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*The Beall-Dawson House, c. 1815
home of the Montgomery County Historical Society
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EMORY GROVE

A BLACK COMMUNITY OF YESTERYEAR

In 1860, the population of Montgomery County was 18,322 of whom 30 percent (5421) were slaves.^{1,2} When these slaves were freed after the Civil War, these men and women, with no formal education, no bank accounts, no homes, and very few resources of

1. G.M. Hopkins, *Atlas of Montgomery County, Maryland, 1879* (Philadelphia, PA: G.M. Hopkins, 1879) (Reprinted Rockville, MD: Montgomery County Historical Society, 1975), p. 7.

2. Ray Eldon Hiebert and Richard K. MacMaster, *A Grateful Remembrance, the Story of Montgomery County, Maryland* (Rockville, MD: Montgomery County Government and the Montgomery County Historical Society, 1976), p. 152.

any kind, were faced with starting a new life. Many of these people did not know whether their children, parents, relatives, and friends were living or dead. Yet these recently freed men and women had their minds filled with a great work, and their hearts were overflowing with joy. Their silent prayers had been answered, and they were free from their earthly masters who had had charge of their bodies but not of their souls. This was a group of people that felt each other's love, care, sorrow, and pain. Out of these conditions, as many as 50 black communities were formed in Montgomery County.³ Emory Grove, on the Gaithersburg-Laytonsville Road (now Route 124) northeast of Gaithersburg, was one of these communities.

The 123-acre community began with families from nearby farms in Redland and Goshen purchasing small parcels of land from the farms of the Woodwards, the Bowmans, the Saffells, and the Dorseys.⁴ Some of this land was sold because it was unsuitable for farming. Among the pioneer citizens of Emory Grove who purchased land in the 1870's were Franklin Duvall, Joseph Duvall, Robert and John Taylor, William Chambers, William Mockabee, Robert Tyler, William Robertson, George Praither, and Martha Lockett. Most owned less than two acres for which they paid about \$60 per acre. Perhaps the earliest resident was Abraham Lancaster whose name appears as a landowner on the 1865 Martenet and Bond map although land ownership has not been verified in the county land records. Other residents identified in the United States Census of 1880 were the families of John W. Dorsey, Elijah Lancaster, Richard Frazier, John Mockabee, William Frazier, George Frazier, John Morsell, Charles Wilson, Lloyd Duvall, Alexander Taylor, Henrietta Johnson, John Thompson, Noah Sedgewick, and John W. Ennis.

As in most of the developing black communities, the church was a central, unifying force. Between 1865 and 1870, religious services for the community were held in the tenant home of John W. Dorsey on a farm which is today the Montgomery County Airpark. Sunday school, prayer meetings, and class meetings were pioneered by this religious leader. These gatherings attracted people from surrounding communities, some at distances of 10 or 12 miles. This group of singing and praying people became the nucleus of a mission set up in 1871 under the Washington Conference of the Methodist Church. They met in the home of Robert Taylor who had built one of the first houses in Emory Grove.

The first regularly appointed pastor was Rev. Perry Matthews. Matthews was pastor of the Rockville charge of the Methodist Episcopal Church; the Rockville charge included Rockville, Norbeck, Quince Orchard, Laytonsville, and the mission at Emory Grove. This pastor seemed well-fitted for his work, sufficiently determined, and a good mixer. Soon a building committee, of which Abraham Lancaster was a member, was formed. Plans were made for construction and for the accumulation of funds. A contract was let to West Thompson. The heavy timber which had to be hewn was selected, and hewing was begun by Frank Duvall, James Johnson, and Henry Tyler. Committees were appointed to oversee the financing of the building project which cost between \$500 and \$600. The church appears to have been built before the land was deeded to the trustees. In a deed recorded March 26, 1878, the half acre more

3. *Ibid.*, p. 305.

4. Montgomery County Land Records, Book EBP 4, p. 385; Book EBP 10, p. 274; EBP 11, pp. 51 and 420; EBP 12, pp. 72-73; EBP 15, pp. 454-455; EBP 21, pp. 35 and 140; and EBP 23, p. 141.

or less, which was part of a tract called "Woodward Hall," passed from Rozell and Eliza Jane Woodward to Jeoffrey Mockabee, Samuel Johnson, John W. Dorsey, John Waters, and William Chambers, trustees of the Methodist Episcopal church.⁵

In 1874, the small, log edifice with its balcony and splendid no-back benches was dedicated by the Rev. N.M. Carroll. The enthusiasm was unimaginable, singing, marching, and shouting being in evidence and quite in order. With the dedication over and the committees at work staging festivals and concerts, which not only served as a source for gathering finances but also as a means of recreation, modes of worship could be considered. The church year included Class and Sunday School every Sunday, preaching as often as could be arranged because of the number of churches comprising the charge, prayer meetings, revivals at specially stated periods, and, beginning in 1877, camp meetings each year during the month of August.

