



Old White Marsh Church

White Marsh Parish

TRAPPE

MARYLAND

Mid-way between Easton and Trappe, where stark concrete ribbons of US Highway 50 cut through the green flat farmland of the ancient villiage of Hambleton, a stately cluster of tall trees stands sentry over the isolated remnant of Old White Marsh churchyard.

Weathered ruins of brick walls surviving the gutting fire of January 12, 1897, dominate in solemn dignity the small fence-bound knoll. Faded headstones, some erect, others leaning or fallen, mark the final resting places of good Christian men and women, whose names yet no longer legible in stone still live among the old families of the surrounding country.

Many people visit this place, drawn by old family ties and a fleeting sense of responsibility; attracted by a welcome and refreshing quietness, the mute testimony to the memory of hardy, God-fearing, strong-willed pioneers; realizing here a tangible personal contact with history. Religiously and historically, this small plot is indeed hallowed ground.

Some present day researchers find evidence of the original building having been erected as early as 1662. Others refer to the Land Records of Talbot County and suggest 1665 a more reliable date. Hostile Indians in the area would have discouraged establishment of settlements prior to a treaty in 1650. Records of the Court of Talbot County for June 21, 1687, state that one William Dickinson was appointed to repair the road "from Cooley's gate to the Church at White Marsh", indicating existence of the church at that time. Other records reveal that Joseph Leech was rector of White Marsh in 1689 and bear evidence that the church was well established by then. It is claimed that this is the oldest church on Maryland's Eastern Shore in which public worship was conducted in recent times.

Existing records reveal White Marsh Church erected and serving the community as a place of worship and guidance nearly thirty years before the Act of 1692 which first divided the Province of Maryland into thirty parishes. The old church, located approximately center of the area designated "St. Peter's Parish", was the only church in this parish. It was not until a century later that Christ Church was built in Easton. Due to shift of the county seat to Easton, as well as for population and marketing displacement, Christ Church became the main church of St. Peter's Parish. The Parish was bounded by the Tred Avon and Choptank Rivers and a line from Tuckahoe Creek on the Choptank to the Tred Avon.

"St. Peter's Church" and "White Marsh Church" seem to have been used interchangeably by vestry and members for some time. Origin of the name White Marsh is conjecturable, it being suggested that certain white flowers in adjacent marshy areas, as noted these days along the Eastern Shore, might have supplied the inspiration.

An excerpt from the June 20, 1693, County Court Records reads: "The Court proceeds to lay out the parishes of this County, as also to nominate and appoint the vestry for the several and respective parishes". Appointed to St. Peter's vestry: Thomas Bowdle, George Robins, Nicholas Lowe, Samuel Abbott, Thomas Robins and Thomas Martin. (Hampden, "Oldest house in the County", is said to have been built in 1664 by Thomas Martin. It is on Island Creek Neck near the village of Trappe).

From the record of "Births, Marriages and Deaths, St. Peter's Parish", some pertinent information is obtained concerning statistics of the early years. There is recorded the birth of William Riche on July 9, 1681, however the

name of the officiant is not listed. Also: "Thomas Delahay, sonne of Thomas Delahay and Eve his wife, was borne ye 23rd Day of October Ano Domi 1689 and christened, pr. Rev. Joseph Leech". Mr. Leech's name is connected with similar official acts during the years along to 1697.

Existing records would indicate other men of the clergy serving White Marsh to be: The Rev. John Clayland who ministered also at St. Michaels, Wye House and other places in the County; The Rev. Benjamin Nobbs who died in 1703; Richard Sewell and John Lillingston.

The Rev. William Glen, sent out by Bishop of London, was received as rector on July 18, 1708. The same year "the vestry bought of Mr. Robert Grundy 185 acres of land situated and lying near St. Peter's Church called and known by the name of Tranquility to be and remain a certain Glibb to the minister of St. Peter's Parish forever for the sume of 16,000 pounds of tobacco", also 50 (Grosslands) and 34 acres (Partnership). Mr. Glen was married the next year and died in 1713.

