Women's Page



BY A MAN

NEW YARMOUTH

DR. WROTH WRITES OF FINDING THE REMAINS OF THE FIRST TOWN IN KENT COUNTY

From an autobiography of Dr. Paregrene Wroth, we obtained the material for this week's woman's page. Dr. Wroth practiced medecine in Chestertown and his home was located where Lewis Butcher Shop now is, at Cross and Cannon Sts. The old house had quite a flower garden but all this has been torn down now, and now buildings built where the old house stood.

Dr. Wroth's writings date back as far as he can remember, which is the year 1792. Some more of his writings will appear at a later date.

In the latter part of the article which is to follow: Dr. Wroth states that the town, "Old Town" was located nine miles down the river. This is now called Quaker Neck Wharf. A colored settlement up the road from Quaker Neck Wharf towards Bond Chapel is still called "Old Town." Mr. Hadaway kept a store there for many years. The town later was moved to the present Chestertown.

Also in the article, Dr. Wroth writes of English stone used as ballast, and this was thrown off when the ships were loaded. Several rock piles are found in shallow water of Chester River today. The legend about these rock piles, which are said to be English Stones, is that the ships would run into shallow water and would be forced to throw over the ballast, so as to float off.

From the Maryland Historical Society the following about New Yarmouth was furnished by Mr. C. Cox Hopper and appeared three weeks ago in the Transcript under the leading of (DID YOU KNOW). "About 1686, New Yarmouth at Grey's Inn Creek, near what is now Rock Hall, became the county seat by act of General Assembly November 6. In 1683 it had become a port of entry."

The farm belonging to Mr. Nelson Stevens in Eastern Neck is today still called Hunting field.

(The following word for word as Dr. Wroth wrote it.)

While searching the Records of Kent County in the Clerk's office in Chester Town, Maryland, George L. L. Davis, Esq., who was then engaged in collecting materials for his contemplated history of Kent County, discovered that Chester Town either in its present or former location further down the River, was not the oldest Town in that county. He found evidence of the existance of a more ancient town, the situation of which was on Gray's Inn Creek, a branch of Chester River, on land purchased of Major Thomas Ringgold by a man named Tovey.

The lot of 100 acres purchased by Tovey was part of a large tract called Hunting Field, which stretched from Gray's Inn Creek across Eastern Neck to Chester River, just within its mouth and embraced 1500 acres, the farms no belonging to George W. Wilson, Thomas Brown and others.

On receiving this information from Mr. Davis, I proposed a visit to that vicinity, as I was well acquainted with all that neighborhood, in order to ascertain, if possible, the exact site of that first metropolis of my old county. He agreed to my suggestion and the next day we went, first to the farm of Mr. Brown on Gray's Inn Creek, which farm, I knew, had belonged to the Ringgold Family ever since I could remember until lately.

Directly in the South front of Mr. Brown's house, on a cove or small branch of Gray's Inn, we soon discovered the remains, the unmistakable remains of a wharf, at the mouth of the cove; and the ground near the wharf was or had been paved and was now covered nearly with bluish, rounded, water worn stones, great numbers of which I have seen and are indeed still found near the wharf in Chester Town, particularly about the yards of the houses now occupied by Mr. William E. Wicks and Miss Redue.

These stones are not natives of Kent County or, as I believe of this whole country, being entirely different from any found in this district or region. They were brought to Chester Town and doubtless to Gray's Inn also, as ballast for ships which traded with this country in Colonial times for Tobacco, our chief staple at that early period for exportation and these stones were thrown out of the ships so as to take in cargoes, and were afterwards used to pave the approaches to the wharves.

These ships were all foreign as the recent settlers had not then commenced ship-building.

This first town here (Mr. Brown's farm) founded was named New Yarmouth. A store, a dweling and an ordinary (tavern) were all the houses of which we have any accounts; but there is recorded evidence that juries sat there on civil business and that vestries met to consider the affairs of the Church.

An old gentleman name Keating, a member of Mr. Brown's family, being asked by Mr. Davis, what was the name of the land there, replied, "I always heard it called Tovey's Lot."

As the situation agreed with the account in the Records, being on Gray's Inn, on and purchased by Mr. Tovey, from a tract called Huntingfield, (and I KNEW that we were then on Huntingfield) and as we had found a wharf, for which there had been no use there for a hundred years, and the blue stones brought there as ballast; stones which I know, are not natives of that Peninsula at least, no doubt could be reasonably entertained that we had discovered the site of New Yarmouth.

