

Sharpsburg Town Crier

The Wetterer Edition



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Number 2

Casualties of War: The Sad Story of St. Paul's Episcopal Church and Rev. John Alexander Adams *By Alex Rossino*

Back in the days when I used to attend the Sunday service at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, I sat in a pew toward the rear of the congregation. Several rows behind me stood a tall stained glass window through which the sun's rays would pass, bathing everything in front of it in hues of blue, yellow, and red. The name of a man who had once been the rector of St. Paul's could be read along the bottom of the window—Reverend John Alexander Adams. Being curious by nature, and wanting to know more about the history of the building in which I sat, I decided to look into the story of this man. What I found fascinated me.

Born in 1801 and raised in the Sharpsburg area, Adams had become the rector of St. Paul's in 1860 after the unexpected departure of his predecessor.

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Town Hall Bulletin

Vice Mayor Jacob Martz

On a September day in 1867, a tradition was borne in our town, a tradition that has endured during peace and war, disease and famine, and some of the most difficult circumstances that our Nation has ever faced, and one that will continue to endure today. Our spirit of remembrance is unyielding, and our dedication to this grand tradition is a legacy that we leave for future generations, and one that will resonate through history.

Last year, in the midst of lockdowns and legal prohibitions, our community demonstrated its resolve and commitment to that mandate of preservation that was established so long ago. As many of you may recall, I had a small role in bringing last year's commemoration to fruition; but while I may have provided some organization and a point of contact, it was the people of this

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town and the surrounding community, who came together in a grassroots fashion, that made it happen. I wasn't sure what to expect that day last year, but I was truly humbled by, and grateful for the outpouring of support from our community, without whom it would not have happened at all. The spirit of that day is something I will never forget, and it's what makes this town such a unique and great place to live.

Preserving our traditions and honoring our heroes is very important to me, and I know it is to you too. That's why I am proud and honored to be the Chairman of this year's Memorial Day Parade Committee, that we as a community may persevere despite the hardships that befall us, and add another page to the annals of this continuing saga of remembrance.

We are currently in the process of planning this year's 154th commemoration, and I am fortunate to be working with a team of great, dedicated people. It really is a testament to the strength of our community that we always have people willing and ready to step forward and dedicate their time to make things like the parade and the Town Crier possible.

With the ceremony this year, we are hoping to convey a sense of a return to normalcy and to help reinvigorate the spirit of our community, especially after the circumstances of the past year; to preserve our tradition and, most importantly, to honor our brave heroes who gave the ultimate sacrifice in the service of our country. We can never forget what this day is really about, and the solemn occasion

that brings us together year after year, and I hope people will take a moment during the commemoration to reflect on its true meaning.

For more information on how you or your organization may participate in this year's parade, please contact us at townofsharpsburg@comcast.net. Those wishing to purchase a sponsorship or remembrance in the parade book may send a check, made out to the Town of Sharpsburg, to:

Memorial Day Parade
PO Box 368
Sharpsburg, MD 21782

or simply drop your submission off at Town Hall during normal business hours; the cost of a sponsorship will be two lines for \$2, and the cost of the book is \$3. If there are any questions, contact Town Hall at the email listed above, or at (301) 432-4428. All submissions for both the parade and book must be received by April 15, 2021.

I look forward to seeing you there!

Jacob Martz
Chairman



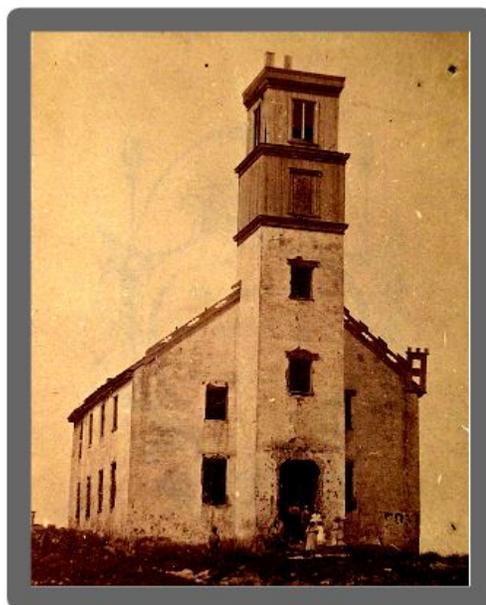
Casualties of War (*Continued*)

