

THE ARCHEOLOG

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DELAWARE



PEPPER CREEK CANOE



NANTICOKE RIVER CANOE

The Rev. Wm. Beckett's Plantation and the Glebe
of St. Peter's and St. George's Churches in Sussex Co., Del.

by

David Marine

The Wm. Beckett farm was purchased by him in 1733 from Samuel Davis and wife of Sussex Co., John Donelson and wife of Somerset Co., Colony of Maryland, and Philip Russell of Sussex Co. as recorded in a deed dated March 28, 1733 (Deed Book No. 7, page 153).

The tract of "land and marsh" was located about 8 miles from Lewes and contained 400 acres "situate lying and being on the south side of Love's Creek in Angola Neck, Indian River Hundred and County of Sussex beginning at a white oak standing on the edge of the marshes of the said creek, etc." The purchase price was 270 pounds and included a good house, barn, about 1000 fruit trees and other appurtenances and attractions, including a beautiful view of Rehoboth Bay, the coastal sand dunes and the ocean beyond.

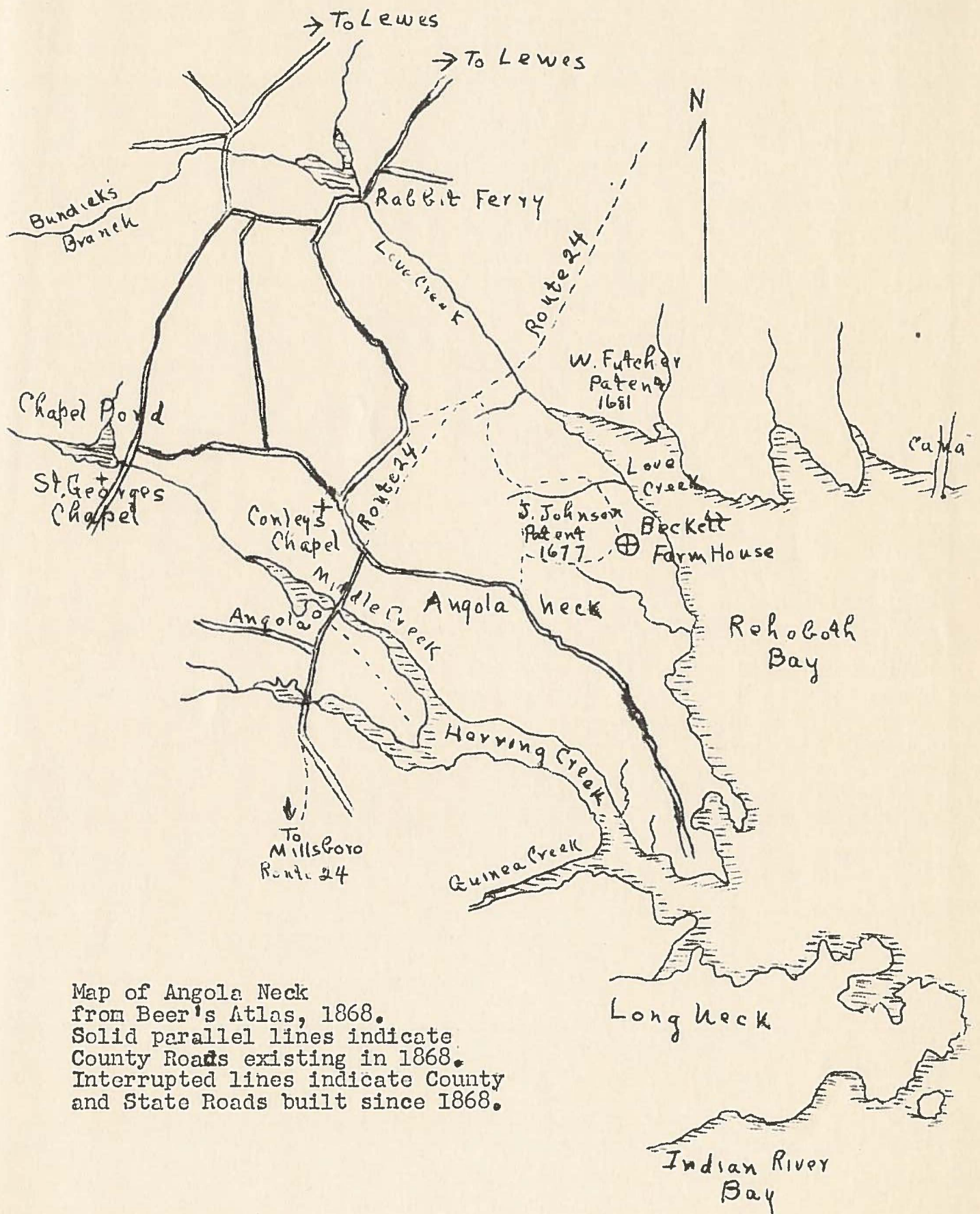
In the spring of 1733 Wm. Beckett moved his family to the farm from a house and lot on Second Street in Lewes located between Mulberry Street and St. Peter's Church yard, which he had purchased from Samuel Davis as recorded in a deed dated July 6th, 1722 (Deed Book No. 6, page 6).

