

BULLETIN
OF
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CECIL COUNTY

No. 1

October 25, 1955

SALUTATORY

The Bulletin makes its bow with this number. Frankly, it is an experimental innovation, and the reception accorded it will determine its continuance or early demise. If it should survive, a historical sketch on some Cecil County subject, similar to the one on page 4 herewith, will appear in each future number. It hopes to serve as a medium for spreading information regarding the county and for informing the members of their Society's activities. That will be the principal mission of its existence.

The sponsor of the Bulletin takes refuge behind a cloak of anonymity in order to avoid the risk of debarment from the Society.

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NEW MEMBERS

At the spring meeting held in Leeds Church House on the evening of May 16th the following new members were welcomed into the Society:

Mrs. Martin Dwyer, Elkton
 Mrs. Dorothy W. Jefferson, Elkton
 Mr. and Mrs. John W. Lord, Perryville
 Mr. Leonard K. Lupin, Newark, Delaware
 Mr. and Mrs. John T. McCauley, Wilmington, Del.
 Colonel Theo O'Brien, Haverford, Pa.
 Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Williams, Jr., Chesapeake City

The accession of these additional members makes a total of 215 names now on the roll. The Frederick County Society has 450 members. Why shouldn't Cecil County double its membership? The usefulness of the Society depends very largely upon the number of its members.

Historical Society of Cecil County

OFFICERS

The election of officers is an important item on the agenda for the meeting on October 25th. According to the revised By-Laws the officers installed at this time will serve for the next biennium, i.e., until October 1957.

DEATH OF WALTER BLACKSON

The sudden death of Walter Blackson at his home in Wilmington, Delaware, on June 1, 1955, has deprived the Society of the service of a Trustee and valuable member who was zealously attached to the interests of his native county. Possessing an intimate knowledge and keen appreciation of Cecil County history, he was continually seeking to increase his fund of information.

Mr. Blackson was born near Big Elk Chapel. After graduating from the Cecil County High School in 1900 and from Goldey Commercial College one year later, he entered upon a successful business career in the city of Wilmington. He took an active part in civic affairs and among other positions served as a trustee of Grace Methodist Church for forty-four years—a record which was without equal. His varied interests and genial personality brought him a wide circle of friends by whom he was esteemed and respected.

Sincere sympathy is extended to Mrs. Blackson.

THE GOVERNOR VISITS ELKTON

The fall meeting of the Historical Society will be held in Fellowship Hall of Elkton Methodist Church on Tuesday evening, October 25th, at 7:30 o'clock standard time. We are honored on this occasion by having as our guest the distinguished Governor of the State of Maryland, the Honorable Theodore R. McKeldin, who will address the Society.

This meeting has been arranged to coincide with the dedication of the new Cecil County Library, which will take place at 7:00 p.m. The Governor will also attend and participate in this ceremony. The program will afford our members an opportunity to inspect the library and become acquainted with their future home on the second floor.

DECEMBER-MAY ROMANCE

The following notice was published in the MARYLAND GAZETTE of Annapolis on September 29, 1808:

"Married on Thursday evening, the 22nd inst., by the Rev. Nicholas Chambers, the Rev. James Cook, minister of the gospel, aged 60 years, to the amiable and much esteemed Miss Rebecca Chambers, aged 16 years, of Cecil County, State of Maryland."

HISTORY IS MADE

On the hot afternoon of Wednesday, August 3rd, the executive officers of Friends of the Library of Cecil County, Inc. and the Trustees of the Cecil County Library met in the Elkton branch library to witness the consummation of a successful campaign to provide funds for the purchase of a permanent library site in Elkton. The matter of obtaining adequate library facilities in the county seat had been studied for several years, and upon the death in April of the late Mayor, Henry H. Mitchell, an opportunity was presented to acquire his residence at 135 East Main Street for that purpose.

The building was first examined and approved by the State Library Supervisor. Then during the month of June a money-raising campaign was launched under the able leadership of Wallace Williams, Sr. and a goal of \$37,000 was set, this amount being required for purchase of the building and its adaptation to library uses. The campaign came to a close on July 20th when announcement was made that the goal had been achieved by the contributions of more than 900 civic-minded Cecil Countains.

This fine achievement was of great concern to the Historical Society of Cecil County. Since its incorporation in 1931 the Society had been without a headquarters, and while the desirability of having a repository for valuable historical data had been broached from time to time, the project had not progressed beyond the point of wishful thinking. When the happy suggestion was made that a legally designated room in the proposed library be set aside for its exclusive use the Society on May 16th endorsed the plan and threw its whole-hearted support into the campaign. Grateful thanks are due those who exercised the privilege of contributing to the success of this community effort.

At the meeting on August 3rd settlement was made for the Mitchell property and title was vested in Friends of the Library, Inc., of which Mrs. Henry V. Davis is President. At the same time the new owners executed an agreement leasing the building to the Cecil County Library and the Historical Society of Cecil County for a term of ninety-nine years in consideration of a cash payment of One Dollar (\$1.00).

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The long cherished hopes for a home for the Historical Society have thus reached fulfillment. Your officers intend to make it a distinctive feature of the County Library in which all the members will feel a sense of justifiable pride.

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FORMATION OF CECIL COUNTY

Cecil County includes one of the oldest settlements, perhaps the very oldest, made within the present limits of Maryland, although no habitation now marks the site. It appears probable that as early as 1627-28 the followers of William Claiborne established a trading post on Palmer's Island (now known as Garrett Island) at the mouth of Susquehanna River. No further settlements were made in the county until after the treaty was concluded with the Susquehanna Indians in 1652. The more settled conditions resulting from this treaty caused a movement of population toward the head of the bay from the settled portions of Maryland and the Delaware River.

In 1658 the first settlement was made on Carpenter's Point near the mouth of Principio Creek. Shortly thereafter Augustine Herman located on Bohemia Manor and soon the estuaries of the Elk and Sassafras rivers were dotted with numerous plantations. By 1674 the population was sufficient to warrant the cutting off of that portion of Baltimore County east of the Chesapeake Bay into a new county named in honor of the aged Proprietor, Cecil, Lord Baltimore.

On the 6th of June 1674 a proclamation was issued by Charles Calvert, over his title Captain-General of Maryland, erecting the new county. It was directed to Nathaniel Stiles, who was named High Sheriff of Cecil County. This proclamation was followed by a second one on June 19th of the same year modifying the boundaries first assigned because they were found to overlap most of Kent County. The usual method of erecting the counties was by Act of the Assembly, and the Governor's proclamation creating Cecil County is the only instance of its kind to be found.

The prime mover in establishing the new county was Augustine Herman, who had not only named but also indicated the bounds of Cecil County in his map of 1670. It was the tenth in order of formation of Maryland counties. It has an area of 386 square miles, a considerable part of which is intersected by waters of the Bohemia, Elk, and North East rivers.

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THE STATE FLOWER

The Black-eyed Susan is the flower emblem of the State of Maryland, it having been so designated by the State Legislature in 1918.