

THE CECIL WHIG, ELKTON, SATURDAY, February 24, 1872.

RECOLLECTIONS OF MY BOYHOOD.

Muncie, Del. County. Ind.,
January 29th, 1872.

“There comes a voice that awakes my soul. It is the voice of years that are past: they roll before me with all their deeds.”

Ossian.

I was born in Cecil county, Maryland, Nov. 4, 1800. My earliest recollections are connected with the farm of Tobias Rudolph, where my father Capt. John Sample, then lived. It was on the Glasgow road, opposite the Cowden farm (now owned by Rev. James McIntire). From there I used to go to school over Ginn's Hill - where the residence of Postmaster General Creswell now stands - to Elkton, about a mile and a half. Then we lived about three years at the Landing, moving to Elkton about 1811, I think.

I remember many of the scenes and incidents of the war 1812; and particularly how the red-coats beat up our quarters so often in Elkton, while they blockaded the Chesapeake. Often we (the women and children - and *some men*) took what we could conveniently carry and fled for safety. One afternoon after the battery (as we called it) was elected at the Landing, and the good men and brave were there to meet the foe, very many of the women and children were collected at the creek north of the town, awaiting the result of an approach of barges, two men came sneaking by - John and Jim Anderson - and the women opened on them a fire of ridicule, which was very severe, but they kept on, observing the adage, “He that runs away, may live to fight some other day.” My mother and the younger children went to the residence of Mr. John Thompson, near Newark, in Delaware, and remained for some time. The prominent men who stood foremost in the defense of our homes then were Col. James Sewell, Major Andrew Whann, (of the cavalry) Capt. Sample and Ensign Thomas Howard - I have forgotten the Lieutenant. A part of the time there was a company from Lancaster, Pa., quartered in Whann's house, near the mill. - The British fleet lay in the bay down about Pool's island and Spesutia island, and from thence they sent marauding parties in barges up Sassafra, Susquehanna and Elk rivers, robbing hen-roosts, firing private property, and turning up Jack generally. They thus destroyed ware-houses and schooners at Frenchtown, where we had an unfinished fort. They also destroyed Havre de Grace. I saw the smoke at Elkton of the burning property. They essayed to reach Elkton, but finding a Cheraux-de-frise across the river, and the little battery at the Landing ready to receive them, they retreated, remembering that discretion was the better part of valor. They were a wretched, cowardly set of marauders, going only to these points which were unprotected. A large body of Pennsylvania Militia was collected and encamped at Kennett Square, in Pennsylvania, contiguous to the heads of the Chesapeake and Delaware bays, ready to succor any post where most needed: from thence was a chain of videttes leading down through Elkton to Bull's Mountain, at the head of the Chesapeake, and by that means constant watch was kept over the movements of the British fleet in our bay. Their headquarters, in Elkton, were at the Fountain

Inn, kept then by Joshua Richardson. They each rode about ten miles, and I have often seen them coming on a gallop, the horse covered with foam.

We could distinctly hear the booming of the cannon, during the bombardment of Fort McHenry, at Baltimore. In February, 1815, when the news of peace was received, all of our citizens repaired to the Landing to fire a salute from the battery. Ezekiel F. Chambers, then a sprightly, slender, sharp-faced young lawyer - I think from Kent county - was at Elkton, (perhaps Court was in session - I think he was State's Attorney at the time.) and took charge of a nine or twelve-pounder canon. It was at the north end of the battery, near the stone house, where a tavern was kept in the early days. In loading the gun, some imprudent person, after the ball was rammed home, stuck a frozen clod in the muzzle; (they were firing at a barrel on the ice, some half mile below,) Chambers touched the gun off, and it busted. I was standing on the rampart, near him, watching the effect of the shot, when, on looking down, I saw Chambers lying against the bank, bleeding, and the debris of the gun lying on him. He was hardly hurt, but no bones were broken, although there were some narrow escapes. A large piece of the gun was thrown into one of the garret windows of the stone house which stood near, and a little girl was looking out of the window at the time. Tobias Rudolph stood upon a barrel to see the effect of the shot, right in the rear of the gun, the breech of which knocked the barrel to pieces under him. I met Chambers, in August, 1859, at Newport, Rhode Island. He became one of the Judges of the Court of Appeals for Maryland.

