



Dear Friends of Maxwell Hall,

As we bring in the new year, the officers, board member and members of Maxwell Hall would like to say thank you for all the volunteer work and support given in 2022. We started 2022 with the sad news of the passing of Mr. George Gazarek in February, our President, and Founder of the Friends of Maxwell Hall. George had spent countless hours building the FOMH into a very successful organization through professionalism, community outreach and the love of Maxwell Hall and the history surrounding the historic house and property. George Gazarek, our past president, founder, and friend will truly be missed, and it has proven to be challenging to move forward without his help and devotion to the FOMH.

Moving forward in March 2022 Mike Callahan accepted the role of President and Mike Gargano accepted the role of Vice President of the FOMH. Again, as challenging as it were, several members of the FOMH community stepped up to keep the FOMH operating. Yes, there were many bumps in the road to get over and still are, but we believe with everyone's support and effort we can get through it successfully. The membership of the FOMH has grown in 2022 and we hope to continue add additional membership to the roster in the coming months as lots of great things

are happening in our future at Maxwell Hall. You may have notice that our FOMH website and Facebook page have been updated with a fresh look and current events as Shane Gargano has stepped up to help us with advertising, information technology community outreach and stellar coordination of the FOMH. A host of members, neighbors, good friends, and the Charles County Government have stepped up to help as well, to get us through our community events scheduled for the FOMH. I will not attempt to single them out, but we all know who they are, and I wish to personally thank everyone for their hard work and efforts last year. A BIG THANK YOU!

We charged forward in 2022 with the: FOMH monthly Open House, Monthly Member Appreciation Events, Serenity Farms Sunflower Festival, Benedict Fire Department Events, Legends and Lore Halloween Night Hike, Charles County Holiday Trail (Crossroads of Hughesville Garden Club), Owl Prowl and Night Hike, Archeology Excavations and Education, Colonial Faire with 600+ visitors to Maxwell Hall, we have also erected and completed the FOMH Bluebird Trail from the entrance to MH to the Swanson Creek waterfront. We also had the pleasure of meeting new friends of history with the Discovering and Raising New Voices Project Coordinator, Julie Ennis. Julie is working on a very interesting program regarding Local African American History, Genealogy and Culture.

We are currently looking for volunteers to work the FOMH Open House Events held the first Sunday afternoon each month. No experience

necessary, we will train or pair you with another member. It's a lot of fun to show off the house.

The Friends of Maxwell Hall wish you a very Happy New,

Best regards,

Mike Gargano

VP-FOMH



A Brief History of Maxwell Hall

Maxwell Hall was built in 1768 by George Maxwell, a Benedict merchant. Choosing an elevated site overlooking the Patuxent River and Swanson Creek made the home easily accessible by land or water yet a safe distance from the deadly pestilence that plagued the port settlements and plantations of the Chesapeake region.

The house represents an architecture that was comparable to those dwellings occupied by other prominent merchants and planters in this locality during the latter part of the eighteenth century.

Architectural Features

- House measures 36'L x 28'w and retains its 18th century floor plan
- Double-Sloped Dutch-Style gambrel roof
- Distinctive matching-end 18-foot-wide chimneys
- Double-tiered chimneys with elongated/stepped lower weathering's
- Five fireplaces
- Massive peg-fastened beams, including two 36-foot-long hand-hewn summer (main) beams
- The stairwell wall is lined with hand-split clapboards and lath fastened with rose-head nails.

- House erected on fieldstone and brick, most likely from the original house dated back to 1680
- The foundation is made of brick and fieldstone, some of which reportedly came from England's "white Cliffs of Dover"

Outbuildings

Numerous old barns along the north side of the driveway. The first barn is a tobacco barn with hand-hewn horizontal clapboards along the east wall. It is constructed with pegs and is approximately 200 years old. The second is a very large tobacco barn with attached stripping shed built partly with pegs but remodeled in the 1920's. Smaller barns were originally used as stables. The small shed near the house was built in the 1920's for use as a meat house.

