

Freedom District Tour, 1952
Carroll County Times article for 11 June 2000
By Jay A. Graybeal

The Historical Society recently sponsored a driving tour to four historic churches in the Union Bridge-New Windsor area. The Society has a long tradition of sponsoring tours of historic sites such as one in 1952 to the Freedom District. The Society's newsletter described the tour:

"FREEDOM DISTRICT

The Carroll County Historical Tour of 1952 features the first district in the county to be settled by white people, mostly English and Scotch-Irish. They came from Annapolis and southern Maryland over what was called the old Annapolis Road, formerly an Indian trail. Another trail crossed Freedom District from Delaware Bottom in Howard County to Eldersburg, from which it followed what is now known as the old Liberty Road to the vicinity of New Windsor where it joined with other Indian trails coming in from the east and the north.

The early settlers in this district were mostly landholders who had acquired large tracts of land. They were large slave holders and builders of fine mansions. This accounts for the fact that today we find the better old homes in this section of the county rather than in the eastern portion which was settled by Quakers and Germans. The first settler in Freedom District was Richard Owings who acquired by patent OWINGS OUTLAND PLAINS, surveyed for him April 3, 1723. This tract will be pointed out as one of the landmarks of the tour.

The starting point will be at the site of the old 'Chappell of Ease.' The cornerstone of which was laid March 8, 1771, for the benefit of Delaware Hundred, a subdivision of the large parish of St. Thomas which included part of Carroll and part of Baltimore counties. The small stone church, located in Eldersburg on the Liberty Road, occupied a commanding site in a beautiful grove of trees. It flourished until the time of the Revolution when the mother church no longer had authority to collect taxes for its support—taxes paid mostly in tobacco. For a number of years the church building was used as a school. Finally it became a stable and by 1842 was floorless and roofless. In 1843, however, George Frazier Warfield and his wife Rebecca started a successful movement to restore it with the result that it was re-consecrated October 31, 1843. Services continued until 1923. But now the building is completely gone. Only the old churchyard with numerous graves of prominent people remains to mark the site of 'Chappell of Ease.'

That part of Freedom District which surrounds Sykesville on three sides is rich in history. The Springfield estate, formerly owned by George Patterson, was one of the most complete farming establishments in Maryland. Every school child knows the story of his famous sister Betsy who escaped from the room where her father William had locked her, mounted a waiting steed supplied with the aid of a slave boy, and galloped down from Springfield to Baltimore town to meet her fate in the person of young Jerome Bonaparte.

George Patterson married Prudence Ann Brown. Their only child Florence married James Carroll of Charles. She died and the estate was sold in 1880 to her cousin, Frank Brown. He combined this with his own, 'Brown's Inheritance.' In 1875 and 1878 he was elected to the House of Delegates and in 1892 he became the Governor of Maryland."

Much of the information in the article was gleaned from Bradford Gist Lynch's 100 Years of Carroll published during the Carroll County Centennial in 1937. The Centennial generated great interest in local history and contributed to the founding of the Historical Society in 1939.

Photo caption: The Historical Society's 1952 tour visited the former property of Elizabeth Patterson Bonaparte (1785 - 1879). Photograph of a painting by Francois J. Kinson, courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society.