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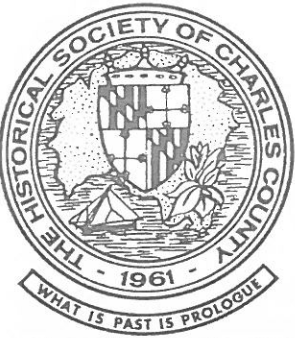
EDITOR'S NOTE

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

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The RECORD

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Mr. Michael J. Mazzeo, Jr., President

Mr. Garth E. Bowling, Jr., Editor

Admiral Raphael Semmes

by Paul Semmes Perrin

Editor's Note: Over the past several months, much has been written about Admiral Raphael Semmes in the local newspapers. At this time, the Charles County Board of Education has delayed making a decision regarding the naming of a new school after Semmes.

The following article is written by Paul Semmes Perrin, a great-great-grandson who lives in Charles County. Hopefully, this timely article will serve to better inform the reader about one of Charles County's outstanding native sons.

"She was of 900 tons burden, 230 feet in length, 32 feet in breadth, 20 feet in depth, and drew, when provisioned and coaled for a cruise, 15 feet of water. Her model was of the most perfect symetry, and she sat upon the water with the lightness and grace of a swan. Her sticks were of the best yellow pine that would bend in a gale, like a willow wand, without breaking. She was not only home, but my bride as it were, for the next few years, and I was quite satisfied with her external appearances."⁽¹⁾

Such was the romantic appraisal of the ship by the man who would take her, and the U. S. Civil War, to the north and south Atlantic Ocean, across the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea, and back again. The length of his voyage would have allowed him to circumnavigate the globe 3½ times.⁽²⁾ Newspapers in the Americas, London, Paris, Cape Town, and Singapore, traced his movements and reported his 87 victims. He became a romantic figure to millions throughout the world, and a national hero to many Southerners.

Born at "Efton Hills," Nanjemoy, Maryland, on September 27, 1809, Semmes had deep Maryland roots. His mother, Catherine Middleton, was descendant of Arthur Middleton of South Carolina, signer of the Declaration of Independence. His father, Richard Thompson Semmes, descended from a 1640 settler, Marmaduke Semmes.

Orphaned at age 14, he was placed under the guardianship of his uncle, Benedict Joseph Semmes, former member of the U. S. Congress. After graduating from Charlotte Hall Military Academy, he was appointed a midshipman in the U. S. Navy on April 1, 1826.⁽⁴⁾

In 1828, due to illness after serving on the USS *Lexington* and USS *Constitution*, he received a leave of absence. He studied law in his brothers office and passed the Maryland Bar examination in 1835. He married Ann Spencer on May 5, 1837, and they had six children. ⁽⁵⁾

In 1837, he was recalled to duty, promoted to lieutenant, and assigned to duty at the Norfolk Navy Yard, with other assignments following. by 1847, he was onshore with the Naval artillery at the bombardment of Vera Cruz. As volunteer aide to Major General Worth, he participated in the expedition against Tuxpan and accompanied General Winfield Scott on his triumphant entry into Mexico City. The Maryland General assembly passed a vote of gratitude for his gallant service. He responded by saying, "I have done no more than Maryland had a right to expect of the meanest of her sons."⁽⁶⁾

In 1849, the peace-time navy placed Lieutenant Raphael Semmes on extended leave. He moved his family to Mobile and settled into a quiet practice of law and reflections upon his Mexican War experiences. He authored, *Service Afloat and Ashore During the Mexican War*, and *The Campaign of General Scott in the Valley of Mexico*.

