

# The Sycamore Islander

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Photo by Kathy Carroll

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## Dates to Remember

**October 9:** Old Timers Potluck lunch [Rain date: Monday, November 6]

**October 11:** Next Club Meeting, 8 pm (at Clubhouse - potluck dinner before, for those interested)

**October 22:** Islander Deadline (send contributions to markdfriedrichs@gmail.com)

**November 8:** Club Meeting

**November 12:** Fall Workfest

## Relief Caretakers' Schedule

Contact Madeleine Carter at [madeleinepcarter@gmail.com](mailto:madeleinepcarter@gmail.com) to volunteer

### October 7

10 am – 2 pm: **Need a Volunteer**  
2 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

### October 14

10 am – 2 pm: Meredith Griggs  
2 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

### October 21

10 am – 2 pm: John Cunningham  
2 pm – dark: Gary Slayen

### October 28

10 am – 3 pm: **Need a Volunteer**  
3 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

### November 4

10 am – 2 pm: **Need a Volunteer**  
2 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

### November 11

10 am – 2 pm: **Need a Volunteer**  
2 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

### November 18

10 am – 2 pm: **Need a Volunteer**  
2 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

### November 25

10 am – 3 pm: **Need a Volunteer**  
3 pm – dark: **Need a Volunteer**

**Thank you to the September Relief Caretakers: Robert McCartney, Gary Slayen, Hayley Holdridge, Tom and Barbara Lott, and Meredith Griggs**

## Old Timers/Good Timers Potluck Lunch

Monday, October 9th, 12 noon, on the Island  
[Rain date: Monday, November 6, 12 noon]

Come and share a beautiful fall day with your fellow Islanders. The grill will be sizzling, and we'll be pouring the lemonade. Bring a salad, casserole or dessert to share. You need not be an Old Timer to enjoy the Old Timers/Good Timers potluck lunch. All are welcome.

There is always entertainment. And guess what? It is YOU. In past years, we told stories and sang river songs. This time round, bring one funny joke.

Questions: Contact Lucky Marmon, 301-654-7893, [lucretiamarmon@gmail.com](mailto:lucretiamarmon@gmail.com)

## Nominating Committee formed for 2018 Club Officers and Supervisors

The Nominating Committee for Club Officers and Supervisors for 2018 will be led by John Noble, Vice President. It will prepare a slate of recommended nominees to be announced in the December Islander and voted on at the December meeting. Members other than incumbents that are interested in being considered for an Officer or Supervisor position, please write [johnnoble@mac.com](mailto:johnnoble@mac.com).

## The Club Archives Story Origin, Carnegie Library Home and Temporary Move to Newseum

Archivist's Note by Karen B. Possner

Since 1885, various members have assumed responsibility for safekeeping papers considered important to the club's collective memory, i.e., our "precious documents." In practice, this meant that miscellaneous envelopes, folders, binders and cartons stuffed with paper often sat for years in someone's basement or attic and then when various torches were passed, the papers passed to the next volunteer. Or not. Nothing in the collection was organized, much less inventoried, and so the whole undertaking, while well intentioned, was decidedly haphazard. Realizing this could not go on indefinitely, the members formed an Ad Hoc Archival Committee to make a recommendation regarding permanent storage of our papers.

On September 13, 1989, this situation was (more or less) rectified when members who had gathered for the monthly meeting unanimously agreed to a motion to deposit our archives with the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., located in the Carnegie Library. Until recently, this meant that any interested member could contact the Society, request an appointment and spend a leisurely few hours in a pleasant reading room, cruising through various folders to see what we've preserved for posterity. But time marches on.

The Carnegie Library has two key distinctions: it was Washington's first public library and also D.C.'s first desegregated public building. Donated by Andrew Carnegie and dedicated in 1903, it was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in 1969. The New York architectural firm of Ackerman & Ross is responsible for its outstanding Beaux-Arts design.

