UPLANDS

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Visitors to the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion are often surprised to learn that its original owners only spent several months a year occupying the building. At the close of Baltimore’s social season, which ran from November to Easter, Robert and Mary Frick Garrett would depart from their Mount Vernon Place home and either sail to Europe, enjoy the cool mountain air at the Deer Park resort in Western Maryland, or rent a “cottage” mansion in exclusive Newport, Rhode Island. (After Robert’s death in 1896, Mary Frick would marry Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs and build her own villa in Newport.) However, it’s possible that the place Mary Frick thought of as “home” was where she would return each autumn: Uplands, her country estate near Catonsville, Maryland.

When Robert Garrett married Mary Frick in 1872, his father, B&O Railroad President John Work Garrett, gave the couple the elegant Mount Vernon Place rowhome that would—after many expansions and renovations—become known as the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion. Here, the popular young couple would entertain guests during the winter social season. Meanwhile, Mary’s parents, William and Elizabeth Frick, similarly honored the couple’s union by gifting them Uplands. The childhood home of Mary Frick and her siblings, Uplands was a secluded retreat from their public life in the city.

Uplands came to Mary Frick and Robert through Mary’s mother, Elizabeth, who inherited the property from her father, James Swan. James, in turn, had inherited it from General John Swan (1750-1821), I than emigrant from Cockerfield Dumfries, Scotland. Soon after arriving in the colonies, John Swan committed himself to the cause of independence and quickly distinguished himself while fighting in the Revolutionary War. He was personally recognized and promoted by General George Washington after being injured during the Battle of Morristown. Later, General Swan served alongside the Marquis de Lafayette at the Siege of Yorktown. ( Yes, SEIGE, NOT BATTLE, RIGHT?)

After the war, General Swan was honored for his service with 1,000 acres of land west of Baltimore. The acreage was a wide (Delete WIDE IN WHAT WAY? MEANING?), tree-covered space that had been confiscated from Tory statesman Daniel Dulaney. The Uplands site was originally known as Hunting Ridge, and for good reason. The forested ridge was ideal for fox hunting, a sport much enjoyed by General Swan, and abounded in game like turkey, duck, and deer, to the delight of local hunters. At his new estate, General Swan raised sheep, cattle, and horses, and hosted entertainments for friends, including Washington and Lafayette.

General Swan would continue to distinguish himself, serving as the head of the Maryland State Militia and becoming president of the Maryland Branch of the Bank of the United States. Proud of his service to his country, he was one of the first signers of the constitution of the Society of the Cincinnati, a prestigious fraternal hereditary organization founded in 1783 to commemorate the Revolutionary War. The artist Charles Vincent Peale painted a portrait of General Swan and his wife, Elizabeth Maxwell (NEED HER BIRTH/DEATH DATES I could not find online but think you could delete. There is an images of both paintings on the BMA website to which you could link or we could request permission to reproduce ), a testament to their important social position. His grand-daughter Mary Frick proudly displayed the painting at her Mount Vernon Place home. Currently, it resides at the Maryland Center for History and Culture in Baltimore.

General John Swan’s second-born son, James Swan (1798- 1859), who would serve as president of two prominent Baltimore banks, inherited the Catonsville property from his father. He gave a portion to his eldest daughter, Ann Elizabeth Swan (1819-1880), in (1848YEAR?) when she married William Frederick Frick (1817-1905BIRTH/DEATH DATES), a Baltimore lawyer. The Swan homestead had first been called “Bleak House” and later renamed “Hill Top.” In 1852, William rebuilt the mansion after the original structure burned down and rechristened it “Uplands.” Although he gifted Uplands to his daughter Mary Frick and her husband, Robert, William arranged with them that he hold a life interest in the property. (WHAT IS A LIFE INTEREST AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT HE REQUESTED THIS? A Life interest (per Duncan) entitles the holder to hold and possess the property while they live, but not to change the owner retaining the remainder interests who owns it after death of the life tenant, unless the power to do so has been specifically reserved. Now aren’t you sorry you asked! Mary gave a life interest in GJM to Dr. Jacobs so he could continue to live there after she died. )

After taking charge of Uplands, Robert and Mary Frick began to make improvements. They hired E. Francis Baldwin, architect for the B&O Railroad, to add rooms and special features, including a grand billiards room. John Stack and Sons, an in-demand Baltimore City builder, installed stained-glass windows, while the carpenters Charles F. Mesilahn (IS THIS MEISLAHN?Could not fnd on internet, just use spelling in document you found with a (? Sp behind it) and Co. embellished fireplaces with Colonial and Renaissance revival mantles. The Garretts also upgraded the gardens, producing prize-winning vegetables, along with flowers that Mary Frick loved gifting to friends. In 1889, they added a greenhouse and engaged famed rosarian John Cook to act as the head gardener. (CHECK ON THIS – HE MAY HAVE BEEN EMPLOYED BY HER FATHER IF I REMEMBER? Can you change these 2 sentences to read: In 1889, they added a greenhouse and along with head gardener John Cook, the famed rosarian, developied a variety of rose hybrids that he often named for Maryland events and people, including one called “Mrs. Robert Garrett.”

