



SEPTEMBER 22 MEETING

A Visit To Mr. Paul's Telephone
Collection and a Tour of Wilson's
Antique Collection at Hickory, Pa.

Fort Vance Historical Society

August 25, 1971

McDONALD HOUSE TOUR

7:00 p.m.

ED McDONALD HOME
Now occupied by
Kim Darragh Family

JANE McDONALD HOME
Now occupied by
Dalino Family

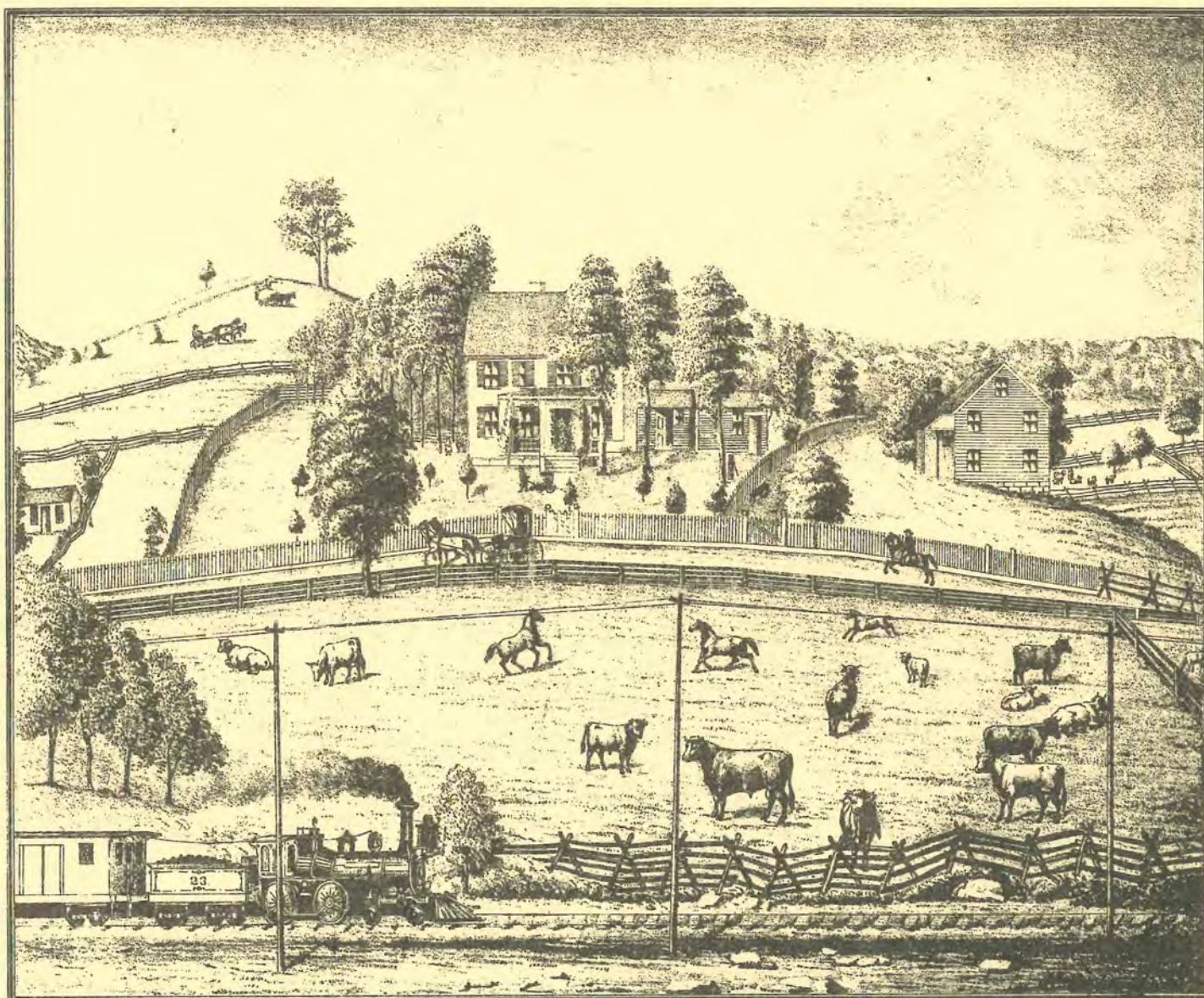
Mr. and Mrs. Ed Cauchie
Meeting Chairmen