The age and grandeur of the building, coupled with its Mount Vernon Square location, have made redevelopers drool for years and this summer its future was finally decided. In an August 10th press release, the Library's Board of Trustees announced it has signed an agreement to share the Carnegie Library with Apple and Events DC (aka Washington Convention and Sports Authority). The first floor of the restored Carnegie Library will house a new Apple Global Flagship store and the Historical Society will relocate to space above the store. The exterior of the library will be restored, the interior spaces will be renovated and the redesigned building will

provide the Historical Society with a state-of-the-art research library, storage space, new galleries and technology to properly house the Society's collections.

In the meantime, the Historical Society will occupy space on the third floor of the Newseum located at 555 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Sycamore Island Club members (and others) have been able to visit and peruse the Club archives as of September 19th. If all goes according to plan, the Historical Society and the Club Archives will return to the Carnegie Library on Mt. Vernon Square by December 2018.

## Tryon Wells and the Revamped Club Website

Archivist's Note by Karen B. Possner

When I answered my telephone a few months ago, I rejoiced that it was not a telemarketer but, rather, club *grandee*, Tryon Wells. He said he required assistance "on an archiving project" & since I am the club archivist, how soon could I be at his house to lend a hand? Most of you know about the years of service Tryon has already rendered to our club (counted in decades) so, when he asks for help, I pretty much salute.

When I arrived 30 minutes later (changed out of a wet bathing suit & into club archiving attire) I was presented with a perfectly produced & designed spreadsheet that showed -- month-by-month -- year-by-year -- from 1988 to 2013 -- when, where & how our caretakers had summarized their lives & notable events on our island -- in the form of *Notes from the Island*, in the *Caretaker's Log* or, in some cases, both. Faced with 300 spreadsheet entries, I did not immediately grasp the task before us. Much less its purpose. I'll come to that later.

If I did not appreciate it before (I did), I was reminded again that one person has dedicated a not insignificant portion of his time to preserving & organizing our club's history. The next time you see him, you might consider saying "thanks." Our afternoon working together is the impetus for this note, the purpose of which is to remind us all that our website contains a vast array of (mostly) useful information that you might want to check out some day.

Go to [sycamoreisland.org](http://sycamoreisland.org) & you'll find a page that shows our logo -- a bright green sycamore leaf atop crossed canoe paddles -- surrounded by the words: Sycamore Island Canoe Club (NOT our name). The homepage is organized into 13 categories, each of which is a link:

Weather & River Conditions	Caretaker Log	Sycamore Island Picture Gallery
Sycamore Islander Newsletter Articles	Calendar of Events	Notes From the Island
Club History	Official Club Information	Links to Other Sites
How to Host a Large Party	Membership Info	Relief Caretaker Schedule & Instructions
	Contact the Club	

The *Weather*, etc. category is a catch-all for 12 sub-categories, all relating to river levels, weather radar, etc. -- pretty self-explanatory & essential for island, member & guest safety.

Clicking on the *Sycamore Islander Newsletter Articles* icon brings you to a list of seventy (yes, 70) articles written by members between November 1997 & March 2004 covering a wide range of subjects (see especially the June 2001 article on Fletcher's).

The section on *Club History* contains a short description of, yes, our club history but also includes fourteen links to our standing rules, by-laws, articles of incorporation, monthly meeting archives, maps & land patents, etc. Most importantly, the first link takes you to the Centennial Issue of the *Islander* (1885-1995) which includes *forty more links*, including articles on the legendary CIA canoe pool, the trolley line, our ferries & bridges, wildflowers, birds & fuzzier critters.

The *How to Host a Large Party* link is self-explanatory & contains two links to further relevant information.

If you click on the *Caretaker's Log* icon, indicated by a yellow face with flashing eyes & moving mouth, the page is headed by a photo of our own treasured Joe Hage & is (sometimes) a daily compilation of items that Joe believes warrant our attention. When you get to the bottom of the page, you'll see another link to "Caretaker's Log Archives" which runs from January 1997 to July 2016; as I write this, the latest entry is for August 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The *Calendar of Events & Large Parties* icon is also self-explanatory & allows you to search month-by-month for scheduled events on the island.

Click on the icon for *Official Club Information* (policeman's cap? suggest new icon?) and you're presented with a list of eight categories, which link to further information such as club officers, board of directors, the island code (pretty important, actually), as well as a place to search for anything not immediately evident. By the way, it also includes four recipes; I can only vouch for Jane Winer's baked grits (everything she bakes is excellent).

