

## II. Broad Creek History

Broad Creek is one of the principal tributaries of the Potomac River in the area that is now Prince George's County. The mouth of the creek and its broad estuary create one of the distinctive features of the western boundary of the county, and define the Broad Creek Historic District.

Long the hunting grounds of Native American tribes, the Broad Creek area was visited by British colonists by the midpoint of the seventeenth century. The first record of proposed use and settlement by these colonists came in 1662 with the survey of a 500-acre tract called Battersea. In the next 25 years, numerous other smaller tracts were patented in this immediate area, but Battersea was the first, and it was out of the 500-acre tract that the community of Broad Creek came to be developed at the end of the seventeenth century. During the same time period, a short distance from the fledgling port town, a house of worship was built for the new parish of the established Anglican church, soon followed by the construction of dwellings, stores and warehouses. Over the next three centuries, most of these riverside structures disappeared, but new development followed, mostly residential and on relatively large lots. Large tracts of undeveloped parkland also make up the Broad Creek district, and today the area still exhibits, to a certain extent, its rural character. Its residents now seek ways of preserving what is left of the original historic structures and landscapes, as well as its historic rural ambience.

### First Residents

The coastal plain of the Potomac River basin had long been the home and hunting grounds of groups of Piscataway and other tribes of Native Americans. At the time of European contact, the principal lands of the Piscataway tribe in this area lay about four miles south of Broad Creek. This area, on the south bank of Piscataway Creek at its confluence with the Potomac, had been inhabited by these native populations for nearly 5,000 years before the period of European contact. Encounters and negotiations between the British colonists and the native Piscataways took place regularly during the latter years of the seventeenth century. Although cooperative relations had been established between the British and the Piscataways, the native populations were frequently under attack from the warlike Susquehannock tribes to the north. These constant raids, as well as the failure of the colonists to guarantee the protection of the Piscataway populations, eventually led the Piscataways to abandon their Maryland hunting grounds and resettle in the mountains of Virginia. Almost all of the local native population left this area in 1697, leaving the area essentially open to the British to develop their port town and community.

In the area of Broad Creek, the Potomac River shoreline is known to have been home to Native American tribes during the Archaic and Woodland periods (7500 B.C. to 1600 A.D.) No systematic archaeology has been done on prehistoric sites within the Broad Creek study area, but large numbers of early artifacts were collected by the farmers who cultivated the Battersea land during the nineteenth century. Also, a few informal shovel test pits, opened during the National Park Service excavation of 1985-87, gave clear

evidence of Native American occupation before the end of the seventeenth century. Systematic excavations by the National Park Service in the future are certain to shed more light on early Native American presence in the Broad Creek area.<sup>1</sup>

## Early Colonial Settlement

It was out of the 500-acre tract, Battersea, and the various subsequent divisions of its land, that the commercial riverport community of Aire (or Broad Creek) came to be developed at the end of the seventeenth century. Battersea was surveyed in 1662 for a lawyer named Humphrey Haggett, who never lived on the land that was surveyed for him. By 1668 he had died, and the land was patented in that year to his widow's new husband, Richard Fowke. It is unlikely that the Fowkes or the next few owners ever lived on the land; the first archaeological evidence of European residence is a generation later. Richard Fowke sold the 500-acre tract in 1688 to two men (Richard Iles and Phillip Mason); it was on Mason's half (the westerly section near the mouth of the Broad Creek) that there began to develop the community of Broad Creek, sometimes known also as "Aire."<sup>2</sup>

By this time, several smaller tracts had been laid out in the immediate vicinity of Battersea; there was Little Hall and Wharton's Rest to the northwest and Addison's Expedition, Athey's Folly, and Clarkson's Purchase to the south. (See Map 2.) Although it is not known whether these tracts were occupied by their owners, there is evidence from later accounts that they were at least cultivated during these later years of the seventeenth century. The population of the Maryland colony was gradually moving inland, discovering promising places along major waterways, and beginning to settle and develop communities. In 1692 the Battersea tract changed hands again: Mason sold his 250 acres to Thomas Lewis, and it is almost certainly the Lewis family that first constructed a dwelling on this, the land which we know today as Harmony Hall.<sup>3</sup>

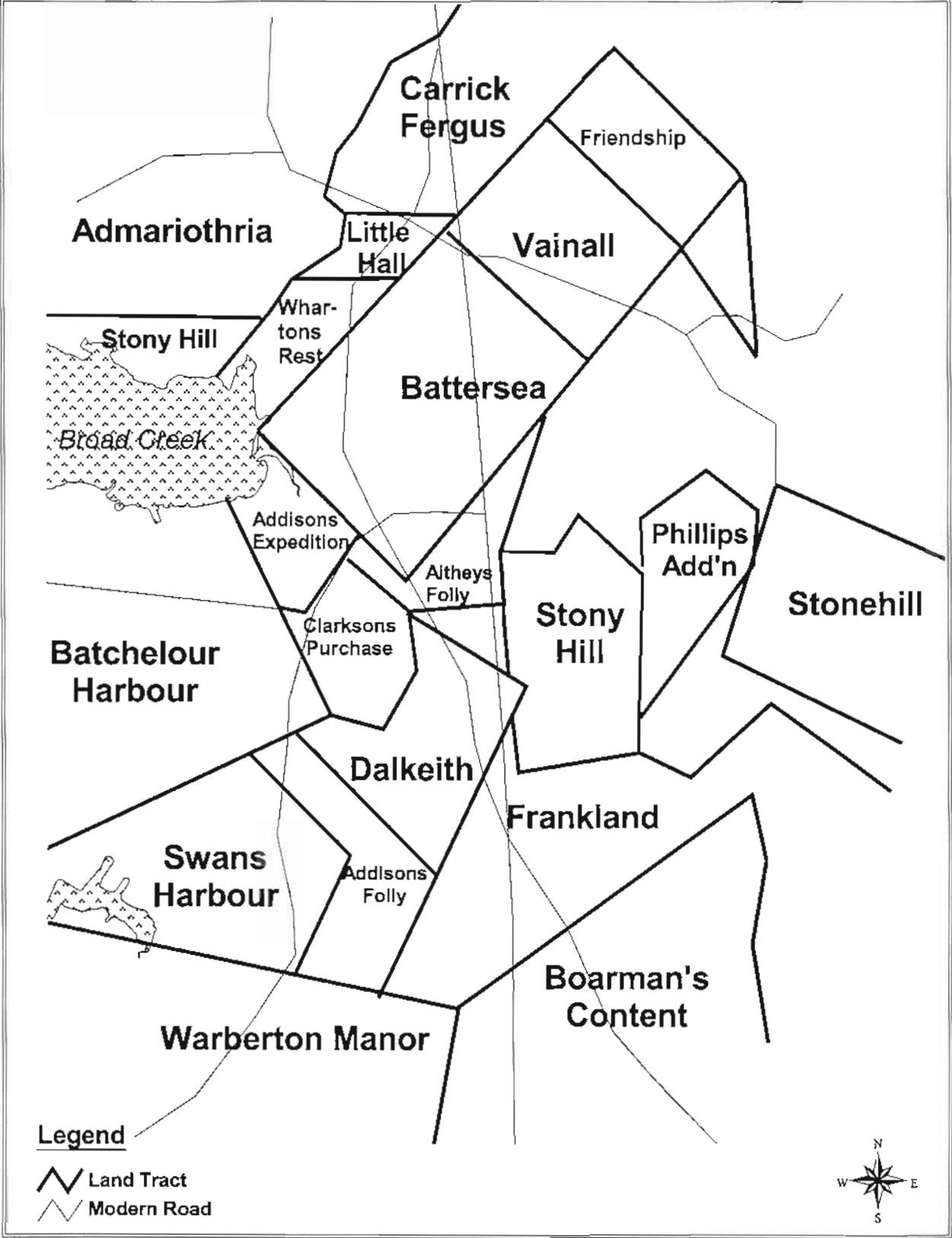
The archaeological investigation carried out by the National Park Service (1985-87) gave evidence of an earthfast structure<sup>4</sup> just east of the present eighteenth-century brick plantation house at Harmony Hall, possibly the oldest documented dwelling in the Washington metropolitan area. Artifacts and other materials suggest a household of modest income, consonant with the economic status of the Lewis family as revealed in the inventory of Thomas Lewis. Lewis died in 1696 and by his will devised the southwesternmost 100 acres of Battersea to his son, Richard; his will makes

<sup>1</sup> Toogood, Anna C., *Piscataway Park Maryland, General Historic Background Study*, National Park Service, 1969; *Archives of Maryland* XV, 279-313; interview with Robert Sonderman, National Park Service archeologist, and interviews with local residents, July/August 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Prince George's County Patent Survey #6:226, 1662; Patent #12:138, 1668; Charles County Deed P#1:32, 1688.

<sup>3</sup> Charles County Deed S#1:48; Sonderman, Robert C., Matthew R. Vitta, Marilyn W. Nickels, and Stephen R. Potter, *Archeology at Harmony Hall: Exploring the Late Seventeenth-Century Frontier of Maryland*, National Park Service-National Capital Region, Washington, D.C., 1993.

<sup>4</sup> Earthfast houses were built using a post-in-ground construction technique and were relatively simple and economical to construct.



Map 2--Approximate Location of Early Tracts at Broad Creek (1696)

clear that his widow (the mother of Richard Lewis) was at that time living on the property.<sup>5</sup> Richard Lewis's 100 acres comprised the southernmost corner of the original 500-acre tract, the land on which the present Harmony Hall stands. It is safe to assume that the earthfast structure on the present grounds of Harmony Hall was the dwelling place of the Lewis family.<sup>6</sup>

The year of Thomas Lewis's death, 1696, was important for a number of reasons. In 1695, in response to the increase of population moving inland into this area, the General Assembly had passed "An Act for the Division and Regulating Severall Countys...and Constituting a County by the name of Prince George's County." This act took effect on April 23, 1696, and Prince George's County was thus created out of parts of the previously established Calvert and Charles Counties. All of the western part of the new county had been part of Charles County, which had originally been established in 1658.<sup>7</sup>

In 1692, the "Act for the Service of Almighty God and the Establishment of the Protestant Religion within this Province" had established the Church of England as the official church of the Maryland province. At that time, 30 parishes had been created in the province, two of which were located within the boundaries of Prince George's County when it was established in 1696. One of them, Piscataway (later known as King George's) Parish, established in then Charles County, extended along the Potomac River northward from Mattawoman Creek and included all of the Broad Creek area. At this time, 1692, there was no existing church building in Piscataway Parish. The few inhabitants of the area, however, quickly selected a vestry, led by John Addison, soon to be colonel of the new county's militia. In 1694 the vestry purchased from George Athey the 78-acre tract, Little Hall, and contracted with carpenters to build a wooden church.<sup>8</sup> The building of the first church on this site begins the history of St. John's Episcopal Church, like Harmony Hall one of the historical/architectural landmarks of the Broad Creek community.

The original intent of the "Act for the Service of Almighty God" of 1692 had been to establish churches and chapels every ten miles, and in the case of Piscataway (King George's) Parish, two mission chapels were constructed by 1696. The "upper chapel" was built to the north near the Eastern Branch (now Seat Pleasant) and the "lower chapel" in Accokeek to the south. And although the area's population included significant numbers that were not Anglican, the very construction of these new Anglican houses of worship enhanced the church's support and

<sup>5</sup> Sonderman et al, *op.cit.*; Provincial Court Will #7:150 (1696); Provincial Court Inventory XIV:42.

<sup>6</sup> The other 150 acres of Thomas Lewis's Battersea property were conveyed in 1709 and 1711 to Thomas Stonestreet, who subsequently (in 1726) purchased the remaining easterly 250 acres of Battersea. The Stonestreet family landholdings comprised much of what is today the northern section of the Broad Creek Historic District; see Prince George's County Deeds D:79, E:101; M:88. Interviews with Phyllis L. Cox, spring 2001.

