

The Rambler Finds Another Historic Spot

Site of the Schoolhouse in Montgomery County Where John H. Surratt Was Teacher—Old Families in That Section.

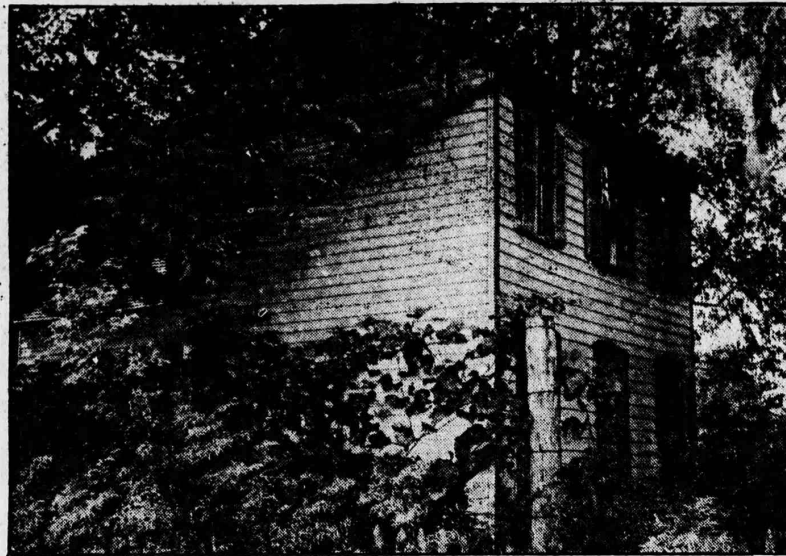
THE Rambler came upon a spot which greatly interested him because of the memories it evoked and the recollections it awoke. It is not because of the interest it held for him but because of his belief in his hope that it may interest you that he will get down some of the things observed and learned and some of the men and women met with on this little Sunday walk.

The name "Schoolhouse lane" is not an uncommon one in this and other neighborhoods. Usually when a country schoolhouse has stood upon a lane long enough to become historic or to become a landmark, the dwellers "legendize" call it "Schoolhouse lane." The schoolhouse may disappear but the memory of it will survive in the name of the lane. In many neighborhoods there is a "Church hill" or "Chapel hill" where neither church nor chapel stands upon the hill. But the place-name shows that once upon a time and perhaps no long ago that "Man's memory runneth not to the contrary"—and all that, a shrine which pious and devoted people loved stood upon that hill and that there men listened to those messages of love and promises of forgiveness which give us strength in life and consolation on the eve of death.

The Schoolhouse lane which the Rambler came upon is in Montgomery county, Md. The largest town near it is Garrett Park and that place is a trifle under a mile away as the crow flies—when he flies straight—and about a mile and a half away, if from the junction of School House lane with the Rockville pike, you follow the pike south to Plack's lane and then follow that lane across the green and prosperous fields of the Plack farm to the northwest edge of Garrett Park. Schoolhouse lane is a shady, narrow, road connecting the Rockville pike and the older part of the stage road between Georgetown and the west through Rockville, which now appropriately bears the name "Old Georgetown road."

The pike and the older road are half a mile apart where the lane runs. East of the pike a newer prolongation of the lane crosses the Baltimore and Ohio railroad half a mile east of the pike and near the railroad station of Windham, and then straggles on for another half mile eastward nearly to Rock creek. West of the Old Georgetown road a prolongation of Schoolhouse lane "pursues" its course for a mile among "farms." But the true Schoolhouse lane is the old and tree-bordered stretch which links the pike and the road which east and west traffic followed before the pike was built, which was about 1820. The electric railroad to Rockville crosses School house lane and cars stop there to take on and discharge passengers, but so far as the Rambler has learned that stopping place has no common name such as Jones' Crossing or Smith's Crossroads. The railroad men call the place "No. 4 Switch." The newer conductors might not know Schoolhouse lane, but every man on the line knows "No. 4 Switch." There is a patch of woodland close to the switch and about a hundred yards west of that point on the south side of the lane is where the schoolhouse stood. Not a vestige of it remains, but in the woods around it the feet of children have beaten certain signs upon the earth, such as bare hard places where they played, and tramped out paths over which they came and went. Because of these reminders it is not hard for an imaginative person to visualize the old schoolhouse. Two schoolhouses stood there.

