

Pleasants, J.H.

The second hospital in the  
colonies.

MARYLAND

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THE SECOND HOSPITAL IN THE COLONIES, THE  
"COOLE SPRINGS OF ST. MARIES," MARY-  
LAND, 1698.

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THE SECOND HOSPITAL IN THE COLONIES, THE  
"COOLE SPRINGS OF ST. MARIES," MARY-  
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BY J. HALL PLEASANTS, M. D.

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Maryland may claim the distinction of having been the first [18] of the colonies to agitate the question of establishing a hospital within its boundaries, for as early as 1638 we find the well-known pioneer priest Andrew White urging upon Lord Baltimore the necessity of such an institution. Nothing was actually accomplished, however, until the close of the century, when, in 1698, a hospital was established at the "Coole Springs of St. Maries." During this interval the Dutch East India Company, in 1658, had built at New Amsterdam, an almshouse and hospital, known as the "Old Hospital," or "Five Houses," of which the present Bellevue claims to be a direct outgrowth.<sup>1</sup> The "Five Houses" is probably the oldest hospital in the colonies, the Cool Springs dating second in the order of establishment. The statement frequently made that the Pennsylvania Hospital, founded in 1751, is the oldest hospital in the colonies, is thus not borne out by facts.

We shall first refer briefly to the early suggestion to found a hospital in Maryland, and shall then trace the history of the Cool Springs.

In the recently recovered Calvert papers there is a letter from Father White to Lord Baltimore, dated from Maryland,

\* Read before the Johns Hopkins Hospital Historical Club, October 19, 1903.

<sup>1</sup> R. J. Carlile: An Account of Bellevue Hospital, 1893, p. 1.

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[18] Feb. 20, 1638.<sup>2</sup> This letter, written four years after the founding of the province, refers in no uncertain way to the sickness among the settlers. He is inclined to attribute much of this to the "eating of flesh and drinking salt waters and wine by advice of our Chirurgian rather (than) by any great malice of their fevers, for they who keep our diet and abstinence generally recovered." Father White's opinion of the surgeon is evidently not of the highest. He then goes on to add that such excesses "begett fevers troublesome enough where wee want physick, yet not dangerous at all if the people willbe ruled in their diet, which is hard for the vulgar unless wee had a hospitall here to care (for) them and keep them to rule perforce wh<sup>ch</sup> some worthy persons of this place doe think upon." There is nothing to show that Father White's suggestion was acted upon, or that a hospital of any kind was founded in Maryland until the establishment of the Cool Springs sixty years later.

In the "Coole Springs of St. Maries." Maryland may lay claim to more than a mere hospital, however, and its establishment in 1698 really marks the foundation of what was probably also the first sanatorium in the colonies. That this once famous resort should have fallen into oblivion and its very name be almost forgotten, is not surprising when we recall the history of old St. Mary's, and when we learn upon what a slight basis the popularity of these springs actually rested. The current histories of Maryland scarcely even refer to its existence. Yet at the close of the seventeenth century this same "Coole Springs" was the cause of much legislative discussion, and of even more religious ill-feeling. The perusal of the Archives of the province gives us some idea of the important place which these "springs of healing waters" occupied in the minds of the early settlers.

In the winter of 1697-98 the southern counties were visited by a severe pestilence of some kind. Neither an examination of our own records nor those of the neighboring colonies throws any light whatever upon the nature of this pestilence.

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<sup>2</sup> Fund Publication of the Maryland Historical Society, No. 28, p. 202.

Smallpox naturally suggests itself to us, as its terrible ravages [18] among the early colonists are only too well known. Yet it is scarcely probable that *convalescents* from this disease would seek spa treatment, for it will be seen that the "Springs" came into prominence during the *decline* of the epidemic. Whatever its character, the pestilence was especially prevalent and its ravages most severe in Charles County.

We first hear of "the pestilence" in connection with the religious ill-feeling aroused by the activity of the Roman Catholic priests among the sick. The following message, sent by the Lower House to Governor Nicholson, March 29, 1698,<sup>3</sup> calling his attention to the matter, gives us an idea of the intolerance of the times:

May itt please yor Exncy

"Vpon reading a certaine Letter from a Reverend Minister of the Church of Engld which yor Exncy was pleased to communicate to us Complaining to yor Exncy how that the Popish Priests in Charles County do of their own Accord in this violent & rageing Mortality in that County make itt their business to goe up and (down) the County to psons houses when dying & frantick and endeavour to Seduce and make prosellites of them & in such Condition boldly presume to admnistr the Sacrement to them. Wee have put it to the Vote in the house, if a Law should be made to restrayne such their presumption or not and have concluded not to make such Law att prsent, but humbly to Intreat yor Excy that you would be pleased to Issue your proclamation to Restrayne and prohibite such their Extravagante and prsumptuous behaviour.

