

# *Martingham*

A Brief History

by

Edith M. Sprouse

October 1986

## MARTINGHAM

Barbara and Ed Higgins, who own the Salty Oyster Restaurant in St. Michaels, have lived on Swan Road for only six years, but they are a living link with 17<sup>th</sup> century Marylanders who once held this land making up our Martingham community. In their front yard is the small cemetery of the Auld family, from whom Ed is descended. "When you weeded the cemetery and planted flowers," declared their next door neighbor Virginia Ruff, "my old rocking chair settled down and stopped rocking by itself."

Did this appease the spirit of old James Auld, licensed in 1699 to keep a tavern at Deep Water Point?

Martingham is made up of portions of several tracts assembled about 1967 by David Owen and Charles Iliff as "Miles River Farms" and sold three years later to developer Sid R. Peters. The preliminary plat recorded in February, 1970, by the firm Martingham Inn, Inc. laid out some 450 acres divided into 97 one-acre lots, 5 inland lots with a minimum of two acres, 48 two-acre waterfront lots, and 248 acres for apartments and other amenities.<sup>1</sup> A hotel, the Sheraton Martingham Inn, was to be built along the shore where Hambleton Creek flowed into the Miles River. Some modifications occurred in the original plan<sup>2</sup> before the trustees of the first developer sold the subdivision to Bittorf Ford, Inc. in 1977.<sup>3</sup>

Included in this sale were lands which had formed a part of East Martingham West Martingham, Deep Water Point Farm and its woodland, Oak Level, and another small parcel. It would seem that these had once been part of the tract known as Martingham. The mansion house itself had been retained by David Owen when the sale was made. The center part of the dwelling may represent the earliest frame house in Talbot County.<sup>4</sup> The 17th century structure is situated on land that belonged to the Hambleton family from 1659 until 1945. It may be contemporary with the Old Friends' Meeting House in Easton.<sup>5</sup>

The first patent for the land was granted in 1650 by Lord Baltimore to Robert Martyn, as "headrights" for transporting his wife and five children into the colony. Of the 500 acres, Martyn assigned 200 to William Champe. He conveyed the tract, called Martingham, to William Hambleton in 1659.<sup>6</sup> One of the more prominent early settlers of this area, Hambleton served as high sheriff of Talbot County in 1663, was a member of the Maryland House of Burgesses in 1666 and a Gentleman Justice from 1668 until his death in 1675.

William and Sarah Hambleton had seven children. The sons William and John inherited his dwelling plantation. This was made up of two patents, Martingham and Williston.<sup>7</sup> It descended through the male line of the family to their brother Philemon, then to his son William. The latter was a member of the Talbot County Committee of Observation in 1775 and a Captain in the 38th Battalion of militia during the Revolution.<sup>8</sup>

In 1793 this William Hambleton had his tract, by then containing 411 acres, resurveyed as Martingham Enlarged. It consisted of parts of these patents:<sup>9</sup>

- 200 acres, surveyed in 1659
- 100 acres, surveyed in 1662 called Cambridge
- 100 acres, granted in 1688, called Hambleton's Addition
- 224 acres, granted in 1665, called Williston
- 258 acres, granted to John Auld in 1722, called Newport Glasgow.

In his will, written in 1805, he left the mansion house land to his son John N., and the eastern half of Martingham to his sons Edward and Samuel. This generation of Hambletons served in the War of 1812, Edward as Lieutenant in a cavalry unit, John as naval officer, and Samuel as purser on Perry's brig "Lawrence" at the Battle of Lake Erie.

Samuel lived for a time in the old house, having acquired the interests of his brothers and sisters. In 1812 he bought 500 acres adjacent to St. Michaels and moved there in 1820, naming his new home Perry Cabin, in honor of his former commander. Samuel and his brother John, both bachelor naval officers, lived there with their two unmarried sisters. The men were innovative farmers, bringing both ideas and seeds back from their voyages. They were early members of the Maryland Agricultural Society.

The part of Martingham known as Newport Glasgow had been patented by James Auld, who had come from Scotland at the end of the 17th century. This tract contained 300 acres on the north side of Deepwater Creek; the certificate was made out to his son John in 1722. Two of John's daughters married into the Hambleton family. In the following generation another daughter would marry a Dodson; this branch would later repurchase the land from a later Hambleton. So much intermarriage took place that every family in the area seemed to be cousins.

John Auld died in 1766 and his widow Mary lived on the farm until her death in 1795, although the male heir had conveyed his interest to Matthew Tilghman, Esq., who owned the adjoining Deep Water Point tract.<sup>10</sup> In 1823 Tilghman's heirs sold Newport Glasgow and Deep Water Point to John Hambleton. The Aulds continued to be buried, however, on their property. Future deeds excepted the cemetery from the conveyances.

As directed in his will, John Hambleton's nephew sold all of his property except the old Martingham home.<sup>11</sup> Deep Water Point in 1875 was purchased by Richard S. Dodson of Norfolk, a distant relative, and kept by his family until 1944. One portion, on Long Haul Cove, was sold to H. P. Brown; the other to Roger Ringold. Deep Water Point changed hands several times before 1967 when it was sold by Nettie Jones to the Miles River Farms, and by them to Martingham Inn, Inc.<sup>12</sup>

This sketch of the plantations which make up our community and the people who have lived here provide the current residents with a sense of continuity. There are still Hambletons buried just to the west at Old Martingham, and the Aulds still rest in their graves on Swan Road. The body of Col. Hugh Auld may have been moved to Arlington -

Cemetery, and the wrought iron fence taken by vandals and sold to a blacksmith in St. Michaels is now in front of that shop, but Martingham in its fourth century is still flourishing.

