

A TOUR OF BOLINGBROKE NECK, TRAPPE, MD. IN 1915  
by Wilson M. Tyler  
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“WHERE TALBOT ENDS IN THE GREAT CHOPTANK  
“Chancellor Point-The Very Last Land in Talbot is a Miniature Marsh  
Projecting Boldly into the Blue Tide”

Yellow-visaged autumn, serene, gloriously pigmented with subtle harmonies of red and yellow leaves, pregnant with a beauty pathetically transient, mellow-visaged autumn was hauntingly alluring as the motor left Easton in the distance and seemed to leap forward joyously on a southward course toward Trappe. The day was God-given. Great fleecy clouds rolled in symmetrical spirals against the blue and sent earthwardly occasional cat's-paws to caress the foliage, and, alas, to harbinger the blusters of winter. But the warmth of an autumn afternoon was a specific for any thought of sterile winter, and there was naught but compulsory abandonment to the spirit of the nonce.



“Ingleside” the Dawson home.

Hardly noticeably the car had been going steadily upgrade. The almshouse was off to the right, bleak of exterior, and, like similar institutions the world over, a commentary upon civilization in which none can take pride. Somehow distracting and out of the place in the scheme of autumn this county house in spite of the apparent neatness of the surroundings. It was just the passing thought of the human discard who spent the tag end of life there, and no sooner the thought than it was driven away. For must not this autumn, too be swallowed up in all the glorious autumns which have gone before. The ground was rolling and from the crest of a hill could be seen a large circle of country.

“The highest point in Talbot,” commented one.

Fertile farms lay on either hand and patches of woodland vying with one another in the rich, but subdued, delights of their colors. And then Trappe.

It was Saturday afternoon and Talbot's cozy, home-like community, grown up some three miles from any railroad, a town of considerable history, was lethargic. A group of men had availed the goods boxes in front of one of the stores for the purpose of a political meeting, a horse pawed the road impatiently while his owner sought to make room under the seat of his carriage for Sunday's provisions. The car drew up to a “flatiron” in the street and an old negro, hat in hand, was interrogated for directions.

“Whar you say you want to go?” and the Uncle came “nigh.”

“Just as far south in Trappe District as we can go. How do you get to Chancellor Point?” (From a road map it had been ascertained that this was the name of the southernmost projection of Talbot into the Choptank.)

“Youse keep straight ahead through Baber (Barber) an' down to Ingleside an' turn to the right, sah.”

Inquiries as to the ownership, tenancy, and the like proved futile and the Uncle stood bobbing his head after the manner of the negro as we drove on. Frank Baker's house, comfortable looking in the freshness of its paint and the neatness of its lawn, is one of the sights of the town- the home of an esteemed citizen. Frank isn't the only great man who has come from Trappe, but he certainly occupied the baseball calcium for a spell and they ought to be proud of him at Trappe.

More miles of road through country which undulated gently. Barber, a crossroads, was passed, and we knew from a recollection of the map that we must be approaching the end of the country where the two shorelines of the Choptank converge at Chancellor Point, the axis for a great upward sweep of the river.

For some reason unaccountable, the praises of the Choptank shore have been denied a bard. Acquainted as we were with the beauties of the Miles, the Tred Avon, and their appreciated tributaries, the secrets of the Choptank were a sealed book. This but added zest to a journey somewhat out of the trumbled paths of the motorists. Ah, the trip had developed a new motive-that of exploration. To the spiritual exhilaration of an autumn ride through lower Talbot was added delight at the possibilities of a section as to which we had already come to believe the injustice of popular neglect had been done.

Straight ahead was a gate-one of those gates whose wooden slats grow increasingly tall as they reach the center and are buttressed on either side by square box posts. There the county road stopped dead-stopped dead in a little colony of mail boxes for the rural carriers stop with the public roads. Yet the colony of mail boxes was an interesting subject for an autumn reverie on such a glorious, sunshiny afternoon. These awkwardly shaped galvanized boxes were the symbols- as well as the mediums of communication between the little community who dwelt farthest south in Talbot and the rest of the world. The daily papers, telegrams mailed from the nearest office, letters with their answers, messages which bring joy and sorrow-this little roadside postoffice, geographically the last in Talbot, is the conduit for them all. "Ingleside", with the wooden "G" departed, was the semicircular legend across the gate which brought the public road to an abrupt stop.