The first was burned down, or perhaps it got so badly out of repair that the Montgomery authorities decided to pull it down and build another. The fate of the first school is not known to the Rambler. The second school stood there till about ten years ago, when it was discontinued and torn down. The Rambler believes that it was officially called the Montrose schoolhouse, because it stood a trifle more than half a mile south of a place called Montrose, an old place, and a very lovable old place, where a number of Washington people board throughout the summer. It was also called the upper school. Down the Old Georgetown road about a mile and a half south of Schoolhouse lane is a road junction called Beane. Once it was called Rabbit's Store, and now it is generally called by the people of that part of the country Wilson's Store. At Beane a road leaves the Old Georgetown road and leads west to join the Seven Rocks road near Bell's mills or Orendorff's mill or Magruder's mill, on Cabin John run, something more than two miles away. On that road, about a quarter of a mile from the Old Georgetown road, was another school, which was called the lower school. The schoolhouse was standing the last time the Rambler



THE MAUGHT HOME, WHERE JOHN SURRATT BOARDED.

walked over the road from Beane to Bell's mills and he described the old place. But it was the site of the upper school which most interested the Rambler.

In the generations of pupils at that school many teachers came and went. Some stayed a long time, say two or three years. One of these teachers was John H. Surratt son of the unfortunate Mrs. Mary Surratt, and a man who had a tragic life himself. If the Rambler were writing only for the old-time people of Maryland and Virginia and the District he need write no more than that fact, but Washington is crowded with newcomers, some of whom perhaps are kind and indulgent enough to glance at the pictures that the Rambler takes, and some of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of old Washington people do not know how many visions and memories of past days are called up by the name "Surratt." John Surratt died in Baltimore a few years ago. The Rambler knew that. Keeping the Index of The Star and performing many other useful duties on this great newspaper is a young woman whose home is Alexandria. Her name is Margaret Germond. The Rambler rang for messenger and sent to Miss Germond the following note: "Dear Margaret: Can you give me the date of death of John H. Surratt. I don't want you to take too much trouble about this, but perhaps you can find it without much work."

In three minutes a little pencilled note came back, "April 22, 1916, page 8."

Turning to the file indicated the Rambler copied what follows: BALTIMORE, April 22.—John Harrison Surratt, last survivor of the alleged conspirators tried for implication in the plot to assassinate Abraham Lincoln, died at 9:20 o'clock last night at his home, 1004 West Lenoir street, after an illness of pleuro-pneumonia lasting nearly two months. He was 72 years of age on April 13. At his bedside when the end came were his wife, Mrs. Mary Victoria Hunter Surratt, and two of his daughters, Mrs. Albert F. Dalton of Kensington and Mrs. J. Francis Hardy. He leaves also a son, William H. Surratt, and another daughter, Mrs. Parker L. Weller of Montgomery county.

Mr. Surratt led a life of business activity until last August, when he retired from the position of general freight agent and auditor of the Old Bay Line. He was born in the District of Columbia in 1844 and his first employment was with the Adams Express Company in Washington. When the civil war broke out he enlisted in the Confederate army and was a member of the secret service division for four years. He was in Elmira, New York, when Lincoln was assassinated and he heard that a warrant had been issued for his arrest as one of the conspirators fled to Canada and then to Europe. Later he was arrested, brought back to the United States for trial and was acquitted. He married in 1872.

