

Bulletin

OF

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CECIL COUNTY

No. 33

Summer Hill, Maryland

October 21, 1968

1968 SPRING MEETING

The Fire House in Chesapeake City on the north bank of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal provided the setting for the Society's regular meeting on Monday evening, May 20th. The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, and the invocation was offered by Vice-President Alfred T. Scarborough.

A turkey dinner was served to 166 members and guests by the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Chesapeake City Fire Department.

Following the dinner, the President (Mrs. Robinson) introduced as the speaker of the evening Mr. Mike Button, of Broad Creek, Talbot County, whose subject was the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum at St. Michaels on the Miles River. His interesting and humorous talk was illustrated by color slides of vessels indigenous to the Chesapeake Bay area. Some of the exhibits which the museum has acquired, he said, during the three years of its existence are such nautical wonders of the past as a round-bottomed oyster sloop, the 89-year lighthouse from Hooper's Strait, an old log-built bugeye, Lightship No. 79, the museum's largest exhibit, and paintings and models of great sailing ships which once plied the bay.

The museum is staffed by local *volunteers* and is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. In its first 36 months about 60,000 visitors passed through its doors.

During the business session after Mr. Button's talk, the Treasurer (Mr. Bouchelle) submitted a brief report showing a cash balance of \$2,535.55 in the Society's bank account, and the Curator (Mrs. Delano) invited inspection of the current exhibit in the Public Library featuring Chesapeake City.

The Chairman of the Markers Committee (Mr. Krastel) reported that a historical marker for the site of the Chapel of Ease (a dependency of North Elk Parish) near Battle Swamp had been received and would be set up soon. He also stated that directional signs would be erected at the southern end of the Chesapeake City bridge to indicate the location of the old Lock Pump House, which is one of Maryland's two registered national historic landmarks.

Mr. Medholdt commended the BULLETIN for its valuable contribution to the constructive work of the Society, and the editor expressed gratification that his literary efforts were of interest to the members.

A MUSEUM AT CHESAPEAKE CITY

On July 4, 1968, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers opened a museum in the boiler room of the original lock pumphouse of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal at Chesapeake City. This museum is designed to preserve the historic, esthetic, and recreational features of the 139-year old canal by displays consisting of maps, paintings, old documents, and various artifacts related to it. There is also an unusual exhibit of marine fossils which were dug from the canal. These fossils are typical of the Cretaceous period in the earth's evolution and are estimated to be about 70 million years old.

The construction of a canal to link the waters of the Delaware and Chesapeake bays was first conceived by the far-seeing Augustine Herman as early as 1660, and actual efforts to build such a canal were begun in 1801 by Benjamin H. Latrobe along a different route from the one finally selected. Work on Latrobe's project was halted in 1803 and the enterprise was allowed to slumber for twenty years until 1824, when the present route was adopted and work resumed.

The canal was completed and opened to navigation on October 17, 1829. It was then 13.625 miles long, 66 feet wide at the waterline, and 36 feet wide at the bottom with a depth of 10 feet. The cost was approximately \$2,250,000. There were four locks, one at Delaware City, one at St. George's, and two at Chesapeake City.

The locks at Chesapeake City were later combined and operated from a stone pumphouse sheltering an immense, wooden waterwheel which was 38 feet in diameter and 10 feet wide. There is a difference of 16 feet in the levels of the two bays and this wheel was used to raise the level at the Chesapeake end. Its rim was equipped with 12 buckets capable of lifting 1.2 million gallons of water every hour from Back Creek and dumping it into the canal to maintain the level in the lock. Two steam engines provided power to turn the wheel.

On August 13, 1919, the canal was sold to the Federal Government for \$2,514,000 and in 1921 work was commenced to make it a sea-level waterway. When this was completed in 1927 the need for locks no longer existed. The canal was again enlarged in 1936, and in 1954 the Congress appropriated \$100,000,000 to widen and deepen it and to build three new high level bridges. When this work is completed the canal will have a channel depth of 35 feet and a width of 450 feet.

The canal project called for demolition of the stone pumphouse and scrapping the giant waterwheel. At this point the Historical Society of Cecil County went into action and promptly organized a protest movement to prevent destruction of so rare and historic a relic. Largely through its efforts the matter was brought to the attention of the Secretary of the Interior, and in 1965 the mechanical marvel was declared a registered national historic landmark.

It is correct, therefore, to record that this Society's intervention made the new museum at Chesapeake City possible.