Signed p Ord<sup>r</sup> W. Bladen, Clk: house Delegates."

This shows well the intense religious bigotry of the times, for it should be remembered that in matters of religion, Maryland was really among the most liberal of the colonies. For several years the Catholics numerically had formed only a small proportion of the population, but in the years imme- [19] diately following the revolution in England, which deposed James II. and placed a Protestant prince, William of Orange, on the throne, the feeling against the Catholics in all English-speaking countries was especially strong. In Maryland, Lord Baltimore, who was a Catholic, was deprived of his gov-

<sup>3</sup> Archives of Maryland, Vol. XXII, p. 22.

[19] ernment, and in 1692 the province became for a time a royal colony with the Church of England as the established religion. Rumors of plots on the part of the adherents of Lord Baltimore to regain control of affairs had made the government unusually suspicious of any activity on the part of the Catholics.

We can infer that the success of the priests in spiritual matters was probably the reward of their labors in the actual care of the sick and dying during the epidemic, and we shall presently see the steps taken by the established church to counteract this influence.

The early summer found the pestilence on the wane and militia drills, which had been suspended on account of the epidemic, were resumed July 1 by order of the Council.<sup>4</sup>

The "Coole Springs" first comes to our notice in a letter from the owner of the springs and the adjoining lands to the Assembly, dated April 1, 1698.<sup>5</sup> The contents of this letter have not been preserved, but the brief entry upon the record made at the time of its receipt is most expressive: "As to Captn. Dents Lr. about the Coole Springs it is looked upon as an Idle Letter not worth an answer." If this indicated skepticism as to the worth of the springs, we shall see how that feeling was soon to give way to a very different one.

At a meeting of the Governor's Council held June 4, steps were taken to care for the spiritual welfare of those who were already flocking to the springs in search of health. We see now an adroit move on the part of the government to counteract the influence which the Catholic priests had already gained among the sick. The following quaint entry upon the Council proceedings seems worth quoting in full:<sup>6</sup>

"Mr. Philip Lynes appearing at the Board and giving an Acct of some Extraordinary Cures lately wrought at the cool springs in St. Mary's County & that several poor people flocked thither to recover their health and limbs. His Excellency the Governor is

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<sup>4</sup> Proceedings of the Council of Maryland, July 1, 1698. Md. Hist. Soc. MSS.

<sup>5</sup> Archives of Maryland, Vol. XXII, p. 61.

<sup>6</sup> Proceedings of the Council of Maryland, June 4, 1698. Md. Hist. Soc. MSS.



to send & give to those Poor People at the said springs ten Bibles [19] these to remain for the use of the poor people that Comes thither.

"His Excellency also Orders that Capt. James Keech and Mr Philip Lynes do provide some Sober person to read prayers there twice a day to whom he will give 12 S/d Day & is pleased to lend the person that reads prayers there a book of Homolyes two Books of family Devotions & a Book of reformed Devotions written by Dr. Theophilus Dorrington out of which Books he is to read to them on Sundays.

"Further Ordered that the said captain Keech & Mr. Lines acquaint Captain John Dent who is the Owner of the said House and Land that if he be willing his Excellency would have a reading desk & some Benches made in the New house there for the readers to read prayers & the people to sit on which by the Leave of the said Captain Dent, Captain Keich & Mr. Lynes are Ordered to get made & his Excellency will pay them for them.

"His Excy is pleased likewise to give & Allow to the said Poor people every Sunday a Mutton & as much Indian Corn as will Amount to Thirteen Shillings pr Week & orders Mr. Lynes to Consult Capt. Keech in Order to procure the same & his Excellency will pay them for it.

"Ordered that the person that reads prayers at the cool springs take an acct. of what persons Come thither who are cured & of what Distempers—paper (for this) being sent by the said Mr. Lynes."

