STILL POND M. E. CHURCH.

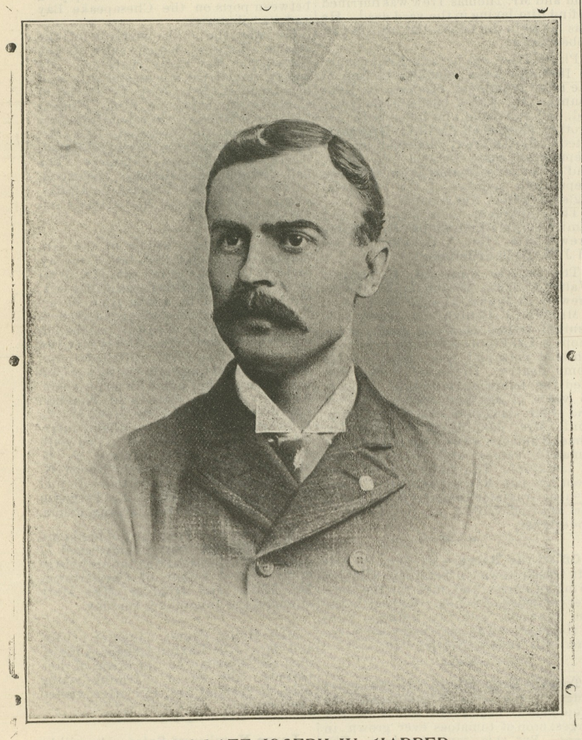
Hon. James S. Harris Reads an Interesting Historical Paper at Still Pond.

THIS part of Maryland was very early brought to the favorable notice of the English people. From our colonial history we learn that in 1608, the year following the settlement in Virginia and twelve years before the landing of the Puritans in New England, the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries was surveyed and charted by a surveying party of fifteen of the first settlers of Virginia, and as laid down on that first map of our Kent shores was accurate.

From the same authority we learn that the first white settlement in Maryland was on Kent and Palmer's Islands, at the head of the bay, by Clayborn and his people; and that it was before Ford Baltimore's settlement in St. Mary's in 1634, which was a Roman Catholic settlement, and that on the Severn was a Puritan settlement, while Kent was a settlement of the people of the Church of England.

Owing doubtless to the unsettled condition of affairs in the co ony here during Cromwell's control in England, when Lord Baltimore was deprived of his rightful control here, there was delay in issuing legal titles, and according to the old land title records nearly all the land in this part of Kent county was granted to settlers about 1660 and a few years following that date. Those early settlers soon made preparations for worship according to the rules of the established Church of England. I have seen either the old original parchment title papers or copies from the record for nearly all the land as originally granted in Still Pond Neck, and all the lower end of Still Pond Neck was granted to a man named Blay about 1662 and known on those old title papers as "Blay's Park."

I have been credibly informed that about the same time another large tract was patented as "Blay's Range," extending from Turner's Creek eastward, and that the owner of this tract conveyed to the Church of England authorities the land on which to build Shrewsbury Church, about 1666. This fact and date I have obtained from Mr Cornelius J Scott, whose maternal ancestor conveyed the land on which this the first church of any kind was built in this part of Kent county.



THE LATE JOSEPH W. HARPER

For many years Superintendent of the Sunday School and a leading spirit in all the work of the Church.

While the Shrewsbury records do not go so far back as to cover the first building of the church, I have been told by one of the rectors of that church that one of their oldest records was an application in 1701 for money to repair the church, which need of repairs at that time or date bears out clearly Mr. Scott's statement of the date of its first building; and for years the Church of England people were the only church organization in this part of Maryland.

The Quaker or Friend's Church, now standing near here, was built about 1698, and the society flourished here till the time of the Revolutionary War, when the larger part of the leading families of this section of the county were Quakers. But the young men, being patriotically in favor with the colonial cause, many joined the army and were dismissed from the Quaker church for bearing arms.

