

Chapter Six:
Sotterley - This Place Matters
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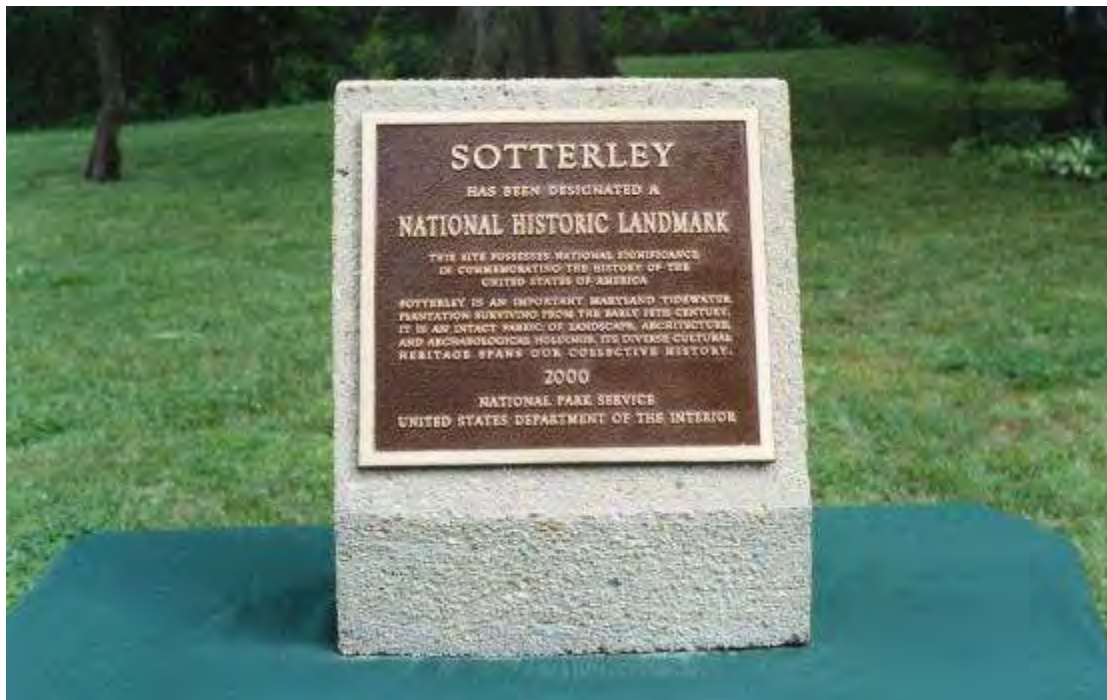
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1. Sotterley's National Historic Landmark marker.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Introduction

Mabel Ingalls: *The Sotterley Mansion Foundation through the actions of the trustees and staff shall preserve and promote Sotterley Mansion, its dependencies and grounds, as an architectural and historical monument. The purpose of this preservation and promotion is to educate culturally, aesthetically, and historically the public and students, particularly as to the basis of the rights of man, the basis of our democratic process and the basis of our ideals and institutions. The mansion and grounds are to be open as often as possible for the education, appreciation, use, benefit and enjoyment of all people and sectors of our society.*

Sotterley Foundation is a nonprofit institution which holds in public trust the historic site known as Sotterley Plantation. The Foundation's mission is to preserve, research, and interpret Sotterley Plantation's diverse cultures and environments and to serve as a public educational resource. The Foundation fosters an appreciation for our collective heritage through a full array of cultural activities and educational programming for the public and for students of every background and age.¹



2. Mabel Ingalls (center) with descendants of the Platers (right) and the Barneses (left).
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

From Sotterley Master Plan (1993)

Introduction

The Sotterley Mansion Foundation, Inc. with the assistance of the Maryland Museum Assistance Program developed this Living Master Plan which should provide direction for the future. The continuous generation of history by this aging historic cultural center will be of great

¹ "The George Plater Society of the Sotterley Foundation," *Sotterley Archives*

value to future generations as they study the growth and development of our country, state and county. Following the goals set forth by this Master Plan should help people regardless of their race, creed, or nationality understand our past life and to use that knowledge to insure that the future will preclude the faults of our past and capitalize on our strengths.

Mission

The mission of the Sotterley Mansion Foundation, Inc. is to research, interpret, exhibit, and preserve the buildings, gardens and grounds, as a living architectural and historical monument to centuries of plantation life on the Southern Maryland littoral of the Chesapeake Tidewater, and as an exemplar of the cultural history of Maryland, in particular as to its occupants and their place in the development of America's democratic principle and constitutional institutions.²



**3. Left to Right: Jan and Sandra van Heerden, John Hanson and Bonnie Briscoeat Sotterley
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**

² "Sotterley Master Plan, Prepared with the Assistance of a Grant from the Maryland Historical and Cultural Assistance Program," December 1993, *Sotterley Archives*

Lest We Forget Slavery

The New York Times Magazine

Magazine

Building the First Slavery Museum in America

By DAVID AMSDEN FEB. 26, 2015

A nation builds museums to understand its own history and to have its history understood by others, to create a common space and language to address collectively what is too difficult to process individually. Forty-eight years after World War II, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opened in Washington. A museum dedicated to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks opened its doors in Lower Manhattan less than 13 years after they occurred. One hundred and fifty years after the end of the Civil War, however, no federally funded museum dedicated to slavery exists, no monument honoring America's slaves. "It's something I bring up all the time in my lectures," says Eric Foner, a Columbia University historian and the author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning "Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery." "If the Germans built a museum dedicated to American slavery before one about their own Holocaust, you'd think they were trying to hide something. As Americans, we haven't yet figured out how to come to terms with slavery. To some, it's ancient history. To others, it's history that isn't quite history."

What makes slavery so difficult to think about, from the vantage point of history, is that it was both at odds with America's founding values- freedom, liberty, democracy- and critical to how they flourished. The Declaration of Independence proclaiming that "all men are created equal" was drafted by men who were afforded time to debate its language because the land that enriched many of them was tended by slaves. The White House and the Capitol were built, in part, by slaves. The economy of early America, responsible for the nation's swift rise and sustained power, would not have been possible without slavery. But the country's longstanding culture of racism and racial tensions- from lynchings of the Jim Crow-era South to the discriminatory housing policies of the North to the treatment of blacks by the police today- is deeply rooted in slavery as well. "Slavery gets understood as a kind of prehistory to freedom rather than what it really is: the foundation for a country where white supremacy was predicated upon African-American exploitation," says Walter Johnson, a Harvard professor. "This is still, in many respects, the America of 2015."³

THE NEW YORK TIMES METRO SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 1995 By CHARISSE JONES

Bringing Slavery's Long Shadow to the Light

"What's happening is an attempt to celebrate the spirit of ingenuity and survival in the face of suffering," said Michael Eric Dyson, professor of communication studies at the University

³ "Building the First Slavery Museum in America", by David Amsden, *The New York Times*, February 26, 2015.

of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. “We can say, ‘If they could make it under slave conditions, then certainly we could make it. If they could make it under economic misery, we can make it.

Looking back at slavery is not new. From emancipation celebrations at the turn of the century to Alex Haley’s “Roots”, the celebrated book and miniseries of the 1970s, black Americans have long grappled with that era and its legacy. But some scholars say the recent burst of introspection, greatly inspired by the Afrocentric movement, represents a transition from feelings of shame and denial about slavery to an embrace of that painful past. Some have begun to call slavery by another name, dubbing it the black Holocaust, or “maafa,” a Swahili word meaning “unspeakable horror.”

I guess the generation here in the 90s is doing what it is called to do, and that is to remember,” said Velma Maia Thomas, curator of a black Holocaust exhibit in Atlanta. “To finally open up the wounds, so when we go into the next millennium, some healing has taken place.”

“Slavery is a collective wound constantly being torn at by people who deny its importance,” Mr. Dyson said, “by people who acknowledge other people’s pain, but ignore slavery as a source of pain for black people.”

Black Americans young and old speak of the cursory references to slavery in their schoolbooks, in which blacks were often portrayed as passive victims who achieved nothing before being enslaved. Some remember the overwhelming silence that surrounded the subject in their homes and communities.

“For people of my generation,” said Roger Wilkins, a writer and history professor at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., “slavery was pushed away.”

Now in his 60s, Mr. Wilkins recalled a day when his mother told him stories of their ancestors that he had never heard. “I said, ‘Why didn’t you tell me that when I was growing up’” he said. “She said ‘Well, Roger I guess it is like the old folks used to say: we didn’t like to clank our chains.’ Apparently, that was a common expression among black people. It meant that slavery was a shameful past. People didn’t want to look back at it.

“Now most black people’s attitudes toward slavery have come 180 degrees, and they look at slavery with pride,” said Mr. Wilkins, who believes today’s interest is part of a continuum that first bloomed during the 1960s. “They say, ‘I must be descended from some extraordinary people to have weathered that hideous storm.’”⁴

* * * * *

The following paper was written by a St. Mary’s College student in 1997. This paper focuses on a house tour from 1969 – over forty years ago. Much has changed in the tour structure at Sotterley since then. As the previous chapter makes clear, the research and contributions made by Agnes Kane Callum have significantly opened up the discussion of the contribution of enslaved peoples at Sotterley and in St. Mary’s County as a whole. As you read this following research article, keep in mind that this talks about a Sotterley tour that was, not the Sotterley tour of today.

“Not a Cottonpickin’ Mention of Slavery”

⁴“Bringing Slavery’s Long History to Light,” by Charisse Jones, *The New York Times*, April 2, 1995

As is evident in her house tour of 1969, Mrs. Ingalls definitely felt that Sotterley was worth preserving for its social utility. Her efforts to produce an authentic historically accurate site are evident in her tour, as she contently mentions the necessity to “check” on historical and architectural matters of which she is unsure. Her donation of the site to the foundation, and, indirectly, to the American people upon her death are also indicative of her desire to have this site preserved for its historical value.

Despite references for a “multicultural” perspective, there were obvious points of Mrs. Ingalls’ 1969 tour which are more consistent with the memorialization of “great white men who founded this nation.” For example, most of the tour focuses on pictures of and artifacts belonging to famous people. It is also important to note that most of these people are not simply famous, but are associated with some contribution to the making of the nation. The most prominent example of this are the pictures of George and Martha Washington. The link between the Platers, the premier owners of Sotterley, and the Washingtons are often mentioned in tours at Sotterley. It is even believed that Mount Vernon may have been modeled after Sotterley.

The 1969 tour and subsequent tours also focus on the Platers as prominent government figures, especially the role of Governor George Plater, III, who signed the Constitution and was linked with John Hancock. It was also mentioned that Theodore Roosevelt was a friend of Mr. Herbert Satterlee, as were the Crown Prince Harald of Norway and Ambassador Jefferson Patterson. Connections to the military were also emphasized, such as John Paul Jones. General Nathaniel Greene and Colonel Jacob Astor are all mentioned as having ties to the former owner of Sotterley. The primary focus of the tour in 1969, though it was deemed to be beneficial to everyone, still mainly focused on the great men and major events of history.

Slaves were alluded to in the 1969 text, but descriptions or explanations as to the role of slavery on the plantation are not mentioned. One statement that is extremely disconcerting is the description of two miniatures that occupy a prime spot in the décor at Sotterley. Believed to be from the time that slavery was abolished in Great Britain (1832), the statuette features two kneeling black figures that are chained at the wrists. The motto above them pleads, “Are we not brethren?” There are also vague references to a secret passageway that was used to hide Dr. Briscoe, a former owner, when Union troops came by. Further information is provided in a later reference (Docent’s Manual 1995), that the Briscoes were Southern sympathizers who took part in vigilante police squads and Confederate armies. It is also recorded that there were many blacks in St. Mary’s County that fought for the Union, perhaps with ties to Sotterley or neighboring plantations. The most specific reference to slavery in the 1969 tour was that Mrs. Briscoe, an invalid, would often sit looking out of the windows to see that the slaves were working.

The previous examples raise a number of issues in regard to the presentation of history in recent years at Sotterley. The most basic of these is the complete omission or glossing over any reference to slavery. The civil rights era was still in its infancy in 1969. The result of this, however, is a large overshadowing of a great many people who had a part in the history of Sotterley.

The entire history of the plantation, even that which has been heavily researched and recorded in the most recent Volunteer Manual (1997), concentrates on the history of the white gentry that controlled the majority of the land, labor, wealth and political power. Once carrying the subtitle “Home of the Bowles and the Platers”, the history that is presented to the public credits the plantation owners for the success and diversification of the tobacco economy. Nowhere is it mentioned that slave labor was relied upon to manage such a labor intensive

system. When slaves are mentioned in the text, the relationship is in terms of the relationship to landowners. Within the history, slaves are discussed in ways that enhance the image of the slaveholders' economic power, as imported technology. For example, slaves are described in terms of what kind of jobs they had, how many there were and how much they cost. Furthermore, discussion of the slaves is also presented with the discussion of the outbuildings. There is no mention of how slaves were responsible for the success of crops, childcare or domestic tasks. As stated by Agnes Kane Callum, a descendent of Sotterley's slaves, "Sotterley could not have survived in such a stately manner if it were not for the slaves".⁵

* * * * *

Agnes Callum: Sotterley is significant because my great grandfather was purchased as a slave there, and my grandfather was born a slave on Sotterley, and I knew him. And it's important, it's a site to save for future generations. Sotterley matters because Sotterley is a real working plantation and there's a group coming behind me, a whole generation, that is interested in slavery. It's important for them to know their ancestors lived at Sotterley. Some of the things that happened at Sotterley. For example the garden, the school house, the stables. And, that's important.

Samuel Baldwin: Why is it important to preserve that slave cabin?

Agnes Callum: Oh my spirit. That slave cabin. I took a lady there that was a school teacher to get her opinion cause I was writing a paper. She was so angry. She said that the bed was dirty and mold was run down through the floor and where did the children sleep? She left me down there. She was really angry. She said no one should live like that. They lived in worse than that. They slept in cold sacks on the floor. They didn't even have beds. I couldn't tell her nothing. Boy, she was upset. She needed more education. She needed to know more about slave cabins.



4. The Sotterley slave cabin.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

The fact that it was a slave plantation. This was a plantation with slaves, overseer -- everything that went along with slavery happened here. The story of slavery is important. And the continuity of this whole place is important because how are you going to tell schoolchildren -- as it is, you can tell schoolchildren in the classroom, but to bring them here and show them -- that is tremendous. And I think this plantation should be preserved.

⁵ "Not a Cotton-Pickin' Mention of Slavery," St. Mary's College of Maryland paper, Sotterley Archives, by Stephanie N. Abdon.

THE BALTIMORE SUN

A Sense of Ownership Pain and pride: History weighs heavily on the old Sotterley Plantation in St. Mary's County, and on those who labor to save it, black and white.

January 22, 1996 | By Carl Schoettler | Carl Schoettler, SUN STAFF

She's [Agnes Callum Kane] hard at work trying to preserve Sotterley as a public institution.

"I hope Sotterley does not close," Mrs. Callum says. "I think this comes as close to a complete plantation as ever you will find in the state of Maryland."

"Complete" because of the slave quarters and perhaps unique: Folks in St. Mary's County have called Sotterley America's oldest working plantation. It's been in continuous operation since Squire James Bowles, the son of a London tobacco merchant, established the plantation in 1710. Slaves no doubt helped build Bowles' original two-room house that survives as the manor's entrance hall and library. Plantation land purchased by relatives of Mabel Satterlee Ingalls, the owner who set up the Sotterley Foundation, is still cultivated.

"Sotterley was a self-sufficient plantation," Mrs. Callum says. "And the blacks who worked there, the slaves, were skilled laborers, some of them. They did everything. The blacks have not been given credit for what they did at Sotterley."

There are people, both black and white, who would just like to get rid of the slave cabin altogether as a reminder of bad times best forgotten, she says.

