

**Gap View  
Resource History  
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**1750** – Henry Loyd received a grant of 400 acres from Thomas Lord Fairfax (NN GB G/439; Geertsema Shepherdstown Quad, #904).

**1774** – The Circuit Court of Berkeley County ordered that a deed be recorded for the conveyance of land from Henry and Judith Loyd to Walter Baker [Sr.] (Order Book 2, p. 312; ref. in 1774 List of Tithables).

Walter Baker [Sr.] appears on Godwin Swift's District list of tithables for that year. Also in his household was a man named John Gayne [?], and slaves William, Dick, Landon, Jack, Phillis, Sam, Hugh, and Arguhart [?] (1774 List of Tithables, p. 49) Of these slaves Landon, Jack, Dick, and Phillis were part of Walter's estate in 1786.

([www.geocities.com/dalemorrow/bak156.htm](http://www.geocities.com/dalemorrow/bak156.htm)) Online genealogy states that Walter Baker [Sr.] was the son of Nicholas and Mary Baker of Prince Georges County, Maryland. Nicholas Baker was among the members listed in the Queen Anne's Parish (St. Barnabas Church) records (home parish of the Chaplins and Swearingens among others). His son Nicholas was born in 1703 – this is probably the father of Walter [Sr.]. In 1753, Nicholas Baker had a resurvey done on two tracts located in Frederick County, Maryland (part of Prince Georges Co. prior to 1749) called "Resurvey on Woolf Pitt Tract and Pigg Pen." (Maryland Archives, Plats.net)

"In his father's will, Walter received two sections of land on Rock Creek in Rock Creek Hundred, Frederick Co., MD, called "Wolf Kill" and "Pig Pen", 348 acres plus 30 acres of "Baker's Chance", and 60 pounds, half in money. Walter petitioned the court in Frederick Co., on 11 Apr 1767, to have the boundaries set. A number of witnesses were called n to swear to the boundary lines of these tracts, as told to them by the father Nicholas BAKER."

Walter Baker [Sr.] married Elizabeth Briscoe, daughter of Dr. John Briscoe, probably about 1774.

"On 9 Dec 1776, Walter was named to a Berkeley Co., VA Commission, and as a Justice of the Peace. Between 1782 and 1787, he was polled 1 white and 17 slaves. On 20 Jun 1783, Walter was co-executor of the will of David Micks, manager of Frederick Forge in Washington Co., MD [later called Antietam Iron Works]."

**Clearly between 1774 and 1786, Walter Baker [Sr.] was living on his 400-acre tract later called *Gap View*.**

**1786** – Walter Baker [Sr.] died leaving wife Elizabeth, sons Walter [Jr.] and Corbin, and daughters Elizabeth and Harriet.

([www.geocities.com/dalemorrow/bak156.htm](http://www.geocities.com/dalemorrow/bak156.htm))

“In Walter's Will, he left property to his sons and daughters, including slaves to his daughters. His land on the Ohio River was left for the care of his orphaned children. In the appraisal of his estate, the names of his slaves and some of their ages are listed: D. Jack, Cloe, Will 16, Landen 30, Joe 14, Peter 37, Dick 40, Charity 38, Cecelia 2, Enoch 8, George 6, Bashshed 4, Phillis 34, Sam 13, Sarah 10, Landon 7, Ned 5, Jerry 2, Hester 16, and Henny 20.”

**“In his father’s will [Corbin] received the home dwelling, equally divided with brother, Walter.”**

“In the division of slaves, wife Elizabeth received Billy, George, Ned, Nace, Evans, Phillis, Dinah, and Kate; daughter Elizabeth HOLLIDAY received Peter, Charity, and child Betsy; daughter Harriet received John, Jenny, and Milly; son Walter received Sam, Young Landon, and Kitty; and son Corbin received Landon, Esther and child Billy. (BC WB 3 p79, 5 p29, 12 p405, 15 p95)”

[the division of the estate happened in 1796, ten years after the appraisal, additional slaves listed likely represent young children born after the appraisal]

“On 17 Oct 1786, Elizabeth, wife was appointed guardian of Walter, Corbin, Elizabeth, and Harriet BAKER, orphans of Walter BAKER for 4000 lb., signed by Sec. John Cooke, George BRISCOE Jr.”

All of Walter’s [Sr.] children were “infants” under the age of 21 if they had a guardian. In 1787, Elizabeth Baker was taxed on 10 blacks under 16, 10 blacks over 16, 10 horses, and 10 cattle, but no white males. This indicates that the two sons Walter [Jr.] and Corbin were both still under 16. In 1795, Richard Baylor was appointed the guardian of Walter Baker, signed by Abraham Davenport.

This means Walter (Jr.) was still under 21-years old in 1795. He probably turned 21 about 1800 – his first deed of conveyance to Henry Miller was in 1801 (JC DB 1/39). That places the birth date of Walter Baker [Jr.] around 1780.

**Walter Baker Sr. would be the one called a “Tory” in the Gap View NR. The John Baker cited in Between the Rivers was possibly another son of Nicholas but not directly associated with Gap View.**

**1798** – Berkeley Co. House tax only listed Henry Baker, in Charles Town, and John Baker with houses. John Baker, who was a lawyer, had a country house in District 2 valued at \$630 and was a tenant in one of Daniel Bedinger’s Shepherdstown houses, valued at \$1,050. Although it doesn’t say it, it is possible that John Baker Esq. was the attorney/guardian paying the tax for the “infant” Baker heirs. Perhaps their mother Elizabeth Baker was already remarried or dead. Other entries do indicate when a house was taxed to the heirs of someone.

