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FROM DAWSONSVILLE TO SUGAR LOAF MOUNTAIN

In 1801, The General Assembly of Maryland passed an Act "To review the road from the mouth of the Monocacy to Georgetown". Today this road is known as Route 28. Some dozen or so miles west of Rockville, it reaches the little village of Dawsonsville, named for early owners of the adjacent plantations.

Here the road divides. The left hand fork leads to Poolesville and White's Ferry (formerly Conrad's Ferry) on the Potomac River. Route 28 follows the right hand fork toward Sugar Loaf Mountain and Frederick. Along this route lie lands patented in the eighteenth century by the ancestors of many of those living on the land today. Prosperous farms and cattle ranches line both sides of the road, and, interspersed between modern homes, are fine old brick and stone dwellings which stand today much as they have stood for the last hundred years or more, some of them made into beautiful estates by recent purchasers.

We are going to take a brief look at a few of them, as well as call attention to some of the natural features of this scenically beautiful region.

Not far beyond Dawsonsville are three notable places. On the right side of Route 28 is Greenwood. On the left is Aix la Chapelle. And down the Buck Lodge Road a mile or two is Friends Advice.

FRIENDS ADVICE

Friends Advice is now the home of General and Mrs. Albert Wedemeyer. The present house set in landscaped grounds and among beautiful trees, probably incorporates part of the original house built in 1793 by the Reverend Townsend Dade, from whom Mrs. Wedemeyer is descended.

The name was given to the place by Elisha Williams who patented ²⁴⁴ ~~244~~ acres under that name in 1760. By 1763, Williams, who was first a carpenter, had

become a landed gentleman acquiring a total of 1253 acres known as Resurvey on Friends Advice. The Williams family were prominent in the County. A member of the family founded Rockville, then known as Williamsburg.

In 1763, 400 acres of Friends Advice were bought by Edward Owen, jr. His widow and her second husband, James Magruder, are listed as owners in 1783. They and other heirs of Owen sold 325 acres in 1793 to the Rev. Townsend Dade. He, before the Revolution, had been Rector of several Parishes in Virginia, including Christ Church in Alexandria where George Washington often worshiped. It is said that the minister could not adjust to the changes brought on by the Revolution, so, preferring the life of a country squire, he moved to Montgomery County. In 1870, one of his descendants married a Mr. Wall of Baltimore. They called the place Walldene and made of it the handsome estate it is today.¹

AIX LA CHAPELLE

This beautiful country estate was for many years the home of the Brewer family. It was patented in 1749 by Daniel Carroll for 1792 acres. On the Tax List of 1783 it is charged to the heirs of Charles Carroll and is said to have a frame dwelling and several log buildings. The Carroll family never lived on it. In 1809, John Poole, jr. and Joseph Newton Chiswell bought 1243 and 3/4 acres, which they divided. Chiswell took the northern part which continued to bear the name of the whole tract.¹

On February 2, 1800, Chiswell's daughter, Mary Robison Chiswell married Dr. William Brewer and they became the owners of Aix la Chapelle. Dr. Brewer was born in Anne Arundel County in 1777. At the age of 20, he received his M.D. degree from the Medical College of Pennsylvania during the period when Dr. Benjamin Rush headed the Institution.

The nucleus of the present house, built of bricks burned on the place, was started in 1812 and finished in 1820, the building being delayed by the War. Dr. Brewer's descendants lived in the house until about fifty years ago.²

GREENWOOD

Greenwood was the home of Dr. Nicholas Brewer, son of Dr. William Brewer, who took over his father's practice. He married Martha Williams, daughter of Elisha Williams and Jane Plater, granddaughter of Gov. George Plater. In addition to carrying on his large practice, Dr. Brewer was active in State politics. He was a member of the State Constitutional Convention in 1867, and served several terms in the Maryland State Senate.²

Continuing along Route 28, we reach Beallsville, a tiny crossroads village, named for a resident. Just beyond the crossroads is Monocacy Cemetery. Farther along the road, on one side of which can be seen the remains of a stone fence (once quite usual, now rare), are the farms of the White and Jones families and the State Roads Marker designating the site of Woodstock.

