

## "Pumpkin Papers Discovered"

Carroll County Times article for 6 December 1998

By Jay A. Graybeal

Fifty years ago this week, federal agents descended on a Carroll County farm in Bachman's Valley and collected microfilmed documents secreted in a hollowed out pumpkin. The story made national headlines and was also reported in the Westminster Democratic Advocate newspaper which ran a story from the Baltimore press under the headline of "CARROLL COUNTY ON THE MAP":

"Fear of a Communist raid on his home led Whittaker Chambers to hide microfilms of highly secret State Department documents in a pumpkin on his farm in Bachman's Valley, known as the Clinton Thomas property and along the state road, Chambers said.

He said he and his family were away from home so much he was afraid Communists might visit the farm during an absence and steal the microfilms.

Mr. Chambers, now an editor of Time magazine and an admitted former Russian agent, said the Government documents were intended to go to the Russian Government but that they never reached Soviet hands.

He did not identify the source of the microfilm copies, but apparently they were films of State Department papers which were stolen from the files and later returned.

The microfilms came into his possession about ten years ago, he said, at about the time he first considered 'quitting the Communist party.'

Indicating that the microfilms had been brought to his farm only recently, Mr. Chambers said they had been kept in Brooklyn, N. Y. Where in Brooklyn they had been hidden and how long they were there he did not disclose.

Mr. Chambers led congressional investigators to his farm yesterday and in their presence removed the microfilms from a hollowed-out pumpkin.

They were said, by the House UnAmerican Activities Committee today to be copies of documents of 'tremendous importance.'

Later today, Mr Chambers went to Baltimore where he conversed for several hours with his attorney, Richard F. Cleveland, who is representing him in a \$75,000 libel suit brought by Alger Hiss, former Baltimorean and one-time State Department official.

The suit grew out of statements made by Chambers who touched off the inquiry into alleged Communist infiltration into the United States Government.

On instructions from Mr. Cleveland, Mr. Chambers would make no further comment about the microfilms or about certain documents which Congressional investigators are said to have obtained from Chambers since the films were uncovered.

When asked how long the conference with Mr. Chambers would last, Mr. Cleveland said he would be unable to guess 'because things are developing from minute to minute.'

At about 5:30 p.m., Chambers left his conference with Mr. Cleveland—which was in the O'Sullivan Building— in the company of two unidentified men.

To all questions he replied: 'I can't say a thing.'

He was smiling and in good spirits.

Bernard J. Flynn, United States Attorney for Maryland, was asked whether the new developments would lead to action in the Federal Court. He replied: 'I know nothing in the world about it except what I have read in the newspapers.'

Judge W. Calvin Chestnut, of the United States District Court in Baltimore, declined to comment when asked whether discovery of the microfilms might have any bearing on the pending suit involving Chambers and Hiss."

Whittaker Chambers, Alger Hiss, Richard Nixon became famous or infamous through their involvement with the "Pumpkin Papers" episode. In another controversial decision, the Chambers farm was designated a National Historic Landmark by Secretary of the Interior Donald P. Hodel in 1984.