



Route 28, Darnestown looking west; late 1880's
Courtesy Montgomery Historical Society

The History of Darnestown

Part One



The Darnestown area, which is centered at the intersection of Darnestown and Seneca Roads, was settled in the 1750's. Darnestown Road (or Route 28) was an old Indian trail and is recognized as one of the oldest roads in Montgomery County, Maryland. William Darne of Virginia, married Elizabeth Gassaway, the daughter of a wealthy landowner. They settled at the intersection of Darnestown and Seneca Roads and established an inn and a tavern. The Darne family owned a large amount of land, was wealthy and very well-respected. In 1812, the area was named Darnestown in their honor. By the 1820's, the town began to blossom, and hosted a wheelwright, grist mill, a blacksmith, a physician, a post office, and a variety of other businesses. The stagecoach passed through the area from Georgetown to the river at Poolesville.

In 1855, the Darnestown Presbyterian Church, which is located at the corner of Turkey Foot and Darnestown Roads, was founded by the generous donation of three acres of land by John Dufief. The church was constructed of stone that was hauled from the local quarry by the men of the congregation. The completed church was dedicated on May 22, 1858. The church was renovated in 1897 and then again in 1953. The stained glass windows are memorials to the Tschiffely, Gassaway, and Nourse families – some of the original members of the church.

In 1861, the Federal leadership realized that Darnestown was the natural place from which Washington, DC could (and needed to) be defended. There were 18,000 Union troops placed in Darnestown, owing to the relatively shallow Potomac River depth nearby. During the 1870's through 1900, Darnestown was a thriving business hub due to its trade linked to the C&O Canal. Darnestown became an important place for commerce in the area. Seneca Road led to a stone mill and the canal at Seneca Village (near present Old River Road). From Darnestown one could travel either by stagecoach along Darnestown Road or board a "packet boat" on the canal at Seneca.

After the Civil War, Darnestown experienced an economic downturn due to the increased popularity of the railroad, which bypassed the area and obviated canal transport. The mill business decreased and some farmers tried their hand at tobacco farming. This proved to be unprofitable for most and many people left the area. It wasn't until World War II that Darnestown began to grow and prosper again. This was mainly due to the government hiring more employees and the push for an improved road system. Over 6,000 citizens live in the Darnestown area today.

SLAVERY

Maryland's great variety in geography and population created a unique environment for slave flight. Individual county studies examine the unique features of each county, the strategies used by fleeing slaves, what aid or difficulties were available, and what sources were used in our study. During the period 1830 – 1860, Maryland had the highest free black population of all the states. By 1860, the state's free blacks were the largest in the nation in terms of both rural and urban locales. Proportionally, Maryland's blacks ranked near the top as well. In antebellum Maryland, the enslaved population was concentrated in the southern counties: Prince Georges County, Charles County, St. Mary's County, Anne Arundel County, and Montgomery County.

By 1860, the approximately 46,000 slaves in the counties of southern Maryland outnumbered those found in all other regions of the state combined. However, the southern counties had a relatively small free black population. The central Maryland areas of Frederick County, Carroll County, Baltimore County, Harford County, Howard County, and Baltimore City had the largest free black populations by a wide margin. These counties held over 42,000 free blacks, which was more than the total found in the rest of the state. The central Maryland region is most intriguing, as it represented a crossroads of sorts. Baltimore County and Baltimore City were paradoxically both hubs for free blacks and bastions of slaveholding. In Central Maryland, the percentage of slaves as a proportion of the total black population decreased in the mid nineteenth-century. The free black population of the Central Maryland counties grew more quickly, but often the enslaved population decreased. With each passing year, the disparity between the two castes of blacks widened. However, friendship and kinship ties transcended social caste and bound all black Marylanders together.

SENECA

Presumably, for thousands of years people moved about the Seneca area to fish, hunt, and camp along the Potomac River. Seneca Indians migrated from New York around 1600, planted maize, and established palisaded villages. The Algonquin and Piscataways (called "Conoys" by the Iroquois) lived near Seneca within a five-mile area along the Potomac River. Their fish weirs still dot the Potomac up by Mason and Harrison Islands.

A 1712 map calls Seneca Creek the "Riviere de Senecards." In the 1950's, local Roy Yinger wrote of finding remnants of an Indian village in a nearby cornfield, including pottery shards, arrowheads, a stone hoe, and broken tomahawks. He estimated that there were many burial sites in the area, untouched at that time.

The town of Seneca had a strange beginning. It was originally laid out in lots on the west bank of the creek by John Garrett. In 1787, he sold lottery

tickets with the lots as prizes; however, it was not the success that he had envisioned. Not until the coming of industry and the C&O Canal, the Seneca Sandstone Company, and the Seneca mill did Seneca begin to flourish.

The Seneca area is well-known for its 400 acres of swampland donated to the State of Maryland including a 200-acre wild duck sanctuary. Just below Seneca is Beech Tree Island, once an outpost of Maryland's disappearing river otter population.

Seneca facilitates almost any outdoor activity. As the closest unpolluted boating area to Washington, the waters by Seneca are the only really navigable natural water on the upper Potomac. They are known for catfish, carp, bluegill, and bass. Boaters know that the river is over a half mile wide and never less than three feet deep at any point.

RILEY'S LOCK (Lock #24, Milepost 21)

Less than two miles west of Violette's Lock, very near the IR/World Bank country club of Bretton Woods, is Riley's Lock, the Seneca Aqueduct with its adjacent canal turning basin, and the remains of the once thriving Seneca Stone Quarry. During its heyday, Seneca Creek clamored with the familiar ring of hammers on steel, "stone drills", and shouts of "hey locks!" as boatmen approached the canal's lock.

Canallers boated day and night, sometimes shouting or blowing a horn to alert the lock keeper. An Old-timer recalled "old man Johnny Riley," the last locktender at Seneca, as one who was never caught napping: "any hour of the night you went to his lock and holler... there was the lantern waving you ahead." The parking lot below the lock house was once a large basin where boats took on grain and flour from adjacent warehouses stocked from nearby Tschiffely Mill.

Milling in Seneca dates to 1780 as local farmers began to experiment with wheat. At the intersection of Seneca Creek and River Road are the remains of Tschiffely Mill, a grain mill built in 1866, which continued to operate into the 1930's. Seneca

Creek State Park has developed a display along Black Rock Road to show how the similar Black Rock Mill operated. A narrow gauge railroad carried flour and other products from the boats tied up near Riley's Lock. Riley's Lock is the only one that directly abuts an aqueduct. The Girl Scouts give tours of the Lockhouse on weekends.

From Kate Mulligan's *Towns Along the Towpath*: "Pennyfield Lock is only about five miles from Great Falls Tavern, which is probably the most popular spot on the canal, but it is a scene far removed from the bustle and crowds down the towpath. Walk past two abandoned houses, complete with sagging porches, cross a footbridge to the shuttered lockkeeper's house, which overlooks the canal. The Potomac is in full throttle here, with an island tantalizingly close. Less than a mile upstream along the towpath is the Dierssen Waterfowl Sanctuary, a series of ponds that attract birds and birdwatchers. The latter say that on a spring morning, it's possible to spot as many as 80 different species. The towpath continues past beautiful cedar-topped cliffs, which turn into rolling countryside. Violette's Lock is a favorite spot for fishing and launching canoes for the trip to Georgetown. A 2,500-foot rubble stone dam supplies water from here to Little Falls. Water skiing is popular in the slackwater behind the dam. Riley's Lock hand Lockhouse, about a half-mile upstream along the towpath, is the canal's version of civilization. Seneca Creek Park, which has picnic areas, public toilets, and a parking lot, adjoins the area. Seneca Aqueduct, the first of 11 aqueducts between Georgetown and Cumberland, carried canal boats over nearby Seneca Creek. At Sycamore Landing, about five miles upstream, a footbridge across the canal bed leads to Sycamore Landing Road and the McKee-Beshers Wildlife Area."

SENECA AQUEDUCT

Built in 1829-30, Seneca Aqueduct is the first of 11 aqueducts along the C&O Canal that connects Georgetown and Cumberland. Back then, the duct was filled with water and carried canal boats over the creek. In September 1971, a bad freshet stone

collapsed the aqueduct's west arch. Flood markers from the historic Potomac floods of 1899 and 1936 can be found on a sandstone post on the southeast corner of the parapet.

