

The Inkwell

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*Renew
your
membership
today!*

Linking the Chesapeake & Delaware Before the Canal!

By—Bruce Bendler

Construction of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, or “the canal” as known to locals, was not the first attempt to link the Chesapeake and Delaware watersheds. As early as the 1660s, after receiving the grant for Bohemia Manor, Augustine Herman constructed a “cart road” linking a landing at the head of the Bohemia River with a landing on the Appoquinimink River, at the future site of Odessa, Delaware. Herman envisioned an exchange of Maryland tobacco for “negroes and other commodities” from New Netherlands. Initially in violation of the English Navigation Acts, the English conquest of New Netherlands resolved that problem in 1664. Herman himself won the favor of English authorities.

In addition to the aforementioned “cart road,” early records made reference to another “cart road” reaching the banks of the Delaware River across from Reedy Island. Furthermore, yet another road, built by Native Americans years before European colonization, linked the Nanticoke and Choptank watersheds with the Delaware River near the site of New Castle. North of Herman’s cart road, it became known as the “Delaware Path” to Europeans; south thereof, it was called the “Choptank Road.”

The landing on the Bohemia River became more widely used by late

1674. In November or December of that year, John Maull, Sr., wished to “draw his affairs out of Maryland to the Delaware Bay.” He did so with two sloops “with considerable draught” that he owned. He planned to unload the two sloops at Bohemia landing and transport their contents on the “Delaware Path” to New Castle or on the cart road to the Appoquinimink. Years later, William Davis mentioned that Heally also made use of the cart road to Reedy Island at about that same time. On the Back Creek, Jacob Young had built a landing by 1691, and he built another cart road connecting his landing there to the trans-peninsular road connections.

Early Cecil County deed records often referred to roads to pinpoint the location of property transactions. As early as 1698, a deed referenced the “cart road to Reidentland [Reedy Island] in Delaware.” When Ephraim Augustine Herman leased large quantities of his land, the recorded leases described much of it as situated on the “New Castle Road,” part of the route linking the Delaware and Nanticoke-Choptank watersheds, constructed years before by Native Americans. Cecil Countians also built connections to the bay side of the county; a deed of 1732 referred to an “Elk River Road.”

Canal, page 6...

President's Corner

Hello Membership,

Happy Summer! Here is another issue right on the heels of our issue dedicated to the Rev. Duke Log House. Our members have been busy writing so I had enough material for another issue. It this productivity keeps up, we'll have enough content for an extra issue this year. The Historical Society has been very busy as you will see from the pictures in this issue and we appreciate everyone's participation.

The winners of the Spring Raffle were: David & Mary Segemark, Chesapeake City, MD won the Martinet map and wine basket raffles, Dr. Michael Hogan, CA won the crab basket raffle and George Reynolds, Elkton won the Maryland basket raffle. Thanks to everyone who purchased a ticket. Better luck next time to those of you who didn't win.

The DeWitt Museum grand re-opening was November 11, 2022 and was very well received. It was a down to the wire, all hands on deck situation, but it all got done and the finished result was very impressive. County Executive Danielle Hornberger presented the Society with a certificate of congratulations on the renovation. If you have not seen the new DeWitt collection, please stop by and admire the new displays.

The Historical Society annual membership meeting was held November 18, 2022 at the former Elkton town hall currently occupied by the Elkton Alliance. Beth Moore, Vice President gave a talk on the history of the building and the surrounding area.

We were finally successful in holding the fundraising Dance Party that had previously been cancelled twice due to COVID. The Society partnered with the Cecil County Arts Council and the North East VFW graciously provided the venue. The food was provided by our volunteers. The DJ was great and kept everyone on the dance floor. The guests had a grand time, many coming in period clothing. The props provided for selfies were very popular. The guests all expressed the hope that we would have another "dance" next year.

