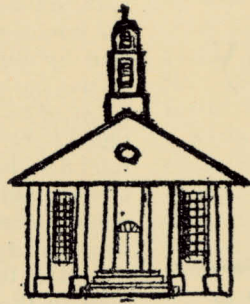


Essex County



Historical Society

ESSEX COUNTY 1692

VOLUME 4

TAPPAHANNOCK, VIRGINIA

MAY 1973

REV. RALPH E. FALL ADDRESSES SOCIETY ON HISTORICAL VAUTERS CHURCH AT JANUARY MEETING

Vauters Church, one of the oldest Colonial Churches still in use in Virginia, was the subject of the talk given by the Rev. Ralph E. Fall at the January meeting of the Essex County Historical Society.

Mr. Fall said that Vauters is the eleventh of the forty-eight colonial churches still standing in Virginia. He gave interesting sketches of many of the rectors of St. Anne's Parish and told of the three Vawter brothers who were instrumental in building Vauters in 1731 and of the handsome silver chalices and paten plates, gifts of Queen Anne and which were so fortuitously returned to Vauters after being missing for many years. This silver is 249 years old and worth more than \$40,000.

Mr. Charles Warner said in his introduction of the Rev. Fall that he is the author of historical articles, including "Belle Grove, King George County, Virginia," the birthplace of President James Madison, recently published in the Northern Neck Historical Magazine. He has consented to write the leading article for the May issue of our bulletin which I am sure all will find most interesting. The Rev. Fall is also the author of the book "Historical Record of Bowling Green, Virginia, 1667-1970." The Rev. Fall is the minister of three Episcopal churches: Vauters, Loretto, Essex County; St. Peter's Church, Port Royal, and St. Asaph's Church, Bowling Green; both in Caroline County.

In the business meeting there was a discussion of the part our society should take in the Bicentennial Celebration which will soon be taking place. This culminated in the selection of Mr. J. C. McManus as chairman of the committee. It was decided there should be eight or ten members and there were many things which we could contribute since we are such an old county with so many historical landmarks and so much Revolutionary history.

Mr. Robert L. Pettigrew, chairman of the Nominating Committee, presented the following slate of officers for next year: President, Mrs. Henrietta Wolfe; Vice-President, Mr. Arnold Motley; Treasurer, Mrs. Percy R. Eubank, and Secretary, Mrs. Anne Scott Wright. Mr. Pettigrew also requested that we have a membership committee and a project committee, as standing committees.

Mrs. William A. Wright, Secretary.

MISS ANN FROST WARING ADDRESSES SOCIETY ON THE RICHMOND JUNTO (ESSEX JUNTO) IN APRIL

THE RICHMOND JUNTO a group of the State Central Committee of the Jefferson Democratic Republican Party was Miss Waring's topic which she chose because of their historical significance to Essex County. They were Thomas Ritchie, Spencer Roane and John Brockenbrough, all three were born in Tappahannock, and are relations to many Essex families, including the Waring's. Another leader of the Richmond Junto was Wm. Cary Nicholson who made up this powerful group.

Thomas Ritchie was Editor of the Richmond Inquirer and through the press was the spokesman for the Junto, and had great impact on State and National Politics. Spencer Roane was Judge of the State Court of Appeals and had great influence on the Virginia Court System, and was always a staunch defender of States' Rights. John Brockenbrough was President of the Bank of Virginia and had much influence on the financial system of Virginia and was the Father of the United States Independent Treasury established during Van Buren's Administration. All of these men were close friends of Thomas Jefferson and always promoted his great ideas of the individual's role in government.

Miss Waring brought out many interesting facts and illustrated them with charts, pictures and by reading excerpts from the Richmond Inquirer which were written by Thomas Ritchie. It is hoped that on some later date, her talk may be a part of one of our bulletins.

