

A low-angle photograph of a large tree with a glowing orb in its branches. The tree's dark trunk and branches are silhouetted against a bright, hazy sky. A single, glowing orb, resembling a full moon or a light source, is positioned in the center of the frame, partially obscured by the tree's branches. The overall mood is mysterious and atmospheric.

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GLOUCESTER-MATHEWS
GAZETTE-JOURNAL

Section C Thursday, October 27, 2022

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Spooky sightings at the Rosewell Ruins

BY MELANY SLAUGHTER

With mysterious deaths ranging from the Georgian era through the early 20th century, bodies buried without tombstones and the ghosts that still claim the ruins as their home, the Rosewell Plantation is filled with spook-tacular sights not for the faint of heart.

Intrigued folks can sign up to attend this year's Rosewell Ghost Tours for "two nights of fright" on Friday and Saturday, Oct. 28 and 29, with one-hour tours at 7 and 8:30 both nights.

Ghost tour guide Marilyn Iglesias has plenty of stories to tell, beginning at the visitor's center, past Native American land close to where Chief Powhatan and Pocahontas once lived, out to the site of the 1916 fire which gutted the Rosewell mansion, and through a trail in the woods to the ice house (where the living stored their dead for three days before burial so their souls could transition from this realm to the next). Each tour ends with a recent story from a group of men and their

dogs who claimed to have had a much-too-close encounter with an infamous Rosewell ghost.

Mann Page began the construction of Rosewell in 1725. It was completed by his widow, Judith Carter Page, and son of the same name in 1737, following his death in 1730. After nearly two centuries of strange deaths and tragic accidents, a mysterious fire began somewhere in the mansion one night in 1916 and its occupants at the time hardly had time to escape.

"It burned pretty much to the ground," said Iglesias.

Without funds to repair the home, the family abandoned the once grand mansion. More than half a century would pass before the Gloucester Historical Society would establish a foundation to preserve the property, after decades of vandalism, trespassing and detrimental vegetative growth contributed to the deterioration of the building.

Even with the preservation efforts that began in 1979 and continue today, Rosewell continues to decline.



MELANY SLAUGHTER / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

Rosewell was gutted in March 1916 by a mysterious fire. It is now dubbed the "Rosewell Ruins" as the building continues to fall apart. Pictured is the building from the south facade. At right, the ice house was used to store the recently deceased for three days so the soul could transition from this world to the next. Pictured is the pit of the ice house where a girl, who was thought to have died from tuberculosis, was laid.

"Over the years, it's kept falling down," said Iglesias.

In the years since Rosewell has been open to the public, the visitor's center has received strange tales from those who brave touring the ruins.

Once, a family visited the ruins and met a mysterious child who played with their son all day. When the family was packing up to leave, they could not locate the boy they

had met. After reporting the boy as missing to the sheriff's office, deputies searched the area and came up empty. A missing boy fitting his description was never reported.

According to Iglesias, a 13-year-old boy by the name of Aiden had slipped from a frosty rafter when working on the roof during the construction of Rosewell and fell to his death. Iglesias likes to think that Aiden found a playmate

from another century for the day.

A girl walking from the ice house back to the mansion is also a familiar Rosewell sighting.

In the 19th century, a young girl died of tuberculosis at the mansion and was wrapped in a blanket and taken to the deep pit of the ice house so her soul had a cool and quiet

SEE ROSEWELL, PAGE 3C

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The 'spirit' of Spirit Branch Road

BY ELSA VERBYLA

Spirit Branch Road on Gwynn's Island brings spooky visions to mind.

The road got the name not from being next to the island cemetery, but from what happened at the waterside end of the lane, at a cove off Edwards Creek.

Judy Rowe, longtime resident on Old Spirit Branch Road (which is a turnoff from Spirit Branch) got the story from Addie Rowe. Addie was the mother of Julian Rowe, Judy's late husband.

"Many years ago when we moved here I was told by my mother-in-law that the creek up here was called Spirit Branch. The story was that an old captain could sometimes be seen walking along the shoreline at night with a lantern. People would see the lights from time to time."

No other story went with that, but it inspired the Rev. E. A. Lockwood, who also lived in the subdivision, to have Langley Deagle paint a sign of a headless man holding a lantern, Rowe said. When other residents insisted the night spirit was not headless, he had Deagle come back to paint a head on the body.

That sign hung at Spirit Branch's intersection with Old Ferry Road for many years.

Bill Lockwood, son of the Rev. Mr. Lockwood, heard a slightly different version, that a man who had drowned off a point of land wandered up and down the path with his lantern. That path later became the road leading into the subdivision.

When Mathews County began to name its streets, a project that began in the 1980s, it arose that Spirit Branch and Old Spirit Branch both needed names, and they appear that way today on the county map.



Poison Jenny: The tale of a Guinea witch

BY MELANY SLAUGHTER

Many have not heard of her, but to some Guinea residents the legend of the witch Poison Jenny (pronounced Pyzen) runs deep in family history.

Guinea Heritage Association member and lifelong Guinea resident Hamilton Williams heard the story about Poison Jenny from his father. In the late 1920s, a man by the name of Ben Archer (two first names) arrived at the store of Williams's great-uncle, Jack Williams, all scratched up. When asked what happened, Ben Archer told those present at the store that Poison

Jenny had put a hex on him and rode him around the Friends Church through the briars.

According to Williams, Poison Jenny was not a good-looking woman. In fact, a Guinea expression to call

somebody ugly is "you favor a thing that rode Ben Archer around the Friends Church."

Over the years, Williams had not met another who had heard of Poison Jenny until

SEE POISON JENNY, PAGE 4C

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ROSEWELL

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2C)

place to transition from this plane of existence to the next.

When the three days ended, the girl's body was found in a different spot from where she was laid. The girl had regained consciousness and tried to climb out of the ice house; scratch marks were discovered on the walls of the pit. She is sometimes seen wrapped in a blanket walking back to the mansion.

Photographs of the mansion have also brought forth ghostly images, including a beam of light exiting the cellar where a slave had died, faces in windows, and strange orbs have all been captured.

Several of Rosewell's occupants were buried on the property in a family cemetery. Only one general marker remains on site for the Page family. The original markers were moved to Abingdon Episcopal Church in 1969. The bodies however still remain at Rosewell.

All of these stories and more will be told at Rosewell during the ghost tours Halloween weekend. The cost is \$10. Call 804-693-2585 to reserve your spot, if you dare.

More about Rosewell...page 6C.

She nearly died!

Pulled out of the East River by her father, the toddler Edith Keyes of Foster appeared to be dead.

She had fallen into the soft mud and six-inch depth of the river at the age of 18 months. She was apparently lifeless; handed over to her mom, the mother shrieked and dropped her in the yard. "And that water came pouring out of my mouth," Edith Keyes Shackelford recalled in 1982, as the Gazette-Journal told her story.

But that wasn't the first time her story had been told. Edith held onto a yellowed newspaper clipping telling the story which shocked her neighborhood in 1898.

A neighbor, Mr. Bailey, refused to

give up on the child. Rubbing the little body, then placing it in a mustard bath, as the old paper told it, circulation was restored. The family put away its shrouds: Edith began to breathe again.

She lived to attend Foster School, marry twice, and to celebrate her 88th birthday before dying in 1984 at the age of 88.



Edith Keyes as a student at Foster School, around 1910.

Tales from the graveyard

BY ELSA VERBYLA

The sadness of saying farewell, unrelieved grief at the loss of children, tragedies that tore apart families, traditions that connected a people to their almost-lost identity: all of these can be found in cemeteries in Gloucester and Mathews that span several centuries of our history.

A double drowning

Summer was winding to a close on Aug. 28, 1931, when 10-year-old Nannie Miller Minter of Beaverlett and her Newport News cousin Marie Dertl, 12, dressed in their bathing suits and ran to the edge of Horn Harbor to play. Marie was the guest of her

aunt, Mrs. John Miller, who lived at Susan. Nannie came from her home to visit Marie, a cousin, and was also a guest.

The morning brought sounds of the girls' laughter to adults at the waterfront Miller home, the Mathews Journal reported. Then the chatter ended. At first the hosts thought the girls had gone visiting elsewhere, but they soon became alarmed and summoned help.

