

# A Journey Through Time

## The **TIMES** Chronicle

Columnist Linda Reno is a historian and genealogist specializing in Southern Maryland history. Mrs. Reno is a member of the St. Mary's County Historical Society, St. Mary's County Genealogical Society, Charles County Genealogical Society, Maryland Historical Society and the Maryland Genealogical Society. She has authored many books and articles on local history. We hope you will enjoy these articles and welcome your comments and suggestions for future subjects.

By Linda Reno  
Contributing Writer

We begin this week with the continuation of the response of Dr. John Broome to information appearing in the *Baltimore Patriot* on April 6, 1846 by James T. Blackistone regarding the events leading to the shooting of George Ashcom.

Mr. Blackistone writes, 'my only connection with this affair was as a peace maker.' Now to the proof. Mr. Ashcom solemnly deposed, under the awful responsibilities above mentioned, that Mr. Blackistone's advance upon him was hostile; that Mr. Blackistone pointed his pistol towards him, which caused him to draw his dirk. The witnesses under examination on the 11th inst., testify that the position of Mr. Blackistone was not that of a peace maker, but that he stood beyond the reach of Mr. Ashcom with a pistol pointing at him; and such most have been the conclusion of the intelligent magistrate, who investigated this affray on the 11th inst., as I have been credibly informed that he was issued a writ for the arrest of James T. Blackistone, for an assault upon the person of G. G. Ashcom with the intent to kill.

I will here remark that Mr. Blackistone (from having been for many years upon terms of particular and intimate friendship with Mr. Ashcom, and knowing that he was a man of firmness; that he was a man, who, if circumstances required, would advance with unflinching steps to the blazing cannon's mouth) should not have expected to bring such a man to terms of peace by the sight of a pocket pistol. In Mr. B.'s card, we find the following words: "The pistol was not used until every other recourse had become vain, and until Mr. Ashcom's desperation had rendered a resort to an absolutely though unhappily, necessary, as a matter of the most pressing self defense."

To this I will say that Mr. Ashcom has solemnly deposed that he did not intend to injure any of the parties; that his sole object was to show them that he was not to be intimidated by such measures. It is proved by positive evidence that Mr. Ashcom was shot by John H. Thomas, on whom Mr. Ashcom made no more thrust or threat. Mr. Blackistone has been for some years practising the profession of law--has been a member of the legislative Assembly of Maryland, and ought, ere this, to know, though he seems not to know, that the act of a third party in the rear shooting a man (who is engaged with two in front) is not so absolutely a matter of the most pressing self defence."

Mr. Ashcom still lives, bearing his suf-

ferings with calmness and christian fortitude; perfectly resigned to the will of his divine Master; occasionally expressing the warmest friendship for the parties in that melancholy tragedy; and in speaking of that unfortunate young man who has brought him to his bed of pain and in all probability to his bed of death used these words: "A man of my age shot by a boy--a boy whom I have fondly cherished and loved as if he had been my own son." John M. Broome, April 13, 1846.

The April 28, 1846 edition of the *Baltimore Sun* reported "At an investigation had before Mr. Costigan, a justice of the peace, at the instance of the parties implicated. George Thomas, against whom a charge had been preferred, was discharged. James Blakistone, at the close of the same investigation, tendered bail. The case of John Thomas was submitted to the Hon. Judge Key on Thursday last, on the affidavit taken before the magistrate. The Judge, without argument, admitted Mr. Thomas to bail in the amount of \$6,000. For my own part, we trust that an end will soon be put to further controversy. The parties involved are men of character--entitled to a suspension



George Ashcom's tombstone, St. Mary's College of MD

of unfavorable judgement--and it is essential to the purposes of justice that public opinion should be left free for the impartial action of the proper tribunals. We learn from a gentleman from St. Mary's that Mr. Ashcom died on Friday morning, having lingered for nearly three weeks after the infliction of the wound of which he died."

The case was presented to the Grand Jury. Charges were dropped against James Blackistone but John H. Thomas was charged with murder. His trial began August 16, 1846 and was submitted to the jury on August 19. "After a patient investigation and full argument, the jury returned a verdict of 'not guilty' without leaving the box, and the public approbation of their finding was testified by a round of applause which followed the annunciation."

Last week I erroneously stated that George Ashcom was buried at Trinity Episcopal Church. He's actually buried on the grounds of St. Mary's College of Maryland. My apologies.

**Now Arriving**

**FALL  
LAWN & PATIO  
FURNITURE**

**At Outlet  
Discount  
Pricing**

*Seasonal*  
**OUTLET CENTER**

**McKay's Plaza, Charlotte Hall**

**301-884-8682 • 301- 274-0615**

**Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri, Sat: 10 am - 7pm**

**Sunday: 10am - 4pm**

**Closed Tuesdays**