The Historical Society was invited to have a table at the From the Farmhouse Spring Antique show held on April 1, 2023 at the Ed Walls building on the Fair Hill fairgrounds. We had

Officers

- ◆ PAULA NEWTON – PRESIDENT
- ◆ BETH MOORE—VICE PRESIDENT
- ◆ PAMELA HOWARD – TREASURER
- ◆ MIKE DIXON – HISTORIAN
- ◆ CAROL DONACHE – LIBRARIAN
- ◆ BETH MOORE – CORRESPONDING SECRETARY
- ◆ LISA DOLOR – CURATOR

***HSCC wants to email the Inkwell
to as many members as possible!
Please send us your email address to
receive future issues via email.***

Trustees

- ◆ TRAVIS HUMISTON
- ◆ ERIC MEASE
- ◆ KAREN PETERSON
- ◆ RUSTY EDER
- ◆ MARGIE BLYSTONE
- ◆ CHUCK DOLOR
- ◆ WANDA OWENS

***Do you want to get involved?
Contact us!
cecilhistory@gmail.com***

a wonderful day connecting with people and sharing our Cecil County history.

Rusty Eder, a Historical Society board member and history teacher at West Nottingham Academy gave a two-part talk on Prohibition entitled "Breakfast in the Free State" on April 11 & 18, 2023 at the Elkton Library. He had delightful local stories along with a very informative overview of who, what, when and why Prohibition happened.

The re-dedication of the Rev. Duke Log House was held on May 5, 2023. Rev. Duke was portrayed by Rev. Bert Jicha, former minister at Cherry Hill United Methodist Church. He spoke about living in the log house and conducting a school for boys. The Historical Society also dedicated a bench that was commissioned by us to honor the many contributions made to the Society and the Town of Elkton by the Stanley family. Delicious barbecue was provided by Doug Jackson and sides were donated by the volunteers. Boxturtle Bob entertained everyone with his music and an original song about the log house that he wrote. It was a perfect Spring evening for people to enjoy our "outside café" and eat and be merry.

The Historical Society had a table at the annual St. Mary Anne's Garden Market. We had a garden basket raffle and sold books and plants donated by our volunteers. There was a station set up for children to create a "tussy-mussy" which was well received. Thanks to Dawn Hair at Elkton Florist for providing us with the flowers. Many people stopped to chat about what the Historical Society has to offer.

Preservation Maryland will be holding a "Pop Up Office" at the Historical Society on July 10th from 10-3. We will be posting more information on our webpage and Facebook as we get more information.

The Historical Society will be open for Downtown Elkton's Fall Fest on September 16th from 10-4.

This is a reminder that the Historical Society board meets the third Wednesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Historical Society, 135 E. Main St., Elkton. All members are welcome to attend.

Don't forget to make the Historical Society a destination this summer. Keep up to date with us by visiting our website and Facebook page. See you again in the Fall!

Keeping History Alive...

Paula Newton



County Certificate of Congratulations on the DeWitt Museum



Bench Plaque: In Recognition of the Dedication to the Preservation of Cecil County History by John Stanley, Phil Stanley, and Debbie Stanley Storke.



Booth at the Farmhouse Spring Antique show



DeWitt Collection Reopening



Rev. Bert Jicha AKA Rev. Duke at the rededication of the Rev. Duke Log House



Rusty Eder gives a talk at the Elkton Library about Prohibition

Dance Party!



Arts Council Director, Annmarie Hamilton with Elvis!



Annual Membership Meeting

By 1729, John Carnan, an aspiring merchant, sought to promote commerce between the two watersheds. In the *Maryland Gazette* of Annapolis, he advertised his “sloop and hands to transport goods and passengers to any part of Maryland and Virginia” from the landing on the Bohemia. His advertisement also mentioned “carts and horses to carry goods between Pennsylvania and Maryland.” Carnan’s advertising evidently produced favorable results. On October 14, 1732, he leased 300 acres of land from Ephraim Augustine Herman, part of Bohemia Manor. Ten years later, he identified himself as a merchant when he sold a variety of silver items, household goods, and three enslaved people to his son John, Jr.

