

CAROL STUART WATSON

*The Beall-Dawson House, c. 1815  
home of the Montgomery County Historical Society  
103 W. Montgomery Ave., Rockville, Maryland*

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## THE TURBULENT HISTORY OF LOCUST GROVE

by John M. Walton, Jr.

Across Westlake Drive from busy Montgomery Mall and in the shadows of high-rise apartment buildings, there stands in a grove of locust trees an old brick house, the only eighteenth-century brick house still standing in the Bethesda area. The house, appropriately named "Locust Grove," was built by Samuel Wade Magruder, one of the founding fathers of Montgomery County. The house was inherited by his son, Lloyd Magruder, at whose death Locust Grove had to be sold at public auction. In spite of a succession of similarly financially troubled owners and twentieth-century development of the immediate area, Locust Grove still survives.



Samuel Wade Magruder, the son of Captain Alexander Magruder of Prince George's County, was born about 1728.<sup>1</sup> Samuel was a lieutenant in the colonial militia in the 1750's and, during the American Revolution, served first as captain and later as major in the 29th Battalion, Maryland Militia. On September 4, 1759, the vestry of Prince George's Parish nominated Samuel Wade Magruder to be one of the inspectors at Rock Creek Warehouse, located in or near Georgetown.<sup>2</sup> Magruder continued in this position at least until October 1770. He was chairman of the Committee of Observation for the Lower District of Frederick County prior to the founding of Montgomery County in 1776,<sup>3</sup> and on April 21, 1777, he was appointed as one of the "assigned Justices of (the) Montgomery County Court."<sup>4</sup> He continued as a Judge of that court until at least the March term of 1790, the last term at which he presided.

Exactly when Locust Grove was built is not known. In June 1751, Samuel Wade Magruder received title to 214 acres of a tract of land called "Resurvey on Hensley" through his father's will.<sup>5</sup> This portion of Resurvey on Hensley (later discovered to contain only 194 acres) eventually formed part of the nucleus of the larger tract of "Magruder's Discovery" which was patented under that name for Samuel Wade Magruder on January 20, 1764, and which comprised 580 acres.<sup>6</sup> Magruder's Discovery and several other pieces of land owned by Magruder were later resurveyed on May 7, 1785, and were combined with some adjacent vacant lands to form one 906  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre tract under the single name of Magruder's Discovery.<sup>7</sup>

The 1783 Tax Assessment for Montgomery County lists Samuel Wade Magruder as owning a little over 1123 acres in the county, including a tract of land called Magruder's Discovery on which stood "1 large Brick house," a "Kitchen," "two Tobo (Tobacco) houses," and a "Barn," and other unspecified structures.<sup>8</sup> This description of the improvements on Magruder's Discovery in 1783 represents the earliest reference to Locust Grove and its outbuildings that has yet been found.

During the course of 1783, a young boy destined to be famous in the history of this nation came to Locust Grove as a boarder in the household of

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1. Gaius Marcus Brumbaugh, *Maryland Records. Colonial, Revolutionary, County and Church from Original Sources* (Baltimore, MD: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1915), Vol. 1, p. 184.

2. Vestry Minutes of Prince George's Parish, M 261 (1), p. 78, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland (hereafter abbreviated MHR).

3. Archives of Maryland, Vol. XII, p. 464.

4. Montgomery County Court Proceedings, 1777-1785, p. 1.

5. Frederick County Wills, Box 1, Folder 7, MHR.

6. Patents, Book BC & GS #25, pp. 385-389, MHR.

7. Montgomery County Unpatented Certificate No. 163, MHR.

8. Assessment of 1783 for Montgomery County, M872, MHR.



Major Samuel Wade Magruder. The boy, William Wirt, was a student at Reverend James Hunt's nearby Tusculum Academy. Wirt went on to become one of the most capable and noted attorneys general of the United States, serving in the cabinets of Presidents James Monroe and John Quincy Adams, as well as an author of considerable reputation and a presidential candidate on the Anti-Masonic ticket in 1832. In his memoirs, Wirt provides a description of the old mansion and its outbuildings and gives some idea of life at Locust Grove two centuries ago.

"In 1783 I was removed from the grammar school of Mr. Dent in Charles county, to that of Rev. James Hunt, the Presbyterian minister in Montgomery county, ... . I was put to board with Major Samuel Wade Magruder, a substantial planter, who lived about two miles from Mr. Hunt's. The Magruders, at that time, formed a numerous family in that county. The original name, I have heard, was McGregor of Scotland, and the ancestors are said to have sought a refuge in this country, after the defeated at Culloden. The Major showed marks of High-land extraction. He was large, robust and somewhat corpulent, with a round florid face, short, curling, sandy hair, and blue-gray eyes. He was strong of limb, fiery in temperament, hospitable, warm-hearted and rough. He was a magistrate and *ex-officio* a conservator of the peace, which, however, he was as ready, on provocation, to break as to preserve. At times he was kind and playful with the boys; but wo betide the unfortunate boy or man who became the object of his displeasure!

