

Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission

Landmarks Nomination Report: Hopewell (William Little, Jr. House)

Physical Description:

Hopewell is located on Bloomery Road (County Road 27) overlooking the Shenandoah River in eastern Jefferson County, West Virginia. The property sits approximately three miles south of Harpers Ferry, up stream of the Millville Hydro Station and Snyder Hill Dam.

Historic Description:

The property that contains the house was originally purchased by John Carlyle, a merchant in Alexandria, Virginia, from Jost Hite. Carlyle sold the land to William Little Sr. who died in 1802. He willed the land to his son, William Little, Jr. who built the log house, circa. 1810. In 1827, Little conveyed two parcels from his 180-acre tract totaling 20 ½ acres to James Hite and Jacob Newcomer for \$10,000. The two tracts included the 2 ½ -acre mill parcel, with buildings valued at \$6,000 on the 1828 assessment, and an 18-acre parcel described on the 1828 assessment as “including the Millers House” valued at \$300 “taken from Wm Little tract of 180 acres.”

Thomas H. and William B. Willis purchased the mill property in 1843 at a public sale resulting from the James Hite and Jacob Newcomer default on their 1827 mortgage. The Willis' paid \$5,450 for the two parcels, including the mills on 2 ½ acres and the miller's house on 18 acres. In 1843 Thomas Hite Willis purchased the property. Willis, owner of George Washington's Rock Hall plantation and the Millville Mills, probably never lived at the Little's Falls mill property, leaving the business to a hired miller. The 1883 S. Howell Brown map showed Watson with the Hopewell Mills property and “T. Hite [Willis]” on the Millville property east of “Watson's Woolen Factory.” In fact, in 1880 Watson was bankrupt and the Hopewell tracts were sold by a court assignee to James A. Gary of Howard County, Maryland for \$3,000. Gary and Watson may have prearranged the sale, allowing Watson to continue his association with the mills. His will, probated in 1888 noted, “...any interest that I may have or claim to the property known as the Watson Factory of Hopewell Mills property on the Shenandoah River, I desire to go as I have already endeavored to do, to my friend James A. Gary of Baltimore to pay as far as possible my indebtedness to him...”. The 1890 Shenandoah Navigation survey (Lt. Col. Peter C. Hains for the Corps of Engineers) showed James A. Gary [sic] with Hopewell Mills and the house property. In 1909, then owner Charles Town Light & Power Company sold the lots to David J. Howell. In 1952, D.J. Howell's daughter-in-law, by then a widow, sold the Hopewell Mills tracts along with four other tracts the Howell family had acquired through the years to Harold G. Moulton.

In Harold G. Moulton's will, written in 1964 and probated in 1966, he devised “...to my daughter, Barbara Moulton Browne, one farm...located on the Shenandoah River, at the Big Eddy, and consisting of approximately 98 acres...residual portion of a tract of approximately 181 acres...a second tract of land, known as 'Hopewell,' said farm being adjacent to the foregoing and consisting of approximately 85 acres.

Hopewell was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1994.

Historic Resources:

The main house, built about 1810, is a clapboard covered two-story log dwelling. The house is steeply banked into a hill overlooking the river. The five-bay house has a raised stone basement with cooking fireplace. The plan is single-pile, with a parlor and bedroom on either side of the central hall. The house retains its original interior millwork and doors and stands as a good example of log dwellings in the county.

Nomination Criteria:

The JCHLC nominates this property under Criteria C for inclusion on the list of registered county landmarks. Criteria C states that a site may be nominated if, in the opinion of the JCHLC, it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values. Owner, Sally Moulton, has agreed to have the property listed as Jefferson County Historic Landmark.

Nomination Action:

The JCHLC voted unanimously to add Hopewell, under Criteria C, to the rolls of registered Jefferson County Historic Landmarks on July 15, 2009.