

THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY STORY

Published by the Montgomery County (Maryland) Historical Society

Vol. IV

August, 1961

No. 4

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THE EARLY HISTORY OF POOLESVILLE

by

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The word "Poolesville" brings to mind a section of Upper Montgomery County, Maryland, roughly between the Potomac River and Route 28, the general locale of Sugar Loaf Mountain and White's Ferry. People who live in it think of themselves as members of the Poolesville Community, a cohesive group with the same economic background and problems who go to school together, marry each other, attend a neighborhood Church, shop at a neighborhood store and are buried side by side in Monocacy Cemetery. The social and economic center of this Community is the town of Poolesville.

If this village had come into being in 1961 instead of around 1761, doubtless it would have been a "development". Many of the factors which lead to development were present - healthful climate, beautiful scenery, a good road, land which had not been exhausted by over-planting of tobacco, and land-owners willing and anxious to sell off small lots.

At an early date the physical advantages of the area became known to the Rangers, an organization set up by the Maryland Assembly to range about the frontiers to give advance warning of possible Indian trouble. No doubt they utilized a much-traveled Indian trail later to become known as Coxens Road. This road today is Route 107, an extension of Route 28 out of Rockville; it goes from Dawsonville to Whites Ferry (formerly Conrads Ferry), and is the Main Street of Poolesville.

A real demand for land in the Poolesville area was in full swing by the 1750s. However, the fact that land grants were made does not necessarily mean

that settlers came in, since land was often taken up merely as an investment. But the fact that a Chapel-of-Ease was established at Beallsville in 1747 (as part of All Saints Parish in Frederick) shows that there were enough settlers in the area to necessitate a chapel.

Some of the early land grants which later became the "Poolesville area" were:

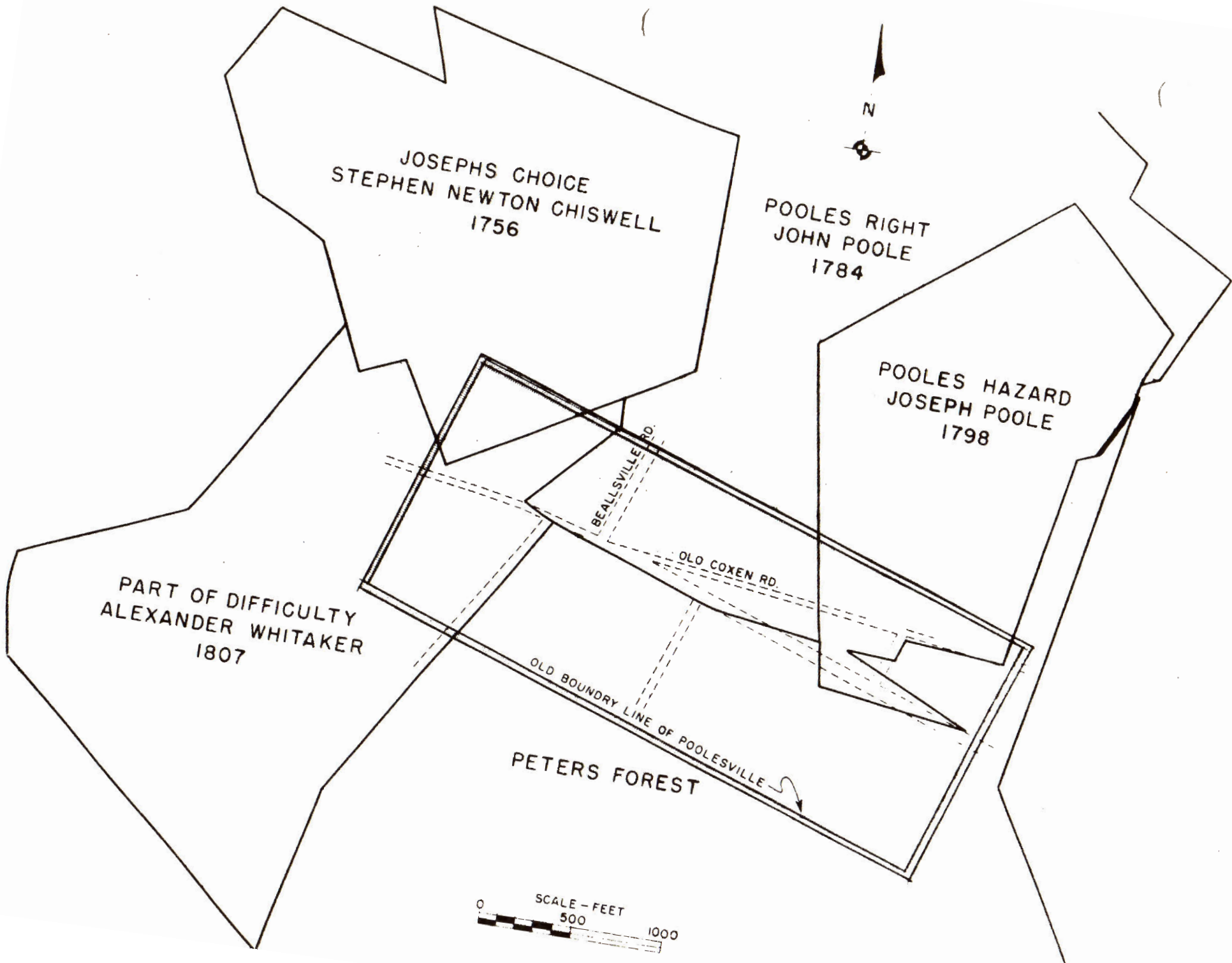
- (1) Elizabeth's Delight 1753, Resurveyed 1759 to Charles Hoskinson for 498 acres
- (2) Joseph's Choice, 1758, to Stephen Newton Chiswell for 90 acres
- (3) Forest, which in 1784 was Resurveyed by Robert Peter, 1796 acres. (To Henry Wright Crabb, 1754, originally)
- (4) Aix-la-Chapelle, 1749 to Daniel Carroll, 1792 acres
- (5) Difficulty, Resurveyed in 1765 by George Wilson for 231 acres  
This section of what was then Frederick County was called Sugarland Hundred.

