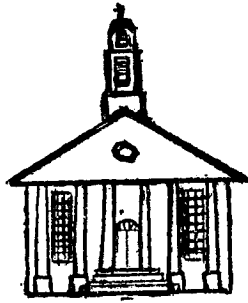


Essex County



Historical Society

ESSEX COUNTY 1692

NUMBER 3

TAPPAHANNOCK, VIRGINIA

NOVEMBER 1972

Mr. Pettigrew Has Most Interesting Program For The April Meeting

At the April meeting our president, Mr. Robert L. Pettigrew, showed beautiful slides beginning with the founding of the first English colony at Jamestown and tracing our nation's history through all the different influences which have contributed so much to our being. He also spoke on the Spanish influence in the Southwest and in Florida and California, also the battles which contributed to our freedom and to making the nation what it is today. Mr. Pettigrew's commentary along with the colorful slides made this one of our most interesting programs.

The April meeting climaxed a very successful year for Mr. Pettigrew as president of our society. His leadership strengthened the society and enlarged our membership. It is hoped that the Historical Society will begin to make plans for celebrating the Revolutionary Period in 1976 and to do something outstanding in presenting Tappahannock and Essex County's place and importance during this period of our nation's history.

Mr. Charles Warner, Essex County Historian, Speaks At The July Meeting of Our Society

On Sunday afternoon, July 23, 1972, the Essex County Historical Society met at St. Margaret's School. The meeting had been planned for the river front lawn, but due to the heat wave, was moved to the gym. Also the heat wave kept many members at home. Mrs. Henrietta Waring Wolfe presided over her first meeting as our new president.

Mr. Warner gave a most interesting talk about Colonel Thomas Waring and his widespread descendants in this area, revealing the fact that the Warings were the largest landed family in Colonial Essex and represented the county in the House of Burgesses for five generations. Delicious refreshments were served following the meeting.

Dr. Tyler Haynes Guest Speaker At The October Meeting of Society

Dr. Tyler Haynes is a native of King and Queen County and has made a hobby of photographing the old homes of that community. He has a most complete set of slides of these homes and intends to leave them to the Virginia Historical Society.

His talk and slides were most interesting. Many of the lovely homes are still occupied by the descendants of the original owners or the owners have owned these homes for many, many years. Others have been beautifully restored such as Holly Hill by General and Mrs. Cox; and Peach Grove, the old Garnett place,

The Tappahannock Historic District

On October 9, 1972 your editor was informed by the Rappahannock Times of an official announcement sent to them by the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission. This announcement told of the creation of the Tappahannock Historic District by the State of Virginia as a part of its Historic Landmark Registry Program begun by act of the Virginia Legislature in 1966.

The Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission also proposed to the Federal government that this district be placed on the National Historic Landmark Register. Thus, after four years of intensive effort on the local level for community support and on state level for recognition, the historic importance of Tappahannock to Virginia and perhaps the nation has become a fact of public record.

Several organizations were of great importance in making the Tappahannock Historic District a recognized fact as well as particular persons associated with them: The Essex County Women's Club, The Tappahannock-Essex County Chamber of Commerce, The Essex County Historical Society, The Essex County Improvement Council and the Tappahannock Town Council. Special mention should be made of Mrs. Gordon Lewis and Mrs. Charles N. DeShazo. Many letters were written, resolutions sent, historic material supplied, a map of historic structures prepared and visits to the office of the Virginia Historic Landmark Commission in Richmond. The Executive Director, Mr. Junius R. Fishburne, gave leadership, advice and encouragement through all these years. We are greatly indebted to him and to his staff for preparing the final report which created the Historic District.

The creation of The Historic District as a Registered Virginia Landmark and possibly also as a National Registered Landmark will lead eventually to the preservation of thirteen historic structures for future generations. Such is provided for by enactment of both the
(Continue on Back Page)

and many others. Dr. Haynes had slides of several places which are no longer standing, even as shells of the original, and these were particularly interesting to see, for the style of architecture and to know where they had stood.

Our president, Mrs. Henrietta Wolfe, appointed the nominating committee to bring in a slate of officers at the January meeting: Mr. Robert L. Pettigrew, Chairman; Mrs. Daisy Taliaferro Gouldin, Mr. John J. McManus—Mrs. William A. Wright, Secretary.

