



The Linden Times

A bi-weekly newsletter for the members & friends of the Calvert County Historical Society – [September 10, 2020](#)

Not all towns, cities or municipalities are named after heroes, beloved people or doers of great deeds. Here is the background of our Prince Frederick and his rather challenging childhood and life.

Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales was born in Hanover Germany, on February 1st in 1707. His parents, George, Prince of Wales (later King George II), and Caroline of Ansbach, left him, their first born, in the care of his grand uncle when he was only 7 years old to venture to Great Britain. Frederick did not see his parents again for 14 years.



Frederick, Prince of Wales
by Swedish painter Charles Boit, circa 1724



'Frederick, Prince of Wales', 1733
by J. Richardson (1665-1745) British
Black & White Chalk on blue paper

In 1728, as a young man, Frederick arrived in England after his father's accession to the throne. You would imagine after so many years the family reunion would be a celebrated affair. To the contrary, the hatred between the prince and his parents was a national scandal. In the years away from Frederick, King George and Caroline had several children. They rejected Frederick both as their son and as a person, referring to him as a "foundling" and nicknaming him "Griff", short for the mythical beast known as a griffin (also spelled, gryphon). What the root of the antipathy really was, no one has ever been able to establish, but Frederick's father, the king, could seldom bring himself to speak to him and told people that the prince was a changeling and no true child of his.



Griffin

Frederick's mother once famously described him as *'the greatest ass and the greatest liar and the greatest canaille (common person) and the greatest beast in the whole world', adding 'and I heartily wish he were out of it.'* On another occasion, catching sight of the prince from a window, she said, *'I wish the ground would open this moment and sink the monster to the lowest hole in hell.'* She and his father both preferred Frederick's younger brother, the 'Butcher' Duke of Cumberland.

While the "Butcher" of Cumberland sounds like a delightful gentleman, it's been written that Frederick was open-handed, with an easy manner. It was said he had a certain charm and a taste for [cont. on page 2](#)

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sport, gambling and women, and though his command of the English language was uncertain and he looked like a frog, some said, possibly due to his wide set eyes, the English citizenry, on the whole approved of him.

On April 27th, 1736 at the age of 29, after a spendthrift and womanizing youth, Frederick settled down to become a devoted family man, following his marriage to the sixteen-year-old Augusta of Saxe-Gotha. Frederick had nine children (his youngest daughter was born posthumously) and was a much better parent to them than his own father and mother had been to him.

When Augusta was about to bear their first child in 1737, Frederick insulted his mother by making sure that she was not present at the birth. The reason she had wanted to be there was to make quite sure that the new arrival actually was Augusta's child. She doubted very much that it could be Frederick's and had been telling people that he was impotent.

A lover of music, science and the arts Frederick himself was a knowledgeable amateur of painting, who patronized numerous artists of the day including immigrant Italian painter Jacopo Amigoni and French painter Jean Baptiste Vanloo. He collected paintings, wrote songs and poetry, played the cello well and loved music. He was also an enthusiast for hunting, shooting and fishing, and a keen games player, captaining the Surrey cricket team for several seasons.

A few weeks after his 44th birthday he was struck hard by a ball when playing cricket, or it may have been tennis, and the blow apparently caused an abscess. Subsequently the prince, in his garden at Kew on a cold March day, caught a chill which turned to pleurisy. Three doctors were called and bled him. He seemed to be getting better, but then the abscess burst, it seems, and on the evening of the 20th, confined to bed at Leicester House (the original name of Essex House in London), he began to cough painfully. On March 31st, according to Horace Walpole (an English writer, art historian, antiquarian and Whig politician), he put his hands on his stomach and said, '*Je sens la mort*'. His German page, who was holding him, felt him tremble and cried out, 'The prince is going.' Frederick's wife at the foot of the bed caught up a candle and ran to him, but he was dead. The post mortem gave the cause of death as suffocation after the 'imposthume' or abscess broke, but the general medical opinion was that he died of pneumonia.



'The death of Frederick, Prince of Wales at Leicester House'

Frederick's death in 1751 left his eldest son, the future George III, as heir to the throne. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, in the Henry VII Chapel, with a minimum of ceremony and without a single member of the royal family present. '*Here lies Fred,*' as the anonymous contemporary epitaph had it, '*Who was alive and is dead ... There's no more to be said.*'



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