

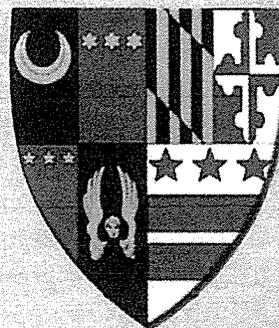
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

In reference to your Fall issue, the caption under the picture of Darnall's Chance, "Home of the Carrolls," is incorrect. When Prince George's County opened the historic house, Darnall's Chance, in Upper Marlboro in 1988, it was represented as the possible birthplace of John Carroll, the first Roman Catholic bishop in the United States.

Not long thereafter, Maryland National Park and Planning Commission (MNPPC) historians who were custodians of the site began to realize that the research was incomplete and that inaccurate conclusions had been drawn regarding the house's origin. When Ms. Susan Reidy became the Director of Darnall's Chance House Museum in 2000, everything about the house and property was reevaluated. Extensive research concluded that although Col. Henry Darnall patented the 105-acre property as Darnall's Chance in 1704, there was no house built on it until 1742, after it had been sold out of the Darnall family.

The town of Upper Marlborough was established in 1706 and included a large section of Darnall's Chance acreage. Town lots thus created, as well as the remainder of the Darnall's Chance property, passed from Col. Henry Darnall to his son, also Henry Darnall, who, in turn, gave it as a wedding gift to his daughter, Eleanor, upon her marriage to Daniel Carroll.

Carroll had immigrated to Maryland in the early 1700s and had become a merchant in the town of Upper Marlborough. He married Eleanor Darnall in 1727. They were the parents of John Carroll and lived in the town, but not on the Darnall's Chance property. They



The Catholic Historical Society of Washington

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OUR MISSION

The Society was established to preserve and promote awareness of our Catholic history in the area which now comprises the Archdiocese of Washington. The Society sponsors lectures, special tours, and this biannual publication on local Catholic history.

sold four and three-quarter acres of that property to the wealthy Scots merchant, James Wardrop, in 1741. The first reference to a house there is in 1742, when Wardrop was taken to court and sued for non-payment of brickwork.

Thus, the Darnall's Chance connection to the Carroll family.

~ *Gloria Wyrill Garner*



St. Mary's Of Upper Marlboro, The Early Years

By Gloria Garner

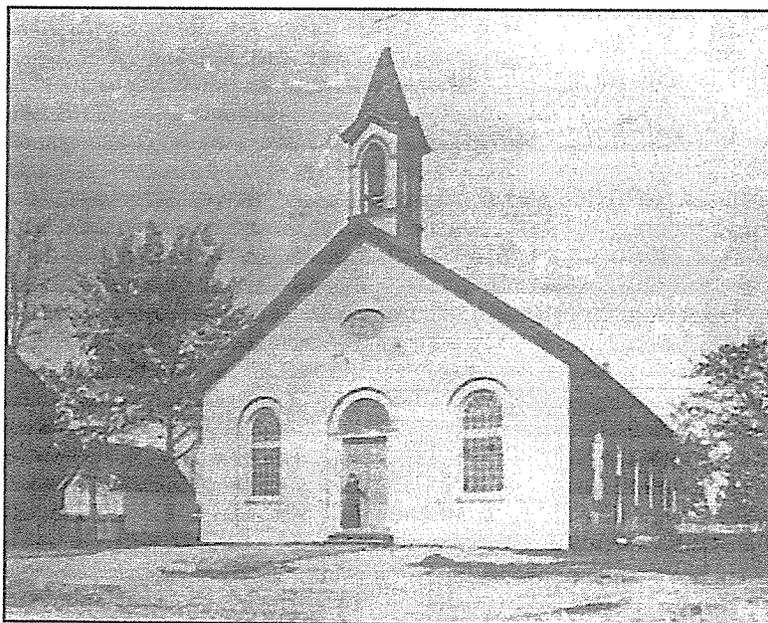
This account of the origins of St. Mary's is an extensively revised and enlarged version of a study first published in the newsletter of the Catholic Historical Society of Washington in 1996.