<sup>7</sup> *Archives of Maryland*, XIX, 212-215.

<sup>8</sup> *Archives of Maryland*, XIII, 425-430; Charles County Deed Q:70-71; Vestry Minutes of King George's Parish, 1693, 1694; Hienton, L.J., *Prince George's Heritage*, Maryland Historical Society, 1972, pp. 67-69.

membership. Within 30 years of the “Act,” the number of Anglicans in the Maryland colony increased sixfold.<sup>9</sup> The church at Broad Creek became one of the focal points of the developing community.

Many priests in the newly established Anglican church made serious attempts to minister to and convert the slaves in their parishes. John Fraser was inducted as the first rector of Piscataway (King George’s) Parish in 1710; there is evidence that he devoted himself to the teaching and conversion of African-American slaves. In 1724, Fraser completed an Anglican church questionnaire that gave evidence of his efforts. To the question, “Are there any Infidels, bond or free, within your Parish; and what means are used for their conversion?” Fraser responded, “The Bond slaves are negroes and mulattos, of which sort I have baptized a great many, both infants, but particularly of adults. They frequent my churches ordinarily, and say their Catechism. The free are native Indians, who are aversed to Christianity.” Fraser’s response suggests that his congregation included a significant number of African-American slaves, but that he had been less successful in the teaching and conversion of the relatively few Native Americans remaining in the area.<sup>10</sup>

Although he may have felt that he was less than successful in proselytizing the local Piscataway Indians, the Reverend Fraser is known to have communicated and traded with them. Through his wife’s inheritance, Fraser had become proprietor of a sizeable plantation, St. James, on the south bank of Piscataway Creek approximately four miles southeast of the Broad Creek Church. This 700-acre tract had been patented in 1663, and passed down through the Neale, Blizzard and Fraser families. Because the St. James acreage was part of the Piscataway tribal lands, Fraser confirmed his possession in 1717 by presenting gifts to a member of the tribe. In the 1717 deed, Indian Tantahanz of the Piscataway nation conveyed to Fraser the 700 acres of St. James on the south side of Piscataway Creek “in the lands formerly reserved for use of [the Piscataway] Nation of Indians” in return for presents, including two guns, given to Tantahanz by Fraser.<sup>11</sup>

The year 1696 marks the establishment of Prince George’s County, the death of Battersea’s Thomas Lewis, and the finished construction of the first church in Piscataway Parish. As the county entered its first year of self governing, British colonists had surveyed and selected areas for cultivation, the Lewis family, and probably several other families, lived in modest earthfast wood houses, and the parish, which consisted of only 144 “taxables,”<sup>12</sup> had built its first house of worship. At this point, the focus of the area turns to the riverport and its commercial use.

<sup>9</sup> Middleton, Arthur Pierce, *Anglican Maryland, 1692-1792*, The Donning Company, 1992. After the Act of 1692, the Roman Catholic population of the Maryland colony, mostly concentrated in the southern counties (e.g., Charles and St. Mary’s), came under significant restrictions: Catholics were denied voting rights and the holding of public office and were required to conduct their worship in private.

<sup>10</sup> Perry, William S., D.D., *Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church*, Vol. 4, Anglican Records of Maryland and Delaware, Questionnaires of 1724.

<sup>11</sup> Prince George’s County Patent #7:53; Prince George’ County Deed F (old series):32.

<sup>12</sup> “Taxables” consisted of free males 16 years or older, male servants 16 or older, and all slaves (male and female) 16 and older.

## The Town at Broad Creek

In 1706 the General Assembly passed the “Act for the Advancement of Trade,” designating many more towns in the province; five of them, each to be 100 acres in size, were in Prince George’s County. These five riverport towns (in addition to the already established seat of government, Charles Town on the Patuxent River) were Milltown, Nottingham and Queen Anne on the Patuxent River, Marlborough on the Western Branch of the Patuxent, and a new port town at Broad Creek on the Potomac. Trade had already been well established at Broad Creek, the only one of the first six towns on the Potomac River. (The next year, 1707, the port town of Piscataway was established on Piscataway Creek, another tributary of the Potomac.) The landing at Broad Creek, which at the latest must have been in use from the early 1690s, was still in 1706 known as Thomas Lewis’s landing, although Lewis himself had been dead for ten years. In April 1706 provincial governor John Seymour signed into law the creation of a port town “in Prince George’s County at Broad Creek in Potomac River at south side of Broad Creek at Thomas Lewis’s Landing.”<sup>13</sup> The small commercial village was located close to and including the southwest corner of Richard Lewis’s 100 acres of Battersea, where Clash (or Slash) Creek flows into Broad Creek and thence into the Potomac.

The town at Broad Creek, like the others, was to be divided into 100 one-acre lots, with convenient streets and alleys, and with open spaces for erecting church, chapel, and market house, and any other necessary public buildings. Commissioners were appointed to purchase the land, and the original owner of the land would have first choice of the lots. Although no plat for the port town at Broad Creek has ever been discovered (and it is doubtful whether all of the town’s 100 acres were ever developed), contemporary sources do reveal some pieces of information about the early growth of the town. Certainly there was a landing and soon warehouses, and the community must have grown with increased trade. An indication of increased population and activity is the fact that in 1716 the Prince George’s County Court ordered that stocks and a whipping post be erected in the town at Broad Creek (as well as at Marlborough, Queen Anne and Nottingham).<sup>14</sup>

In 1706, the same year that the town at Broad Creek was officially established, a small tract of land was surveyed along the northwest diagonal boundary of Battersea. Including part of a previously surveyed tract called Wharton’s Rest, this new 35-acre tract was called Want Water, and was patented to Thomas Addison, son of Colonel John Addison.<sup>15</sup> The Want Water tract was made up of land along the south bank of the Broad Creek, giving its new owner valuable commercial exposure in the developing port town community of Broad Creek. Thomas Addison may well have traveled back and forth between his commercial property at Broad Creek and the family plantation approximately three miles to the north; one of the county’s early public roads connected the two places. The Addison family

<sup>13</sup> Session of General Assembly, April 2 to 19, 1706; *Archives of Maryland* XXVI, 636 ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Archives of Maryland* XXVI, 638-639; Prince George’s County Court Records, Book H:86 (1715-1720).

<sup>15</sup> Prince George’s County Patent DD#5:509.

also owned extensive property to the west, on the south side of the wide Broad Creek bay, a tract known as Batchelor's Harbor.<sup>16</sup> It is possible that the earliest section of the house known as Want Water (the ruins of which still stand on the Want Water tract) was built during Addison family ownership of the tract (cf. *infra*).

During the same time period, ownership of the land adjoining the village of Broad Creek was changing. In 1709, Richard Lewis sold his entire 100 acres of the Battersea tract to William Tyler, identified in the deed as a carpenter (both grantor and grantee were identified as residents of Prince George's County). In the deed, the boundaries are clearly stated as the same south-westerly 100 acres "at the mouth of a creek called Clash Creek" which Richard Lewis had inherited from his father in 1696, i.e., the location of the port town of Broad Creek. The deed also clearly states that the land being conveyed includes "any part thereof being erected and made a Town."<sup>17</sup> The 100 acres of Battersea remained in the ownership of the Tyler family for more than a half century.

There is significant evidence that the Tyler family resided on the Battersea acreage, probably in the earthfast house of the previous owners. William Tyler, carpenter, is cited in the vestry records of the Piscataway Parish church located on Little Hall (a short distance north of the town of Broad Creek): Tyler is credited with supervising construction of the second church on the site (1707), of wood frame construction, 50 feet by 25 feet with porch on the south, and subsequently (1713) as providing pews for the church.<sup>18</sup> One may assume that this is the same William Tyler who owned and occupied 100 acres of the adjoining Battersea at the time.

William Tyler died in 1721. His will devised his "now dwelling plantation called Battersey [sic]" to his wife, Elizabeth, and after her death to their son, William Tyler, and his heirs. He also devised to his daughters a working mill (location unspecified) and another plantation known as Clarkson's Purchase, a tract directly south of Battersea. Although Tyler's will clearly referred to Battersea as his "dwelling plantation," his 1722 inventory included no household furnishings.<sup>19</sup>

The second William Tyler predeceased his mother (who remarried within a few years of her husband's death) and therefore never came into legal possession of his father's Battersea bequest. William Tyler, Jr., apparently left the Broad Creek area and relocated to Charles County, possibly because the Battersea house was destroyed by fire close to the time of his father's death as suggested by the findings of the 1985-87 archaeological investigations at Harmony Hall. In his own will of 1755, the younger William Tyler was identified as "of Pomonkey" in Charles County; he left his various properties to his three children, never specifically citing Battersea.<sup>20</sup> It was his son, John Tyler, who later sold the 100 acres of Battersea in 1761.

<sup>16</sup> Prince George's County Court, March 1739 Session, Road Survey; Prince George's County Deeds C:184, 187, 204.

<sup>17</sup> Prince George's County Deed E:5.

<sup>18</sup> Vestry minutes of Piscataway Parish, Vol. I, pp. 17-20; unpublished history of St. John's Church, Broad Creek, from the manuscript of the Reverend Ethan Allen, c. 1870.

<sup>19</sup> Prince George's County Will #1:117; Prince George's County Inventory #7:151.

<sup>20</sup> Charles County Will AD#5:37; Sonderman et al, *op.cit.*

## Development of the Broad Creek Community

Another indication of growth and activity in the port town at Broad Creek is the fact that in the early 1720s, the vestry at Piscataway (King George's) Parish carried out plans to construct a church of brick. By 1722 the number of taxables in the Parish had reached 1,105, and the parishioners could contemplate building a brick church to replace the wood-frame structure erected by William Tyler in 1707. In January 1722/23, the vestry agreed to pay John Lane 16,000 pounds of tobacco to build the church and porch of brick, and to pay John Radford, carpenter, 14,000 pounds of tobacco to complete the framing of the structure, doors, windows, shutters, pulpit, pews and gallery.<sup>21</sup> The next year, in the church questionnaire of 1724, John Fraser, the rector of Piscataway (King George's) Parish<sup>22</sup>, described his parish and church as follows: "<sup>23</sup> This 1723 brick church served the Broad Creek community until the church was enlarged and rebuilt in 1766. (See Map 3.)

Soon also, the Want Water tract changed hands, while the town of Broad Creek continued to grow. In 1736, John Addison, eldest son and heir of Thomas Addison, sold the 35-acre tract Want Water to Humphrey Batts, shipwright.<sup>24</sup> Shipwright Batts had entered the picture at least as early as 1727, when he married Mary Tyler, the elder William Tyler's daughter to whom he had devised a mill.<sup>25</sup> It is probable that the fine house known as Want Water was built (or at least expanded and finished) by Humphrey Batts in the next few years. This Tidewater-style dwelling was one and one-half stories in height with gambrel roof, with principal elevations of wood and gambrel ends of brick. Study of its particularly fine interior decorative moldings, and comparison with other firmly dated buildings, strongly suggests finishing in the 1740s. Whether it was begun or merely finished by the Batts family after 1736, it was certainly the dwelling place of the shipwright's family.<sup>26</sup> Humphrey Batts prospered, not only with his wife's dowry, but with his own shipbuilding business at Broad Creek. Newspaper advertisements give clear evidence of Humphrey Batts' industry; in 1746 he advertised for sale "at Broad Creek in Prince George's County, a new Schooner, of about 36 Tons, well built for the West-India or Coasting-Trade; well ceil'd [sic], fit for the



Figure 1: Want Water (1935 photograph)

<sup>21</sup> Vestry minutes of King George's Parish, pages 44-52.

