

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING RELEVANT:  
UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEX  
CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MUSEUM AND  
COMMUNITY.

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Like many of America's house museums, Mount Clare, the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Baltimore plantation home of Charles Carroll, struggles to maintain relevance, sustain its mission and remain financially sound. More recently formed museums, such as the Tenement Museum of the Lower East Side of Manhattan, have begun to recognize their capacity as platforms for dialogue and social justice and the necessity of engaging their local communities, providing a useful model for Mount Clare Museum House. Engaging with its southwest Baltimore community would enable Mount Clare to fully support an educational mission that resonates with the local population, while preserving the role of the historic site.

The purpose of this paper is to explore Mount Clare Museum House in terms of its relevance to various levels of community. This will be accomplished by

examining Mount Clare's governing boards and mission statement, by considering its interpretation and outreach programming, by researching community opinion, and by comparing it to aspects of the Tenement Museum. The intention is to create a better understanding of why past attempts to broaden Mount Clare's interpretive scope have failed, to help the museum move forward in reaching out to the community, and to reflect on the public it seeks to educate.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING RELEVANT: UNDERSTANDING THE  
COMPLEX CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MUSEUM AND COMMUNITY.

By

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## Preface

Almost a year ago, I began my summer internship with the Mount Clare Museum House. Located on the top of a hill in a somewhat forgotten park in southwest Baltimore, I sensed that the stately 18<sup>th</sup>-century manor held promise. I had been in touch with one of the curators, a young woman with exciting ideas and a penchant for social history. Following a meeting with the director in which we spoke positively about the importance of maintaining relevance within the context of the local community, I was hooked. However, by the time I took my place at the museum in early June of 2009, it had, like the rest of the country, fallen on difficult financial times. Both curators were gone, and with a limited and changing staff and resources, just maintaining the status quo seemed difficult enough let alone beginning new initiatives.

As I observed the site over the summer, I was struck by how few of our guests were visiting from the surrounding neighborhoods. The few passersby enjoying the park seemed to pay Mount Clare little notice. One evening after closing, as I was fiddling with my keys trying to unlock my car door, a city bus pulled up alongside me. The doors flew open:

‘Excuse me,’ said the driver, ‘but I have never seen anyone come out of that house, and I have always wondered what it was!’

I was delighted to fill her in and, noting the very reasonable admission price, she seemed eager to return. I came away saddened by the apparent disconnect between the museum and community highlighted by this experience. In that moment I vowed

to try and do *something* to understand what might be missing – this paper is the result of that vow.

The potential of Mount Clare to contribute to collective memory, if somewhat latent, makes up the core of this study. Although Mount Clare seems to occupy the margins of that ever elusive ‘relevancy,’ it still *is* – and that, I have discovered, is half the battle. The extraordinary existence of this historic home and its tenacious spirit of survival are very much in tune with what I have come to know about southwest Baltimore itself. I hope this work not only charts the space between the museum and its communities, but draws out this connective thread – because the possibilities abound!

## Foreword

*“Existence is no more than the precarious attainment of relevance in an intensely mobile flux of past, present, and future.” ~ Susan Sontag*

## Acknowledgements

In undertaking this exploration of community, I was overwhelmed by the support and enthusiasm exhibited not only by the southwest Baltimore community I sought to understand, but also by my own communities, both academic and personal. The effort was a shared one in every sense, and I can only hope this work gives back a fraction of what was given to me by the participants who helped me bring it to fruition.

To my readers and mentors Dr. Donald W. Linebaugh, Dr. Mary Corbin Sies, Donna Ann Harris, and Dr. John Caughey, whose guidance I deeply appreciate and whose professionalism I aspire to emulate, thank you for being so generous with your time!

To Director Jane Woltereck of the Mount Clare Museum House and Director of Curatorial Affairs David Favaloro of the New York Tenement Museum, I am incredibly grateful for all of your time and help in facilitating my research.

To Dr. Teresa Moyer, for whom the question of Mount Clare is also a labor of love – I was so lucky to find a kindred spirit in you! The path would have been far less certain had you not borne the torch before me.

Stephanie Stevenson, Pastor Jeff Anderson, Gloria Pestridge, and Woodrow Pestridge, I cherish our discussions together and thank you for contributing your opinions so freely. I hope I have interpreted your thoughts justly and that you recognize your voices at the heart of this paper.

Thank you to my incredible colleagues in the historic preservation program and AMST 629A – I am truly moved by your engaging and supporting me, even in the face of my preoccupation with a side of the field somewhat out of fashion in this day and age.

Catherine Matthews and Tanveer Chowdhury – thank you for being my eyes and ears in the Lower East Side when I could not! Your photographs and experiences enlighten Chapter Four.