The early history of St. Mary's of Upper Marlboro is among the more interesting of our local parishes in that it grew out of the influence of both lay and religious leadership. The Town of Marlborough, named for the first Duke of Marlborough, was established in 1706. Officially, it is now Upper Marlboro, although it is commonly referred to as Marlboro. Catholics of the Upper Marlboro area first saw their spiritual needs attended to by priests of the Society of Jesus.

The Jesuits were followed by the Dominicans, Carmelites, and Mill Hill Fathers (Josephites), who claimed St. Mary's as their base of operations in Southern Maryland. Among the laity closely involved in the formation of the parish were

descendants of the Hill, Digges, Lee, and Carroll families.

Prior to the establishment of Prince George's County, prominent Catholics settled near Upper Marlboro on large tracts of land. Col. Henry Darnall, a cousin of the first wife of Charles, Third Lord Baltimore, for example, settled in Maryland prior to May 1674 when he was elected a delegate to the lower house of the General Assembly from (then) Calvert County. He lived at his estate called Woodyard, approximately five miles north



St. Mary's of Upper Marlboro.

of Upper Marlboro. Clement Hill, Jr., son-in-law of Col. Darnall, was commissioned Surveyor General for the Western Shore by Lord Baltimore and settled on a large estate bordering the Patuxent River known as Compton Bassett, approximately three miles east of Marlboro. When Upper Marlboro

was established as a port town in 1706, it quickly became a commercial, political, and social center. As such it attracted other Catholics of note, e.g., Henry Darnall, Esq., son of Col. Darnall who owned the tract of land known as Darnall's

Chance, part of which was selected for the site of the town of Upper Marlboro. Daniel Carroll, son-in-law of Henry Darnall and father of John Carroll, patriarch of the Church in the United State, became a merchant in the town.

PENAL TIMES

By the time Upper Marlboro was founded, public exercise of the Catholic faith had already been legally prohibited in Maryland. However, out of respect for the traditional rights that were affixed to private property, colonial officials turned a blind eye when Catholic landowners ensured that celebration of the Mass would continue by erecting "Mass-rooms" and "house chapels" on their property. Historian Beatrice Hardy has documented the spread of these places of worship during the 18th century and the prominent role of the Catholic laity as patrons of the faith during the penal times. Hardy noted that in Prince George's County during the 18th century the Jesuit presence was not as strong as it was in Charles and St. Mary's Counties.

Because of this and the laws against the erection of freestanding churches, Catholic laity of Prince George's provided sixteen of the seventeen chapels in the county. Further, the lone Jesuit-owned chapel in Prince George's was situated on their 2,000-acre plantation at White Marsh (now Sacred Heart, Bowie), which was donated to them by a layman, a member of the Carroll family. Its location was central to Catholics in Prince George's County. Anne Arundel and Baltimore Counties as well as the District of Columbia were also recipients of the White Marsh Jesuit spiritual ministrations.

Catholics living in the vicinity of Upper Marlboro opened their homes to both friends and neighbors for the celebration of Mass, baptisms, weddings, funerals, and the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. At various times during the 1700s Mass was offered at Col. Darnall's home, Woodyard, the Digges' Melwood Park, Clement Hill's Compton Bassett, and at Boone's Chapel, home of the Boone family.

ITINERANT PRIESTS

While establishing a "Mass-room" or "house-chapel" was a relatively simple matter for the

