
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION INFORMATION SHEET

TRIADELPHIA: THE THREE BROTHERS

*The Personal Recollections of a Lost Village
by One Who Knew and Loved the Place*

Triadelphia was the name of a lovely little village of about three hundred and fifty inhabitants, that once existed on the south bank of the Patuxent River, in Montgomery County Maryland, fourteen miles from Rockville, the county seat and twenty five miles from Baltimore. The town was laid out on a survey containing five hundred and sixteen acres, made for Benjamin Gaither, April 8, 1725. The town was established in 1809 by three brothers-in-law, Isaac Briggs, Caleb Bently, and Thomas Moore. Mr. Moore married Miss Mary Brooke, September 21, 1791; Mr. Bently married Miss Sarah Brooke, April 20, 1791; and Mr. Briggs married Miss Hannah Brooke, all daughters of Roger Brooke, a descendant of Robert Brooke, who came from England and settled on the Patuxent River in St. Mary's County, Maryland. Mr. Briggs was an engineer and helped to lay out the city of Washington. The town of Triadelphia was laid out on a part of tract called "Benjamin's Lot," which was deeded to Benjamin Gaither by Lord Baltimore, and then deeded by Mr. Gaither to these three brothers-in-law, Briggs, Bently and Moore, whose relationship gave name to the village, Triadelphia, which means "The Three Brothers."

Mr. Briggs, the surveyor, laid out the town and superintended the erection of the cotton factory, grist mill, and house adjoining, which burned down. Mr. Charles H. Brooke, a descendant of the noted sire whose three daughters were married to Messrs. Bently, Briggs and Moore, wrote me a few years ago of his residence in Triadelphia, which was before my father come to the place. Mr. Brooke said in his letter:

"We lived in a brick house opposite the factory. The grist and saw mills stood below the factory, the same race serving them all. The road to the farmhouse passed the factory and went up the hill; near the mill was a gushing spring; the farmhouse was occupied by Old Frederick Brown. At that time, 1820-1825, the factory, mill, and farm were busy, and a large tenantry could hear the hum of machinery from morning till night. The business was like clockwork in every branch, perfect system prevailing everywhere."

1850

By referring to the accompanying diagram, which I prepared by the help of Mr. Frederick W. Brown, who also lived in Triadelphia when I did, though he is ten or more years my senior, the reader may see what families resided in the village about 1850-55. The drawing is not absolutely correct in distance and relations, but it is sufficiently so to make it reliable, especially as to buildings and families. By reference to numbers below the diagram, the location of each family and industry, institution and home, may be found.

About 1854 my father moved to Triadelphia. With six and eight-horse teams he hauled raw cotton from Baltimore to Triadelphia, and conveyed the manufactured goods back to Baltimore. I think the plant was owned and operated at this particular time by Mr. Thomas C. Miller and two of the Warfields, relatives, I believe for former Governor Warfield, who still

to the dear old ladies who had given me winter apples when I went visiting with my mother, and turned to take one last, lingering look at the town and people I had learned to know and love with all the innocence of my child nature, Triadelphia was a flourishing village, holding on its bosom of thrift and contentment a happy and prosperous people, about four hundred in all; when I returned just fifty years later, there was not a soul in the town - - not one! The disastrous flood of 1868 had swept the village away, leaving only the bare and broken walls of the cotton factory, grist mill, church, store, and three dwellings, all of which had become more dilapidated since the flood, thus giving additional gloom and sadness to every aspect of desolation that the ruins of the village presented.

Under the stately sycamore, by which I was enabled to identify where "home, sweet home" had been, and which had grown from a slender sapling to a sturdy tree, I stood in tearful tenderness, my soul being deeply moved by memories sad but sweet. I was glad I was alone - not another soul being on the sacred site of the once happy, thriving village. I looked up to God. He alone could know the nature and meaning of my tears, or measure their purity and tenderness. And He alone could soothe my sorrow and sweeten the bitter cup I drank under that old sycamore. And He did. As I longed for the boys and girls whom I had learned to know and to love, and thought of all the blessed associations I had enjoyed in that place, and which would return no more on earth, He fed my sorrowing soul with this promise:

" 'Tis more than a dream, and I smile
for I feel
That the vision that haunts me will
some day be real;
And comrades long parted will some-
where convene
Sometime, all together, on God's
fadeless green."

PROMINENT MEN

Mr. Lansdale became the owner of the Triadelphia mill property about 1856. From that time on, until war, fire, and flood had visited the place, Triadelphia was a busy, thriving, beautiful village of three or four hundred inhabitants. Mr. Lansdale was the first manager to introduce steam into a factory for heating purposes. He was one of the inventors of the first wood-planing machines, and also invented the metallic yoke for swinging bells.

