

Chester County Historical Society's History, Landmarks

At a meeting of the Tuesday Evening Study Club, Tuesday, March 7, Miss Louise Knox, president of the Historical Society, was guest speaker, and gave the following interesting talk on the Society, its history and landmarks. Miss Knox also was guest speaker at the Chester Rotary Club and the Chester Senior High School during the year 1960, and used this speech for both occasions.

You, Members of the Tuesday Evening Study Club, have honored me. I am delighted to have this opportunity to tell you about our Chester County Historical Society, which was organized during the month of November and December of 1959.

A small group of seventy (70) enthusiastic citizens met on November 19, 1959, for the first organizational meeting — to form a society or association for the purpose of studying history — to search out the facts of recorded information, (a systematic written account of events, particularly of those affecting a nation, an institution, science, or art). This account of events is to be not only of the United States, of which we are a part, and of which we of today know so little, not only of the State of South Carolina, of which we are a part, but also this knowledge that records and explains past events as steps in human progress — a series of 'events clustering' about some center of interest, that of our own Chester County.

The second organizational meeting was held December 3, 1959, for the purpose of electing permanent officers for the year 1960. To study the history of Chester County, to collect the records and manuscripts, and to restore and preserve them for posterity, and to teach from the cradle to the grave a new kind of appreciation of our noble heritage as true Americans, by beginning in our everyday environment to love and cherish those lofty principles and ideals our dear ones before us left to us in creative expressions of their efforts in whatever form they achieved success. In this enrichment and enlightenment, the Chester County Historical Society, of 181 charter members, is sponsoring an Historical Museum for all of us to take time to recapture the glory of the past, enhanced by the beauty of our Creator, whose hand guided the hearts of our forefathers in their search for religious freedom, the same lofty principle which ex-President Eisenhower

expresses so often "peace with liberty."

The Museum has had its beginning — A very desirable room has been secured in the Chester County Court House. This room is fire-proof and has a vault door, which makes it safe and secure.

The first year of the Historical Society has been one of programs and activities. On May 3, 1960, the Historical Society staged the formal opening of the Museum, using as the theme, "How People Lived in Chester County Before 1860." This theme was carried out in the old kitchen in the museum room, and in the charming and historic home of Mrs. D. T. Welborn, Sr., and the late Mr. Welborn. This home was built in 1859, and has furnishings of rare antiques. The first regular meeting of the Society was held May 30, at which time Dr. Daniel W. Hollis, an associate professor of History at the University of South Carolina, delivered the address. He spoke on "Early History of South Carolina," a subject on which he is indeed an authority.

During the summer months the members of this organization cooperated with the Chester County Library by helping with the Carolina Trails Reading Club. An exhibit of American Indian relics was displayed in the Chester County Library. This private

collection was the work of Robert Shannon, a member of the Society, and now a senior at Clemson College. We hope that many of you viewed this interesting exhibit which reflected the life of the Indians during the period when the Americans were redskinned. Also, for the Reading Club, we presented a program, which was a lecture, illustrated with color slides, using as our subject, "A Story of the Up Country of South Carolina." This story had its beginning in 1750, when the first settlers, Scotch-Irish from Pennsylvania and Virginia, made their way into the Waxhaw section of Lancaster District, and from there spread out over the whole of the Up Country of South Carolina.

In the Museum room, during the week of October 24 through the 28, the charm of old Chesterville before 1875, was recaptured in an exhibit of a prize collection of glass, silver and china. This was the second of a series of exhibitions to be held at the Museum, and was an outstanding success.

The annual meeting of the Society was held on the evening of December 14, when Dr. Chalmers Davidson, an historian and author of Davidson College, was guest speaker, relating to us some historical facts about Chester County. Dr. Davidson is well-versed in American history.

It is our desire to stress the importance of teaching our boys and girls American history in the schools in order that they may understand and appreciate our yesterdays which become histories of today — Yesterday is

history. You are a part of history. Everything you say or do becomes history. Deeds and words, good or bad spread their influence, radiating as a stone dropped in a mill pond.

Our soil, according to history, has not been touched by George Washington, the first and one of the greatest Presidents of the United States, even though he made a journey through South Carolina. But, our soil was touched by an international figure, Aaron Burr, whose life was filled with tragedy and sorrow, for himself and for his family — such a personality and such a failure. He was Vice President of the United States, with Thomas Jefferson as President, slayer of Alexander Hamilton, and father of the beautiful Theodosia, who was the wife of Joseph Alston, once Governor of South Carolina. Aaron Burr came through Chester on his way to Richmond for trial on a charge of treason. He spent the night at Lewis, in the house now owned and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Jones. He was forced to sleep on a homemade bench on the front porch of this house. This bench is now on display at the Chester County Library. Thus, Aaron Burr left his mark on Chester County, and on the hill of Chester, the marker itself speaks.

Standing as firmly and securely as when erected 138 years ago, is the Landsford Canal in Eastern Chester County. This canal was designed by the famous Robert Mills, an architect and engineer of South Carolina. Few people know the historical

significance of this perfect masonry.

The Catholic Presbyterian Church was organized in 1759 by the Rev. William Richardson. This church celebrated its 200th anniversary in 1959. Many Revolutionary soldiers worshipped at this church.

The Fishing Creek Presbyterian Church had its beginning in 1752. The original velvet collection bags, on the same old poles, are still used for taking the collection. The cemetery entombs the bodies of veterans of four wars.

As the Confederate Capital at Richmond was being evacuated, Mrs. Jefferson Davis spent the night at Woodward Baptist Church in Chester County.

