

# Cabin John Village News

For April 1971 (see inside)

Vol. 4 No. 8

April 1971

## APRIL CALENDAR

- Apr. 4 Opening of the Clark gallery  
3-7 pm 9800 Falls Rd. Potomac
- Apr. 7 Book Talk 7:30 pm  
Little Falls Library
- Apr. 8 Book Talk 10:30 pm  
Little Falls Library
- Apr. 9-18 Spring Vacation, Clara Barton
- Apr. 10 Easter Egg Hunt 2 pm  
Cabin John Methodist Church
- Apr. 19 Homemakers Meeting 11:30 am  
7401 Arden Rd. Cabin John
- Apr. 24 Spring Fair 12 - 4 pm  
Clara Barton Elementary School
- Apr. 26 Spring Recreation Program  
Clara Barton Elem. School
- Apr. 27 Citizens Asso. Meeting 8 pm  
Clara Barton Elementary School
- Apr. 28 Whirl of Fashions 12:30 pm  
St. Andrews Methodist Church
- Apr. 29 Kindergarten and 4 year old  
Round-up. Clara Barton 9-11 am
- May 1 Loyalty Day Dance 9 - 11 am  
Post Hall, Great Falls Md.

## MR. PARRISH AT MEETING

On Mar. 23, at the Cabin John Park Citizens Asso. Meeting, Mr. S.W. Parrish, Director of the Dept. of Community Development, spoke about the history of the Community Development Office's involvement in Cabin John. The first contact with this community came in 1965 in connection with early efforts in obtaining paving for Carver Road. Later, Don Herdeck, then Pres. of the Citizens Asso. went to see Mr. Parrish and talked of his concerns about Cabin John. Subsequently a letter was sent to the Comm. Dev. office from the Citizens Asso. outlining areas of concern and requesting assistance from the Office in the form of a planner. This led to the assignment of a planning person for Cabin John, and the allotment of \$15,000 to help with the cost of drawing up a plan.

Because County budgets are drawn up so far in advance, the Office of Community Development made some general estimates about possible costs involved in implementing a Cabin John Community Plan, should treatment be required. Things like road improvements, public works, recreation areas, sewage disposal, rehabilitation of private dwelling and meeting county standards in all areas were considered. This led the Comm. Dev. Office to ask for 1 million dollars over four years for Cabin John, of which \$664,000 would be federal funds.

Mr. Parrish stressed that only the most general estimates were made and that Cabin John was in no way bound to the areas considered by the Comm. Development Office. "The philosophy of this office", he said, "is to implement on a local level whatever program the people within a community wish".

One specific type of Community plan was explained. Called FACE ( Federally Assisted Code Enforcement), it involves concentrated code enforcement and offer controlled development of the community. Code enforcement is essentially pervasive and is designed to stop deterioration before something more drastic becomes necessary. The simplest and least expensive program, FACE does not include the power to condemn or demolish buildings, and would disrupt the community the least, according to Mr. Parrish.

Whatever type of plan or list of priorities evolves from the Cabin John Community Survey, the Office of Community Development will assist in bringing the proposal into reality. For that reason it is especially crucial that all households fill out and return the Cabin John Questionnaire in order to get a real consensus on areas of concern.

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 \*\*\*\* The Village News Staff \*\*\*\*\*

- NEWS COLLECTION please call:  
 Mrs. Janet Hutchinson 365-2144  
 Mrs. Susan Vogt 469-6379
- INTERVIEWS (doyou know an interesting person in Cabin John?)  
 Mrs. Barbara Clark 469-6731
- RECIPE LADIES ( they may compile a Cabin John Cookbook). Please donate a recipe.  
 Mrs. Mary McCusker 469-7508  
 Mrs. Dana Cable 365-3430  
 Mrs. M.W. Kandle 469-8708

GARDENING GENIOUS (Help! I need a volunteer!) Offer yourself at 469-6379  
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WE STILL NEED FUNDS. THERE WILL BE A GENERAL CANVASS IN JUNE, BUT IF YOU HAVE NOT CONTRIBUTED FOR THE PAST YEAR WON'T YOU SEND IN YOUR DOLLAR TODAY?? THANKS.

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## POTOMAC VALLEY HOMEMAKERS

We had a very interesting program for our March Meeting presented by Mrs. Fenton and Mrs. Phillips. The subject was Grief Adjustment.

Our April Meeting will be at the home of Mrs. Joanne Whittaker. Please note the new time - 11:30 am., Monday April 19. Newcomers please telephone Mrs. Whitaker to make reservations at least a week in advance at 365-4499. Dagny Newman, Sec.

## COMMUNITY TIP SHEET AVAILABLE

If you would like to have the Office of Comm. Development's Community Tip Sheet mailed to you free every month, please call the Office at 279-1327 and leave your name and address. This is an interesting booklet concerning Montgomery County affairs and opportunities.



There aren't many people around today who ever heard of Billy Swainson. But thirty years ago everybody in Cabin John knew him--and most of them feared him.

Who was this Billy Swainson, a legend in his own time? Where did he come from? How did he live? What happened to him?