I am sure our members who were unable to attend would enjoy it thoroughly and those who were there would enjoy reading it, though not as much as hearing Miss Waring deliver it, in her clear and distinct voice and charming, poised, manner. Miss Waring is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Waring of "Fairview", Essex County and a senior of St. Margaret's School in Tappahannock.

Following the address a short business session was called to order by our president, Mrs. Henrietta Wolfe. Miss Weathers made a motion that we contribute \$5.00 to the Essex County Improvement Council; it was seconded by Mrs. McManus and passed.

Mr. McManus reported that he visited Williamsburg and talked with Mr. Parke Rouse, Executive Director

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Four Essex County Landmarks

By RALPH EMMETT FALL
Port Royal Virginia

Of the many venerable structures erected in Essex County, four in upper Occupacia District have been placed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places:

VAUTERS CHURCH

Loretto, Virginia

St. Anne's Parish was formed in 1704 from old Sittenbourne Parish. Its first lower churches had been located in the vicinity of Champlain ("Sale's Church"), and near Layton's Landing. An upper church, probably of frame construction, was built near the Rappahannock River on present Mount Pleasant farm above Loretto. In 1719, another upper church, rectangular in shape, replaced the earlier one, and twelve years later was itself increased in size with a sixteen-foot wing and bricked in as a unit in splendid Flemish bond with glazed headers.

The oyster-shell mortar is still in its original condition, and a date "1731" for the remodelling is etched in a brick over the south doorway. The architect's name is unknown, but the bricks were fired probably on the site. Edward Vawter, one of three brothers who immigrated to Virginia in 1685, is described in his family's records as "the builder of the church in 1731" which may mean that he superintended its construction. In early church records, his name became mis-spelled as "Vauter's Church" and has so remained since.

The first Wardens of the parish were Edward Moseley and Benjamin Mosely, succeeded next by Thomas Ramsey and Francis Gouldman. James Smith was the first rector, and the present writer appears to be the 28th rector in 269 years. The two-story Glebe on present Cloverfield Farm, now owned by Mr. and Mrs. James Hundley, Jr., near Chance, Va., was also erected in about 1731, showing a style of brick-work similar to that of the church, and remains one of the oldest Glebes in Virginia. It replaced an earlier Glebe near the church, on land purchased from the Wardens by John Micou in 1706. The brick Glebe was sold in 1803 to Edward Rowzee whose servant, Frederick Robb recalled when men dressed in knee breeches and boots, and driving horses and coaches, attended Sale's Church.

A roadway formerly surrounded Vauters Church, where the fashionably-dressed Colonial communicants alighted from similar carriages at the church door, and then the carriage wheels passing by often struck the church building, where the marks are still visible. The parish received a set of four pieces of English communion silver dated "1724" in its earlier days, two chalices and two patens. Three of these pieces became missing for over 100 years until 1909, when two of them were retrieved for \$150 from an antique dealer in New York. One paten is still missing. The

Rev. Robert Rose was rector of this parish from 1725-1748, during which time he kept a "Diary". He listed the names of 90 persons baptized and 32 couples married by him in that period, most of whom belonged to the parish, indicating a thriving congregation. An event of unusual nature to occur in a churchyard took place here in 1812, when James Bankhead and Colin Buckner, both of Port Royal nine miles distant, held a duel. But only one shot was fired, and both parties went home unscratched, attended by Robert Starke, surgeon of Norfolk.

At the turn of the 19th century, no services were held in the church. In 1827, the high box pews were cut down to their present size and re-arranged. All the woodwork, panelling and pews, hardware, two sets of double entrance-doors, many window panes, and aisle-flagstones (brought over as ship-ballast) are here originally from 1731 or earlier. In 1960, Vauters Church celebrated the 250th anniversary of the church building, and the 265th anniversary of the parish's founding, and was modernized with electric heating and air-conditioning. With an active congregation today, its structure is the 11th oldest among 48 Colonial churches still standing in Virginia.

