



# Historic Newtown Neighborhood News

Fall 2017

Salisbury, Maryland

Newtown Association meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of every month at 7 PM at Poplar Hill Mansion and are open to all residents.

As we head into fall and the end-of-year holidays, here's a look back at summer events and upcoming ones:

- On a sunny morning in early June, Newtown celebrated the dedication of its new [Little Free Library](#) in our Community Garden at Boundless Playground, which was specially designed for Historic Newtown. Everyone is invited to *take a book and leave a book!* Books for all ages are welcome. Stop by and see this new treasure in our neighborhood and spend some time tending the garden. Help yourself to the vegetable bounty this fall!
- Also in June, this year's Newtown [Neighborhood Block Party](#) was enjoyed by all. The moon walk, provided by new neighbor Tish Ottey and installed on David Scheid's lawn on William Street, was a hit with the kids. The annual block party is open to all neighbors and funded by Newtown Association membership dues. Volunteers are always needed to help! Click the links above to see photos of both events.
- Newtown Association continues its initiative to tell the story of Historic Newtown as a livable, lovely neighborhood adjacent to revitalizing downtown Salisbury. A new, colorful, illustrated brochure, which features Newtown to new home buyers, will be distributed to local realtors and others. Our goal is to stabilize housing values, reduce foreclosures, and increase owner-occupied properties. Check out the [new brochure](#) on the Newtown website.
- Newtown Association's Traffic Committee continues to work with the City on concerns about increasing cross-town traffic, especially heavy commercial trucks that should be using highways 50 and 13 instead of residential streets N Division and Isabella. New stop signs on these streets have slowed traffic, and signs directing trucks around Newtown are promised by the City. Noise from motorcycles and pickups remains a constant disturbance.
- Newtown Association's annual meeting is scheduled for October 11. See the calendar page for details on time and place. New members and officers will be elected, all residents are invited, and dues-paying members may vote. We hope to see you there!
- *And don't miss the neighborhood Halloween party at Poplar Hill Mansion on October 27.*

Judith Dressel, President & Newsletter Editor • [newtownassociation@gmail.com](mailto:newtownassociation@gmail.com)

REMINDER – Like Newtown on Facebook and keep up to date with our news – [Newtown Historic District Salisbury Maryland 21801](#) and at [www.newtownhistoricdistrict.org](http://www.newtownhistoricdistrict.org)

## Salisbury Neighborhood Housing Services (SNHS)

SNHS is a private non-profit organization founded with the vision of increasing homeownership in underserved communities. The goals of SNHS are to

- Increase home ownership
- Reduce neighborhood blight
- Provide resources for home improvement
- Encourage private investment by banks, homeowners, commercial and industrial users, and landlords
- Foster sustainable change through education, training, and leadership development
- Develop self-sustaining programs

NHS offers home owner and home buyer educational workshops and hands-on assistance in applying for loans to finance home rehabilitation, rent-to-own, and prevent foreclosure. No income restrictions for owner-occupied properties.

Call to register 410-543-4626 and see more information at [www.salisburynhs.org](http://www.salisburynhs.org)

### Upcoming Workshops

- October 21 (lunch provided, scholarships available): Community Wide Homebuyer Education Workshop
- November 4: Keeping the American Dream: Learn How To Preserve Your Greatest Investment

## Save the Date

### Antiques & Collectibles Appraisal Fair

November 11, 2017

Location: MAC Inc., Area Agency on Aging,  
Salisbury, MD

Appraisals @ 10 am to 3 pm; doors open at 9:30  
am

Featuring appraisals by local antique experts

Charlene Upham & Steve Blumenhauer

Tables available for antiques vendors, information  
exhibitors

Also silent auction, food on sale, entertainment

Co-sponsored by MAC Inc. & the Westside Historical  
Society

For more information or a registration packet, call  
410-742-0505 or email [cfr@macinc.com](mailto:cfr@macinc.com)

## Welcome New Neighbors!

**Tom and Linda Grier** settled in Newtown this summer at 320 N Division, one of the oldest houses in Salisbury, after moving from Lower Bucks County, PA. Both are graduates of Indiana University. Linda had a shop, Linda Grier Antiques, in Yardley, PA, for 10



years. Today, her antiques business travels to shows from New England to Illinois. After teaching high school history for two years, Tom earned his law degree in 1975. Tom practiced law from 1975 until June of this year. In 2001 he completed a MA in American History at Rutgers University and taught history and business law at community colleges for several years. Tom says: "We long wanted to spend our retirement near the ocean and our children and their families. We were fortunate to find an older home in Salisbury--after having lived in an 18th century home in Langhorne, PA for 30 years--that appropriately fits our interests in antiques and history. We look forward to meeting our new neighbors, making new friends, and learning about Salisbury, as we begin the retirement stage of our lives and our 48th year of marriage."