MONOCACY CEMETERY

Monocacy Cemetery in Beallsville had its origin as the churchyard of Monocacy Chapel, which was already in existence in 1747 when it was designated a "chapel of ease" of All Saints Parish in Frederick. In 1770, the lower part of that Parish was set off as Eden Parish, named for the last Royal Governor of Maryland, and Monocacy Chapel became the Parish Church. Following the Revolution, it was renamed St. Peter's Parish. In 1850 a new church was built in Poolesville and became the Parish Church.

However, the chapel at Monocacy remained in a fair state of preservation and was used for services up to the outbreak of the Civil War. A troop of Federal Cavalry stabled their horses in the building and damaged it beyond repair. It was then decided to establish a public cemetery on the site. Adjacent land was acquired and this, together with the Church property, was turned over in 1872 by St. Peter's Vestry to the Monocacy Cemetery Society which received its charter at that time.

In 1912, the Col. E. V. White Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy built the present Chapel on the site of the old Church in memory of the Confederate soldiers who are buried in the Cemetery. For many years the

Daughters of the Confederacy held a yearly Confederate Memorial Day, separate from the National Memorial Day.

In addition to the many old stones (the earliest 1748) marking original interments, many ancient stones have been moved to Monocacy plots from family burying grounds on neighboring farms. Valuable genealogical information may be gleaned from the inscriptions.

WOODSTOCK MANOR

Woodstock Manor, once an unbroken tract, is now cut into several farms. The State Roads Commission has erected a marker at the site which reads:

Woodstock - 1102 acres patented by Thomas Sprigg, jr. in 1725. Three of his granddaughters, one of whom, Sophia, was wedded to John Francis Mercer, later Governor of Maryland, inherited it and conveyed 519 acres to George Washington in 1794.

The Washington land was the northern part of Woodstock. The southern part, 585 acres, was held by the Spriggs until 1830 when Margaret Sprigg sold it to Joseph I. Wilkerson Jones and Dr. William Brewer jointly. Thomas Peter of Georgetown purchased the Washington tract from the estate but sold it shortly thereafter to George Scott. None of the early holders of Woodstock lived on the land, but rented it in small tracts to tenant farmers.³

WHITE FAMILY HOLDINGS

Adjoining Woodstock along both sides of Route 28 are 600 or more acres belonging to the descendants of Benjamin White, son of Nathan Smith White whose ancestor John White came to Maryland from England between 1644 and 1650. One of the White properties is Inverness, a red brick house on the left of the road now owned by Wellstood White. Two of his brothers, F. Malcolm and Henry, as well as a sister, Mrs. Elsie White Daniel, also live on part of the ancestral acres. Linden Hall (not visible from the road) was until recently the home of Lawrence White, another son of Benjamin.

The Monocacy school house was at one corner of the land. Given to the County to be used as a school, it was returned to the White family acreage when the school was discontinued.⁴

ELEVEN BROTHERS or OAK RIDGE

The first member of the Jones family to settle here was Edward Jones (1737-1790) who named the place Eleven Brothers because he had eleven sons. Edward Jones built the first house. The present red brick house was built by John A. Jones I, grandson of Edward. A descendant changed the name of the place to Oak Ridge. Mr. John A. Jones, II, the last member of the family to own the property, sold it to Mr. Owen Scott, the present owner, who has built on it an ultra-modern home.⁵

The next point reached on our journey is Dickerson, a thriving community on the Metropolitan Branch of the B. and O. Railroad. It was named for W. H. Dickerson who operated the Post Office, store and railroad station. Leaving Dickerson and bearing right is the road to Mt. Ephraim and Sugar Loaf Mountain. Just beyond Dickerson on the left is the road to the Mouth of the Monocacy. Straight ahead from Dickerson on Route 28 is Rock Hall and the Frederick County Line.

MT. EPHRAIM

Mt. Ephraim was built in 1866 and is named for Ephraim Harris, a local farmer who kept a store and post office there, and who was called "Mount Ephraim" because of his great height. The locality took its name from Mount Ephraim's store. The house was built of local materials which include brick baked at the building site, slate quarried on an adjoining farm, and white pine, oak and chestnut from Sugar Loaf Mountain woodlots. It was erected by William Hilton, a Barnesville contractor.