BROOKE'S BANK

Loretto, Virginia

William Brooke, fourth in line from the immigrant Robert Brooke (1663-1714), married Sarah Taliaferro, eldest of six children of Lawrence Taliaferro and Sarah (Thornton) Taliaferro. They lived first in a small house on land acquired earlier by Brooke's ancestors, near the present mansion. They made plans for a larger Georgian-styled home on their property on the river, purchased from Edward Evans, the construction of which began in 1731, a date still noted on the cornerstone. It is unknown when this home was first called "Brooke's Bank," but in 1829 a letter was addressed to Wm. Thornton Brooke, Brooke's Bank, Loretto, Va.

Two children were born to Wm. and Sarah (Taliaferro) Brooke: Sarah Brooke was born in the smaller house and died unmarried in 1768; and Wm. Brooke (1735-1764) married Ann Bengier, daughter of Elliott Bengier and Dorothea (Brayne) Bengier, and niece of Governor Alexander Spotswood. Wm. Brooke the elder died in 1735, with his large house still unfinished. The widow Brooke followed the plans made earlier for completing it. At various times, she added frame out-buildings, a kitchen with large chimney, overseer's office, smoke house, dairy (which burned in 1747), barns, and carriage house. A larger wharf in front of the house was used to unload materials when construction went on. After 1748, a ferry ran from the wharf across to Leedstown in Westmoreland County.

A large trading-store was at "Brooke's Bank," managed by two Scotchmen, Andrew Anderson (1709-1764) and John Miller (1722-1761), both of whom are buried in Vauters Churchyard. The rector then, the Rev. Robert Rose, spent many nights in the large house as Mrs. Brooke's guest, along with other travelers, between his Glebe and services in Vauters Church. Rose was also a frequent visitor at the trading-store. In his "Diary," Rose always referred to the house as "Mrs. Brooke's" and never as "Brooke's Bank." The mansion was built of brick laid in Flemish bond with a high water course, its central portion being 60 feet long and 36 feet wide, with wings 10 feet square at

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Officers of the Society

President Mrs. Henrietta Waring Wolfe
Vice-President Mr. Arnold Motley
Treasurer Mrs. Percy R. Eubank
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 \$2.00 per year. For copies of publication send 50c to Mrs. J. M. Evans, Box 8, Tappahannock, Virginia.

BROOKE'S BANK—Continued from page two

either end. Two brick chimneys rise more than twenty feet above the ridge line, decorated handsomely with contrasting headers to trace a diamond pattern on three faces, the effect intended to ward off evil spirits as much as to be aesthetically pleasing.

In 1890, it was then noted that the double doors at both front and rear of the first-floor hall were of panelled oak studded with nails, and with massive brass locks with stirrup-shaped handles and 10-inch keys. Over the Gothic arch in the hall at that time were these words, now disappeared: "Who would be joyful, let him, There's no surety for the morrow." Until 1861, when it fell, an oil lamp in the shape of a sailing ship ("the upper half glass, the waves and keel silver") was suspended from the arch by a silver chain. The stairway winds from the west center hall up and across the front door to the east side of the second floor, making a 90-degree curve in the last eight steps. The first floor has four large rooms and two halls. The principal rooms contain cornices, chair rails, baseboards, panelled window-seats, and corner chimney pieces. There are eight corner fireplaces. The woodwork is black walnut, from trees on the place. The second floor duplicates the first in number of rooms, except that another bedroom was created from the front of the hall.

The original owner, Sarah (Taliaferro) Brooke died in 1764, and "Brooke's Bank" remained in the Brooke family until 1880, when Dr. Walter Saunders became the owner. There are early Brooke graves located here. Later, the house deteriorated when it was occupied by tenants for many years. Robert Roberts was owner in 1932, and two years later, the property was acquired by the present owner, Mrs. Enos Richardson and the late Mr. Richardson who restored "Brooke's Bank" to its present splendid condition. The house is now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Osburn and family.

