

THE HASSETT FARM & RELATED HISTORY

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The history of this particular tract of land can be traced to several original patents. Deed searches of the property refer to “Rocky Neck,” “Rocky Neck Amended” and “Good Luck.” Rocky Neck totaled 548 acres and was granted to Lancelot Jacques and Thomas Johnson on May 17, 1763, (Land Patents Book 1, pg. 139-140). Rocky Neck Amended was surveyed for Denton Jacques, October 18, 1811, and totaled 548 acres, (Land Patents Book 1, pg. 286). Good Luck was granted to James Prather on April 16, 1790, with 160 and 117½ acres, (Land Patents Book 2, pg. 42-43).

On April 2, 1824, Samuel Prather and his wife Elizabeth (a daughter of Denton Jacques) purchased 197 (or possibly 257) acres from the estate of James and Elie Prather, (Land Record GG/774 & 775). February 24, 1825, he purchased 225 acres from Lancelot Jacques, Jr., a trustee of Denton’s estate (Land Records HH/171). The Mackall Survey Map shows Samuel owning this property in 1835 when the C&O Canal Company condemned him and John Cowton. Samuel lost a portion of his property to the Canal for \$2800, (Liber 20/110). In 1844, the Washington County Commissioners purchased land from several owners to create what is now Four Locks Road. Samuel Prather was one of the landowners, (Road and Land Records OHWI/366-369).

Circa 1846, Samuel died leaving several heirs. One of his heirs, Catherine Prather Snider (wife of John R.), died just after her father. This left a problem in settling Samuel’s estate. In 1859, William Cushwa, a trustee for the Circuit Court, was appointed to settle Samuel’s estate; i.e., Jonathan D. Prather vs. John R. Snider (Equity Records 1566 and Chancery Records #10/580-598). On page 589, reference is made that Jonathan Prather purchased 159¼ acres for \$55 per acre. This sale was advertised in the newspaper (page 590) and advertises deceased Samuel’s property including a deed No. 1 located in Four Locks with 153¼ acres and a two-story stone house “with an orchard of excellent fruit trees.” Page 589 states the actual survey for this 153¼ acres was 159¼ acres. Prather’s purchase is recorded in Land Records IN 16/339 & 340 at a cost of \$11,508.75.

On top of the south side of the present stone house – known as the Hassett House – is a keystone with the date 1868. Therefore, this house was completed or renovated during the occupancy of J. D. Prather. Not much is known about Jonathan D. Prather. However, Washington County Post Office records show a post office located in Four Locks from June 30, 1858 to January 21, 1865. The postmaster was John D. Prather. Incidentally, this post office was dissolved in January, 1865, moved to Clear Spring, re-established in April, 1878, and dissolved again in 1903, when it was moved to Big Spring.

The Washington County Atlas of a877 shows the present stone house listed under the name of J. D. Prather.

Also of note in 1978, the Maryland Historical Trust completed an Historic Sites Inventory for this house – called the Hassett Farm. Architectural Historian Paula Stoner reported that the house

“probably dates from the second half of the 19th century as suggested by the general form of the house.”

In Prather’s will there is mention of a house and warehouse on the tract. Jonathan died in 1878 and his wife, Ann Catherine Prather, died in 1905.

Of further interest are two Mason-Dixon markers which serve as doorsteps for the two entrances on the east side of the house. Two Englishmen – Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon – were hired to settle the boundary dispute between Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Every mile had a simple intermediate stone with an “M” and “P” on either side. A fancier crown stone was placed at every fifth mile.

On December 13, 1905, Thomas and Margaret (Miss Kate) Hassett purchased this tract from Jonathan Perry and Frank Mish who were administrators for the estate of J. D. Prather (Land Record 122/655). The purchase price was \$5,377.59.

According to Margaret Rowland, former undertaker and close friend of the Hassetts, Thomas had three sisters, Lida, Libbie and Mabel, who never married. Thomas had no children. He had one brother, Charles, who had one daughter, Elizabeth Hassett Ankeney. In June, 1956, Margaret died. Thomas died in 1941.

Mrs. Ankeney stated that her uncle Thomas was a “purchasing agent” for the Canal Company. He purchased grain and other supplies from local farmers, stored them in a warehouse building in Four Locks and sold these to the Canal Company. In addition, Thomas was a County Commissioner, a Director of the Washington County Museum and Director for the Clear Spring National Bank. Thomas also had a tenant house built across the street from the main stone house.