SENECA STONE MILL (Just west of Lock #24, Riley's Lock)

Down the path west of the aqueduct are the remains of the Seneca stonecutting mill, the oldest stone cutting mill in the United States. Built of local sandstone known as "Seneca Brownstone" about 1837, the mill was used to cut and dress stone from the quarries nearby to the west. Seneca quarry worked about 100 men, and at one time took out the red sandstone used to build the Seneca Aqueduct and neighboring homes such as Montevideo, as well as the Smithsonian Institution, the Washington Aqueduct (often called the Cabin John aqueduct), the Library of Congress, and the Washington Monument (used as backing stone), the Museum of Natural History in New York, as well as most of Washington's post-Civil War architecture. Freshly cut stone reached the mill on a narrow gauge railroad, in mule drawn gondolas. Water from the turning basin, which ran in a large channel through the center of the mill, powered a large turbine that drove the mill's machinery. (The remains were the setting of an independent short film entitled "From Hell, With Love" that was produced in 2002 as a project with Mt. St. Mary's College.)

SENECA QUARRY

Just west of Seneca Stone Mill are a series of overgrown quarries, developed from the high sandstone bluffs. This red sandstone deposit, which underlies most of the Western Montgomery County, is of the Triassic Age (about 200 million years ago) and is part of a larger formation that erratically spans from Connecticut to the Carolinas. As far back as the 1790's, Seneca stone was quarried and rafted eight miles down the Potomac to Great Falls, where it was used in a "skirting canal" that enabled riverboat men to bypass the falls. When first cut, Seneca stone is relatively easy to work, but it hardens on prolonged exposure to air. Across the marshland north of the bluffs was a settlement of free black quarrymen, some of

whose descendants now live in the Berryville Road area.

From Kate Mulligan's *Towns Along the Towpath*: "Tschiffely Road, near the store, runs from river Road to abandoned quarries and the remains of the Seneca Stone Mill, which was the center of the sandstone industry. According to local historian Jane Sween, the Seneca Sandstone Company used the facilities of the canal, which opened in 1830, to process the sandstone. The company installed a gate in the canal west of Seneca Creek, diverting water into the plant. Mules pulled uncut sandstone boulders in gondolas out of the quarries over the narrow gauge railroad track. Water from the mill race, fed by the canal, ran the turbines, which furnished the power for cutting. Seneca was once intended to be the starting point of a canal extension to Baltimore, an effort that never materialized. But it did become a bustling canal town during the second half of the 19th century. The canal was used for personal transportation between Seneca and Georgetown, as well as commercial shipping. The sandstone company closed in 1900, and the canal company ended operations in 1924. The area's natural beauty remained, however, and many loyal residents owned summer or year-round cottages. In 1957, Roy Lee Yinger, a columnist for the *Montgomery County Sentinel*, wrote, 'Seneca, believe me, is an enchanting and romantic spot.' Repeated flooding – and ironically, the reincarnation of the canal as a federal park – decimated the community. Hurricane Agnes destroyed many homes, and Montgomery County officials denied owner's permission to rebuild on a flood plain. In the late 1970's, federal officials bought up property to enlarge the C&O Canal National Historical Park."

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SENECA MARSH: CANAL TURNING BASIN

Here, boats tied up to load stone from the nearby Seneca Stone Mill. Since canal boats were over 90-feet long, occasional basins like this one were the only places to turn around. Stone shipped from this basin went to the docks in Georgetown, or up canal to Point of Rocks for trans-shipment on the B&O Railroad, often carried on a steamboat especially adapted for the canal, the *Aunt Chercy*.

POOLE'S GENERAL STORE*

Across River Road, on Old River Road, is Poole's General Store and the Upton Darby House. It was built in 1901 by Frederick Allnutt, who previously owned a store along the canal in Seneca. One of the few surviving turn-of-the-century commercial structures in Montgomery County, this authentic general store remains a vital part of the community.

ALLNUT HOUSE or THE UPTON DARBY HOUSE

Adjacent to Poole's General Store, the house was built in 1855 by Upton Darby, a prominent miller. The Frederick Allnutt family purchased it in 1900. It is currently owned by the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission to be incorporated into Seneca State Park.

SENECA SCHOOL

Funds to build this one room school house were raised by local miller Upton Darby through subscriptions solicited from the neighbors. Construction was completed in 1863. Parents paid for their children's books, and tuition was covered by several means. Families could pay cash toward the single teacher's \$200.00 per year salary, give wood or coal for the heat (a pot-bellied stove remains the only heat source), or help to "board" the teacher.

The age range for students was 6 to 16, with approximately 25 pupils at any given time. Grade levels 1 through 7 were taught and students were separated roughly by level of study in each particular subject, rather than by age as they are now: a child might have studied 3rd grade math while also doing 6th grade reading or history.

Gender separation was maintained by seating girls and boys on opposite sides of the room. The larger boys were expected to help bring in the wood or coal and carry out the ashes. Misbehavior begot corporal punishment.

*Editor's Note: Poole's Store closed in 2010. The Department of Parks is embarking on a restoration project and looking for a new tenant. For more information on the restoration project, please contact Jamie Kuhns, Senior Historian at 301-650-4362 or Jamie.Kuhns@montgomeryparks.org.

BLOCKHOUSE POINT

This was the site of a Union outpost during the Civil War. The inland area beyond the cliffs is Blockhouse Point State Park, which can be reached from River Road. This is one of the most distinctive scenes along the river, where the rocky-forested cliffs are reflected in the still water of the canal, just a few precious feet of earth from the rough rapids of the Potomac. (C&O Canal Guide)

ROWSERS FORD (Violette's Lock, Lock #23, Milepost 20)

This was an important river crossing during the Civil War. John Mosby used Rowsers Ford on his raid up to Seneca. Jeb Stuart is thought to have crossed here just before the Gettysburg campaign in the summer of 1863. After the Union Army crossed at Edwards Ferry on June 25 and 26 in pursuit of the main body of Lee's Army, Stuart's cavalry came from Dranesville down to the banks of the Potomac at Rowsers Ford. The water was higher than usual – too high for artillery and ambulances – but Stuart decided to cross there anyway. His men unloaded and carried the boxes of ammunition across the river by hand. The guns and caissons were dragged across the river completely submerged. The night was dark and moonless, so the men could not see clearly where they were to enter and exit the water. They stayed close to each other, drifting down the river with the current until someone would appear from the Maryland shore to tell them how to straighten their lines. After they crossed the river, the soldiers captured a number of canal boats in the area of Violette's Lock, turning one sideways to create a bridge for his soldiers to cross. They abandoned their plan to burn the other boats after the boat captains persuaded them to have mercy on small businessmen. Instead, Stuart's men transformed the boats into obstructions by turning them sideways and then draining the water from that section of the canal.

Violette's Lock was named for Ab Violette, the last lock keeper, whose house has disappeared. Standing on the lock looking toward Seneca, Violette's Lock is on the right, a lift lock that raised

and lowered canal boats about eight feet. The lock on the left is a guard lock through which local grain boats were admitted to the canal. Both locks were built of Seneca sandstone. North of the locks was once the small village of Rushville, where thirsty canallers or quarrymen purchased moonshine whiskey from "Aunt" Pricilla Jenkins.

Crossing the river by Violette's Lock are the remains of a 2,500 foot-wide rock dam built by the C&O Canal Company around 1828 of quarry waste from nearby Seneca quarry in order to impound the water that fed into the 18-mile section of canal down to Little Falls. Waters impounded by this dam flowed into a five-mile pool know as Little Seneca Lake, which now supports heavy recreational use by people from the entire Metropolitan area (25 feet average depth; 70 feet max. depth; 505 acres; 15 miles shoreline). Violette's Lock is a haven for canoers and kayakers who use its shores as a launching site above the Seneca "breaks", or rapids. Boaters can cross to the Virginia side and enjoy mild whitewater through one of the original skirting canals excavated by George Washington's Patowmack Company.

C.M.E. CHURCH

On the hilltop to the left of Violette's Lock Road, a weathered clapboard shell was built about 1900 to serve the local Colored Methodist Church congregation. The African American community at Seneca was established as much as 125 years ago by ex-slaves who worked in the quarries.

DARNESTOWN

Darnestown was first settled about 1730, when Maryland was still a colony of England. The first settlers in its general area were Scottish or Irish frontiersmen, descendants of men who had fought in the Revolutionary War under Washington, who had helped put down the Whiskey Rebellion in Pennsylvania, and who had fought with General Braddock in the French and Indian War. They were mostly Calvinists. One of them was Ninean Beall, a tavern keeper, who came about 1750. He had a number of daughters who married community leaders, including Charles Gassaway, who built an

estate to become known as "Pleasant Hills" (now known as the Kelley farmhouse in Spring Meadows). For a while, the town also took the name of the large tract of land on which it was built "Mount Pleasant". When a post office was later built, Charles Gassaway's son-in-law, William Darne, had become the largest landowner, and the town was renamed Darne, then later Darne's Town, and eventually Darnestown.

The Darnestown area became a town between 1815 and 1820, but tobacco farming in the area had so impoverished the soil that it didn't attract many farmers until the Quaker farmers of Sandy Springs introduced crop rotation and Peruvian guanos fertilizer. Residents continued to farm tobacco, which they sent on barges down the river to Georgetown. By 1820, the intersection of Seneca Road and Darnestown Road had a postmaster and merchant, a tavern keeper, a blacksmith, and a wheelwright. Nearby was Benjamin Edwards, a doctor (whose grandson married Elizabeth Todd, elder sister of Mary Todd Lincoln).

