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William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, 2nd Ser., Vol. 5, No. 4. (Oct., 1925), pp. 273-275.

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TWO EARLY MEMBERS OF PHI BETA KAPPA.

BY JOHN W. WAYLAND.

It is doubtless generally well known and accepted as a fact that the body of Elisha Parmalee, a distinguished early member of Phi Beta Kappa, lies somewhere in the Valley of Virginia, that part known as the Shenandoah Valley, in an unmarked grave. At least, the grave appears to be unmarked at present. Tradition has it that Parmalee was traveling through the Valley by the main road, in very early times known as the "Indian Road," and as early as 1753 known as the "Great Road," since 1834 the Valley Turnpike; that, being ill, he stopped at Abraham Byrd's; there died, and there was buried.

The situation is complicated by the fact that there were at the period (the latter part of the eighteenth century) two or three Abraham Byrds, prominent men, living on or near the Valley Pike ("Great Road") within the small section of country between Tenth Legion, in Rockingham County, and Woodstock, in Shenandoah County. One of them lived at Craney Island, on Smith Creek, about two miles above New Market; another Abraham Byrd lived at Red Banks, on the Shenandoah River, a mile and a half below Hawkinstown. It should be noted that "above" in this region means southwest; "below" northeast.

Both Craney Island and Red Banks have been very definitely and confidently designated as the burial-place of Parmalee. At each is an old graveyard, more or less in ruinous condition.

The case, from one standpoint, seems stronger for Red Banks. It is right on the Turnpike ("Great Road"), and was for many years a noted stopping-place for travelers. Craney Island is about a mile off the main road, eastward. The way in leaves the Pike at "Hardscrabble," the old Williamson homestead. However, there is a tradition that at

Craney Island, in the wall of a building, is a tombstone, supposed to have on it Parmalee's name. If this tombstone can be found there it will pretty well establish the case for Craney Island.

The grave of another distinguished charter member of Phi Beta Kappa is also in the Shenandoah Valley—very definitely and certainly located as yet, but in imminent danger of being lost. This is the grave of Major Isaac Hite (Isaac Hite, Jr.), whose body rests in the old Hite graveyard at "Long Meadows Farm," near Strasburg, and who was, it appears, the first man chosen to Phi Beta Kappa by the charter members. From the *William and Mary College Quarterly*, Vol. X, pages 120, 121, and the April, 1896, issue, the following facts appear: John Heath and a few other young men founded Phi Beta Kappa at William and Mary on December 5, 1776. In January, 1777, the charter members assembled and chose officers; on March 1 laws were adopted; and at a called meeting on March 27 Isaac Hite was elected to membership. He was the only one elected at the time. This would give him distinction; but he has also other claims. He was an aid to Muhlenberg in the Revolution, and married, for his first wife, the sister of James Madison.

Following is a copy of the inscription on Hite's tombstone:

Maj. Isaac Hite
of Belle Grove
who was Aid to
Genl. Muhlenberg
in the War of the Revolution
Born Feb. 7, 1758
Died Nov. 24, 1836

Hite's two wives, Nelly C. Hite (nee Madison), born February 14, 1760, died December 24, 1802, and Ann

Tunstall Hite (daughter of Rev. Walker Maury), born September 14, 1782, died January 6, 1851, are buried beside him.

Major Hite's palatial home, Belle Grove, the plans for which were, it is said, drawn by his friend, Thomas Jefferson, stands on Cedar Creek battlefield, half a mile west of the Pike, a short distance above Middletown. Long Meadows Farm is on the north branch of the Shenandoah River, near the mouth of Cedar Creek, three or four miles east of Belle Grove. Long Meadows was the home of Major Hite's father, Isaac Hite, Sr., who was the favorite son of old Jost Hite, the famous pioneer of the Lower Valley. The latter selected Long Meadows as a homestead for his son Isaac, and for situation and fertility it could hardly have been surpassed.: It is said that Jost Hite's first wife, Anna Maria DuBois, died at Long Meadows in 1738. If so, she was probably the first to be buried in the family plot, where later her son, her distinguished grandson, and many others were laid to rest.

The pathetic fact is that Major Hite's grave is fast going into ruin. The tombstone has already fallen down. The fence around the resting place of the dead has been removed. Brush and briars are growing up therein, and hogs and cattle root and tramp there unhindered. In a few years, it may be, unless a change soon comes, the grave of Hite may be almost as hard to find as the grave of Parmalee.