The trial of John H. Surratt was begun in the Criminal Court June 10, 1867. The jury was out two days, and on August 10 reported that it could not agree, standing eight to four for acquittal. He was not brought to trial a second time, and after several months in prison the indictment against him was nolle prossed and he was released. The trial judge was George P. Fisher. John Surratt's counsel were John H. Bradley, sr.; John H. Bradley, jr., and Richard T. Merrick. The district attorney was E. C. Car-

lington, and to assist him in the prosecution the government called in Edward Pierrepont of New York. More than 200 witnesses were called. There is no doubt in the minds of anybody familiar with the whole Lincoln conspiracy case that John H. Surratt had at one time become involved with Booth in a plot to kidnap President Lincoln, but was not privy to any plot to murder the great emancipator. The best study of the whole case was written in 1915 by Winfield M. Thompson, and the Rambler takes the liberty of reproducing from Mr. Thompson's thorough, accurate work the following:

When Mary E. Surratt was hanged her son was in hiding in Canada. The news of her trial was kept from him by friends and no ill motive to aid her therefore prompted him to return and give himself up. Had he returned there would have been one more figure on the scaffold on which Mrs. Surratt perished on July 7, 1865, for John H. Surratt was held to be the first aid of Booth in the killing of Lincoln. Had John H. Surratt been tried in 1865 before the military tribunal, that condemned his mother the evidence that enabled

Supreme Court had ruled that while the courts were free to exercise their functions such a body was not a competent tribunal for trying civilians. Trial before a court meant a free introduction of testimony for the accused. Before the military commission the preponderance of testimony admitted had been that against the accused.

The site of the Upper School, in which John Surratt taught, and a considerable acreage around it is now the property of Morgan H. Beach, whose home is on the Rockville pike near Montrose. A few hundred yards west of the site of the school and on the south side of School House lane is an old frame house set in a shady garden where grow fine old boxwood trees, a giant British yew tree, one of those trees bearing large panicles of blue flowers and which is called "the pride of China" or the "Empress of China" tree, an ash, a willow and a tree locally called "Illinois locust." There are tubs full of gay petunias and circles and beds of many other flowers. By the side of the house is a vegetable garden; where nearly all the vegetables that can be raised in this climate are growing. This is now the home of Conrad Franklin Maught and his sister, Miss Lucinda. Here it was that John Surratt boarded while a teacher at the "Upper School," and Mr. Maught was one of his pupils.

The Rambler has often had occasion in the course of his Montgomery county narratives to mention Osborn Sprigg Wilson. His old house by the side of the pike and near the new buildings of Georgetown College is standing and its picture has appeared in the rambles. He was the ancestor of many people living in Montgomery county. His third daughter, Mira, married Conrad William Maught of Frederick county. Mr. Maught died about 1859 and his widow built the house which stands in the shady garden with the box, yew, ash and willow trees. Conrad William Maught and Mira Wilson had three children. The first was John William Maught, who married Miss Lovetta Young of Frederick county, a daughter of Jacob Young. John William is dead, but his widow lives in Middletown and has one son, whose name is Conrad Jacob Young Maught.

Conrad Franklin Maught and Lucinda Maught were the other children of Conrad William and Mira Wilson Maught, and they live in the old home. This house stands on a part of the Osborn Sprigg Wilson land, and the Rambler believes that the old school stood on land that once was owned by Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Maught has very clear remembrance of John Surratt, and says he was a good teacher, a good man, and is affectionately remembered by all the people who took their lessons under his guidance and who are still living. The first teacher at that school, so far as Maught can remember, was one whose name was Mounts. Another was Thomas Harris, one was Luther Claggett and another William Keefe. Mounts returned to this school, and, if the Rambler is reading his notes straight, he succeeded John Surratt. Miss Blanche Braddock taught at this school, and she is now a teacher in a school at or near Glen Echo. The last teacher



CONRAD FRANKLIN MAUGHT.

