

Chapter 8- Arthur Fenner Lee “Buck” Briscoe: “Mr. St. Mary’s County”

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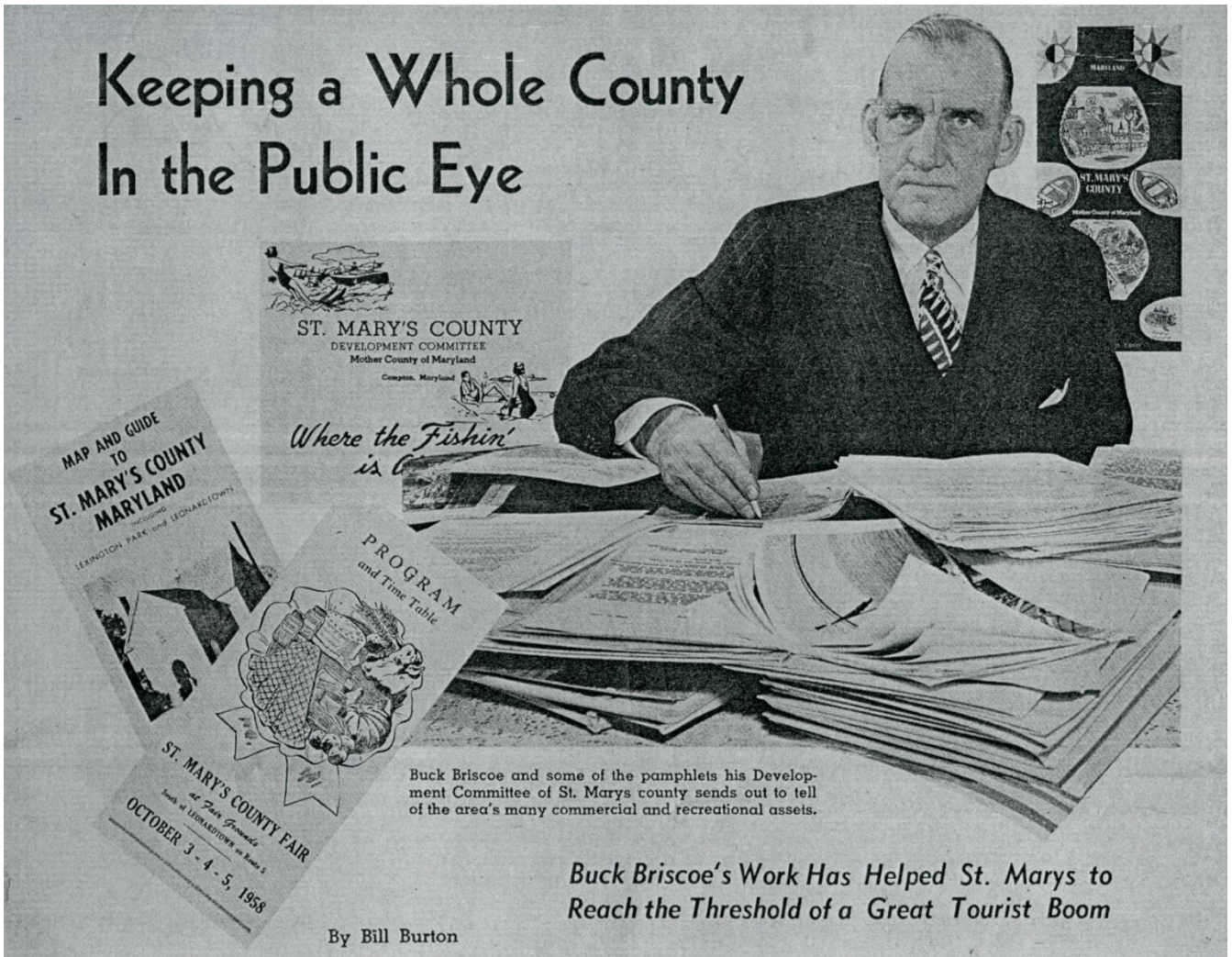
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Keeping a Whole County In the Public Eye



Buck Briscoe and some of the pamphlets his Development Committee of St. Marys county sends out to tell of the area's many commercial and recreational assets.

*Buck Briscoe's Work Has Helped St. Marys to
Reach the Threshold of a Great Tourist Boom*

By Bill Burton

Figure 1 Buck Briscoe. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

From Baltimore to St. Mary's County and Back Again



Old And Historic St. Marys County Fast Changing To Modern Pace

By EARL ARNETT

The story of Buck Briscoe illustrates much about the changing life of St. Mary's county. Some call him a "character"; others call him "Mr. St. Mary's County." The truth in his craggy 67-year-old face labels him an unusual and interesting man.

Fourteen generations of his family have lived in St. Mary's County. He spent his boyhood on the Sotterley plantation, which had been in the family nearly 100 years. It was a working farm in those days and its grandeur has faded.

Arthur Fenner Lee Briscoe was born on October 3, 1900 in Baltimore to Sophia Howard Lee and James Briscoe, Jr. His maternal grandfather, James Fenner Lee, was a diplomat at the court of Austria. His mother was the former Sophia Howard, descendent of John Eager Howard, revolutionary war hero and namesake of Howard County. His father, James Briscoe, was the son of Reverend James Briscoe; and Reverend James Briscoe was the sole owner of Sotterley after the death of his parents, Dr. Walter Hanson Stone Briscoe and Emmeline Dallam Briscoe. His family returned to St. Mary's shortly after his birth, and as a boy the young Briscoe spent most of his summers at Sotterley Plantation.



Figure 2 Left to Right: Sophia Howard Briscoe, Cornelia Briscoe, Arthur "Buck" Briscoe at Sotterley, 1904. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

After graduating from Leonard Hall in 1918, he returned to Baltimore to work on one of the steamboats of the Old Bay Line that traveled to Norfolk, Virginia, taking advantage of the route to transport bootlegged whiskey.

"I left here when I was 17," Buck said, "and there were seven jobs in Leonardtown... I didn't want to leave but lack of opportunity forced me to."



Figure 3 Buck Briscoe as a purser.
Courtesy of Buck Briscoe

He was an entrepreneur even at that age, and in the spirit of the county at that time he made a small fortune bootlegging. In 1932 he came to Baltimore and established a burial vault business. While travelling, he had to go through Virginia, which was dry. St. Mary's County and Maryland were not, and some of the finest stills possible were on private property, unknown to any revenue.

While on this job as a purser, he met a passenger with whom he became friends- Bill Sheen. The passenger told him about an idea he had for a waterproof asphalt burial vault. But, he told Buck, "I need about \$1800 to get it started. He suggested Buck might join him if he ever got the business going.

Buck told him he'd get the money, and bring it to Sheen's apartment. The following Tuesday, Buck Briscoe knocked at the apartment door. "Here's your money, Mr.


Sheen," he said, smiling that broad grin which seemed to encompass everyone. "Where the hell did you get this kind of money?" Sheen asked. "You've got it, now don't ask questions," Buck replied. "Now when do we go in business?" That was 1932.¹

His description of Baltimore banks illustrates much about his thought. "They were like hock shops," he said, "You'd walk in; the men in charge would be senile nine times out of ten, two years older than God. If you had \$10,000 worth of I.T. & T. stock they might lend you \$5,000. If not, you'd come back in two weeks, and they'd say 'I'm sorry.'"²



Figure 4 Buck Briscoe as a purser.
Courtesy of Buck Briscoe

Families Depend on the Funeral Director for Advice



Protection against water can be had in a SHEEN ASPHALT GRAVE VAULT.

Brick graves protect a grave from sinking but afford no protection to the casket from water that enters practically every brick grave after heavy rains, and melting snow.

SHEEN ASPHALT GRAVE VAULTS justify the purchase of the finest casket because the casket will be PROTECTED.

Guaranteed Waterproof Airtight

ASPHALT GRAVE VAULT COMPANY

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Phone, Gilmor 0265

Figure 5 Advertisement for the Asphalt Grave Vault Company. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

¹ Dorothy, Shannon, "Arthur Buck Briscoe, Mr. St. Mary's County," *The Enterprise*, August 19, 1976.

² Earl Arnett, "Old and Historic St Mary's County Fast Changing to Modern Pace," *The Baltimore Sun*, June 27, 1968.

Keeping a Whole County In the Public Eye

By Bill Burton

John Hanson Briscoe recently called Buck “my old, interesting icon of a cousin.”

Besides his large straw hat bearing the county name on it, Buck Briscoe wore several other hats. He was a bootlegger, a businessman, a car dealer, a hard drinker, and relentless promotion man for the county’s way of life.

He would pay \$22 for a case of booze in Baltimore and sell it for double in Virginia markets. In an interview published in *The Tide* on Oct. 14, 1987, Buck Briscoe recalled telling a revenuer he was bribing, “I told him that we could both make money and offered him \$5 a case. He took it. “I never did anything different or changed myself to let anyone know I had any money. I kept things low key,” he said.

Buck Briscoe said of his bootlegging, “I made enough money to go into business for myself.” When World War II arose, Briscoe moved on to New York City to weld bulletproof plates for ships in the war effort³



Figure 6 Young Buck Briscoe, 1928.
Courtesy of Buck Briscoe

³ Bill Burton, “Keeping a Whole County In the Public Eye,” *The Enterprise*.

New York City

Buck left Baltimore in 1942 and went to New York. He established a multi-million-dollar business in marine welding.⁴

“He was generous to a fault. His philosophy was ‘easy come, easy go.’ He accumulated influential friends, one of whom was Frank Costello, a well-known racketeer, who helped him, for a fee, to keep the maritime labor unions in line to keep production rolling,” Roy Guyther wrote.⁵

* * * * *

John Briscoe recalls a story Buck told him, “Frank, what’ll it take to break this strike?” “Well, we might have to break a few heads,” Buck was told.

John Hanson Briscoe: *In New York, he had a Rolls Royce, a chauffeur driven limousine, he pal’d around with the Rockefellers. Married a Ziegfeld Folly. Went to all the famous restaurants in New York City. He had it all.*

Folies Bergere, my good cousin. Look at this. 7th Street West Broadway. And here he is. That is his lady who was a Ziegfeld Folly, Marie. And right across from her is Buck’s mother. There’s a good picture of Buck’s mother, Sophia Howard Briscoe. Yeah and she’d take them out on the town, you know. Park Avenue. He had access to everything, to the boardroom of the Rockefeller’s, you know. And he’d go to all these night clubs.



Figure 7 Autographed photo from Frank Costello to “Arthur B, A Sincere Friend”.



Figure 9 Folies Bergere advertisement.



Figure 8 Left to Right: Buck Briscoe, Ziegfeld Folly, Marie, and Sophia Howard Briscoe.

⁴ Earl Arnett, “Old and Historic St Mary’s County Fast Changing to Modern Pace,” *The Baltimore Sun*, June 27, 1968.

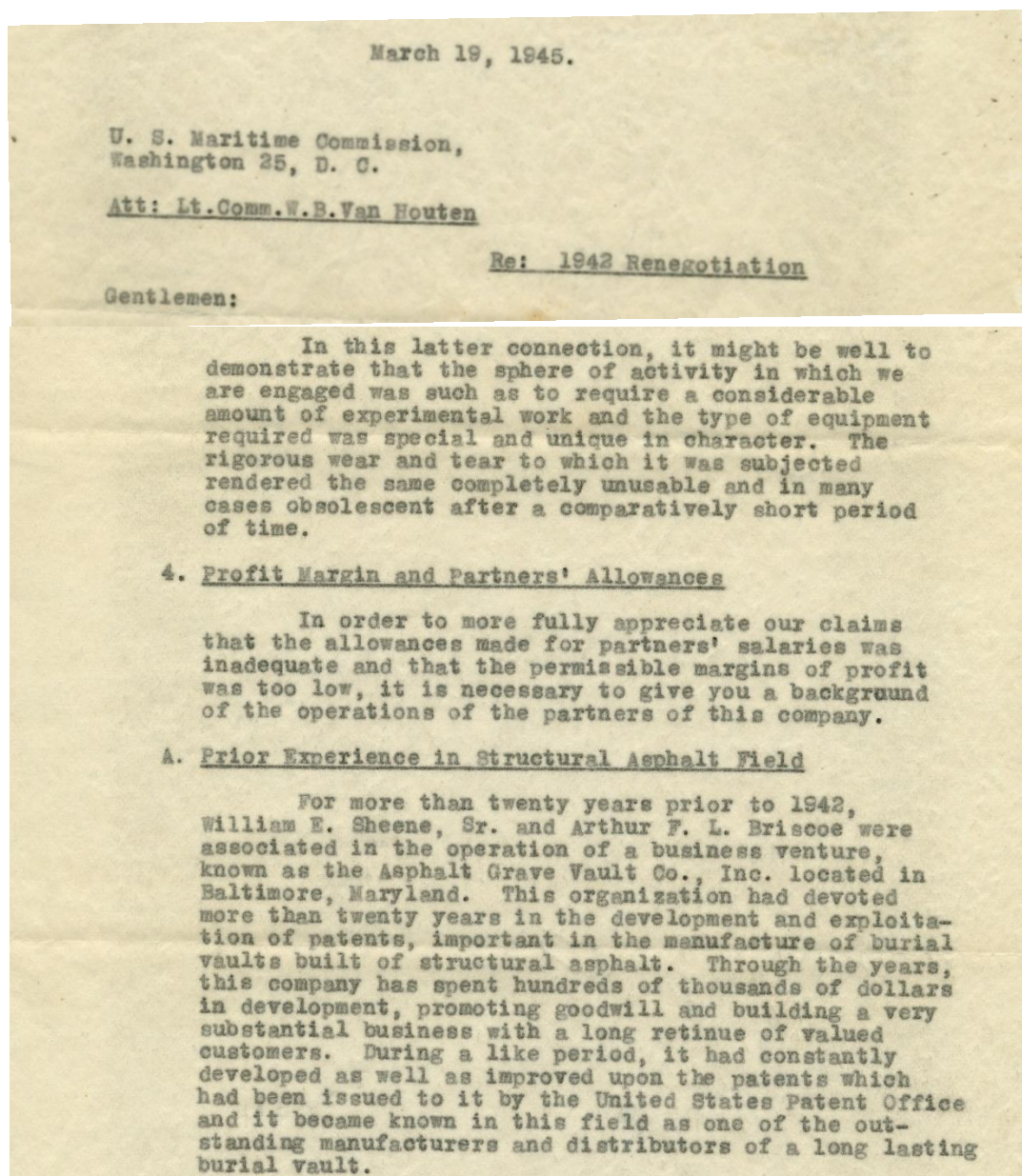
⁵ *Chronicles of St. Mary’s*, St. Mary’s County Historical Society.

Well, during the 2nd World War he was sitting up there in the shipyards in New York City dealing with US Steel, Bethlehem Steel, you know working on their freighters that were going to Europe. Welding and all that stuff, repairs. He had a fabulous business. He was making a lot of money from those big steel companies, and I've seen the papers where he's been paid incredibly. But the war really did end abruptly and he had a lot of money invested into all this equipment, welding and shipyards and the unions and everything, and all of a sudden it stopped. Didn't need all that. US Steel said, "Didn't need you anymore." Bethlehem Steel said, "Didn't need you anymore." And he's got all these people and all this investment and equipment. He borrowed money to do it. You didn't just go out. He ended up owing a lot of money from all these people. And his income was not totally on the up and up. He made a lot of money, didn't report it, and the Internal Revenue went after him and they closed him down.

And he was so tough and hard that losing all of that, somebody might've committed suicide.

Audio 1. John Hanson Briscoe on Buck's involvement in World War II

To understand the transition from Asphalt Burial Vaults to New York City shipping, consider the following:



C. Conversion to War Effort.

With the outbreak of hostilities in December of 1941, the officials of this company who at that time included all of the partners of the subject organization, decided that they would abandon their very successful civilian operations and instead apply their patents, knowledge and experience in making a direct contribution to the war effort. As a matter of fact, in the early part of 1942, our company was requested by the governmental agencies to enquire into the possibilities of applying our patented asphalt processes to the construction of plastic armor units on merchant and combat vessels for the United States Maritime Commission, Navy Department and for foreign governments. At that particular time, this country was confronted by a very serious shortage of steel and an adequate and workable substitute had to be found immediately therefor. The urgency of this situation was particularly accentuated by the enormity and vastness of an overwhelming shipbuilding goal which had been established by our armed forces as being absolutely indispensable in meeting the requirements of the armed forces.

D. Development of Plastic Armor Construction

Consequently, with the urgency of finding a substitute for critical steel, the Navy Department decided upon the use of plastic armor as a protection for the vital parts of merchant marine vessels. With all due despatch, application was made to the Navy Department, Bureau of Ships and Supplies, for all relevant data pertaining to plastic armor. Fortified with the knowledge and experience that the partners of this company had and armed with the information furnished by the Navy Department and the U.S. Maritime Commission, the principals immediately launched a program to experiment with and develop at the earliest possible date, a plastic armor to meet the specifications set by the Navy Department and the U.S. Maritime Commission.

At first, we were requested to fabricate panels for ballistic tests for the plastic armor which the Navy required.

To further emphasize the adversity of the working conditions under which this company was applying the plastic armor, we have but to demonstrate the fact that we were constantly required to have barges moved by a tugboat throughout the port area of New York, men were required to be constantly at our beck and call at a great expense, 24 hours a day and seven days a week for which they were paid at all times, including waiting time, overtime, etc. The actual working conditions were very bad and perilous to the men. It was indeed most difficult to retain a well balanced and skilled crew of men who were competent and experienced in the handling of this extraordinary task. The parts of the vessel which were worked on had in most cases to be scraped, to bore metal, and perpendicular 1/2" round rod welded to the stud bolts, were attached to the rod, and after this formed up with plywood, so that the boring of the plastic armor could begin on a pilot house, radio chart room or other part of the ship. Once the jobs were undertaken, there was no stopping until the work was completed. The hours and the labor worked embraced considerable hardships for the working force because not even inclement weather was an excuse for work stoppage. It would take from three to five days and nights uninterruptedly to complete a ship.

The mobile working units of this organization were required to render service to ships to the ports of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. The working personnel were on a seven day week and on a round the clock schedule at all times. Our work received the commendation of all of the interested governmental agencies for whom this most critical and vital work was performed.

In view of the foregoing, we submit that the pre-war business experience of this company, as best demonstrated by the operations of its predecessor company, should entitle us to a net profit, before drawings of partners, equivalent to at least the same amount earned over a period of many years; namely, forty percent (40%). This will enable the partners to maintain a level of profits reasonably consistent with their former business experience and compensate them for all of their efforts, activities, risk, relinquishments of all of their former business activities and for their direct and unstinting contribution to the war effort.

We will welcome the opportunity of an early conference with your representatives to further discuss the pertinent data embraced within the scope of this re-negotiation.

Thanking you for your many courtesies and cooperation in this matter and awaiting your further advice, we beg to remain

Respectfully yours,

Figure 10 Letter from Buck Briscoe to the U.S. Maritime Commission.