A Census taken in 1776 has luckily been preserved, and from it we know the names of families living in the Hundred in that year. Among these early residents were Alexander Whitaker, James Soper, John Dowden, Mary Dowden, Hugh Tomlinson, Hugh Hoskinson, Capt. Solomon Stimpson, John Fletchall, Joseph Poole and John Poole. The population of the Hundred was 1821, of which 1374 were white and 447 black.

In 1776, Montgomery County was created out of Frederick County. A Tax Assessment was made in the new County in 1783. Included in Sugarland Hundred we find (in what today would be the immediate vicinity of the town of Poolesville):

- (1) Difficulty - James Soper - 100 acres; 1 log dwelling house;  
3 other out houses
- (2) Forest - Josiah Harding - 170 acres; 1 dwelling house, two log houses
- (3) Forest - George Blackmore - 100 acres; one old dwelling house
- (4) Johnny and Molly - Joseph N. Chiswell - 6½ acres; dwelling house
- (5) Pooles Rectification (formerly Elizabeths Delight) - Joseph Poole - 70 acres; one log dwelling house and two other houses
- (6) Pooles Rectification - John Poole - 90 acres; one log dwelling house and one kitchen
- (7) Aix-la-Chapelle - Charles Carroll heirs - 1792 acres; one framed dwelling and a few other log houses too tedious to mention (sic!)

Alexander Whitaker was the Assessor for the area. He was the owner of a number of tracts, but the only one listed as having a house on it was Two



Brothers, 200 acres which had a log dwelling, a quarter, and a mill house. This log house may be the house standing today on a tract later known as "Mt. Pleasant" (into which in 1797 Alexander Whitaker had twelve of his tracts combined.) This later was known as the Cissell farm. Since Two Brothers was granted originally in 1737 to Thomas and John Fletchall this house may be the oldest in the area.

From this Assessment we can see that the Poolesville area in 1783 was entirely a frontier community, very sparsely populated by a few settlers living in log houses.

The first step toward establishment of a town in this section took place soon after 1783, when a certain John Poole built along Coxens Road a small log house (still in use today as a home). (See # E)\* The builder may have been John Poole, owner of the tract (formerly Elizabeth's Delight, then Pooles Rectification and now resurveyed into Pooles Right). As we have seen from the Census, he was living in the area in 1776, having come up from Ann Arundel County as had many of his neighbors. Or the house may have been built by his son, John Poole II "merchant" to whom the father in 1799 deeded 15 acres of Pooles Right along Coxens Road, which 15 acres included and surrounded the little house. In it, according to tradition, John Poole lived and kept store; in any case John Poole junior, obtained a storekeeper's license in 1800.

