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Looking Back Upon Old Queenstown

By The Rev. G. Croft Williams, One Time Rector Of Wye

Three centuries ago there lived along the southern shores of the Chester river a gentle tribe of Indians known as the Ozinies. They hunted, fished, and tilled the soil, as they had a right to do; but they did not cultivate the fierce qualities of revenge and malign cunning for which their neighbors, the Susquehannaahs and Nanticokes, were famous. The Ozinies had their chief town near the mouth of Corsica creek, remains of which we may see today in the weapons and untensils that are scattered about.

The first settlers in this part of the county probably emigrated from Kent Island during the dispute that waged between Claiborne and Lord Baltimore. From the situations of the oldest settlements and the lay of the old highways we concluded that Queenstown was the centre from which population radiated more than two and a half centuries ago.

In 1706, the General Assembly created Queen Anne's county out of Talbot and Kent, this part of the county formerly belonging to Kent. (The record of the General Assembly April the first, 1707, says: "That whereas the platt or draught of Queen Anne's County having been laid before the Board, and the same fully inspected and detected thereon, it was the unanimous opinion of the said Board that the Plantation of Maj. John Hawkins, in Coursey's Creek, being nearest the centre of the said County, is the most propper and convenient place for the Town and Court House to be fixt on. Therefore it is referred to the House of Delegates for their consideration." Which being debated, it was "carry'd by a majority of votes that a Town be erected at Mr. Hawkins Plantation, in Coursey's Creek, and the Court House to be built and fixt there.)

This county-seat was named Queens Town in honor of Queen Anne, the English sovereign, for whom the county was also named. The town was one hundred acres in area, and was divided into lots that were sold to various purchasers. It extended along the water-front, probably from Captain Friel's granary to Mr. McConnor's marsh, with streets running towards the cardinal points of the compass. The jail stood near the place now occupied by the residence of Mr. Cockey. The court house stood on the lot opposite Mr. Denny's store, that is now owned by Mr. Thomas Embert. The lot on which the court house and jail were built was two acres in extent. A town green, where the inhabitants met to lounge and talk, covered part of the open triangle on Front Street. Bolingly, which was then much smaller than it is now, was the home of Maj. John Hawkins.

Executions were conducted in Gallows' Field, whose name remains as the only reminder of the stern exercise of the law in those days. A whipping post was erected in Queenstown, and according to the court records, on Aug. 26th, 1718, Katharine Langton was there tied and given twenty lashes on her bare back till blood appeared. Other dread implements of punishment were the stocks, the pillory and the branding irons. Sep., 1748, a man stood in the pillory here with the word "cheat" on his back, while he was pelted by the populace. His crime was reducing a peck measure below standard. The branding irons were seldom used, however. According to the stern code of that period, they were considered necessary. They bore the initial letters of certain usual crimes and were heated and applied to the offenders: "S. L.," for seditious libeler, on either cheek; "M," for manslaughter, or "T" for thief, on the left hand; "R.," for rogue or vagabond, on the shoulder; "P.," for perjury on the forehead. On looking through the early trial records of this county I find that the judges were quite lenient, usually substituting fines, where possible, for severer punishment. The largest number of judgments given were in the cases of paupers and infirm persons who implored assistance, to whom they gave generously.

Not only the offenses now taken cognizance of by the law were punishable, but others that seem strange to us now, though they were of dread import then. In the Commission issued to the justices in Queenstown in 1718, Charles, Lord Baltimore, directed them "to hear and determine all and every the fellonies, witchcraft, enchantments, sorceries, arts magick, trespasses, forestallings," etc.

Queenstown real-estate must have been much sought, a sthere are many references to it in the early land records of the county. I shall cite two cases to give an idea of the value of town lots. On August 28th, 1713, Samuel Hunter conveyed to Richard Hammond, lot No. 42, which had been taken up and built upon by the said Hunter. The purchase money paid by Hammond was 15,000 pounds of tobacco, (about $275.00). On March 22nd, 1714. Thomas Jackson deeded to Samuel Hunter, in consideration of the payment of 10,000 pounds of tobacco, (about $185.00) "two lots, Nos. 23 and 24, with one new dwelling house, 35x20 ft. lying in Queenstown, and being part of the 100 acres of land formerly laid out for said town."