THE BLUE BALL TAVERN

(The following talk was given by Mrs. Florence D. Brown
at the Society's meeting on January 20, 1968)

This has to do with Blue Ball, Maryland, on Route 273 between Fair Hill and Calvert; not Blue Ball, Pennsylvania, nor Blue Ball, Delaware. Blue Ball, Maryland, where at the junction of the old Lancaster County and Nottingham roads, the great thoroughfare between those places and New Castle, Delaware and the head of Elk River, two centuries or more ago was established a tavern, on lot number 35 of the Nottingham Lots. This was in 1710 when Andrew Job was granted the land by William Penn.

The tavern, probably the first in Cecil County north of the Elk River, was housed at first in a small brick house which stood a few rods north of the Blue Ball Inn, later the Blue Ball Tavern. This was, for a long time, one of the most celebrated hotels in the county. It had been built to last. Huge rafters in part of the building, plastered with clay and hair, were a durable feature of its construction. The late Mrs. Iva McKinney, of Calvert, said that her grandmother was reared there as a ward of Bailey and Mercy Biles, and often told of the good times she had there.

The Inn, as mentioned, was established by Andrew Job, whose name figures in the history of one Elizabeth Maxwell. We say "story" because there are some who would disclaim the truth of the whole yarn. Nevertheless, it has endured—either as fancy, fact, or fiction, for many years. This is how it goes:

Until she was 18, a girl named Elizabeth Maxwell lived in London. Her mother, born a Defoe, was a sister of Daniel, who gained fame for writing ROBINSON CRUSOE and MOLL FLANDERS. Daniel's desire to reform the realm by writing pamphlets criticizing Her Majesty's government got him into trouble. To escape arrest in 1705, he fled to his sister's home and lived in seclusion for years.

Daniel's niece, Elizabeth Maxwell, became his pupil from her fifth year and enjoyed her uncle's company and stories. When she was 18 she became engaged to a young man of whom her mother did not approve. This bar to their marriage made the girl despondent and she felt that she must cut herself off from all her accustomed association with her friends. After a few months of this isolation, Elizabeth learned that a ship was about to sail for America from a wharf near her home. Without a word to anyone, she ran aboard just in time, and was off. After long weeks on the voyage, she made port in Philadelphia.

Such unceremonious passage as this was not unusual in those days, and these young people did not hesitate to sell themselves as bond servants to those who would pay their passage money. (A forerunner, perhaps, of the "travel now — pay later" arrangement of the present day!) So, Elizabeth and a group of her fellow passengers came up for sale soon after landing. In the crowd around the auction block she saw a

man wearing a broad-brimmed hat of the Quakers. She had known these people at home to be kindly, so she asked this man to pay her passage money and to take her as a servant for the required seven years.

The man was Andrew Job, owner of the Blue Ball Inn and Tavern. He had five sons, but no daughters. His wife needed help in her housekeeping. So Andrew paid Elizabeth's fare and took her home with him. Elizabeth served out her seven years with the Job family, but during all that time she did not write home. At the end of the time of service, she was married to one of the five sons, Thomas Job, with whom (according to my source material) she had had ample time to become acquainted! Then she wrote home, telling her mother the whole story.

Months passed. Finally a letter came from Uncle Daniel Defoe. He told Elizabeth that her mother's anxiety for her safety could never be allayed, for she had died some years earlier.

Uncle Daniel told her further that by her mother's will "in case she should ever be found alive" she was to have a "good property" and her mother's furniture. Daniel said that he would send this furniture to her. He asked that she preserve it carefully, because it had come to the family from their Flemish ancestors who had sought refuge under the banner of Queen Elizabeth from the tyranny of Phillippe. He went on to apologize for the wooden seats in two chairs, explaining that he had worn out the cane seats and had replaced them with wooden ones.

Elizabeth Maxwell Job died in 1782. The first written account of Elizabeth appeared in a letter written by one James Trimble in 1874 when he presented a chair, supposed to have been Daniel Defoe's, to the Delaware Historical Society, where I believe it is today.

Dr. George Gifford, Jr., who has done considerable probing about things in the Calvert area and written extremely interesting dissertations on the subjects, says that no records exist of Elizabeth Maxwell. In addition, he asserts that if it were a genuine 16th century chair, it would have been the last thing a religious refugee from Flanders would have found room for in his belongings. If Defoe had had an antique chair, Dr. Gifford says, he hardly could have sent it to anyone in Maryland because at that time he was being sued and his property was being seized to pay an outstanding debt. But, with or without proof, we like the story, as many before us have liked it.

The Blue Ball Tavern became a general store a long time ago. It is presently owned and maintained in excellent condition by Jimmie Mendenhall, whose father and grandfather kept store before him. Jimmie and his wife live in the other side of the old tavern. Their son operates a garage next door. Young men of the area congregate there of an evening, but the old-timers still go into the store where the chairs are, and where they can sit on the loafing bench and feel the warmth of the old pot-bellied stove.