"But those are people, both black and white, who are not facing facts and facing the truth. We cannot change history," she says. "We cannot change that slave cabin. It was there. People lived in it. People survived. And we must tell the world about this."⁶

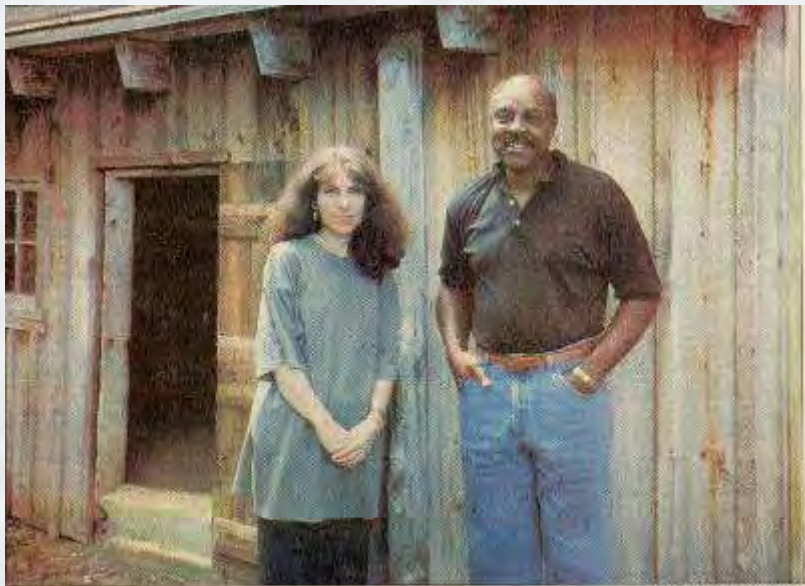
THE ENTERPRISE, LEX. PK., MD., Wednesday, April 5, 1995

Sotterley Now Acknowledging Its Past Included Slavery

By JOSEPH NORRIS
Enterprise Staff Writer

"There are folks who say you need to take a bulldozer and push that building into the gully over on the side, forget the phase of history and let's move on," said Master of Ceremonies George Forrest, an educator in St. Mary's County. "We can't do that. I really believe it's important to use that site as a monument. There are folks who lived there that really suffered and struggled against conditions you would not believe."

⁶ "A Sense of Ownership Pain and Pride: History weighs heavily on the old Sotterley Plantation in St. Mary's County, and on those who labor to save it, black and white," Carl Schoettler, *The Baltimore Sun*, January 22, 1996



Restoration to Begin

Carolyn Laray, executive director of the Sotterley Mansion Foundation, and George Forrest, Sotterley trustee, stand in front of the slave cabin at Sotterley Plantation which will be restored, beginning in October, due in part to a capital grant given to the foundation by the Maryland Historical Trust. Story on Page A-10.

5. Former executive Director Carolyn Laray and Former Trustee George Forrest. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Hughes noted. "The big question is going to be, how do we talk about this aspect of the past? Some who wish to avoid the problems and complexities of the past, who wish to see in the past only optimistic, reassuring ways, might prefer to simply ignore the existence of this aspect of history. To my mind, it is educationally beneficial to address the experience of those individuals, in this case African-American men and women who dealt with really harsh historical circumstances and survived despite the odds."⁷

"We're here on a mission," Kane said. "We also want to be presented as a part of this plantation's history."

"I believe the whole Sotterley concept should be used as a site for reflective thought," said Forrest. "It should be a place that can heal some really deep wounds... a place that helps us to view our past with an eye for the future."

"By ignoring the existence of the slave quarters, by bulldozing it or simply allowing it to deteriorate, we are essentially silencing the voice of those men and women who lived through a very difficult part of American history.

* * * * *

Martina Callum: *In terms of Sotterley, it's very important to have the complete history because nowhere on this property can you walk or look and not see the fruits of the work of the people of color who were enslaved here. The slaves who were listed in the records of this plantation with a last name perhaps that was because Dr. Briscoe was a highly educated man in not only medicine, but he had a school. But you know everything that was done here from the water up, any planting that went on, having the schoolhouse warm for the kids that boarded here to go to school – the slaves did that. And I think in an effort to maybe improve the relationship with the local and especially local African-American community that it's important to point out that black people did a lot of work over here. It wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the work of these people.*

* * * * *

Merideth Taylor: *I'm a diehard believer in education and I believe that having something tangible that represents the past like a museum, like Sotterley, can allow people to encounter--when it's accompanied by interpretation--that allows people to encounter the past in*

⁷"Sotterley Now Acknowledging Its Past Included Slavery," Joseph Norris, *The Enterprise*, April 5, 1995.

a way that helps them spiritually or emotionally as well as intellectually. When you see a building you know that happened, not that, "Oh, maybe it happened but it's been exaggerated a bit." When you can look at the size of the cabin and the size of the mansion, you say "Oh," and suddenly there's a recognition of that space and time. I use it as a teaching tool.

Sotterley is a monument from which we can learn about the past. It's very rare to have an 1830's slave cabin in existence still open to the public. It makes the history more real and it's richly interpreted and it's irreplaceable. The structures are irreplaceable and the history would not have the same impact and the history is important. The structures bring meaning.

THE ENTERPRISE, Lex. Pk., Md., Wednesday, March 29, 1995, Page B-7

Sotterley Schedules Family Heritage Day

On Saturday, April 1, Sotterley Plantation in Hollywood hosted its second annual Family Heritage Day in recognition of the contributions made by African Americans to Sotterley and the region, and to celebrate African-American heritage.

The event is among the non-profit Sotterley Foundation's most important, as this year's event will be the start of a community effort to restore and preserve the plantation's rapidly deteriorating and sole remaining slave quarters. Funding for the restoration effort is being sought through state grants and corporate sponsorships, but citizen involvement will play a large role.

As the Preservation Movement increasingly recognizes the merit and significance of vernacular structures, and as many African Americans become increasingly determined to preserve structures and artifacts that explain and give witness to their history, the Sotterley cabin has gained attention. The restored slave quarters will be the eventual focus of a full program on African-American life at Sotterley and in Southern Maryland, and Sotterley hopes it will be a significant component in the state's preservation of African-American history, and its heritage tourism program.⁸



⁸"Sotterley Schedules Family Heritage Day," *The Enterprise*, March, 29 1995.

"Some think it is a painful part of history that needs to be torn down and forgotten about," said George Forrest, a trustee of the foundation whose great-grandmother was a slave on another St. Mary's farm. "The other [approach] is to take this structure and use it as a memorial to those folks who struggled here."

Baltimore resident Agnes Kane Callum, whose great-grandfather Hilry Cane was a slave at Sotterley, said, "We are here on a mission to preserve part of our heritage, or what's left of it, and also we want to be included in the culture of this plantation."

That sentiment has drawn criticism from some, including some blacks, Forrest said, and is reminiscent of a controversy that erupted last fall at Colonial Williamsburg, Va., when some blacks protested the reenactment of a slave auction.

For most of the blacks who toured the cabin today- many of whom are connected to the Kane family or to other St. Mary's slave families- the visit was an emotional one.

"I'm sort of overwhelmed right now," said Marvis Gross, of Baltimore.

Albert Smith, also of Baltimore, said, "It fascinates me to think back on what these people went through."

Said Smith's wife, Grace: "Some people resent it, but it's good to know about it."⁹

St. Mary's College of Maryland Research Paper, "Community Perceptions of Sotterley"
Authored by Barbara McLean, 1997

George Forrest was the Master of Ceremonies at Family Heritage Day [in 1997] and had been quoted in the *Enterprise* saying that he knew of people who wanted the slave cabin bulldozed. He is also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Sotterley Foundation.

We asked Mr. Forrest about the position some have taken opposing the existence of the slave cabin. He replied:

"I am not going to set myself up to speak for the entire African American community of this county but I can give you the general sense of where we were and where we have moved. I was born here and grew up here and Sotterley was a place that was not a part of our conscience and there are a lot of reasons why. What went on there and what we did not realize was the significance of the people who made contributions to Sotterley who although they were slaves, did make major contributions to Sotterley and to the growth and development of this county. That piece of our history was not something that we talked about with anything other than emotion and once you have those kinds of discussions that only involve emotion a lot of the logic goes away and you don't take time to think about where you need to be."

George Forrest spoke of having students see the slave cabin in a state of total disrepair, while the manor house was greatly preserved. This demonstrates where importance has been laid in the preservation of history. "Having the slave cabin in this state of disrepair was manifesting the belief that it was not really important." He also spoke of talking with kids today

⁹From The Washington Post, By Retha Hill April 2, 1995

who complain about the struggles that they go through in daily life, and how he reminds them of the struggles that the people before them had to go through to get them where they are now.

Elmer Brown has known of Sotterley all his life, but he has never visited the slave cabin because he “never had any interest in what it represents.” He went on to say,

“If you are going to do something negative you also have to do something positive alongside of it... To leave it in a total negative aspect, I am not that interested. They don’t express the fact that many of the people [slaves] who were there ended up being productive people, you have to give a positive spin to it.”

Mr. Brown is the chairman of the Afro-American Monument Project, which is a testament to the lives and contribution of African Americans in St. Mary’s County. He said that if school children are going to be going to see the slave cabin at Sotterley they should also be taken to see the monument, when it is completed, to show the lives of blacks in this community in a different perspective.

We also interviewed Richard Portee, who expressed a great appreciation and admiration of the people who lived and worked at Sotterley while it was a working plantation. He has heard of what they went through and feels that this is a testament to their determination, courage, and cooperation. He speaks of young children, as Mr. Forrest does, and expresses their need to see what happened in the past, how strong the slaves were, and hopefully gain something from this realization. “If you are going to destroy this part of history, you might as well destroy history”. He feels very strongly about the slave cabin remaining open to the public, for it is an artifact that people can learn from.

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Historical Sotterley Plantation offers a variety of educational programs throughout the year intended to share the rich history of people from the plantation, such as Hilry Kane. These programs encompass four sites: The mansion, slave cabin, landscape, and port are designed to educate children and the general public regarding the slaves’ journey to freedom. Through the use of authentic artifacts and primary source documents, as well as architectural structures, visitors touch a living piece of the historical contributions and challenges of enslaved Maryland African Americans. Sotterley stands as a primary example of the issues that sparked the debate regarding slavery’s continued viability within the state and the nation. Maryland is fortunate to have such a vital resource for the understanding of enslavement in the state.¹⁰

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¹⁰ A Guide to the History of Slavery in Maryland



**6. Education programs at Sotterley Plantation.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**



Repairing the Smoke House

Gary Hodge, former county commissioner in Charles County and economic development director: *Sotterley's importance is huge. Not only is it a physical manifestation of colonial Maryland. Its architectural significance would be enough to make it a national treasure. But it tells the story of the Southern Maryland region in a way that very few places can. I'm just going to hit a few touch stones including the slavery period. It encompasses that aspect of Maryland's heritage.*

Samuel Baldwin: *Agnes Callum said two things in her book. She said: "There would be no Sotterley without slavery." She said: "You can't tell the economic story of this county without including a mention of slavery; that you've got to tell that story."*

Gary Hodge: *Absolutely. Something brought this to mind yesterday, I was listening to NPR, and it's quite obvious that slaves built America. When we talk about the Nation's Capital or the United States Capital building, or the older federal government buildings in the city, slave labor built those buildings. There are counties in Maryland where there were more slaves than there were free men.*

Samuel Baldwin: *St. Mary's might've been one of them.*

Gary Hodge: *Yes, it might've been, of course it was an agricultural region. Everything was locked up in the water and the land in terms of the wealth of the community. So possession of land and in this case possession of people to work the land represented the entire economy of the community. And we're talking of course pre-Navy, we're talking before 1941. That's the story, not just of St. Mary's but the story of Calvert and Charles as well.*

Samuel Baldwin: *How do you with sensitivity tell that story today?*

Gary Hodge: *I think that someone has said 'race matters'. The conversation about race has to be one that we engage in, even in a politically correct world. There are a lot of risks in that discussion depending on the audience. But I think Sotterley is a unique place to have a conversation like that. Particularly with African-Americans who are alive today and have their heritage represented there. That enables you to have a different kind of discussion than you would have in a more urban environment which is layered with the media hype on a lot of these subjects. But I think it needs to be a forthright discussion. It's a courageous discussion, it's one where you have to put your toe in the water and wade on in and go where it leads you.*

Samuel Baldwin: *And you have to do it?*

Gary Hodge: *You have to do it; you have to have the courage to have the conversation.*

Samuel Baldwin: *And you believe there are positive benefits for all of us to have that conversation?*

Gary Hodge: *I think there are but I feel strongly that what Sotterley gives you is the physical resource that enables that conversation to be relevant to the past, present and future of the community, and not just a stage for political theater, if you understand what I'm saying.*

Samuel Baldwin: *No, go ahead and explain.*

Gary Hodge: *Well, I'm saying that if CNN does a forum on race it becomes a different kind of show, than you would do in an intimate space at Sotterley in the barn for instance where you have people who actually live here and work here talking with each other about race. Those are two entirely different settings, two entirely different audiences, a different vocabulary, a different level of commitment to the outcome.*

Samuel Baldwin: *In that respect, if bridging racial divides, whatever those divides might be, is an important goal, do you think that Sotterley's telling of the slavery story and the preservation of that slave cabin is a positive way of addressing those issues and being part of the dialogue?*

Gary Hodge: *Well I think it's a door opener. I think it gives Sotterley, and we're going to touch on other dimensions of Sotterley here that are unique and significant but it's one of the doors that Sotterley opens to the complete picture of Southern Maryland 300 years ago that you would not get anywhere else.*

Audio 1. Gary Hodge on story Sotterley tells:



Slavery is a fundamental foundation stone of America. It's the fundamental flaw in our creation and it's something we still have not dealt with adequately as a culture and we have to find relevant ways to do that in our institutions. Sotterley is a historical and cultural artifact, a very important one, that tells a story and slavery is part of the story.



**7. Gary Hodge and John Hanson Briscoe at Sotterley Plantation.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**

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Nancy Easterling, Sotterley's current executive director: *Part of some of these lessons and the "Slavery to Freedom" program, you're inside the mansion and you walk down the hill and you say to these children: "As many people who lived in the slave cabin lived in the house when it was at its most crowded." Then this tiny little structure, you could have at any given time 12 to 20 people not sleeping more than 4 hours a night. Because after their 16 hours out in the field they would've been doing their own chores and gathering their own food because they were given such small rations. So for us as we're talking about it, that disparity, that big difference and the beauty of this room [in the mansion], a lot of that would've been done by skilled slaves. It's a discussion that a lot of people don't think about with historic homes, even ones throughout the DC area. The White House would've been built with slave labor.*

You have to be prepared for the fact that it's going to be painful for a lot of people. There are people that we have down here who do not want to step foot on a plantation and that don't want anything to do with it. I understand the pain that's associated with that and I understand that it's a difficult subject. When you're listening to someone and they're angry, you realize that they aren't angry at you, they're angry that such an atrocity could've existed. They're not sure if you've got this "Gone With the Wind" mentality, antebellum hoopskirts, "isn't it pretty?" But they don't realize that you're willing to be honest. I'm a member of the UCAC, the Unified Commission on Afro-American Contributions in St. Mary's County. As we've connected with them who are also members of the NAACP to evaluate some of our programs, to see what we're doing, some of the new things and they're starting to reach out to their members and say: "Understand that yes there's a slave cabin there but they're willing to talk about it and they're willing to talk about what shouldn't have happened and what we need to learn from it." So all of this is a big part of that. It's going to take time and them understanding that you aren't going to be upset because they're upset. Because they're upset is a completely natural reaction to an atrocity that happened. They need to gauge how you are going to be reacting to it as you move forward.