Before the Revolution there was no school in Queenstuwn, those here seeking an education had to go to the school house about a quarter of a mile beyond the Tanyard bridge. As that sschool was so important in the lives of our good citizens a century and three quarters ago it will not be improper for me to speak of it.

In 1732, the Rev. Christopher Wilkinson reported that there was no gree school in Queen Anne's County. In this year an act was made for the purpose of erecting a school as near the center of the county as possible. Visitors were appointed to direct the school and were instructed to purchase one hundred acres of land and erect on it a school-house and residence for the master. . This master had to be a member of the Church of England, "of pious and exemplary life and conversation, capable of teaching the grammar good, writing and mathematics, if such can conveniently be got." His salary was fixed at 20 sovereigns ($100.00) a year. In 1724, a good school-house was built and the work was begun. The hours of teaching were, from April 1st to the last of September, 7 to 11 A. M. and 1to 5 P. M..; from the last part of September to April 1st, 8 to 11 A. M. and 1 to 4 P. M.

In 1756, Quinton Malcolm was master. He startled the visitors and delighted the pupils by teaching dancing in the school on two days in every week. He was requested to resign, but refused to do so. Two years later the attendance had diminished to one scholar, when Master Malcolm was forced to surrender his ferrule.

In 1776, Luther Martin took charge of the school. He was subsequently distinguished by being appointed Attorney General, by his opposition to the Federal Constitution, and by his defence of Chief Justice Chase. He had a massive and skillful mind and spoke with power and eloquence.

There was a custom among the scholars of taking fire-arms to school and shooting at marks on the school lot, so, in 1768, the Visitors passed resolutions forbidding them to go to school armed.

From the lists of books and apparatuses purchased by the Visitors, from the high curriculum that they prescribed, and from the fine characters and attainments of the masters generally, we know that for that time our people had good educational opportunities. In 1788, the school-house having served its usefulness, was turned into an almshouse.

In 1766, "A meeting of the gentlemen and free holders of Queen's town, Queen Anne's county, was held on the 6th of June, for the purpose of sharing in the general exaltation over the repeal of the Stamp Act." These proceedings are thus described:

"The citizens met at the house of Thomas Baker, and proceeded from thence to the green, before the court house, where a hole was dug in the ground and the emblems of Discard deposited therein. A pillar was erected on the spot, amid the joyful shouts of the assembled crowd and booming of cannon, upon the sides of which was the following inscription:

"Underneath the foot hereof lieth buried in oblivion Discard, and by the friends of liberty of Queen Anne's county this pillar is dedicated to Concord, In memory of the restoration of union, mutual affection and tranquility to Great Britain and her colonies, under the auspices of their King, George the Third by the friends of American Freedom, but particularly by the virtuous influence of the great guardian of the rights of mankind, William Pitt, The great preserver of English liberty, Lord Camden, and the present worthy and patriotic ministry. An elegant entertainment was prepared; after whcih the following toasts were drunk, with the discharge of cannon.

"1. The King. 2. The Queen. 3. Prince of Wales and all the Royal family. 4. Perpetual union and harmony between Great Britain and her colonies, under the auspicious governor of the illustrious house of Hanover. 5. May the submission of America to the mother country be ever compatible with her constitutional liberty. 6. The House of Lords. 7. The House of Commons. 8. Mr. Pitt. 9. Lord Camden. 10. Col. Barre. 11. General Howard. 12. The Governor and prosperity of Maryland. 13. The Virginia Assembly. 14. The man that first proposed the Congress, of New York. 15. All the gentlemen of the Congress except those that refused to sign. 16. Daniel Dulany, Esq. 17. John Dickinson Esq. 18. The London Committee of Merchants.19. The Navy and Army. 20. Trade and Navigation. 21. Number 105 in the House of Lords. 22. Number 250 in the House of Commons. 23. All true hearts and sound bottoms.

