

Isle of Kent - 1631

NEWSLETTER OF THE KENT ISLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC.

WINTER 1983

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Fellow Members,

I trust you all survived the blizzard of '83 in good shape. One of the t.v. weathermen described the storm as happening once in 50 years. It looks like this snow, along with the one we had in '79, should suffice us for at least a century.

While we were snowed in over the weekend our family shared some recollections of snowstorms past. I know our members must have a wealth of interesting anecdotes and remembrances of past Kent Island storms they would be willing to share with the rest of us. How fortunate our younger members and future generations would be if we would take the time today to record some of this living heritage. Remember these are tomorrow's good old days. How about sending along to Sandy Speer, our newsletter editor, your favorite family anecdote or description of Kent Island life in storms past so we may share them at a later date.

The Kent Island Heritage Society has accomplished a great deal these past years, but there is so much yet to do. We need active participation by our members to insure the success of this newsletter, continue the accumulation of genealogical records, and serve on our committees.

I'm looking foreward to seeing as many of you as possible at our first meeting on Friday, March 18th, to hear our guest speaker, Mr. Orlando Rideout.

Hope to see you there.

Walter T. Denny, President

ELECTIONS

Mr. Walter T. Denny was elected President of the Kent Island Heritage Society at the Annual Dinner Meeting on December 9, 1982. Joining Mr. Denny as officers for 1983 are Alexander D. Speer, Vice-President; Mrs. Linda L. Jefferson, Corresponding Secretary; Mrs. Mildred C. Schoch, Recording Secretary; Mrs. Evelyn P. Price, Treasurer; Mr. William E. Lane, Director, and Mr. William Baxter, Director. Persons wishing to contact the officers or committee chairmen may do so as follows:

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673-2180

William Baxter 1983-86
643-5828

William E. Denny III 1981-84
643-5869

**OF HISTORY AND HOUSES - A KENT
ISLAND HERITAGE by Mildred C.
Schoch**

A number of people have requested information as to where to obtain copies of Mrs. Schoch's book. They may be obtained from:

Queen Anne Press
P.O. Box 50
Queenstown, MD 21658

Mrs. Schoch has graciously consented to autograph your copies at each scheduled meeting of the Society.

**FOUNDERS, COMMITTEE WORKERS
HONORED**

At the December 9th 1982 Dinner Meeting outgoing President Mary Jones White recognized the people who really make our Kent Island Heritage Society work and the "founding five". Mrs. White in turn was honored with her long overdue Honorary Life Membership scroll.

ARCHAEOLOGY REPORT

The search for the first settlement in Maryland, William Claiborne's trading post, "Kent Fort" which was established on Kent Island in late August 1631, goes on without any archaeological findings so far. This search has gone on for years but as Erich Isaac reported in 1957 there is an "absence of any definite knowledge of where precisely the first settlement was located." To correct this deficiency Kit W. Wesler began in 1977 to systematically search plowed fields looking for datable evidence of settlement but by the summer of 1980 no evidence of mid 17th century settlement was found.

In the fall of 1980, Alex. D. Speer was requested to head a committee to find the Claiborne settlement in time for the August 1981 scheduled celebration of the 350th Anniversary of the settlement of Kent Island. Mr. Speer was fortunate to have all the available historical record carefully provided by Mrs. Mildred Schoch, to have the good fortune of having contact with Mr. Wesler through Orlando Ridout V. Mr. Wesler was then working as Archaeological Sites Supervisor with the Maryland Historical Trust. Mrs. Schoch provided aerial photographs taken in 1972 and the tantalizing reference from Nathaniel Claiborne Hale's book Virginia Venturer, which states:

"When Claiborne arrived in August 1631 he instructed Mr. Watlington to head the Africa straight for a gate leading to a fine anchorage in an inlet he had previously discovered. It was on the eastern side of the island about two miles northeast of Kent Point. This cove could "hide two ships or galley ships of five hundred tun," so well protected was it. Emptying into the little bay were two branches of Long Creek (Tanners Creek) between them being "an Isthmus of low ground like a Tongue environed with fresh water." Just above on a ten foot rise the fort would be built."

Unfortunately the source given by Mr. Hale for this was "Reconstruction of the Isle of Kent after Calvert Paper 880 by H.S. Berkeley", but after a careful search of this map paper 880, and indeed the entire collection of Calvert Papers

at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, no substantiation of this reference could be made. James Leslie, the Kent Island historian who wrote the Play "The Green Gem" mentioned that he had found the source of this reference among the Virginia Archives, but no specific source could be recalled.