Under the guiding hands of John W. Dorsey, Frank Duvall, Elijah Lancaster, and Thomas Fitzhugh, the Sunday School grew and spread its wholesome influence widely. The first class was led by Samuel Johnson. As the congregation grew, three classes became necessary; they were led by James Braxton (Number One Class), Eliza Duvall (Number Two Class), and Anna Taylor (Number Three Class). Class members gathered for the purpose of giving expression on the "welfare of the soul and hopes for making Heaven their home." Class was not only a place for singing, praying, and giving testimony but also a place of purging. Those who failed to answer the roll call by the class leader were immediately sought and reproved for their laxity. The measure meted in some cases was not unlike ostracism.

Music has always been an integral part of the Emory Grove church. The first choir, under the leadership of John Wesley Ennis, Jeoffrey Mockabee, Perry Tyler, and Henrietta Johnson, rehearsed in various homes prior to the building of the church. During the 1930's, a Junior Choir was initiated by Rev. N.C. Barnes. Both the Senior and Junior Choirs engaged in choir contests with the choirs of other churches. In addition to the choirs, several famous quartets developed; they sang in many churches during the 1930's. The quartet under the leadership of James H. Braxton won first place in a county-wide contest. Later, in 1964, a youth chorus was started under the direction of Glen Taylor; this group adopted the name "Gospelettes." Today the Gospelettes of Emory Grove, a group of 15 a cappella singers, carry their "message of faith and joy around the metropolitan area like a traveling salvation show."⁶

Emory Grove, like its neighboring community of Washington Grove, became the site of annual camp meetings in the 1870's. The first camp meeting was held in Bowman's Woods which in later years became the property of Robert Plummer. About 1877, the permanent camp ground was established under the auspices of the Mineral Grove Club of Montgomery County. The Corporation consisted of Francis Ricks, Charles E. Ross, Secretary, William Luster, William Hawkins, Frank Duvall, and Washington Ricks. This association continued with ownership passing from father to son or other relatives.

5. Montgomery County Land Records, Book EBP 18, pp. 20-21.

6. *The Washington Post*, March 6, 1987.

Originally camp meeting served as a time for the saving of souls and for spiritual growth and renewal. People came from throughout the county, some to remain camped in tents throughout the weeks for prayer meetings and other services. Then, on Sundays, the campers watched the crowds pour in for morning, noon, and night services. At first the wagons and ox carts of all kinds jostled along over the ruts, stirring up clouds of dust as they entered the grounds. Later it was the rubber-tired buggies, the fringed-top surrey, and the dayton, but they were all destined for one place - Camp. The city folk boarded the train, alit at Washington Grove, walked or had someone meet them, but they too came. Those who came to stay drove some of their stock to camp; the animals were staked out in a common area.

Food was always an intrinsic part of Camp. Large black Kettles of golden cabbage, ears of corn, and potatoes over open fires sent enticing aromas through the camp grounds. Ham and fried chicken were a must. Thick slices of cake, pie, and ice cream added an extra joy to the meal. On the other hand, large numbers of families prepared their lunch or dinner at home and enjoyed eating under the numerous shade trees.

The closing or breaking of Camp on the third Sunday night of Camp for many years consisted of a grand march around the grounds singing hymns of praise and thanksgiving. Over the years, Camp remained the meeting place of many old friends. In later years, it lost some of the religious atmosphere, but the afternoon worship service in the old tabernacle on the second Sunday, which was always the third Sunday in August, remained the highlight. Visiting ministers usually conducted most of the services. The first and last Sunday attendance never paralleled the attendance of the second Sunday, which reached a peak of 10,000. In 1947, Edward Johnson purchased the camp grounds (14.4 acres) from the Mineral Grove Club.⁷ After 90 years the old Camp with all its evangelistic services ended in 1967. Traffic and transients along with concern about unsanitary food preparation contributed to this decision.