Recalled to duty and promoted to commander in 1855, he became the Lighthouse Inspector of the 3rd District, conveniently based in Mobile. By 1858, Commander Semmes reported to Washington, D. C., as Secretary of the Lighthouse Board. His new duties were sedentary ones and held little promise for excitement and glory. How-

ever, much had happened in the United States during his years in Washington, and Semmes decided to follow his adopted state of Alabama when it seceded on January 11, 1861. "Civil War," he wrote, "is a terrible crucible through which to pass character."⁽⁷⁾

His first duty for the Confederacy was a shopping trip North. In New York City, he purchased large quantities of percussion caps, made contracts for batteries of light artillery, powder and other munitions, and a complete set of machinery for rifling cannon. He also visited his eldest son, who was a cadet at West Point.⁽⁸⁾

He then made way to New Orleans and took command of the first Confederate Navy war vessel, the CSS *Sumter*. After running the Federal blockade, he captured 18 enemy ships during a 5½ month cruise. Hopelessly blockaded in Gibraltar Bay, he was forced to abandon ship. On this voyage, he formed his strategies of prize-taking, financing and provisioning his ship, which he would again use.

The study of law was Semmes' most useful tool as a commerce raider. It enabled him to master international maritime law and the intricacies of belligerent and neutral maritime rights and obligations. He presented legal briefs to neutral port authorities, English, French, Brazilian, and Spanish, successfully arguing that as a belligerent, he had rights to buy coal and provisions and to repair his ship. Otherwise, he could never have kept the CSS *Sumter* and *Alabama* afloat, constantly at sea, for three years.

Semmes' command of the CSS *Alabama*, then being built in England, brought him most of his fame and legal entanglements. He covered 32 pages of a tightly written and logical argument in his memoirs to prove that the *Alabama* was a legitimate Confederate Navy warship, operating in an accepted mode of naval warfare. The post-war negotiations between London and Washington, however, concerned not the ship herself, but the British obligation to prevent a ship built for war use, regardless of how or where she might be later armed, manned and equipped, from leaving her territory. That principle served as the basis for the 1873 Geneva Tribunals decision that England pay a debt of 15,500,000 dollars to the United States for damages the *Alabama* wrought on the high seas. It was after this celebrated trial that Semmes Room in the capitol

building of Geneva, Switzerland was dedicated, marking the first time Switzerland acted as a neutral party in the settlement of international disputes.⁽⁹⁾

The CSS *Alabama* would capture 69 ships, a record not exceeded in modern history. Semmes won the distinction of being the only captain of a wooden warship to ever sink a new ironclad warship, the USS *Hatteras*, in January, 1863.⁽¹⁰⁾

The *Alabama* was not as lucky when she entered Cherbourg Harbor on June 14, 1864. Blockaded by the USS *Kearsage*, Semmes knew his only chance to put to sea again was to risk battle before other ships joined in bottling her up. Meanwhile, word of the impending battle spread across France, and curious onlookers gathered on the shore. The artist Edouard Monet came and painted the *Alabama* in her death throes. Semmes and most of his crew were rescued by a sailing yacht and placed on the shore of England.

He boarded a ship sailing to America, and made his way back to Richmond, Virginia. He was promoted to Admiral and given command of the James River Fleet. Semmes had to destroy his own fleet as Grant turned Lee's right flank, and flee with his officers and sailors to Danville, Virginia, where President Davis appointed him a brigadier general in the Confederate Army. At the end, he was with General Joseph E. Johnson in North Carolina, and he surrendered with Johnson's troops to William T. Sherman. Later, he used the terms of his surrender to refute charges of piracy and, after a four month imprisonment, gain a pardon from President Johnson.

During the period of reconstruction, Semmes sustained himself and family by teaching in an academy that later became Louisiana State University, editing a newspaper in Memphis, and lecturing on his wartime experiences, writing the 833 page *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*. He worked in Mobile as a lawyer, appropriately specializing in international law and maritime affairs.

He died at age 67, on August 30, 1877. The citizens of Mobile declared a full day of mourning during which cannon sounded every half-hour.⁽¹¹⁾ His statue now guards the entrance to Mobile Bay.

Notes

1. Raphael Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*, p. 402.

Genealogy Committee

Enclosed is a Genealogy Form we are asking each member to complete, to be housed in the Southern Maryland Studies Center, Charles County Community College, to be used by genealogists, researchers and our own Genealogy Committee.