The landing at Back Creek also grew and developed. On May 19, 1725, Joseph Wood leased 300 acres of land along that creek “by Jacob Young’s cart road,” built over three decades before, to Howell James. James built a mill on that property and, before 1739, he sold it to Thomas Colvill. On September 15, 1739, Colvill sold the mill and adjacent land to Peter Lawson. Along with land on the “main road from the mill to the Elk River,” the transaction also included “a small parcel of land behind the mill,” and “liberty of the landing just above the salt house,” as well as the mill on Back Creek James had built.

The legislature of Maryland removed another impediment to commerce and travel by its authorization of ferry service across the waterways of southern Cecil County. When Dr. Alexander Hamilton traveled through the county in 1744, he mentioned crossing the Elk, Bohemia, and Sassafras rivers by ferry. Crossing a river by ferry posed hazards. On September 23, 1744, Hamilton could not cross the Bohemia due to a “furious northwest wind.” Instead, he was “shaved by an Irish barber whose hand was so heavy that he had almost flead [sic] my chin and head.”

Other uncertainties confronted Hamilton. “One of the ferry men” who carried Hamilton across the Elk River “plied his tongue much faster than his oar.” Even so, Hamilton found road conditions better than expected. He described the roads in the county as “good and even,” although “dusty in the summer and deep in the winter season.” By eighteenth century standards, conditions were relatively tolerable. Furthermore, Alexander Hamilton’s journeys attested that Cecil County had become connected to an intercolonial road network.

By 1768, three roads in southern Cecil County crossed the line into what were then known as the Three

Lower Counties. One ran from “Warwick Town” to a tavern operated by David Witherspoon in New Castle County on the future site of Middletown. The second ran from “Joseph Wood’s run,” near the Back Creek mill, toward New Castle. Older records, from both Delaware and Maryland, referred to another connection between Witherspoon’s tavern and the Head of Bohemia. As of 1740, that road connected the Head of Bohemia with “Andrew Peterson’s now Witherspoon’s” property in New Castle County.

Later in the 1700s, new efforts emerged to link the commerce of the Chesapeake and Delaware watersheds. Two locales in Delaware, Port Penn and Middletown, sought to improve commercial links with their neighbors in Cecil County. Port Penn, established by David Stewart in 1764, sought to enhance its status as a trading center along the Delaware River. But in 1757, even before Stewart platted out his proposed town, military necessity led to the construction of a road from the mouth of Augustine Creek, just to the south of the site of Port Penn, through Maryland, to the scene of British military operations against French and Native American forces in western Pennsylvania and Maryland. Petitioners in Delaware saw the opportunity to enhance their own commercial interests, arguing that the military road would prove “a great service to many inhabitants of the country.”

By 1779, the Court of General and Quarter Sessions, which oversaw road construction in Delaware, had received numerous petitions for a more direct connection between Port Penn and commercial facilities in Cecil County, such as the landings on Back Creek and Court House Point on the Elk River. Wishing to “enlarge the trading intercourse of this state,” petitioners in Delaware supported those more direct connections between the two watersheds.

They did so for good reason. In 1783, tax assessors in Cecil County recorded the presence of seven wharves in the southern part of the county, either along the Bohemia River or the Back Creek. Four of them had warehouses constructed nearby. Furthermore, three mills operated on the Bohemia Manor property once owned by Augustine Herman. William Rumsey, who also owned property in Delaware, operated a mill on a branch of the Bohemia River tellingly called the Landing Branch.

The efforts to build this road languished for years. Finally, in May 1790, the Delaware court approved the planned road from Port Penn to the

state line near the head of Back Creek. At the road's eastern terminus, a connection to the piers on the Delaware River across from Reedy Island won the court's approval in May 1803.