Since the early inhabitants of Emory Grove drifted in from the surrounding farms, most of them naturally eked out a living by laboring in the nearby fields from sun-up to sun-down and reaping the crops of corn, wheat, and hay - the main money crops. In winter it was cutting wood by the cord and the many other routine jobs of agricultural life. Many of the over-worked men labored the best portion of their lives for 50 cents or 75 cents a day. For years then, except for the few citizens who were later engaged in small business enterprises, agriculture remained the chief employment for the men. The women for the most part did domestic work in homes in nearby Washington Grove and Gaithersburg. Some did "take home" laundry. In the 1880 census Mrs. Martha Lockett, Mrs. Jane Chambers, and Mrs. Harriet Taylor are listed as washerwomen. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Mrs. Emma David, Mrs. Martha Taylor, and Mrs. Rebecca Dorsey traveled miles to serve as midwives. A little later Mrs. Margaret Luster, Mrs. Betsy Davis, and Mrs. Anna Taylor pursued this type of nursing until they became unable.

In the early days traveling must have been difficult because there were so few roads. In 1880, the Montgomery County Commissioners appointed Richard W. Jones,

7. Montgomery County Land Records, Book 1074, pp. 272-274.

W.L. Cole, and William H. Benson "to examine and determine whether the public convenience requires the opening of a public road leading from the Gaithersburg and Laytonsville Road to Walkers Mill - Beginning near the Colored people's 'Emory Grove Church,' ..." After a thorough examination they decided that the public convenience did require the opening of a public road because "a Majority of the Petitioners have no way of going to Mill or Church without passing through their neighbors and are liable to be shut in at any time; and it also makes it much more convenient for the neighborhood as a Mill and Church road."⁸ Thus Emory Grove Road came into being.

Soon after they were freed, many of the men realized that the three R's would enable them to adjust more easily to their new way of life. So, some of the early adult citizens of Emory Grove traveled to Claysville to attend night school, which was held in a home. After the church was built, school was conducted there by Basil Frazier, the first public school teacher in Emory Grove. The one-room school, located about one block from Emory Grove Road on Route 124, became a reality in the early 1880's. Many children trudged from miles around through bitter cold, deep snow, pelting rain, and mud; they came from as far as Stewarttown, Metropolitan Grove, and beyond with their lunch buckets and slates. They sat on backless benches; later used desks and seats were installed. The water supply consisted of a bucket with a dipper on a stand or table. This building served as Emory Grove's only school until 1925.

On June 10, 1924, Edward Ulysses Taylor, a progressive native son of Emory Grove and a graduate of Howard University, became the Supervisor of Colored Schools in Montgomery County. Under Mr. Taylor's leadership, many communities applied for and received aid from the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Mr. Rosenwald, president of Sears and Roebuck and a philanthropist, set aside a large sum of money to improve the educational opportunities for blacks. As a result of this grant, Emory Grove enjoyed the facilities of a new, buff-colored, two-room school housing seven grades. This school, located on Route 124, was designated as the Washington Grove School. Mrs. Marie Johnson and Mrs. McDowell were the first teachers to enjoy the new building. They found that the learning experience for children was much richer in smaller groups. Before the era of the Washington Grove School ended, the county supplied transportation to all children who lived more than one mile from school. By that time the school year had been extended from seven to nine months.

In the 1940's, a familiar phrase was heard in the segregated educational system - separate but equal facilities. Discussions, planning, agreements, and disagreements became paramount. As a result, 10 acres of land adjoining the camp grounds were purchased for an eight-room brick building.⁹ This school, the first modern plant for blacks in the county, opened in March 1950. The one-room schools at Germantown and Cloppers, the two-room schools at Stewarttown and Emory Grove, and the four-room school at Brookgrove were closed, and the children were bused to Emory Grove. Brookgrove, the largest school closed, had enrolled pupils from Olney, Brookville, Mt. Zion, and Damascus. Thus some children traveled 10 miles or more to the new school. For

8. Montgomery County Land Records, Book EBP 23, pp. 109-110.

9. Montgomery County Land Records, Book 1249, pp. 25-26.

the first time in Montgomery County, black children enjoyed modern conveniences. To many, it was a new learning experience - a thermostat, venetian blinds, florescent lights, and many other new terms helped increase their vocabularies. To guide these youngsters in their quest for knowledge, Miss Edith M. Throckmorton was appointed as principal. Other members of the first faculty were Mrs. Clara C. Boyd, Mrs. Alethea C. Plummer, Mrs. Lillian B. Offord Brown, Mrs. Florence D. Snowden, Mrs. Ethel N. Jones, Mrs. S. Oneita Downell, and Mrs. Harriet B. Budd. Mrs. Louise Davis was assigned as secretary. Mr. J. Henry Braxton won the affection of all with his capability as head custodian.