Meanwhile, in 1769, John Poole I had sold 70 acres to his brother, Joseph - a tract which Joseph later had resurveyed into Pooles Hazard. This was to the east of John Pooles homestead, also fronting on Coxens Road. (See # "Eye".)

In 1806, Joseph Poole marked off six lots of one quarter acre each along the road, and assigned a lot to each of his five sons, keeping one for himself. It would seem that the sons were not much impressed, as, so far as we can learn, only two lots were built on. Lot #5 assigned to son Joseph has on it an old

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\* Letters refer to supplement, Poolesville's Ancient Buildings.

house today owned by Mrs. Virginia Hersperger. Another lot once had a house on it, but it is no longer there, as a different old house has been moved onto the foundation of the older one; this is now owned by Mr. Isaac Cubitt. (See # F and # G.)

Joseph and Benjamin, two of Joseph Poole's sons, evidently did not feel that their father's lots were a good location for business, as in 1807 they purchased from their cousin John Poole II a lot of three-eighths acre, the exact location of which is not known but it was presumably near the corner of Main Street & Beallsville Road. Here the brothers kept store for many years, as evidenced by references in many deeds, plats and grants. The brothers did not marry, and their property seems to have become informally the estate of other members of the family.

In 1807, John Poole II sold off another small lot to Christian Hempstone. One business enterprise after another has occupied this site, evidently very near Joseph and Benjamin Poole's store.

John Poole I died in 1816 and soon thereafter his son John Poole II moved to Barnesville. Three of his sons, however, when they reached maturity, returned to Poolesville as their home. These were Thomas, William D. and Frederick, about whom we shall hear later.

When John Poole II left Poolesville, he sold his 14 remaining acres of Pooles Right along Coxens Road to Dennis Lackland who lived in John Poole's little house which was probably Poolesville's first postoffice, since Dennis Lackland was its first postmaster.

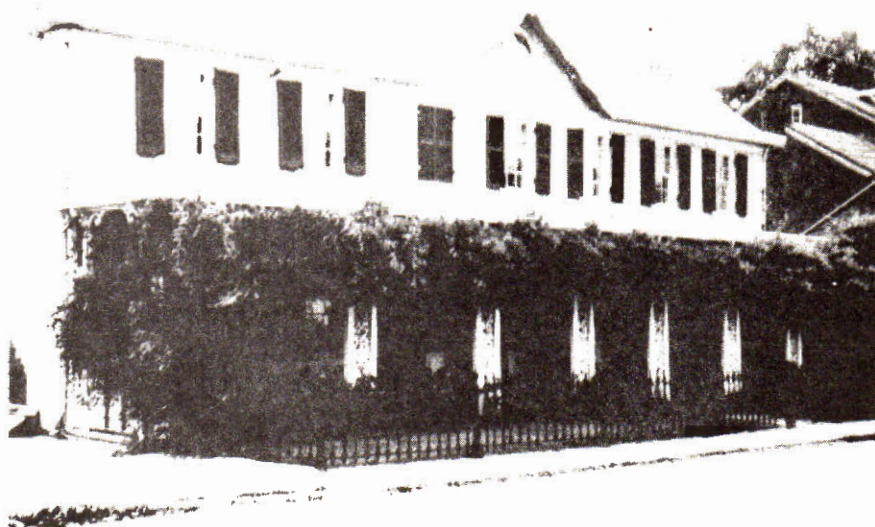
Leaving the North side of Coxens Road for the moment, we will take a look at the South side. For a short distance along the road was Forest, a large tract owned by the Peters family. In 1819 Robert Peter began to sell off lots along this short strip. The first one sold was an acre to Robert Wilson, on which was built a house occupied by his descendants until a few years ago and still in use as a residence. Wilson's daughter Mary married Frederick Poole, with whom this house is usually associated. (See # L)

POOLESVILLE HOUSES



John Poole  
House

Frederick  
Poole  
House



Thomas  
Poole  
House

Although according to present standards, four houses would not make a village, the Assessment of 1813 refers to it as "Poolesville". The Assessment of 1820 lists the following owners:

