

# Bulletin

OF

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CECIL COUNTY

NO. 31

SHELEMIAM, MARYLAND

MAY 22, 1967

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Historical Society has arranged to hold the Spring Dinner Meeting at the Bay View Elementary School, Bay View, Maryland, on Monday evening, May 22, 1967, at 6:45 o'clock. Dinner will be served by the PTA. It will be necessary that your reservation be in by May 15. Dinner tickets are \$2.50 each. If you expect to attend this meeting, please fill in the enclosed card and send it, together with YOUR CHECK, to MISS LILLIE E. ENGLAND, R.D. #1, NOTTINGHAM, PA. 19362. Our program for the meeting will be on Cecil County history, and more information will be given in the county newspapers prior to the meeting.

In my letter of January 5, I stated that I had written to our Congressman indicating our Society's approval of a proposed Bill to make funds available to Historical Societies. I am glad to report that Congressman Rogers Morton advised me that this Bill was passed.

Our Society is indebted to the Head of Elk Chapter, D.A.R., for a copy of the third volume of "Cemetery and Family Records of Cecil County." This represents a tremendous amount of work and is a splendid addition to our information files.

The familiar figure of "Jelly" the venerable colored man who was acquired with the Library Building in August 1955, is now missing from the local scene. At the direction of the Fire Marshal he was dispossessed from the quarters which he occupied in the boiler room in the basement. He departed under amicable circumstances and is living with a relative. For those who knew him only as "Jelly," his real name is Walter Moore.

The Society's annual meeting will be held in October of this year, and the following Nominating Committee has been appointed to recommend a slate of officers and trustees to serve for the next two years:

Mrs. Mary deV. Dunn, Chairman  
Mr. A. Victor Davis  
Miss Bessie C. Hartnett

Mrs. Joseph E. McFadden  
Mr. J. Albert Roney, Jr.

If you are contacted by the Committee to serve the Society, I do hope you will show your interest by agreeing to join the official group.

MARK YOUR ENGAGEMENT BOOK FOR MONDAY, MAY 22, AND COME TO THE DINNER MEETING AT BAY VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

Dorothy D. Robinson, President



## WILLIAM T. MAHONEY

The death of William T. Mahoney on November 28, 1966, after an illness of six months, was the occasion for very deep regret by all those who knew him as a remarkable person. His loss has deprived the Society of a valued member who possessed a wide knowledge and keen appreciation of Cecil County history, which he was always ready to share with others.

His interest in history was not confined to Cecil County alone, but extended to the Mason-Dixon boundary line and to the Civil War, on both of which he was a recognized authority. He was the founder of the Civil War Round Table of Wilmington, Delaware in 1956, and was elected its first President, and he was instrumental in having the Delaware Civil War Centennial Commission erect three monuments on Antietam battlefield in memory of Delaware regiments engaged in that battle.

Mr. Mahoney was also responsible for organizing the Union Room Committee which is establishing a Civil War museum in the new building of the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, and was serving as the Committee's president at the time of his death.

The writer of these lines enjoyed a close friendship with Bill Mahoney for 75 years and retains for him nothing but great admiration and pleasant recollections. Old friend, farewell!

At a meeting of the Executive Committee of this Society held on January 6, 1967, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

RESOLVED, that the members of this Society, having learned with profound sorrow of the death on November 28, 1966, of their esteemed colleague and fellow member, William Terry Mahoney, desire to record in the minutes of the proceedings of the Society their high appreciation of his qualities of heart and mind which made him an outstanding citizen and a distinguished historian.

Mr. Mahoney was born near Bay View on September 11, 1883. He was proud of his native county and was anxious to preserve its history and traditions. Being one of the earliest and staunchest supporters of this Society, he was elected its President on October 25, 1955, when its fortunes were at a low ebb, and during his eight years' tenure of that office he infused new life into the organization and was largely responsible for a vast expansion of its functions and activities.

He was a man of vigor and enthusiasm and withal a sense of humor. He was positive in his convictions and he advocated with earnestness any cause which he espoused, so that his inspiring leadership usually brought to completion any proposal which he sought to achieve. His warm and genial personality endeared him to a host of friends who deem it a privilege to have known him and who how mourn his loss.