8. David McCullough, eminent American historian and writer, at Sotterley Plantation.

Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Audio 2. Nancy Easterling on community perceptions of Sotterley and its slave cabin:



Nancy Easterling: *A lot of people in this county, and I still encounter them sometimes that felt for the longest time we should take it [the slave cabin] down because it was a painful memory. But the thing about history is you don't get to pick and choose history. It's about the reality of history and for us the reality of that site for 160 years was slavery. And you don't get to just not tell it because it's painful. Do you get to just not talk about the Holocaust because you don't like to discuss it? It's not an option. And because it was a reality you have to address it and acknowledge it. Part of what we're doing with some of our exhibits, with one that will be going in at the slave cabin this year and even at the corn crib, the "Land, Lives and Labor," is a further acknowledgement that this did exist. But as Tuajuanda Jordan said in her speech when she came for our Middle Passage event, she said: "Lest we forget." And that is the point, you just cannot forget.*

Samuel Baldwin: *And to follow up on that, you had a gentleman spend the night in there as a part of his slave dwelling project. Tell me a little bit about that.*

Nancy Easterling: *We had heard about Joseph McGill, he was with the National Trust for Historic Preservation; he was the development officer. So we heard about his project and he was just starting to sleep in some slave cabins down in South Carolina. So we called him and said: "Hey, are you willing to come outside of South Carolina and be a part of our Speaker Series?" He said okay and he came up and stayed the night; it was a hot July night. He stayed with one of the St. Mary's College students who came and recorded it, recorded his time and then the next day he actually gave a presentation talking about not only his time at Sotterley but his whole project. The moment of levity came when he walked into the slave cabin, looked around and said: "Hm, it's a dirt floor. Down in South Carolina all of the slave cabins tend to be elevated because of the ground water and the termites. They tended to put them on stilts, not here." So he slept on the second floor while he was at our slave cabin and sweated to death all night because it was a hot July night.*



9. Nancy Easterling, Sotterley's current executive director, introducing one of the speakers at Sotterley's Middle Passage Marker Ceremony.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

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Joe McGill is a Civil War re-enactor who in 2010 founded the Slave Dwelling Project, an ongoing attempt to publicize and preserve the nation's remaining historical slave quarters. As a part of his project, he visited Sotterley Plantation's original slave cabin to spend a night in it. *What I also try to do in this Slave Dwelling Project is to invite folks that can help further the cause in trying to save these places because after every stay I do a blog but I want as many other people to experience this with me so that they can help tell this story. And let the public know the importance of saving such places.*

"I have to commend Sotterley for doing what they did for putting the resources into this dwelling. It's a story that we need to tell."

Another thing about this space is this is probably one of the places within their lives that they could experience some form of serenity because beyond this space they knew what waited for them. In this case working in the tobacco fields in this time of year they would have been very active in harvesting that crop. As a young man I worked a tobacco field, so I know some of the labor involved in doing that. But to be working in that in any kind of situation where you're enslaved and that's all that your master has you on the property for, it's kind of sobering to think about that. In being in these spaces like this you think about those things. I have to commend Sotterley for doing what they did for putting the resources into this dwelling. It's a story that we need to tell and you know I am certainly going to do my part to tell that story.

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Tyler Gearhart: *There're a fair amount of properties that have slave quarters. The one at Sotterley, that's the actual location. That's somewhat unusual. A lot of slave quarters got moved. A lot of them largely reconstructed even though they're considered original.*

I think slavery obviously is an important piece of American history and the role of slaves was very important to the development and maintenance and wealth that were created at Sotterley and so Sotterley as a property. I mean you have a mansion house which is significant, you have a slave quarter which is arguably significant and that property as a whole is especially significant because it has both. The roles of both the owners of the property, roles of the slaves of the property are both very important to the history of Sotterley, to the history of our county.

I met Agnes Callum through efforts at Sotterley. And, that story of her and John Hanson and their relationship in an interview was very compelling. He being descendant of a former owner of the property and she being a descendant of a former slave of the property and both wonderful people and both working hand in hand preserving Sotterley. And the broader story of the owners' perspective and the slaves' perspective. History is important and you want to capture it while you can. So yeah the roles of the slaves at Sotterley are important. I commend Agnes Callum for the work she did. That was pretty amazing, I find more people who are more unaware or don't really care about their family history. If they come from slaves fine. If they come from manor owners or whatever. They're just busy with their more day to day life and they don't care that much for history or historic sites or historic preservation. That's more common. So when you bring it up in this context. Kind of like well Agnes reached out to people saying "you might be a former slave" might make people upset. That was less common for me and more common for "Oh really thanks a lot well I got to go to work." Like "don't ask me for any money" kind of deal.

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While public interest in American slavery grows, houses occupied solely by enslaved and free African-Americans in the decades immediately after the Civil War are rapidly disappearing. Few survive on their original sites, especially those that maintain visual relationships with contemporary fields, work buildings, and owner's houses – in short, with much original context. Even rarer are such delicate survivals that are also normally open to the public. Those few that fulfill all these criteria tend to have been recently remodeled or vigorously restored in an effort to strip away evidence of subsequent use. Cleansed of accretions, these buildings have lost much of their character and ability to evoke their many years of use.

Beyond its considerable technological significance, then, the Sotterley slave house is important as a building that illustrates the lives of generations of slaves and free people who worked on this property, which now happens to be a museum. Much of its original form and character survive, but so do adjustments made by and for subsequent residents. Most of the evidence for continued use and modest change has not been scraped away. This is a condition worth maintaining, so that the house can be used to teach about different kinds of people at various times rather than solely about slaves in the decades just before the Civil War. Public presentation that addresses continuities and changes at this building makes especially good sense at Sotterley, which has a main house, outbuildings, and landscapes that have all reached their present state in many stages, not just a single campaign. Each generation of occupants has left its mark on the mansion, making it far more complex and engaging than many historic house museums that have lost their messy authenticity by attempting to recreate an unblemished early state. While later and far simpler, the slave house has a parallel history that is equally worth presenting.¹¹

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**Keynote Address: Lest We Forget
Sotterley Plantation Middle Passage Marker Ceremony
November 1, 2014**

Tuajuanda C. Jordan: It has never been a priority of mine to visit plantations as they are a reminder of a very dark time in history- a time that some refer to as the glory days of Southern living, economic prosperity, and gentility but to me they represent the zenith of man's inhumanity to man in this country.

As we all know, Sotterley Plantation was a very active and willing participant in the slave trade serving as, in my interpretation, a clearinghouse for the slaves who had survived the Middle Passage. The amount of emotion that fills me as I stand here on this ground is equivalent to the emotion I felt as I walked one warm summer's morning down a winding road with trees on either side. Looking at the woods, being acutely aware of a swamp not too far away and the river that is an integral part of this place shrouded me in darkness and sadness. So much so that I started to hum "Strange Fruit", the classic sung so movingly by Billie Holiday. The words are important for me to say to convey the meaning of this occasion to me at a place that played a significant role in the history of my African heritage in this county.

¹¹ "The Slave House at Sotterley, near Hollywood, St. Mary's County, Maryland: Architectural Investigations and Recommendations," Jeffrey Bostetter, Edward Chappell, Willie Graham, Mark Wenger. September 27, 1995.

“Strange Fruit”:

*Southern trees bear a strange fruit
Blood on the leaves and blood at the
root
Black bodies swingin’ in the Southern
breeze
Strange fruit hangin’ from the poplar
trees*

*Pastoral scene of the gallant South
The bulgin’ eyes and the twisted mouth
Scent of magnolias sweet and fresh
Then the sudden smell of burnin’ flesh*

*Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck
For the rain to gather, for the wind to
suck
For the sun to rot, for the tree to drop
Here is a strange and bitter crop*

“A strange and bitter crop”... haunting isn’t it?

When one reflects on the past, we have a tendency to not want to discuss the mistakes, the atrocities, the inhumanities that have occurred. Yet, we must. Lest we forget. Know that we are not “celebrating” slavery and its associated history. Rather, we are celebrating how far we, as a community, have come in recognizing that we must acknowledge the past and learn from it as a means to improve the human condition. We do not want to repeat the past. The impact of slavery is still being dealt with more than 150 years after the Emancipation Proclamation. Thus, each and every day we must work to educate members of our society about the what, the who, the why, the when, and the how of this dark moment in our history. Lest we forget.

Some might ask, since slavery was abolished, why do we need to talk about it? Why do we have to spend money preserving artifacts and buildings? Why can’t we just live our lives today and not worry about the past?

Our past is always with us in one form or another. We cannot just live for the day or “move forward” with any certainty until we know our past and try to understand it. The impacts of slavery are deep and far-reaching. The results manifest themselves in a variety of ways that have profound effects on our culture, health, economy, and values. Correlations have been made that link the weakened family, economic status, and chronic health problems of African Americans to slavery. Additionally, in this nation the notion of white supremacy has roots in slavery and I believe it is perpetuated by ignorance and fear. Thus, history cannot be ignored.

Can we right the wrongs of history? No. But, what we can do is educate people about that history and provide them the opportunity to engage in history beyond the classroom in both



**10. Dr. Tuajuanda Jordan, president of St. Mary's College of Maryland, at Sotterley's Middle Passage Marker Ceremony.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**

formal and informal settings. This is why museums and sites such as the Sotterley Plantation are so important. This is why we must continue to acknowledge and preserve the past. Lest we forget, we are bound to repeat it. Lest we forget, we will never be able to learn from it and to use what we learn to address the problems of today and the challenges of tomorrow.

Formal institutions of learning such as St. Mary's College as well as informal educational institutions such as museums and historical sites like the Sotterley Plantation each has a role to play in shaping our future individually and in partnership. If we continue to educate the public and to acknowledge, preserve, and learn from the past, I have no doubt that the world can become a better place and the likelihood of another Middle Passage and Sotterley Plantation thriving will never again come to past. Lest we forget.¹²

"This is why we must continue to acknowledge and preserve the past. Lest we forget, we are bound to repeat it. Lest we forget, we will never be able to learn from it and to use what we learn to address the problems of today and the challenges of tomorrow."

¹² "Keynote Address: Lest We Forget," Sotterley Plantation Middle Passage Marker Ceremony, by Dr. Tuajuanda Jordan, November 1, 2014.

More Thoughts on What Makes Sotterley Important

“Historic Sotterley National Trust for Historic Preservation Designated Endangered Site”

“Clearly an A-list property... Sotterley is one of the core historic sites in Maryland that should remain open to the public”—Orlando Ridout, Architectural Historian, Maryland Historical Trust, *The Washington Post* (December 27, 1995).

“This place deserves to be preserved and open to the public... it would be a great loss to the state of Maryland and to the country...” Richard Moe, President, National Trust for Historic Preservation, *The BaltimoreSun* (January 22, 1996).

Sotterley’s designation by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of this nation’s most endangered sites illustrates both the importance of Sotterley and the gravity of its situation. The past several months have seen increasing public concern and media attention for Sotterley’s plight. This concern must be translated into action for despite the concern, and despite good progress thus far, Sotterley remains endangered. The structures continue to deteriorate, the site continues to operate with minimal staffing and severe cuts in its programming. Concerted efforts by all who cherish our heritage must continue if Sotterley is to reach a level of stability that removes it from danger.

Video 1. [A National Trust for Historic Preservation video on Sotterley Plantation, narrated by author and historian David McCullough.](#)

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Donald Barber: *The biggest*

change seems to be a lot of effort making the place more accessible to people. One of the obstacles that Sotterley is working hard to try to overcome is the idea that it was a place for rich, privileged people. Just because it wasn't a primary residence. It was place for Mrs. Ingalls to rest and have parties and relax so everybody just knew to stay away from here if you were like a working class person, you wouldn't come around here. So Sotterley has done a lot to try to overcome that and try to make it like a community kind of a resource. And building that wharf down there, I think that went a long way. They have the education programs here in order to be economically viable. You have to have a lot of community involvement. So they are working in the right direction to try to open things up. I know that's been one of the challenges in terms of volunteers, because people don't volunteer like they used to because the economy is not good and people are busy working. So, to have volunteers and to cultivate people to be volunteers is going to be a challenge, and I think it's going to remain that for a good time to come. This site is



11. From left to right: Donald Barber, former lieutenant governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Congressman Steny Hoyer, and Betty Currie on the portico at Sotterley.

Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

very large and very complex. It's not like its one building, it's all these outbuildings, it takes quite a bit to get a place like this healthy and going. So, it's going to be a challenge, but I think they are positioning themselves. And I think the renovations done to that barn was a very good thing to do, gives a source of income and a source of interest. Having said that, one of the best things about Sotterley is that some things haven't changed. Still got the mansion here and the effort to preserve it, gives you a chance to have a window back into the past. And the beauty, the natural beauty of the site is a good reprieve from all the development and things that are going on beyond those gates out there. I mean, when I was a child Sotterley extended all the way out to that Half Pone Point Rd, Steer Horn Neck Rd., they call it. There used to be these 2 big brick columns and a Black Gate. What we use to call "black gate." Down Mill Hill, open the gate, it was all dirt roads, Vista Rd. was dirt when it came through here back then.

There are sites down there along the edge of those fields where Native Americans lived and we would go out there after they plowed the fields back then and if they plowed the fields, you'd wait for the first rain and find arrowheads. Just tons of them. Things were so plentiful; I showed the arrowheads to a historian he said they were 5,000 years old. Cause you would just think they're a few hundred years old, that's what I was thinking. He said they were 5,000 years old. So it shows you how plentiful marine life was at that time. And it stayed there for thousands of years.



12. Pat and Frank Greenwell, in character as Governor and Mrs. George Plater III, in Sotterley's garden.

I love this place. The views here are remarkable. For example, one of the things that we do; people have a tough time relaxing. Just because of the pace of modern life people have a difficult time relaxing, so one of the things we do a lot of at Pathways is relaxation techniques. One of the things they do a lot of is what they call guided visualization. And

I always use that hill over there when I'm trying to construct a guided visualization because if you've ever stood there and looked at that hill in the springtime when it's breezy you can see the waves blowing through the grass and then you look up and you can see the clouds and the birds way up high. If you just kind of run through that verbally, people are asleep before you even finish and it helps people relax. You couldn't make a more beautiful scene than off of that hill over there so that's what I love about it. I'm always interested in how people lived in the past because we've got so many modern conveniences and things, in the last few years we got computers and I've got this Blackberry here, you know, and you're always in touch with everybody. You know, when we lived here we had maybe three TV channels that came in kind

of clear; I remember when we got a telephone. You know what I mean? So it's like, you know, when you're more reliant on talking to people face to face, you go to bed at night, didn't stay up late because for one thing, the TV went off at a certain time. Yeah, the channels went off anyway. We couldn't wait to go outside, I mean there was always something to do. There were streams around here, you know, there was just a ton of things to do. So, it's just fascinating. You couldn't ask for a better place to grow up in terms of that. And history is just interesting, how people live, how did they survive, what did they do, and what did they think? Here, stuff is alive. When you're here. It is; it is. You can actually see; you go down to the slave cabin and see how people lived there and be up here and see how people lived. You got the old necessary house way across the garden, way over there.¹³



13. Sotterley and its grounds during Winefest.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

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“Community Perceptions of Sotterley”

A St. Mary's College of Maryland Research Paper, authored by Barbara McLean in 1997

One respondent to SMCMd Ethnography Class Questionnaire stated:

“I first saw Sotterley 10 years ago when I attended a garden wedding and have been entranced every year since. I make a point to go at least once a year, just to walk around the grounds and house... I may be a transplant to Southern Maryland, but our history needs to be kept alive; the good as well as the bad. Without our roots, we have no idea of where we came from, much less of where we are going.”

¹³ “Donald Barber.” *Sotterley Oral History Project*. By Lynn Fitrell. February 12, 2010.



