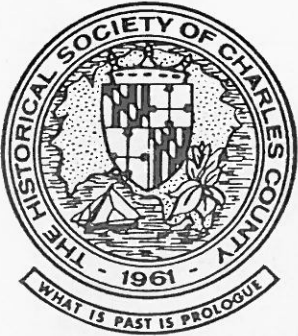


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Dr. Lloyd S. Bowling, *President*

Mr. Garth E. Bowling, Jr., *Editor*

WILLIAM EILBECK OF ARABY

by Michael J. Mazzeo, Jr.*

William Eilbeck lived at "Araby" from 1734 to 1765. He was born near Gosforth, Cumberland, England, the son of William and Margaret Dixon Eilbeck and baptized 4 October 1696.¹ He sought a career for himself away from his land and was dispatched in 1725 by Peter Howe and John Aderton as a tobacco agent to Virginia on the Chesapeake Bay.² When Eilbeck sailed from Whitehaven on The George he was instructed to take on two hundred gallons of brandy at the Isle of Man or fifty gallons or brandy in Dublin on credit. Eilbeck and his companion factor were to divide their stock of goods and set up two stores a suitable distance from one another. Once The George had taken on her cargo of tobacco, Eilbeck was to take all the store goods that remained unsold and set up a new store for the next season.³

Eilbeck remained as a storekeeper on the Potomac and about 1730 married Sarah, the daughter of John and Johanna Edgar of Prince George's County.⁴ Apparently they lived in Prince George's County for a time as in 1733 he is among the list of taxables in the lower part of Piscataway Hundred.⁵

It is on 6 March 1734 that John Greaves, Sr., Lord of St. Mary's County sold to William Eilbeck of Prince George's County one hundred eighty-two acres of land for seventy pounds on the South side of Mattawoman Creek.⁶ This is the land that William Eilbeck builds up extensively and the home he calls "Mattawoman", later to be called "Araby".

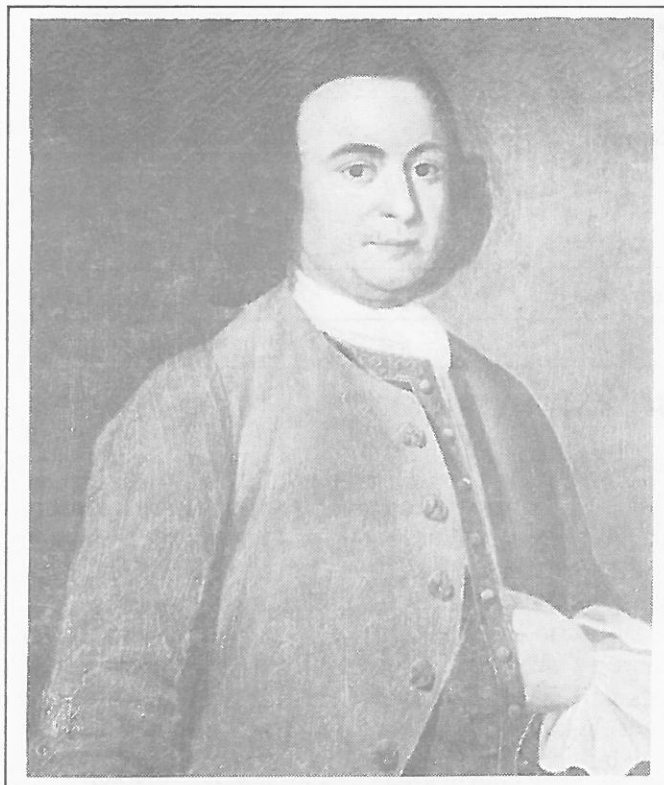
Apparently William Eilbeck was acquainted with Colonel George Mason III (father of George Mason IV, author of the Virginia Bill of Rights), for when Colonel Mason drowned in the Potomac River on 5 March 1735 William Eilbeck and W. Williams were designated as creditors of his estate. On 18 August 1735 they made an inventory of Mason's property at his Charles County homestead.⁷