Anyone interested in pursuing membership will find that clicking on the *Membership Info* icon is the logical place to start. Hopeful applicants are presented with four links that lead to four more links on the application process, a statement of who we are & what we're about, on dues and fees, and how to find your way to the island.

Another self-explanatory category, *Contact the Club*, contains names & email addresses for all officers & supervisors, as well as the caretaker (these are the dedicated people who go out of their way to help you enjoy the island safely).

If you click on *Sycamore Island Picture Gallery*, you'll immediately see eight photos; click on them & you'll find many, many more. When I visit our archives at the D.C. Historical Society (now temporarily located at the Newseum), looking through old photos provides a rich history that's hard to put into words. You'll need an appointment, but all are welcome.

Click on *Notes from the Island* & you'll find a trove of Island history & trivia – the jottings & musings of caretakers from January 1989 to February 2013. Many entries are in essay form & some read like poetic musings while others are distillations of the caretaker's log. (more on this in a moment).

Have you heard of the Jefferson Islands Club? Started in 1931 by 3 U.S. senators, its purpose is to support/defend/advance government principles enunciated by Thomas Jefferson. It's located in Maryland, seventy miles southeast of D.C. on St. Catherine's Island & has duck blinds, a swimming pool, canoes & kayaks, as well as other amenities. I learned about it by clicking on *Links to Other Sites* & then other island clubs.

Our final category, *Relief Caretaker Schedule*, lists who has volunteered & dates for which volunteers are still needed. If you haven't called Madeleine Carter recently to volunteer (301-412-3304), shame on you. Meredith Griggs must have Madeleine's number on speed dial (or vice versa).

The purpose of Tryon's project was to enable a massive cleanup of the club's website, deleting a great deal of duplicate historical information. Remember when I wrote that *Notes from the Island* sometimes is a distillation of the *Caretaker's Log*? Well, now, in each & every case where *Notes* entries have duplicated *Log* entries, all that duplicate information has been (or is in the process of being) deleted from the *Notes*. Since the *Caretaker's Log* is the official record of what's going on, all that has been preserved.

How many members will notice these changes? And how many will appreciate that the club's website has been streamlined (relatively-speaking)? To all those who volunteer their time, muscles & mental effort to keep our club afloat – thanks. We really do appreciate it even if we don't say it often enough.

## CARETAKER'S LOG



Photos by Joe Hage and David Winer

**Monday -- August 28, 2017**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 2.9    Water Temperature: 84**

What a time we had at the fishing derby! I don't know how they do it but George and Shelly know how to deliver a good time and some good fishing. No turkey bacon this time but they brought the donuts and the fishing trophies, fancy cigar boxes filled with shiny new lures! We got everything set up and then we ate donuts and drank coffee while we waited for all of the competitors to show up.

It was a slow start but eventually we had enough people for some real competition. I wasn't here when the fishing boats returned with their catches but I was on the captain's float for what I think was probably the most magical moment of the day. After George was done chumming the waters with chicken livers, and after he had helped all of the kids get their kid-sized fishing rods in order, we all ventured down to the captain's float to see what the kids could catch. One of our most active new waitlist families, the Wales, were there with son William and daughter Catherine. I guess they are about 11 and 9 respectively. Catherine had her little purple rod with a big hunk of chicken liver on it which was so big that her dad said that it looked like a roast beef sandwich dangling from the hook. They were fishing pretty hard for a while until finally Catherine hooked a fish! Her rod was so short that it didn't bend, but we knew it was a big fish because her reel was whizzing loudly from the fish pulling on the drag.

Luckily, George was there to coach her, and her older brother was there, ready with the net. Catherine's eyes were as big as saucers as she reeled in the big 17-inch catfish, the first fish that she had ever caught in her life! I quickly ran for the aquarium so that we could admire the catch before we let it go again. Catherine and her brother posed with the fish for the camera but Catherine was reluctant to be the one holding the slimy thing for the picture, so William did the honors. Eventually, Catherine was able to shore up her courage and she allowed herself to touch the fish, but only with her one index finger, so cute. Congratulations to Catherine and to all of the other participants, and a big thank you to George and Shelly!