Prayers twice daily, books of "Homilies" and "family devotions" as well as good Theophilus Dorrington's "reformed devotions" would seem indeed to meet spiritual needs, but a suspicion cannot help entering the mind that the bodily comforts of the visitors were probably less well provided for. There is no mention of provision being made for medical attendance or for nursing the sick. Whether a record of the cases treated as ordered was ever actually made, cannot be learned. It has certainly not been preserved.

By September 6th the pestilence had entirely disappeared, for the Council recommends to the Governor that he appoint a day of thanksgiving for the return of health through the great benefit of the Cool Springs and for the promise of bountiful crops. The following proclamation issued Oct. 22 shows the esteem in which the springs were now held:<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Archives of Maryland, Vol. XXII, p. 157.

[19] "And what in a more peculier and nearer manner affected this his Majestyes Province in God Allmightyes withdrawing his Afflicting hand of sickness from us and restoreing health to us w<sup>th</sup> severall beneficiall and healing springs of water called the Coole Springs which by his blessing haue wrought many Wondorfull and Signall Cures amongst Severall distempred and Impotent psons \* \* \* \* \* he had appoynted Tuesday next being the 25 Instant to be sett apart for a day of publick thanksgiveing and rejoyceing therefore to be kept and observed by the Gen<sup>l</sup> Assembly and others att the Towne and Port of Annapolis and the 22<sup>d</sup> of November next Ann arundell County and all other Countyes within this Province."

The reputation of the Cool Springs was not confined to the province of Maryland, for on the same day that the Governor issued his thanksgiving proclamation, he submits the following message to the Upper House, showing that its fame had extended at least as far as New York. His recommendation that the province should establish suitable buildings for the care of the sick was acted upon soon afterwards by the General Assembly.<sup>8</sup> His own offer to contribute twenty-five pounds toward the building of a hospital was a notable act of charity for the times, and is probably the first donation to a hospital in the colonies:

"The printed news lately by his Ex<sup>cy</sup> received from New Yorke Delivers severall representations to him relateing to the Coole Springs in saint Marys County and (he) proposes that if the house doe Consent to have some small Tenem<sup>ts</sup> built there in [20] the nature of an Hospitall he will giue twenty five pounds sterling towards the building thereof."

After some little discussion the following act was passed, Oct. 20, 1698, for the purchase of the Springs with the adjoining land and for the erection thereon of suitable buildings for the care of the sick:<sup>9</sup>

"Whereas by the favour of Allmighty God there hath been of Late a discovery made of fountains of healing Waters Called the Cool Springs in St Marys County whose healing quality has been Experienced by many Impotent and diseased persons to their

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<sup>8</sup> Idem., p. 158.

<sup>9</sup> Archives of Maryland, Vol. XXII, p. 279.

great help and Comfort and for that so great blessing, benefitt [20]  
and gifts of Almighty God may not be neglected but a right use  
thereof made it is most fitting and Convenient that a particular  
Care should be first had of all such poor Impotent persons as re-  
paire thither for Care and for tht purpose or other such Charitable  
or pious uses a small Tract or parcell of Land near adjoyning may  
be purchased thereon to build and erect houses for the Entertain-  
ment of the said poor, and fuell for fireing and other such neces-  
sarys for their reliefe the Delegates of this present Generall As-  
sembly Therefore pray it may be Enacted.....that the  
persons hereafter named may and are hereby Appointed Trus-  
tees.....to buy & purchase in the name of our Sovereign  
Lord the King.....for pious and Charitable uses fifty Acres  
of Land adjoyning to and in which the said fountains shall be  
included. And be it Enacted by the Authority aforesaid That Col  
John Courts Thomas Brooks Esqr Capt James Keech, Capt Jacob  
Morland of St Mary's County and Capt Philip Hoskins Capt John  
Bayne and Mr Benjamin Hall of Charles County or any three  
of them be & are hereby Impowered Authorized and appointed  
Trustees. . . . ."

