

GEDDY GARDEN NEWS

Issue #70

January 2000

*"If St. Paul's Day be fair and clear,
Then it betides a happy year."*

Folksaying

We welcome the millennium and enjoy our first taste of winter temperatures of this twenty-first century. January 25th is St. Paul's Day.

Today we rely on modern technology, newspapers, radio and TV weather forecasters to predict our weather conditions. In past centuries, however, there were special days in the Church calendar that were linked to weather forecasting. Those dates being set and consistent had a history of matching weather patterns so that the folksayings are not based on superstition, but were often quite accurate and reliable. Hence, weather lore became linked to holy days and saints' days. For example, the Feast of St. Hillary, January 13th, has often been found to be the coldest day of the year and it became known as such. Some connections can even be traced back to the Bible. The theory of the red sky at night as the prediction of fair weather to come can be found in Matthew XVI, 2-3:

"When it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning, it will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and lowring."

January is considered to be one of the most unreliable months, weatherwise, so there is another old proverb that is especially appropriate for January:

"Winter weather and women's thoughts often change."

In our recent training about *Taking Possession of the Land*, Kent Brinkley told us about change over time. He spoke of trees such as pines, beech, hickory and oak in the woodlands being disturbed by road building. Boundary markers were being made by early surveyors by making cuts in the trees. These cuts were commonly known as three chops. Did you ever wonder, as I did, about the origin of the name of Three Chop Road in Richmond?

I find that the idea of marking land can also be traced back to the Bible in Proverbs 22:28, *"Cursed be the man who removes his neighbor's landmark."* This was used in The Communion Service in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. We find this linkage to religion in so many aspects of the lives of the colonists.

During these cold winter months, the colonists took care of their property by doing many necessary tasks, such as repairs of their buildings and fences and cutting up firewood.

The gentry members took advantage of the cold, frosty days to also enjoy recreational activities.

George Washington was a great outdoorsman and it was often in January and February that he would enjoy hunting and deer stalking. He loved fox hunting and he loved riding his mount Magnolia. He had hunting horses named Blueskin, Ajax, Valient and Chinkling. He also enjoyed seeing and wagering on horse races and would travel to attend a good horse race. These cold winter months became the R and R time for colonists. Repairs and recreation.

Janet Guthrie