It is, therefore, with feelings of deep regret at the passing of William Terry Mahoney that the Historical Society of Cecil County pays this tribute of respect to his memory.

## THE FAMILY BACKGROUND OF KITTY KNIGHT

Miss Catherine Knight, familiarly known as "Kitty Knight," needs no introduction to a Cecil County audience; her courage and patriotism are written in indelible ink for posterity. She was born at Knight's Point on the Sassafras River in 1776, only daughter of John Leach Knight and his second wife, Miss Catherine Matthews, who was a twin sister of Dr. William Matthews, owner of "Worsell Manor" from 1796 to 1806.

The following reminiscences, which are centered around the Knight, Matthews, and Morton families of Cecil County, are taken from facts, not fiction. To Mrs. Harry M. Ullmann, nee Rachel B. Mifflin (granddaughter of Hamilton Morton and his wife, Mary Theresa Durkee, who was a daughter of Captain John F. Durkee and his wife, Mary A. Wheeler), belongs the credit for the funeral story and the other incidents. Mrs. Ullmann now resides in Bethlehem, Pa.

"Vulcan's Rest," later known as "Strawberry Hill," lies on a cove of Little Bohemia River called St. Augustine's Creek, and adjoins land of St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church. This farm came into possession of the Matthews family by deed from James Douglas on 18th January 1757 and to the Morton family by will from Hugh Matthews in 1809. The name "Strawberry Hill" probably was derived from the large orchard of tiny red apples not much larger than a plum which resembled and had the flavor of a strawberry. "Strawberry Hill" was also known for its wharf where lime and phosphate were delivered by boat to the farmers; for boating and bathing in the summer time; and for fox hunting in the winter; all of which was enjoyed by those of us who were fortunate to live close by.

The Matthews' and Knights were among Cecil County's first families, blessed with some of the world's choicest properties, e.g., "Vulcan's Rest" owned by Dr. Hugh Matthews, Jr., (1712-1744), where he lies buried; "Worsell Manor" owned by his son, Dr. William Matthews (1735-1808), where the latter was living in 1791-1792 when his brother James, and sister Susannah, were buried there, as was he himself in 1808; and "Bohemia" or "Milligan Hall," where Mass was reputedly said by the Jesuits during the 18th century, and which was owned by Kitty Knight's grand-nephew, William Matthews Knight (1837-1910).

I also find that the first wife of John Leach Knight was buried at "Ward's Knowledge" in 1770. Who she was I know not, but I am inclined to believe she was a relative of the Ward or Davis families, due to the fact that prominent families usually buried on their estates, and certainly could have reserved a plot for the interment of even the married members of their family. A separate corner, however, was always reserved for their faithful slaves. The grave-stone, broken off at the top, bears the inscription: "wife of John Leach Knight, Anno Domini 1770." Her first name is given as "Mary." As they say in a close horse race, "a blanket could be dropped" on these four old homesteads that were so closely interwoven.

Mrs. Ullmann relates that her mother was very much amused when her brother, i.e. Mrs. Ullmann's uncle, William Morton, who emigrated to California, told her of attending the funeral of Kitty Knight. He and his brother Harry (baptized Henry) were taken to the funeral. They wore large hats which were the style for young boys in those



days. Around the crown was tied a black ribbon that had long black streamers hanging down their backs. They were carefully instructed that as they walked up the church aisle behind their parents they were to behave as little gentlemen, no laughing or talking, as everything was to be very quiet and solemn. Mrs. George W. Lockwood, eldest daughter of Hamilton Morton, in all probability was also there, but she was not mentioned in the story. It all centered around those long black streamers hanging down the boys' back and their behavior during the funeral.

Another story related by Mrs. Lockwood's daughter, the late Miss Marie Lockwood, was that her mother told how Miss Kitty would arrive at church very much dressed -- wearing her diamonds--and that a young colored boy would accompany her. She got out of her carriage, and the boy would enter church with her, walking backwards all the way up the aisle fanning her with a large palm leaf fan, up to the front pew, and then stand all through the Mass fanning her continually. Mrs. Lockwood's youngest son, James Booth Lockwood, a veteran of World War I, said that Miss Kitty came into church "with all sails set."