- (1) Dennis Lackland -  $14\frac{1}{2}$  acres improved
- (2) Christian Hempstone -  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre - improved
- (3) Robert Wilson - 1 acre, improved
- (4) Joseph and Benjamin Poole -  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre improved

After the death of Robert Peter, his son George Peter sold off a number of lots laid off parallel to the lot sold to Robert Wilson. It is not clear how owners of these lots could get out to Coxens Road since to do so they would have to cross Poole land. To remedy this, the purchasers of the lots, led by George Peter, petitioned for a relocation of the road which they claimed was on low ground. There were about an equal number of people for and against the change depending, as one might guess, on whether the petitioner's land was on or off the old road. The petition was granted and a new road cut along the northern boundary of Forest, where it is today. This meant the end of any plans for developing land along the old road and accounts for the two roads that formerly came together at what is now the Poolesville Bank.

From that time on the Peter family sold off lots. On one of these is the house built by Dr. Thomas Poole. (See # M). Other houses extended to the East (See # K). As time went on, much of this section became the business district with stores and shops. Unfortunately much of this area has undergone a series of fires, so that the structures there today are replacements for the original buildings.

Meanwhile on the north side of the street Dennis Lackland did not prosper and he lost his property which was bought by his brother-in-law, Ignatius Davis, and sold off in lots by him and his heir, Davis Richardson. Here were homes at first, some of them later becoming business establishments. Here, too, fire destroyed several buildings, but some interesting ones remain. (See # C and # D).

Encouraged, no doubt, by the demand for lots, Alexander Whitaker, owner of Difficulty lying just west of the Poole and Peter lands along Coxens Road, left

directions in his Will that 16 lots were to be laid off out of his estate along the road, and two allotted to each of his eight children. This was done in 1828. But his sons moved away and his married daughters did not build on their lots. These were sold to prospective home builders who erected a number of comfortable houses, many of them still in use today. Several lots became the site of St. Peters Episcopal Church, built in 1847. (See # A, # O, # P, # Q, # R)

After almost all the land along Coxens Road had been built up, the town expanded to the North onto land of the Chiswell family; to the East onto Aix-la-Chapelle; and to the South and West to take in more of Forest and Difficulty.

In addition to houses and business establishments, Poolesville also had Churches and schools. In 1820 Major George Peter gave the land for a Methodist Episcopal Church on which a brick edifice was erected which is still standing. At the time of the Civil War the Methodist Episcopal Church South separated from the Mother Church, taking away (in the case of the Poolesville Church) most of its members. The old Church stood idle for years, its burying ground deserted and neglected. A few grave stones are still to be found there; at one time several stones marked the graves of Union soldiers. The building is now the Town Hall. (See # N)

In 1849 the Presbyterian Church acquired land on which was built the Church in use today after a period of being closed. (See # B)

St. Peters Episcopal Church was built in 1847 and has been in use continuously ever since. It succeeded the Parish Church formerly in Beallsville where today Monocacy Cemetery is located. The land was acquired from William, Thomas and Frederick Poole. Church records beginning in 1799 give much information about local families. In 1947 the Montgomery County Historical Society placed a bronze tablet on the Church on the occasion of its 100th Birthday. (See # R)

In 1864 a Baptist Church, still standing although no longer used as a Church, was built at the eastern end of town. (See # J)

Major George Peter gave land for a school in 1841. Here, on the corner adjoining the Dr. Thomas Poole house and the Methodist Church was a school house

used until about 50 years ago. Presumably the school was a community school at first. My father had a large volume of the "Dramatic Works of Shakespeare" published in New York in 1859 by Leavitt and Allen. Inside the front cover is the inscription "April 8, 1864: presented to J. Sprigg Poole on trial Declamation by his teacher J. William Booth".

A mile or so North of Poolesville was Briarley Hall, a boarding school for young ladies from about 1870 to 1900. Later it was a Military Academy. Today Poolesville has two large modern Public Schools.