When the C&O Canal was constructed at Seneca, Darnestown began thriving as a commercial crossroads. By 1871, Darnestown had a population of 99 people and was the 9th largest town in the county. By 1879, its population had grown to 200, doubling in a ten-year veritable boom time. The community was very close-knit. In its heyday, between 1880 and 1890, farmers from around the area would bring their grain to the mills of Darnestown to transport it directly from there down the canal to Georgetown. After the railroad came to Gaithersburg and Germantown in the early 1900's, there was no more need for the mills in Darnestown and they petered out by the 1930's.

In the 1800's, mail was brought by stagecoach from Rockville three times a week, and the people of the neighborhood rode out on horseback to be there when it arrived. The ladies dressed for this occasion in long riding skirts, hats with drooping feather, gauntlets, and always carried riding whips. As they cantered up the dusty road (Rt. 28, based on an old Indian trail) to Darnestown, dogs, chickens, and pigs flew out before them. They

would arrive early and draw their horses under the shade of nearby trees where they gossiped and flirted with the young men of the community. After dropping off the mail, the stagecoach then continued on through Dawsonville to Poolesville.

Residents would sometimes take a "packet boat" to Washington or Georgetown for shopping. It took nearly all day to travel from Seneca to Georgetown, and the time could vary by several hours. Passengers would impatiently pace the canal bank or wait inside Johnny Riley's stone lock house. The packet boat had a saloon, captain's room, and a kitchen, and could hold as many as 50 passengers. It ventured out onto the river at points but was more frequently on the canal. The boats were drawn by two tandem horses driven by a boy who rode the rear horse. When the boat reached the wide, long levels) known as the eight-mile level and the six-mile level), the horses galloped and their bells carried along the water. Later, the boats used steam engines, which often stalled. The boats could only run up to 8 mph to avoid damaging wakes.

When it was too cold for the packet boat to operate, residents made the trip to Washington by horse and carriage, slowly plodding through mud over the horse's ankles as they traveled along Old River Road, the shortest way to Washington.

When the Civil War broke out, the Federals immediately knew that the shallow waters of the Potomac River's Seneca Rapids were a natural point for the Confederates to cross in order to invade Washington from the North. Union encampments were soon positioned in Darnestown by Windsor School, Kelley Farm, Kirkhel Farm, Magruder Farm, as well as near the C&O Canal. The presence of troops of course boosted the economy. By guarding all of the fords as well as the C&O Canal, searching canal boats and wagons along area roads, and checking the passes of travelers through the area, the 18,000 soldiers were the main defense against attacks on Washington from the north. The troops were callow, and they "borrowed" what they needed from the beehives and orchards of local farmers, which did not make for a congenial relationship with the residents. When the army left, most of the

fences had become firewood, and not a cow, hen, or hog remained. A number of newspapers throughout the nation had reporters stationed here, including the famous artist and novelist Daniel Strother. Using the nom de plume Porte Crayon, he wrote war stories and made sketches on the Darnestown area that were published in Harper's Magazine.

Maryland remained in the Union, but many Darnestown residents fought for the Confederacy:

- William Darne, a graduate of the US military academy and son of Alex Darne, a West Point graduate, joined Company B, 35th Battalion of the Virginia Calvary at the age of 16.
- Walter Peter Gibson, son of Major George Peter, grew up in a home still known as Montaverde on Berryville Road. He joined the 7th Brigade of the Confederacy, fought at Balls bluff, and was later caught with a cousin in Tennessee dressed as a Federal officer. They were charged with spying and subsequently hung.
- George Rice joined the 1st Maryland Calvary, CSA, and was captured twice by Federal troops. In 1866, he married Elberta Tschiffely, and in 1881, he built the Dr. Richard Beall house on Darnestown Road near Turkey Foot.

As one Yankee soldier put it, sympathetic as they were to the South, during the Civil War years, "Darnestown went to making money with more than Yankee shrewdness, and Darnestown was Union when the army came." He went on to describe the little village: "Most of its homes are of the log and mud style. It boasts no hotel, though some hospitable people would afford entertainment for man and beast. It has three country stores where hardware, dry goods, groceries, boots and shoes, quack medicines, and whiskey are sold in rather small quantities – barring the whiskey as to the small. The few houses of more than usual pretention would hardly pass muster in a New English village, and the poorer ones were sadly dilapidated. Two or three houses were enclosed with fences, and had a few flowers in front, but as a whole the village of one street was of the Rip Van Winkle order."

The end of the C&O Canal spelled the end of Darnestown as a commerce center, and residents resorted to farming. One of the largest area milk producers was Kelley's "Pleasant Hills Dairy" which operated well into the late 1950's.

DARNESTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

As the desire for worship centers developed, a log cabin church was built at what is now the corner of Route 28 and Route 118. This building was shared by Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians. It was called the "Free or Union Church". On May 12, 1855, under the direction of Rev. Daniel Motzer, the ten communicant members of the Presbyterian congregation decided to build their own church, as a "Missionary Point" of the Neelsville church. They formed part of the Presbytery of Baltimore, a conservative branch of the Presbyterian Church made up largely of Southerners who refused to take a stand against slavery. In 1858, a schism developed in the Presbyterian Church. The "Old School" churches became the Confederate Church. The "New School" churches became the Presbyterian Church USA. Darnestown Presbyterian Church joined the "New School", which first became part of the Presbytery of the Potomac, and later part of the Presbytery of Washington City. The Presbyterian Church USA admitted blacks to the congregation, who sat in a small balcony at the back of the church.

A gift of three acres by John DuFief, a French immigrant who was a miller and landowner, provided a site from the Presbyterian Church. Having only meager funds, they chose a very simple design without a bell tower or stained glass windows. A side entry led to a basement room where a Sunday School was held (current location of the DCA members meetings). The cornerstone, which can no longer be located, was laid in 1856, and the building was dedicated on May 22, 1858. The iron fence along the cemetery at the back of the church was taken from the Rockville Courthouse. The stones for the foundation were rolled by the male members, and the women raised money by cutting long strips of cloth, which they sold to a manufacturer of braided rugs. At first,

there was no heating, and each family provided its own rug for it pew, giving the church a look of Joseph's coat of many colors. Within three years, their membership had grown to 44 people.

The Manse was built on an adjacent, donated lot of twelve acres. The minister spent three quarters of his time at the Darnestown Church, and one quarter at the Neelsville church, to which they were still joined. A gift of \$5,000 from a Scottish businessman named Andrew Small, who was a contractor on the C&O Canal, and then a subsequent bequest by him for \$35,000 led to the construction of the Andrew Small Academy. This was the largest and finest academy in Montgomery County. It had boarding as well as local students, and went up through three years of high school. Up until 1892, the minister of the church was also the principal of the academy, and he received a salary of \$600. The school became the cultural center of the community with concerts, plays, recitals, and a literary society. In 1892, the academy got its first full-time principal. Then in 1907, it was taken over by the Montgomery County school system, and in 1927, it was changed into an elementary school. This ended its service as a cultural center. A new elementary school (now Darnestown Elementary) was built to replace it in 1955.

MAGRUDER FARM

The North established a Signal Corps school on Magruder farm, where an especially large chestnut tree was fitted with platforms for signalers to use. Signal flags and telescopes were used to exchange information along a chain of signalers that stretched from Harpers Ferry to Georgetown (Signal Tree Lane). As one local resident stated, "Magruder overlooked the river, bristled with cannon and fortifications, just waiting for the Rebs to ford the Potomac at Seneca."

Mrs. Magruder's nephew, Colonel Nicholas Dorsey, joined the Confederacy and was captured at Baltimore (Dorsey Road, a street racing hotspot, near Baltimore). He escaped and took the back roads to Magruder farm, arriving the same day as General Banks of the Union, and was again caught. When confusion arose as the Federals were

assigned to quarters, Drosey, dressed in Mr. Magruder's civilian clothes, walked out, waving to the sentries, and then caught a wagon ride to Seneca where we was rowed across to safety.

PLEASANT HILLS

One of Darnestown's first landowners was Ninian Beall, a tavern keeper. In 1763 – 1765, his first daughter, Ruth Beall, and her husband, Charles Gassaway, built one of the earliest houses in Darnestown, a large brick house called Pleasant Hills, on property known as Mount Pleasant. The house, which today is located on Kelley Farm Drive in the center of the Spring Meadows community, is on the Maryland Historic Registry. At one time, Charles Gassaway owned as much as 1,700 acres. Gassaway, who was well-respected in the community, served as a Captain in the Militia, and was coroner for Montgomery County.