On September 17, 1984, I interviewed Mrs. Leon Cushwa, a friend of the Hassetts. She explained the lineage as such: Thomas had a brother, Charles (wife Rose); their father was William T. Hassett. William’s brother was John C. (wife Sally) who lived in the Baker Property. William T. and John operated a warehouse and store in Four Locks.

Mrs. Cushwa added more to what Mrs. Ankeney reported. Thomas (a Republican) in addition to being a County Commissioner, was President of the Board of County Commissioners in his second term. She also described Thomas as a “gentleman farmer” who was, at times, shy and had little mechanical ability. He did most of his own farming and did not have a lot of people working for him. He grew wheat and corn, had a home orchard, rode horses and had a few other farm animals.

Mrs. Cushwa said, “when you came to the Hassett House, it was a happy day.” The reason was because “Miss Kate was a special person.” She was a skilled painter and did carvings with a knife on large tree lichens. Miss Kate was from Virginia, “a loving and caring person” who enjoyed a cultural life. She also gathered people around her who enjoyed the same life, particularly friends who sat for hours and painted the Potomac River and Four Locks from the front porch.

On September 11, 1956, Henry and Hazel Starliper purchased the home from the Hassett estate (land Record 315/14); also refer to “straw deed” 315/536). Mrs. Starliper stated that next to the big stone house was a bake oven (the back portion of today’s garage). She also said that the barn burned down during their tenure as owners. The purchase price from Hassett was \$15,500 for Parcel 1 (71¾ acres) and Parcel 2 (87½ acres).

On August 14, 1962, the Starlipers sold the house to Bernard Charles (Land Record 383/489; Plot Record 492 and 493). In the various deeds the Hassett Property is part of Parcel 1.

Mr. Charles kept the house only a short time when on March 4, 1963, he sold it to Arthur Weber for \$18,000 (Land Record 390/529).

Finally the United States purchased Tract #76-111 from Arthur Weber in May, 1973, for \$52,500 (Land Record 560/461). The tract totaled 3.49 acres.

GENEALOGY

Compiled from research in Register of Wills office, interviews with Mrs. Leon Cushwa, visiting Hassett gravesites in Rosehill Cemetery of Clear Spring, and historical notes of William T. Hassett, Jr. of Hagerstown.

Thomas Hassett (died ca. 1865)

Wm. T. Hassett (11/1839 – 5/1908) (wife: Sarah Edelen)	and	John C. Hassett (1/1844 – 4/1917) (wife: Sally J.)

Thomas Hassett (12/1869–6/1941)	Charles Hassett (10/1865–4/1931)	Libbie (1872–1936)	John Cowton Hassett (died 1920)	Tilman Wm. T. Hassett (c.a. 1891–1952)
		Eleanor (Lida) (1867–1943)		Wm. T. Hassett, Jr
		Mabel (1874–1961)		

Elizabeth Ankeney
David Ankeney

John C. and Sally J. lived in the Baker property.

According to William Hassett, Jr., of Hagerstown, who has historical notes of his family, Thomas and a brother came to this country from Ireland during the Potato Famine. The brother disappears, but Thomas married a Miss Tice who died. His second wife was Eleanor Silver. They

had 4 children, including S. Amelia, William T., John C. and Mary E. who married Alex Flory (they lived in the present Lewis property in Four Locks). There were __ other children.

GG/246 (List of Sales) – Thomas Hassett had a 99-year lease in Four Locks from the C & O Canal Co. on a tract of land part of “Good Luck” and condemned from Samuel Prather. This was recorded 2-12-1863 (Land Records IN 16/525-526).

36/743 (List of Sales) – Thomas Hassett had 4½ acres and a two-story weather board dwelling in Four Locks conveyed to him June 9, 1860 (Land Records IN 15/94).

He had another leasehold in Four Locks from the Canal Co. which included .28 acres and a 1½-story weatherboard house. This was for 99 years and was in the area of Lock 50 originally owned by Samuel Prather (Land Records IN 13/222).

CHERRY HILL FARM (above the Hassett Flats trailers) on the hill is where William T. Hassett lived and his 5 children were born (Thomas, Charles, Lida, Libbie, and Mabel). Cherry Hill House burned down on December 17, 1925, was immediately rebuilt, and re-occupied by the three sisters. They moved to Clear Spring in 1930. This second house is still standing.