

"Belfast, The Town That Never Was"

Carroll County Times article for 14 May 2000

By Jay A. Graybeal

The chance discovery of a historic document by New Windsor native and historian Louis H. Dielman, revealed an ambitious plan for a local town that never was. The April 2, 1937 issue of the Taneytown Carroll Record newspaper carried the story:

"The following heretofore unpublished information concerning the vicinity of "old Taneytown" came to the editor of the Record from Louis H. Dielman, executive secretary and librarian of Peabody Institute, Baltimore. At a public auction of antiques recently held, Mr. Dielman purchased the original small poster (a copy of which follows), and had phototatic copies made, one of which The Record was favored with.

We now give it below, in condensed form. Even the present older members of the Birnie family have no knowledge of this 'Belfast' project.

C. BIRNIE,

Wishing to dispose of all his landed property in Frederick County, Maryland, (with all the buildings and improvements thereon) which contains 3001 acres, proposes to lay it out in four hundred lots, to contain from one, to one hundred acres each, agreeably to the following scale, or as near thereto as the nature of the ground will admit, the number of lots however he engages shall not exceed 400, viz:

8 Lots of 100 Acres each			800
9	50		450
10	25		250
18	20		360
29	10		290
126	5		630
200	1		200
_____			_____ 2980

It is supposed the Streets &c. will occupy 21

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In all 400 lots containing 3001 Acres.

The price of each lot 275 dollars, and in order to accommodate purchasers, payment will be received in the following manner, viz: 55 dollars on the first day of February, 1819, and the remaining 220 dollars in four equal installments from the first day of April 1819. Notes with approved security will be taken for the several payments--It is expected that a new road will be opened in a direction from David Kephart's to Francis Grove's mill, and there join a road already made that falls into the turnpike road leading from

Westminster to Petersburg (or Little's-Town). This expected new road will cross the great road near Bear Branch at right angles, and form a very eligible site for a new town to be called

#### BELFAST.

The one acre lots for building on will be laid off along those roads; the five and ten acre lots will partly be convenient to the town, and partly of woodland; the other lots will be laid off in the most convenient manner possible to accommodate the purchasers.

This plan affords many advantages to purchasers. On the streams of Big Pipe creek, and Bear branch, which pass through those lands, there is a great deal of excellent meadow ground, (the upland is dry and all fit for tillage) and several mill sites two in particular are very valuable, viz; one on each of those streams that are never failing, (where the mills can be built immediately on the side of the great road) with sufficient falls. There are also abundance of excellent stones for building, and a tolerable portion of woodland. The situation is extremely healthy, only 37 miles from the city of Baltimore, and a good turnpike road all the way: when all those advantages are considered, the low rate at which the property is valued, the smallness of the payments and the liberal credit given on them, it certainly must be acknowledged that no property has ever been offered to the public on more fair, or more advantageous terms in this way.

It is expected that all the lots will be sold by the first day of February 1819, when or as soon after as may be, the purchasers shall have notice to meet and apportion to each, the lot or lots to which he shall be entitled, agreeably to such plan as they so met, or a majority of them shall adopt.

In case this sale is effected, possession will be given on the first day of April 1819, with a reservation of all the crop then in the ground.

Note--Be it remembered that for the sum of 275 dollars there are several chances of obtaining 100 acres of valuable land, and should but one acre be obtained, it is calculated that it will be worth the money it cost in a very short time.

The mill lots will be comprehended in lots deemed sufficient to command use of the water."

Editor Preston B. Englar included some additional historical facts about Clotworthy Birnie and some of the other figures mentioned in the Belfast town proposal:

"There were evidently no desired developments following this proposal. As Taneytown was at that date (1819) a well established town, and as this tract must then have looked greatly less attractive than now, the new town idea no doubt had but little appeal to investors.

C. Birnie (Clotworthy) then lived in the old building at 'Glen Burn,' later enlarged and rebuilt by his son, Rogers; while he built the original dwelling at 'Thorndale,' both of which have in more recent years been fully modernized.

The 'David Kephart' mill referred to was the Trevanian mill, that finally came into the ownership of the late Charles McFadden. The first mill there was built by Leonard Kitzmiller about 1760 and was continued by him until 1773. In 1792 Mr. Kephart bought the mill property. The mill referred to a

'Francis Grove's' mill was likely the next mill up Big Pipe Creek owned in recent years by Frank Roberts, J. Frank Sell and now by W. W. Donelson."

The above sheds some light on the interesting topic of town founding in Carroll County. In a time long before planning and zoning, a land owner made all the decisions and assumed all the risk. Clotworthy Birnie's endeavor to dispose of his real estate and create a town named after his home failed.