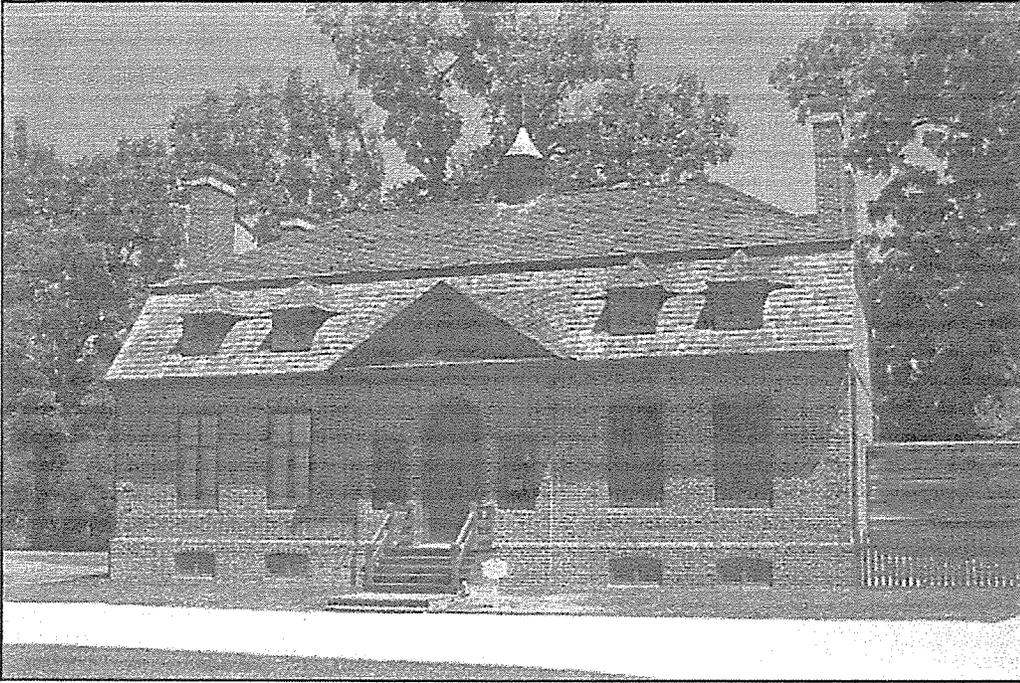
members of the Catholic gentry who were willing to brave the possible legal penalties, obtaining priests to celebrate Mass in these places was much more difficult. From the founding of the colony until the American Revolution there were never more than two dozen priests available at one time to serve the Catholics of Maryland, and these men, almost all Jesuits, were also responsible for the Catholics of Pennsylvania.

Under these circumstances the chapel sponsors could only hope for intermittent visits from itinerant priests. Traveling

by horseback from place to place, the ministry of Colonial era priests was often hampered by the harshness of the damp, cold winters and the stifling heat of summer. Chills and fever, or malaria, were the scourge of Southern Maryland and would have an adverse effect not only on 18th-century Jesuits, but it also interfered in the establishment of other permanent religious houses in Upper Marlboro. Father Miles Gibbons, S.J., who, according to the *Catholic Almanac*, said Mass on the second and fourth Sundays of the month at Marlboro from 1849 to 1850, died there on



*One of the oldest
parishes in the archdiocese,
St. Mary's is historically
related to some of the first
families of Maryland as
well as to four religious
orders*



Darnall's Chance, the Prince George's County home of the Carroll family.

August 7, 1850, apparently of typhoid fever. It is possible that he is the Jesuit priest buried beneath the present St. Mary's Church as related by Rev. Francis J. Loughran in a private conversation.

Catholics in the vicinity of Melwood were more fortunate in this regard in that a priest resided at Melwood Park. Father Thomas Digges, S.J., (1711-1805), one-time superior of the Jesuits in Maryland, lived at the family estate for most of the sixty-four years that he served in the Maryland mission. Upon his death in February 1805, his old friend, Bishop John Carroll, presided at his funeral.

BOONE'S CHAPEL

The Boone family was similarly blessed. John Boone, Jr., (d. 1775) maintained a chapel on his property. Two of his sons entered the Society of Jesus. The younger John (1735-1795) served in Maryland for sixteen years and is known to have ministered at the family chapel. Situated on land granted to the Boone's in 1676, the chapel was located some ten miles south of Upper

Marlboro along the old road leading from the important 18th-century port town of Nottingham north toward present-day Rosaryville. Little is known about the history of the chapel, although it appears on an early 19th-century list of missions attended to by the Jesuits stationed at White Marsh. Archbishop Ambrose Marechal recorded in his diary of October 1825 that he confirmed eighty-two persons in Boone's cha-

pel. The chapel served the Catholic community of Upper Marlboro as the immediate forerunner both of St. Mary's in Upper Marlboro and Holy Rosary at what would later be called Rosaryville.