"The company then returned to the Pillar and drank the health etc., of Pitt and Concord. After which they passed unanimously the following resolutions: "That they think it their duty (as they have not the means of directly addressing the Throne) to declare to the world with hearts full of the warmest duty and affecion, their unshaken and inviolable attachment and loyalty to their lawful, rightful, most good and gracious Sovereign George the Third, and gratitude for his royal and beneficent attention to the compaints of his subjects on the continent of America in relieving therefrom the confusion and distress which must inevitably have attended the execution of the Stamp Act, and most solemnly to join in the ardent prayer which cannot but flow from the hearts of every American, that there may not, to the latest period of time, be wanting a prince of his most illustrious house to adorn the Imperial Crown of Great Britain, and extend the royal beneficence to all his loyal subjects however, remote.' In the evening the day's celebration was concluded with the illumination of the town."

This shows a commendable spirit in the colonial citizens of our town. They were animated by the strong Anglo-Saxon principles of liberty and fair dealing, for these they would hazard their lives and fortunes; yet they loved their mother country and their King and were ever true and loyal to them.

In 1776, Queenstown was the only post office in this county, and the amount of postage for the year was £, 10. 11 s., 8 d. ($51.18). But she was losing her prestige. Strong pressure was brought by those living in the upper part of the county to have the court house and prison moved on to a place more centrally located. So in 1782, the General Assembly passed an act applying the proceeds from the sale of the old court house and prison to the erection of new ones at the head of Corsica creek. (Chester Mills.) In 1790, even the postoffice was no longer in Queenstown, it had been moved to Chester Mills.

There is no record of the religious life in Queenstown before the Revolution, yet we know fairly well what it was. The people were firm believers in Christianity and realized the need of Churches and sacraments.

The Roman Catholics did not have one representative in Queen Anne's county in 1696, but in 1708, we find that 179 were here, despite the rigorous laws against them; as they had no Churches they had to hear the mass in private, celebrated by Jesuit priests from Bohemia Manor. These priests were faithful and true to their profession and lead faithful and godly lives. To their energy and perserverance is due the strength of the Church of Rome in our borders now.

"The first meeting house that was ever built by the Methodists on the Eastern Shore, was in Kent county in 1774, about nine miles below Chestertown." A little later there was erected the "Old Dudley Meeting House," the first Methodist place of regular worship in this county. In April, 1778, we are informed that: "Joseph Hartley," an itinerant Methodist preacher, "was apprehended in Queen Anne's county, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, for preaching the Gospel; he gave bond and security for to stand his trial in court. He was then obliged to desist from preaching in that county; but he would attend his appointments, and after singing and prayers, he would stand on his knees and exhort the people till his enemies said they had as lieve he should preach on his feet as on his knees." This fearless and faithful pioneer of Wesleyanism ministered to our townsmen one hundred and thirty years ago. Such men made their Church the great power that it is today.

The people generally were members of the Church of England. At Bolingly lived Col. John Hawkins, who was at one time High Sheriff of Kent county and who sold the land on which Queenstown was erected. He was a ipous man and a member of the vestry of St. Paul's parish, of which Queenstown was then a part. St. Paul's Church, Centreville, still uses the communion plate that he gave. On the chalice is inscribed, "The Gift of Col. John Hawkins of Chester River in Maryland 1716," and on the flagon, "The Gift of Col. John Hawkins in 1717." His son, Ernault, was also a vestryman and gave a silver paten now used in St. Paul's . Members of the Church of England worshipped at St. Paul's, Chester, and St. Luke's, Wye both of which were built prior to 1692. To these churches the people usually rode on horse-back; vehicles were seldom used before the Revolution.