George Maxwell Family

George Maxwell had been living in Benedict as early as 1745, successfully building various business interests in partnership with other prosperous merchant and tobacco planters. He already owned several large tracts of land on both sides of the Chesapeake Bay, as well as commercial properties in and around Benedict. He was issued a patent for 487 acres of land from the Calverton Manor lands of the lord proprietor in 1768. He named this land "Maxwell's seat." In 1763, George Maxwell owned at least one sailing vessel, the Lord Baltimore, and at that time he petitioned the King's Agent for permission to build a landing for his ship on Swanson Creek.

War of 1812 and Maxwell Hall

Benedict is the first site on which a foreign enemy has landed in force on the United States (the second being Pearl Harbor, WWII).

On August 18, 1814, approximately 4,500 British soldiers under the command of Major General Robert Ross and Rear Adm. George Cockburn debarked their ships at the Town of Benedict. The soldiers camped here and along two miles of shoreline, including the farm of Maxwell Hall. Upon hearing news of their occupation, James Monroe, then Secretary of State, personally rode (by horseback) from Washington to Benedict. Using a ridge that overlooked the town, he was able to successfully spy on the British movements. Convinced Washington was in trouble, he raced back to the city to raise the alarm. The British troops then marched from Benedict to Washington in a brutal summer heat wave. After capturing and burning the city, the troops returned to Benedict, carrying their wounded and supplies. Two of the British soldiers who died were buried at Old Fields Chapel cemetery in Hughesville. They sailed out of the Patuxent River and into the

Chesapeake Bay with Baltimore as their next target.

A local tale of interest is the role that Maxwell Hall played when the British landed at Benedict and seized the town for 24 hours. It is said that one of the British officers requisitioned the first floor of the house for his headquarters requiring that the family living here make-do with the rooms on the second floor. His occupation was mercifully brief but perhaps saved the house from “torching” which was the fate of many other nearby homes and structures.

Over the years, buttons, cufflinks, and belt buckles have been found on the property that is believed to have belonged to British troops.

Acquisition & Restoration

When Edwin and Marion Swann purchased the property in 1980, the house had been abandoned for decades. Vines were growing over the house; the roof was all but gone and the badly sagging frame was miraculously held together by the massive chimneys. Due to water damage and neglect, the house was on the verge of ruin. After extensive and expensive restoration and sweat equity investment, Maxwell Hall again became a livable home.

The Swann's felt that no one really ever “owns” a house of this great age and they believed that it was only theirs to live in and love temporarily. They both had hoped that one day Maxwell Hall would be publicly owned - a place where visitors could appreciate the value of historical preservation and experience a piece of our Southern Maryland heritage.

In 2007, their dream became a reality when Charles County Government had the foresight to acquire the property (using Maryland Program Open Space funding). This was indeed a rare opportunity to protect and preserve a fully restored 18th-century dwelling” Maxwell Hall will be an important venue in our efforts to interpret the War of 1812, colonial life along the Patuxent River as well as Benedict's role in the Civil and Revolutionary Wars”





Maxwell Hall Website Links

[The Trails of Maxwell Hall](#)

[Maxwell Hall Site History](#)

[FoMH Membership Form](#)

[Visit the Website](#)

The Friends of Maxwell Hall, working with Charles County Recreation and Parks, have made all the preparations for your visit. For over 250 years, many different people have lived, worked, and visited these grounds, and now it's your turn. The land, the house, the barns, the history are all yours to unravel, to explore, to experience, to enjoy, to make your own. Let us know how we can assist you on this adventure.

Maxwell Hall is a 1768 colonial house, located within Maxwell Hall Park's unspoiled 692 acres. The park was acquired by Charles County in 2007 and is managed by the Charles County Parks and Grounds Division. The park has 15 miles of hiking/equestrian trails with access to the Patuxent River. The trails are open every day of the year; however, the historic house is open to the public for special events listed on our Events page or by appointment.

Archeologists working a dig on the property