A CHURCH FOR UPPER MARLBORO

Following the American Revolution, Catholics were once again free to worship publicly, and churches began to spring up. Sometime early in the 19th century the Catholics of Upper Marlboro, with the concurrence of the Jesuits at White Marsh, decided to build a church on a permanent site in the town. By this time the location of Boone's Chapel was no longer convenient or desirable. The Nottingham Road had ceased to be a major thoroughfare. Upper Marlboro, as the county seat, was thriving and seemed the logical choice as the center of Catholic worship in the area. Accordingly, one acre of land was purchased and titled in the name of Francis Neale, S.J. (1756-1837). This arrangement was in keeping with the custom in Maryland to title land for church use in the name of Jesuit priests.

Unfortunately, as a consequence of this action, the Catholics of Upper Marlboro were caught up in a lengthy battle which raged in the 1820s between the Jesuits and Archbishop Marechal, third Archbishop of Baltimore. At issue was whether church lands deeded to the Jesuits for the erection of churches and other institutions were intended as donations specifically to the Society of Jesus or to the Church as a whole. Archbishop Marechal favored the latter interpretation and wanted all church lands vested in the name of the Archbishop of Baltimore.

Although the cornerstone for the original St. Mary's was laid on June 4, 1824, the completion of the brick church and its opening were held in abeyance until the dispute between the Jesuits and the archbishop was settled. The brick church with clear-glass palladium windows and built in a style developed by the Jesuits with seating for 450 people was dedicated on April 5, 1829. Francis Dzierozynski, S.J., the Jesuit superior, sent Marechal a report of the proceedings: "Rev. Mr. Mudd offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, assisted by Rev. Mr. Smith. The sermon was delivered on the occasion by Rev. Fr. Young, sent there from the College. Tho' the weather was very unfavorable that morning the church was crowded with strangers, some of whom came from a distance. It is unnecessary to mention the extreme joy and satisfaction that pervaded every class of Prince Georgians throughout the neighborhood of Marlboro."

Finally, five years after the laying of the cornerstone, St. Mary's parishioners had their church.

LAY LEADERS

During the first half of the 19th century, Catholic churches in America were often administered by a board of trustees, usually three laymen and the parish priest. We have been unable to positively identify the trustees of St. Mary's, although correspondence suggests that both Richard Hill and Charles Hill were among them. They certainly

played an important role both in the planning of the parish and erection of the church. Archbishop Marechal wrote Father Mudd at "White Marsh near Queen Anne" on February 28, 1827, that he had written to Richard Hill to suggest a solution to the problem of the title, but had never received an answer. Additionally, Father Neale wrote to Superior General Dzierozynski on June 30, 1828, concerning the exact wording of the deed to St. Mary's. He stated that he would visit Charles Hill before taking any action. Each of the Hills is memorialized in stained glass windows in the present church.

THE DOMINICAN YEARS

For twenty-six years after the opening of the original St. Mary's Church at Marlboro, the Jesuits continued to administer the Sacraments there from White Marsh. Then, on March 25, 1855, Father Roger Dietz wrote to the Jesuit Provincial, Charles H. Stonestreet, advising him of conditions surrounding the Marlboro mission. The week before he had met with the Archbishop of Baltimore who wanted the Jesuits to continue with their attendance there. Conversely, Father Dietz insisted on a "stationed priest in regard to the large number of congregants and the almost impracticable service from this distant place . . . and the large number of sick calls. One day in January I got no more than eight sick calls at one time. One of them died without the Sacraments." Dietz wrote that during the winter months he had "many long and hard (horseback) rides to that congregation," and it had broken his health. He concluded that he would comply with the wishes of both the Provincial and Archbishop and persevere as long as he was able.

A religious notice appeared in the October 1, 1856, issue of *The Planters Advocate*, a Marlboro weekly newspaper: "Divine Service will be celebrated in the Catholic Church in this place on Sunday the 5th. In the future this church will be regularly attended by the reverend gentlemen

of St. Dominic's Church, Washington, to whose charge the congregation has been placed by the Most Reverend Archbishop. Service in the future will be on the second and third Sunday of every month."

Francis Patrick Kenrick, the sixth Archbishop of Baltimore, had enlisted the aid of religious orders to ease the burden of staffing parishes. The Dominicans had agreed to relieve the Jesuits at Marlboro.

