

2020-2021

Preservation Matters

Celebrating Charles County's Historic Places



CHARLES COUNTY GOVERNMENT
Planning & Growth Management
www.CharlesCountyMD.gov



2020-2021

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Celebrating Charles County's Historic Places

A Planning and Growth Management Publication

The information contained in this annual publication "Preservation Matters" has been brought to you as a public service by the Charles County Department Planning and Growth Management to support historic preservation in Charles County.

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Features

4 **The Moyaone Reserve Historic District**
Preserving the Recent Past

10 **The Green Book Motorist and Tourist Guide in Charles County**
"You will find it handy."

14 **Looking Beyond the Building**
History through Storytelling

16 **Jane Brent Watts**
An Excellent Woman

22 **Archaeology at Swan Point**
A Tale of Two Sites

26 **Society Hill in Cobb Neck**
An 18th Century Centerpiece

30 **Smoot Mill**
A Ditch in the Woods

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About the Cover

In the early 1920s Alice Ferguson (1880-1951) (pictured), wife of Henry Gardiner Ferguson, was a dynamic, creative artist trained as a painter at the Corcoran School of Art. She began to look for a country property close to the couple's home in Washington, D.C., and in 1922, bought Hard Bargain Farm, a place that would change the course of her life, transforming it into a unique, remarkable environment that is still alive with the mark of her creative touch. To commemorate these contributions made by Alice, Henry, a well-known USGS geologist, established the Alice Ferguson Foundation in 1954 as a non-profit organization, chartered in the state of Maryland. Read more about Alice on page 4 and visit www.FergusonFoundation.org.



Stories of Preserving Charles County's Rich History

Franklin A. Robinson, Jr.

Chair, Charles County Historic Preservation Commission

Welcome to the 2020-2021 issue of Preservation Matters, the Charles County Historic Preservation Commission magazine.

As I sit in my home office writing this, Charles County, Maryland, and the nation are experiencing the COVID-19 virus pandemic. Not since the Spanish Flu of 1918 has any widespread illness even remotely affected all levels of income, geographic location, and social class as has this virus. I wonder, what lessons from 1918 have we forgotten? What have we learned in the present day? What will future generations glean from our own response to this historic moment? How will this time in our history be remembered? In our virtual age, will there be extant primary sources to inform the history? National institutions such as the Smithsonian and Library of Congress, as well as our own local Southern Maryland Studies Center have been documenting the current pandemic for the historical record even as we experience it.

Even after this has passed, the ramifications for our historic sites and preservation initiatives will be long term. How do we meet the challenge of reduced budgets and staff, new requirements for healthy social interaction, all the while maintaining the level of care and commitment we have come to expect from our parks, historic sites, and gathering places? These obstacles are currently being overcome by new and creative ways of engagement through the virtual world while maintaining a more traditional approach to our historic sacred places.

Protected places, such as open space, historic sites, and landscapes, contribute to good mental and physical health. As we move into a more technological society, wide ranging, convenient, and yet in many ways isolating us into our own virtual cocoons, these places feeding our soul will be even more important. Preservation does matter. What is that favorite place of yours to get away from it all? Beach, mountains, historic place, or a drive down a country road? Is that place protected? What are the ramifications of local and statewide development policy on a place you treasure? What does the world look like that you want to leave behind for those coming after you? Your engagement is key to the preservation of these places.

In a session cut short by the pandemic, the Maryland General Assembly continued to show support for preservation initiatives within the state and our county. While it is uncertain how budgeting will play out in the future, organizations such as the Southern Maryland Heritage Area, Maryland Historical Trust, and Preservation Maryland continue to remind legislators of the importance of preservation in its many forms and the benefits to not only the spirit but also the economy.

Lastly, there are numerous and often times invisible volunteers and professionals keeping our county historic sites, parks, and archives open to the public, cared for, and moving forward. The next time you see one of them, say "thank you." Finally, it is a pleasure for me to serve the Commission as its Chair. I want to extend a public "thank you" to our staff support; Beth Groth, Cathy Hardy Thompson, and archaeologist Esther Read. Without them and their expertise, the Commission would be sorely handicapped. The Charles County Historic Preservation Commission continues to be a tool for documenting and protecting our history, ensuring its existence for those that imagine after us.



Poplar Hill in Charles County is the westernmost subdivision of the Moyaone Reserve. Internal and external views and vistas are significant characteristics of the setting of the historic district that help shape how people experience and understand the resource. Focused views along road corridors where the tree canopy creates a tunneled prospect enhance the rustic character of the district's setting. Credit: Robinson & Associates, Inc.

Preserving the Recent Past: The Moyaone Reserve Historic District

By: Daria Gasparini (Robinson & Associates, Inc.) and
Rita F. Bergman (Moyaone Association)

After a two-year effort led by a dedicated group of community volunteers, the Moyaone Reserve Historic District has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

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WAGNER HOUSE

Architect Charles F. Wagner, Jr., built his house in the Moyaone Reserve in stages, as time and budget allowed. This image of the architect on the front porch of his house dates to the 1950s. Since its construction, few changes have been made to the residence, which features many original materials and design elements and retains a high degree of integrity. Original building materials include concrete block, board-and-batten siding, cement board, plate glass, slate, and pine paneling. Wagner described his home as “a beautiful house, a good house – with sun and air and outlook.”
Credit: Holliday Wagner

The Moyaone Reserve – Continued from previous page

The **Moyaone Reserve Historic** will be the first historic district in Charles County recognized for its collection of mid-century modern residential architecture.

The Moyaone Reserve Historic District encompasses a residential landscape of roughly 1,320 acres that spans parts of two Southern Maryland counties — Charles County and Prince George’s County.

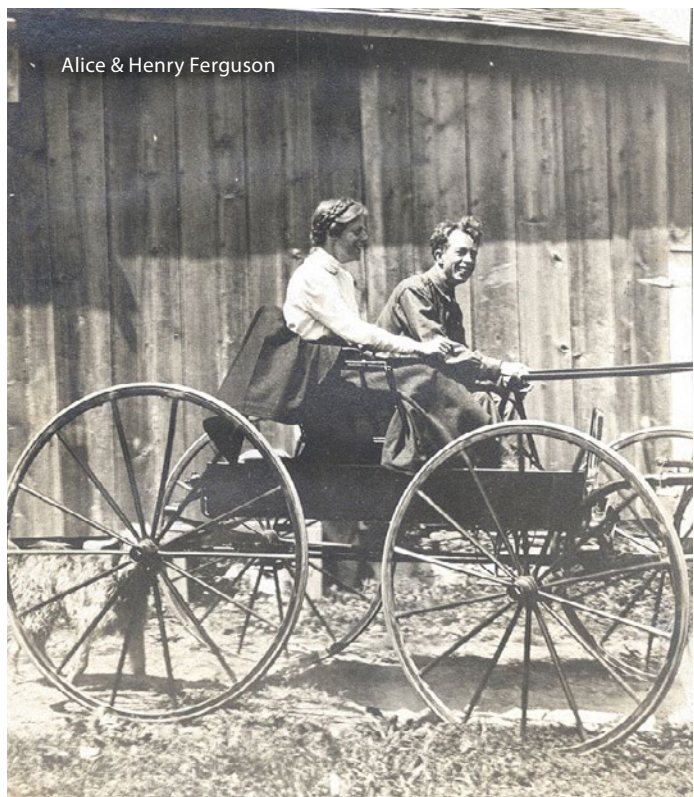
This landscape is characterized by a topographically diverse terrain that creates a distinctive setting for residential development. It offers scenic hilltops, hidden valleys, and plenty of level ground for home building, and within its boundaries are 124 houses that contribute to the significance of the historic district, reflecting a range of late twentieth-century residential forms and styles. Since its founding, the Moyaone Reserve has been a place defined by the presence of over twenty species of trees. This tree canopy serves an important role in defining the district’s rural character, providing a significant portion of the Mount Vernon viewshed, and creating a natural habitat for wildlife. Natural systems and features of the landscape have influenced land use within the historic district. While lots are generally zoned for residential development, several parcels are maintained as conservation areas.



The Moyaone Reserve originated from a land venture spearheaded in 1945 by a small group of like-minded friends who aspired to create a residential community that was conscientiously developed to preserve the unspoiled, rural character of the Accokeek/Bryans Road area, near the confluence of the Potomac River and Piscataway Creek. The community’s founders envisioned the Moyaone Reserve as a progressive alternative to the homogeneous suburban neighborhoods that were transforming the Washington region in the postwar years. With the initial purchase of a 467-acre tract, the group, which included Alice and Henry Ferguson, the owners of Hard Bargain Farm in Accokeek, architect **Charles F. Wagner, Jr.** (*pictured*) and business consultant Robert Straus, among others, set about to create a community grounded in a shared interest in rural resources and their settings and low-impact residential design. Restrictive covenants established by the founders stipulated that lots could not be less than 5 acres and prohibited the cutting of large trees. These measures assured the concept of

large-acreage development sites on which houses were subordinate to the landscape. Early advertisements promoted the Moyaone Reserve as “a new kind of country living.”

Seen as an antidote to grid-based merchant-builder subdivisions and as an alternative to the curvilinear or neighborhood unit approach of some architect-builder subdivisions of the time, the Moyaone Reserve developed organically without a preconceived design. Tracts were acquired gradually as surrounding land became available and platted with respect to the existing terrain. Parcels offered both level ground to build on and visually interesting natural features. Unlike traditional suburban streets where houses are centrally arranged on manicured lawns and separated from the street by sidewalks and tree lawns, most houses in the Moyaone Reserve were set within large, densely planted lots and hidden from the road. The community set aside large swaths of land as nature reserves, established bridle trails in place of sidewalks, and constructed unpaved rather than hard-surface roads. The roads followed routes that avoided having to level, cut through, or otherwise alter the topography, emphasizing the rustic character of the place over conformity with any overall residential plan or suburban ideal. Residential development within the Moyaone Reserve included architect-designed houses, houses built by intrepid do-it-yourself'ers using plans and materials ordered from catalogs, and everything in between. Whether they built modern homes with open floor plans and copious glazing or more conventional residential forms, property owners shared a deep appreciation for their natural surroundings.