St. Mary's Farm

John Hanson Briscoe: He just came back here and went to the farm and became a farmer. He had a farmer there that would account to him for some crops that wasn't enough for the Internal Revenue to get to, Internal Revenue couldn't touch the property because it was in his mother's name.

So he said "I've got to get out of here and go back to St. Mary's County where I was smart enough to buy a farm in my mother's name." And he didn't know what was going to happen, but he was so smart. And he came here penniless with a big federal Internal Revenue judgment against him for tax evasion and he came down here and they couldn't touch him because he had no income and the farm he was living on belonged to his mother.

That's an incredible, incredible story. He came down here penniless. And here he is, he used to live on Park Avenue.

Audio 2. John Hanson Briscoe on Buck Briscoe's return to St. Mary's County.

"He's [Buck] the person you should have written a book about."



Figure 11 Left to Right: Hilda Maddox Briscoe, John Hanson Briscoe, Arthur "Buck" Briscoe.



Figure 12 John Hanson Briscoe with Buck Briscoe.

St. Mary's Jobs Promoter

Old And Historic St. Marys County Fast Changing To Modern Pace

By EARL ARNETT

"Get three people together in Southern Maryland and the chances are one of them will be a Buck Briscoe."

That was Capt. Andy Scheible, a Wynne charter boat captain, speaking. And in that one sentence he summed up how most fishing party captains and business men think of a 57-year-old native son who returned to his home eleven years ago with an idea.

"I'm a promoter; it comes natural for me," says Arthur Briscoe, known as "Buck," chairman of the St. Mary's County Economic Development Committee. He says he saw the farm industry declining and worried about the possibility of a shutdown at the Naval Air Station. Also, he had a lot of energy that needed an outlet. The result? Since 1956 Mr. Briscoe has labored hard and colorfully to lure the tourist to enjoy "the 400 miles of safe waterways" in the county. And he has also worked to attract

industry to the area.⁶

Arthur Buck Briscoe thrives on crowds especially when they're congregated in St. Mary's county. He stays awake nights figuring new ways to bring people together, whether it be to see wrestling matches, go fishing or water skiing, or just tour his county's still natural countryside. His foremost aim is to get more and more people interested in the rustic atmosphere of Southern Maryland at its best. Occasionally he promotes his ideas outside his county, but you can bet there's a St. Mary's angle involved.



Figure 13 Buck at center with wheelbarrow full of rockfish. Left to right: Boy Mate- Randy Guy, Captain Hike Lichliter, Stephen Edward Bean, and John Stephen Bean

⁶ Earl Arnett, "Old and Historic St Mary's County Fast Changing to Modern Pace," *The Baltimore Sun*, June 27, 1968.



Figure 14 Pat and Mike Kelly with Buck Briscoe His committee,

which includes William A. Chapman, J. Frank Raley, Jr., William O. E. Sterling, Hiram Millison and Sheridan Fahnstock, is due a great portion of the credit for keeping filled all summer the 400 tourist accommodations available in the county.

This whole promotional idea goes back to the mid-1940's when Briscoe gave up his \$1,000,000 marine welding business to return home as a self-styled farmer.

He had left St. Mary's county in 1917 because he couldn't get a job there, and wound up as a purser for the Old Bay Line. Later he operated a burial vault business in Baltimore.

It was the lack of business opportunities he had found when he was young that made him think of returning to St. Mary's and trying to build it up.

His ideas were first met with only mild interest, but were finally accepted. Later \$3,000 was appropriated. It's small, considering the scope of the committee's work.

At the outset he spent much of his time visiting and revisiting eating places, motels and waterfront establishments in efforts to convince the owners they ought to dress them up. They soon caught on to the committee's ideas, and today no county can outdo St. Mary's for vacation facilities.

Each year some 14,000 letters come in the county asking for information about its accommodations and recreational facilities. All are channeled through the Development Committee of St. Mary's county, which has headquarters in Compton- conveniently enough, Briscoe's home town. Every one of these letters is answered, some with printed pamphlets, some with individually typed replies, and some in Briscoe's unique scrawl.

When the mail pressure is too great Briscoe can be seen practically going from door to door to get help in typing answers. During the summer months he enlists the full-time aid of Mrs. Dorothy Dunn, of 619 Linnard Street, Baltimore who vacations in St. Mary's. She donates her services.



Figure 15 Buck and his wife Dorothy Dunn

It has paid off, too, as evidenced in a report published recently in the St. Mary Beacon, of Leonardtown, one of the county's weekly publications.

Although farming was off in 1957 and the deposit of Government checks from the Patuxent Naval Air Station also took a drop total bank deposits for the months of June, July, August and September rose \$6,344,098.67.

The Beacon credited the increase to county's prominence as a vacation land. It believes St. Mary's is on the threshold of the greatest tourist boom in its history. And if Buck Briscoe has his way, you can bet it is.⁷



Figure 16 Buck Briscoe at Hardee's (today the site of the Leonardtown pub), the first fast food restaurant in St. Mary's County.

John Slade: He'd have groups come down to take a charter boat; you know participate in charter boat fishing. He was just a great promoter, you know, always promoting the county. And of course to promote the county you always have to promote the little guy, you know the little guy who runs a little charter boat or has an apple stand or whatever.

In 1956, he was appointed to the St. Mary's County Economic Development Committee. Because the IRS was still hounding him the position paid no salary.

"We came up with the conclusion that the county was dependent on the Navy for our income because agriculture was slipping and seafood was slipping," Buck Briscoe said in a 1987 interview. "We felt we had to do something to get some other business into the county," he said.

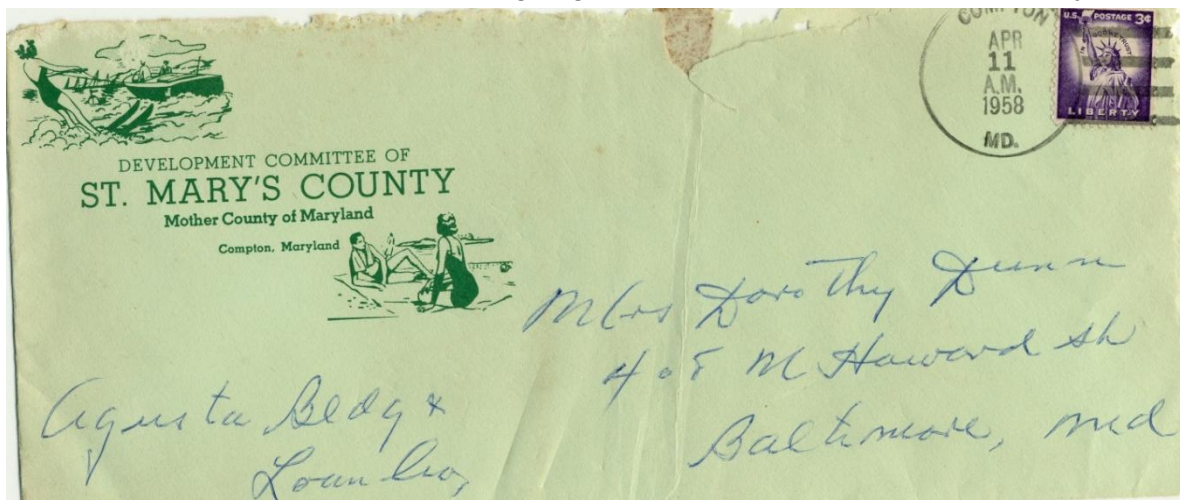


Figure 17 Buck Briscoe's stationery. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

⁷ Earl Arnett, "Old and Historic St Mary's County Fast Changing to Modern Pace," *The Baltimore Sun*, June 27, 1968.

He traveled all around the East Coast promoting St. Mary's as "The land of Pleasant Living," and a tourist destination.⁸

* * * * *

Bob Schaller: *Right, well there was, having grown up here and you know that back in the 60s, 70s and even into the 80s the base wasn't, well, let's say this, it wasn't universally welcomed by the county way back then and it probably wasn't until the end of the 70s and the 80s when it was large enough and it was stable that people realized in the late 80s early 90s when it became more permanent. Prior to that this was more of the enlisted ranks; it was an operational base, it was a test base but there were a lot of operational squadrons and those could be moved, and they were move. There were times when major squadrons of hundreds of folks left and it would ebb and flow and the concern was then 'is this something we can bank on?'*

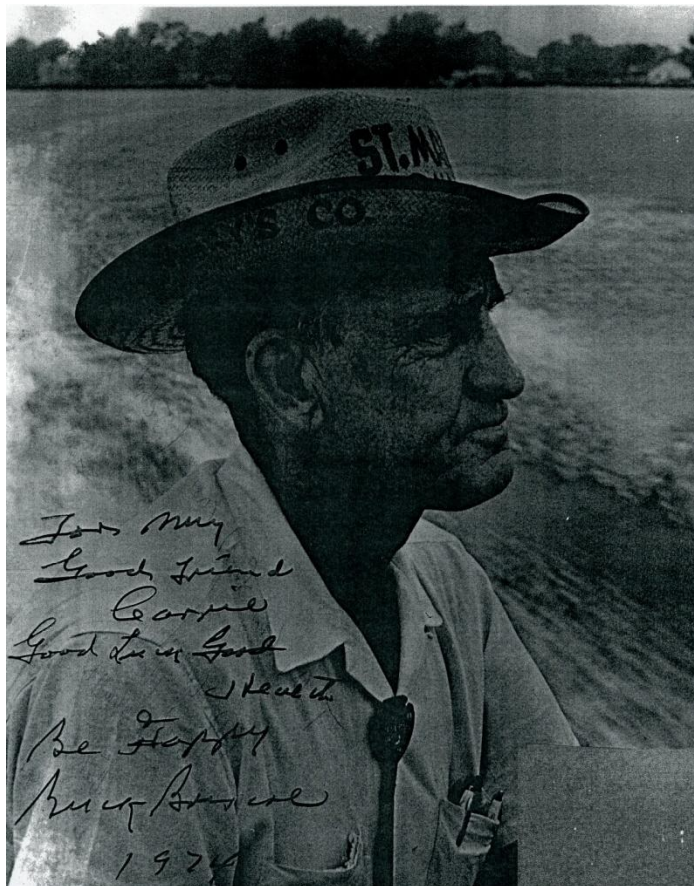


Figure 19 "To my good friend Carrie (Shaller) [Bob Shaller's mother] good luck, good health, and be happy" signed Buck Briscoe, 1974.

⁸ Dorothy, Shannon, "Arthur Buck Briscoe, Mr. St. Mary's County," *The Enterprise*, August 19, 1976.

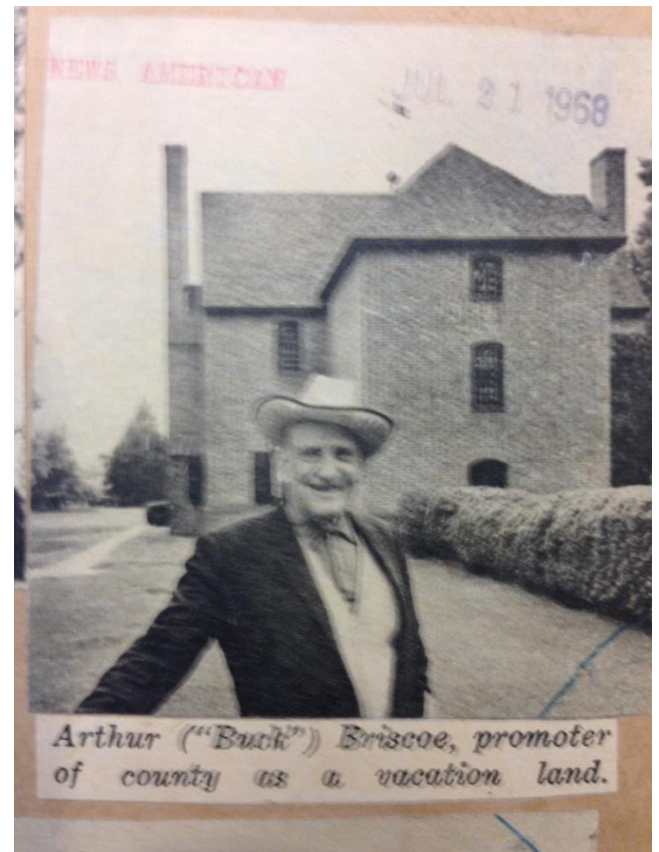


Figure 18 Buck Briscoe promoting St. Mary's County.

Samuel Baldwin: *Meaning the base?*

Bob Schaller: *The base, as in terms of an employee anchor and it wasn't until back in the 90's and with that term really weighing. We were always mindful of the base. It's just now with 23,000 people we don't think it is going to turn off tomorrow. This is all the more reason for thinking back to the 50's and the 60's about having a diversified economy. This peninsula, we're blessed with water and land, all these things that represent our quality of life, "the land of pleasant living." You know, I can see Buck realizing that this is what is going to keep the lights on.*

It's still interesting because you could make the argument that sitting there on the water, in St. Clements Bay was what might have

motivated him to say, "More people need to know about this". By sitting on that bay everyday and him thinking, "I've still got a lot of life and energy and that entrepreneurial spirit - how I can use it?" Then on his own, he created this developmental community.

Samuel Baldwin: Out of his house.

Bob Schaller: Out of his house, you know, connected with some good people, and then found his way into a more official status. Like I said, the Economic Development Commission owes its development to Buck Briscoe. You know as most things started small.

* * * * *

Gary Hodge: The date on this is 1959, so I would say that, and we just talked about the Eisenhower thing being '58. During this period I think Buck was really in his element, promoting our culture both nationally and locally. In the cities people were hungry for these sorts of local interest stories, human interest stories. And he would feed the sources he had and they were eager to use that material. I think as the world turned and we get into the 80's we have a different dynamic afoot, particularly with government becoming more professional, not only at the state level but in this region and at the county level. I remember vividly when I started work here in 1980. The County Commissioner's offices in Charles, Calvert and St. Mary's occupied such small spaces that we would be shocked today. The professional staff was really just a clerk working for three commissioners. That whole picture transformed radically.



Figure 20 Buck presents the Kennedys with a turkey.

Samuel Baldwin: William Sterling was an attorney at the time. And Hiram Millison who was Larry Millison's father and Sheldon Fahnstock was owner of the Enterprise I think, right? So these were the people with Buck informally calling themselves the Economic...

Gary Hodge: Now you and I know how you put a committee together. This doesn't say "Economic Development Department" it doesn't say "Economic Development Office."

Samuel Baldwin: It doesn't say "Governmental Center."

Gary Hodge: It says Developmental Committee. And you and I know how this works. People are very creative and they want to establish a role for themselves in the community. And so they find several other people who are prominent in the community and have major influence and put them on their letter head. They establish a committee and start writing letters to people. I'm not disparaging that. But I'm drawing a line here. This is not an official department of county government. This is an Ad Hoc enterprise that everyone supported because it was public-spirited, and it was designed to benefit the community, and advocate the local resource

industries and tourism. And no one could possibly be opposed to that. But it's not a government agency. It's not an entity that executes programs.

Samuel Baldwin: *Did it work?*

Gary Hodge: *I think that to a degree it was an informal network of contacts who received the information that he provided and then used it to the county's advantage. I think in that context it did work.*

* * * * *

John Hanson Briscoe: *He decided he was going to do things for St. Mary's County. He loved it. He created his own economic development committee, no salary. And he'd go around and promote fishing and slot machines in the county. Remarkable man. It's a shame that somebody had not written a book about him. You talk about an incredible career, so he took off. He had to leave New York. He was broke. He had to sell his jewelry. He had all this fabulous jewelry he gave his wife. But he was so well liked that people looked after him. Larry Millison took to him when he came down here; Harry Waller; and they'd give him money and take care of him because they knew he couldn't have a salary. That's a big story. Big story.*

Audio 3. John Hanson Briscoe on Buck promoting St. Mary's County

* * * * *

With an idea always in mind a constant smile on his face and a heart filled with love for St. Mary's County, Buck Briscoe has formed a one-man advertising agency to promote his County to every state in the union and very often to foreign countries.

A man with contacts that even the most astute businessman would be proud of, he can pick up the telephone and get just about anything he wants done immediately. With a multitude of friends who go to unlimited lengths to help him, Buck secures for St. Mary's national and international advertising.

One of the many ways he accomplishes this feat is the Christmas turkey that is presented to President and Mrs. Eisenhower each year. The occasion is televised nation-wide and printed in newspapers throughout the world.



Figure 21 Buck Briscoe presenting the Eisenhowers with turkey from St. Mary's County.

Bringing Famous people

Buck brings to the County some of the most famous and admired people in the United States. For each event, such as the County Fair, such well-known names as Governor Tawes, Homer Gruenther, special assistant to the President and radio and television stars, attend. By doing this he entices thousands of people from Maryland and the surrounding States to visit the annual affairs.

Bringing columnists to the County to go on fishing trips, view the old and aristocratic homes, water ski or just tour the lovely Maryland countryside, often results in articles that will be read by millions of people.

Each year Buck receives over 8,000 letters requesting information concerning the County from individuals, who have read in articles about the unlimited resources of St. Mary's.

The letters often contain questions about the fishing and vacation aspects of the County, but many times letters are received regarding possible residential accommodations for families.

Every Letter Answered



Figure 23 Buck at his desk.



Figure 22 Buck Briscoe with Governor Tawes at County Fair

Every letter is answered, thousands individually by Buck and his assistant, Mrs. Dorothy Dunn.

Mrs. Dunn freely donates her time to help Buck keep a systematic file of every letter that is received and answered. The file which began some 12 years ago in two loose-leaf notebooks had now grown to several steel cabinets.

Christened Arthur Briscoe, Buck has ideas that extend much farther than bringing tourist trade into the County.

As he said "Industry is vital to the mainstay of any county and the construction of the new dress factory in Leonardtown is just an example of what we will be doing here in the future."

And attracting this light industry to the County- which he is attempting with hundreds of others- was his first realization of that dream.

As chairman of the St. Mary's County Development Committee, Buck gives wholehearted to the County knowledge that he has garnered in his 60-year-life. When no more ideas seem to be available or practical Buck can always be counted on to come up with something.