Shortly after the opening day, pupils were asked to submit a name for the new school. A fourth-grade pupil, Shirley Duvall of Emory Grove, submitted the name Longview; it became the official name of the new school. In explaining her choice, Shirley wrote: "Many children travel a long way. When we look out the doors and windows the view is beautiful."¹⁰ During this period the health of Mr. Taylor, who had devoted years of strenuous work and devotion to the school, began to fail. He was able to help plan the formal dedication of Longview School on May 19, 1950, but in November 1951 he passed away in Freedman's Hospital in Washington, D.C.

In the fall of 1951, a four-room addition to Longview School was constructed even though the seventh grade had been transferred to a Junior High School.

The monumental unanimous decision of the Supreme Court on May 17, 1954, that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional began gradually to affect Longview. Some of the children who traveled long distances enrolled in nearby schools. By the spring of 1959, definite plans had been made to close Longview as a black school. Miss Throckmorton worked diligently in helping all the members of the faculty to transfer to schools in the down-county area since the superintendent, Dr. Whittier, had suggested that the Gaithersburg area was not ready to accept black teachers. The entire staff was placed except Miss Throckmorton, who resigned because her new assignment was unacceptable to her. Children were assigned to the nearest school. Before the closing date for teachers in June 1959, every textbook and library book had been removed to the Board of Education.

In September 1959, Longview School became part of the Gaithersburg Elementary School. At the completion of construction at the Gaithersburg Elementary School in 1961, Longview Elementary School became an integrated special education school for children with learning disabilities;¹¹ It is still being used in that capacity today.

10. Nina H. Clarke and Lillian B. Brown, *History of the Black Public Schools of Montgomery County, Maryland 1872-1961* (New York, NY: Vantage Press, 1978), p. 66.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

Like the early school house, the old log church had to be replaced. A new church with a capacity of 300 was dedicated in 1903. The cost of construction was approximately \$3000; clubs were formed to raise the money. Some of the original hand-hewn logs were used in the flooring of the new church and were uncovered during remodeling in the early 1960's. This remodeling included new floors, a lowered ceiling, and the addition of rest rooms, a basement, and a kitchen.¹²



Emory Grove United Methodist Church in 1974

The next big enterprise was the building of the parsonage, which began in 1910 under Rev. T.P. Thomas and was completed in 1911 by Rev. C.E. Hodges. While this parsonage on Emory Grove Road was an auspicious building when it was built, by the early 1950's, it needed modernization. One thing it lacked was running water. So the parsonage was razed, and a new one was built adjoining the church.

12. Maryland Historic Sites Inventory, Emory Grove Methodist Episcopal Church and Camp Meeting, Form prepared by Sugarloaf Regional Trails, 1979.

The citizens of Emory Grove sponsored many small businesses, mostly stores. In the days before the automobile and refrigerators, a merchant drove his team to Washington, D.C., to purchase staples or he ordered them sent out by one of the trains which stopped regularly at Washington Grove. Most of these stores were one-room, located usually in the owner's home; they handled a very limited supply of items. Early in this century sugar sold for 4 cents a pound, chicken for 15 cents a pound, and steak for 8 cents a pound. Hogs heads and jowls were given away. Butter, eggs, and chicken could be traded for produce.

Some of the early stores were;

<u>Proprietor</u>	<u>Period</u>	<u>Place</u>
Aaron Luster	Early 1900's	Camp Ground
Frank Duvall	Early 1900's	Camp Ground
Samuel Claggett	Early 1900's	Corner of Muncaster Mill Road and Route 124
W. Dorsey	Early 1900's	Corner of Emory Grove Road and Route 124
Jack Steward	Early 1900's	On Route 124
W. Frazier	About 1912	Camp Ground Gate on Route 124
Rev. Bailey		Near Camp Ground
Guest & Patton	Late 1920's	On Gaither property
Millard Sellman	Late 1930's	
Pugh	Late 1930's and early 1940's	Near Johnson's Tavern

Mr. Guest and Rev. William Tyler were hucksters; later Chester Smith followed in this trade. In 1948, R.O. Tyler, a Navy veteran and an outstanding citizen of Emory Grove, built the very successful Little Market on Emory Grove Road.