On a recent Sunday morning a man stopped by and pounded on Jimmie's door, demanding to know where the Blue Ball Tavern was. He said he needed a drink. Jimmie, who has a reputation for being frugal with words, quietly informed the thirsty traveler that it isn't a tavern any more, and "Anyway." Jimmie added, "it isn't open on Sunday."

FOREMAN PORTRAITS ACQUIRED

Through the good offices of Mr. Caleb Winslow, an active member of the Garrett County Historical Society, our Society has recently acquired salon portraits of General and Mrs. Thomas Marsh Foreman. These portraits may be seen in the gallery in the Library Building in Elkton.

Major General Foreman probably attained the highest military rank of any man in Cecil County. He was born on Kent Island on August 20, 1756, eldest son of Ezekiel Augustine Foreman, who was a descendant of Augustine Herman. He was a grandson of Thomas Marsh, who bequeathed him the plantation known as "Rose Hill" in Sasfras Neck, upon which most of his life was spent.

When the Revolutionary war began he was living on this plantation in charge of a tutor, but he ran away from home and joined General William Smallwood's troops in New York. He participated in the battles of Long Island, Brandywine, Trenton, and Monmouth, and endured the hardships of Valley Forge. At the close of the war he was serving as an aide to General William Alexander (Lord Stirling).

General Foreman was a representative from Cecil County in the General Assembly for three terms between 1790 and 1800, and commanded the First Brigade of Maryland militia, which included the 30th and 49th regiments from Cecil County, during the bombardment of Fort McHenry in September, 1814. His home at "Rose Hill" was a popular center of fashionable society. Here he indulged his taste for horticulture and here his love of horse racing found an outlet. He was the first President of the Maryland Jockey Club, organized in 1830.

Mrs. Foreman was the former Miss Martha Ogle, of Delaware. She was married, first, to Capt. James Rorke Gallender in Christ Episcopal Church in Philadelphia in 1808. Capt. Callender was presumed to have been lost at sea some time in 1811, and his presumptive widow was re-married to General Foreman in the Kitty Knight House in Georgetown, Maryland, in May 1814. According to a local tradition, Capt. Callender came home to Georgetown unexpectedly, walked onto the porch of the Kitty Knight House, and peering through a window saw his wife was being married to General Foreman. He then vanished in the shadows of the night and was never seen in Georgetown again.

While the old soldier was spending the autumn of his life at "Rose Hill", one of his neighbors was Sidney George Fisher, who owned the adjoining plantation known as "Mount Harmon". For many years Mr. Fisher kept an illuminating diary. It was published by the Pennsylvania Historical Society in 1967, and is highly recommended for good reading. Under date of May 25, 1845, this diary contains an entry which imparts a frank appraisal of General Foreman's life and character. It reads as follows:

"May 25, 1845. Whilst I was down at Mount Harmon, Gen'l Thomas M. Foreman died. He was attacked by a sore throat & in 3 days it put an end to his life. I saw him a few hours before his death, when he was in fact dying. He knew me and seemed glad to see me. He died on Thursday the 8th and was buried on the 10th. The funeral was well conducted. All the neighborhood was assembled & formed a very respectable crowd, much more so than I expected. The coffin was carried by six of his stoutest negroes and all the other negroes belonging to him followed it, with crepe on their hats. He was placed in the vault in the family graveyard on the farm, in the beautiful grove of large forest trees between the house and the river. He is certainly a loss to the neighborhood.

He lived like a gentleman and thus afforded an example of comfort and refinement which was not without its influence on those around him. His place is very beautiful & he improved it by planting and gardening & thus diffused a taste for rural embellishment among the better class of farmers in the Neck. In these respects he is certainly a loss, but for him one can say no more.

His character and course have always been bad, his moral influence evil, he contributed to the happiness of no one, & he died without being regretted by a single mortal on earth, as he had lived for many years without inspiring anyone with affection. To his wife his death must have been a great relief. She led a horrible life with him by reason of his infirmities, his violence, & his irritable and tyrannical temper. I hope he has left her comfortable.

One will only had been found when I was there — dated in 1824 — by which she had an annuity of \$1,800, and all the property is left to a grandchild, a Mr. Bryan, brother to the Bryan who inherited the Roanoke estate of John Randolph, said to be an educated and respectable person. It is thought however that he made a subsequent will of different tenor leaving the property to another grandchild by a different daughter. Though married twice he never had a legitimate child"

DE MORTUIS NIL NISI BONUM

IN MEMORIAM

The deaths of the following members of the Society are recorded with regret:

Alfred Victor Davis, of Elkton, on July 16, 1968; he had been a member of the Society since May 1956.