Both of Gassaway's sons found wives across the river in Virginia. As river travel was easier in those days than road travel, Leesburg was much closer than Georgetown. Gassaway's daughter Elizabeth married William Darne in 1798. Charles Gassaway gave 505 acres of Mount Pleasant tract to Elizabeth and William Darne, who lived on part of the Mount Pleasant tract, east of the Pleasant Hills house. Darne served on the Maryland legislature, and was director of the C&O Canal.

In 1824, following the death of Charles Gassaway's widow, the house and some of the land was sold to James Hawkins, whose heirs sold it to John Thomas Kelley. Kelley, a merchant in Georgetown for the past 20 years, lived in the home with his five children. One of the daughters, Nellie, married Millard Rice, who took over the management of the farm. Two wings have been added to the original home, one in 1900 and a second in 1918. The wings are made of bricks taken from old slave quarters on the farm and laid in Flemish bond to match the original house. His son, Thomas C. Kelley became a prominent lawyer and Judge, and was instrumental in the change to the county council system of government in Montgomery County.

Descendant Tom Kelly farmed much of the land around the Pleasant Hills homestead and was famous for his “Kelly Corn” farm wagon of fresh dairy produce during the summer months, as well as the corn that fed visitors to the Montgomery County Fair each August, and his pumpkin patch in the fall.

Until 1833, worshippers of all denominations congregated at a little log cabin near the Pleasant Hills homestead that was built by the Methodists. A one-room school house was also located on the same lot.

MONTEVIDEO

By 1812, the land on which Montevideo would be built had been given by Robert Peter, the first mayor of Georgetown, to his son Thomas. Thomas Peter married Martha Parker Custis, the granddaughter of Martha Washington. They lived at Tudor Place in Georgetown and built a summer home near Darnestown that is no longer standing called “Oatlands” (no relation to the Oatlands Plantation west of Leesburg). Montevideo was a summer home built for Peter’s son, John Park Custis, and his wife Elizabeth Henderson Peter, in 1830 from red sand stone of Seneca Quarry. The walls are of local redstone nearly two feet thick, covered with stucco and painted white. The house was restored in 1960.

A widowed tutor named Charles Nourse, who was also an ordained Presbyterian minister, lived in the Peter household. Thirteen months after Mr. Peter’s death, widow Peter and Rev. Nourse were married, giving to much talk of propriety in the local community! For a look at what remains of this 19th century community, begin at Poole’s [former] store. To your left is a large white frame house constructed in 1855. Turn right off Old River Road onto Montevideo Road. At the first bend, you’ll see the Rockland-Mann Farm. Built in 1870, the house was the social center of the community and shows the use of sandstone. It has five bays, a hip roof, gable chimneys and outbuildings, including a smoke house and corn crib. Montevideo, one of the most striking houses in the area, is out of view, down a private driveway. Surrounded by 400 acres, the house is owned by the Kiplingers, of the publishing empire. Its original builder was a descendent of Martha Custis Washington.

MONTANVERDE

Montanverde on Berryville Road was owned by another son of Robert Peter named George Peter. George ran away at 15 to join the Maryland troops in the Whiskey Rebellion. George Washington, a family friend, personally sent him home. After graduating from Georgetown University five years later, George rejoined the army, rising to the rank of Major. One of his assignments was to investigate and testify at the Aaron Burr trial.

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During the Civil War, area residents divided their loyalty between North and South. Darnestown was the scene of Civil War activity due to its strategic location near Potomac River crossings and its proximity to Washington. Some 18,000 Union troops were garrisoned in and around Darnestown in 1861, and in 1864, large numbers of both Union and Confederate troops moved through the area.

After the Civil War, the county’s population increased, the canal boosted the local economy, and the Great Falls aqueduct encouraged further development. When Civil War soldiers discovered gold, they envisioned another California Gold Rush. As word of the gold spread after the war, mines were established along Rock Run and the canal. Although the success of the mines varied, they attracted newcomers to the area.

After emancipation, many African Americans were able to buy land and establish relatively autonomous communities where they made their living as laborers for neighboring farms while providing food for their families on their own small farms. These communities included homesteads near Oaklyn Road, and in the Cropley community near Great Falls, where Angler’s Inn now stands.

Through the 1930’s, area farms and orchards were generally productive, but in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s, many farms between Potomac Village and

Rockville were developed for housing. During the 1960's, development accelerated and Potomac experienced a rapid 287 percent population increase. These development trends have continued as Montgomery County has become more populated. In the past three decades, much of the farmland and woodland in the Potomac Subregion has been subdivided for residential use. Spreading suburbanization, the loss of agricultural open space and the impact of roads and traffic on a formerly rural area present major challenges for the creation of communities and the preservation of historic and environmental resources.

TOWNS AND AREAS AROUND DARNESTOWN

About 1750, settlements began in what we now call Darnestown, then a thickly wooded area crossed by an important Indian trail, noted in deeds as early as 1758 as "the main road, the road that goes from Montgomery County Court House to the Mouth of the Monocacy," later called Route 28. This became one of the first roads in Montgomery County, leading to an important crossroads for trade and a ferry across the Potomac River at the Monocacy River.

Within fifty years, all of the land in and around Darnestown was claimed ("patented") into relatively large tracts. These original tract names (Mitchell's Range, Deakin's Range) appear in present Montgomery County street maps.

William Darne owned most of the land around the intersection of Route 28 (Darnestown Road) and Route 112 (Seneca Road), the center of which was named Darnestown. Tax records from 1815 indicate Mr. Darne owned 422 acres, including land beneath the Our Lady of the Visitation Parish, Darnestown Park, Seneca Highlands, most of Darnestown Presbyterian Church, Mockingbird Drive, and also parts of the Brookmead neighborhood. Property deeds from these areas commonly read "a part of Mt. Pleasant," the tract name of the Darne property.

Berryville Road, platted in 1873 and named for the Berry family who lived near Seneca Road, was "probably an extension of farm lanes to the main road."

Black Rock Road and Clack Rock Mill are named for the "Black Rock" tract of land dating from 1760. Black Rock Mill, the ruins of which have been stabilized, was operated from 1815 until at the latest 1920.

Deakins Lane follows from Deakins Range, a 490-acre land grant dating from 1788.

George Esworthy was a farmer whose land bordered much of the road now named after him, Esworthy Road. A 1785 land patent for 2,950 acres was called "Hartley Hall," now the name of a subdivision on Esworthy Road.

Nathan Jones owned 900 acres around the time of the Civil War, and Jones Lane grew from what was most likely an extension of the dirt lane serving his farm.

Query Mill Road harkens to a grist and sawmill at Muddy Branch Creek date from 1780 to 1795.

The 800 acre land grant "Quince Orchard," patented by Henry Clagett in 1866, is the namesake for today's Quince Orchard Road.

It's been logically suggested that the road linking Route 28 and Route 118 (dating from 1849), Riffleford Road, was named for "the place of a ford at the riffles (or ripples) on Seneca Creek." And River Road was also based on an old Indian trail.

An important grist mill had been located where River Road crosses Seneca Creek since before the Revolutionary War, and its old millrace is still visible near Poole's Store. The remains of the Seneca Stone Cutting Mill still stand near the mouth of Seneca Creek at the Potomac River. Surveyed in 1810, Seneca Road, which ran from the center of Darnestown at Rt. 28 to this dynamic duo of mills, was referred to as "the Road to Seneca Mills," shortened to Seneca Road.

A Civil War signaling station, one of many from Harper's Ferry to the District of Columbia, is commemorated by Signal Tree Lane. The tall chestnut tree near the intersection with River Road appeared in Harper's Magazine (1866) and for many years a sketch of that tree appeared in the frontispiece of the U.S Signal Corps Manual.

Springfield Road is named for the large, 1,392 acre "Springfield" land tract (patented in 1799) which stretched from River Road to the Our Lady of the Visitation Parish property.

Turkey Foot Road, established in 1859, was named for three streams joining in the hallmark shape.

The History of Tobytown

Tobytown is located in Potomac/Darnestown five miles west of Potomac Village on River Road, across River Road from the end of Esworthy. Tobytown is an historic property that was originally purchased in 1875 by former slaves following the Civil War. Many Tobytown residents to this day can trace their ancestry back to the original owners of the land, William Davis, Sr. and Ailsie Martin.

In March 1967, the Montgomery County Council declared Tobytown an urban renewal area, and allocated funding to upgrade the homes on site and construct new ones. By December 1972, 26 units had been built to house Tobytown residents. These units range in size from one to six bedrooms. Today, many residents of Tobytown own their homes, and a few are rentals.

The Tobytown community is bounded by River Road and Pennyfield Lock Road. The Tobytown Cemetery, which contains the remains of its founders, is the last original site remaining in the community.