After World War I and through the early 1920's, a fashionable place to go after church on Sunday was the ice-cream parlor of Mrs. Amanda Waters. One of the first cobblers was John Taylor. In the 1920's, Henry Diggs operated a shoe-repair shop on Route 124 near the camp grounds. In 1950, Mrs. Elnora Cromwell opened a beauty shop in her home on Emory Grove Road; it closed in the mid 1950's. More recent businesses were a barber shop operated by Larry Plummer and a successful bakery operated by John Braxton in his home just off Emory Grove Road.

The Johnson Tavern was opened in 1930 on Route 124; its pool room offered a community recreation. Du-Drop Inn, or the Duvall Tavern, on Emory Grove Road had its first grand night in 1947. In the 1950's, this tavern became famous for its dances and shows when nationally known singers such as Fats Domino, Little Richard, and Ruth Brown appeared there. The low-ceilinged concrete building remained open for dinner and drinks until the early 1980's.

In the spring of 1948, Edward Johnson, proprietor of the Johnson Tavern and purchaser of the camp grounds, announced the opening of the first night baseball park in Montgomery County. The park, located on the back portion of the camp grounds, opened on schedule on May 30, 1948, with an American Legion team playing the Stewartown Stars. To meet the standard code for night baseball, Johnson had to install ten 90-foot poles with clusters of 1000-watt bulbs. Seating capacity was 250, but the crowds frequently spilled over onto the banks around the field. Refreshment booths offered all kinds of wonderful food, far beyond the usual hotdogs, peanuts, and soft drinks. The American Legion Post 151, a very popular Rockville baseball team, began using Johnson's Park as its home field in 1949. On occasion the Park hosted such professional teams as the Elite Giants and the Newark (N.J.) Eagles of the Negro League. Still other events, such as turkey shoots, were held in Johnson's Park.

During the early 1930's, farm machinery began to change the requirements for manual labor on the farm. The automobile made transportation available so large numbers of men found employment with the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission. The women began working in Bethesda and other down-county areas. In the early 1940's, new and varied kinds of employment became available at the Naval Medical Center in Bethesda and, later, at the National Institutes of Health. Some of the women also found jobs at these institutions.

After World War II, a war in which five young men of Emory Grove, Robert Davis, Alfred Duvall, Percy Holland, Lloyd Newman, and Norris Terry made the supreme sacrifice, still more changes came to Emory Grove. New industries and government enterprises, such as the Atomic Energy Commission, the National Bureau of Standards, and International Business Machines relocated in the Gaithersburg area of the county. A rapidly growing Montgomery County school system provided jobs for men and women on the custodial staffs and in cafeteria services. As racial barriers disappeared, not only more jobs but jobs in new fields such as typists, clerks, technicians, and other forms of office work and skilled labor became available to the citizens of Emory Grove.

While growth provided increased job opportunities, it also increased the pressure of development. Emory Grove residents formed a citizens association to deal with these pressures and to solve some of their problems. There were no sewers, most homes did not have water, the roads were narrow, rutted when it rained and all but impassible when it snowed. So, when the Montgomery County Department of Community Development selected Emory Grove for the county's first conservation and rehabilitation project,¹³ residents of Emory Grove looked forward with great anticipation to better living conditions. However, the urban renewal project turned out, in the eyes of many, to be a disaster. In all, 105 homes, 63 termed delapidated and 27 deteriorated, were destroyed. The community's only grocery store and Johnson's Tavern were also demolished. Only 19 homes were spared.¹⁴ Obviously, residents had to relocate while new homes were being built. When new homes were finally available, much later than originally planned and at higher cost, few of the natives of Emory Grove returned to the community. Today Emory Grove is a racially mixed community of more than 350 subsidized and public housing units. Only Emory Grove United Methodist Church stands as a reminder of the black community that was.

13. *Montgomery County Sentinel*, October 21, 1965.

14. *Ibid.*, April 19, 1979.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Most of the text of this Story is taken from "A Brief History of Emory Grove" produced by the Women's Society of Christian Service of Emory Grove United Methodist Church in 1970. The officers of the Women's Society at that time were Mrs. Maude Harriday, President; Mrs. Charles E. Smallwood, Vice President; Mrs. Carroll Scott, Secretary; and Mrs. Fred Scott, Treasurer. The document contains no author's name, but it is credited to Mrs. Ethel Jones by researchers for Sugarloaf Regional Trails. These researchers report that Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Maude Taylor expressed the opinion that there are no existing documents to substantiate the information in this history. For source material Mrs. Jones interviewed long-time residents of the community, and Mrs. Taylor provided information compiled by her late husband, Edward U. Taylor. The documented material in this Story, based primarily on the United States Census of 1880 and Montgomery County land records, has been added to the original version of the history.

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