Marie's body was found first, on a shoreline about a quarter of a mile from the home. Nannie's body was found the next morning floating in

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POISON JENNY: A famous legend from Guinea; also, the Wampus Cat

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3C)

two years ago when a friend of his added details to the legend that she had heard from her father. His friend's father claimed that Poison Jenny lived on Horse Point Road with her husband Nimrod and owned a spell book she used to practice her spells. Legend also has it that she would take her skin off at night, fold it and store it under her pillow. With her skin off, Poison Jenny was reported to be able to exit a closed door through a keyhole. Nimrod is also said to have rubbed salt in her skin when she had it off one night in order to burn her when she

put it back on.

Poison Jenny came to an end when she was hanged for witchcraft at the Honey-Pod tree. Before she died, she stated that none of this would have happened if she could only get to her spell book. It has also been said that when she was hanged, she started throwing up something that looked like green apples.

Williams, who has done extensive genealogical research for Guinea, can find no record of a Jenny and Nimrod living in Guinea.

"It's pure legend at this point," he said.

Though he can find no evi-

dence of a married couple by the names of "Jenny" and "Nimrod," Williams was pleased that his friend could corroborate the story of Poison Jenny because her account "made it a little more real."

Another legend

Poison Jenny is not the only legend to have graced Guinea over the years.

Another popular Guinea legend is that of the "wampus cat." Williams said that Guinea parents would warn their children to come home on time, lest the wampus cat get them. Men would even hide in the bushes and make noises

like the cat to scare the children into going home on time. The wampus cat was purported to roam the marshes of Guinea Point and Maryus.

Though Williams believes that the story of the wampus cat was created to make children obey their parents, he has a friend who claims to have been visited by the creature. According to his friend, the wampus cat hid in a cul-

vert one night near her trailer and started banging on the door with such strength that the whole trailer shook.

Regardless if any of these old stories are completely true, the culture of Guinea relies on these legends passed from one generation to the next.

"Guinea thrives on legends and playing pranks on each other," said Williams.

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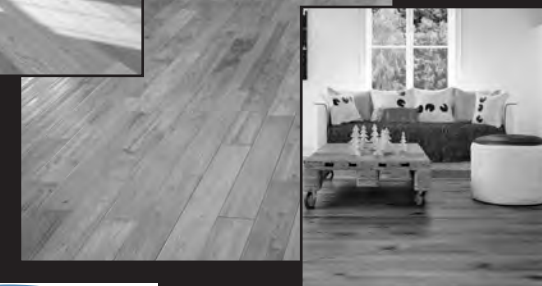
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TALES FROM THE GRAVEYARD: Tombstones tell of tragedies and traditions

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4C)

the harbor.

No one knew what had happened, but the Journal reported, "The shores of the Harbor are known to be treacherous. There are many holes where the depth changes abruptly ... Marie could swim a little but Nannie could not swim



Nannie Miller Minter's gravestone

at all ... It is presumed that the younger girl stepped into deep water beyond her depth and that both were drowned when Marie tried to save her."

Both girls are buried near where they drowned, Marie in the cemetery at St. Paul United Methodist Church and Nannie in Christ Church cemetery, not far from Beaverlett.

Nannie's grieving family placed a school picture in her tombstone, where in spite of cracks and age, her gaze still greets visitors 91 years later. The inscription reads, "Come with me to the heavenly playground."

African funeral customs brought to America

Hollis Pruitt, in his Ph.D. dissertation "No Longer Lost at Sea" written in 2012 for the College of William and Mary, examined how freed slaves in Gloucester built new commu-

nities just after the Civil War.

Consecrated burial grounds, Pruitt wrote, were something new for the new citizens, who before their liberation were usually buried in unmarked graves. The new burial grounds accompanied the establishment of churches, one of the first institutions created by the freedmen.

In those graveyards, Pruitt said, African traditions literally took root. He quoted art historian Robert Farris Thompson who said, "Trees planted on graves also signify the spirit; their roots literally journey to the other world."

Pruitt wrote that "The centrality of living trees in burial areas was a common feature in black cemeteries County-wide. The tree that was most often used in these burials was the Cedar (Evergreen)."

Examining burial grounds of the early African-American churches in Gloucester, Pruitt found evidence of trees planted at the heads of graves, along with other African traditions such as decorations with glass and straight-line arrangement of graves.

"While no claim can be made that the entirety of every burial field or every individual grave is culturally coded with distinctly African-American signifiers, Gloucester's black cemeteries provided opportunities for commemoration and cultural expression," Pruitt wrote.




An ancient cedar stands at the head of a tomb in the old portion of the cemetery at The First United Baptist Church, Gloucester. Did it grow by chance? Was it planted in keeping with traditions?


It was important to hold on to the cultural memories they retained, he wrote, because "Though through their enslavement they lost much, the early enslaved Africans brought many things into colonial Gloucester. They brought with them value systems, patterns of faiths, religious beliefs and systems, elements of culture, social structures, and memories. For many of the early enslaved, these memories included the evermore distant happiness of life before enslavement... and the seemingly unending

horrors of the Middle Passage. Uprooted from cultures in which the dead were venerated and consecrated with ritual practices and ceremony, the anonymous, callous, dehumanization engendered in the tossing of the bodies of those Africans who succumbed to the terrors of the Passage into altar-less waters and waiting sharks marked an end and demanded that the enslaved adapt to cultural disruption and craft for themselves not only a new begin-

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TALES FROM THE GRAVEYARD: *Tombstones tell of tragedies and traditions*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5C)

ning but bridges between past and present.”

Zion Poplars Baptist Church was founded by a congregation that worshipped in a brush arbor on the site, and “the building they raised drew much of its sacred meaning from the natural altar with which it was associated. When the congregation established its cemetery on the same property, each burial placed human remains below earth within a field already inter-penetrated by the root structure of a living, natural altar,” Pruitt wrote.

All the babies

A distressing reminder of young lives cut short appears in the placement of five tiny tombstones in Horn Harbor Cemetery in Peary. All were children of John P. and Martha Jarvis.

James S. Jarvis was born in 1833 and died in 1839 before



A lamb lies here: One of the Jarvis children's tombs in Peary.

his sixth birthday. John S. Jarvis was born in 1838 and died in 1839 just after his first birthday. Ziporah Jarvis was born just before Christmas in 1845 and died the day after Christmas in 1846. Enoch Jarvis was born in 1847 and died in 1861, living just past 13 years. Jehut Jarvis was born in 1852 and died in 1855 just before his third birthday.

There is no indication of the

cause that sent these Jarvis children to early graves. Visible on one of the worn stones is a carved lamb; on another, an angel.

All-too-common tragedy

The Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (now Preservation Virginia) in 1959 published a volume containing “Epitaphs of Gloucester and Mathews Counties in Tidewater Virginia Through 1865.”

Teams of history-minded residents had walked through well-kept churchyards and hacked through the briars at overgrown, forgotten sites to record the pathos of history.

They found instances of death of both mother and newborn child, including one heartbreaking incident that took place in 1716 in the wealthy Page family—even before Rosewell mansion, now in ruins, was constructed.



FILE PHOTO

A congregation of more than 50 persons attended a dedication of the Page family cemetery at Rosewell in December 1955, held after a restoration of the tombs.

The marble tomb, befitting the family's prominent role in Virginia, was engraved in Latin. Fortunately for most of us, a translation was included in the book:

“To the sacred and most pious memory of his most beloved wife, Judith, cut down in the very flower of her age, this monument of grief was erected by the Honourable

Mann Page Esquire. She was ... a most excellent and choice lady who lived in the state of most holy matrimony for four years and as many months.

“She left one survivor of each sex, Ralph and Maria, true likenesses together of Father and Mother. She also had a third named Mann, who,

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TALES FROM THE GRAVEYARD

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6C)

scarcely five days surviving, under this silent marble was enclosed with his Mother. On the third day after his birth she exchanged mortality for immortality."

Rosewell passed out of the Page family and burned in 1916, and its magnificent table tombs along with the ruins were slowly overtaken by nature.

Page descendants removed briars and honeysuckle and restored the marble tombs and the burial ground, first used in 1702. A service of consecration was held in December of 1955.