"Mrs. Magruder was the sister of Col. Thomas Beall of Georgetown, and daughter, as I have understood, of the gentleman after whom Georgetown took its name - George Beall of that place. She was a small, spare old lady who had been handsome. Her countenance was strongly expressive of her gentle disposition. The contrast with her husband was very striking. She was quiet and generally silent. I do not remember having heard her speak a dozen times in the two years I lived in the family, and have forgotten the note of her voice. But the Major's I remember as the loud north wind that used to rock the house and sweep the snow-covered field. They had a large family - seven sons and four daughters. ...

"Besides the parents and children, there were divers incumbents who drew their rations in the Major's house. There was, for a short time, a Col. Hamilton, who used to wear leather clothes, - coat and waistcoat included - a thin, keen, active man, a little above middle age who, I was told, had been a *Regulator* in North Carolina, - though I was then ignorant what the word meant, - and that he was rather in concealment and under the Major's protection.

"Then there was an interesting old gentleman, by name Thomas Flint, who had been an English schoolmaster, and had educated all the family except George and Patrick, who were destined for a classical education and a learned profession. Mr. Flint was upwards of fifty, 'in fair round belly with good capon lined' - a good looking man with a dark complexion, sharp, black eyes and shaggy brows. He had a son who was Major Magruder's overseer.



"Besides these, there were two apprentices: - one of them, Zack, a wild, slovenly, blackguard boy, cut out by nature for a strolling player, having a strong inclination to repeat fragments of speeches and scraps of plays which he had learned from the boys of the school; - the other was Harry, the son of the miller who was in the Major's employment, ...

"The mansion was a large, two-storied brick house, built not long before I went there. In this his family proper lived. Within a few feet of it stood the old house, which had been the former residence of the family, but which was now occupied, at one end, by the overseer, and in the residue of its chambers by the school boys and the two apprentices. Here, at night, we got our lessons and more frequently played our pranks.

"There were two boarders, besides myself: Walter Jones, son of Mr. Edward Jones, a rich planter of Frederick county, and Richard Harwood from Anne Arundel, - in after times one of the Judges of a District in the State. For a short time the late Col. Thomas Davis of Montgomery, was one of our boarders and schoolfellows. - So that Major Magruder's household embraced not less than twenty white persons. To these there was a constant addition, by visitors to the young people of the family. It was, in fact, an active, bustling, merry, noisy family, always in motion, and often in commotion ... ."<sup>9</sup>

When Samuel Wade Magruder died in 1792, he left behind the memory of a man devoted to public service for nearly half a century, and he bestowed upon his children through his will a considerable landed wealth acquired during a like amount of time. To his three youngest sons, Warren, Lloyd, and Thomas Contee, he bequeathed Locust Grove and more than 1300 acres of land including the entire tract of Magruder's Discovery.<sup>10</sup> All three sons were minors under the age of 21. Perhaps the only consolation to these three young boys in the wake of their father's death was that their mother, Lucy Beall Magruder, was still living. But even her presence was not to be savored long, for, in 1795, she joined her departed husband.<sup>11</sup>

While Lucy Magruder had lived following Samuel Wade's death, she had been joint executrix of his estate with the oldest son, Levin,<sup>12</sup> and had, no doubt, continued to reside at Locust Grove with some of her children until her death. The three co-heirs to Locust Grove and the surrounding estate were, after all, too young to maintain or manage their inheritance.

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9. John P. Kennedy, *Memoirs of the Life of William Wirt* (Philadelphia, PA: Lea and Blanchard, 1849), Vol. 1, pp. 36-37.

10. Montgomery County Wills, Box 2, Folder 53, MHR, and Montgomery County Court Record, 1795-1801, pp. 478-486.

11. Montgomery County Record Book, Book C, p. 221.

12. Montgomery County Wills, Box 2, Folder 53, MHR.



In fact, even before their mother's death on November 26, 1795, the Montgomery County Orphans' Court appointed George Magruder guardian to Thomas Contee and Lloyd Magruder. Warren also chose George Magruder as his guardian.<sup>13</sup> After Lucy Magruder's death in 1795, George Magruder became the sole caretaker of the affairs of the three youngest Magruder boys until each reached his majority, while Levin was left as the only executor of his father's estate. In 1799, this situation was altered when the Orphans' Court of Montgomery County, finding Levin remiss in his legally prescribed duties as executor and administrator of Samuel Wade Magruder's estate, revoked the letters of administration that had been granted to him and appointed Thomas Beall, brother-in-law of Samuel Wade Magruder, as administrator *de bonis* of the estate.<sup>14</sup>