In 1737 William Eilbeck adds to his land by purchasing on 13 April 1737 from Dennis N. Dowing for five shillings five pounds land on the "South side of a fresh called St. Thomas's alias Mattawoman known by the name of Moors fishing Creek".⁸ On

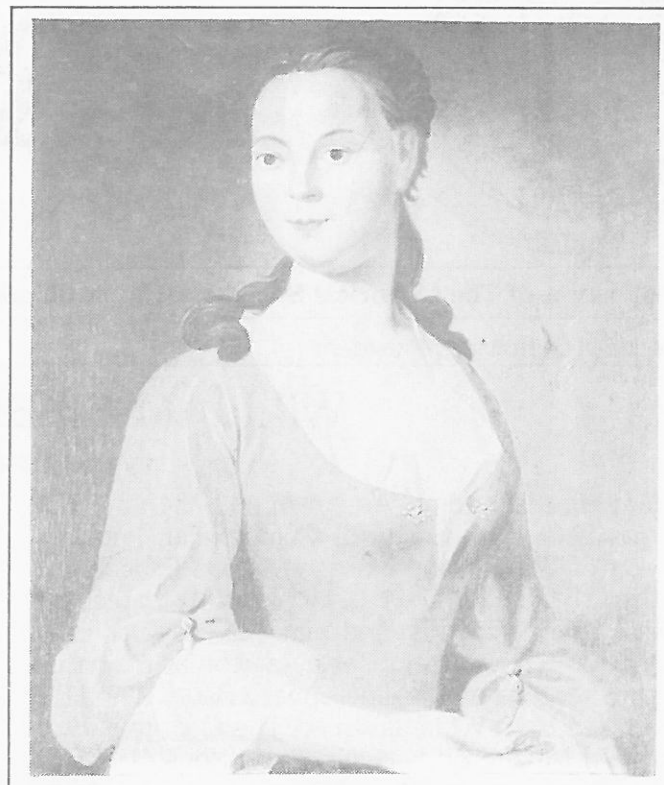
March 1737 he purchased from Stanley Elder one hundred seventy-nine acres of land for two thousand pounds of tobacco on the "South side of the Mattawoman known by the name of Elder's Lott".⁹

William Eilbeck was a vestryman of Durham Church¹⁰ and by 1745 was one of the gentlemen Justices of Charles County. On 14 March 1745 he, the other Justices of Charles County Thomas Stone, Walter Hanson, Robert Hanson, Young Parran, Arthur Lee, Robert Yates, William Middleton, and John Winter petitioned Governor Thomas Bladen and the Upper and Lower Houses of the Maryland General Assembly to release Richard Stanton of Charles County from imprisonment for debt, to release Thomas Hutchens of Charles County from imprisonment for debt, and on 17 March 1745 to release John King of Charles County from imprisonment for debt.¹¹

On 14 August 1745 William Eilbeck purchased from Baruch Williams of Prince George's County land in Charles Town, lot number 58, for twenty pounds sterling.¹² In 1747 he was involved in a case of complaint by Robert Haselop of Charles County against Henry Brook and Samuel Hanson that came before the Committee of Grievances and Courts of Justice in the Lower House of the Maryland General Assembly. John Hanson, deputy Sheriff of Charles County came to the house of Robert Haselop on 8 April 1747 to collect the land rents owed him: 8/4 pounds sterling and one hundred sixty-eight pounds of tobacco. Since Haselop didn't have the money, Hanson said he would take Haselop's plow horse and sell it in five days for the money, but left the horse on Haselop's plantation with plans to pick it up later. Three days later Haselop rode the horse to Port Tobacco Town and Samuel Hanson, Sheriff, brother of John Hanson, asked Haselop if that was the horse his brother was going to sell. Haselop said it could be but "if he owed anything, it was money, and not a horse". Sheriff Hanson took the horse and didn't return it or any part of the money paid for the horse. William Eilbeck offered Mr. Henry Brook, receiver for His Lordship, fifty-four pounds sterling for whatever was due for land rents from Robert Haselop.