Lewisville Female Seminary, (now the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Gaston near Pleasant Grove Methodist Church offered educational advantages to young women. This school closed in 1854.

The Cornwell House at Cornwell, built in 1841, once a stage coach stop, was the scene of a great celebration when the first train came to Chester in 1851.

The T-shaped Chester County Court House, built in 1850, presents a massive and dignified appearance. The Court House which preceded this one was located on the hill about the spot where the Confederate Monument is today.

Bonnet Rock, midway between Armenia and New Hope Methodist Churches, was used by the first settlers to predict the weather.

These are but a few of Chester County's interesting and historical landmarks, sites, churches and schools.

Chester County has made many contributions to our civilized society and now it is up to the members of the Historical Society to create an interest among our young boys and girls in order that they may search the facts and add their worth to those worthy deeds of the past.

Dr. David Smiley, an assistant professor of history of Wake Forest College, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, once said, "In order to appreciate the values of the past, people must be made aware of what, when, where, how, and especially WHY, events

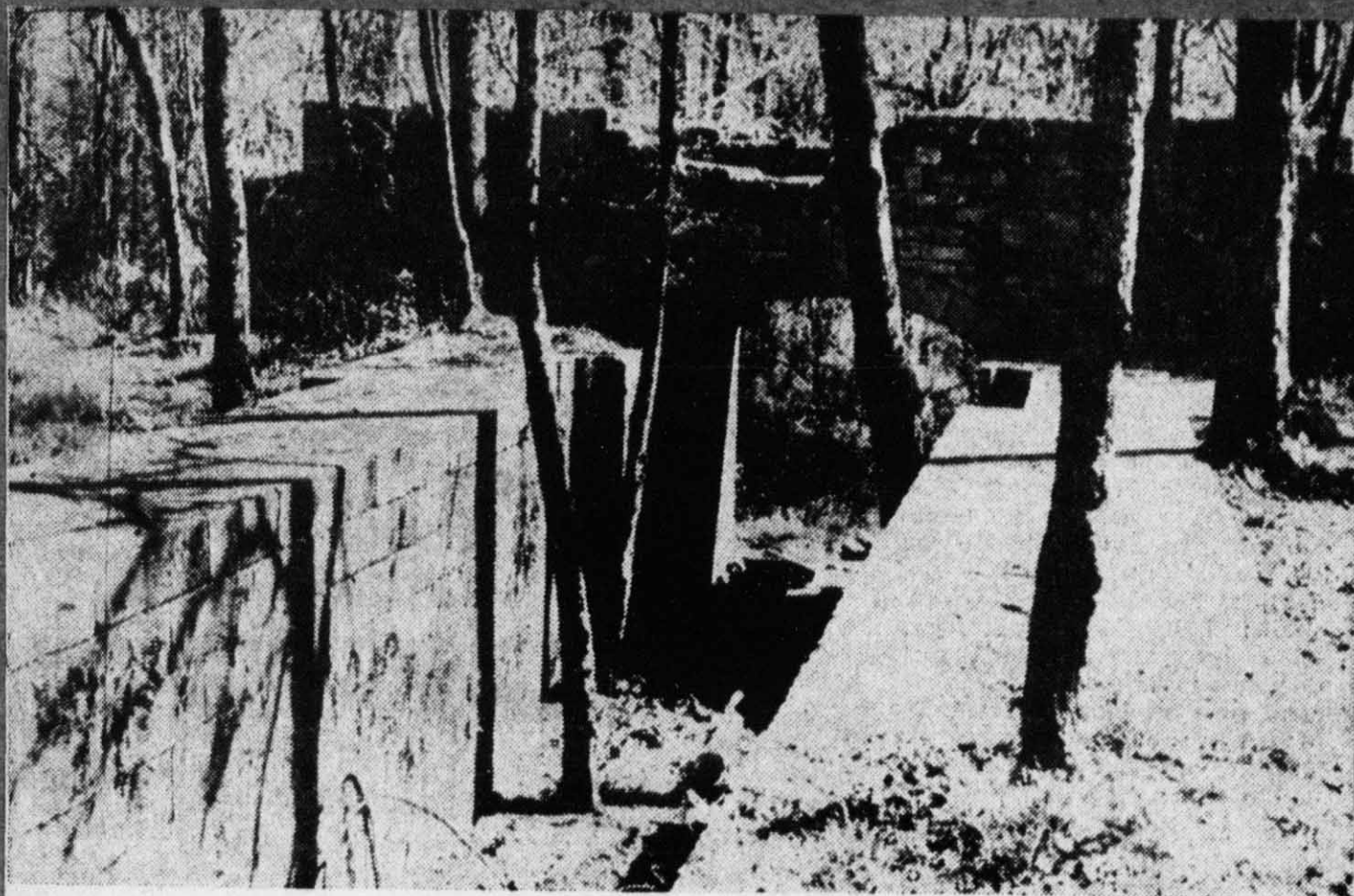
or things happened. In short, they must be educated to appreciate the past."

These are the words once spoken by Sir Winston Churchill, in regard to the past, "The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see."

WORDS TO LIVE BY — Martin Buber's words have great significance for me: "You yourself must begin — Meet the world with the fulness of your Being and you shall meet God. That



HOPE TO RESTORE THESE RUINS



LANDSFORD CANAL HISTORIC SPOT

He Himself accepts from your hands what you have to give to the world is His Mercy. If you wish to believe, love."

My hope, may we all as members and citizens of Chester County continue to work together with determination, with courage, with Divine Guidance to carry on with a deep appreciation of our past — our noble heritage.

I thank you.

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