

the Preservationist

Summer 2003

Recalling the Past: Camp Meetings

by Joey Lampl

Starting this Fall, the Historic Preservation Section will document Montgomery County's Camp Meeting tradition. In a phased folklore project funded by the National Park Service through the Maryland Historical Trust's Certified Local Government grant program, staff and independent consultants will document an important part of the county's social, educational, recreational, and religious history.

Camp meetings, or summer religious revivals, were a natural fit in Montgomery County beginning in the early 19th century because of the county's extensive woodlands and rural character. The first camp meeting sites were arbors of trees surrounded by benches. The idea was to have a spiritual retreat for ministers, their families, and worshippers in an atmosphere that was rejuvenating. The meetings typically were held for a handful of days in late July or early August. The earliest county meetings were held at Hopewell Chapel near Damascus and at Federal Chapel in Colesville.

After the Civil War, the camp meetings became more permanent in nature. In several locations, tabernacles were built, along with dining halls, dormitories, and cottages. Orators began to make the camp meeting circuit, traveling from other parts of the country to speak at the religious retreats. Washingtonians traveled to the meetings via horse and buggy. One of the first post-Civil War meetings was at Emory Grove, a Methodist meeting established for black freedmen. It was active until 1967.

The opening of the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad in 1873 spurred the development of the meeting at Washington Grove in 1874. Methodist ministers and laymen from Washington, D.C., bought nearly 170 acres of land near Gaithersburg and the B&O accommodated the summer worshippers by establishing a stop at Washington Grove. The camp featured a wooden tabernacle under a

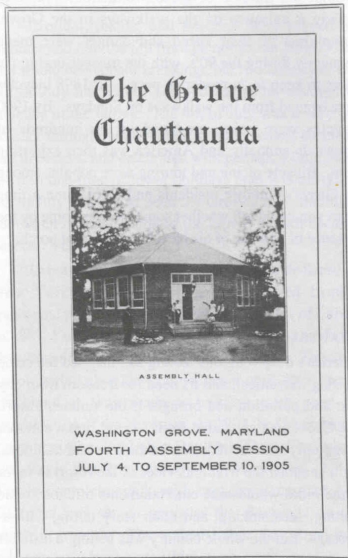
grove of trees and cottage sites on narrow lots that radiated out from the tabernacle. The summer meetings ended in 1924, but the community still thrives as a permanent, year-round neighborhood.

The Baltzley brothers decided to construct a more sophisticated version of the camp meeting, known as the National Chautauqua at Glen Echo, in the early 1890s. The Glen Echo site not only featured spiritual sessions, but intellectual lectures and fine concerts. It drew a vast crowd of Washingtonians to the shore of the Potomac until a malaria scare in 1892 squelched its popularity.

In 1931, the Bethesda Methodist Church sponsored a camp meeting in Damascus, which eventually became known as the Damascus Camp Meeting (and has been run for many years by the Montgomery County Interdenominational Holiness Association). Another Depression-era meeting was the Free Methodist Church Maryland-Virginia meeting – also known as the Spencerville Free Methodist Camp Meeting – started under a grove of trees with benches and tents in 1932. Worshippers eventually erected a wooden tabernacle, one-room cabins and frame buildings to support dining and other functions.

The first part of the camp meeting folklore project will be an oral history component. The Historic Preservation Section is seeking people who have participated in any of the Montgomery County camp meetings over a long period of time. Researchers are looking for people who have good memories of events and the routine of the camp meeting. Three people with extensive knowledge of the camp meeting tradition will be interviewed during the first phase of work in the late Fall. The goal is that additional people will be interviewed as future grant money becomes available. Interviews will take no more than one hour, can be held at the

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Program cover of the 1905 Washington Grove Assembly.

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Historic Preservation News and Notes



Reenactor Anita Henderson at Oakley Cabin for Montgomery County Heritage Days.



HPC Commissioners Velasquez and O'Malley at the Historic Preservation booth at last year's Montgomery County Birthday celebration.