"Fine old place," was the comment, but a council of the party resulted in the decision to visit Chancellor Point, the southernmost point in the county first. So the car was headed to the left road and ran smoothly along an overhung country lane. Goldenrod bloomed on the roadside and a turn afforded a momentary glimpse of a creek studded with myriads of sparkling, sun-made gems. We came to a gate which yielding to persuasion. It was the only gate, so the choice was not a difficult mental process.

The lane up to the house was moderately long, and there were trees which did not receive much of our attention. For the house was our cynclosure. For height it is safe to say this dwelling stands alone in Talbot County. The appearance of height is also enhanced by two tall chimneys which rise from the roof and are only some 20 feet apart. "Basement, one; first floor, two," we counted; "second floor, three; third floor, four; and a guess which turned out corrected we counted the odd little structure on the roof between the chimneys for an observatory and called it five. Five floors, or, if you leave off the observatory, four floors. There must be no quarrel with counting the basement. It is a basement, pure and simple, not a cellar, and most of the basement is above ground. Probably servant's quarters, possibly the kitchen, too.

"Is this Chancellor Point?" was the query.

"No sir." replied the grandmother, who had been notified of our arrival by a child playing on the lawn. "This isn't Chancellor's Point. This is Codd's Point. There's Chancellor's Point." She pointed across sparkling Bolingbroke Creek. For the first time a satisfactory view of the creek was possible. Then our mistake was only too evident. The wrong road after all. A little below Ingleside we had elected a turn which took us into Bolingbroke Neck, thinking the other road led off to a farmhouse on one side. The mistake was understood in a moment, but regret had no part in the realization. Here was a discovery indeed. One had but to look at the house to become profoundly interested. Rectangular in shape, each half was a duplicate of the other. On the road side was a two-story porch running the length of the building. On the river side there was another two-story porch running the length of the building. A wide hallway ran through the center of the house. Of course there was nothing to do but take a picture of their fine old house. True enough the porch railing would not pass the critical eye of the architect and perhaps the lines of the building are not modern. But then the house is not modern. However, comparatively a small amount of money would make this into a fine country home-one of the finest country homes in Talbot. Some day that is just what will happen. For the quality of workmanship in the house and the materials used are unexceptional, the water view superb and Cambridge a short motor-boat ride distant.



“Land’s End”, Chancellor Point, Talbot’s Southernmost Point.



“Jamaica Point”, one of the Five Hughlett Homes.

“This house was built by Col. Tom Hughlett,” continued the grandmother. “He built Allonby, over there and Chancellor’s Point house, and Ingleside, and the house at Jamaica Point. All five of them. Would you like to see the inside of the house? I’ll go get my daughter.”

She did, and the wife of the present tenant at Codd’s Point was gracious. So it happened that we were invited into the spacious hall and examined to heart’s content the thick paneled woodwork, and above all the beautiful winding stairway. Its long, graceful flights and continuous passage from the first floor clear up to the observatory was a joy to the eye. It was white finished, save for the mahogany handrail. From the fourth floor to the basement there was a dumbwaiter, probably a nascent fad in Talbot when the house was built. A door from the upstairs gave [sic] on the second story of the porch. The possibility for French windows opening from the bedrooms and quiet evenings spent watching the moon-gems sparkle on Bolingbroke Creek.

But a fortuitous remark made by the grandmother had made its impression. Five houses built by one Hughlett. There was a mistake in the name, but not in the fact. Here is the story of the five houses- the five visited upon this autumn journey into Trappe district.

