

WINDY HILL AND BRUCEVILLE, NEAR TRAPPE, MD.
from the Easton Star Democrat April 23, 1927

“WINDY HILL AND BRUCEVILLE A
FINE SECTION OF OLD TALBOT

Has Been Transformed From Dense Forests Of A Few Years
Ago To Prolific Farming Country- Plenty Of Game
Found There Until Recently

Talbot County, in the memory of many now living, was bountifully supplied with wild game of a great variety. Parts of the county were covered with a thicket of woods that would be hard for the present man to penetrate. Indeed, some sections of Trappe district, now known as Bruceville and Windy Hill were considered a suitable hiding place for fugitives from justice on account of the heavy growth of ivy and the dense woodland.

In the memory of many citizens now living the time can be recalled when it was said that let a man commit some crime in the county and if he got across Miles Creek bridge he would be sure of freedom for some time to come. The woods were vast the thickets almost impassable, and here game abounded in profusion. And even today this section produces more muskrats, more otters, and many more squirrels and partridges than any other section of Talbot.

The ravages of time and the hand of civilization and progress have laid to waste this vast amount of timber. There was a time not so long ago that all along the banks of Miles Creek thousands of cords of wood were cut and scowed out of the creek to the Choptank, where it was carried to all parts. But now the place has been cleared to the present site of Bruceville vast expanses of woodland were only recently cleared.

Old Route To Easton

Men are living today who recall the time when to come to Easton they were forced to go to Bambury Church or school and there turn toward Wright's mill and on to Easton. This was the only outlet, and the present road running to Easton was a forest. In winter time the roads were so banked up with snow that the residents were compelled to remain at home, and only when spring opened were they able to get in touch with the rest of the world.

Even though the woods have been cleared and now as one rides along the roads wheat fields are seen on either side, there is a rustic appearance about the section that is fascinating. Somehow the fields and the wooded background look slightly different to other sections. The hand of time possibly has not modernized quite as much as in other sections...

One Community

Bruceville and Windy Hill are not more than a mile distant, and the entire community is considered as one. One school house, one church, one store serve all residents of this section. The M. E. Church South is located at Bruceville, and in the last few years a branch of the Holiness church has been started at Windy Hill, the pastor at Trappe serving these people.

The beautiful Choptank river touches at Windy Hill, and at one time this was a great shipping place. Three lines of steamers stopped at the wharves here, taking freight and passengers to Baltimore. The old Wheeler line, the Choptank line and the Maryland Steamboat Company made a strong fight for patronage, and there are people living to day who frequently went to Baltimore without even paying the fare. In those days the purser didn't seem to care whether he got the fares or not as long as the people patronized the boat. Today one boat a week stops at Windy Hill.

Methodist Church Started

Talbot Methodists recall the Rev. Mr. Grubb and his enthusiastic pastorate in this county. It was

while he was preaching in Talbot that the first M. E. Church was established at Bruceville. This was about forty-two years ago, and the place was like a wilderness. Indeed, the church was built in the woods and woods was on every hand. Fifty-two years ago the road was extended past Bruceville in the opposite direction. Michael Connolly, of Easton, cut the road through. He was a well known man half a century or more ago.

Two or three years later the road was cut through to Miles Creek, and for many years the people from the creek to Trappe were forced to travel to Easton by way of Wright's Mill. In later years, and in the memory of many people now living, the present road was cut through from Miles Creek Bridge to Easton. And the road today is in excellent condition. It is comfortable to ride on, has just enough turns and winds to make it picturesque, and the farm lands bordering on it are the equal of any in the county.

Recollections Of An Old Resident

Jessie L. Cox... has been a resident of Bruceville for about forty-two years... He moved to Bruceville, he says on account of the school. Being a father of twelve children he was greatly concerned about their education, and desired to live close to a school. For this reason he moved from the lower sections of the district to Bruceville, and his children got all the education offered in the country school while the father worked at farming and trapping to keep the home fires burning.

And Mr. Cox can relate some thrilling experiences in the marshes about the Choptank. He has trapped more otters than any man in the county. During his abode at Bruceville he has bagged twenty-two of these very cunning animals. His traps are marvelous for catching these animals, requiring two hundred pounds pressure to set them. While small in statue, he is capable of setting these double spring strong traps with ease...

But the trapping business is a part of Mr. Cox's existence. He delights to relate his many experiences in traversing the thickets of Bruceville in years gone by when the ivy was so thick that the tenderfoot found it impossible to make any progress. But Mr. Cox hunted and trapped and in the spring would carry five hundred or more muskrat hides to Baltimore and sell them for 15 cents each...

Great Muskrat Ground

No greater muskrat grounds are to be found than in this section of the county. The vast marshes are filled with these animals, and last year a young man bought a small piece of marsh land and in a couple of months trapped about five hundred. He averaged about \$2 each for the hides, netting him more money than a similar acreage planted in wheat or corn.

