

SWAN HARBOR FARM

Swan Harbor Farm, also known as the Wilton Farm, is located off Oakington Road, about midway between Havre de Grace and Aberdeen, Maryland.

This farm, which originally consisted of approximately 530 acres, facing and overlooking the Chesapeake Bay, and neighboring farms, Oakington and Bel Vue, were originally settled in the early 1600s, only a short period of time after the settlement of Jamestown and Captain John Smith's excursion to the headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay.

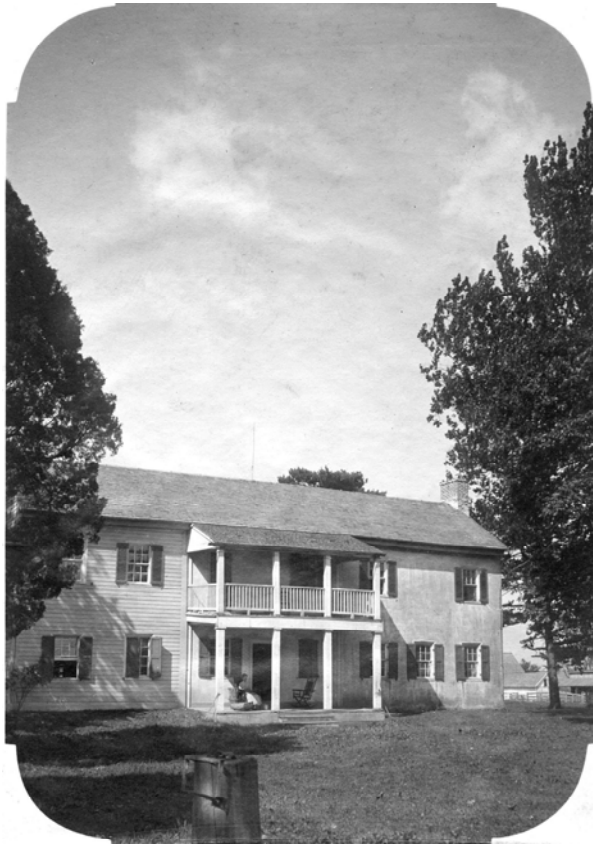
The property has a long list of owners, often being transferred back and forth between previous owners. Its early history is not well known, nor documented, although traces of information do occasionally appear.

Situated on a tract of 463 acres, Swan Harbor Farm, a stately home on the Chesapeake Bay, boasts a long and proud history. Initially, the home was owned by several generations of the Giles family in the 1700's, but the most significant owner was John Adlum. Mr. Adlum purchased the farm from Thomas Giles in 1797. From Swan Harbor Farm, John Adlum pioneered wine making in Maryland. In 1809, Mr. Adlum sent a bottle of his fine burgundy to his good friend, Thomas Jefferson. Mr. Jefferson was so impressed with the quality of the wine that he ordered 165 cuttings from Adlum's vines to be planted at Monticello.

The house itself is the product of several periods of growth. The main part of the house is a two-story brick and frame structure consisting of several wings, probably built in two stages. The dimensions of the large wing are identical to the 20'x61' structure cited in the 1798 tax rolls. A smaller wing housed the kitchen and above the kitchen was a low perpendicular wing that housed Mr. Adlum's slaves.

The mantels in the ground floor rooms are among the finest Federal era mantels in Harford County. Mantels on the second floor, as indicative of the times, are simpler. Interesting original hardware is evident throughout the house. Apart from the barn and various other outbuildings, there was a 15'x15' wood building erected especially for Mr. Adlum's gardener at Swan Harbor Farm. This was the first gardener's house in the 1798 tax records.

After the Adlum era and a series of short-term ownerships, John Kenney of Washington, D.C., bought the property in 1951. He added a pool, tennis courts, greenhouse, kitchen-pantry wing and a dining room to suit his upper class lifestyle. In 1986, Mr. Kenney conveyed 520 acres of Swan Harbor Farm to the Johns Hopkins University. The University purchased an additional two acres along Oakington Road in 1990. Harford County purchased Swan Harbor Farm in 1994, as part of the open space preservation program.



