

Bulletin

OF

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CECIL COUNTY

No. 32

Bohemia Village, Maryland

May 20, 1968

JANUARY 1968 MEETING

Instead of the customary dinner meeting, a luncheon meeting of the Society was held in the Educational Building of the Presbyterian Church in Elkton on Saturday afternoon, January 20, 1968. The invocation was offered by the Rev. Edward B. Carley, and luncheon was served to 155 members and guests.

Following the luncheon, a short business session was held, at which the following nominees were elected to membership in the Society:

Mr. and Mrs. Earl S. Jackson

Mrs. Guy S. Rogers

Mrs. Lila G. Leach

Mr. Harvey E. Simmers

Mr. and Mrs. John P. O'Neill

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Thurlow 3d

Mrs. F. Marion Rawlings

The form of our program was also changed and in lieu of a guest speaker, seven members gave talks on subjects pertinent to the County's history. In response to numerous requests, four of these papers are published in this issue of the BULLETIN.

At the conclusion of the talks the meeting was adjourned and all were invited to go to the Society's rooms in the Library Building for dedication of a plaque in memory of William T. Mahoney, who served as our President so faithfully and well for eight years 1955-1963. The plaque had been placed on the wall in the Howard Room and our President presented it to the Society and to Mr. Mahoney's daughter, Mrs. Harry F. Thernal. The dedicatory address was given by E. A. Howard, Mr. Mahoney's life-long friend.

VETERAN'S GRAVE MARKED

Our Society was officially represented at a ceremony which took place on Sunday afternoon, March 31 1968, in the cemetery at Welsh Tract Baptist Church, near Iron Hill, when the Chevy Chase, Maryland, Chapter of the D. A. R. dedicated a marker in memory of Mathias Tyson, a Revolutionary War soldier who lies buried in that cemetery.

Mr. Tyson was a native of Chester County, Pennsylvania, and served for three years in the 9th Battalion of Chester County Militia. He died March 25, 1829, aged 75 years.

In gratitude for assistance given in locating the grave, Mrs. Marion D. Steinberge, of Chevy Chase, a direct descendant of Mathias Tyson, presented to the Historical Society of Cecil County framed silhouettes of the old soldier and his wife. This gift was accepted by our President, Mrs. Argus F. Robinson.

Following the dedication, the visitors from Chevy Chase and members of the Chester County Historical Society were escorted to Elkton and conducted through the Public Library and the rooms of our Society.

HISTORICAL MARKERS DEDICATED

This Historical Society was accorded an unusual honor on April 5th, when a delegation of 84 members of the Society of U. S. Daughters of 1812 traveled by chartered buses from Washington, D. C., where their national convention was in progress, to dedicate two plaques at historic spots in the First District of Cecil County.

The first of these handsome bronze plaques was dedicated at Fredericktown to commemorate the heroism of Col. Thomas Ward Veazey and the 35 men under his command in Fort Duffy who attempted to repel the force of British marines who came up the Sassafraz River on May 5, 1813 and burned the town when the ammunition of the defenders was exhausted and they could no longer hold the fort. This plaque was presented to the Historical Society of Cecil County as a token of appreciation for its efforts to preserve the County's records of the past.

The second plaque was dedicated at "The Anchorage", which was formerly the home of Commodore Jacob Jones (1768-1850), hero of a naval engagement on October 13, 1812, between the U. S. sloop "WASP" and the British brig "FROLIC". This property is on Augustine Herman Highway about one mile north of Cecilton and is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. George C. Fry. The marker here was presented to the Historical Society and to Mr. and Mrs. Fry.

The dedication of both markers was made by Mrs. Frank C. Love, of Syracuse, N. Y., immediate past President-General of the Daughters of 1812. They were accepted on behalf of the Historical Society by our President, Mrs. Argus F. Robinson, who recounted the gallant exploits of Col. Veazey and Commodore Jones.