Apparently no good deed goes unpunished. The newly visible and restored tombs at the deserted site, although protected by a locked chain link fence, attracted several instances of vandalism. To protect them, the tombs were moved in 1969 to Abingdon Episcopal Church—and restored again.

Rescue of Rosewell's ruins began in 1980 when the family owning the property gave it to the Gloucester Historical Society in Virginia. The

Rosewell Foundation is the current owner.

Myth or fact?

The APVA book tells of one epitaph which is impossible to confirm, as the stone was no longer in existence at the time of publication. A roadside stone in the vicinity of Bellamy was said to state:

"Here lies the body of John Spinks

Who died inch by inch
Here lies John Spinks
Who never did flinch,
Here lies John Spinks who never did fear

To drink Rum, Wine, and good strong beer."

A note with this epitaph states "The mutilated stone that was here is now missing. The epitaph as printed was found in the handwriting of Henry Hughes in his home at Tippecanoe [a house near Cappahosic] after his death; he was County Surveyor of Gloucester for many years in the early 19th century, and he obtained the epitaph originally from the stone which was seen as late as fifty years ago."

L.B. Taylor: Master ghost storyteller

You can't really talk about Virginia ghosts without mentioning L.B. Taylor Jr.

The Williamsburg author penned 50 non-fiction books, including 25 on Virginia ghosts with titles such as "The Ghosts of Virginia," "The Ghosts of Tidewater ... and Nearby Environs" and "Haunted Virginia: Ghosts and Strange Phenomena of the Old Dominion."

In his seventh volume of "The Ghosts of Virginia," Taylor recounted several stories with local connections. A chapter titled "The House of Unspeakable Tragedies," for instance, focuses on Auburn in Mathews County and the tragedies experienced by Dr. Henry Tabb who in 1824 moved into the Georgian-style home built for him by his father.

It includes the tragic tale of the death of his daughter Eliza after slipping on the front stairs and the hauntings reportedly experienced by residents of the home.

Another chapter sketches the historical significance of Warner Hall Plantation, now known as the Inn at Warner Hall. It includes ghostly en-

counters experienced by former owners as well as those witnessed by present owners and innkeepers Troy and Theresa Stavens and their guests.

Yet another chapter is related to the unsolved disappearance of Keith Call of Gloucester and Cassandra Hailey of Grafton, two Christopher Newport University (then College) students who vanished while on a date in 1988. Call's car was discovered on the Colonial Parkway but no trace of the couple has since been found to this day.

Law enforcement officials have long believed that the disappearance was linked to the slayings of two other couples, one occurring on the Parkway and the other on the Ragged Island Wildlife Preserve in Isle of Wight County.

In his book, Taylor recounts the purported findings of a Newport News psychic, referred to only as "Helen," who the author says was recruited to investigate the Call/Hailey case. Helen's "readings" indicate the couple was murdered in Gloucester and put forth some other theories related to all the cases.

The author passed away in 2014, but his work lives on, with a number of his books available through Amazon, as well in local libraries.

OLD NEWS

The following account, says the person who sent it, can be well attested. In February 1767 a sloop was sunk in Mobjack bay, near New Point Comfort, by a squall of wind; and through the negligence, or inability of the owners, lay near twelve months under water. Upon her being raised, a fish was found confined in her hold, so large, that the decks were obliged to be broken up to get it out, and upon being measured, was found to be full half as long again as the vessel. It is something surprising, how a fish of that size could remain so long in a confined situation.

From the *New York Gazette*, May 23, 1768; Joan Charles, compiler

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Old House Woods has fascinated ghost watchers for decades

BY ELSA VERBYLA

What happens in Old House Woods?

For decades, people have talked about the remote stand of pine trees near Haven Beach in Mathews. They told of headless specters, ships sailing in the air above the tree line, buried treasure, women in white: almost anything you can think of. So far as we know, no movie camera has captured any of these legends in the act.

An article in the Baltimore Sun in 1926 whipped up a lot of excitement.

Jesse V. Hudgins, a Mathews

Court House merchant who lived near the woods, told the Sun: "Old House Woods is haunted. My advice to you is, keep away from there. You can't defy the guardian spirits that watch over the place and get away with it." He said that he had seen the ghosts about a dozen times, including once when he was a youth, driving a horse and buggy by the woods at night to fetch a doctor for a neighbor.

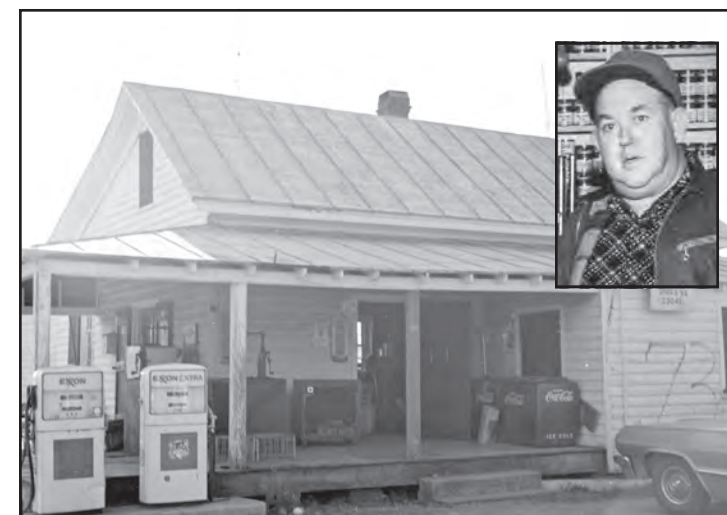
"My horse, usually afraid of nothing, cowered and trembled violently," Hudgins told the Sun. "I had seen lights on the road before at night, but they always were a source of

comfort and companionship. This one was different. There was something awesome and unearthly about it ... I gained on the nocturnal traveler ... What I saw was a big man wearing a suit of armor. Over his shoulder was a gun, the muzzle end of which looked like a fish horn. As he strode or floated along he made no more noise than a summer zephyr."

Long story short: the woods became filled with lights and moving forms. Hudgins looked back to the man in armor and saw a skeletal figure instead. It raised a sword, started toward him, and he fainted.

He came to in daylight, the horse had run away, and his family had picked him up in the road and borne him home unconscious. He never made it to the doctor's house. Probably the doctor came to him.

After this sensational article was published, the Mathews Journal told of the aftermath. One man tried to organize a hunting party to look for whatever was there. A veteran offered to spend a week in the woods with a moving picture



FILE PHOTOS

Elwood Lorraine Hudgins, inset, was postmaster at Diggs and lifetime resident of the community which includes Old House Woods. He told the Gazette-Journal in 1973, he never had an experience with the ghostly spirits rumored to be there.

camera to film the ghosts, if only someone else would pick up his expenses.

Gazette-Journal reporters Charlotte Lanford and Virginia Ward took a hard look at the legend in 1973 and Lanford wrote: "If Old House Woods is haunted by ghosts and evil spirits ... it is haunted even more with reporters. It is perhaps members of the press more than the ghosts themselves that have kept the legend alive so long."

She said that Elwood Lorraine Hudgins, postmaster at Diggs, had been interviewed about the woods about 12

times ... although he never saw a specter. Hudgins admitted that most of the people who saw "things" are "gone now."

Lanford reported that Bill McKelway, a reporter for the Richmond Times-Dispatch, was undisturbed during one night's vigil in the woods (except by mosquitoes) until someone crept up to his Volkswagen and yelled, "Boo!"

She and Ward visited the woods in daytime and around 2 p.m. saw a strange light in the east, that disappeared as

SEE OLD HOUSE WOODS, PAGE 9C

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OLD HOUSE WOODS: *What happens?*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8C)

soon as it was photographed. "And so the legend of Old House Woods lingers," she concluded.

The stories have persisted well into this century. Six years ago, in 2016, almost 200 people turned out in Mathews for a presentation on Old House Woods and other supposedly haunted places in the county. Presenting the lecture to the Mathews County Historical Society was Dr. Rosalind Hammond, county native now living in Ohio, where she retired from teaching at Bowling Green University.

The ghost stories of this heavily wooded area on the Chesapeake Bay, just to the west of Haven Beach at Diggs, date to the 1700s, Hammond said, and include hidden treasures (three), ghost ships,

and headless people and dogs. "It is marked as one of the most haunted places in the United States," she said.