Thirteen Historic "Landmarks" In Tappahannock

By ARNOLD MOTLEY

The Town of Tappahannock was established by Act of the Virginia Legislature at James City in 1680. The Town was laid out in half acre squares which still bear the original numbers and its wide and straight streets still retain the original names. To the original 68 lot numbers eight "slip" lots were added to make the Town border on the Rappahannock River.

A "Square" bounded by Prince (Main), Church, Queen, and Cross Streets was set aside in 1680 for "the Publick Use" and on this square are located four of the "Landmark" buildings:

No. 1—Courthouse 1728

The original Court Order for this building specified one of "40 feet long, 26 feet wide, and 16 feet above the pavement." The building is of brick laid in Flemish bond with arched windows and is still standing (being that part of Beale Memorial Baptist Church, minus the front belfry and extending to the first addition). It was used for Court until it became too small and in 1848 another building was erected.

In 1815 the building was partially burned by the British but was restored for use. In 1937 a bronze marker was installed on the old walls by the Henricopolis Chapter of N.S.D.A.R (National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution). Since 1875 it has been a Baptist Church, now known as Beale Memorial.

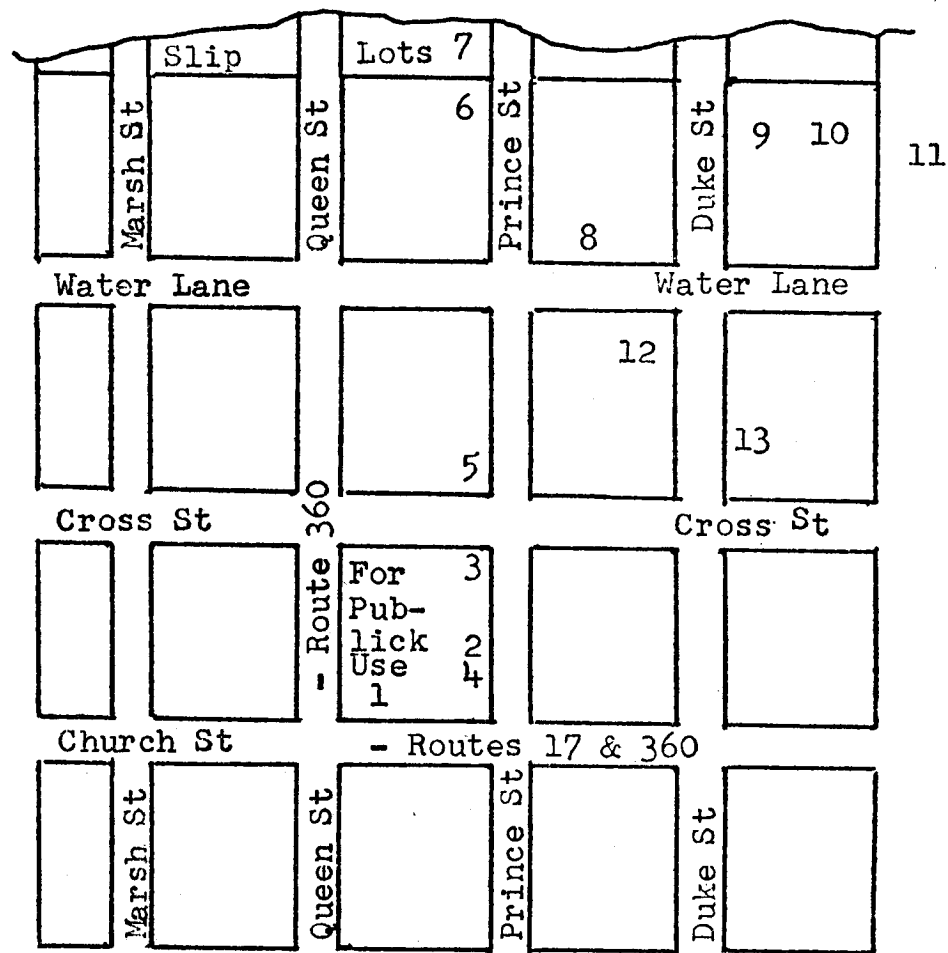
No. 2—Courthouse 1848

This imposing brick structure was erected in 1848 and fronts on Prince Street. It has large columns and semi-columns on the front, two-story windows, and almost three-foot thick walls. In 1926 the late Alfred I. DuPont renovated the interior and installed a clock steeple as a gift to Essex County citizens. This building not only housed the Court but had a fireproof Clerk's Office and Record Room in the rear where the County records dating from 1656 were stored. In 1963 a fireproof addition for the Clerk's Office, Record Room, and additional Court Room Offices was added. In 1965 the interior of the Old Court Room was gutted by fire; but, no other part of the building was damaged. In 1965 the interior of the Court Room, clock steeple and roof were restored from architectural drawings of the 1926 renovation.

No. 3—Old Clerk's Office

Court records show that in 1808 there was ordered the building of a "Clerk's Office with walls 1½ brick

RAPPAHANNOCK RIVER



Original 50 Acres of the Town of Tappahannock of 1680
from Harry Beverley Survey of 1706

thick, by 32 by 18 feet, roof covered by slate and to have one room 18 by 22 and the other 18 by 10 . . . The office room to have a floor of brick or stone and the other room planked." One year later an additional chimney was ordered and the records were ordered to be removed to the new Clerk's Office. (They had been kept at Smithfield by the Clerks Lees). This building ordered erected at Prince and Cross Streets is still standing; it was used as a Clerk's Office until 1848 when that Office was moved into the new Courthouse; it was used as an ordinary, shop, and strap lined County Jail. In 1926 the late Mrs. Jessie Ball DuPont, while her husband was renovating the Courthouse, had the jail lining removed and the building renovated. Since that time it has been the Essex County Woman's Club headquarters and the Essex County Public Library.