The task of being rector is one that Adams assumed more out of necessity than by choice. Already for many years he had preached and taught the dozens of laborers living and working near the Antietam Iron Works, located some miles down the Harpers Ferry Road from Sharpsburg, near the confluence of Antietam Creek and the Potomac River. This place lay not too far from Adams's large estate and home on the Harpers Ferry Road, referred to at the time as the West Farm. Travelers can still see the ruins of the iron works today, and even the homes of its workers along the road leading to Dargan. Now the worshippers in and around Sharpsburg required Adams's services.

Adams had married a well-educated woman named Mary Anna Ritchie around 1830 and in 1833 the couple traveled to Kentucky as missionaries. For ten years, the Adamses preached, taught, and, eventually, contracted malaria, among the locals, before returning to Sharpsburg in 1843. Dealing with the terrible impact of this disease would prove devastating to their marriage. Rev. Adams in particular suffered from the emotional instability that sometimes accompanies longtime malaria victims. Prone to violent mood swings and long bouts of depression, Adams would lapse into periods when he would not speak to his wife or family for weeks at a time. Mary Anna responded to the stress by using Laudanum, a form of opium, to ease her suffering.

By the time the Civil War came, Mary Anna had been using this highly-addictive

“cure” for years. One can only imagine the difficulty that the war caused for her as the government directed stocks of the medicine to suffering troops, leaving an unpredictable supply for the civilian populace. The addict in Rev. Adams' household suddenly could not get her fix. Add the malaria-induced mercurial temperament of her husband and the combination became explosive.



St. Paul's Episcopal Church, c.1862

The arrival of the Army of Northern Virginia in mid-September 1862 brought new challenges to the people of Sharpsburg and the Adams family. No one knows for sure if Adams willingly let the Confederate army use St. Paul's as a hospital, but the church ended up becoming one anyway. Struck multiple times by shellfire from Federal guns placed east of Antietam Creek, St. Paul's sustained damage to its roof and belfry. This damage, though, paled in comparison to the gore spilled on its floor by injured Rebel soldiers. The parishioners, again we are not sure of

Adams's role in this, had at least removed the pews and other furniture from the interior of the church, sparing them from ruin. Wounded and dying Southerners, however, still lay about the floor until Federal troops relocated them after Robert E. Lee's army departed the area. Rev. Adams had an undetermined number of them buried in a plot that he owned behind St. Paul's. There they stayed until burial parties dug up and reinterred their remains at Rose Hill in Hagerstown.



St. Paul's Episcopal Church c.2020

For Rev. Adams's part, the war left his church and position in the community devastated. A letter Mary Anna wrote to her sister after the war recounted how Rebel cavalry had confiscated 9 horses from the West Farm in the midst of harvesting. Without these horses the crop could not be brought in, or sold, leaving the Adams family destitute. Despite being victimized by Rebel raiders, local Unionists continued to suspect Adams and his family of Confederate sympathies. This resulted in part from the fact that Mary Anna had been born in Jefferson County, (West) Virginia, and still had family there during the war. It also arose from the fact that Rev. Adams's

nephew, Franklin Turner, served in the Confederate army. According to Mary Anna, General Fitz-John Porter, the commander of the Fifth Corps in George McClellan's Army of the Potomac, so suspected the Adams family of supporting rebellion that he ordered artillery to level the West Farm. Only a personal appeal by Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, later of Gettysburg fame, caused Porter to reverse his decision and spare the family's home.

In May of 1863, Rev. Adams wrote to Bishop William Rollinson Wittingham of Maryland explaining how his "health has been ... feeble during the winter and spring. Mrs. Adams, too, since the Battle of Antietam, has not recovered from the severe shock and remains exceedingly delicate and nervous." Adams recounted to Wittingham the devastation of the area as well. "Everything around us in the public road is unenclosed and desolate," he wrote, indicating how first Confederate troops and then Federal soldiers after them had burned all of the fence rails for firewood. "All characters are daily and nightly passing," continued Adams, "and it would not be safe, even if my health would permit, to leave home. You cannot, my dear Bishop, realize the suffering of losses we have had in this part of our border state."

