

4.4 - Records of the Houses - White Marsh and Bowie

Background on the House at White Marsh

In 1729, Maryland missionaries acquired the property of White Marsh in Prince George's County, Maryland. It consisted of a 2,500-acre plantation and 30 enslaved people, and was given by the bequest of James Carroll, whose wide-ranging mercantile activities included financing the transport of 105 captive Africans on the slave ship *Margaret*. When the Jesuits acquired the plantation and human property, White Marsh was the western frontier of the colony.

The priests of this House maintained strong ties with the Carroll family. They ministered to Boone's Chapel, where John Carroll was baptized, and to Doughoregan Manor, a large plantation located near Elkridge that was established by Charles Carroll of Annapolis (nephew of James Carroll, and signer of the Declaration of Independence).

During the period of Jesuit Suppression, White Marsh was an important site. Led by John Carroll, the former Jesuits met at White Marsh to form the Corporation of Roman Catholic Clergymen and Georgetown College, and to designate Carroll as their choice to become Bishop of Baltimore.

From the time the Jesuits acquired White Marsh until their sale of 272 enslaved individuals in 1838, the Jesuits worked to defend the title to the plantation. The legitimacy of James Carroll's will was heavily contested. The will named his nephews, James and Daniel Carroll, as his heirs, and one of the estate's executors, Dr. Charles Carroll, argued that English law prohibited the passage of land to Catholics. Ultimately, however, the Maryland Mission successfully defended its interpretation of James Carroll's will and retained possession of White Marsh.

Between 1817 and 1823, White Marsh again became the center of a dispute. Archbishop Ambrose Maréchal claimed that the Archdiocese of Baltimore - rather than the Maryland Jesuits - owned the plantation, including the enslaved people who worked there. Although the Jesuits successfully defended themselves against these claims, they did agree to make regular payments to the Archdiocese. The 1838 sale of the Jesuits' enslaved property enabled the Jesuits to make a lump sum payment to the Archdiocese, thereby discharging themselves of this financial obligation.

Eighty-nine of the 272 people sold in 1838 came from White Marsh.

Bibliography

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