Mount Ephraim Harris' store continued under successive owners until 1912, when Dickerson became the locality's postal and retail center. The house was then occupied by Francois Darrieulat, a native of Dax, France and a celebrated fencing instructor who coached many United States Olympic teams.

Mount Ephraim fell vacant in the mid-1930s and was purchased by its present owner, Frederick Gutheim, in 1940.⁶

SUGAR LOAF MOUNTAIN

This detached mountain, an offshoot of the Catoctin Range, has been a landmark to Marylanders from the time when hunters and Indian traders were brought to the area by their Indian guides. Approaching it from the South it has the

shape of a cone like those into which sugar was made in early times, and so it was called Sugar Loaf.

In 1707, a Swiss explorer, Louis Michel, put Sugar Loaf Mountain on a map. In 1712, another Swiss gentleman, Baron von Graffenried, climbed to the top and left a written account of his experiences. Like a lighthouse, Sugar Loaf has guided every traveler to the West, including General Braddock on his way to the French Forts in 1755.

In the 1830s the whole Sugar Loaf Mountain area came into possession of the Bank of the United States. They had the 3000 acres surveyed and sub-divided into some 50 "wood-lots", many of which were purchased by charcoal burners and adjoining farmers. During the Civil War the mountain was used as a Lookout Station by the Union Army.

This little mountain wilderness remained aloof among the adjoining farms for many years. In the early 1900s it captured the imagination of Gordon Strong, a mid-western industrialist. He bought up the various small tracts and called his property Stronghold. Here he built his home, a home for the manager, shops, roads, look-outs and trails. This he generously made available to the public. Since Mr. Strong's death a Foundation has been created to carry on the Stronghold tradition.⁷

MOUTH OF THE MONOCACY

The Mouth of the Monocacy River is one of the boundaries of Montgomery County. Over the Monocacy is a seven-span, 438 foot aqueduct made of white quartzite brought from the quarry at Rock Hall by means of a unique railroad with cars running on oak rails, drawn by horses. The aqueduct is notable for its combination of beauty and utility. Over it for many years passed the mule-drawn canal boats, often heavily laden with coal and farm produce.

From the beginning, the Canal has been engaged in controversies. The right to use the Potomac valley was the subject of a long and bitter legal battle between the Canal Company and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Then came

competition of trucks, leading to the closing of the canal as a going concern, and its purchase by the United States. Today friends of the Canal have to fight against dams and six-lane highway proponents.

Other remains beside the Canal bed at Monocacy are what is left of a "turn-around" and an old stone ware-house. Nature lovers and fishermen find this a fine spot for a day's leisuretime activity.

ROCK HALL

Just across the Frederick County line is Rock Hall. The house of gray sandstone quarried on the place was built in 1812 by Major Roger Johnson, youngest brother of Gov. Thomas Johnson, first governor of the State of Maryland.

In 1830 Rock Hall was bought by Dr. Alfred Belt of Leesburg, Virginia. The house and part of the land remained in possession of the Belt family until 1939. One of its owners, Dr. Edward Oliver Belt (one of the founders of the Episcopal Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital of Washington) and two of his sons were killed in the Terra Cotta wreck on the B. and O. R.R. on December 30, 1906. Another son, now Dr. Norvell Belt of Frederick, still owns part of the property on which he has built a modern house which he calls The Knoll.

On the property can be seen the quarry from which the stone was taken for the aqueduct and the railroad bridge across the Monocacy. It is said that the iron used by Rumsey in the first steamboat on the Potomac River was wrought in an iron furnace on the place.⁵

The area we have traversed from Dawsonsville to Sugar Loaf Mountain does not contain any sites of stirring historical events, nor mansions of exceptional architectural merit. However, a visit to this region will be rewarding to anyone who admires beautiful scenery and who appreciates the fine way of life enjoyed here yesterday and today, typifying as it does all that is best in our County and in our Country.

This article was prepared by Alexander Casanges from information furnished by the following: (1) Miss Martha Poole; (2) Mrs. Harvey White; (3) Mrs. L. G. Hoover; (4) Mrs. F. Malcolm White; (5) Mrs. Wm. Everett; (6) Mr. Frederick Gutheim; (7) Stronghold Foundation. Also from printed sources.