Like many ladies of the era, Mary Frick developed an interest in poultry. Always determined to be the best at whatever she pursued, she oversaw a vast production of fowls. In 1894, the Garretts constructed a 260-by-18-foot poultry house three stories high (IS THAT CORRECT? THE BUILDING ITSELF DON’T LOOK THREE STORIES, DO YOU JUST MEAN THE TOWERS?)Can you add Three-story to between three and turrents?, which included three turrets, a drawing room, a library, and a living space for Uplands’ head of poultry. The specialized building featured a tower for choice fowl, one for feed, one for brooding, and a pigeon loft, as well as space for fattening, killing, and dressing the birds. Attending a gathering of poultry enthusiasts in Asheville, North Carolina, Mary Frick was recognized for her outstanding stock, and she won special prizes for her Barred Plymouth Rocks, Light Brahmas, Partridge Cochins, and White Wyandottes.

Ever the hostess, Mary Frick made certain that family and close friends enjoyed the comforts of Uplands. Members of Grace EPISCOPAL? Church just Grace Church at that time according to Wikipedia, where Mary Frick attended, looked forward the festive picnics held each summer. Her brother James Frick and his wife, (NAME?), were frequent visitors. To better entertain the guests who joined Robert in hunting game, the Garretts arranged for pheasant eggs to be shipped from England and hatched using the hens at Uplands. At the opening of hunting season, the gamekeeper released the pheasants to the delight of local hunters and the Garrett’s guests.

The Garretts were protective of their rural sanctuary and guarded Uplands from urban intrusions. Employing lawyers, they successfully sued the Traction Company and the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad to prevent rail tracks from being constructed near their property. (WHAT IS THE TRACTION COMPANY? IS THAT THE FULL NAME? THERE ARE TROLLEY COMPANIES WITH THAT NAME. WAS IT A TROLLY COMPANY?Baltimore Traction Company was a trolley company)

Mary Frick was an active and supportive member of Grace Episcopal Church (WHERE) and was attuned to the needs of her church community. She especially noted the plight of clergymen’s widows who, lacking pensions or personal savings, were often left nearly destitute. Their situation prompted her to leave her Uplands estate to the Episcopal Diocese (WHOLE NAME? PROBABLY “OF MARYLAND” according to Wikipdia it is “Diocese of Maryland” with no Episcopal The Abandoned Houses Website uses the term “Protestant Episcopal Church” ) to create and sustain a beautiful home for “lonely church women.” Here, she imagined, they could live out their last years in comfort and dignity.

Mary Frick died in 1936. Three years later, following the death of her second husband, Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs, the property, along with a $1.3 million endowment, was transferred to the diocese. However, it took several years for Mary Frick’s vision to become a reality. The conversion of Uplands into a home for the elderly was delayed as the Church awaited for interest to build from the principal, and because of government restrictions, material shortages, and cost inflations as a result of Pearl Harbor and World War II. 10 A series of wartime fires took numerous lives in elderly care homes, which led to changes in building materials and fireproofing standards nationwide.

Additionally, the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Maryland disagreed that Uplands would be a suitable site for the aged. 9 A report produced by James A. Latane, president of the board of managers of the home, noted that Uplands would require considerable reconstruction and money to bring it up to the standards necessitated for a nursing home. 8 9 The 42-room mansion would need the erection of a fireproof brick shaft for an elevator and iron staircase and the construction of fire-resistant stairways at each end of the building. There were also large rooms that could not be easily divided.From Abandoned Houses website.

To meet city (COUNTY? It is in the city) codes, bedrooms were required to be housed in a fireproof wing and stucco needed to cover the existing siding (WHY? FIRE CONCERNS? See above). As per Mary’s requirement, the billiards room became a chapel. (DID THIS TAKE A LONG TIME TO DO? WERE THERE COMPLICATIONS? IT IS MENTIONED HERE WITH OTHER COMPLICATIONS THAT SLOWED THE PROJECT DOWN. I doubt that this was time-consuming but just an example of the extent of the renovations) The endowment stipulated that the capital (THE ENDOWMENT, RIGHT? SAY endowment INSTEAD OF “CAPITAL”?no, that is not the same thing. Use capital) could not be used for capital improvements to the property, so several years passed before the interest and sale of some 300 acres of the adjacent property raised the funds needed for the renovations.