George Mason



Portraits by Boudet

Ann Eilbeck Mason

Brook told Eilbeck that the money had to be paid to the sheriff, so Eilbeck gave the money to Haselop. When Haselop presented this money to Sheriff Hanson, he said he wouldn't accept it because it didn't include his fee. This case went to the Committee of Grievances and Courts of Justice and as a result "the committee humbly conceive that the Tender made by the said Eilbeck to Mr. Brook the receiver, and by the said Haselop to the High Sheriff and his deputy, before distress made, were very sufficient and good, and that the said Brook and the said Sheriff, or either, ought of right to have received the money aforesaid, without any further or other charge".¹³ "In pursuance of an order of the Lower House of Assembly, to settle sundry fees, arising due to the officers of that House and Sundry witness for attendance, on a complaint made there against Henry Brook, farmer of His Lordship's Quit Rents in Charles County, and Samuel Hanson, Sheriff of said County," William Eilbeck was to be paid two pounds fifteen shillings for "three days attendance and eight days itinerant charges, in coming and going twice to and from Charles County".¹⁴

On 8 September 1747 Edward Musgrove of Frederick County of the Colony of Virginia sold to William Eilbeck, Merchant, one hundred fifty acres of land for twenty-five pounds called "Shursberry," on the North side of the Piscataway river and the South Side of the Chicamuxen Creek.¹⁵ Eilbeck bought eighty acres of land for sixty pounds sterling and four thousand pounds of tobacco on the South side of the Mattawoman Creek from Dennis N. Dowing on 15

November 1749.¹⁶ On 19 March 1750 he bought from Thomas Graves and George Graves of St. Mary's County land for fifteen hundred pounds of tobacco and seven pounds ten shillings sterling "adjoining part of the tract where William Eilbeck now dwells".¹⁷ William Eilbeck now owns five hundred forty-one acres of land.

On the third of April 1750 an important social event took place at "Mattawoman" when Ann Eilbeck, daughter of William and Sarah Eilbeck, married George Mason IV of Virginia, the author of the Virginia Bill of Rights. The article in the Maryland Gazette 2 May 1750 reads: "On the 3d of last month, George Mason, Esq., of Virginia, was married to Miss Ann Eilbeck, daughter of Mr. William Eilbeck, Merchant in Charles County in this province; a young lady of distinguishing merit and beauty, and a handsome fortune".¹⁸ George and Ann Eilbeck Mason moved to "Gunston Hall" in Virginia and of the twelve children born to them only one, John Mason, was born at "Mattawoman".¹⁹

In May 1754 William Eilbeck, along with John Stoddert, Gustavus Brown, Walter Hanson, John Hanson and Daniel Jenifer signed a petition to Governor Horatio Sharpe for clemency for Samuel Nolar and Negro Dick, both guilty of felony.²² In June 1755 he served as one of the Justices of the Charles County Court, Charles Town, in the following cases: William Stratton is presented for having caused the death of Jeremiah Chase by poisoning; he is tried, found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. Negro

¹¹ No. 5, op. cit., pp. 71-72.

¹² No. 6, op. cit., 1745, Liber Z., No. 2, Folio 60.

¹³ Maryland Historical Society, Archives of Maryland, XLIV, Proceedings and Acts of the Assembly, v. 28, 1745-1747, Edited by Bernard Christian Steiner et al., (Baltimore, 1925), pp. 521-522.

¹⁴ No. 13, op. cit., p. 532.

¹⁵ No. 6, op. cit., 1747, Liber Z., No. 2, Folio 182.

¹⁶ No. 6, op. cit., 1749, Liber Z., No. 2, Folio 371.

¹⁷ No. 6, op. cit., 1750, Liber Z., No. 2, Folio 386.

¹⁸ The Maryland Gazette, May 2, 1750, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland, as cited in The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in The State of Maryland, Behind The Maryland Scene, Women of Influence 1600-1800, (1977), p. 68.

¹⁹ The Mason Bible, Mason-Mercer Library, Gunston Hall, Virginia, as cited in Behind The Maryland Scene, p. 68.

²⁰ No. 13, op. cit., p. 544.

²¹ No. 13, op. cit., pp. 577-578.

²² No. 5, op. cit., p. 115.

²³ No. 5, op. cit., p. 112.