Wm. Beckett also acquired a Proprietary land warrant dated October 16, 1738, calling for 75 acres of land adjoining his plantation (Warrant Book No. 6, page 31). This tract called "Woodland Grove" was surveyed by Wm. Shankland for 73 acres on March 25, 1742 (Survey Warrant B, page 580).

He acquired another Proprietary land warrant, dated October 16, 1740, for 125 acres of land (Warrant Book C, page 33) lying between a tract formerly taken up by Wm. Bradford and a tract belonging to Cord Hazzard and Joseph Hazzard. This tract did not adjoin his plantation. Thus the total land holdings of Wm. Beckett in Angola Neck in the year 1740 amounted to nearly 600 acres.

Wm. Beckett died on August 20, 1743, and his will of Aug. 7th and codicil thereto on Aug. 17th was probated Aug. 29, 1743 (Will Book A-1, page 350). He left his plantation amounting to 474 acres to two of his daughters - Elizabeth and Susannah, to be divided equally between them with the right to sell "but the deed, to be valid, must contain the signature of either Ryves Holt or Capt. Cord Hazzard or both".

On Dec. 20, 1743, Elizabeth and Susannah sold the 400 acres together with the adjoining 74 acres (land warrant) to Coventon Corbin of Accomack Co., Va. (Deed Book No. 8, page 57) and Coventon Corbin in 1745 conveyed these lands to John Potter also of Accomack Co., Va. (Deed Book No. 8, page 100).



Map of Angola Neck
from Beer's Atlas, 1868.
Solid parallel lines indicate
County Roads existing in 1868.
Interrupted lines indicate County
and State Roads built since 1868.

John Beckett, of the Colony of Virginia, by deed dated July 28, 1762 (Deed Book 9, page 398). "Thomas Evans having died intestate and the said lands not being sufficient to bear a division among the several heirs, the lands were allotted to John Evans (eldest son) after laying off the widow's third, by the Orphans Court held in Sussex Co."

John Evans in 1770 sold 245 acres of the 474 acres "lying on the south side of the part laid off and reserved for the glebe" for an unrevealed sum (Deed Book No. 11, page 148) to Thomas and Peter Robinson of Angola Neck.

Another part of the original Beckett land was sold by John Evans as recorded in a deed to Benjamin Burton, Thomas Robinson; Burton Waples; Reece Woolfe, Anderson Parker, John Wiltbank, Jacob Kollock, Jr., Wrixham Lewis, Parker Robinson and Daniel Munez for the Glebe of St. Peter's and St. Georges Churches. This deed was dated Dec. 1, 1769, and recorded in Deed Book No. 14, page 523. The deed called for 193 acres of land and marsh including the Widow Evans' third.

According to the Vestry records of St. Peter's Church (Turner, C. H. B., Some Records of Sussex Co.; Del.; 1909, page 250) this glebe land was sold on Aug. 27, 1791, to Peter Robinson, a member of the Committee representing St. Peter's and St. Georges Churches at the sale on the premise for 200 pounds and a deed was given to Peter Robinson by the "surviving grantees" of the Dec. 1, 1769, deed.

