

# The Oldest Old School Baptist

*Sent by Mrs. Christine*

WILLIAM H. WROTEN JR. (History Professor, Salisbury State Teachers College)

In the northern part of the Delmarva Peninsula there is a section of New Castle County known as the Welsh Tract and also Pencader Hundred. On Oct. 15, 1701 a grant of about 30,000 acres of land in New Castle County (and a bit of Maryland as well) was given to William Davis, David Evans and William Willis.

Shortly thereafter a small group of Welsh Baptists settled on the grant, to which they gave the name Pencader Hundred. The northern limits of the tract come to within a mile of Newark, Del. With their settlement in the area there was established the Old School Baptist Church, oldest in the United States, and one which continues to hold religious services today.

According to the church records, the history of this church began in 1701 when some members of the Churches of Jesus Christ in the counties of Pembroke and Caermarthen, South Wales, decided to settle in the colony of William Penn. These 16 brethren, sailing on a ship named James and Mary, landed at Philadelphia on Sept. 8th.

Although they were well received by the congregation meeting in Philadelphia, which was of the same general faith, they could not enter completely within the worship of God. The two groups were kept separate for some years because the Welsh believed and practiced the ordinance of "Laying-on-of-hands on every particular member" whereas it was neither preached nor practiced in the Philadelphia Church. Several meetings were held to discuss this ordinance, but the two groups could not reach an agreement.

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ALTHOUGH IT was necessary for the Welsh Baptists to live "much scattered" for about a year and a half, they kept up their own weekly and monthly meetings, during which time they added twenty new members. Also at that time they were making plans for their own settlement and church by joining with other



Old School Baptist Church In New Castle County

Welsh people to purchase the Welsh Tract in New Castle County. In 1703 they moved to the area, began to farm the land, set up their own meetings and build a place of worship. The church, a log meeting house, was soon commonly known as "The Baptist meeting house by the Iron-hill."

In 1706 the Baptists of the Welsh Tract and those of the Philadelphia area reached an understanding concerning the "Laying-on-of-hands." In summary, they said that those who wanted to believe this ordinance could do so and those who did not could omit it, but "that neither of the parties were to make opposition in any mixed assembly, . . . that the members of either church might enjoy occasional communion one with the other."

The reasons for trying to reach an agreement on religious beliefs and practices are as interesting

and enlightening as the agreement itself.

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"THE FOLLOWING considerations induced us to come to the above appointment.

Because they and we were desirous of union in the privileges of the Gospel,

Because we were not like to gain them by keeping asunder from them.

Because they without were taking occasion to mock because of so much variance among the Baptists.

Because some of our members were far from us, and near them; and some of their near us and far from them; and that these members might sit down in meetings next to them.

Because, as we all came to the yearly meetings, we might have a general union at the Lord's Table."

The famous 16, including their pastor, who came to this region seeking and receiving religious freedom were: Thomas Griffith (Pastor), Griffith Nicolas, Evan Edmonds, John Edward, Elizeus Thomas, Enoch Morgan, Richard David, Elizabeth Griffith, Lewis Edmond, Mary John, Mary Thomas, Elizabeth Griffith, Shonnet David, Margaret Matheas, Shonnet Morris, James David.

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BECAUSE the church was composed of Welsh settlers, the preaching for almost a century was in the language of those people. And, of course, some of the early church documents are written in the Welsh language.

Up to 1951, when the Welsh Tract Baptist Church, observed its 250th anniversary, there had been just 18 pastors, with an average service of about 14 years. And, buried in the church cemetery, are nine of the former pastors.

Services in the old log church, built in 1703, stopped in 1746, when the present brick structure was erected. Although it was not common practice to transport brick all the way from England to the colonies to build the many fine churches and houses of the colonial period, that is the claim for most of them. The historians of the Welsh Tract Baptist Church, claim that the bricks from England were brought by mules from Newcastle to the church site. It is also reported that these mules were led by the women of the congregation.

On Sept. 3, 1777 the meeting house is said to have been hit by a cannon ball. After some of the Americans in the Revolutionary War had been driven from Cooch's Bridge they made a stand under the protection of the church walls.

Today regular meetings are held on the second Sunday of each month. The meeting house and cemetery are enclosed with a rock wall, with the sexton's house located in front of the meeting house. The rock house parsonage also is located on the 30 acres now owned by the church.



## Found, Two Tots Sought

BOWERS BEACH, Del. — The body of a young, pregnant woman was found last night in the Murderkill River near this Delaware Bay resort, 12 miles south-east of Dover.

State Police identified the mother of two as Helen Naomi Scott, 25, of near Felton. Dr. Philip J. F. Quigley, state medical examiner, ruled the death an apparent suicide by drowning. Police said no note was found.

