

"Sulphur Springs"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

An early history of New Windsor was written by Frank J. Devilbiss in 1894 and published in a series of columns in the Taneytown Carroll Record newspaper. Mr. Devilbiss notes that the first owner of the land was Charles Carroll and that a subsequent owner, tavern keeper Isaac Richardson Atlee, acquired the land in an novel way:

"The land upon which New Windsor stands was originally granted to "Charles Carroll, and is composed of two tracts, "Five Daughters" and "New Windsor." The former comprised 1500 acres, and extends westward to "Park Hall." Mr. Carroll seems to have been very liberal minded, and with one stroke of the pen, conveyed the entire tract to his daughter in 1759."

"In about the year 1788 after the close of the Revolutionary War, Mr. Isaac Richardson Atlee, visited this section in view of locating. He noted considerable travel on both the Monocacy and Buffalo roads, which crossed here, and, being of a business turn of mind, concluded that a tavern at this juncture would be a profitable investment. The Monocacy road was opened only by usage and not by state authorities, and passed here from Baltimore and the settlements of Baltimore county, to the settlements on the Monocacy.

This was the main thoroughfare, and trains of wagons passed over it daily. It antedates the national turnpike more than a half century, and is the identical road which now passes through the farms of Lincoln W. Rinehart and Amos Wampler. The Buffalo road laid out by duly commissioned officers, starts at Annapolis, and leads to Buffalo, N. Y. At the intersection of these thoroughfares here, Mr. Atlee located and built a small tavern, and rudely constructed stables. The genial disposition of Mr. Atlee, and the unstinted courtesy shown his guests, made his hostelry very favorably known to travellers, who patronized him liberally, of times making excuses, by predicting unfavorable weather, to tarry longer with him. It is needless to say that ill-starred fanatics, pseudo-moralists and battered politicians (?) had not at that time developed into either "Prohibitionist" or "Local Optionist," and all this was favorable to the business interests of Mr. Atlee.

He built up a lucrative business and in the meantime, settlers hearing of a sulphur spring, now on the Maynard estate, and of its high medicinal qualities, came from far and near, purchased lots, erected houses and spent money. The place then became known far and wide as "Sulphur Springs," and afterwards as "The Springs." Throngs of people visited the place simply to partake of its health-giving water. In fact, The Springs, as a health resort, became as famous as any of the modern watering-places in Virginia. An old gentleman had located near the spring and purchased nearly all the land which was afterward comprised in the Atlee estate. He imbibed sulphur water generously, by finally this exquisite pleasure was wholly consumed by the insatiate thirst for rum. He became a daily denizen at the Atlee bar, and his downfall which was rapid and disastrous, soon followed.

Besides borrowing money from Mr. Atlee to assist him in his gambling propensities, he would have his liquor bills charged from time to time, until at intervals Mr. Atlee in a patronizing manner, would request settlement. The old man would invariable give his note. These notes accumulated until they amounted to more than the estimated value of his possessions. At the final settlement however, his

entire property passed into the hands of Mr. Atlee at a price agreed upon, which did not liquidate his indebtedness."

Mr. Devilbiss also enjoyed telling a good story and his history is liberally sprinkled with amusing anecdotes about the early residents of New Windsor. One relates to an incident that took place in the former Atlee Tavern:

"After Mr. Atlee discontinued his boarding place, Thomas Bartholow opened a hotel in the old Conoway property, recently purchased by Mr. Louis H. Dielman, and as quickly torn down. Thomas had the patronage of many lively denizens in his ranch. He had a particular fascination for dominoes, and would frequently encourage the game in his house but seemed to be religiously opposed to card playing. He would conscientiously fight, or reverently eject patrons, who would attempt to play cards. Very frequently, a citizen named Thomas Poole kept bar for Bartholow. An unenviable character named Moses Cullison frequented the ranch, and upon one particular occasion, he imbibed too freely and became offensive to Poole. They wrangled until matters became desperate, and finally, in order to get rid of Cullison, Poole challenged him to fight a duel. No quicker was the challenge given than it was accepted. By this time, quite a crowd congregated on the street. Poole and Cullison next selected their seconds, into whose hands two rifles were given to be loaded and submitted to the duelists at their call. The ground was measured and staked, and the antagonists took their respective positions without fear or trembling. The seconds delivered the deadly weapons, time was called, and order given. "Fire." Bang! bang! rang out the shots, and Thomas Poole fell automatically to the ground with a heavy thud, and without a struggle. The crowd stood steadfast and speechless. You could have heard the hair growing upon your head. Cullison realizing his crime (?) dashed his gun to the earth, and tore through the crowd with the rapidity of an arrow. The crowd followed him, captured him and had him well bound. Upon his return to the hotel, he wept bitterly, and begged that "after his is taken from the gallows, that his body be decently buried under a certain familiar old chestnut tree, from whose branches, in his youthful days, he threshed down the prickly burrs and rifled their contents." That tree stood on a farm in Baltimore county. The joke was carried far enough, so finally Cullison was made promise solemnly, that when liberated, he would never again make a disturbance in New Windsor. He left the town, and his face was never seen again."

Readers should be careful not draw a conclusion that the early residents of New Windsor were more intemperate than other local residents. If anything, they probably imbibed somewhat less given the close proximity to the healing spring for which the community was first named.

Photo caption: "A Birdseye View of New Windsor, Md. (c.1914)" shows the town as it appeared at the turn of the century. The town was once known as Sulphur Springs; visitors came from far and wide to take the water which was thought to have healing properties. Historical Society of Carroll County postcard collection.

Side bar copy: Eight historic New Windsor homes and buildings will be open this afternoon from Noon to 5:00 for the New Windsor Heritage Homes Tour. The tour begins at the historic St. Paul's Methodist Church at the corner of Main and High Streets.