**Tuesday -- September 5, 2017**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 2.9    Water Temperature: 79**

Regatta, regatta, regatta! Things are quiet now but what a raucous time we had on the Island yesterday. Just like last year we had an amazing turn-out, I counted between 80 and 100 people on the Island that day. Everyone had a fabulous time and we have Mia and Steve Holland to thank for doing another excellent job of hosting the biggest day of the year on the Island. They brought the food, the drinks, the ice, the eggs for the egg toss, the ping pong balls for the canoe pick-up, the water balloons, the bullhorn, and anything else you might need for an A-plus type of regatta, incredible. And then they cleaned everything up before they left! Thank you Mia and Steve!

We started with the three-legged race, then we did the egg toss and then it was time for infamous race around the Island. There were so many racers that we ran out of boats and we had to have two separate heats of 15 boats each. What a sight it was, canoes everywhere and spectators on the mainland, on the ferry and on the Island, all cheering and waving. After the ping pong ball pick-up we started the grill and the kids started the water gun battle. All of the members pitched in to work the grill and to get the food out while I pulled the ferry back and forth all day. Luckily, there were some kids that wanted to help with the ferry, I don't think I could have done it without them. We all had such a good time that I didn't even mind scraping all of the mud off of the bathroom floors and doing all of the other cleaning up that I had to do this morning. Lets hope that Mia and Steve volunteer to run the regatta again next year!

Speaking of large crowds, I think we set some sort of record for the month of August. There were 11 sign-in sheets for the month and they were all filled in, which means that we had close to 400 people visiting the Island in one month!

#### **Thursday -- September 21, 2017**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 2.8    Water Temperature: 75**

It looks like we're headed for a beautiful weekend. Skies are clear, the air is warm and it looks like the swimming season isn't quite over yet. I thought that our swimming season had come to an abrupt end last month so it is such a pleasure to have some summer weather as we head into Fall.

#### **Sunday -- September 24, 2017**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 2.7    Water Temperature: 78**

It's been super busy down here this week. The river and weather conditions are perfect, plus the kids in Montgomery County didn't have school on Thursday and the DC schools were closed on Friday. I keep a list of school closings in Montgomery County so I was prepared for the onslaught on Thursday but I was really surprised to arrive back on the Island on Friday and see the place swarming with kids before noon. Mary and I are really enjoying having all of these really cute kids here and they are all so helpful and well behaved, mostly. The best part is when we're all on the ferry going back to the mainland and one of the kids says that it was the best day of their life or that Sycamore Island is their favorite place in the whole world.

I don't have any wild animal stories to share. It seems that our humming birds have left for warmer climes or maybe they aren't using our feeder since there are literally thousands of jewel weed flowers for them to feed on. On the Island we have the yellow jewel weed almost exclusively, with maybe one or two of the orange, spotted jewel weed. Along the towpath it is the exact opposite with a profusion of the spotted jewel weed growing in the canal prism for as far as the eye can see and hardly any yellow ones. The spotted ones are very pretty but they do not grow as tall and they seem to prefer that wet soggy ground. The other name for the jewel weed is touch-me-not, and yesterday I had my first seed pod explode in my hand when I touched it. Flowers going to seed, it must be Autumn.

I'm hoping that this new warm spell will reinvigorate the fishing. I haven't had very much luck this summer but someone caught a 15-incher last week, so there is still hope for me to improve my season's catch.

## Minutes for the September 23, 2017 Meeting of the Sycamore Island Club

**Attendees:** David Winer, John Noble, Sherry Fizdale, Anne Waidmann, Geoff Holdridge, Richard Bertaut, Star Mitchell, Bill Marmon, Lucky Marmon, Gerry Barton, Joe Hage, Molly Newberry, Karen Possner, Jim Drew, Mark Friedrichs. Marianne Ross, Drew Walsh

President Richard Bertaut called the meeting order. Attendees introduced themselves. Notes take at the August meeting were accepted without correction. There were no official minutes as there was no quorum.