Their hardship notwithstanding, Reverend Adams and Mary Anna, elderly by this point, persevered through the war. Both of them then died in 1875. Mary Anna's remains rest in the cemetery behind St. Paul's while Reverend Adams's are buried in the Lutheran cemetery on Cemetery Hill, near where the Lutheran church once stood

that Lee's army used as an observation post. His grave there is alone, with no sign of Mary Anna near him, a lasting testament perhaps to the sad and protracted domestic civil war they had fought in life.

(Award-winning author and historian Alexander B. Rossino is a local resident. He is the author of acclaimed histories of the racial-political policies implemented by the Third Reich during its 1939 invasion of the Polish Republic. He worked at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum from 1994 to 2003 and authored scholarly articles and book reviews. His interest in the American Civil War dates from childhood and he has written several books on the subject from a local perspective. The Town Crier is pleased to publish this narrative.)

<https://alexanderrossinocom.wordpress.com/>



Alex Rossino, Author

Mayor & Councilpersons

Russ Weaver – Mayor
Jacob Martz – Vice Mayor
Mia Parsons – Council
John Hammond – Council
Ed Beeler-Council
Robbie Waters – Council
Joe Kudla – Council

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Zoning Administrator-Tim Lung
Sharpsburg.md.zoning@gmail.com

It's Been A Long Winter: Many thanks to Steve Williams and family; Chasity, Ryan, and Addy



March 2021 Council Meeting Minutes
Attached

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ATTACHMENT

Mayor & Council of Sharpsburg

Meeting Minutes- **DRAFT VERSION**

March 1, 2021

Via Zoom- 6 pm

In Attendance-Russ Weaver, Mike Arant, Ernie Wetterer, Mia Parsons, John Hammond, Jacob Martz, Ed Beeler, Jen Bruni, Robbie Waters, Joe Kudla, Carrie Estell, Winston Estell and Tim Lung (via Zoom).

- I. Call meeting to order at 6:07 pm, Robbie Waters initiated pledge
- II. Town Crier-Mike Arant spoke about the town crier and its new life as he'll continue with this community communication. The person who did the original for over 20 years was Mrs. Jan Wetterer. Mr. Ernie Wetterer, her husband, received the first hard copy in her memory. The newest first edition is dedicated to her and will be available electronically. Mr. Ernie thanked everyone and said that Jan loved talking to people and she would be proud that the Town Crier will continue. Mike Arant spoke of all town USA will be the purpose of the Town Crier, content will not be a bother as many stories and submissions have started to come in; the purpose is to build our community communication and include calendar items. This is a great way for the citizens to be in the know. The drafted meeting minutes will be included with each monthly edition.
- III. Meeting minutes from January 2021 to approve-motion to approve-Russ, John seconded the motion. January's meeting minutes-APPROVED.
- IV. Treasurer Report-reviewed the basics of the expenses/incomes were summarized. Hotel/motel, road way usage and state income taxes have been electronically put into our bank account. QuickBooks learning curve, as these incomes were not reflective in the current report. Snow plowing/removal/salting/shoveling have exceeded the budget, it is over 50k, all agreed to hope for no more snow this season.

PUBLIC COMMENTS-none were brought forth. It is planned that April will be an in-person meeting, and available for the public.

Mayor's Report

Fill Vacancies-

Vice Mayor-Ed Beeler nominated Jacob Martz, Robbie Waters seconded the motion, and the nomination was closed, he'll be on a two-year term. John Hammond will now be on a four-year term.

Joe Kudla to fill the seat Jacob Martz vacated which is a two-year seat. Russ suggested Joe, John Hammond motioned to close the nomination, Ed Beeler seconded the motion. Nominations were closed.

Overview water and sewer-Russ served on a committee for four months, he reviewed the costs, geography of the plant and the division the sewer and water are different components. There are 10K sewer customers. Individual customers and connections are done through Hagerstown, we were merged into the system. On our own the costs would be much higher than they are presently, the county cost was between 25-30 million dollars. Water and sewer-sewer is paid for, our sewer costs will never go down, basic operations. This company does many things, federal regulations have made it so there are costly expenses to get rid of waste. Rates will be gradually increase. Our water is much higher in the county and the reason is because of the 1, 000 water customers, 700 of them are from Sharpsburg. This water needs to be treated, which is very costly. Can Sharpsburg use wells? This is something that would

alleviate water cost for our citizens. Possibility of drilling two wells...this to be done asap. Investigated, there are a few people outside the town who are willing to assist in this project. The Little League has drilled a well and it performs at 70,000 gallons/minute. Zoning map, Sharpsburg is unable to expand due to be surrounded by public land. Because the town has been good stewardships of land preservation, fed/state govt/ to assist with this costly endeavor.