Office At Home

Each June Buck temporarily lays aside thoughts and plans for the county and devotes one day to the entertainment of 60 orphans from Baltimore who come by bus to his sprawling 165-acre farm to swim, run in the fields play ball and eat, as he says some good country cooking."⁹

St. Mary's County Oyster Festival

John Hanson Briscoe: *I haven't seen this in a long time. Look at ol' Paul Thompson. Look at them all there. Bert Fenwick, Manny McKay. Yeah, Nick Smith's wife, Peggy. "Golden" Thompson, James G. Thompson, James "Golden" Thompson. And David Sayer. The Chamber of Commerce, The Watermen's Association; and of course, I tell ya, Buck Briscoe had a big part in saying "We've got to celebrate the watermen down here and show people how wonderful the oysters are here, we ought to have an oyster festival." It was Buck Briscoe's idea, no question about it. He'd get the watermen together, he'd get the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, all that stuff. And he was the one that organized it. I don't know what the date was. I remember the first one we had, and I was one of the oyster shuckers, because we didn't have any. We started it then; I was one of the contestants. Paul Thompson was one of 'em and Paul Bailey was one of 'em. I might even have a photograph where we were shucking because we didn't have any contestants; see, it was brand new. It was the beginning. I don't know what year it was, but it was the beginning. And it just picked up and picked up and became very successful as you know. It helped the watermen, they made money, they got publicity, they got to sell their oysters. And of course all of the services clubs,*

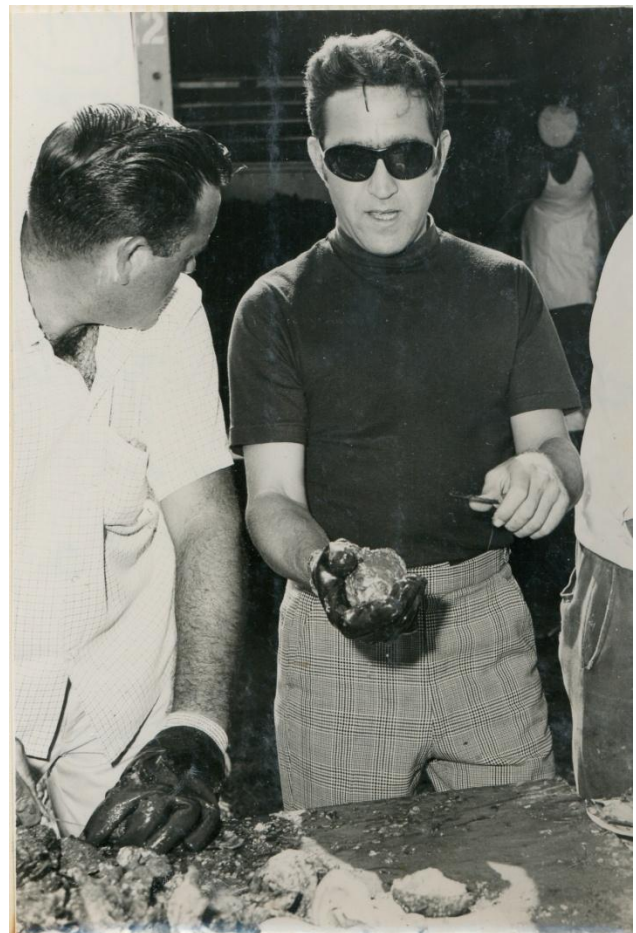


Figure 24 John Hanson Briscoe shucking oysters at the first oyster festival.

⁹ Jackie Davis, *The Enterprise*, April 28, 1960.

like the Rotary club and the Lion's club, they'd have their little booths with barbeque and beer. And it became a big deal. Then the championship shucking, and they'd have raw oysters and oysters in every way, shape, or form. And they'd have the recipes. Buck was big on having the people come and have a contest on how many ways you could cook oysters and there'd always be an award for it. Big deal. And they still do it. Oyster cook off, they'd have an oyster cook off and oyster shuck off. And all these people put their recipes in there and people judge the taste and everything, different people over the years. Very important, and they used to bring food people from the city down to, you know, participate. It was a big, big deal. But Buck Briscoe did it all.

Audio 4. John Hanson Briscoe on Buck

* * * * *

Bob Schaller: *It's amazing with all the promotion of how do you do this at the fair. How do you start the oyster festival, the cook off?*

Samuel Baldwin: *Tell me about the oysters and the cook off. How did Buck come up with that?*

Bob Schaller: *Well, I believe, I know he came up with the cook off which I knew that the first year. But the cook off has been going, oyster festival has been going since the mid 60's, 70's maybe, so it's coming up on its 50 years and that was a way to celebrate and really promote what we do, the kick off of the oyster season. It really wasn't long after that where he added a cooking component. That goes on to today.*

And here it is you know, it's evolved into a great event. It's got the Lexington Park Rotary and other Rotaries that really support it. You know gives back to the community like that.

Samuel Baldwin: *Where do you think Buck came up with an idea like that?*

Bob Schaller: *Well I think it's just looking back to his letterhead and it's all about seafood and our endowed with, the blessing of being by the water. The pictures that we see if they're not in business attire he's sitting by the water.*

* * * * *

Richard Knott: *He gave a thousand dollars to the oyster shuckers. Their first thousand dollars, he donated. He really promoted that Oyster Festival.*



Figure 25 Buck with Governor Milford Tawes at the St. Mary's County Fairground

Samuel Baldwin: But I think he was **S**integral, if he didn't dream up the Oyster Festival he was integral in starting the Oyster Festival.

Gary Hodge: I think that's a very fair comment also. Here's an area where our activities overlapped. The Tri-County Council established a regional tourism promotion effort that had some traction and some significance. And as a part of that we financed advertising for a number of events. And one of those was the Oyster Festival. So we would've been involved with the county and with Buck in promoting that. And that is a very important event, objectively speaking from any standpoint. The Oyster Festival is an incredibly unique event with international dimensions to it. And Buck deserves credit for elevating that to the stature it had.



Figure 26 Buck at the oyster festival.

Planting Crepe Myrtle Along Route 5



Figure 27 Buck Briscoe, pictured on the left.
Courtesy of St. Mary's County Historical Society

Samuel Baldwin: I'm going to show you another photo. It's a photo of crepe myrtles.

Richard Knott: Well Mr. Briscoe, he had the crepe myrtle planted in the middle strip all through Mechanicsville up to Charlotte Hall. On Route 5. When he first started here he was the gentleman that started the Economic Development and he worked with 'em for years with no pay. He actually didn't work for the county.

And he thought it would be a nice thing to put them crepe myrtles, and now they're beautiful trees, and they're taken care of nice, the state does a nice job taking care of them.



Arthur "Buck" Briscoe, Director of the St. Mary's Economic Development Committee, is shown as he viewed the crape myrtle blossoms in August, 1966 at which time the plants were three years old. Below, Briscoe views the same blossoms in August, 1970. These plants, along with other shrubbery, were planted on the median strip along Route 5

from Charlotte Hall through Mechanicsville. Financing for the beautification project was obtained from various banks in this County, the beautification received praise from Mrs. Lady Bird Johnson in 1966. Briscoe is responsible for conceiving the idea, obtaining the assistance of the State Roads Commission.



Figure 28 *The St. Mary's Beacon*, October 29, 1970. Buck Briscoe pictured with Crepe Myrtle plants along Route 5 from Charlotte Hall to Mechanicsville, Maryland.
Courtesy of St. Mary's County Historical Society

Taking Turkeys and Oysters to the White House

Samuel Baldwin: *Let me show you something. This one is Mr. St. Mary's County and a Gift to President and Mrs. Eisenhower. Tell me about that photo.*

Richard Knott: *Well this is the first president that Mr. Briscoe gave turkeys to. Mr. Briscoe was really promoting St. Mary's County, and I guess he got in with all the dignified people and it helped to promote St. Mary's County. He didn't only give turkeys and oysters and country stuffed ham, but on Christmas he done, and Thanksgiving and special occasions, and he also gave four other presidents turkeys and stuffed hams and oysters. He got them from Sotterley and he got some from Thompson's turkey farm from down below Great Mills.*

* * * * *

Bob Schaller: *He had a number of presidents that he would hand deliver turkey's, oysters, stuffed hams; just county fare, And how he was able to make the connection, I guess once he had the connection he was able to keep using that to keep St. Mary's county front and center in the eyes of people who weren't from here.*

He's like a renaissance guy. He was the promoter extraordinaire.

* * * * *

Take, for instance, his presentation of a 42-pound St. Mary's raised turkey to President and Mrs. Eisenhower last Christmas.

That received enough national publicity to give his homeland a name in the holiday turkey industry. But the tall, slightly stooped one-man public relations agency had a regret. He couldn't induce White House aides to get the Chief Executive to go to St. Mary's to pick up his gobble.

"It would have brought visitors here in the tens of thousands," he lightheartedly laments. "Maybe some other time."



Figure 29 Buck with St. Mary's County oysters to bring to the White House. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



Figure 30 Buck with St. Mary's County turkey. The 2nd person from the right is Jean Blackiston (Dorsey)

Gary Hodge: *In my role as Executive Director of Tri-County Council, coming aboard in the Fall of 1980, I probably met Buck for the first time in 1981. At that time I believe he had a small office in the governmental center on the first floor across the hall from the Commissioner's meeting room. I believe the plaque on the door said "Economic Development." The Commissioners had appointed Buck in that role but without any salary or duties connected to it. He had been a long standing figure in the community. The legendary piece of this I think would be his gift to President Eisenhower in 1958. I believe he gave a stuffed ham to the President and Mrs. Eisenhower in 1958. And I believe that the President acknowledged that with a thank you letter to Buck.*

Audio 5. Gary Hodge on Buck's role as St. Mary's County economic director

I think that particular event exemplifies Buck's role. I think he sought out opportunities in terms of public relations to focus a positive spotlight on St. Mary's, specifically on the resource industries of St. Mary's. It would be a misread to describe Buck as anyone who was promoting economic development in the sense that we would understand it today: which is bringing high technology jobs to the region for example. But, he was a good ambassador for the county in terms of representing agriculture, seafood, forestry, and things of that nature; which today we would call resource industries. And at that time we were on the cusp of major change here in the county and the Southern Maryland region. And so when I walked through Buck's door I was looking at what he brought to the table as a personality playing a role in this bigger picture. In much the same way as the media creates a personality; Buck was a character in the story of St. Mary's. I think that's a fair description.



ST. MARY'S COUNTY HAM -- Dorothy Dunn, demonstrates how to stuff a St. Mary's County ham at the N.Y. World's Fair as the chef of the Maryland Pavillion, a member of the TV World Fair Staff, and Buck Briscoe, watch.

Figure 31 Buck Briscoe and Dorothy Dunn with St. Mary's County Ham at the World's Fair.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

“Mr. St. Mary’s County”

John Hanson Briscoe: *He was such a promoter of St. Mary’s County, either he or somebody gave it to him because he’s a big, robust guy and wherever he went they’d look at his straw hat. And he’d wear it and wear it everywhere. He’d go to the White House with it. He’d go to the Governor’s office with it. And I’ll tell you this, he made a lot of money in New York. He had a fabulous run up there with all the rich and famous people. I’ve told you about that.*

Audio 6. John Hanson Briscoe on Buck Briscoe as a St. Mary’s County promoter

But I swear to you he was happier back here, broke, and just going around and promoting fishing and slot machines and St. Mary’s County as a place to come and recreate. He was very, very happy at that. And he was, you know, a big guy. He’d come up and put his arms around you. And he was attractive to all the people in the county.

“He was very proud to be a proponent of St. Mary’s County, which he loved more than anything in the world.”

* * * * *

Ernies Bell: *Buck Briscoe? Funny man. Yeah, Buck, “Mr. St. Mary’s.” Golly days he knew everybody. Two funny stories. Buck had lived in New York and had a big job in the maritime industry. Probably told you the story about visiting Robert Lee Miles’ home (in Leonardtown)? Robert Lee Miles was somewhat related to Buck. Robert Lee’s home was a great place to go after work. Everybody stopped in, maybe had a drink or two. Talked about the day’s activities and Robert said, “You know, Buck, today’s my wife’s Peggy Lee’s birthday?” Buck said, “That’s good, had anybody sang you happy birthday?” She said “no” and he gets*

on the phone and here he dials this apartment in New York and Kate

Smith - on the fourth of July of 1936 she was the first person to sing God Bless America, and she was known for it - it’s Kate Smith on the phone singing Happy Birthday to Peggy Lee. And then one time Buck brought “Aunt Jemima,” the real Aunt Jemima. And Buck was always bringing, you know he always, his ability to recruit for this county... Made a dollar a year, known as “Mr. St. Mary’s.” But that’s a picture of my dad as Mayor of Leonardtown and Buck Briscoe, and John Parlett, God rest his soul, he later became a delegate, he had a turkey farm, and they were presenting the Turkey to the White House. So Buck, God knows the number of people that he knew. Buck knew everybody. He’s a funny man.



Figure 32 Buck Briscoe with gifts for the Eisenhowers.

Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

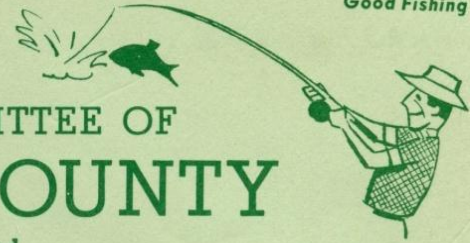
Audio 7. Ernie Bell on Buck Briscoe



DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY

Mother County of Maryland

COMPTON, MARYLAND



Outboard Motor Racing
Every Sunday



Good Sea Food



400 Miles of Waterfront



Safe Bathing



'Unharried' Atmosphere

Perhaps the most interesting characteristics of this well-preserved area is that it retains the wholesome atmosphere of early hospitality and neighborliness, even today, sharing it with the guest. It makes his visit an enjoyable memory that is alive with experiences of good days spent at a lovely spot "where the fishing is good" and had been for more than 300 years.

Church suppers are held throughout the County. Food is placed on the table, and for \$1.50 you may eat all you want of the abounding variety of home cooked, home-grown food stuffs. There are chicken and turkey and there is the famous, inimitable stuffed ham. You can have oysters, and soft crabs and all the delightful pastries and breads that round out your meal. You have ample opportunity to participate in the Country Dances, which are held every week and are open to the public. Every fall, in September, a Fair is held in Leonardtown. There are fairgrounds with five permanent buildings, a queen is crowned, prizes are given to families who enter their live-stock, and foodstuffs and home-grown-products. An old custom is still preserved: Great pride is taken to the yearly Jousting Matches. They date back to the Landing Fathers and the old rules of the game still prevail. On every Wednesday throughout the year, the Amish people in their costumes hold a Farmer's Auction which you may want to attend to purchase their homemade preserves and other foodstuffs. Antiques and other interesting articles are for sale at these auctions which in themselves are quaint and picturesque events. Here is a listing of prices, of everyday bargains that are yours when you come to St. Mary's County: A dozen Soft Crabs is \$1.00, a chicken is \$.75, and eggs are \$.45 a dozen. You can buy oysters at \$2.50 a bushel, steak is \$.69 per pound, and apples at \$.50 a bushel. A haircut is \$.75, a suit is cleaned and pressed for \$1.00 and a shave is \$.35. Fishing-parties are very popular. It will cost you \$2.00 to join. At the beaches you can swim, relax or picnic without cost. The delightful marinas which are small harbors where boats are for hire and which you can reach walking, or by car, are within easy reach of the cottages and neighboring beaches.

Cottages and cabins are available, fully furnished, from \$40.00 - \$50.00 per week. Utensils and linen are provided, gas and electricity are furnished, kitchen and bathroom are fully equipped. The houses have running hot and cold water. They are close to beaches and marinas and within easy reach of inns and restaurants. Furthermore, land may be purchased for approximate \$100.00 per acre. A house, of course, will cost whatever you will make it, but to quote an estimate: A House suitable for retirement is available for \$5,000.00. This has 2 bedrooms, living room, bath and kitchen and a bathroom, on a 100x100 lot.

Many people are attracted to the 400 miles of shoreline along the rivers and the bay and the creeks and the beaches where they can crab and swim and water ski and fish to their hearts content. For as little as \$2.00 per day one can rent a boat. Outboard-motors and the boats that go with them are available at \$7.00 per day. For fisherman, here are the names of fish and seafolk that wait their line, their bait and their net: Rockfish (striped bass) during March throughout May, Bluefish and Trout during August through September, Hardheads (Croakers), Perch and large-mouth Black Bass are found in abundance in the waters of the bay and its tributaries. Brook Rainbow and Brown Trout and many varieties of fresh water fish abound in the inland and non-tidal waters. Soft and Hard-shelled crabs, oysters in season, are easy to be had in merely using crab-net or fishing from public piers or walking along the shore.

Reply to: Arthur "Buck" Briscoe, Chairman, Compton, Maryland. William A. Chapman, J. Frank Raley, Jr., William O. E. Sterling,

Hiram Millison, Sheridan Fahnestock.

* * * * *

Bob Schaller: "Seasons' greeting from Old St. Mary's." Yeah, this is patent Buck Briscoe pitching our farmland, our way of life.

Very well connected. Buck Briscoe is an amazing individual, such a broad reach. I don't know anyone else, when you say 'Mr. St. Mary's County.' When I was in office, I wouldn't wear, no, I wouldn't dare wear the straw hat. They would say to me, "Why don't you wear the straw hat?" I said, "I can't". I would wear my baseball cap that would say St. Mary's County. That was my trademark I guess.

People would say, "Well Bob, you're now Mr. St. Mary's County." I would say "No I'm not." I could not even hold a candle to the kind of outreach that he had. I mean I was blessed to have fifty years later a community here that was already made. Buck was in a time prior to the base. I mean, you can always gauge history here by the base. The base was here but it was a very small piece and like I said not everybody, in fact the further you left Lexington Park the more you heard this term, and I'm sure you heard it, "That damn base," because of what it brought with it has become more central to us.



Figure 33 "Season Greetings From Ole St. Mary's"
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Audio 8. Bob Schaller on Buck's importance to the county

He didn't drive very fast and if you drove behind him you weren't going to get to your location on Compton road very fast. He's a great guy you know, very gregarious, earned his title. He didn't just earn it, he practiced it every day. Mr. Saint Mary's County, yeah.

* * * * *

Gary Hodge: Buck was a character who was playing a role in promoting the county and the assets of the county to an external audience.

Samuel Baldwin: Where did that idea come from? Was there anyone doing that before Buck?

Gary Hodge: I don't think anyone did it or did it as effectively as he did. Now I can't give you a litany of examples other than the ones I've already cited of where his role in that way had galvanized public attention on St. Mary's. But I do see him as an omnipresent figure in local community events in the county during the last seven years of his life.

Audio 9. Gary Hodge on Buck's importance to the county

Samuel Baldwin: *Let me jump ahead and ask you something else, as yourself being a County Commissioner in Charles County. I ran across these newspaper clippings where Buck was running for County Commissioner on a platform of developing future prosperity. And I guess he did have bit of a track record.*

Gary Hodge: *He at least ran for commissioner. He wasn't elected but he ran. And again I think this is a crucial period here. As I understand it, he was born in Baltimore, he lived in New York City and experienced the dynamic there, and then he came home. He's had some impact in terms of reaching important audiences and he's testing the waters here to see whether he can become a political force in the county.*

Samuel Baldwin: *Would that have changed his ability to work for the benefit of the county?*

Gary Hodge: *You know, some people have more impact out of office than they do in office. And the perfect example of that is J. Frank Raley. He had a very limited run as an elected official but he had tremendous impact. So I can't generalize on that. I've been a one term commissioner who's lost elections and you could argue whether I've had more impact as a commissioner, an appointed official, a consultant or a private citizen.*

Arthur "Buck" Briscoe

FOR

**COUNTY
COMMISSIONER**



**Dedicated to the development, future, prosperity
and welfare of St. Mary's County.**

A native born and successful business man for
many years.