JANE McDONALD HOME NOW



ED McDONALD HOME NOW



RESIDENCE & FARM OF HON. JOHN N. McDONALD, McDONALD STATION WASHINGTON CO. PA.

John McDonald and His Home, "Mt. Pleasant"

John McDonald, the original settler of this family name, was born at Listravanich, County Fermanagh, in northern Ireland on April 3, 1738. The McDonalds, of Scottish extraction of course, had fled Scotland in a time of religious persecution and after a sojourn on the Isle of Rothlin, had found their way to northern Ireland and were there when John McDonald was born. Migrating to America, the year 1760 found John in Baltimore, where, in partnership with a brother, he was an exporter of flax to the city of Belfast. He was in Cecil County, Maryland on the eastern shore of that state in 1772, and in the same year he explored for land in the region south of Fort Pitt.

From 1770 to 1773, a number of families from Cecil County, Maryland migrated to and settled in the Chartiers Creek watershed. Coming either with this party or soon thereafter, John McDonald was, in the year 1773, in possession of what was to become his homestead tract, Mt. Pleasant, the estate situated at the western side of the present corporation limits of the Borough of McDonald. This was to be the home of the McDonald Family for more than 175 years.

On the tract, Mt. Pleasant, John McDonald built the usual log cabin and to this home came his bride, the former Martha Tarvin Noble, to whom he was married by the Rev. John McMillan on April 28, 1778. Eleven children were born to this couple, the first two, twin brothers having been born within the protection of Fort Beelor at the present village of Candor, to which John McDonald had taken his wife the day before the birth of these boys, Andrew and William, on May 10, 1779. Other children were: John, Jr., born on July 1, 1781; James, born on August 29, 1783; Margaret, born on October 18, 1785 (married Dr. Robert Glenn); Martha, born November 23, 1787 (married George Allison); Alexander, born on January 6, 1790; Edward

born on August 13, 1792; Elizabeth, born on July 20, 1794 (married to John Mitchell; Rachel, born on June 23, 1797 (died within her first year); and Mary, born on July 22, 1801 (married to Rev. William Nesbit). In addition to his log cabin, or house, Mr. McDonald erected a block-house near his home, and this served as a place of refuge from Indian attacks for his own and his neighbors' families as long as danger from these attacks existed.

A man of some wealth and prominence, it is said that John McDonald had a number of slaves at Mt. Pleasant. When his mother-in-law, Mrs. Noble, from nearby Noblestown, paid her first visit to her son-in-law's home, the story is told that she was "moved with indignation" at the sight of her daughter, of all people, out at the creek washing clothes with the darkies. One who tells this story adds, "Let us suppose that Martha was at the creek by her own choice."

In the course of time, John McDonald acquired large tracts of additional land, and at his death on January 17, 1815 he left real estate to his wife and children in the amount of 5,911 acres, including 1,000 acres in the homestead, Mt Pleasant, 1,000 acres in the adjoining Primrose Hill plantation, 1,111 acres at Mill Creek (Hookstown), 2,000 acres at West Logstown, now Aliquippa, and 800 acres across the state line in Brooke County, Virginia (now West Virginia). His specie wealth increased considerably after the Revolutionary War; he was one of the substantial depositors in the Bank of Pittsburgh (chartered in 1813-14) and the owner of \$15,000 worth of that bank's capital stock at his death. He also owned human chattel to the extent of fourteen negro slaves.