THE COUNTRY STORE

Visitors to the basement of the Library Building will be delighted to find that the old Country Store on display there has been greatly improved by the construction of permanent counters and a postmaster's desk to which the original Blythedale Postoffice pigeon-holes have been attached. The counters and desk are exact replicas of ones in Taylor's store at Blythedale, dating from 1855.

This exhibit has fascinated groups of school children who are conducted on tours through the Library and discover in the store articles that are strange to them, such as anthracite coal, which they are surprised to learn was used for heating houses.

NEWSPAPER SHELVES

The Society's collection of County newspapers was moved during the month of March to our business office where shelves have been installed to house them in one location. In addition to having the entire collection conveniently available for reference, the new arrangement lends to the office the appearance of a modern research library. Access may now be had to files of the Cecil Democrat, the Cecil Whig, the Cecil County News, the Midland Journal, and the Baltimore Sun.

"HEATH'S WARWICK"

By Mary deVine Dunn

This town was established by James Paul Heath on a tract of land owned by his father, James Heath, of Warwick, England, who before his death on November 10, 1731, had projected laying out a new town to be called Warwick. However, it fell to his only living son, James Paul, born September 5, 1712 at Worsell Manor, to carry out his father's wish. The will of James Paul Heath, written September 5, 1745 and probated a year later, stipulates "Five hundred acres is to be layed out for a town to be called Warwick."

The Heaths were large land owners. Among their holdings we find "Heath's Wold", "The Holt", "Toad's Purchase", "Worsell Manor", "St. Ignatius", "Woodbridge", "Heath's Longlands", "Heath's Range", "Heath's Landing", "The Meadows", and "Shinai Wood", to name a few.

The Warwick Post Office, established in 1775, was one of the original seventy-five offices in the United States, of which thirteen were in Maryland. It and the offices at Charlestown and Head of Elk were the only ones in Cecil County.

The first school house was a log cabin which was situated on the northwest quadrant of the "Four Corners". The second school house, a red brick building, was built in 1858. The bricks were donated by Frank Morton, a brick manufacturer. It was called the "Warwick Academy". A teacher in its early days by the name of Hopkins was almost killed while trying to stop a fight between a student and the uncle of a little girl, who had told her uncle that the young man had pulled a ribbon off her hair. In those days the boys were grown men who went to school only in the winter months, after the farm work was done. In 1890 this school house was used by the colored children, and the present school, called the "Warwick Academy" was erected. It was a two-room building. The last teacher in the brick school and the first in the new academy was Miss Ella Staats.

It has been said that the first church service held in Warwick was in a log cabin. The present Methodist Church in the town was built in 1859. The ground for the parsonage was given by Samuel Gillespie and his wife. Mr. Gillespie was proprietor of "The Gillespie House" and likewise a dealer in saddles, etc. He was also a horse trainer, having a fine one half mile track connected with his stables. This track was on the ground between the brick school house and the hotel. The fastest and most handsome horse was called "Warwick".

One of the oldest buildings in the town was the Old Tavern. It was a hip roof house with a bar and a gambling room. Nearby was the brew house made of logs. In later years Mr. Stapp had a "Grog House" in a log building, which may have well been the original building. He sold whiskey by the gallon.

J. A. Jamison had a carriage factory, which stood where "The Thrift Shop" is at the present time. Jacob S. Hayes and J. C. Cranor were merchants, and Amos Wilson was a carpenter and builder of the steam saw mill. Dr. J. J. Wright was the town's physician.

J. E. Dixon's sign read as follows:

UNDERTAKER, MANUFACTURER AND DEALER IN COFFINS AND
CASKETS OF THE LATEST STYLES AND DIFFERENT QUALITIES.
BURIAL APPAREL AND STOCKS ARE FURNISHED. FUNERALS WILL
RECEIVE MY SPECIAL ATTENTION. CHARGES MODERATE.

