



# *Notes from the Academy*

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## Up Coming Events and Programs!

### **December 17th:** Monthly Public Program

Celebrate the holidays with a visit to the Historic Odessa Foundation. Enjoy the classic story of the “The Secret Garden” from 1911. \$5 per person. 3 pm and 6 pm, meet at the Bank building, corner of Main and Second Streets in Odessa. Please RSVP to Alison at 378-8265 or 740-5544. Each tour limited to 10 visitors.

### **January 21st:** Monthly Public Program, 7:30 pm

Jim Ethridge, who has a PhD in botany, will uncover the historic landscape to us, and we'll learn about the changes in that landscape through native and non-native plants. Rescheduled from October.



Courtesy of the Historic  
Odessa Foundation

## Highlights in this Issue

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## Planning for History

In a number of our past issues we have mentioned that the Historical Society is working on and completed our first strategic plan. The plan encapsulates the vision of the board, membership, and the community. In our first year there is a lot of planning to be able to fulfill our mission to encourage the development of Middletown's history. Part of this planning will be a timeline for our upcoming exhibitions as well as an interpretation plan to guide our programming. To be involved in this process please take a few minutes to fill out our survey!

<https://forms.gle/4gufkjW8spq5Z1KEA>







## What's New at the Museum!

By Alison Matsen

Professional artist John B. Moll, Jr. was born in Pennsylvania and died in Maryland, but he married a Middletown girl, Barbara Pool, and lived just north of the Academy (our museum) in the 1930's and 1940's. At that time he did this beautiful and rare watercolor of an everyday scene in an historically African-American neighborhood in Middletown, Delaware.

This beautiful watercolor, 14" x 15", by John B. Moll, Jr. is the fourth work by him in our collection, and only the second original work. The other two are woodcuts. We had a new mat put on the picture to pick up the blues in the painting.

*Editor's note: The Middletown Historical Society recently purchased several works of art from a local collector. We will be featuring one in each newsletter.*

# From the Desk of the Presidents

## Incoming President-Dale Wyatt

It is indeed an honor to be chosen to be the next President of the Middletown Historical Society, an organization admired by so many in this great town for its mission, to collect, preserve, educate, and encourage the development of Middletown's history in order to foster historic awareness and pride in our community. I strongly support the commitment to inclusion, diversity, civic engagement and growth here at MHS.

I was born and raised here in Middletown and it will always be "home". I have been drawn to History, especially older homes and the stories that fill them. I fulfilled my love for older homes by purchasing a historic home built in the late 1860s right here in the heart of Middletown.

It is important to preserve history because it helps people envision a better future. I am looking forward to the many great things to come out of the Historical Society and the growth to make it an even stronger organization.

## Outgoing President-Linda Harting

Thank you to all the members who have helped traverse the path over the past four years! Navigating the great losses of our President, Terry Markisohn, and our historian, George Contant, we have made strides to continue their good work as well as that of many others of the past and present. On that note, we engaged a contractor to help us write a strategic plan, "Preparing for the future and respecting the past". An enduring building requires a good foundation. Volunteer manuals and collection management policies may not sound glamorous, but are vital documents which have required outside expertise. New partnerships have been forged, advisory councils video-toured town, and MHS continues to find creative ways to build relationships throughout our community. All these activities and more require the energy of many individuals. For that, as past-president, I am truly grateful. I look forward to working with our new president, Dale, and supporting him in his various initiatives.

# Participating in Community Traditions

By Alison Matsen

For the first time ever, the Middletown Historical Society will be participating in Historic Odessa Foundation's holiday activities. In the Wilson house (1769) we, along with many other groups, will decorate a tree based on a children's book.

The book we chose is Elizabeth Enright's 1942 children's book, "The Four-Storey Mistake". It tells of the Melendy children, whose widowed father, concerned about their safety during World War II, moves his four children from New York City to an old Victorian house out in the country. At first the children don't like the old house, but they gradually learn to love it, and create their own fun in it and in the surrounding area. They are intrigued by several mysteries in the house and yard. Mona, the aspiring actress, Rush, who loves to play the piano, Randy, who is determined to be a ballerina, and little Oliver, who just wants to fish and have fun, along with Cuffy, the loveable cook, and Willie, the handyman, form a great group of characters who learn to appreciate life in the Victorian mansion.

Alison Matsen, Linda Biggs, and Linda Harting are the volunteers who will decorate the tree with items that reflect the story and the interests of the characters. We chose this book because it reflects the Society's ongoing concern for the preservation of the remarkable historic architecture in the Middletown area, like Cochran Grange-pictured below.





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