In 1922, Alice Ferguson purchased Hard Bargain Farm in Accokeek as a weekend retreat for her husband and herself. The story of the Fergusons and Hard Bargain Farm is an opportunity to understand not just an isolated piece of history, but to preserve a full picture of how one couple pioneered the key elements of environmental conservation as we know it today.

Learn more at www.FergusonFoundation.org

During the postwar period, many residents of the Moyaone Reserve commissioned an impressive collection of mid-century modern homes designed by a noteworthy list of local architects, including Charles M. Goodman, Charles F. D. Egbert, Harold Esten, and Casper Neer. No architect or builder had a greater impact on the Moyaone Reserve than Charles F. Wagner, Jr. In 1946, Wagner purchased a 12-acre lot that included the western edge of a small plateau but mostly consisted of a densely wooded slope. There he built a modest, yet elegant modern house that was widely admired by residents and visitors alike. Its success led to multiple commissions in the Moyaone Reserve beginning in the late 1940s through the mid-1970s. Wagner’s houses were typically modest in size, simple in composition, and built using low-cost, readily-available materials. Modernist window walls were paired with natural materials like board-and-batten exterior siding, interior wood paneling, and terra-cotta tile flooring. The houses were efficiently designed to take advantage of the sun’s energy for heating. Starting in the 1960s, Wagner’s residential designs became more site specific. Houses were built into slopes in the terrain to minimize the physical and visual intrusion of the architecture on the landscape. Also during this period, he frequently combined natural materials, such as slate and brick, with standardized, prefabricated materials, including cinder block

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and plywood paneling. In recent years, many Wagner-designed houses have been recorded for the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties, creating a lasting record of the architect's contributions to the community.

Since its founding, land conservation, environmentalism, and historic preservation have been key concerns of the Moyaone Reserve. In the 1950s, industrial development along the Maryland shore of the Potomac River threatened the community's rural setting and the historic view from Mount Vernon, inciting a decades-long effort led by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association (MVLA) to protect the viewshed, which encompassed the Moyaone Reserve, through the creation of a national park. In 1957, the MVLA and a determined cadre of Moyaone Reserve residents created the private, non-profit Accokeek Foundation – one of the nation's oldest land trusts – to hold in trust key pieces of land within the viewshed. In 1961, Piscataway Park was established as the first national park to preserve a historic vista, becoming a model for subsequent federal parks across the nation. As part of the development of the park, Moyaone Reserve residents were given the opportunity to donate or sell scenic easements to the Department of the Interior to create a protected, wooded buffer of privately owned land within the Mount Vernon viewshed. By early 1968, the Interior Department had acquired virtually all of the lands and interests in lands necessary to create Piscataway Park. When it was dedicated that February, the park encompassed a total of 1,100 acres owned by the federal government along the riverfront between Piscataway Creek on the north and Marshall Hall on the south. The park also included an additional 2,800 acres backing up to the strip of land along the river that was protected through permanent scenic easement grants. At the time, scenic easements were a relatively new legal instrument, one that allowed the land to remain on the tax rolls while placing limits on the character of its development.

In 1965, through the tireless activism of a dedicated group of Moyaone residents, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation that enabled five counties, including Charles and Prince George's counties, to grant special tax provisions to landowners with scenic easements. The following year, Prince George's County passed the nation's first local law granting tax credits for the preservation of scenic open space. As an innovative tool for land conservation, the ordinance became a model for other jurisdictions

throughout the country. Today, all properties within the Moyaone Reserve are bound by scenic easements, ensuring the ongoing preservation of the historic view from one of our nation's most revered historic sites and demonstrating the importance of easements as a method of encouraging private participation in conservation. The efforts of the Moyaone Reserve community and others to prevent development that would encroach into the panoramic view from Mount Vernon and to preserve the wooded setting of the community and the rural character of its landscape represents an outstanding achievement that has national significance within the conservation and historic preservation movements.

In 1998, Arapahoe Acres in Englewood, Colorado, became the first postwar residential subdivision listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and, since then, neighborhoods across the country have successfully met the challenges of documenting, evaluating, and preserving resources of the recent past. Regionally, the National Register recognizes such modernist suburban enclaves as Hollin Hills in Alexandria, Virginia, and New Mark Commons in Rockville, Maryland. As the first historic district in Charles County recognized for its collection of mid-century modern residential architecture, the Moyaone Reserve Historic District helps tell the story of the county's postwar development and enhances public understanding of its diverse architectural heritage.

The National Register designation of the Moyaone Reserve also marks an important milestone for the community, which has a strong tradition of supporting local conservation and historic preservation efforts, beginning with its interest in protecting the Mount Vernon viewshed through



the pioneering use of scenic easements. More recently, when Dominion Energy petitioned to build a compressor station in the Accokeek/Bryans Road area, residents joined local environmental groups to successfully block the development. “When the next external development threat appears in our area,” said Michael Leventhal, past president of the Moyaone Association, “the National Register designation will provide an added layer of protection, via Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.” This provision requires federal agencies to consider the effects on historic properties of projects they carry out, fund, permit, or approve. The National Register designation also has the benefit of qualifying homeowners of contributing houses within the historic district for Maryland’s Historic Revitalization Tax Credit, which provides funds in the form of an income tax credit for repair or renovation projects.

The Moyaone Association and its predecessor, The Moyaone Company, have operated as a voluntary, non-profit homeowners association since 1953. In addition to sponsoring the National Register nomination, the association supports the community’s ongoing conservation and preservation activities, such as the annual Potomac River Cleanup, organic

gardening plots at the community garden, and compliance with federal easement requirements. In addition, the Moyaone Association sponsors a bi-annual Homes Tour of selected properties to showcase the features (both landscape and building) of its member properties. (The next tour is scheduled for April 2021.) Moyaone Modern (moyaonemodern.com), founded by a local homeowner, is dedicated to the preservation, education, and promotion of mid-century modern architecture within Piscataway Park. The organization sponsors periodic architectural tours and lectures.

The Moyaone Association was pleased to have received funding for its National Register nomination application from the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, Prince George’s County, the Maryland Historical Trust, and Preservation Maryland.

Robinson & Associates, Inc., is a research and consulting firm based in Washington, D.C., that specializes in architectural, landscape, and cultural history. Services include research and documentation of historic buildings and landscapes, National Register and National Historic Landmark nominations, and Maryland Historical Trust surveys. ■



The **KOCH HOUSE** (opposite page) located on Overlook Drive in Poplar Hill was designed by Harold Esten, who studied architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago and opened a practice in Silver Spring in the 1950s. Credit: Dave Koch

The affordability and efficiency of kit houses appealed to many residents of the Moyaone Reserve, and numerous examples can be found in the historic district. The **WATTS HOUSE** (top left), a Pan Abode house built in 1964-65, is an excellent example in the Moyaone Reserve of a mid-century, Rustic Revival-style, kit house. Pan-Abode International was established in British Columbia, Canada, in 1948 by Aage Jensen, a Danish cabinetmaker. It sold pre-cut Western Red Cedar logs and building plans for easy-to-assemble, yet durable, pre-manufactured houses. Credit: Robinson and Associates, Inc.