Six months after the Orphans' Court had replaced Levin Magruder as administrator, Warren came of age and became the master of his own affairs.<sup>15</sup> He was not content to share his inheritance jointly with his two younger brothers and as soon as possible took steps to obtain a third of the estate. On March 1, 1800, Warren Magruder started proceedings to bring about, through the Montgomery County Court, a partitioning of the approximately 1336 acres which included within its boundaries the residence of Locust Grove.<sup>16</sup> He was successful in his effort, and the Court ordered the sheriff of Montgomery County and "twelve good and lawful men" to carry out the partitioning.<sup>17</sup> On January 17, 1801, the estate was divided into three shares as equal in value as was possible. Warren got the most acreage, 564  $\frac{1}{4}$  acres, while Thomas Contee's portion was 462 acres, and Lloyd's only 300. But it was Lloyd who was given the part of his father's estate on which stood Locust Grove. His 300 acres was made up of parts of two tracts, Magruder's Discovery and "The Resurvey on Part of Hensley and the Addition to Hensley," and formed one unified farm.

Not long after the partitioning took place, Lloyd Magruder attained the age of 21, and, in February 1803, he married his first wife, Elizabeth Magruder.<sup>18</sup> The marriage was undoubtedly a happy event and should have heralded the beginning of a new and prosperous life for the young couple at Locust Grove, the handsome brick residence built by Lloyd's father. But it was not to be. Lloyd Magruder very soon commenced a life of living on credit and buying on time,<sup>19</sup> and his young wife, Elizabeth, died after just a few

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13. Montgomery County Orphans' Court Proceedings, 1779-1810, p. 62.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

15. Montgomery County Record Book, Book D (transcribed version), p. 302, MHR.

16. Montgomery County Court Record, 1795-1801, pp. 478-486.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Montgomery County Marriage License Records, 1798-1839, CR 8920, MHR.

19. Montgomery County Equity Case 105 (1837) and Montgomery County Land Records, Book X, pp. 419-421.



short years of marriage. In March 1807, he married again.<sup>20</sup> His second wife was Ann Holmes, and, although she lived to enjoy more than 25 years of marriage, hers was not a life free from worry. She bore witness to her spouse's ever increasing indebtedness, and perhaps it was a merciful death that prevented her from seeing what eventually became of Lloyd's estate. Her husband followed her to the grave hardly more than a year later on March 9, 1836.<sup>21</sup> Lloyd was 55 when he died, and somehow he had miraculously succeeded in holding at bay a pack of creditors, thus delaying the dissolution of both his real and personal property until after his death.

To his family, however, life does not seem to have been totally bleak. There are, in the files of the Montgomery County Historical Society, two paragraphs said to have been written by Rebecca Johnson Magruder Davidson which show that the glory days of Locust Grove did not end with Samuel Wade Magruder's death:

"My grandfather, Samuel Wade Magruder brought over Scotch retainers who burnt the bricks and built 'Locust Grove.' Old Mrs. Dunlap said 'it created as much talk as the President's House as it was the first brick ever made in that section of the Country.' He took up thousands of acres of land and his house was as much resorted to as the President's House.

"My father, Lloyd Magruder, inherited the Homestead and truly it was the center of Hospitality and social life for miles around. Persons from Washington, Rockville and all through the Country found a cordial welcome and the doors of 'Locust Grove' were always open to a friend. My Father would never have the doors of the Hall closed for fear it would look inhospitable."

(This same source ascribed a date of 1776 to the house, but no real proof of this date can be found today.)

Less than a year went by before all of Lloyd's personal belongings were sold in order to satisfy his debts, and still that was not enough.<sup>22</sup> On December 10, 1836, a bill of complaint was filed in the Montgomery County Court by Robert Howison and his wife, Eliza, a sister of Lloyd's second wife, and Eleanor Holmes, another sister, against the administrators and heirs of Lloyd Magruder. The purpose of the bill was to initiate equity proceedings in the Court to force the sale of Lloyd's real estate which, of course, included his house Locust Grove.<sup>23</sup> It seems somewhat merciless though that

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20. Montgomery County Marriage License Records, 1798-1839, CR 8920, p. 33, MHR.

21. Montgomery County Equity Case 105 (1837): Magruder and Related Families' Papers, MS 961, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland.

22. Montgomery County Record Book, Book U, p. 433 ff.

23. Montgomery County Equity Case 105 (1837).



two of Lloyd Magruder's sisters-in-law would choose such a course of action to gain what was rightfully theirs at the expense of twelve of their own nieces and nephews, of whom seven were still minors.<sup>24</sup> But apparently they felt no guilt pangs for they did not relent until every last penny had been exacted.

