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“Trappe Has a Large And Prosperous Section With Which To Do Business

Has a Large Number of Stores For a Town of Less Than Three Hundred Inhabitants

Much Interest Shown In The Electrical Supply For The Town

The town of Trappe, or La Trappe, as it was formerly called, probably originated from the landing of Trappist Fathers in that section of the county. Some say it was at Trappe Landing, while others have the opinion that the settlement first started where the colored church is now located on the edge of town. Just when the town was first laid out no one seems to be sure and no authentic records are available.

Many years ago, probably in the seventeenth century, the religious fathers no doubt settled on the creek, and there are people living today who say their fathers recalled to them in days gone by how the creek ran up to where the colored church is now situated. In fact, one old resident of Trappe stated that the present colored church was formerly a Quaker meeting house and the members of that sect came to church in boats. In later years, he stated, the building was sold to the colored people, who were forbidden to hold services before the war unless some white people were present. He recalled the days when some of the prominent people of Trappe would go in church and sit through the services while the colored people held their meetings, thus complying with the law. The early church history takes one back to the seventeenth century, although the boundary of Whitmarsh Parish extended to Oxford and the surrounding country. In the graveyard of this church is found the tomb of Robert Morris, buried in 1750. He was of Revolutionary fame and a great friend of George Washington. This burying ground is near Trappe, and possibly there was a settlement at that time.

A Resident 90 Years Old.

Robert Mullikin, who if he lives until June 10 next, will be 90 years old, gave some excellent recollections of the town in its earlier days. Born in Trappe and living there for the greater part of his life, he recalls many important incidents in the life and growth of the town more readily of earlier days than recently. His mind is very clear and his memory keen. He stated that some French monks settled in the town, but he has often been told that the creek came up to where the colored church is now standing, and he also says this church was formerly a Quaker meeting house.

Asked how the town got its name, he replied that there are several versions. One is that on the edge of the town a man kept a store shaped like a partridge trap, and here the married men would congregate to play cards and drink whiskey. Anxious wives in quest of their husbands would inquire for the missing companion only to be told he was at “The Trap.” Very likely the town acquired its name from this store.

School Teacher Sept on The Job.

Mr. Mullikin said in his boyhood days the houses in the town were for the most part one story affairs, and only in later years were two story structures built. The house alongside of Mr. Mullikin's residence was first used as a schoolhouse and was situated on the school lot, from which it was moved to its present place. He told of a school teacher he studied under named J.W. Abbott. In the morning session Mr. Abbott acted all right and the school went along in a quiet way, but at dinner time the teacher journeyed down to the store of James Chaplain and in the language of the present day, "tanked up." As a result, the teacher was in no fit condition to teach in the afternoon, and after covering his face with a large bandana handkerchief would sleep while the children enjoyed themselves. This was the rule rather than the exception in those days. The teacher was stepfather of Robert R. Butler.

Mr. Chaplain's store was noted for its excellent whiskey and while he did a thriving business and his place became noted, he was at the same time one of the pillars of the Methodist Church and many preachers made his home their stopping place. It is said that in those days the decanter was always at hand and before going to church a round of drinks was the order, including the minister.

All of these recollections were vividly recalled by Mr. Mullikin, who states that many important events in the life of the community which happened during his younger days are readily recalled more so than things happening in later years.

Mr. Mullikin has been a lifelong resident of Trappe, with the exception of a few years. During the civil war he was with the Quartermaster's Department at Wilmington, and several years were spent in that city. When he was 10 years old his parents moved to Baltimore, and he was a resident of that city until he became 21, when he returned to Trappe and has since lived there. He was a leading merchant up to a year ago last September, when he found that his advanced age would not permit him to keep the pace with the modern methods of business. He has a record of the weather which he has taken daily for the past fifty years.

Bricks Brought From England.

He cherishes a picture of four generations of his family, and stated that the death of his wife a few weeks ago was the first break in his immediate family for the past sixty years. His mother, he stated, lived in the old Kemp property in Trappe, a brick house built out of bricks brought from England. The house is still standing, but not the woods which were on the other side of it. This house was on the edge of the town then, but now it is far from the boundary. Mr. Mullikin himself has lived on the same spot for fifty years. He is well and hearty at the present time, eats three meals daily, and sleeps sound at night. He walks from his house to the postoffice occasionally, and his mind is very clear. He is a brother of Col. James C. Mullikin [1842-1926] of Easton, who visited him recently, and in the conversation the Colonel asked his brother if he remembered a certain woman who kept a store on the lot where Mr. Mullikin now lives. The answer was yes. The Colonel then stated that he remembered the store, too. His brother stated that the Colonel had a most remarkable memory, for it was at the time of the Colonel's birth that the store was there.

Much Business Done.

In former days Trappe did considerable business. Even today there are a great many stores doing business. The surrounding country is considered one of the best sections of the county. Automobiles have connected Easton with this district to such an extent that the farmers now go through Trappe where formerly they stopped.