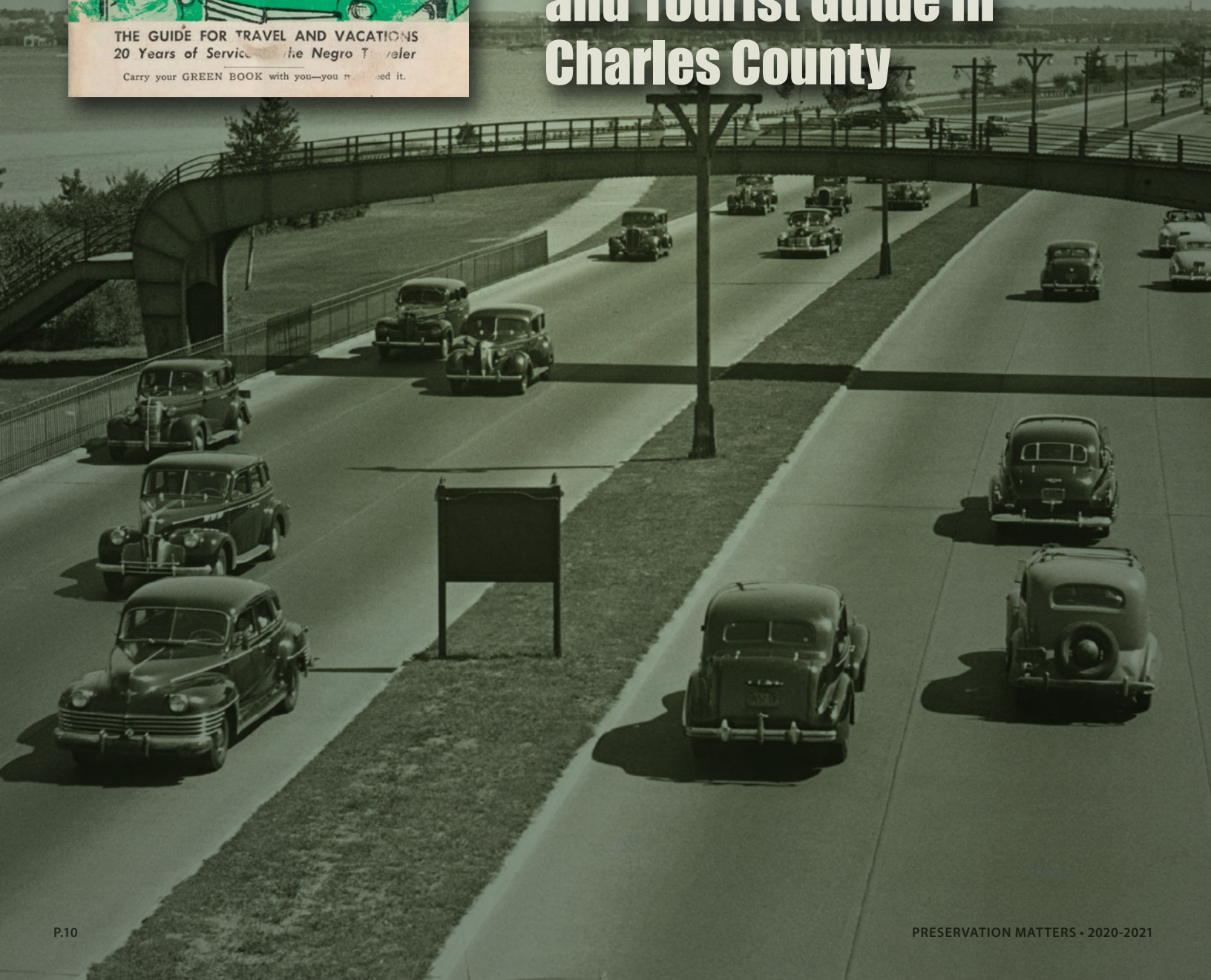


The **HIBBEN HOUSE** (bottom left) is perched on a wooded hillside site in the Poplar Hill subdivision of the Moyaone Reserve. Designed by Washington-area architect Charles F. D. Egbert and completed in 1967, it is an outstanding example of mid-century modern design in Charles County. The house features large, floor-to-ceiling windows, plate-glass picture windows, and clerestory windows that flood the interior with natural light and blur the distinction between interior and exterior spaces. Using conscientious massing and natural materials, including blond-colored brick, stained redwood siding, slate, and rough-hewn stone, the house blends harmoniously into its natural surroundings. Credit: Robinson and Associates, Inc.



"You will find it handy."

The Green Book Motorist and Tourist Guide in Charles County





Between 1937 and 1962, Victor and Alma Green published *The Green Book*, a guide for African American travelers and motorists.

Each edition offered information about locales, motels, restaurants and a host of personal services as well as vacation or seasonal resorts. The Green Book's first edition focused on businesses open to African Americans in New York City and northern New Jersey since Green was a mailman in Brooklyn and lived in Harlem. The couple had family in Virginia and expanding the directory in 1938 to cover 21 states provided guidance for the long drive between New York and Richmond, as well as to other states.

Many of *The Green Book's* 101 listings in Maryland were in west Baltimore, and near, but not on US 40 in Frederick and Hagerstown, with the rest spread throughout the state in 23 towns. In Charles County, *The Green Book* listings included two motels and a restaurant in Waldorf and Faulkner, as well as a seasonal hotel, "Violet Belles Hotel" in Benedict.

Little is known about Bell's Hotel (**pictured**), but it is likely that the hotel was used during racing season by those working at or attending horse races at the town's track. Violet Bell was an owner of a house with her husband, Clarence, but no mention was made of it as a hotel in *The Afro-American's* social columns, classified advertisements or the paper's travel section, unlike Thomas Hotel which stood near the Patuxent River.

Bell's Hotel is included in the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) form as part of the Benedict Survey District (CH-229), and it is a two-story, three-bay, front gable building standing near Mill Creek. The front porch support posts have been boarded over, and there is a corrugated metal shed roof addition without windows on the south elevation of the house. Bell's Hotel Green Book listing ran as *Violette Belles* from 1938 to 1940, and then again from 1949 until 1960, always in the "Vacation" or "Resort" section of the directory. It did not seem to have a steady clientele whose comings and goings could be reported as local social news.

Although Charles County had always been a rural area of the state, the 1949 legalization of slot machines along with the planned Crain Highway improvements resulted in growing commercial strips outside each town and the county became known as "Little Las Vegas," for its bright signs advertising businesses. As Maryland's traffic volumes grew exponentially between 1910 (5,590) and 1950 (684,747), new businesses along the highway responded to the traffic with car-friendly driveways, parking lots and motels, which were hotels designed to accommodate arriving motor vehicles.

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By 1952, landowners began to feel the impact of the State's highway plans for Crain Highway when the Maryland State Roads Commission (SRC) purchased right-of-way from landowners for the new highway's alignment. The new road would be designated US 301 since it connected Maryland with Virginia via the Governor Nice Bridge. Two land owners, Arthur Farrar on the north side of Waldorf, and A. Carlton Gardiner in Faulkner, benefitted from the state's decision to construct the highway to the west of each town, and they followed other neighbors in developing commercial properties on their reconfigured lands.

Farrar's motel in Waldorf called "Blue Jay" was one of several enterprises that the businessman ran while he lived in Waldorf. He first acquired land in 1936, and by 1952 when the State purchased highway right-of-way, he had built the Blue Bird Baseball Stadium for the local African-American baseball team called "The B.B.'s." In addition to the baseball stadium, he owned a restaurant and bar called the Blue Bird Inn (also listed in The Green Book in 1955), as well as the Big Boy's Gas Station and the Jiffy Carwash on the old Washington Road at the north end of Waldorf.

The Blue Jay Motel is said to be a copy of a friend's motel in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, and it was an L-shaped building, with a two-story wing of rooms to the rear and a restaurant. It stood near the Heidelberg Motel and also had slot machines for patrons to use when visiting. Mr. Farrar experimented with several ideas to attract business including adding a party room, and his son, Roy Sr. managed the motel. Noted visitors included Noble Sissle (pictured, above), the jazz band leader and composer famous for "I'm Just Wild About Harry," (1921) and Althea Gibson, the tennis player and 1957 winner of the Wimbledon Women's Tennis Tournament. Sissle passed through while traveling to engagements while Gibson had car trouble that caused her to stop.

At the south end of Charles County, also in 1952, a group of New York commercial developers purchased land on the west side of Faulkner along the new US 301 alignment with the intention of constructing a motel since it was 6 miles from the Nice Bridge. Originally Crain Highway passed through Faulkner, and

the parcel advantageously stood between the old and new alignments of the highway. Because of the New York connections, the developers turned to Abraham N. Sirof, an architect and engineer from Queens, NY for the motel's design. It is a Modernist design that was unusual for Charles County, and the plans are filed in the County land records. The motel was one-story with 2 wings that formed an angle around the driveway, and included hatch windows and raised roof monitors which provided interior light to the hallways. Initially named the Blue Star, perhaps as recognition of the Blue Star Highways and Americans' military service in World War II, the motel changed names several times and was known briefly as the Mayflower and then the Charm before becoming an antiques market. Of note is that the AAA is advertised on its sign. The AAA began to offer membership to African Americans in 1955 and their travel guides used the same information from The Green Books when providing destination information.

Although the motels on US 301 regularly advertised in The Green Book until it stopped publication in 1967, and the Farrars ran ads in The Afro-American Travel Section, the motels did not regularly attract large numbers of patrons who would have made the businesses more successful, and maintaining the motels was a challenge.

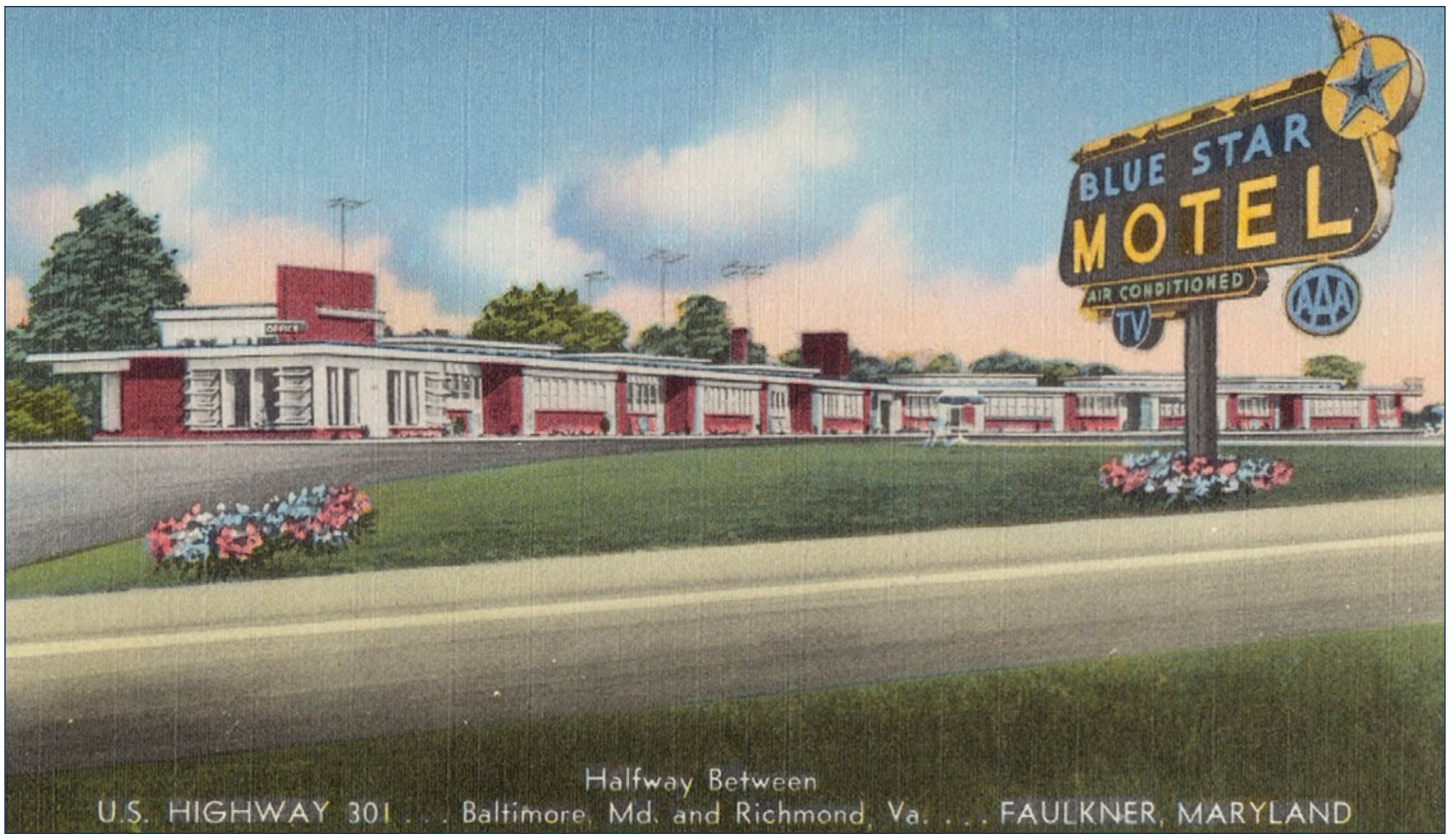
The Blue Jay property has been redeveloped while the Blue Star has been torn down. Victor Green retired from the Post Office in 1952, and passed away in 1960. His wife, Alma Green took over publishing The Green Book until 1962, when she sold the enterprise. The Green Book continued publication until 1967. By then, the advent of the interstate system with its full-service rest areas changed the way Americans, including African Americans, traveled because all service areas were required to be open for any traveler. ■