John McDonald was a gentleman justice of the court, a ranger on the frontier during the War for Independence, one of the founders of the Raccoon Presbyterian Church, and a generous contributor to the support of Jefferson College in its early days. At his death, Mr. McDonald was buried in the cemetery at Raccoon Church, and

when his widow passed on in 1833, her body was laid beside her husband in the same church-yard.

Edward McDonald, youngest son of John and Martha, inherited the homestead, Mt. Pleasant; and it is probable that he built the substantial house still standing on this property; but the date of its erection is not known.

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James McDonald and the Primrose Hill Plantation

James McDonald, fourth son of John and Martha Noble McDonald inherited the tract, Primrose Hill Plantation, lying to the west of Mt. Pleasant on Robinson Run. When the "Panhandle" Railroad was built through this property in 1852, the station nearby was called Primrose after the name of this plantation. As described by one writer (the Rev. Milton M. Allison of Washington, Penna.): "Beautiful for elevation and a joy to behold is the situation of that big sixteen room house standing on this plantation, with family and servant quarters. Conspiring to please the eye, are the type and arrangement of the buildings, the brook below the hill skirting the house grounds to the east, the spring, the sloping lawn and the driveway, the stately old trees, the mammoth sycamore at the spring-house, the pines and the elms." The old house, now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Kurt Dolina and Family, is, in essential points, much as it was a hundred years ago. It is an attractive country estate, maintained much as it has been for many years. Whether this home is the house to which James McDonald brought his bride, Julianna Cooke, whom he married in 1827, is not certainly known, but if the house had not been erected then, it is likely that it was built in the years immediately after; but like the house at Mt. Pleasant, the date of its building is not known. The house was remodeled to its present proportions in 1892 or 1893.

At Primrose Hill, Col. McDonald and his wife and family maintained an easy, hospitable way of life. The family consisted of two daughters: Martha Melvina and Margaretta Jane, and of two sons: John James Cooke, and K. Noble McDonald. Into this home was brought also, at the death of his mother, Silas Gault of the Cross Creek Township family of that name; and although never adopted, he was thereafter considered a member of the James McDonald family. In the final distribution of the McDonald estate, "Gotty" as he was known, fared very well. In 1855, the noted artist, David G. Blythe, is said to have spent several weeks at the mansion home when he painted the portraits of Mr. and Mrs. James McDonald and their four children. These likenesses are now hanging in the galleries of Butler Art Institute at Youngstown, Ohio.

Financial income on the estate was largely from the raising of sheep and from general farming, together with revenue from investments made by Mr. McDonald. However, in the period around the 1890's the members of the McDonald Family then living, the children of James McDonald, together with Silas Gault, were beginning to feel themselves "land poor," but fortunately for them, soon thereafter deposits of coal, oil, and gas were found underlying much of the 1,000 acre estate; and it is said that ninety-seven oil and gas wells were brought into production on the James McDonald property.

"K" McDonald made the raising of horses his hobby; and in it, he was very successful, buying and breeding, but seldom selling any of his blooded racing stock. At one time he was owner of forty-eight head of these valuable horses. John James C. McDonald was of more scholarly tastes, and in the economy of the McDonald household, he was responsible for the commissary and the details of the house-keeping. Neither of the brothers ever married, nor did the sisters

in the family, Margaretta Jane having died in 1874 and Martha Melvina died suddenly while attending the World's Fair at Chicago in 1893.

Following the deaths of the last members of this McDonald Family, Silas Gault came to the home and managed the estate until 1910 when he went to Erie, Pennsylvania where the rest of his life was spent. He became immensely wealthy, being very adept in stock market transactions. When the stock market "broke" in October, 1929, Mr. Gault suffered great losses; no one ever knew what his losses were nor how much he salvaged from that financial crash; but he died on Friday, September 13, 1935 a relatively poor man, the wealth of this branch of the McDonald Family pretty well gone. But the old home still stands on Primrose Hill, and in the Meadow in front of the house can still be seen the race-course used by K McDonald in training his horses.