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## **Boone's Chapel Radio Broadcast of 1946**

On Sunday, September 8, 1946 Station WPIK radio of Alexandria, Virginia broadcast a documentary on "Boone Chapel" in Prince George's County. The speaker was William R. Carr, student of Gonzaga High School, Washington, D.C.; officer of Richard Montgomery Chapter, Children of the American Revolution; and a member of the Maryland and Montgomery County Historical Societies. The full text of that broadcast follows:

### **Southern Maryland History and Topography**

When the first colonials arrived in Maryland in 1634, they preempted all the desirable properties abutting on the Chesapeake Bay and the tributary waters of the Potomac--the Patuxent, the Saint Mary's and the Wicomico Rivers; and also in and around Breton Bay, Cornfield Harbor, and the various streams which they termed creeks such as Saint Inigoes and the Piscataway.

Means of communication between plantation and plantation was by wherries, pinnaces, sloops and even by barges propelled by oars. When the children of these settlers grew to manhood and womanhood and married, they began to spread out into the interior to establish their seats or homes. The first migration of the second generation of Maryland colonists was forced to center around Piscataway just about fifteen miles south of the present capitol of the United States because the Quakers and Puritans from the north had taken possession of the Eastern or Bay section which is now Anne Arundel County. These settlers from Southern Maryland, toward the end of the seventeenth century, changed their migration eastwardly from Piscataway in the direction of the second capitol of the province then located at New Providence, now Annapolis. This provincial capitol was the only city in the Palatinate and was fast becoming a metropolis of commerce and culture for all of the seaboard colonies, French, English, and Spanish and also for the islands of the Spanish Main. For many decades, this town held preeminence as the Paris of America for style and the Athens of American for its men of learning.

In the second migration, moving east from Piscataway, we find that the Digges patented Melwood Park as early as 1672. Their estate was located just four miles west of the present Upper Marlboro which was laid out as a town in 1704 to commemorate the victory of the Duke of Marlboro in the famous battle of Blenheim, in which he introduced the modern strategy of warfare. Following the Digges came such families as Mudd, Dangerfield,

Boone, Dent, Neale, Mathews, Sims, Gwynn, Magruder, Mattingly, and others.

These people, in order to reach Annapolis and to maintain social relations with each other, carved from primeval forests a maze of roads and gave names to intersections. These names were given either for a family or for topographical reasons. Thus we have Five Points, Brandywine, T.B. (for Thomas Brook), Oxen Hill, Suitland, Hughesville, Piscataway, Laurel Mills, now Laurel, Surrattsville, now Clinton, and many others. The word Piscataway, incidentally, means that the Indians plaited their hair on the side as well as on the back of their heads.

If we drive down to Marlboro over the Crain Highway, continue south seven miles to Cheltenham, and then turn left, we enter a very pleasant and a very beautiful country. Traversing the countless roads of the area, we see many of the old colonial mansions still standing on sites of eminence selected for the charming vistas on every side.

Many persons who do not know Southern Maryland have the impression that it is low and swampy. As a matter of fact, there are two sections known as swamps--Mattawoman and Zechiah. These swamps are narrow marshes or fens lush with animal life and vegetable life, and heavily timbered. They extend from the section with which we are concerned in a southeasterly direction to the Potomac River. This section of Prince George's County is distinctive for large rounded knolls. It is the great tobacco growing center of Maryland and is becoming equally famous for its dairy farms and wheat fields.

We may remember that in the war of 1812 the English General Ross sailed up the Patuxent River, debarked his troops at Benedict, constructed a causeway of oyster shells to the mainland and elected to advance on Washington by a roundabout route through Patuxent City, Aquasco, Horsehead, Nottingham, Croome, and Marlboro. In marching to Washington, the English Army left Marlboro over the present Marlboro Pike, passed Melwood Park, the Digges home, and proceeded to the present Forestville, at that time Old Long Fields, and then detoured to the present Tuxedo, near Cheverly, and the River Road into Bladensburg.

After the burning of Washington, the English Army returned to Bladensburg and ascended the hill to Decatur Heights, over what is now the Defense Highway. The army then turned right on the Ridge Road through the present Landover and Largo and on to Marlboro and back through Croome and Nottingham to Benedict.

With this brief discussion of the topography and the history of Southern Maryland, and of Prince George's County, we may now proceed to our main point of interest--**Boone Chapel**, the site of which was located two miles southeast of Cheltenham.

## **Boone Chapel**

**Boone Chapel**, in which the infant "Jackie" Carroll was baptized, was the first Catholic Church edifice erected in Maryland after the relaxation of the Penal Laws enacted by the Puritan council in Annapolis. The presumption is that it was erected as early as 1710 and was built to serve Catholics of Prince George's and Charles Counties and even Anne Arundel County, although few Catholics had seated themselves beyond the North River section. **Boone Chapel** has been considered the first link in setting up a church system for English speaking Catholics in the New World. It led to the construction of other chapels, such as the Carroll Chapel at Forest Glen in Montgomery County; Queen Chapel at Brentwood, District of Columbia, and the church or chapel at Whitemarsh. In other words, *the erection of Boone Chapel marked the transition from the celebration of religious rites in private chapels to the building of structures definitely designed for public worship.* Standing at this sainted spot, we might recall to mind the quotation: "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife" from Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard."