Anne E. Bruder is the author "You Will Find It Handy: Documenting the Green Book Sites in Maryland" which was presented during talks at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum in Baltimore (August 2017), the Prince George's County Historical Society (September 2019) and the Baltimore Heritage and Baltimore Architecture Foundation in Baltimore (July 2020). She is part of a group of architectural historians and historians who are documenting Green Book sites in Rhode Island, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Illinois.

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- Photo: Bell's Hotel, Benedict, MD: Photo by Anne E. Bruder



Mr. Farrar's Car Wash that stood along
Old Washington Road

The Farrar Ballfield along
Old Washington Road

LOOKING Beyond the Building

By: Cathy Thompson

PRESERVATIONISTS love old buildings, and I am no exception. However, those interested in historic preservation should always be mindful of what is not represented by our most well-known and well-loved historic buildings. What are we missing? What is invisible? And what is hiding in plain sight? We should also pay attention to old buildings, cemeteries, villages, and the landscapes we pass by every day that often go unnoticed. What stories have yet to be told?

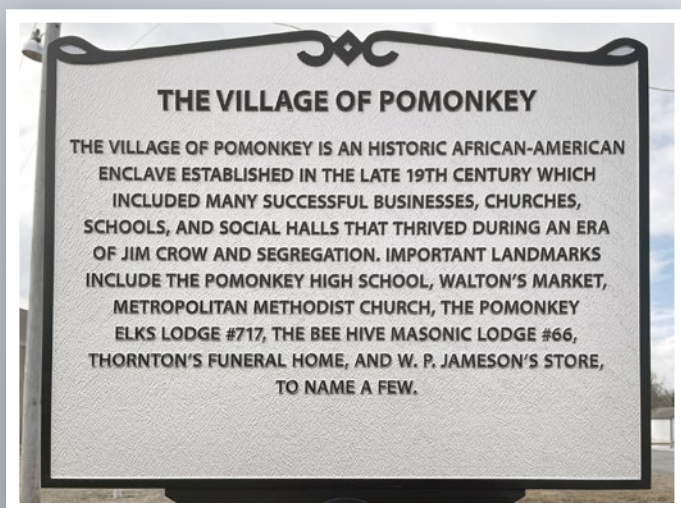
A recent project undertaken by Charles County Government aims to give a voice to the untold stories. A diverse group of staff and community members are working together to document a history that has not been widely celebrated in the past. Moving beyond buildings, through a series of videos, podcasts, brochures, historic markers and print media, Charles County is exploring various aspects of the African American experience in Charles County, an experience that was shaped by the universal forces of family, resilience and community and the harsh truths of slavery, reconstruction and segregation.

Over the next year, we will be conducting interviews, gathering photographs, and completing historical research to more completely understand these places that are hidden in plain sight while striving to reintroduce the stories that were once a disregarded part of American history. Work began earlier this year with video documentaries of the Blue Jay Motel in Waldorf (featured in this issue) and the village of Pomonkey (featured in 2016), corresponding with the erection of two new historic markers installed this year (pictured below). The Charles County Government Tourism Division, is working with tourism counterparts in Southern Maryland to produce a regional African American Heritage Guide. The brochure celebrates and introduces the significant historical sites, stories, and organizations that tell the African American story in the region. The brochure will be available in a flipbook (digital click-through) magazine on the Destination Southern Maryland Heritage area website. A printed version of the publication will be released in late 2021.

But much work is left to be done. As we get to work on this exciting project, stay tuned for updates. In the meantime, I encourage everyone with a love of history to talk to one another and to especially listen to our older generation. They have much to teach us about who we are, where we have been, where we hope to go, and what is really worth preserving. ■

Listen to our historic preservation podcast featuring Preservation Planners Cathy Thompson and Beth Groth:

www.buzzsprout.com/209287/episodes/938405





Preserving HISTORY Through Storytelling

Stories of Charles County's African American history are coming to life through a collaborative documentary, scheduled for release in the fall of 2021, we invite you to learn more about many locations within our county that tell the stories of our African American heritage.

Visit the Charles County Government's YouTube channel for our current historic stories, including our latest videos related to some of the amazing photos seen here...

Pomonkey, the BlueJay Motel, and McConchie One-Room School House.

[YouTube.com/playlist?list=PLYKfJ608FjL9fsyhuAih2FXdOKrgfQh9y](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYKfJ608FjL9fsyhuAih2FXdOKrgfQh9y)



*She was the widow Brent
in 1729 when she purchased
a lot in Charles Town*



Still Life with Lighted Candle
Pieter Claesz, 1627
Mauritshuis Museum, The Hague, Netherlands

AN EXCELLENT WOMAN

Jane Brent Watts

By: Esther Doyle Read

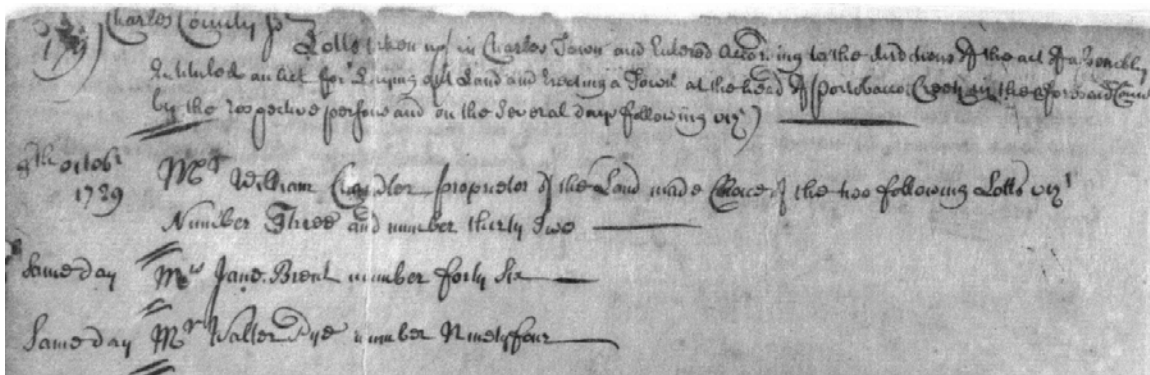
Archaeologists working with historic-era sites often have access to documents that add to the archaeological record. In 2018, I conducted research concerning a section of the village green in Port Tobacco. One of the lots, Lot 46, was the location of an excavation in the early 1970s done by Gerald Braley for the Society for the Restoration of Port Tobacco. The excavation area was in the northwest corner of Lot 46 and at the time was identified as the Glassford store. Since that time, we have discovered that while Glassford was here in the 1760s and 1770s, there were much earlier occupations on the lot. There is a rudimentary artifact catalog from the excavation, but the findings have never been reported. The latter is due in part to the excavation records going missing and not resurfacing until this past spring. I began working with the artifact collection in 2016 and since that time, with the help of volunteers, have cataloged over 9,000 artifacts. We're not finished yet and I estimate that the number will exceed 10,000 items when we complete our work.

When we finish the artifact catalog, we should be able to match the artifacts to the data in the excavation notes and incorporate the historical data into our interpretations of the lot. Although the research is still ongoing, I'd like to share some of the preliminary document research about the first owner of Lot 46, Jane (Thompson) Brent Watts. She was the

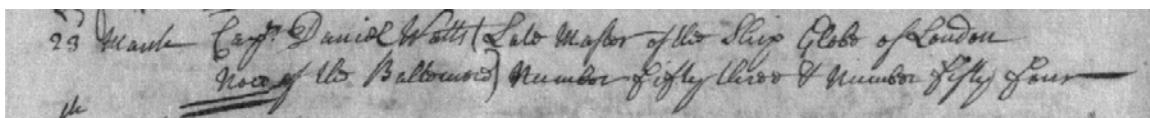
widow Brent in 1729 when she purchased a lot in Charles Town (now Port Tobacco). While it was not unusual for widows to own property in the early eighteenth century, Jane's story is different from that of many women living in the Chesapeake Region. She was born in 1689 in William and Mary Parish to William Thompson and Victoria Matthews. In her late teens, she married Henry Brent and through him became part of a larger kin network that included the Calvert family. Henry Brent was a great-nephew of Giles, Margaret, and Anne Brent, the latter of whom was the wife of Governor Leonard Calvert. His mother, Mary (Sewell) Chandler Brent, was the stepdaughter of Charles Calvert, third Lord Baltimore, and the stepsister of Benedict Leonard Calvert, fourth Lord Baltimore. These family connections meant that Jane had access to the upper levels of Maryland colonial society.

Jane and Henry's only child William was born in 1708. When Henry died just over a year later in November or December of 1709, Jane became a widow with a toddler at the age of 20. Henry's personal estate and chattels were valued at £204 and 4 shillings sterling. The amount of real estate that Henry owned is uncertain. He was a younger son of George Brent by a second wife. Woodstock, the family home on Aquia

— Continued on next page



1729 Sale of Lot 46 to Jane Brent, Charles County Land Records Liber M no. 2, folio 179



1729 Sale of Lots 53 and 54 to Daniel Watts, Charles County Land Records Liber M no. 2, folio 180



Lot 46 in Port Tobacco is the grassy expanse that extends from the parking lot to Chapel Point Road. The 1970s excavation was located near the signpost.