By 1789, petitioners "once" from Cecil County but "taken into New Castle County" by the Mason-Dixon survey, complained about the condition of the old road from Middletown to Bohemia. Noting that the road had gone unused for years, petitioners requested construction of an entirely new road from Middletown to the Bohemia Church-Back Creek road just across the Maryland state line. It took six years, but the Court of General Sessions approved the project in November 1795.

Petitioners in Delaware also sought a more direct connection between Cantwell's Bridge (Odessa) and the head of the Bohemia. What began as a local effort in Delaware to connect Cantwell's Bridge with folks living in the "forks of Drawyers Creek," was incorporated into a larger project to build a road from Cantwell's Bridge to the Maryland state line near the head of the Bohemia River, a project not completed until 1805.

By 1794, Cecil County had a road network in place that provided connections with those roads being built on the Delaware side of the boundary. A "plot of the present publick roads" in the Bohemia Manor area drawn in 1794 showed a "Road No. 9" running from the Delaware state line westward to Old Bohemia Church, connecting to roads leading to the Elk ferry at Court House Point, Town Point, and the ferry across the Bohemia River. Another map of the most southern section of Cecil County showed the road crossing the state line through Warwick, coming northeastward from the head of the Sassafras River.

The Commissioners of the Roads in North and West Sassafras, Middle Neck, and Bohemia hundreds made a return of the roads within those hundreds, dated August 11, 1794. They precisely reported the courses of sixteen roads through those four hundreds. The roads connected points from the shore of the Chesapeake Bay, a store operated by David Fulton, Fredericktown, Old Town Wharf, St. Stephen's Church, Sassafras Crossroads, Head of Sassafras, the "priests' mills," Warwick, and George's Wharf.

Likewise, commissioners also reported on nine roads, sequentially numbered, on Bohemia Manor and its vicinity, including the aforementioned "Road No. 9." Those roads connected Bohemia Ferry, St. Francis Xavier Church, Elk Ferry at Court House Point, Town Point, a recently constructed Methodist meeting house, and a mill operated by Benjamin Sluyter. The commissioners noted that one of the roads led from St. Francis Xavier Church "to the state line towards New Castle in Delaware."

By the first decade of the 1800s, roads of recent construction linked New Castle and Cecil counties. By that

time, efforts had begun in the legislatures of Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania to fund a canal across the Delmarva Peninsula. At that point, the routing of the canal remained uncertain. Ultimately, it linked the Delaware River to the Chesapeake via Back Creek and Elk River, but years of debate and deliberations preceded its completion in 1829. After that, even though the roads retained local importance, regional and national commerce shifted to the canal.



Volunteer Opportunities

The Historical Society of Cecil County is looking for volunteers who are willing to help us fulfill our mission of preserving and interpreting our Cecil County History. The following are volunteer positions we need to fill:

- CORRESPONDING SECRETARY
 - EVENT COORDINATOR
 - VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR
 - EDITOR OF THE INKWELL
 - WEBSITE MANAGER
 - RESEARCH ASSISTANT
 - LIBRARY ASSISTANT
 - GARDENER
- PUBLICITY/SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR
 - CURATOR'S ASSISTANT

If any of these positions are of interest to you, please contact us at (410) 398-1790