From the earliest days there are references to taverns in the town. These seem to have been kept by various people through the years, but none of the proprietors seem to have owned their establishments which makes it difficult to locate the buildings. In 1821 a deed refers to Berneys Old Tavern; in 1827 a petition for relocating Coxens Road says the petitioners want to alter the road "from William O. West's tavern in Poolesville so as to intersect the said road at some point below the old tavern formerly kept by Henry Fowler". The History of Western Maryland by J. Thomas Scharf mentions Mr. Riney and Mr. Taylor as other tavern keepers. Both Scharf and town tradition identify this early tavern with the house now owned and occupied by Edwin Tillack. (See # II)

There are many references at a later date to the Hotel kept by Richard Spates. This was located just behind the site now occupied by the Poolesville Bank and was in existence for many years. The Hotel had a pump which was supposed to bring forth unusually fine drinking water. Consequently many of the townsmen repaired to the Hotel each evening ostensibly to bring home a bucket of drinking water. But from the length of time it took to perform this relatively simple act, many local housewives suspected that the Hotel was serving as a sort of Men's Club!

As mentioned before, most business establishments now in Poolesville have been built as replacements for earlier structures destroyed by fires in 1923, 1935 and 1953. The Poolesville National Bank was opened for business in 1907.

Poolesville grew slowly. The Montgomery County Tax Assessment Books show the following:

1813	3 improved lots
1820	4 improved lots
1826	8 improved lots
1827	11 improved lots; 16 unimproved lots
1830	10 improved lots; 31 unimproved lots

Growth continued and by 1850 according to the Census, there were 20 families living in the town. An Article in the National Geographic Magazine for November, 1959 gives the population of Poolesville at 298, - the population increase of the United States every 54.6 minutes.

The people who live in a typical rural town are usually retired farmers, professional, business or trades people, and Poolesville was a typical town in this respect. According to the U. S. Census for 1850, occupations of townspeople were distributed as follows:

Blacksmiths	3
Cabinet makers	2
Carpenters	5
Constable	1
Farmers	10
Housewives	4
Laborers	1
Magistrate	1
Merchants	2
Physicians	2
Shoemakers	1
Tailors	5
Teachers	1
Wheelwrights	2

In the 1850 and 1860 Census schedules - (100 years ago) are included the following names, most of them still familiar ones around the town: Cator, Cruit, Fyffe, Gott, Hall, Hoskinson, McIntosh, Merchant, Metzgar, Moulden, Norris, Poole, Reed, Spates, Veirs, White and Williams.

Social life was many-sided in Poolesville. For instance, the Vestry Proceedings for St. Peters Church on August 4, 1800, contain the following entry:

"Mr. Richard Fish has opened a school for Church music. He may use the Church (at Monocacy) for that purpose provided he allows Mark Fowler (should he choose to teach singing Church music) the use of the Church for an equal portion of time; that is to say, one to have one week and the other the following."

Home entertaining always provided the major social life of the Community. Baseball games between local teams created as much interest as Major League Games create today. The Poolesville baseball grounds were on the Back Street.

In October, 1843, Poolesville was the scene of the first County Fair held in Montgomery County. Evidently spinning and weaving were still widely practised in the home as shown by the classes for which prizes were awarded. These included:

- (1) Fulled cloth;
- (2) Fulled linsey;
- (3) Striped linsey;
- (4) Carpeting;
- (5) Blankets;
- (6) Counterpane;
- (7) Cassinett;
- (8) Flannel;
- (9) Sheeting;
- (10) Stockings.

Prizes were also offered for the usual classes of farm products - cattle, garden vegetables and the like.

After the Civil War neighborhood ladies had an active chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Today there are various women's organizations including a Woman's Club and a Garden Club. For the men there has been since 1869 the Poolesville Lodge of the I.O.O.F. There was at one time a branch of the Y.M.C.A. with headquarters in the Town Hall. An active Board of Trade and local Farm Organizations for both adults and youth are among groups affording opportunities for civic service.

During the Civil War, Union troops were stationed in the territory along the Maryland side of the Potomac River. This brought them close to Poolesville which was an off-duty rendezvous for the soldiers. Union and Confederate troops came through the town at various times. Young men from the area served on both sides, but especially dear to Poolesville hearts are the volunteers who with Elijah White crossed over into Virginia to form what is sometimes called the "Laurel Brigade". After the Battle of Ball's Bluff in which Col. Edward D. Baker was killed, his body was laid out in the parlor of the Frederick Poole house awaiting proper transportation elsewhere for burial.

As to Government, Poolesville was for many years a part of Medleys District with the polling place in the neighborhood of Beallsville. The town was

incorporated in 1833, since which time it has been governed as to local matters by a Town Council of five members, one of whom serves as Mayor. The town had a Sesqui-Centennial Celebration in 1954. Today the town has modern improvements including hard streets, cement side-walks, electricity, telephone service, etc.