William Walker, of Trappe, close to the century mark says his father built the first house at Windy Hill. He has spent the greater part of his life in Trappe district. Fishing was followed by his father, when the seines were hauled practically to his back door and the fish dumped on the kitchen floor. In those days the houses did not have wooden floors to any great extent. Hard clay floors were common in the kitchens. White perch were caught, rock were plentiful, and shad in season.

The first house was between the two wharves, and deep water ran close to the shore, so that the nets were set not very far from the house. Mr. Walker says the name Windy Hill must have been derived from the rise near the water's edge, and which the wind from the northwest blew very strong from the water.

Resident Opposes British At Royal Oak

Mr. Walker's father saw service at Royal Oak the time the British opened fire on the village. He left his family to protect the colonists, and at the close of the attack returned to Windy Hill. There was a large hole in the ground which even today has created no little interest. Mr. Walker stated that in his boyhood days it was possible to buy whiskey most any place. A colored man had a deep hole dug in the top of the rise at Windy Hill, and here he stored five or six barrels of whiskey which he bootlegged. He sold his liquor without paying the government tax, and did a thriving business. This hole is still to be seen today Griffith Bros. recently purchased the tract of timber, and will start cutting lumber soon as the saw mill can be stationed.

In the early days of Mr. Walker he says he went out in the morning and brought in no less than thirty rabbits home. Rabbit runs were set everywhere, and these animals were very plentiful. Even partridges were trapped alive and crates of them shipped to Baltimore. Very little was realized from these birds in those days. Whole coveys were trapped in no time.

Huckleberries were so thick that they were found everywhere. And they can be found in profusion even today. Wild animals of different kinds were formerly seen but since the woodland has been cleared these large animals have been killed or driven off.

Known Formerly As Scrappletown

In early times Bruceville was known as Scrappletown. It has had a number of names, but no one seems to know how it got its present one. One man stated that years ago it was called Bruceville and application was made for a post office. Word was received that another Bruceville in Maryland prevented the place getting a postal service.

Capt. A. Bryan, who for many years was on the steamer Minnie Wheeler, has retired from the water service and has a place in this section. In fact, his house is in plain view of the Miles Creek bridge where the fatal accident happened last Saturday night. The Captain stated that the cars rumble over this structure at night so fast that it sounds like thunder. He is looking for more accidents at this point due to the fast driving. The Captain recalls his days on the Chesapeake, and says the first boat to make regular trips from Windy Hill to Baltimore was the Stepping Stone...

In modern times the business interests gained a foothold in this section. Not so many years ago four canning houses were in full blast during the season. They were operated to the fullest capacity, while today only one is left and this is owned by the Federalsburg firm and is run only part time. At Bruceville the present canning house employs white labor for the greater part, and the people living there find steady employment while the factory is running. About 10,000 cases were packed at one time by the factory, and it was not uncommon to see 4,000 or 5,000 baskets of tomatoes waiting to be canned.

There were three stores at Bruceville at one time, all doing a good business. There was also one at Windy Hill. Today there is but one store left and this one at Bruceville. Windy Hill has produced a baseball player who has been in various parts of the country. Pitcher Hammer is the man. He is now south with one of the teams of a southern league. Formerly he at one time was with an Eastern Shore team.

Large Orchards Here

Another modern industry is the large fruit orchard of Walker and Turner. This is a thriving industry and occupies the original Ross estate. Peaches by the ton are shipped in season to all parts of the world from this farm, and many derive a livelihood picking and sorting and packing fruit.

The people are energetic and considerate, though hard working people and show the marks of their labor. The school has two very able teachers and has established an enviable reputation for rural school work. In fact, the state has been highly honored through the work of this school, records being published of tests made of the children. The results were very flattering to the pupils and teachers,

A hustling Parent-Teachers Association has done much to assist. A standard certificate was awarded the school and it is working hard to keep pace with the times. A year ago the school house was destroyed by fire and a new and modern building is now on the same site. The fire deprived the school of its standardization, but the enterprising spirit of the people will soon reach the point where another certificate will be sought.

The atmosphere of Bruceville and Windy Hill is peculiar to itself, and a touch of real country life where Father Time and Civilization have not altogether eliminated the rural environment is exemplified here more than in any other section of old Talbot." [*Easton Star Democrat* April 23, 1927].

The new road that was mentioned is now known as the Bruceville Rd. It is noted on an 1877 map as a projected road. The above article states that the road was cut through from Bruceville to Miles Creek in about 1878 and from Miles Creek to Easton some years later. Bruceville grew up around the intersection of Bruceville and Windy Hill Rds. The article mentions that Bruceville got a church in 1885, but the name Bruceville does not appear on a map until 1905. Windy Hill dates to at least 1877.