To this I will add with humility a story told to me by my late father, Thomas H. deVine, who had received a stern reprimand from his father for having spoken of Miss Knight with disrespect by calling her "Kitty." It seems that Grandfather associated the name "Kitty" with that of a cat. He reminded my father that her name was Catherine (the short of which is Kate), that she also had a handle to her name, and that in the future he was to speak of the grand lady as "Miss Kate." Grandfather then went on to say that many a young blade vied for the privilege of hitching her horses when she arrived for a Sunday Mass at Old Bohemia, adding that Miss Kate had a sharp tongue in her pretty head, but blue blood in her veins. He said that she was "proud as a peacock" when she strutted up the church aisle, swishing her hooped skirt from side to side and showing her beruffled silk petticoat, which did, in spite of their devotion, distract the meditation of the parishioners. Oh, Grandfather, if you were living today, I am sure you would say, "Thank God for the dear dead days beyond recall when ladies wore beruffled petticoats that did hide their high-top buttoned shoes."

It has been said by some people that Kitty Knight was not a Catholic; nothing could be farther from the truth. Even if the Morton and deVine families did not know that she was a Catholic, the fact alone that she is buried in consecrated ground is proof positive. The consecrated part of Old Bohemia cemetery ends at the left of the two gates in the center of the cemetery. Additional ground has been acquired which has not been consecrated and non-Catholics may be buried in it if they so wish. The Catholics buried in that part of the cemetery have their graves blessed at the time of interment. Only practical Catholics may be buried in consecrated ground.

An interesting incident concerning the death of Miss Kitty was told to me by Mrs. Ullmann a long time ago. When she was very ill a message was sent to Mrs. Ullmann's grandmother, Mrs. Hamilton Morton, of whom Miss Kitty was very fond. Mrs. Morton was driven by her husband to see Miss Kitty on an extremely cold night. Mr. Morton remained outside in his carriage while his wife went into the house with a bottle of homemade blackberry cordial, but Miss Kitty was beyond human aid, for she died that same night--November 22, 1855. We hope the blackberry cordial did not hasten her demise, and that we shall all meet in the Heaven prepared for us.

Mary deVine Dunn

## THE NORTH-EAST RECORD

Some time in 1876 an enterprising editor by the name of Harry Moss launched a weekly newspaper in Chesapeake City. He called the paper the CHESAPEAKE CHESAPIKE. It was not long before Mr. Moss realized that prospects for a successful career in journalism were not promising in the divided city, and he therefore disposed of his plant and good-will (if any) to a Dr. D. H. B. Brower early in 1878. Dr. Brower changed the name of the paper to the CHESAPEAKE RECORD, and while this was an improvement, it did not increase the paper's circulation to any noticeable extent. The RECORD and its predecessor live in the history of Cecil County journalism in name only, as no copy of either paper is now known to exist.

The new editor also found very soon that financial problems threatened the existence of the CHESAPEAKE RECORD and decided that a change in climate might prove beneficial. In December 1878 he moved the type and press to North East and on the 21st day of that month published Vol. 1 No. 1 of the NORTH-EAST RECORD. This was the first newspaper ever published in that town. A worn copy of this number is in possession of the Historical Society of Cecil County.

The RECORD was issued every Saturday morning from an office in Roney's Building on Main Street in North East. At the outset Dr. Brower declared that a hyphen should be used in compounding the name NORTH-EAST and that it would always appear in that form in his paper. In a vein of prophetic optimism he wrote in his first editorial: "In view of the possibilities before us, may not the children be at school today who will live to read the daily papers of North-East?"

