

Dr. Eckenrode Lauds Area

Dr. H. J. Eckenrode, director of the Division of History Archaeology of the Virginia Conservation Commission, paid high tribute to the rich history of West Point and its surrounding area in an address before the Washington Burgess Route Association in West Point on Wednesday of last week. Dr. Eckenrode's address follows:

The history of West Point is singularly interesting and would make a wonderful pageant if properly presented. The town has witnessed some of the most dramatic events in the annals of Virginia.

In the first place it was the capitol of the great Opechanough, one of the foremost leaders of the Indian race. It must have been here that the massacre of 1622 was planned; from here dark-skinned messengers sped to all the tribes of eastern Virginia bidding them prepare for the day of wrath that would witness the extermination of the white intruders. For many years the most important Indian village in Virginia stood on this site. Due to the fact that West Point was settled at an early date, few relics of the Indian race are now to be found in its vicinity, although excavations might reveal something of interest.

West Point witnessed the final scene in Bacon's Rebellion, the most interesting event in the colonial history of America. There in January, 1677, Wakelet, the leader who succeeded Bacon, surrendered, ending the rebellion. Lawrence and Drummond, Bacon's chief supporters, were at the Brick House, across the river from West Point, when the news came that the rebel had given up the contest. The two fled from the house to their doom; Lawrence was never heard of again; Drummond was captured and hanged.

All Americans must have a ten-

(Continued on page 4)

Dr. Eckenrode

(Continued from Page 1)

der place in their hearts for this particular section of Virginia, because it was here that George Washington found his romance and passed the happiest years of his life before fate beckoned to him and made him the founder of a nation.

This way Washington constantly traveled on his way from his home to Williamsburg, going from Mount Vernon to Fredericksburg, and from the latter place to the colonial capital. He crossed the Mattaponi and Pamunkey at several ferries. While his route cannot be followed in entirety by modern travelers, for the old ferries are gone and bridges do not stand on their site, most of the route can be traveled today. It is therefore fitting that this way should be marked, thereby enabling travelers to follow in the footsteps of the immortal Washington as he went to take his seat in the House of Burgesses in those fateful years that preceded the Revolution.

Here, in the vicinity of West Point, was the heart of Virginia in the last half century of the colonial era. In this section lived the great John Robinson, speaker of the House of Burgesses, the dominant man in Virginia for many years. Here were Lanesville and Eltham, two of the finest colonial houses in America. Nowhere in the America of that day was life richer or more cultured than in this fair region watered

by the twin rivers that meet, to part no more, at West Point.

In 1781 the vicinity of West Point was history making. Here Lafayette came in the late summer of 1781, just preceding the Yorktown campaign. At the last of August, he crossed the Pamunkey and advanced toward Williamsburg in the opening phases of that ever-memorable campaign that gave independence to America.

Once more, in May, 1862, West Point was the focus of all eyes, for just across the river was fought the engagement of Brick House Landing or Eltham Landing in the Peninsular campaign. There Union troops attempted to attack the Confederate wagon trains moving toward Richmond and stop or impede Johnston's retreat. While the action was not a major battle, it was important in that the Confederates drove off the Unionists and continued their movement up the Peninsula. In later times, in that war, West Point passed through some stirring moments. The Confederate authorities in Richmond were always afraid of a thrust by the Union troops at West Point against the capitol city.

All in all, few cities in Virginia have had as fascinating a history as this town of West Point, which has a situation unsurpassed by any city of America, standing as it does where the Mattaponi and the Pamunkey marry and have as their offspring the noble and beautiful York River.

