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Harford celebrates 250th Anniversary of the Bush Declaration for Independence signed ‘at the risqué of our lives and fortunes’

Before the American Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, 34 elected representatives in Harford County signed the Bush Declaration on March 22, 1775, pledging their support for independence “at the risqué of our lives and fortunes.”

Named for the Colonial town of Bush where the signers assembled, it was the first such document signed by elected representatives of the people. Two hundred and fifty years later, Harford County is planning a weekend of celebrations including a display of this important document, a gathering of the signers’ descendants, and public events honoring those brave souls who risked everything for liberty.

On Friday, March 21, descendants of the signers from across the nation will gather at a ticketed social event also open to the public. Attendees will be able to view the declaration and re-enact the signers’ dilemma by choosing whether to sign a replica of the document as a brave “citizen” or remain a “subject” of King George III.

The event will feature heavy hors d’oeuvres, cocktails, and music from the Colonial period. Joyce White, author of “Cooking Maryland’s Way” will be on hand highlighting the cuisine of 1775.

Hosted by the Historical Society of Harford County and the Hereditary Order of the Signers of the Bush Declaration, and sponsored by the McComas Family, the Descendants of the Signers Meet & Greet will be held from 5 to 8 p.m. at the Liriodendron Mansion, 502 W. Gordon Street, Bel Air. Tickets are \$55; space is limited, and the deadline to register is Friday, March 7.

On Saturday morning, March 22, the Bush Declaration Celebration will feature a dramatic reading of the document and a presentation by a living history interpreter portraying Colonel Aquila Hall, the declaration’s first signer.

This free event will include a discussion of the declaration’s historical significance and live performances of patriotic music. No reservations are necessary; the public is welcome to attend from 9:30 to 11 a.m. at the Bel Air Armory, 37 N. Main Street, Bel Air.

Later on Saturday, March 22, and on Sunday afternoon, March 23, historic sites related to the Bush Declaration will be open for visitors with a docent at several locations to discuss the connection. The sites, some of which are rarely open to the public, will include historic homes, church cemeteries, and the last remaining Colonial-era structure in the village of Bush.

The Historical Society of Harford County Headquarters will also be open, and the declaration will be on display.

Visitors can document their travels with a Passport to History that will be stamped at each site. All who visit at least four sites will earn a certificate, children and students will also earn a Junior Historian Badge; Scouts can earn a special Bush 250 Patch.

Passport to History sites will be open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on March 22 and from 12 noon to 4 p.m. on March 23. Passports with information and addresses for each location are available at all branches of the Harford County Public Library and the Historical Society of Harford County, 143 N. Main Street, Bel Air.

On Sunday evening, March 23, the Hereditary Order of the Signers of the Bush Declaration will hold its annual dinner at Mountain Branch Golf Club, which is a ticketed event open to the public. Tickets are \$60 and the deadline to register is March 1. Details are online at www.bush-declaration.org.

For more information about the above events, people may visit the Historical Society of Harford County website at <https://www.harfordhistory.org/bush-declaration/>