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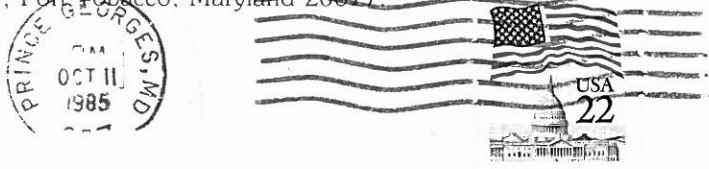
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Articles of historic interest on Southern Maryland are requested for possible publication in future issues of **The Record**. Please send your typewritten manuscripts and other communications to: **Editor, The Record, P. O. Box 261, Port Tobacco, Maryland 20677.**



The RECORD

Publication of the Historical Society of Charles County, Inc. No. 35 August 1985
Mr. Richard E. Heise, *Acting President*
Elwood M. Leviner, *Editor*

OLIVIA FLOYD

With the republication of Tom Jones' "John Wilkes Booth" by the Society for the Restoration of Port Tobacco, people in Charles County are retelling anecdotes about the Civil War long familiar to families who have been here for many generations. Their favorite protagonist is Olivia Floyd, the sharp minded little hunch-backed lady who owned "Rose Hill" and was able, right under the eyes of Union Troops, to forward money and messages from the North across the Potomac to Confederate leaders.

She was born July 2, 1826 and lived most of her life at "Rose Hill" which she inherited through her mother, Sarah Semmes Floyd, from an uncle, Ignatius Semmes. As a child her back was broken in an accident, and when she was an old, old lady, her face ringed 'round with a fringe of white curls, she loved to tell the children in her high squeaky voice about how she eluded the doctor when he came to treat her. One time she hid in a feather bed, and another time in a large hat box of the type used in those days. She wanted no doctor and she was strong-willed enough, even as a child, to ensure her own way.

Discovering good hiding places was to be a distinguishing feature of her life. With his soldiers encamped over the hillsides of her farm and himself frequently in and searching the house, General Joseph Hooker was never able to discover a scrap of evidence to label her "spy." At one time she hid a large sum of money collected for the Confederacy in Baltimore in a model boat, steamship type, which had been hand made by her brother. "Rose Hill" was turned upside down by Union officers, and after they had failed to find the money, she quietly forwarded it South.

Mrs. William Carlyle Turner, of Pope's Creek, remembers "Miss Olivia" as a child and her father, Mt. Adrian Posey, purchased "Rose Hill" from the vivacious old lady. She was by that time in reduced financial circumstances, and he gave her a home for the remainder of her life.

The story of General Joseph Hooker warming his boots on the very andirons containing a secret message for which he was searching "Rose Hill" is very well known. Mrs. Turner has supplied the background of the incident, and revealed some results for "Miss Olivia" which certainly were not forseen by her.

It seems that eight young men from the South decided that they would acquire funds for the confederate cause by robbing a series of banks in N.Y. and northward. After the robberies they dispersed, and some fled into Canada but they were eventually apprehended and charged as authorized Confederate agents. This they denied, protesting that the robberies were conceived and executed by themselves alone. They were told that if they could prove this by having Jefferson Davis sign a corroborating letter, they would be held as life prisoners and not receive the death sentence. The letter was prepared and forwarded South, but for some reason not entirely clear, other interests in the north did not wish the letter to reach its destination.

General Hooker was alerted to apprehend the letter. A thorough search of "Rose Hill" was ordered. While he waited in the parlor, he warmed his feet on the andirons in which the letter was secreted. Telling the incident to Mr. Posey years later, "Miss Olivia" observed with relish, "All the time his feet were on that note, Mr. Posey - he was getting hot, all right!"

Later, "Miss Olivia" hid the note in her hair and took it to "Pope's Creek", where it was carried across the Potomac and then to Richmond where Davis signed it. The lives of the rash young men were spared.

Years after the war, a lady called on "Miss Olivia". It is not known just who she was, but she came to La Plata one day on the 10 a.m. train, hired a horse and buggy and drove to "Rose Hill" where she was able to learn without a shadow of a doubt of "Miss Olivia's" part in forwarding the letter to Jefferson Davis. The lady revealed that she was a connection of a Colonel Young, of Kentucky, one of the young bank-robbing desperados who had long been interested in learning the identity of the person who had forwarded the letter which saved his life.