It has been said that if Mr. Dixon looked you in the eye you were being measured for a shroud and that you had better make your will and make peace with your Maker. The colored people of that time really believed this and were sure, if they saw Mr. Dixon heading their way, to turn around and go in another direction.

In the early days there were no carriages, but there were a few two-wheeled buggies or shays, and these were owned only by the very rich. The first shay was owned by Mr. Thomas Rothmell, a farmer who lived on the Levels. Most people traveled by horseback.

HISTORY OF THE TURKEY POINT LIGHTHOUSE

By Joseph R. Grant

I bring you a picture of the Turkey Point Lighthouse painted by the grand-daughter of Mrs. Salter, the last keeper of the light in residence there. As I am limited to about five minutes of time for this presentation, you are thus saved a thousand words of description. I also have a plat of the land which shows the courses and distances run by the surveyor. Proper credits for these exhibits will be given at the close of this history.

Alexander Hamilton was Secretary of the Treasury when our first Congress, on August 9, 1789, brought into being "The Lighthouse Service" and designated the Treasury as the proper Government Agency for its supervision. This service consisted of 12

lighthouses along our Coast and harbours. Some of these are still maintained as navigational aids; such is the "Boston Light" originally built in 1716 and I believe still in service.

In 1832 a four-acre tract of land was purchased on a hundred foot high clay prominence extending out into the Chesapeake Bay—where the Elk and North East rivers meet—called Turkey Point. Here in 1833 a 35-foot masonry lighthouse was built and put into service. The Chesapeake and Delaware Canal had been completed a few years prior to this, and there was need for this navigational aid to enable Captains, bringing their vessels up the Bay, to safely change their course to the Elk River leading to the Canal. On top of the masonry structure was a glass enclosure and in that was the oil lantern. The lenses of this lantern were made in France. Outside the masonry tower was erected a thousand-pound bell with a fifty-pound clapper. There was a Bellhouse with a mechanical mechanism not unlike that found in grandfather clocks with thousand-pound weights which have to be wound manually. The bell warned ships in time of fog. There was a smaller clapper which could be operated manually in case the mechanism failed. The light could be seen for 13 miles, and the bell's warning heard for possibly 4 miles.

A lighthouse required the constant attention of a keeper. A residence and other auxiliary structures were erected close by the lighthouse. There was much to do, such as trimming the wick, filling the oil lamp, keeping a spare always ready, and cleaning of the lenses and the premises. To keep alert at these tasks required men and women devoted to the service.

Such was the John Crouch family, the George Brumfield, and the C. W. Salter families. Only those committed to a 24-hour daily vigil know the stamina required to furnish these necessary services. The three families served Turkey Point Lighthouse most of the 140 years of its manned existence. There are some here today who remember Mrs. Brumfield. She retired as lighthouse keeper at the age of 70.

Mrs. Brumfield was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Crouch, former lighthouse keepers. She lived at the Lighthouse from the age of 16 until her retirement. There was a two-year period after Mrs. Brumfield's retirement during which a Mr. Stowe from North Carolina was the keeper of the Light. Mr. C. W. Salter, of Virginia, was appointed to the position in 1923. Upon his death in February 1925, his widow, Mrs. Fannie May Salter was appointed by President Coolidge as keeper of the Light. In later years she was affectionately referred to as Maryland's Lady of the Light.

The nearest place by land for the purchase of provisions was 14 miles, over roads that were at times almost impassable. Mrs. Salter augmented her food supply by growing fruit and vegetables, raising chickens, a few turkeys, sheep and pigs. Like most women of her day she preserved and canned surpluses for the bleak winter days which she knew would make it difficult to reach the food stores.