<sup>22</sup> From this period (circa 1724) on, the Parish is generally referred to as King George's (and even at times as St. John's Parish). The name "King George's Parish" was made official by the Diocese of Washington in 1902.

<sup>23</sup> Perry, William S., D.D., *op.cit.*, Questionnaires of 1724.

<sup>24</sup> Prince George's County Deed T:421. The name of the new owner is variously spelled Batt or Batts in the early records.

<sup>25</sup> St. John's Church Register.

<sup>26</sup> Erb, Albert P., *Measured Drawings with Full Size Details of Moulded Sections of the Early Architecture of the District of Columbia and Maryland*, Washington, D.C.; see also Historic American Buildings Survey drawings and photographs, Prince George's County, Maryland-MD,17-10-7, 1936, Library of Congress.



smallest Grain; nailed, and handsomely finished, with a Scroll Head, fit for a Gentleman's Use. She will stow in the Hold 50 Hogsheads of Tobacco." He also advertised a somewhat less elegant schooner "fit for carrying Lumber, Plank, or Tobacco. She will carry under Deck 40 Hogsheads, has an Anchor and Cable, is indifferently rigg'd, fit for a Tobacco Droguer."<sup>27</sup>

In 1747 the General Assembly of the Maryland colony passed "An Act for Amending the Staple of Tobacco [and] for preventing Frauds in his Majesty's Customs." During the early years of the eighteenth century, the quality of the tobacco exported from the Chesapeake area had gradually declined, to the extent that in 1730 the Virginia colony had instituted a warehouse inspection system to ensure uniform quality of the tobacco to be shipped. The Maryland colony soon saw its neighbor's commercial advantage, and in 1747 instituted its own "Act for Amending the Staple of Tobacco." By this act, there were created, among other things, tobacco inspection warehouses in the various counties; the tobacco inspectors themselves were to be selected by the vestry of each Parish. One of the tobacco inspection stations in Prince George's County was to be "at Broad Creek, on the Land of Humphry Batts,"<sup>28</sup> a development which could only have increased Batts' success. In the following year, 1748, Batts agreed to build a warehouse on his land at Broad Creek, and two men, John Hawkins and George Fraser, were appointed to choose the exact location. At the same time, the court ordered that a complete set of weights and scales (amounting to 1,450 pounds of weights) be delivered to the warehouse at Broad Creek.<sup>29</sup>

The tobacco crop would be carried by local planters, overland and especially by waterway, to the inspection warehouses, to be inspected by the vestry-chosen inspectors, and if passed, selected by the factors (representatives of the various British/Scottish export firms) for export across the Atlantic. These factors managed the company stores at the port towns of the Chesapeake area, and established trade with the local planters, taking large quantities of tobacco out along the major rivers (in the case of Prince George's County, the Potomac and Patuxent), and bringing in products (such as fabric, nails, sugar and rum) needed by the planters and their families. Tobacco was by far the largest export, though corn and wheat were also shipped, and until the period just before the American Revolution, tobacco was the accepted medium of exchange. After the establishment of the inspection warehouses, the volume of tobacco export rose significantly: from an average of 30,000 hogsheads per year to approximately 100,000 in 1775. The tobacco inspection system continued until the outbreak of the Revolution.<sup>30</sup>

Specific information about the logistics of export activity at Broad Creek is scarce, but it must be assumed that the process was very similar to that followed at Piscataway, the port town and official tobacco inspection station a few miles south of Broad Creek, about which much information is available.

<sup>27</sup> *Maryland Gazette* (newspaper printed in Annapolis, Maryland), 30 September through November 11, 1746.

<sup>28</sup> *Archives of Maryland*, XLIV, 595 ff; Prince George's County Court Records, Book HH:351. See also Middleton, Arthur P., *Tobacco Coast*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984.

<sup>29</sup> Prince George's County Court Records, 1748, Book HH:348.

<sup>30</sup> Toogood, Anna C., *op.cit.*; Middleton, *op.cit.*, pp. 135-147.

In the early years of the tobacco commerce, British ships would pull into the broad estuary of Piscataway Creek, and flat boats (or scows) would carry products to and from the ships along the narrower and shallower extent of the creek, from and to the warehouses.<sup>31</sup> The process must have been the same at Broad Creek, with flat boats plying the upper Broad Creek and Clash Creek to meet the British ships in the wide estuary of Broad Creek. The mid-eighteenth-century scene at Broad Creek was probably similar to that shown in this Colonial Shipyard Scene.

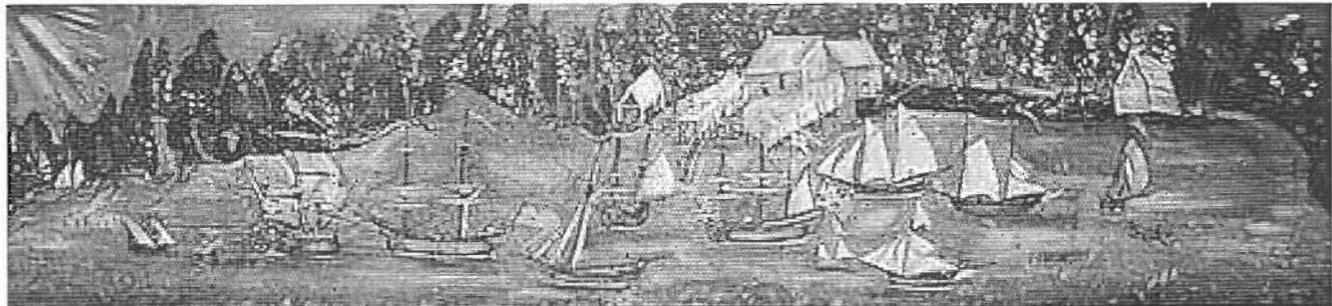


Figure 2. Colonial Shipyard Scene: over-mantel panel from Spencer Hall, Kent County, Maryland, circa 1760. Courtesy of Maryland Historical Society.

Humphrey Batts not only built the official tobacco inspection warehouse, but he also cut a channel (approximately 100 yards long) to allow easier access to the inspection warehouse. Records of the Prince George's County Court (November 1749) indicate that Batts applied to the court for compensation for the construction of the channel: "your Petitioner has Erected and Completed a Warehouse Agreeable for Inspecting Tobacco at Broad Creek with a warf and Crane but in order to make the same for Importation has been obliged to Cut a Channel upwards of one hundred yards to be more Convenient and Commodius to said Ware House therefore as the same has been of Great Expence & Trouble humbly hopes your Worships will be pleased to allow Your Petitioner for Such Trouble & Expence [sic]..." The court awarded Humphrey Batts 2,000 pounds of tobacco for his trouble.<sup>32</sup> The channel provided access by small scows or flatboats between the warehouses and the ships moored in the wide estuary. This small channel now runs north past the Want Water house and bends to the east. It was dredged and extended in the early 1930s (see *infra*) and is today known to local residents as the Want Water Canal.

At approximately the same time, Shipwright Batts had a "storehouse" built on his property and advertised it for lease in the summer of 1749: "A New well-built Store-House, 24 feet in Length, with a good Shed-Room to the same, situated near Broad Creek in Prince George's County, not more than 30 Yards from a good Landing, and near the Inspecting-House and Country Road."<sup>33</sup> It has not been discovered who leased and operated this new store, but there are frequent notices of stores and merchandise at Broad Creek in the *Maryland Gazette* which was published in Annapolis during these years.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> "The Letterbooks of Alexander Hamilton, Piscataway Factor," edited by R.K. MacMaster and D.C. Skaggs, *Maryland Historical Magazine* LXI (1966), pp 146-166, 305-328. See in particular pp. 156, 320.

<sup>32</sup> Prince George's County Court Records 1749, Book LL:67,68.

<sup>33</sup> *Maryland Gazette*, June 14, 1749 (repeated weekly through July 5).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Maryland Gazette*, March 6, 1751; June 15, 1758; May 28, 1772.

These pieces of information indicate that this Potomac River port town was known as Broad Creek and scarcely ever as "Aire." They also indicated that Broad Creek was an actively developing commercial center. Ferriage was provided across the Potomac to and from Virginia at a narrow point in the river near Broad Creek "where all Persons may be assured of a ready Passage over Potomack River, and good Entertainment for Man and Horse."<sup>35</sup> The county sheriff made Broad Creek one of his regular stops for the collection of fees: county levies, clergy dues, and lawyers' fees. And for the period between 1737 and 1772, at least 12 individuals are known to have been issued licenses for the operation of "ordinaries" (taverns) in Broad Creek.<sup>36</sup> These taverns were the focal points of commercial villages; they catered to the needs of travelers and provided gathering places for the exchange of news and opinions, and the conduct of business between merchants and buyers, planters and factors. The existence of this number of taverns indicates the growth and activity of the bustling Broad Creek port town.

Humphrey Batts, shipwright of Broad Creek Town, died in 1757. He devised to his son-in-law Richard Barnes "all that tract or parcel of land called Want Water containing 35 acres more or less together with the dwelling house I now live in and all and every the tenements and hereditaments thereupon or thereunto belonging..."<sup>37</sup> It is not known whether the Barnes family ever lived at Want Water; in 1761 Barnes sold the property to Enoch Magruder, a merchant, businessman, and extensive landowner who was to have considerable influence on the Broad Creek community.<sup>38</sup>

Before this time, Enoch Magruder had established himself and his business at Broad Creek; by the early 1760s, descriptions of the boundaries of Battersea indicate that "Enoch Magruder's store house" stood at the place where a century earlier the "beginning tree of the whole tract [Battersea] formerly stood," i.e., on the northeast side of Clash Creek as it flows into Broad Creek. During the 1760s, Magruder set about purchasing a considerable quantity of land around the port town of Broad Creek, not only Want Water, but land to the north along Broad Creek and to the south along Clash Creek, and also the 100 westernmost acres of Battersea that adjoined (and comprised some of) the town of Broad Creek.<sup>39</sup> Magruder also owned substantial acreage to the south and east of Battersea on the road toward Piscataway, as well as several large plantations in other parts of the county.<sup>40</sup>

In 1763, soon after he purchased Want Water and had presumably moved into Humphrey Batts' fine house, Enoch Magruder had the Want Water property resurveyed. He had purchased 35 acres from Batts' son-in-law,

<sup>35</sup> *Maryland Gazette*, August 5, 1746.

<sup>36</sup> Prince George's County Court Records, 1747-1772; *Maryland Gazette*, 1737-1772.

<sup>37</sup> Prince George's County Will, Book I:491.

<sup>38</sup> Prince George's County Deed RR:142.

<sup>39</sup> Prince George's County Deeds AA#2:22, RR:142.

<sup>40</sup> Piscataway, another port town established one year after the establishment of Aire, was located on Piscataway Creek, another tributary of the Potomac River that was south of and larger than Broad Creek. The town of Piscataway grew larger than the town of Broad Creek and was considerably more commercially prominent. See also National Register nomination for Mount Lubentia (PG#73-16) and Maryland Inventory form for Belleview (PG#81B-1).

Richard Barnes, but the 1763 resurvey revealed that the original tract of Want Water was actually only 26¾ acres. (The discrepancy in acreage may be partially explained by changes in the water line of Broad Creek over the more than half a century since the tract was first surveyed in 1706.) The resurvey also revealed that there was a 20-acre adjoining “vacancy,” i.e., unpatented land between Want Water and the Little Hall tract to the north. As a result of the resurvey “to amend errors and add contiguous vacant land,” Magruder’s holdings became a larger (46¾ acres) tract, renamed Want Water Enlarged. Magruder now owned not only the fine gambrel-roof house that stood on the original Want Water tract, but also a modest 12-by-8-foot dwelling, one apple tree, and 300 fence logs on the 20-acre vacancy.<sup>37</sup> (See Map 4.)