**14. A garden wedding at Sotterley plantation.
Courtesy of Samuel C.P. Baldwin, Jr.**

Another respondent stated:

“The place of Sotterley should be of a much higher priority for all St. Mary’s County residents. It shows an extreme lack of appreciation of the past to have the house in the condition it is today. It should never be closed to the public. Like it or not, this IS a part of the history of our country. We cannot selectively forget parts of where we came from. The slave cabin should NOT be bulldozed. We commend your class for the interest they have shown. Don’t let it go unrewarded. No, we don’t see Sotterely as another Williamsburg or Monticello, but it should be restored in its entirety, and there should be county, state, and federal funds made available to do so. We all know there are millions spent each day for much less worthy causes.”

Yet another respondent stated:

“As a resident of St. Mary’s County I definitely feel that Sotterley is an important part of the history of the country, state, and nation. The historical and cultural significance associated with this property represents a treasure which should be maintained... The land itself is of significance even beyond its historical and cultural value, serving as an essential buffer from the pressures of further development in the continuing battle to restore health and vitality to the Patuxent River and the Chesapeake Bay.”¹⁴

¹⁴“Community Perceptions of Sotterley,” St. Mary’s College of Maryland paper, Sotterley Archives, by Barbara McLean.

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Joe Goldsmith: Sotterley has tried to survive as a working farm for a long long time. Thank God someone had the foresight to get it into the charter on the historical side to keep it and to preserve it because it is so different, sacred and intact. Southern Maryland has been such an agriculturally based community for such a long time. You did two or three things in Southern Maryland. You worked on a farm, you worked in construction or you worked on the water, it wasn't anything else. And as the base came along and the development came along, it was a wonderful thing. It's developed the county as well as created huge infrastructure and tons and tons of opportunity. It's also changed the dynamic. At one time everybody knew everybody. The farmers, even though you didn't see each other every day because we didn't have cell phones or internet you would still see each other at the market, you'd see each other at the farm store or the seed store and you knew you would talk about what was going on. In a situation where anybody was having any problems you'd always help out. Now with life being faster pace and most families both couples work, I think it's changed everything. To get an afternoon to come down and spend an hour or two outside of your yard in a place like Sotterley it's a really cool thing, whereas a lot of us here locally grew up with that kind of thing. I didn't have neighbors until I was 26 years old, I could not see another house. But now people are living in whole lot tighter areas and you don't get the feel. I live here and I do it every day of the year, when I walk around the mansion to inspect it every morning I go to the hillside and look across that view. I think about all those generations that have been there and seen that. I never take it for granted because it's so incredible. People don't get to experience that stuff anymore and that's what I mean when I say the dynamic has changed. The family dynamic has changed a little bit.



15. Joe and Darlene Goldsmith at the Sotterley farmers' market.
Courtesy of Nate Ryon

Audio 3. Joe Goldsmith on Sotterley's appeal in a fast-paced world:



News From U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski

Democrat from Maryland

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 14, 1996

CONTACT: CLAIRE HASSETT
(202) 228-1122
Press@mikulski.senate.gov

MIKULSKI HELPS TO PRESERVE SOTTERLEY PLANTATION AS A HISTORIC LANDMARK Senator Says Sotterley is a Part of Maryland Culture and Heritage

"Sotterley Plantation is a symbol of Maryland heritage and culture that must be preserved for future generations. I am happy to know that I could be of assistance in helping to alert the public to the need to preserve this most important icon. The Plantation is an important repository of 18th-century Tidewater tobacco and colonial history.

"Sotterley provides families and children the opportunity to experience history life firsthand. The rich history contained in the walls and on the grounds of the Plantation serve as a fitting classroom for anyone seeking to learn more about who we are as Marylanders."¹⁵



16. Two United States Senators at Sotterley; left, Senator Barbara Mikulski, and right, Senator Paul Sarbanes with wife Christine Dunbar.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

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David Brown: *You talked about its importance in American democracy, what did you have in mind?*

¹⁵ "News from U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski," Office of Senator Barbara Mikulski, June 14, 1996.

J. Frank Raley: *Well, I'm always writing about that and I've pushed that down at the College, they have the Center for American Democracy there. But I thought that what we see in American democracy, Sotterley is a part of American democracy. And it's a factor in it. And now it's a place where we can talk about it and integrate the things of our society into its part of being a member of that group. That's how I see this.*

I looked at Sotterley as a very pleasant place to be connected with. I would say that's why Sotterley can say that, to understand the culture and history of our area, of our society, of our America. It does stand for a part of all of those things. You connect with it. That's what it is. That's what I see of it. The people, I think feel that. I feel that way.

* * * * *

Tyler Gearhart: *Its significance is association with important people. You know former Governors, members of the General Assembly, and others. And also architectural significance. Earlier tidewater home and its setting. You know which is very well preserved as well. When it was built like 1720, early 18th century. And complex buildings and so forth. The complexity is also significant. It's a national historic landmark. It is nationally significant for those two things: association with important peoples and the unique example of an architectural style and craftsmanship. There're about 150 individual national historic landmarks in Maryland. But, for much different reasons and different periods and all sorts of different things. Sotterley I think is unique for its fairly early period, its post in the ground tidewater construction. I think those are unique to Sotterley.*

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J. Frank Raley: *The only thing that I did make clear to them was that they certainly weren't going to make money or be able to continue it unless they got a broader base of people in the community. I understood that they had a very precious thing here and this is something that they ought to keep and unless that was put together and developed it was going to go under. Of course when I went on it they didn't have any money and I guess that was a time when there was that first good piece of money they ever got, that \$90,000 from the state and that did start them though. They did start to look at those kinds of things. So I saw it as, this is a beautiful idea of Sotterley, continuing it, both the beauty of the place and the culture for which it stands. That was important to our society and important to our people here. I think it has elevated the people. So I think Sotterley is becoming much better known and is branching out a lot and it is certainly not going to fail in my opinion now.*

* * * * *

Gary Hodge: *Another dimension is the Patuxent River and the War of 1812 and the British Navy sailing up the River, the Battle of St. Leonard's Creek, and so forth and so on. There's an international dimension here. Since the Revolution we've only been invaded twice, if you want to count 9/11. And the first time it happened right at the front door of Sotterley. That's an important international story that relates to the Navy which has a big presence here in the 21st Century. In other words it opens another door that connects a lot of dots.*

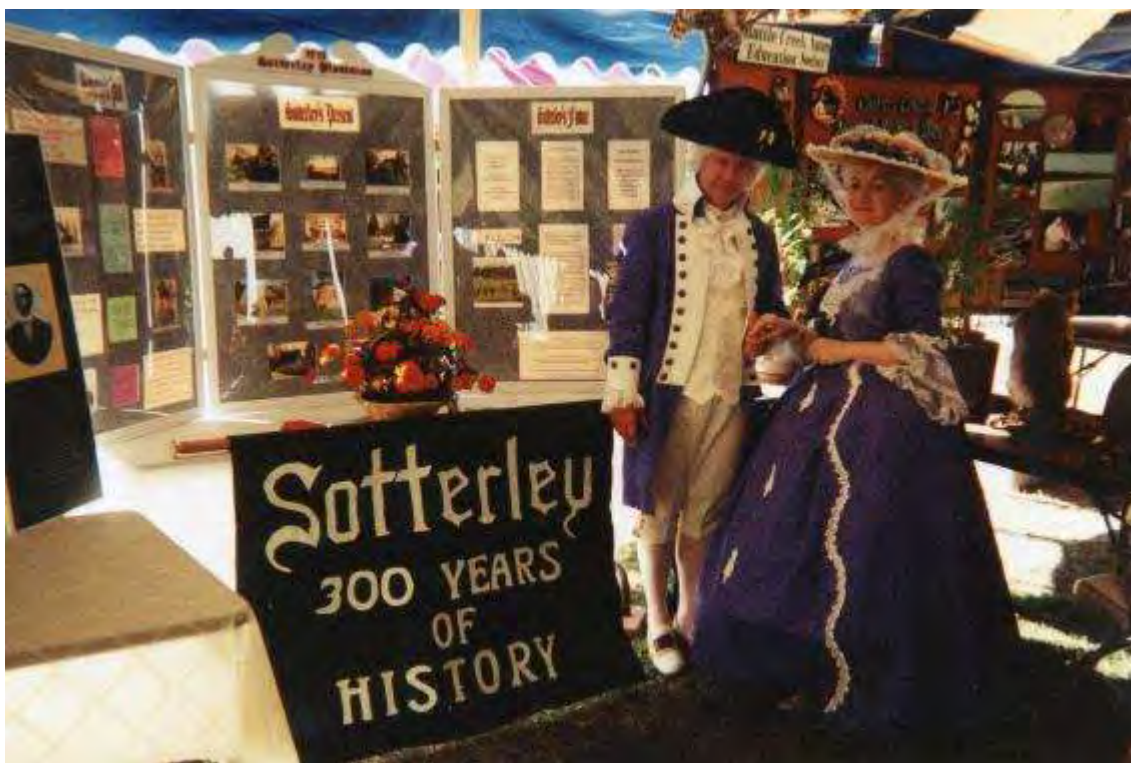
Samuel Baldwin: *The river?*

Gary Hodge: *The location of Sotterley also brings in the resource aspect of the river as a historical fishery, and objective of our campaigns to protect the water quality of the river from environmental pollution, where it has been a test bed for strategies to save the Bay.*

Samuel Baldwin: *What other dimensions of Sotterley would you..?*

Gary Hodge: *Well the history of the families that have owned Sotterley is important. I remember the first time I went to Sotterley 35 years ago, and while it wasn't in the restored condition that it's in now, it was still significant. But depending on the event, and I've spoken there a number of times in the past, there are so many touch stones that it illuminates almost any conversation on almost any subject related to this region.*

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17. Pat and Frank Greenwell at a historical exhibit at Solomons Island.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Samuel Baldwin: What would the "signature" be for Sotterley?

Burt Kummerow: *Well you see it's not a unique "signature." It's very rare in the 17th century places like Sotterley that share early history like the English settlement. By the time you get to the 18th century there's more development, not nearly as much as you see nowadays but for the time there was an increase. Plantations and settled houses and structures were around in lots of different places. The whole point about Sotterley is it's a bigger ball game because you're dealing with something that most people recognize as Colonial Williamsburg; it's put the 18th century on the map, they created their own vision. They created an environment so people would be able to get the feel of what it is like to live in the 18th century. That's the role that Sotterley is in. How many reproductions of the 17th century do you see outside of New England? See here's Sotterley, why would Sotterley be any different from any other attempt to make a*

plantation? Because, historic houses are a dime a dozen but historic landscapes are not. You have a house in a setting and that has a lot to do with ambiance and looking out on that water and it's amazing that its slave quarters survived. That at least makes it a little different but that doesn't make it sell to others. There are a lot of other things you can sell, but it is fairly unique you know. It's a great house.

Samuel Baldwin: *Is Sotterley one of the homes that could be lost to a sale or something, or maybe it should be kept?*

Burt Kummerow: *It should be kept, there's no doubt about that. I think that now when you look at the history in St. Mary's or any other place like St. Mary's county you have a 17th century history there which has been nicely preserved even though it doesn't have a good audience as it needs. You need a good representation of the 18th century history as well. I don't know of another place as good as Sotterley because it's just a really nice setting as well as a house.*

* * * * *

Nancy Easterling: *Yes, the 300 years of history and a different take on history than places that interpret to one family or one individual, we take a much broader scope. We look at all of the people who lived and worked at the site, the owners, the slaves and the farm workers. It's about the continuum of history and not just trying to examine and delve into one person the way that a place like Mount Vernon or Monticello does.*

Audio 4. Nancy Easterling on Sotterley's 300 years of history:



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Sotterley Plantation constitutes a significant cultural resource in southern Maryland. Given the continuity of land use and the consistency of land boundaries of the plantation, cultural resources on the 90 acres of land under the care of the Sotterley Foundation contribute to our understanding of the history of southern Maryland. Archaeological and architectural resources within the boundaries of, or pertaining to, Sotterley Foundation land gain significance from what they contribute to our knowledge of the history of the plantation, and to the understanding of changes in

18. Children enjoy a tractor ride at Sotterley.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

agriculture and community life in southern Maryland from the 18th to the early 20th century. While various archaeological sites on Foundation land (for example a 19th and 20th century

tenant site) might not seem able to inform us about the regional and American past when considered on their own, such sites gain significance when evaluated within the context of the history of the entire holding. All the sites and landscape features at Sotterley Plantation give evidence of the overall creation, operation, and evolution of a large scale plantation. Each cultural feature of this place tells us something about land use and plantation planning and management. These resources, taken together, also provide visual representation of a changing landscape and plantation plan. Such a heritage property is worthy of the investment of time to inventory all contributing resources, and is worthy of protection and interpretation.¹⁶

Video 2. [A segment from “Maryland Cooking,” a Maryland Public Television program, filmed at Sotterley.](#)



19. State and local delegates at the 40th anniversary of Sotterley’s National Historic Landmark status. From left to right: Sandra van Heerden, Delegate John Bohanan, Agnes Kane Callum, County Commissioner Joe Anderson, State Senator Thomas Mac Middleton, County Commissioner Thomas Mattingly, County Commissioner Shelby Guazzo, County Commissioner Danny Raley, County Commissioner President Julie Randall, John Hanson Briscoe, and Michael Whitson. The far right officer’s name is unknown.

Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

¹⁶ Phase I Archaeological Investigations At Sotterley Plantation Saint Mary’s County, Maryland, James M. Harmon and Jessica L. Neuwirth, July, 1999.

The Garden Guild and Volunteers

From 1980:

The attendance for June had the largest number of people to attend in any one month and the heaviest days ever handled consecutively with no letup. In June we had the most attendance in any one day, in any one month and took in the largest amount in any one month in the Gift Shop.

This all meant a terrific work load for everyone. There has never been so much, with so few to do it. We still have not found 2 paid hostesses to replace those we lost and Edward needs one good man.

The staff at Sotterley has slowly but surely built a good reputation and even though we are all under pressure, because of the increased attendance we keep getting compliments on the quality of our tour.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth K. Harman¹⁷

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20. A junior docent volunteer at Sotterley.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

¹⁷ "Sotterley Mansion Operations Report," Sotterley Archives, June 1980

Joe Greenwood: *I was hired principally as a gardener and for maintenance in 1988.*

David Brown: *What was the garden like in 1988?*

Joe Greenwood: *A wreck. It had been left alone for about three seasons and that was when I started. The house was a mess too. The windows needed re-caulking, they were just rattling in their sockets, you know.*

David Brown: *Now in those days was there what we have now at Sotterley, the so called Garden Guild that would come in on Wednesdays?*

Joe Greenwood: *I never knew if there was. They used to have volunteers but they would come in on a specific project.*

David Brown: *But not to maintain the gardens?*

Joe Greenwood: *Not to maintain at that time. I was hired to clear it and it was cleared in this way to begin with. And then we dug out the maps, if you will, of the gardens as they used to be. And I slowly started to cut turf and put beds back in and things like that. Just to restore it a little bit. We straightened out the garden basically and referred to Mrs. Ingalls. She was really the one who said, "That goes there", I remember. And she was in her 80s then and she once came out to me and said, "Where's my roses gone?" and Henry Knott who had been here since he was born, I went to him and said, "Where's her white roses, she's going to really insist on them." And he said, "They're long dead. We got to convince her that they're long dead." And he said, "Just find something creamy white or something and tell her it's them."*

Maps of the garden were in the library in the Red Room. Those maps had been done by Herbert and Louisa Satterlee. I'm sure they were an old print and everything else, you know, rolls... one was the kitchen garden and one was what they called the house garden for flowers.

So we kept the kitchen garden, it was about five acres all together. So it was a big job and basically I was "it" and I didn't mind, I just slugged on. It slowly



21. Sotterley's main house, 1953. Photo taken for a National Geographic article.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



22. A Garden Guild volunteer at work.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

evolved itself and then I got into the house and a lot of stuff had to be taken out. But I enjoyed it very much.