Montgomery Preservation, Inc. Preservation Awards

The annual Montgomery County Preservation Awards Ceremony was held May 21 at the newly restored Silver Spring Train Station. This year's Montgomery Prize went to former County Council member Blair Ewing for his outstanding work in helping to preserve County history. Ewing currently teaches Political Science at Montgomery College and provides organization management services as a consultant to nonprofit organizations. Other restoration/renovation awards went to: Chevy Chase Village for the *Chevy Chase Village Hall*, John T. Bell for the *Cottage at Quality Hill* in Rockville, Maureen and David Neumann for *Hearthstone* in Washington Grove, Robert Thomas and Donna Maria Seyfried for *Pleasant Fields* in Laytonsville, the Olney Boys and Girls Community Sports Association for the rebuilding of the historic *Falling Green Barn* for public use, and John and Kathy Lyons for the conversion of the historic *Willow Grove Springhouse* for private use.

For pictures and information on these projects, visit the Montgomery Preservation, Inc. website at www.montgomerypreservation.org.

Montgomery County Heritage Days a Big Success

The weather was cooperative and beautiful on the weekend of June 28 and 29 as 28 historic sites around the county were open with special activities and exhibits for the 6th annual Montgomery County Heritage Days (previously

called "History Tour"). Some sites, such as the Gaithersburg International Latitude Observatory, the King Barn in Germantown, and the Sandy Spring Slave Museum, are not often open to the public. Other more well known places such as the Beall-Dawson House and the John Poole House, featured special demonstrations and exhibits. Six M-NCPPC sites were open: Oakley Cabin in Brookeville (open regularly on the last Saturday of every month), Woodlawn Manor in Sandy Spring, the Agricultural History Farm Park in Derwood, the Waters House (operated by the Montgomery County Historical Society), the King Dairy Barn Mooseum in Germantown, and the Hyattstown Mill (operated by the Hyattstown Mill Arts Project) in Hyattstown. If you missed the event, many of the sites are open to the public at other times. You can check out the Montgomery County Historical Society website, www.montgomeryhistory.org to find the websites and phone numbers of the participating sites.

New Historic Markers

Historic markers will soon mark the sites of Veirs Mill and of Newmantown, as well as the historically designated house and barn that were built by merchant and farmer Oliver Watkins in Cedar Grove. All of these resources are located on Montgomery County parkland.

Celebrate the Founding of Montgomery County

On Sunday, September 7 come help celebrate Montgomery County's 226th birthday at the Beall-Dawson House Historical Park, 103 West Montgomery Avenue in Rockville from 12 noon to 5 p.m. There will be lectures on gold mining in the county, the local Negro Baseball League, and life on the "Home Front" during the Second World War. Young and old can explore the county's history through exhibits by local historical groups, living history presentations, videos, an archaeological dig, tour of the house, or historical games. Historical music and good food, including a birthday cake, will add to the celebration of the Birthday of our county.

Parking is available at the City of Rockville lot on East Middle Lane and a free shuttle bus will take you to the Park two blocks away. The event is cosponsored by the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission and the Montgomery County Historical Society. For more information call 301-762-1492 or www.montgomeryhistory.org.

the Preservationist

The Preservationist is the official publication of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Phone: 301-563-3400. Statements herein do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Commission. Created by the Historic Resources Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 24A, Montgomery County Code) the Commission is responsible for identification, designation, and regulation for purposes of protection, preservation, continued use, and enhancement of sites and structures of historical, archeological, architectural, or cultural value. Commission members are appointed by the Montgomery County Executive and confirmed by the Montgomery County Council.

Commission

Susan Velasquez, Chair Julia O'Malley, Vice Chair
Steven Breslin, AIA Douglas A. Harbit Lynne B. Watkins
Kimberly Prothro Williams Nuray Anahtar, AIA Lee Burstyn Jef Fuller, AIA
Historic Preservation Coordinator Gwen Wright

Requests to be on the mailing list and content information should be directed to the Commission.

Meet Our New Commissioners

This spring three new commissioners joined the Historic Preservation Commission, replacing retiring commissioners. One of those leaving was the Chair of the Commission Steven Spurlock who had been on the Commission since 1996. Susan Velasquez is now the Chair and Julia O'Malley is the Vice-Chair of the Commission.