In winter time, however, the roads are not as good as in summer, and most of the farmers depend on horse and carriage for travel. As a result a great deal of buying is done in Trappe. Mr. Mullikin was postmaster of Trappe for sixteen years.

Has a Flourishing Bank.

A modern institution worthy of note the Trappe Bank. Organized in 1917 with a capital stock of \$10,000 and a surplus of \$5,000, it has steadily grown until today the surplus is \$12,000 and the assets are \$235,000. Robert J. Dawson is president and Norman H. Leonard cashier. The same board is still in office as when first organized. Nine semi-annual dividends have been paid. Seven of these were at 3 per cent and two at 4 per cent. It is housed in a modern building, neatly furnished on the main street.

While Trappe is a small town, boasting of not more than 280 inhabitants, it has many attractive homes and has produced many noted persons. The halls of the legislature have regularly held members from this district, and today is no exception. But the man who put the name of Trappe on the map is J. Frank Baker, the home run hero of baseball. Frank was always a clean, sincere player, and received the respect and confidence of those with whom he worked. When he won the World's Series for the Athletics by his hard hitting, Trappe became famous throughout the breadth of the land as being the home of this player.

Baker Through With Big League Ball.

But Frank says he is through with big league baseball now, preferring to remain at home with his family. With this end in view he has turned down the offers of the New York Yankees this year to join the team, and has refused to sign a contract. He wants his release, and if this is granted he will likely play with some club on the Shore. This will give him an opportunity to be home for the greater part of the time and at the same time keep in trim. He likes the game and likes his home, and if there is any way in which the two can be enjoyed at the same time Frank can be counted on to continue to play.

One thing about Trappe's development is that there are more houses in the town than formerly and still the population is less than a few years ago. Mr. Mullikin was asked the reason for this, and he replied that in olden times the families were large while the present generation has very small families.

As stated before, the Protestant Episcopal Church was the first denomination established in this section of the county. The parish boundaries were much larger than at present, and many notables of historic fame were members of this parish and instrumental in the upbuilding of the parish. The present church in Trappe was built in 1856, and from time to time in recent years has been without a rector. At present a new rector has recently accepted the responsibility for the work and new life is already being manifested.

Methodism Started.

In 1802 the beginning of the Methodist Church was started and it was completed in 1812. Bricks were made from clay obtained from an adjacent lot, and the lot was filled in with dirt brought from near by woods. In the records of the church there is an item calling for a gallon of whiskey for the men employed in tearing down the scaffold.

On the west end of the church was a door leading to the gallery, which was used by the colored people. On the east side was the door used by the ladies, for in those days the men sat on one side and the ladies on the other. On the south side the door was for the men. The present church was built in 1883 from the old bricks.

Of course the M.E. Church, South did not start until 1867. Its history is modern, and it has a most imposing edifice as well as a flourishing congregation at the present time.

Another church of modern times is the Holiness Church. An eminent minister of this faith is stationed here, and he is doing a great work both locally and in a larger field. He has charge of several publications of the international body, and much of the routine work of his denomination is done in Trappe.

"Let there be light, let there be more light, and let there be better light" is the cry of the people of Trappe at the present time. The entire community is talking light, is interested in better light, and want Easton to furnish the electricity which will make this possible. While the town boasts of an electric light plant which has supplied the current for several years, the demands have increased from year to year until the present output is not equal to the demand.

With a small engine and a big dynamo the plant is taxed to its utmost from sundown to midnight. Outside of these hours the kerosene lamp or candles have to be depended on for light. In the postoffice, for instance, the rural carriers have to depend on lamps on cloudy days to make up their mail or straighten up their books. And it is the same in the private houses. If the children are sick with the croup after midnight and father has to hunt for the paregoric or other remedies, he either has to walk in the dark or else carry a lamp or candle.

And the rate for this service is a minimum charge of \$2 a month and 20 cents a kilowat hour. Several persons stated that three or four 75 candle power lamps are necessary for sufficient light with which to read the newspaper, indicating that the current is very weak. As a result the monthly bills of the consumer are high, with poor service added free.

Under such conditions is it any wonder the people are clamoring for more light and better light. Delegations have visited the Easton Utilities Commission and asked that the Easton plant furnish Trappe with current at a fair rate. From the idea gathered by these delegations Easton is willing that Trappe be supplied, provided that Trappe furnishes a line from the power house in Easton to the circuit already installed in Trappe.

Hold Conference With Telephone Official.

Last Monday evening a delegation came to Easton for a conference with Mr. Eisenbrandt, of the engineer's department of the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company. There is a move on the part of the Trappe people to enlist the services of the telephone company in extending the poles from Easton to Trappe. At present the telephone company has the line running from Easton to Hambleton, the present line running by way of Oxford. While the telephone company is ever ready to lend all possible assistance and would gladly help in the present situation if business warrants the spending of sufficient money to this undertaking, the Trappe people were told that nothing would be done until Easton and Trappe got together and had decided on something definite.