Col. William Hughlett amassed a considerable fortune and removed from Greensboro, Caroline County, to Talbot. With a far-sightedness which is yet to be fully realized, he purchased a very large tract of

land in the lower part of Trappe District. He left this land principally to his son, William R. Hughlett. The latter built the fine old house at Jamaica Point and settled it upon his son Thomas. William R. Hughlett then built Retreat, which the grandmother had pointed out "over there" and which is now called Allonby. Selling Retreat, William R. Hughlett built a third time and called it Home. This is the house of five stories called Codd's Point. After living there seven years, the builder gave it in trust to his son Richard's wife and children. In the meantime Ingleside had been built by William R. Hughlett's brother, Thomas Hughlett, from whom it was purchased by the former. A. Franz Scheppers purchased Ingleside and for the last time William R. Hughlett built, this time the less pretentious house at Chancellor Point. This was all ascertained later on, after a talk with the present owner of Allonby.



"Creek-Fields", the Borden-Smith Home.

Charmed with the idea of five houses built by one man, there was nothing to do but inquire the way to Allonby. A broad avenue of trees made the approach to the house agreeable. Trees planted in line, varieties carefully selected, and the rows far apart to give the effect of breadth. Another two-story porch—no we shall be more exact and say gallery. This one however, extending entirely around the building. The lower porch was screened by a thick clinging vine.

The host came forward. He is Mr. Bayless of Baltimore, who secured Allonby after the death of John Riker. To Riker is ascribed the avenue of trees and, most to his credit, the landscape gardening which makes the lawn between the river and the house one of the most artistic country house grounds in the county.

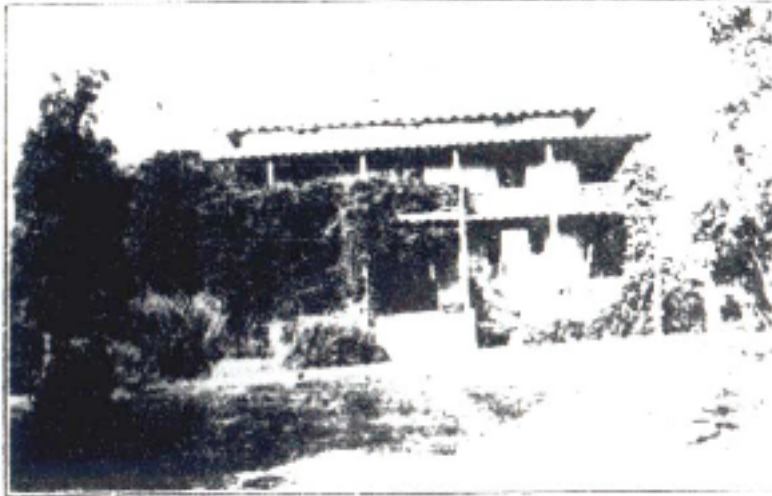
The preferences of this Hughlett with the building penchant are everywhere apparent. The wide, central hallway, the same attractive stairs, the inevitable ceiling medallions, ample fireplaces, heavy paneling—we were ushered into the observatory.

"I call this my \$100,000 picture," said the host with a gesture toward the glass front of the little room.

The host was right.

Allonby is situated upon the point of a small peninsula which divides Bolingbroke Creek into two forks. The lawn grades off into the Creek, which winds to the right for some distance. Directly in front and extending southward on either side of the creek is another peninsula. As it makes its way to an end at the mouth of the creek this peninsula is but a slender and timid strip of land—at one point little more than a sand bar. But on that autumn afternoon, as the sunshine poured upon the Choptank and its tributary, the sand of this strip was a ravishing aureolin—the kind of Sorolla paints with his unequalled vividness of color. Further toward the point which separates creek from another river, the peninsula becomes larger, actually

ending in a thick grove of trees which had taken on the hues of fall. To the left of the grove is the mouth of the creek and beyond lies the broad expanse of the Choptank. Cambridge is clearly visible in the distance. The hospital rises from its bluff. A column of smoke ascends from some tall factory chimney. Suffering. Turmoil. Oh, not to mar the picture. No more than to vibrate gently the chord of melancholy which gives perspective to the mental joys of contemplating nature, to emphasize in a gentle, unobtrusive way the contrast between the quietude of Allonby and the hurly-burly of the city across the river.