Talk to a man who knew him well, Ralph Springmann, who has lived on Woodrow Place for the past forty years.

"We were friends, Billy and I. The water wasn't so good out on his island so he used to get it from my well in big milk cans. There was no piped-in water then in Cabin John; everybody had wells. I don't know if he ever had any title to that island; I think he was just a squatter. I know that for years the government would put it up for sale for the back taxes, but nobody would buy it. They'd have had a terrible time getting him off of there. Just about everybody around was scared of him.

"Squatters? Sure, there were lots of them once. Before the government bought it, the Canal Company owned the land down by the canal and the river, and they'd let people live there. Lots of folks took old street-cars, put them on cinderblocks and lived in them. And in houses along the canal and the river. Billy's house was actually between the canal and the river, a two-story frame house. But his garden and all his animals were out on the island. He had plenty of animals; he'd take anything anybody wanted to give him in that line. I remember he had three Russian wolfhounds, ducks, geese, pigs, goats, chickens, cats.

"It's on the map officially like that now--Swainson's Island--right by Lock 10. I guess you'd have to agree it was his island, even if he didn't pay for it, because he lived there for so many years, at least thirty, maybe more.

"Up by Lock 10 you can still see the pilings of the bridge he built to get out to his island. Matter of fact, there's a bridge now over the canal that the Park Service rebuilt from one Swainson put up originally. You had to cross that bridge over the canal, then go across a stretch of woods where his house was, then cross another bridge to get to Swainson's Island. That is, if he knew you. If not, you might be met with a shotgun. I wouldn't say he was over-friendly. He was pretty careful, you know, because I don't think there was much he did that was inside the law.

"Like the woman who lived there on the island with him. She had a husband somewhere else, but that didn't stop Swainson from spending all her money, and there was a good bit of it. They're all dead now, of course.

"I couldn't say when he first came to Cabin John--couldn't even guess. I came here in 1930 and he was already an institution. Everybody was cordial to him, you know, but they avoided any difficulty with him. He was a powerful man, not so tall but very strong and fearless. People didn't cross him. He was a fairly well educated man. I understand he once worked as an accountant for the Treasury Department. But when Prohibition came in, he left that job and started bringing whiskey down from Canada in his rattletrap truck that swayed from side to side as he careened along Conduit Road. He never held a regular job after that, to my knowledge, but he was always working on things.

"For instance, one time the wind knocked over a big tree in my yard. I knew Billy burred a lot of wood, and I asked him if he'd like to have the tree. He showed up next day with a truckful of teenage boys and some saws. They were really working hard, with Billy walking around giving directions. 'How much are you paying these boys?' I asked him. 'Paying them? Nothing. Their folks are paying me. I'm running a health camp out on the island this summer; this is their activity time'.

"You didn't dare mention anything you needed or admired--he'd bring it to you the next day or two, if you were his friend. Not that he bought it, you understand, just 'borrowed' it from someplace where he figured they didn't need it. Once I mentioned that I was going to get a doghouse. Next day he had hauled out one of these toolsheds the government used in the parks, and left it in my yard. I had no way of knowing where to take it back; he could be very silent when he wanted to.

"He was a remarkable man in many ways. Physically, as I've said, he was very impressive. At the time of the Big Flood of 1936 he was quite a hero. That was the worst flood that I can remember. The Cabin John firehouse was turned into a relief center--the Red Cross was running it--and the canal people who were all flooded out were fed and sheltered there. Well, there was an old woman living all by herself out on one of the islands--there's a house still standing on that island--and the Coast Guard couldn't get to her for fear their boats would capsize. Or so the story goes. Anyway, Billy just jumped into the river, swam out there, and carried that woman back through the treacherous water. And he must have been nearly fifty then.

"What ever happened to him? Well, one day he shot a dog that wandered onto his island--he was an ornery guy sometimes--and the dog's owner, when he found out about it, went out to the island and gave Swainson the thrashing of his life. I expect that may have been the first time he was ever beaten. After that he changed, I don't know whether from the shame of it, him who had always lorded his way around Cabin John, or whether there was some brain damage, but he sort of went crazy, rarely left the island, wouldn't talk to anybody. He didn't even recognize me when I saw him one day on the towpath. He stayed on the island until he died a few years later. That was about twenty years ago. He must have been around sixty.

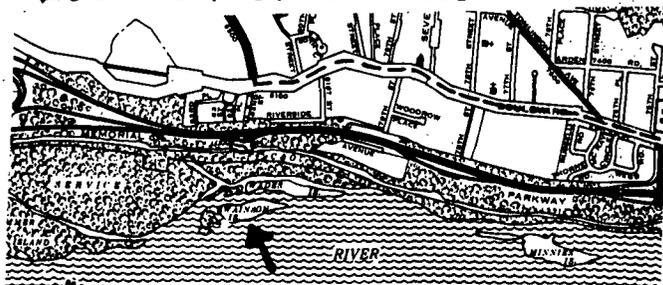
"If he ever had any relatives I never heard about them. There was a rumor that he married the woman he rescued from the flood, but I don't know that.

"Nobody ever lived on the island after Billy. The buildings deteriorated and eventually the government tore down everything. Billy Swainson was a real character. I wish you had known him."