During the Revolutionary war our brave soldiers went to other parts of the country, as we had no invasion by the British. In the thirty years succeeding the new county seat, Centreville, became the place of interest. The fire that old inhabitants once spoke of must have swept the town at this period. Certain it is that of all the buildings along the water-front only one foundation, so far as we know, remains to mark the place where busy traffic was done, where silk robed ladies strolled down the street to see the ships come in from foreign ports, and where bewigged gentlemen, with swords girt to their sides, dropped in at Samuel Hunter's Inn to have a glass of sangaree with jolly Vincent Hemsley.

Though swept by fire, though deprived of the court house, Queenstown was too beautiful and important a situation to be only a wheat field. In 1804, the Legislature passed an act laying out a public road from Queenstown to the landing on Queenstown creek. From this it would appear that there had been no water there for some time, for in that year the water-front was a farm. Before the Revolution the streets ran down to the creek, and there was doubtless a landing at the foot of each.

In 1806, Thomas and Co. did a large mercantile business here, importing directly from London. This year they announce that the new schooner "Experiment" had begun to run as a packet between Queenstown and Baltimore. She had ten births, and a netting around her quarters to keep the children from falling overboard.

W. B. Posey was another prosperous merchant that flourished at this time. He sold dry-goods, wines, brandies, rums, and whiskeys, of the most expensive kinds, Spanish cigars, tamarinds, limes, etc. The character of his stock shows that he had wealthy customers who lived after the most approved manner of the lavish and luxury loving people of the Eastern Shore.

In March, 1808, Greenberry Griffin, a bold sailor and a wealthy man, ran the "Jefferson," a passenger schooner lying between Queenstown on Prospect Hill and kept a tavern at Queenstown Landing. All vestiges of this tavern have disappeared. . When Capt. Griffin began to take passengers in the "Jefferson" the "Experiment" was regularly run as a freight beat. This shows a thriving town for there was not then the large freight and passenger traffic which our modern life demands. In May, 1813, two British barges captured the "Jefferson' 'as she was approaching Baltimore. The crew, seeing the approaching barges, took to the small boats and escaped, leaving Capt. Griffin and the passengers to the mercy of the enemy. An American boat was near but made no effort to protect the ill-fated "Jefferson." Capt. Griffin's imprisonment was brief, for we find him, in 1814, running the Pinckney."

The only time that a foreign enemy ever entered Queenstown was in the War of 1812. Our town had lived through the Indian wars, the French and Indian War, and the Revolution without any molestation; but in the war of 1812 the center of the storm was too near for her to remain unharmed.

On Aug. 12th, the British landed at Jackson's Creek, 3400 strong. The news flew through the county, and our little body of 400 men, under the command of Maj. Wm. B. Nicholson, rapidly formed and marched toward Piney Neck. There were the 38th regiment of infantry, with 244 men, under Maj. Nicholson, the cavalry, with 100 men, under Maj. Thomas Emory, and the artillery, with 35 men and 2 six-pounders, under Capt. Gustavus Wright. . They could not find quarters in Queenstown for so many men, so they marched on down the road for a mile and a quarter and camped for the night. A picket guard under Capt. Massey was sent out to take position at the top of Slippery Hill and announce the approach of the English without firing. About three o'clock in the m orning our troops were startled in their camp by the sound of musketry. Maj. Emory rode down toward the picket guard and found them fireing upon the British. He realized that the enemies superior force would soon annihilate our little home-gurd, so he ordered Capt. Massey to retreat, which he did in all haste. The picket guard consisted of about 30 men, they fired two rounds at the British and killed several of them. This was the battle of Slippery Hill.

In the meantime Admiral Cockburn, with two British frigates, sailed up the Chester river and anchored at the mouth of Queenstown creek. From there he came ashore, at Hall's landing with an armed force, intending to meet the infantry that was marching up from Piney Neck. This infantry came in at the heels of the flying American troops. The wheat fields were ripe and ready for the cradle, these the enemy fired. They sacked the town, stealing all the jewelry and plate that they could find. Nothing was sacred in their eyes, for they broke up the beautiful old furniture and thrust their bayonets through the family portraits. From the home of Dr. Troupe, which stood where Mrs. Sherwood's house now is they carried away many valuables, among which was a handsome gold headed can, these were subsequently returned by order of the English commander.