The trustees appointed under this act met at All Saints  
Parish, St. Mary's County, November 24 to complete the pur-  
chase of the springs and land for 25 pounds sterling,<sup>10</sup> but  
there was apparently some hitch in the sale, as we later find  
the Assembly taking steps to condemn the springs and ad-  
joining land.<sup>11</sup> The erection of small cottages seems to have  
been later determined upon instead of the large house which  
was first planned. For some reason the erection of buildings  
by the government was delayed until several months later,  
for July 3, 1699, we find the Assembly and Council still dis-  
cussing the erection of buildings:<sup>12</sup>

"Forasmuch as by our Journall of the last Sessions we find that  
there was one hundred pounds sterl allotted for the use of the  
Cool Springs towards the purchase of fifty Acres of Land and for  
the building of small tenemts for the good and benefitt of such  
poor Impotent and lame persons as shall resorte thither and we  
find the Trustees appointed by Act of Assembly to purchase the sd  
Land have agreed for and purchased the same for Twenty five pds

<sup>10</sup> Vestry Records of All Faith Parish, St. Mary's Co., Nov. 24,  
1698. (Transcript in the Md. Hist. Soc.)

<sup>11</sup> Archives of Maryland, Vol. XXII, pp. 418 and 419.

<sup>12</sup> Archives of Maryland, Vol. XXII, p. 298.

[20] sterl so that there is yet seaventy five pounds Sterl remaining towards the building of such Tenements.

"We humbly pray that your Excy will be pleased to appoint two of his Matys hon<sup>ble</sup> Councill to Joine into a Committee w<sup>th</sup> three of the members of the house to Consider of the Erecting such Tenem<sup>ts</sup>

Signed p Order

Chr: Gregory Cl house Del.

"The Honble Col. Henry Iowles and Thomas Brook Esqr Appointed to Joine with the Members of the house upon that Committee."

A few days before this the former owner of the Springs, Capt. John Dent, had petitioned the Assembly for the sole privilege of keeping an inn or "ordinary" at the Springs, which shows that although the pestilence had passed away more than a year before, its popularity had not yet waned. We have every reason to believe that the seventy-five pounds remaining after the purchase of the land was devoted to the construction of buildings, for there is nothing to show that the money was turned back into the treasury, or used for other purposes than that for which it was appropriated.

The Cool Springs now disappears as suddenly from view as two years before it had sprung into prominence. I can find no reference to it in the colonial records of the first half of the eighteenth century. With the passing of the great pestilence, its popularity must have waned, although we have no means of judging when this occurred.

With a view of tracing the subsequent history of the Cool Springs I have recently made a thorough inquiry among those familiar with the local traditions of Southern Maryland to discover, if possible, its later history.

The location of the springs is in St. Mary's County where the village of Charlotte Hall now stands. The place is said to have been renamed in honor of Queen Charlotte, wife of George III. The name "Saint Maries" recalls all that is romantic in the early history of the colony. The island of St. Clements, where the first landing was made by Leonard Calvert in 1634, and the city of St. Maries, the first seat of government, are both situated in this, the oldest county of the province. The history of Catholic Maryland was largely the

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<sup>18</sup> Archives of Maryland, Vol. XXII, p. 383.

history of St. Mary's. With the ascendancy of Protestant in- [20]  
fluence in the colony and in England, the seat of government  
was removed by Governor Nicholson in 1694-95 from the city  
of St. Mary's to Annapolis. St. Mary's never recovered from  
this shock. Her importance rapidly dwindled. Even the  
former city of St. Mary's has almost disappeared from the  
map, being now represented by a church, a school and a few  
scattered buildings. Other once important towns in St.  
Mary's county are now as desolate as our own Joppa. The  
Cool Springs was destined to suffer a similar fate to that  
which befell St. Mary's City, for in the first three-quarters  
of the eighteenth century it passes entirely from our view,  
until in 1774, by an act of the Legislature, the now well-  
known Charlotte Hall School was established there, although  
the outbreak of the Revolution delayed the actual opening of  
the school for several years. It is probable that the site was  
selected largely on account of its healthfulness and the abund-  
ance of pure water.

The springs are situated at the head of a swamp, the water  
gushing out at several points from a bank of sand and stone.  
There are three springs, all within thirty yards of each other. [21]  
The water from the principal spring is now supplied to the  
school buildings. A recent analysis of the water from the  
two principal springs illustrates only too well what we see so  
frequently in this day and generation, and for which we need  
not go back two hundred years for an example: the water  
possesses two wonderful curative properties—purity and  
abundance. From mineral constituents it is remarkably  
free, as the following analysis shows:

ANALYSIS OF WATER FROM CHARLOTTE HALL, MADE JANUARY, 1889.		
PARTS 100,000.	SPRING No. 1.    SPRING No. 2.	
Total Solids at 1000 C.....	4.70	2.55
Silica .....	.38	.35
Iron and Alumina.....	.15	.08
Lime (Ca. O.).....	.65	.30
Magnesia (Mg. O.).....	.24	.03
Sulphuric Acid, Soz.....	.43	.26
Correct:	<i>Signed, HARRY J. PATTERSON, Chemist.</i>	
App'd	HENRY E. ALVORD, <i>Director.</i>	

Note—In both cases, the Lime and Magnesia exist principally  
in the form of Carbonates.