Tobytown was established in 1875 by William Davis, Ailsie Martin, and Emory Genus. Davis was given four acres of land by John and Susan Rouzee (for consideration of \$8.00) in 1875. According to a grandson, Davis was a Tennessee native who was an emancipated slave working on a farm in the vicinity of Seneca Road at the time of the purchase. Martin and Genus bought a five-acre parcel from the Rouzees for \$100. The land was part of a tract known as Brackenridge.

The community's first residents were former slaves. With the exception of one two-story house, all of the original fifteen houses were one-story houses with one, two, and three bedrooms. The community had no post office or school and classes were held in the Baptist Church.

The community requested its own school in 1917, after the church burned, but Montgomery County denied residents' requests to construct a school so it was never built. After construction of the second church, it undoubtedly was also used for classes. By the early 20th century, most other black communities had their own school buildings, however inadequate, and many, unlike Tobytown, also had a post office. Tobytown still had neither.

Tobytown Today

But the community began to prosper as most of the residents worked on surrounding farms as laborers, gardeners, domestics, and cooks. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, demand for rural labor declined as the area developed with exclusive residences. With limited job and educational opportunities, Tobytown began to suffer; the standard of living dropped and living conditions declined. By 1965, the community was impoverished. The majority of the 75 residents lived without benefit of electricity, indoor plumbing, or garbage collection. Meals were prepared on wood stoves, drinking and cooking water came from a single well and sanitary facilities consisted of one outdoor privy.

In 1965, the County health department issued an order to improve sanitation conditions, including wells and outhouses. The County Council designated Tobytown as an urban renewal area in 1967 and directed the Housing Authority to establish a nonprofit development corporation. Thus, the Tobytown Development Corporation, consisting of residents, interested citizens, and government staff, was appointed.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development approved the Development Corporation's housing plan in January 1972 and new townhouses were occupied by December 1972. Today, Tobytown has approximately 125 residents in 26 townhouses on 16 acres of land. These residents have a marked sense of pride and community.

The Tobytown Cemetery

The Tobytown cemetery is located on the parcel which was owned by Ailsie Martin. By 1878, Tobias Martin had a residence in this vicinity. Emory Genus lived on the opposite side of Pennyfield Lock Road. The cemetery can be found at the rear (north) of a group of houses on Tobytown Drive. Approximately rectangular in form, the cemetery is surrounded by a chain link fence and contains about two dozen scattered reddish sandstones, which may be headstones or footstones. The Tobytown Cemetery is the only historical resource remaining connected with the early black kinship community of Tobytown. All other structures associated with Tobytown were demolished in the early 1970s and replaced with a townhouse community in which descendants of many of Tobytown's original

families still live. The cemetery contains the remains of former slaves and their descendents. Among those believed to be buried in the cemetery are:

- Charles Davis (d1914),
- Father of Henson Davis (b1893)
- The grandfather of Henson's wife
- Henson's brother (William Davis)
- Henson's son

Most graves are, unfortunately, unmarked.

Montanverde

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Montanverde Update!

Montanverde was the early 19th century Piedmont country estate of a war hero and public official. Major George Peter, member of a prominent family who held important posts in the Maryland General Assembly and U.S. Congress after notable service in the War of 1812, lived in Montanverde from 1827 until his death in 1861, after which his descendants owned the property for another half century. From 1916 to early 2014, three generations of the Frank P. Harman family have owned Montanverde, using it as a summer home and later renting out the houses and barns.

An outstanding example of early 19th century farmhouse design, Montanverde retains much of its original character and materials. The Peter house is a modest but elegant 2½ story side gable frame dwelling house with a five-bay main block, Seneca sandstone foundation, and 1½ story wings

at each gable end. External brick chimneys anchor both ends of the main block, and the front (south) façade differs from the rear elevation by having a three-light transom and an entrance landing reached by stone steps. The west wing contains the Lincoln Bedroom, so named for the then-congressman's overnight visit in 1848, and the east wing, which recently served as the kitchen, is a 1930s replacement. Montanverde is listed in the National Register as a featured property in the Seneca Historic District and is designated on the Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

In September 2011, the main house and cottage were condemned for occupancy by Montgomery County. News of this so alarmed a Peter descendant, Phil Peter, that he looked to preservation groups for advice. Soon a "Save Montanverde" committee formed, including Phil, members of Historic Medley District and Montgomery Preservation, and concerned neighbors on Berryville Road. They set up a fund administered by HMD to help pay for some immediate stabilization needs and attempted to facilitate negotiations among the Harman family, MD Department of Natural Resources, and prospective purchasers. At last in January 2014, Tucker and Meakin Bennett took title and began the daunting project of restoration and renovation.

By the time of condemnation, the Peter house retained much of its architectural character but was in poor condition, vacant, and in desperate need of restoration. The tenant house was also substantially deteriorated, four remaining outbuildings were in ruinous condition, the narrow winding dirt driveway was deeply rutted, and surrounding pastures were overgrown. Conditions were such that the damage must be reversed or the property would be lost.

The Bennetts assembled a talented team to work on both houses simultaneously, beginning to stabilize the main house while focusing on repairing the 1930s tenant house for occupancy with their two young children. Built of frame construction with a concrete block foundation and

raised-seam metal roof, the 2-story three-bay front gable tenant house faces west toward the Peter house. Here, Tri-State Controls replaced the roof, rebuilt the porch, and conducted rehabilitation and in-kind repairs throughout. After repairing damaged and deteriorated trim and sills, all windows were removed and replaced with 6/1 wood windows.

Was kitchen addition removed from tenant house? The kitchen also required complete rehabilitation. The kitchen foundation had to be rebuilt. The entire house was actually gutted, and the Bennets put in new everything—plumbing, electrical, HVAC, walls, appliances etc. Mrs. Bennet commented, "I like to say that was an 'everything but the kitchen sink' renovation since the only thing we saved was the 1920s farm kitchen sink. We did also save the floorboards in the living room, but they were repaired, sanded and stained."

In June 2014, the family moved in, and were able to be on site for work on the main house for their primary residence.

Intending to make Montanverde their family home for generations, the Bennetts were determined to maintain its classical symmetry. They first repaired the roof and halted collapse of the center hallway, replacing rotted north-south log beams with concrete beams. A new full basement provided space for modern infrastructure, and according to the Bennetts, "*...this is actually only a crawlspace, the only cellar is under the Lincoln room. We also kept all of the old, original, framing and shored it up so that in another 200 years the next renovation team will be able to see how it was originally built. Also of note, while we were preparing to jack up the center hall way, our builder (Mike Morris) fortunately discovered that the second floor joists were centimeters from fall off their post—thus collapsing the second floor. If we had simply jacked the house up, the second floor would have collapsed like a house of cards. Thus before the house could be raised, north-south steel were place thought out the original section of the house to suck the north and south side together, and hold the second floor in place. The center hall foundation was then jacked up 12 inches to make it level again.*"

Simultaneously, they removed rotten wood, extraneous plumbing and hot water heating. They re-leveled all

floor systems, re-plumbed walls, added new framing and insulation, and repaired fire damage near the east chimney before adding modern electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems. They removed a non-working 20th century brick chimney from the west end of the house along with other alterations. Everywhere, their architect and contractors worked to restore original materials and features where possible. To the east side of the kitchen the Bennetts added a modest 175 s/f one-story mudroom/laundry; its roof and wood siding match the existing materials. With the final County condemnation lifted, they moved into the Peter house in November 2014.

In the 12.99-acre environmental setting, there was much to be done. The eroded driveway from Berryville Road was cleared of bushes and fallen trees, improved with drainage piping and gravel, and reconfigured to provide better access to both houses.

Overgrown pastures are slowly being recaptured and reused; Montanverde's stunning rural ambiance has rebounded. The large bank barn, at the far eastern edge of the property, was sold with 1.2 acres to the Bennetts by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). From the Harmans, DNR purchased 30 acres adjoining the Montanverde parcel on three sides to maintain this setting and enhance Seneca Creek State Park.

Recently, a plaque was placed at the top of the driveway in a grass clearing. From this high ground, a person can read the plaque, see the house behind, and overlook pastures and woodlands in the background. It is cast in bronze and mounted on a slab of locally-quarried flagstone. The plaque was designed by Phil Peter and funded by donations to the Save Montanverde fund established within HMD.

The property is protected by caring, responsible owners, with a perpetual easement held by MHT, DNR ownership of the surrounding land, County historic designation, and continuing interest by the Peter family and Darnestown Civic Association.

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Detail of Darnestown from Simon J. Martenet
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Continued...

“A Brief History of DARNESTOWN”

By: The Darnestown Historical Society

FOREWORD

“Darnestown History Day” began as an idea in the minds of several members of the Darnestown Historical Society during its first days of existence in 1989. Conceived as an addition to the 4th grade studies in Maryland History, the History Day took on a rich meaning as Sharon Scopin and Mary Alice Schooley, the co-chairs, realized the strength of the local historical tradition. Enlisting the aid of the school staff, the PTA, and many long-time local residents, Sharon and Mary Alice arranged a program that portrayed the full range of the local history, from the founding of Darnestown to the present time. The former existence of the Andrew Small Academy on the site of the present Darnestown Elementary School provided a natural emphasis on education.