Methodism, about that time, was making its appearance here and found these conditions favorable, as also the declining influence of the Church of England during the Revolutionary War, gave the followers of Wesley a favorable field for planting and building up a society here, which was at first done by preaching, holding prayer meetings and class meetings in private houses. Although there were no ordained ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America till 1784, and but few for years after that date, yet there were pious, gifted men who were in the service of God, what we would now call local preachers, whose gifts and graces enabled them to greatly assist the traveling preachers to build up Methodist societies all up and down this peninsula, amid great opposition from the established church people, who thought they occupied the whole ground.

The Methodist societies at Barrett's Chapel, Dudley's Chapel and others were in advance of Still Pond in building houses to worship in, while the Still Pond society seems to have continued to worship in private or rented houses, after the organization of the Methodist societies of this county into Kent Circuit.

The oldest Methodist Church records that have come to my knowledge, and probably the oldest of our Methodist records now in existence in the county, begins with the record of a quarterly meeting of the different societies held in Chestertown on March 1st, 1801, and known as the Quarterly Meeting of Kent Circuit, extending the entire length of the county. At this Quarterly Conference Still Pond was represented by a contribution from the society here, it being one of the sixteen societies or classes there represented.

According to that old Steward's Book for Kent Circuit four Quarterly Meetings were annually held at different places on the circuit, many of them being recorded as Camp-Meeting Quarterly Conferences, designating the woods in which they were held; but the first mention in that Steward's Book of a Quarterly Meeting being held at Still Pond was on September 19, 1818. At that Quarterly Meeting Still Pond and Turner's Creek, with twelve other societies, are reported as making class contributions.

The fact of there being no Quarterly Meetings of the Kent Circuit held at Still Pond before 1818, does not necessarily imply a small or weak society here, as there is no record of any being held at Rock Hall or Head of Chester, as Millington was then called, and continued to be so recorded in her contributions till 1832. Those points being so remote from the larger part of the membership on the circuit made it inconvenient to hold quarterly meetings there. The greater number were held at Chestertown. Then comes in frequency Georgetown X Roads, Hynson's Chapel and some other central points; but Still Pond was always represented by a contribution. There may have been, and doubtless was, some local cause that we know not of for the absence of such meetings here.

There was no village here then, as all the houses now standing in Still Pond village, except one, have been built within the period of my recollection; this was then entirely a farming community.

At the quarterly meeting held at Old Chapel, Kent Circuit, on August 2, 1801, Still Pond is represented by a contribution of 4 pounds, 14 shillings and 6 pence; Chestertown by 5 pounds, 3 pence, and the public collection at Old Chapel, where the quarterly meeting was being held, was 7 pounds, 6 shillings, 4 pence, and all the other societies, sixteen in all, were represented by smaller contributions.

The fact that this our oldest Kent Circuit Record that we now have begins with the quarterly meeting of March 1st, 1801, does not prove that none were held before, but to the contrary, as the first line of that record credits a cash balance on hand from the last quarter, thus showing that quarterly meetings were held on the circuit in 1800, and possibly before, of which we have no local record. Another noticeable entry of the disbursements, dated May, 1801, is the payment to John Smith, worn-out preacher, $20, showing that Methodism had been growing long enough here for a preacher to wear out in the service and need and receive support from the people he had taught.

Referring again to our old Steward's Book for Kent Circuit we find for several years of the early part of this record the quarterly contributions and disbursements are entered in pounds, shillings and pence. And the preacher in charge in those early days of Methodism here received his $50 quarterly, $200 yearly, and the junior preacher received his $25 a quarter, $100 per year, each being paid small extra expenses and house rent and fuel for the senior preacher, for traveling this whole county circuit.

The second quarterly meeting after 1801 in Still Pond was held on September 15th, 1820, and twelve days after that quarterly conference we learn from our county records (September 27, 1820) that John Hepbron, John Howard, George Beck, John Moore, John Turner, Joseph Parsons and Benjamin Price, as trustees, received a trust deed from Thomas Gale and Rasin Gale, for the sum of $60, a title

(Continued On Third Page.)

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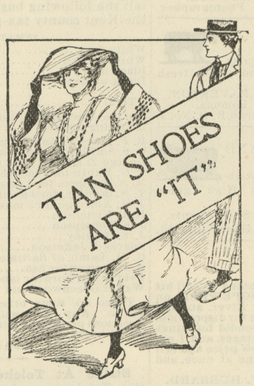

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