

BULLETIN

OF
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CECIL COUNTY

No. 11

Elk Forge, Maryland

January 19, 1959

OUR NAME

There seems to be an unconscious tendency on the part of some of our members to refer to this organization as the Cecil County Historical Society. The same distorted form of the correct name is invariably used in the meager publicity which the County papers allot to the Society. This may be a mere lapsus linguae or a natural short cut; whatever the reason, the fact remains that the corporate title is The Historical Society of Cecil County. The longer name is probably not euphonious, but by charter from the Free State of Maryland it is The Historical Society of Cecil County. It is hoped that every one will be at some pains to speak of the Society by its correct name.

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OCTOBER 1958 MEETING

The Society's regular fall meeting was held on Monday evening, October 20, in the spacious cafeteria of the new Bohemia Manor High School on the Augustine Herman Highway south of Chesapeake City. It was the first meeting ever held in the Second District and visitors were afforded an opportunity to marvel at the ultra-modern school building. Approximately 170 members and guests were served a bountiful turkey dinner by the newly organized PTA.

Former Congressman Alfred N. Phillips introduced the speaker of the evening, the Rev. Francis Krastel, Jr., who made a scholarly talk on the history and influence of Old Bohemia or St. Francis Xavier Church, which was founded as a mission in 1704 and became the center whence the Jesuit Fathers carried their missionary work into nearby colonies. Father Krastel also related the development of Old Bohemia Academy, which was opened in 1745 and numbered among its youthful students Charles Carroll of Carrollton and his cousin, John Carroll, the first Catholic Bishop in the United States.

An interesting relic displayed was the historic iron cross, on loan from the museum of Georgetown University. This cross is believed to have been brought from England when the colonists came to Maryland in 1634 and taken to Bohemia when the mission was founded and kept there for nearly two centuries.

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POST OFFICES DISCUSSED

On Monday evening, November 24, a group of 25 interested members met in the Conference Room of the County Library in Elkton for the sixth in the series of round table discussions of local history. The subject explored at the meeting was "Old Post Offices and Postmasters of Cecil County".

All post offices of the County, both past and present, were summarized and much valuable information was contributed and recorded. It was brought out

that when the Federal Government instituted the postal service on July 26, 1789, there were thirteen original post offices in Maryland, three of which were in Cecil County. They were located at Head of Elk, Charlestown, and Warwick.

Old letters sealed with wax, others mailed before the advent of adhesive stamps, and covers bearing cancellations of County offices no longer in existence were displayed, together with a postmaster's commission signed by John Wanamaker, Postmaster-General.

In addition to 18 offices now located in Cecil County, other places at which offices were once established were: Appleton, Aikin, Bank, Barker, Barksdale, Blake, Blue Ball, Blythedale, Brick Meeting House, Calvert, Cherry Hill, Cowentown, Cromwell, Elk Neck, Fair Hill, Farmington, Greenhurst, Iron Hill, Leeds, Mechanics Valley, Octoraro, Oakwood, Pilot, Pivot, Pleasant Hill, Port Herman, Richardsmere, Rockland, Rock Springs, St. Augustine, Singerly, South Milford, Theodore, Sylmar, Town Point, Union Vale, Winchester, Woodlawn, and Zion.

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THE ELK FORGE COMPANY

This company was organized in 1761 for the purpose of manufacturing bar iron. It acquired upwards of 1300 acres of land on the Big Elk Creek and erected two forges and a large grist-mill where the town of Elk Mills now stands. The company was very successful in its operations and employed a large number of teams in transporting charcoal from the forests, where it was burned, and in hauling pig iron from the furnaces in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, where it was produced, to the forges on the Big Elk Creek.

At the time of the British invasion of Cecil County in August, 1777, Elk Forge was a place of considerable importance and a detachment of troops sent there committed many depredations and destroyed much property.

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CHANDLEE ARTICLES PRESENTED

The Society is greatly indebted to Mrs. Walter Blackson, of Wilmington, Delaware, for the donation of a valuable surveying instrument and accessories made about the year 1795 by the celebrated firm of Chandlee & Sons, of Nottingham (Brick Meeting House).

The founder of this firm was Benjamin Chandlee, whose father emigrated from County Kildare, Ireland, and reached Philadelphia in 1701. Having learned the trade of clockmaker and married the daughter of his employer, Abel Cottey, he located at Nottingham, where Benjamin was born in 1728. The eminence attained by Benjamin Chandlee in the manufacture of scientific, mathematical, and chemical instruments was unsurpassed in America during his lifetime, and his sons, Isaac and Ellis, carried on the enterprise with equal success after their

father's death on September 18, 1794. The Chandlees, who were probably best known in Cecil County for the clocks which bear their name, conducted the business until Isaac died on December 10, 1813. It was then discontinued by Ellis, who survived until 1816.