While this looting and burning was going on, our men were hastening up the road toward Centreville. As they appeared on New Market hill the English frigates at the mouth of Queenstown creek fired on them. Foot-sore and weary they finally reached Chester Mills, where they camped and rested up after their ten mile race. After seeing the Americans safely away, and after having gotten all the valuables and vengeance that they could, the English embarqued, thus closing the martial history of Queenstown.

At this time chicken fighting was a chief sport. One, Samuel Swan, was a famous chicken-fighter and raised gamecocks of rare endurance and skill. Sam was an ardent hater of the British. When our troops retreated through town Sam refused to go with them, saying that he desired to remain and all alone fight the enemy. How much he fought we do not know, but when the war was over Sam was still raising chickens for the ring.

Horse racing was also very popular; never since have our people been so generally interested in that sport. From the hill this side of Beaver Dam to where Mr. Delahay's shop now stands was the race course. From Wye Island, from Kent Island, and from the regions beyond Centreville, quarter-mile racers were brought; good, all-around horses they were, that could draw a plough as gracefully as they could bear a rider or haul a vehicle. Both sides of the road were lined with people, each having his favorite horse that he had known from colthood. Negroes, a few half-breed Indians, poor white people afoot, rich-planters' families in coaches, all with good humor, good jests, and good lungs, came to spend an exciting and uproarous afternoon. Sportsmen today who go to see two horses trot a mile in a certain number of seconds, which have before been put down in cold blood as their record, don't know what a jolly, human, harmless thing a country race is. The State later ended this amusement by entering a law against racing on public roads. This concluded the turf history of Queenstown.

Had you stood on Prospect Hill, on a certain day in 1817, you would have seen what was then a strange sight. A little boat with side paddle-wheels came puffing up the river. "The Surprise" was her name, a very appropriate one, commanded by Capt. Spencer. This was the first steam-boat to enter Chester river.

Centreville was then connected with Queenstown by a stage route. The stage left Beard's tavern, Centreville, every Wednesday morning at seven o'clock. Jolly riding that was. We can hear, in our mind's ear, the rattling stage, the blast of the announcing horn, the guffaws of the merry driver. Children and dogs run to the gate to see the wondrous sight go by. Then for breakfast at Griffin's tavern, a trip on the Pinckney" running before the wind, and a day in the city spent in admiring the latest style of hoop skirts or velvet waistcoats and in longing to get back home, for Eastern Shore people can not be happy anywhere else.

Queenstown was then a delightful social center. The Halls, and later the Masseys and Mitchells, entertained lavishly at Bolingly. Duck suppers, balls, formal dinners, and other entertainments were given with aristocratic liberality and superb taste. Dr. Troupe, too, with his versatile daughters, and the Davidsons, the Earles, the Hindmans, and the Tilghmans, formed a circle that was charming in its culture and graceful hospitality.

In 1849, the Methodist Church was built. Prior to that our Methodist brethern worshipped in the old school-house that stood on the lot now occupied by the double house in which Mr. Anthony lives. Though young, as the Eastern Shore counts age, many blesseed meetings have been held here; and many, many, saintly souls think of it is the sweetest place on earth, for from that pulpit they heard the Gospel that convicted and at that altar-rail they saw the Light that has led them through sin and temptation to salvation and joy.