He also paid his respects to the conservative citizens of Chesapeake City in the following pungent paragraphs:

"Comparatively speaking, Chesapeake City has some peculiar advantages, but it lacks the energy necessary for their development. True, there are some active, enterprising business men there, but the antediluvians, with those who claim the soil by virtue of Nebuchadnezzar or some other ancestral lineage, will not improve it nor suffer it to be done by others, without an onerous tribute to themselves. They are like those of whom we read who would neither enter the kingdom of Heaven themselves nor suffer others to go in. Consequently, the enterprising men of Chesapeake City are burdened with the fossils of a former age, and the only wonder is that they have accomplished so much in improving not only a conservative but also a progressive power among the dry bones.



We do not--and never will--forget our warm and earnest friends in Chesapeake City. No man ever had more devoted friends than we have in that town today. We are grateful to them and their names are recorded in the book of everlasting remembrance, as well as our brief but pleasant sojourn among them. But there are some who deserve the curse of Meröz who, like the swine, spend their lives in supreme selfishness, rooting for acorns and never looking up to the place from whence they came. Here in North-East we know of none whose sickly notions of lineage, traced back to Adam or Darwin's monkey, palsy the progressive power of mind nor check the spirit of improvement. The way is clear and the march has begun. Like the Hooved soldiers, the brave sons of Arpod, this place, in action knows but one word, and that is "FORWARD!"

The RECORD was a four-page paper about 18 by 24 inches in size, with seven columns to a page. It was independent in politics. The subscription rates were \$1.50 per annum if paid in advance; \$2.00 if paid within the year, and \$2.50 after the end of the year.

At the head of its news column the RECORD published a local directory which included a list of the town officials, a schedule of the arrival and closing of mails; a railroad time table; the hours of church services, and dates of meetings of the fraternal societies. The postmaster in 1878 was L. W. Thomas, and the town commissioners were B. F. Thomas, President, J. L. McDaniel, Treasurer, Samuel Reeder, Dr. P. B. Housekeeper, and John M. Anderson, Secretary.

The cost of an advertisement of one inch was \$1 for the first insertion and 25¢ for each subsequent insertion. Among the advertisements which appeared in the first number of the RECORD were the following: Store goods by W. H. Simcoe, James Roney, and Thomas & Anderson; hardware by Isaac N. Benjamin; stoves and ranges by J. W. Johnson & Son; drugs and medicines by Housekeeper & Moore; the Railroad Hotel by W. J. Crothers, Proprietor, and the North-East Hotel by B. F. Thomas, Proprietor.

Other advertisers were Dr. S. Carhart Britton, surgeon dentist; T. J. Blackwell, auctioneer; George Moore, practical tailor; F. A. Foster & Son, cabinet makers; C. H. Haley, shoemaker; Miss Mae Tyson, dressmaker; George W. Gardy, carriage maker; Andrew Anderson, blacksmith, and Hammond & Ricard, livery stables.

The RECORD's span of life was brief, because Dr. Brower laid down his editorial pen on February 11, 1882, and sold the paper to George O. Garey, a native of Easton, Maryland. On July 29, 1882, the new owner issued the first number of the NORTH EAST STAR. The STAR was published by Mr. Garey until his death in April 1926. Thereafter it led a checkered career under sundry editors and as a component of other papers until it disappeared completely in 1939.

The daily paper which Dr. Brower once envisioned for North East now looks farther away than ever.

EH

## OLD COUNTRY STORE EXHIBIT

"Did you ever pay a visit  
To an old time country store,  
Where an iron bellied stove  
Stood red hot beside the door?"

The above quotation is from a poem entitled "The Country Store," by Mrs. Elsie P. Hevlow and Mrs. Ethel D. Loller, which appears in the December 1966 issue of the UPPER SHOREMAN. Such a question could not have been more timely, for on January 15 many members and their guests paid a visit to an "old-time country store" exhibit which the Society then opened in the basement of the Cecil County Library building. More than 125 persons attended the "Open House" held by the Society on that day at its headquarters in the Library building, in lieu of the usual mid-winter dinner meeting.

The Old Country Store prompted many recollections of similar stores in the County of by-gone days and much interest was expressed by the visitors. Many items in the exhibit came from Taylor's store in Blythedale, which was operated by the Taylor family for 95 years. Opened in 1855 when the village was known as "Whitaker's Mill," the store also housed the Blythedale postoffice when it was established at a later date. Mr. William Taylor was both postmaster and storekeeper.