The people of Poolesville have reason to be proud that their main characteristic is stability rather than mushroom growth. They are proud that there are in the town more than a dozen houses still in use although more than a hundred years old. Many of the local families are living today where their parents, grand-parents and even great-grandparents lived before them. While we cannot name any Poolesville native son or daughter who has attained national prominence, we cannot recall ever having heard of any one who has brought shame to this, his native town, where crime is little known either in the present or past.

So here we have Poolesville.

## POOLESVILLE'S ANCIENT BUILDINGS

In spite of the fact that Poolesville has suffered from three serious fires, the town still boasts more than a dozen ancient structures. The homes have been in use continuously for more than a hundred years.

With the exception of numbers F, G, H and "Eye", these buildings can be seen in the course of a short walk around the town. Consult map.

No. A - Across the street from St. Peters Church on Whitaker Lots 9, 10, and 11, is a large frame house now the property of John Hall. Here in 1832, Craven P. Beeding erected "valuable houses and other improvements to the value of \$2000 or \$3000; this he furnished with rich and costly furniture, plate, piano, etc." Beeding also purchased a valuable carriage and harness. Beeding's wife was Rosetta Lackland, sister of Dennis. To her Craven transferred all his property and then failed in business; he represented to his creditors that he owned nothing - all belonged to his wife. After much legal bickering, this house was sold in 1850 to William Dennis Poole, brother of Frederick and Thomas who had homes further east in the town.

William D. Poole and his family lived in the house until his widow, Mrs. Rebecca Poole, died. The heirs sold it in 1889 to James F. Poole, a descendant of Joseph Poole. In 1903 it became the property of Julius Hall, son of John R. Hall who lived "up the street". Julius was the father of John Hall, the present owner.

No. B - Presbyterian Church. On Beallsville Road, just north of Main Street.

No. C - A row of houses mainly identified with John R. Hall. In 1830 Thomas Hall purchased two lots of the Poole-Lackland-Davis tract from Henry A. Collier. When Thomas died in 1855, a Commission was appointed to divide the property. The description of it then describes it very well as it is today: (1) A two-story brick dwelling house occupied by Thomas Hall in his life time and now occupied by his widow; (2) a two-story brick house adjoining; (3) A tailor shop; (4) Brick meat house; (5) log kitchen; (6) small one-story wooden building used as a shoemaker shop; (7) Old log stable.

Thomas Hall's son, John R. Hall, got part of the property at the time of the division. Upon the death of John's mother in 1870 he bought in the rest of it.

John R. Hall had several children including Misses Dora and Rebecca Hall who lived in the old house until recently. A son, Julius Hall, later moved to the house opposite the Church (No. A). Charles Jamison now owns one of the row houses.

No. D - Sellman-Willard House. On Sept. 30, 1853, Davis Richardson sold six acres of the Poole-Lackland-Davis tract to Martha Michael. She was a cousin of the Poole brothers, founders of Poolesville.

In 1857, two years before her death, Martha sold off part of her land, part of Pooles Right, to Franklin Veirs. He was a builder, son of one of the Whitaker heirs, married to Ann Elizabeth Hall whose father, Thomas Hall, lived next door. Franklin was builder of St. Peters Episcopal Church, as can be seen by a brick in the Church wall.

Franklin in his will probated Sept. 29, 1857, left his house and lot in Poolesville (his late residence) to his wife; he made no separate provision for his children as he "had full confidence that his wife will do what what is right by them".

The widow married William Walter, and in her will probated June 3, 1885, left her property to her two daughters. The house was advertised for sale Jan. 21, 1888 as a "brick house and lot nicely located in village of Poolesville; house well constructed and in good condition; 8 rooms, necessary outbuildings, including good stable, fine well of water, nice garden enclosed by good post- and rail fence". It was bought by one of the daughters, Lucy Sellman, wife of Charles Sellman. Occupied for many years by Mrs. George Willard, the house is still in fine shape and most attractive.

