

BULLETIN

OF

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CECIL COUNTY

No. 5

Head of Elk, Maryland

January 14, 1957

OCTOBER 1956 MEETING

On Monday evening, October 15, 1956, the regular fall meeting of the Society was held in the American Legion Home in Perryville, within a pistol shot of historic Rodgers Tavern, which provided an appropriate subject for consideration. After a splendid dinner served by the Auxiliary of Susquehanna Post #135, Morton F. Taylor introduced as the principal speaker Mrs. Charles W. Williams, President of the Society for the Preservation of Maryland Antiquities. Mrs. Williams related the history of the Rodgers family in Maryland and the building of the tavern at Lower Susquehanna Ferry by Col. John Rodgers in 1771, and said that because of its association with George Washington the proposed restoration of this old building is one of the most commendable projects that has been undertaken in Maryland for a long time. She pointed out that existing letters and diaries show that General Washington crossed at Lower Ferry at least 31 times between 1781 and 1798, and always stopped at Rodgers Tavern for lodgings and meals.

After Peyton B. Patterson had reported on the structural condition of the building and the work necessary to restore it, the Society approved a contribution of \$100 to the restoration fund.

Mrs. Blanchard Randall, of Baltimore, showed slides in color of Sodderly, the home of former Governor George Plater in St. Mary's County, and of the restored Wye Mill in Talbot County.

SECOND ROUND TABLE

The Society's second round table discussion was held in the County Library in Elkton on Thursday evening, November 15, and was led by John W. Perkins, who presented an excellent paper on "Old Mills of Cecil County". The ensuing discussion developed some new and interesting facts regarding the early industrialization of the county. It was brought out that at early dates there were mills which produced such diversified items as linseed oil, meat skewers, Windsor chairs, straw hats, shoe pegs, horse blankets, and match sticks, while nails were made at Marley Mill in 1807 at the rate of 100 tons annually. These were in addition to iron, paper, flour, and other major products.

An appeal was made for photographs of old mills and factories to amplify the file on this subject, and the gift of such pictures by members or friends will be greatly appreciated.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The cash position of the Society is indicated by the Treasurer's report on operations for the year ended December 31, 1956, of which the following is a condensed statement:

RECEIPTS			
Balance on hand January 1, 1956.....	\$	35.49	
Dues collected		507.00	
Dinner tickets		713.25	\$1,255.74
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DISBURSEMENTS			
Cost of three dinners	\$	720.00	
Printing and postage		94.93	
Contribution to Rodgers Tavern fund..		100.00	
Miscellaneous expenses		44.84	959.77
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Bank balance December 31, 1956	\$		295.97

NEWS FILES GIVEN TO COUNTY LIBRARY

Messrs. William W. and Francis H. Bratton have presented to the Cecil County Library complete files for the years 1900 through 1935 of the weekly newspaper, CECIL COUNTY NEWS, of which their father, the late William D. Bratton, was the editor for 41 years. This is a valuable acquisition by the Library as the papers provide a veritable mine of information regarding the people and events in the county during a period of 36 years.

Editor Bratton published a newspaper rather than a pictorial advertising sheet. His obituaries were models of composition and he had a happy faculty of reporting minor incidents which will always be a source of delight to the reader. By way of illustration, the following are three small items found in the file for the year 1933:

"A cannon ball 5½ inches in diameter and weighing 22½ pounds was found under seven feet of ground last week by Edward Caldwell when excavating for a new wharf at what is known as Weaver's Wharf on Water Street, just above the bridge. The missile, which is in excellent shape, is now at J. Frank Frazer's drugstore." (3-1-1933)

"One of the oldest business landmarks in Elkton disappeared this week when the old log and frame building at the corner of North and Whig streets, occupied for many years by the late William T. Giles and afterwards by Oliver T. Giles, Sr., as a restaurant and store, was torn down.

It was erected more than a century ago. The first known tenant was Samuel E. Estes, who conducted a bakery and candle manufactory there." (5-24-1933)

"A horse owned by Henry Dorsey, of Elkton, got out of its stable and went directly to the blacksmith shop on North Street conducted for many years by Reuben T. Dunbar, who died suddenly two weeks ago. The horse rubbed its

nose against the door for admittance and having gained entrance, took its usual place and awaited the proprietor, wishing to be shod. It was with force that the animal had to be led from the shop without new shoes. The death of Mr. Dunbar closed Elkton's last remaining blacksmith shop, which had long been under the management of his father, his brothers, and himself." (9-13-1933)

CECIL COUNTY ALMANAC

The record of important events occurring in the County during the month of July is presented below as the third installment of the Almanac, the months of May and June having been published in previous numbers.