With the receipt of a generous grant from the Montgomery County Historical Preservation Commission, the Society has been able to assemble and print this [material], which will be a permanent part of the school library [in booklet format]. Many people have contributed to the material in this booklet; the Society is indebted to all of these willing and civic-minded citizens.

The Society also is grateful to the many people whose participation has made the History Day a highlight of the school year for the 4th grade

THE FOUNDING OF DARNESTOWN

Darnestown was first settled in the 1750’s, before the United States became independent from England. One of the first landowners was Ninian Beall (pronounced “bell”), a licensed tavern keeper.

One of Ninian Beall’s daughters, Ruth, married a man named Charles Gassaway. About 1763-1765, the couple built a brick home which they called “Pleasant Hills”. In the early days, it was common

practice for a family to give a name to their property. Although the practice is less common now, it is still done occasionally. This house still stands near Route 28 on Kelley Farm Drive.

The house is still preserved by its owners, Mr. and Mrs. John Auchenbach. The house is recognized by the state of Maryland as a historic residence.

Charles Gassaway’s daughter married William Darne in 1798. They called their residence “Mount Pleasant”. It was located to the east of “Pleasant Hills”. Like most of the early houses, “Mount Pleasant” was torn down many years ago.

William Darne served in the Maryland legislature and was a director of the CO Canal. He was noted as “distinguished for his hospitality and urbanity of manner”. He was so well respected that the town was named “Darnestown” in his honor.

William’s only son, Alexander Darne, built a house nearby. For many years, it was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Clark Boyer. Now it houses the Headmaster of Windsor School.

Darnestown acquired a post office in 1825. The post master was John Candler, who had opened one of the first stores in town. Samuel Leeke was the town’s first wheelwright. John Dowd was one of the first blacksmiths, and Benjamin Edwards was one of the first physicians.

Because Darnestown was located at a crossroads, it became important to commerce of the area. One road (now Seneca Road) led to the mills and to the canal at Seneca. The other (Darnestown Road, or State Route 28), one of the oldest roads in Montgomery County, ran between the County courthouse in Rockville and the mouth of the Monocacy River.

From Darnestown, one could travel either by stagecoach along the Darnestown Road or by boarding a packet boat on the canal. The packet boats, which carried farm products as well as passengers, could hold as many as 50 people. The

boats also served as floating restaurants, since the trip to Georgetown took most of a day's time.

Although "Pleasant Hills" is an excellent example of the finest construction available to early settlers in the Darnestown area, most houses were not so large. The houses usually were made of wood, rather than brick. Many of the houses were made of logs. These log houses, which were built as early as 1820, were torn down very recently (in 1987). They had been covered with siding to protect the logs underneath.

Red sandstone was found in abundance at Seneca. The Seneca Sandstone Company began operation in 1850, just a few years before the outbreak of the Civil War. Stones from this mill were used in the construction of the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, and the Washington Monument (the redstone was used as backing stone). The stone also was used to build the Museum of Natural History in New York City.

The ruins of the Seneca sandstone mill still can be seen near the Potomac River if one walks down Tschiffely Mill Road from [the former] Poole's General Store in Poolesville.

Grist mills have existed at Seneca since about 1780. The Seneca Mills, later also called the Tschiffely Mill, was built about 1866. It stood very near the bridge over Seneca Creek near [the former] Poole's Store. Besides milling, the company also sold milling supplies, wheat, flour, feed corn, and fertilizer.

The Tschiffely Mill operated until the early 1930's. Worthington Tschiffely sold the mill and 29 acres of land in 1947 to the Pierpont family. In 1972, Mrs. Pierpont sold the land for \$10 to the State of Maryland so that it could become part of Seneca Creek State Park. The State Park also owns a building that once was a grist mill; it is located where Black Rock Road crosses Seneca Creek. The Park staff have prepared a display at Black Rock Mill to show how the mill operated.

THE CIVIL WAR IN DARNESTOWN

At the beginning of the Civil War, the Federal leadership realized that Darnestown was a natural point of defense for Washington, the Nation's capital. If the Confederate forces could cross the Potomac River from their encampments in northern Virginia to attack Montgomery and Frederick counties, then they could easily invade Washington from the North.

As early as June, 1861, Darnestown was occupied by the 9th New York Union troops. By late August of that year after the battle of Bull Run, Major General Nathaniel Banks arrived in Darnestown and established his Division Headquarters there. Soon there were about 18,000 Union troops in Darnestown, hailing from New York, Connecticut, Indiana, Pennsylvania Rhode Island Wisconsin, and Massachusetts. They were the main line of defense for Washington from northern attacks.

To secure the northern approach to Washington, the army had to guard all fords across the Potomac River, protect the C&O Canal, search the Canal boats and wagons traveling through the area, examine passes of travelers, and establish a provost guard at Darnestown.

Besides the one in the area now occupied by the Windsor School, other Union encampments were placed at the Kelley farm, at Kirkhill farm, along Seneca Creek, near Muddy Branch, at the Magruder farm (now known as the Iler farm), and along the C&O Canal.

General Banks set up his headquarters in the house that we now call Windsor School. On September 26, 1861, there was a grand parade held in observance of the President's Fast Day. All the regiments in the area proceeded in full uniform with arms and musical accompaniment to the open fields near the Windsor School area for the event.

A Signal Corps School was established on the Magruder farm about 1.5 miles southwest of Darnestown towards Seneca. An especially large chestnut tree there was fitted with platforms for

signalers to use. With the aid of signal flags and telescopes they could exchange information with other signalers in a chain that reached from as far upriver as Harpers Ferry and downriver to Georgetown.

It is believed that Presidents Lincoln visited General Banks at Darnestown on October 6, 1861. Soon after, on October 21, Banks gave orders to cook two days' rations, leave tents and wagons in the care of a smaller cadre of troops, and move towards Conrad's Ferry, now known as White's Ferry. While en route, the soldiers learned about the disaster at Ball's Bluff, where many Union troops were killed in an attempt to cross the Potomac.

Many of Banks' troops remained in Darnestown until the spring of 1862. Thereafter, the town was visited by many patrols from both sides of the conflict as they continued to fight the Civil War.

The citizens of Darnestown were divided in their loyalties during the Civil War. Maryland was a Slave State, and many of its residents supported the Southern cause. About 20,000 Maryland men fought with the Confederacy in Virginia, and some of those were Darnestown residents. On the other hand, Maryland stayed in the Union, and its men fought with the Union forces, too.

The Union soldiers generally found the Darnestown residents to be hospitable to them while they were camped here, and trade with local merchants was brisk and friendly.

Among the Darnestown residents who fought in the War Between the States, there are several whose stories have been preserved until the present time. One of these was William E. Darne. He was born near Darnestown on February 11, 1848. He was the son of West Point graduate Lt. Alexander Contee Hanson Darne. Lt. Darne was graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1836 and served in the Army for nine years before resigning to take up farming.

William was 13 years old when hostilities broke out between the North and the South; he must have talked to his father about the danger of war.

Alexander Darne knew personally many of the officers and soldiers on both sides of the Civil War because of his West Point background. William also could not avoid the War; in September, 1864, he is known to have been a member of company B, 35th Battalion of Virginia Cavalry of the Confederate States of America. He was 16 years of age at the time.

At the end of the War, William Darne, along with other members of the regiment, rode towards Lynchburg, Virginia rather than surrender at Appomattox. On April 22, 1865, however, he and compatriot Maryland "exiles" returned to civilian life at Harper's Ferry by signing a parole and an oath of allegiance to the Federal Government.

William died at the Old Soldiers' Home in Richmond, Virginia fifty years later, in 1915, at the age of 67. He was later buried in the cemetery of the Darnestown Presbyterian Church.

Another Darnestown resident who served in the Civil War was Charles H. Nourse. Charles Nourse was slightly older than William Darne. He was sixteen years old and living in Leesburg, Virginia when he heard about the Confederate victory at the Battle of Balls Bluff.

The news of the war came from Walter Gibson Peter, a close friend of Darne's participating in the battle.

Charles enlisted in Company A of the 35th Battalion of the Virginia Cavalry on January 1, 1863, while the Company was quartered at New Market, Virginia. Charles was detailed to the Signal Service, where he spent his entire military career.

The War ended for Charles Nourse in June, 1865. On June 6th, in Washington, DC, he signed the oath of allegiance to the Federal Government. On June 10th, Charles entered the camp of the 1st New Hampshire Cavalry at Edward's Ferry in Maryland;

there his name was recorded on a list “of paroled Rebel Soldiers who have availed themselves of the President’s Amnesty Proclamation”. He was then only 20 years old.