The gardens were Mrs. Inaglls' love, she loved the garden. You don't move anything, you wouldn't put anything in without clearance. She just didn't want change.¹⁸

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Bob Aldridge: I've always enjoyed gardening. I came because John and Grace Horton in the early 90's asked me and Jane to be donors because of the tight financial situation and we have been ever since. She also came to know that I was a gardener and said: "Well they need some help in the garden over there." One couldn't refuse Grace Horton so here I am.

Samuel Baldwin: I've heard you referred to as the "Duke of Dirt." How did that come about?

Bob Aldridge: It just seemed to evolve. Early on, Elizabeth Harman founded the garden guild with some friends when Sotterley was in deep financial trouble. You can close a house but you can't close a garden. So she got permission from the board to come and maintain the garden as best they could with the limited help they had. She of course was the chair; Sandy Craft was her vice chair. And when she came to give up the leadership role she asked Sonia Franklin and I to be co-chairs in running the garden guild.



23. Sotterley's larder, site of the first gift shop.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

The garden has been kept up and went from 5 or 6 people at the start. Originally it was Elizabeth Harman, Lisette Day, Louise Snell, and then I think one or two others whose names I never really knew. Ted Balone was the first man to come in to help in the garden and he is still here. He is currently the volunteer of longest standing in the garden.

A "guild" was Elizabeth's idea. She felt we were all skilled people, and the ancient gardeners were all skilled people so we have to call ourselves something so we'll be "The Garden Guild."

Samuel Baldwin: How many members do you have?

Bob Aldridge: Right now I would say we have 30. And on a typical day, on our Wednesday morning and Saturday morning work sessions, we will typically have 6 or 8 people show up, not the same ones. Because some people can't come during the week and some people don't want to give up their weekends.

¹⁸ "Joe Greenwood." Sotterley Oral History Project. By David Brown. September 12, 2008.



24. Daphne McGuire, Garden Guild member.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Over the years, Sonia and I got together a gardening calendar which has all the tasks. What we're doing is, in maintaining this garden, which we are interpreting as colonial revival in style, is working with a found landscape. This is what was here when we started, the remains of what Mabel Ingalls had with some modifications. If you want to go into them I can tell you about this particular lawn which was originally the cutting garden which is now over the hedge to the north. And the herb garden which is now three fairly large beds was just one small one. So that evolved shortly after Mabel's death. The reason the cutting garden was moved was the gigantic northern red oak that fell in Hurricane Irene in 2011 had totally shaded it out. With that being gone now, portions of the garden that were a shade garden are no longer.

When Sonia and I took over we had sort of been up to that point sitting around on our buckets when we took a break in the middle of the day and going over: "Well what do we need to do?" I said: "Well we really need to have a more formal establishment." So in 2001 the formal, written garden guild and administration document was created and approved by the administration and the board. In 2007 it was changed again. We've had to modify it again and actually, are voting this Saturday on the new modifications. Essentially the garden guild will be run by a steering

committee, which is all the committee heads and that's how it'll go.

Samuel Baldwin: Now there's a difference between a pleasure garden and a kitchen garden?

Bob Alridge: A kitchen garden being for producing the foods that you need. The beans, the spinach, what have you, all the food that is needed. A pleasure garden is designed strictly for that: to walk through and appreciate the beauty of the planting. Most prominent homes, such as Sotterley was definitely under George Plater III, there would have been one.

There is in one quadrant of one quadrant, there is a little demonstration vegetable garden. Elsewhere on the plantation a lot of vegetables are grown but they mostly go to food kitchens. This is part of Joe's work.

Samuel Baldwin: *Joe Goldsmith?*

Bob Aldridge: *Yeah. He and his family have worked very hard to get that set up.*

Samuel Baldwin: *And then primarily what we see here today would be considered a pleasure garden?*



**25. Garden Guild volunteers planting a new shrub.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**

Bob Aldridge: *Primarily.*

Samuel Baldwin: *And you could break it down to your flowers that you take care of every year versus the hedge, the boxwood hedges?*

Bob Aldridge: *There are a lot of perennial plants that are flowered at various times of the year. The herb garden of course is a demonstration sort of thing. The garden as a whole is used by the school system to teach Outdoor Ed. The kids learn about the insects, the pollinators and also some of the plants, particularly the herbs.*

Samuel Baldwin: *Sotterley's been here for almost 300 years, there's always been a garden, whether pleasure or kitchen or both?*



26. A Garden Guild volunteer tending the Sotterley gardens.

Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Samuel Baldwin: *That's George the Second?*

Bob Aldridge: *George the Third. He was the Mike Miller of his day. He was the President of the Maryland Senate for quite a long time, prior to becoming a governor. Always involved in government, from back in the days of the Royal government here he was the governor of the Privy Council. In entertaining at home he would have wanted to impress. One of the things he did was add the beautiful drawing room to the house. That's a "Look-at-me" project and the garden would've been similar to that.*

In whatever manner their case directed, by the time the Satterlee's bought it we have some photographs that show the present long beds that run north and south directly north of the house were in place at that time. The sun dial that we have in the garden now on a stone base was in the garden then on a wooden base. So they had a sense of gardening organization and décor and that's as much as we can say about gardening in that period.

He wanted the place to be as it would've appeared as the home of a colonial planter on the Eve of the Revolution, that's what we've been told always. And he wanted a garden to go

Bob Aldridge: *You had to have them. The lady of the house didn't have a CVS on the corner so she had to have medicinal herbs; she needed the culinary herbs for cooking, needed hermetic herbs. One of the things we have here is called "Our lady's bed straw" and it's a hermetic, I understand it was used as a strawing herb, cut it and spread it on the floor and it gave off a pleasant aroma. When they walked on it, I have heard that it also helped keep down insects.*

Samuel Baldwin: *How has the garden here changed over the centuries as the owners changed? And let's start with the first owner James Bowles.*

Bob Aldridge: *Well we don't know where his gardens were. All we know is that he must've had one. We do see in his inventory gardening tools as opposed to farming tools. Platers would have built on that because Mrs. Plater was the former Mrs. Bowles. Their son was a very wealthy man. He certainly would have developed a pleasure garden.*

27. Maryland State Senator Michael Miller, current Senate Majority Leader, at Sotterley.

Courtesy of Historic Sotterley





28. Lizette Day, Garden Guild volunteer.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

with it. So originally we were told that the place had been done by a noted landscape architect for Mr. Satterlee. There's no evidence either here or in the family records up in New York that give us either the plan or a name of an architect. It is similar in layout to the garden that I've been told is at George Washington's childhood home. It's colonial revival in style, very symmetrical, got a lot of boxwood.

Samuel Baldwin: *And is that what we see today?*

Bob Aldridge: *That's what you see today. That survived into Mabel Ingalls era. I told you how this particular square has evolved. And we had both Lisette Day and Elizabeth Harman who worked for her and supervised the garden who gave us quite a bit of information about her likes and dislikes. Most of which we respect, some of which we ignore which has to do with the color pink which she didn't care for. We are dedicated to maintaining the found landscape as much as we found it as possible.*

Samuel Baldwin: *Let me ask you about a few structures that are here in the garden. Let's start with the structure right behind us, this sun dial. What can you tell me about it?*

Bob Aldridge: *Some experts have said that it is quite old; others say it's not earlier than turn of the century. It was here on a wooden base when the Satterlees came. It has the name Richard Dallam and the date 1828 scratched into the face. Some say that was added later – it's a very unusual one. I've been told that the angle of the blade or gnomon. They are apparently specific to your latitude and that one was made for an area near Boston. The face is made of slate. It's on a stone section under it. Ray Canetti who is a master of masonry did some repairs on it for us and he said that this was a French Limestone, similar to that which was used in the National Cathedral. My suspicious little mind says, "Well gee, Henry Satterlee, the cousin of Herbert*

Satterlee who was involved in Herbert Satterlee finding out about Sotterley was the founding bishop of the National Cathedral where they used French Limestone and had stone cutters so maybe that's where the base came from."

Samuel Baldwin: Now the garden is much admired by people who come to Sotterley. As we're doing this interview we have a group of elementary school children coming to tour Sotterley and coming into the garden.

Bob Aldridge: They're here for outdoor education to learn about insects. They do sort of a treasure hunt finding cards that tell them about different bugs. They also are learning certain navigation skills. They're told what's North, South, East and West. You have to follow the directions.

Samuel Baldwin: Learning how to tell time before they had their smart phones.

Bob Aldridge: I do have to explain to them that sundial is on standard time.

Samuel Baldwin: What other groups enjoy the gardens?

Bob Aldridge: We just had the house and garden pilgrimage from the garden club here this past Sunday. We have people here who have heard about it who live quite some distance away.

It's used extensively for weddings. That's part of the reason why we are so meticulous and have records about what colors are in bloom when so that the brides can choose appropriately and aren't clashing with the flowers.

Samuel Baldwin: So you'll try to have something blooming throughout the year?

Bob Aldridge: We do the best we can.

Samuel Baldwin: I know Sotterley itself will hold events associated with the garden.

Bob Aldridge: There's a gala in June that's being held in the garden. I have noticed that with the gala most people stay closer to the bar, but some do walk through the garden.

Samuel Baldwin: Now one thing that I think is important, and we can sort of wrap it up the way we began, and that is the importance of volunteers. They keep Sotterley in general open to the public but also this garden. How important are the volunteers?

Bob Aldridge: Vital. You would not have this garden without volunteers. The garden guild does more than maintain the garden. They create income for Sotterley with our sale of plants in the spring and our Christmas crafts. We generate enough money to more than pay for the maintenance of the garden and are able to buy a lot of garden furniture. We've been able to buy trees and things like that. Just the idea of trying to keep this garden open, the expense of having paid staff to do it would be a deal breaker. We put in thousands of hours a year maintaining this garden with the volunteers. And if you use the figures in the office you'll find that that is a bunch of money and it would not fit into the budget. So no volunteers, no garden.

** * * * **

Joe Goldsmith: *The garden guild is an amazing group and they're kind of like their own little group but we support them 100% because they support us 150%. Just a wonderful bunch.*



29. Jim Franklin, left, and Bob Aldridge, right.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Joe Goldsmith

There has always been some group or some individual whose primary focus is the maintenance of Sotterley. Joe Goldsmith follows in the footsteps of the Knotts – today, he keeps Sotterley together.

Samuel Baldwin: *How did you end up coming down here to Sotterley?*

Joe Goldsmith: *I guess I ran across it in the local paper, they were looking for a grounds keeper and I had just taken an early out. I was at my 25 years with Charles County and it just kind of happened. I knew about Sotterley and thought it was an absolutely beautiful place. I applied and they called four or five months later. But mainly when I came down and met with Nancy and the staff and I actually met Mr. Knott that day for the first time.*

At Sotterley, if I fix something or make something better for somebody it doesn't matter how little it is, it's appreciated. They appreciate it and you get to see how it affects people who are here to enjoy it. That's probably the greatest thing to the end of my career that I could ever ask for.

Just looking around the place I was like "You know, I could really hopefully add something to this." You could see the immediate need for the basic stuff. It's always been a working farm no matter who owned it; it was always an agricultural based thing. Walking in Mr. Knotts' shoes, which are pretty big shoes, and Richard, I consider it an honor and a privilege to be coming in behind him. And he's one of my good friends; we talk daily, incredible resource for anything that I need here. Plus he's super supportive when it comes to Sotterley.

I guess you could say my job description is "maintenance supervisor" which would be: taking care of the buildings and grounds, just the daily operations. But the job has changed because Sotterley for the past four years has become home. Once we moved down here, and part of the reason for moving down here was because after I realized how much this place meant to everyone, it means so much to so many people, my biggest fear was something going wrong and me being 30 minutes away [if I didn't live here] and not being able to respond to it. It was tough, every time I would get a call from like the alarm system in the middle of the night or something, I didn't know if it would be a pile of ashes by the time I got here or what. I didn't want that on my shoulders or on my watch. The house was vacated with just the gardener's cottage, which is where I live now. And it just kind of happened by fate, which a lot of things do at Sotterley. You know a lot of things just happen. So the security part of it, having someone on site. Whereas when Richard was living here he never had the problem of people coming into the site. There was always somebody there. If there was a problem chances are you were going to see it. When it was the 9-5 thing, if the water was leaking on Friday it ran until Monday. So it just gives a set of eyes to the place. I think without a doubt it helps with the maintenance of the site too because it cuts those little things off.

Samuel Baldwin: *Summarize the need for someone like you on this property over the centuries.*

Joe Goldsmith: *Well if you take your residential home for the average person, and you just think about the issues you could have at home. You come home from work and your heat isn't working, your air conditioning isn't working, you have an electrical problem, tree limb in your*

yard; times that by 100 here at Sotterley. Then put the factor in it that some of the buildings are 300 years old and the construction you're dealing with, wooden shingle buildings, buildings that weren't built to any kind of code. So you're dealing with a lot. And then you're dealing with the sensitivity of not destroying and preserving what you've got, so it's a big balance in that. I guess you would say that it's your home a hundred times over. We cut 44 acres of grass every week; we have people on the site 7 days a week so that's the other side of it. You have private functions, guests; in and out of here every single day, you have school kids. So it's alive all the



**30. Joe Goldsmith in Sotterley's barn.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**



31. Outdoor construction at Sotterley.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

time and it's alive a lot of the time from 5 o'clock in the morning to midnight. It takes, in just that volume of traffic in and out of here, someone to be here all the time. Typical places like this would have security or perhaps someone to watch it. And vandalism here, which we have hardly any, could be really devastating to a site like this.

Audio 5. Joe Goldsmith on Sotterley's corn crib:



Samuel Baldwin: And just to put it in perspective, to give it some numbers, how many acres do you manage?

Joe Goldsmith: Well it's roughly, with the lease with DNR, about a hundred acres. But there are different levels of management. You take a golf course versus a gravel pit, you have two totally different levels of maintenance and Sotterley is somewhere in between there. It's not your typical farm maintenance by any means; it's a lot of aesthetic stuff here. We have an amazing group of volunteers that take care of the gardens and it deserves to look as pristine as it can look.

Samuel Baldwin: *And how many buildings do you have?*

Joe Goldsmith: *Roughly 20 or 21.*

Samuel Baldwin: *And these aren't just utilitarian, they're buildings of historical significance?*

Joe Goldsmith: *Absolutely.*

Samuel Baldwin: *You touched upon it when you said "the sensitivity." Tell me the unique requirements associated with the mansion.*

Joe Goldsmith: The mansion, and I can only imagine prior to the restoration the sensitivities, but it was a residence at that point, but the mansion alone they've had to install fire suppression in there which is one of those necessary evils. Fire suppression being a sprinkler system is a huge security problem for the building and it's also a huge maintenance problem for the building. It's



32. Trees down at Sotterley after Hurricane Irene.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley.

also an electronic issue, that if something were to go wrong with the amount of water that it's capable of being put in the building, it would ruin furniture and plaster. So if it was a false alarm or something it wasn't intended to, which we've had several scares like that. The maintenance on the mansion is very very different because the mansion is so much intact. The mansion, the smokehouse, the gatehouse, they're all very much intact from where they were. I'm just amazed every time I get underneath one to work on one the workmanship that's been under there for 300 years. It's incredible and you don't want to do anything to jeopardize that. But at the same time what we've come across more than anything is that because it was a

farm and because it was a working residence that different things have been done over the years. You know someone added an electrical plug here, or somebody ran water here. And those things were done by the farm help or whoever had the capability of doing it. Some of them have worn out over time and caused problems. The stuff has just been missed you know over time. And that's one of our biggest concerns, that we miss something like that that causes a problem. A fire in a place like this is a terrible terrible thing.