One final glimpse of its past is taken from the pages of An Apology for the Life of Mr. Bampfylde Moore Carew, an adventurer and pickpocket who may have been here in 1740.

*A pilot brought the vessel down Mile's River and cast anchor in Talbot County; when the Captain ordered a gun to be fired as a signal for the planters to come down, and then went ashore. He soon after sent on board a hogshead of rum, and ordered the men prisoners to be close shaved against the next morning and the women to have their best head dresses put on, which occasioned no little hurry on board; for between trimming of beards and putting on of caps, all hands were fully employ'd.*

*In the morning the Captain ordered publick notice to be given of a day of sale, and the prisoners, who were pretty near a hundred, were all ordered upon deck, where a large bowl of punch was made, and the planters flocked on board. Their first inquiry was for letters and news from old England, what passage he had, how their friends did...their next inquiry was if the Captain had brought them good store of Joiners, Carpenters, Blacksmiths, Weavers and Tailors...*

*When all the best tradesmen were brought up, a planter came to Mr. Carew and asked him what trade he was of: Carew, to satisfy him of his usefulness, told him he was a rat catcher, a mendicant, and a dog merchant.*

*Naturally no one purchased his indenture.*

*The next day the Captain took him ashore. They went to a tavern where over a bowl of punch, several planters including Mr. Hambleton, a Scotchman, seemed to have an inclination to buy him. Carew, who had given no consent to the bargain they were making for him, thought it no breach of honor or good manners to take the opportunity of slipping away, and made his escape with a pint of brandy.<sup>13</sup>*

## Epilogue

This document was originally written by Edith M. Sprouse in 1986. During the 1980's, Edith lived at the end of Deep Water Point Drive in the home recently owned by Mr. Raymond Jones and now owned by Tom and Abby Campi. It is Edith Sprouse to whom we owe our debt for her research on this history of our community.

Virginia Ruff, mentioned on page 1, still lives on Swan Road. Norman and Marian Franck (who live next door to Mrs. Ruff) acquired the property formerly owned by Barbara Higgins. The Franck's live on the property that holds the old Auld family cemetery.

Additional research shows that Hugh Auld (1745-1813) was removed from the family plot in April 1935 and reinterred in Arlington National Cemetery, Section 2. Hugh Auld, Jr. (1767-1820) was buried adjacent to his father.

*The Salty Oyster Restaurant* mentioned on page 1 was on South Talbot Street. Over the years it has been recast as *Higgins Crab House*, *Holy Mackerel*, *Destiny* and more recently as *Bella Luna*.

The next page shows an aerial photo of the Martingham area about 1969. This photograph was used in a report to the original board of directors of the Martingham Inn Development Company.

As you can imagine, the original 1986 document was prepared on a typewriter and copies were made and circulated to some of the residents at the time. A copy was found in the Martingham Archive but upon close examination, it was determined that several pages had lines of text missing at the bottom of the page, probably due to errors in the copying process over the years. The question in 2011 was: "How do we find a complete copy of this Martingham History after 25 years?"

Two months later, Eugene "Gene" Holler, a resident of Swan Road and an historian in his own right, came up with the missing link. He had received a good copy of the Brief History of Martingham from Kathy Mourlas, who has been living on Deep Water Point Drive since 1981. Ultimately, the source documents were scanned, run through OCR (optical character recognition) software and converted into a digital file that could be edited. Five hours of editing and formatting later, we ended up with this final document.

Every effort has been made to retain the original text and the endnotes that reflect all of Edith Sprouse's excellent work from October 1986.

Jon H. LeTowt  
MPOA, President  
January 12, 2012

## Before Martingham

Circa 1969

Can you find your home?



1. 302 Acres under purchase  
Agreement to Martingham Inn  
Development Co.

2. 105 Acres under purchase  
Agreement to Martingham Inn  
Development Co.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Talbot County Plat Book 23:18; 24:40, 54. Deedbook 441:177; 442:357. Also 421:66; 429:237.
- <sup>2</sup> Easton Star-Democrat, March 25, 1970.
- <sup>3</sup> Talbot County Deedbook 508:314.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., 429:237. Talbot Banner, November 25, 1976.
- <sup>5</sup> Laurel, Maryland News-Leader, October 23, 1958.
- <sup>6</sup> Maryland Land Office, Book 4:333.
- <sup>7</sup> Tilghman, Oswald. History of Talbot County, Maryland 1661-1861. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1915. 2 Vols. Vol. I:455.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid, Vol. II:69, 79.
- <sup>9</sup> Hambleton, Samuel. Record of the Man, Needles, and Hambleton Families. Philadelphia, 1876. p. 42.
- <sup>10</sup> Talbot County Deed Book 20:319.
- <sup>11</sup> Talbot County Will Book TNC 11:391.
- <sup>12</sup> Talbot County Deed Book 80:486; 214:472; 258:505; 421:66.
- <sup>13</sup> Tilghman, II:514.

This information was taken from records in the Talbot County Court House., the Maryland Room of the Easton Library and from an article on the Auld family generously made available by Barbara Higgins.

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