

**Mt. Ellen, built ca.1818 by Benjamin or John Davenport (Jr.)**

**Resource History**

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**1740** – Doctor John McCormick purchased 395 acres from Jost Hite (Orange Co. DB 4/11, in O’Dell, p. 163).

The tract was part of the 40,000 acres Hite purchased from the Vanmeter brothers and was described in Hite’s 1734 colonial grant as adjoining the Borden (Burden), Hampton, and Griffith grant land, crossing a “Waggon road” and “the head of Bulskin Spring” (Va. Patent Book 15/322). (see attached Map 4 from O’Dell)

In later references (after 1740) to this first McCormick tract, it is always referred to as his “Old Patent land,” including in the 1750 Fairfax grant to George Johnston (NN GB G/458).

**1760** – Dr. McCormick got a Fairfax grant for 157 acres at “the Head of the So. Fork of Bulskin” (NN GB K/126). This immediately adjoined his 395 acres as a narrow triangular parcel.

In 1765 Dr. McCormick sold the 157-acre grant land to his son John McCormick Jr. for £500 (FC DB 10/323). The land was described as adjoining his [McCormick Sr.] other patent land as well as that of Capt. George Johnston and McCracken (by then GW but not mentioned), Maj. Calmes (later Throckmorton), Maj. Lawrence Worthington, and Robert Worthington.

**1768** – Dr. John McCormick (Sr.) wrote his will and died (FC WB 3/182). He listed his wife Ann, sons James, John Jr., Francis, William, George, and Andrew, and daughters Mary (wife of Magnus Tate) and Jane (wife of James Byrne). Francis and John Jr. already had land they purchased from their father. The remaining land – the 395-acre “Old Patent” – was to be divided between William, George, and Andrew.

William 140 acres, “with all the water courses” etc., which he sold to Samuel Washington for £146 in 1779 (BC DB 6/53, O’Dell:165) (this may be where Shenston is located).

Andrew got 140 acres, “with my dwelling house” (White House).

George got 115 acres, “with all the tenements and improvements,” which he sold to John Dawkins £500 in 1771 (FC DB 14/394, O’Dell, p.165). Dawkins sold the tract to George Cloak in 1772 (BC DB 1/384, in Rice, p. 57).

**1785** – John McCormick (Jr.) was assessed in Berkeley County for 150 acres. His personal property assessment in 1785 included himself, two slaves over 16 years, four slaves under 16 years, four horses, and six cattle.

His brother James was assessed for 150 acres as well and Andrew for 146 acres.

George Cloke [sic] was assessed for 165 acres. George Cloak was assessed for personal property in 1784, including himself, three slaves, two horses, and six cattle. In 1785, Cloak was assessed for the horses and cattle but no slaves

**1787** – John McCormick (Jr.) sold his 150 acres, plus another parcel of 41 acres to John Davenport for £700 in 1787 (BC DB 7/244) – showing as 195 a. on Davenport’s 1790 tax.

George Cloak sold his former George McCormick tract to John Davenport before 1790, showing as 114 a. on Davenport’s 1790 tax (ref. in JC DB 3/283). This deed was apparently unrecorded but in 1792 a document was recorded to prove that Ailee Cloak, wife of George Cloak, could not travel to Berkeley County to be privately interviewed for the conveyance of the Cloak land to John Davenport. Several men were sent to her to confirm her agreement to the conveyance (BC DB 10/322).

Then in 1797, Jonathon Clarke, Philip Williams, and Andrew McKay, acting as commissioners for the sale of land owned by Robert Green, William Duff, and Robert McKay, “representatives of Jost Hite” in the Hite vs. Fairfax land dispute, recorded a deed to John Davenport for 9 acres for £45 (BC DB 13/363). This must have been some piece lost by surveyor’s error as it was described as adjoining General Washington (formerly Capt. George Johnson), Bullskin Run, Maj. Calmes, and the heirs of John McCormick (which would have to place it down at the southern end of the 395-acre McCormick tract purchased from Hite in 1740). Since it never showed up separately in the tax record, it was probably part of the 115 acres that George McCormick inherited and sold to Dawkins, Dawkins to Cloak, and Cloak to Davenport.