"It is named for a dilapidated house that once stood in the middle of the woods," said Hammond. Treasures are said to have been buried in the "old cowhole," a freshwater pond where cattle ranging free would stop for a drink, centuries ago.

Hammond summarized a lot of these stories:

A tale with 1700s roots states that pirates buried plunder from the ships they robbed, as their headless shipmates, or victims, wandered the woods. A lady in white is said to be the wife of one couple slain by pirates, while a headless man searches for his lost love. Those

woods are full!

Moving forward to the Revolutionary era, Cornwallis, besieged in Yorktown, sent men to bury treasure for safekeeping in the woods; the men were assaulted and killed, and their spirits roam the area.

A third treasure tale, Hammond said, involved a different group of British soldiers and royalists sent by the crown to ... bury treasure! They were ambushed and killed by white bondsmen who had worked in England and come home. "There are ghosts in armor protecting this third treasure," Hammond said.

She decided to look into the legends and spent the large part of a night at nearby Haven Beach, a safe distance from snakes and mosquitoes and bats and copperhead snakes, and whatever else might be in the woods.

She saw none of the above, but what she did discover was another folk phenomenon—partygoing—apparently quite familiar to the people of Mathews, and in closing, she drew a big laugh with this firsthand observation from her fieldwork:

"In my entire life, I do not believe I had ever seen so many drunks in one spot," Hammond said.

OLD NEWS

Last Saturday evening there fell a shower of hail in Gloucester county, which did considerable damage to the wheat. In several places there were hailstones as large as goose eggs; many as large as hen eggs. In some places, and particularly near Mr. Willis's mill, the earth was covered several inches deep with hail as large as pistol bullets. The hail and rain fell together so violently there, that they filled the buckets of the wheel, and set the mill to work, and carried round the works for a considerable time with great velocity.

From the Virginia Gazette, May 19, 1774; Joan Charles, compiler

OLD NEWS

Found, by the Subscriber, aground, near new Point Comfort, a Sloop nearly new, Burthen about 45 Tons, her Rigging pretty good, laden with Flour and Bread. She has received some Damage by her having a couple of Holes lately cut in her Deck. I should be bid to know who is the Owner. Richard Billups.

From the Virginia Gazette, Williamsburg, Sept. 12, 1777; Sara E. Lewis, compiler

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CAPPAHOSIC HOUSE

CAPPAHOSIC CHILD

(A Legend)

The night of New Year, the wind was wild,
The ice was white, and a lonely child
With the face of a seraph and a voice all song
Was singing to heaven as he danced along
On the tide-cracked roof of the mile-wide stream
With eyes entranced by the star-like gleam
Of Cappahosic, where a fiddler's arts
Were setting the pace for dancers' hearts.

The fiddler stopped — "The sleigh is lost!"
I heard a voice high up in the frost!
The Dean of Bruton will greet the sod!
The child sings now to the throne of God!
His voice, and then the wind grew still.
Silence held Cappahosic Hill.

Softly out to the terrace swept
The dancers all, and the Lady wept
Alone, but reached for the fiddler's bow
As if to play; then soft and slow
She murmured a music like a cradle croon,
"My child . . . My child, of the harvest moon . . .
My child, my child . . . Heaven sings to me . . .
I hear your music, wild and free! . . ."

No floating sleigh, no frozen air,
But only the whisper of song was there,
While the elfin child like an autumn breeze
Danced lightly back to his mother's knees.

And the Dean of Bruton was reached in time.
But that is not all of this miracle rhyme.
When the wind blows wild on New Year's night,
Cappahosic House hangs high a light.
And silence holds at the midnight bell.
And children ask that the mistress tell
Of the child that danced on the frozen foam
And reached by song Cappahosic home.

—Warner Tabb

'Cappahosic Child'

This poem by Warner Tabb, formerly of Summerville, Gloucester, appeared in the Jan. 13, 1955 issue of the Gazette-Journal. The paper said "Cappahosic Child" brought to light a very old legend which concerns Cappahosic House, the home at that time of Mr. and Mrs. E. Stewart James of Gloucester.

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Legendary moments in local history

Saved a life here. Born here. Slept here. Spoke here. Ran away from here. Wouldn't give up her seat here. Wrote here? Walked the woods here?



Pocahontas and John Smith

Gloucester and Mathews, nestled at the end of a peninsula of the Chesapeake Bay, have been close to history from the beginning of English settlement in Virginia. Some noteworthy people were born here, and some really famous people have left their mark here.

Saved a life here

Every school child knows about the English colonists that settled at Jamestown, and the famous persons involved in those early years: Pocahontas, Powhatan, and Captain John Smith. It's likely that all of these people were assembled at Powhatan's seat of power in present-day Gloucester County when one of the signature lessons of our first history took place.

The storied interaction between John Smith and Pocahontas took place at Werowocomoco, on the north bank of the York

River in what is now upper Gloucester. Smith had been captured late in 1607 and taken before Powhatan. In an early report on this captivity, Smith said they just talked. Later (according to Wikipedia) as Pocahontas prepared to visit England to meet King James, he gave more detail. Smith wrote that he was about to be executed; however, "at the minute of my execution, she hazarded the beating out of her own brains to save mine; and not only that, but so prevailed with her father, that I was safely conducted to Jamestown."

A legend was born. Pocahontas converted to Christianity, married the settler John Rolfe, and became Rebecca. Visiting England

in 1617, she died there and is buried in Gravesend on the outskirts of London; but she was born in Gloucester County.

Slept here, gambled here

Warner Hall in Gloucester can claim many illustrious people in its line of descent, including Robert E. Lee and Queen Elizabeth II.



G. Washington

And George Washington, Father of our Country. His grandparents were Mildred Warner (of Warner Hall) and Lawrence Washington. Their son Augustine Washington and his wife Mary Ball were the parents of George Washington.

It's probably safe to say that George in his younger years visited his family members at Warner Hall, sleeping there. It's also believed that he gambled at Seawell's Ordi-

SEE LEGENDARY MOMENTS, PAGE 11C

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LEGENDARY MOMENTS: *Local history full of facts and "maybe" stories*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10C)

nary nearby.

The old ordinary, an 18th century building now the home of AutoMax, was a tavern and site of a racetrack. Oral histories place Washington at the track and possibly claiming a late-night bed in the lodgings provided there for the public.

Wrote here?

Thomas Jefferson attended the College of William and Mary with John Page of Rosewell, grandson of the man who built the magnificent estate. They were said to be friends and, according to the Rosewell Foundation's website Rosewell.org, "It was here that the two young patriots first began to explore what lay ahead of the emerging nation in which they would play such an important role." Some have stretched their relationship into speculations that Jefferson on visits to Rosewell began to write some of his famous documents that forged the will of the United States.



T. Jefferson

Walked here?

Remote and grown up on the long peninsula of land known as West Mathews, lying between the East and North rivers, is a one-time trail through the woods known to old-timers as the Cornwallis Road.

Holland L. White of Bohannon told the Mathews County Historical Society in 1968 that he remembered, as a child, "how the road known as Cornwallis Road could be identified through the woods, but no story was ever handed down as to why the road was built ... Now, most traces are gone."

The West Mathews Community League revived the legend in 1990 with Folklore Night and a three-act play focusing on the road, described as a path through the woods from Mobjack to Cardinal.

"The path is rumored to have been cut by Lord Cornwallis during the Revolutionary War, though there is no evidence at all to back the rumor which has been circulating in Mathews for generations," the Gazette-Journal reported, after interviewing



Lord Cornwallis

lifelong resident Audrey Mason.

Maybe or maybe not, Cornwallis walked upon our local soil, but we know for sure that he walked on Yorktown soil in 1781 where George Washington, who certainly walked here, accepted his sword in surrender.

Ran from here

At the starting point of the Revolution, there's no dispute that John Murray, Lord Dunmore, royal governor of the Colony of Virginia, skedaddled from our own shores in July 1776.

The Battle of Gwynn's Island got started after Dunmore and his fleet encamped on the island after being driven away from Norfolk. He and his soldiers, including a number of escaped slaves who joined the English fighters, suffered heavy mortality from smallpox.