If this John Baker tax value of \$630 is the Baker heirs’ house, it would be a high assessment for a log or frame dwelling. However, there is little about the stone *Gap View* house to indicate construction prior to 1820.

**1802** – Both Walter and Corbin Baker were listed on the Jefferson County land tax. Walter had 168 acres and Corbin had 133 acres. The other third must have been Elizabeth Baker's dower although it was not on the tax list.

**1810** – The census record listed Walter Baker [Jr.] as the head of household, aged 26-44 (about 30), with another male in the same range (Corbin). There were two females both ages 16-25, probably the wives of the two men. The two boys and three girls were all under the age of nine. There were 14 slaves in the household. Elizabeth Baker apparently not part of the household and she was not listed nearby so she was either remarried or dead and Walter and Corbin were in full possession of the 400 acres.

Walter's first wife was Magdeline or Margaret Hamilton, whose father Francis Hamilton, owned land near "the old furnace" (probably Keep Trieste Furnace near Harpers Ferry). Walter got into a small pickle by selling her 39-acre inheritance without recording her relinquishment. In 1817, after his first wife's death, Walter had to mortgage a quarter interest in his 400-acre estate to Francis Moore, who bought the 39 acres, until he could get deeds from Magdeline's (and his) children as the heirs (JC DB 10/93).

**1812** – Corbin Baker sold most of his inheritance, 148 acres presumably including the rights to the "home dwelling" to his brother Walter (JC DB 7/300).

Corbin Baker disappeared off the tax role beginning in 1805, his 133 acres taxed under Walter Baker's name "for C. Baker." In 1810, the tax assessor recorded 148 acres "of Corbin Baker" under Walter Baker's list. He also added 76 acres "of Hamilton."

Corbin Baker died some time before or around 1820. He may have been very ill for the 10-15 years prior in which he slowly gave up his land.

**1814** – Walter Baker was assessed for 393 acres of land adjoining John Yates.

There is no assessment for Walter Baker on the 1815 special house tax. This leads me to believe that the "home dwelling" was likely still log or frame and not valued over the \$500 minimum for this tax. This also seems to indicate the John Baker \$630 house value in 1798 was probably not *Gap View*.

**1817** – Walter Baker remarried, this time to Jacobina Hamilton, sister of his first wife.

Since the house was less than \$500 in value in 1815, and in 1820 the buildings on the farm were valued at \$2,000, it appears that **Walter Baker [Jr.] built the first 3-bay section of the stone house at *Gap View* for his new wife about 1817.**

**1820** – Apparently Walter Baker died this year and he wrote a will (which I missed!). Jacobina Baker, widow, was assessed for 393 acres adjoining John Yates, with a building value of \$2,000.

Appraisalment of Corbin Baker's Personal Property, 5 slaves, 1 bed, tableware, and a few other small things (WB 3/271). It appears likely that Corbin had been ill for a long time and was probably an invalid in the "home dwelling."

**1828** – Jacobina Baker was assessed for 393 acres adjoining John Yates with \$2,200 in building value, "New Log House value \$200 added." This may represent the log tenant house still on the *Gap View* property, or, given the really low value, it may represent the log smoke house.

**1832** – The tax assessment record showed that Jacobina Baker divided the farm in half, keeping 197 acres for herself with \$2,000 in building value (undoubtedly the stone house), and selling 196 acres to James L. Ranson with a \$200 building value (log house?).

**1834** – James L. Ranson acquired the rest of the *Gap View* farm with all the buildings "transferred from Jacobina Baker by deed." He also had on his list of properties a 75-acre tract adjoining John McGarry with a \$100 building value

The 196 acres and 75 acres were consolidated as one tract in 1836. Ranson was also deeply involved in the Shannondale Springs property during this time.

**1841** – Ranson again consolidated his *Gap View* tracts making the farm 468 ½ acres, slightly larger than the original Loyd grant of 400 acres. The building value mysteriously fell this year to \$1,000 on the combined acreage without comment from the assessor.

Maybe there was a fire that gutted the stone house, resulting in the dramatic drop in value. This would also explain the massive changes to the building about this time.

None of this is reflected however in the tax record. Ranson's building assessment value stayed at \$1,000 as late as 1856. It did begin to be called by the name of "Gap View" on the tax record in 1851 but the value did not change.

By 1867, *Gap View* was leased out to Henry Bowers. The following year it was sold at public auction by the executors of James L. Ranson's estate and according to his wishes in his will, Ambrose R. H. Ranson, and the widow Frances M. Ranson. Parker H. Strode bought *Gap View*, then 452 acres, for \$99.45 per acre (JC DB 5/497). Parker Strode immediately sold the farm to Charles Aglionby of *Mt. Pleasant* (JC DB 5/499). When his son John O. Aglionby died in 1925, he left a life estate in the farm to his sister Jeanette Aglionby (JC WB E/249). Jeanette sold the farm, apparently including part of *Mt. Pleasant*, to James Marshall in 1928 for \$16,620.28 (JC DB 131/194). In 1937, Marshall was bankrupt and the farm was sold to the bank for \$17,500 (JC DB 145/135). Today *Gap View Farm* includes 153 of its original acres.