A Paid Political Advertisement
By A Friend

Point Lookout

Point Lookout had been the historical home of Native Americans, a Civil War prison camp, and hospital, as well as a hotel destination. But by the early 1960's the peninsula was just the site of a few homes. The Point Lookout Post Office had closed its doors in 1943. Gov. J. Millard Tawes included \$305,000 in his 1962 budget to purchase 300 acres at Point Lookout, but the deal got hung up at the state level.

"He could really be called the father of that park," John Hanson Briscoe said.

The land acquisition was "hung up in the bureaucracy," he said, until Buck told him, "Johnny, you get the legislature council down here."

Back then there were about 14 movers and shakers in the legislature and "We ran the show," Briscoe said. Buck Briscoe told his cousin, "I'll get a school bus and I'd love to take them down to Point Lookout."

After touring the area, the school bus parked and the group decided to buy the land for the state right there at the peninsula's tip, "A motion was made at the end of the park by the lighthouse," John Briscoe said.

He said of Buck, "It wouldn't have happened if he hadn't done it. You never said no to Buck."¹⁰

* * * * *

John Hanson Briscoe: Well, it all began when I was in legislature, Marvin Mandel was the Speaker of the House and I was the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee and Buck Briscoe asked me if I could get a group to come down from the legislature, you know the legislative council, which was all the key House and Senate people, you know, that did things during the summertime, just junkets and everything. He said "You think you can get Marvin Mandel and the council to come down to St. Mary's County?" and I said "What for?" and he said "I want to show them Point Lookout State Park." This would have been in the 60's. Sure enough, Buck arranged for them to come down, had a school bus and drove all around the park, there



Figure 34 Buck Briscoe with Governor Tawes. Courtesy of St. Mary's County Historical Society

¹⁰ Enterprise (same as 1. B'more)

was nothing there. There was nothing there, but the old lighthouse, all that beautiful beach and everything, but that was it. And Buck got up on the school bus and had all the top Senate and House people there and I was one of 'em. And they all looked at this place and of course there was no camping there at the time, just beautiful sand beach and everything. And Buck Briscoe said "This place is only good for a park and recreation. It can't be developed because it floods and its got all these problems with it." And I swear to you that Roy Staten, the Senate Majority Leader, they all knew Buck Briscoe, got up and said "Well, what do we need? The Department of Public Works of the state of Maryland is going to have a look at it, review it, and acquire it." I don't know whether the county owned it at the time or not, but it was just sitting there. And sure enough there was a vote on that bus of, well, all the top Senate and House people that were there, I happened to be part of it, and by God they took a vote right there in front of Buck they took a vote and said, 'We vote to recommend that the Board of Public Works review, appraise, and acquire Point Lookout. And that was on a school bus. And that was Buck Briscoe did that. Nobody else could've done it. And sure enough, they all went back to Annapolis and they went through the process and, of course, in those days the process was a lot simpler than now. And sure enough the state acquired it and it got the camping and did all the work and the sea walls and fixed it up so people could come down there and fixed it up so that it became one of the most popular campgrounds in the state of Maryland. It's beautiful down there!



Figure 35 Buck Briscoe and Governor Tawes at Point Lookout State Park, June 19, 1976. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Audio 10. John Hanson Briscoe on the establishment of Point Lookout State Park

And, so as time went on, I think it was Harry Waller he did call me up and says "Johnny Briscoe..." he said "You know we oughta do something for Buck Briscoe. He's such a great man." And I said "Well, what do you want me to do?" He said "We need to have a monument for him and recognize him before he dies, all the good he's done." We investigated and I talked with the Department of Forest and Parks of Maryland because they owned all of Point Lookout

State Park, and I talked to my good friend and I said "Look, Buck Briscoe's founded this. You can't go and name it Buck Briscoe Park, I realize that, but you've got to consider naming a portion of this park to him. He's such a great guy." Sure enough, they cordoned off a place, they created a monument that's down there today. Millard Tawes came over and we dedicated part of the campground, you know, and its beautiful monument dedicated to Arthur F. L. Briscoe. You know, preservationist and everything. And I was really happy with that and we had a ceremony down there. And Governor Millard Tawes came over from the Eastern Shore and made a speech and I was there and I made a little speech. And it was a wonderful tribute to Buck before he died. He never wanted that stuff, he didn't go for that stuff, you know? But that's what happened and you really oughta go down and see it, it's there today. It's a great story.



Figure 36 Left to Right: Buck Briscoe, Governor Tawes, and John Hanson Briscoe at Point Lookout State Park. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Conclusion

John Slade: "Well, everyone knew Buck, that old straw hat that he wore. Now he was a great promoter of St. Mary's County. He was a big burly man, he wasn't too handsome, just a big towering man who loved his county. He did a lot of free pro bono work for this county, I remember. He always had something witty to say. He used to say that, 'If I had known I was going to live as long as I did I would have taken better care of my health.' Of course, Buck used to drink and smoke cigarettes years ago and he had a colorful life. He was quite successful. He was in the ship building business up in New York and he had tax problems and that did him in. He knew a lot of big time people including some of the racketeers of that era. But he could tell some interesting stories. I suspect a lot of them were just stories, you know how we embellish things. But he was very dedicated to his county. In his senior years, he devoted the last ounce of his energies to promoting our county. He'd take turkeys up to President Eisenhower and others, you know, promoting the county."

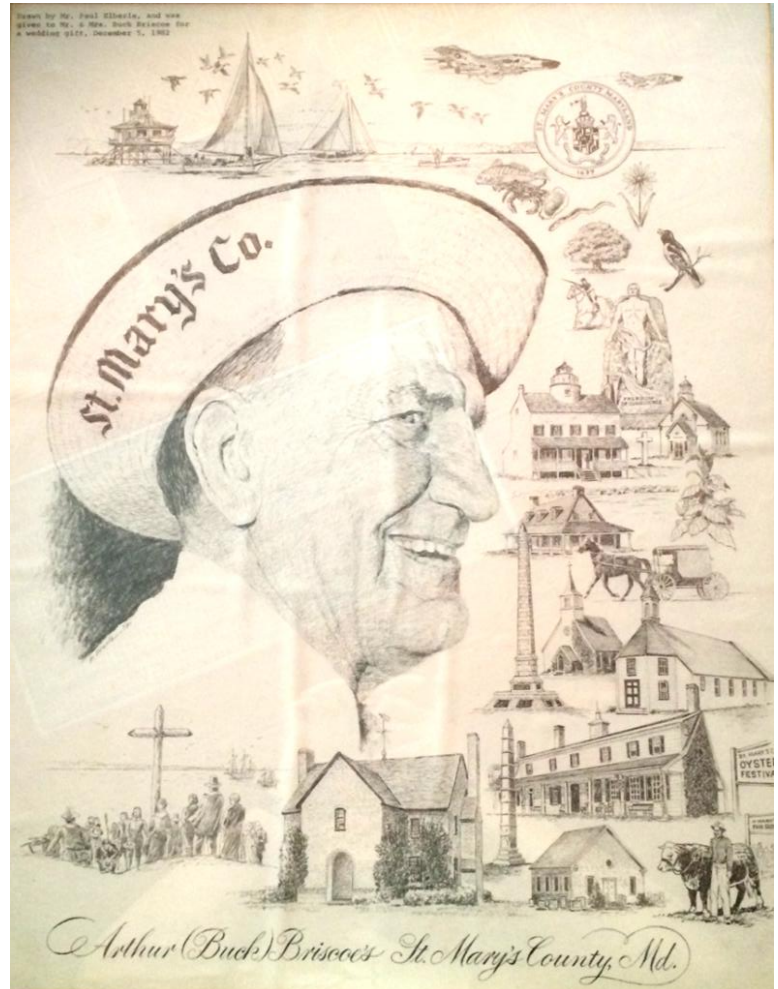


Figure 37 Buck Briscoe, "Mr. St. Mary's County"

Audio 11. John Slade on Buck's relationship to the county.

Old And Historic St. Marys County Fast Changing To Modern Pace

By EARL ARNETT

Mr. Briscoe says that the slot machine interests are responsible for their own demise. They were too selfish. "I can't get excited about it," he says. "I liked the machines, because tourists liked them. I have never thought the owners were fair with the county. The county never got what it was supposed to get. The county commissioners were afraid to question the honesty of the owners."

But he is a staunch supporter of Mr. Larry Millison and other young business men whom he says are not afraid to invest their profits in the future of the county.

Buck Briscoe is a promoter, one of those energetic men one often finds in outwardly insignificant jobs. But behind the scenes he is a broker, bringing men together in an effort to shape the world according to his vision of it. His shrewd, intelligent eyes belie the straw hat he wears and the bi-annual binges he calls “an unwinding process.”

Mr. Molitor [the editor of the Enterprise] said that St. Mary’s County is going through the end of a frontier era.¹¹

* * * * *

“If only half his stories are true, they would be enough for a best seller. Buck Briscoe, the old countian and promoter, is the last of the Mohicans.”

Samuel Baldwin: Ok this is a photo of you and Buck Briscoe.

John Hanson Briscoe: [At] St. Mary’s City, yeah. Buck curried favor with everybody. Didn’t matter who they were. And he really did. And everybody liked him. Nobody could say anything against him. He was a great. He’d be there and make sure he would see everybody. Yeah, that was a favorite, all the politicians loved to come to St. Mary’s City because they’d be recognized, you know, Maryland Day. And of course Buck loved it. He’d put on a big show if anybody was there.

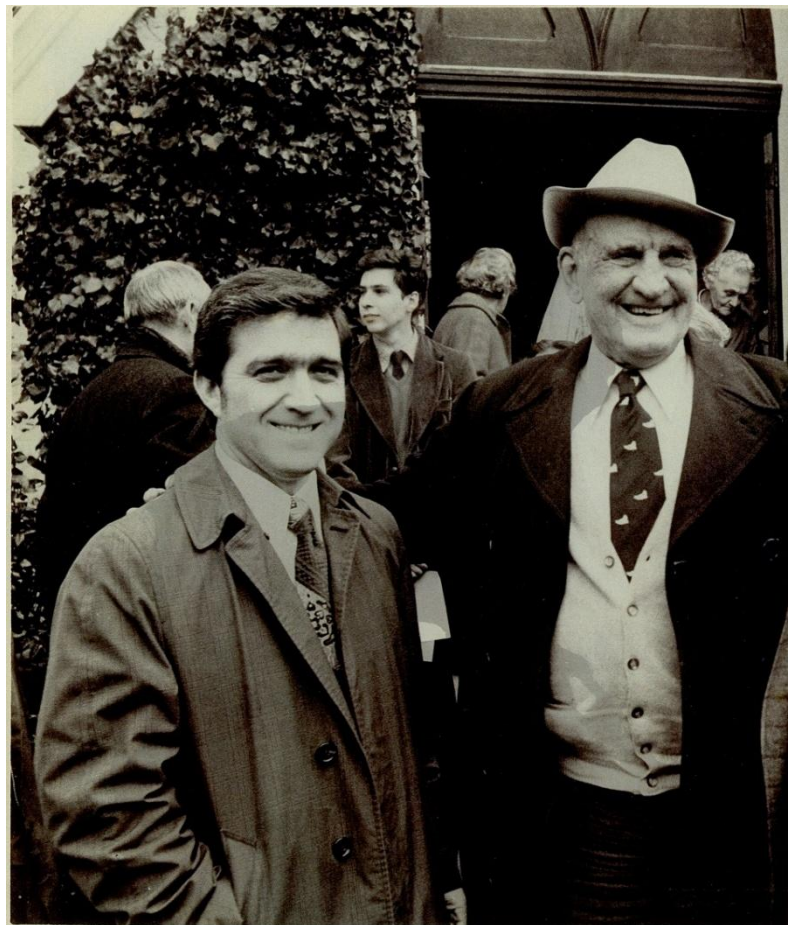


Figure 38 John Hanson Briscoe and Buck Briscoe

¹¹ “Old and Historic St Mary’s County Fast Changing to Modern Pace”

* * * * *

Arthur F.L. "Buck" Briscoe, 87 of Compton died Friday night. Briscoe was known for decades as "Mr. St. Mary's County" and Father Jeffery Samantha referred to him by that title during the funeral service Tuesday morning at St. Aloysius Church in Leonardtown. His death followed years of declining health, which rarely kept him from pursuing his 35 year calling to promote St. Mary's County. "He pushed it 24 hours a day," recalled George Aud, former county commissioner and longtime friend of the Briscoe's. "I don't doubt he talked about it in his sleep."

Every president since Dwight D. Eisenhower has received St. Mary's oysters, turkeys and stuffed ham at Briscoe's initiation.

During the beginning years he delivered the goods in person, probably wearing the oversized yellow straw hat that became his trademark. The hat rested upon his hands during prayers at Brinsfield Funeral Home on Monday evening. Briscoe was also a driving force behind the national oyster shucking and cooking contests held during the annual St. Mary's County Oyster Festival sponsored in conjunction with the Rotary Club of St. Mary's. He didn't stop at oysters and ham.

John T. Daugherty, president of Maryland Bank and Trust, credits Briscoe with teaching him how to handle a Chesapeake Bay hard crab. Scores of countians—notables and dignitaries as well as average citizens—declared Buck Briscoe to be the best friend St. Mary's County has ever had. "Eddie," he'd say to [former county administrator] Ed Cox, "the only two things in the world worth having are good health and good friends."



Figure 39 Buck Briscoe at Sotterley.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Briscoe's loss of good health prompted another frequently quoted line of this, "If I had known I would live this long I would've taken better care of myself." A good dozen of the storytellers fell back on that line when they caught themselves beginning a Buck Briscoe story

that might be inappropriate for a family newspaper. "He's a legend," said Rose Slade, member of the St. Mary's Nursing Center Board of Directors. "He's a real legend." The legend was born in Baltimore on October 3rd, 1900.

A 1968 Baltimore Sun article described his boyhood on the Sotterley Plantation which was a "working farm with its grandeur faded." He graduated from Leonard Hall Academy in 1918 with former Judge Joseph Mattingly's brother. "He's the kind of guy who could go with the president or the buck-a-day boys," Mattingly said of the years he watched Briscoe become Mr. St. Mary's County.

He didn't begin accumulating his legendary status locally. There was no work in Leonardtown when he graduated in 1918. He worked as a purser on the Old Bay Line steamship line running between Baltimore and Norfolk until 1932. He spent the next 10 years as a partner in the Asphalt Grave Vault company in Baltimore. His body was returned to Baltimore to be buried in a family plot in Druid Ridge Cemetery with his parents James and Sophia Lee Briscoe.

He is survived by his wife, Dorothy Wilson Briscoe; his stepson, Stephen E. Shuman of Baltimore; and two step grandchildren. His first wife Alpha Shuman Briscoe, died in 1943.

During World War II Briscoe left Maryland and began the Maritime Welding and Ship Repair Company in New York. During his four years there from 1942 to 1946 he turned the company into a "multi-million dollar business", according to the Sun article. Aud recalled that New York stint. Aud had honeymooned in New York and remembers a high rolling Briscoe who supplied him and his new bride with tickets to shows and a limousine.

Although the money didn't last, Briscoe's high-rolling generosity did. "There are many things he did for people," said a teary-eyed Victor Reynolds, a close friend of 20 years. "Even though I knew about some of them, he wouldn't want them repeated. They're his little secrets. He had such honesty and integrity and respect of human dignity," Reynolds said.

Briscoe returned to St. Mary's county in 1946 and opened Cedar Point Motor Company where he sold new DeSoto and Plymouth automobiles in Lexington Park where the Wyle building now stands. It was in the early 1950's that Briscoe formed the St. Mary's County Economic Development Committee, which was first housed in the First National Bank of St. Mary's. "I had the only free office space available," remembered Joseph Marion Gough, president of the First National Bank of St. Mary's. "He was a one man development agency, an absolutely great guy."

"He was a great man who got things done," Samaha said during the prayers and the mass. Others echoed that as they paid their respects. Paul Raley, the retired county purchasing officer and an ordained deacon who conducted Briscoe's burial service in Baltimore, said Briscoe's office landed in the Governmental Center around the same time he did in 1963. "He was pushing brochures and stuff," Raley recalled. It was also about that time Briscoe convinced Gov. J. Milard Tawes to authorize a state park at Point Lookout. Briscoe remained involved with the park up to his death. He closely followed plans to build a new fishing pier and threats to lock

the park off from the public during some hours and seasons. An area of the park was named for Briscoe.

The Margret Brent gazebo at St. Mary's City also stands as a testament to Briscoe's relentless pursuit of recognition for the first woman to seek equal voting rights in the state legislature. Mary Fraser dePackh remembers her surprise at meeting Briscoe. He'd been recommended as someone who could help her group build a memorial to Margret Brent.

"When I saw him I thought, 'Here's someone who is the most macho person I've ever seen.' And there he was working for a memorial to the first woman to ask for the right to vote. The size of his heart," DePackh sighed. Lois Field, chairperson of the organization which built and maintains the gazebo and surrounding gardens, seconded dePackh's sigh. "We've lost our buddy," she said. Reynolds mourned his failure to find a production company willing to make a film on Brent's life, one of Briscoe's most recent ongoing projects.

"He sparked things. He looked out for people," Reynolds said. "Who's going to take his place?" wondered Tom Burke, a Rotarian and oyster festival organizer. "It's such a big hole. We have to plug it with a guy who wouldn't let things slip."

But even more than the film, Reynolds wants a place for the huge collection of mementos Briscoe accumulated during his years of promoting the county, an idea Mike Marlay, an oyster festival organizer, and he tossed around.

"So people for years to come can know what Buck has done," Reynolds explained. "Mr. St. Mary's County," mused Joseph Mitchell, director of county economic development. "He was just that for 30 years," and Cox, offering the eulogy on the behalf of all the county workers and dignitaries gathered in the church, tried to thank Briscoe one more time for what he had done.

"I stand here today as a messenger of praise... of a man, a friend, a leader, a co-worker... with a bigger than life handshake and oversized hat.

"He gave creative thought and determined effort to make things better." Cox eulogized.

"He taught us to never be too busy. To be kind, thoughtful, and courteous. He loved St. Mary's to death. He gave all he had to give. And Buck, in case you've never heard this before, St. Mary's County loved you too."