After receiving testimony from both sides of the case, the Montgomery County Court, sitting as a court of equity, found in favor of the plaintiffs and, on November 22, 1837, issued a final decree calling for the sale of Locust Grove and its surrounding 300 acres of farmland as well as a 7½ acre parcel of land called "Hobson's Choice" (obtained by Lloyd Magruder in 1828) in order to satisfy the remaining debts of Lloyd Magruder.<sup>25</sup> In addition to Locust Grove and its outbuildings there was also a "Grist and Saw Mill" on the 300-acre parcel that was for sale.<sup>26</sup> It had been this mill, coupled with the growing of tobacco and other crops on the surrounding farmland, that had been the main source of Lloyd Magruder's livelihood <sup>27</sup> - however meager it may have been.

On February 26, 1838, John A. Carter, one of Lloyd Magruder's administrators and the husband of his daughter, Mary Catherine, purchased Locust Grove, the grist and saw mill, and the 300 acres surrounding the house and the mill for \$4500.<sup>28</sup> The house itself had apparently changed little since the time it was built. The advertisement offering Locust Grove for sale in 1838 described it as "a large and commodious Brick Dwelling House, two stories high, "with "Kitchen, Barns, Stable, Corn House &c."<sup>29</sup>

John A. Carter's decision to buy Locust Grove at public auction does not appear to have been motivated by sound judgment. Perhaps his wife had persuaded him to prevent her childhood home from falling into the hands of strangers. But, regardless of what his motivation had been, his purchase of the property was ill-advised. He was unable to pay the purchase price in cash, and so he issued to John G. England, the trustee appointed by the court to sell the estate, three promissory notes with due dates at one-year intervals over a three-year period, each for \$1500.<sup>30</sup> In order to protect his sureties on the notes, who were Thomas F.W. Vinson, George W. Dawson, and William O. Chappell, against loss or damage should he fail to pay off

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24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*; Magruder and Related Families' Papers, MS 961, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland; Montgomery County Land Records, Book X, pp. 419-421.

28. Montgomery County Equity Case 105 (1837).

29. *Ibid.*

30. Montgomery County Land Records, Book BS 8, pp. 564-566.



England on schedule, Carter mortgaged Locust Grove to them on March 12, 1838.<sup>31</sup> Later records reveal that Carter never was able to pay off completely the purchase price of the property, but, for more than ten years, he was somehow able to refinance it by continually borrowing money, issuing new promissory notes, and granting new mortgages.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, however, the wolf caught up with Carter. He must have foreseen the eventual outcome for, in 1848 or 1849, Carter and his family left Locust Grove to settle in Arkansas. By 1853, Carter had been on the losing end of numerous Montgomery County Court judgments arising from debts incurred over a 15-year period, including money still owed for the purchase of Locust Grove.<sup>33</sup> And so, on July 28, 1853, a written agreement was reached between Carter and the attorneys of his creditors. It called for the public sale of Carter's Montgomery County real estate in order to satisfy various judgments against him, first and foremost of which was one issued against Carter for failing to pay John England \$1500 as part of the original purchase price of the Locust Grove farm.<sup>34</sup> Apparently this agreement had already been reached verbally at least five months earlier, because on March 7, 1853, the sheriff of Montgomery County sold Carter's estate at public auction to William Orndorff for \$7850.<sup>35</sup> Ironically this was the second time in just 15 years that the once-proud home of Samuel Wade Magruder had been placed on the auction block, and yet it was not, by far, to be the last time.

William Orndorff lived at Locust Grove with his family for slightly more than 20 years, and, during the first ten, he seems to have led a fairly prosperous existence. He and his sons ran the saw and grist mill and managed the farm while his slaves did most of the hard farm work. His wife, Susan, with the help of a hired white domestic named Mary Reid and several women slaves, took care of household matters.<sup>36</sup> With the close of the Civil War, however, the winds of change blew ill for William Orndorff, and what had previously been a rather happy and not too difficult life for him and his family grew more harsh and dreary day by day. The War brought the end of slavery which meant no more slaves to till the Orndorff fields surrounding Locust Grove or to haul grain and lumber from the Orndorff saw and grist mills down by Cabin John Creek. While the departure of his slaves unquestionably presented Orndorff with a severe hardship, it did not result in utter and complete economic ruin. To his credit was the fact that he was able to keep his head

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31. *Ibid.*

32. Montgomery County Land Records, Book STS 3, pp. 406-407; Book STS 4, pp. 248-249; and Book JGH 2, pp. 375-379.

33. Montgomery County Land Records, Book JGH 2, pp. 375-376.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 376-379.