Swan Harbor as it was approximately 1906



Swan Harbor as it appears today, 2003

In 1904, Dr. Leon H. Tubbs, a veterinarian, and Mrs. Cricket Still Jacobs were married and moved to the then leased Swan Harbor Farm, which he later purchased part of.

While previously living and practicing in Kansas, Dr. Tubbs had been credited with instituting the de-horning of cattle, and was later active in the design, building and operation of the Havre de Grace Race Track, which was adjacent to his property.

During the Spring and Fall racing seasons many of this Nation's finest thoroughbreds raced at the track before it closed in 1950. Among the well-known horses which ran at the track were the great Man O'War, Triple Crown winner, Citation and the famous Seabiscuit.

In 1996 Swan Harbor was selected as the Harford County Chapter of the AMC Cancer Research Center's Show house.

Harford County Department of Parks and Recreation has made many changes and improvements to the house and grounds for use as a public County Park. A few of the changes include repairs and restoration of the house, with furnishings representative of the various periods, as much as possible. Additional stairs have been added, for easier and quicker exit in case of fire or other emergency. Facilities have been added and improved to accommodate the general public as well as the handicapped. A total of six rest rooms have been previously installed or recently added to meet the needs of visitors.

Swan Harbor Farm is now a rental facility, open to the public, for weddings, corporate functions and special events and has a capacity of 250 persons for outdoor events. House capacity is 125 and there is seating for 80-85 people throughout the different rooms on the first floor. There is no ballroom or banquet room where more than 20 people can gather at the same time.

The fertile fields of farmland are still home to vast arbors of grapes for the nearby wineries. Probably the most important change to the grounds has been the addition of tents and gardens, complete with a fountain, to accommodate weddings and other outside occasions.

Additional information about Swan Harbor Farm is available at the Visitor's Center at Swan Harbor and at the Historical Society of Harford County in Bel Air.

Credits/Sources:

Harford County Department of Parks and Recreation

Historical Society of Harford County (File No. HA-243)

Mrs. Bonnie Watts-Cook, granddaughter of Dr. Leon H. and Cricket S. Tubbs

John F. Hartman, Library Volunteer

Historical Society of Harford County

SWAN HARBOR FARM

Earliest part of the house, log cabin now covered with stucco, now is library and master bedroom. When present owners purchased the house the bed room was the kitchen and the library the dining room. Previous owners in remodeling the house put the furnace flue in the original kitchen's fire place which is centered between the two closets. Above these two rooms are two small bedrooms which were originally reached by a ladder and there were lattice covered holes for the heat from the fireplaces to reach the bedrooms. In bedroom a fine Chippendale chest on chest (English) and Sheraton chest with shaving mirror.

Second Addition

The second addition before 1800 was in fieldstone, now covered by a previous owner with stucco. Downstairs it contains the entrance hall and small living room. The paneling in the hall is not original to the house but of the period. Hall contains a Chinese painted Chippendale chest (Eng), antique English commode with antique (American) mirror. Candlesticks are old Arabic from Morocco. Painting by Alice Acheson.

Living Room

Paintings by Schenker.
One very fine Sheraton sofa. A similar but larger in Philadelphia Fine Arts Museum. Two Regency plant stands, now holding lamps. Two English corner cupboards.
Two candle sconces antique Dutch
Three swans on mantel are American antique. Blue swan collection American antique. White ones are Portuguese... not too old.
Two corner cupboards Sheraton, English antique.
One antique Sheraton upholstered chair.
Two tiered table, antique.
Desk is antique ...top and bottom, but originally didn't belong to each other.
Fine painted antique tray serving as coffee table.

Third Addition

Brick exterior.
Bay side bedroom upstairs and down.
Downstairs bedroom contains owners finest swan collection. Two large ones with flowers are very fine English ones. Others are Staffordshire in the cabinet. Swans elsewhere are modern Italian. Hanging shelf and table are antique as is Sheraton chest of drawers and shaving mirror. Commode as bedside table is English antique.