After the War, Charles Nourse became a physician. He practiced medicine for many years in the Darnestown area. He died on October 11, 1917, and was buried in the Darnestown Presbyterian Church cemetery.

A close friend of Charles Nourse was Walter Gibson Peter. He was born on October 16, 1842. He spent most of his youth in Darnestown, in a home known as “Montanverde”, on Berryville Road. His father was Major George Peter, an Army officer.

In 1848, when young “Gip” Peter was nearly six years old, Congressman Abraham Lincoln was entertained by the Peter family and spent the night at “Montanverde”. The house still stands on a hill near Berryville Road.

At 18, Gip Peter crossed the Potomac to visit the Nourse family, and he volunteered to serve with the Seventh Brigade of the Confederate Army. By that time, Gip was a tall, strong youth and an excellent horseman.

On October 21, 1861 after the Battle of Ball’s Bluff, Gip returned to Leesburg and showed 16 year-old Charles Nourse his uniform. According to a written account, Gip had “five bullet holes about him -- through his hat, his coat in the shoulder, under his arm – all made while delivering orders upon the field”. Gip remarked to Nourse, “It is not very funny, Charlie, is it? But we are right, and I am going into the service regularly”.

In December 1861, Peter joined Captain White’s company of couriers. Soon thereafter, at the request of his cousin William Orton Williams, Gip traveled to Tennessee. There he joined his cousin’s command. About 16 months later, for reasons as yet unknown, the two men crossed the Union lines dressed as Federal officers. They were soon found out, and charged as spies. Despite their pleas of innocence, Gip Peter and his cousin were hanged on June 9, 1863, at Franklin, Tennessee.

Two other Darnestown residents who fought in the Civil War were George R. Rice and Edgar L. Tschiffely.

George R. Rice was born in Montgomery County, Maryland, on October 8, 1842. When the Civil War broke out, he also decided to enlist in the cause of the Confederacy. On August 25, 1862, at the age of nineteen, he joined Company A, 1st Maryland Cavalry, CSA.

George’s service to the Confederacy was marked by two instances of capture by Federal troops. His first capture was at the hands of the 13th Pennsylvania Cavalry, in Strausburg, Virginia. After incarceration at Camp Chase in Ohio, he was exchanged for a Federal prisoner. Later he was recaptured and held until the War’s end, when he signed the oath of allegiance.

Shortly after the War, on January 2, 1866, George married Miss Elberta Moore Tschiffely. Thereafter, he became a successful farmer in Darnestown. In 1881 he bought the Dr. Richard Beall house, which had been built prior to the War. This house still stands on Darnestown Road near Turkey Foot.

George Rice also served as a trustee of the Andrew Small Academy, and as a Supervisor of Elections in Montgomery County. He died at the age of 79 on October 13, 1921, and he was buried in the Darnestown Presbyterian Church.

Also born in 1842 was Elgar L. Tschiffely. Like Rice, he joined Company A of the 1st Maryland Cavalry. His service began just prior to the Battle of Gettysburg. He served for two years, participating in some 25 armed engagements; he was released from service on May 25, 1865.

Elgar Tschiffely became a successful farmer in the Darnestown area after the Civil War. He died at the age of 87, and was buried with a small marker in the Darnestown Presbyterian Church cemetery. On October 28, 1989, a ceremony honoring his memory was held at the cemetery. The Governor of Maryland issued a proclamation that day,

praising the community for remembering its history,

As a result of the occupation of Darnestown by so many troops, the area suffered heavy damage to its crops, fences, livestock, and buildings. Most severe, of course, was the torment of broken families who in some cases had soldiers on both sides of the conflict.

Darnestown Presbyterian Church

Prior to 1855, Presbyterians in Darnestown were one of several church-going congregations who held their services in a log building near the intersection of Darnestown Road and Germantown Road. In 1855, however, the Darnestown Presbyterians, then numbering ten people, were made a "Missionary Point" of the Neelesville Church, and they set about to build their own building.

Major George Peter offered to give the congregation some land on Berryville Road. However, the congregation rejected the offer because of the distance of the land from the center of Darnestown.

Later, the congregation accepted an offer of land from John Du Fief, a miller, offered three acres at the intersection of Turkey Foot and Darnestown Roads for the church; with this gift, planning for the building began.

The cornerstone of the church was laid on September 14, 1856, only a few years before the Civil War would forever change life in Darnestown. Mementos of the time – papers and coins – were sealed into the cornerstone. The whereabouts of the cornerstone and the mementos is not known at this time, although the cornerstone could have been concealed by later additions of paint or concrete.

The church was constructed of stone that was hauled from the local quarry by the men of the congregation. The women helped to finance the project by winding long strips of cloth into balls and

then selling them to a company that manufactured braided rugs.

The completed church building was dedicated on May 22, 1858. The large sanctuary had only one stove to provide heat, and this was not enough to keep the floor warm. Soon the owners of the various pews brought pieces of carpet from home to keep their feet warm, giving the church the appearance of "Joseph's coat of many colors".

Services were held twice a month on Sundays during the early years of the church. The first minister was the Reverend Daniel Motzer. During the week, a small parochial school was held in the church basement.

The Presbyterian Church and its congregation are important to the history of Darnestown because it has served the community continuously for its 135 years as a place of worship and a town meeting hall. As we shall see, however, the congregation also was responsible for providing Darnestown's first school.

During 1897, the church was renovated. A parlor and a bell tower were added to the front of the building. No other major change was made until 1953, when the inside of the sanctuary was remodeled and a new wing was added to the rear of the building. In 1958, the parlor was opened to enlarge the sanctuary. The stained glass windows, including memorials to the Tschiffely, Gassaway, and Nourse families, and the floor and the frame still remain as parts of the original structure.

Today worship services are held in the church every Sunday. The Church membership has grown to nearly 500 members. [*Editor's Note: Membership number is from 1992, when this document was first published.*] The bells of the church remind all the people of Darnestown to think about their blessings.

The Darnestown Presbyterian church continues to play a major role in our community life. Along with the church-related activities, the building provides meeting space for many local organizations such as

the Greater Darnestown Civic Association, the Boy Scouts. The Girl Scouts, the Darnestown “Bloomers” garden club, and the Darnestown Historical Society.

Darnestown Presbyterian Church Cemetery

The Presbyterian Church cemetery contains the graves of many of the people who contributed to the founding and growth of Darnestown. The cemetery was marked out at the time of the building of the church. The first burial, of James Brooke Beall, took place in 1856. After the church was established, some members of the congregation re-buried the remains of relatives who had been buried in other places.

Descendants of some of the earliest families of Darnestown who are buried in the Presbyterian Church cemetery include the Gassaways, the Darnes, the Rices, the Claggetts, and the Offutts. Civil War veterans buried there include William E. Darne, Charles H. Nourse, George R. Rice, and Elgar L. Tschiffely.

Mr. Nourse’s service during the Civil War was described earlier [in this series]. He is the grandfather of Curry England, a Darnestown native and one of the Darnestown History Day speakers. Mr. Nourse became a physician after the Civil War. His son, Upton Nourse, followed his father in the medical profession, delivering many babies in Darnestown. When he began his practice, he traveled the roads with a horse and buggy, but later he acquired the first automobile in Darnestown. He was an elder of the Presbyterian Church for many years, and is buried in the church cemetery.

A tall obelisk in the cemetery marks the grave of Andrew Small, a Scottish contractor. His donation to the church led to the founding of the Andrew Small Academy, predecessor of the Darnestown Elementary School. Mr. Small left neither wife nor child, but he is remembered by many whose education can be traced to his generosity.

The church cemetery is also the final resting place for the men whose names were given to the nearby

locks of the C&O Canal – Pennyfield, Violet, and Riley.

Other prominent Darnestown family names can be found among nearly 1,300 graves in the cemetery: Berry, Broome, Carter, Cissell, Connelly, Curlis, Darby, Du Fief, Esworthy, Hoskinson, Kelley, Lewis, Mills, Nourse, Roberts, Tschiffely, Ward, and Windsor.

In 1891, the iron picket fence that surrounded the old Courthouse building in Rockville was bought by the church and installed within the cemetery, where a part of it still stands today.

The cemetery continues to be used today. Lying near the church, the school, and the quiet fields of Darnestown helps make it a happy, yet peaceful place in which Darnestown residents can remember their forebears.

EDUCATION IN DARNESTOWN

The first formal education in Darnestown took place in the basement of the Presbyterian Church immediately after its construction. Education was not available to everyone and not all communities could boast of even a small school.

In 1867, however, the Presbyterian Church was given a gift of \$35,000 to build a real schoolhouse. The gift came from Mr. Andrew Small, a successful contractor on the C&O Canal who admired the efforts of the church to provide learning opportunities for the children of the Darnestown area.