March 7, 1709, the vestry authorized the making of ten new pews and repairing several old ones, the building of a new pulpit and repairing the windows and chancel doors, and ordered the same paid for to the amount of 5,250 pounds of tobacco. May 2, 1710, John Bullen became the registrar of the parish and served until May 15, 1731. (The silver chalice used today at regular communion services in White Marsh Parish bear the initials J. B. An old mahogany alms box credited to this early period is preserved by one of the parishoners. It is about six or eight inches square, covered by a top with a hole in the center. It has a

long handle which served the two-fold purpose of passing the box during the offering, and of prodding any sleeping members of the congregation).

Rev. Daniel Maynadier was rector from 1714 to 1746. In 1724 he wrote: "I was removed to this parish I now possess in the year 1714 in May. I was licensed by the then Henry, Bishop of London. My parish is 29 miles long and 14 miles broad; there are 344 families in it. There are several negroes in my parish but no Indians. I hold Divine service on Sundays and holidays; on the Lord's Day I have a large Congregation, on holidays very small. I have a Glebe and a dwelling house upon it and I occupy it myself". The Parish Record has the following entry: "The Rev'd Dan'l Maynadier, rector of St. Peter's Parish, was married to Mrs. Hanna Parrott (nee Haskins) on the 12th day of January Ano. Domi 1720". Another source refers to his marrying Hanna Martin, daughter of the original vestryman.

During April, 1722, 150,000 bricks at the rate of 200 pounds of tobacco were ordered, the vestry having decided upon a new building 56 feet long and 20 feet wide. A year later 100,000 bricks were ordered instead of the original number. In February, 1724, the vestry decided that the deminsions should be 56 by 32 feet; later in May decided upon 50 by 28 feet. In January, 1726, arrangements were made to employ the services of Matthew Kerby to build the new church at the west end of the old building. As payment, he was to receive 45,000 pounds of tobacco and 20 pairs of shoes. In May subscriptions were solicited for the new building, "The old church being much decayed and unfit for Divine service".

In 1729 a contract was let for the completion of the chancel. In 1732 a paling fence, 200' by 130' was built and a Mr. Dulaney was asked to order 200' of glass from London. Communion silver was ordered in 1736 but this and other items did not arrive from Kingston until two years later.

Dr. Maynadier died in 1745 and was buried under the chancel of the church which he had served for 30 years. In 1745, Rev. Dr. Thomas Bacon, who had come to Maryland as Chaplain to Lord Baltimore, succeeded Dr. Maynadier. He established a Charity Working School in 1750 where the students were known as Baltimore Boys. This was the Western part of the old Alms House on the Oxford Road to the West of White Marsh.

In July, 1746, the vestry decided to enlarge the building by adding 36 square feet, and ordered 50,000 bricks set at a size 9"x4"x2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Sometime between 1746 and 1751 this addition was completed and nearly doubled the seating capacity. (Existing ruins measure 36' x 39'. It has not been determined if this be the original or the addition).

Robert Morris, Sr., resident agent for the Liverpool firm of Foster, Cunliffe and Sons, was a prominent member of Old White Marsh for many years. His untimely death is described by a business associate. A ship had arrived from Liverpool and, as was customary, Mr. Morris went on board. On his return to shore he was accompanied by the captain of the ship. This officer, before disembarking had left orders for the firing of a salute, the signal for which he was to give by putting his finger to his nose. Soon after leaving the ship, a fly alighted upon the captain's nose and he brushed

it away with his hand. On board this was mistaken for the signal to fire. The wad from one of the guns struck Mr. Morris in the arm. The infection from this wound resulted in his premature death. This was in 1750. The grave, to the West of the old church building, is well preserved, the Daughters of the American Revolution some years ago having replaced the stone which marks this spot.

