



Festival Issue
July 2023
Issue 128

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The purpose of the German Society of Maryland is to preserve and promote the German heritage, language, and traditions through educational, social, and benevolent programs; and to develop the unity and continuity of the German-American community in the State of Maryland. The German Society of Maryland is a nonprofit, charitable corporation under the provisions of the §501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are welcome and are fully tax-deductible.

German Society of Maryland

Vereinsnachrichten

Founded in 1783 and Incorporated by Act of the General Assembly of Maryland Chapter 100, February 3, 1818

President's Message – Steven R. Harper

Dear Members / Liebe Mitglieder,

It is a great pleasure for me to be writing my first message to the membership as President, and I am especially pleased to be welcoming members and potential new members to the Maryland German Festival.

For those of you who have not met me before, I have been a member of the Society for over 20 years and have served on the Board as a Director since 2016. Elected President in April of this year, I previously have served both as 2nd Vice President and 1st Vice President.

For the last several years, I have served as the Society's representative to the Bürgerverein, the umbrella organization of German clubs and societies in Maryland. The Bürgerverein is the sponsor of the Festival, which contributes directly to the vitality of all the member organizations. Although the Society does not rely on the Festival for fund-raising, it is critical for our public outreach and membership recruitment. I hope I will have a chance to meet many of you at the Society's Stammtisch on Sunday afternoon.

I want to thank all our members who have contributed their time, whether preparing and staffing or working at the front gate. In particular, I want to thank Paul Otto and Brigitte Fessenden for redesigning, composing, and printing the display for the German Society booth.

In the coming year, I look forward to strengthening the Society's educational and cultural programs. In this newsletter you will find a review of our activities over the last year. Even as I write this, we are finalizing plans for the annual Anniversary Banquet in November. I hope you will join us then. Be sure to check out our website for calendar updates and volunteer opportunities. We urgently need members who have professional skills such accounting, social media, web-design, and event planning.

Thanks for your support,

Steven



The Society honored 48 high school students for their outstanding performance on the 2023 National German Exam. See page 2 for the full story.



Homeschool student Charlie Schmidt (left) earned a Gold Medal and was a finalist for the summer-study scholarship. GSM President Steven Harper is Charlie's German teacher.

Society, through the generosity of Gerhard Meinzer, also awarded a scholarship for this summer program. The 2022 scholarship winner, Skylar Brown, made a presentation at the Awards Ceremony about her experience in Germany. She is a student at Fallstown High School.

Although the Society was not able to offer a scholarship in 2023, German Society President Steven Harper has expressed the Society's intent to renew the scholarships in 2024.

High School German Students Honored

The German Society of Maryland, in conjunction with the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG) held an awards ceremony on Sunday, May 7, 2023, to honor high school students for their exceptional performance on the National German Exam (NGE). Speakers at the ceremony included Katharina Grüninger from the Cultural Affairs Section of the German Embassy.

This year, 208 Maryland students took the NGE. Of these, 62 received Gold Medals, 24 received Silver Medals, and 21 received Bronze Medals. The German Society provides a cash award to the Gold- and Silver-Medal winners on the Level 2, 3, and 4 exams. Typically these are students in their sophomore, junior, or senior years. This year, Gold-Medal winners who came to the awards ceremony received \$85, and Silver-Medal winners received \$50.

Nine Maryland students were named as finalists at the state level in a competition for scholarships for a summer study trip to Germany. These scholarships are funded by the German government.

The three scholarship winners were Rebecca Levi and Louisa Mulligan (both from the Saturday morning German program at the German International School) and Chloe Kang (Liberty High School).

In past years, the German



Skylar Brown won a Gold Medal on the Level 4 Exam. She is joined by MD-DC AATG Chapter President Deborah Mifflin, and Mohamed Esa, Chair of the GSM Education Committee.