BLANDFIELD

Caret, Virginia

The exact date, the architect and builder of this fine old mid-Georgian plantation mansion are all unknown. An earlier and smaller dwelling had been erected close to the river. But it was decided to build the larger home at its present location on a high bluff

about one and a half miles from the Rappahannock River. It was probably built in about 1750 for William Beverley (1696-1756), third of his line in Virginia, son of Robert Beverley the Historian and Ursula (Byrd) Beverley, who married Elizabeth Bland for whom the mansion was named.

Architecturally, the house like other Virginia mansions reflects the monumental style of Palladio as seen in English architecture design books, the other houses being Mount Airy, old Menokin, Elmwood, and the Carlyle House of Alexandria. Built of brick in handsome Flemish bond, "Blandfield" has a two-story central section with flanking two-story dependencies connected by straight one-story passages. The main dwelling is nearly square-shaped, and its first-floor hall measures 70x30 feet. At right angles to the larger center structure, the end dependencies form a forecourt on its front. There are 24 rooms in all, with high ceilings. The main residence contains a three-bay pedimented pavilion on both its land and riverside fronts. Perhaps the pavilions once were fronted by two-story porches, but the present one-story porches are of Greek Revival design.

The building is surrounded at its roof line by a modillion cornice, topped by a hip-on-hip roof with four interior chimneys. The gauged brick-jack arches all over the windows are said to have the widest splay of any in Virginia. The first-floor hall originally, perhaps, was divided into two rooms as it is now with its twin stairway on either side separating the first-floor rooms. Both stairways ascend to a larger cross hall on the second floor. The original kitchen in one of the dependencies has not been restored to what it once was, although it contains a fire place ten feet long and four feet wide, with a large crane, on which an ox could be roasted whole. The other wing originally was a school and office. In 1844, the owner was William Beverley who was said to have disliked the old panelling in his house, and all the interior woodwork was removed, replaced by the present plain woodwork, in his preference for plaster walls. The interior was altered again in 1848 by Van Ness, the contractor who restored the upper interior of "Mount Airy" near Warsaw after its fire in 1844.

During the Civil War, "Blandfield" was sacked by Federal troops who did not damage the house but carried off many wagon-loads of furniture and many family portraits. Because of a drop from one level to another in the lawn at the front of the mansion, it is believed that this line formed a "Ha Ha" wall in early days. Always owned in the Beverley family, "Blandfield" today is owned by Mrs. William Nash Beverley who occupies one of the dependencies. Mr. Beverley, who died in 1968 and is buried in Vauters Churchyard, began the raising of Charolais cattle, and sheep, and continued the growing of crops and timber on more than 1,000 acres here. One son and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Bradshaw Beverley and their children live at "Blandfield", and another son and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. John G. Beverley live near Doswell, Virginia.

ELMWOOD

Loretto, Virginia

Muscoe Garnett, several generations removed from Thomas Garnett the immigrant to Virginia in 1610, was born in 1736 at "Mount Pleasant," near Vauters Church which the family has always aided, only

Continued on page four

child of James and Elizabeth (Muscoe) Garnett. He married Grace Fenton Mercer of Stafford County, in 1767. "Elmwood" was built for their son, James Mercer Garnett in an unexact date, but near the date of 1774-1776 on 1,000 acres of land, and has remained in the Garnett family since.

The two-story mansion, 100 feet long and 30 feet deep, is of brick made on the property, in Flemish bond. Originally, the house may have been flanked by dependencies, although this has never been confirmed. The roof is hipped with a shallow central projecting pavilion on the entrance front, and a second-floor Palladian window. A fine modillion-and-dentil cornice surrounds the base of the roof, with two interior chimneys at its ridge. Many architectural historians have visited the mansion over the years and have minutely described its many various features, with descriptions not repeated here. But visitors to "Elmwood" appreciate its fine interior panelling, elaborate cornices, overmantels, and arches.