²⁴ Maryland Historical Society, Archives of Maryland XXXI, Proceedings of the Council of Maryland, 1753-1761, Letters to Governor Sharpe, 1754-1765, Edited by William Hande Browne et al., (Baltimore, 1911), p. 81.

²⁵ No. 5, op. cit., p. 132.

²⁶ No. 5, op. cit., p. 133.

²⁷ No. 24, op. cit., p. 297.

²⁸ No. 6, op. cit., 1758, Liber G., No. 3, Folio 235.

²⁹ No. 6, op. cit., 1762, Liber L., No. 3, Folio 189.

³⁰ No. 5, op. cit., p. 178.

³¹ No. 5, op. cit., p. 182.

³² Tombstone of William Eilbeck, Charles County, Maryland.

³³ Charles County Wills, Charles County Court House, La Plata, Maryland, 1765, Liber A.D., No. 5, Folio 316.

³⁴ Charles County Inventories, Charles County Court House, La Plata, Maryland, 1735-1752/1753-1766, pp. 449-455.

³⁵ No. 19, op. cit.

³⁶ No. 33, op. cit., 1780, Liber A.F., No. 7, Folio 582.

³⁷ No. 6, op. cit., 1800 Liber J.B., No. 3, Folio 137; 1802, Liber J.B., No. 5, Folio 159; 1815, Liber J.B., No. 11, Folio 97, 335.

³⁸ No. 33, op. cit., 1818, Liber A.B., No. 14, Folio 43.

³⁹ No. 6, op. cit., 1856, Liber J.S., No. 1, Folio 400.

⁴⁰ No. 6, op. cit., 1849, Liber W.M., No. 3, Folio 453.



Johnstown was built by Caleb Hawkins to replace a dwelling destroyed by fire in 1798.

The oldest part of Johnstown is thought to have been constructed about 1810, but evidence found in the 1980s revealed that the interior was unfinished when the property was sold to merchant-planter John B. Wills, Jr., in 1818.

AFTERNOON TEA

Mark your calendar now so you will not miss the social event of the season:

Afternoon Tea
at Historic Johnstown
June 27, 1993

3:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Located south of La Plata, Maryland



Details of cost and menu selections will be included in a separate mailing of invitations at the end of May.

Last Year's Afternoon Tea, held at Westwood Manor, was a smashing success. Don't miss it this year.

Dick, slave of Charles Courts, is indicted for having broken into an outhouse of George Keech and stolen thirty pounds of bacon; he is found guilty and sentenced to be hanged; his value is put at sixty-five pounds. Negro Jenny is convicted of attempting to poison her owner, Jeremiah Chase; sentenced to be hanged. Negro Anthony, slave of Edward Diggs, is indicted for conspiring to poison Jeremiah Chase; he is found guilty and sentenced to be hanged; he is valued at thirty-five pounds current money.²³

On 21 October 1755 the following letter was written by the Justices of Charles County to the Governor of Maryland pledging their allegiance to the Governor and to the Government of Maryland:

May it please your Ex^{cy} and Hon^{rs}

Your pleasure touching the Reports of the tumultuous Meetings and Cabaling of Negroes, the Misbehaviour of the Roman Catholics in some Countys and the absence of some of the Priests in this Province Intimated to you, was Signified to us (Justices of the County a^d) by Letter from Mr. Ross on the 15th of August last as the foundation of such Reports did not fall within our Notice as Magistrates of this county, We have with Patience and Circumspection in our Several Neighbourhoods, waited to see if time would produce any cause or Information to any of us of any such Matters Suggested to your Excellency and honours; but as nothing of that Sort has happened here or come to any of our knowledges, we presume such Reports must be without foundation, as to any in this County.