General Andrew Lewis of the American forces set up on the mainland. Dunmore bragged that he would drive the patriots away "like crickets on a hill" and that community's name has come down through history as Cricket Hill.



Dunmore

Lewis had other plans. He lined up his guns and opened fire on the fleet. His accurate fire whizzed past Dunmore on his flagship, drilled holes in other ships, and caused the English governor and his forces to flee Virginia forever.

Born here, buried here

Sally Louisa Tompkins was born at Poplar Grove on the East River on Nov. 9, 1833.

This young woman moved with her family to Richmond just before the outbreak of the Civil War. Like so many other women of that period, unable to help on the battlefield, she established the private Robertson Hospital in Richmond. She had an outstanding success rate in a period when infection and fever just as lethal to a patient, perhaps more so, as a gunshot wound itself.

Confederate President Jefferson Davis shut down private hospitals because many

had poor treatment and high mortality. Sally Tompkins appealed in person to the leader; he awarded her a commission as a Confederate Army captain so that she could continue her work. She was the first woman commissioned in the U.S. service.

Effective, and loved: When Sally Tompkins returned to Mathews for a visit in January 1906, she attended a Lee-Jackson Day gathering of veterans in the courthouse. The Mathews Journal reported that she was received "by the old soldiers all rising as she entered the room."

She died July 25, 1916, and was buried at Christ Episcopal Church in Mathews.

Born here, came back here, helped here

Thomas Calhoun Walker, born a slave in 1862, grew up without schooling and taught himself to read and write. He got the elements, then saved 92 cents, and took himself to Hampton Institute. He was accepted provisionally, worked his way through, and returned

SEE LEGENDARY MOMENTS, PAGE 12C



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LEGENDARY MOMENTS: *Local history full of facts and "maybe" stories*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11C)

to his native county before setting to work on a lifetime of helping his fellow man.

Walker founded schools. He preached education and land ownership. He took in homeless youths.

While doing all this, he studied law under the supervision of a former Confederate officer, General William Booth Taliaferro. Walker was admitted to the state bar in 1883.

He built up a practice, defended people accused un-



T.C. Walker

der the Jim Crow system, bought property, lived on Main Street, and remembered from the perch on that hill the fabled Honey-Pod Tree that once stood on the street not far from his front door. There, he said in his autobiography named after the tree, enslaved people were bought and sold.

And there, he wrote, "All of us Gloucester Negroes used to gather under the honey-pod tree, that sheltered the slave auction-block, on anniversaries of our emancipation to hear the Proclamation read all over again and give thanks to 'de Lawd' for giving us our freedom. Men, women, and children like me, joined hands and shouted, jumped, swayed, and sang our most

joyous spirituals while tears of gratitude rolled down the faces of the older black toilers—free at last!"

Truly he was a homegrown legend. A Main Street mural depicts his remarkable life.

He spoke here

One of the renowned figures of the early 20th century, Booker T. Washington, made a swing through Eastern Virginia and stopped to give talks at the courthouses in both Gloucester and Mathews.

Typical of the news coverage of that deeply segregated era, when even the newspapers kept items of interest to the African American community to a minimum, the Mathews Journal (the Gloucester Gazette was not yet founded) reported briefly and not in depth on his talk.

The Journal said a large crowd, black and white, attended the talk, and that Washington exercised "great tact" while speaking of racial conditions in the South and urging economy in time and money and "settled habits" necessary for black people

to make progress. It could not have been an easy task to please listeners of both races in those Jim Crow days, but apparently the famous orator accomplished that feat.

'Come to Cappahosic': People talked here

Dr. Robert Russa Moton, born just after the end of the Civil War in Amelia County, worked his way through Hampton Institute and continued

his education, eventually becoming president of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. It was he who accompanied and introduced Booker T. Washington to the crowds in Mathews and Gloucester in 1913.

His second wife, Jenny Dee Booth, was a home economics instructor at Hampton Institute. Moton's first wife had died; Miss Booth, whose family was from Gloucester County, became his bride.

Moton retired from Tuskegee in 1935 and had a Georgian-style home, Holly Knoll, constructed on the banks of the York River at Cappahosic; and then he began to issue his famous invitation, "Come to Cappahosic." The

purpose of the resulting Moton Conference Center was to talk, and to help, and to find ways to improve the experience and condition of African-Americans. Dr. Moton died in 1940 but his legacy carried on.

Moton's son-in-law, Dr. Frederick D. Patterson, remained closely associated with the Institute and in 1946 founded the United Negro College Fund. Another legend, possibly just speculation, is that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote his "I Have a Dream" speech at the center.

During the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Holly Knoll hosted chain store executives, students and college officials, and representatives of civil rights groups in an unpublicized but effective conference that led to desegregated stores in the South.

Charles and Kay James purchased Holly Knoll in 2005. Now known as The Gloucester Institute, the restored venue provides a place for emerging leaders, with a concentration on providing "skills, knowledge and intellectual foundation required to succeed in the corporate, government and academic realms," according to the institute's website.

SEE LEGENDARY MOMENTS, PAGE 13C

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LEGENDARY MOMENTS: *Local history full of facts and 'maybe' stories*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12C)

Kept her seat here

Irene Morgan, a young woman then in her late 20s, visited her mother in Gloucester County in 1944 while recovering from a miscarriage. She got on the Greyhound bus at Hayes to return to her home in Baltimore. She took a seat next to another black woman carrying an infant.



Irene Morgan

Not many miles down the road, just across the Gloucester-Middlesex line, Morgan became a civil rights pioneer.

Wikipedia states, "An African-American could not sit next to or across from a Caucasian passenger, but there were no designated 'black' or 'white' seats on the bus. When a white couple boarded the bus at a stop in Middlesex County, Virginia, the bus driver ordered

Morgan and her seatmate to surrender their seats. Her seatmate immediately retreated to the back of the bus with her infant, but Morgan refused to give up her spot. When Morgan would not move, the bus driver got off the bus to find a sheriff. The sheriff presented Morgan with an arrest warrant, but she tore up the piece of paper and threw it out of the window of the bus." Things progressed to biting and wrestling before Morgan was arrested and charged with resisting arrest and violating Virginia's Jim Crow transit law.

At the subsequent court case in Middlesex, Morgan paid a fine for resisting arrest but would not plead guilty to the segregation violation.

Her case went to the U.S. Supreme Court and Morgan eventually won. As a result, segregation became outlawed for interstate transportation.

President Bill Clinton awarded Morgan a Presidential Citizens Medal in 2001, the second-highest award

for civilians, ranking just below the Presidential Medal of Freedom. She died in 2007.

Went house shopping here

Kim Robins of Zanoni was a student at James Madison University in the spring of 1980 and a part-time groundskeeper at White Hall, near her home, when she met one of her true heroes, former Beatle John Lennon.

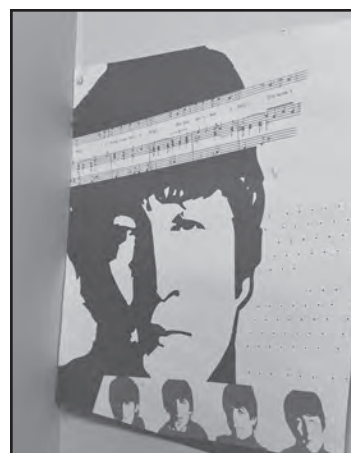
She was home from college that weekend and received a tip that he might visit White Hall while touring property with an eye to purchasing in the area. She remembered that the owners wanted their pansies mulched, and took herself there.

She was in the garage when a black limousine pulled up and hefty men in dark suits and dark glasses got out. "They were literally beating the bushes, looking behind trees, and then they looked in the garage. The man said, 'who are you and what are you doing here?' and I asked him who he was, and what he was doing." The man did not answer, but told her to stay in the garage. He and the other scouts got back into their limo and drove off.

"Several minutes went by, then [local real estate broker] Bob Baldwin's Cadillac drove in followed by a big black limousine," Robins said. "They pulled up to the back entrance." Two people got out of the limo, back to her, one wearing a cowboy hat and the other wearing a flowered sun hat. She could not see their faces.