On April 21st, 1842, St. Luke's Chapel (Episcopal) was consecrated. It was then a place of only occasional services held by the rector from Centreville. The bell in its belfry is worthy of note. Its story was told in THE QUEENSTOWN NEWS, Dec. 15, 1894, by Mr. DeCourcy Wright Thom, of Blakeford, in these words:

"The bell I am reminded of as a gift from the late William Henry DeCourcy Wright, of "Blakeford," to Saint Luke's Church, Queenstown, bears the following inscription:

"Sancta Maria—Delos Dados,
Mater Nostra Defend enos
A fulgere et tempesta. Amen.
I. H. S.
Maria Joseph San
Augustine ora pro nobis.
1746.
Retizo Dindo Pr. Or.
Secunda vey El Pr. Fr. Pedro
de San Augustine."

All which inscription I understand to mean: "Holy Mary 'of the Gifts'" Our Mother Defend us from lightning and tempest. Amen.

Jesus, of Mankind, the Saviour. Mary and Joseph, Saint Augustine pray for us.

1746

Recast, Being Provincial of the Order for the second time, the Priest Brother Pedro of Saint Augustine."

On the bell, too, around its outer rim is the inscription: "Presented to the P. E. Church, at Queenstown, by William Henry DeCourcy Wright, Dec. 22, 1839."

The Church in which the bell hung was served by the Franciscan Order, of which Fray Pedro de San Augustine was Provincial for the second time. The bell has much silver in it, hence its sweet ringing tone. Mr. Wright brought it from the city of Rio deJaneiro, Brazil. Investigation has led me to conclude that it wos originally used in Portugal in a monastery, and that when much church property was being confiscated by the crown after the bitter, bloody struggle with the Church power, this bell, with other Church property, was carried by the Priest to the New World —to Brazil; there it seems to have been recast."

During the Civil War Queenstown was freed from scenes of bloodshed, though many of her boys served on both sides and fought with bravery, maintaining the traditions of faithfulness and prowess that came from a worthy ancestry. But if there were no battles here feeling ran high, and a martial spirit prevailed. There were two companies that drilled in town; the Confederate, with Ogle Tilghman as captain, and the Federal, under the leadership of Capt. Wm. B. Paca. The Confederates drilled on Bolingly lawn, and the Federals drilled on the lot now occupied by the old Davidson store. Neither company was mustered into service.

I have a briefly sketched life of Queenstown down to a time within the memory of men now living, to their pens. I shall leave the story of the period through which they lived. It is fascinating to picture the interesting scenes that were enacted in our streets in the years long gone by, and to recall the lives of worthy people whose bodies have long since mouldered to dust and whose names are likely to be forgotten soon. A people that does not remember its own history will leave none for others to remember. Let us be grateful for so beautiful a town, with such a long and interesting story, and let us make the most of it that our names may adorn and not besmirch its record.

Milk Goat Called Pocket Edition Of Cow

Describing the milk goat as "a handy pocket edition of the cow" that will thrive where it is not practical to keep a cow, the new Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture tells of progress in improving native goats by using sires of milk breeds—Saanen and Toggenburg from Switzerland.

Many native goats have too short a lactation period—only about 4 months —and are not heavy producers even when in milk. The best of the does in the milk breeds will produce for about 9 months, and one Saanen doe made a record of nearly 7 quarts of milk a day through a 9-month lactation. A good milker will give enough for a small family and may be kept on one-sixth to one-eighth the quantity of feed required for one cow.

V. L. Simmons, of the Department, believes milk goats are likely to become increasingly important as a practical part of live-at-home programs. On the average it costs less to buy a goat than a cow, and less to keep one. The milk makes a desirable addition to the diet. In the Department's herd at the National Agricultural Research Center the program of top-crossing has increased the average period of lactation 145 percent and the average annual production 335 percent.

Goat milk has about the same range in butterfat content as cow milk, and varies in like manner with the breeds and between individuals. The fat in goat milk, however, is in finer divisions and though the cream does not "rise," it can be separated mechanically.

Auto Death Brings Suit

Salisbury—A suit for $25,00 was filed against Max P. Hughes, automobile operator, by the wife and daughter of Gardner L. Hurley who was struck and killed by Hughes' car as Hurley was walking on the Nanticoke road last spring.

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