Forum on the History of Ferries and the C & O Canal and Their Impacts on Montgomery County's Social and Economic Development

While many are familiar with White's Ferry having used it to cross the River or as a jumping off point for hiking on the C & O Canal, it is a fair bet that far fewer residents know the history of ferries along the Montgomery County segment of the Potomac and the C & O Canal, including White's Ferry, and the role they played in the evolution and growth of Montgomery County.

That is why the Historic Medley District, Montgomery History, and the Fair Access Committee are sponsoring a forum on July 17th at the Poolesville Memorial United Methodist Church at 6:30 p.m. focused on a presentation on this topic. The presentation is based on research spearheaded by Ralph Buglass and supported by numerous local history researchers and experts including William Bauman, Jim Poole, Jon Wolz, Rod Mackler, Mary Ann Kephart, Link Hoewing, and Charles Jacobs.

Mr. Buglass will present the findings of the research and a panel of local historians will offer commentary and views on how ferries and the canal transformed the agricultural economy of Montgomery County. Topics to be discussed include:

- The contributions of African American farming communities to the growth of the county, especially after the Civil War;
- The growth of plantations in Montgomery County before the War and their reliance on the ferries and the canal to transport the crops they grew;
- The historically close ties between Northern Loudoun County and Leesburg and Western Montgomery County and Poolesville due in part to the three key ferries – Edwards, White's and Spink's - that crossed the Potomac between the two areas; and
- The gradual closing of ferries except for White's which made the transition from largely transporting goods and grains grown on the farms to transporting automobiles.

If you have questions or need more information, call or text Link Hoewing on 202-365-4749 or email him on linkhoe@aol.com.

Photo Courtesy Jim Poole