Please have your lineage information preserved with many others and at the same time preserve the history of your heritage. Mail your forms by Jan. 1, 1991.

Program Committee

The Program Committee has planned a very exciting schedule for the membership over the next two years. Included in this schedule are new "On-the Site" programs, summer "picnic" meetings and because of the great success of our Indian Head and La Plata "Reminiscences" panel programs a plan to remember a community of Charles County within the two years.

The following schedule is tentative until confirmation of speakers and locations is determined:

Winter Meeting 1991 — Saturday, January 26, 1991. Mrs. Emily Joyner will present:

Women's Life and Work In The 17th Century
La Plata Methodist Church, 2:00 p.m.

Spring Dinner Meeting 1991 — Saturday, May 18, 1991. Mr. Clinton Addison will present
Marshall Hall And The Marshall Family
Dinner on the lawn at Marshall Hall, 5:30 p.m.

Summer Meeting 1991 — Sunday, July 21, 1991. *In Honor of the 350th Anniversary of St. Thomas Manor.*

Picnic on the lawn at St. Ignatius Church, Chapel Point, 2:00 p.m.

Fall Dinner Meeting 1991 — Saturday, October 19, 1991. *In Honor of the 100th Anniversary of Nanjemoy Baptist Church*, 6:30 p.m.

(* For 1992 we will be honoring the 300th year of the Act that established the Episcopal Parishes of Maryland by holding two of our meetings in Episcopal churches.)

Winter Meeting 1992 — Saturday, January 25, 1992. *In Honor of the 500th Anniversary of The Voyage of Christopher Columbus*
A presentation from the Library of Congress on "Voyage in Search of a Better world." Christ Church, Port Tobacco Parish, La Plata, 2:00 p.m.

Spring Dinner Meeting 1992 — Saturday, May 1992. Mrs. Margaret Shannon on the history of Old Durham Church/Colonel William Dent on the Maryland Episcopal parishes. Christ

Church, Durham Parish, 6:30 p.m.

Summer Meeting 1992 — Sunday, July 1992
A panel program, *Remembering the Old Schools of Charles County* with a tour of the Port Tobacco School house. Picnic on the lawn of the Port Tobacco Courthouse, 2:00 p.m.

Fall Dinner Meeting 1992 — Saturday, October 1992. A panel program, *Remembering Bryantown*, with a possible homes tour of Bryantown's historic district. Dinner and program at St. Mary's Church, Bryantown, 6:30 p.m.

St. Ignatius Church - St. Thomas Manor Celebrates 350th Anniversary

For the past two years, the parishioners of St. Ignatius Church at St. Thomas Manor, have been diligently working to recognize the 350th Anniversary of Andrew White's establishment of a mission in Chapel Point. Under the direction of the current pastor, David E. Barry, S.J., the St. Thomas Manor Trust was formed with specific goals to insure the continued preservation of the Manor and grounds, provide for vocational education scholarships, and provide assistance to the poor.

The 350th Anniversary was seen as the natural means to achieve the goals of the Trust. By marking this significant occasion with activities and events during the year, funds could be raised to meet these goals while also celebrating 350 years of service and history in Charles County.

With all of the many planned events to raise funds and provide for a celebration, the missing piece was the historical connection to Charles County. Therefore, the Historical Sub-committee was formed with an agenda of four major projects. Under the leadership of Fr. Barry and Mrs. Christine Mais, this sub-committee will endeavor to achieve the following:

1. A collaborative project with the Charles county Community College: a pictorial history and lecture (photographs and artifacts on display from March 1 to April 10, 1991)
2. Pictorial history exhibit available to various groups and agencies such as the tri-county library system, community colleges, churches, etc.
3. Video tour of the Church and Manor House including photographs and artifacts from the exhibit.
4. Pictorial history in soft-cover format.

The 350th anniversary's culminating activity will occur on May 18, 1991 with an ecumenical service in the morning and activities highlighting Southern Maryland living scheduled throughout the day.