Father Nicholas Young, O.P., became the first resident pastor of St. Mary's. He was a native of Charles County who was highly regarded and admired for his work in the Kentucky-Ohio missions where he was known as the Co-Apostle of the West. His uncle, Edward Dominic Fenwick, O.P., was the founder of the Dominicans in the United States and first Bishop of Cincinnati. Father Young found himself responsible for St. Mary's and remnants of the Boone's Chapel congregation. In his early sixties, he faced circumstances similar to those encountered in the mission field in the mid-West. The long distances between his home base and parishioners required hours in the saddle or horse and buggy through unpredictable weather and deplorable road conditions. He notified his parishioners of parish activities such as Mass schedules and Lenten regulations through the local newspapers.

Apart from attending to the needs of his widespread parishioners, Father Young maintained an interest in the decaying Boone's Chapel with its historic background. He is quoted as saying, "a place so sacred to the Catholic history of Maryland, Boone's Chapel should not be . . . forgotten." In the beginning, Young was obliged to say Mass for the Boone's Chapel congregants in the home of a local family, possibly that of Henry S. Mitchell, owner of Woodstock.

Father Young also oversaw the construction of the first frame Church of the Most Holy Rosary, located a few miles from Boone's Chapel "at the Woodyard gate," an area that later became known

as Rosaryville. The cornerstone was solemnly blessed and laid on Sunday evening, June 5, 1859. The *Freedman's Journal*, a New York newspaper reporting on the event, noted "that the venerable Father Young made some feeling remarks in returning thanks to those present and their numerous attendance. He reminded them that Boone's Chapel, which the present church was to replace, was one of the first churches erected in the County." The *Journal* also reported on the dedication of the new church on October 23, 1859, followed by a High Mass and appropriate discourse by the Very Reverend J. A. Kelly, Provincial of the Dominicans. The paper added that the church was erected on land donated by Henry S. Mitchell for the benefit of the congregation of the old Boone's Chapel. Eight days before the dedication of Holy Rosary, John Brown raided the United States Arsenal at Harper's Ferry. Hard times were coming.

Father Young resigned as pastor of St. Mary's and Holy Rosary in 1860, although he continued to minister at Holy Rosary off and on during 1862 and 1863. He was succeeded by Father J. P. Turner, O.P., who served at Upper Marlboro until November 1862, and then by Father P. C. Coll, O.P., who attended both churches. Holy Rosary remained a mission of St. Mary's until 1966 when it was established as a parish.

COMING OF THE CARMELITES

In February 1869 the Dominicans surrendered the Upper Marlboro missions to Carmelite Fathers Peter Thomas Maher and Theodore McDonald, who assumed responsibility on behalf of their order with the blessings of their superior at Cumberland, Maryland, Cyril Knoll, O. Carm. Correspondence between Knoll and Archbishop Martin John Spalding, seventh Archbishop of Baltimore, indicates the Carmelites intent to establish a novitiate in Upper Marlboro and to pursue their aim adopted by the Carmelites in

Cumberland, the care of souls and instruction of youth.

The situation in post-war Upper Marlboro, just four years after the end of the Civil War, was entirely different from their Cumberland experience. Maher and McDonald had traded the rich coal mining operations in that region for an agricultural economy based on the production of tobacco, corn, and wheat in Southern Maryland. Upper Marlboro, though, was a thriving town in spite of the economic depression suffered from the war and its aftermath and offered possibilities for the success of their mission.

Maher and McDonald originally intended to reside at the so-called pastoral house at Nihil, the estate of Mrs. Eliza Gaston Graham (1819-1885). Instead, they lived for one year in a house connected to the church, which consisted of two rooms on the first floor and two on the second. The pair immediately launched a campaign to build a residence large enough for a novitiate. It was subsequently erected on land donated by Mrs. Graham at the intersection of present day Marlboro Pike and Brown Station Road. On June 19, 1872, Graham deeded the 7.3-acre residence property along with a 2.3-acre parcel of land to be used as a cemetery for the congregation of St. Mary's to the Carmelites. The cemetery, known as Mt. Carmel, is the burial site of many faithful parishioners of St. Mary's. The remains of Thomas Sim Lee, a colonial governor of Maryland, and other family members originally buried at Melwood, were removed to Mt. Carmel several years ago. The deed from Mrs. Graham contained a provision that the land should be conveyed to the Archbishop of Baltimore should "the said Order of Carmelites cease to officiate and withdraw their pastoral care from St. Mary's."