Samuel Baldwin: Now contrast the sensitivity and maintenance issues of the mansion with the sensitivities and maintenance issues with the slave cabin.

Joe Goldsmith: Again, the slave cabin isn't as old as the mansion obviously but you have the same factors. You have a dried wooden structure that you have to worry about, drainage, insect damage, the issue of fire and having a buffer around it. If you have a brush fire or lightning



33. Signage at the Sotterley Farmers' Market.
 Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

sure that that stays here for the next generation.

strike, hazard trees around it or anything like that that's going to damage it. Because it's not like with any of those structures you can run down to Lowe's and find something to replace anything on it with. And that's a really good contrast; because if you look at the slave cabin and mansion they were both residences. But one is built rough as can be, one was built with what they had to work with, and one has the flip side of the coin with the craftsman and tradesmanship in it. But they're both still standing and they were both somebody's home for a long time. We really feel that we have an obligation to do anything humanly possible to make

Samuel Baldwin: *Talk about the corn crib. Tell me a little bit about that.*

Joe Goldsmith: *The corn crib is really interesting. The corn crib, which I'm sure, has changed purpose as far as the farming operation many times and you can look at it and tell there are actually pieces of molding, shoe molding that they used for trim in it that was left over from something they did at the mansion, I'm sure. Somebody needed something. And there are hand hued beams in it with pegs in it that were pulled from another structure at some point in time. It was actually used as a corn crib in the 1900's when they started mechanicalizing the ability to make corn and they picked it on the ear. They had to let it dry and that's why it's got the slats in it like it does. And again because it's been here for so long it's changed purpose throughout. Mr. Knott talks all the time about shoveling corn out of it and grinding corn underneath of it. That building has seen a tremendous amount of physical labor through the work staff here for centuries. Very unique construction but very basic construction, you know just post-in-ground construction, well done and still standing.*



**34. Joe Goldsmith and Bucky Readmond at the Sotterley Farmers' Market.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**

From the time of Richard Knott to the time we were farming, Southern Maryland was full of farmers and everybody was raising a couple hundred acres. Now there's four or five farmers raising a couple thousand acres and the family farm has just about disappeared. I, Mr. Knott and the Morgans all have had the privilege of growing up like that and know what it's like to produce your own food, to spend time with the family while doing it, and that has gone away by the wayside. So anything we can do to bring that back around. And the other thing is every acre we put back into Sotterley's farming production, it takes it out of the general ground maintenance. We've taken 20% out of it that was getting cut weekly and maintained and put it into agricultural things; which gives the guest here something else to look at and explore or the teachers who teach second graders what's going on, they see it while we're working it. So it's multisided. It's a huge plus for what Sotterley can do for the community not to mention last year we put 8,000 pounds of produce into the local food bank here in St. Mary's County and donated it.

Samuel Baldwin: *And they donated it to whom?*

Joe Goldsmith: *A couple different churches and food pantries. Every week we would take a load of stuff down. One of the fellas that work here with me would do it on Monday mornings. One morning he couldn't make it down there and I took it but I got there late and people were in line waiting to get their produce. I was really touched by it because people have a preconceived notion of who needs it and who's using it. It could've been my sister, it could've been myself. It really made me realize that the need for it was greater than what you would think.*

Property managers and farmers - most property managers - are large ground type people or some kind of agricultural based people. Because it's equipment orientated, it's labor orientated and it's multifaceted. You know you have the building and construction side of it; you have the animal type and fencings and gravel roads. Things that are just very unique to the farm trade. The pride that is instilled in you as a young child about the way your farm looks, because you really don't have the financial means to buy nicer things, so your pride is in the way it looks when you pull up. So the obvious things like the roads being graded, the trees being trimmed, the stumps being gone and the fence being up. You know it doesn't have to be pristine, it doesn't have to be gorgeous, and it just has to look nice. It needs to have the wow factor when

you pull up and somebody needs to say “Wow, somebody really cares about this place.” That’s probably when I pulled in there I could see how incredible it was and it was so obvious that people were trying to do the best with what they had to work with. Financially, Sotterley has always been on an uphill roll but your county governments are the same way. They’re trying to figure out how they’re going to get through the year with what they’ve got to work with to make pay roll. It’s really no different, just a different scale. In the county you have to figure out how to make it work just like you do here. The difference I will say and I say it all the time and I say it without feeling bad about it, the county, and I’m sure this is true about most government, you could save them a million dollars today and it was forgotten about the next day.” At Sotterley, if I fix something or make something better for somebody it doesn’t matter how little it is, it’s appreciated. They appreciate it and you get to see how it affects people who are here to enjoy it. That’s probably the greatest thing to the end of my career that I could ever ask for.

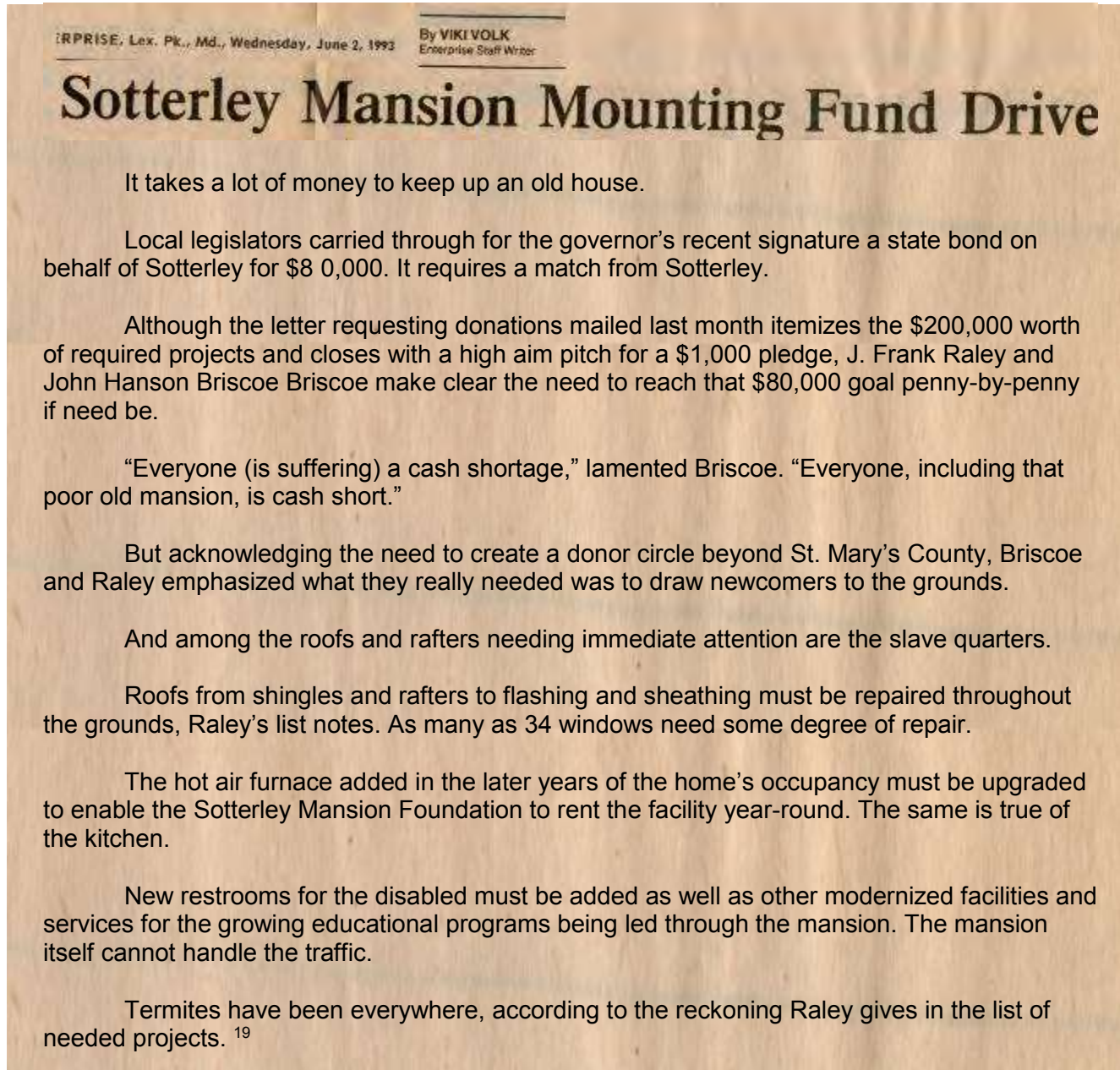


35. The Sotterley grounds.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

The Need for Financial Support

The following articles set forth in detail the various expenses associated with maintaining Sotterley – the mansion, the slave cabin, the various outbuildings, and the grounds. When the property was donated by Mabel Ingalls to the Sotterley Mansion Foundation, that donation came with myriad issues, but not no funding and no endowment.

These articles provide a timeline of the gradual discovery of the structural problems associated with Sotterley and the search for funding to address those problems.



¹⁹"Sotterley Mounting Fund Drive," *The Enterprise*, by Viki Volk, June 2, 1993.

**Sotterley Mansion Foundation, Inc. Trustees Meeting
October 29, 1993**

In a departure from the planned agenda, and because the matter was considered to be very important, James C. Raley, Executive Director, gave a report on the structural condition of the mansion and the gift shop. Using slides to illustrate his report, he recited the history of his exploration of the house and dependencies. What he termed extensive and serious structural deterioration was described in the ceiling plates and roof supports of the mansion, smoke house and storage shed, and the floor of the gift shop.

Mr. James C. Raley responded that over time faults have been “fixed”, when major repairs should really have been done. He considered the second floor of the mansion unsafe for tourists, but thought the gift shop floor could be made safe without much difficulty.

Much discussion followed. A motion was made by Grace Anne Koppel, seconded by Dr. Howland, and passed unanimously, that we engage, as soon as

possible, expert professionals to assess the true structural condition of the house. In response to a question from James C. Raley: “How will we pay?”, J. Frank Raley suggested we use \$20,000 of the grant money. The choice of the professionals was left to the Executive Committee and the Building and Grounds Committee.

Many trustees expressed concern about Sotterley’s future and our ability to maintain it and continue its mission. A motion was made by Grace Horton, seconded by Richard Thomas, and passed, that Judge Briscoe be authorized to form a committee of trustees, outside experts, and others, to evaluate Sotterley’s needs and make recommendations about the present and future use of Sotterley to the Board of Trustees at the February meeting.

James C. Raley announced to the Board that he has exhausted his personal resources and that he must leave the position of Executive Director in October, 1994. In response to a question about what he would need to make the position more tenable, he replied that he would need a full time support person.

* * * * *



**36. The smokehouse under repair.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**

The following “renovation program” summarizes in great detail the many structural details that needed to be addressed – and, somehow or another, paid for.

**Sotterley Mansion Renovation Program
1993**

Projects:

1. Mansion

- A. Remove the roof shingles over the library wing and the dining room and bedroom over the dining area. Replace the roof rafters and roof sheathing as damaged by leakage and termites in these two areas. Re-install the removed shingles and add new flashing as required to prevent water damage due to leaks. Existing shingles will be used where possible to minimize costs.
- B. Repair all the windows in the mansion to protect the original glass. Very labor intensive. 34 windows could need some level of repair.
- C. Replace and upgrade the furnace in the mansion. The hot air system presently installed lacks the capacity to provide proper temperatures for winter events. Additional ductwork necessary to provide heat in the upper hallways to help balance the distribution of warm air.



**37. Sotterley mansion's cupola undergoing restoration.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**



**38. Repainting the drawing room.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**

and mansion. The existing connector has badly rotted. The floor joists, flooring, two walls, and a poorly sloped roof require replacement.

E. Upgrade the fire detection and intrusion systems. The existing system needs a redirection and the addition of motion detection equipment.

F. Upgrade the fifty (50) year old electrical system that exists today with one that meets the electrical codes for the state and county regulations.

G. Upgrade the kitchen to a full service food preparation facility. Today we have a non-compliance food service capability.

H. Replace the roof gutters with the appropriate type of system approved for installation by the historical trust administrators.

D. Replace the connector between kitchen



**39. The ice house undergoing restoration.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**

- I. Repaint the mansion. This is needed to preserve the facility.
2. Dependencies

A. Replace termite damaged exterior and interior walls in the gate houses. The existing structures are not repairable due to major termite and water damage.

The floor joists, wall joists, headers and some ceiling joists need replacing on one side of each building. The inside walls must then be replaced and repaired. The mantles in the houses will require replacing and then repainting will be necessary.

- B. Replace roof and repoint brick on the smoke-house.
- C. Construct and install restrooms for the disabled near the mansion. Provide the proper sidewalks to connect them to the entrances of the mansion.
- D. Repaint the main dependencies. This is needed to preserve the facilities.
- E. Install a new hot air furnace in the guest cottage. This is an immediate need that must be satisfied before the next heating season.



40. The brick walls of the smokehouse being restored.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

F. Restore in accordance with the historical trust direction the sole remaining original slave cabin existing in St. Mary's County today.

G. Upgrade the warehouse to provide additional classrooms and meeting facilities for the educational programs and seminars being conducted in the mansion. This would greatly reduce the wear and tear on the mansion and enhance

our marketability to outside organizations looking for a significant meeting facility. New HVAC systems are required as well as restroom facilities in the area adjoining the meeting spaces.

- H. Repair the roof, porch, porch floor and paint the Brink Cottage. Repair and rebuild the accessory shed used for storage.
- I. Repair the roof, siding, porch, windows and repaint the Docents House. Replace the existing furnace. Exterminate and establish a yearly termite inspection schedule.
- J. Repair the siding, electrical fixtures, and paint the Gardener's House. Install storm windows and drain spouts that are non-existing.

* * * *

*** Sotterley Board of Trustees Press Release**

January 12, 1994

The Board of Trustees of the Sotterley Mansion Foundation, Inc. are faced with the difficult task of maintaining the Sotterley Mansion and its dependencies. Over the past several years you have generously supported to the best of your capabilities our requests for maintenance programs at Sotterley. During the past year we have discovered that the physical condition of the mansion and its dependencies is more serious and critical than previously thought. This major finding has caused us to undertake major efforts to secure funding in support of the program that for the mansion alone could total a minimum of \$500,000. Your help is needed and we are certain that you will respond positively by approving our request for \$600,000.

* * * * *

THE BALTIMORE SUN

A Sense of Ownership Pain and pride: History weighs heavily on the old Sotterley Plantation in St. Mary's County, and on those who labor to save it, black and white.

January 22, 1996 | By Carl Schoettler | Carl Schoettler, SUN STAFF

Mr. Moe [director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation] met in Washington with Sotterley trustees last month, December 1995, in an effort to work out a plan to save Sotterley for the public.

"This place deserves to be preserved and open to the public," he says. "It would be a great loss to the state of Maryland and to the country... There isn't anything like this in the whole area."

Funding the mansion without an endowment is more dicey, says Mr. Moe. Places like Sotterley are rarely about to support themselves through visitor fees, he says. And Sotterley is "off the beaten path of tourism. It will never be supported by visitors."

Innovative sources of funding are needed, he says, and the trust is working with Sotterley's board to try to find them. Public support has never been good for this kind of thing," Mr. Moe says. "And it's increasingly hard to come by."

An endowment to survive?

Mr. Briscoe thinks Sotterley needs an endowment of \$2 million to \$2.5 million to survive as a public institution.

"The poor building needs more help than we expected," says Richard Trostle, an architect specializing in historic preservation. "There's not only the problem of the roof going down, but termites coming up."

Everyone tends to agree the rambling mansion's serious structural failings are obscured by the antique charm of its red shingles, white clapboards, dormers and gables and its site looking out over the Patuxent valley.

"That mansion is such a beautiful structure," Mr. Briscoe says, "it disguises its problems".