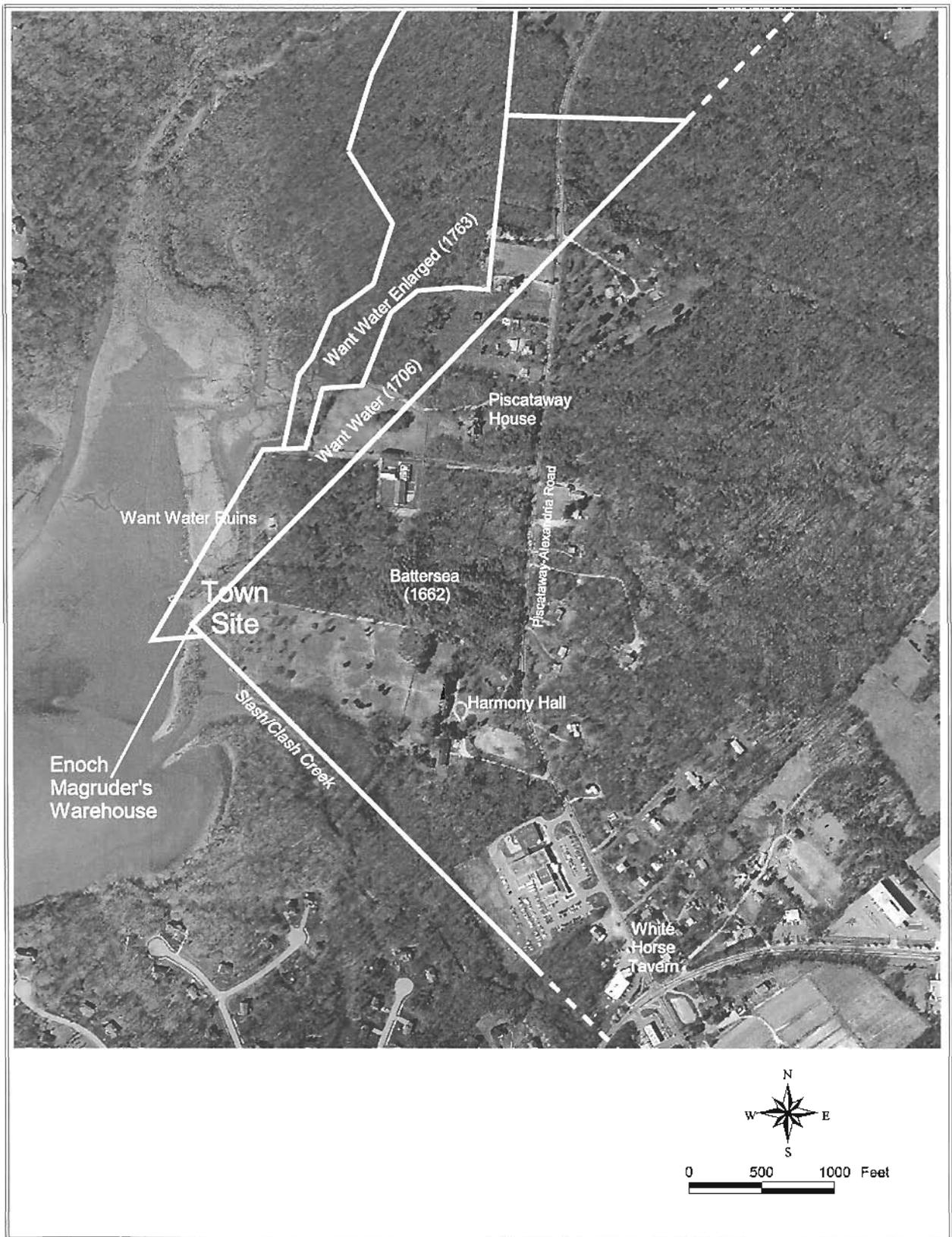
Magruder already had a warehouse at the edge of Broad Creek, on the westerly corner of the Battersea property, and before the end of the 1760s he owned 100 acres of Battersea, as well as the fine house of the shipwright’s family at Want Water.<sup>38</sup> It was almost certainly Enoch Magruder who, within the next few years, built the brick plantation house at Battersea, now known as Harmony Hall.

Before he bought the Battersea property in 1769, Enoch Magruder may well have been living in the house at Want Water. (There is also the possibility that he had been living at his family’s plantation, Norway, near the center of Prince George’s County, on which there was a substantial house at least by 1761 and which his parents deeded to him in 1765.) From related records, however, it appears that the Magruder family made their principal home at Broad Creek, close to Magruder’s business operations. In 1771, he rented his house at Norway to the Reverend Jonathan Boucher, who operated a boys’ school there while he served as rector at nearby St. Barnabas’ Church, Leeland. In 1775, at the outbreak of the American Revolution, Boucher left America and returned to England, but Enoch Magruder and his immediate family continued to live at Broad Creek; this is clearly indicated by the fact that in 1776, the 53-year-old Magruder, his wife, and three grown children were recorded as residing in King George’s Parish in Prince George’s County. In 1779, Enoch Magruder deeded the Norway plantation (by then over 900 acres) “whereon my dwelling house now stands” to his son Dennis, who had just achieved his majority at 21 years. Confirming the Magruders’ residence at Broad Creek is a 1786 Chancery Court case, in which Enoch Magruder’s son-in-law, Basil Burgess, testified that in 1763 Enoch Magruder lived at Broad Creek. It appears that, from at least the early 1760s, merchant Magruder resided in the Broad Creek community.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Prince George’s County Patent DD#5:509; patented certificate of survey #2249, 1763.

<sup>38</sup> John Tyler, son and grandson of the two William Tylers, sold his inherited 100 acres of Battersea to James Marshall in 1761. Marshall was sued in the Court of Chancery for the value of the land, and the case was settled in 1763. In 1769 Marshall sold these 100 acres of Battersea to Enoch Magruder. See Prince George’s County Deed AA#2:22; Provincial Court Deed DD#2:337; Prince George’s County Judgments DD#4:18, 489.

<sup>39</sup> Boucher, Jonathan, *Reminiscences of an American Loyalist*, 1925, pp. 74-75; Carothers, B.L., *1776 Census of Maryland*, Chesterfield, MO, 1972; Prince George’s County Deed CC#2:644. The Norway property is now known as Mount Lubentia, listed in National Register of Historic Places. Prince George’s County Chancery Court Records (1786), pp.69,70.



Map 4--Historic Land Patents in the Broad Creek Area

There are other indications of growth and prosperity in the Broad Creek community during the 1760s; for example, the church at Broad Creek was to be enlarged. At the end of 1763 the governor and assembly responded to the request of the vestry of "St. John's (commonly called King George's Parish)" and approved a levy upon the taxables of the parish (to be collected by the sheriffs of Prince George's and Charles Counties) for the necessary enlargement of the parish church.<sup>44</sup> During 1764 and the early part of 1765, the vestry solicited proposals for the work and, in April 1765, contracted with one Thomas Cleland to build a full-length addition to the 1723 brick church. The plans were changed several times over the next year, but finally in April 1766, it was decided that all the old brickwork was to be taken down and rebuilt. Completed in 1768 and known today as St. John's, the church measures 38 feet by 63 feet, with hip roof and a west porch approximately 10 feet square. The vestry records of the period indicate that Captain Enoch Magruder was closely involved in both the planning and the financing of the new church construction.<sup>45</sup>

Also during these years, while living at the Want Water house, Enoch Magruder was busy improving the 100-acre tract of Battersea that he acquired in 1769. The earthfast wooden house of the Lewis family had been destroyed by fire early in the eighteenth century. The 100-acre portion of Battersea that the Lewis and Tyler families had owned, although cultivated, may well have been largely unoccupied for nearly a half century before Enoch Magruder acquired it. By the end of the 1760s, the wealthy and successful Magruder began construction of a substantial and handsome brick residence.

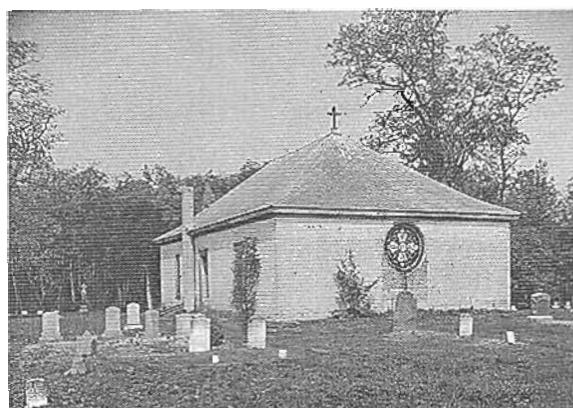


Figure 3: St. John's Church (1935 photograph)

The house that he built was two and one-half stories high and side-gabled. Comparatively long at 56 feet, the house was only one room deep, but distinguished by particularly fine Georgian interior detail in the cornices, chair rails, paneling and stair elements.<sup>46</sup> It was the home of a successful businessman and gentleman landowner, and it can be assumed that the Magruder family, including the younger children not yet married, moved into the new and elegant house at Battersea before the outbreak of the Revolution. Later evidence suggests that the Magruders' daughter, Sarah, who sometime before 1779 married Colonel William Lyles, took up residence at this time in the house at Want Water. Descendants of the Magruder family would own the Battersea and Want Water properties until 1850.

With the approach of the American Revolution, things changed for the active port towns along the Potomac River and throughout the entire

<sup>44</sup> *Archives of Maryland* LVIII, p. 511 (Acts of November 1763); *Maryland Gazette*, 1 December 1763.

<sup>45</sup> Vestry records of King George's Parish, Vol. I, 1693-1779, pp. 182-225.

<sup>46</sup> Notes from the 1930s owner of Battersea (Harmony Hall) indicate his discovery of stone foundations at the north and south gable ends of the house, indicating the existence of original (or at least early) flanking wings. See Collins, Charles, *Harmony Hall or Battersea, Broad Creek, Prince George's County, Maryland*, 1936, submitted with Historic American Buildings Survey papers.

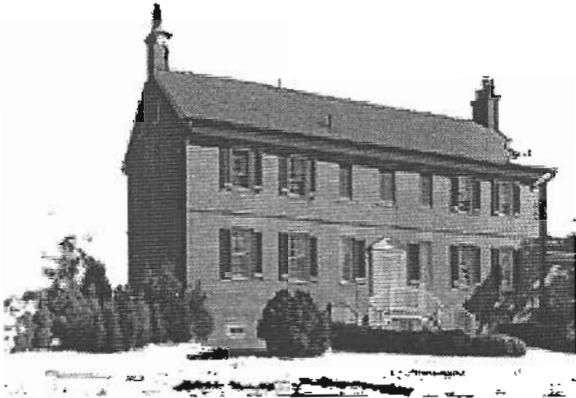


Figure 4: Harmony Hall (1935 photograph)

Chesapeake area; their heyday had extended through slightly more than the second third of the eighteenth century. Strong evidence among the planters of dissatisfaction with British constraints are clear in the writings of Piscataway factor Alexander Hamilton, as well as in the actions of American patriot associations. The resolutions of the first Continental Congress put an end to the import of British goods by December 1774 and brought to an end American exports to Britain by September 1775. Trade at the Potomac port towns continued as long as it was practical, but the battles of Lexington and Concord in spring 1775 marked a turning point—after this, planters of southern Prince George’s County recognized that war was inevitable and that the booming tobacco trade was coming to a halt.