Robins got to work with the mulch in the pansy bed, on her hands and knees. "I was having my doubts" about the identity of the visitors, when three nearly-grown golden retriever puppies ran from the house toward her. "Not far behind them was a child who yelled 'puppies' and they turned and went running after him. They knocked him down. He's laughing and giggling and I went to rescue him and they jumped on me. We were all on the ground rolling around with the puppies, having a good time."

Then, "a pair of arms reached down and picked up the little boy. All I could see



The John Lennon poster overlooks the desk reporter Kim Robins occupied at the Gazette-Journal for many years.

been watching, to ask her if she would ever wash that hand.

John Lennon and Yoko Ono would eventually purchase Auburn and Poplar Grove in Mathews that spring. Tragically, there was not much time to enjoy these purchases, as Lennon was murdered in New York that December.

Robins is now a retired reporter for the Gazette-Journal. A John Lennon poster hung in the corner near her desk for many years.

OLD NEWS

The Brigantine John and Mary, Richard Tillidge, Master, now lies at Mr. Richard Littlepage's Wharf, on Pamunkey River, ready to take in Tobacco on Freight, at the usual Rate, for Bristol. It is intended she shall sail in March. Any Persons inclinable to freight their Tobacco are desired to give or send their Orders to Capt. John Perrin, of Gloucester, or to Capt. Tillidge, aforesaid, who will give constant Attendance at the adjacent Courts, for that Purpose.

From the Virginia Gazette, Williamsburg, Dec. 9, 1737; Sara E. Lewis, compiler

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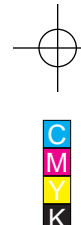
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Bells Rock Lighthouse. USCG



Pages Rock Lighthouse. FILE PHOTO



York Spit Lighthouse. USCG



Tue Marshes Lighthouse. NATIONAL ARCHIVES



New Point Comfort Lighthouse. FILE PHOTO

8 lighthouses once guarded our local waters

BY ELSA VERBYLA

From the head of the York River near West Point, around New Point and up Chesapeake Bay to entrances of the Rappahannock River, at one time eight lighthouses guarded our local waters.

The York River had Bells

Rock, near West Point; Pages Rock, near Coke; York Spit and Tue Marshes at the mouth of the York; Mathews had New Point, at the division of the Mobjack Bay from the Chesapeake; and Wolf Trap, marking a shoal off Mathews County. Just up the bay, Middlesex and Lancaster coun-

ties had Stingray Point and Windmill Point lighthouses, on the south and north sides of the mouth of the Rappahannock River.

Eight lighthouses. A century ago, a vessel coming up Mobjack Bay would look for their beacons and listen for their foghorns to avoid trouble.

Today's navigators have GPS, radar and detailed charts with which to find the multiple day beacons and night beacons on local waters. Yesterday's skippers watched out for the lights.

Bells Rock: Bells Rock was located in the York River near West Point, and was erected in 1881. The screw-pile lighthouse was topped with a hexagonal house and showed a fixed white light, standing 40 feet above water level. It was dismantled in 1928. An automated light was placed on the original foundation after the lighthouse was taken down. A schooner hit the lighthouse in

1884, damaging it, according to a Coast Guard history.

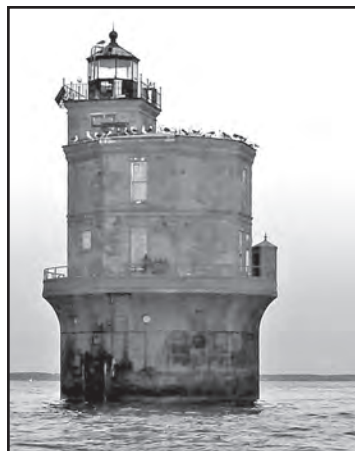
Pages Rock: A Coast Guard history tells us that Pages Rock was built in 1893 as a hexagonal cottage-style dwell-

ing on a screw pile, with a tower on the roof. It was located off Blundering Point in the York River, near the Rosewell

SEE 8 LIGHTHOUSES, PAGE 16C



Wolf Trap Lighthouse, washed away. NATIONAL ARCHIVES



Wolf Trap Lighthouse, standing today. FILE PHOTO



Stingray Point Lighthouse. NATIONAL ARCHIVES



Windmill Point Lighthouse. FILE PHOTO

OLD NEWS

The havoc of the storm along with line of the Dismal Swamp canal is appalling ... Capt. Noah Foster found a dead woman lashed to the rigging of an abandoned fore-and-after schooner, which went ashore in Mathews county during the storm off Gwynn's Island. She was about 35 years of age.

From the Sun, Baltimore, Md., Aug. 20, 1879; Joan Charles, compiler

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8 LIGHTHOUSES: *Local waters were well guarded*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15C)

Plantation which was the seat of the Page family. Rosewell, now a magnificent ruin, was still standing and occupied when Pages Rock was constructed. The light stood at a height of 41 feet. It was automated in 1960 and deactivated and removed in 1967, replaced with a 43-foot steel tower with an automated six-second flashing light.

York Spit: Wikipedia information states that "The York Spit Light" was a lighthouse located at the mouth of the York River in the Chesapeake Bay, marking a long shoal paralleling the main channel into the river." It replaced lightships stationed at this location and was constructed in 1870. The lighthouse was removed in 1960 and an automated light placed there. Anglers find big cobia fishing around this shoal.

Tue Marshes: Complete with a bit of Victorian gingerbread decoration, Tue Marshes Lighthouse, a cottage on a screw-pile base, marked a

shoal near the Goodwin Island entrance of York River, on the York County side. It was built in 1875, according to a Coast Guard history, and deactivated in 1960. The current automated light uses the original foundation.

New Point Lighthouse: To many people the symbol of Mathews County, New Point Light, constructed of sandstone, first shone across the waters on Jan. 17, 1805, to warn mariners of the extended land mass separating Mobjack Bay from the Chesapeake. The light was automated in 1919 and deactivated by the Coast Guard in 1963. Abandoned in 1968, it went into the possession of Mathews County in 1972. Several restoration efforts for this 58-foot-high tower culminated in 2021 with an effort that raised the ground level, repointed the masonry, and repaired missing glasswork. As a punctuation mark, with Coast Guard permission, a flashing light was restored atop the tower. New Point is the third oldest standing

lighthouse structure on Chesapeake Bay, and is a listed historic landmark.

Wolf Trap Lighthouse: Standing in Chesapeake Bay at some distance from the Mathews County shoreline, approximately off the mouth of Winter Harbor, Wolf Trap continued to shine until 2017, when it was deactivated. The original lighthouse was built in 1870, according to a Coast Guard history. This cottage-style light was swept away in a deep freeze in January 1893, and the house was carried 20 miles down the bay. The present caisson-type lighthouse, constructed of brick, was built in 1894 and continued to mark Wolf Trap Shoal until it was discontinued in 2017, remaining on charts as a day marker. The shoal received its name when a British ship, the Wolfe, ran aground there in 1691. Wolf Trap has been privately owned since 2005, made available through the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000. Like New Point, it is a listed historic landmark.

Stingray Point: Marking the episode in early Virginia history when Captain John Smith was stung by a ray, Stingray Point Lighthouse in Middlesex County guided mariners looking for the Piankatank River to the south and the Rappahannock to the north. The screw-pile lighthouse was lighted in 1858 and lasted until 1965, when it was decommissioned and taken down. Like so many other lights on the bay, it provided an attractive hexagonal wooden cottage for its keeper and its equipment.

Windmill Point: A bit out of our area, in Lancaster County, Windmill Point marks the northern entrance to the Rappahannock and was probably easily spotted from Gwynn's Island. It was built in 1869, replacing a lightship. Ice in the winter of 1917-1918 damaged the structure, and after repair it continued in operation, being automated in 1954. A tower replaced the wooden cottage in 1965 and a concrete filled caisson was placed in 2008. Riprap from the original lighthouse surrounds this structure, according to Wikipedia.

The sad, mysterious death of Harry Monsell; and other tales of lighthouse keepers

Long nights on the job, surviving vicious storms, short stays at home, entertaining the family aboard: except for being fixed in one place, the keeper at a lighthouse was very much like the captain of a ship that the light was there to protect.

Family stories and articles from Gazette-Journal files and other sources tell something about the men—and about one woman—who kept the lights.