No. 4—Debtor's Prison

In 1769 a Court order showed the area around this present building as "prison bounds" which proves that this almost square story and a half building of old brick was erected and in use before this date. In 1809 another Court order concerned the removing of the prisoners from the criminal to the "debtors jail." This building attests its great age by the fact that the sand stone door sill has been worn down and curved from the many, many feet that have crossed it. The exact date of its erection can not be prov-

Officers of the Society

President _____ Mrs. Henrietta Waring Wolfe
Vice-President _____ Mr. Arnold Motley
Treasurer _____ Mrs. Richard Parker
Secretary _____ Mrs. William A. Wright



PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Chairman, Mr. Charles W. H. Warner; Members, Mrs. William A. Wright, Mrs. J. M. Evans, Mr. Joseph Ewing



Meetings are held quarterly in the Essex County Court House. Dues are \$1.00 per year. For copies of publication send 50c to Mrs. J. M. Evans, Box 8, Tappahannock, Virginia.

ed from the records as jails were ordered built and abandoned throughout the years. A plat of 1850 shows the Old Clerk's Office and four jails, all fronting on Prince Street, but the location of the Debtors Prison in the same corner on which it now stands is further proof for this building. It is still County property and is now the Treasurer's Office where taxpayers still pay debts.

No. 5—Ritchie-Meriwether House

This brick home is located on the corner of Prince and Cross Streets and across from the Old Clerk's Office. The present building is the western-most of what was once three or more brick buildings, all of which were connected by covered passageways, as a drawing of the structures was found in the Archives of the Virginia State Library. In 1706 Thomas Meriwether purchased twelve one-half acre lots in the Town. He was required to build a finished twenty-foot structure on the lots within a year or the title would be escheated. Since he willed his home at his death in 1708, he still owned the land area; and court references soon after this time refer to "Meriwethers Dwelling House commonly called the Long House on the Great (Prince) Street." These buildings passed through several ownerships and were used not only as a dwelling, but a store, ordinary, and tavern by the Banks Family. In 1768 Archibald Ritchie, the father of the famous editor Thomas Ritchie who was born here in 1778, purchased the entire square which is bordered by Prince, Cross, Queen Streets, and Water Lane. There was at this time and up to the Ritchie sale in 1805 a substantial brick wall around the entire property; fragments and foundations are in evidence to this day. At the 1805 sale brick buildings 225 feet long (Meriwether's Long House) were advertised besides the necessary out buildings, stables, and a barn. The original panelling is now in the DuPont Winterthur Museum at Wilmington, Delaware, and is known as the Tappahannock Room. The remaining part of the structures is now the private home of Mr. and Mrs. William Dandridge Andrews.