They began that spring to decrease their cultivation of tobacco and to plant many of their tobacco fields with flax and corn. That season’s tobacco crop went largely unsold.<sup>47</sup>

Both Enoch Magruder and his son-in-law, William Lyles, were active patriots during the period of the American Revolution; Magruder himself served in 1775 on a Committee of Observation for Prince George’s County, and later on a committee to raise supplies for the Revolutionary army.<sup>48</sup> By the summer of 1775, after the outbreak of hostilities in the Massachusetts colony, many of the British factors left their stores and sailed to England, as did Henry Addison, the Loyalist rector of St. John’s Church.<sup>49</sup>

## After the Revolutionary War

With the end of the War of Independence and the establishment of the American Republic, the British factorage system had come to an end; with it ended the inspection station system and the active and dependable tobacco trade. Two other factors added to the gradual decline of Broad Creek and the other port towns: the rise of Baltimore as the Chesapeake area’s principal market and the overwhelming siltation of the river tributaries. Again there is more information about the geology/ecology of Piscataway Creek than of Broad Creek, but the situation may be assumed to be similar.<sup>50</sup> Siltation had so clogged the tributaries that commerce became greatly limited. A new tobacco inspection system was established in 1816,

<sup>47</sup> Toogood, *op.cit.*, pp. 127-133; MacMaster and Skaggs, *op.cit.*, pp. 319-328.

<sup>48</sup> *Maryland Gazette*, September 21, 1775; Act of Maryland Legislature, March 17, 1778.

<sup>49</sup> Toogood, *op.cit.*, p. 136; Bowie, E. G., *Across the Years in Prince George’s County*, Genealogical Publishing Co., Baltimore, 1947, p. 35. Allen, Rev. Ethan, *Clergy in Maryland of the Protestant Episcopal Church Since the Independence of 1783*, Baltimore, 1860. Rector Henry Addison returned to St. John’s after the Treaty of Paris, and served as rector until his death in 1789.

<sup>50</sup> Alexander, J. H., *Report of the Engineer & Geologist in Relation to the New Map to the Executive of Maryland*, Annapolis, 1836.

but siltation had already taken its toll. Many of the tobacco warehouses were disbanded and sold, the market shifted to Baltimore, and water transportation of tobacco and other crops would soon be replaced by the new railroad. By the end of the eighteenth century, Broad Creek was already declining as a commercial center.<sup>51</sup> The economic base of the Broad Creek area was gradually shifting to regular crop farming, as well as to fishing. It is interesting to note that in Enoch Magruder's inventory, taken at the time of his death in 1786, there are recorded not only his three old tobacco skows (sic), but also three large seines. As the tobacco industry declined, Enoch Magruder had clearly gotten into the fishing industry, with one seine only a year old "with 300 fathom hauling rope" and another with a "400 fathom trauling [sic] rope."<sup>52</sup> Several major fisheries would develop at Broad Creek during the nineteenth century.

Enoch Magruder remained one of the prominent citizens of the Broad Creek community until his death in August 1786. As noted above, he had conveyed his large Norway plantation to his only son, Dennis, in 1779, and later, at the time of his death, provided substantial real estate to each of his surviving five daughters. His detailed will, written a year before his death, describes the bequests to each of his children, in particular part of Want Water and considerable adjoining land (including part of Battersea) to his daughter, Sarah, wife of William Lyles.<sup>53</sup>

The house at Want Water remained the home of the Lyles family, and there William and Sarah Lyles raised their large family. There is some question about the use of the Magruders' new brick house at Battersea after Enoch Magruder's death; it is possible that his widow, Meek Magruder, continued to live there (she appears in the 1790 census as the single white member of her household, together with 11 black slaves). It is also possible that the house was rented out for several years as the rectory for the Broad Creek church, and was occupied by Joseph Messenger, who began his Broad Creek rectorship in 1785, approximately a year before Enoch Magruder's death.<sup>54</sup> In any case, by 1792, the Reverend Messenger and his family had settled on their plantation about five miles to the east of the church.<sup>55</sup> It was in this year, 1792, that there was recorded one of the most memorable events regarding the house at Battersea, and the way it acquired its present name "Harmony Hall." In that year, the house at Battersea was rented to Walter Dulany Addison, his brother, John Addison, and their two brides.

According to Enoch Magruder's will, Sarah Magruder Lyles became the owner of her home at Want Water in addition to that part of Battersea that included the Magruders' brick house. There are several indications, however, that it was her brother, Dennis Magruder, who managed the Battersea property for her. In February 1792, he ran an advertisement in a Georgetown newspaper: "Dennis Magruder will rent his dwelling house on

<sup>51</sup> Bowie, *op.cit.*, p. ix (quoting *Marlboro Gazette*, July 7, 1836); Toogood, *op.cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>52</sup> Prince George's County Inventories (1781-1787), ST#2, pp. 396-397.

<sup>53</sup> Prince George's County Will T#1:238.

<sup>54</sup> Murray, Elizabeth Hesselius, *One Hundred Years Ago, or The Life and Times of the Reverend Walter Dulany Addison*, p. 132; unpublished history of St. John's Church, Broad Creek, from the manuscript of the Reverend Erhan Allen, c. 1870; *Maryland: Heads of Families, 1790 Census*, GPO 1907, reprinted 1977.

<sup>55</sup> *Federal Direct Tax, 1798, King George and Grubb Hundred*.

Broad Creek in Maryland within five miles of Alexandria; the house is 56 feet long, two stories high, with good cellars, nursery, kitchen, carriage house and stable."<sup>56</sup> The house was rented by Walter Dulany Addison (soon to become rector of the church at Broad Creek) who married Elizabeth Hesselius in June 1792. Addison's brother also married a few months later, and the two Addison brothers brought their brides to the rented house. In her biography of Walter Dulany Addison, his granddaughter later wrote, "The two families lived in great happiness together, and from this fact my grandmother Hesselius called the place Harmony Hall which name it retains to this day."<sup>57</sup>

## Early Nineteenth Century

The earliest administrative units of the county were called "hundreds," serving the purposes of taxation as well as judicial, legal and military administration. This system was changed at the beginning of the nineteenth century. By state law in 1800, the counties were to be laid off in election districts (also serving as enumeration districts in the tabulation of the federal census). In the southwestern section of Prince George's County, Piscataway District (Election District #5) replaced the earlier Hynson, Piscataway, and King George Hundreds. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Piscataway District, which included the Broad Creek community, comprised approximately 62 square miles (nearly 40,000 acres).<sup>58</sup>

By the early years of the nineteenth century, planters were already diversifying their crops; tobacco was still planted, but the cultivation of grains, fodder and orchards increased. Members of the Magruder and Lyles families operated large plantations not only at Broad Creek but also inland near growing population centers like Upper Marlborough. Sarah Magruder Lyles raised her family at Want Water, possibly also occupying the house at Battersea, by this time known as Harmony Hall. One of the memorable stories inextricably tied to that of Broad Creek is of Sarah's son, Enoch Magruder Lyles, who died in a duel in 1805. Encouraged by his father to demand satisfaction after an insult, young Lyles went with his antagonist, John Fraser Bowie, across the Potomac to Johnson's Spring on the Virginia side on the morning of August 7, 1805. In the duel that followed, Enoch Magruder Lyles was killed at age 26, and (according to the legend) his

<sup>56</sup> *Georgetown Weekly Ledger*, February 4, 1792, from Wright, F. Edward, *Abstracts of Newspapers of Georgetown and the Federal City, 1789-1799*.

<sup>57</sup> Murray, Elizabeth Hesselius, *op.cit.* pages 105-106.

<sup>58</sup> As the population increased, election districts were divided and new districts created. Brandywine District (#11) and Oxon Hill District (#12) were established in 1872 and 1874 respectively, taking some of the east and north portions of the Piscataway District, so that by the end of the nineteenth century, the Piscataway District was reduced by nearly a third. The majority of the Broad Creek community remained in the Piscataway District, with only the north shore of the Broad Creek estuary (west of Henson Creek) becoming part of the new Oxon Hill District. See Martenet, S.J., *Martenet's Map of Prince George's County, Maryland*, Baltimore, 1861; Hopkins, G. M., *Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington Including the County of Prince George, Maryland*, Philadelphia, 1878; Mathews, Edward B., *The Counties of Maryland, Their Origins, Boundaries, and Election Districts*, Johns Hopkins Press, 1907.

father, William Lyles, observed the signal of that sad event from his home at Broad Creek. Enoch Magruder Lyles was buried in the St. John's churchyard.<sup>59</sup>

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Sarah Lyles' brother, Dennis Magruder, was living at his central-county plantation, Norway, where he had just finished rebuilding and embellishing a large brick plantation house. Although he maintained his connections with Broad Creek, it seems fairly certain that most of his time was devoted to his Norway plantation. In 1795, by straw deed, William Lyles had transferred his wife's inherited property (Want Water and part of Battersea, amounting to over 100 acres) to himself. When he died in 1815, he left the Want Water property and part of the Battersea acreage to his son, Thomas C. Lyles, who continued to reside in the Want Water house. During the next 25 years, Thomas C. Lyles was assessed for up to 180 acres of Want Water and Battersea, as well as 30 acres of marsh. William Lyles devised the brick house at Battersea (Harmony Hall) and 40 acres on which it was located to another of his sons, Dennis Magruder Lyles, who apparently resided for the next decade or so at Harmony Hall. Dennis M. Lyles operated a fishery on another part of the Lyles family property, a short distance to the southwest at the confluence of Broad Creek with the Potomac. He died at a young age at Harmony Hall in August 1828, and management of his properties was left with his widow, Ariana Lyles.<sup>60</sup>

## Mid-Nineteenth Century

After the death of Dennis Magruder Lyles in 1828, the house at Battersea (Harmony Hall) was occupied for several years by Henry Fairfax Thorn, constable for this area of Prince George's County. Although it is not known exactly how long Henry F. Thorn lived at Harmony Hall, it is likely that, as did the Addison brothers 40 years earlier, he chose Harmony Hall as the first home to which to bring his new bride. In December 1833, Henry Fairfax Thorn married Mary E. Fraser; they lived at Harmony Hall in 1834 and 1835, and he died in 1836. Papers from the settlement of his estate indicate that he owed Ariana Lyles \$34 "balance of rent due on Harmony Hall for the year 1834," and \$100 "rent for the same tenement for 1835."<sup>61</sup>

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the community of Broad Creek had been outpaced by other inland communities. Like many of the other port towns established a century and a half earlier, the town structure gave way to a loose collection of farms. In the cases of Queen Anne Town and Nottingham on the Patuxent, for example, the towns essentially disappeared, but at least their names remained on maps. In the case of

<sup>59</sup> *Alexandria Gazette*, August 8, 1805.

<sup>60</sup> Prince George's County Will TT# 1:164 (1816); Prince George's County Tax Assessments for Piscataway Hundred (Election District #5) 1801-1841; Dixon, Joan M., ed., *National Intelligencer Newspaper Abstracts, 1827-1829*, Heritage Books, Inc., 1999; see also Prince George's County Deed JBB#7:92.

<sup>61</sup> Prince George's County Marriage Licenses; Prince George's County Administrative file (Henry Fairfax Thorn, 1810 docket); debts charged against Mr. Thorn's estate indicate his considerable consumption of spirits at local taverns, including the "White Horse" just south of Harmony Hall, see *infra*.

Broad Creek, not even the name appeared on maps of the period, and the only remnant was the location of the church, indicated as "Broad Creek Church." For most of the nineteenth century, the nearest post office was at Fort Washington, the location of the major Potomac fortification approximately three miles to the south. The Fort Washington post office served all of the residents between Tinkers Creek to the southeast and Hensons Creek (the source of Broad Creek).<sup>62</sup> The town of Broad Creek, briefly known also as Aire, no longer existed. The immediate area was undeveloped and agricultural, known for its fisheries, and for a few landmarks such as Harmony Hall and Broad Creek (or St. John's) Church.