Photo Album



Figure 40 Top Left: James Briscoe and Sophia Howard Briscoe at Sotterley, 1904. Collection of photos from Sophia Howard Briscoe.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



Figure 41 Top photos: Buck and sister, Bottom photo: Buck with his family including his parents, James and Sophia Briscoe in Baltimore, 1904. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

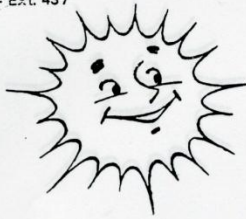


Figure 42 During an informal ceremony, Mrs. Ingalls presented Buck Briscoe with a bronze plaque for his years of effort to promote Sotterley as a major tourist attraction.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



Courtesy of Bonnie Briscoe

Office:
(301) 475-6621 - Ext. 437
Home:
(301) 475-8430



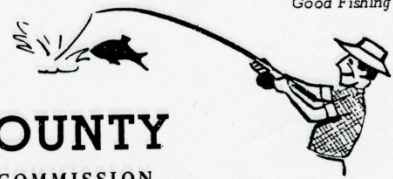
ST. MARY'S COUNTY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

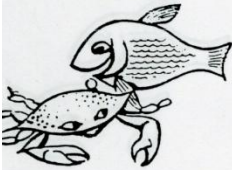
MOTHER COUNTY OF MARYLAND

P.O. Box 351

Leonardtown, Maryland 20650



Outboard Motor Racing
Every Sunday



Good Sea Food



400 Miles of Waterfront



Safe Bathing



'Unharried' Atmosphere

July 28, 1983

Mabel Ingalls
Sotterely Mansion
Hollywood, MD

Dear Mabel:

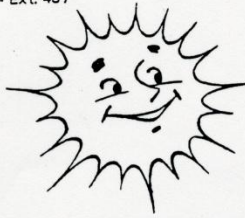
A Editorial appeared in the St. Mary's County, Enterprise this past week extolling the generosity of wealthy individuals giving land to be used as historical attractions and your generosity pertaining to Sotterley was mentioned.

Gaylord Day who does a excellent job publicizing the Sotterley mansion was responsible for the Enterprise publicizing your generosity.

For 28 years, I have been Director of the St. Mary's County Economic Development Commission, and one thing my commission does is to publicize historic spots or places in St. Mary's County Maryland. Mr. Gaylord Day has done more to publicize Sotterley than any other individual who has been connected with the historic plantation known as Sotterley. I do wish, in a quiet way you would let Gaylord Day know that you are aware and appreciate the excellent effort and job he is doing in trying to publicize Sotterley Mansion.

I do want to thank you my-self for the excellent consideration and treatment you, your staff at Sotterley have always afforded me when I visit the old homestead and I will also be grateful to your father; Herbert Al Satterlee for purchasing Sotterley in 1910 restoring it as the Briscoes did not have the money to maintain the old home-

Office:
(301) 475-5621 - Ext. 437
Home:
(301) 475-8430



ST. MARY'S COUNTY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

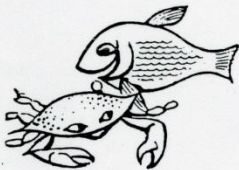
MOTHER COUNTY OF MARYLAND

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Leonardtown, Maryland 20650



Outboard Motor Racing
Every Sunday



Good Sea Food



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Safe Bathing



'Unharried' Atmosphere

July 28, 1983

stead to assure that it would be here today.

Thank you again mable and may you enjoy
good health and be happy.

Sincerely yours,

Arthur "B"
Arthur "Buck" Briscoe
Director

Figure 43 Letter from Buck Briscoe to Mabel Ingalls, July 28, 1983.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 8, 1965

Dear Mr. Briscoe:

Recently your accomplishments in highway beautification in nearby Maryland have come to my attention, and I want you to know how much I appreciate all that you are doing.

I cannot tell you how encouraging it is to learn of the dedication and skills that are at work enhancing cities and countrysides throughout America.

The President's national program for beauty can only be realized if people like you dedicate their time and talent in their local communities. As I work on Washington's Committee for a More Beautiful Capital, it is helpful for me to know of the work you have done.

Sincerely,

Lady Bird Johnson
Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson

Mr. Arthur Briscoe
St. Mary's County
Compton, Maryland 20627

Figure 44 Letter from Lady Bird Johnson to Buck Briscoe, December 8, 1965.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21404

January 13, 1966

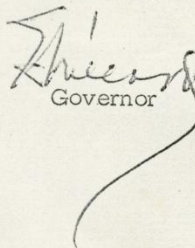
Dear Buck:

I was thrilled to read in the newspaper that Mrs. Lyndon Johnson had written to you praising you for your vision, imagination and energy in the beautification of highways in Southern Maryland. Please accept my heartiest congratulations.

We in Maryland know how hard you have worked and how successful you have been in promoting this beautiful area in which Maryland had its beginnings and we are happy to see the others are beginning to recognize that fact.

With kindest personal regards, I am

Sincerely,


Governor

Mr. Arthur Briscoe
Compton
Maryland 20627

Figure 45 Letter from Governor Tawes to Buck Briscoe
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

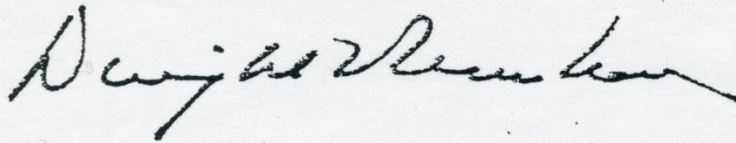
October 18, 1958

Dear Mr. Briscoe:

This is to thank you -- and the people of St. Mary's County -- for the fine country ham and fresh oysters that Mr. Gruenther brought back from the Leonardtown Fair. Mrs. Eisenhower and I are deeply grateful to all who participated in providing such a thoughtful gift for us.

With best wishes and warm appreciation,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dwight D. Eisenhower". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mr. Arthur Briscoe
Chairman
Development Committee
St. Mary's County
Compton, Maryland

Figure 46 Letter from President Eisenhower to Buck Briscoe, October 18, 1958.

Southern Maryland Stuffed Ham
has been served at the White House
and the Governor's Mansion in
Annapolis

During the World Fair in New York,
1964-1965, more than 28,000 orders
of Stuffed Ham were served in the
Maryland Pavilion

The Development Committee of
St. Mary's County takes great pleasure
in presenting the Stuffed Ham to
visiting Dignitaries among the
most recent ones the Governor
of California

Carl Hunt Buck Briscoe

Figure 47 Memo from Buck Briscoe regarding the World's Fair in New York.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

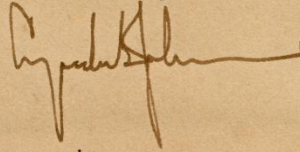
December 30, 1964

Dear Mr. Briscoe:

Many thanks to you, Senator Brewster, and the organization you represent, for the fine turkey and oysters that were accepted at the White House recently for Mrs. Johnson and me. I hope you will convey our appreciation to all who had a part in this thoughtful gesture.

Mrs. Johnson joins me in extending cordial good wishes for a happy and successful year ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "Lyndon B. Johnson", written in a cursive style.

Mr. Arthur Briscoe
Director
St. Mary's County Economic
Development Committee
Compton, Maryland

Figure 48 Letter from President Lyndon Johnson to Buck Briscoe, December 30, 1964

MARYLAND LIFE

St. Mary's County Turkey To Grace Kennedy Table

By *James C. Mullikin*

"MR. ST. MARY'S COUNTY VI" is the name of a Southern Maryland turkey, weighing 40 pounds on the hoof, which faces a noble fate. He will wind up Christmas Day on the dinner table of a family named Kennedy, currently occupying the White House in Washington.



MULLIKIN

It is not unusual for St. Mary's County turkeys to be served at Christmas dinner in the White House.

Ever alert to the advantages of good, wholesome publicity, the St. Mary's County Economic Development Commission has adopted the custom of presenting a turkey to the President and his family. Four turkeys from St. Mary's were sent to the Eisenhowers, and last year the Kennedy family received one.

So this is the sixth year that a Maryland turkey will grace the table of the White House.

The presentation of Mr. St. Mary's County VI is to be made Thursday at 10.30 A. M. in the East Wing of the White House. The affable, hard-working Arthur "Buck" Briscoe, chairman of the county economic development commission, and Miss Carolyn Drury, Maryland Queen of Tolerance, will be on hand to deliver the broad-breast bronze turkey to the President.

Raised on historic Sotterley estate near Hollywood, St. Mary's County, the turkey was the beneficiary of the most scientific methods known to the poultry industry. Incidentally, Sotterley is owned by Mrs. Mabel Ingalls, granddaughter of the late J. Pierpont Morgan, the financier.

Buck Briscoe, never a man to do things by halves, is also going to present to the President on Thursday a gallon of the finest oysters and clams from the waters of St. Mary's County. Just what is needed for stuffing for the turkey!



Figure 49 Buck Briscoe with St. Mary's County turkeys at Sotterley. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



Figure 50 Buck Briscoe presenting Governor Tawes with a St. Mary's County stuffed ham.

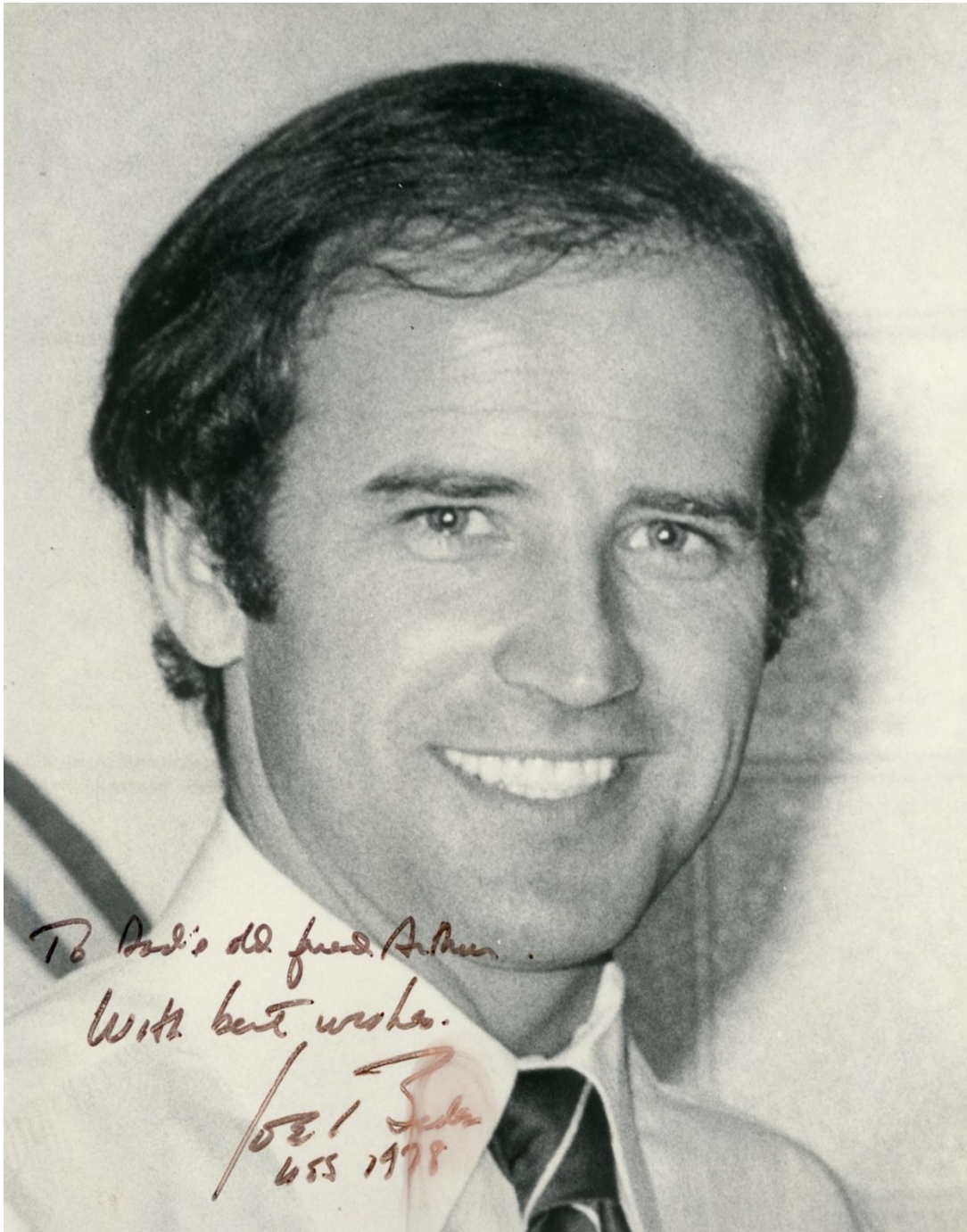


Figure 51 Joe Biden to Buck Briscoe, 1978.

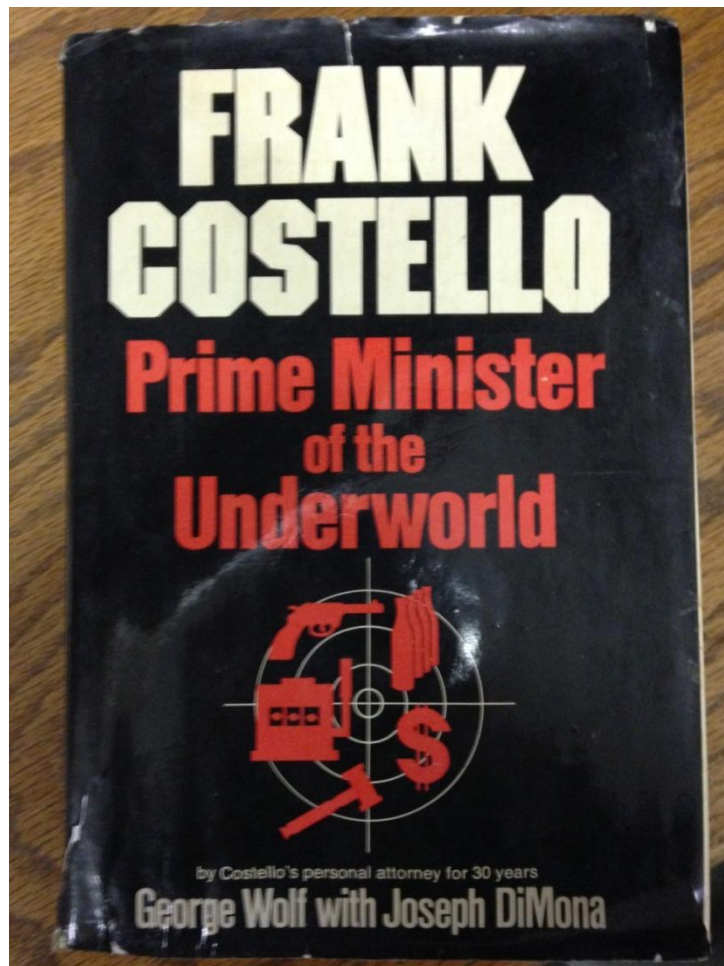


Figure 52 Buck was personal friends with the subject of this book, Frank Costello.

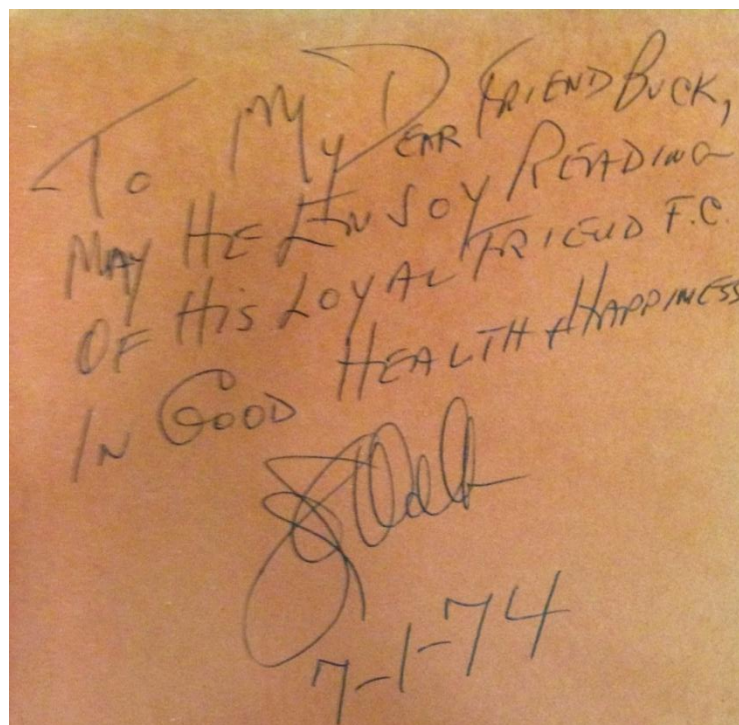


Figure 53 Dedication to Buck Briscoe by the author, George Wolf.

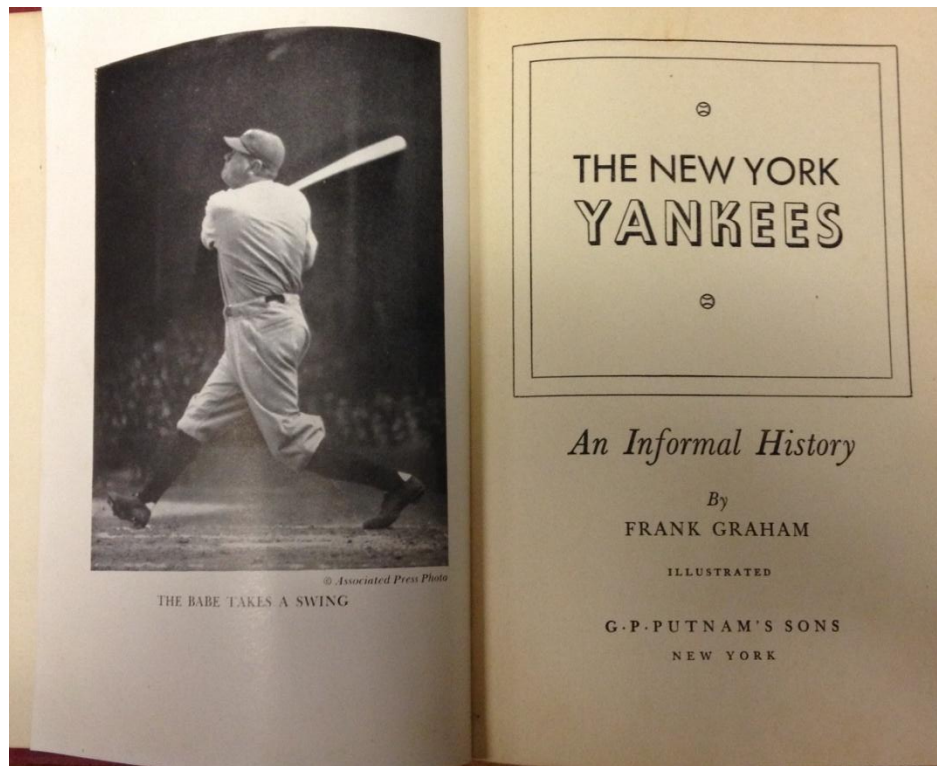


Figure 54 Buck was personal friends with one of the subjects of this book, Babe Ruth.