In those days, Earl, Worrall and Purnell composed the Circuit Court for Cecil county. Wm. Alexander, Jere Cosden, John Partridge, Tobias Rudolph, Wm. H. Ward were the prominent resident attorneys; James Sewall, Clark, and perhaps Robert C. Lusby, Sheriff. Henry Stump was perhaps a student at law, and perhaps George B. Cosden, Henry D. Miller, Register of Wills.

In my early days in Elkton, there were no lines of steamboats, and all travel was by means of stages between Baltimore and Philadelphia. There were three lines - the U. S. Mail, Pilot, and Expedition. West of Elkton, some six miles, was a place called the barrens, where robberies were committed. One evening in Winter, the passengers going east were waiting at the Fountain Inn, while the baggage was being changed from one stage to another. A trunk was found to be unusually heavy - Many loafers were standing around, some assisting to lift the trunks on to the boot of the stage. Some one remarked, "there must be money in this." The owner was standing on the porch, and remarked "Boys, if you should see what is in that trunk, it would make you laugh; there are lobsters in it." The roughs thought that but a ruse, and some of them getting ahead of the stage, when it reached the barrens cut the baggage strap, and carrying the trunk into the bushes, broke it open, and found, to their dismay, that it did indeed contain lobsters. The owner, a fancy goods merchant of Baltimore, had; been to Philadelphia to replenish his stock, and being somewhat of an epicure, had filled this trunk with lobsters. His fancy goods trunks were examined for money, but, finding none, the trunks were left there in the brush.

Afterwards, and before the era of railroads, a line of steamers was established between Baltimore and Elkton, the passengers being carried twenty miles by land between Elkton and Wilmington, in the post chaises. It was a beautiful sight to see from nine to twelve of these post coaches coming in, each carrying about nine passengers, drawn by four horses, and this each way each

day. The steamers landed at the Landing. There was a large carrying trade done in those days between Baltimore and Elkton, in sail vessels. - Great quantities of wheat were shipped from Baltimore, to supply the flouring mills on the Big and Little Elk Creeks, and pig iron was brought in Elkton.

I left Elkton for the West in October of 1819 - not then quite 19 years old. Often in memory, especially in the last two years. I have rambled over it in every part, and re-visited the Landing, where, about the wharves and in the river, I spent so much of my time rambling about, with rod in hand, fishing, and catching crabs. I am an old man now, but the recollection of those days is very pleasant to me. I go back to the store, near the Court House - East of it - where, for Levi H. Evans, I clerked the last Summer, - that of 1810, - which I spent in Elkton. There used to be a legend connected with the Rudolph house, which stands next to that store-room East. The store-room sets back from the street. On the west side of the house is an outside cellar door. It used to be said that during the Revolutionary war, our troops retreating before the British, who were in close pursuit, some of our boys were in that cellar filling their canteens out of some pipes of wine, when the British appeared around the bend of the road, west, where old Stephen Hollingsworth used to live, and of course they did not tarry long. The retreat continued to Brandywine, where our troops made a stand.

Many of the incidents in No. 17, of the reminiscences, published in *The Cecil Democrat*, are familiar to me, and all of the persons—Zeb Ferguson, Andrew Short, Dick Mill, Polly Poulson and others. I wonder if any of the Giles family live about there now? Amelia married Philip Harding, a Kentuckian, first cashier of the old Elkton Bank, and an out and out gentleman. I very well remember the life and death of Nicholas Lirtz Dawson, who died early, and was a relative of Col. Sewall. - His sister Maria - now Mrs. Ford - I learn, resides in Sassafras Neck, a widow, and an estimable lady. The funeral of Lirtz Dawson I shall never forget. I noticed in *The Cecil Democrat*, sent me by the hand of a kind lady friend, the name of John Gilpin. I knew him, and Joseph and Henry and Mary, the only sister, - a sweet, inestimable lady. Their mother married Frisby Henderson—both now dead.

I would like to know the name of the writer of the reminiscences. I am doubtless well acquainted with the person.

I am now an old man, but still hope to re-visit those scenes of my boyhood; go back to the old farm, where memory came 1 into being; roam again over the old scenes of the Landing; go across the river again to the Lewis Thomas farm, where I used to go for apples; fish again at the old log pens, opposite the lower wharf; go to Whann's mill, where, with Mary, I used to stroll along the race-bank of Sabbath evenings; go to the spot in the graveyard, at the head of Christian Meeting House, where my precious sisters lie buried.

This is enough for this time. I may write again.

Yours, in friendship,

Thomas J. Sample.