him to go free in 1867 would not have availed him. The military commission that condemned Mrs. Surratt, Payne, Atterdorf and Hend to death and sent Dr. Mudd, Arnold, O'Laughlin and Spangler to Dry Tortugas, the last three with life sentences, the last six years, was appointed to convict. In the passion of the time clear judgment could scarcely be expected. The members of the commission were officers and not lawyers. Many of the witnesses who appeared before them were influenced by the hope of large rewards. Others were in fear of government displeasure or harbored hope of gain in place of influence. In the two years that elapsed before John Surratt was brought to trial men's brains had time to cool. A military commission could not sit in his case, for the

at that school was Miss Beulah Dove, who is now living at Rockville. Among the boys who attended the school with Mr. Maught were Charles, Harry, George and Fred Tansill, sons of Col. Robert, Tansill; Winfield, Willie and Wade Magruder; John, Fritz, Charles and Edward Spangler, and the Rabbitt, Mace, Plack, Lochte and Goegler boys. Several years ago, when the Rambler was trying to locate the roads and fields on which the first skirmishing in Gen. Early's raid against Washington took place, in 1864, he came to the house in which Franklin and Lucinda Maught are living. He wrote: "Holding his way the Rambler came to a road leading from the old Georgetown road to the Rockville pike, and in a frame house nearly hidden by giant boxwood and a big yew tree he found one of the old residents of that part of Montgomery county. Her name is Lucinda Connor, who was born Lucinda Wilson, and who not long ago celebrated her 92d birthday." That was several years ago. Mrs. Lucinda Connor is no more, but her memory survives affectionately in the minds of many people in the county. The Rambler felt that surely her spirit must visit and revisit the old home where the box, yew, ash and willow trees are growing.

If you walk west from the Maught home along Schoolhouse lane a few rods brings you to the old Georgetown road. Turn to the left into that road and you will see off to the right hand, in picturesque garden and a grove of big trees a very old house. This is now called the Mace house, but before most of the Rambler's readers were born it was the Riley place. Isaac Riley, who married Matilda Middleton, lived there. Isaac Riley died July 5, 1850, at the age of seventy-six, and his wife, who was born in 1800, died in 1890. The Riley children were Martha, who married Samuel Wade Magruder; Sarah, who married Edward Viers; Anos, who went to California and married and died there; Van, who went to Missouri and is dead; Frances, who married Franklin Mace of Cecil county, Maryland; Josephine, who married John Keyes of Montgomery county and who is living near Rockville, and William Franklin Riley, who never married and has passed away. Living in the old house now is Charles Mace, the son of Franklin Mace and Fannie Riley. The Rambler has pictures of this old house which he visited last Sunday and he will write more at length about it in a future "ramble."

Continuing south on the old Georgetown road and leaving the Riley-Mace house behind, you will soon come to a road that strikes off to the west and leads to the Seven Locks road at Scotland. Within sight of this road junction is a pretty house which stands on the site of a very old one. The new house is the farm of Dr. Robert S. Woodward, president of the Carnegie Institution, and is the home of the superintendent of the farm.

This land was part of the farm of Thomas Lyddane. That farm extended across or eastward of the Georgetown road and the eastern part is now the property of John Joy Edson, who has built there one of the beautiful homes of the Washington neighborhood. The Thomas Lyddane homestead stood in the grounds now owned by Mr. Edson and the old house was removed several years ago. On that part of the Lyddane farm owned by Dr. Woodward stood a farmhouse which from 1808 to 1871 was occupied by Col. Robert Tansill and his family. This part of the county he often revisited by one of the Tansill boys. The old-timers out that way call him Charlie Tansill, but his full name is Charles Fisk Tansill and he lived at 1262 Kearney street, Brookland and is one of the pioneer settlers in that beautiful section of Washington. Everybody in the northeast knows Mr. Tansill. He has lived in Brookland twenty-one years and has been closely connected with all its varied civic activities and has been one of the promoters of the various rose and flower shows that have made Brookland famous. He is the proud possessor of the grand gold rose medal of the Brookland Rose Society, having won it three times in succession. He has been president of the Brookland Rose Society, president of the Brookland Brotherhood, an denominational society of Brookland men; vice president of the Brookland Citizens' Association and vice president of the Brookland Holy Name Society. The Rambler is going to write the story of the Lyddane farm and the Tansill family at a very early date and he believes it will interest many thousands of people. Thomas Lyddane married Margaret Jones of Montgomery county and their children were Jones, Mary, Thomas, Charles, who married Miss Ida Huddleston and lives in Rockville; Samuel, Nicholas, Leon and Margaret.