Thomas Moore, one of the noted brothers-in-law who founded Triadelphia, was also an inventor. He made and had patented the first refrigerator ever made. It was a cedar tub of oval form, about eighteen inches deep, in which was placed a tin box with square corners, which would contain twenty-two prints of butter of one pound each, leaving space on each side between the tin and the wood for small lumps of ice. In this refrigerator the butter was taken to Georgetown D.C., a distance of twenty miles, and in the warmest weather, firm and fine, with ice enough left to give each purchaser a small lump. This butter commanded a high price. Thomas Jefferson, then President of the United States, and other noted Federal officials, used Mr. Moore's patent refrigerators. He constructed the causeway from Mason Island, in the Potomac opposite Georgetown, to the Virginia shore. He was also appointed chief engineer of the James River Canal, in Virginia, and also served in the same relation to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal.

"The Moon Man"

Shadrach Nugent, a famous colored man, born near Rockville, Maryland, in 1761, was a noted character about Triadelphia in its early history. His father came from Guinea, and

became "Mr. Crampton's Bob". His mother was an Irish woman named Mary Nugent, who served seven years to pay for her transportation to America. She had four children - Shadrach, Eli, Millie, and Nellie. Shadrach was bound by his mother to George Graff, who became an officer in the Revolutionary War, and Shadrach became his body servant. After the war, Shadrach was set free, and returned to the vicinity of Triadelphia and helped to quarry stones for the cotton and grist mills, and for other buildings in the village. During the War of 1812, he lived with his sister near Triadelphia, and saw the light when the British burned the capital at Washington. Later on he moved to Washington, where he lived and labored for many years. During the latter part of this life, when he was too feeble to work, he was a conspicuous figure on the streets of Washington selling his "History of the Moons" for a living. He wore a card on his breast with this inscription: "Shadrach Nugent was encamped on Federal Hill, Baltimore, Maryland, with Lieutenant George Graff, of the artillery, as his body servant, one hundred and two years ago this July 1879, when General Lafayette reenforced General Washington at Yorktown, Virginia. I was sixteen years old then, and am one hundred and eighteen years old now." His predictions concerning the moon, including his activity in selling them, gave him the title, "The Moon Man," of which he was proud.

The Farm House

This is a part of the house into which my father moved when we first went to Triadelphia. It was built by Captain Welch, an ancestor of the Warfields, I am told, about 1725. It was located about half a mile from the village, and was called the "Farm House" perhaps because it was more in the centre of Benjamin's Lot, or else for the reason that the manager of the farm lived in it for many years.

The Church

This was the first church I ever attended. It was a Methodist Church, located on a hill just south of the town. The road in front of it led from the village up to the company's large barn and stables, and on to what was called the "old orchard" and the "Farm House". It was called "the back road."

My earliest recollection is connected with this church. One bright Sunday morning, because my mother had made me a dress that I did not like, and which I refused to put on, I declined to go to Sunday School. My father then took me in charge, administered some medicine in the shape of a spanking, and it cured me. I put the dress on and went to Sunday School. That was the first and last spanking my father gave me.

Fifty years after, when I visited the ruins of the town, I entered the old church, then used by the farmer as a place to store implements, and found it much as I had seen it fifty years before, except that the pulpit and pews were gone. There was the same old gallery for the colored people - a provision found in nearly all churches in that section of Maryland in those days. I went up into the gallery to see what I could see. Among other things I found an old wheel, about five or six feet in diameter, over which the village schoolteacher, about whom I used to hear them talk, is said to have lost his mental balance, trying to establish perpetual motion. Just how or why he lost his mind I do not know, but there was the old wheel. I carried it down and out into the light, and then took a snapshot of it. But the schoolmaster, whose name I do not recall, has long since gone to his home on high, where perfection of faculty is the gift of God to each and all.

The Store

Here are the remains of the village store, owned and operated by Miller and Warfield, to which I used to run on errands for

my mother. It stood on the bank of the river, and could be distinctly seen from the other end of the village. It faced up the main and only street in the town. Just behind it glides the Patuxent River. To me those ruins are dear and mean much.

The Old Tree

Looking from the ruins of the store westward, we have presented in this view the Miller and Warfield house on the right, the cotton factory on the left, and the large village tree in the distance. Just to the left of the tree is the spring, with part of the dairy remaining. It was once a lovely place - and is still, for that matter.

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remained ten years. He was the first to introduce steam into a factory for heating purposes. In 1856, he returned to Triadelphia and by his enterprise and energy succeeded in making it a thriving village containing 400 inhabitants, with a large three story store, cotton factory, saw, plaster, bone and grist mills, stone and mechanical shops. He was a member of the State Constitutional Convention of 1864, and was elected to the Senate 1865. He died in 1878 universally respected by the large circle of operatives, business men and politicians, with whom he was associated while he lived in the confidence and esteem of his friends and neighbors.

Copied from little book published in 1879, written by Col. T.H.B. Boyd, entitled "History of Montgomery County- Maryland."

Under Chapter XIV - Prominent Men

Hon. Thomas Lansdale was born in this county in 1808. He invented the first wood planing machine, and the metallic yoke for the swing bells. Extensively engaged in mechanical operations for a number of years. In 1842 he became interested in the Triadelphia Mills, remaining five years, when he took charge of the Granites at Ellicott's Mills where he