An Excellent Woman – Continued from previous page

Creek in Stafford County, Virginia, went to Henry's half-brother George, the oldest son by the first wife. Henry received land at Swanson's Creek on the Patuxent River from his father. While there are no transactions for Henry Brent listed in the Charles County land records, he and Jane were probably living in Charles County as his estate was probated in the county. They also had family living there. Henry's older half-brother William Chandler owned property near Chandlers Town (later Charles Town).

Where Jane lived after Henry's death is unknown. As the executor of his estate, she appears in county probate records in 1710 and again in 1716, when she received money for her son from one of Henry's sisters. She doesn't appear again in the county records until February 1723, when her father deeded "Thompson's Chance," a 230-acre tract near the future town of Port Tobacco, to Jane and her brother William Thompson. The deed stipulated that Jane had rights in the property only so long as she remained a widow. The property reverted to her brother and his heirs if she remarried or at her death. Two years later, when her brother-in-law William Chandler wrote his will, he left his nephew William Brent – when he reached the age of 21 – the dwelling plantation of 900 acres and another 100 acres of "Goose Creek" and "Chandler's Addition." He left Jane, the relict of his late brother Henry Brent, her living on the dwelling plantation. William Chandler's will indicates that the family made sure Jane was cared for.

In 1729, Jane faced a dilemma. Her brother William Thompson died in March, leaving his two-year-old son Richard Matthews Thompson as half owner with Jane of "Thompson's Chance." This meant that decisions regarding the property were now made in concert with her sister-in-law Catherine (Queen) Thompson. In addition, Jane's son William Brent turned 21 and came into full possession of his inheritance from his father's

estate. With the exception of the widow's third, Jane would lose all control she had over her late husband's estate. That October, nearing her 40th birthday, Jane decided to purchase a lot in the new town of Charles Town on the first day of lot sales. She is the second person entered on the list of purchasers and was the first of two women to take up original lots in the town. Not only that, but she took up a lot directly across from the courthouse lot, a central location in the town. Lot 46 was entirely hers; she did not own it with another family member and did not have to consult a male family member about what she planned to do with the property. Jane satisfied the conditions of purchase, erecting a 400 square foot building on the property within the stated time. What she did with the lot is unclear, but it may have been used as a store or tavern. Completion of the analysis of the 1970s artifacts may help to answer that question.

Around the time that Jane bought her lot, Daniel and John Watts purchased land in Charles Town and along Nanjemoy Creek. Daniel Watts took up lots 53 and 54 in the town in March 1730 and is listed in the sale as "Late master of the ship Globe of London, now of the Baltimore." John Watts, who was also a ship captain, purchased 100 acres of "Poynton Manor" in 1726 along Nanjemoy Creek. The relationship of the two men is unclear. Both were associated with the London merchant John Hyde and were at least connected through the tobacco trade, if not actual kinship. John Watts had been associated with Hyde since at least 1708, when Hyde refused to let the British government use his ship *Ann Arundel*, of which Watts was master, as a hospital ship at the rate the government offered. While John Watts worked for a London merchant, he was part of a merchant family based in Workington, Cumberland County, England, and had at least four siblings: Richard, Dorothy, Isabell, and Ann Watts, all of whom resided in

England. Workington is on the Derwitt River at its confluence with the Solway Firth (the border between England and Scotland) and is about eight miles upstream from the English city of Whitehaven. By the early 1740s, this area ranked third behind London and Glasgow as a hub for the import and re-export of American tobacco to Europe.

John and Daniel Watts were part of a broader trans-Atlantic trade that included ports in countries bordering the Baltic Sea, Ireland, and the Colonial Atlantic seaboard. Newspaper announcements of the arrivals and departures of ships in Colonial and British papers suggest that John Watts may have concentrated on the American trade, while Daniel was focused on European trade. For example, the Maryland Gazette announced on 26 May 1730, that John Watts, master of the sloop William and John of Maryland, was departing Annapolis for Philadelphia. The Newcastle Weekly Courant of Newcastle on Tyne, England, announced on 22 November 1735 that Capt. Watts of the Baltimore (presumably Daniel), spoke with the William and James, Capt. King, off the Lizard (the southern-most point of England). Daniel may have perished at sea in February 1737, when the Expedition, under Capt. Watts, bound for London from Danzig (Gdańsk), Poland, went down in the Kattegat Sea, north of Copenhagen. The name of John Watt's ship in 1708, the Ann Arundel, hints at ties with the Calvert family, at least by John Hyde. Another connection appears in a newspaper article in the Derbyshire, England paper, the Derby Mercury, on 29 June 1732, announcing news of the death of Benedict Leonard Calvert at sea during his return trip from Maryland in the Charles, a ship captained by a Captain Watts. It is possible that Jane Brent met John Watts through family connections.

After 20 years or more of being a widow, Jane Brent decided to marry John Watts. The exact date of their marriage is unknown; it was after Jane purchased Lot 46 in Charles Town on 8 October 1729, but before 12 September 1735 when John wrote a codicil to his will, leaving Jane part of his estate. Like her first marriage, Jane's second was also short lived. John Watts was dead by late September 1736. His full will was entered into probate in England by his brother Richard Watts on 1 October 1736, while the codicil was admitted to probate in Charles County on 7 September 1737. John's brother, Richard Watts, and brother-in-law, John Carr, were the executors of the estate and were instructed to take possession of the plate, logbooks, and stock of merchandise on Watt's plantation and in his yawl. Walter Pye of Charles County, one of Henry Brent's cousins, was the executor of the codicil. Jane was given full use

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View of part of Poynton Manor. In 1726, John Watts bought 100 acres of Poynton from Matthew Stone. The Stone family received the 5,000 acre manor from Lord Baltimore in 1653. John's land was probably the dwelling plantation where he and Jane lived.



Tobacco pipes and the base of a case bottle found during the 1970s archaeological excavation of Jane's Port Tobacco Lot. Case bottles were square and were shipped in wooden cases. They often held gin or other spirits. The archaeology field notes record a layer of broken pipes in the cellar of a building on the lot. These are the types of artifacts that are typically associated with a tavern, which is one of the possible businesses that Jane either maintained herself or leased to a tenant.



Embossed copper alloy sleeve buttons recovered during the 1970s archaeological excavation of Jane's Port Tobacco lot. The button on the left was recovered in the lower levels of a structure that once stood on the property. Its floral design and that of the button on the bottom center are similar to buttons in the collection of the Museum of London. Buttons on clothing could be changed thus enabling an individual to personalize their clothing.



Volunteers Julie Simpson and Elsie Picyk working with artifacts recovered during the 1970s excavation of Lot 46.

of “Poynton Manor” until her death. The Maryland estate, valued at £527.19.8 was not settled until 1752, three years after Jane’s death.

Jane sold Lot 46 in Port Tobacco in 1740. Interestingly the lot is not mentioned in John Watts’ will or codicil. By law, the lot became his property at the time of their marriage. It is possible that they had a pre-nuptial agreement concerning her real estate, but if they did it is not mentioned in the will, nor does there appear to be a copy of it. At the same time as the sale of Lot 46, Jane’s son William Brent granted her 100 acres of Goose Creek for use during her lifetime. When William died in late 1745/early 1746, his will reaffirmed his mother’s right to Goose Creek.

Jane’s kin network supported her through both periods of widowhood, and we see the Brents, Chandlers, and Thompsons providing for her after each husband’s death. The documents paint a portrait of a woman who was an astute businesswoman. First widowed at the age of 20, Jane remained single and in control of her late husband’s property until her son reached the age of 21. She then purchased her own lot in a developing port town and married a man involved in the trans-Atlantic tobacco trade. She was widowed shortly thereafter, but John Watts’ estate was more than double that of Henry Brent, and she appears to have retained control of her own real estate. Her son’s will bestowed the right to run her cattle anywhere she liked on his property, indicating that she managed her own farm. But what was Jane like as person? John Watts’ codicil gives us a glimpse into Jane’s personality. He left her 20 books of her choice out of his stock and a pipe of wine (or 126 gallons). I have not found a record of the books Jane chose to keep, but the books listed in the inventory include Thomas Salmon’s *Modern History*, *The Adventures of Telemachus, the Son of Ulysses*, written in 1699 by Archbishop Francois de Salignac de La Mothe-Fenelon (a book that questioned the divine rights of kings), and eight volumes of *The Turkish Spy*, a novel written by Giovanni Paolo Marana in 1683. The latter features a collection of fictional letters written by “Mahmut the Arabian” a spy at the French court and is a satire concerning society, politics, Catholicism, and the status of women. Jane it appears liked to read and drink wine, a woman after my own heart.

However, there was a dark side to Jane’s life. She and both her husbands owned slaves. When Henry died in 1709, they owned five enslaved people who are listed in the estate inventory. Three of the slaves are

unnamed, and two of the former are listed as over 50 years of age. Two slaves were much younger: Billy age 12, and Sarah age 9. Twenty-seven years later, John Watts’ inventory also lists five enslaved individuals, who are named in his will: Samuel, Giles, and Teresa, and mulatto Nanney and her child. When Jane died in late 1749 her inventory listed 11 enslaved individuals including mulattos Nan and Gigger (probably the mother and child named in John’s will). Most of the wealth in all three estates was vested in the human beings the family owned.

