

Shannon Hill

Built 1839-40 by George W. Hammond

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Shannon Hill was one of the Frederick/Berkeley County plantations owned by George William Fairfax and was likely the home of Battaile Muse (on Muse Hill) in 1783-1784. The 1,200-acre farm passed to Ferdinando Fairfax after GWF's death. F. Fairfax apparently maintained a house on "Muse Hill" (in Lot 2 on attached plat). In 1811, Fairfax transferred the tract to trustee Lawrence Lewis for the use (maintenance) of his wife Elizabeth and children in the event of his death. He died about 1820 and in 1821, the heirs filed a "friendly suit of partition" (JC DB 23/53). The large property was surveyed and divided into twelve lots (for the twelve children), reserving a life estate on a 2-acre parcel on Muse Hill (doesn't show on the plat but was described as being in Lot 2), with all the buildings, for the use of Elizabeth, the widow. (Another parcel reserved but not on the plat was called the Retreat and later showed up in the tax records as Cedar Cliffs or Clifts)

According to Fairfax's 1803 Mutual Assurance record, the building complex on the Shannon Hill plantation was quite large, including the main dwelling house (wood, 45 x 18, 1-story, \$600), the barn (an enclosed complex of buildings and yard (\$3,000), negroes quarters (\$300), Overseer's house (\$150), joiner's house (\$150), blacksmith shop (\$150), blacksmith's house (\$150), wagonmaker's shop and house (\$300), and a carpenter's shop and house (\$200) - a total of \$5,000. The 1820 Jefferson County land tax record showed Lawrence Lewis with Fairfax's 1,500 [sic] acres called Shannon Hill Farm with a building value of \$750. When the property was divided in 1822, it was son Wilson Miles Cary Fairfax who got Lot 2 with the reserved Muse Hill building complex.

In 1823, after the division of the Shannon Hill property, the farm was still listed under Lewis but the building value rose to \$2,250 with the notation "Altered." The 1824 tax list showed the division, and some of the out-sales, and revealed that it was son William Henry Fairfax who built new buildings (\$700) on his 99-acre Lot 6 (on the west side of the Beeler's Mill Rd.). Wilson M.C. Fairfax had already sold his 105-acre lot, including the 2-acre reserve on Muse Hill, to Hugh McDonald. McDonald's assessment included a \$1,000 building value on the parcel so it is likely there was a lease arrangement for his use of the house complex. McDonald also purchased son Ferdinando Fairfax's Lot 3 (showing as 103 acres). In 1827, McDonald acquired a 1 54-acre lot "from F. Fairfax heirs" and in 1830 he added a "new log house" on the parcel valued at \$500.

Hugh McDonald sold his 215 acres of Shannon Hill (Lots 2 and 3) to George W. Hammond in 1837 for \$7,484 (JC DB 22/263). Hammond continued to acquire additional Shannon Hill lots -

from Floretta Fairfax (Lot 5), Archibald Fairfax (Octavius' Lot 11), Thomas Griggs, Jr. (probably Lot 1 with a \$500 building value in 1839) in 1838, and from James L. Ranson in 1839 (Lot 4). On the 1841 tax record, these three lots were consolidated into one tract of 291 acres with a building value of \$5,820 "added for new buildings." This was likely the stone house covered with stucco now standing, probably on Lot 1 or 5, near the old building complex.

In 1844, George Hammond purchased one last parcel from Robert T. Brown, trustee for Thomas Griggs, Jr., a 5-acre piece of Lot 1 called "the Distillery lot." In all he had accumulated 606 54 acres, "upon which said Hammond now resides" and which Hammond sold in September 1844 to George W. Peter of Maryland for \$20,000 (JC DB 27/197). George Peter was assessed in 1845 for the 606 acres with a building value of \$7,670. Peter's assessment value did not change prior to his sale of the property to Peter H. Rouse in 1853 for \$33,605 (JC DB 33/420). By then it was 611 acres, including the "Cliff lot" of 5 acres purchased by Peter from Humphrey Keyes in 1846 (I don't think this lot shows as part of the Shannon Hill tract on the 1852 map).

The large Shannon Hill property remained in the Rouss (Rouse) family for many years. After the death of Peter Rouss in 1888, it was divided between his three sons Milton, William, and Charles. According to the will, William got the "mansion house where I now reside" and 12 acres, while Milton got just land, and Charles got "the house on Locust Hill and one third of the residue of my land" (JC WB W/50). (I believe on the 1883 map Locust Hill may be where "C. Timberlake" is shown) Whether Charles and William made a land swap it did not show in the land records, but by 1898 when Charles wrote his will, he gave to his daughter Virginia Duane Lee "the farm known as Shannon Park" with the mansion house and 166 acres (JC WB C/438). Charles B. Rouss died in 1910 and Virginia D. Lee sold her inheritance to Milton Rouss for \$20,000 (JCDB 105/41).