With the ending of the hostilities of the Civil War, Small’s gift gave the community a chance to turn its efforts to peaceful ends. The leaders of the church were grateful for the gift and used part of the money immediately to build a school building, saving the rest to pay for its operation.

The new school was given the name “Andrew Small Academy” when it opened in 1869. At the time it was built, the Andrew Small Academy was the largest school building in Montgomery County. The

high level of the instruction given there soon established it as an accredited college preparatory school.

Because there were so few schools in the area, many families from neighboring communities sent their children to the Andrew Small Academy as boarding students. These students lived on the third floor of the building along with the teachers. Local youngsters attended as day students. The school was closed during 1871, but operated continuously from 1872 until 1907. This photo shows the academy as it appeared around 1908.

In 1907, the Academy ceased operating as a private school. The Montgomery County Public School System took over the building for use as a public high school. In 1927, the County discontinued use of the upper floors and began to teach elementary school in the first floor of the building.

Although the Civil War was long over and black citizens of Maryland were entitled to full rights of education, it was only in 1954 that black children and white children were educated in the same schools. This policy of racial segregation was common throughout the United States for many years after the War Between the States, but the practice persisted longer in southern and border states.

In 1955, the school building, then almost a century old, was torn down to make way for the present Darnestown Elementary School. The new school was built about 100 feet from the site of the Andrew Small building, at a cost of \$207,000.

Since that time, two generations of students have been educated in the new school. The enrollment has continued to grow larger over the years, but the teaching staff has always provided a sound foundation in “reading, writing, and arithmetic”.

The gift that Andrew Small left the Darnestown community showed his high regard for the importance of education. The citizens of Darnestown want their children to remember

Andrew Small and his Academy gift, because they also believe that education is very important.

DARNESTOWN AFTER THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES

After the catastrophe of the Civil War, the entire United States turned to the problems of healing the wounds of the war, reviving productive farming, and rebuilding the ordinary family life of the Nation.

In Maryland, a border state in which brother against brother fought during the war, restoring a peaceful climate was both more important and more difficult.

Darnestown had additional problems brought on by the encampment of thousands of troops there during the war. Many of the farms had been ruined. Much work had to be done to rebuild the farms, plant crops and trees, and regain productive use of domestic animals.

Although the steam engine was invented a century before the Civil War, the industrial revolution was slow in coming to the United States. Veterans of the Civil War turned almost entirely to farming or to shop-keeping and mules provided nearly all the power that did not come from the arms and legs of men and women.

Darnestown residents of that time included a doctor, a merchant, a blacksmith, and a wheelwright. These people served the needs of the farmers and other residents of the area. The heart of Darnestown Village lay at the intersection of Darnestown Road and Seneca Road.

Mr. James Windsor, grandfather of Curry England one of the featured speakers during History Day, opened the Windsor Store at the corner of Seneca and Darnestown Roads in approximately 1878. He operated the store for many years, and also served as Darnestown’s Postmaster for some 20 years. The Darnestown Post Office was discontinued in 1911. The Windsor Store building survived until 1969, when it caught fire and burned to the ground.

Darnestown was an important community at that time. Situated at a busy crossroads, Darnestown was a center for trade in farm products and the stone and grain from the nearby mills.

At the turn of the century, the average Montgomery County farm was 100 acres in size; 90% of the County's residents were engaged in agricultural occupations.

Because horses were used for power on the farms, and because transportation was expensive, many farmers built large barns for the stabling of livestock and for the storage of hay and grain to use during the winter.

The grain farmers shipped some of their wheat to Washington by boat. As much as 4,000 bushels could be carried on each boat from the Seneca or Tschiffeley's mill.

The value of a farm during the post-Civil War period was determined in part by the quality of the nearby roads. Farms lying along paved roads, or along the train routes, brought higher prices than those served only by dirt roads.

In 1899, there were 790 miles of unimproved dirt roads in the County and only 45 miles of stone and gravel roads. As time went on, more and more of the roads were leveled and paved.

The first use of steam to multiply man's power came to Montgomery County on May 25, 1873, in the form of the steam-powered train. It ran on 42 miles of track, including runs through Gaithersburg and Germantown.

The speed and efficiency of the train for the transportation of goods and people spelled the end of the C&O Canal. The train also reduced the importance of the grist mills, and of Darnestown as a major center for commerce in Maryland. Citizens of the town began to concentrate on farming and local commerce for their livelihood.

As the industrial revolution brought mechanical planters, reapers, balers, and tractors to the farms, farmers began to depend less and less on human labor (and thus on their own large families!) and more and more on the machines. The speed of trucks and

trains also enabled dairy farmers to sell milk in Washington despite the lack of good refrigeration.

Mechanical skill became even more a vital part of a farmer's abilities than it had been in former times. Fast transportation and the use of mechanical milkers allowed a dairy farmer to enlarge his herd of milk cows. One of the largest local milk producers was Kelley's "Pleasant Hills Dairy", which ceased production only in the late 1950's.

Until recently, Mr. Tom Kelley, descendant of Darnestown's early families, farmed much of the land around Darnestown. He was famous for his "Kelley Corn" farm wagon that supplied many Darnestown families with fresh produce during the summer. Kelley corn also fed many visitors to the dining hall at the Montgomery County Fair each August.

Most of the large farms of Darnestown have been broken up and used as the sites for new houses. However, here and there one can still see a large barn that testifies to the land's heritage. One such barn, built about 1920 by Mr. Paul Bogley on the old Dr. Richard Beall property, still stands within sight of the Darnestown Elementary School today. It is used by Mr. and Mrs. James Schooley to stable horses, store hay, and shelter tools, but no longer serves as the center of a large farm.

The Bogley farm itself became the site of the community of Ancient Oak West after Mr. Bogley sold it in 1963.

There are still cattle and horses in Darnestown, although the cattle are fast disappearing. Horses, however, may be as numerous now as they ever were, offering their owners – both young and old – many opportunities to improve their equestrian abilities, or simply to spend a quiet hour riding through the fields and woods of Darnestown or nearby Seneca Creek State Park.

Darnestown Today and Tomorrow

Today, Darnestown's major product is not milk, corn, wheat, or lumber, but people. They grow in the majority of the homes that occupy the agricultural fields of former times. Instead of farm wagons, cars and school buses crowd the two main

roads that connect Darnestown with its neighboring communities.

Many open areas testify to the rural heritage of Darnestown, however, and provide the vistas of Maryland's rolling hills that make it such a popular place to live. Darnestown is lucky to be nearly surrounded by parkland and to have its own softball and soccer fields and a covered picnic area.

It is still possible to stand near the Darnestown Elementary School and see the fog hanging over the Potomac River some three miles to the south. Horses can be seen grazing peacefully within sight of the school.

Darnestown is typical of small-town Maryland in many ways. It has both public businesses, a variety of old and new homes with plenty of grass and trees, and quite a bit of open land. Most of its citizens like this type of community. There are many people who see that Darnestown is close to metropolitan Washington and that more businesses and more houses could easily be built and sold for a profit here. This tendency towards more intensive development worries the leaders of Darnestown; should they try to keep the town small and rural, or should they encourage new construction?

The leaders know that Darnestown is really not a town at all, in the sense of being incorporated by the state of Maryland. It has no definite boundaries, no mayor, and no City Council.

As an un-incorporated area, the boundaries of Darnestown are not legally defined; what most people mean when they refer to Darnestown is the area bounded by Seneca Creek State Park to the north and west, by Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park to the south, and by Jones Lane, Norman Drive, and Riffle Ford Road on the east.

Since Darnestown has no Mayor or City council, decisions about the number and types of houses, the installation of city water or sewer facilities, and the introduction of new businesses through commercial or industrial zoning all must be made

by the Montgomery County Council or the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

Darnestown has had elected civic leaders in the form of the Greater Darnestown Civic Association since 1967. The officers and trustees of the Civic Association are chosen by the residents of Darnestown to represent them in discussions about Darnestown with the county and State governments.

When the Park and Planning Commission was preparing a Master Plan for the Potomac Sub-Region, the Civic Association offered its help and advice. The most recent Master Plan was adopted in 1980. It still guides the development of Darnestown.

Darnestown also has its own newspaper, The Little Acorn, written and published four times a year by volunteer staff under the guidance of the Civic Association. Darnestown news also appears in the Gaithersburg Gazette, in the Montgomery Journal, and in the Washington Post newspapers.

Since Darnestown must rely on the County and Regional governments to make sensible decisions about the community, it is important for all of the residents to know about the Master Plan and to obtain up-to-date information about county and state happenings that affect Darnestown.

As you study in school and as you work and play in Darnestown after school, you should remember all of the students who have grown up over the past two centuries. Like them, you should try to think about how you can make Darnestown a better community.

The Darnestown Historical Society hopes to continue to preserve historical information about our community and to make it available to coming generations. The Society believes that the future is best built on a sound understanding of the past.