But in a worst-case scenario, Sotterley's beauty would outweigh its problems for a private buyer. "The least preferable solution is to sell it to a private person," Mr. Briscoe says. "The public might never see it again." But even though he realizes he might never get in except by "kind invitation," he says, "I'd rather have a private person own it and love it than see it crumble."²⁰



41. The portico undergoing restoration.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Page A-12 THE ENTERPRISE, Lex. Pk., Md., Wednesday, June 19, 1996

Sotterley Put on Short List Of Endangered Historic Sites

Since Mabel Ingalls' death, Sotterley has had to face the challenge of finding the means to meet its critical restoration needs, set at approximately \$2 million, and developing ways to fund the operations and programs of the unendowed site.

"Should the foundation be unable to find the means to restore the centuries-old buildings, and the means to keep Sotterley open to the public," a press release stated, "the deteriorating site will be lost as a public resource."

Sotterley's critical need "dramatizes what happens sometimes to house museums without endowments," Richard Moe said. "It needs support and maintenance. It's at a real risk and is really important to Southern Maryland's history and heritage".

²⁰"A Sense of Ownership Pain and Pride: History weighs heavily on the old Sotterley Plantation in St. Mary's County, and on those who labor to save it, black and white," Carl Schoettler, *The Baltimore Sun*, January 22, 1996

Even though many foundations have rallied to raise awareness of Sotterley's grave need, Executive Director Laray says seeking funds is still entirely in the hands of the Sotterley Foundation, its supporters, volunteers, and those interested in the community.

"We're looking for grass-roots support from the citizens of St. Mary's County and the Southern Maryland region to reach a level of stability that removes (Sotterley) from danger now, before it's too late," Laray said.²¹



42. The New Room gets a new look.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Sotterley Plantation, a nonprofit museum in St. Mary's County that was forced to cut back its visiting hours for lack of funds, has been named one of "America's 11 most endangered historic places."

"The descendent of a slave and the descendant of the man who owned that slave are working together to preserve the site and keep it open to the public," said trust President Richard Moe. "But without new sources of ongoing financial support, this national treasure may no longer be able to teach important lessons."

As with many other historic sites, years of inadequate funding and deferred maintenance have left the manor house and outbuildings in need of extensive repair.

The trustees of Sotterley Plantation were forced to close the property to visitors in December, saying they needed \$1.2 million to fix the roof of the manor house and make the property safe for visitors.

Overlooking the Patuxent River, the manor house is still attractive on the outside. But there

is a lot of "behind-the-walls structural damage, termite damage" that makes it unsound, said

²¹"Sotterley Put on Short List of Endangered Sites," *The Enterprise*, June 19, 1996

Carolyn Laray, executive director of the Sotterley Mansion Foundation, the group that operates on the property.

"If you look closely, you can see undulating ripples in the roof that indicate warping of the structure", she said. "It's getting to the point that these problems aren't going to be hidden much longer. They need to be addressed. It's a critical situation for Sotterley at this point."

A large part of the problem with Sotterley is that it has no endowment for maintenance, Laray said. "Sotterley is hit with a double whammy, which is that there are significant high restoration costs, and if they aren't addressed, you have to close the site. There was no mechanism set up to fund Sotterley."

The trustees recently received a \$5,000 grant from Preservation Maryland to stabilize the manor house. The General Assembly also passed a state bond bill that provides \$80,000 for repairs, and that amount has been matched by private donations.

Laray said that the money will be used to stabilize the most deteriorated portions of the manor house's roof. She said that the foundation is still trying to raise the rest of the money for repairs.

She said that the cost of repairing all the structures will be about \$2 million and that the foundation may seek more money from the General Assembly. Board members didn't know the full cost of the repairs when they first sought funds several years ago, she said.²²

"Historic Sotterley National Trust for Historic Preservation Designated Endangered Site"

Since the death of its benefactress, Sotterley has been faced with two major challenges: finding the means to meet its critical restoration needs set at approximately 2 million dollars, and developing ways to fund the operations and programs of the unendowed site. Should the Foundation be unable to find the means to restore the centuries-old buildings, and the means to keep Sotterley open to the public, the deteriorating site will be lost as a public resource.

In the past years, approximately 15,000 visitors came to Sotterley annually for tours, school programs, and special community and cultural events. The restoration and funding crisis has resulted in severe cutbacks in public programming. The volunteer-maintained gardens and the grounds are open but tours are restricted and by reservation only, and the second floor of the manor house has been closed due to concern for its structural integrity.

Video 3. [A tour of Sotterley decorated for Christmas time.](#)

The most critical problems of the Manor House are structural. Architectural and engineering studies place restoration costs at 1.2 million dollars. Maryland's Board of Public Works has recently certified the required match for an \$80,000 bond bill, and the Foundation plans to begin a small portion of stabilization and roof work, which will be the basis for more intensive restoration efforts if full funding can be found. Restoration needs of the outbuildings bring total restoration costs to 2 million dollars.

²²"Sotterley Plantation in Danger," *The Baltimore Sun*, by Edward Gunts.
June 27, 1996

This fall, restoration of the Slave Quarters is scheduled to begin. The effort is funded through private contributions and a grant from the Maryland Historical Trust. At this time a pre-restoration architectural study conducted by Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and funded by MHT, and an archaeological investigation funded by Preservation Maryland, have been completed. If Sotterley is able to continue, the restoration is envisioned as a first step in a program addressing African-American history and contributions in Tidewater Maryland.

In an effort to remain in operation, Sotterley Foundation recently completed sale of conservation easements on 34 acres and outright sale of 14 acres to the state of Maryland under Program Open Space of the Department of Natural Resources. This transaction ensures that the historic landscape will remain protected forever, while proceeds from the sale have made it possible to pay loans assumed over past years and perhaps begin a small endowment.



43. Sotterley volunteers in the kitchen.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

In the past, the families who owned Sotterley cared for it lovingly, and because of that care, Sotterley survived. But now, Sotterley has moved beyond the idea of the private family as central to its welfare, to the larger, more inclusive idea of community. Sotterley must develop a new foundation: a community of citizens who believe the past of our collective family is worth saving and its lessons are worth transmitting to those who will follow. Sotterley needs capital assistance to restore and preserve this national treasure, and endowment assistance so that it



44. The field tents at Sotterley's Riverside Winefest.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

can confidently weather whatever challenges the future holds. Your support is the only means of ensuring a bright future for an important piece of our heritage where our connections with our past remain vital.

* * * * *

A recent interview with Tyler Gearhart, former director of Preservation Maryland:

Samuel Baldwin: *Is that unusual, that type of funding problem, for these historical sites?*

Tyler Gearhart: *It's not as unusual as we think. There are a lot of people who are having trouble preserving these sites. Preserving historical sites is challenging across the board in Maryland and nationally. Dick Moe is actually a hero in this story. He was retiring from the National Trust and he encouraged people not to create new historic museum sites. Because one of the greatest challenges was maintaining the existing ones. A lot of people were promoting that some sites do go back into private hands. Ones less significant than Sotterley.*

It's more the business of preservation of history; not everyone is interested in that.



45. Quilters at the Sotterley Quilt Show, a former annual event at Sotterley Plantation.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Video 4. [A Maryland Public Television broadcast from the Sotterley quilt show.](#)

Video 5. [Another segment from the same video feature, featuring former executive director Carolyn Laray.](#)

Samuel Baldwin: *So how do these historic homes raise the funds to stay open? Aside from giant corporations giving them money for an endowment. How do you keep these places relevant and afloat?*

Tyler Gearhart: *Especially visitors, regular visitors fees and special events. Some combination of that is how you keep them afloat. Most of them have an endowment, some of them have a visitor fee and then they try to bring in special programs and educational things and change those so the sites are fresh and people have a reason to come more than just once and then they try to have special events like wine tastings and music. That is pretty magical when you're sitting on the front lawn at Sotterley and a great singer is there with you. So that's how they do it*

and everybody has sorts a different formula, but those are the main kind of components of it. But again Sotterley is fairly far from major population areas; a little challenging in that regard.

Audio 6. Tyler Gearhart on how to attract visitors to a site like Sotterley:



Tyler Gearhart: *The job of the foundation was to maintain and interpret, educate people about the property and I assume that occurred. That's a challenge for Sotterley because of the location. It's not in downtown Washington D.C. right. So a little out of the way. Rural and remote. It makes it more difficult to bring visitors, generate income, and revenue for your property. Hold events there and so forth.*

Because Sotterley was being considered for sale there was some threat that it could be developed.



46. A scene from Sotterley's Mother's Day Tea, 1999.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

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Bill Callis: *I didn't want to be the Director. I'd see Jim Raley suffering every day. Anyhow, I'm gonna read this because it's how I felt at the time: "Maintenance Manager was a position. I was the first to arrive in the morning and the last to leave at night. For a couple of months I performed all administrative maintenance and all manner of other functions, keeping the lights burning." This was all important: "It was so desperate that Judge Briscoe told us volunteers -- at a meeting-- that all was lost and that our primary goal was to save the garden." Those were the words out of Judge Briscoe's mouth.*



47. Quilters at the Sotterley Quilt Show.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

About this time, Dick Moe got the National Park Service to declare this one of the 11th most endangered sites in the United States. They always used to have 10, we became the 11th. And a little bit of money started coming in. Small donations from all over the United States, twenty-five, fifty dollars. But all of a sudden, a check arrives, I had to go get it at the Post Office, I always opened the mail, so I opened it on the way back. It was for \$293,000. And that's where the money came from, to start this whole thing.

Fran Turgeon: *Where did it come from?*

Bill Callis: *I can't tell you. No, I can tell you, I know who and I'm not going to say their name because the person asked not to be identified.*

The \$293,000 was sent anonymously to us, but we had the lawyer's name to contact and mailing address. So Carolyn Laray was so proud of that, she had to put it in the paper. Well, as papers always do, they exaggerated the number and they made it \$300,000. And Carolyn went ballistic. On the phone to the Enterprise you know and she called the lawyer and she was about to cry on the phone apologizing, and the lawyer said, "Don't worry about it, we'll take care of it," Sure enough they sent a check for the other seven thousand dollars.

True story. Another thing that nobody knows, at that time we had a line of credit at the bank down there, \$175,000 line of credit. And that's how we kinda kept running between low spots and high spots. And now we're in a low spot. We hadn't got any money at all. When Ms. Ingalls died, you know, we did not--

Fran Turgeon: *She didn't leave an endowment or anything.*



48. Winefest volunteers in 2014.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Bill Callis: *No, not anything. And the fact is she said, "I've given you so much here, that I expect you to maintain it."*²³

Audio 7. Bill Callis on keeping Sotterley operational:



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**The Sotterley Foundation
Press Release
October 14, 1996**

Sotterley Foundation announces that it has received a \$300,000 gift from an anonymous donor to help keep the doors of Historic Sotterley Plantation open. "News of the gift is a tremendous boost", declared Foundation President John Hanson Briscoe, "it will give Sotterley's trustees, staff and volunteers renewed determination to carry on with the Herculean effort of saving Sotterley—this is, meeting its restoration and funding needs which must be overcome if this American treasure is to have a future.

As at many historic sites, years of inadequate funding and deferred maintenance have taken their toll. With major structural repairs needed for the manor house, the slave cabin and other buildings, and lack of funds to do all the necessary work, Sotterley has had to limit its visitor programs, and continued public access to the site is in jeopardy.

* * * * *

T Tyler Gearhart: *The National Trust "eleven most endangered" list goes out once a year and it gets out. It gets national attention and so forth and generates a lot of attention. It brought that attention. Dick was the leader of the preservation movement so when Dick called me up and said "Tyler, Sotterley is going to be on the eleven most endangered list and we're going to do everything we can through Preservation Maryland to assist with that." And so we went down and provided operating support and were involved with strategy sessions on what other things could be brought to bear including the Program Open Space and other tools.*

Samuel Baldwin: *Tell me about Open Space.*



49. Former governor Parris Glendenning, center, with John Hanson Briscoe, right, and former comptroller Louis L. Goldstein, left.

Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

²³ "Bill and Marilyn Callis." *Sotterley Oral History Project*. By Fran Turgeon. July 15, 2010



Tyler Gearhart: *Program Open Space was a Maryland program that received money from the real estate transfer tax and was somewhat of a cutting edge, smart growth and open space program.*

Samuel Baldwin: *Was that Governor Glendenning?*

Tyler Gearhart: *I think Governor Glendenning was largely responsible for. Well actually it all started under Governor Schaffer, but I think Governor Glendenning grew it. People were thinking of creative ways to bring funding. Because Sotterley was being considered for sale there was some threat that it could be developed and therefore their people were like 'development rights, we could protect the property by selling the developing rights and bringing some new money into Sotterley.' If you're living hand to mouth an endowment would be very important.*

Samuel Baldwin: *But how do you establish an endowment if you are living hand to mouth?*

50. Tyler Gearhart.

Courtesy of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources

then ask them for substantial gifts and restrict them in a way that they will be sure they will go to the preservation of the property. Some properties generate a lot of income. If you're in a big city with a million people coming through your property every year your admission price can largely support operating cost. But, that's not the case for Sotterley, it's not the case for most properties.

Tyler Gearhart: *You get interested parties that have means and you present a compelling case to them and*

Audio 8. *Tyler Gearhart on the good an endowment for Sotterley could do:*



* * * * *

Grace Horton: *The one thing that John Hanson Briscoe never fails to announce to any group gathered is that I'm responsible for getting Richard Moe, head of the National Trust for Historic Preservations, to come to Sotterley during the days when we were struggling. I heard Dick being interviewed on the radio by Diane Rehm and during the interview someone called in from Calvert County and Dick said, "Oh I know Calvert County very well because my wife and I go there on weekends." And so I wrote to him immediately and told him something about Sotterley, I didn't know if he was familiar with Sotterley and said that we needed help and I wondered if we could meet with him.*



51. Richard Moe, left, former director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and Michael Whitson, former member of Sotterley's board of trustees.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

I just hope Sotterley... I believe it is becoming more stable financially now and I just hope that continues. There was a long article sometime last year, I think in The New York Times about house museums and how so many are struggling and so it's a real challenge to maintain these places. I know that one museum owned by the Williamsburg Foundation, not in Williamsburg, but close by, it just had to close down because they could not get money. I would love to leave money to Sotterley. I am a member of the George Plater Society and I will certainly continue that and I get the feeling that things are stabilizing a bit more. And just keep up the good work. It is such a beautiful place. We are so privileged to have it here.²⁴

* * * * *

Lynn Fitrell: *In addition to the views of the future, it's interesting that your daughter [Janice Briscoe] is now Chair of the Board and how do you feel that's going to fare for the future of Sotterley with another Briscoe on the Board?*

John Hanson Briscoe: *Well, I had no idea she was going to take it on, I didn't encourage her to do it. In fact, I'm surprised she did. She's a mother, she's a partner in a law business and she's a very busy person, but she caught on and she took it on herself. And she's worked as hard, probably harder than I did. And you know, it interferes with her business; she's cutting her vacation short to come back for a Sotterley Board meeting. And I know she just loves Sotterley*

²⁴ "Grace Horton." *Sotterley Oral History Project*. By Lynn Fitrell. April 7, 2009.

and she's doing everything she can to try to keep its head above water like I did. And I would hope that before she goes off the Board that an endowment could be created. And that's tough to do it. You've got to have people who know what they're doing. You've got to start off by getting significant people to commit to a certain amount of money that will go in a pot and then once people see that then they will do it. Everybody likes to follow; everybody likes a winner. And if they think there are people out there who will commit a certain amount of money to build up that nest egg to keep this magnificent treasure house going, it'll catch on. But you've got to start that. You've got to go to certain individuals and companies and get them to commit to it. And then people will follow that if it's done right and they know it's up there to keep it going. It's not just going for something that's not necessary.

