

Sam Bleight:

His ancestor printed the Declaration of Independence



Clifford Owen - Potomac News

Mr. Bleight prepares apples for applesauce

By DOROTHY KELLER
Sitting in front of a warm stove in Sam Bleight's home in Haymarket and listening to him tell the history of John Dunlap, printer of the Declaration of Independence, almost gave one the feeling of going back into time and reliving those days.

Bleight is a very warm, friendly gentleman who has lived in Haymarket since 1893, all of his life. He is from a family of four children, three boys and a girl. None of the boys ever married.

He was born at Greenhill Farm—now the home of the Vincent Stantons—which the Bleights sold to settle an estate. However, Sam still reserves seven acres there after selling about 300. His present home, on Va. 55 directly across from the Haymarket Baptist Church, is situated on 18 acres.

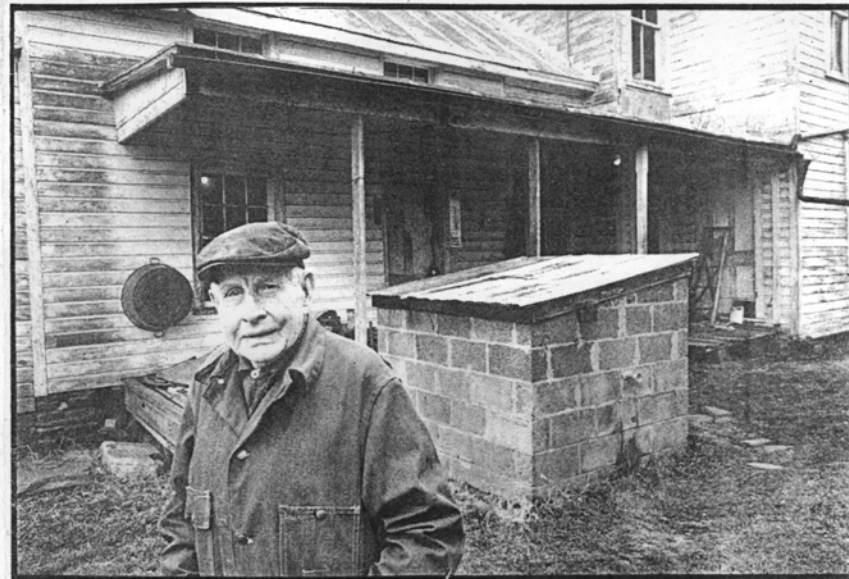
The original house on the property was burned down during the Civil War. Bleight recalls that his father, Samuel Rush Bleight, told him that he, Charles Jordan, and Jim Utterback stood on a nearby hill and watched most of Haymarket burn down during the Civil War.

Bleight remembers many details of his family history that has been passed down from one generation to the next. He is a great-nephew of John Dunlap. In his home, Bleight has several pieces of furniture that belonged to Dunlap, including a table Dunlap kept in his living quarters above the printing shop. It was on this table that Dunlap laid the Declaration of Independence and set the type on it.

Bleight had several old copies of the Declaration, on the bottom of which read "Published by John Dunlap."

Another interesting piece of furniture is a corner cabinet carved from teak trees. Teak is a large tree of the East Indies, with a hard, durable, yellowish-brown wood. The cabinet was a wedding present to John Dunlap.

On July 4, 1776, Dunlap printed the first copies of the Declaration of Independence from Thomas Jefferson's written manuscript. In 1976, Charles R. Jordan, a friend



Mr. Bleight in his Haymarket backyard

and neighbor of Bleight's drove him to Philadelphia where he was an honored guest for the Society of Professional Journalist's Bicentennial Celebration in honor of John Dunlap, newspaper editor, patriot and printer of the Declaration of Independence.

Bleight has always been a farmer. He still likes to grow a large garden each year, a lot of which he gives away to friends. He farmed at Greenhill Farm until 1942 when it was sold.

His brother George, who will be 98 in March, is in the Annaburg Manor Nursing Home. Bleight speaks very fondly of him and tries to visit when he can get transportation. Due to his failing eye sight, he is restricted from driving. Sam lost the

ends of several of his fingers while grinding hay; George has the same finger tips gone on the same hand.

Bleight's parents once moved for a short period to Prince George County, didn't like it and came back to rent Pageland Farm on Pageland Lane, Gainesville.

Bleight's education varied. His parents hired a live-in teacher for the children when they lived at Greenhill Farm. He went to Nanie Turner's private school where his teacher was Debuts Carter; he also attended school at Haymarket's Town Hall. Bleight's several years in high school were spent about three blocks from St. Paul's Church.

A very religious man, Bleight walks to St. Paul's

It was
manor Nursing Home but
managed to attend church at
St. Paul's whenever possible.
One time Bleight took his
niece, Helen Crowley, to
church on a sleigh pulled by
two horses. When they were
turning into Greenhill Farm,
Bleight pulled too hard on the
reins. They broke the horses,
left the sleigh on the side of
the road and ran to the barn.
In June 1929, the town of
Haymarket held a picnic.
About 200 people attended,
including Rep. Herbert E.
Harris, Manassas Mayor
Harry Parrish, and
Gainesville District Super-
visor Donald White. Mayor
Murdal Gilbertson presented
an American flag to an
honored guest, Samuel
Bleight.

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