

LANDING NECK, TRAPPE, MD.
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“LANDING NECK HAS 18 SQUARE MILES
Old “Wright’s Mill” And Its Surrounding Form a Wonderfully Picturesque
Setting-- More Miles of Roads Traverse The Neck

Landing Neck borders the Choptank River as the most northern section of Trappe District. Very roughly speaking it is [several words unreadable] twice as [several words unreadable] containing about eighteen square miles. That is, a three by six mile strip of farming country. Its southern boundary is Miles Creek, its northern limits the head branch of Peachblossom Creek, its eastern boundary the Choptank and the western boundary line uncertain. The last line may go as far toward the west as the direct road from Easton to Trappe or to the Manadier road running south to “Wright’s” mill.

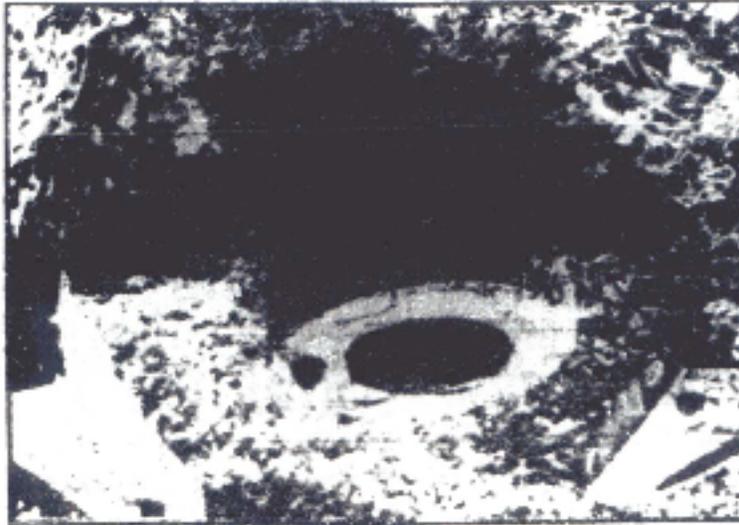
The name “Neck” is misleading, though for generations it has been called such, and now it is too late to change the nomenclature. A neck of land is a bottled up sort of territory with usually one road leading into it out of which one must emerge. The six Necks on the western and southern side of Trappe District are properly named, but Landing Neck presents no such conformity. It can be entered by road from various points on three sides not adjacent to the river. Once in, there are roads and lanes, some inviting and well attended to, others less agreeable. The main highway, and a beautiful road it is, leads from Barber’s corner to Bruceville.

Here is a section of Talbot County to delight the person of rural taste, the person who loves farming for what he can get from the soil, who loves stock and poultry and loves to hear the cock crow in the morn, telling him it is time to get ready with his milking pail and time to find the anticipating residents of the barn yard. Here it is, at this November season, that long shocks of corn stand in the fields, that piles of splendid ears of corn are being built up by the huskers, that wheat and alfalfa are green as spring time. Here it is that the land is undulating, rolling sufficiently for drainage, with here and there a pebbly brook, with vistas of timber of young growth and rare, but not of obsolete, century old monarchs of the forest.

Here it is that most of the farms are small, that steady yeomen find life worth living, for [with] robust health, they can be independent of charity. Ask them if farming pays, and the answer comes back somewhat in this wise: It pays to stay home when you can’t make money enough to get away; remaining at home keeps the work going, and keeps the fires burning, and keeps the children fed; hired labor is almost prohibitive except on short time when a loss of crop would be otherwise; the farm is small and with what family labor is available, a comfortable stay-at-home living is made. The cry of the “dirt farmer” is the same everywhere, Landing Neck is no exception. They are the farmers who are compelled to make their living out of the dirt itself. When they have good crops, the prices are low in the selling, and when the crop is a failure, there is nothing to sell. Labor goes on. The land is “kind” and poultry and pigs flourish. No conspicuous orchards are seen, but enough fruit for home needs abounds.

Of the fifty or more homesteaders in Landing Neck only a few own the places on which they reside. In the main, these present a thrifty appearance. The houses are comfortable and neat. Unpainted houses are rare. The entrance ways are inviting. The out-buildings correspond. Silos are not so much in evidence as in some other sections. Of three brick houses noted, one was entirely vacant, though its commanding situation speaks of halcyon days long gone. This house is on the farm belonging to I. Davis Kirby of Trappe.

Much of the land in Landing Neck is tenanted. This does not detract from its appearance. In fact, the most valuable farms of the section are owned by non-residents thereon. Mr. E. B. Hardcastle, of Easton, owns and controls large acreage, every foot of which spells the word “prosperous.” The “landing” on the river, known as “Lloyd’s Landing”, is on or adjacent to the Hardcastle lands. It is this landing which gives the name to the Neck. Like other river wharves, it is of little use in these latter days. But to return to those places [which] are not tenanted outside the ownership: Prosperity is also conspicuous with them, among whom are Levin Schwanninger, George Stevens, John Martin, “Billy” Harrison, William Marvel, Paul Garrett, Graham Price, Charles Kemp and Frank Parrott. The Ben Taylor brick mansion near White Marsh is sturdy and imposing. It lends ancestral color to a once charming abode. It is now owned by Raymond Marvel.



