

CONTACT: Cara Burton, Library Director, (757) 787-3400

LIBRARY BUILDING PROJECT MAKING HISTORY WITH HERITAGE CENTER

(ACCOMAC, VIRGINIA) February 21, 2018 – Saving Eastern Shore history has become a focus of community support for the new regional library to be built in Parksley, Virginia. Eastern Shore Public Library Board of Trustees recently approved naming the addition to the former grocery store the “Eastern Shore of Virginia Heritage Center” which will house archives, a research room, lecture hall, and makerspace. Since October 2015, when the Library bought the Fresh Pride building in Parksley, a growing number of local historians and genealogists have worked together to create a building program that expands what is now the Eastern Shore Room at the current main library in Accomac. The \$5 million regional library will be a 20,110 square foot facility of which the Heritage Center will be 7,600 square feet.

Since 1984, the Eastern Shore Room has provided research materials for people searching for information about their family history, scholars researching the earliest beginnings of the United States, authors writing stories about the Eastern Shore culture, and students learning about local history. The rare books and manuscripts, along with the expertise of librarian Dr. Brooks Miles Barnes, became well-known drawing visitors from all over the world. The library received the donated collections of local historians like Nora Turman and James Egbert Mears, however, in recent years Dr. Barnes had to turn away donations due to space limitations. Archives pertaining to the Eastern Shore started to be donated to the historical societies in Richmond and out-of-state. Dr. Barnes took this as a call to action advocating that the new regional library have a large, climate controlled room to safely store our local history here on the Eastern Shore. Even after his 2016 retirement, Dr. Barnes helps a fundraising committee focus on securing funding for the planned Heritage Center.

The Eastern Shore Public Library Foundation has focused recent fundraising efforts on securing grants and donations to fund the Heritage Center in the regional library. Current plans include relocating the Katharine H.S. Edmonds Eastern Shore Room and creating the Brooks Miles Barnes Archives Room. Additionally, the Dennis R. Custis Lecture Hall will enable the library to host public programs, workshops, and conferences. The makerspace will have audio and video recording equipment for collecting oral histories, interviews, recording audio-books, and other digital publications. A Young Adult room will be next to the maker space and lecture hall to engage students in local history. An archivist’s office is included for the professional that will prepare and preserve materials for use and organize public programs. An endowment to fund this position has been started with a bequest from local historian and author, Kirk Mariner.

Local author Curtis Badger recently wrote, “This will give us the opportunity to usher in a new era for the study of Eastern Shore history. Today we have the opportunity to ensure that Eastern Shore documents remain on the Shore, providing a new generation of writers and historians with ample material to study and interpret for many years to come.”

The new Eastern Shore Regional Library and the Heritage Center are scheduled to open in the Fall of 2019. History cannot wait. Recent donated archives of Francis Bibbens Latimer and Kirk Mariner have to be stored in off-site locations. The Eastern Shore Public Library

Foundation is seeking financial donations to support the building. To donate, visit www.shorelibrary.com or send a contribution to ESPL Foundation, PO Box 554, Accomac, VA 23301. To donate stock or for additional information, call the Foundation office at (757) 787-2500.