So do I.

BC

Location of Swainsons Island



This delightful afternoon is presented by the WSCS of St. Andrews United Methodist Church at Goldsboro and River Roads. There will be dessert served at 12:30 followed by a beautiful fashion show (professional models) done by the Endearing One of Little Falls Mall. Then will come bridge, or other card games if you desire. The place is the Social Hall of the Church, the day is Wednesday, April 28, and a donation of \$1.50 is requested. To make reservations, please call any of the numbers listed below:

- 229 - 3663                      229 - 6593
- 654 - 1987                      654 - 4675
- 656 - 4258

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**BE THE FIRST ON YOUR BLOCK TO RECYCLE !**

A collection point for refuse able to be recycled has been set up near Cabin John. The place is the Safeway Parking lot at 4865 MacArthur Blvd., and although newspapers may be deposited there at any time, several other types of refuse will be collected on Sat, and Sundays from 9 - 4 pm. The following things can be recycled for reuse:

**All glass:**

Separate by color (green, brown, or clear). Rinse out, throw away lids and rings (like from twist-off beer caps). Forget the labels.

**Aluminium Containers:**

Things which do not adhere to a magnet for instance soft drink cans with no seams and molded bottoms, TV trays from dinners.

**Newspapers:**

Leave loose, do not tie in bundles.

This is a concrete way to help conserve our natural resources. One truckload of newspapers saves 39 trees! There will be volunteers at the Safeway during the weekend to help sort and carry items.

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**BROWNIES NEWS**

The Brownies have been very busy lately, and have an even busier Spring planned. Recently they took a trip to the Wendy Ward Charm School, and had a great time there. Soon the Brownies will begin cleaning up and planting in their plot along MacArthur Blvd. A picnic at Carderock and a trip to the Montgomery College Planetarium are also scheduled.

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**BOYS BASEBALL BEGINS**

The Montgomery County Recreation Dept. and the Kiwanis Club are setting up a Baseball team for boys born in 1958 and 1959. The season will start on April 26 and will run until June 20 (approximately). There will be two games each week on Mondays and Thursdays. Each boy's fee is \$8 which covers Insurance, Tee Shirt and Hat. If you are interested, please contact Mr. Dick Sponaugle at 365-2475.

The April Book Talk at the Little Falls Library will review the John Fowles book The French Lieutenants Woman. The April 7th talk will begin at 7:30pm and the April 8th one at 10:30 am. Copies of the book are available at the Library.

For children aged 4 and up, there will be a series of Story Hours on Sat. mornings at 10:30 am. This Sat. there will also be a Penny Theatre. The Story Hours are of course free. %%%

**KINDERGARTEN AND 4 YEAR OLD ROUNDUP**

Registration for next year's Kindergarten and 4 year old classes will be held on Apr. 29 from 9 to 11 am in the All Purpose Room of the Clara Barton Elementary School. All children who were born in 1966 are eligible for Kindergarten, while those born in 1967 may attend the 4 year old class. Parents who are interested in registering their children should call the School Office (365-3014), so that forms may be sent to the home. The filled out forms should be returned to the office at Registration on Apr. 29.

This year's 4 year old program has been successful because it has had contributions of time and money from the parents of the 4 year olds involved. If you are interested in seeing a program set up this fall for the children in the Clara Barton School District, please register your child on April 29. Mothers from this years program will be on hand to answer questions that you may have concerning the 4 year old set-up. On the 29th, an evening meeting in May for parents will be announced to make concrete plans for next year's program. If you want a 4 year old program next year, you must attend the meeting in May.

Children who are already registered at Clara Barton for next year, need not come on April 29th.

**\*\* CLARA\*\*BARTON\*\*SPRING\*\*FAIR \*\***

Reserve Apr. 24 for a GREAT Spring Fair at Clara Barton. The hours are 12 - 4 pm, and there will be a variety of games, white elephants, bake goods, used toys and books, new handmade items and much more. There will be an attraction for every age, so bring the whole family, have a hotdog, and enjoy the show!

The PTA is hoping to get as many people from the Community involved as possible. If you have white elephants or used items to donate, Mrs. Peter Camplair's house will be the collection point. Call her after 3pm at 365-0358.

Mrs. Lori Glenn is in charge of the handicraft and sewing dept. Contributions are welcome. Call her at 365-5865. The Girl Scouts need old stockings for stuffing. Can you help with that?

Baked goods are needed and if you can help out with that please call Mrs. Roberts after 3 pm at 365-7468.

Proceeds from the Spring Fair will be used for carpeting in the school library and other furnishings. So, plan to come! We're going to have fun !!



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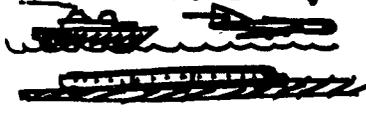
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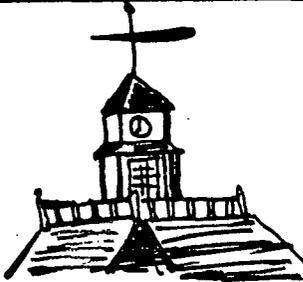
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