Prince George’s Enquirer and Southern Maryland Advertiser

*The Prince George's Enquirer and Southern Maryland Advertiser* [LCCN: sn89060124] was established in 1882 by Joseph K. Roberts and Frederick Sasscer, Jr., two politically well-connected lawyers from the county seat, Upper Marlboro. The *Enquirer* replaced the *Prince Georgian and Southern Maryland Advertiser* [LCCN: sn89060125], a paper established by Michael J. Slayman during the Civil War after the *Planter’s Advocate* [LCCN: sn89060004] was suppressed by federal authorities. Roberts died in 1888 and Sasscer continued to edit the paper, eventually becoming the owner. He ran it as a staunch supporter of the Democratic Party. Samuel A. Wyvill, who had joined the paper as an apprentice in 1903, became part owner in 1909. The paper was published until January 30, 1925 when Sasscer and Wyvill bought the *Marlboro Gazette* [LCCN: sn83016370] from Mary E. Wilson and Charles I. Wilson and named the merged paper the *Enquirer-Gazette* [LCCN: sn89061528].

Despite its proximity to the nation’s capital, newspapers in Prince George’s County recorded the resilience of its conservative inhabitants and their traditions. Tobacco had been the staple crop in the county for hundreds of years, and tobacco prices remained a key market indicator in the local economy. Socially the *Enquirer* noted the gatherings of old ante-bellum families for deliberately anachronistic chivalric tournaments featuring tilting on horseback. By the turn of the 20th century, some of the grand old plantations were being acquired by outsiders. Most notably, New York’s William Woodward bought the Belair estate and established a breeding and training operation that produced many champion thoroughbred race horses. The newspapers closely followed meets at county race tracks in Upper Marlboro, Bowie and Laurel, which contributed to the reputation of Maryland as a center for equine sports.

The advent of the automobile lessened the isolation of Prince George’s County. The state government began work in 1922 on a modern road, Crain Highway, which connected Baltimore to the Potomac River via Upper Marlboro. The University of Maryland was established in 1920, merging professional schools in Baltimore with the Maryland State College (formerly the Maryland Agricultural College) in College Park. New towns and communities began emerging along transportation routes and on the fringes of the District of Columbia. Progress was slow for the county’s large African American population, but the opening of the Bowie Normal School in 1911 marked the beginnings of an institution that later became Bowie State University.

Sources:

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