Funds for construction of the residence, designed by John F. Eckenrode, were realized through pledges by parishioners, fund raisers, and money earned by the priests themselves. A local Marlboro newspaper, the *Prince Georgian*, in

December 1869 and January 1870 enthusiastically reported a one-week fair sponsored by the Ladies of St. Mary's Church and held in the Courthouse. The fair netted \$1,000, "to enable the Reverend Fathers to finish their beautiful residence at the west end of our town." A highlight of the fair was the raffle of a fine colt donated by Henry W. Clagett and of a young cow given by William M. Hill. The affair, held during Christmas week, evidently gave great pleasure to the residents of the community and its surrounds and was a welcome change from the "hard times" they had endured in recent years. By 1871 ten priests and novices were in residence at the newly constructed pastoral house, known locally as the "Priests' House."

The Carmelites also ministered to St. Mary's at Piscataway, St. Ignatius at Oxon Hill, and Holy Rosary at Rosaryville. The monks' care of souls was extended through the scheduling of a mission at Marlboro by Redemptorist Fathers. Old St. Mary's had a seating capacity of 450 persons. In November 1869 the *Prince Georgian* reported that "the pews, galleries and aisles were filled as we had never seen before . . . by citizens irrespective of sect" for the sermons of Father Joseph Wissel, "which have not failed to awaken a deep interest in the minds of all who heard them as to the necessity for more than a mere profession of Christianity." The mission, a resounding success, concluded with a Solemn Mass for the Dead.

Education of the poor "colored" children of the parish was also foremost in the thoughts of the Carmelites. Father McDonald appealed to Archbishop Spalding for help. He wrote of the house connected to the church and proposed to use it as a school. The "colored" children were numerous and in need of instruction; the ladies of the congregation promised a contribution to support two "colored" sisters from Baltimore if he could obtain them. The nuns could live in the upper rooms and teach in the lower ones. Sometime in the early 1870s St. Mary's School for Colored Children opened with an enrollment

of thirty-two students. However, records of the Oblate Sisters of Providence of Baltimore indicate that while they were teaching in New Orleans and Philadelphia during that time, there is no record of their involvement in the school at Upper Marlboro.

The Carmelites prospered in Marlboro in spite of hardships, the threat of malaria due to the warm, humid climate, and internal struggles within their order. Father Maher left in January 1871 to establish a new house in Kentucky. Archbishop Spalding, who invited the Carmelites to Marlboro, died in June 1872. He was succeeded by Archbishop James Roosevelt Bayley (eighth Archbishop of Baltimore). Bayley supported the Carmelites, but made it known that he would never give them title to the parishes they staffed. They stayed at Marlboro until 1875 when the Cumberland community closed and its foundation moved elsewhere.

During their seven-year tenure the Carmelites developed a strong base at Marlboro from which they effectively administered to all the churches under their care. They routinely said Mass, offered catechetical instruction, cared for the sick, buried the dead, and founded a school for "colored" children in addition to erecting a substantial residence for themselves where they trained their novices. A history of St. Mary's at Piscataway relates that the Carmelites made many converts, and their departure was marked with regret by parishioners and friends.

A MILL HILL PARISH

The last of the religious foundations to accept responsibility for St. Mary's was the newly organized (1866) St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart for Foreign Missions. These missionaries became known as the Mill Hill Fathers after their home base, Mill Hill, near London. By 1873 there were ten Mill Hill Fathers in the United States where they accepted as their primary mission the evangelization of African Americans. Archbishop

Bayley convinced them to staff St. Mary's with its large congregation of African Americans, and Fathers William Hooman and John Greene arrived at Marlboro on August 12, 1875. They found they were responsible for the same four churches and the parochial districts they covered with the same schedules as their predecessors: Masses, sermon and catechetical instruction at St. Mary's and Holy Rosary every alternate Sunday; St. Ignatius at Oxon Hill and St. Mary's, Piscataway, once every four weeks. Piscataway meant a week-end stay, presumably at the church, which had rooms attached as at Marlboro.