We know that **Boone Chapel** was in existence and staffed by one and sometimes two priests, Jesuit Fathers, and served this community for nearly one hundred and fifty years until 1859 when the Rosaryville Church was built at Upper Marlboro. **Boone Chapel** at that time had fallen into a state of disrepair and the selection of Washington as the capitol of the United States had opened up a number of settlements in the upper reaches of Prince George's County. The site of Rosaryville was found to be more convenient for the Catholic settlers of this new section. Hence we find the new church being established at a site on Nottingham Road, now known as Rosaryville, and also Oxen Hill near the Potomac River opposite Alexandria, Virginia.

Looking over the files of the FREEMAN'S JOURNAL of New York and the CATHOLIC MIRROR of Baltimore, we learn that the cornerstone of the first Rosaryville Church was laid on Sunday evening, June 5, 1859 by the Very Reverend Nicholas D. Young and that it was dedicated on Sunday, October 23, 1859. In the CATHOLIC MIRROR describing the dedication the editor remarks: "The cemetery of the old **Boone Chapel** will serve for the new church. In that cemetery rests the ashes of some of the most respectable families of Maryland. Their relations will, we hope, rejoice to hear that **Boone Chapel** will again be restored and the Holy Sacrifice offered there for their departed relations whose remains repose there."

Catholic Directories contain the name of one pastor of **Boone Chapel**, the Reverend Ignatius Combs, S.J. He is listed for 1838 and 1839 and was dwelling at the time at Whitemarsh a distance of possible twenty miles in airline.

## **John Carroll, First Archbishop of Baltimore**

All of us have read and recall the stirring verses of THE BIVOUAC OF THE DEAD, the immortal martial hymn by Theodore O'Hara. O'Hara was the son of Keane O'Hara, a prominent educator of his day in Kentucky, who married a Miss Helen Hardy. Helen Hardy was born right near **Boone Chapel**, the daughter of Solomon Hardy and Rachel Libers. The first Hardy arrived in Croome about 1732 and the Libers had already been in the neighborhood for several generations. This first Hardy was a successful businessman and a close friend of Henry Darnell of His Lordship's Kindness, living at Woodyard. Darnell's sister was the mother of "Jackie" or John Carroll, first Archbishop of Baltimore.

The Hardy Estate was known as Timberly and lay between His Lordship's Kindness, overlooking Charles Creek, and contacted the estate of the Claggett's where Bishop Thomas Claggett, the first Episcopalian bishop to be consecrated in the United States, was born. Timberly is now intersected by the Crain Highway.

We now come to the incident that bestows fame on **Boone Chapel** and its site. On January 8, 1735, was born a son, John, to Daniel Carroll a wealthy merchant of Upper Marlboro and Eleanor Darnell Carroll of Woodyard, his wife, a lady of great culture with a finished education acquired from the Flemish nuns in Europe. There has been a tradition that the first Archbishop of Baltimore was carried by his Godparents in a coach and four over ten miles of ungraded roads of that day to **Boone Chapel** at God's Acre to be baptized by one of the Jesuit priests in charge of that mission.

The children of Daniel Carroll and Eleanor Darnell Carroll, his wife, were in succession--Henry, the oldest, drowned in early boyhood; then Daniel Carroll of Rock Creek, Forest Glen, Maryland, one of the first Commissioners of the District of Columbia; Ann Carroll, wife of Robert Brent and the mother of Robert Brent, Jr., the first mayor of the District of Columbia; John Carroll, Bishop and Archbishop of Baltimore; Eleanor, who married William Brent, brother of Robert; Mary, who married into the Nicholas Young family of Prince George's County; and Elizabeth, who died a spinster. It is most natural to presume that all of these children were baptized at **Boone Chapel**.

In passing, it is interesting to note that the land on which the United States capitol now stands was at one time the property of Daniel Carroll of Duddington, who married Ann Brent, niece of Archbishop Carroll.

## **The Great White Oak Tree**

Nature has preserved for us a living memorial to the Boone Chapel Church in a giant and majestic oak, which cast its beneficent shade over the worshippers at Boone Chapel for over one hundred and fifty years. This oak is twenty-five feet in circumference at the ground, and sixteen and one-half

feet in circumference at a point eighteen feet above the ground where the branches begin to radiate from the trunk. It is one hundred feet in height and has a spread of ninety-seven feet. This white oak, at least two hundred and fifty years of age, is only one of a number of oaks which formed a grove destroyed in a tornado in 1923. At that same time, the Methodist Church at Cheltenham was razed and many barns on adjacent farms were carried into the woods by the storm. Still standing in good condition are stumps of the stielate oak, post oak, black oak, red oak, and the scarlet oak. The very nature of the soil--hardpan--was the typical or hickory climax before the storm. This is indicated by the presence of flowering dogwood holly, red cedar, pignut holly, honeysuckle, and smilax or greenbrier, and the strawberry bush. The entire cemetery is covered with periwinkle or myrtle, common in early Maryland cemeteries, and indicating a graveyard of very great age.

The general topography of the mesa or flat elevation with a broad prospect looking towards the Patuxent River, would indicate that the chapel faced the east as it should and was located on the road running at that time from Cheltenham to the site of old Brandywine. There are few monuments or markers in the cemetery of stine or marble but there are many wooden crosses still standing which would seem to prove that burials were made as recently as twenty to twenty-five years ago. There are very many nameless graves, marked by depressions in the ground.

In these hallowed surroundings, we are forcefully reminded of our tremendous debt to those early Americans, who under strife and stress and with many untold difficulties laid the foundation of this nation, bequeathing to us the priceless heritage of freedom and the right to "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." We can only discharge that debt by proving ourselves worthy of their great endeavors, always recognizing the obligations of American citizenship as well as its rights and privileges.