Interested people may call Mrs. Mais at 743-5053 after 6 p.m. for more information.

Our Fall Dinner Meeting is also the time to honor all our new 1990 members. Please join the Board of Directors prior to dinner to welcome them. The reservation announcement will be mailed shortly.

Friendship House

Anita Wood, Chairperson of the Tours and Educational Programs Committee, on behalf of the Board of Directors, would like to extend a special *Thank You* to the following Docents who devoted their time and expertise to our 1990 Tourism Season:

Mrs. Elsie Dent	Mrs. Blanche Hutchins
Mr. Howard Dent	Mrs. Charlotte Houchins
Mrs. Lillian Beaulieu	Mrs. Naomi Petrash
Ms. Kathy Foster	Mr. Robert Petrash
Mrs. Madelyn Griffith	Mrs. Elaine Racey
Mr. Philip Griffith	Mrs. Carolyn Shamblen
Miss Eleanor Higdon	

Two generous donations were recently received to enhance the furnishings collection at Friendship House. Mr. Eugene A. Jenkins, Jr., past president, donated the following eighteenth century books:

Oeuvres de Mr. de Voltaire, Amsterdam, 1740.

La Vie de Frederick, Baron de Trenck, Metz & Paris, 1788.

An Introduction to the Making of Latin, London, 1769.

Testament Politique du Marquis de Louvois, Cologne, 1696.

Histoire de la Vie de Jules Cesar, Paris, 1758.

Oeuvres Choies de Jean Racine, New York, n.d.

Mr. David Fairfax Cooksey, in his Last Will and Testament, bequeathed to the Historical Society the following: A painting of Salt Box House or "Cat Slide" of Old Port Tobacco painted by Joan Wooddy, one copper spoon mold, two Powder flasks and iron cooking utensils.

HOMEPLACES

The Southern Maryland Studies Center of Charles County Community College is pleased to announce the publication of *Homeplaces* Traditional Domestic Architecture of Charles County, Maryland by J. Richard Rivoire. Published by the Southern Maryland Studies Center, Charles County Community College, La Plata, Maryland, 1990 with a foreword by Cary Carson, Vice President for Research, Colonial Williamsburg

Foundation.

In *Homeplaces*, historian and preservationist J. Richard Rivoire presents the first comprehensive study of the rich architectural heritage of lower Southern Maryland published to date. Combining a highly readable and authoritative text with over 230 architectural drawings, ink sketches, and vintage photographs, the author traces the evolution of local building customs from the early seventeenth century to the Civil War. Presented in a two-part format, *Homeplaces* begins with an introductory overview of the socioeconomic and architectural history of Charles County in the context of Southern Maryland and the lower Chesapeake region. This is followed by a chronologically arranged series of site-specific studies of 29 dwellings representing various building styles characteristic of the locality over a 150-year period. This study is based on the results of an intensive survey of historic Charles County architecture conducted over the past twenty years and funded in part by state and federal grants. *Homeplaces* offers the serious scholar, as well as the amateur history buff, a fresh and exciting new look at the region's social history and material culture.

J. Richard Rivoire is a member of the Board Directors of the Historical Society. *Homeplaces* will be available at the Fall Dinner Meeting to members for \$22.50 and afterwards at the Charles County Community College book store for \$25.00



2. W. Adolphe Roberts, *Semmes of the Alabama*, pp. 282-84
3. Harry Wright Newman, *The Maryland Semmes and Kindred Families*, pp. 76-80.
4. *Maryland Independent*, Oct. 28, 1971.
5. W. Adolphe Roberts, *Semmes of the Alabama*.
6. *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. V-1910, pp. 377-78.
7. Raphael Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*, p.72.
8. *Ibid*, p. 81.
9. Warren Spencer, *The Confederate Navy in Europe*. pp. 212-16.
10. Raphael Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*, p. 536.
11. Warren Spencer, *The Confederate Navy in Europe* pp. 212-16.