The movements toward and against the abolition of slavery were increasing during the second third of the nineteenth century and would, within little more than a generation, burst into war; but another great factor of change during this period was the advent of the railroad. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad came into Prince George's County in 1835 and the face of the County was dramatically changed by the implementation of this new form of transportation. Within another generation, after the end of the Civil War, another railroad line would reach the length of the county, changing forever the old way of bringing produce to market. Towns and villages along the lines of the railroads grew into commercial centers, and in general, dependence upon the river for communication and commerce began to decrease. The railroads, however, bypassed the entire southwestern part of Prince George's County, and this area continued its strong dependence upon the river. Although the advent of the railroad changed other parts of the county, small river towns like Broad Creek remained rural, agricultural, and comparatively quiet. Commerce in the southwestern part of the county, including Broad Creek, continued to depend upon the river, and overland travel continued to depend upon the horse and stagecoach.<sup>63</sup>

One of the principal roads in the southwestern part of the county ran directly through the Broad Creek community; this road connected the town of Piscataway with St. John's Church and then continued north to the Eastern Branch and/or (by ferry across the Potomac) to Alexandria. Travelers making this journey relied upon taverns along the way for rest and refreshment, not only for the passengers, but for their horses. One such tavern, the Slash Creek or White Horse Tavern, was located on this Piscataway-Alexandria road (now Livingston Road), immediately south of Harmony Hall, at the present intersection of Livingston and Fort Washington Roads. Many taverns are known to have operated in the village of Broad Creek during the eighteenth century, but little is known about them other than the names of the proprietor/licensees; in the case of the White Horse, more information is available.

The White Horse Tavern stood on the west side of the road that ran south from St. John's Church to Piscataway and operated from the very early years of the nineteenth century. In 1804, Philip Webster purchased three acres of Battersea "at the road leading from Piscataway to the head of Broad

<sup>62</sup> Martenet, S.J., *op.cit.*, 1861; Hopkins, G.M., *op.cit.*, 1878; *Gazetteer of State of Maryland*, 1852, 1856; *The State Gazette*, 1871; *Maryland Directory*, 1878.

<sup>63</sup> Pearl, Susan G., "Railroads in Prince George's County, 1835-1935," in *Historic Contexts in Prince George's County*, M-NCPPC, 1991, pp. 41-49.

Creek.”<sup>64</sup> From that time until his death in 1818, Webster operated a tavern on this property, known variously as the Slash Creek or White Horse Tavern. After Webster’s death, the tavern stand was acquired by Henry Culver Thorn, who operated it until his death in 1872. The White Horse was a landmark in the Broad Creek community to the extent that, during much of the nineteenth century, the Harmony Hall property was identified in legal instruments as adjoining the tavern or the Henry C. Thorn property. The old tavern building and its prominent White Horse sign lasted until the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>65</sup>

Thomas C. Lyles died intestate in 1845. His widow and several of his grown children continued to reside for another 20 years in the house at Want Water, farming the 180 acres of land that Thomas C. Lyles had accumulated. The house at Harmony Hall, however, was sold by the Lyles family in 1850. In that year, Ariana Lyles, widow of Thomas Lyles’ brother, Dennis, together with her daughter and son-in-law, all of whom lived in the District of Columbia, sold 40 acres including the Harmony Hall house to William J. Edelen of the prominent Piscataway village family.<sup>66</sup> Census records suggest that although, during the next decade, William Edelen operated a small farm on his 40-acre property, he did not live in the house. In 1860 and 1861, Edelen defaulted on property tax payments, and during this period the house was occupied by Francis and Elizabeth Kerby, a young couple who farmed the land for Edelen. When, because of Edelen’s default in payments, his property was offered for tax sale, Elizabeth Kerby purchased the 40-acre Harmony Hall property (for \$21.60) in 1867, and the Kerby family continued to live in the century-old brick house and farm the land.<sup>67</sup>

Other families besides the Thorns, Edelens and Kerbys came to the Broad Creek community in the early nineteenth century. For example, in 1820, John Cadle purchased part of the Stonestreet family’s Battersea acreage. From that time, more than four generations of the Cadle family farmed land in what is now the northern part of the Historic District.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Prince George’s County Deed JRM#10:333. Webster purchased the tavern stand from Richard Stonestreet, member of a family that had purchased parts of Battersea early in the eighteenth century. Although no connection has yet been found, it is interesting to note that in 1737, Butler Stonestreet of the same family was operating a tavern at Broad Creek. See Prince George’s County Court Records, June Court 1737.

<sup>65</sup> Prince George’s County Equity #1431; Prince George’s County Administration File #904; Prince George’s County Tax Assessments 1828-1867. Henry Culver Thorn was a collateral relative of the Henry Fairfax Thorn who lived at Harmony Hall in the 1830s.

<sup>66</sup> Prince George’s County Deed JBB#7:92.

<sup>67</sup> Prince George’s County Deed FS#5:223; see also federal census records for Prince George’s County, Enumeration District #5, 1850, 1860, 1870 (population and agricultural schedules).

<sup>68</sup> Prince George’s County Deed AB#1:389, Prince George’s County tax assessments and federal census records for Prince George’s County; Prince George’s County plat of James G. Cadle’s estate, JWB#6:688; E. L. Latimer plat, 1936, of Lot #1 of J. W. Cadle estate. Interview, spring 2001, with Phyllis Luskey Cox.

## Civil War, Reconstruction, and Broad Creek's African-American Population

As in the rest of Prince George's County, the more extensive landowners of the Broad Creek area were slaveholders; the family of Colonel William Lyles, for example, held a larger number of slaves than any other family in the area. Although most of these landowners opposed secession from the Union, they also opposed abolition of slavery. The Reverend Walter Dulany Addison, who had rented Harmony Hall in 1792, and later (1801-1809) had served as rector of St. John's Church, publicly stated his opposition to the institution of slavery and set an example by freeing some of his slaves during the early years of the nineteenth century. He found, however, that manumission brought new problems to the freed people, and subsequently he supported the concept of emigration to Liberia.<sup>69</sup>

The questions of slavery and secession continued to grow until war was inevitable. Although the Broad Creek community was not directly touched by the Civil War, it experienced significant changes as did the rest of the county. The changes may have been especially noticeable because the slave population of the Piscataway District was larger than that of most of the County's other districts.<sup>70</sup> After the end of the war, and the actual emancipation (in January 1865) of slaves in Maryland, many of the newly freed families stayed in the Broad Creek area, working on small tenant farms. One example was the Warrick family, descended from Hannibal Warrick, a slave of the Hatton family that owned large plantation acreage in the Piscataway District. Warrick descendants remained in the area after the Civil War, eventually purchasing a small property near Harmony Hall, working for the Kerby and Cadle families and farming the land.<sup>71</sup> Other freedmen's families also remained in the area, e.g., the Humphries family, formerly slaves of Henry C. Thorn of the White Horse Tavern. Members of the Shorter family, who had worked as freedmen on Hatton family plantations, were instrumental in establishing the post-war African-American community of Chapel Hill, about two miles southeast of Broad Creek. Descendants of the Warrick family also lived and farmed in the community of Chapel Hill.<sup>72</sup> Others from the very large slave force of the Lyles family have not yet been traced, although several descendants of Rachel Loggins,

<sup>69</sup> Prince George's County manumission records, 1796-1830; Murray, *op.cit.*, pp. 124-126.

<sup>70</sup> On the eve of the Civil War, Piscataway was geographically one of the largest of Prince George's County's election districts. Fifty-three percent of its population (1,600 out of 3,040 persons) was enslaved, just slightly higher than the 51 percent average enslaved population of the entire county. Federal census for Prince George's County, Maryland, 1860; Martenet, S.J., *op.cit.*, 1861.

<sup>71</sup> Emily, daughter of Sarah Magruder and William Lyles, married Henry D. Hatton in 1812 and became part of the extensive land owning Hatton family. Hannibal Warrick was part of the labor force of Emily's son, Joseph C. Hatton, before the Civil War. Federal census for Prince George's County, Enumeration District #5, 1870-1920; Prince George's County Deed JWB#3:638; *Slave Statistics*, 1867, p. 151.

<sup>72</sup> Federal census for Prince George's County, Enumeration District #5, 1870-1920; *Slave Statistics*, 1867, p. 159. Pearl, Susan G., *African-American Heritage Survey*, 1996, M-NCPPC, pp. 92-98.

freed by Dennis Magruder Lyles' 1828 will, remained in the immediate area, farming the land as freedmen until at least 1850.<sup>73</sup>

During the period of Reconstruction, properties tended to be broken into small farms and many passed through a series of short-term owners; this was true in the case of both Harmony Hall and Want Water. The Kerby family, having legally acquired Harmony Hall only in 1867, had already by 1868 defaulted on tax payments. By 1876, the 40-acre Harmony Hall property was offered at tax sale. This time the buyer was Ignatius S. Wilson, editor of the *Marlboro Gazette* and resident of Upper Marlborough, acquiring the property for investment purposes; within two years, Wilson sold Harmony Hall to his brother, George W. Wilson, Upper Marlborough merchant. And less than two years later, in May 1879, George W. Wilson turned the property over to J. K. Roberts, attorney of Upper Marlborough, who specialized in real estate transactions. During this period, the house at Harmony Hall was apparently still occupied by members of the Kerby family.<sup>74</sup>

At the same time, ownership of the Lyles family property, which included the house at Want Water, was also changing. Rebecca, widow of Thomas C. Lyles, continued to live at Want Water after his death in 1845. Her adult sons, John S. and Thomas C. (Jr.), farmed the property, which by this time amounted to approximately 180 acres, the remaining portion of the Want Water tract having been joined together with parts of Battersea and adjacent land. The Lyles decreased the amount of tobacco raised on the land and increased the raising of livestock. A few years after Rebecca Lyles' death in 1860, the two brothers agreed to sell the property, by then called Broad Creek Farm, which they had inherited from her. They executed a deed for 158 acres of Broad Creek, and Thomas Lyles held the mortgage on this sale; because the purchaser defaulted on the mortgage, the case went to the Equity Court. In June 1870, by order of the Equity Court, Lyles again sold his 158-acre Broad Creek Farm, described in the Equity Court records as follows: "property of 158 acres, called the Broad Creek House...three miles from the Alexandria Ferry...improved by a mansion house, large and old fashioned, 12 to 14 rooms with full cellar with a spring in it...ice house, granary, stable, corn house, carriage house, meat house and quarters...newly built tenement house one mile from dwelling...situated on the head of Broad Creek, a branch of the Potomac, sail boats and tugs can come within 300 yards...public road and landing on the place."<sup>75</sup>

Over the next few years, the property passed through a series of short-term owners, including Nicholas Keyser, a farmer from Virginia, who purchased 60 acres of the Broad Creek farm including the Want Water or Broad Creek House in 1876. It is Keyser's name which appears on the 1878 *Hopkins Atlas of Prince George's County*.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Prince George's County Will TT#1:438; Prince George's County Certificates of Freedom, p. 126, 1 January 1829; federal census for Prince George's County, Enumeration District #5, 1840 and 1850.

<sup>74</sup> Prince George's County Deeds HB#10:694, HB#13:72; ATB#1:193. Hopkins, G. M., *op.cit.*, 1878.

<sup>75</sup> Prince George's County Will WAJ#1:182; federal census for Prince George's County, Enumeration District #5, 1850, 1860 (population and agricultural schedules); Prince George's County Deeds FS#3:668, 669; Prince George's County Equity #573.

<sup>76</sup> Prince George's County Deeds HB#3:534,536; HB#11:170,177; WAJ#1:673,675; Hopkins, G.M., *op.cit.*, 1878.