**1798** – John Davenport was assessed on the Berkeley County House Tax for one house “near Bulskin” [sic] valued at \$157.50.

From 1790 to 1801, John Davenport was assessed for just the two tracts of land one 195 acres and the other 114 acres.

**1802** – John Davenport was assessed for his 195-acre and 114-acre tracts, and for a new tract of 358 acres. This would be the land purchased from John Bates to which Davenport soon moved (Locust Grove-Shirley House). In 1804, another parcel of 79 acres (adjoining the 358) was added to his assessment, purchased from Lawrence Washington.

The 1810 tax assessment noted from whom each of these tracts was purchased: 114 acre “of Cloke,” 195 acres “of McCormick,” 318 [sic] acres “of Bates,” and 79 acres “of Washington.”

**1810** – Benjamin Davenport (26-44), with a wife, two infant boys and five slaves, was listed as the head of a household separate from his father John. He was listed near Nathan Haines, Thomas West, John Lock, and Thomas Griggs in the Summit Point/Rock Hall area.

His father John Davenport was listed with his wife and other family members probably on his new farm (Locust Grove) near Smith Slaughter (Richwood Hall) and Harfield Timberlake (Shenston).

In 1806, Benjamin Davenport purchased a 5-acre tract from Andrew McCormick described as adjoining the land John Davenport purchased from George Cloak (JC DB 3/283). Benjamin was assessed for the 5 acres beginning in 1806. By 1814, his father John had transferred the 114-acre and 195-acre tracts to Benjamin on the tax record, although no deed of conveyance was recorded. Judging by the census record it appears that Benjamin was living on the Mt. Ellen tract, in his father's old house, as early as 1810.

**1815** – John Davenport was deceased but his estate (“Adm.”) was assessed for a house in Jefferson County valued at \$300 over the \$500 minimum (\$800 total), likely the Locust Grove house. Benjamin Davenport's house, likely an older log dwelling did not reach the minimum \$500 value and was therefore not listed on the 1815 special house tax.

**1816** – The Chancery Court divided John Davenport's estate, a suit brought by Benjamin Davenport, probably to protect his land given to him by his father before his death from any dower reservation. Benjamin was given his 186 acres “purchased of his father” as well as the 53 acres of Lot No. 8 (Platt No. 2) (JC DB 10/110; see attached plat).

Lot 7, the 53 acres on which Mt. Ellen was eventually constructed, was given to John (Jr.). Adjoining to the north was a 38-acre dower lot and Lot 6, 53 acres, was given to Rebecca Davenport. In all, there were 393 acres covered by Platt No. 2 of the John Davenport (Sr.) estate.

In 1818, Benjamin purchased Rebecca's lot (JC DB 10/405) and John's lot. John Davenport (Jr.) and his wife Martha were living in Frederick Co. Virginia by 1818. **They sold 53-acre Lot No. 7 to Benjamin for \$1,555 (JC DB 10/293).**

**1820** – Benjamin Davenport, whose 380 acres adjoining John Lock (White House) included his 186 acres purchased from his father, plus the remaining acreage purchased from Rebecca and John, was assessed for a building value of \$2,500.

I am speculating that Benjamin likely built the Mt. Ellen house prior to his purchase of the 53-acre tract from his brother John (who lived in Frederick County by 1818), perhaps with the financial help of John given the relatively high sale price of the small parcel in 1818. Clearly by 1820 the house was there.

In 1823, Benjamin sold a 1-acre lot to the trustees of the Methodist Episcopal (Methodist) trustees, Michael Smith, James Grantham, Christian Allemong, John Allemong, and Richard Hardesty (JC DB 12/330).