A lot of people say "why do you...?" Well it's my ancestral home, that's why I've got a deep interest in preserving it. But I really just love the property anyway even if it wasn't our ancestral home.²⁵

* * * * *

Burt Kummerow, recently retired director of the Maryland Historical Society: You're only as strong as your weakest end when working in this business. You have to constantly reinvent yourself on one level which is to have events and programs that people would be interested in coming to. You do that on an annual or quarterly basis; if you get mentioned in the Washington Post you get a crowd. That's the way that Southern Maryland lives. The more important thing to get into is: "What is really important about that house?" You've got onto one thing, it's really important in this country and that's slavery. You've got physical manifestation of slavery and from my point of view there is always a reason for someone to come down on a trip over the weekend and visit Sotterley as long as it keeps all of the things that's interesting about it in action. The historic house itself is appealing to certain people. There are certain types of visitors, you're dealing with 'streakers,' people who come through quickly and aren't particularly interested in the real content. You have 'strollers,' the people who will come to an event and enjoy themselves. And then you have 'studiers,' which is about 15 percent of your visitors if you have this whole thing going for it.

The only group that will contribute financially on a regular basis is the studiers. Strollers will pay for an event but streakers you probably can't get money out of them at all. You can look at it from a different direction too because they've actually in the last 20 years really been studying museum audiences and what attracts them. About 15% of the audience will come, join and be members. It's a significantly sized group if you look at the country. It doesn't sound like much. Then you have another 25% or maybe 35% of the strollers that will come to particular events like your Gala in the Garden, Harvest Days and all the things you create within the course of a year. Then you have another 50% of the audience that probably won't come.



52. Janice Briscoe, current president of Sotterley's board of trustees, and Linda Colina at the 2015 Sotterley Garden Gala. Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

²⁵ "John Hanson Briscoe." Sotterley Oral History Project. By David Brown. February 20, 2008.



* * * * *

Samuel Baldwin: *Let me ask you this then, if Sotterley is, and I think it is fairly uniformly cited as being significant in so many different ways because of the people that live there, the continuity of the farming operations, the significance of the river and so forth, why are places like Sotterley always at risk financially it seems?*

Gary Hodge: *Creating constituencies for these places of significance is the challenge. We're in an age where more and more places are being identified as 'significant.' You know, when we were kids there was Williamsburg. I don't know about you but my family traveled a lot in the Mid-Atlantic region and I was raised during the Civil War centennial, 50 years ago. So we went to Gettysburg, Antietam, Harper's Ferry. We went to Yorktown, to Williamsburg. We went to all these familiar places and others on field trips. We could count those significant historic sites on two hands. Now if you ask the National Park Service to give you a list of all their significant places, be prepared to get something as big as the New York phone book in your mailbox. There's been an explosion of interest in preservation and local pride in protecting historic sites. Lyndon Johnson did a great job of creating agencies to do this work and they've done a great job. Historic Preservation and all these groups, so it's a geometrically exploding universe of places and probably not an equally dramatic increase in the number of people who need those places. So here we are in St. Mary's County which now has 100,000 people and 35 years ago it had about 75,000 people and 50 years ago it probably had about 50,000 people. But there's your universe of people in the immediate community who have a stake in the outcome of Sotterley. The rest of the people you bring aboard you have to go out and persuade that it's important from a statewide or national perspective and of course the biggest ally you've had in that work has been Congressman Steny Hoyer. John Berry, who worked on Steny's staff, and played an important role in Steny's federal funds to restore and preserve Sotterley later served with the Department of Interior.*

John Berry had been on Steny's staff and so when Steny decided to try and get some funding at the federal level to help Sotterley he could turn to someone who had worked for him



53. Frank and Pat Greenwell, Sotterley volunteers, caught in a rare moment where they are *somewhat* out of character.

Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

to help make that happen. But you know this is a never ending struggle. Fifty years from now you guys [college aged interns sitting in on the interview] are young enough to be sitting at this table with other people, saying: "How in the heck are we going to get money for Sotterley?" It's going to be the same challenge and those buildings are going to be 50 years older. So I don't see that struggle ever ending.

Audio 10. Gary Hodge on how to create constituencies at institutions such as Sotterley:



Gary Hodge: *I spent 2 years of my life working on Maryland's 350th anniversary (1982-84) and the outcome was we got 800,000 to a million people to come to Southern Maryland for the first time. Burt Kummerow was a part of that and so were a lot of other people. That was the first time there was a statewide, organized effort to open people's eyes to what Southern Maryland and St. Mary's County had to offer. We put public service ads on TV in Baltimore and Washington, an advertising campaign and the whole nine yards. That probably did help to build awareness, it probably did help to create sponsors for the stuff Burt later did as Director of St. Mary's City, or for what has happened at Sotterley, and helped facilitate the move of 6,000 high tech jobs and defense workers to Pax River, many of whom were interested in cultural activities. That boosted the potential audience for things at Sotterley. The terrific lecture program that you do there is, I think, incredibly important. It's a small room but the people who come to that are heavy hitters. That's a very important opening conversation with people.*

How you lick this problem, and you know we've got the same problem with the Dr. Mudd House in Waldorf. I could name any number of places. Let's take St. Clements Island, it's a great example. Before the 350th anniversary in 1984 St. Clements Island was a wreck, it was an absolute wreck. The island was disappearing. It was eroding away. The river had washed it away, half the island or more. The lighthouse was in total disrepair. The anniversary gave us the peg we needed to hang our hat on. It was a state investment. So we got the island rip-rapped. A private group rehabilitated the lighthouse. We created a ferry service to the island so people could actually get there and we got the state to invest in the museum on the shore. Now that's because the anniversary gave us a peg to hang that on.



54. Congressman Steny Hoyer at Sotterley.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Samuel Baldwin: *That being the 350th?*

Gary Hodge: *That being the 350th. Then that goes away. An event on March 25th, an excellent program June 23rd and 24th weekend where we bring the Baltimore symphony down here and British Royalty and the British company of pikemen and musketeers and bam that's over. Now what? How do you keep the pilot light lit?*

Samuel Baldwin: *And the answer?*

Gary Hodge: *You do what you can on Maryland Day, which Burt has done at Historic St. Mary's City. You create the Cross-Bottany so you can award that to a high profile official every year. You put Ben Bradley [publisher of the Washington Post] on your board of directors. See, this is how it's done. But now you've got social media so the question is, and how do you use it to generate interest and visitors?*

Samuel Baldwin: *They aren't.*

Gary Hodge: *They aren't and that's why I'm bringing it up.*

Samuel Baldwin: *"They" for the record being our interns here.*

Gary Hodge: *Well there are ways to use that to engage a new generation of people. Can you get a new generation of people interested in historical artifacts? Well I know you can get young people to go to the Holy Land to work on archeological digs or any other part of the ancient world, on internships and travel programs. I don't know that Sotterley has the "sizzle" that those kinds of places have. But there need to be innovations in this in other words.*

Samuel Baldwin: *Burt Kummerow, he basically said what you were saying. You've got to keep it fresh; you've got to keep up with events. He said: "If need be make something up, make up an event."*

Gary Hodge: *Exactly.*



55. Educational programs at Sotterley.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley

Video 6. [John Hanson Briscoe reflects on his time as a trustee at Sotterley.](#)

In 1996 the nation was close to losing one of its most important historical and culturally significant landmarks, Historic Sotterley Plantation. Agnes Kane Callum and John Hanson Briscoe, working side-by-side with the Sotterley community, saved the site from fading into history. In this chapter you read about the staggering cost of preserving Sotterley's irreplaceable history, and the loss it would be if Sotterley was no longer there to educate future generations. Today Historic Sotterley Plantation continues to rely on the generous contributions of private donors. As a non-profit 501(c)(3) every donation made to the organization is tax-deductible and helps set into motion all of its positive cultural and educational work. There are countless ways to support Sotterley, and to learn more about these giving opportunities visit Sotterley's website at <http://www.sotterleyplantation.com/ways-to-give-sotterley.htm>. To talk with someone directly and find out how you can make an immediate impact at Sotterley please contact Sotterley's development manager at development@sotterley.org. Please consider making a donation to Historic Sotterley Plantation today.

Donate Now to Historic Sotterley Plantation

<http://www.sotterley.org/donate.htm>

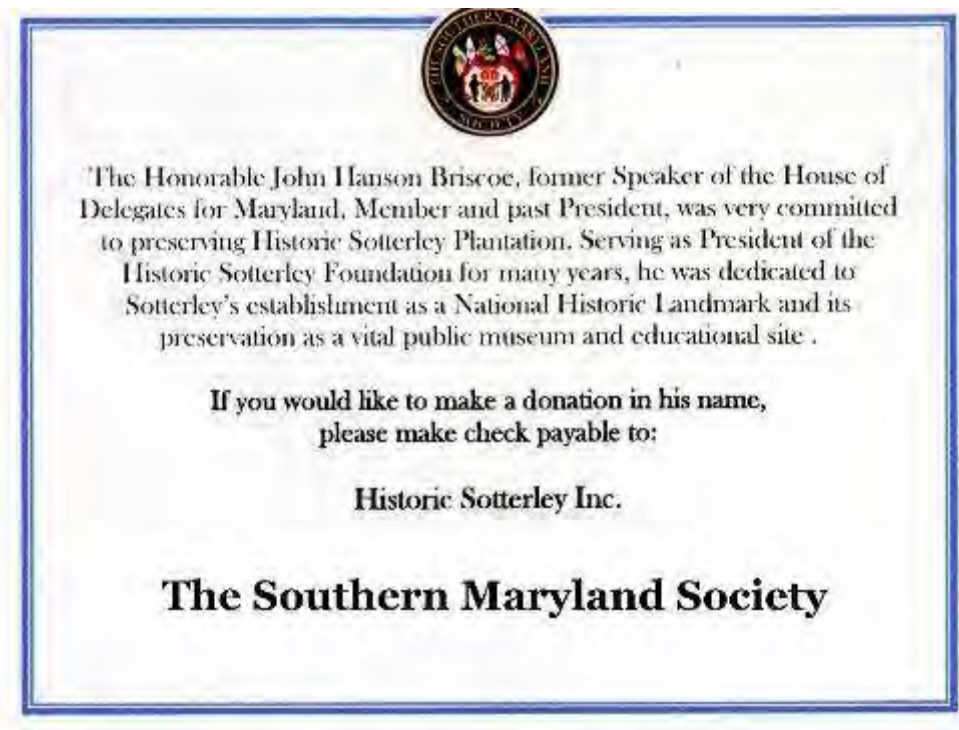


Photo Album



56. Picture, top-left: former director Catherine Elder, center, and Ellen Zahnhiser, right.

Picture, bottom-left: former director Carolyn Laray, left, Louise Snell, center, and Wilbur Harman, right.

Picture, bottom-right: Catherine Stormont, Ellen Zahnhiser.

Courtesy of Historic Sotterley





**57. Bill Schmagelmeyer, with model of Sotterley.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**

**58. Horse rides at Sotterley during Christmas.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**

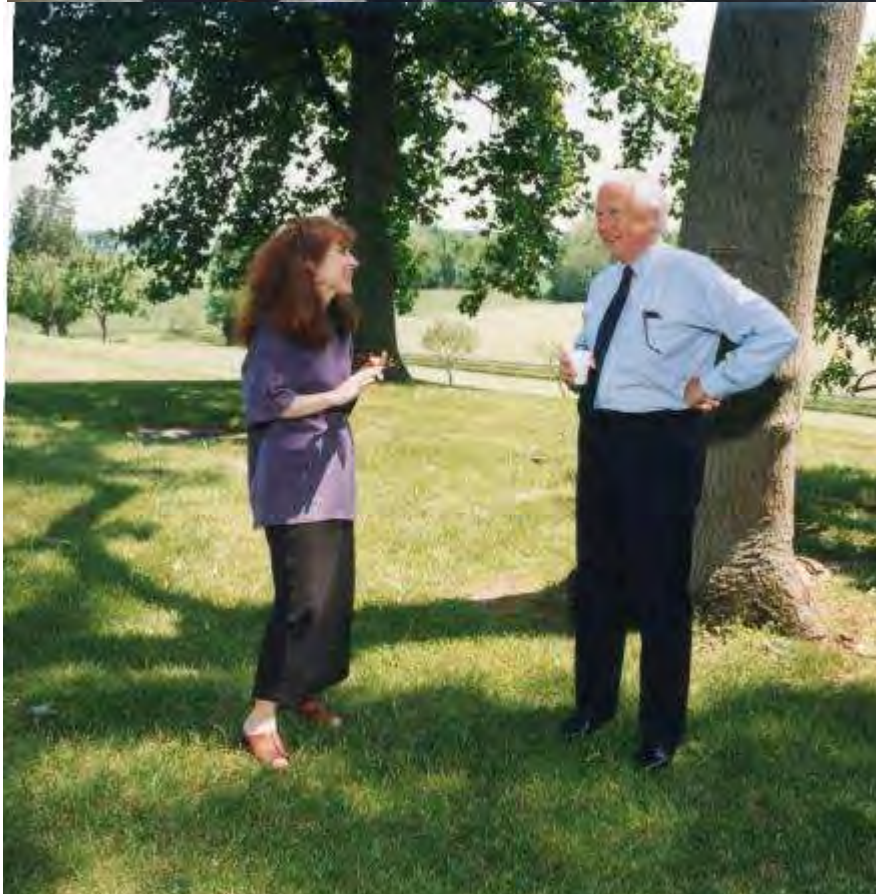




59. Current State Senate President Thomas V. Michael Miller, left, and former Speaker of the House of Delegates John Hanson Briscoe.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



60. David McCullough, well-known American historian and speaker, talking with former executive director, Carolyn Laray on a visit to Sotterley to film a segment about the need to preserve Sotterley Plantation.





61. Ghost tour volunteers at Sotterley.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



62. Sotterley Garden Guild's Christmas store during the holiday season.



63. Second graders on an environmental field trip at Sotterley.



**64. Staff, friends, and volunteers at Sotterley.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley.**



65. Scenes from Sotterley's Farmers' Market.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley.













66. From left to right: St. Mary's County Circuit Court Judge Michael Stamm, St. Mary's County Commissioner Todd Morgan, and Cindy Slattery.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



**69. Carollers sing during the Sotterley Christmas production.
Courtesy of History Sotterley.**



**67. Volunteers at work making cookies in Sotterley.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**

**68. Frank and Pat Greenwell, volunteers and re-enactors,
performing in Sotterley's Christmas play.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

WASHINGTON, D. C.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE
HISTORIC BUILDING

KNOWN AS

Gotterley

IN THE COUNTY OF

St. Mary's

AND THE STATE OF

Maryland

HAS BEEN SELECTED BY THE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE

HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY

AS POSSESSING EXCEPTIONAL
HISTORIC OR ARCHITECTURAL
INTEREST AND AS BEING WORTHY
OF MOST CAREFUL PRESERVATION
FOR THE BENEFIT OF FUTURE
GENERATIONS AND THAT TO THIS
END A RECORD OF ITS PRESENT
APPEARANCE AND CONDITION
HAS BEEN MADE AND DEPOSITED
FOR PERMANENT REFERENCE IN THE
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

ATTEST

Robert C. Smith
Acting Chief Architect



James A. Johnston
Secretary of the Interior



70. Mabel Ingalls at the Department of Interior, at the time Sotterley was designated a National Historic Landmark.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



71. County commissioners from St. Mary's County, and Michael Whitson, address the crowd at the 40th anniversary of Sotterley's designation as a National Historic Landmark.



72. Sandra van Heerden at podium. Agnes Kane Callum sits in the first row of seats, on the far right.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley



**73. Congressman Steny Hoyer and former Sotterley director Catherine Elder.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**



**74. From left to right: former Sotterley trustee Michael Whiston, John R. Griffin, secretary of Maryland's
Department of Natural Resources, and Mike Nelson.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**



**75. A summer camp at Sotterley.
Courtesy of Historic Sotterley**