JULY

7TH MONTH

1. National Bank of Rising Sun commenced operations, 1880.
2. County's ports closed by embargo on British ships, 1807.
3. Artillery roar at Gettysburg battle heard in county, 1863.
4. First train ran from Wilmington to Perryville, 1837.
5. First county newspaper, THE ELKTON PRESS, published, 1823.
6. Jeremiah Baker commissioned captain of militia, 1776.
7. Susquehannock Indians ceded most of county to English, 1652.
8. The Community Fire Company of Rising Sun organized, 1921.
9. Cornerstone of Cecil County High School laid in Elkton, 1896.
10. Mutual Building Association of Cecil Co. incorporated, 1870.
11. Maryland troops left Head of Elk for Philadelphia, 1776.
12. Wheat quoted \$1.16, corn 60c a bushel, 1833.
13. Bishop Richard Randolph Disney born in North East, 1835.
14. "New Munster" of 6000 acres surveyed for Edmund O'Dwyer, 1683.
15. St. Swithin's—Rain today portends a lot more.
16. Cecil County troops disembarked at Cherbourg, France, 1918.
17. Rev. Samuel Finley, founder West Nottingham Academy, died, 1766.
18. Cornerstone of Trinity Church, Chesapeake City, laid, 1889.
19. Grand Lodge of Maryland, K. of P., convened in Elkton, 1872.
20. First baseball game in county, Elkton vs. Chesapeake City, 1882.
21. Martin Van Buren visited McLane's at "Little Bohemia", 1829.
22. Dr. John H. Jamar, Civil War surgeon, born in Elkton, 1840.
23. Cecil Daughters of the Confederacy held public reception, 1901.
24. John Churchman, scientist of Brick M-H, died at sea, 1805.
25. Railroad bridge over Susquehanna wrecked by tornado, 1866.
26. New Court House in Elkton dedicated, 1940.
27. Eleanora Taylor appointed postmaster at Blythedale, 1892.
28. Drawing of Bohemia Library lottery announced, 1763.
29. North Elk Parish observed 250th anniversary of founding, 1956.
30. Capt. John Smith explored Toghwoh (Sassafras) River, 1608.
31. First railroad train ran from Wilmington to Baltimore, 1837.

CECIL COUNTY'S FIRST NEWSPAPER

Prior to the publication of a newspaper in Cecil County all advertisements of sales and similar public notices were set up at the Court House door, in hotels, and in other public places. They were generally handwritten, although sometimes printed forms were obtained in the cities. In the early days there was a requirement that certain public notices should be displayed at the Parish Church.

The first newspaper printed in Cecil County was the ELKTON PRESS. It was started in Elkton in 1823 by James Andrews and John McCord, who had attempted to establish a paper at Andrews' Bridge on the Lancaster County side of the Octoraro Creek. As the venture did not succeed, they moved their equipment to Elkton and started the PRESS, a weekly paper devoted to the interests of the people.

The first number was issued on July 5, 1823, under the management of John McCord. It was printed on a sheet of handmade paper about 22 by 27 inches in size, with five columns to a page. The printing press was operated by a screw and lever.

The subscription price was \$2 a year. Advertisements not exceeding a square were published three times for one dollar; the cost of each subsequent insertion was 25c. The paper had for its slogan, "Obedience to the people's choice", which seemed to indicate its editorial policy, because at first it was neutral in politics. Judging from communications which later appeared in its columns, the PRESS favored the election of Andrew Jackson to the Presidency in 1828.

The first issue contained a report of a Fourth of July celebration held at the Court House in Elkton on the previous day. On that occasion the Declaration of Independence was read by Captain Edward Wilson, a veteran of the War of 1812, and an oration was delivered by Joseph Gilpin, Esq. The program was punctuated by several discharges of cannon, and at the conclusion a sumptuous repast was served at the public house of George Peacock. The conviviality of the company there assembled was demonstrated by the drinking of 24 toasts, Col. James Sewall acting as toastmaster, while a band enlivened the festivities by dispensing patriotic airs.

Among the advertisements which appeared in the first number of the PRESS were the following: Store goods, by Samuel Miller and Levi H. Evans; lumber, by Enoch Cloud; tailoring, by George Jones and George Hardy; public sale of land and iron works of John Frey on the Octoraro, by Jeremiah Cosden, trustee; dissolution of a pottery business, by James Carter and Job Haines; \$40 reward for a stolen horse, by Penelope White; and a list of unclaimed letters in Elkton postoffice, by Col. Adam Whann, postmaster.

After varying vicissitudes of fortune, including changes in ownership and financial difficulties, the PRESS passed out of existence and left the journalistic field to a rival, THE CECIL REPUBLICAN, which was launched in Elkton on May 12, 1832.