

Foreword

Researching the history of the Maryland Association of Counties was no small undertaking. When I began the task in 1999, I do not think anyone envisioned the depth of the information that would need to be researched or the challenge presented by the voids in that information. Many people contributed to this undertaking and deserve my thanks.

MACo Research Associate Jill Bigden researched the buildings and properties at 5 State Circle and 169 Conduit Street, among other issues. She uncovered history of Conduit Street buildings, dating beyond the signing of the U.S. Constitution. (We were a bit disappointed that we could not trace those signers directly to our location, but the information was fascinating nonetheless.) She also conducted several interviews. Her willingness to “dig deeper” was much appreciated.

Bethany Young began the initial research during the months she spent assisting the staff prior to the 2000 Summer Conference. In many ways, Bethany ciphered through perhaps the most difficult portion of the history – matching dates with events, people with titles, Board of Director’s decisions with their follow-through. Her tenaciousness was impressive and I am very grateful for her assistance.

Megan Sheils was brought into this project at the eleventh hour to help pull together all the research, interviews, and events into a coherent publication. She did a superior job. With limited guidance, she fearlessly plunged into the project, organizing the information, matching MACo events with state and national newsworthy items, and creating a consistent tone for the history. Her help was invaluable and she is to be commended for her adaptability and initiative. It could not have been completed without her fresh perspective and expertise.

Legislative Director Michael Sanderson and Associate Director Erin Dougherty wrote the Legislative Affairs chapter. From the beginning, MACo’s mission was representation at the State level. This chapter reviews that important part of the organization’s history, folding in significant State legislation affecting local government as it related to MACo’s goals and objectives. With their legislative background and solid grasp of county issues, these two were aptly suited for the task and I am indebted to them for writing this chapter.

Additional assistance was provided by MACo Office Assistant Becky Black, Administrative Specialist Karen Lowe, Office Financial Manager Leslie Walsh, and of course, the support and encouragement of Executive Director David Bliden, who calmed the fears of this reluctant author’s misgivings about the project countless times.

Many MACo friends donated their time and memories to be interviewed for this history. Time precluded us from scheduling more interviews, but those conducted provided us with valuable personal perspectives. Of course, the most interesting stories could not be published, but we enjoyed hearing them immensely. It should be noted that despite months of scheduling attempts, we were not able to interview MACo Past President, Governor Parris Glendening.

Our gratitude to those persons interviewed, including former Governor William Donald Schaefer, former Speaker of the House Clayton Mitchell, former Governor Marvin Mandel, MACo

Past Presidents Frank Francois, John O'Rourke, James Dent, Delbert Null, C. Vernon Gray, Henry Parker, Esther Gelman, former MACo Executive Directors William Ratchford, Raquel Sanudo, and Tee O'Connor, former MACo staff members Mavis Spence and Mickey Geisler, former Wicomico County Administrator Matt Creamer, and Local Government Insurance Trust Executive Director Jon Burrell.

Information collected from the personal interviews was supplemented by researching fifty years of documents. The list is exhaustive, but in short, they included the early *Legislative Bulletins*, Board of Directors minutes, Legislative and Conference Planning Committee minutes, *Courthouse News*, Winter, Summer, and Attorney and Administrator Conference Programs, photographs, correspondence, budget reports, court records, and newspaper articles.

A very special thanks to Frederick County Commission Special Assistant Mary Alice Marks, who researched the Frederick County Board of Directors minutes from the 1950s, and National Association of Counties Director of Public Affairs Tom Goodman, who supplied information about MACo's involvement in our national association.

More than 10 years of the *Courthouse News* were missing from the MACo archives. Despite creative attempts to find them, they were never located. As we relied heavily on cross-referencing Board of Directors meeting minutes with *Courthouse News* information and vice versa, this was most unfortunate. Those *Courthouse News* issues are sorely missed, but we remain hopeful that someone will come forward to donate their cherished copies.

In addition to the donation of his time, Bill Ratchford also generously donated his personal set of the *Courthouse News & Notes* he published when he was Executive Secretary during the 1960s. We are grateful for this gift.

It is with pride that this history be published. It is dedicated to the scores of dedicated, talented, and colorful people through the past fifty years, who are, themselves, the very essence of the Maryland Association of Counties.

Ellen B. Clarke

*Director of Meetings & Communications
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