One of the African-American families that settled in the Broad Creek community after the Civil War was that of Henry and Chloe Hemsley. Records of the Hemsley family before and during the Civil War have not been found, but it is known that Chloe was the daughter of William and Rachel Clagett. Attempts to find either Henry Hemsley, Chloe Clagett, or her parents among the records of enslaved persons in Prince George's County have not been successful, but the possibility exists that they may have been among the labor force of one of the Clagett family plantations of the county. In any case, by 1870 Chloe and her husband Henry Hemsley were listed in the register of St. John's Church at Broad Creek, and their youngest children were baptized there. Also by 1870, the Hemsley family was living in the northern part of the Broad Creek community, near St. John's Church.<sup>77</sup> In 1877, Chloe Hemsley purchased two acres of land out of the Cadle family property immediately adjoining the property of St. John's Church and raised their large family there. According to the reminiscences of long-time residents of the area, the Hemsley family lived in a small cabin on part of the Cadle property and attended St. John's Church. Their house is clearly shown, a short distance north of the church, on an 1894 map. After Chloe Hemsley's death in 1901, her heirs sold her two-acre property to the vestry of St. John's Church, and in 1906, the parish hall was built on that two-acre piece of land. The present Parish Hall/Education Building was built (1966) next to the site of the 1906 hall.<sup>78</sup>

In 1886, Attorney J. K. Roberts sold the 40-acre Harmony Hall property to Domenico Cristofani, an Italian shoemaker from the District of Columbia, who, according to later reports, lived at Harmony Hall and used the cellar of the house as a workshop for the production of shoes.<sup>79</sup> The immediate area was dotted with a few small farms, providing produce for family consumption as well as for the Washington markets. The creek itself was changing; from the end of the nineteenth century to the eve of World War II, its broad estuary was the scene of major dredging for gravel, a significant new industry. Along the Broad Creek estuary were several large fisheries reported to have brought in tremendous volumes of herring, shad, catfish, eels and sometimes sturgeon, which were then carried to the Washington and Alexandria fish markets. One of these fisheries was run by the family of George Raum, who had immigrated with his family from Bavaria. Another industry which developed near the estuary during this time was that of brickmaking; the Raum family operated a brickmaking kiln as well as a fishery. At this time the house at Want Water and 60 acres to the north were owned by the family of John Jacob Sellner, another family who had recently immigrated from Germany, while nearby land to the east and

<sup>77</sup> *Prince George's County, Maryland, Indexes of Church Registers*, Volume I, King George's Parish, 1979; federal census records, Prince George's County, Enumeration District #5, 1870.

<sup>78</sup> Federal census for Prince George's County, Enumeration District #5, 1880; Death Certificate; Prince George's County Deeds HB#12:141, #34:40; Maryland Death Certificate, Oxon Hill, 1901; G. M. Hopkins map of *The Vicinity of Washington, D.C.*, 1894. Research continues in an attempt to trace members of the Clagett and Hemsley families, enslaved or free, to antebellum plantations in the Broad Creek area; as yet no slave statistics or manumission records for these families have been discovered.

<sup>79</sup> Prince George's County Deed JWB#7:424; see also "Broad Creek Ripples," by Helen O'Leary, occasional columns printed in the *Prince George's Journal*, 1958-59.

north was being farmed by the Cadle and Pfeil families. Members of the Pfeil family had immigrated from Germany just after the Civil War; they, the Raums, and the Sellners were apparently among the first of a group of German immigrants who would bring new growth and activity to the Broad Creek community. This would be the beginning of the community of Silesia.<sup>80</sup>

## Silesia

In 1875, a young man named Robert Stein came to the United States from his birthplace in Silesia, Prussia. Fluent in a number of languages, Stein completed studies at Georgetown University and began teaching in Washington. Together with his brother, Richard, Robert Stein began in the early 1890s to purchase several hundred acres of land in the Broad Creek area. He had soon successfully petitioned for the community to be renamed "Silesia," and by 1902 an official Silesia post office had opened. In 1892, when Robert Stein legally acquired Harmony Hall, he persuaded many members of his family to immigrate to Maryland. Two sisters of Robert and Richard Stein (Selma Stein Adler and Anna Stein Tilch) came from Prussia with their families and took up residence at Harmony Hall, living and farming there into the first decade of the twentieth century when they began to build their own houses on parts of the Stein family acreage. More of the extended family, including, in addition to the Adlers and Tilches, the Walzels and the Rudsits, arrived from Silesia in the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>81</sup> The Tilch and Adler children attended Friendly School, approximately three miles to the southeast, until the Silesia Schoolhouse was opened in 1903, just a quarter of a mile to the south on the road to Fort Washington. Black children from Broad Creek attended a school which had been established in 1895; it was located a short distance northwest of St. John's Church.<sup>82</sup>

The land owned by the Stein-Adler-Tilch family included the old White Horse Tavern on the old Alexandria road just south of Harmony Hall. In 1903, part of the old tavern was torn down, and Richard Stein built on its site a new grocery and feed store, which was subsequently operated by members of the extended family. The remaining section of the old tavern was then converted into a wash house, and at about the same time, a dwelling was built next to the new store for the Tilch family, members of whom continue to operate the store complex to the present day. (That Tilch family dwelling was later moved north to a location on the old Piscataway-Alexandria road near St. John's Church; it was subsequently

<sup>80</sup> Prince George's County Deeds WAJ#1:349,673; see Hopkins, G.M., *op.cit.*; O'Leary, Helen, *op.cit.*; Federal census for Prince George's County, Enumeration District #4, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920; Tilp, Frederick, *This Was Potomac River*, Alexandria, VA, 1978; interview with Phyllis Luskey Cox, February, March 2001.

<sup>81</sup> Prince George's County Deeds JWB#20:639, JWB#21:493; JWB#28:46; *Who Was Who in America*, Vol. I, 1897-1942, Chicago, 1966; the Silesia Post Office was opened in 1902 and operated until 1927.

<sup>82</sup> Closed school files, Fort Foote Colored School; Colored Public School Trustees Association, *A Survey of Colored Public Schools of Prince George's County*, 1923, 1924; Prince George's County Retired Teachers' Association, *The Public Schools of Prince George's County*, 1976; inventory file for Silesia School, PG#80-12

demolished.) Robert Stein, who had been the prime mover in bringing his family to the area, resided in Washington. He distinguished himself in linguistics and exploration, including accompanying Admiral Richard Peary to Greenland, as well as in initiatives toward world peace. He died in 1917, at which time the Harmony Hall property was being occupied and farmed by his brother, Richard Stein, and his nephew, Bernard Tilch.<sup>83</sup>

At the same time, during the early years of the twentieth century, the grocery and feed store was being operated by Bernard Tilch's brother, Robert. This store was the only one in the immediate area, and the small Silesia commercial complex became a local landmark. The complex included a blacksmith's shop across the road to the south of the Tilch store, the nearby post office, and the Silesia schoolhouse a short distance farther south. During the same period, Richard Stein purchased property to the east of Harmony Hall, on the other side of the old Alexandria road, by then known as Livingston Road; on this property he built two houses for members of his family. The commercial complex has expanded over the years, with a liquor store/tavern built in the 1930s after the end of Prohibition, the replacement of the 1903 store in the 1940s, the construction of a new liquor store in 1979, and the opening a few years later of a new feed and pet supply store in the remodeled 1930s liquor store. Two houses, built for members of the Tilch family in the 1930s, still stand on the property immediately north of the store.<sup>84</sup>

## The Collins Era

With the arrival of the Collins family in the late 1920s, significant changes came to Broad Creek—direct effects upon Harmony Hall and Want Water and the relocation of another eighteenth-century building into the community. The arrival of the Collins family also had indirect effects upon the development of the immediate area, e.g., the building of new residences for the members of the extended Stein-Tilch families who had lived at Harmony Hall. Charles Wallace Collins, an attorney from Alabama, came to Washington, D.C., just before World War I. Beginning in 1915 he worked in the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress, also advising committees of the Senate and House in drafting the Budget and Accounting Act, adopted by Congress in 1921. At that time, Collins resigned his position at the Library of Congress to become general counsel for the new Bureau of the Budget, and subsequently for the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency. Collins left public life in 1927 and resumed private law practice, serving as general counsel to the Bank of America until his retirement in 1947. He was the author of many books and articles on constitutional law, banking law, and states rights, and his writings were

<sup>83</sup> *Who Was Who in America*, Volume I, 1897-1942, Chicago, 1966; Federal census for Prince George's County, Enumeration District 5, 1900, 1910, 1920; O'Leary, *op.cit.*

<sup>84</sup> O'Leary, *op.cit.*; Tanta-Cove Garden Club, *Along the Potomac Shore in Prince George's County*, 1992, pp. 49,50; Hutchinson, Elizabeth J., *Silesia, Formerly White Horse Sign*, unpublished paper, 1969; Prince George's County Deeds #148:147, #3940:139; Prince George's County tax assessments, 1920-1941; conversation with members of the Tilch family.

influential in the organization of the Dixiecrats in the presidential election of 1948.<sup>85</sup>

Charles Collins had a passionate interest in history and archaeology and had previously restored two eighteenth-century houses in Georgetown. By the late 1920s he was looking for rural property on which to establish a prominent country estate outside but close to Washington, D.C., modeled on his memory of plantations of the deep South. Collins' notes indicate that he was learning to drive on the old unpaved Piscataway-Alexandria stage road when he first saw Harmony Hall. After several months of negotiations, he purchased (in April 1929) 41 acres of the Harmony Hall property from Richard Stein and began the restoration of the eighteenth-century brick house.<sup>86</sup>

When Charles Collins and his wife acquired Harmony Hall, the house was in fairly deteriorated condition, but they were able to preserve the original wood floors, paneling, and staircase details, and acquire appropriate hardware to replace what had been lost. They discovered stone foundations of a north and a south wing extending from the gable ends of the house, but the wings themselves had long since been destroyed. Collins noted that the Stein family had used most of the house for farm purposes; the parlor had been the fish-drying room and meal and corn had been stored in the third story. He also noted considerable damage from an infestation of rats that had created a network of runways through the brick foundations. Consequently, he rebuilt the four corners of the brick foundation and successfully closed off the runways. Collins credited Richard Stein with taking special care of the wood details of the house, indicating that the floors, mantels, paneling, chair rails, cupboards and cornices were in "perfect condition," and that the handsome staircase required no restoration. After nearly two years of work, Collins and his wife moved into Harmony Hall.<sup>87</sup>

Collins introduced electricity and running water before they moved into Harmony Hall, but from 1930 to 1941, the house was heated by the original fireplaces, with a boy employed full-time to keep the fires going. Upon the outbreak of World War II, Collins installed an electric warm-air system, creating channels in the brick walls for vents and disguising them with added plaster. Collins and his wife settled into Harmony Hall, not only working on the fine brick mansion, but also embellishing the grounds with a terraced lawn, "ha-ha," and cypress walk. They also reclaimed 11 acres of land through the dredging of Slash Creek, built two bridges across it, and fitted up the waterfront with boat house and pier.<sup>88</sup> Collins also began to

<sup>85</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, National Personnel Records Center (Civilian Personnel Records), St. Louis, MO; telephone interviews with archivists of Library of Congress Law Library, National Archives Center for Legislative Records, Supreme Court Library; *Washington Evening Star*, December 16, 1964, obituary of Charles W. Collins; *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*; Charles Wallace Collins Papers, Special Collections, Hornbake Library, University of Maryland at College Park.

<sup>86</sup> Prince George's County Deeds #326:375,376; Charles Wallace Collins papers, *op.cit.*, (Series I), Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.

<sup>87</sup> Charles Wallace Collins papers, *op.cit.*

<sup>88</sup> Charles Wallace Collins papers, *op.cit.*

acquire adjacent land for the undertaking of even more challenging projects.

