

CONNECTIONS

One of the great things about living in a small community is discovering connections between people and things. It is one of my great pleasures to stumble onto some interesting fact, or photo, then to follow it along, finding quite unexpected links and new dimensions to the matter.

I highly recommend this past-time to you all. It can be very confusing, sometimes inquiries don't lead anywhere, and you risk getting swamped in trivia. But months later another piece of the story may turn up or a new connection fall into place.

For example, there's this matter of...

THE TITHING QUILT

Part One of Three

Our bookstore used to be beside the *Nothing New Antique Shop*, **Shirley Walton and Rose Garvin**, proprietors. They helped us a lot in our early years, and we became friends. Shirley passed away, but Rose is going strong. She still drops in regularly with a picture or clipping or piece of information. Recently she had a question.

She asked if I had ever seen an article about the St. John's Tithing Quilt. She said she'd read about it in a book that **Minnie Harrison** once had.

Now here's the first Fairbank Village connection: Minnie and her husband **Adrian**'s home was the little waterside bungalow on the Bar Neck side recently purchased by **Fred and Val Panebianco**. Minnie and Rose were fellow-teachers at Tilghman Elementary School, and became very close after Adrian passed.

Minnie was interested in quilting and the book she showed Rose mentioned a Tithing Quilt. It turns out that tithing quilts were a custom in the 19th century, notably in church congregations. The women made a patch with their names on it and the amount being contributed to some cause or other.



In this case, the occasion was the departure of St. John's Chapel's first minister, **Charles Millican**. He arrived two years after the Chapel was built, in 1893, and served for two years before moving on. In appreciation, a tithing quilt was constructed to commemorate his departure.

The amounts were modest but significant by the standards of the day and in a poor parish. But we do know he got the quilt, because at the time of the article, 1995, the quilt was in the possession of Rev. Millican's grandson John—though where he may be is not mentioned.

Rose couldn't find her photocopy of the article and wondered if I had a copy. I didn't, so she contacted Minnie's daughter, who contacted her daughter, who had her grandmother's books—including the original quilting book whence came the article. She made another copy and sent it to Rose who brought it to me. I was able to identify

the book and find reference to it on the internet, which enabled Rose to obtain a copy from the Tilghman Library on inter-library loan in just two days! Connections!

The book, *A Maryland Album*, by Nancy Gibson Tuckhorn and Gloria Seaman Allen, was about some 75 Maryland quilts. Here is how they described the St. John's tithing quilt:

"Typical of crazy quilts of the 1890s, the St. John's Chapel quilt includes a variety of fancy fabrics and artistic techniques. Names and initials were both painted and embroidered; individual areas have pieced, appliquéd, and painted designs of flowers, animals, fans, and Christian symbols."

There are photos of the quilt, one showing the entire five-by-five array of 25 squares.

The authors pay special attention to the 9th square, counting from the top down and left to right—the Kinnamon "Tree of Life."

It connects not only to the present-day boat-builder and his family, but also to the **Russos**, the **Finizios**, and particularly the **Benders**.

[to be continued]

CONNECTIONS

Last issue we began a series illustrating how on thing leads to another around here, and the fun it can be to follow the threads.

In this case, it began with a quilt made as a parting gift for the first minister of St. John's Chapel, and led to other matters of interest to Fairbank Villagers. We pick up the thread with a closer examination of that quilt.

THE TITHING QUILT

Part Two of Three

According to Tuckhorn and Allen, the authors of *A Maryland Album* wherein was found the article about the St. John's Tithing Quilt, the center fan block contains the names of the Rev. Charles Millican and his wife Lucy. Now here's an interesting little connection: The Millicans' named their son Smithson, honoring the Englishman who donated his life's fortune to found (in 1846) the world-class intellectual institution in Washington DC.

One photo shows in detail the area just to the "northeast" of the fan, the Kinnamon "Tree of Life" (white arrow). Now this

. The dark area points to an area just to the "west" of the Tree



THE TITHING QUILT

The first minister of St. John's Chapel was the Rev. Charles Millican. He and his family arrived in 1893 to serve the Methodist Episcopal Church South parishes of St. John's Chapel and Royal Oak.

This Deed made March 13, 1891, states that I, **John V. Harrington** of Talbot County, in the State of Maryland, in return for ***the sum of \$100.00*** which I acknowledge receiving, do hereby grant and convey unto **John W. Mitchell, Lewis Cummings, Frederick Faulkner, William H. Bradshaw, George A. Cummings, Walter Weber, Edward R. Tyler, Josiah Faulkner, John V. Harrington, and George F. Duncan**, Trustees of the Lower Island Methodist Episcopal Church South of Talbot County and of "The Baltimore Conference" and to their assigns and successors in office, in fee simple.