36. Eighth Federal Census, 1860, T-7, Fourth District, Montgomery County, Maryland.



above water financially. Because of this, neither he nor his heirs had to suffer the agony of watching the Locust Grove Farm become the object of equity or other court proceedings to satisfy the wishes of angry creditors. But Locust Grove did suffer the ill-fortune of neglect and disrepair as a result of Orndorff's declining financial status. In the ten years following the Civil War, the old home of Samuel Wade Magruder slowly but continuously deteriorated. This deterioration, heaped upon that of the more than 50 years during which the house was occupied by its two previous owners, Lloyd Magruder and John A. Carter, led to a structure that on January 28, 1874 (when William Orndorff died)<sup>37</sup> was literally ready to fall apart at the seams.

Just slightly more than two months after the death of William Orndorff, an appraisal of the real estate was made by Thomas Lyddane and John G. Trundle under an order of the Montgomery County Orphans' Court. Their remarks on the condition of Locust Grove itself and its outbuildings reveal the pitiful condition of the house. "Dwelling house is brick in very bad condition(,) east end is proped to be kept from falling out and every room wants a little repair. Out houses in good condition except the Stable and that cannot be considered safe for horses to be kept in, Tenant House in fair condition, ..."38 The above quote represents the earliest reference to the fact that the east wall of Locust Grove was on the verge of collapse, a condition that is hinted at today by the brick bonding changes in that wall which indicate that, at some time, the east wall was almost entirely rebuilt.

The 1876 photograph of Locust Grove shows the main front, or south side of the house, as well as an adjoining portion of the story-and-a-half frame addition. This photograph documents the fact that, around 1875, the main brick section of Locust Grove bore a coat of white or some other very light color of paint, and it is evident that the paint had been on the house for some time. Perhaps the most important features which the photograph documents are the original pitch of the roof and height of the front and back walls, the original size of the second-story windows, what was probably the original size and configuration of window panes in both the first and second floor windows, and the existence of at least one if not two exterior chimneys on the east side of the building corresponding to the two on the west end which still exist today. No date for construction of the story-and-a-half addition on the west end can be established, but it too is in a state of disrepair indicating that it must have been at least 20 years old.

As Locust Grove continued to deteriorate following the death of William Orndorff, his children started to quarrel among themselves over the inheritance which their father had left them. Orndorff had never taken time to

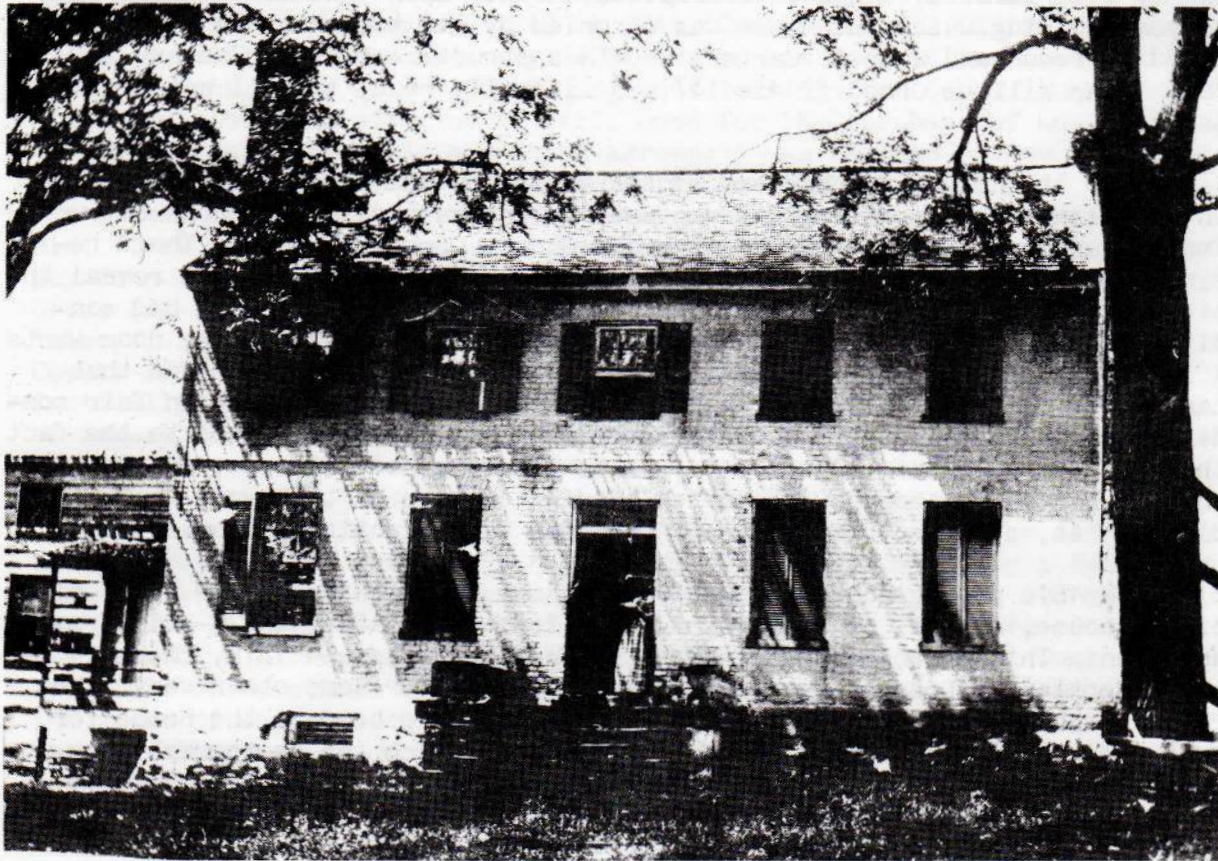
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37. *Montgomery County Sentinel*, February 6, 1874, p. 2, col. 4.