**1837** – Benjamin Davenport was listed as deceased on the 1830 tax record. He left no will and his administrator, Braxton Davenport, apparently had not settled the estate as late as 1837 when he was replaced by Robert Worthington. Heirs listed included John, Samuel, Eliza J., Ellen H., Elizabeth S. (widow), and Margaret S. (infant) (JC WB 9/193).

In 1838 the Chancery Court ordered the sale of the property. In 1839 the conveyance to Levi Cain was recorded for \$17,628.39. The property included 375

acres plus 1 ¼ acre purchased by Davenport from W.W. Throckmorton in 1826 (JC DB 23/543).

In 1841, Cain sold two parcels. One was 73 acres to Jonathon Frazier, the southern parcel of the Frazier farm on the 1852 map (DB 25/1). The other tract was 98 acres, “part of the land on which Levi Cain resides,” sold to W.W. Throckmorton (DB 25/17). On the 1841 land tax this tract had no building value, however the building value on Cain’s remaining 204 acres (Mt. Ellen) fell to \$1,500 in 1841 (from \$2,500 in 1839 under Benj. Davenport heirs).

**1842** – The sale price on the deed from Levi Cain to David Howell of \$10,000 for the remaining 202 acres (altered by resurvey) also indicates that at least valuable land, if not valuable buildings, went with the sale of the two parcels in 1841 (JC DB 26/119).

**1848** – Thomas West, soon to be the son-in-law of David Howell, purchased the Mt. Ellen farm for \$10,250 (JC DB 29/426). It was 216 acres, including an 11-acre parcel purchased from neighbor Joseph Morrow on the White House farm, a 2-acre lot from the same, and a 1-acre “water lot,” and excluding 1 acre sold to the Winchester & Potomac Rail Road.

In 1852, Thomas West married Caroline Howell (Jefferson Co. Marriages, JC Courthouse).

In 1854, Thomas West’s tax assessment listed 208 acres adjoining Summit Point with an \$1,800 building value and the notation that 11 ¼ acres had been transferred to Joseph Morrow. West was also assessed for 9 ¾ acres “from Joseph Morrow” (part of White House) without building value, and 17 ½ acres “from Elisha Lock hrs” (part of White House), also with no building value.

**1857** – Thomas West was deceased. His executor Lewis Fry sold the 214-acre Mt. Ellen farm, along with a 17-acre parcel, to James Grantham for \$13,103.13 (JC DB 36/416).

This purchase began the more than 100-year ownership of the farm by the Grantham family.

James Grantham, of Tudor Hall near Smithfield/Middleway, wrote his will beginning about 1844 but with each purchase of another farm he added a codicil indicating which heir should get that farm. In 1844 he purchased his brother William’s farm (I think that is called Fair View but not the one we looked at); in 1851 he purchased the “Sinclair farm”; and in 1857 he added a codicil after the purchase of the “West farm.” This instructed that the West farm should be devised to his daughter Eliza C. (Grantham) LaRue, wife of William A. LaRue. James Grantham’s will was finalized on the Tudor Hall farm in March 1861, shortly before he died.

Eliza C. Grantham was 23 in 1860 and probably not yet married. In 1870, William A. and Eliza C. Larue were listed on the census in Clark County, Long Marsh Twp, living on a farm they apparently did not own (possibly his family? William was living on his father John’s farm in Clark Co. in 1860). Their oldest child Eliza C. was six years old, Fidelia was three, and there was an unnamed infant.

Eliza C. LaRue died in 1906. In 1947 her estate was “released” to the heirs (DB 23/12) and in 1955, James W. and Winifred LaRue sold 68 acres, what remained of the “Mt. Ellen Farm” to J. Blackwell and Elizabeth B. Davis (DB 205/155). In 1985 the farm was sold to John and Grace Duwel (DB 543/281) and in 1995, after their divorce, John sold the farm to Grace (DB 800/422). Grace (Duwel) Gustin sold Mt. Ellen Farm to Yves and Giulia Tencalla in 2000 (DB 935/5).