

Mountain Prospect-Jesuit Plantation

Carroll County, Maryland

Located east of Union Bridge, Maryland, on McKinstry Mill Road was the land tract named *Mountain Prospect*. On August 1, 1745, Father Thomas Digges, obtained a patent for that 600-acre parcel that would become part of the extensive landholdings of Jesuit missionaries in Maryland until sold away from the Catholic clergy in the late 1790s. It was part of eastern Frederick County until Carroll County was established in 1837.

By 1726, Pipe Creek, a tributary of the Monocacy River near *Mountain Prospect*, was used as a base by Father Joseph Greateon during visits to Maryland's frontier. The first mention of *Mountain Prospect* was found in a memorandum from Father George Hunter on December 3, 1755. It states "Pipe Creech (Creek) 600 acres, 18 miles from Frederick and 30 miles from Conywago (Conewago), there are now 3 men upon it."

In 1780, Father James Walton sent "Judy and Clem," two of the Jesuits' servants/slaves, "to settle Mountain Prospect." On March 31, 1797, "Father James Walton, et al" appointed Reverend John Carroll as their agent to sell all that tract in Frederick County near Little Pipe Creek known as *Mountain Prospect*.

On October 2, 1798, Samuel Godfrey and James Gillingham, along with the adjoining land owners, executed "Articles of Agreement" to establish the boundary lines of *Mountain Prospect*. Upon completion of the new survey it was determined that the tract actually consisted of 622 acres. At this time *Mountain Prospect* was sold and reference to the tract passed out of Catholic Church history. Subsequently, the land was referred to locally as "Priestland."

While researching the owners of *Mountain Prospect*, the question arose as to why the land was owned by individuals instead of the Catholic Church. Contact was made with Laura E. Masur, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at The Catholic University of America who noted that Jesuit property transfers and land ownership in Maryland were a bit unusual. During Maryland's colonial period, the Jesuits held land individually rather than corporately, either because Church ownership of land was outlawed by the English government or because it was more secure to hold it as individuals (or perhaps both). Periodically, land was transferred to non-Jesuits to protect it, usually during periods of unrest and negative sentiment toward Catholics. This is perhaps why, at one point, the property was deeded to Ignatius Digges in 1753 on the eve of the French and Indian War. After the establishment of the United States and the first American Catholic diocese (since Catholicism was tolerated by the U.S.), the then "former" Jesuits (the Society of Jesus was disbanded in 1773, and not fully re-established until 1814) formed the Corporation of Roman Catholic Clergymen to protect and manage their land interests collectively. There was a big battle in the early years of the 19th c. when the then bishop of Baltimore tried to gain control of this land (and presumably enslaved persons as well).

Sources:

Jesuit Online Library

1. Woodstock Letters, Volume LXXXII, Number 2, May 1, 1953
2. History of the Society of Jesus in North America, Volume 3 Page 275
3. Woodstock Letters, Volume XLI, Number 2, June 1, 1912
4. History of the Society of Jesus in North America, Volume 3 Page 276

[Jesuit sites in Maryland: Laura E. Masur Ph.D. 2020 Workshop in Archaeology Priestly Plantations](#)

Mountain Prospect Owners				
From	To	Date	Patent/Deed/Will	Acres
Province of Maryland	Thomas Digges	August 1, 1745	Prince Georges County Patent# 1510	600
Thomas Digges	Ignatius Digges	July 7, 1753	Provincial Court Deed EI 9A-376	600
Ignatius Digges	George Hunter	November 18, 1771	Provincial Court Deed DD 5-276	600
George Hunter	James Walton	June 1, 1779	Charles Co. Will Vol. 7-372	600
James Walton	N/A	March 21, 1782	Frederick County Deed WR 3-48	600
Land Commission Depositions to confirm property lines due to decayed boundary trees				
Corporation of Roman Catholic Church Clergymen founded in 1792. Father James Walton (Cofounder)				
Samuel Godfrey & James Gillingham		October 2, 1798	Frederick County Deed WR 17-310	622
“Articles of Agreement” New survey made to establish property lines with adjoining land owners				
Corporation of Roman Catholic Church Clergymen	James Gillingham	September 26, 1798	Frederick County Deed WR 17-362	275
Corporation of Roman Catholic Church Clergymen	Samuel Godfrey	July 20, 1805	Frederick County Deed WR 27-337	347
Samuel Godfrey obtains deed in 1805 from the Corporation of Roman Catholic Church Clergymen after delay from 1798				
James Gillingham	David Englar	August 21, 1799	Frederick County Deed WR 18-473	120
James Gillingham	Philip Englar	December 21, 1801	Frederick County Deed WR 22-293	155
John Senseney Sr. Fr. Co. Will GM 3-408 28 Oct 1800 States bequeath to my son Abraham Senseney 100 acres of land purchased from Samuel Godfrey known by name “Priestland”				
Samuel Godfrey	John Senseney Jr. etal.	August 7, 1805	Frederick County Deed WR 27-357	347
John Senseney Jr. & Christian Senseney obtain deed from Samuel Godfrey for the 347 acres their father purchased. John Senseney Sr. died in 1800 before the deed was completed.				
Note: Senseney Family Graveyard no longer exist. Stones were moved to Pipe Creek Brethren Cemetery				



Mountain Prospect 600 Acres

Prince Georges County Patent# 1510

August 1, 1745

Thomas Digges



Mountain Prospect

1798 Land Division



Mountain Prospect
1863 Carroll County, Maryland
William O. Shearer



Mountain Prospect
1877 Carroll County, Maryland
Lake, Griffing and Stevenson