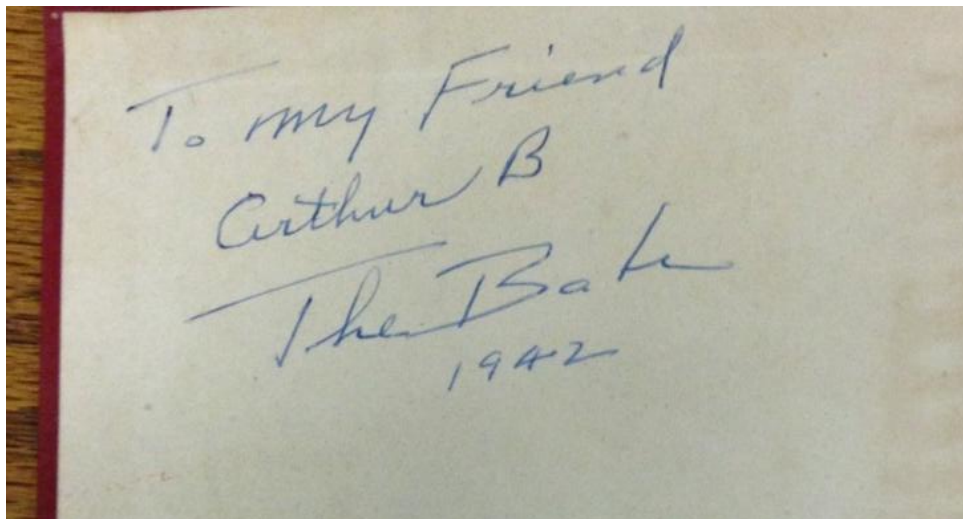


Figure 55 Dedication to Buck Briscoe by Babe Ruth.

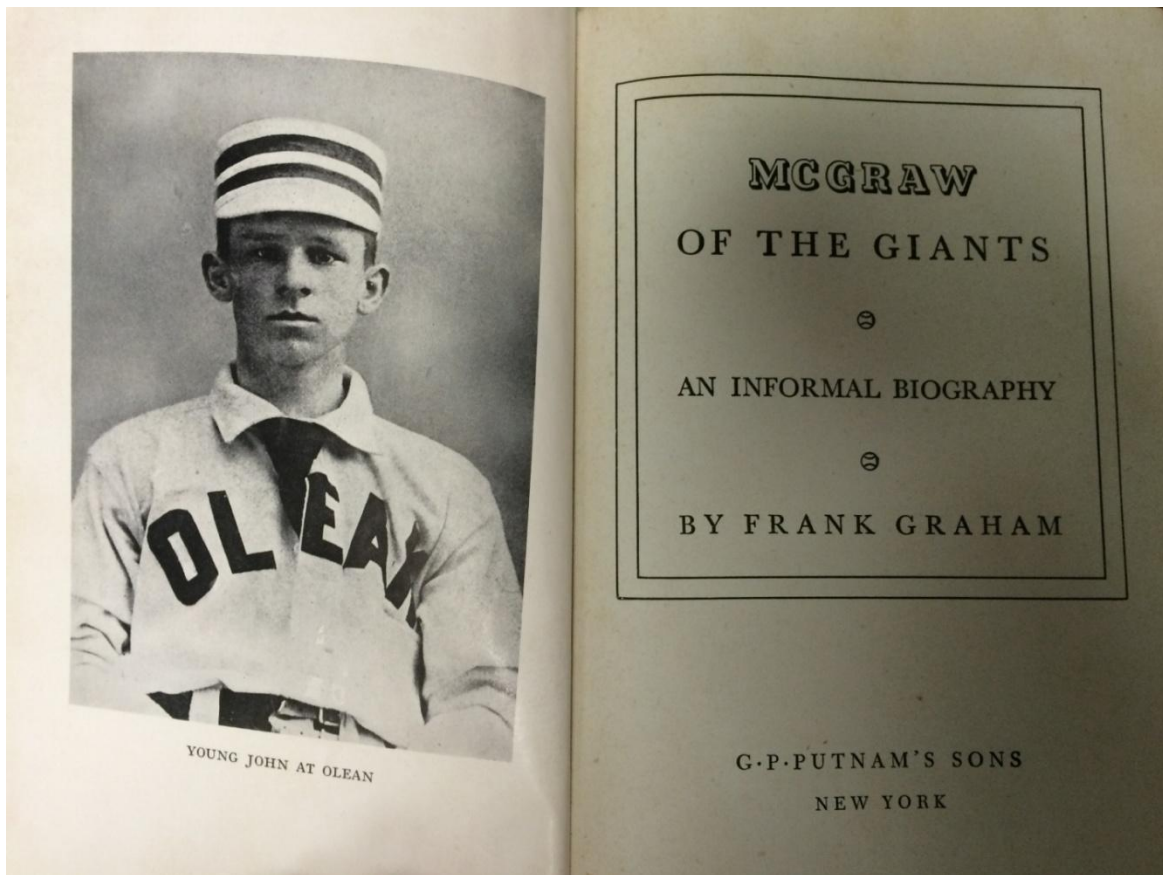


Figure 56 Buck was personal friends with one of the subjects of this book, Buck Herzog

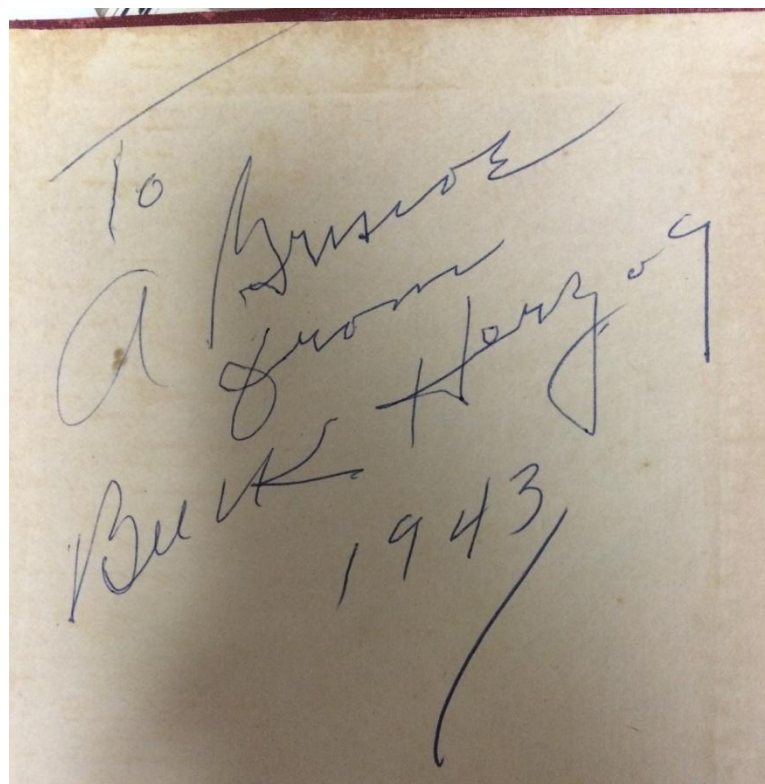


Figure 57 Dedication to Buck Briscoe by Buck Herzog

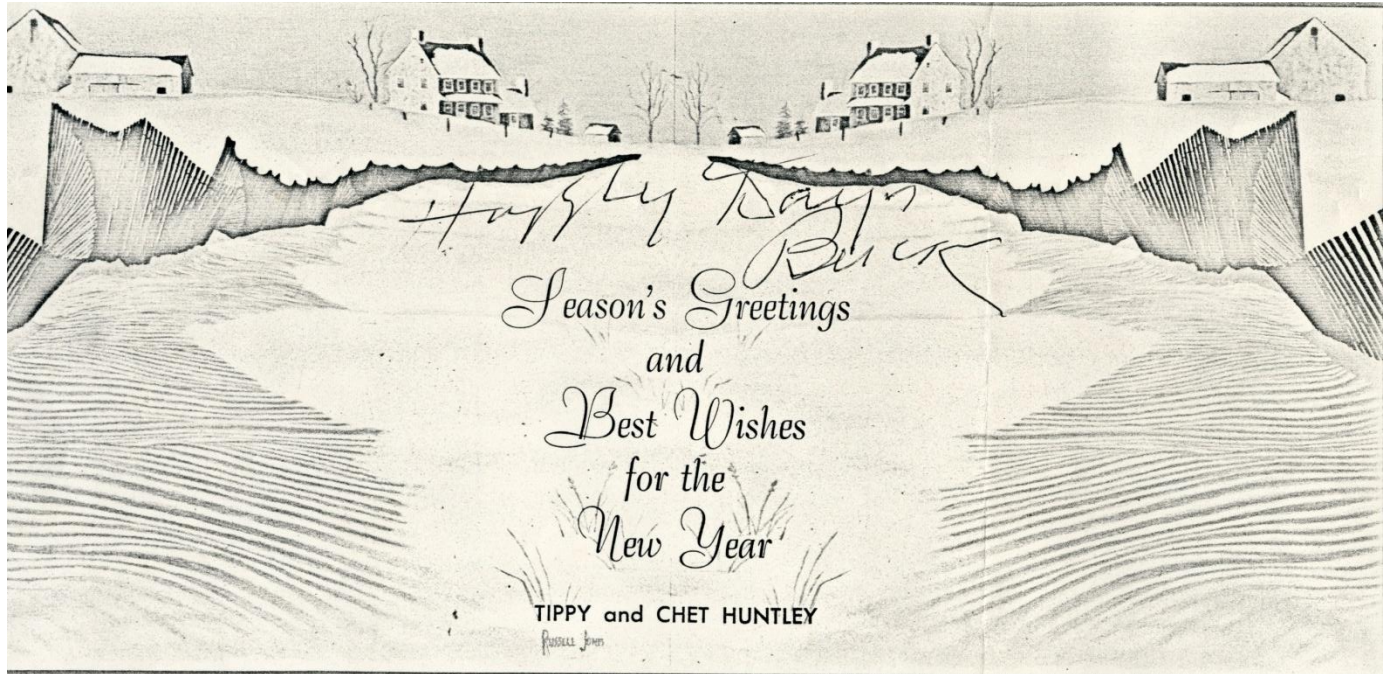


Figure 58 Christmas card to Buck Briscoe from Tippy and Chet Huntley, NBC Nightly News Anchor.

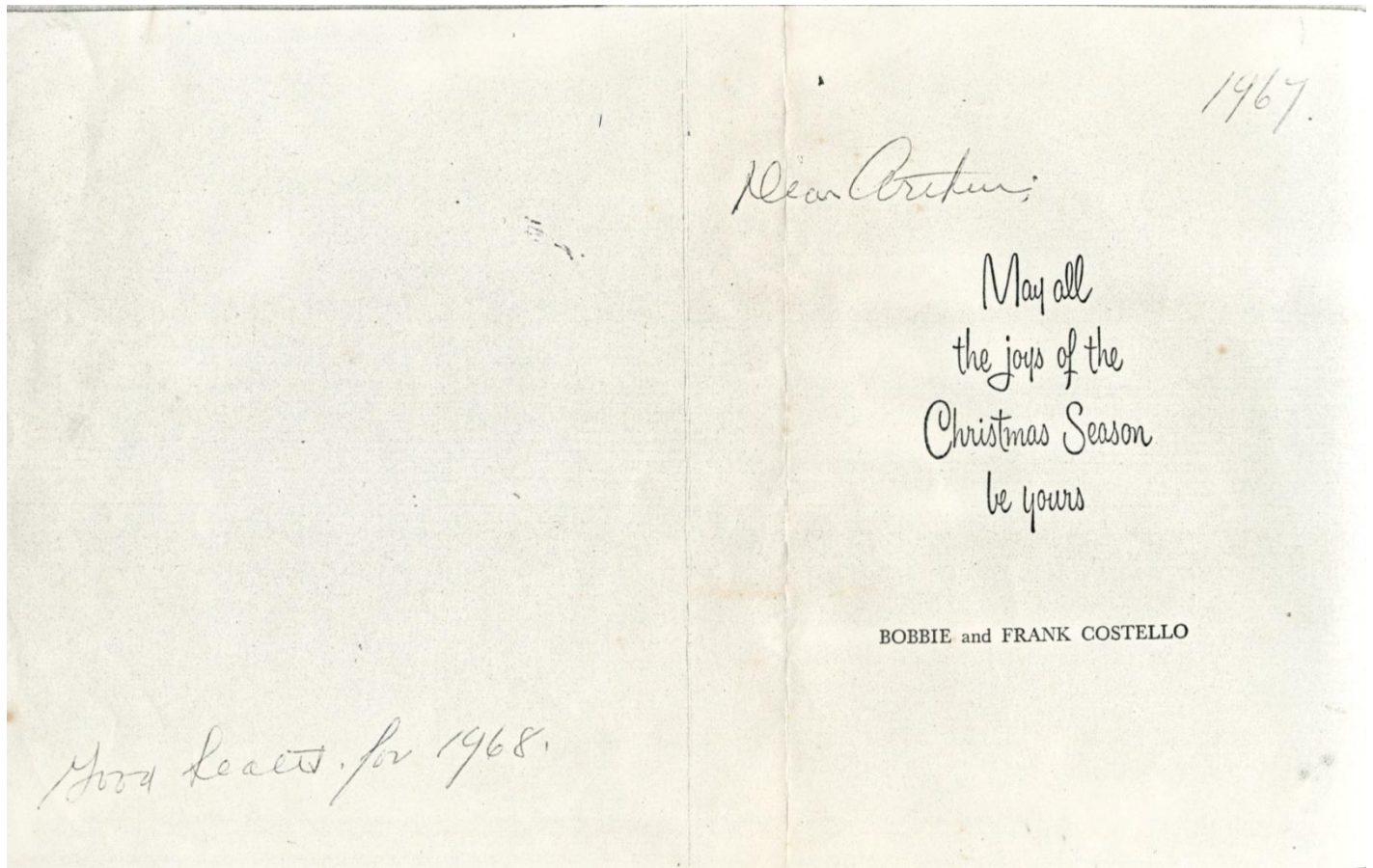


Figure 59 Christmas card to Buck Briscoe from Bobbie and Frank Costello, friends of Buck's.



Figure 60 Pilot Howard Hughes became famous for setting several aviation world records, including for his 1938 flight around the world in 91 hours. On this flight, Harry Connor, Buck's brother in-law served as Hughes' co-pilot. On July 10, 1938, Hughes and Connor departed from New York for their trip around the world, sponsored by the New York World's fair. Their private plane included the latest technology such as a homing radio compass, a periscopic drift indicator, a gyro-pilot and a radio transmitter, linking them to the World's Fair in order to increase publicity for the fair. At the center of the photo are Harry Connor and Cornelia Briscoe Connor, Buck's sister, standing to Connor's right.



Figure 61 Left to Right: Governor Marvin Mandel, Arthur "Buck" Briscoe, Philip Dorsey.



Figure 62 Buck Briscoe and former St. Mary's County Commissioner President, Carl "Buddy" Loffler



Figure 63 Buck Briscoe as a young man.



Figure 64 Buck Briscoe as a young man.



Figure 65 A portrait of Buck's mother, Sophia Howard Briscoe, 1910.

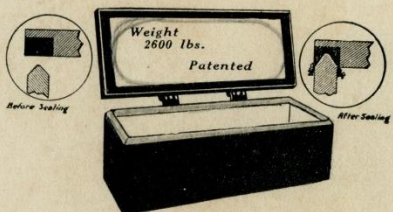


Figure 66 Buck Briscoe at Sotterley. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



Figure 67 Buck Briscoe as a young man.

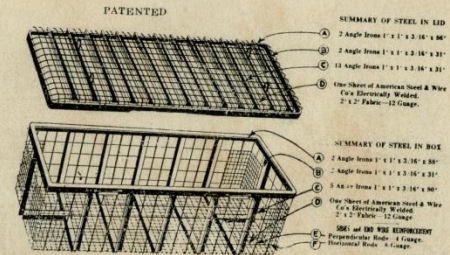
Call BALTIMORE Gilmor 0265 COLLECT--Daily and Sunday
 Call BALTIMORE Gilmor 2853 COLLECT--Nights



Before Sealing After Sealing

ASPHALT
GRAVE VAULTS
KEEP
CASKETS DRY

PATENTED



ASPHALT GRAVE VAULT CO.
 BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Guaranteed
Waterproof

Guaranteed
Airtight

Figure 68 Advertisement for one of Buck's Businesses, Asphalt Grave Vault Company.

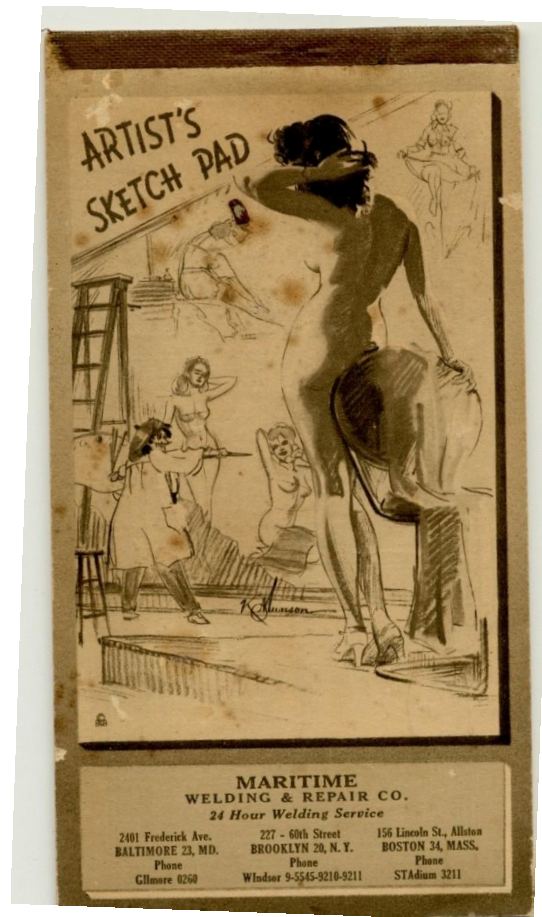
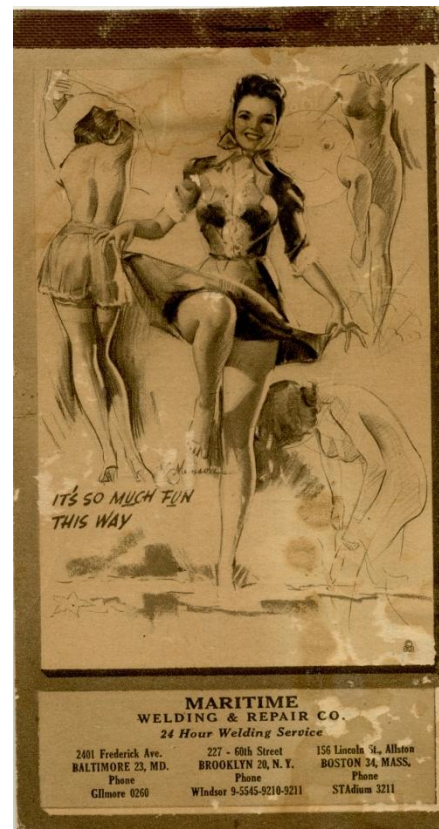


Figure 69 Now that Buck is no longer selling asphalt graves, the ads have changed.