Something happened to Jane’s ability to write before she died. The documents indicate that she could write, and one of the bequests in her will was of her writing desk to her grandson Henry Brent. While Jane signed the deed of sale for Lot 46 in 1740, she made her mark on her will on 19 October 1749. This suggests that she could no longer write. Did she have a stroke? Was she blind due to cataracts or glaucoma? Was she able to still read her books? While the documents tell us a great deal about Jane, we may never know the answer to the last questions. Jane was in many ways a woman of her times, the men in her family gave her land, but only for use while she remained single, assuming that any future husband would provide for her. Her family cared for her when she was a widow, yet it was by remaining a widow for almost a quarter of century that she was able to retain control over her first husband’s estate. When her son became an adult and took full control of the property, she purchased her own lot in a developing town. She also retained control of this land after the death of her second husband.

While Jane’s extended family gave her the ability to make choices, it is in her choices as a widow that we see an atypical woman of the period. Many women of her era who were widowed at a young age with a small child would have been forced to remarry quickly to survive. Jane’s choices were possible because of her social position and familial support. ■



Frontispiece from the Franciscan Jacques du Bosc’s *The Excellent Woman in the British Library*, London. Originally appearing in France in 1645, the book underwent several translations and was still being published in the 1750s. This edition was printed in 1692 in London by Joseph Watts.

Rev. Du Bosc’s book argues that women possess the same virtues as men, stating that “...women are not onely capable to understand that which is important in affaires and in commerce; but even that also which is subtile and solid in the highest wisdom,” the latter meaning the church. Jane embodied many of the qualities that du Bosc enumerated in the world of commerce.

ARE YOU A HISTORIC PROPERTY OWNER?

You may be eligible for the Heritage Structure Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program.



Homeowner Tax Credit Program

Administered by Maryland Historical Trust (MHT)

Did you know homeowners can earn a state income tax credit for renovating historic homes? The tax credit offers homeowners of single-family, owner-occupied residences up to 20 percent of eligible rehabilitation costs. Tax credits may be used for repairs such as: Roof Repair and Replacement, Chimney Repair and Lining, Window Restoration, New Storm Doors/Windows, Masonry Repointing, and Floor Refinishing.

Eligibility: Buildings must be certified as historic, defined as having at least one of the following designations:

- Individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- A contributing resource within a National Register Historic District.
- A locally designated structure or contributing resource to a local historic district that MHT determines to be eligible for the National Register.

The credit is capped at \$50,000 in a 24-month period, and projects must have a minimum of \$5,000 of eligible expenses to qualify. Applications are accepted year round; MHT review runs approximately 30-45 days.

Details: Megan Klem — Megan.Klem@Maryland.gov • 410-514-7688. Additional information is available online at: https://mht.maryland.gov/taxcredits_homeowner.shtml.

MHT also administers a Small Commercial Tax Credit for income producing properties.

NATIONAL REGISTER PROPERTIES

Rose Hill	Mt. Air
La Grange	Mt. Aventine
Habre de Venture	Pleasant Hill
St. Thomas Manor	Rosemary Lawn
Friendship House	Cedar Grove
The Retreat	Compton House
Araby	Mt. Bleak
Stagg Hall	John Reeder House
Chimney House	Dr. Mudd House
Sarum	Rich Hill
St. Mary's Catholic Church Newport	Locust Grove
Truman's Place	Oakland
Burch House	Maxwell Hall
Ellerslie	Timber Neck Farm
Waverly	The Exchange
Crain's Lot	Spye Park
Linden	McPherson's Purchase
The Lindens	Bryantown Tavern
Thainston	Evergreen
Mt. Carmel Monastery	Old Waldorf School
Acquinsicke	Bel Alton High School
Oak Grove	Eugene Chaney House
Green's Inheritance	

A Tale of Two Sites

Archaeology at Swan Point

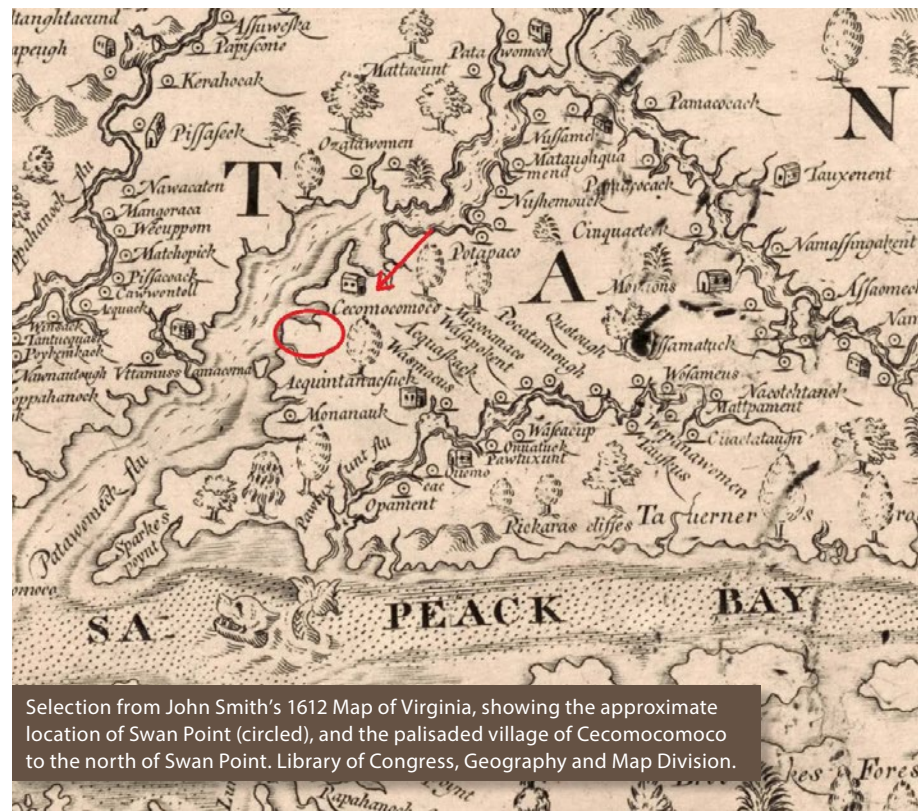
By: Ann B. Markell, R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc.

Good land is rarely vacant. At Swan Point in Charles County, that fact is borne out by the abundant evidence of thousands of years of past occupation recovered from two recently excavated archaeological sites.

Bounded by the Potomac River on the west, Cuckold Creek to the north, and the Wicomico River to the east (pictured, top) the land that now provides recreation and respite to the growing Swan Point community, previously had been occupied from at least the Late Archaic Period (3000 B.C. to 1000 B.C) through much of the 20th century.

In 1634, when Europeans began their colonization of Maryland, the region was home to the Piscataway or Conoy, who spoke the Algonquian language. They lived in palisaded villages and in addition to seasonal hunting, fishing, and gathering, they practiced agriculture in the fertile soils along the rivers like the Potomac and the Wicomico. One of their villages, located just to the north of Swan Point, was called Cecomocomoco and was depicted on John Smith's 1612 map of the region (pictured, right).

That the Piscataway Conoy remained in the region in the 17th century is attested to by the fact that the first European who held a land grant at Swan Point — Captain James Neale — was actively engaged by the Maryland government to barter with the local



Selection from John Smith's 1612 Map of Virginia, showing the approximate location of Swan Point (circled), and the palisaded village of Cecomocomoco to the north of Swan Point. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

Piscataway. Records indicate that in 1638 he imported cloth, knives, scissors, white and purple beads, bells, hoes and axes to use in that trade. The Piscataway Conoy still are resident in Charles and the surrounding counties, and are active in efforts to preserve their heritage. For more information, contact the Piscataway Indian Museum and Cultural Center in Waldorf, Maryland (www.PiscatawayIndians.com).

Archaeological survey at Swan Point began as early as 1991, and since then, archaeologists have successfully identified at least eight archaeological sites. Of these, two have undergone data recovery excavations. These excavations were carried out in satisfaction of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended) by Archaeological Testing and Consulting, Inc. (ATC) under the review and guidance of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Maryland Historical Trust, and Charles County. One of the two sites contained the foundations of a house likely built in the late 17th century by James Neale, Jr. and his wife Anne (Site 18CH354). The other site (Site 18CH350) revealed the remains of a house built by Edward and Monica Digges at the end of the 18th century. It was occupied by the Digges and later the Matthews families through the 19th century. Both sites yielded a wealth of information on the lives of those who lived at Swan Point during the more than two centuries that it was occupied by the Neale, Digges, and Matthews families, and also about the prior use of the land and its resources by indigenous people.

Indigenous Artifacts at Sites 18CH354 and 18CH350

Evidence of Native American occupation included lithic tools carefully crafted from chert and quartz; fragments of ceramic bowls and vessels, many decorated with cord-marking; and remains of the foods that were consumed. Oyster shell, bone fragments, and fragments of fire-cracked rock that indicated the locations of former fire or cooking pits were recovered from the archaeological excavations at Swan Point.

At Site 18CH354, almost 200 lithic and ceramic artifacts were recovered (*pictured*). Most of the ceramics that could be dated were identified as Accokeek ware, manufactured during the Early Woodland period (900 BC to 300 BC). A single sherd of Pope's Creek ware was identified; this was manufactured between 500 BC and AD 300. Site 18CH350 contained primarily lithic artifacts; only one ceramic sherd was recovered. The ceramic was identified as Accokeek ware, like that found at nearby Site 18CH354. Most of the indigenous artifacts at the two sites were found alongside and mixed with those from the historic period, indicating that the original early occupation areas had been disturbed by the later construction of the houses.

Site 18CH354 – The Neale Family

Captain James Neale was born in England and immigrated to Maryland in 1637, establishing himself as a trader. By 1642, he had been granted 2,000 acres of land at Swan Point by Lord Baltimore, but because of



Archaeologists from ATC excavating the house at the 18th-century Site 18CH354. Photographed by ATC, Inc.



View of a portion of the brick cellar wall at Site 18CH354. Excavated and photographed by ATC, Inc.

