

PAPERS OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE.

XL.

SAMUEL WHITE AND HIS FATHER
JUDGE THOMAS WHITE.

AN ALMOST FORGOTTEN SENATOR; AND HIS
FATHER WHO WAS A FOLLOWER OF
ASBURY IN THE EARLY DAYS
OF METHODISM.

BY

HENRY C. CONRAD,

LIBRARIAN OF THE SOCIETY.

Read before the Historical Society of Delaware, Sept. 21, 1903.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE,
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WHITE'S MEETING HOUSE.
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State News/Lee Ann Walling

George L. Caley of Smyrna leads fellow Methodists in singing a hymn at the dedication of a historical marker that notes the site where Judge Thomas White harbored Francis Asbury, a prominent Methodist minister, during the American Revolutionary War. Pictured behind him at the site on Kent 59 Saturday are, from left, Dr. Philip Lawton of the Peninsula Conference; Rep. G. Robert Quillen, R-Harrington; and Sen. Nancy W. Cook, D-Kenton.

State marks minister's refuge site during war

By **Lee Ann Walling**
Staff writer

WHITELEYSBURG — All that is left of Judge Thomas White's home now is a fallow field along a lonely highway west of Harrington.

But the site played a significant enough role in the history of Methodism and Delaware to warrant a state historical mark-

er. The Methodist faithful, as well as historians and a few politicians, gathered there on Saturday afternoon to see the \$1,125 marker unveiled.

Judge White harbored Francis Asbury, the most prominent American minister of Methodism, at his farm for two years during the Revolutionary War.

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Marker

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"He was considered to be John Wesley's first assistant in America," the Rev. Allen B. Clark, president of the Peninsula Conference Historical Society, told those gathered along Kent 59 east of Whiteleysburg.

As such, "He was particularly a marked man," remarked C. Russell McCabe, coordinator of the state's historical markers program.

To understand why a preacher needed sanctuary while this

country was fighting for freedoms that included religion, one has to understand the atmosphere that existed at the time, Mr. McCabe said.

"Delaware was the scene of considerable political unrest," he explained. The state was split between those loyal to King George III, the Tories, and those who either were patriots or didn't care.

"People associated Toryism with Methodism," Mr. McCabe said. "It was just solely the fact that the Methodist movement sprang from England."

Mr. Clark said Asbury preached at the judge's house 23 times. "He stayed here and stuck it out."

Judge White's home was razed in 1979. He was a member of the legislatures of Delaware and Maryland, as well as chief justice of the Kent County Court of Common Pleas. The judge was a delegate to the Delaware constitutional conventions of 1776 and 1791-92.

"When the Mason-Dixon dispute finally was settled, they told him, 'You're a Delawarean now,'" Mr. Clark said. Still, Caroline County's historical society was represented at Saturday's unveiling.

His son, Samuel White, grew up in the house and represented Delaware in the U.S. Senate from 1801 to 1809.

Mr. McCabe said the renowned minister may have stayed at the judge's home because he could easily escape into Maryland. Asbury "had genuine affection for Judge White because of the sacrifices Judge White made," he said.