

BULLETIN
OF
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CECIL COUNTY

No. 8

Head of Elk, Maryland

January 27, 1958

OCTOBER 1957 MEETING

Magraw Hall at historic West Nottingham Academy was the scene of the Society's dinner meeting on Monday evening, October 21, 1957. A capacity attendance severely taxed the school's resources of space and dining-room equipment and under ordinary circumstances would have called for a display of the SRO sign. Following the dinner, President W. T. Mahoney presided at a business session during which Peyton B. Patterson reported that a contract had been let for restoration of the basement kitchen in the County Library and that work on this project would be commenced at once. Morton F. Taylor, Curator, made an appeal for early American kitchenware suitable for furnishing the restored room and, as a member of the Maryland Committee, also put in a plea for the campaign for funds to restore the U. S. frigate CONSTELLATION, first ship of the U. S. Navy. Contributions for this purpose may be sent to "CONSTELLATION", Baltimore 2, Maryland.

Francis W. Krastel was called to the Chair when the nominating committee submitted its recommendation that all officers and trustees be re-elected for another term of two years. This recommendation was approved without dissent and the nominees were declared elected.

Wallace Williams, Sr. introduced the Rev. Charles W. Blaker, headmaster, who talked in a felicitous vein of the Academy's history from its beginning in a log cabin in 1744 down to the present, and concluded by showing slides in color of the buildings and grounds.

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OLD SCHOOLS DISCUSSED

On November 18, 1957, a group of 38 members and guests gathered in the Conference Room of the County Library in Elkton for a round table discussion on the subject, "Old Public Schools of Cecil County". Led by E. A. Howard, Historian, the meeting proved to be the best attended to date in the series of Society-sponsored round tables. Such a turnout on a stormy evening is indeed indicative of an active interest in our County's history.

As a result of extensive research the leader presented historical data on each of 86 public schools in existence fifty years ago and additional information was contributed by the conferees. Brief sketches were given of all County School Examiners or Superintendents from the first Examiner, the Rev. William Torbert, down to the incumbent, Morris W. Rannels, who was present and introduced to the group.

Visual aids included a County map pinpointing each school, a teacher's certificate of 1894, old textbooks, and photographs of an 1895 Teacher's Institute, school-houses, and school groups.

(M.F.T.)

IN MEMORIAM

The deaths of our fellow-members, William M. Jefferson, on September 9, 1957, and of W. Henry Pippin, on November 11, 1957, are recorded with regret.

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FINANCIAL REPORT

The following is a summary of the Treasurer's report on operations of the Society for the year ended December 31, 1957:

RECEIPTS

Balance on hand January 1, 1957	\$ 295.79	
Dues collected	578.00	
Dinner tickets sold	822.00	
Contributions to Kitchen Fund	1,204.00	\$2,899.79

DISBURSEMENTS

Cost of three dinners	\$ 830.00	
Printing and postage	154.16	
Contribution to Old Bohemia Fund	100.00	
Sundry expenses	119.50	1,203.66
Balance in bank December 31, 1957	\$1,696.13	
This balance includes Kitchen Restoration Fund of	1,234.00	

It is gratifying to note from the Treasurer's statement that a large proportion of our members paid dues for the year 1957. At the same time it is disconcerting to report that the Executive Committee has been compelled to remove a small number of chronic delinquents from the membership roll. The Society cannot operate without money, and those individuals who accept membership should recognize that they are assuming an obligation to pay dues of \$2 a year. We should like to retain all our members, but membership and unpaid dues are not compatible.

The supplement accompanying this issue of the Bulletin shows that membership of the Society at the end of 1957 was composed of 334 active and 16 honorary members, total 350. Any omissions or errors in the list should be brought to the attention of the Treasurer.

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KITCHEN RESTORATION COMPLETED

We feel sure that those who accepted the invitation to visit the County Library before coming to this meeting were surprised and delighted to see the magic transformation which has been achieved in the basement of the building. Instead of a forbidding dungeon cluttered with rubble they found that the restoration of an Early American kitchen has emerged under the expert supervision of Mr. Patterson and that the addition of contemporary fixtures has enhanced its utility and attractiveness.

This re-constructed room will not only serve as a museum and as a place for informal gatherings but will endow the Library building with historic interest which is certain to prove fascinating to every one who visits it. The restoration committee thanks the contributors who made the success of the project possible and hopes that they will feel repaid for their assistance after inspecting the completed work.

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CECIL COUNTY ALMANAC

Notable events in the County's history during September constitute the fifth consecutive month in this series.