Harry Monsell

Mrs. Sidney Monsell of Capahosic received a telegram on Dec. 19, 1918, that her son Harry's body, clad in a life jacket, had drifted ashore at Point Lookout and was buried in Heathsville on the south side of the Potomac. A letter in the Gloucester Gazette of Feb. 6, 1919, told the sad story.

Monsell, 44, kept Point No Point Light in Maryland on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. The letter in the Gazette said that he got his mail across the bay at Hooper's Island, where he had previously kept the lighthouse.

It was assumed by authorities that Monsell had gotten into a "nonsinkable" watercraft to cross the bay for his mail, in company with a

10-year-old boy named Ernest Tyler whose body was not recovered, according to an article in the Baltimore Sun. "It is suggested that the boy may have in some way gotten overboard and [Monsell tried] to save him and got separated from the boat; no one can ever know just how it all happened," the letter said.

Sidney Monsell went to Heathsville, exhumed his son's body, and returned it to Gloucester County where Harry was laid to rest in the graveyard of Bellamy Methodist Church, "where he will sleep till the morning of the resurrection."

Richard Marchant

Captain Richard W. Marchant missed 46 days in 1905 from his duties as keeper of New Point Comfort Light-Station, after he "was obliged to go to a hospital and have a difficult surgical operation performed," according to a report made in July that year from the Inspector of the Light-House Board. His substitute received \$1 a day.

Apparently Captain Marchant was not well. One year later, on Aug. 2, 1906, readers of the Mathews Journal were no doubt shocked to read that

SEE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS, PAGE 17C



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LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS: *Stories from the past*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16C)

the longtime lighthouse keeper, "after writing to his wife advising her what to do and telling her that she would never see him again, threw himself from the deck of the steamer upon which he had started to Baltimore and was drowned in Chesapeake Bay."

His body was found and buried in Reedville; identification was positive, because "he had taken the precaution to put his name upon a card, which was found in his pocket."

Local undertaker Richardson took a gasoline launch to Reedville, had the body exhumed and put into a metal case, and brought back to Mathews where a respectful crowd followed Marchant's remains to the cemetery at Christ Episcopal Church, and he was laid to rest on his native soil.

Bertrand Parkes

His job led to romance and a family.

Bertrand H. Parkes, 1889-1955, a native of Pennsylvania, joined the Navy at age 17 and served in World War I. As told by his son Ralph Parkes of Ware Neck, Bert



COURTESY OF RALPH PARKES

Bertrand Parkes aboard Pages Rock Lighthouse.

saw a government advertisement for lighthouse keepers that brought him to Virginia in 1930. He served in Pages Rock, Tue Marshes, Middle Ground and York Spit lighthouses.

At Pages Rock, in the York River just off Cedar Bush Creek, he met Kathleen Jenkins of Coke. They were married in 1941 and brought up their three sons, Richard, Bert Jr. and Ralph, in Gloucester.

Bert polished the lens and

the wooden floors, read the rotating libraries sent by the government, worked one week on and one week off, and hailed the passing vessels, while helping to keep the waterways safe.

Enos Brooks

Enos Littleberry Brooks of Hallieford, 1883-1947, was deeply involved with his family, and his family with him. As related in the late 20th century by his daughter, Marjorie Williams, Brooks sometimes welcomed his wife Clara aboard the lighthouse where he served.

Early in life Enos went to sea. After Marjorie was born in 1911, he joined the lighthouse service, working at Plantation, Sevenfoot Knoll, Great Wicomico, Wolf Trap, Stingray Point, York Spit and others.

He was at Stingray Point, not far from home by boat, during the Great August Storm of 1933. His daughter recalled "he felt he would be lost as heavy winds took some of the rails, and walkways were destroyed."

When on leave, Enos helped in the family store at Hallieford. But his profession soon took him back to his duties: "He was up early on the lighthouse and had the work done and log in perfect condition," his daughter said. "His work each day was to have a spotless and clean house, shine the brass and clean the Hughes lens so the light would be bright at night to guide the ships coming in and going out the bay. He also had the fog horn in good shape and run during foggy weather." He retired in 1940.

Earl Crewe

Floyd Earl Crewe, 1908-1978, lived at Diggs, and if he drove from his home to nearby Haven Beach, could look out at Wolf Trap Lighthouse, from which he retired in 1968.

Crewe started in the lighthouse service in 1930, according to a biography by the U.S. Lighthouse Society. He worked on Diamond Shoals

Lightship, where he survived the Great August Storm of 1933 while aboard; Chesapeake Lightship, and Smith Point, Upper Cedar Point, Windmill Point and Wolf Trap lighthouses.

At Upper Cedar Point in 1943, according to an anecdote at the Gwynn's Island Museum, Crewe caught enough rockfish to buy winter coats for his wife and two daughters.



USCG

Earl Crewe at Wolf Trap Lighthouse.

SEE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS, PAGE 18C


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LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS: *Stories from the past*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17C)

Interviewed by the Gazette-Journal for its Aug. 6, 1964 issue, Crewe said his job amounted to much more than taking care of the light. He was always on the lookout for trouble, and told the paper, "Why only Saturday night we had four men to spend the night with us. They lost their course after leaving Gwynn's Island. By the time they reached us they were exhausted and out of fuel. We invited them aboard where they remained until daylight and then resumed their course."

Crewe and others on the lighthouse traveled to and from their station, which is some distance offshore, in a 24-foot boat. The article concluded, "Records indicate that Crewe and the other men...have never abandoned their station, even in the fiercest hurricanes that have swept in from the Atlantic Ocean."

He retired in 1968 from Wolf Trap as the last civilian U.S. Lighthouse Service keeper there.

Charles L. Sadler

Mathews County native Charles L. "Bozo" Sadler was assistant keeper at Cove Point Lighthouse, in Calvert County, Maryland from 1944 to 1953. It was not a job that separated him from his family. He took his wife, two sons and two daughters with him. Every day was "Take Your Daughter to Work Day."

Sally Sadler Callis of Mathews grew up around the lighthouse and recalled those glorious years for a TV documentary filmed for PBS and the Discovery Channel in 2004. She told the Gazette-Journal that "It was nine years of my life growing up, and I loved every minute of it."

The Sadler children gath-

ered sharks' teeth from the beaches, picnicked on the rocky beaches, and took a skiff offshore to dive and swim.

During the first years, the family was also swept up in World War II precautions. "The army had taken over the beach, looking for submarines," she said. "There were dirigibles going overhead" but all in all, the war seemed remote. The children helped their parents with lighthouse chores such as polishing brass and raising the flag, but Sally said he would not let anyone help him polish the light itself.

A life in the fresh air, a lifestyle experienced by very few, still summoned happy memories decades later.

Henry Dow

The last caretaker of New Point Lighthouse, Henry Dow, went daily to the station after it was automated in 1919, converting from kerosene to acetylene.

He had to be sure everything was functioning correctly.

In a biography compiled by the U.S. Lighthouse Society, Dow said he first went to the light in a pony cart. It was a favorite destination for beach picnickers.

After the 1933 storm, the lighthouse became separated from the mainland and Dow had to use a rowboat to get there. He retired as lamplighter in 1954.

Fannie Salter

Finally, the woman. Fannie Hudgins Salter was born in Mathews County and at one time was the only female lighthouse keeper in the nation.

Her husband Clarence Salter, also a Mathews native, kept lighthouses up and down the bay. He was at Turkey Point in North East, Mary-

land, when he died in 1925 at age 47. Fannie took over with an appointment from President Calvin Coolidge.

She remained at her post until retiring in 1947, and was the last keeper at Turkey Point; the light was then automated.

The Gazette-Journal reported in 1952 that she was visiting relatives in Mathews, stating that at one time she was the only female lighthouse keeper in the United States.

Fannie Salter is featured in a book, "Women Who Kept the Lights" (2001) by Mary Louise Clifford and Candice J. Clifford.

Sources: "The Lighthouses of the Chesapeake" by Robert de Gast; U.S. Lighthouse Society; National Archives; U.S. Coast Guard; Gwynn's Island Museum; file copies of the Gloucester Gazette and Gloucester-Mathews Gazette-Journal.

OLD NEWS

W. R. Thurston of Gloucester county, Virginia, has a curiosity in the shape of a cast-off oysterman's shoe, to which fifty six living oysters have attached themselves.