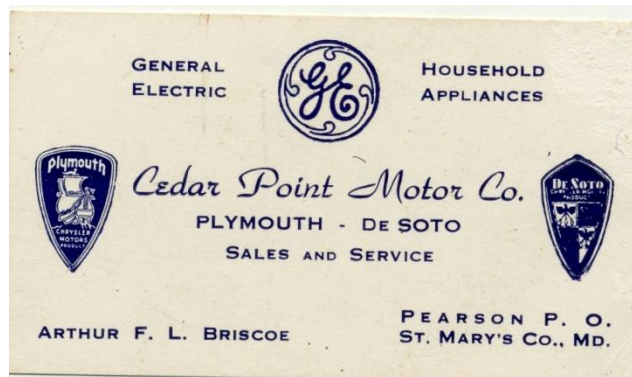


Figure 70 Buck's Business Card for Cedar Point Motor Company

KAZUO YANAGISAWA, M.D.
50 EAST 52ND STREET
NEW YORK 22, N. Y.
PLAZA 9-6159

August 15, 1950

Dear Arthur:

I am sending this on to you and I will let you know by letter before I leave town whether all the things have arrived.

I want to thank you for the trouble to which you have gone for me.

Enclosed is a picture of the model that I have in mind for this November if you are able to locate one, and if I am able to get rid of my old Pontiac and can swing the finances for this new one for the Mrs.

With warmest personal regards to you and to Marie, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Yanagisawa

"I like **DE SOTO** —no fooling!"

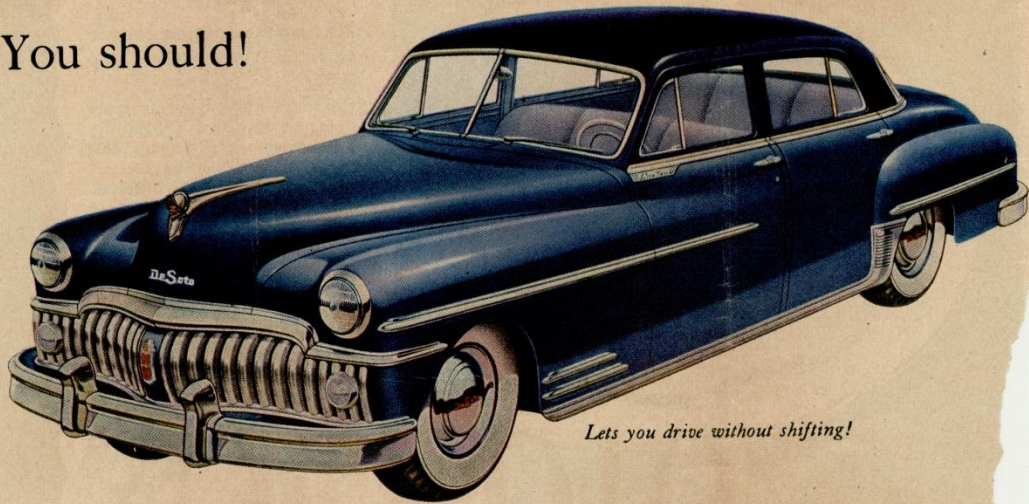


"Me too—*no shifting!*"

Steering?...featherlight!

Brakes?...biggest you ever had! Comfort?...king-size! Operating cost?...miserly! Not driven it yet?

You should!



Lets you drive without shifting!

• Drive a De Soto before you decide!

De Soto-Plymouth Dealers present "IT PAYS TO BE IGNORANT" starring Tom Howard every Wed. night over CBS • DE SOTO DIV., CHRYSLER

Figure 71 Advertisement for De Soto cars.

CEDAR POINT MOTOR CO. Inc.

DeSoto • Plymouth



Lexington Park

Great Mills 5361

ST. MARYS CO., MARYLAND

February 8th, 1957

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This letter will introduce Mrs. Dorothy Dunn. She is an excellent typist clerk. Her work is neat, she is dependable, and hours mean nothing to her. She will work as long as you need her. Her work always comes before her social activities.

She has worked for me on two occasions and I found her work excellent. She is desirous of getting associated with a business enterprise and, I will recommend her to any firm who can use her services.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Arthur Briscoe', written over a horizontal line.

Arthur Briscoe,
President

FACTORY
APPROVED
SERVICE

COMPLETE
LUBRICATION
SERVICE

WASHING
PAINTING
REPAIRING
RECONDITIONING

BRAKE TESTING
BRAKE LINING
FENDER REPAIRS
BODY WORK

IGNITION
STARTER
GENERATOR
BATTERIES
ALL ELECTRICAL
SERVICE

TIRES & TUBES
SALES
AND
SERVICE

FACTORY
ENGINEERED
PARTS

DESOTO LETS YOU DRIVE WITHOUT SHIFTING

Figure 72 Reference Letter for Dorothy Dunn by Buck Briscoe.

St. Mary's Beacon



Established 1839

Court Square Building
in County Seat
Leonardtown, Md. 20650
Phone 475-8078

President LARRY SULLIVAN
Exec. Vice President MURIEL M. SELPH
Manager PATTY GILFILLAN

Editorial

The ugly political snake is rearing its deadly head and writhing all-enveloping coils again!!

The latest episode to come to our attention concerns the Economic Development Committee. In a surprise move, Dr. J.P. Jarboe, Chair of the EDC, wrote a letter to Senator Bailey requesting legislation authorize a salaried position of EDC Director to replace Arthur "Buck" Briscoe who has for 15 years worked heart and soul to the betterment of this County. Buck has worked veritable miracles in his non-salaried, slim-budgeted position. It is a shame that for apparent selfish political reasons a man who has done so much for St. Mary's in the face of such great odds is being literally cast off under circumstances smack heavily of politics and political pressures.

A portion of Jarboe's letter states "There seems to be a desperate need for a full time, knowledgeable individual on the local scene to serve as a catalyst for the solution of many problems we face. We believe that a fully salaried full-time Director of the Economic Development Commission could fill this need. The advice and help of such an individual as we envision should be able to prevent some of the innumerable squabbles such as zoning or sewerage disposal." This is like pressure from a number of individuals connected with the Metropolitan Commission and some local County officials who are directly concerned with the present farce of zoning.

Does anyone believe that any one person, be he County Commissioner, State Legislator or EDC Director, is going to please all groups of citizens such as the Potomac River Association, Water Association or Lexington Park Citizens Council who strongly believe in their causes?

It appears to us that by losing Buck Briscoe this county would lose possession of a wealth of experience, knowledge and "know how" not only the tourist trade but in the thousands of valuable contacts throughout the nation which Buck has built up during the years.

Here is a man known far and wide as "Mr. St. Mary's," a man who has a type of dedication to this county that could not be bought for any salary. Buck has been instrumental in bringing to this County a new industry such as the dress factory (now known as Minitec), obtaining funds to start Point Lookout State Park, the airport, he has made the name of St. Mary's County known in several other countries including the United States, has been on a first-name basis with former Presidents, Congressmen, Ambassadors, nationally-known travel editors (who in turn have published flattering articles about this county in national magazines resulting in tourism growth), operates annually on a \$10,000 budget from which he pays a secretary, buys 50,000 pieces of literature and personally sees that the 5,000 to 6,000 inquiries are answered promptly. We could go on and on on Buck's accomplishments but time and space prevent this. His files are complete and open to the public upon request.

If this proposal to Sen. Bailey is not politically motivated as we believe then would it not seem more logical to hire a much needed Assistant EDC Director who could inherit Buck's knowledge, "know

Figure 73 Editorial in *The St. Mary's Beacon*, March 18, 1971.

[The Saint Mary's Beacon- Thursday, January 7, 1971]

Conversations With A Gadfly

"Why do you do all this?" I said. "At your age with sufficient income, surely you needn't work so hard."

"When I left this county in were about five jobs available for every one getting out of school. We were one of the poorest counties in Maryland. When I came back in 1949 things were better but we still weren't able to find employment for every one. So in 1955 I founded the Economic Development Committee.

"You ask me why do it. Well, in the first place, it's not just me, it's the whole committee."

"Again why do I do it?" Because I like these people. Wherever I have gone in the world, I've never met a man I didn't like. But St. Mary's has some of the finest people in the world. I don't want to see a boy or a girl graduate from school and then have to go someplace else just to earn a living. I don't want to see the people of Leonardtown living off their own world and the people of Lexington Park living off in another.

"I'm a dollars and cents man," he replied. "And it scares hell out of me to see us so dependent on the Navy Base. Why a token cut of ten percent down there would have us all in the soup.

"The committee has a project now to plant several miles of crape myrtle trees along Route 5, at the County. That's all being sponsored by local business. When that's done in a few years the trees have grown up, we'll be in every gardening and outdoor magazine in the country. I want to see all of St. Mary's live up to the promise of that entrance. And we can do it. We can sell ourselves to the rest of the country, and then pick and choose the kinds of industry we want to come here."

"I can't overemphasize the importance of publicity, of selling ourselves," he continued. "With the amount of money we have to operate, we would be lost if it weren't for all the wonderful people in the press and on radio, and the many, many, local businessmen who have never failed me when I called on them for help."

"With all that is at stake here for the good of so many people," I said, "could I ask how much the county appropriates for salaries for you and the rest of the committee members?"

"We receive no salary," he said

"But there must be expenses. All this promotional literature, telephone bills, mailing expenses, travel... who pays for that?"

"The County appropriated \$10,000 for expenses, this year," he said. "It doesn't go very far, but we do what we can."

"And Mrs. Dunn?" I said.

"A small subsistence salary," he replied. "She too, worked for many years for nothing."

Figure 74 Article in *The St. Mary's Beacon*

MESSAGES, ADDRESSES

and

PUBLIC PAPERS

of

J. MILARD TAWESS

Governor of Maryland

1963-1967

Volume II

Edited by

Conley H. Dillon

Professor of Government

and Politics

University of Maryland

Annapolis

State of Maryland

1967

ADDRESS, TRAVEL CONFERENCE

ANNAPOLIS

October 9, 1963

About three years ago, when I proposed to the General Assembly that our State should undertake a program of economic development, I had in mind, among other things, the need to expand the efforts to develop the travel industry. Although we had a limited program in the past, I was convinced that our State government should be doing a great deal more than it had to build up our tourist business. Furthermore, it was obvious to me that, by developing our travel resources, we would, at same time, great strength our hand when it came to bringing new industry here.

Looking to the future, Maryland will take advantage of what promises to be the world's greatest recreational and education attraction as a means of promoting our tourist attractions. I refer to the 1964-65 New York World's Fair. Guided by the old age "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach," our State pavilion, at the Fair, will feature a fine restaurant, offering typical Maryland dishes, such as chicken, seafood, stuffed ham, beaten biscuits, terrapin and buckwheat cakes, to mention just a few of the Maryland delicacies on the menu. Our pavilion will also contain an exhibit that will interest people of all ages and make them want to visit such places as St. Mary's City, naming just a few.

Figure 75 From the Papers of Governor Tawes.

From Washington Star-News
Washington D.C.
Monday, February 11, 1974

"Buck" Briscoe, Mr. St. Mary's"

By: Philip H. Love

Buck Briscoe

You've probably never heard of Arthur (Buck) Briscoe, but five presidents of the United States have, beginning with Harry Truman. And in St. Mary's County, Md., where there must be a score of men called "Buck," the one that comes to mind most readily when that nickname is mentioned is Briscoe.

He's a hulk of a man, well over 6 feet tall, with a craggy face, immense shoulders and a grip that makes you hesitate to shake hands with him a second time. He must be considerably past 70, but he continues to work seven days a week- and some nights, too.

Even in a crowd you'd notice Buck Briscoe, not only because of his hat. In summer it's a huge straw with "St. Mary's County" across the front; in winter, a southern style felt with the same advertisement on the band.

Although St. Mary's is Maryland's oldest county (founded in 1637), it was virtually unknown outside the state until Buck took it upon himself- without pay- to make it known to the world as "the land of pleasant living."

That was back in the mid-1940s. Last year St. Mary's Attracted well over 25,000 tourist, including some from foreign countries. And over the years a surprising number of outsiders, finding the fishing, crabbing and boating excellent, the oysters and the soft-shell clams tasty, the historic sites interesting, and the natives hospitable, have bought vacation or retirement homes.

St. Mary's imbued with the idea of developing its economy to the point where its young people wouldn't have to seek jobs elsewhere.

At his own expense, he hired a secretary, set up an economic development committee and began trying to lure business, industries, tourist, vacationists, and well-to-do retirees to the county. By 1965, he'd done so well that the Rotary Club named him "Mr. St. Mary's County" and gave him a public "Testimonial of Appreciation."

In the meantime, the county commissioners had given his committee official sanction, naming several person to help him and granting him a modest expense account. He still receives no salary, however and wants none. "All I want," he says, "is to see St. Mary's prosper."

From Truman through Nixon, Buck has been delivering St. Mary's turkeys to the White House for Thanksgiving or Christmas. This is always good for a mention in the news, sometimes for picture. He also delivers St. Mary's seafood where he thinks it will do the most good for the county. And during New York Worlds Fair he saw to it that St. Mary's stuffed ham - a unique dish- was served in the Maryland Pavilion's restaurant.

I wanted to talk with Buck and his secretary said he was lunching in a Leonardtown restaurant without success. Each time the dialogue was the same:

"Have you seen Buck-"

"Buck Briscoe? No, sir. Hasn't been in today."

I knew without asking that he was in the third restaurant. I heard his booming voice telling somebody, "These St. Mary's County crab cakes are really good."

When Buck was growing up- and for a considerable time thereafter- St. Mary's was as insular as any other county in the United States.

Few "furriners" went there- except to buy moonshine during Prohibition – and the only means of livelihood were raising tobacco; oystering, crabbing, and fishing; working in a general store; practicing law or medicine, and making and selling "Southern Maryland rye." Buck, like many other St. Marians, went to Baltimore.

From Baltimore, he moved to New York, where he built a profitable welding business. But he was a country boy at heart. He sold out and returned to St. Mary's...[article ends]

Figure 76 Article from *The Washington Star* about Buck Briscoe

THE TAX COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

WILLIAM E. SHEENE SR., WILLIAM E.
SHEENE JR., and ARTHUR F. L. BRISCOE,
co-partners, trading under the style
and firm name of SHEEN VAULT COMPANY,

Petitioners,

-vs-

EDWARD MACAULEY, Acting Chairman of the
UNITED STATES MARITIME COMMISSION,

Respondent.

:
:
:
:
: PETITION

: Docket No.
:
:

(a) William E. Sheene Sr. of 713 Cooks Lane, Baltimore, Maryland, William E. Sheene Jr. of Old Westbury, Nassau County, New York, and Arthur F. L. Briscoe of 20 Park Avenue, New York City, New York, were at all times hereinafter mentioned, and particularly at the time of the execution of this petition, and the institution of these proceedings, co-partners, trading under the style and firm name of SHEEN VAULT COMPANY, with principal offices and place of business at 223--60th Street, County of Kings, City and State of New York.

(b) Jurisdiction is conferred on this Court by virtue of the provisions of Section 403 (e) (2) of the Act of April 28th, 1942, Public Law 528, 77th Congress, as amended, commonly referred to as the Renegotiation Act.

(c) That heretofore and on the 3rd day of January, 1946, the Respondent determined the excessive profits of the petitioners for the fiscal period beginning May 22nd, 1942, and ending December 31, 1942 to be the sum of \$108,076.63. Such determination was made on the basis of certain contracts in connection with which the petitioners furnished work, labor

and services and materials as sub-contractor to the respective prime contractors as follows:

Atlantic Basin Iron Works of 166 Van Brunt Street, County of Kings, City and State of New York; Bethlehem Steel Company at the yards located at 56th Street, County of Kings, City and State of New York, 27th Street, County of Kings, City and State of New York; Hoboken Shipyard in Hoboken, New Jersey; Cardinal Engineering Company at their yard 280 Van Brunt Street, County of Kings, City and State of New York; McNulty Shipyard Ltd. at their yard 9 Summit Street, County of Kings, City and State of New York; Stephen Ransom, Inc. at their yard at 407 West Street, Borough of Manhattan, City and State of New York; Robbins Dry Dock & Shipbuilding Company at their yard at Erie Basin, Foot of Dwight Street, County of Kings, City and State of New York; Seaboard Marine Repair Company at their yard at 558 Newark Street, Hoboken, New Jersey; Arthur Tickle Engineering Company, at their yard at 26 Delevan Street, County of Kings, City and State of New York; Todd Erie Basin Dry Docks, Inc. at their yard at Dwight Street, County of Kings, City and State of New York; Todd Shipyards Corporation, Hoboken, New Jersey; Turbine Engineering Company, at their shipyard at 201 Harrison Street, Hoboken, New Jersey; Zalud Marine Company, at their yard at 52 South Street, Borough of Manhattan, City and State of New York; the respective schedules of the approximate dates when the work, labor and services were performed together with materials furnished, together with names of vessels and the amounts received for each and every vessel, together with

the totals thereof are contained in schedules annexed hereto and made part hereof and are respectfully identified and marked as Exhibits A and B.

(d) The petitioners allege the following assignments of error claimed to have been committed by the Respondent in the determination of excessive profits as follows:

1. Adequate consideration was not fully accorded to the petitioners for the contributions made to the overall war effort by them in their operations during the fiscal period in question, and which was the subject matter of the determination made by the Respondent.

2. The risk capital contributions and the exploratory and preliminary work done in the perfection and development of the plastic armor program which constituted the nub of the petitioners' operations was not accorded proper credit and consideration.

3. The risks encountered as well as the losses sustained in the successful promotion, development and perfection of the plastic armor program were not given due and sufficient consideration.

4. The relinquishment of an active going business, the successor in interest to the business of the Sheen Vault Company and the abandonment of and loss of good will, earnings and emoluments derived from the predecessor company, to wit, Asphalt Grave Vault Company, were not taken into account and given due and sufficient consideration as required by the Re-negotiation Act, and the regulations promulgated by the Res-

negotiation Act, and the regulations promulgated by the Respondent and the War Price Adjustment Board thereunder.

5. The ratio of profits derived in the normal civilian pursuit of the petitioners and their predecessor, the Asphalt Grave Vault Company, which ratio of profits was considerably in excess of the amount finally allowed by Respondent, was completely ignored and rejected.

6. Prior experience of the petitioners in the structural asphalt field and their achievement in converting over with the utmost of dispatch to the war effort was not considered a favorable factor in mitigation of the excessive profits determined hereunder.