At last, the final steps were being taken. A board was established, a director hired, and a part-time minster, shared with St. Bartholomew’s in Mount Washington, was engaged. In the drawing room, a plague I think you mean” plaque” prepared by Mary Frick was lovingly hung. It read: “Uplands Home for Church Women Established by Mary F. Jacobs To the Glory of God and a Loving Tribute to her Devoted Husband, Henry Barton Jacobs Who in his life has shown such unfading sympathy for those in need and has been such a tower of strength to her in aiding her to meet the emergencies of life so common to us all.” (IS THE CAPITALIZATION CORRECT HERE? Is that a Bernadette questions?)

In 1952, 18 guests moved in. Soon, there would be 32 residents with a waiting list of 140. Two of the first residents undertook to create a scrapbook history of the Uplands Home for Church Women. (A BIT CONFUSING – WAS THE NAME OF THE PLACE Uplands Home for Church Women? Yes, that is what Baltimore Heritage uses ) Charlotte Wilcox assumed the role of historian, while Edith H. Sainsbury became the scribe, recording the history, names, and personal information of each resident in her beautiful calligraphic script. The Uplands Home (Diocese FULL NAME?)Yes remained a sanctuary for its residents until the mid-1980s, when the need for an updated facility prompted the sale of the property. (Say something here to the tune of “See accompanying article” so reader knows details are in side article)

Over the years, many residents would express their gratitude and joy at having such a wonderful place to spend their later years. Mrs. Ruth Lynch wrote: “I am privileged to be at Uplands Home surrounded by these beautiful trees and shrubs.” She said it felt as if she were living in the trees. And Mrs. Elizabeth Johnson wrote: “I love this beautiful peaceful Home. I hope to be able to live a long time in order to enjoy it.” And Mrs. Caroline Whittiker, inspired to goodness and kindness by those who provided this home to her, wrote: “O God help us to redirect our lives toward the great ends service and kindness and spiritual well-being so wonderfully typified in this gracious Uplands Home for Church Women.”

Thanks to Edward Heimiller and Edie Garrett for their valued information.

SIDE ARTICLE ABOUT UPLANDS BEING SOLD, THE FURNITURE, ETC.

In early 2023, the Garrett Jacobs Mansion Endowment Fund (GJMEF) was the happy recipient of several pieces of historically meaningful furniture. The items—a mahogany breakfront, a curio cabinet, an ornately carved library table, and two chairs decorated with cherub, lion, and griffin heads—once graced Uplands, the Catonsville country estate formerly owned by Robert and Mary Frick Garrett, and later by Mary Frick and her second husband, Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs. The furniture had remained at Uplands after Mary Frick’s death, when the property became the Uplands Home for Church Women, a residence for widows of the Episcopal Church’s clergy.

In the mid-1980s, the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland (NAME?Diocese of Maryland) arranged for Uplands Home to merge with Fairhaven (WAS THIS THE FULL NAME? Fairhaven Retirement CommunityCORRECT), a new diocese-owned life care facility in Sykesville, Maryland. The Uplands property was sold, and proceeds enabled the construction of a building—also named Uplands—on the Fairhaven campus. This new building included a salon decorated with the best furnishings from Mary Frick’s beloved home as well as a plaque recalling her generosity.
In the early 2020s, Fairhaven merged with Acts-Retirement-Life Community (FACT CHECK NAME see aboveACTS Retirement-Life Community was the version I found), and the salon was dismantled to make way for administrative offices. Resident Charlette Sandberg contacted her friend Jim Garrett, the great nephew of Robert and Mary Frick Garrett, and suggested that he might like to find a new home for the family furniture. Seeing an opportunity to place some of this furniture in a Garrett-connected mansion, Jim and his wife, Edie Garrett, offered some of the Uplands pieces to the Garrett Jacobs Mansion Endowment Fund (GJMEF). His idea was that the furniture might, in a sense, return home.

Having served as board members of Uplands Fairhaven (AGAIN, NEED HELP WITH OFFICIAL NAMES)see above, Jim and Edie had an established relationship with the facility and were able to connect with Susan Arcadia, Executive Director or Acts Retirement Life Communities, Inc./Fairhaven (NAME CLARIFICATION? ACTS, FOR EXAMPLE, IS PRESENTED DIFFERENTLY EARLER see above). Susan graciously arranged for temporary storage of the furniture while the process of entrusting the pieces to the GJMEF took place. In March 2022, Jim and Edie Garrett donated the furniture to the GJMEF, ensuring that the heritage of Uplands, and its former residents, lives on.