From 1789 to 1856, the center of activity of St. Peter's Parish was in Christ Church, Easton. An item in 1790 states: "The vestry determined that the clergyman to be appointed shall preach at White Marsh and at the Court House on alternate Sundays". In October 1791 the vestry decided to dispose of the glebe lands and in December 1816 they sold 149 acres to Richard Sherwood.

Bishop Claggett, first Bishop of Maryland, officiated at confirmation at White Marsh on Trinity Sunday, 1793. At this time he ordained Walter Addison of Prince George, Deacon; and John White of Worcester County and Owne Fitzgerald Magrath, Priests. A list of clergy known to have served the old church reads: Thomas Thornton, 1761-1762; John Barclay, 1762; John Bowie, 1780; T. Gates, 1788; James Conner, 1790; Owen F. Magrath, 1792-1796; Joseph Jackson, 1796-1811; Noble Parmer, as a lay reader, 1811-1812; Thomas Bayne, 1813-1836; John Wiley, 1836-1837; H. M. Mason 1837-1868.

In 1834 a list of pew holders at White Marsh included: Nicholas Goldsborough, Anna Maria Tilghman, Richard Trippe, Edward Martin, Samuel Stevens, Rev. Thomas Bayne, Theodore Lowkerman, Thomas Worrall, Thomas Martin, Harriett Martin, Thomas Coward, James Lloyd Chamberlaine, Robert Delahay, Josiah Rhodes,

Thomas Baker, Samuel T. Kennard, Martin Goldsborough, William R. Trippe, Joseph Martin, Mariah Goldsborough, Nicholas Martin, Nicholas Thomas, Mary Clare Martin, Robert Henry Rhodes and Mrs. Chaplin.

On May 12, 1856, the Diocesan Convention of Maryland, upon the petition of persons living in the town of Trappe, consented to a division of St. Peter's Parish south of a line from the waters of Trippe's Creek to the Choptank River. The Trappe Committee was composed of Messrs. David Kerr, Jr., Alexander Matthews and James Lloyd Chamberlaine. From 1858, when the new church building was completed at Trappe, until January, 1897, when the old building caught fire and was completely destroyed, there were two church buildings in White Marsh Parish. Some services have been held from time to time over the years on the site of the old ruins.

During the summer of 1963, the vestry of White Marsh Parish instigated action, collecting over \$800 for partial preservation of the walls, clearing the grounds, and erecting a split rail fence around the existing property. The Garden Club of Talbot County made possible the purchase of 10,000 bricks from the old Alms House, which are similar to those used in the old church, for possible restoration of the church building. The vestry has authorized formation of a committee to seek ways and means of maintenance and to consider plans for perpetual care, restoration and future development.

The illustrations on the inside of the back cover show the interior of the old church building facing the door with the balcony across that end of the building. The other view is of the exterior of the old church some time before the fire.

Legend

One day in the 1730's, Rev. Dan'l Maynadier's wife became deathly ill. According to her wish she was buried at White Marsh with a valuable ring on her finger. Two strangers noticed the ring and returned after dark, broke open the grave and removed the lid of the coffin. The ring could not be removed so they attempted to cut it off the finger. The shock was such as to revive Mrs. Maynadier who cried out and sat up in the coffin. The ghouls fled. In spite of her grave condition, she gathered up her shroud and walked to the rectory about a mile distant. Her husband answered her knock at the door. Hannah Maynadier is said to have lived for many years afterwards and to have born several children.

There is a story about a duel fought about a mile from White Marsh. "The shot. . . and Andrew Jackson, afterward president of the United States, sprang upon his horse and in a cloud of dust hastened to take a boat at Oxford. With unmarked grave, the victim rests in the cemetery of old White Marsh".

Another legend concerns a parishoner of White Marsh, Gabriel Sales by name. On his death-bed this worthy gentleman made the request that he be laid to rest in a coffin from which both ends had been removed and that a jug of good whiskey be placed inside the coffin. The explanation for this request being that if by any chance Satan should come in one end of the coffin to claim his soul, Gabriel would have a chance to escape through the other end while the Devil stopped to drink the whiskey.

