



# The Linden Times

A bi-weekly newsletter for the members & friends of the Calvert County Historical Society – April 30, 2020

**Joust**, a combat in which two knights on horseback attempted to unhorse each other with blunted lances. This type of combat fought in a highly formalized manner as part of a tournament.



*Renaissance-era depiction of a joust in traditional armor circa, 1540*

**Did You Know** that Calvert County is home to the oldest tournament of Maryland's official state sport – Jousting? It's true! Held each year on the grounds of Christ Church in Port Republic, the tournament celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> year in 2016. Jousting tournaments have been held in Maryland since early colonial times and became increasingly popular after the Civil War. Retaining the pageantry and customs of medieval

tournaments, modern competitors are called "knights" or "maids," and many dress in colorful costumes. Men, women and children compete equally with skill and horsemanship determining the class.

Jousting tournaments in Maryland are "ring tournaments" which involve charging a horse at full-gallop through an 80-yard course toward suspended rings. Using a long, fine-tipped lance, the rider has 8 seconds to complete the course and "spear" the rings, scoring points accordingly.

In a jousting ring tournament, rings are hung 6 feet 9 inches above the ground from three equally-spaced arches (rings range in diameter from one-quarter inch to nearly two inches depending upon the skill-level of the contestant). A family sport, jousting skills frequently are passed from one generation to the next.



**CHRIST CHURCH of Calvert Co. MD** will be carrying on our Calvert jousting tradition with their:

## **154th Jousting Tournament and Church Fair**

***"Hear ye! Hear ye! Come one; come all!"***

**Saturday, August 29, 2020** (last Saturday in August)

For details of this amazing event visit: <http://www.christchurchcalvert.org/church-fair-activities/>

Calvert County Historical Society

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# The Last Saturday in August

It's always hot.

It almost never rains.

It's the day they hold the annual Calvert County Jousting Tournament on the grounds of Christ Church in Port Republic.

Dinner used to cost 50 cents (at least in 1937). In 1938 it jumped to 60 cents. By 1941 it was 75 cents. Four years ago it was \$4. This year they are wavering between \$6 and \$8.

There used to be a ball afterward. There is no ball now, not since 1965.

During the years of the Second World War, they stopped holding the Tournament altogether.

Some still speak of it as the "Mutual Homecoming Tournament" although it has not been held in Mutual since 1957, and the building once known as Mutual Hall was deeded to the County Commissioners in 1957 and has since burned to the ground.

And it is **not** a Homecoming, Father Bill Plummer, rector of Christ Church Parish states emphatically. Years ago they decided to delete the word "Homecoming" so that "no visitor would think mistakenly that the tournament was reserved only for native sons and daughters."

But it is for Betty Briscoe, whose late husband, Dr. Everard Briscoe, had a hand (with John S. Williams, records say,) in 1934, in re-vitalizing the annual event which had been a more or less regular event since 1866 — just after the Civil War — (or the War Between the States, depending on where you grew up.)

When Dr. Briscoe died, Betty kept on with the Tournament for a couple or maybe four or five

years, and so she may be forgiven if for her it continues to mean an occasion when a lot of folks who have drifted away from Calvert County come back to cheer on their favorite horses and riders, and enjoy the deviled crab, country ham and fried chicken dinners, and shop the fascinating little boutiques which spring up overnight all over the Christ Church parking lot, and then sit in the cool of the evening on the porches on Main Street, fanning and eating ice cream and remembering who built which house and which one of whose daughters married who else's third cousin, and keeping alive the funny anecdotes which get re-told every year, and remembering the people who aren't back this year.

But there are a lot of people who do come who aren't coming home at all, but maybe wish they were — and the crowd changes just as the riders change. Betty Briscoe goes through piles of old photographs and tells you who the fine-looking riders are — Doug Parran, whose horse was the admiration of everyone — still is as far as can be told — and Nat Sollers, and the Weems brothers and it is a little hard to know which moment in time is represented by the various splendid looking riders caught in identical poses riding at full gallop to impale the little rings on their spears thus proving their right to crown with flowers a chosen queen of love and beauty.

Meanwhile, in fields and paddocks and riding rings and dirt country roads, a new crop of young riders is practicing in the coolest part of August days, getting ready for the last Saturday in August, getting ready to take their place in that heady, exciting, heart-pounding competition in which rider and horse have to understand and trust each other and try their best to place first in the biggest riding event of the year in Calvert County. □