That William Claiborne had first been appointed (in 1621) as the land surveyer for Virginia, it is surprising that more detailed locational records have not been found.

Other secondary sources contain somewhat similar accounts but, perhaps significantly, do not name Long Creek see (Figure 1).

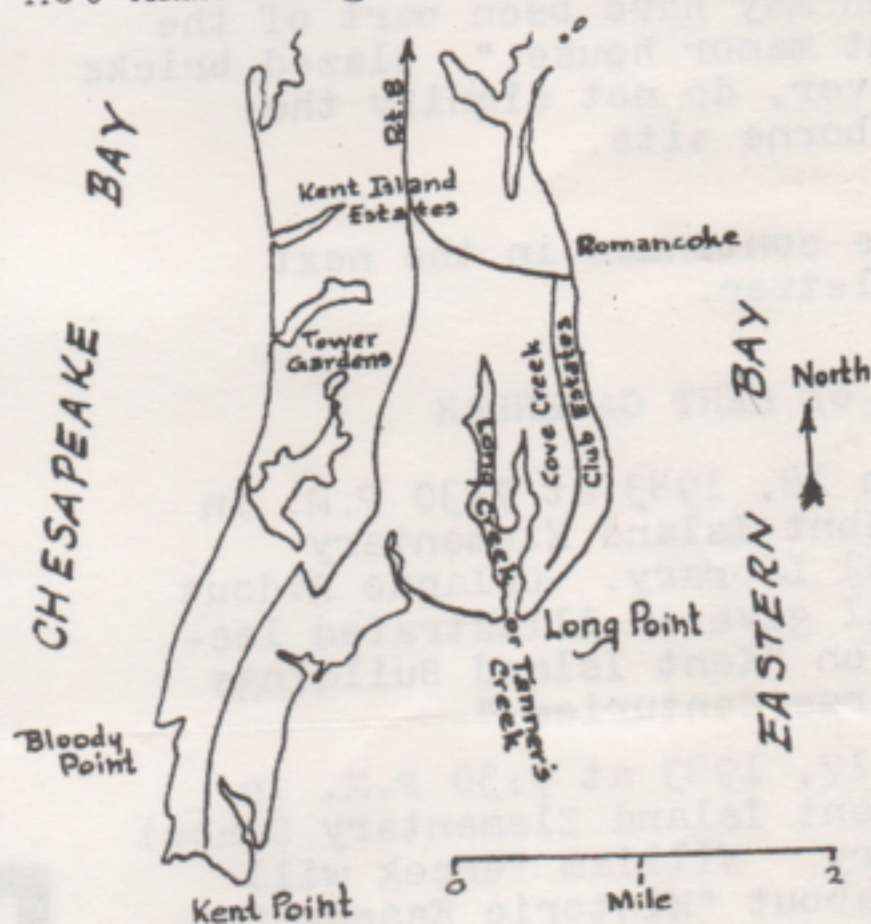


Figure 1. Kent Island.

Emory in 1950 states that "Kent Fort was situated on that part of the Island which borders on Eastern Bay, on the first navigable creek lying on the left hand, in ascending that bay after passing Kent Point."

He cites Davis (1855), but Davis says only that "the seat of Claiborne's settlement was at Kent Point." Tilghman, 1967 describes a visit by historian B.C. Steiner to Kent Island in the summer of 1904 to the place where Claiborne lived: "They found it on a slight elevation back of an old landing on the bend of a navigable creek above Kent Point. To the north of the site, now known as Chew's Gardens and cultivated as a field, in a valley which was probably once an inlet so that the site was surrounded on three sides by water, they found several fragments of glazed bricks about seventy yards from the shore, which may have been part of the Brent manor house." Glazed bricks however, do not signify the Claiborne site.

To be continued in the next Newsletter.

ISLE OF KENT CALENDAR

March 18, 1983 at 7:30 P.M. in the Kent Island Elementary School Library. Orlando Ridout V will give an illustrated lecture on "Kent Island Buildings in Three Centuries."

June 17, 1983 at 7:30 P.M. in the Kent Island Elementary School Library. William Pencek will talk about "Historic Easements - A Method of Preserving Kent Island's Historic Buildings"

September 16, 1983 at 7:30 P.M. in the Kent Island Elementary School Library. Alan Musselman will talk about "Agricultural Land Preservation: Can Kent Island Preserve Some Farmland?"

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