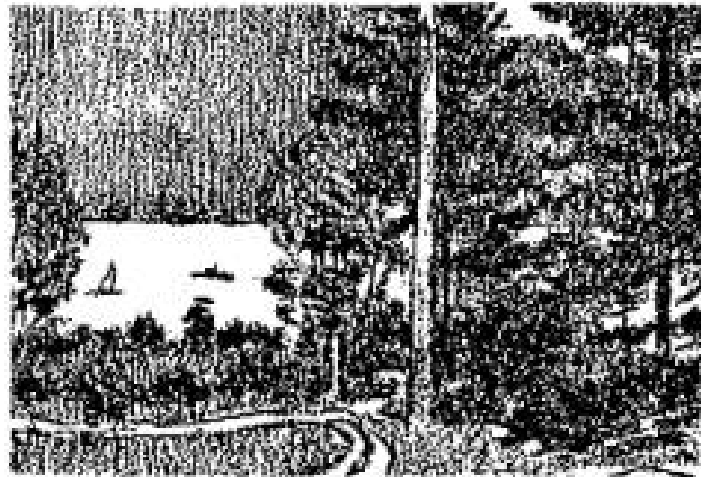


WICOMICO COUNTY....

*Created From Parts Of
Somerset & Worcester In 1867*

The Wicomico River was originally called Rockawackin. If you ask an old-timer the derivation of that odd name, he will tell you that it comes from an eccentric settler of old time named Rock who refused to use a horse. When he hove in view of the people would say: "Here comes Rock a-walkin'" - hence the name of the river. I give the story for what it is worth. When the white people settled on its banks it began to be called Wicomico. This is supposed to derive from an Indian phrase "wicke-micke" signifying a stream upon which houses are built, but here again a much simpler explanation is that it was called after the tribe who lived there, the Wycomesses.



Such was the case with its sister stream to the north, the Nanticoke. The Nanticoke tribe of Indians was said to have originated in the middle of the continent. However that may be, they possessed a culture of their own; they built their houses in their own manner; their utensils, weapons, tribal customs all differed from those of the surrounding red men. In the middle of the eighteenth century they began to draw away from their old lands, now encroached upon by settlers. The main body made its way up the Susquehanna and by 1765 was established in New York State, where they fell under the dominance of the Six Nations. To-day what is left of the tribe resides near Brantford, Ontario. They have lost their distinctive language but still jealously cling to the name of Nanticoke. Another remnant lives on a reservation in Sussex County, Delaware, where at Thanksgiving each year they revive the dances and ceremonies of their forbears.

Wicomico County is mainly drained by the Nanticoke and the Wicomico, which empty together into Tangier Sound. The first white man to view them, in 1608, was the doughty Captain John Smith, who wrote:

We set sail for the maine; and fel with a faire river on the east called Duskarawocks. By it inhabit the

people of Soraphanigh, Nause, Arsek, Nautagu that much extolled a great nation ce Massawomekes.

On the east side of the bay is the river Rockwh and upon it live a people that can make [raise] men, seated some seaven miles within the ri where they have a fort very well paliaaded mantelled with barks of trees. Next to then Ozinies with 60 men. More to the south of that of the bay the River Rspahanock, neere unto wi is the river Kuskaroack [later called Nanticoke the settlers] upon which is seated a people with men. After that is the river Wigheocom [Wicomico] and on it a people of 100 men. people of these rivers are of little stature, of anoi language from the rest [referring to the Powhat and very rude.

It is a far cry from Captain John Smith to modern city of Salisbury on the Wicomico. County was not created from parts of Somerset Worcester—until 1867 but the city is of the same age as Baltimore. For many years it lay in counties; those who lived on the east side of Divis Street paid their taxes in Snow Hill, those on west side in Princess Anne. As the result of several conflagrations and the pressure of modern improvement, nothing of the old remains Salisbury except one fine house, Poplar Mansion, at the head of an avenue bearing the same name. Built in 1795 by Major Levin Handy, with virgin-pine paneling and delicate stairway, it is a good example of the post-colonial style.

FRUITLAND was a busy canning and shipping center that started as the hamlet of Forktown. In 1867 the railroad brought civic pride and a name.

**CREDIT: MANTLAND MAIN & THE
EASTERN SHORE, FOOTNER, 1942**

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MARDELA SPRINGS was a little octagonal Springhouse built before the Civil War, when the clear waters attracted carriage loads of well-to-do people from distant places, and the village of Barren Springs, at the head of Barren Creek, became something of a health resort. The name Mardela was later coined to include the first letters of the words Maryland and Delaware (the southwest corner of Delaware is only two miles east). Several unsuccessful attempts have been made to sell the water on a large scale.