College Students Awarded Scholarships

The German Society annually awards one-time scholarships to Maryland students studying German at universities in Maryland or the District of Columbia. This year the Society awarded three \$1,000 grants to German majors. Axel Opwis Soares is from Bethesda and is a double major in German and history at Georgetown. Mareike Debye from

Pylesville is a double major in German and management at the University of Maryland, College Park. Paulina Leder lives in Rockville and is a double major in German and history at the University of Maryland, College Park.

The German Society made two \$500 grants to students minoring in German. Emma Gebhard is from Olney and is a psychology major at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Halyna Sokoliouk from Bel Air is a student at Towson University majoring in political science.



Winners of the College Scholarships with German Society officials. Left to right: Maureen Helinksi and Bill Kommalan (GSM Education Committee), Axel Opwis Soares, Mareike Debye, Paulina Leder, Halyna Sokoliouk, Emma Gebhard, and GSM President Steven Harper.

Dedication of Monument to Brigadier General John Stricker

On September 18, 2022, the German Society formally dedicated a monument to Brigadier General John Stricker (1759–1825), Hero of North Point. The multi-year project was originally conceived as part of the bicentennial celebrations of the War of 1812 and the Defense of Baltimore (September 12, 1814).

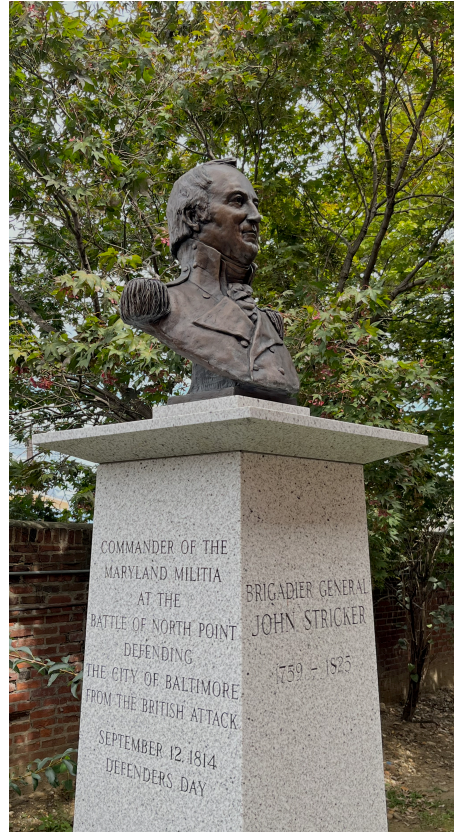
After a temporary installation in North Point State Park, the memorial has found a permanent home in the gardens of the Zion Church of the City of Baltimore.

The bronze bust of John Stricker atop the monument is based on the 1816 portrait of Stricker painted by Rembrandt Peale. The sculptor was Francesca Schuler Guerin, Director of the Schuler School of Fine Arts.

The monument was formally unveiled jointly by then-German Society President Kraig Dean and Bernard Penner, representing Zion Church.

Guests of honor included Francesca Schuler Guerin, Nicholas Fessenden (President of the Society for the History of the Germans in Maryland), William Smithson (President of the Society of the War

of 1812 in Maryland), and Sandra Wallis, State President of the Maryland Society United States Daughters of 1812.



Monument to Brigadier General John Stricker (1759–1825)

Of Swiss German ancestry, John Stricker was born and raised in Frederick, Maryland. After having served in the Revolutionary War, Stricker settled in Baltimore.

Stricker was still active in the militia in 1814, and thus came to play a critical role in the defense of his adopted city when the British attacked Baltimore in September 1814.

The planned two-pronged attack on Baltimore included the naval bombardment of Ft. McHenry and an overland attack by troops who had landed on North Point peninsula.

American troops under Brigadier General John Stricker were sent to meet the invading army halfway up

the peninsula on September 12. The resulting battle delayed their march on the city until the next day.