Winter Day Brown, of Calvert, on August 8, 1968, in his 94th year; at the time of his death Mr. Brown was our oldest member.

Linda Randolph Anderson, of Port Deposit, on August 14, 1968; Miss Anderson was a teacher at Tome Institute, and had been a member of the Society since 1951.

HUMOUR OF THE PAST

A perusal of files of the CECIL DEMOCRAT for the Civil War era will reward the reader with an occasional column under the caption "Wit and Humor" or "For a Broad Grin". What then passed for humour consisted mainly of puns, riddles, and epigrams; by contrast, today's brand of humour is more sardonic in style. Whether our readers will dig the risibilities of the 1860's is difficult to predict, but for experimental purposes the following examples are reproduced from the DEMOCRAT of 1863:

A poor Friend — An indigent Quaker.

The individual who was accidentally injured by the discharge of his duties is still very low.

A lion and a man met one night,
But they'll never meet again,
For the man ran away with all his might,
And the lion with all his mane.

Why is a thief called a jailbird? Because he has been a robbin!

What key is the hardest to turn? A donKEY.

How do you keep fish from smelling? Cut off their noses.

A friend visiting Atlantic City was asked how he spent Sunday. "Well," he said, "among the Sabbath-breakers."

A lawyer may be moving for a new trial when he courts a second wife.

"Sam, why is de lawyers like de fishes?"
"I don't meddle wid dat subjeck, Pomp."
"Why, don't you see, kase dey is so fond of de-bate."

One swallow doesn't make a summer, but one lion can make a spring.

"Why is a man who does not bet as bad as the one who does?"
"Because he is no bettor."

Some girls use paint as a fiddler uses rosin. It helps them in drawing a beau.

"Why are good resolutions like a woman who has fainted?"
"She has to be carried out."

The marriage of Mr. Henry Bean and Miss Sarah E. Greenfield in May, 1863 prompted some wag to compose this quatrain:

If fate shall to their wishes yield,
And fate to true love leans,
Time may bestow on this Greenfield
A lovely crop of Beans.

BREVITIES

The grandfather's clock which long stood on the stairway in the Public Library with folded hands is now throwing minutes into the air and busily ticking away the golden hours. Mr. A. T. Scarborough generously arranged to have a specialist re-activate the old timepiece.

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A member of this Society was faced with a conflict of interests when he received notice of the meeting to be held on May 20th. He had already purchased a ticket for a \$100-a-plate dinner in Wilmington on the same evening, but he passed it up, gave the ticket to a friend and came to the Society's meeting in Chesapeake City.

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A Memorial Day service in the cemetery at Union Methodist Church on May 30th was featured by the dedication of a monument on which are inscribed the names of all veterans of U. S. wars, including twenty veterans of the Civil War, who lie buried in that cemetery.

The Rev. David W. Plumer, rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Elkton, delivered a patriotic address, and Messrs. Grant, Taylor, and Howard, members of this Society, took part in the program.

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The Society's Country Store was the subject of a full-page illustrated article in the CECIL WHIG'S issue of June 12, 1968.

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Miss Caroline W. Stump has donated to the Society two commemorative half dollars which are rare numismatic items. One of these is the Maryland tercentenary coin which was minted in 1934. The face of this coin bears a vignette of Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, and the reverse shows the great seal of the U. S. Government. Cecil County is the only county in Maryland named in honor of an individual whose likeness appears on a coin of the realm.

The other coin donated by Miss Stump is the Pilgrim tercentenary half dollar of 1920. A vignette of a Pilgrim Father is shown on one side and the good ship MAYFLOWER on the other.

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The members of this Society may be incensed to learn that the historical marker of Fort Hollingsworth at Elk Landing was carried away on or about August 22nd and the one indicating the location of Susquehanna Manor on Route 7 east of Perryville was also stolen some time earlier. We like to think we are living in a civilized community, but such malicious vandalism raises serious doubts. These markers can be of no earthly use to anyone, and destroying them must be some moron's conception of good, clean fun. The markers are costly, and any information regarding the whereabouts of the two that are missing will be appreciated.

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A word of thanks is here expressed to Mr. Michael L. Dixon, a junior at Elkton High School this year, who joined the Society's working staff during his summer vacation. He was very helpful in escorting visitors to the museum and especially in conducting groups of school children through the Country Store. Michael is the first high school student who has ever evinced sufficient interest in Cecil County history to offer his services to the Society.