Their assignment was described as laborious. St. Mary's was solvent, and they found "the spiritual condition in general very satisfactory, more established in the district of Upper Marlboro proper, where the priests reside." Within one month of their arrival, Father Greene wrote to his superior at Mill Hill that the work was too much for two people. One night's rain was enough to swell the torrents that crossed the roads which lacked bridges and was the cause of many anxious moments when traveling from one church to another or on sick call. A sick call could be a thirty-mile ride. Father Hooman had succumbed to chills and fever, "the universal malady of Maryland." He was better, but it had left him in a weakened condition. "Never had he (Greene) met such a state of things." Financially, though, they were on solid ground. Pew rents made it possible in the beginning to save \$500 a year. They were devoted to their work with the "colored," meanwhile attending to their white congregation.

A year later, in August 1876, a report notified the superior that their "domestic establishment (at Marlboro) consisted of two priests, two servants, two horses, two dogs and two or three feathered families who follow the Mormon faith—one husband (a fine old rooster) with a plurality of wives proud of their progeny." The servants made it possible for the priests to carry out their work in the mission. In September the

"colored" school opened and was "taught by two white ladies in the village at the compensation of \$30 per month." About eighty children attended regularly. The priests discovered there were twenty-one Catholic "colored" boys among the 300 at the House of Reformation at Cheltenham. Permission was obtained to say Mass and give catechetical instruction at the institution. The first Mass was said there on our national holiday, July 4, 1876. The Mill Hill Fathers happily accepted their role in the care of Catholic boys at Cheltenham, which was gently referred to as their fifth parish. The Fathers also paid occasional visits to the Prince George's County Alms House.

At times a Mill Hill Father served alone at Marlboro. Two appeared to be serving in February 1878 when Father Hooman responded to his superior, "While another priest is necessary for the spiritual success and well-being of our work here, I don't think our people would be able to support three priests. The times are very hard and have been for the past year, and I do not see any probability for improvement." He counseled that if a new priest was sent, he should be strong, healthy, and willing to endure hardship. "This country is not very healthy (particularly Marlboro and Piscataway) due to the swamps and marshes." They expected to have Confirmation in May when Archbishop James Gibbons (ninth Archbishop of Baltimore) would confirm about 200 candidates among the four churches.

Letters to England addressed the instability of the society itself, both here and abroad, bemoaned the loss of Mill Hill Fathers who had become diocesan priests, and responded at length to questions concerning the mission at Marlboro and its future. Hooman further reported that the school was thriving. In a June 1877 letter he wrote that 120 "colored" children were in attendance on the closing day. They were given treats and were happy, he said.

The superiors in England and Maryland kept a close eye on Marlboro and its missions.

There were visits that included stays by their own Bishop Herbert Vaughn, by English and American superiors, and, sometimes, priests of their own order who needed a short period of rest. Their ministries followed the pattern established by previous religious assigned to Marlboro. Their devotion and enthusiasm equaled that of their predecessors. Lacking, however, was the manpower necessary to carry out the demands of the mission. The deadly climate of Southern Maryland took its toll, and they were frustrated over dividing their ministry between black and white Catholics. In 1879, four years after their arrival, they followed the lead of the Dominicans and Carmelites and packed up and left. A few years later a splinter group of the Mill Hill Fathers reorganized in this country as the Josephites.

After the departure of the Mill Hill Fathers, the parish of St. Mary's came under the care of diocesan priests of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, some fifty years after the dedication of its first church in Upper Marlboro.

Bibliographic note: *In addition to Jesuit and archdiocesan archives and county land records, this article consulted Louise Joyner Hinton's Prince George's Heritage (1972); Beatrice Hardy "Papists in a Protestant Age, The Catholic Gentry and Community in Colonial Maryland; 1689-1776" (PhD Dissertation, 1993); Margaret Brent Downing's "Catholic Church in D.C.," (Records of the Columbia Historical Society); Thomas Spalding's The Premier See, A History of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1789-1989; and Robert Traudt, "The Story of the Carmelites in Maryland from 1866 to 1875" (N.E. Dissertation, (1981).*

Gloria Wyvill Garner is a lifelong member of St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Upper Marlboro. She has done extensive research on the history of the parish over a period of several years.