In 1852, many changes were made to "Elmwood", including an Italianate stair tower built at its outside front entrance. In recent years, this tower and other alterations made in 1852 have been removed. On the lane toward the house stands an old brick barn which must be of about the same age as the mansion, and its brick was also made on the place. James Mercer Garnett (1770-1843), the first owner, married his first cousin, Mary Eleanor Dick Mercer of Fredericksburg, and opened a girls' school at "Elmwood". In each first school term he delivered a series of lectures on "The Department and Education of Young Ladies." In later times, a boys' school and a boarding-school were conducted here.

A grandson of the first owners, Muscoe Russell Hunter Garnett married Mary Picton Stevens. As a widow, Mrs. Garnett and her two daughters were forced in the Civil War to evacuate "Elmwood" which remained vacant for 50 years thereafter. The property was offered to the Rockefeller family to become part of the Williamsburg restoration project, but the offer was turned down. In 1938 the entire "Elmwood" library was donated to the University of Virginia which built a special room for it in the Alderman Library at Charlottesville.

In 1943, Mary Barton Picton (Garnett) Mitchell (wife of the Rev. James Clayton Mitchell of North Wales, Pa.) deeded "Elmwood" to her nephew and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Muscoe Russell Hunter Garnett (nee Helene Wallace), present owners and occupants. Many modern improvements have been made to the mansion property in recent years, but its impressive and lovely Georgian appearance from the 18th century has been retained. A large family graveyard is here.

Architects who worked on the house in early times were John Ariss and William Buckland, and in recent times were the late Thomas T. Waterman, the late Charles Spencer, and John J. Ballentine. "Elmwood" remains one of Virginia's architectural treasures, both in size and in richness of detail. Essex County is fortunate, indeed, to have four such fine historic landmarks as "VAUTERS CHURCH, BROOKE'S BANK, BLANDFIELD and ELMWOOD!"

SOURCES

Records of Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, Richmond, Va.

Parish Records and Other Collections, St. Anne's Parish, Essex County.

"Brooke Family Records", from many Brooke family-members.

"Mansions of Virginia", by T. T. Waterman, 1950.

"Home Library of the Garnetts of Elmwood", by H. Clemons, 1957.

"Elmwood", Garnett Mansion in Va.", by Virginia B. Payne, 1971.

May 7, 1973

Dear Mr. Warner:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter which I have received from the Department of the Interior showing that the Tappahannock Historic District has been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

I know this is what you have been waiting for. I know that I am very pleased.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

THOMAS N. DOWNING

House of Representatives

Congress of the United States

April 19, 1973

Dear Mr. Downing:

Thank you for your letter on behalf of Mr. Charles W. H. Warner concerning the nomination of Tappahannock Historic District in Tappahannock, Virginia, to the National Register of Historic Places. We apologize for this late response to your letter.

We are pleased to advise you that Tappahannock Historic District was entered in the National Register on April 2, 1973. Enclosed is a brochure which describes the National Register program.

We appreciate your interest in historic preservation.

Sincerely yours,

ROBERT M. UTLEY

Director Office of Archeology

and Historic Preservation

U.S. Dept. of the Interior

National Park Service

Washington, D.C.

NOTE—The Tappahannock Historic District was placed on the Virginia Landmarks Register in October, 1972. See the November, 1972 issue of the Bulletin for an article on this District.

Miss Ann Waring Addresses Society

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of the Virginia Bicentennial Committee. He received many ideas, material and the thinking of the state Committee. He will meet with the Essex County Bicentennial Committee on May 2.

Mr. Motley reported that Miss Dunn and Mrs. Parker had been to the Clerk's Office and that they have done a marvelous job of cataloging and filing all the materials of the Historical Society, so that anyone coming in to make inquiries can easily find what they are looking for. Mr. Motley also presented the Mary King Pettigrew Collection of Pictures of Essex County Schools, these are very interesting and everyone enjoyed looking at them. They will become a part of our collection and copies of the pictures may be obtained, since Mrs. Pettigrew had new photographs made of the originals and has negatives available.

Mrs. William A. Wright, Secretary.