Conclusions

Summing up the above data, it is concluded that the original 400 acre Wm. Beckett Plantation was located on the southern shore of Love Creek, beginning at the mouth of a small stream (Cherry Walk Creek) about 1-2/5 miles down stream and to the east of the present Love Creek bridge (Route 24) and extended south eastward about 200 perches along the shore line to include part of the western shore of Rehoboth Bay. In depth it extended south-westerly about 320 perches (1 mile). The Beckett house probably stood on a sandy hill about 1/4 mile back (south) from the mouth of Love Creek (Bookhammer's Landing) overlooking Horse Island about a half mile to the east and about one-half mile east of what is now called Cherry Walk Creek. From this hill (now partly bulldozed off) the view of the Inlet (1), Bay, sandy Barrier Reef and Ocean checks closely with Beckett's description.

This rectangular shaped plantation of 400 acres fits in with the location, metes and bounds of a Duke of York patent of 400 acres made by Edmund Andros (Governor etc) to John Johnson dated July 29, 1677 (Duke of York Report, page 174).

(1) The Indian River Inlet in Mr. Beckett's time was considerably to the north of the present stabilized Inlet and therefore could have been seen from Mr. Beckett's home.

This patent was sold by John Johnson to Wm. Futchter, Sr., in 1685 as recorded in a deed (Deed Book A-1, page 45). Wm. Futchter had previously settled on a Duke of York land grant of 322 acres (Duke of York Report, page 75) on the north shore of Love Creek nearly opposite the John Johnson land grant.

The Glebe purchased by the Trustees of St. Peter's and St. Georges Churches in 1769 and sold by them in 1791 was the northern part of the Wm. Beckett plantation.

Since the first bridge across lower Love Creek was built about 1887, all travel to and from Angola Neck and Lewes prior to that date had to cross Love Creek about 2 miles farther upstream either at Burton's (Goslings) Millpond on the Rabbitt Ferry road or at Bundick's Branch bridge on the old Lewes-Millsboro road.

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Additional Data on Steen's Old "Dug-Out" Canoe

by
Henry H. Hutchinson

Considerable interest has been expressed recently concerning Indian dug-out canoes and other early American dug-outs. Arrangements were made by Mr. James D. Spicer for us to examine an old dug-out canoe owned by Mr. Vernon W. Steen of Dagsboro, Delaware, which had been dredged from Pepper Creek at Dagsworthy Landing, in Sussex County, Delaware. Mr. Steen reported the find in the Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Delaware in Vol. 1, No. 2, 1934.

Since dug-out canoes are rare, we think it worthwhile to record some additional details together with photographs as we found it on April 6th, 1957.

The canoe had been stored for a number of years on top of a large incubator in Mr. Steen's hatchery. Here it was warm and very dry, so that its condition now is probably just about as it was found, except for cracks and cross-checks in the decaying wood, due to drying which would have occurred anywhere outside of total submergence or artificial preservatives. It was carefully dusted off and examined by Dr. D. Marine, J. D. Spicer, C. B. Spicer, and the writer.

It had undoubtedly been damaged considerably by the dredging operation, but one end and the flat bottom were still intact, and a small separate fragment of one side wall was with it. (Fig. 1). It measured 11 ft. 7-1/2 inches from tip of bow to the back end of the bottom; 15-1/5 inches wide at center of bottom; and at two feet back from the bow it was 18 inches wide at the top of the sides, which were 15-1/2 inches in height at the bow. It was cut from a loblolly or pond pine and is now very much checked

with age and dryness on the bow and sides, and the annual growth rings are quite distinct, large and uniform (complacent).

There was no indication of charred wood, as one would expect to find on a canoe which had been made by the fire and gouge method known to have been used by the pre-contact Indians. The interior had been cut or chiseled out with a straight bladed tool about four inches wide and quite sharp. The junction of the two sides at the bow formed a sharp angle (Fig. 3), and the junction of the sides with the bottom near the bow was almost a right angle, and in the apex of this angle were several impressions of this sharp edged tool about four inches wide, apparently from the tool trimming the sides, and which had penetrated slightly into the bottom. Similar tool marks were in the bottom near the stern where the sides had broken off. It seemed to us that these tool marks could not have been made with a stone tool and must have been made with a metal tool capable of taking a ground and honed edge.