SPRING HILL CHURCH was a small frame structure erected in 1771-73 as a chapel of ease in Stepney parish, then in Somerset County. An old account book states that the construction cost was £509, which was duly paid -except for £3 deducted 'for bad work.' This building became the church of the new Spring Hill parish created from Stepney in 1827. It stood on or near the site of a Spring Hill Chapel built before 1725.



DELMAR, a town with two mayors, two town councils, and two school systems, though the post office address for both sections is Delmar, Delaware. State Street, the main thoroughfare, follows the State boundary.

The site was a pine forest in 1859 when the Delaware Railroad reached here and opened repair shops. In 1884 the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk Railroad was extended to Cape Charles and a ferry line established to Norfolk, after which Delmar enjoyed a period of fast growth. Not long after the Pennsylvania Railroad took over the whole line in 1918, its business began to feel the competition from trucks on the new paved highways, and the town became increasingly dependent on the surrounding farmlands and their large cantaloupe crop.

The State boundary here was surveyed in 1750-51 by John Watson and William Parsons for Pennsylvania—Delaware then being the Three Lower Counties—and by John Emory and Thomas Jones of Maryland, who ran it from the ocean 35 miles westward to the center of the Peninsula. In 1764 Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon. English

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PITTSVILLE had hatcheries, nurseries, a cannery, and a basket factory, and was one of several towns in an area packing and shipping large quantities of holly and other Christmas evergreens. During November and December dealers wearing long white coats and gloves purchased thousands of holly wreaths ('reefs') brought in by white and black farmers whose families have worked late by coal-oil lamps with holly twigs, wire, and little hoops. 'Reef-wrappin'-time is always jolly in backwoods kitchens; songs are sung and bets are made as to who can wrap the most wreaths in a given time. In recent years most of the wreaths have been dipped in a preservative paint of an unnaturally brilliant green hue that keeps the leaves from curling and is supposed to improve their color, and natural berries have been replaced by artificial ones several times as large and shiny, which are supplied by the dealers, who pay 3¢ to 6¢ apiece for the finished wreaths.

The village was named for Dr. H. R. Pitts, a president of the little Wicomico and Pocomoke Railroad completed in 1869 from Salisbury to Berlin as a continuation of the line from Claiborne.

WILLARDS, near the Pocomoke Swamp, also began as a railroad station, named for Willard Thompson of Baltimore, an office of the line. A big business, until recently, was the cutting and shipping of mine props of loblolly pine to coal mines in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. Willards, a strawberry marketing center, has a shirt factory and basket plant.

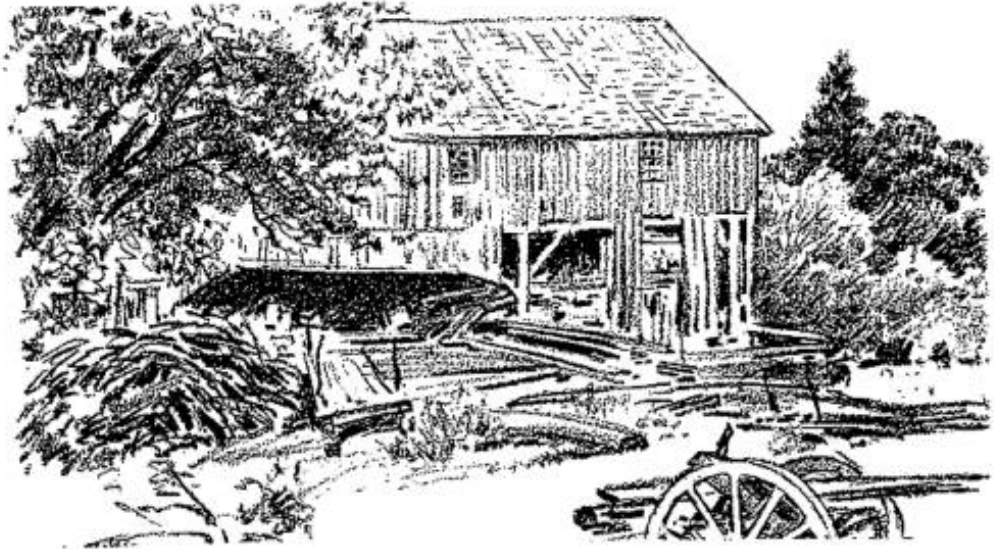
HEBRON, founded in 1890 when the railroad was built between Clairborne and Salisbury. A lumber mill, shirt factories, and a cannery employ several hundred persons here. The *Bounds Garden* on the southwestern edge of town hidden from the street, is noted for its long vistas of formal beds between lines of evergreens; exotic waterlilies bloom in small pools.

