "our old high" is still in use today as the St. Thomas More Academy. The second building, labeled "our new high" was demolished to build the Middletown Public Library on Prospect Street.



*Our Old High*



*Our New High*





Robert Ahalt (Top) and Mary Biser (Bottom), Members of the 1928 MHS Class from Burkittsville.



The digitized copies of the yearbook will be given to the collections of SMHS and the Myersville-Wolfsville Area Historical Societies, while the original book will reside in the collection of Middletown Valley Historical Society. This project is just the latest in several years of collaboration between Middletown and Burkittsville's historical associations, and now, we are glad to include the Myersville-Wolfsville Area in this work too. This partnership ensures that together, our respective organizations are preserving the cultural memory of the Middletown Valley, its people and places.

We will be adding the yearbook to our digital archives soon, and we hope you will enjoy viewing its unique stories and photographs. The students of the MHS Class of 1928 certainly put a lot of work into the construction of this book, and now, 88 years later, we are excited to be a part of preserving it for the future.







# Upcoming Events

## AT THE HERITAGE SOCIETY

### Special Exhibit Open House & Reception

Join us on the afternoon of Saturday, May 21 at 3:00 pm for a special viewing of the exhibit *The Story of Burkittsville in 30 Objects*. SMHS Curator Jody Brumage will be on hand to describe some of the unique stories uncovered while working on the exhibit. Refreshments will be provided.

### Walking Tour of Burkittsville

SMHS Curator Jody Brumage will lead a special walking tour of Burkittsville, exploring the places where many of the stories shared in the special exhibit happened. Visitors will gather at the museum on Saturday, July 9 at 11:00 am (Rain Date: Sunday, July 10 at 1:00 pm). There is no cost for the tour, but donations are appreciated to support future programs at the society.

The Museum is always open on the first Saturday of the month, April – September, from 10:00 am until 3:00 pm.