*Prof. R. W. Silvester, Charlotte Hall, St. Mary's Co., Md.*

DEAR SIR.—After your second letter, we were able to identify the two samples of water. Both have been analyzed, and the characteristic of each is special purity. It is not only free from organic matter, but *contains a very low percentage of mineral matter*. I enclose the two analyses. Authorities agree in the statement, that very good drinking water may carry six hundred parts per million, total solids of the character of those found in your samples. These two samples contain respectively but 251/2 and 47 parts per million of total solids. It is seldom that spring water is found with less.

Very respectfully yours,

HENRY E. ALVORD, *Director*.

What advantages our ancestors of two centuries ago possessed! With scarcely other facilities for analysis than those afforded by the senses, how easy it was to discover at their very door marvellous, healing properties in some abundant fountain of pure water, while we of this twentieth century must cross oceans or continents to sip our morning glass of water, in which our finer chemical methods are able to detect one or two grains of lithia or iron to the gallon. Do the seekers with Ponce de Leon, the early Marylanders crowding to the Cool Springs and the throngs at a modern European spa differ from one another in kind or in degree? Were the cures at the Cool Springs less real than many made to-day at Carlsbad?

The popularity of the Cool Springs was from the first doomed to be of brief duration. Neither the taste nor the smell of the waters was sufficiently bad to ensure them an enduring reputation. Had that enterprising inn keeper, Captain John Dent, but discovered the wonderful properties of a bath in the mud of the neighboring swamp, perhaps his descendants, instead of the rapacious hotel keepers of Marienbad or Franzenbad, might be reaping a harvest of American dollars at the mud baths of "Ye Coole Springs of St. Maries."

Instead of this, even the name Cool Springs is now almost forgotten. There is nothing to show that its waters were used to any extent medicinally except for a few years following the pestilence of 1697. Among the oldest inhabitants

there is now no tradition which gives us the least clue of the [21] subsequent history of this ancient health resort until the establishment there of Charlotte Hall School. By some it is even doubted whether special buildings for the care of the sick were ever actually erected by the State. For reasons which have already been given it seems almost certain that such buildings were erected. We know, however, that there were buildings and provision of some kind there for the care of the sick, from what we have already gleaned from the old records.

Among the people of the neighborhood the water is now supposed to be of some slight benefit in diseases of the kidneys, but even locally it has a very limited reputation.

I have told you all that I have been able to learn of this once famous Maryland health resort. That the Cool Springs should have had but a brief popularity must not lessen our appreciation of the efforts of Governor Nicholson and the Assembly to establish in this colony one of the first hospitals and sanatoriums in the provinces. A few years ago the Colonial Dames of America erected a tablet in the McCoy Building of the Johns Hopkins University, in memory of Governor Nicholson, in recognition of his efforts in behalf of education in Maryland—

TO  
COMMEMORATE THE LIBERALITY  
AND ZEAL FOR LEARNING  
OF  
FRANCIS NICHOLSON,  
GOVERNOR OF MARYLAND,  
BY WHOSE EXERTIONS AND BOUNTY  
WAS FOUNDED IN 1696  
THE FIRST FREE SCHOOL IN THE PROVINCE,  
THIS TABLET IS ERECTED BY  
THE MARYLAND SOCIETY  
OF THE  
COLONIAL DAMES OF AMERICA,  
1900.

It seems unfortunate that some recognition could not have been made at the same time of his early attempt to establish

[21] a hospital for the care of the sick and suffering of the province and his own liberal contribution for the purpose. It seems especially appropriate to bring this early attempt to your attention at a time when an earnest effort is being made to establish a sanitarium for the care of the consumptives of our community. Shall we allow it to be said that our ancestors upwards of two hundred years ago were more zealous in the care of the sufferers from the unknown pestilence than are we of the victims of the great white plague?



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The second hospital in  
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