SALISBURY, an industrial and shipping point at the head of Wicomico River was the largest town on the Eastern Shore and the second largest port in Maryland. Its rapid growth was a contradiction of the traditional quiet and gentle pace of the Eastern Shore. The population increase between 1930 and 1940 was estimated at 877.

During the 1920's the population increased 46 per cent. Streets and stores have become more and more crowded through depression times. From year to year, even month to month, new private and public construction has continued to change the aspect of the place. The business blocks of Main Street resemble those of a large city. The air is charged with business deals and real-estate promotion as well as with exhaust gas from the dense motor traffic. Banks and stores gleam with colored neon signs and bright metal facades. The well-equipped eight-story hotel serves 'businessmen's luncheons' and for dinner offers terrapin a la Maryland to local epicures and tourists on their way north or south on US 13.

Comfortable Victorian dwellings lined narrow shady streets in the older residential section. Modern homes on parklike lawns were rising in the newer, outlying real-estate developments. A federal slum clearance project, pending in 1940, is planned to eliminate the present unsightly shacks near the railroad now occupied by 'poor whites' and blacks.

In 1732 the Provincial Assembly of Maryland



authorized the purchase from William Winder, a minor, of 15 acres of Pemberton's Good Will at Handy's Landing in the forks of the Wicomico in Somerset County. Commissioners were ordered to 'cause the same to be surveyed and laid out into 20 lots ... the town to be called Salisbury-Town.'

In 1932 the city of Salisbury held a five-day jubilee to celebrate its bicentennial, climaxed by a parade 'by far the longest and most elaborate system ever attempted on the Eastern Shore.' Floodlights and a public-address system were installed for the benefit of crowds in Municipal Park, which used to be the bottom of a lake. Though this was the worst year of the depression elsewhere, Salisbury was prosperous and had reason to rejoice.

After the railroad reached Salisbury in 1860 no great change came over Peninsula farming; the revolution came when refrigerator cars enabled growers to send fresh fruits and vegetables to cities 100 to 1,000 miles away. Then the countryside prospered and basket making and other activities allied with commercial farming sprang up here. There was still no great increase in the town's population or business enterprises, however, because farmers continued to deal in the smaller towns and crossroads stores. The waterways and railroads merely tapped the lower Peninsula resources. Then came the great social and economic change; motor vehicles appeared and paved

highways became an important means of transportation. As the villages lost, Salisbury (a Cambridge) gained. Farmers came here for supplies formerly ordered from mail-order catalogs. Salisbury had since been extending its domain year after year until it derived trade from three States.

There have been some stirring times here. During the Revolution Tories and ruffraff pirates masking Tories plundered the river settlements and far off these Ben Allen survived in legend. Tory or plough, Allen was big as an ox, strong as a mule, as mean as the devil. It is said he was finally executed by a patriot firing squad. The hero of that era was Scot named Alexander Roxburgh, who rallied Maryland line in the celebrated Long Island retreat. After the war Major Roxburgh eloped with Fran Handy, granddaughter of Colonel Isaac Handy Pemberton Hall. In 1794 Roxburgh was major brigadier general of Somerset and Worcester militia and in 1801 Congress granted him a soldier's bonus of 400 acres in Ohio in appreciation of his services.

The great Whitsuntide Fair of Salisbury drew country people for several days of celebration, and shopping among the wares of Baltimore merchants who set up booths. In wagons, oxen boats, on horseback, and afoot the crowds came from miles around to handle the silks and lins

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woolseys, the guns and necklaces. Revivalists exhorted and young people made love. Bishop Francis Asbury thought his exhortations did little good here. In 1786 he recorded in his journal: 'Thursday 10. Rode to Salisbury, where, as it was court-time, I had but few hearers; and some of these made their escape when I began to insist on the necessity of holiness, a subject this which the Antinomians do not like to hear pressed too closely.'

During the Civil War Salisbury and its country side were badly split; most of the slave owners were Confederate sympathizers and the rest of the population favored the Union. Federal troops, Maryland and Delaware volunteers, were stationed here from 1861. They made occasional forays through Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia disarming 'secessionists' but there was no actual fighting. At elections troops were posted at every polling place, officially to 'preserve order' but actually, Southern sympathizers charged, to intimidate voters into voting Republican.

Until 1867 Salisbury was partly in Somerset and partly in Worcester County. After a bitter contest the petition to set up Wicomico County carried and this became the county seat. When fire devastated the town in 1860 and again in 1886, hardly an old building escaped; but the bell of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, which rang out the first alarm in 1886, now sounds the hours from the courthouse tower.

CREDIT: MARYLAND FEDERAL WRITERS' PROGRAM, 1940