Colonel Young took a great interest in "Miss Olivia" for the rest of her life. He invited her to be a guest at a Confederate reunion in Kentucky, little realizing the travel difficulties for a hunch-backed, crippled old lady. She was able to attend, however, through the good offices of Mr. Adrian

EDITOR'S NOTE: This above account of Miss Floyd's interest in the Civil War was prepared as background material for an article in the **Washington Post** and **Times Herald** at the start of Rose Hills' restoration by Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Ryerson. It is reprinted here with the permission of Mr. Frank Wade, Jr.

The Historical Society of Charles County

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Posey, who escorted her personally. She had, reports Mrs. Turner, "The time of her life." From this time, Colonel Young gave her a pension, and when she died, he paid her funeral expenses.

Mrs. Turner recalls hearing "Miss Olivia" speak of her life during the days when the hills of "Rose Hill" farm were an enormous encampment of General Hooker's soldiers. She had difficulties, but apparently the wit to counteract them. She was told one day to have gathered up all the meat on the farm for the use of the Commissary. This she made up her mind she would not do, and she removed the slab from the tomb of Dr. Gustavus Brown, the builder of "Rose Hill", and there she hid the meat. She and General Hooker were apparently "friendly enemies", and she had his permission to defend herself with a gun. This she did on one occasion only, when a group of soldiers continued to rip up a fence after her warning to desist. Her brandishing of the gun was accompanied with a fine flow of language and the fence ripping stopped.

By and large, however, her relationship with the soldiers was not unfriendly and she adapted herself gracefully to the situation in which the war had placed her. She lived to be very old, and Mrs. Turner recalls that she was "Very friendly, and just grand. She loved people, and love to tell her experiences during the war." She died December 8, 1905, and is buried in the church yard of historic St. Ignatius at Chapel Point.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Historical Society is currently planning a new project consisting of transcribing Church Records in our County. Church records contain vital information to genealogists and researchers such as records of baptism, marriage and burial and there has not yet been an effort to collectively gather this information for use by the public. This Historical Society would like to do this, however we need your help! Those willing to participate would work together at one church at a time transcribing any records of baptism, marriage and burials prior to 1900. These churches have already been identified and contacted and are now waiting for our project to begin. If you've been waiting to participate in your Historical Society, now's your chance! Please contact Mike Mazzeo, Eleanor Higdon or Margaret Langley.

In regard to the Cemetery project, the society now has its tombstone transcriptions on index cards. The Community College is willing to train volunteers to enter the cemetery cards and other information pertinent to the Southern Maryland Room on a new IBM Computer. Under the direction of Marcia Monaco and Mike Mazzeo, the volunteers would be trained in entering data on a word processing program or file maintenance program. This would allow us to have a print out of our cemetery project alphabetically, by cemetery and by religion. Our Cemetery project has been a great undertaking and as it is in its last phase volunteers are greatly needed. Please contact Marcia Monaco at 934-2251.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Society of Mareen Duvall Descendants is pleased to announce the second reprinting of **Mareen Duvall of Middle Plantation** by Harry Wright Newman. The price per copy is \$32.50 (price subject to change). Mail requests for this publication to Mrs. Joseph C. O'Donovan, 2810 White House Road, Riva, Maryland 21140.

Remember to reserve with Chuck LaHood by September 17, 1985 a seat on the bus for a trip to Stratford Hall, home of the Lees. The trip on September 28, 1985 will cost \$19.00, which includes bus fare, the tour and a lunch of crab cakes and Virginia ham.

The bus leaves the parking lot at the La Plata Court House at 9:45 a.m. on September 28th and returns around 4:30 p.m.

Do not forget the Fall meeting of the Historical Society ~~on October 19, 1985.~~ This meeting includes a visit to the Lindens, with dinner later at the Country Club.

Ann Paxton Brown, member of the Board of Directors for the Montgomery County Historical Society (Phone 301-496-9737), is coordinating a research project to locate and study all Maryland Beall family records up through the year 1850. She requests that anyone having information to share concerning relatives of Upton Beall to communicate with her. The mailing address is: Family History Committee, Montgomery County Historical Society, 103W. Montgomery Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20850.