It was at a time like this that her daughter, Mrs. James Crouch (who with her husband also lived at the Lighthouse), gave birth to a daughter in Perryville at the home of relatives. The night the child was born Mr. Crouch called by telephone to

give Mrs. Salter the good tidings. There was no answer to the incessant ringing of the Lighthouse residence telephone. It was a foggy night, and when Mrs. Salter wound up the heavy weights to activate automatically the warning bell, the cable broke. She spent the entire night operating the manually activated clapper at intervals of 15 seconds. It was not until morning when the fog cleared that she learned of the birth of her grand-daughter. This grand-daughter was named Frances Melba and she is now Mrs. John Barteau, of Dover, Pa., the artist who painted the picture on display.

It would be a natural question to ask, was there ever a ship lost at Turkey Point as a result of the Light or Bell's failure to operate? The answer is none. A ship did burn and sink off the Lighthouse in daylight. Before this hulk had been removed, a pleasure boat struck the submerged motor from the burned craft and sank, plunging the occupants into water about five feet deep and far from shore. Fortunately a fishing craft was nearby and came to their rescue. I believe two of the survivors are here today, members of our Historical Society.

In 1939, one hundred and fifty years after its inception, the Lighthouse Service was merged with the Coast Guard, which has the distinction of being our country's oldest sea-going service. During World War II a detachment of this service was assigned to the Turkey Point Lighthouse for protection from saboteurs. Six years before Mrs. Salter retired, in January 1948, automatic lighting was installed in the tower and the bell was replaced by an electric foghorn.

Mrs. Salter was retired after 22 years of faithful service. She had the unique distinction of being the only woman among 7500 lighthouse keepers in the United States. She died in Baltimore on March 11, 1966, at the age of 83.

Inspection and service at regular intervals by the Coast Guard is all that is necessary now. The importance of the light there, however, is now more evident than ever, due to the fact that our Government is making the Canal wider and deeper, which will increase the flow of traffic passing the Turkey Point Lighthouse.

I am indebted to Mrs. James Crouch for information and use of her mother's scrap-books; to Mr. Will Merchant, of the Coast Guard at Chesapeake City; to Mr. Murphy, of the Baltimore Office of the Coast Guard, and to the National Bank of North East for loan of the painting.

My thanks are also expressed to Mrs. Robert J. McCauley for loan of the plat which was made in 1876 by her late husband's grand-father, Judge James McCauley, who surveyed the land owned by the Government at Turkey Point and drew the plat showing the courses and distances and the amount of land owned.

A REVOLUTIONARY WAR LETTER

By Morton F. Taylor

My bit of "hidden history" concerns a Revolutionary War letter, as our President has stated. This letter was written by my great-great-great-grandfather, Edward Jackson. Incidentally, Edward Jackson was also the great-great-grandfather of our Vice-President, Peyton B. Patterson.

This letter was discovered only last August. It was found by my cousin when she was helping her parents clean the attic of their home in Blythedale. It was in a house

that has been occupied by five generations of the family and where my great-grandmother once lived. I feel this fact somehow helps to account for the letter's existence. It was in a bundle of old letters and so was protected from light and air. I feel that this fact also helps to account for the good state of its preservation. Until its discovery, no living member of the family was aware of its existence.

The letter evidently was written by Edward Jackson for James Linden. When it was brought to me to read, I was thrilled, for it was written on April 20, 1775 and describes events occurring only two days earlier when Paul Revere made the ride immortalized by Henry W. Longfellow's poem. I quote the letter:

Boston, Mass.
Apr. 20, 1775

Dear Friend,

As I was about to go to bed on the night of April 18, I saw a light in the steeple of North Church, it was a warning signal to the people of Charlestown, meaning the soldiers were moving.

The British soldiers were on their way to Lexington to destroy the stores which had been collected there, as well as to try to capture Mr. Adams and Mr. Hancock.

There were eight hundred British soldiers, and when they reached Lexington they found sixty minute-men on the common. They had to get away for the British were to (sic) strong for them.

When they reached Concord the British general saw that things were going to go bad for him, so he ordered a retreat. It was a retreat indeed, the British were fired on from every ~~obstruction~~ thing large enough to hide a man.