A search continued today for the children, Titus, 2, and Dianne, also feared drowned.

Police believe Miss Scott left her home between 5 and 6:15 a.m. and drove to Webb's Landing, near here. Her car was seen parked by the Murderkill about 6:45 a.m. Police said they surmised that she jumped into the river, perhaps with the children.

Fishermen found her body about 5 p.m., a half-mile from where her car was parked.

## Virginians Try To Export Nema-golds

EXMORE — The first Nema-gold sweet potatoes ever to leave the United States for Europe are now on their way to London, England.

C. J. Prettyman of here hopes the shipment will open up a new market for sweets. He said this first shipment is actually a sample shipment, to see how Nema-golds would stand up under a sea voyage. The European representative in Norfolk handling the shipment was Forbes Hibbert, formerly of Canada but now a citizen of the British Isles. The Nema-gold shipment raised by Russell Parks of Accomac, left Norfolk aboard the American Gunner.

## Picture Brings Adoption Offers

A picture of four unwanted puppies in last night's Times produced more than 75 telephone offers to adopt them, Mrs. Hayden Pentz said today.

She heads the Shore Animal Shelter which offered the dogs for "adoption".

She said she got rid of the four pups and could have used more.

The shelter is staging a barbecue tomorrow on the Ocean City Rd. opposite the A. W. Perdue and Son Co. to raise funds for the shelter.

## Boy, 14, Escapes Serious Injuries

A 14-year-old Rt. 2, Eden boy escaped serious injury yesterday when a pick-up truck in which he was riding overturned on him.

Willie Lee Dorch, Negro, was reported in satisfactory condition today in Peninsula General Hospital with arm injuries and a cut hand.

State Police said the injured boy's brother, Harry O. Dorch, 16, was operating the truck at an apparent high rate of speed on River Rd. Ext., two miles west of the Upper Ferry Rd., and lost control of the vehicle when it struck the sand shoulder of the road.

The older Dorch youth was charged with

# For Schools Is Explained

GEORGETOWN — A new half-million dollar program, with eight separate points of expansion and alteration, has been proposed to cure overcrowding conditions in the Georgetown Schools.

This was described yesterday by George H. Keen, superintendent of schools.

Voters of the district are slated to go to the polls Oct. 14 to express their opinion for or against a \$210,000 bond issue needed to pay the local share of the costs of the expansion. The whole project is expected to cost \$525,

000, Mr. Keen said.

The plans call for a new and separate gymnasium building, including locker and shower rooms and a health classroom.

The program is also to provide for:

An expansion of the existing library;

Converting the present boy's locker room to a nurse's health unit;

Converting the existing auditorium into a boy's gym and the girl's locker room to instrumental and choral music rooms, plus

storage and practice rooms for music and a permanent stage;

Converting the girls' gym to a physics, chemistry and biology labs;

Converting and transfer of the existing language department to a full size classroom with an area for language laboratory facilities;

Expanding the business education department from a two-classroom to a three classroom unit;

Convert a classroom to provide guidance and conference facilities;

Convert the existing chemistry lab to a general science lab.

## Salisbury Moose Lodge Member Named Pilgrim

For the second time in its 14-year history, Salisbury Lodge 654, Loyal Order of Moose, has been honored by having one of its members receive the Pilgrim Degree of Merit, the highest honor in Moosedom.

Another highlight of the celebration Wednesday evening in the Moose Home on Snow Hill Rd. was the burning of the mortgage taken out 14 years ago when the Moose Home finally became a reality.

Earl B. Kelley, permanent secretary of Salisbury Lodge 654 and past governor of the lodge received the Pilgrim degree for his loyalty, sacrifice, and service for the good of the organization. George Aten, state director, conducted the ceremony and escort-

ed Mr. Kelley to the four stations of purity, aid, wisdom and progress, where tribute was paid him.

THOMAS MATTHEWS was installing governor and Jay Stoehr, assistant director of membership enrollment for the LOM, conducted the robing and mortgage burning ceremonies. Mrs. Kelley and children, Thomas, Carole and Linda, accompanied Mr. Kelley to the altar for the robing.

Mr. Stoehr reminisced on the trials of the lodge in getting a home and complimented the members on having one of the finest buildings in the region. He urged that they continue to progress in their work.

Other Pilgrims participating were Fred Tanner, John P. Mor-

ison, first Pilgrim to be robed by the local lodge, William Fleshman, and the present Pilgrims from the area.

Robert Rhoades, governor of the local lodge, welcomed the Salisbury Chapter 1208, Women of the Moose, and dignitaries from Catonsville, Essex, Dundalk, Baltimore, North East, and Edgemere.

Frank Kelley, brother of the honored member, was in charge of the social hour.

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