1. Tableware from Site 18CH354. Clockwise from left: free-blown wine bottle, pewter spoon, Whieldon clouded creamware saucer, creamware plate rim, white salt-glazed stoneware plate rim, air-twist wine glass stem, Staffordshire slipware posset cup.
2. Iron door latch, padlock and lock plate, cut and wire nails, window glass fragments, and a roofing slate fragment recovered from the cellar at 19th-century Site 18CH350.
3. Quartz and rhyolite projectile points, Early Woodland Period sand-tempered Accokeek ceramic fragments, and a quartzite hammerstone from Site 18CH354.
4. Bone comb fragment, bone knife handle, clay pipe bowl and stem fragments, thimble, and a King George II halfpenny (1744) from Site 18CH354.
5. Faunal remains from 19th-century Site 18CH350, including fish bones, turtle shell fragments, squirrel tooth/jaw, pig teeth, oyster shell, and cow jaw fragments.



political dissension in the Colony, Neale and his wife Anne left the Colony. After 15 years in Europe, the Neales and their four children returned to Swan Point where they established “Wollaston Manor” in 1661. This earliest dwelling has not been located, but a later home built at Site 18CH354 by the Neale family was located during archaeological survey at Swan Point (*pictured, previous page*).

Probably built in the late 17th century, the house at Site 18CH354 was built from brick and wood, with two interior brick chimneys and partial brick foundations (*pictured, previous page*). The house also had a large cellar under the south-central portion of the dwelling. The cellar was filled with debris from both the destruction of the house and likely from clearing the surrounding yard and trash middens. The types and dates of artifacts recovered from that filled cellar provided valuable information about when the house was occupied, the status of those who had lived there, and the approximate date of its destruction. The house appears to have remained until around 1780, possibly occupied by tenants in the final decades.

The archaeological excavations of the house at Site 18CH354 offered a wealth of information about the lives of those who lived there. Artifacts like buttons and buckles; ceramics and

glass; and bones and shell revealed how the Neale family may have dressed, the types of dishes they used for cooking and eating, what foods they ate and even how they cooked them. By studying the artifacts and historical records on where and when they were manufactured, and by comparing them with artifacts from other similar sites, archaeologists were able to determine that the Neales were relatively wealthy with a higher social status.

The Neale’s livelihood was based primarily on the cultivation of tobacco, although as the regional economy matured, there was a gradual shift to a more diverse agriculture. Regardless of the crop, the Neale’s livelihood and continued wealth relied on the efforts of enslaved laborers. The wills of the Neale family members all listed slaves; Raphael Neale’s will included 36 slaves. Although these laborers lived and worked at Site 18CH354 through the 18th century, there was no clear evidence of their housing or domestic activity found during the archaeological testing.

Site 18CH350 – the Digges and Matthews Families

In 1755, the Wollaston Manor land at Swan Point was partitioned to divide it between the Neale heirs. Tract 1, identified as “Bateman’s tract”, included the house at 18CH354, but also

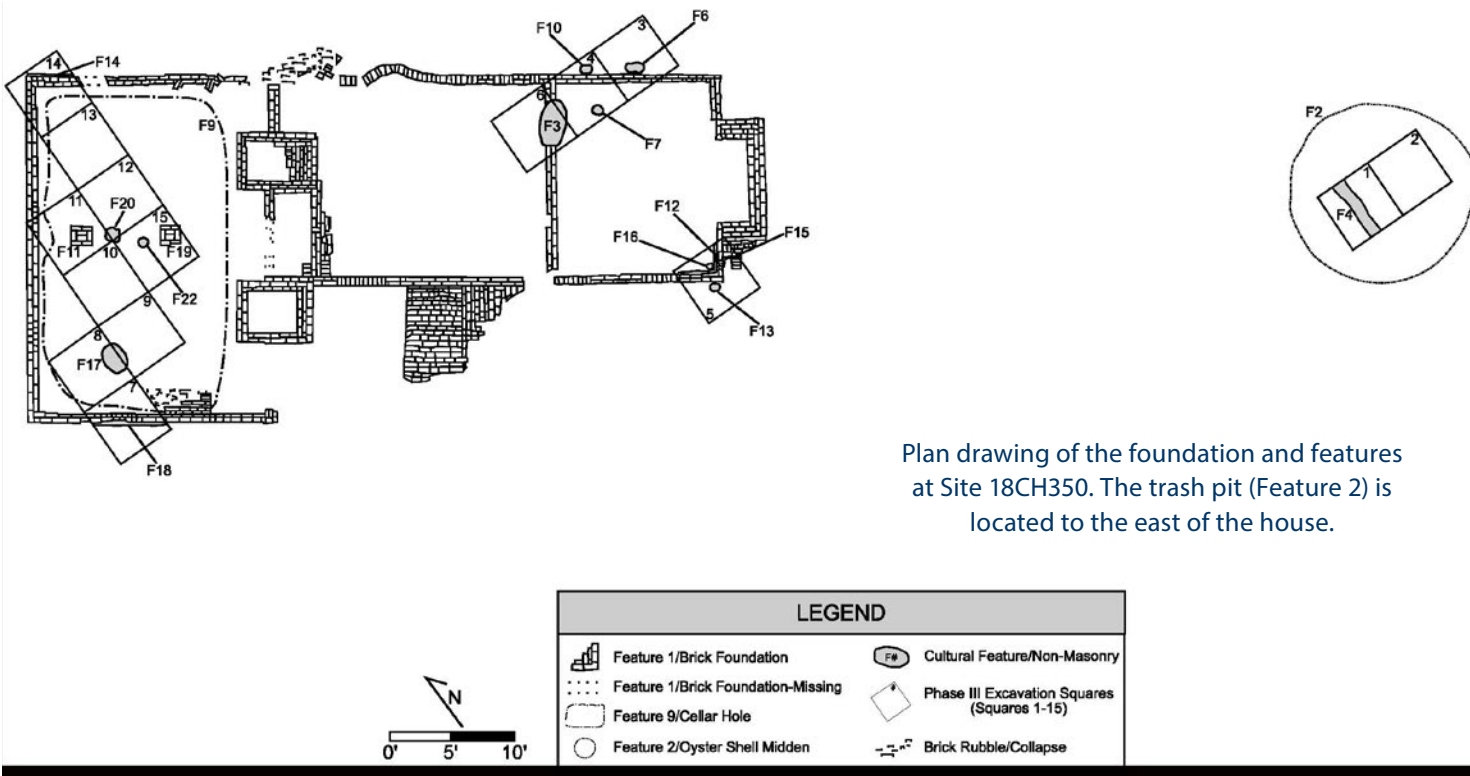
was the location of a later house built at the end of the 18th century by Edward and Monica (Neale) Digges (pictured below). Monica was the great-granddaughter of Capt. James Neale. By 1831, that property then called "Lone Holly" was owned by Elizabeth (Neale) and her husband Dr. Francis Matthews. In 1860, Francis Matthews died and Lone Holly passed to James, their son. The house burnt in 1905, shortly after the death of James Matthews.



Archaeologist from ATC, Inc. working to excavate and expose the long-buried foundation bricks of the 19th-century house that once stood at Site 18CH350.

The Digges and Matthews families weren't the only residents at the Lone Holly plantation in the late 18th and 19th centuries. The plantation economy that lasted until the Civil War was dependent on forced labor to tend the tobacco and other crops, as well as to handle most other domestic and farm tasks. The number of slaves at Lone Holly fluctuated; the 1850 slave census, for example, listed Francis Matthews as the owner of 20 slaves. By 1860 that number was down to 15 slaves who lived and worked on the tobacco plantation. Unfortunately, despite the fact that so many lived and worked at Lone Holly, there was no archaeological evidence that could be specifically linked to the laborers' daily lives.

The Digges house measured 20' x 27' with a later addition that measured 16' x 25'. The dwelling had a partial brick foundation and its sills were supported on brick piers (pictured, above). There were two interior brick chimney bases and a cellar beneath the main portion of the house. The cellar had been filled with domestic and architectural debris after the house was razed (SP 10). The archaeologists identified and excavated the foundations and cellar, as well as a trash pit located a short distance away. Like the cellar, the trash pit contained domestic debris, including oyster shell, fish bone, and other evidence of the meals that were prepared and consumed (SP 11). Both the cellar and trash pit had been filled after the house burnt in the early 20th century, and that fill contained abundant evidence of more than a century of life at the Lone Holly plantation at Swan Point. ■



Plan drawing of the foundation and features at Site 18CH350. The trash pit (Feature 2) is located to the east of the house.



Society Hill in Cobb Neck

The historic farm property with a sweeping view of the Wicomico River... a view that has been largely unchanged for over 150 years. Thanks to the Wegner family, the 350 acres of farmland and forest that are part of Society Hill has been permanently protected through a conservation easement.

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Society Hill – Continued from previous page

The centerpiece of the farm is an 18th century dwelling (*pictured, previous page*) nestled on the crest of a ridge above the Wicomico River. It is approached by a long gravel drive, almost one mile in length, that passes through lush woodland and wide cultivated fields. From its spacious full-length back porch one can experience a landscape of undulating hills that open onto wide plains, the Wicomico River, and the St. Mary's County shoreline beyond.

Described by noted architectural historian Richard Rivoire as one of Charles County's more interesting examples of 18th century architecture, the original house may have been a one-story, five-bay frame dwelling, and is distinguished by a massive chimney similar to that at Maxwell Hall but including a service door in its center. Rivoire opined that in the early 19th century the house was raised to two stories and front and rear porches were added in a manner similar to Deep Falls in St. Mary's County. The interior features a center-hall four-room plan like that found at Maiden Point Farm, also in Cobb Neck.

Society Hill stands on a 17th century land grant known as Frailty surveyed in 1664 for Humphrey Warren. Humphrey Warren was born in Cheshire, England and arrived in the Maryland colony by 1662 with his son Humphrey and two servants, Francis Jenkins and Anne Lake. They settled on Hatton's Point along the Wicomico River. Before his death around 1671, Humphrey Warren conveyed his Frailty property to Esias Fendall in trust for his wife, Eleanor, and son Thomas. His older son, Humphrey, inherited Hatton Point just south of Frailty from his father. Thomas Warren died in 1710, and left to his wife, Jane, 50 acres and the dwelling plantation, part of 300 acres of Frailty.