No. 6—Derieux-Scots Arms Tavern

The Harry Beverley plat of the Town of Tappahannock of 1706 shows on Lot 20 "Coleman's House" as already there at that time, which makes this the oldest house in the Town. Robert Spillsbee Coleman's will of 1760 calls this building the "Scots Arm Tavern." An 1801 insurance policy shows this Tavern to be "105 feet long, one story in height except for the 24 feet next to the river which is two stories." The present house is in this location, is two stories high with

an English basement. It is now the private home of Miss Mary Derieux, whose family has owned and lived here for over one hundred years.

No. 7—Latane-Customs House

This old brick house is believed to be older than 1750 when its first recorded owner was Archibald Ritchie. It is located on Slip Lot 77 and in early times adjoined the Rappahannock River bank where its basement floor is still just above high water mark, while the rest of the building is two stories above this, with a dormer roof. In 1786 the Port of Tappahannock was established and Lawrence Muse was Collector of Customs for both the Town and County of Essex; and he lived here. This was also the home for many years of the late Allen Douglas Latane who was a long time owner and editor of the *Rappahannock Times*, our weekly newspaper, and Clerk of the Essex County Circuit Court. It is now the private home of Mrs. Henry Moncure.

No. 8—Henley House-Emerson's Ordinary

At least a twenty-foot square building was erected here by 1718 and in 1757 when James Emerson bought it, buildings are enumerated. An insurance policy of 1801 states that the building is "45 foot long wooden tavern with a wood wing, one-story Dutch roof, located to front of Lot 11 with a wood kitchen and smoke house to the rear." These are still standing with the kitchen added to the main house and are substantially as described at this date. Many families have owned and lived here, but none has altered its appearance. It is the present home of Mr. L. J. Henley.

No. 9—Anderton-Coleman House

This was the original Robert Coleman home; it was part of his plantation before the Town of Tappahannock was laid out. The center part is the original with its early American architecture. It still retains the original weatherboarding, windows, and chimneys. The interior shows handsome but simple doors, mantels, and trimming. Many prominent Essex County families have owned and lived in it. The Anderton Family in the 1890's added the southern section and St. Margaret's School added the northern section in the 1970's. Since 1947 it has been owned by St. Margaret's School and is now used as a Senior Class dormitory.

No. 10—Brockenbrough-McCall House

There was a twenty-foot square house here in 1682 when Edward Hill, Sr., bought Lot 1 in the original Town plat. Archibald McCall, a Scotch merchant of the Town, bought this lot in 1763 and proceeded to build the present house. Its Georgian style together with its exquisite exterior and interior trim show the work of a master builder. Since William Buckland, who did Gunston Hall for Mr. Mason, was not only in the area at the time of the building but also appeared in Essex Court as a witness for Mr. McCall in 1766, when Mr. McCall entered Court action for a claimed riot about the Stamp Act which had occurred at his home; it is believed that William Buckland did the wood work and trimming for this house. A black marble mantel in the drawing room was shattered by the shelling from a British gunboat in the Rappahannock River during the War of 1812 but was put together again and is still in use in the room. After the War Between the States, Mrs. Judith Brockenbrough McGuire conducted a girls school here. The Brockenbrough and Chinn families owned and lived here for many years and in 1927 sold the property to St. Margaret's School where it is now being used for faculty housing.

(Continued on Next Page)

No. 11—*St. Margaret's Hall-Wright-Gordon*

This house is now the center part of a much larger building, as school wings were added on each end in the 1920's; but the original structure can still be observed on the exterior by the four large chimneys and original roof lines. The interior is substantially intact and has withstood the footsteps of young girls for the past fifty years. The original home was built by Dr. Thomas Gordon on a tract that was originally the Coleman plantation. It was later acquired by the William A Wright Family in 1850; then acquired again by the Gordons and in 1876 by the late Judge Thomas Roane Barnes Wright, whose family in the middle 1920's sold it to start St. Margaret's Episcopal Girls School. The large, high ceiling rooms with double parlors and fireplaces together with front and rear columned porches add both charm and atmosphere to the school.

