

The Capital South County

Harwood woman's book tells of old Deale

By DEBBIE HOUGH For The Capital

"'A picture is worth a thousand words' is so true," said Lois Nutwell.

That was inspiration enough for the Harwood woman to compose "A Ripple in the Wind," a pictorial history of Deale.

"The photos tell a story that I couldn't tell quite the same way with words," said Ms. Nutwell. "I could try and describe the placid water, the aroma of honeysuckle, the plip-plop of waves hitting a pier, but each person that would read my description would view a different scene in their imagination, and what they'd envision wouldn't necessarily be what I was trying to describe."

She was inspired to put a book together one summer day in 2001 as she sorted through photos that belonged to her mother, Helen Phipps Nutwell. The Phippses and Nutwells were two of the original families to settle on the swampland now called Deale.

That day, she noticed a 1930s photo of the Deale Post Office, then little more than a wooden shack. Soon afterward, she sought a copy of a photo she'd seen of an antique Bugeye. She recognized it as one her great-grandfather had spoken of.

And the retired Department of Defense designer was off, slowly working her way to self-publishing the 80-page book. It debuted at the South County Festival in June, and since then she's sold more than 300 of the 1,000 copies printed.

With its mesmerizing photographs of scenes easily recognized in a town that has changed relatively little, the book isn't for quickly flipping through.

"I stayed up all night until I finished the book," said Mike Mullican of Churchton. "I refused to turn a page until I stared and stared at every picture and could figure out exactly where the picture was taken, what it was of, and what was built there now."

It now adorns his coffee table, and he's quick to share it with guests.

"It's especially intriguing due to its sense of community," he said.

For others, like Joe Shenton of Deale, the book is like an extended family photo album.



Lois Nutwell (Harwell) has authored a book of pictorial history of Deale from 1900 to 1950, titled "A Ripple in the Wind". Photo by: J. Henson

When he discovered that photos of his grandparents were in it, he personalized his copy by writing how his children were related to them. It's now a keepsake for the Shenton offspring.

Familiar names

The book begins with a brief history, from American Indians and on to early settlers from the 1600 to 1800s.

Richard Gott's 600-acre tract in 1659 was called Rams Gott Swamp, according to Ms. Nutwell's three-page narrative. The land was sold in 1698 to Anthony Holland.

Of that plot, 240 acres were sold in 1715 to John Giles, who bequeathed 80 acres apiece to his three daughters.

In 1736-37, James Deale bought the three Giles parcels, the land soon forming the center of Deale.

But the book also includes the communities of Town Point and Fairhaven and the "lost" 17th century tobacco port of Herrington.

Many of Ms. Nutwell's facts were derived from a 10-page history of the Marshall family.

But in addition to sifting through photographs of friends and neighbors, she spent days digging through archives at the Maryland Hall of Records in Annapolis and the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore.

Her finds included five pages of maps, ranging from Curtis Point to Sunderland, with most detailing Herring Creek (which later became Traceys and Rockhold creeks) and its shorelines.

Aerial photos from the 1930s and '40s dominate seven pages, attesting to a sparsely populated area, with larger homesteads and far fewer boats, mostly working craft.

Familiar names - Phipps, Marshall, Nutwell, Parks, Knopp, Whittington, Rogers, Windsor, Leitch, Leatherbury, Welch, Kidd and Deale - punctuate the photo descriptions.

There are photos of the first Deale schools, the first footbridge crossing Traceys Creek, the floating theater that visited Tracys Landing and Fairhaven in the 1920s, and the photos of Owings Beach in the aftermath of the 1933 hurricane.

Another coming?

The book teaches Deale's newcomers that the town's grocery history dates back further than the closing of the Tri-Me Market, SaCRED's successful push to keep Safeway out, and the IGA switch to Food Rite.

The R.T. Phipps Store, Henry's Store, Virgil Rogers' Store, John Parks' Store, Matt Windsor's Store and John Leitch's stores once supplied the community with barrels of molasses, bins of nails and penny candy, and served community gathering spots around

potbellied stoves.

Baseball was a wildly popular Deale pastime, as shown by photos of a Cedar Grove team and spectators spanning from 1916 to 1947.

According to a caption citing *The Evening Capital* on July 15, 1933, "The band of fans is said to be the loudest in the county and whenever a run is chalked up for the Cedar Grove aggregation, the yells can be heard from Chesapeake Beach to the South River."

Ms. Nutwell dedicated the book to her father, Oregon Peck Nutwell. She wishes he had lived to see it.

"There would have certainly been a few more interesting stories to add," she wrote of the man who instilled in her a love of the creeks and bays they crabbed in together.

Since the book's publication, other locals have stepped forward with photographs and memories, hoping she'll do another one.

"Who knows?" said Ms. Nutwell. "I imagine it's like childbirth. It was difficult, but after a year or so, you start to think, 'Hey that wasn't so bad. I think I might do it again.'"

Ms. Nutwell will sell autographed copies of her book from a booth at the Blessing of the Fleet on Saturday. Copies are also available for \$15 at MALI Discount, the Capt. Salem Avery House Museum and Deale Florist & Gifts.

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