**Communications:** None

**Treasurer's Report:** No report. Treasurer Ned Goddard is working in Florida on work related to hurricane Irma.

**Captain's Report:** While the Captain was not present, others talked of ongoing projects, such as replacing some of the wood on the island side of the ferry landing. The current low river water levels will permit an examination of the canal side landing as well. There has been talk of replacing some of the screens in the club house doors, but so far no plan to do so.

Dave Winer noted that there was a new tight rope and safety wire on the downside of the island. Children attending the Regatta enjoyed trying it out.

Gerry Barton suggested removing or moving the swing, noting that there had been two collisions of swingers with persons passing in the area. Others recommended better supervision of children by parents and better warning signs. Still others suggested that orange cones be put around the area during events such as the Regatta.

One member suggested that there should be a weight limit for users of the swing, but Dave Winer reassured the assembled about the strength of the swing's construction.

It was also noted that the horseshoe game area has sharp spikes that could do serious harm. It was suggested that we put old tennis balls on the spikes. Others suggested that signage on both swing and horseshoe area might be useful.

**Membership Secretary's Report:** Anne Waidman said there was no change from last month in the number of members and wait list members.

There was a long discussion about changing the dates prospective members could submit applications and enter the bi-annual lottery and the date that the lottery would be held. There was general agreement that if these activities were scheduled for the Fall, prospective members would have time to visit the island during clement weather. That would give them the opportunity to attend meetings on the island and meet members who might later be willing recommend them for membership. VP John Noble will write a proposal and submit it for discussion at the next Club meeting.

**Archives Secretary's Report:** Archivist Karen Possner announced that the DC Carnegie Library, home to the DC Historical Society where our archives have been stored, is closing. The Historical Society has moved to the Newseum and is accessible by a separate entrance (sans fee.) Call ahead if you wish to visit the Sycamore Island archives. The Historical Society will move back into the Carnegie Library after its renovation...hopefully, towards the end of December 2018.

**Club Supervisor's Report:** Club Supervisor Marianne Ross wished to buy a new whistling tea kettle for the club house. It was explained that such items can be purchased from the Glen Echo hardware store where the Club has an account. Marianne should call Treasurer Ned Goddard and have her name added to the list of persons approved to make purchases. Someone suggested posting a list of needed items in the Islander before purchasing them. Members

might be happy to donate items.

There was a discussion about the “shabbiness” of the Club. Karen Possner suggested changing some of the light fixtures and acquiring new moisture resistant furniture, such as treated wicker with cushions covered in “outdoor materials.” She warned against acquiring upholstered chairs or couches, noting that insects dwelled therein.

Drew Walsh has been given chairs and suggested rewarding the donor with a day pass to the island. This action was approved. There followed a lengthy discussion about the “day pass,” and to whom it can be given. There will be further review about day pass policy after conferring with Ann Marie Cunningham re: the original intent of the pass.

**Caretaker’s Report:** Caretaker Joe Hage remarked on the large turnout for the Regatta. He is optimistic about having a big turnout for the Fall Work Fest, as attendance is now tied to a member’s eligibility to host a big party.

**Fall Work Fest:** Sunday, Nov. 12th

**Raindate:** Sunday, Nov. 19th

Gerry Barton noted that Joe has created a new and charming overlook on the south side of the Island. He has mowed the ground cover, set up chairs, and even put up a small tent.

**Relief Caretaker’s Report:** None

**New Business:** David Winer made the following proposal: Permanent signs to be placed on club property must be approved by vote of the membership in a regular club meeting. The proposal was passed 16 to 1.

**Old Timers/Good Timers:** Lucky Marmon agreed to schedule the traditional Old Timers/Good Timers potluck lunch for 12:00 noon, Monday, October 9th.

(See Details elsewhere in the Islander)

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 11th, at 8:00. A potluck dinner is always fun, weather permitting.

Thanks to Karen Possner for the delicious cake.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lucky Marmon  
Co-recording Secretary



Islander Editor: Mark Friedrichs; suggestions or contributions of content or photos welcome to [mark.d.friedrichs@gmail.com](mailto:mark.d.friedrichs@gmail.com)