38. *Montgomery County Inventories, Sales and Accounts*, Book RWC 7, pp. 223-224.



draw up a will, and so, when he went to his grave, Locust Grove and about 305 acres of surrounding farm land became the joint property of his nine children and their wives and husbands. Orndorff's wife, Susan, had died



Locust Grove, circa 1876

three years earlier.<sup>39</sup> In September 1875, William O. Orndorff, the oldest son, and his wife, Mary J., started equity proceedings against the other heirs in an attempt to bring about the sale of the property. The equity proceedings continued in an orderly way for about a year and a half. By the spring of 1877, the eight Orndorff children and their wives and husbands named as co-defendants in the suit had agreed to a sale of the

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39. Montgomery County Equity Case 204.



Locust Grove estate.<sup>40</sup> But events suddenly took a most unusual turn. On June 11, 1877, the case was dismissed, apparently at the request of the plaintiffs, and, on the very same day, William O. Orndorff and his wife filed a new bill of complaint against the other heirs in which they requested the Circuit Court for Montgomery County to order the partition of the 305-acre farm.<sup>41</sup> The Court decreed on November 26, 1878 that a partition should take place, but it qualified its decree by stating that, if the estate could not be split into as many divisions as there were heirs, it should be divided into as many parts as it was susceptible to without loss and injury to all parties. The commissioners appointed to make the partition decided that it could only be reduced to two parcels. They then laid out the boundaries of the two lots - designating one parcel containing 248 7/8 acres and the residence of Locust Grove as "Lot No. 1" or "the home farm" and the other consisting of 56 1/2 acres and the grist and saw mill as "Lot No. 2" or the "mill tract." Not quite two months later, on May 7, 1879, the Court issued a decree ordering that the two lots be sold at public auction, and it appointed two Rockville lawyers, James B. Henderson and Hattersly W. Talbott, as trustees to carry out the decree.<sup>42</sup> On June 9, 1879, Talbott and Henderson conducted the auction on the lawn in front of Locust Grove. At the last minute, after consultation with people present at the sale, they decided to change the boundaries of the two lots by subtracting 12 1/2 acres from Lot No. 2 (the mill tract) and adding it to Lot No. 1 which included Locust Grove.<sup>43</sup> In spite of this attempt to make the latter parcel more appealing, no one offered what the trustees considered a suitable bid.

The failure of Locust Grove, with 261 3/8 acres of land, to draw adequate bids at the auction of June 9 probably was due in large measure to the deplorable condition of the house itself and of its dependencies. In spite of a second failure to obtain an adequate bid in August 1879, the trustees again, on April 3, 1880, put Locust Grove on the auction block for the third time in ten months. This time the property went to the highest bidders, Samuel F. and Otho M. Burrows for \$4835.<sup>44</sup>

Advertisements which appeared in the *Montgomery County Sentinel* and on handbills on all three occasions that the property was put up for sale described Locust Grove and its dependencies as a "large double, two-story Brick Dwelling House, with Kitchen attached, containing 10 rooms; Barn, Stabling, Corn-House, Meat-House, Ice House and other necessary Outbuildings ..."

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40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, and Montgomery County Judgment (Equity) Record, Book EBP 10, pp. 309-355.

42. Montgomery County Judgment (Equity) Record, Book EBP 10, pp. 309-355.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*



The similarity of this description to that in the advertisement offering Locust Grove for sale in 1838 suggests that the main brick section of Locust Grove had changed little, if any, since 1838, and in fact since its construction.