SEPT.

9TH MONTH

1. First free school system established in county, 1859.
2. David Scott (of John), poet, born near Dysart's Tavern, 1817.
3. Robert Alexander, Elkton Tory, abjured independence, 1777.
4. Corner stone of St. Andrew's Church at Andora laid, 1894.
5. West Nottingham Academy began its 211th year, 1955.
6. John M. Reed appointed postmaster at Bohemia Mills, 1862.
7. Garfield flagpole (112 feet) raised at Cherry Hill, 1880.
8. Capt. Henry Dobson killed at Eutaw Springs, S. C., 1781.
9. Rochambeau's heavy artillery camped at Cummings Tavern, 1781.
10. First steam locomotive ran on Frenchtown-New Castle R.R., 1832.
11. Reunion of 6th Maryland Regiment, G.A.R., at North East, 1886.
12. Judge Frederick Stump, on Circuit bench 34 years, died, 1901.
13. Alexander Evans, U.S. Congressman 1847-53, born at Elkton, 1818.
14. Bi-centennial of Brick Meeting House celebrated, 1901.
15. Jacob Tome Institute at Port Deposit opened, 1894.
16. Maryland State W.C.T.U. convened at Rising Sun, 1926.
17. Monument to Cecil soldiers dedicated at Antietam, Md., 1890.
18. George Read, signer of Declaration, born at Charlestown, 1733.
19. First B&O train ran between Baltimore and Philadelphia, 1836.
20. First dated clock made by Abel Cottey of Nottingham, 1709.
21. Population of 24,450 in county revealed by census, 1890.
22. THE CECIL GAZETTE started in Elkton by Henry Bosee, 1834.
23. Community Fire Company of Perryville organized, 1923.
24. Malignant epidemic erupted in Elkton, 1805.
25. John England named manager of Principio Iron Works, 1723.
26. Hiram McCullough, U.S. Congressman 1865-69, born at Elkton, 1813.
27. Augustine Herman wrote his last will and testament, 1684.
28. Samuel Evans made captain of county's first military unit, 1776.
29. Col. Henry Hollingsworth, eminent patriot, died at Elkton, 1803.
30. Calvert Agricultural High School destroyed by fire, 1935.

GENESIS OF PUBLIC WELFARE

Prior to the time when the indigent and under-privileged became objects of public solicitude there was no established plan for relieving the distress of victims of adversity or misfortune. The first provision for the poor of Cecil County was made by the Legislature of 1787 when an act was passed authorizing erection of an almshouse for their benefit. A levy not exceeding £400 was authorized for this purpose. The next year a supplemental act was passed approving the purchase of 200 acres of land for a poorhouse farm.

Nine trustees were named and they were empowered to take possession of a bequest of £58 left by Joseph Phelps of St. Stephen's Parish, and also to appropriate the estates of all persons dying intestate and leaving no legal heirs and to apply the money to relief of the poor of the county. These trustees first met in Elkton on June 11, 1788, and two days later purchased 118 acres of land from Col. Henry Hollingsworth. In 1791 an additional 57 acres were purchased from Col. Hollingsworth. This land constituted the almshouse farm which was located on the plateau on the road from Marley Mill to Cherry Hill.

Col. Hollingsworth was engaged to erect a house on this farm as soon as practicable, but the work was delayed by freshets on the Little Elk Creek, from the bed of which the building stones were obtained, and the building was not completed and ready for occupancy until June 2, 1789, when it was formally accepted by the trustees. George Harris and his wife, Ann, were appointed overseer and matron of the institution at a salary of £40 per annum.

Pending completion of the almshouse, a house owned by Col. Hollingsworth on West Main Street in Elkton was rented to the trustees and used by them as a temporary poorhouse. This was a log building which became a landmark in Little Elk and stood until March 1901, when it was torn down by the late Charles W. King. Mr. King's father had bought the property about 1850, and for many years a number of rings were to be seen fastened in the walls and floors. It had been the custom to chain unruly and demented inmates to these rings.

The almshouse at Cherry Hill had accommodations for approximately 45 human derelicts. It also afforded sanctuary to countless vagrants, for a county paper reported that 110 hoboës lodged there in three nights during the last week of March 1877. In a potter's field on a slope facing the sunset were inhumed the remains of the friendless, unknown transients who met violent deaths within the county, and executed criminals.

The operation of this institution was finally taken over by State-managed agencies and the property was sold on April 7, 1952 to Elk Paper Manufacturing Company. The Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales now occupy the buildings and conduct a kindergarten there.