On the inside of the bottom, (Fig. 2), about 30 inches from the bow and in the center line, were two holes a few inches apart and about 1-3/4 inches in diameter, bored partly through the bottom to a depth of approximately 3/8 inch, as if they were to stop a small mast (though why two holes and why so shallow?). These holes appeared to have been bored with a modern type wood bit. They did not seem to be as old as the rest of the bottom, but were fairly old, judging from the relative color of the exposed surfaces.

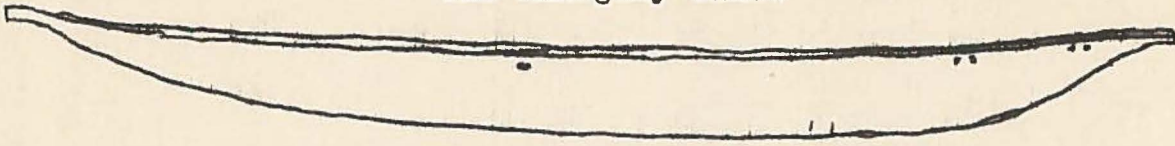
The surfaces of the sides and bow were extensively checked with age and dryness. Tool marks were not distinguishable on the outside. The bottom was quite flat both inside and outside, except on the outside there was a slight upward slope beginning about two feet from each end and rising about one inch above the level at each end. The outside of the bow was "streamlined" with easy curves toward the prow and joining the sides and bottom. (Fig. 4)

Undoubtedly this canoe was fashioned by a skilled craftsman; one who could wield a broad axe and adze with great dexterity, for we believe it would have been impossible to fashion the sharp corners and angles and the flatness of the bottom (inside) with stone tools. This does not necessarily mean that it was not made by Indians, for they could well have made it with steel tools traded from the early settlers.

Although there is doubt in our minds of this "dug-out" being made by Indians, there is no doubt but that it is a valuable example of early Americana, and a splendid example of craftsmanship acquired by early inhabitants of Sussex County.

Since our inspection in April, Mr. Steen has wisely turned it over to the Delaware State Museum to be treated with preservatives, and where the public can see examples of the skill exhibited by our ancestors, or our predecessors in Delaware.

The Mahogany Canoe



HISTORY: According to information given us by Mr. and Mrs. Carmine at Arrowhead Camp in Angola Neck where this canoe is on display, it was found in the marsh near the camp by Mr. Harry B. Ash of Love Creek, who is the owner, though he has been pleased to lend it to the camp because of the interest it might have for the boys and visitors.

Mr. Ash was told by someone who saw this canoe that it was one of twenty "brought by the Government from South Africa". Operations by our central government have become so varied in recent years that we hesitate to say that importation of dugout canoes could not be one of them, but we have not attempted to verify this statement. The log used seems to be mahogany (this will be verified) which is a Caribbean or South American tree.

The wood has been worked down quite thin and at the gunwales is about $\frac{5}{8}$ inch thick. There is evidence in many parts that steel tools were used. The length overall is 17 feet 5 in.; maximum width $17\frac{1}{2}$ inches and maximum depth $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches. There are indications that it had been fitted with outriggers and had a mast. Three square holes cut in the wood of the bottom inside and about 54 inches from the bow may have aided in stepping the mast.

* * * * *

Dugout canoes have been made in this area that have survived to be used by men now living, but the real Indian ones are extremely rare. On the chance of its being Indian, any dugout should be reported, and the study of the more modern ones may help us to recognize the real Indian ones. From photographs on the cover alone, we recognize the sharp angles and flatness of the bottom, both inside and outside, of one canoe which suggest that its makers were not Indian.

In the descriptive matter under the photograph of the comb - if it is a comb - on the cover of our May 1957 number, it is said, far too hastily, that the boat was not a dugout canoe of the type made by our Indians. Certainly it does not appear to be, but from more study of dugouts it seems possible that this representation is a sort of ideogram. These four Indians would be standing on the floor of the canoe and to them the bow and stern would rise as here shown. The sculptor may have used his mental image of the canoe as if he were standing in it. The result is not exactly a cross section as we understand it, but it gives most of the truth we find it necessary to suggest in that way. By connecting the bow and stern with a line we have the proportions of a dugout canoe.