The Duty we owe to his Majesty and his Government, as Magistrates the Requisites your Excellency and Honours have Pleased to Charge us with, and such as from time to time you may Judge proper to intimate We hope will have their proper weight in our future Conduct, and ever be regarded with the utmost Deference by

Your Excellencys and Honours most Obed^t Humble Serv^{ts} Gustavus Brown, Allen Davis, Richard Harrison, Robert Yates, Arthur Lee, James Nivison, Samuel Hanson, William Eilbeck, Walter Hanson.²⁴

In June 1756 William Eilbeck was again serving as one of the Justices of the Charles County Court in the case of Negro Ben, slave of Richard Gardiner, who is presented for having broken into the storehouse of John Chesley and stole various articles. He is found guilty and sentenced to be hanged.²⁵ In August 1756 he was one of the Justices in the case of John Theobalds who is accused of rape. The Justices were "convinced that no such presentment should have been made and pray the Governor to put a stop

to any further proceedings against Theobalds. . . and recommend him to the Governor's clemency".²⁶

In 1758 the Reverend Mr. Theophilus Swift, Doctor Gustavus Brown, William Eilbeck, Walter Hanson, Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer and Daniel Jenifer petition Governor Horatio Sharpe and his council to set aside a day for hearing the Vestry of the Port Tobacco Parish in regard to the disposing of the pews of the Parish church, "and regulate and apportion the same, in such manner as your petitioners apprehend not to be agreeable to Justice and Common Decency".²⁷

On 5 September 1758 William Eilbeck bought from John Tyler, Planter, one hundred acres of land for thirty pounds, "formerly in Prince Georges County, now in Charles County called 'Dent's Level,' the bequest of John Edgar and Margaret Tyler as by their last will and testament".²⁸ On 10 August 1762 William Eilbeck sold to John Mitchell of the city of Glasgow in North Britain for twenty pounds that tract of land he had purchased in Charles Town, lot number 58.²⁹

In August 1762 William Eilbeck is one of the Justices of the Charles County Court when Negro Jonathan, slave of Basil Smith, is presented for having broken into the mansion house of James Provin and stole numerous articles. He is tried, found guilty and sentenced to be hanged.³⁰ In June 1763 he was serving as Justice when Negro Charles, slave of Margaret Brown, is tried for theft of food and utensils from Nathaniel Freeman. He is sentenced to be hanged.³¹

By the time of his death, on 26 July 1765,³² William Eilbeck had become one of the wealthiest men in Charles County. In his will he bequeathed to his wife, Sarah, "twenty of my negroes with all my household furniture, good, chattels, and all and every other thing or things belonging to my plantation. . . and also the use and profit of all my lands in Charles County during her natural life". To his daughter, Ann Mason, he gave "the profits and use of two tracts of land lying and being in Prince Georges County containing four hundred acres". He gave to each one of his grandchildren George Mason, Ann Eilbeck Mason, William Mason, Thomas Mason, Sarah Mason and Mary Mason a negro servant and to his grandson William Mason he gave all the lands he possesses after the death of his wife and the lands he gave to his daughter, Ann Mason, after her death. He gave his son-in-law, George Mason IV, fifty pounds sterling and appointed him executor to his Last Will and Testament.³³

The inventory of furnishings of William Eilbeck's plantation at "Mattawoman" gives a picture of the comforts he and his family must have enjoyed. There were twelve beds complete with furniture, four oval tables, several clocks and looking glasses, four small 'picture in frames' (The Seasons), two small Dutch 'pictures in frames,' one set of maps, two large prayer books, one large bible, one law dictionary, seventy volumes of different sets of books, one mahogany tea

chest, one set of fine black and white china, seven glass decanters, twenty-five wine goblets, six white linen table cloths, copper and brass kettles, four carpets for the floors and two small rugs for the bedside, six leather buttoned chairs, seven flag chairs for children, seventy yards of country cloth 'for the people,' twenty-four pairs of brown dinner knives and forks, fifty-one dishes and twenty-nine gold pewter dishes, among other things. Besides his household furnishings he had seventeen negro men, nine negro women, six negro girls and six negro boys, eight horses, five oxen, twelve steers, ten cow calves, fifteen yearlings, sixty-eight sheep, forty-nine hogs, one hundred thirty-three bushels of wheat and one hundred bushels of salt. His inventory was appraised by James Craik and Daniel Jenifer at £ 2213.2.4.³⁴ Thus William Eilbeck had risen to a position of a man of property and influence in the New World and while his wealth was not on a scale of some, it was significant, considering it was to be the inheritance of his daughter and her family.