No. E - John Poole House. As noted above, this property had passed via Dennis Lackland, Ignatius Davis and Davis Richardson to Martha Michael. In her will probated Sept. 27, 1859, Martha left to her sister Elizabeth Jarvis "Pt of Pooles Right, including my late residence, for life; after her death to my niece, Rose Money". Seventy years later the old house, still in use as a residence, was sold by the heirs of Rose Money to Frank Money and Mary F. Morrison, widow. At this time (1927) it was described as "the old Money house, a 7 room frame dwelling on north side of old or back road", etc.

No. F and No. G - Two of the lots which Joseph Poole gave to his sons.

No. H - Edwin Tillack House, said to be an old tavern. Descriptions of this property in the land records are too indefinite to permit of positive identification. Apparently it is the property which was owned at one time by Thomas Plater, a one-time member of Congress of the United States, son of Governor Plater of Maryland. His daughter, Jane Plater, married first Elisha Williams, said to have been old enough to be her father. She subsequently married a man named Pleasants, young enough to have been her son, and lived on a farm west of Poolesville.

The land passed from the Plater estate to Samuel Cator, a blacksmith. He or his son was postmaster at one time. Subsequent owners were Samuel S. Milford, the village dentist for many years; Alf and Louise Heiberg who planned to make Poolesville into a sort of Waterford; and finally Edwin Tillack.

No. "Eye" - Homestead of Joseph Poole, "Pooles Hazard". Descended through his son William to his son Thomas H. Poole. The latter's daughter, Ann Elizabeth, married Vernon Hempstone. They sold the place to Dr. Milford who sold it to Warren Irvin, the present owner.

No. J - The old Baptist Church, now part of Norris' Farm Supply Company.

No. K - Eastern End of Town. Lots here formerly belonged to the Trundle and White families and others. The White property is now owned by the Kohlhoss family. Here before 1860 lived Dr. Stephen N. C. White who left an interesting will. In it he said "One of my youngest sons is to be educated for the profession of medicine (the one best qualified by mental endowments and education) - if he is so inclined; to him I devise my medical library, surgical and other instruments, office furniture, etc. - - My executors shall not distress any poor person on account of my professional or other services."

When one of Doctor White's daughters fell in love with a local farmer and her Mother disapproved of the match, the girl is said to have jumped out of one of the windows into her lover's arms.

- No. L - Frederick Poole House. His daughter, Florence married her cousin Richard Poole and occupied the house. Their daughter Frances married William Williams and lived in it until a few years ago.
- No. M - Dr. Thomas Poole house. He was a grandson of John Poole, the founder, brother of William D. and Frederick. Together they acquired the property in 1835 and soon thereafter turned it over to Thomas, who built his house on the lot, part of Forest. Some time after his death in 1870 the house was occupied by Dr. Poole's daughter, Alice, the wife of Dr. Richard Gott. It now belongs to Mr. Meerdink.
- No. N - Old Methodist Church. On Edwards Ferry Road a short distance south of Main Street. Now the Town Hall.
- No. O - This was Whitaker Lot #1, sold to Richard Poole, a cousin of John. Richard was at one time postmaster and probably a merchant. He left no immediate heirs so this lot was sold soon after Richard's death in 1832. It was then described as "a corner lot in good situation for business and contains  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre with a two-story brick building 16 ft long by 26 ft wide, a convenient log kitchen and a good pump of water all in good repair and enclosed by post and rail fence in bad order."
- The property was purchased by Gerhart Matzgar and remained in the Metzgar family until 1877 when it was sold to Airy Ann Jones and Columbia Jones. Their heirs in 1936 sold it to Harry L. Willard whose widow sold it to Alf and Louise Heiberg. It is now the property of Frank Flower.
- No. P - John Will Hall Property. This was Whitaker lot #2 and became the property of John W. Hall in 1848. He built the brick house - really a double house which has been in the ownership of the family up to the present, and continuously occupied.
- No. Q - Hoskinson House. Two or three of the Whitaker lots became the property of Hilleary Hoskinson in 1849. The present brick house has been occupied ever since by his descendants; today it is the home of his granddaughters, the Misses Hoskinson.
- No. R - St. Peters Church. On Whitaker lots #6 and #7. Eleanor Whitaker Cissell sold the land in 1834 to Frederick, Thomas and William D. Poole who transferred it to the Vestry of the Church.
- No. S - There is an old house west of the Church. Here the Fyffe family once lived. This old house on Difficulty, possibly was the one there in 1783 when that tract belonged to James Soper. It is now owned by Mr. Peters.