

SLEEPY HOLLOW



Bruce Macdonald

HISTORY

The property that contains the Sleepy Hollow home was originally granted in 1739 to Benjamin Borden of New Jersey by the governor of Virginia. These early land grants were given to capable men who were tasked with settling new territories and thus pushing the American frontier westward.

Sometime between 1739 and the 1750s, William Wardlaw purchased the property that today contains Sleepy Hollow. William's will left the property to his son: *"To son Robert Wardlaw, the plantation of woodland lying beside Samuel Buchanan."*

A dwelling was built on this property by 1761; however, the dwelling may have been a cabin and the stone house might have been built later. By some documentation, William built the house for his son Robert. The home was located just about 200 yards east of the main street in Brownsburg, close to Hays Creek; it had a

commanding view from its location in several directions. This remained the primary residence of the occupants until perhaps around 1810–12, when the Withrow family needed to expand the size of the dwelling as the number of occupants increased.

OCCUPANTS OF THE PRIMARY DWELLING

This property has had many owners in its time, reflecting the changes that the community has endured throughout its history. Through deeds one can learn more about the exchange of ownership up to 1900. Sometime before the 1760s, William Wardlaw purchased land from Borden's heirs. By the 1760s, his son Robert had inherited the property but sold it soon after to his brother William. By 1807, John Withrow purchased the land that surrounds Sleepy Hollow from William Wardlaw. In 1833, William Withrow purchased Sleepy Hollow from his father. By 1900, after the death of William and his wife, Susan, their niece Phoebe Caroline Patterson was given Sleepy Hollow.

SLAVERY AT SLEEPY HOLLOW

There are no known records of slaves owned by the Wardlaw family at Sleepy Hollow in the time they were here.

The first documented slave owner at the property appears to be John W. Withrow. Property records indicate that there was an increase in the number of people, especially slaves, living on the property in his time. John Withrow owned three enslaved people by 1795, 15 by 1820, 17 in 1830, and 11 in 1840. Some lived at Sleepy Hollow, others at Castle Carberry, and some at both sites. He named 14 enslaved people in his will: Aaron, Bolen Watson, Nick, Ben, Reuben, Adam, Charles, Tobias Hays, Fayette (probably Lafayette Lewis), Dinah, Lewis, Lacy, Milly and Isaac. The will divided them among his children, and John Jr. was given Charles,

Tobias Hays, Fayette, Dinah, Lewis, Lacy and Milly. Isaac was given to John Jr. and his brother Andrew Withrow. In the 1860 census, John Jr. reported seven enslaved people by gender and age: Males, 55, 45, 28 and 2, and females, 65, 48 and 17.

By 1830, Milley, likely the “Milly” mentioned above, was more than 55 years old. At that time, Milley had been with the Withrow family for years and would have known the family well. She would have been an adult when John’s children were young and may have assisted in watching them. For this reason, John bequeathed Milley to his son John in his will:

My Woman Milley, I give and bequeath to my son John, but in case the said John my son, should die before Milley, she the said Milley is not to go into his estate, but to go and live with any of my children she may choose, and I enjoin it on all of them, my said children, in that event to take care of her and be kind to her.



The slave dwelling at Sleepy Hollow. The main house is at the left.

William Withrow is the last person to hold slaves here at Sleepy Hollow. These men and women were owned by William Withrow after 1833: Caroline, Letitia, Samuel, Jane, Mary, Frances and Giles. William remained in the area for the rest of his life, but we unfortunately do not know much about what happened to other former slaves after the war.



Slave dwelling fireplace, main room, ground floor at Sleep Hollow.

EXISTING SLAVE HOUSE

This well-preserved slave house has been updated with modern utilities and a contemporary kitchen and has reverted to its original purpose: a residence. There are two full floors, fireplaces in the two rooms on the first floor, and two entrances. It appears that a front porch was not part of the original construction. The house, like most of the others on today’s tour, is located a discreet distance from the main house — convenient for the domestic slaves to provide prepared food and perform other household services, but socially distanced.

Prepared by Coleen Piranian Cosgriff, with information graciously provided by Paul McKinney and Larry Spurgeon.