No. 12—*Tribble-Roane-Wright Home*

This Georgian mansion was built on the corner of Duke and Water Lane about 1850 by Dr. Lawrence Roane. His son inherited it and sold it to Judge Thomas Croxton who in time sold it to Moore Wright, a prominent Town merchant. The exterior bricks are stuccoed and now painted white and the front and rear porches both have fluted columns. This twelve-room house was restored in the 1950's and is now the private home of Mrs. W. Austin Tribble.

No. 13—*St. John's Episcopal Church*

This wooden Gothic structure was completed in 1849 under the rectorship of the Reverend John Peyton McGuire, whose wife was Judith Brockenbrough. This is one of the two churches in South Farnham Parish which was established in 1683. The two original brick churches were completely destroyed soon after the Revolution and all the parish records perished, as we know that one church was burned. The beauty of this present structure is enhanced both in the interior and exterior by its simplicity. It has been in continuous use since its building as a church and is now undergoing restoration and limited expansion.

SOURCES:

Essex County Circuit Court Clerk's Office Records and Essex County Woman's Club Book on Essex County Homes, Landmarks, and Traditions published 1957.

Besides the Tappahannock Historic District, Essex County has the following Virginia Historic Landmarks:

Blandfield, the Beverley Home;
Elmwood, the Garnett Home;
Brooke's Banks, the Brooke Home;
Vawters Church.

There will be a future article in the Essex County Historical Society Bulletin on these other Virginia Historic Landmarks of Essex County.

—CHARLES W. H. WARNER.

THE TAPPAHANNOCK HISTORIC DISTRICT

Continued from Front Page

Virginia Legislature in 1966 and the United States Congress in 1935 and 1966. These acts laid the legal bases for the protection of historic structures in officially designated districts.

The Tappahannock Historic District contains more historic structures than most areas of similar size in the United States. A variety of buildings illustrate important phases of community life over a period of al-

most three centuries. There are public and governmental buildings, private residences of the grand and simple type, a former Customs House, two former taverns and two churches. Two well known schools have been associated with several of the houses as well as persons of historic importance with many of them.

Tappahannock had its full share of distinguished sons and daughters. Among them should be mentioned the following persons who either lived in these houses (indicated by numbers) or were closely related to those who resided there:

FRANCIS MERIWETHER — first Clerk of Essex County (5).

MERIWETHER SMITH—member of Congress and highly spoken of by Chief Justice Marshall (5).

GEORGE WILLIAM SMITH—Governor of Virginia (5).

MERIWETHER LEWIS—renowned explorer of the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Pacific (5).

THOMAS RITCHIE—famous editor of the Richmond Enquirer and member of the Essex Junto (5).

SPENCER ROANE — Chief Justice of the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals, backed by Thomas Jefferson for Chief Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court and founder of States Rights political theory in the United States. He was also the founder of the Richmond Enquirer and of the political faction known as the "Essex Junto" from which Jefferson derived his leading state support (10 and 12).

JOHN BROCKENBROUGH—builder of what later became known as The White House of The Confederacy, President of the Bank of Virginia and member of the Essex Junto (10).

JUDITH BROCKENBROUGH MCGUIRE—wife of the Reverend John Peyton McGuire and authoress of "Diary of a Southern Refugee During the War" and "General Robert E. Lee, the Christian Soldier" (10).

WILLIAM A. WRIGHT—Chairman of the Virginia Conservation Commission and member of the Virginia Senate (11).

THOMAS ROANE BARNES WRIGHT—Judge of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit (11).

THOMAS CROXTON—member of the United States Congress (12).

THE REV. JOHN PEYTON MCGUIRE—Chief Clergyman responsible for the reestablishment of the Episcopal faith in Essex and King & Queen counties after the Revolution (13).

The following account of The Tappahannock Historic District was written by Mr. Arnold Motley, Clerk of Essex County. He is an Essex County historian and the foremost authority on the historic buildings of Tappahannock.

CHARLES W. H. WARNER,
Chairman, Publication Committee

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