Old Lloyds Springs

The water courses are practically divided by the best constructed highway in the neck, above mentioned; those streams to the east flowing toward the Choptank and those to the west flowing toward and into Miles Creek. Beginning at Manadier cross roads the trough of the Neck commences which leads the waters into Miles Creek, where, within two miles, they gathered in to a pretty little lake, made artificial by the erection of a dam. Here is seen the foundation of what was once Barrett's mill, ancestor of the owner of the mill in Easton by the same name. It is a "has been" of course, but fifty years ago it was fragrant with the memories of a long line of worthies who came as Quakers in the peaceful asylum of the Calverts, in Maryland. Here it was the [word unreadable] purred to the grinding of wheat and corn, where an honest toil was taken for honest service. The road from the Neck into the mill-site at the present time- is not so delectable as to be recommended. From the other side, turning from the the aforesaid lake passes through Hambleton toward Trappe the road is more hospitable.

The waters the aforesaid mentioned lake containing a wandering mile almost to the present Valliant lake. This little fortuitous body of fresh water lends an enchantment all its own. The shore lines are high and well wooded. Autumnal foliage is reflected in its mirror. Water dock leaves besprinkle the surface in spots. The stake of the fishing net marks where the fish run. This is nothing less than Wright's old mill pond. It is now owned by William H. Valliant of Belleview, who has stocked it with carp, other fish are caught there including pike, mullet, perch and cat. Mr. Valliant also, in the upper pond, attempted to establish gold fish, but with doubtful success. Here was the mill and home of the well-remembered William P. Wright. The brick house is the one mentioned above as vacant. It is worthy of a worthy occupant.

Nestled at the foot of the ravine surrounded by wooded hill, is the old mill. If there is a more picturesque spot of its kind in all America it would take some time to find it. Framed on solid brick wall of early made bricks. The age of the mill is not established, but perhaps could easily be found in the records. Its hewn timbers indicate age, a set of burrs cast aside, worn out, are the predecessors of very, very old ones still in use; and what would seem the third generation of stones back from the present, is one guarding the corner of the mill from damage. This stone protecting the mill's corner on the outside was worn so thin that one hole for the lifting pin had to be drilled nearer the edge. It is a sort of conglomerate with geological construction differing from the other stones. Its principal ingredient is a tiny pebble embedded in adamantine rock. Imagine a fruit cake with flinty pebbles in the currents and raisins, and an idea of this stone can be formed.

This may not be the mill spoken of "When you and I were young, Maggie," but it is a good counterpart. It is not always still, either. While its old breast-wheel has been replaced by a modern turbine, the timbers creak, the huge stones revolve, the grist comes out as in ye olden time, clean and fragrant. Mr. W. J. Murray is the miller. He has milled all his life. In his younger days he knew Anthony's mill in Caroline County long since vanished, and the pond and mill race now under cultivation. Later he knew the Wye

Mills, and still later George Wilson's mill here in Easton where, for several years, he turned out grist. Mr. Murray does what very few mills are doing, namely turns out a whole wheat product which he sells in Easton and elsewhere. This is possible because of the absence of bolting machinery which the modern mill must have for the "refined" product. Then, what would a picturesque mill in Landing Neck be without a piggery. Here is the real thing in the way of a pig, and it is pure bred, too. Another thing is the strutting turkey gobbler, good enough to set off a Thanksgiving celebration. It is no wonder Mr. Murray would prefer to live in the heart of nature, unadorned, than to dwell at Fifth Avenue. He says so. Here is where the mill story was intended to end-but the "toll-dish" a wooden measure, holding a gallon, has been inscribed with "1863 C. Evans" and this belongs to a story quite outside of Landing Neck.

Leaving the southern point of the Neck, where the mill is, and going to the extreme limit of the Choptank, is the site of the ancient Talbot town of "Dover". Nothing to see. Merely a memory and a place to point to. Dover road takes its name because the town once existed there. Other places in Talbot, once familiar, have vanished. Fifty years ago several houses were grouped under the name of Jerreltown, now wheat fields cover the removed bricks and filled cellars-perhaps only potato cellars.

On one of the Hardcastle tracts in the upper section is the famous "Lloyd's Springs." Famous through romance and memory, but not famous in a world-wide sense. If this spring had been accessible to the world at large, if it had been on a well trod highway where visitors could throng, and a hotel built, there is no telling how famous it might have become. At present not one in a hundred Talbot countians know how to find it or have seen it. Its waters are the same, but the approach has changed, the timber has been reduced in the glen and an unromantic environment surrounds it. Still it is worth visiting for the sake of "auld lang syne." Going back thirty years, the late Dr. Edward M. Hardcastle then wrote of it, in Land of Legendary Lore: "Traversing the land, which here is undulating, is a deep ravine, through which runs a little stream, the outlet of an abundant and constantly flowing spring of deliciously cool chaybeate water. Surrounding the spring for a wide area is a handsome grove of beeches, under whose spreading branches, generations for years past have trod the mazy dance.

'When the merry bells ring round
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth and many a maid
Dancing in the chequered shade'

"Upon the trunks of those smooth bark beeches, that still stand as libraries in the wood, may be read the names of hundreds of the happy youths who, from sentimental fancy, have carved their own and their sweetheart's names upon those monarchs of the forest, that stand like ghosts revealing the merry hearts that have gathered in their midst. Upon the hillside is the famous wild grape-vine, so long serving its term as natural swing for the boys and girls. The fountain of Arethusa or the Idaean groves were no more cherished by the rustic nymphs and fawns than were these natural beauties by the natives of this Eastern Shore, who (though far removed, they may be from its genial presence) still softly sigh-this my own, my native land."

Landing Neck has a past, a present and a future. Its fertile fields have not seen their best days. Modern machinery and schooled ideas are making inroads on the customs of these days when labor was easily hired, where the landed owner could easily leave his home in his chaise and span, and with liveried footman perched over the rear wheels to open the gates. The kaleidoscope of life has turned. The present picture is different."

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