

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

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23 May 1993

Bloomfield Manor's history presents insights into south Carroll
By Joe Getty

The restoration of Bloomfield Manor, a historic property near Sykesville, is the subject of the Historical Society of Carroll County's annual historic preservation month presentation. While the early architecture of Bloomfield Manor is representative of vernacular traditions in this region, a ballroom addition of the late 19th century is one of the best examples of Italianate style in Carroll County.

The presentation will include a slide/tape program produced by Rachel Riffie as a senior project at the Maryland Institute of Art. The slides present before and after views of the restoration project at Bloomfield Manor. The restoration craftsman, Jonathan Herman, will describe the design challenges involved in the project. The program will be held at 7:30 p.m. at the Shriver-Weybright Auditorium, 210 E. Main St., Westminster.

Bloomfield Manor was restored through a cooperative effort of public and private entities. In July 1990, the house and 2.35 acres was donated by Alrick Associates to the Town of Sykesville in order to insure its future preservation. The Town sold the property to JAD Limited Partnership and the house was restored according to historic preservation standards under the supervision of the Maryland Historical Trust.

The history of Bloomfield Manor presents many insights about families and property holdings in southeastern Carroll County. The property was owned first by the Hood and Shipley families. The next owner was James Sykes, who owned a considerable amount of property in and around Sykesville. Then the property is linked to families from Baltimore and Howard counties before being incorporated into the Beasman farms outside Sykesville.

One of the earliest property owners was the Rev. Benjamin Hood. He was born on Jan. 25, 1778, and was a circuit rider and minister of the Methodist Church for over forty years. On Sept. 29, 1804, he deeded 149 ½ acres of "Mount Pleasant Enlarged" and "Hood's Friendship" to Benjamin Shipley for 223 pounds, 10 shillings. Hood's mother Elizabeth was a Shipley before her marriage.

The amount paid for the acreage indicates the probability that there were improvements on the property at that time. The log wing of the house has construction and decorative features that are

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

consistent with this time period, including the quarter-round moldings on the window and door framing and the evidence of earlier partitioning for rooms in this house.

Members of the Shipley family were prominent settlers in this section of Maryland. They were descended from Adam Shipley who immigrated from England to Anne Arundel County in 1668. His son Richard Shipley patented land in area that is now the southeast section of Carroll County.

Benjamin Shipley was the son of Richard Shipley. In 1809, he sold the parcel of "Mount Pleasant Enlarged" to his son, Caleb Shipley, Sr. This was the same year in which Caleb married Ann Mercier. It appears that Caleb lived on the property until he sold it on November 6, 1830 to James Sykes.

James Sykes was a prominent entrepreneur, land owner and founder of Sykesville. He had sizable land holdings which he apparently used as tenant farms. The property of Bloomfield Manor was most likely farmed during this time as part of Sykes's enterprises.

In 1851, Sykes sold a reversionary interest in six of his parcels to William Thomas Wilson and Henrietta D'Arcy Wilson. This was a financial arrangement that provided Sykes with cash equity on these buildings. William Thomas Wilson was a prominent Baltimore medical practitioner and surgeon in the mid-19th century. He had residences on Charles Street in Baltimore City and at "Oaklawn," in Baltimore County.

In 1856, Sykes assigned his interests in the entire 482 acres to James George for \$12,000. In the interim, Wilson and his wife Henrietta had both died. An infant son, John D'Arcy Wilson, inherited the reversionary interest on the 482 acre parcel. James George filed a suit against John D'Arcy Wilson in the Circuit Court of Baltimore City to redeem the property. In 1861, Thomas J. Wilson as the court-appointed trustee conveyed on behalf of John D'Arcy Wilson, minor, the reversionary right to the property for \$5000.

James George was a Baltimore city merchant with an oil and lamp shop. When he died in 1864, he had left to his wife Eliza. The court records indicate that Eliza had filed for divorce in court just prior to her husband's death and the inheritance was disputed by other members of the George family. The property is described as "Bloomfield Manor" in these proceedings. The court appointed James Warden as trustee with authority to sell the property. A 144 acre parcel of "Bloomfield Manor" was purchased by Eliza George in December 1870.

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

The property was sold in 1882 by Eliza George to Trusten Polk (1840-1902), a well-respected Confederate veteran. Polk was from a prominent Maryland family. His ancestor, Robert Bruce Polk, was from northern Ireland and immigrated to Somerset County in the mid-17th century. James Knox Polk, the 11th President of the United States was a relative. Trusten Polk's father, Col. William C. Polk, was a County Commissioner of Carroll County.

Polk appears in the 1860 federal census as a resident of Freedom district, Carroll County. When he enlisted in Company K, 12th Regiment, Virginia Cavalry, he was a resident of Sykesville. Captain Polk participated in General Robert E. Lee's first Maryland invasion in 1862. He was captured on August 6, 1864, and held prisoner at Camp Chase, Ohio, until May, 1865, when he returned to Sykesville.

On his return to Sykesville, he married Grace George, but she died soon thereafter. Polk was active in the Springfield Presbyterian Church in Sykesville. At one time he served as principle of Springfield Academy, a local educational institution sponsored by the church.

Polk was active in Howard County politics. He served as a member of the House of Delegates in 1871 and Register of Deeds from 1873 to 1874. He married Louisa Capron Dorsey (1848-1928) and purchased Bloomfield Manor in 1881. They had seven sons and two daughters. Polk sold the property in 1893 to Mortimer J. McDonald, an attorney. The house served as his country seat until his death in 1922. The property was purchased by Frank B. Beasman in 1924.

The Beasmans were a prominent farming family in this region and Frank was the son of state Senator Johnzie E. Beasman. Frank inherited the adjoining farm, which he renamed "Fairhaven," and developed a major dairy operation. Beasman was also involved in the construction industry and owned his own company. He later merged with McLean Construction Company of Baltimore where he was an executive. He was also involved in community activities and at times held the controlling interest in the local newspaper, *The Sykesville Herald*.

The Historical Society annual historic preservation month lecture will be on Wednesday, May 26, at 7:30 p.m., Shriver-Weybright Auditorium, 210 East Main Street, Westminster. For information, call (410) 848-6494.

Photo caption: The restoration of Bloomfield Manor will be the subject of a historic preservation month presentation at the Historical Society of Carroll County on Wednesday.