As the property was entailed, it in time passed to Barton Warren, Thomas Warren's son by his first wife, Mary Barton. Barton died in 1757, leaving Frailty to his wife and two sons, Notley and John. At the time of his death, the farm included cattle, horses, hogs, and sheep; and its agricultural products



included 30 bushels of wheat, 40 bushels of corn, and several acres of tobacco. In 1778, the buildings on Frailty were described as including a dwelling house, 16 feet square with a 12 feet square addition; a kitchen, 12 feet square; cellar house, 12 feet square; quarter 20 x 12; cornhouse 16 x 10; chair house [carriage house] 12 x 8; dairy, 8 feet square; hen house 12 x 8 and a tobacco house 40 x 22, all of which needed repair. The farm also included 150 apple trees, 250 peach trees, and 2570 panels of fence and was said to produce 1500 pounds of tobacco annually.^[1]

The property remained in the Warren and Hungerford families for almost two centuries. According to Mrs. Bill Chapman (Jane), the name was changed by a Chapman/Hungerford

[1] Charles County MD Will Book 1777-1780; Page 203.View of John Warren's Land. Aug 10, 1778.

*The beautiful view from
Society Hill's back porch.*



husband and wife to Society Hill to reflect the many parties they held there. In 1860 it was mortgaged by Gerard Hungerford to Dr. Andrew J. Smoot, where he and his wife Nannie Wood Smoot, resided for many years. In 1907 it was acquired by Baltimore dentist Justus H. Ehlers who briefly operated a dental office at Society Hill until the property was sold to Robert Crain in 1913. Crain, who acquired many farms in the area at this time, was responsible for constructing the existing outbuildings (*pictured, previous page*) including the cattle and sheep barns, stable and corncrib. During his ownership the farm was operated by tenants, a common practice where a family would occupy the land and farm the property for a portion of the proceeds. Some of the tenants that occupied the farm during different periods of the 20th century include John and later, his son Pearlie Carroll and the Sweeney family. A schoolhouse for local children was established on the property in the late 19th century and stood in the woodlands along the gravel entrance road. The remnants of the foundation piers are still visible near an old road trace now used each year by the De La Brooke Foxhounds W Club, an equestrian foxhunting organization steeped in history that began in 1939.

In 1937 it was purchased by Mary Moore Warner and on July 3rd, 1962, Charles and Ruth Wegner and their three young daughters Virginia, Linda and Susan became the newest owners of Society Hill. Charles and Ruth Wegner looked at themselves

as stewards of the land and buildings and they practiced that philosophy over the decades. Today their children continue the legacy of preservation and stewardship, ensuring that magnificent view and a unique part of southern Maryland history will be unchanged for future generations. Pictured above, sisters **Susan Gilman** and **Virginia Mayer** are the current stewards of Society Hill. Virginia was Charles County's first native-born female lawyer. ■

The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program, in existence since 1977, is one of the most successful programs of its kind in the country. Its primary purpose is to preserve sufficient agricultural land to maintain a viable local base of food and fiber production for the present and future citizens of Maryland. Charles County has been acquiring conservation easements through the MALPF program for over 20 years and through these efforts has protected over 10,000 acres. Many of these properties protected under this program contain irreplaceable historic sites, buildings, and landscapes.



Smoot Mill

A Ditch in the Woods

By: James G. Gibb

The crew, glad to be in the shade of the forest on a hot day in late August, followed the ditch about 1200 feet... a thickly wooded, steep slope toward a level area along a stream.

Our crew of four worked its way down a thickly wooded, steep slope toward a level area along a stream. There we planned to excavate a dozen or so shovel test pits in search of aboriginal and early historic artifacts that might point to a past occupation. Before we reached the bottom of the slope, however, we encountered a ditch. Clearly it wasn't an erosion gully — it ran along, rather than down, the slope, and soil had been heaped along its downslope edge. It was an artificial feature, and we knew exactly what it was: a raceway for a mill and, more specifically, the head race that brought water to a mill, as opposed to a tail race from which water exited the mill.

No responsible archaeologist undertakes fieldwork without first reviewing and analyzing available data on soils, land tenure, previous archaeological investigations within and around the study area, and a host of other sources. Maps of eastern Charles County revealed a small pond. Such features in Southern Maryland are artificial, created by farmers for livestock watering and crop irrigation (sod farms, orchards), and by millwrights to store water with which to power grist mills and saw mills. Using an online source for LiDAR (Light Radar), a tool that uses aircraft-mounted lasers to record topography, even beneath forest canopies, we were able to see the pond

and portions of a northbound ditch that survived erosion and road construction. The ditch we saw in the field is the ditch I saw on the LiDAR image.

The crew, glad to be in the shade of the forest on a hot day in late August, followed the ditch about 1200 feet southward back to the mill pond where we photographed the pond, a recently rebuilt earthen dam, and portions of the raceway that carried water northward from the pond to the mill. We then retraced our tracks and followed the ditch northward from where we first encountered it. Not 250 feet away the ditch abruptly turned to the northeast and ended at a drop of several feet. There before us was a small foundation built of locally collected fieldstone — the iron-rich sandstone that outcrops in deep ravines and along the Patuxent and Potomac rivers. Resting on top of the mound of earth encompassed by the foundation was a millstone, and just to the south, beyond the foundation, another, the bedstone. The more intact one is a runnerstone, which is the upper stone in a pair between which wheat, corn, and other grains are cut and ground into flour and meal. The bedstone — the lower of the two and the one which remains stationary as the water-driven mill machinery rotates

the runnerstone — was less intact with one piece lying on the headrace berm several feet above the mill.

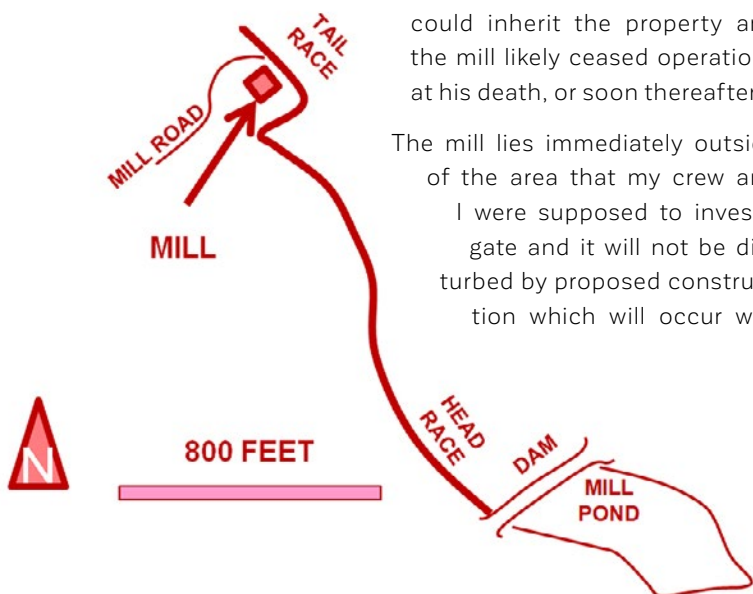
Both stones are in pieces, but they aren't broken: they were made of shaped pieces of buhr (pronounced "burr") stone, imported largely from France. The pieces were shaped and then arranged like a mosaic. An iron hoop, similarly to an iron tire placed on a carriage or wagon wheel, was then heated, placed over the arranged pieces, and then rapidly cooled with cold water. The iron shrank and tightly bound the stones together, again, just like an iron tire affixed to a wheel.

Millers agreed that these stones were tough and held chiseled cutting edges better than most other stones. Keeping those edges sharp meant less frequent re-sharpening by the miller (a laborious task if ever there was one) and better quality flour. Grain must be cut, not crushed. If the runnerstone is set too closely to the bedstone, the grain will be 'bruised' and spoil quickly. Also, if the stones come in direct contact, the friction will ignite the dust-impregnated air of the mill and the building will burn, if not explode.

Between the runner and bed stones is a rectangular depression running along the exterior of the south wall of the foundation. Approximately three feet wide and 20 feet long, this is the wheelpit in which an overshot wheel turned as water poured down from the headrace above. ('Overshot' refers to the part of the wheel that the water initially strikes. Water strikes breast wheels and undershot wheels at points around and below the wheel's axle, respectively.) Overshot wheels more efficiently use the force of the falling water than do other kinds of wheels. In Maryland during the last half of the 19th century, such mills generated about 15 horsepower and were operated by a miller and one or two assistants, generally boys.

Using census data, I have identified three millers who likely operated the mill at least since 1860: Truman Canter, R. Richardson, and Winfield Smoot. None of these men owned the property on which the mill was situated, each likely renting it from the Smoot family. Winfield Smoot died in 1902 before he could inherit the property and the mill likely ceased operations at his death, or soon thereafter.

The mill lies immediately outside of the area that my crew and I were supposed to investigate and it will not be disturbed by proposed construction which will occur well



to the south. It will remain unmolested, hopefully for future research. Much can be learned from this mill through well-planned excavation and sampling of sediments. For example, did the millers — like many of their peers in the 1880s through 1920s — replace the difficult to build and repair mill wheel with a more efficient, less vulnerable to damage turbine purchased from a mill machinery manufacturer? Such an upgrade not only would have increased mill efficiency and reliability; it would have reduced the skill necessary to operate the facility. Is there structural evidence for the expansion of the mill, or were the owners and operators satisfied with the volume of business that the original facility could manage? How did the construction, maintenance and operation of the mill alter the local ecosystem? Can we recover data on shifting plant and animal communities and changing soil conditions from the deep, saturated sediments in and around the mill?

Our investigation failed to find any evidence of Indian or colonial occupation within the eight-acre area spanning a stream that we were charged to examine. Nevertheless, we did find a late 19th-century mill complex and a potentially important source of data for local historical and environmental research. The portion of that complex that would be adversely effected by road construction — a portion of the head race — already had been destroyed by road construction and erosion, so the new work will not disturb the mill or mill pond, or several hundred feet of surviving raceway. ■





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