From the Macon Weekly Telegraph, Georgia, of Feb. 3, 1889; Joan Charles, compiler



Henry Dow



C. L. Sadler



Sally Callis

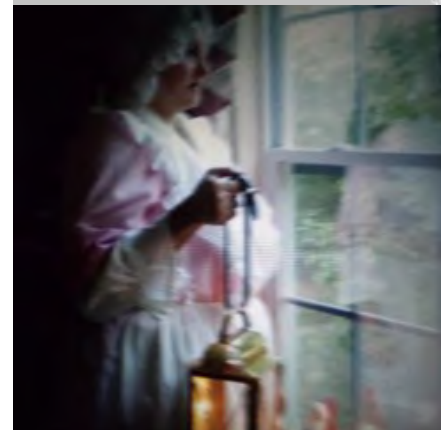


Fannie Salter

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118 years ago, developers eyed New Point

BY ELSA VERBYLA

Today a wild and wonderful spot, New Point Lighthouse stands far from terra firma, reinforced by several layers of stone riprap brought in at intervals during the past 50 years to help it stand against the storms.

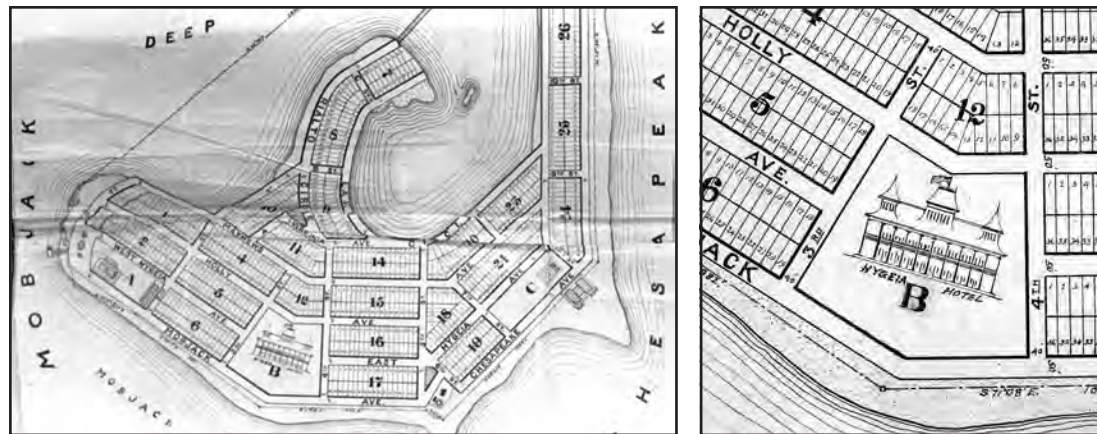
At the turn of the 20th century, however, the lighthouse was surrounded by many acres of land. Developers

looked at that space and knew what to do with it: they would build homes and a resort hotel.

In 1904, the New Point Comfort Corporation purchased 200 acres of sandy beach around the lighthouse and revealed its plans. Officers, all of Norfolk, were H. C. Dodson, president; M. B. Crowell, vice president; and R. C. Browne, secretary/treasurer.

A map in Deed Book 13 in the Mathews County Clerk's Office proposed a layout of avenues, numbered streets, 37 blocks with up to 36 houses in a block, bathhouses, pavilions, and a resort hotel.

The hotel, focal point of the whole project, was to be called the Hygeia, honoring the goddess of health. It appears on the map as a two-story building with turrets, full-length porches on both floors, and views facing the confluence of the Mobjack



Detail from 1904 of a plan, filed in the Mathews Clerk's Office, to sell lots and build a hotel at New Point. The lighthouse and keeper's house are shown at lower right. All of this land area is now washed away. At right, a close-up of the proposed hotel.

and Chesapeake bays.

Mobjack Avenue, Chesapeake Avenue, Rialto Circle, Mathews Avenue, Holly Avenue, Creek Avenue and Hygeia Avenue were the street names.

County land books record the sale of a number of lots in

the next few years, but then hard times came upon the corporation, which defaulted in 1909. Purchasing the land, with the exception of 119 lots already sold, was R. H. Thomas of Baltimore. He could not make a go of the project, and in 1911 the land was sold to

inventor Herman Hollerith, who had established a summer home in Mathews County.

The developers' great dreams washed away; and now the land they dreamed about building their castles upon is long gone as well.



Did it look like this illustration?

The Union Jack flying atop New Point Comfort

Most schoolchildren are familiar with the story of how the British burned and briefly occupied Washington, D.C., during the War of 1812. But how many knew that British troops conducted a similar raid (although on a much smaller scale) in Mathews County?

During the war, British warships were up and down and all around the Chesapeake Bay, including local waters. The Norfolk Herald of Jan. 25, 1814 told its readers about a local occupation:

"The enemy landed at New Point Comfort on Friday, the 29th ult. and destroyed the oil used for the light house; they nearly demolished the dwelling house of the keeper, and fixed the British flag on top of the light house!"



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Medal of Honor winners: one was born here; another is buried here

Two individuals with local ties have received the Medal of Honor, the highest award for valor in the United States military.

James Daniel Gardner, also known as Gardiner, was a free black man born in Gloucester County in September 16, 1839.

He crossed the York River in 1863 to enlist in the Union Army at Yorktown and became a member of the U.S. Colored Troops. He trained at Fort Monroe and, as a member of the 2nd North Carolina Colored Volunteers, was attached to Gen. Edward Wild's African Brigade in Norfolk and Portsmouth. This unit was eventually absorbed into the Army of the James commanded by Gen. Benjamin Butler.

Butler launched an attack at Chaffin's Bluff on the James River in September 1864. Gardner's unit was involved in the heavy fighting against Confederate forces.

His Medal citation reads that Gardner "Rushed in advance of his brigade, shot a rebel officer who was on the

parapet rallying his men, and then ran him through with his bayonet."

After the war, Gardner did not return to his home state. He died in Clark's Summit, Pa., on Sept. 29, 1905, the 41st anniversary of the day on which he earned the Medal of Honor, and is buried at Calvary Crest Cemetery in Ottumwa, Iowa.

In 2005, through the advocacy of Dr. Wesley Wilson of Gloucester, the Gloucester Board of Supervisors honored its native son by placement of a monument bearing his story on the Gloucester Court Green.

The other Medal of Honor recipient with local ties received his Medal for valor and bravery in Italy during World War II.

Van T. Barfoot, though born in Mississippi, married a Mathews girl (Norma Davis) and after his post-war years living near Richmond, is buried at the H.C. Smither Memorial Cemetery in Hudgins.

Barfoot (1919-2012) enlisted in the Army in 1940.

Posted to the European

theater, he was a technical sergeant fighting in Northern Italy when his heroic actions on May 23, 1944 led to his receiving the Medal of Honor.

He and his unit were described as assaulting entrenched German forces. According to the Congressional Naming Commission, "When they came under attack from machine gun positions in the foothills of the Alps, Barfoot moved out alone, heading for the enemy flank. Crawling to the edge of the first machine gun emplacement, Barfoot threw a grenade that killed two and wounded three of the crew, disabling the position. Securing the three prisoners, Barfoot advanced on a second machine gun nest which he attacked with tommy-gun fire, killing two more enemy soldiers and taking another three prisoner. Continuing his solitary assault, Barfoot encountered a third machine gun emplacement and compelled the crew to surrender."

Barfoot continued to clean up the area, taking 17 prisoners and later in the day, with a bazooka, faced a German tank counterattack while moving out ahead of his men. He fired, disabling the lead tank, causing two others to turn away, destroyed a field artillery piece, found two wounded American soldiers, and brought them across exposed lines to safety.

He was subsequently commissioned as a second lieutenant and, when he learned he would be awarded the Medal of Honor, chose to receive it in the field so his soldiers could attend. Lt. General Alexander Patch presented the award "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty."

He reached the rank of colonel, remaining in the Army until 1974.

A permanent, visible honor is also being considered.

The Congressional Naming Commission, charged with changing the identity of military facilities now bearing the names of Confederate figures, has recommended renaming Fort Pickett in Nottoway County as Fort Barfoot. The recommendation is working its way through bureaucracy.



James Daniel Gardner



Van T. Barfoot



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