

# WHITEHALL



Bruce Macdonald

## HISTORY

Whitehall is located on the site of a 408-acre Borden grant to James Henry in 1757. Five years later Henry sold 208 acres to Robert Buchanan. Subsequent owners of that tract were William Alexander in 1765, Thomas Alexander in 1789, John Stuart in 1797 and William Patton in 1830. Henry Boswell Jones (1797–1882) bought 213 acres from the Pattons in 1835, paying \$2,300. Jones kept a diary from 1842 to 1871, detailing the daily life of his family and enslaved people, as well as anecdotes about Brownsburg area residents. He described the early years at Whitehall in an article he submitted to *The Farmer's Register* in 1842, writing that the farm needed much work because the “former proprietor having been fairly starved off, sought a home in the far west, leaving the premises in a galled condition, without a good building, save the body of a barn.” Jones “had to build a good farm-house,

negro-houses” and other structures including a saw mill and a grist mill. He added a cellar to the slave house in 1857.

## OCCUPANTS

In 1825 Jones married Sally Withrow, the daughter of John Withrow Sr., the owner of Sleepy Hollow, Castle Carberry and other land in the area. The couple had three children: David William Jones, John Henry Boswell Jones and Lenora Brown Jones. Sally Withrow Jones died in 1869, and at his death in 1882, Henry Boswell Jones left Whitehall to their son John Henry Boswell Jones, who lived there until his death in 1912.

## SLAVERY AT WHITEHALL

Jones referred by name in his diary to 24 enslaved people. In 1827, he purchased Sarah, Hetty, Madison and Jerry. Sarah later had a daughter, Abbey, who had a son, Howard. Hetty's children included Sam, Catherine, Mariah, Joseph, James and Drucilla;



*The slave quarters at Whiyehall.*

Catherine's daughter, Mary Jane, was Hetty's granddaughter. Jones purchased Cyrus in 1845 (age 9); Morrison in 1847; Ann and her three small children, Mary, Martha, and Henry, in 1851; and John in 1860. Others mentioned in the diary were Edward, Russ, Charles and Aron.

Most of his references to the enslaved people are cryptic. Hetty's son Sam "died this evening with whooping cough." "Aron died of heart disease." "I sold Joe to Gardner Paxton for \$1,200." On occasion, however, Jones provided more perspective. He trusted Jerry and Madison to travel alone to Staunton, Waynesboro, Scottsville and Lexington to deliver farm products and purchase supplies. When Hetty died in January 1856, Jones wrote that she was "only fifty, had been with us 20 years, was a valuable and good servant, a Methodist church member. She leaves three daughters and two sons." Jones noted that he fixed a garden at "Sarah's house."



*Fireplace in the slave dwelling.*

### **EXISTING SLAVE HOUSE**

This brick masonry house is similar to the others, but has some unique features. The quarried stone foundation extends above grade and the brick walls rest on the foundation with a stepped abutment of the brick wall on the stone foundation. There are two complete floors with access to the second floor from an outside platform that originally had a stairway and an interior stairway between the two floors. Both lower floor rooms have fireplaces. One



*Rear of the Whitehall slave dwelling. The main house is close by, at the left.*

room on the second floor has a fireplace with the flue connected to the chimney serving the first floor fireplace directly below. One chimney, two fireplaces. There are "pockets" in the exterior brick wall for roof joists, indicating there was originally a covered front porch. Sawn, hand-hewn timbers and hand split plaster lath are visible inside the house.

*Prepared by Larry Spurgeon and Paul Hahn.*

*Pockets indicating where a porch was probably attached to the front.*