The store provided local color for a novel called "The Mystery of Rockdale," written by Theodore Currier, a former principal of Perryville High School. Mr. Taylor appears in the book as the storekeeper under the fictitious name of "Mr. Talbot." A copy of this novel is included in the exhibit.

Following Mr. Taylor's death, his wife, Eleanora Jackson Taylor, became postmaster on July 28, 1892. Her commission is on display, as is a picture of the Taylor store about 1908. Her son, E. Kurtz Taylor, a former Treasurer of Cecil County, conducted the store from the time of his father's death until his own death in 1950.

Some of the furnishings are from other Cecil County stores; for example, an early cash register came from Pogue's hardware store in Rising Sun, and old-time display cases came from McCormick's store in Cherry Hill and from Wingate's hardware store in North East. The pigeon holes from Blythedale's postoffice, the kerosene lamps, balance scales, plug tobacco cutter, hoops for skirts, decorated tea canisters, iron skillets, cracker boxes and barrels, captain's chairs, candy jars, shoe lasts, celluloid collars, Mason jars of 1858, and bread-making machines, all help to create an atmosphere of the long ago.

One of the most interesting displays is a collection of iron stoves, one of which was made in the Armstrong Stove Factory at Port Deposit and was patented in 1861. Symbolic of its name "Morning Light," a crowing chanticleer appears in bas-relief on the back of the stove. It has warmed six generations of the family of its original owner, Mrs. Victor Craig. An old coffee grinder and a homemade checkerboard impart an air of tradition to the over-all picture.



Other items of interest include a collection of Hagerstown almanacs dating from before the turn of the century and Taylor store ledgers dating from 1855. The ledgers record the practice of barter and show that Blythedale was once known as "Independence."

The exhibit is open to the public during regular Library hours, Mondays through Saturdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Fridays until 9 p.m. Anyone who has not visited this exciting collection of Americana is invited to do so and thereby gain a better appreciation of today's giant supermarkets.

M.F.T.

## CURATOR'S CORNER

Doll-house furniture of the late Victorian period with "genuine" marble tops was a recent gift to our Society from Miss Anna G. Denney, of Elkton. This very complete collection was featured in our Winter Exhibition of Toys. The exhibition was made possible by the hearty co-operation of our members. At this time I wish to thank those who participated by lending the treasured mementoes of their childhood days. Toys have always delighted the hearts of the very young; old toys reflect the American scene of their time. Most manufactured toys date from the second half of the 19th century.

Our office is looking better and better. Have you seen the Fassitt desk and chair-- a recent gift from Miss Margarita Fassitt, of Springfield, Pennsylvania? This wonderful country secretary desk (19th century) was for many years part of the furnishings of the Ury farm, the residence of Thomas Fassitt, whose farmhouse near Calvert is pictured on p. 26 of the Cecil County Atlas of 1877. A chest of drawers originally owned by Thomas Beers, a gift from his granddaughter, Miss Mary Beers, of North East, and a mirror given by Mr. John W. Perkins, of Elkton, help to recreate a Cecil County atmosphere.

Included in our Exhibition of old Valentines were some of 1862 vintage, Miss Margarita Fassitt's album of 1832, and an illuminated tablet belonging to Thomas Fassitt in 1859, which was donated by Miss Fassitt. A beautiful scrapbook from the 1860's and several post card albums with valentines from 1907 were also displayed.

One of the many rewards for my work with this Society has been contact with the children in the Cecil County schools. Frequently I speak to classes in our secondary schools, but only rarely do I have the pleasure of visiting the elementary schools. One such wonderful day came in January, when I talked to the two 3rd grades of Kenmore School on "Life in Cecil County before Modern Transportation." These are big words for eight-year olds, but the topic was selected by the children. The following, which is typical of the many "Thank You" notes I received, speaks for itself:

RD #5, Elkton, Md.,  
January 25, 1967

Dear Mrs. Delano,

Our class had fun seeing your things you showed us. We learned a lot from what you told us. We liked what you told us about transportation. We liked what you told us about how they dressed in the old days.

Your friend, Kim