or cecilhistory@gmail.com

US 40: America's Highway

By Eric F. Mease

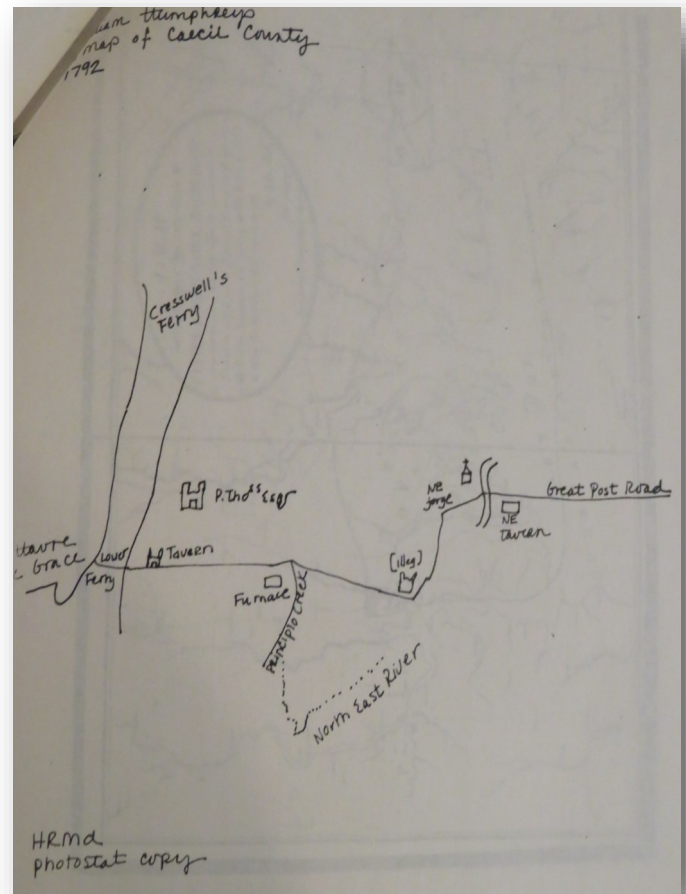
Today, U.S. 40 in Cecil County is dominated by strip malls, gas stations, fast food joints, and stop lights. But remove all of the 20th and 21st century trimmings and we have a roadway that goes back about 300 years, only the road's designation has changed.

The first written account of a journey between the Delaware Bay and the Chesapeake was in 1659 by a person who is no stranger to many present-day Cecil Countians. His name was Augustine Herrman.



Herrman, born in Prague in what is now the Czech Republic, moved to the Netherlands and sailed to the Dutch Colony of New Amsterdam. He went to Maryland as one of the ambassadors sent by New Amsterdam's governor, Peter Stuyvesant.

In his book, *U.S. 40: Cross Section of the United States*, George Stewart writes that in 1659, Herrman's westward travels took him north of today's Rt 40 and "after traveling 3 hours and a half, they camped for the night by a 'run of water flowing southwards.'" "Next day they went on and reached Elk River in good time." From there they took a leaky boat to the bay.



With the establishment of a postal system in 1660, road development between the Delaware Bay and Baltimore moved at warp speed. This system required a post road, linking the northeastern colonies with the south that would become US 40 and later renamed Rt 7 in Cecil County.

Of course, this system changed, at the start of the American Revolutionary War. When the First Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in September of 1774, it agreed to study the possibility of creating an *American* postal system. Based on that report, the Second Continental Congress appointed a postmaster-general for the soon to be independent nation with its headquarters in Philadelphia. The postmaster-general was authorized to appoint his postmasters in posts offices that were to be established between Falmouth, Massachusetts and Savannah, Georgia. According to Alice Miller, in her book, *Cecil County, Maryland: A Study in Local History*, the first postmaster of Cecil County may have been Jacob Hollingsworth, serving between 1776 and 1777.

Under the U.S. Constitution, President George Washington, in 1789, appointed Samuel Osgood to be the first U.S. postmaster general. Osgood supervised 75 post offices and over 2,000 Post Road miles, including the road that ran between Philadelphia and Baltimore, later to be known as US 40, now designated Route 7 in Cecil County.

Crossing on land was one thing, but traversing the many waterways that crossed and crisscrossed the Post Road was another. The granddaddy of all the Post Road, and later US 40 bridges, in Cecil County, is the bridge, or I should say, bridges, that crossed the Susquehanna River between Perryville, Cecil County, and Havre de Grace in Harford County. But remember, the bridge was preceded by 2 hundred years' worth of ferry crossings.

The ferry was essentially made obsolete when an iron railroad bridge, built in 1873, replaced a wooden structure, built in 1866. Both bridges utilized the same piers. That wooden bridge was, by the way, the first bridge built over the Susquehanna. These piers will end up supporting a total of 4 bridges: two railroad (one wooden, one iron) and two vehicular: one, a single roadbed, the last boasting a double decker roadbed.