Within the next three years (into 1932), Collins purchased three parcels of land from the Sellner family, three of five 13.3-acre parcels that had been created by the partition of the real estate of John Jacob Sellner.<sup>89</sup> On one of these parcels stood the Want Water house (or Broad Creek House), where the Sellner family had lived. This brick and wood frame house, which had been the home of the Batts and later the Lyles family, was by this time in deteriorating condition, and Collins began to make plans to restore it.

On another of the Sellner parcels, north of Want Water, Collins arranged to move and reassemble a mid-eighteenth century house from the village of Piscataway. He had discovered that a Tidewater-style frame house located on the main road through Piscataway was to be demolished, and he had succeeded in acquiring it for the expense and trouble of moving it from the site. In 1932, Collins had architectural drawings and photographs made of the house, both exterior and interior, and then had the building and its massive brick chimneys disassembled, numbering each piece for reassembly. Over the next year or so, the house was reassembled near Broad Creek, a short distance north of the house at Want Water, but further from the creek and closer to Livingston Road. Collins built an attached kitchen wing at the north gable end of the house and, a short distance further, a "carriage" house, both additions compatible in style with the historic structure. Collins had the ancient channel, created by Humphrey Batts in 1749 and known today as the "Broad Creek Canal," dredged and extended so that there would be easy access from the newly renovated house to Broad Creek. Christened "Piscataway House," this handsome reassembled dwelling was for many years rented by Collins to tenants. In 1948, Collins had a separate garage/apartment constructed immediately north of and architecturally compatible with Piscataway House. In 1956 Collins sold Piscataway House and 1 1/2 acres to Colonel and Mrs. George S. Brown.<sup>90</sup> Piscataway House remains a privately owned residence.

Charles Collins was not as successful with his plans to restore the house at Want Water. Although he recognized the building as an early and particularly fine example of Colonial architecture, he never succeeded in carrying out the work of restoration. It was, however, carefully documented in 1935, by then in deteriorating condition. The Historic American Buildings Survey was established in that year, and teams of architects, historians and photographers, unemployed during the Great Depression, were sent out to record the nation's historic buildings. Harmony Hall and Want Water were carefully photographed and measured drawings of floor plans, elevations, and decorative details were produced, all filed in the Fine Arts Division (now Prints and Photographs Division) of the Library of Congress. It had been hoped that this documentation would lead to eventual stabilization and restoration of Want Water, but this never

<sup>89</sup> Prince George's County Deeds #279:371, #334:245 and 247, #381:279.

<sup>90</sup> Prince George's County Deeds #279:371, #334:245 and 247, #381:279; see also Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties form for Piscataway House, PG#80-24-9. Prince George's County Deed #2020:429. Colonel Brown (later General Brown) served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1974-1978. See *American National Biography*, Vol. 3, Oxford University Press, 1999. Charles W. Collins papers, *op.cit.*

happened. Although Collins had this historic building stabilized in 1938, it had continued to deteriorate. By the time of his death in 1964, the wooden walls of this outstanding brick-and-frame structure had collapsed, and only its brick gambrel-end walls still stood to mark its former prominence.<sup>91</sup>

Collins and his wife continued to work on their property throughout the 1940s, building a new corn crib and boat shed, and designing and constructing a new two-story (plus basement) brick wing on the south side of Harmony Hall. Also, as scenic protection for the Collins property, in 1941 Mrs. Collins purchased 9.45 acres of property directly across Livingston Road from Harmony Hall, part of what was locally known as Stein Hill. Two residences of the extended Stein-Tilch family were located on this property, and within a few years, Mrs. Collins had them remodeled and rented to army officers.<sup>92</sup>

Charles Collins retired in 1947 and devoted himself to politics and writing, as well as his continued farming operations and improvements of his historic Broad Creek property. At approximately that time, he arranged to have a five-room garden house constructed south of the mansion; upon his retirement he set up an office in its upstairs room. It was from this office space that his large collection of papers was salvaged in the 1980s, now conserved, inventoried, and filed in the special collections of the University of Maryland at College Park library. Charles Collins died December 14, 1964, at Harmony Hall, leaving the Broad Creek property to his widow, Sue Spencer Collins.<sup>93</sup>



Figure 5: Piscataway House (1972 photograph)

## Twentieth-Century Changes

Two years before Charles Collins began to purchase property at Broad Creek, a small family farm complex was beginning to develop on the property immediately to the north. In 1927 George Norman Roland, a grandson of John Jacob Sellner who had lived at Want Water, received one of the 13.3-acre parcels out of the partition of his grandfather's property. Roland began a small truck farming operation on his land, located just north of the land where Collins would soon reassemble his Piscataway House. Soon after 1927, Roland had a small frame cottage built by local Amish craftsmen and raised his family in this house. For two generations, the Roland family grew vegetables and melons and took them to market in Washington. As his children grew up and began families of their own,

<sup>91</sup> Prince George's County Deed #334:245,247; remarks by Charles W. Collins to the American Clan Gregor Society, October 19, 1935, *Year Book of the American Clan Gregor Society*; Historic American Buildings Survey, MD-10-7, 1934/35; Charles W. Collins Papers, *op.cit.*

<sup>92</sup> Collins, Charles W., *Diary, Volume 2, 1938-1949*; Prince George's County Deed #631:205. The 9.45-acre property was later reacquired by members of the Tilch family.

<sup>93</sup> Charles Wallace Collins Papers, Special Collections, Hornbake Library, University of Maryland at College Park; Prince George's Administrative File #15925; Prince George's County Will WDA#14:684.

Roland divided house lots out of his farm property, and during the 1940s three houses were built (for his daughter and sons) fronting on Livingston Road. The design and construction of these three small dwellings were supervised by another member of the family, Walter Roland, who worked as a master carpenter in the District of Columbia. The barn that George N. Roland had built in the late 1920s stands at the rear of one of these lots. Today the three Roland family houses, variously enlarged from the original forms of the 1940s, together with the original 1927 dwelling, comprise a small complex of buildings that reflect three generations of a small farmer's family. Two of the houses are still occupied by Roland family descendants.<sup>94</sup>

During the course of the twentieth century, many changes took place in the Broad Creek community. Silesia School, which had been since 1903 the elementary school for the white children of the area, was closed in 1925. In this year, the Oxon Hill Consolidated School opened, taking in all of the white children who had attended the primary schools at Fort Foote, Oxon Hill, Friendly, and Silesia. The black children of the area continued to attend the Fort Foote Colored School north of St. John's Church, until it closed in 1943. In that year the new Sojourner Truth School opened in Oxon Hill, taking in all of the children from the African-American schools at Fort Foote, Accokeek, Oxon Hill, and Chapel Hill.<sup>95</sup> After the U.S. Supreme Court decision of 1954 and the beginning of school desegregation, Sojourner Truth School was closed (it was later demolished and the Oxon Hill branch of the Prince George's County Library was built on its site). The earlier small schoolhouses, including Fort Foote, were eventually demolished.

Although the Broad Creek community was fairly isolated from the increased development brought by World War II, it was still affected by the events of the time. In 1942 construction began on Indian Head Highway in order to provide access to the munitions plant at Indian Head in Charles County. The line of this straight north-south highway crossed and recrossed the alignments of Livingston Road, the old road between Alexandria and Piscataway. A remnant of that ancient road remained the principal artery of the Broad Creek community.

New commerce and light industry also began to appear in the Broad Creek community. In 1948, Clemmer Mills, who was at that time operating a sawmill in Waldorf (Charles County), purchased part of his father-in-law's land east of St. John's Church and opened the Mills Lumber Company. Mills first established a sawmill on the property, but soon turned his operation into a lumberyard offering lumber for construction, and later a hardware and home improvement store. Mills Lumber Company was the first new commercial establishment to come to the Broad Creek community after the establishment of the Tilch family's feed and grocery store, which anchored the southern end of the community. Several years later, Mills bought an additional acre and a half immediately north of the lumber company; his family home was built on this land in 1964.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Prince George's County Deed #279:371; Prince George's County tax assessments 1920-1935; interview with Richard Scott, January 2001.

<sup>95</sup> Prince George's County Retired Teachers Association, *op.cit.*, 1976.

<sup>96</sup> Prince George's County Deed #975:163; Interview with Carlton Mills, July 2001; "Two Business Partners Rebuild Mills Lumber," *The Washington Post*, June 14, 2001; Prince George's County Deed #2816:163.

Several new houses had been built along Livingston Road during this period. In 1939, the Luskey family began construction of a house on their allotment of the land that had for several generations been farmed by the Cadle family. The small frame Cape Cod style house, built on a small portion of the Cadle farm, is now the northernmost building in the Broad Creek Historic District.<sup>97</sup>

In the period after the end of World War II, another small residential complex began to develop almost directly across Livingston Road from the Roland family complex. A seven-acre triangle of Adler family land on the east side of Livingston Road was purchased in 1948 by the O'Leary family, who planned to have houses constructed for themselves as well as for friends. Within the next few years, they subdivided the acreage and sold several of the small lots; three houses were constructed between 1950 and 1952, sharing a common drive and preserving the wooded setting.<sup>98</sup>

Increased development and changes came to the general area around Broad Creek after the construction of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge and the Capital Beltway in the early 1960s. Since that time, new residential subdivisions have been developed in all directions around Broad Creek. The congregation of St. John's Church increased in size, and in the mid 1960s a new parish hall and rectory were built. Because of the increasing school-age population in the immediate area, plans were begun to build a new elementary school. In the summer of 1965, Sue Spencer Collins, widow of Charles W. Collins, sold to the Prince George's County Board of Education the southernmost ten acres of her Harmony Hall acreage, for the building of the school.<sup>99</sup> Harmony Hall Elementary School opened in 1966, but had a short life as a school building. Budget cuts and decreased enrollment caused the school to be closed in 1981, and the building was enlarged and opened a few years later as a regional arts center. Drawing large numbers of participants and audiences for a range of lively arts, the Harmony Hall Regional Center is now the principal modern element in the Historic District.

The presently operating pumping station was also built on the Collins family's acreage. In the fall of 1965, Mrs. Collins sold nearly four acres (plus a right-of-way) of the Sellner land to the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC), and the pumping station was constructed soon afterwards.<sup>100</sup>

In 1966 Mrs. Collins sold the remaining 65.7 acres of the Harmony Hall property (including the Want Water house) to the National Park Service, "subject to [her] tenancy for life in that portion of the property containing approximately two acres on which is located a two and one-half story brick colonial dwelling known as Harmony Hall, together with auxiliary buildings, and including the drives thereto from Livingston Road and with a right-of-way to Broad Creek."<sup>101</sup> Sue Spencer Collins died in Alabama in

<sup>97</sup> Interview, spring 2001, with Phyllis Luskey Cox; Prince George's County Plat of James G. Cadle's Estate, JWB#6:688; E. L. Latimer plat, 1936, of Lot #1 of J. W. Cadle estate.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Helen O'Leary, May and June 2001; Prince George's County Deeds #1072:111, #1099:277, #1281:274.

<sup>99</sup> Prince George's County Deed #3193:387.

<sup>100</sup> Prince George's County Deeds #3222:642, #3226:39.

<sup>101</sup> Prince George's County Deed #3370:556.

April 1983.<sup>102</sup> The National Park Service continues to manage the property, conducting archaeological investigations near the house at Harmony Hall (1985-1987) and undertaking stabilization of the Want Water ruins in 1998. The Park Service is currently making plans for the future maintenance and use of the house at Harmony Hall.

Today the Broad Creek community remains relatively quiet and as yet undeveloped. The abundance of parkland in the general area provides substantial green space and unmatched potential for outdoor education and passive recreation, while the small amount of modest residential development provides a compatible backdrop for the outstanding eighteenth-century historic buildings that offer a glimpse of Broad Creek's long history.

<sup>102</sup> Prince George's County Administration File #32288.