The HPC is very happy to welcome Nuray Anahtar, Lee Burstyn and Jef Fuller.

Nuray Anahtar, AIA

Nuray Anahtar is an architect and the principal of NOA Architecture, Planning, Interiors of Bethesda, Maryland. She has been living and practicing in the Washington, D.C., area since 1985 and has been involved in numerous commercial, residential, institutional, and interior design projects. She lives in Bethesda.

Lee Burstyn

Mr. Burstyn is a real estate agent with Weichert, Realtors in Bethesda. He is retired from the

U.S. Department of Transportation where he worked as an attorney. Mr. Burstyn has lived in Montgomery County for twenty-five years and resides in Rockville.

Jef Fuller, AIA

Mr. Fuller is a lifetime resident of Montgomery County and has lived in the historic Locust Hill property in Brookeville Maryland for the last 17 years. Jef is Managing Principal of DNC Architects, Inc in Rockville Maryland, involved in a wide range of commercial projects.

2003 Historic Preservation Grants Available

The Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission administers a Historic Preservation Grant Fund of \$30,000 which will be available for disbursement in fiscal year 2004. These grants are given to nonprofit groups or municipal governments for historical activities and must be matched with local funding or in-kind services by the group.

Activities for which the Commission will consider a matching grant include, but are not limited to: historic district signage; walking tour

handbooks of historic districts; feasibility studies for restoration or preservation of buildings owned or under the custody of nonprofit organizations; research projects such as historical or archaeological surveys; public educational functions such as slides shows, lectures, videos, exhibits and oral histories.

The HPC does not fund staffing or capital improvement projects. Please see the column to the right for more information.

Camp Meeting Project

from Page 1

person's home, and will be recorded on audiotape. Interviews will be transcribed and the interviewees will be professionally photographed for a future publication.

Historic Preservation Section staff also seeks any written or photographic memorabilia associated with the Camp Meeting tradition. If people have newspaper articles, advertisements, circulars, or photographs that can contribute to an understanding of this important tradition, please consider sharing the information with the staff. All material will be returned in the same condition that it is received.

The Historic Preservation Section hopes to be able to develop a publication on the Camp Meeting tradition after enough interviews have been collected and the history of the camp meetings has been fully researched. The Maryland Historical Trust Press has published several folklore books and pamphlets that have proved successful in raising the level of awareness of the state's important cultural traditions. Examples include books on tobacco farming in Cecil County, life along the Patapsco River, and skipjacking on the Eastern Shore.

Please contact the Historic Preservation Section at 301-563-3414 if you have any information concerning the camp meeting tradition or know of anyone who does.

2003 Historic Preservation Grant Fund Schedule

July:

Applications mailed to interested parties, advertisements placed in newspapers.

September 30:

Completed applications due.

September/October:

Applications processed.

October:

A committee of Historic Preservation Commissioners reviews applications and makes recommendations to the full Commission which votes on the proposals.

October 31:

Applicants notified of awards. Notice to proceed with projects is issued around January 1, depending on completion of executed documents. Completed projects are due the end of December 2004.

If you would like to receive an application for an HPC Historic Preservation Grant please call: 301-563-3400.

Calendar

August

13 HPC Meeting, 7:30 p.m., MRO Auditorium, 8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring. Call 301-563-3400. www.mc-mncppc.org

September

7 Happy Birthday Montgomery County Celebration, Beall-Dawson House, 111 West Montgomery Ave., Rockville. Call 762-1492. www.montgomeryhistory.org

10 & 24 HPC Meeting, 7:30 p.m., MRO Auditorium, 8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring.

October

4 Harvest Festival at the Agricultural History Farm Park in Derwood. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Call 301-670-4661. www.montgomeryparksfnd.org

8 & 22 HPC Meeting, 7:30 p.m., MRO Auditorium, 8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring. Call 301-563-3400. www.mc-mncppc.org

November

1 Maryland Emancipation Day celebration. Oakley Cabin. 12 noon to 4 p.m. Call 301-258-4044. www.montgomeryparksfnd.org

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Silver Spring, MD 20910

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