Thomas J. Hatem Memorial Bridge

According to an article about what would become the Thomas J. Hatem Memorial Bridge on bridgestunnels.com, "a proposal for a four-lane, twin through-arch crossing over the Susquehanna River, adjacent to the double-decked bridge, was approved by the War Department on September 19, 1938."

As the web site states, the structure took just over a year to complete. "Construction of the bridge began in February 1939, and it was



completed at the cost of \$4.5 million. The new Susquehanna River Toll Bridge opened to traffic on August 28, 1940. The old 'Double Decker Bridge' was kept open for pedestrians and bicyclists until it was demolished for scrap steel for the World War II effort in 1942-43. The steel that was salvaged equated to the construction of 60 tanks for the military."

Finally, 1963 marked the completion of Interstate 95 in Maryland through Cecil County to the Delaware line. With the dawn of the interstate system, travel along US 40 locally was greatly diminished and largely confined to local traffic. However, it remains a major thoroughfare for residents of both Cecil County and beyond as US 40 remains Cecil County's and America's Highway.

Read more about Route 40 and its predecessor roadways in the upcoming reincarnated "Bulletin of the Historical Society of Cecil County" coming later this year.



Become a Member!

Joining the Historical Society of Cecil County is a great way to support the Society's undertakings.

All members are invited to attend meetings and functions sponsored by the HSCC, receive discounts on books and items, use the HSCC library for free and get a subscription to *The Inkwell*, our newsletter.

For over 75 years, we have connected people with Cecil's past by collecting and preserving the county's history and we count on membership dues to help fund this endeavor.

Through your membership you help connect people to the county's past through our library and its significant collection of rare books, manuscripts and photographs; our outreach services, helping others understand county history; a website that attracts hundreds of visitors monthly; our museum, which contains fascinating displays; and our widely distributed print newsletter.

Ways to Join

Become a member online or send your payment by mail (the old-fashioned way!). Membership renewal is on an annual, calendar year basis.

Members joining on or after August 1st will receive credit for the remaining months of the year of receipt as well as a full 12 months in the following period.

By Mail

Membership
Historical Society of Cecil County
135 E Main St.
Elkton, MD 21921

Online Payment with Paypal

Select the appropriate category and click on the "buy now" button. It will take you to a secure PayPal page for payment.

You will receive your membership package within about two weeks.

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Upcoming Event!

Call for Local

ANTIQUE DEALERS, ARTISANS AND FARM-TO-TABLE MARKET GOODS

to participate in a one day market on November 4, 2023
focused on food, dining and table decor at the
Historical Society of Cecil County, Elkton

Suggested items for sale would be: china, glassware, silverware; table linens;
cutting & charcuterie boards; table centerpieces; cookbooks, recipes; food items;
wooden serving pieces; pottery; bar accessories; wine

Please contact us at 410-398-1790 or
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Genealogy Resources at Cecil County Public Library

<https://www.cecilcountylibrary.org/learn/history-genealogy>



HeritageQuest includes federal census records, source documents, and indexes. Rich with demographic and genealogical detail, the collection contains personal data such as education, place of birth, language, occupation, veteran status.



World's largest online repository of free genealogical records. As an affiliate library, enhanced digital content can be accessed by using within any CCPL library branch.

Enoch Pratt Genealogy Resources

The Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore has an extensive genealogy collection with great resources. Scroll to the bottom of the page for website links.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CECIL COUNTY

135 East Main Street Elkton, MD 21921
(410) 398-1790

The Historical Society is open.

Monday and Thursday 10 A.M. - 4 P.M., 1st Saturday of the Month - 10 A.M. - 2 P.M.

Since 1932, the Historical Society of Cecil County Maryland has been the go-to resource for researchers, students and history buffs looking for answers about the culture and materials that defined (and continue to define) our county. We are a 100% volunteer-based organization.