This gave the city's defenders critical time to prepare fortifications at Hampstead Hill (now Patterson Park). Stricker and his men rejoined the main defensive line at Hampstead Hill. The Baltimore defenders put up a strong defense on September 13th, so that British hopes of success now depended on the successful bombardment of Ft. McHenry.

With the failure to take the fort (as documented in the words of the Star-Spangled Banner), the British decided to withdraw on September 14. Boarding their ships, the British army sailed south to New Orleans, where they would be defeated by American forces led by Andrew Jackson.

In addition to being the Hero of North Point, General Stricker was a significant figure in Baltimore's civic life, although he declined offers of political office. He served as vice president of the German Society and was instrumental in the Society obtaining its state charter in 1818.



Then-GSM President Kraig Dean and Bernard Penner, representative of Zion Church, unveil the Stricker Monument.



Francesca Schuler Guerin discusses her sculpting of the bust.

2022 Anniversary Banquet Honors Hans Steffen

The Society held its 2022 Banquet on November 5 at the Sheraton Baltimore North Hotel in Towson. The Honoree was Hans Steffen. Following World War II, Hans' family was expelled from their home village, which was located in what is now part of Poland. The family was initially resettled in western Germany, but eventually emigrated to the United States thanks to the sponsorship of Charles E. Miller, a Chevy dealer in Ellicott City.

Hans and his brother Fritz joined the Baltimore Kickers soon after their arrival in Maryland. Following service in the U.S. military, Hans made his career as a NATO driver for the German Armed Forces Command USA/CA.

He has been an active supporter of the Maryland German community for more than 64 years. Besides being a successful player and referee for the Baltimore Kickers, he was active in the club's leadership for many years. As the club's Cultural Chairman, Hans has been instrumental in organizing the Kickers' German language classes, arranging overseas trips for members, and planning cultural events such as the Schlachtfest and the Schutzenfest.



Officers and Directors of the German Society with 2022 Honoree Hans Steffen (center front)

Hans is also a member of Club Fidelitas and the Zion Church. He helped establish the annual Christkindlmarkt held at Zion Church of the City of Baltimore. Under the joint sponsorship of the Baltimore Kickers and Zion Church, this market brings a little bit of Germany to Maryland every year the weekend after Thanksgiving.

Attendees of the Maryland German Festival know Hans best, however, because of the delicious schnitzel that the Kickers serve under his direction. Be sure to try some while you are at the Festival.

Upcoming Events

- October 6, 2023: German American Day
November 4, 2023: German Society Anniversary Banquet
April 13, 2024: General Membership Meeting

New Mailing Address

German Society of Maryland
PO Box 1585
Ellicott City, MD 21041

Are you receiving our emails?

We are consolidating all of our emails to use the @germansociety-md.com extension. If you have not received any emails recently, check your spam folder or email german@germansociety-md.com and let us know you would like to hear from us.

Become a Member

For membership information, visit GermanSociety-MD.com.
Annual dues are just \$25 per year.



Officers of the German Society of Maryland 2022/23

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| President: | Steven R. Harper |
| 1st Vice President: | William Hay Kommalan |
| 2nd Vice President: | Zachary Butt |
| Secretary: | Amy Unverzagt |
| Treasurer: | Anton G. Smoot |

Directors 2022/23

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Shelley Dolch Arnold | Gerhard Meinzer |
| John K. Aymold, Jr. | Dr. Armin Mruck |
| Linda Butt | Betty Niemann |
| David A. Denisch, DDS | H.J. Siegfried Otto |
| Kraig Dean | Paul Gerhard M. Otto |
| Lynette Dean | Bernard Penner, Esq. |
| Dr. Mohamed Esa | Shirley Santora |
| Brigitte V. Fessenden | Dr. James D. Schaub |
| Dr. Maureen Helinski | Dr. Mary Upman |
| Noreen (Freddie) Herbert | Christel van der Berg |
| Eva Maus Kelleher | Sherry Veith |
| William J. Kelleher | Hon. Gerard Wm. Wittstadt, Sr. |

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