O. H. Peets

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The Nanticoke River Canoe

We are indebted to Mr. Avery Ellis of the Diamond State Telephone Co. and Mr. Harold Purnell, both of Georgetown, Del., for the following notes and photographs of a canoe remnant which was probably of considerable historical and possibly of archeological interest to Sussex Countians.

The data as given by Mr. Ellis are as follows: A Mr. Wm. Outten (now deceased) was fishing for shad in the Nanticoke River about one mile above Cannon's Ferry sometime between March 20th and May 20th, 1919, when his seine got caught in some submerged object. He pulled it up on the left or south bank at a place known as Boyce's Wharf. Sometime later Mr. Ellis, while fishing with his father, saw the remains and returned the next day with his camera and took pictures.

Nothing further occurred for over 35 years when, during a conversation with Mr. Purnell, the subject came up, and Mr. Purnell obtained permission to make the photographic copy shown here (See Cover). Two years ago the area was searched and many residents of the neighborhood interviewed, but no trace of the canoe has been found and no additional information has been obtained.

Mr. Purnell sent the photographs to the Smithsonian Institution, and their experts decided that they might indicate an authentic Indian canoe.

* * * * *

"The work of the archeologist is essentially historical detective work - in his digging and searching, he must find, assemble and interpret clues. Some of these clues will be tangible, like pottery fragments, other clues will be intangible - the very absence of pottery fragments in an ancient dwelling tells a story. The correct evaluation and interpretation of multitudinous clues by many experts over two generations have at last given us a very considerable knowledge of Southwestern pre history."

K. A. Wing, Bandolier National Monument, National Park Service 1955.

The Archeological Exhibit

The Sussex Society of Archeology and History arranged a display of Indian artifacts in the Corkran Studio of the Rehoboth Art League as its part in the observance of the 1957 Delaware Festival of the Arts.

The exhibit was opened to the public on May 5th and remained on view each weekend throughout the month. President Purnell appointed Orville Peets general chairman of the exhibit, which was effectively staged by David Guillaume, Supervisor of Art in the Sussex County public schools.

Among the things on display were a reproduction of an Eastern bark covered wigwam, a flexed human burial and its accompanying dog burial, an interesting group of restored and intact pots and bowls, together with potsherds to illustrate various types of decoration used by the local Indians. There were also representative collections of Indian axes, chisels, knives, spearheads, arrow points, netates and pestles, gorgets, stone drills, bone awls, beads and pipes, together with many other objects of Indian art.

A preview of the exhibit was given on Saturday, April 27th, for the benefit of those attending the annual Institute of Delaware History and Culture held in Dover on that date. Among those who visited the exhibit were Dr. T. Dale Stewart, National Museum, Washington; Prof. and Mrs. H. C. Reed, University of Delaware; and Mr. Leon deValinger, State Archivist.

The registered attendance for the four weekends was 375.

Judging from the many questions and favorable comments, the exhibit appears to have had considerable educational and cultural value.

Book Notice

"The Abbott Farm", by Dorothy Cross, which is published as Vol. 2 of "Archaeology of New Jersey" by the Archaeological Society of New Jersey and the New Jersey State Museum (price cloth \$7.00, de luxe \$8.00) is a work of the highest quality in every respect. The list of its virtues would be a long one, but perhaps first on this list would be the significance of the site. First reported in 1872 by its owner, Dr. C. C. Abbott, this site has been the background of much archaeological discussion and has been treated in over a hundred books and articles. In 1882 an important article in Harpers Magazine presented the turning point of the conflict between those who thought the mound builders were a race distinct from the later Indians and those who claimed the evidence showed a racial continuity. The article took what is now the accepted view that the mound builders were Indians as we know them, but after making an effective case, the author hedged a little in saying that evidence from the Abbott Farm would probably give the final answer. It has done so; but in this book by Dorothy Cross, rather than in the many writings by Dr. Abbott, is the final word to be found.