**Lena and Adam Woodis** moved to Newtown from Bloomington, IL this summer into the glorious, red, fish-scaled, Queen Anne at 103 Elizabeth with their toddler daughter Rya. Lena is originally from Wisconsin and Adam is from Massachusetts. Both joined

the faculty at Salisbury University: Lena teaches physical chemistry and Adam teaches German studies. They received their doctorates from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where they met in 2011. Adams says: "We chose to live in Newtown because we have a great appreciation for historic houses – they are just so beautiful with so much character. Historic neighborhoods also attract a certain type of resident – generally the type we call 'front-porch people,' namely, people like us who like to spend time outside and enjoy getting to know their neighbors. It fosters a sense of community and greatly increases the pleasure of being at home. We lived in a historic neighborhood in Bloomington and love the unique character these types of neighborhoods have." Lena, Adam, and Rya enjoy exploring nature and are avid birdwatchers – even Rya can identify a number of birds!

## *Neighborhood Landmarks Share Newtown's History*

**The Charles H. Chipman Center**, in downtown Salisbury and a Newtown historic landmark, has seen slavery, the Civil War, and the Emancipation Proclamation, and has been standing for 180 years. It was built by five local freedmen who purchased the property on Broad Street and built a structure for use as a church, school, and meeting place. Today, it is the oldest standing African-American church on the Eastern Shore.



In 1837 the site was an open meadow where slaves gathered for worship, and the next year a plain one-story structure was built. The John Wesley Church was identified as the African Methodist Church. It was the first school for children of freed slaves in the region and the first Delmarva high school for African-American children after the Civil War. The building was expanded in 1876.

The church was of such significance that Frederick Douglass came to Salisbury in 1880 and lectured in the two year-old courthouse to raise funds for the needed second story addition to the John Wesley Church. In his two-hour lecture, Douglass “spoke obliquely to the peculiar institution of slavery. In others he addressed it directly, referring to the ‘barbarism’ of human bondage” (<http://www.dorchesterbanner.com/dorchester/1880-frederick-douglas-speaks-salisbury-courthouse/>).

Years later, the property was abandoned as a church when its membership merged with another church to form Wesley Temple. Local educators Charles and Jeanette Chipman purchased the property in 1968 to save it from destruction, and after Professor Chipman’s death, it was deeded it to the Newtown Association for preservation in 1985. Newtown subsequently deeded the property to the newly-formed, non-profit Chipman Foundation, which opened the Chipman Cultural Center after extensive renovations in 1994.

Today, the building is a cultural center and museum honoring the history of African-Americans of the Eastern Shore and hosts community events, musical performances, and activities highlighting our area's rich African-American heritage. The Center hosts educational field visits for youth groups from public and private schools and service organizations, educational programs for adults and youth, and non-profit events at no or reduced cost. Chipman Center is available for rent to any person or group in the community as an event site. Contact Shanie Shields at [sshields820@aol.com](mailto:sshields820@aol.com) or 443-523-0084.



### **Parsons Cemetery**

*...where life meets death, nature meets city, and present meets past...*

Keith Eggener, architectural historian and author of *Cemeteries*

Parsons Cemetery, Salisbury’s first garden-style cemetery, originated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cemeteries from this time were designed to be green oases for calm reflection within busy cities as well as sacred resting places. The Victorians valued ornate sculptural monuments as lasting locators for the graves of loved

ones. Today Parsons Cemetery is an urban green space adjacent to Historic Newtown on N Division and an outdoor sculpture museum. Its 53 acres originated as the Parsons’ family burial ground and were donated to St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in 1873 by Salisbury banker, Benjamin Parsons. The ornate iron gates were provided in 1967 by Alison Parsons in memory of his ancestors. Currently the cemetery is managed by a non-profit organization separate from the church.



