

## **GRASSLAND**

*Grassland* is an *antebellum* brick plantation house at Hercules Road, Annapolis Junction, Anne Arundel County, Maryland, that is today nestled on three to four plus acres located within the National Business Park (and next to the National Security Agency Annex building) near the intersection of the Gladys Noon Spellman (Baltimore-Washington) Parkway and Maryland Route No. 32, close to the Northwest corner of that road intersection.

The home consists of a brick telescope-style home and what is left of three surviving farm outbuildings which today are owned and administered by The Grassland Foundation, Inc.

The builder was William Anderson, a self educated architect and storekeeper, who purchased approximately 700 acres in 1852 of *Worthington's Fancy* from James Worthington. Anderson had recently returned to Anne Arundel and Prince George's Counties, Maryland (his place of birth) from Harpers Ferry in what was still the Commonwealth of Virginia, where he had owned and operated a dry goods and hardware retail store that was located directly across the street from where, later, occurred John Brown's Raid. (Today, the beautifully restored three-story double brick townhouse of William Anderson at Harpers Ferry is the Main Headquarters Building of the National Park Service.)

In 1852 Anderson had decided to commence a career in farming and plantation operation at Annapolis Junction, and he began clearing for and constructing his plantation buildings using slave labor. An account of this and of the daily local, state, and national events, interspersed with family events and affairs, covering a twenty-five year, more or less, period (which includes the years of the Civil War and Reconstruction) are chronicled in a farm journal which today is at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore.

All three sections of the telescope-plan house were built at one time (1853) with bricks that were made and fired on the property. The larger and more formal portion of the home displays an unusual use of a side entrance and side passage leading past its double-parlor. Thus, the home is arranged axially with the principal entrance located at the gable end. Inside, the stair hall runs the length of this section, from gable to gable end. The two parlors, as well as most of the bed rooms located on the second floor, were heated by gable-end chimneys, one in each room.

The central section of the telescope plan consists of one room which includes a second stairwell to the second floor. The smallest portion of the home was later used as a kitchen with an upstairs loft. Exterior and interior trim throughout the house is very plain and typical of the mid-nineteenth century.

Originally, the main kitchen was located in a separate free standing building at the back, which no longer exists, although the chimney from that kitchen still stands. Slaves dug the ice pond and constructed a dam and ice house. The ice house remains. In 1853 a frame bank barn (destroyed in 1985 for the expansion of Route 32) was built by Anderson, his slaves, possibly including an Elias Gardner. One hundred wagon loads of stone from nearby out-croppings were hauled to the site for the massive foundation walls. Thirty and forty foot rimbers were hewn for the mortise and tenoned framing which was secured with large pegs.

A slave owner, Anderson was a Southern sympathizer during the Civil War. However, he was compelled to host several encampments of Union troops at *Grassland*. Annapolis Junction, a strategic railroad convergence of two railroads and an area of troop concentration for the Union, was less than a mile away. The home served as a place of overnight abode for important train passengers during the War whenever regular hotel facilities at the Junction were full.

In 1870, Anderson's daughter, Susannah, married Major (later Colonel) T. John Bowie, who, as a young man, served as the Union provost marshal for northern Prince George's County, and this couple succeeded to the ownership of *Grassland* by the time of her father's death in 1877. Later the home and farm were owned and occupied by John Bowie, the oldest of his parents' five children. Sheriff John Bowie lived at and farmed the *Grassland* tract until his death in 1953.

Through the efforts of one of his sons, Captain John Bowie, Jr., USC&GS, and Captain Bowie's widow, the late Audrey Lawrence Bowie, the surviving buildings (most of which today are gone) and approximately three to four plus acres upon which they sit were set aside for preservation when the balance of the farm had to be sold about 1989. Today the brick home is, by far, the main and only surviving structure plus one of the original slave cabins.

*Circa* 2005, with the aid and assistance of a financial grant, two front porches (one of which is two story) on the home were reconstructed to their original appearance, some outside windows were replaced, some outside brick and roof repairs were made, and one second floor bedroom was converted into a new bathroom. Since 2003 the home and property have been totally unoccupied, due to a combination of zoning issues (the entire property is today comprehensively zoned for industrial use, which permits some commercial uses), and also because the home has not been upgraded for "lead based" paint issues. Undoubtedly the only practical uses to which the property and its remaining improvements could be put today is for some form of conversion to office space use and/or for use as a motel/bed and breakfast, and/or conference center.

The property was listed on the National Register in 1984, and plans for restoration and adaptive reuse are proceeding. For inquiries, contact the Foundation at Post Office Box 64, Annapolis, Maryland 21404-0064 or on the "web" at [MarvinHAnderson@gmail.com](mailto:MarvinHAnderson@gmail.com) (telephone: (A.C. 410) 721-0498). The property is "for rent" (on a long-term commercial ground lease basis, with the tenant to be obligated and responsible to make and have made all changes and improvements necessary or desirable and in accordance with the standards of the United States Department of the Interior applicable to properties like this which are the subject of permanent easements granted to the Maryland Historical Trust.