But this is not all the evidence. Reliable traditions in the neighborhood added strength to the conviction that watchers, in a very short time found the site of that ancient town. Miss Ambrose, a most respectable and excellent old lady with whom in my youth I was well acquainted when a student in Chester Town, indeed boarded in the same house with her; Miss Ambrose, I say, told Mr. Hodges, who told me, that when she was young, that part of the road leading from St. Paul's Church to Eastern Neck Island opposite to Mr. Brown's house was called "Yarmouth Race Course." Again, Mr. James Urie said that he had heard his father say that "He had coopered many hogsheads of tobacco at the old ware-house, which stood in Mr. Brown's yard. I remember old Mr. Urie well, and always knew him as a reliable man, as also is his son.

In connection with this subject, it may be mentioned that Mr. George W. Willson, who owns that part of the Hunting Field, which lies on Chester River, informed me that, old Nathan Laddy, an aged negro of good character, who died a few years ago, upwards of 100 years old, had told him that "He remembered when a church stood on Mr. Willson's farm." I have examined this spot, and with Mr. Willson can testify that there are now many English bricks scattered about it. After returning to Chestertown, I wrote to Mr. Willson, asking him to take a servant, with a spade and see if he could find any graves about the place where Laddy had said the Church stood. He kindly did so, and digging about on some raised spots of the field (which were still evidently seen tho' the field has been long cultivated in wheat and corn ever since he could remember) he found a number of graves, some of which were arched over with brick. It may also be added that Mr. Willson remembered to have often heard the servants of his grand-father say that when going out of nights and returning before day, they as always "gave that place a wide birth as things were to be seen there."

This town (New Yarmouth) was situated only a few miles from Eastern Neck Island, which is the South-Western Extremity of Kent County, and was the first part of Kent County that was settled, and as these settlements extended towards the middle of the county, it became necessary to have a church edifice more convenient to the majority of the inhabitants. Then St. Paul's was built about 1680. New Yarmouth also became inconvenient as a centre of business and Chester Town was laid out. This was done at first about 7 or 8 miles lower down the River from where Chestertown now stands, but this too proving inconvenient, the present site of Chestertown was determined on. In my boyhood, that now standing, was called "New Town," and the one first fixed on is known as "Old Town" to this day. Kent County was the first settlement in Maryland, Kent Island being colonized from Virginia before Lord Baltimore obtained a charter for Maryland and Avalon, and was first known as Kent Island County.

Eastern Neck Island received its name from the inhabitants of Kent Island; it stands Eastwardly. P. W.

TO HOLD CLINIC

The Maryland Tuberculosis Association will hold a clinic at the Health Center, Chestertown at 10 a. m. on Monday, February 6th. Dr. Louis H. Seth will conduct this clinic.

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You've probably already heard by means of that mysterious underground wireless that Jefferson's has just received a new shipment of dresses. But darned if I'm not going to tell you about them anyhow. SOMEBODY'S got to listen to me rave!

Most of the new ones are prints and they are such totally different styles and types that there's absolutely sure to be one to suit each of you.

Just as I told you a few weeks ago the sleeves on the smartest new dresses are simpler, especially around the shoulder line. It all seems to have slid down near the cuff, and the childlike simplicity of these new sleeves—ending above the rest in school girl fashion, is the most refreshing stunt to appear in ages. It makes a girl's arm look so round and appealing, the sort that makes a bachelor, however confirmed, see visions of cosy homes and dear little clinging-vine wives.

Let's see, where was I? Oh, the dresses. Well, anyway, there's a precious little print done in tourqoise blue, black and white with lots of fluttery bows; and there's a very new design, geometric print they call it, in shades of blue, with tight little cuffs and pert little white frills. Another good bet is a red crepe printed in white with a short little shoulder cape and white collar and cuffs. These are especially for the young and impudently slim but there are also a couple of beauties in plain color for those wanting size 38.

One is black with cut steel buttons and buckle, cut cleverly and smartly. The other is brown with lines of fagating across the shoulders and a touch of white in front. All these little numbers are priced at that miraculous sum of $5.98.

Wait a minute! Don't go yet. There's a special price of $4.50 on a number of close-out dresses. Better look 'em over again.

LYDIA LEE.

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