They were met by general Percy just a little ways this side of Boston and were very glad to reach the cover of his guns.

Yours truly,
James Linden

Per Edward Jackson

I would like to present this photostatic copy of the letter to the Society for its files. It will be noted that it has the old water marks and the edge is worn as though it has been eaten by moths.

What Edward Jackson was doing in Boston we can only surmise. However, on August 18, 1781, he enlisted in the Continental Army and became a private in the 4th Battalion, 4th Company of Maryland militia, Capt. Richard Bird, of Cecil County, commanding.

Edward Jackson was third in line of eight Edward Jacksons, the latest being a 14-year old brother of the girl who found the letter, and a student at Shenandoah Valley Academy, New Market, Virginia. Edward Jackson, the writer, is believed to have lived at "Heart's Delight", a plantation overlooking the Susquehanna River near St. Mark's Church at Aikin. The ruins of the plantation house still stand. This delightful name has been perpetuated by Mr. and Mrs. Peyton Patterson, whose nearby home is part of the same tract and bears the same name.

Edward Jackson, the author, married Margaret McMullen on January 26, 1769, in St. Mary Anne's Church at North East, then the parish church of the Aiken-Blythedale area.

Some years ago the Capt. Jeremiah Baker Chapter of the Perryville D. A. R. erected a plaque in memory of Edward Jackson at the Valley Forge Memorial Chapel. In 1961 Susquehanna Post #135 of the American Legion in Perryville erected a monument in his memory on the lawn of Rodgers Tavern there.

THE MECKLENBURG DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

By Ernest A. Howard

An article in the Philadelphia Bulletin of November 14, 1967, stated that the Daughters of the American Revolution has announced that its Alexandriana Chapter will erect in the city of Charlotte, North Carolina, a monument costing \$3,000 to commemorate the signing of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. Charlotte is the seat of Mecklenburg County in that State. This announcement should be of great interest to members of this Historical Society.

The Alexandriana Chapter, by way of orientation, takes its name from John McKnitt Alexander, who served as secretary of the convention which adopted the Mecklenburg Resolutions on May 20, 1775, the day after news of the battle of Lexington was received. It declared that the people of Mecklenburg County were free and independent of the British crown, and many of its phrases are word for word as they appear in the Declaration of Independence which was promulgated in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776.

The meeting of the Mecklenburg patriots was held in Mr. Alexander's home, which was later burned by the British. In the process they also burned his diaries and unfortunately the original copy of the Declaration. Whether the Declaration of Independence followed the language of the Mecklenburg Declaration or whether the latter, having probably been restored from memory, was colored by the later document, is still a disputed question. At any rate, North Carolina was the first of the thirteen colonies to declare its independence.

Why is this matter of interest to this Society? Because the men who dominated the convention which adopted the Mecklenburg Resolutions were all from Cecil County. The outstanding patriot, John McKnitt Alexander, the 11th child of James Alexander and his wife, Margaret McKnitt, was born on New Munster in 1733 and went to North Carolina when he was 21. His brothers, Theophilus and Amos Alexander, were leading elders of Rock Presbyterian Church and are buried in Head of Christiana cemetery. Abraham Alexander, of Cecil County, was president of the convention, and Dr. Ephraim Brevard, also from Cecil County, was Chairman of the committee which drafted the Declaration. His father, John Brevard, was an elder of Broad Creek Presbyterian Church which stood near Pivot Bridge in Cecil County. The city of Brevard in North Carolina perpetuates the name of this Cecil County family.

Three other Alexanders were among the signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration. Another signer was Col. Thomas Polk, a great-uncle of President James K. Polk, whose father is believed to have emigrated from Cecil County and settled in North Carolina.

The prominent part played by natives of Cecil County in connection with the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence should not be overlooked when the commemorative marker is erected in Charlotte, and it is suggested that the Society might consider sending one or more representatives to its unveiling, which will probably occur in May of this year.