The quiet beauty of the cemetery grounds, which face Johnson’s Pond at the western end, makes them an integral part of the legacy of the Salisbury community. Its stewardship has been entrusted to successive generations for 144 years. Through its landscape and monuments, the cemetery tells the story of this beloved city by the river and its citizenry. Among the grandest is the Jackson family area, seen here, with Louis Comfort Tiffany-style monuments for Elihu E. Jackson, former Governor of Maryland, his wife, and others. Parsons Cemetery contains about 13,000 identified graves, more than 500 military graves, and 2,200 available plots. For more information see the [Parsons Cemetery website](#).

## Newtown's Grandest Queen Anne, the Gillis-Grier House, 1887



On a corner lot in the Newtown Historic District, registered with the Maryland and National Historic Trusts, is this imposing five-bedroom, four-full bath, Queen Anne Victorian. It is outstanding among the impressive residences that define this historic Salisbury neighborhood. Though identified as the Gillis-Grier House after the two, related families who owned the property from 1896 to 1975, the home was built for merchant James Cannon in 1887. Known for its impressive design and craftsmanship, the home features a 3-story turret with conical slate roof, an assortment of gables, bay windows, and wraparound porch. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century interior design features beautiful parquet floors, seven fireplaces adorned with cabinet-style mantels with original tile hearths, and colored glass windows throughout.

Jeff and Sue Ellen Smith became the fourth owners in 2007 after seeing the house was going up for auction. They have provided the following narrative about their work bringing the house back to life: "Structurally sound, the house had been neglected for years, with peeling exterior paint everywhere, so our first project was painting. We worked with a designer in Texas to develop the perfect color scheme. Stripping the paint down to the bare wood was a major undertaking but well worth it." Jeff, a historic restoration professional, began painting a back section of the house to test colors, "What looked great on color charts just did not work on our house! We tried changing this color and that color, but none was just right; we looked in books and magazines and finally took a trip to Cape May, New Jersey to see its painted ladies. There we found the colors that worked. The home's owner saw us standing and pointing and came out, only too happy to share her paint colors with us. The results are what you see today, although we did add several accent colors of our own.

As with all old houses, every project leads to another. We temporarily painted the dark cherry paneling in the kitchen to brighten it up. Eventually we came up with a design for the kitchen using the existing cabinets with several custom-built cabinets to fill in the space. What started as a chopped up, dark, dysfunctional kitchen turned into a dream kitchen. We have restored all four bathrooms, keeping the historic character while adding modern features. The master includes heated tile floor, Swedish steam shower, double granite vanity sinks, custom closet, exposed brick, and a large, original claw-foot tub."

While most of the restoration is not seen, it is there. New wallpaper complements the cleaned and waxed oak floors and restored leaded glass windows. The 1½ story carriage house that sits behind the main house is one of the last remaining carriage houses in Salisbury. The Gillis-Grier house meets all criteria of Salisbury's B&B ordinance, including off-street parking, and would make a grand B&B. The Smiths are returning to their home in Texas and have recently placed this very special house on the market. See available homes for sale on the [Newtown website](#) for more information.

### **For your fall calendar –**

- October 11, 6 pm  
**Newtown Association's annual meeting & potluck dinner**  
319 N Division Street. [RSVP to anghartley1@comcast.net](mailto:anghartley1@comcast.net) by October 8<sup>th</sup> if you plan to attend  
All residents are invited, but Newtown 2017 dues must be paid up to vote
- November 4, 9 am  
**Fall clean-up of Isabella Street bump-outs.**  
117 E Isabella; many hands make light work!
- **Poplar Hill Mansion** – see details [here](#)  
October 27<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm: Halloween party in a real haunted house! Donation \$5.00 per person  
November 9<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 am: Fall tea. RSVP early as seats are limited  
December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1:00-4:00 pm. Yuletide Open House. See the Mansion decorated for the holidays  
December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1:00-4:00 pm. Tea with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Have a picture taken with Santa
- **Parsons Cemetery** – see details [here](#)  
December 16<sup>th</sup>: Join us on National Wreaths across America Day ceremony