***Mount Carmel***

By Elisa Graf

The Smiths’ house is over on Wootton Avenue, the Joneses live out 117 in that big old house, and we just love to shop at that little antique shop in downtown Clarksburg. We drive through Barnesville and Dawsonville without even stopping to think about the millions of people who have passed through the same intersections for hundreds of years. What were their lives like? Why were they here? How have the businesses they started, the buildings they constructed, and the games they played affected our lives today? I hope that with this new column, we can dive into the past and discover how the foundations laid by the founding fathers of the Monocacy area have created what we know as today.

Our first adventure back in time is to visit an old plantation. Mount Carmel sits along the east side of Route 28 headed from Beallsville toward Dickerson, just beyond Martinsburg Road. It is not clear what parts of the puzzle-like home were built first, but it is clear that they all date back to the late 1700s to early 1800s.The evolution of the home is evident from its facade. The main building is a two-story sandstone structure joined to the west with a smaller one-and-half-story wood frame house. Around the back on the north side of the main house is a one-and-a-half-story stone kitchen. Attached to the frame structure are two one-story stone buildings. There is also an additional stone building once used as slave quarters just beyond the main house

From the beginning, Mount Carmel has always played an important role in the history of the Monocacy area as have the families that lived within its walls. In 1799, Hezekiah Veitch helped divide Montgomery County into five election districts which included the Medley District in which much of the Monocacy area is located. Thomas Veitch, a relative of Hezekiah, was the first to own the land on which Mount Carmel stands today and, most likely, was the first to build on that land in the late 1700s. Thomas was a justice of the second county court, a slave owner, and a successful tobacco farmer. At this time, tobacco was one of the most popular and successful crops in the region.

Thomas passed the plantation down to his daughter Mary and her husband John Trundle before the turn of the nineteenth century. The Trundles continued to add onto the home and grow tobacco on the land. In 1816, their daughter Mary was born. She inherited the plantation along with her husband Richard Gott in the early nineteenth century. They raised seven children at Mount Carmel. Their daughter, Sarah, born in 1837, left the plantation to marry a well-known local Civil War hero, Elijah Veirs White.

Records suggest that Mary and John continued to pass Mount Carmel down to their children, and that it played a small role in the Civil War. On September 9, 1862, the plantation hosted Colonel Stonewall Jackson just before the Battle of Antietam. There must have also been some sort of skirmish around the plantation as there is a “miniball” from a Civil War-era gun embedded in one of the exterior walls.

Sometime during the mid-nineteenth century, as many plantation owners and farmers found, the tobacco crops were seriously depleting the soil of its nutrients, and the crops were failing. The Gott family decided to switch their crop to wheat and built a small grist mill south of the home along the Little Monocacy River. The plantation seemed to be thriving. In 1862, as many as nine slaves were working on the land, in the mill, and in the home at Mount Carmel; however, as the Civil War came to an end and the industrial revolution was about to be in full swing, times were obviously changing. The Gott family would continue to farm the land in and around the area, but in 1910, the grist mill ceased its operations. According to the 1900 U.S. Census, John S. Gott was still farming in Barnesville, and while he did not own slaves, as it was no longer legal to do so, he did still have two servants living with him and his family.

As the early part of the twentieth century wore on, Mount Carmel was abandoned and fell into disrepair. The Miller family rescued the home in the mid-twentieth century, and by 1973, the home had been completely restored and reconstructed. That year, it was surveyed by the Maryland Historical Trust and added to the state’s list of historic properties. It appears that since then, Katherine Hallambauer has also owned Mount Carmel and briefly used the land for farming in the late 1990s. Sadly, today it once again sits unoccupied.

Mount Carmel is an incredible example of the agricultural history of the region from the nineteenth century. Many other homes and buildings give us a tangible link to this past, and, with a little digging, we can uncover what we are missing even as we unknowingly encounter it every day.

*Elisa Graf has been living in Poolesville since July 2011. She has a Bachelor’s degree in Art and Architectural History from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a Master’s degree in Historic Preservation from Georgia State University. Elisa is passionate about uncovering the past that we encounter in our day-to-day lives that we might otherwise never know exists. If you have questions about a specific historic property that you would like to see featured i, “Monocacy Foundations,” she can be reached at foundationonthemonocacy@gmail.com*