7. The allowance made for drawings to the petitioners hereunder for their work, labor and services actually performed in promoting the operations of the Sheen Vault Company were fixed by the Respondent at an extremely low level in the light of the services actually performed; especially when compared with rates of pay accorded to employees and executives similarly situated and engaging in similar or nearly similar activities and also below the rates customarily accepted and approved by the Treasury Department, through its Salary Stabilization Unit in this Region, where the petitioners operate their principal place of business, for comparable duties performed by other employees or executives.

8. The rate of depreciation was fixed by the Respondent at a base which does not give adequate consideration to the useful lives of the individual items of machinery and equipment

utilized by them, from the view point of excessive wear and tear and obsolescence; especially in the light of those rates of depreciation and obsolescence recognized by the Treasury Department in Bulletin F, issued by it and as accepted through the reasonable standards employed in the Shipbuilding Industry.

9. The Respondent further refused to recognize the petitioners' contentions that a considerable portion of the business considered to be the subject of the Renegotiation Act was not properly includible in such determination, in that, certain items of business taken into account in the overall consideration by the Respondent were non-renegotiable items of business and were exempted by the provisions of the Renegotiation Act from being considered in determining excessive profits; the petitioners refer to the work, labor and services performed by them upon the vessels of foreign registry in the aggregate amount of \$86,791.00. A complete schedule of such sales detailing contracts for vessels owned and operated by foreign governments including the names of the vessels, the flags thereof, and the amounts are set forth in a separate schedule hereto annexed and made a part hereof, and identified as Exhibit C.

(c) The facts upon which the petitioners rely as sustaining the foregoing assignments of error are as follows:

1. At the complete sacrifice of all the civilian business which the petitioners had acquired over many years in the operation of their predecessor company, the Asphalt Grave Vault Company, the petitioners immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities and even prior thereto engaged themselves in the development

of a new product known as plastic armor.

The details concerning which will be more fully elaborated hereinafter under another sub-division. After their labors over many months in exclusively exploring the possibilities for the development of plastic armor, and the practical methods of its uses and applications in connection with shipbuilding, test panels were developed and submitted to the United States Navy. Following successful tests at the proving grounds at Dahlgren, Virginia, a certificate of approval to the use of this new plastic armor as an applicator on ships was granted.

During all this period, the petitioners had divested themselves completely from all of their other business, and had in fact relinquished their means of livelihood and income and profits which they had normally received for a period of many years prior to their undertaking the activities hereinabove outlined. This state of affairs continued for many months at a great cost and expense and loss of time, money and effort to the petitioners without any reimbursement therefor. In addition, the good will and business developed over a period of many years in their predecessor company aforementioned was completely nullified and for all intents and purposes entirely lost to them for all times. During all this period of probing and exploring in this entirely new field of plastic armor, the petitioners devoted themselves to such work in exclusion to all other activities.

Petitioners contended that the Respondent gave little or no consideration to this factor in arriving at the determina-

tion complained of herewith.

2. The Respondent erred, in that, he failed to recognize and consider as a credit to the petitioners, the price reductions which had been accomplished and voluntarily granted by them to the War Agencies during the fiscal period in question.

In the course of the exploitation and development of their plastic armor program, petitioners were able to perfect the uses of plastic armor to such an extent that they were utilized in the manufacture of gun circles, flare boxes, hydrogen gas bottlehouses on ships as well as gun circles. Through the continued use and perfection in the fabrication of the plastic armor, the petitioners were able to achieve lower cost from time to time. Through their efforts, existing prices of other companies in the field for the supply of an inferior product were lowered considerably and for the first time there was introduced real genuine competition in this field. Thereby the War Agencies were able to benefit by substantial price reduction ranging from 30% to as high as 100% in some cases. These savings were passed on to the Navy Department Maritime Commission and Foreign Governments.

No regard was given by the Respondent to this factor in his overall consideration.

3. The petitioners risked the investment of their own capital which they either directly or indirectly contributed in the enterprise of Sheen Vault Company.

The petitioners pledged their credit in order to obtain sizeable loans and investments in the exploitation and development of the plastic armor business of the Sheen Vault Company.

Considering the newness of the product, and the inability to predetermine eventual success coupled with all the risks inherent in this undertaking, great sacrifice of the petitioners' investments was a distinct likelihood. By the end of 1942 the petitioners realized that they were personally indebted for pledged credits in connection with the business of Sheen Vault Company to an amount totaling \$300,000.00. In addition they had completely sacrificed and foregone their well established predecessor's business, the Asphalt Grave Vault Company.

There was an ever present risk which the partners assumed until the successful development and exploitation of so highly a speculative program which they had undertaken. It can safely be stated on the basis of the evidence presented, that they were pioneers in the field of providing a practical method for the application of plastic armor on ships as a good substitute, for critically needed steel plate. The ability to adapt plastic armor to these uses proved of inestimable value to the ship-building program at the time when ships were urgently needed for the continuation of the war effort. The many months, time and effort which were devoted by the petitioners, and pioneering and ultimate development for the uses of plastic armor were facts which were completely ignored by the Respondent in its determination of this matter.

4. To achieve the final result in the perfection and development of plastic armor, considerable background and experience as well as the perfection of special equipment were of course prerequisite.

In order to achieve a successful result, special equipment was required in the handling of this work; embracing, among other things, the designing and building of special mixers, stone heaters, and other unique facilities necessary in order to hold heat, inasmuch as the retention of heat was a very vital factor in the application of plastic armor. This equipment was costly and non-durable due to the excessive heat, and the most unsuitable conditions to which it was exposed and required discarding after one operation.

The various products requiring the application of plastic armor being spread around at such widely separated and remote points, required the building and furnishing, moving and transporting of a considerable amount of equipment; especially since the operations were of a novel nature and the desired equipment being so highly specialized and was extremely difficult in procuring in the open market. There were difficult conditions experienced in the handling of the work in question, including the training and maintenance of a highly specialized and skilled personnel trained for this type of work, and the services of the partners were consequently required during all times, in order to insure the complete stability and continuity of the work embraced in the aforementioned program.

No consideration was given by the Respondent of these factors.

5. A large portion of the assets of the predecessor company, Asphalt Grave Vault Company, were passed on to Green Vault Company in order to assist the latter in its activities.

was not too plentiful, that some adequate substitutes would have to be evolved if the shipbuilding program was to become a realization. In order to accomplish at least a part of this objective, the petitioners were able to take advantage of their knowledge, experience and background in experimenting with the structural uses of asphalt, and uses of plastic armor in lieu of steel armor plate. As aforementioned, this was a very uncertain, yet important undertaking. By finally achieving the desired result, the petitioners were able to furnish our Armed Forces with a product equal to, if not superior to that of steel armor plate, yet at the same time conserving the uses of steel for other purposes.

This factor too, was not considered by the Respondent in mitigation of the claim of excessive profits.

8. The salaries allowed were wholly inadequate.

The statements in the form of a summary of income, and profit and loss for the fiscal year in question, and to adjustments for the purpose of renegotiation, which is annexed hereto, and made a part hereof and marked Exhibit C, indicates that the allowance made for the petitioners' salaries was \$ 7,364.38 to each one of them, or an aggregate of \$ 22,093.15 for the fiscal period.

In view of the experience, background and the risks assumed in the preliminary ventures of the Sheen Vault Company, the relinquishment of their profitable business, and their predecessor company aforementioned lead to the conclusion that the salaries so fixed by the Respondent were inordinately

low and disproportionate to the foregoing factors; which when properly considered would have entitled each of the petitioners to a salary of no less than \$20,000.00 per annum.

In comparable enterprises within the metropolitan area of the City of New York, where shipbuilding operations were performed, executives of such firms as Wheeler Shipbuilding Co., J.K. Welding Co., The Arthur Blair Shipyards, The Cardinal Engineering Company and others, the executives' salaries were equal to and in many cases in excess of \$20,000.00 per annum. In fact, in these last mentioned instances there was no pioneering or development work such as was rendered by these petitioners. In addition, these petitioners were required to give of their services to the successful development and continuation of their program continuous effort seven (7) days a week on a twenty-four (24) hour schedule with absolutely no time for recreation at all for themselves, or for the devotion of any other activities.

The petitioners in fact were accorded a salary which curiously enough is equal to the salary paid to one of their superintendents, who is one of their employees, who received \$12,500.00 per annum. It also was in the same amount as salaries paid to ordinary superintendents in such welding and shipbuilding companies as Central Welding and Repair Co., Wheeler Shipbuilding Company, Cardinal Engineering Co., Bethlehem Steel Company, and other Shipbuilding and Ship Repair Companies in the metropolitan area of greater New York. Instances can be multiplied where ordinary superintendents were

receiving salaries of \$12,500.00 per annum, and better, for performing a lesser work load with a lesser degree of responsibility, than that assumed by these petitioners in their aforementioned activities.

For these reasons, it is evident that the appraisal for salaries for these petitioners in the amount determined by the Respondent was arbitrary and unreasonable.

9. The rate fixed for depreciation was insufficient.

As indicated above, the equipment, facilities and property utilized by the petitioners in effectuating their plastic armor program had a very brief span of life. For a considerable period, they became obsolescent at a very early age and in the remaining instances deteriorated to the vanishing point in a period of between six months and no more than two years.

As aforementioned, the experience in this industry coupled with the practical knowledge derived in the use of the equipment and facilities in the plastic armor program gave convincing proof to the fact that the petitioners' formula for obsolescence and depreciation of such facilities, etc. was not properly appraised and considered by the Respondent.

The norm of obsolescence and depreciation was employed by the Respondent is one which could only be applicable in the cases of facilities and equipment not subjected to such adverse elements and unusually severe conditions as were the instrumentalities employed by the petitioners in the conduct of their business. Consequently, the ratios of depreciation and obsoles-

cence adopted by the Respondent in the renegotiation aforementioned failed to credit the petitioners with sufficient and proper allowances and deductions from their excessive profits for such inordinately high and unusually severe obsolescence and depreciation of their equipment.

Failure to give the aforementioned factors due and sufficient regard constituted error on the part of the Respondent.

10. The schedules marked Exhibits A to B-13 annexed hereto indicate that a very substantial portion of the overall business of the petitioners during the fiscal period in question constituted work performed on vessels in foreign registry.

The petitioners contended that they were entitled to exemption from renegotiation for this branch of their work, because of the provisions of the renegotiation which specifically precluded a determination for excessive profits in those cases where the work performed or the materials furnished are for the benefit of a Foreign Government.

Therefore in this further respect the Respondent erred in failing to exclude from his consideration those items of business set forth in schedules marked Exhibits A to B-13 , and which are non-negotiable matters.

11. Error was committed in the fixing of a percentage of 11.54 on adjusted sales which in reality represented a percentage less than 10% on the basis of original sales.

The excessive profits which were determined by Respondent were arbitrarily and capriciously fixed, and can only be determined on variable percentages with no fixed bases for estimating

or determining a true and proper formula for excessive profits; especially since other firms, persons and corporations who have been renegotiated were accorded percentages of profit far in excess of those permitted in the instant case, and the salaries allowed in the renegotiations of these other persons, firms or corporations by the Maritime Commission of the United States and other Government Agencies acting in pursuance of the Renegotiation Act, were greater in percentages and amounts, than those which were permitted to the petitioners in their renegotiation with the Respondent for the fiscal period aforementioned.

That the Respondent by virtue of the standards utilized in arriving at the determination, the manner and method in which the hearings were conducted, and the rationale were so utterly inconsistent with established precepts of law and in derogation of the rights of the petitioners, as to have deprived them of due process of law.

The petitioners contend that the gross amount of income during the fiscal period May 22nd, 1942 to December 31st, 1942 was \$557,702.41. That there should have been deducted from this amount the following items of cost and expense:

1. \$300,974.79 representing materials, labor, rental of equipment, towing, etc.
2. Manufacturing overhead of \$49,938.29, including such items as depreciation and obsolescence, repairs, rent, utilities and other reasonable and normal items of overhead.
3. General and administrative overhead of \$63,101.43 representative of partners' salaries, office salaries, traveling expenses, professional services and other reasonable and normal expenses in the general administration of the petitioners' business.

4. New York State Incorporated Business Tax of \$7,231.00.

5. The non-reneegotiable business aggregating \$86,791.00, and representative of work performed on vessels of foreign registry.

On the basis of the foregoing, the petitioners allege that the percentage of net profit earned by them after all of the foregoing deductions, was reasonable, and in ratio, much lower than that which they normally earned in the operation of their civilian business, the predecessor of their present company, and that in the light thereof, the fixation by the Respondent of an amount of excessive profits, which if approved and accepted, would yield the petitioners less than a 10% return on the business transacted by them, would be entirely unreasonable and in arbitrary adjudication.

A copy of the notice sent by the Board, and a copy of the order of the Board or of its representatives determining the amount of excessive profits, which notice and order form the basis for the initiation of the proceedings under Section 403 (e) (2) are appended to the petition herewith.

In addition, the statement furnished to the petitioners by the Respondent setting forth the basis upon which the determination of excessive profits was predicated, is similarly appended to the petition, both the notice, and the statement being respectively identified by Exhibits D to E .

(f) WHEREFORE, the petitioners pray that this Court may hear the proceedings, and find as a fact that there were no profits as accrued to the petitioners during the fiscal period May 22nd, 1942 to December 31st, 1942, as were subject to the provisions of the

Renegotiation Act as aforementioned and declaring affirmatively that the determination made by the Respondent was inconsistent with and contrary to the law and the facts in the instant case.

Dated, March 30th, 1946.

SHEEN VAULT COMPANY

BY:

Arthur E. L. Briscoe
Partner -- Petitioner

Sidney O. Raphael,
Attorney for Petitioners,

STATE OF NEW YORK)
CITY OF NEW YORK)SS:
COUNTY OF NEW YORK)

ARTHUR P. L. BRISCOE, being duly sworn deposes and states:

That he is one of the petitioners, and a partner in the firm of GREEN VAULT COMPANY, and that he has read the foregoing petition, and is familiar with the facts and statements contained therein, and that the facts and matters stated therein are true to his own knowledge, except as to those facts and matters which are stated or given upon information and belief, and as to the same he also believes such facts and matters to be true.

Arthur P. L. Briscoe

Arthur P. L. Briscoe

Sworn to before me this
30th day of March, 1946.

Lawrence H. King,
Notary Public, New York County,
State of New York.

The Family Tree of Arthur Fenner Lee Briscoe

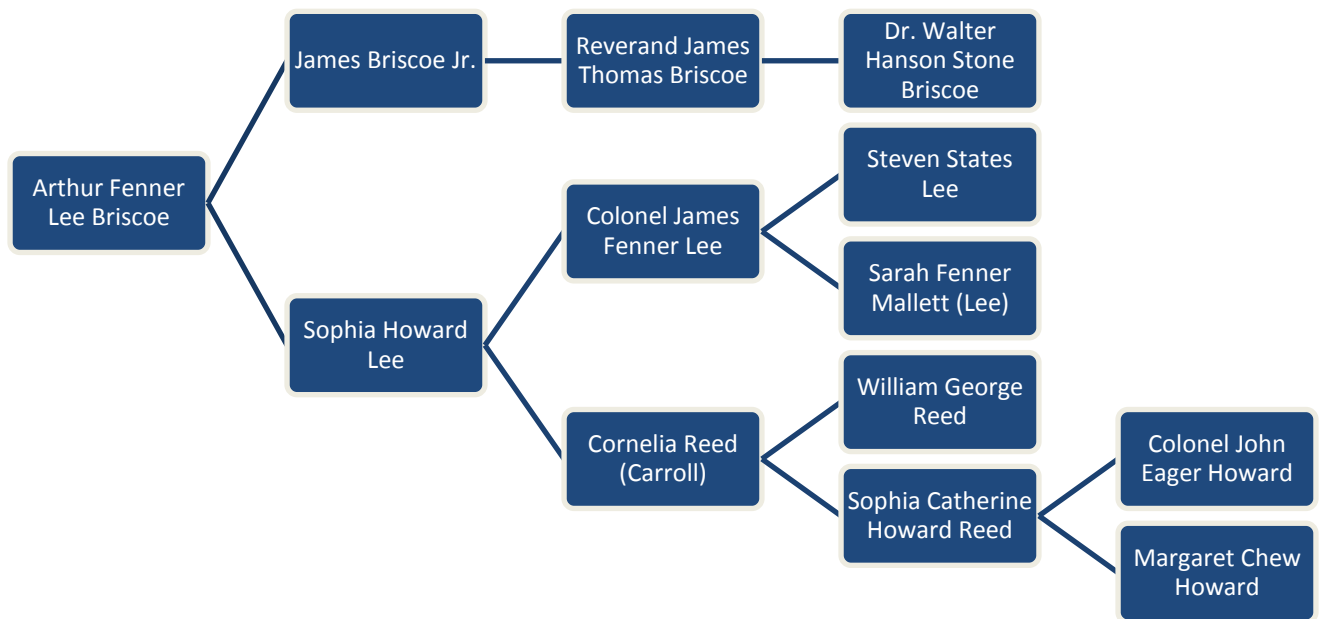




Figure 78 Colonel John Eager Howard (1752-1827), born at the place settled by his grandfather in "Garrison Forest", Baltimore County. Distinguished himself throughout the entire Revolutionary War, was elected State Governor of Maryland for four successive terms and subsequently became United States Senator. He was also a Brigadier General in the Army organized by George Washington. His declining years were spent in Belvedere, in Baltimore, (now just north of the Washington Monument) where his hospitality was unbounded. A large portion of the northern part of the city was embraced within his hereditary estate. Out of this domain he gave the ground upon which the Washington Monument stands. His brother in law was Colonel Charles Carroll of "Homewood", Baltimore County (The current site of Johns Hopkins University.) Colonel Howard was Buck's maternal great-great grandfather.



Figure 79 Colonel James Fenner Lee (1843-1898), a distinguished lawyer and diplomat. He died on his estate "Myrtle Point" on the Patuxent in St. Mary's County. He was educated in Switzerland and graduated from the College of Louis le Grand, Paris. He returned to America when he was 18 years old and studied law at Harvard for a year but left to return home to Baltimore during the Civil War. He bought an estate in Carroll County and represented that county in the state Senate in 1876 and 1878. He was appointed Charge de' Affaires by President Cleveland in 1885. He was a Representative of the United States at the Courts of Austria. He was appointed by President Harrison as first Envoy to the Republic of Brazil. He was described as a prominent member of the Maryland Legislature. Colonel Lee was Buck Briscoe's maternal grandfather.



Figure 80 Sophia Howard Lee at Sotterley. She was the daughter of Colonel James Fenner Lee and Buck's mother. She was born in 1878. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



Figure 81 Arthur Fenner Lee was Buck's maternal uncle and Buck's namesake. This photo depicts him as a private in the 5th Regiment of the Confederate Army in Baltimore, July 1889.