THE BULLETIN

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Ernest A. Howard, Editor.

PERSONAL NOTES

The Executive Committee has elected Mr. F. Rodney Frazer, of Elkton, a Trustee of the Society to fill a vacancy caused by the death of Mrs. Harry T. Alexander. The resignation of Mrs. Kingsley Montgomery as a Trustee has been tendered, but her successor has not yet been named.

The resignations of Mrs. C. W. Dickerson, Robert D. Rasmussen, Mr. and Mrs. Anthony E. Robertson, Mrs. R. James Roe, Mrs. Mary Smith Witcher, and the Rev. Herbert Leswing, Jr., as members have been received.

During the second half of 1958 the following new members were enrolled:

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Barnett	Mrs. Ernest Janney
Miss Roberta B. Craig	Miss Miriam E. Russell
Mrs. John Hyland Dilks	Rev. and Mrs. John W. Simpser
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald H. Haines	Mrs. Robert T. Taylor
Mrs. Ellis Hawke	Mr. J. Mercer Terrell

The Society sponsored a display of early Christmas cards, old story books, and antique dolls in the foyer of the Cecil County Library during the month of December. The exhibit was arranged by Mr. Taylor, our Curator, and Mrs. Jefferson, County Librarian.

Messrs. W. T. Mahoney, Morton F. Taylor, and E. A. Howard represented Cecil County at the second annual conference of Historical Societies of Maryland held in the headquarters of the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore on October 11, 1958. Some seventy delegates from County societies discussed their common objectives and methods of promoting the best interests of their organizations.

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TREASURER'S REPORT

Following is a condensed summary of the Treasurer's report on financial operations for the year ended December 31, 1958:

	<u>Receipts</u>	<u>Expenses</u>
Balance in bank January 1, 1958	\$1,696.13	
Annual dues collected	656.00	
Dinner tickets sold	696.00	
Contributions	682.00	
Cost of three dinners		\$ 720.00
Restoration work in Old Kitchen		2,076.16
Printing, postage, stationery		230.56
Sundry expenses		20.45
Balance in bank December 31, 1958		682.96
	<u>\$3,730.13</u>	<u>\$3,730.13</u>

A SCHOOLBOY'S LETTER

One morning in March, 1816, Dr. John Groome, of Elkton, received a letter from his son, Samuel, age 13, who was then a student at West Nottingham Academy under Reuben H. Davis, principal. To Samuel's letter was appended a footnote by his older brother, John Charles. For those now permitted for the first time to scan this letter, a few facts regarding the Groome family may help in a clearer understanding of its contents.

Dr. John Groome, a native of Chestertown, had removed to Elkton to practise his profession and had married Elizabeth Black Wallace, widow of Dr. George Wallace, who had died in Philadelphia while assisting Dr. Benjamin Rush during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793. Dr. and Mrs. Groome became the parents of two sons: 1) John Charles, who was born June 8, 1800, and after attending West Nottingham Academy, graduated from Princeton University, became a leader at the Elkton bar, and was the unsuccessful Democratic candidate for Governor in 1857; 2) Samuel William, who was born July 26, 1802, and after attending West Nottingham Academy, graduated from Jefferson Medical College in 1824, and practised in Elkton until his death on May 11, 1843. He lies buried in Head of Christiana Presbyterian cemetery.

It may be added that John C. Groome was the father of James Black Groome, who was inaugurated Governor of Maryland on March 4, 1874.

Reproduced below is the letter exactly as Dr. Groome received it from his boys. It contains interesting sidelights on the hardships which were part of the price of obtaining an education in those early days. "Brother James", who is referred to by Samuel, was his half-brother, James Wallace, son of Dr. George Wallace. This is the letter:

West Nottingham March 17th 1816

Dear Father

I take this opportunity of writing you a few lines to let you know we are well and to let you (sic) our examination is to be on the fourth Monday of next month and our exhibition on the fourth tuesday John says to get him the play called Mr. H* and please to send me up a dollar or two for to get candles blacking and to pay the man for cutting our wood and to pay Mr Ramsey for the wood we burn at the Academy takes our money and I have not got but one 12-1/2 cent note, and if you send me up a dollar or two it will do me untill the examination and tell Mr Watson to be shore and make side pockets in our coats and make hast and get them done and send them up to us for I have not got any close fit to go to meeting and get Brother James to get us hats in Philadelphia for one hat he'll get their is worth (sic) of Beastens and to get mine to fit his head middling tight and tell Mamma to send us up some cakes and to send me up a lock for my trunk.

I remain your affectionate son

Doctr John Groome

Samuel W. Groome

*The play which I wish you get me is called "Mr H. beware a bad name."

John C. Groome