From the standpoint of the telephone company this seems perfectly reasonable from the fact that considerable expense is necessary to make a tentative investigation and this will not be done until everything else is settled. There are many outstanding features to the situation that need to be cleared up. One is the right of way from the electric plant to the edge of town. A permit will have to be granted for a pole line, it is thought, along West street to the Trappe road beyond the hospital. From here the permit along the road to trim trees and right of way will have to be obtained. The question is, Will the people of Trappe be allowed to construct a line through the town of Easton?

Many more intricate questions are to be settled before the telephone company can consider the project. When the preliminaries are satisfactorily adjusted, however, the telephone people will then take up the matter by making a canvass of the territory for prospective customers, and if the business warrants it some agreement may then be made with Trappe in bearing part of the expense of a pole line.

Proud of The School.

For several years the people here have been clamoring for a new school building. The old building leaked and was so badly in need of repair that it was deemed unsafe for the children to attend. Indeed, parents of many of the children refused to send their children to the school, and after considerable propaganda the company built the present very fine building. It is the last thing in school construction for rural localities, and is a credit to the county.

And now the town has the school the people are doing their utmost to make it one of the best in the county. Recently a Patron's Club was organized, composed mostly of women, and these are now raising sufficient funds to further equip the building. There are a number of things needed for the school which were not mentioned in the original contract. As a result the club is holding monthly entertainments and the proceeds used for this purpose.

A new piano has been purchased by the school. A curtain for the assembly hall is one of the things the Patron's Club is raising money for. Last night a St. Patrick's entertainment was given, and while the admission price was small, the amount realized is very encouraging.

Thursday of last week, the club entertained the high school teachers of the county at luncheon in the assembly hall. These teachers hold regular meetings throughout the county for the purpose of discussing the work and methods of teaching.

A large number was present at Trappe and were royally entertained by the club. Mrs. Norman Leonard is president of the club and Mrs. D.C. Kirby vice president. Mrs. Anna Merrick is secretary and treasurer.

School Athletics.

The present activities of the school are centered about the coming baseball season. Last years team is practically intact for this season, and with the fine playground adjoining the school, which is the envy of every other school in the county, the boys will soon be in condition to play. Principal Leon Cooper has his squad out at every suitable opportunity, and he expects to have a good team.

Every Wednesday one of the class rooms is responsible for some form of entertainment in the assembly hall. Generally a play of some kind is given. There are six class rooms and every six weeks a class puts on some kind of entertainment. The attendance at the school is growing each term, until by next year it is believed the school will be classed with the first-group schools. At present the tenth grade is the highest, but next year it is possible that another class will be added, as well as another teacher, making the school equal to that of Easton, Oxford, and St. Michaels. In this event five scholars will be in the graduating class, and the school may then have its commencement exercises the same as the other schools. This year, however, closing exercises will be held. The total number of pupils in the building today is 184. Classes are increasing all the time. Many of the Trappe children are attending school in Easton. This is due to the old school building and also to the lack of a graduating class.

Tax Rate 40 Cents.

The assessed valuation of the town of Trappe is something over \$200,000. and has a tax rate of 40 cents. Up to two or three years ago the town rate was 25 cents. The town commissioners comprise E.W. Bartlett, president of the board; C.E. Simpson, and M.E. Newnam. The town is peaceful and quiet, a good church center, and much business done on Saturdays.

Community Active.

There is much activity among the residents of the town and adjoining territory. For several years the Farmers' Club of Trappe was functioning, but since the Farm Bureau movement has started here the club has quietly given way to the major organization. Before the club ceased to function, however, a committee was appointed to secure a site for a town hall. There is no suitable place for public gatherings with the exception of Red Men's Hall, which is not equal to the many demands made upon it. The plan of the club was to buy a suitable site, erect a three-story building, and have storerooms on the ground floor, and lodge rooms upstairs, with a large hall on the second floor. One site was chosen, that adjoining the bank. The price for the store and dwelling with the lot was said to be \$3,500, and the club thought this too much. Another site is being sought where the initial cost will not be so high.

At one time the town boasted of a hotel. This was years ago, but the residents will tell you today that this is one of the crying needs. Strangers and traveling men come there on business and they have to travel to Easton for something to eat.

The Public Library.

One thing the town has that many larger places are striving to get and that is a public library. It is located on the main street, and has about 800 volumes. It is open every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon, and volunteers take turns in looking after it. The building belongs to the Dickinson family, who by the way, are responsible for most of the books. As long as the building is used for a library the town is entitled to it without cost, but as soon as the library ceases the building reverts back to the estate."

This article also featured photos of Whitemarsh Church, inside and outside, the bank and the new high school.

Robert Thomas Mullikin (10 June 1833- 1 Nov. 1928) was an authority on Trappe history. He had been a town grocer for decades and its post master for 16 years. He also published Trappe's first newspaper *The Index* in 1873. He built the house (now 3927 Main St.) across the street from the high school. In his old age, Trappe's "grand old man" loved to sit on his front porch and talk about Trappe with passersby. He died at age 95 and his obituary is in the Nov. 9, 1928 issue of the *Star Democrat*.

article copied by James Dawson
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