

THE BOAL FAMILY AND ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BY J. THOMAS MITCHELL

IN THE mountains of the Asturias in northwest Spain is the little town of "Boal," pronounced in two syllables with the accent on the second. It derived its name from that of the lord of the castle dominating the village. One of the family was a captain of a ship of the Armada which was supposed to conquer England. Fighting his way through the English Channel and the North Sea, the vessel rounded north of the British Isles only to suffer shipwreck on the eastern coast of Ireland.

Captain Boal and several of his men attained the shore and were doomed to remain there or be captured by the British. Settling in Ireland the Captain met and married an Irish girl, and made a permanent home in that country. For two hundreds years the Irish Boals were bred with little thought of their Spanish origin until one of the children named David decided to try his luck in the colonies of the new world.

David Boal settled first at a town called Palamina, halfway between Lancaster and Columbia in Pennsylvania. He joined the Cumberland County Associators during the Revolution as captain of one of its companies and continued in the service until 1783. His company was one of those that occupied the picket lines between Valley Forge and Philadelphia under General James Potter.

His son, another David, returned to Ireland, took part in the revolt of 1798, escaped from the conquering British by hiding in a large chest, which the family still preserves, and arrived in America in that year. He then settled near what is now known as the town of Boalsburg, purchased the Blue Spring farm (still in the possession of the family), and built a portion of the present residence.

The part of the house erected at that time is its central portion, one and-a-half stories high. Later, as money accumulated, he built

the twin-chimneyed eastern section of the front of the present dwelling which is a model of careful carpentry work. The family grew, occupied offices of dignity and authority in the county, one being a member of the Assembly and one an associate judge of the county courts.

The Boal men always had a military bent. A David Boal was captain of a company in the war of 1812. A George Boal was captain of a militia company formed in 1833, which strove vainly to enter the Mexican War. The same George also raised a company for the Civil War. It was commanded by his son, John Boal, who was killed at Averysburg in Sherman's attack on Richmond in the last days of that conflict.



Carved Wood Escutcheon of the Christopher Columbus Family, Columbus Family Chapel, Boalsburg.

Courtesy Boal Museum

A Hamill Boal assumed charge of the Boalsburg property for a few years until Theodore Davis Boal, the natural heir, returned from the western state where his father had made his residence. Theodore lived for a few years in New York City with his uncle for whom he was named, Theodore M. Davis, the noted Egyptologist. Later he went to Paris, studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and became an architect. While there he married Mathilde de Lagarde, a daughter of an old Spanish family who were related to the family of Christopher Columbus.

On returning to America, Theodore designed and built several residences and other buildings both in Denver and in Washington,



DESCENT FROM THE CROSS
By the Master of Hoogstraten.



VIRGIN AND CHILD
By an unknown painter.
Courtesy Boal Museum

D. C. He returned to Centre County, completed the building of the residence of the "Blue Spring" farm, and designed the Roman Catholic Chapel at State College. About that time it was found necessary to move or destroy the old chapel on the Columbus estate in Spain. Mr. Boal seized the opportunity to acquire its contents and brought them to his home, where he erected the simple chapel now to be seen on the property.

This chapel contains two very fine "old masters" and other interesting paintings of the Spanish and French schools of the "Post-Primitive" periods. It holds voluminous records of the Columbus family in the form of archives and other documents, as well as some relating to the family of Torquemada, the "Grand Inquisitor." All of them are historically noteworthy.

The chapel has further attractions in a full set of colorful, very ancient, silk brocade and damask church vestments as well as carved chairs and chests. There is also a very old silver reliquary containing two pieces of the "True Cross," this being accom-

panied by an authenticating document in the form of an episcopal letter identifying them.

The old barn of the estate contains the traveling coach of the early David Boal and an interesting collection of nineteenth century equipages. In this place also, very tastefully arranged, is a varied collection of early American and Pennsylvania-Dutch antiques, with a collection of firearms and other weapons of more than a hundred years ago. Here there is also to be found such items as chain-mail, pikes, spears, swords, and other weapons of still earlier days.

Theodore Davis Boal raised a machine-gun troop, one of the first organizations of that kind, which he offered to lead in the American attempt to capture and punish Franco Villa. While this troop was not then accepted, it continued its existence, enlisted in the first World War, and was finally sent to France. At that time the then Major Theodore Boal was serving on the staff of General Muir of the 28th Division.

Pierre de Lagarde Boal, his son, went to France at the opening of that war, serving first with one of the crack French regiments and later joining the Lafayette Escadrille. In that service he flew repeatedly over his father, then Colonel Boal, who was in the attack of the American troops at Chateau Thierry. Upon returning to his home, Captain Pierre Boal became attached to the American Foreign Service, in which he enjoyed a distinguished career, reaching the rank of ambassador.

It is under Pierre Boal's direction that the estate of the Blue Spring Farm has been renovated and made an object of historical interest to all Americans.