Membership Committee

The Historical Society would like to welcome the following NEW MEMBERS:

Mrs. & Mrs. Ray Brett, Swan Point
 Ms. Janet Simmons, Pisgah
 Mr. & Mrs. William Posthuma, Swan Point
 Mr. & Mrs. Thomas L. Higdon, Sr., La Plata
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Junghans, Swan Point
 Ms. Mary Louise Tietjen, Summit, New Jersey
 Mr. & Mrs. George C. Bornscheuer, Swan Point
 Ms. Jane Norfolk, White Plains
 Mr. & Mrs. Warren Bowie, Indian Head
 Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Dommen, Bethesda
 Ms. Janice Frauenfelder, Waldorf
 Mrs. Frances M. Ward, Nanjemoy
 Miss Martha Forbes Boone, Waldorf
 Ms. Donna S. Perry, Indian Head
 Ms. Barbara L. Trotter, La Plata
 Mr. Kenneth F. Craft, Jr., Norcross, Georgia
 Mr. Robert P. Posey, Trenton, New Jersey
 Mrs. Norma Hurley, Nanjemoy
 Mr. Robert Skatzes, Bryans Road
 Mr. Thomas R. Brookes, Jr., Bel Air
 Mr. & Mrs. Calvin Compton, Jr., Port Tobacco

Projects Committee

The Projects Committee has begun the abstracting of names from the early Court Proceedings Records. The results of this project will be to create a name index for interested researchers and genealogists. If you are interested in working in the project, please contact Sally Barley at the Southern Maryland Studies Center, 934-2251, ext. 610 or any of the committee members. The following records are on loan from the Courthouse to be used for this research:

Court Proceedings Docket — 1819-1820
 Court Proceedings Docket — 1821-1822
 Court Proceedings Docket — 1822-1824

Court Proceedings Docket — 1824-1826
 Court Proceedings Docket — 1826-1829
 Court Proceedings Docket — 1829-1834
 Court Proceedings Docket — 1834-1838
 Court Proceedings Docket — 1844-1853
 Court Proceedings Docket — 1850-1858
 Docket of Court Proceedings 1833

Southern Maryland Studies Center

Donna Burch, Clerk of the Circuit Court for Charles County, has donated the following volumes of early land records to the Southern Maryland Studies Center:

1 - 3	A - D No. 1	1658 - 1670
4 - 7	E - H No. 1	1670 - 1680
8 - 12	I - N No. 1	1680 - 1687
14 - 17	P - S No. 1	1688 - 1694
21	Z No. 1	1703 - 1706
24	C No. 2	1706 - 1711
25	D No. 2	1710 - 1713
27	F No. 2	1714 - 1716
28	H No. 2	1716 - 1722
31	L No. 2	1722 - 1729
32	M No. 2	1729 - 1733
34	O - No. 1&2	1733 - 1743
43	X No. 2	1743 - 1744
45	Z No. 2	1744 - 1752
46	A - No. 3 Pt2	1752 - 1756
51	G No. 3	1756 - 1761
55	L No. 3	1761 - 1765
58	O No. 3	1765 - 1770
61	S No. 3	1770 - 1775
64	V No. 3	1775 - 1782
68	Z No. 3	1782 - 1786
Liber D	No. 4	1786 - 1790
Abstracts JB 9 & JB 10		1810 - 1814

Fall Dinner Meeting

The Program Committee has planned the Fall Dinner Meeting for Saturday, November 3, 1990 at Shymansky's Restaurant in Cobb Island. The seafood dinner will be followed by a short business meeting and a presentation by Paula Johnson, Acting Director of the Calvert Marine Museum, who will speak on "Folklore of the Chesapeake Waterman."

Copies of *Homeplaces, Traditional Domestic Architecture of Charles County, Maryland* by J. Richard Rivoire will be available at \$22.50 for members and \$25.00, non-members. In addition, Louise B. Turner will have her new children's book, *Yesterday to Color At Gunston Hall*, a glimpse of life in the 18th century, for \$4.15, and *It's A Great Day*, the story of Rusty, the Gunston Hall fox, for \$7.15.