Samuel F. and Otho M. Burrows were both farmers who resided on River Road in the District of Columbia near the Montgomery County line. Neither of the two men took up residence at Locust Grove during the first three years of their ownership, but Otho Burrows may have lived there from 1883 or 1884 to around 1890.

When the Burrowses purchased the property in 1880, they did not have the ready cash to pay for it so they borrowed the full purchase price of \$4835 from Abraham H. Herr, a resident of Georgetown and the co-owner of and partner in a large grain mill company also located in Georgetown.<sup>45</sup> In addition, as security on the note, the Burrowses granted a deed of trust on the entire 261 3/8 acre estate to Austin Herr and George W. Cissell, Herr's partner in the grain mill business.<sup>46</sup> When the ten-year note came due on April 3, 1890, Samuel and Otho Burrows had not paid it off, and so, on Saturday, June 21, 1890, Austin Herr and George W. Cissell sold the property at public auction to Walter W. Burdette, a dealer in stocks and bonds, from Washington, and Samuel Sewall Cissell, a member of the grain mill company of George W. Cissell & Co., for \$7057.10.<sup>47</sup>

Perhaps, on the surface, the increase in sale price of the Locust Grove farm from \$4835 in 1880 to \$7057.10 in 1890 seems unusual, especially in light of the fact that nothing appears to have been done to improve the property. However, as a dealer in stocks and bonds, Walter Burdette probably knew, before he and Cissell purchased the property, about the chartering of a company in April 1890 to build a trolley car line from Tenallytown to Rockville.<sup>48</sup> Among the intentions of the Tenallytown and Rockville Railroad Company was the construction of a branch line leading off at a point near Alta Vista from the main line from Tenallytown to Rockville. This branch line was to proceed northwest from the Alta Vista area to a point about halfway between Old Georgetown Road and the "Road from Rockville to Seven Locks," now Seven Locks Road. There it was to enter a large development, a development which was to encompass the entire Locust Grove estate as well as several surrounding farms. At the very center of the town's main square was to be

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45. Montgomery County Land Records, Book EBP 22, pp. 159-162.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Montgomery County Judgment (Equity) Record, Book JA 6, pp. 108-109; Montgomery County Equity Case 895.

48. Proceedings of the County Commissioners of Montgomery County, (March 17, 1884 - July 15, 1890), p. 343.



the former residence of Samuel Wade Magruder - Locust Grove.<sup>49</sup>

On May 13, 1891, the Tenallytown and Rockville Land Company, a sister corporation of the trolley car company, acquired title to the Locust Grove farm.<sup>50</sup> During the period of its ownership Locust Grove underwent the most significant repairs of its entire existence. The east wall was rebuilt, and a single interior chimney was constructed at that end of the building in place of the two exterior chimneys that appear to have once been there. A new roof was added with a pitch much less severe than the original. The north and south walls of the house were increased in height by about five or



Locust Grove, circa 1930

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49. Real estate map of the Metropolitan Branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company between Washington, D.C., and Rockville, Md. and Adjacent Land Holdings, prepared by Fava Naeff & Co., Washington, D.C.; Montgomery County Land Records, Book JA 27, pp. 6-7.

50. Montgomery County Land Records, Book JA 27, pp. 6-7.



six courses of brick, and the second-story window openings were made taller. Perhaps it was also at this time that both the main brick section and the story-and-a-half addition received their identically styled open porches on the south side. In addition to these exterior modifications, changes were also made in the interior. The number and arrangement of rooms appears to have been altered, and the style of the woodwork and other elements of the building's internal design were transformed as well.

The development planned by the Tenallytown and Rockville Land Company never materialized, and so the Company mortgaged Locust Grove and the surrounding 261 3/8 acres to Sarah and Emory M. Bowlus of Frederick, Maryland.<sup>51</sup> The Company failed to comply with the terms of the mortgage, and so the Bowluses directed their attorney, H. Maurice Talbott, to put Locust Grove up for auction.<sup>52</sup> At the public auction which took place on July 11, 1898, the property was sold to the Bowluses themselves for \$6569.92, but very shortly thereafter they resold Locust Grove to Edmund Lyddane for an identical sum of money.<sup>53</sup>

In the three and a half months that followed the deeding over of the title to Locust Grove to Edmund Lyddane, the property changed hands two more times. On November 30, 1898, a real estate man by the name of Bernard A. Duke gained title to the property, and, on the very next day, he deeded it over to Henry Maurice Talbott<sup>54</sup> - the same Talbott who had been on the board of directors of the Tenallytown and Rockville Railroad Land Company and who had served as attorney for the Bowluses in their mortgage foreclosure. Then, in July 1899, Talbott and his wife sold a half interest in the estate to George F. Linthicum.<sup>55</sup> Almost exactly two years went by before the Talbotts and Linthicum and his wife sold Locust Grove and 257.62 acres to Robert D. Weaver.<sup>56</sup>

In the four years following the auctioning off of the house as part of a mortgage foreclosure, little or nothing had been done to alter it further. In fact, except for the enclosing of the porch on the south side of the frame addition and the two small sub-additions on its north side, all major exterior changes to the building had already taken place.

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51. *Ibid.*, Book JA 32, pp. 220-225.

52. Montgomery County Equity Case 1634; Montgomery County Land Records, Book TD 4, pp. 438-439; and Montgomery County Corporation Records, Book EBP 1, pp. 158-160.

53. Montgomery County Equity Case 1634; Montgomery County Land Records, Book TD 4, pp. 438-439.

54. Montgomery County Land Records, Book TD 6, pp. 266-268 and pp. 310-312.

55. *Ibid.*, Book TD 8, pp. 478-480.

56. *Ibid.*, Book TD 17, pp. 333-335.



Robert D. Weaver had been a resident of Georgetown for all of his life when he purchased Locust Grove in 1901, and that is what he remained the rest of his life. He continued to own the Locust Grove farm until his death in 1934, when it became the joint property of his wife, Mary, his son, Maurice, and his daughter, Catherine.<sup>57</sup> Two years later Weaver's wife died, and so title to the estate then rested with the two children. In 1944, Catherine L. Weaver sold her share to her brother, Maurice. When Maurice E. Weaver died in 1953, title to the Locust Grove farm was inherited by his two children, Robert D. Weaver and Mrs. Mary A.W. Holland, who maintained ownership of the property for barely more than a year before selling it to John H. Solomon on November 15, 1954.<sup>58</sup>

During what could be called the Weaver period of Locust Grove's history, the house appears to have been occupied by tenants who maintained it and farmed the surrounding acreage. From around 1901 until about 1928, Robert D. Weaver kept livestock there,<sup>59</sup> but this was more than likely also taken care of by tenants. It was also during the Weaver period that the last significant changes were made to the exterior of Locust Grove. These changes consisted of the construction of a small water closet and an enclosed porch on the north side of the frame addition.

Dr. John H. Solomon was a general partner in the development firm known as Cabin John Mall Associates. Prior to his death in July 1968, Solomon deeded more than 70 acres, including Locust Grove, to Loma Linda University, a Seventh-Day Adventist medical and missionary college in California of which Solomon was a graduate.<sup>60</sup> The University then submitted an application to rezone the property to permit the construction of retail stores, office buildings, and apartments. Citizens Associations and preservationists became alarmed that this action might lead to the destruction of Locust Grove. Assurances were given that the house would be saved.<sup>61</sup>

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57. Montgomery County Wills, Book HGC 5, pp. 461-465; Montgomery County Orphans' Court Records (1933-1935), Book HGC 7, pp. 330-332.

58. Montgomery County Wills, Book WCC 34, pp. 330-333; Montgomery County Land Records, Book 1996, pp. 562-563.

59. Montgomery County Assessment Book 1896-1906, Fourth Collection Disbriect, p. 136; also 1918-1922, 1923-1927, and 1928-1940.

60. Montgomery County Land Records, Book 3761, pp. 157, 161, 170, and 175.

61. *The Washington Star*, April 5, 1969.



Subsequently the property was deeded to Westlake Park Limited Partnership.<sup>62</sup> This group, later under the name Westlake Park Condominium, built garden apartments, high-rise apartments, and townhouses. The steps required to restore Locust Grove were studied, but no action was ever taken.

In 1978, the Manor Investment Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Chevy Chase Savings and Loan Association, purchased 1.2760 acres, including Locust Grove.<sup>63</sup> Plans were made to renovate the old building as a branch bank and an art museum and community meeting place. Unfortunately these plans have not yet been carried out. Recent events, however, offer a note of optimism for the future. The Montgomery County Planning Board has very recently recommended to the Montgomery County Council the amendment of the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation in Montgomery County, Maryland*, to include Locust Grove. As a result of this action, some progress on the long-awaited restoration of this valuable and historic landmark should soon be evident.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This story is a shortened version of a report prepared in 1974 by John M. Walton, Jr., for Brisker-Campitelli Enterprises, developers of much of the area surrounding Locust Grove and partners in Lakeview Center, Incorporated. To convert Mr. Walton's very thorough study to this purpose and to bring it up to date, his material was rearranged and edited and some information was added.

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62. Montgomery County Land Records, Book 4307, pp. 452 and 479.

63. *Ibid.*, Book 5256, p. 23.

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