William Eilbeck's daughter, Ann Mason, died at the age of thirty-nine on 9 March 1773 at "Gunston Hall,"³⁵ and his wife, Sarah Eilbeck, died 11 December 1780. In her will she bequeathed all her lands to her grandson, William Mason, as William Eilbeck had requested. She gave her grandson, George Mason, "my diamond ring," and to her grandson, Thomson Mason, she gave "twenty-five pounds sterling money to buy him a gold watch". To grandson Thomas Mason she gave a negro boy and to her granddaughters Ann Eilbeck Mason, Sarah Mason, Mary Mason and Elizabeth Mason she gave negro slaves and one hundred pounds money each when "they arrive at age twenty-one or marrys first". She also gave to her granddaughter Sarah Mason "my gold watch and my emerald ring set round with sparks".³⁶

Like his father and grandfather, William Mason adds considerable acreage to his lands he inherited from his grandmother, approximately nine hundred additional acres, which he calls "Mason's Amendment".³⁷ William Mason's death occurs in 1818 and his estate passes to his wife, Ann Stuart Mason and their five children, William Stuart Mason, George Mason, Ann Sarah Stuart Mason, Mary Elizabeth Mason and Edgar Eilbeck Mason.³⁸ William Mason's lands were surveyed in 1811 and in August 1827 a land commission was appointed to divide his lands among his heirs:

At the request of Hezekiah Brawner, Walter M. Hannon and Luke S. Jameson, Commissioners appointed by the Honorable Court of Charles County, I have laid down a tract of land called "Mason's Amendment" according to a survey of the same made by James Brawner in the year 1811 which contained,

according to the certificate of said survey, 1801 acres and 10 perches and by the direction of said commissioners I divided the said land into three parcels designated by lot No. 1, 2 and 3. Lot No. 1 is laid off to Edgar Eilbeck Mason and is two parcels. The first part leading from Nanjemoy Church to the head of the Mattawoman containing 1030 acres, 2 rods and 22 perches. The 2nd part is laid off to Ann Sarah Stuart Mason, containing 318 acres. Lot No. 3 is laid off to Mary Elizabeth Mason, containing 402 acres, 1 rod and 28 perches [this is the lot with the house on it]. I have laid off the widows dower, taking a portion from each lot, containing 425 acres. Thomas Perry, Surveyor of Charles County.³⁹

"Mason's Amendment passes from the hands of the Eilbeck-Mason family when on 19 June 1849 Mary E. Mason (daughter of William Mason) and Ann Mason (widow of William Mason) sold to William Thompson, "four hundred two acres, one rod, and twenty-eight perches of land known as 'Mason's Amendment' for six thousand dollars".⁴⁰ It was during the stay of William Thompson that the name of "Mason's Amendment" changes to "Araby," which has remained the name of this home and property ever since.

* *Mr. Mazzeo, past president of the Historical Society, wrote this article in 1981 as part of his undergraduate work at Salisbury State College.*

Endnotes

¹ Gosforth Parish Register, Cumberland, England, as cited in Pamela C. Copeland and Richard K. MacMaster, *The Five George Masons*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975), p. 91, (hereafter cited as Copeland).

² *John Mercer's Ledger*, 1725, Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, as cited in Copeland, p. 70.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Will of Johanna Edgar, *Prince Georges County Wills*, Liber 20, Folio 156, as cited in Copeland, p. 91.

⁵ *Calendar of Maryland State Papers, No. 1, The Black Books*, Publication of The Hall of Records Commission No. 1, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1967), p. 41.

⁶ *Charles County Land Records*, Charles County Court House, La Plata, Maryland, 1734, Liber 0., No. 2, Folio 75.

⁷ *Charles County Inventories*, Liber 21, Folio 90, as cited in Copeland, p. 73.

⁸ No. 6, op. cit., 1737, Liber 0., No. 2, Folio 173.

⁹ No. 6, op. cit., 1737, Liber 0., No. 2, Folio 223.

¹⁰ *Durham Church Records*, Durham Church, Ironsides, Maryland.