Definitive is, in fact, the word which best describes this volume. It is the last word in correct excavating and reporting methods and will remain so until techniques as yet hardly imagined are put into use. The book is also an ultimate in printing. It may be the last wholly letter press volume of relatively short edition archaeological books, for more modern and much cheaper methods are improving rapidly and may soon give results equal to this. They will not be superior, for this book shows linotype text and halftone plates at their best. The requirement of line drawings only in the text pages (because of the uncoated paper used) has been met with some really fine art work, and the tables are a triumph of the most difficult kind of typesetting. Borders are wide in a tradition few publishers can afford at present, and the book has an imposing aspect even in the cloth edition. But what is most imposing about it is the scientific attitude. Conclusions flow from a large mass of carefully digested data and where any consideration - however unlikely - might invalidate these conclusions, it is stated with an honesty that will disarm critics.

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Reports of Meetings

Sept. 19th

Dr. Walter J. Heacock, Director of Research and Interpretation, Eleutherian Mills-Hagley Foundation, Wilmington, Del., gave us an illustrated talk on the work to date the Foundation has done on the Brandywine River at our regular meeting. In addition to describing the physical material, its location and present condition, he reviewed the history of the Brandywine water power and its industrial development.

He also emphasized the necessity and magnitude of searching the local and foreign literature as the indispensable preliminary of any attempt at restoration, and discussed the various ways and plans of establishing a museum that accurately portrays the tools, machinery and working conditions available to the early duPont industries.

Oct. 17th

Mr. John L. Cotter, regional archeologist of the National Park Service, and now working on the Independence Hall Project, gave us an illustrated lecture entitled "Jamestown, a Window to 17th century Colonial Life" at our regular meeting.

Mr. Cotter had spent two years excavating at Jamestown just prior to the opening of the Exposition and brought us a well documented interpretation of the Dept. of Interior's work there.

He discussed the methods used, materials found and added that he hoped further work there could be delayed for 25 years in order to study fully and interpret the work to date and also to take advantage of improved methods and techniques that almost certainly will be available at that time. "Haste makes waste" is an old adage that has a particular interest to archeologists since evidence destroyed is gone forever.

An item of interest and value to us in Sussex County was the illustrated charts of earthenware, china, knives, forks, spoons and other household articles arranged in chronological order by experts.

Every organization on the east coast excavating historical sites should have such charts for ready reference and the evaluation and dating of the material.

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NEW MEMBERS

Mr. & Mrs. George V. Carey	Milford, Del.
Mr. & Mrs. Frank L. Donovan	Milford, Del.
James E. Goslee, Jr.	Georgetown, Del.
Mr. & Mrs. William H. Henderson	Georgetown, Del.
Steven Hood	Milford, Del.
Mrs. William A. Horn	New York & Rehoboth Beach
Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Karl	Lewes, Del.
Mr. & Mrs. John A. McManus	Rehoboth Beach, Del.
William H. McCauley	Dover, Del.
Mrs. Roberta O. McClearnen	Dover, Del.
Stanley R. Phillips	Queen Anne, Md.
Joseph Gales Ramsay, III	Wilmington, Del.
Mr. & Mrs. Oliver Short	Lewes, Del.
Harry Smith	Georgetown, Del.
Miss Linda M. Virden	Lewes, Del.
Michael Walsh	Easton, Md.
Hon. Caleb M. Wright	Georgetown, Del.

Sussex Society of Archeology and History
Officers for 1957

President: Harold W. T. Purnell	Georgetown, Del.
Vice-President: Warren Calloway	Bridgeville, Del., R.D.
Secretary: Mrs. Desmond Lyons	Milford, Del.
Treasurer: Wm. H. Ponder	Rehoboth, Del.
Custodian of Records:	
Miss Catharine Maull	Lewes, Del.
Managing Editor: O. H. Poets	Millsboro, Del., R.D.

Correction Vol. 9 No. 1, May, 1957 -

Delete first 2 lines of page 3 (Russell Site Report) and substitute the following:

faint overall fabric impressions and superimposed over these are many incised scratches in random groups as if made with a wide flat tool with serrated edge. The inside is covered with a patch work of similar scratches rather deeply incised. One of these patches contains 25 parallel scratches in a width of approximately $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches.