

GRUBIN NECK, TRAPPE, MD.  
by Wilson M. Tyler  
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"HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF GRUBIN NECK  
An Autumn Afternoon Spent in this Favored Section of Talbot Is One  
That Will Linger Long in the Memory

Last week a touring party of five intelligent and knowledge-seeking persons motored to Talbot County from Pennsylvania. They had heard so much of this favored section that curiosity got the better of them. They wanted to see for themselves. They were not home seekers, not prospecting for those who might be. Simply radiant with joy at being in the old Colonial State, and especially in this particular part of it.

But a tinge of disappointment was seen to fringe the expectation of the tourists when was asked the question, But where are your shores, we have seen nothing of them all the way down? The sky of disappointment was cleared by production of the map. Roads are built to avoid, as much as possible, the necessity for expensive bridges. Homes are built, or were built, in early days, to enjoy water communication. Roads, therefore, avoided the ragged contour of the shore line, while the home-builder sought that very environment, and was willing to work his way out to the main road by such plan as he could best invent. Sometimes the distance was great, and a wooded tract intervened. Occasionally it was short, but usually the dwelling was too remote to be seen from the road. Such a country as this may easily be a disappointment to the party who depends entirely upon what he sees from the public highway.

Consult any of the maps which show the tide water sections of Talbot county, and one will understand how its Necks are approachable by one main road, usually through which the tourist must enter and emerge. For that reason maps are herewith provided at no small expanse, that the reader may more fully enjoy what he reads, and more concretely become en rapport with a country claimed by geographers to be the best watered one on the face of the globe.

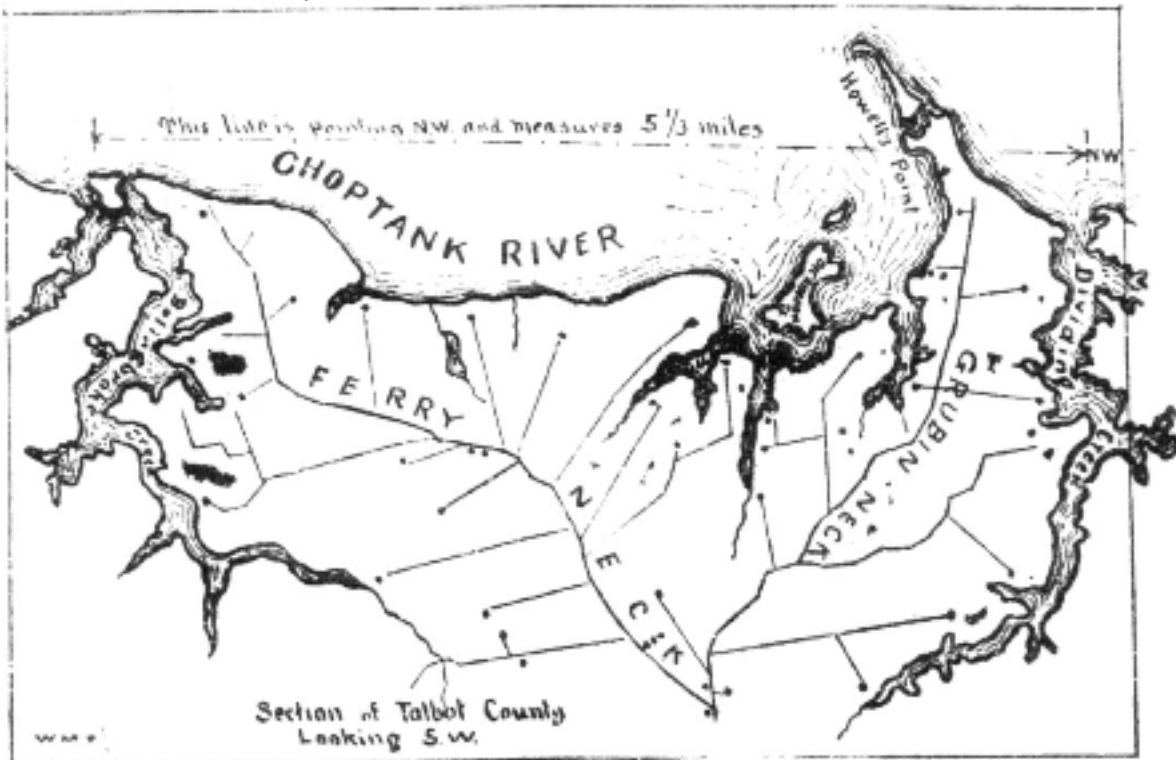
Grubin Neck is more often called Little Neck. It is of the rose leaf pattern, with a mid-rib road and apex at Howell's Point. It is entered by bearing to the right after passing through the village of Trappe. Here is seen a beautifully wooded road, well made and drained, with neither hill nor bridge. If a rivulet dares to cross it, the same is passed unobserved. It is three miles from base to apex. Side roads lead off to the right and left, as one proceeds, and with slight exception these offer no enticement at the beginning for one in attempt the devious single track through the wood. In some places one would think the settlers axe had not ravished ungrooved nature. The darkness of forest primeval with dense underbrush is not wanting. Large timber, though comparatively rare, can still be seen. No saw-mill camps disclose the insatiable lust for denuding the woodlands in Grubin Neck. Even the axeman's echo did not descend when these precincts were recently visited. Oak and gum stood beside the wood-maple in autumn attire, while the whispering pine brandished its long-leafed brush in verdant grandeur.

First lateral road to the right, going straight for nearly a mile and a-half, one approaches the abode of Mr. Harvey Slaughter, with grounds sloping to the water near the head of Dividing Creek, also known as Trappe River. Across the river is Trappe landing with a busy canning plant in evidence. This homestead was once part of the estate of Governor Samuel Stevens of Maryland, whose office, as such, terminated in 1825. Like many other places along the water courses dating back a hundred years or more, there is an atmosphere of retirement from the dizzy onrush of modern life, and a let-me-alone halo.

"Beachwood" is reached by a serpentine woods-road. It well repays the effort to reach it, if one does not meet a loaded team which can ill afford to give much of the ditch-bordered highway. On emerging from the wood, a pretentious farm and buildings is disclosed, tenanted by Thomas H. Salisbury, and owned by Charles E. Simpson, of Trappe, and before him by Judge Patterson of Cambridge. The building commands a river view of considerable extent while the shaded lawn lends added charm. The out-buildings are generous for a stone's throw from the barn, may be seen the "monument" to a departed oak tree, the size of which "grows with unusual dimensions, for the stump still stands as high as the first lap, revealing the broken or cut off ends of giant limbs.

The next place, adjoining on the river, is the historic "Compton" a relic of by-gone dignity. It is owned by Mr. Nelson Fooks of Preston and tenanted by Mr. Harry Mears. The walls of the residence are as substantial as when Governor Stevens lived there a hundred years ago, except where lightning's tongue

affectionately licked a corner from the kitchen, the ravages of which are plainly visible. It would seem a desecration to despoil this old building by modern rehabilitation, badly as it needs it for living purposes. Here it was that Governor Stevens lavishly entertained, and from Compton he mounted his mare which "had never been struck with a whip or spur" and rode all the way around the head of Chesapeake bay to Baltimore to welcome La Fayette.



"Compton" Reflects Its Venerable Age.

Again reaching the main road and keeping to the right, one soon comes to a velvety lateral partly carpeted with pine needles, leading to "Boston." Just why the "Hub" should be so honored is not made clear. It would be a matter of interest if the origin of the names of many of the county's antiques could be

ascertained. This old residence antedates, it is said, even "Otwell" and was long in the Goldsborough family where the family grave-yard is peopled with that name. Some seventy years ago, Mrs. William Bond Martin bought Boston" from Martha Goldsborough since which time it has remained in the family, now being owned by the grand-daughter, Miss Nettie Martin of Trappe, and tenanted by the family of George Watts. The old building suffered a harmless siege at the beginning of the Civil War when it was suspected of being seditious by the Yankee soldiers and was searched from cellar to garret, much to the discomfiture of the residents, and greatly to their relief of mind when the soldiers withdrew, giving the place a clean bill of patriotic health. It might be added, however, "Boston" did not "sympathize" with the assailants proclaimed at the "Hub" at that time, though the searching party may have interpreted it as belonging to the Bostonian spirit in the North.

Mr. W.C. Chaplain, who makes it clear he is not the "Charlie" branch has very recently taken over that beautiful and highly improved property known as Howell's Point, lately vacated by Mr. Bowdle Highley, and which was modernized by Mr. William Bryan of Philadelphia, a few years ago. Mr. Chaplain and family came from Sewickley, Pennsylvania, because Talbot is a nice place to come in, that's all. Except for the fact that this section of the Neck has already enjoyed copious publicity, this mention would not be so brief. The water view here is uneclipsed with the harbor of Cambridge four miles distant.

Another beautifully situated home on the same outlook is that owned by Mr. Denny Marshall of Trappe. Like some of the other places it enjoys its "history." All that portion of land is synonymous with the days when Capt. William H. Valliant was the honored landlord. Capt. Valliant was the last Collector of the Port of Oxford, which office was abolished in 1866. It can be surmised he must have made many excursions up the Choptank from his Oxford office to his home, rather than to take the road around. But that was before the days of motor propelled boats and he may have preferred horses and muddy roads to whimsical winds and sails.

Without exception, it is safe to say that most popular place in Grubin Neck during the past fifty years is that known as "Crosiadore," the late home of Mr. Overton Dickinson, now in the possession of his heirs, Mr. and Mrs. Edward W. Hughlett, who aptly keep up the ancestral civilities. "Crosiadore," (croix d' or, - cross of gold) must have won its cognomen from some ancestor of the Dickinsons who figured in the Crusades. In this old mansion was born John Dickinson, Governor of Pennsylvania, and founder of Dickinson College. A hundred reminiscences, worthy of repetition, could be here narrated, but that has already been done by real historians. It is only worthily mentioned to show the reader what, among other things, makes Grubin Neck something more than a strip of land bordered by two estuaries of the bay, Lastly as one emerges from the Neck, is passed "The Willows" owned by Mr. A. L. Leonard of Trappe facing the head waters of the inlet known as Holmes Creek.

If the reader has accompanied the writer in his introduction to these beautiful homes and their tenants, and has appreciated with him some of the "atmosphere" that surrounds them, the effort is repaid. Our next trip will be into Ferry Neck."

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