“Allonby” in Its Dream Garden.

From Allonby back to the forks where the happy mistake of the journey had been made was but a short run. The objective of Chancellor Point must not be renounced, so southward the car was turned again. A few hundred yards and the road led along the bank of the river, toward the point of the Great Bend. A high bluff has the Choptank in that part and thereby is entitled to distinction in this country of many rivers, but also many flats. Some children were playing along the shore. In the distance the last house in Talbot stood on the last high land-Chancellor Point, for some reason escaped the whim of that capricious river and still unconquered by erosion. A gate had to be opened and shut and we drove up the lane toward the last house in Talbot.

Amaryllis was there, holding a work horse by the halter while the fagged animal drank from a trough on the lawn. The last Amaryllis in Talbot, and we hailed with the request for photography rights. She smiled, Amaryllis, but the whirr of the motor-curses-drowned her voice. A second statement also failed and, taking permission for granted, we left her. Amaryllis would have done finely as a dairy maid in Normandy cap and pink frock, leading home the cows from the pasture. But the picture was not of our composition.

This house on Chancellor Point is built on the bluff overlooking the river. The very last land in Talbot is a miniature marsh which runs for a ways from the foot of the bluff in the river. Architecturally and in point of preservation, the house can not be compared with the other homes of the Hughletts. So we stood and looked in the other direction. The last land in Talbot. The shutter of the kodak fell.

Homeward through the private road on the autumn afternoon which was now drawing to a close, we came to Ingleside, owned, though not built, by this same William R. Hughlett. It is now the attractive home of R. J. Dawson. Beautiful grounds, well kept, surround the house and the Choptank runs its course where the lawn slopes down to the shore. Well toward the head of Bolingbroke Creek is the home of the Rev. Samuel Borden-Smith, looking out upon the winding tributary. Another beautiful home which graces tidewater Talbot. And here for the first time were to be found French windows, opening onto a long porch overlooking the water. From the Borden-Smith's home a tortuous motor boat channel ends at last at the mouth of the creek, opposite Cambridge, and past Allonby and Codd's Point. The house with the French windows is nestled in a clump of trees. It is a home of undeniable charm and individuality. A short run farther and a run to the fine old house at Jamaica Point, now owned by E. B. Hardcastle, but built-his first- by the builder of Allonby, Home and Chancellor Point. Trappe again and the new route back

to Easton. A canoe with two young people on the Peachblossom colony was drifting in the creek and the western sky blazed with a daring sunset. The lights from the window of a bungalow back in the trees twinkled as the car moved on, the end of the day was come.”

Editor’s note: the Hughletts built or owned many houses in the area: Cherry Grove, Jamaica Point, Ingleside, Chancellor’s Point, Cod’s Point, Allonby (or Allemby), Creekfield, and Belmont. The description of Cod’s Point House seems to resemble Belmont, but nothing more is known about it. It is not there now. Allonby, may have also been named Alemby, at the tip of Cod’s Point, was destroyed by fire probably in the 1920s or early ‘30s. It was rumored that the fire was started by a still which was hidden inside the house, in any event it was gone by 1949. Creekfield, the Borden-Smith home, located in the field just above Belmont, was destroyed by fire Sept. 10, 1939. That fire was thought to have been started by an electrical generator, which supplied power in the days before rural electricification.

It was common practice then for a white man to call an older African American man an “Uncle”. Juakin Sorolla (1863-1923) was a Spanish painter. Amaryllis was a shepherdess in Greek mythology. The new route back to Easton was the recently widened and paved Old Trappe Rd, now Rt. 565.

Although unsigned, the style and content of this article matches that used by Wilson M. Tyler in other articles he wrote about county history in the ‘teens and twenties of the last century.