Tim Lung, Zoning Admin.-lives in Maugansville, 30 + years of zoning experience in Washington County, most of career in public service. Municipal service with Boonsboro, in office from Fridays from 10-2, responds to emails from home. Zoning and planning issues are the main aspects of this job. He is currently working on a T-Mobile permit. There was an agriculture use permit for a roof extension on a barn off East Antietam Street. Many inquires on fences and sheds. While doing researching this our current ordinances need revisions. Tim will be working on recommendations for the zoning regarding fences, permits/fees need to determined. He is in contact with the GIS department of the county to map the town for the website for the council and the citizens soon. Email: sharpsburg.zoning.md@gmail.com

Planning commission meeting will be this week, Thursday, March 4th at 6:30.

Joe Kudla-introduced himself, he lives across the street, looking forward to having a role in the Council and to make Sharpsburg a better place for its citizens. His duties will include street maintenance and to seek updated ordinances and fairness to zoning inquires.

- Ed Beeler-Historical Planning, town archives, communications, grants, liaison for Tolson Chapel. The chapel and school were designated as a National Historic Landmark, with significance to our country's history. Ed will work on getting museum ready for opening, which will hopefully be by Memorial Day.
- John Hammond-Building and Infrastructure-Russ and John to work on this closely and to get a list of rebates for some of our senior citizens regarding sewer/water.
- Jacob Martz-Vice Mayor, communications, Memorial Day Parade, grants-Town Crier, Jacob and Mike will be working together, flags have been ordered to display on Main Street, invitations sent out, parade is underway with a great planning. Open space park planning is going well and Susan has helped greatly with the grant writing.
- Mia Parsons-Planning-(Streetscape), grants-looking into some grant information and has ideas, looking forward to assisting with the open space. Minor adjustments can be made for lights, protection of the night sky.

Russ spoke about his leadership style and how he wants to have a side-by-side style of governing, helping council members with their ideas instead of telling members what to do. If the council keeps the best interests of the community and town at its core, many things will be achieved with planning and implementing.

- Robbie Waters-parks, railroad station, town operations-slide at the park will be fixed or replaced soon. Railroad station is closed due to the COVID-19. Slides can be purchased individually. Park to hopefully be open in early April. The park is closed b/c of safety issues, our intention is for it to open as soon as we possibly can; Robbie has taken up the responsibility of maintaining the townhall and we need to keep this in good order as it will be first impressions to many. Mural lights could serve a twofold purpose of highlighting the mural and lighting for safety. The mural was given two coats of a protective layers.

- Chris Vincent-advisory board-Antietam Battlefield, the visitor's center is being remodeled.
- Joe Kudla-streets-will be taking a walking tour to see what needs to be done. Streetscape, walks, trees, many sidewalks in need of repair. The planning commission to walk part of the town too for ideas and areas of need.

Old Business/ACTIONS-councilpersons to please look at these tasks and take on items that could be part of their interest or fall under the heading of their responsibilities.

Light in the municipal parking lot-light need to protect the mural,

Train Station roof completed budget-Russ, budget was done, 8k under budget, spring time could be a nice time to paint.

High Street signs

Opening park

Meet with Dave Trone-ownership of walls and sewer

Meet with state delegates for sewer and water issues

Bricks on walkway around telephone poles to be replaced

West Antietam Street barrier

New Business

Bulk Trash-this is done through Apple Valley Waste; clerk will check with company to get a price.

Post to Facebook and signage at the post office. Limbs and brush to wait until fall.

Flag Donation-the company is striving for a flag in every classroom, Robbie voted to donate 100 or 200\$ to the project. Jacob seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Tax Rate-Constant Yield was discussed, and our tax rate will be decided on at another meeting with more information needed.

Adjourned at 7:13 p.m.