And finally, a big thank you to my dear friends and family who, in a world where everyone's a critic, remain my biggest fans!

## Table of Contents

Preface .....	ii
Foreword.....	iv
Acknowledgments.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction - The Plight of the House Museum.....	1
Chapter 2: Brief History and Current Governance .....	8
Chapter 3: Mount Clare Interpretation, Outreach, and Community Opinion.....	21
Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations .....	45
Bibliography.....	62

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Baltimore, 1851.....	12
Figure 2: Map of Baltimore, 1869, detail of Mount Clare and brickyards.....	14
Figure 3: Map of Baltimore, 1869, detail of Mount Clare.....	15
Figure 4: Map detailing West Fayette Street, Baltimore .....	28
Figure 5: Map detailing James Street, Baltimore.....	32
Figure 6: Mount Clare, as viewed from the playground near Bayard Street.....	36
Figure 7: Map detailing South Carey Street, Baltimore .....	39
Figure 8: A tour group outside the New York Tenement Museum.....	48
Figure 9: Orchard Street, the Lower East Side, Manhattan, New York.....	49
Figure 10: Diagram of community spheres of influence.....	56

## Chapter 1: Introduction – The Plight of the House Museum

A museum curator once said that “not-for-profits have to remain fiscally solvent and maintain their mission – that’s a tougher bottom line than most for-profits.”<sup>1</sup> This is particularly true in the case of the American house museum. Professionals in the field have reached a critical juncture, as they struggle to maintain sufficient funds for upkeep, interpretation, and outreach. Add to this excessively low visitor turnout and high staff turnover characteristic of an economic downturn, and the situation is indeed dismal.<sup>2</sup> These issues genuinely reflect the situation of Mount Clare Museum House. Currently interpreting its 18<sup>th</sup>-century beginnings as the plantation home of Maryland patriot Charles Carroll, the Barrister, Mount Clare is Maryland’s oldest house museum and an institution in its own right.<sup>3</sup>

This paper explores Mount Clare’s connection to various levels of community by examining it within the context of site, community and governing board histories, current interpretation and outreach practices, and, most importantly, local opinion. In Chapter One, I use Donna Ann Harris’ book entitled *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America’s Historic Houses* to better understand how Mount Clare fits into the broad theater of 21<sup>st</sup>-century museum problems and practices. Chapter Two tells the story of Mount Clare in the context of community history. In this chapter I also address the history of Mount Clare’s

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<sup>1</sup> Shawn Herne, The Greater Baltimore History Alliance’s Intern Day (guided tour and site visit, Sports Legends Museum, Baltimore, MD, July 14, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth C. Turino, “America Doesn’t Need Another House Museum,” *History News*, Spring 2009, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Mount Clare Museum House, “Home and Welcome,” Mount Clare Museum House, <http://www.mountclare.org/index.html>.

governing board and consider the organization's mission. In Chapter Three I revisit my experience of Mount Clare's interpretation and outreach as a summer intern and attempt to gain a better understanding of how local residents view the museum through discussions with four Baltimoreans. I conclude with Chapter Four, in which I introduce the New York Tenement Museum, a forerunner in cutting edge approaches to interpretive and outreach programming. I examine the ways in which the Tenement Museum addresses the challenges of staying relevant to their communities, highlighting techniques that might be useful in the context of Mount Clare. Finally, I close by offering specific recommendations to help connect Mount Clare to its communities, drawing upon the reflections and opinions presented in Chapter Three.

Though the weak economy may have spurred preservationists forward in reevaluating historic house museums, there are deeper issues at stake. Some are caught up in traditions that once made them historically significant, but do not lend themselves to the changing times. In the first part of her book, *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic Houses*, author Donna Ann Harris addresses issues which threaten museums' relevance, providing stewards and stakeholders with a framework for understanding the source of the problems they face.

Harris presents the reader with a number of fictional synopses that characterize the difficulties faced by various types of house museums. Of particular interest is the story of White Row, an imaginary house museum interpreting the life of early 19<sup>th</sup>-century war hero Major White, in the midst of a rapidly changing neighborhood. Telling the story of Major White is a major part of the museum's

mission. But residents of the local Chinatown, where White Row is now located, do not seem particularly interested in learning about the Major. Outreach programs are failing, litter piles up around the building, and there have been occasional break-ins.<sup>4</sup>

The full title of the scenario summarized above is “Relevance to the Local Community – White Row.” But what *is* relevance exactly, and what is meant when it is used in connection with museums and museum work? The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines relevance as “without construction: pertinence to current or important issues, interests, needs, etc.; appositeness.”<sup>5</sup> The second part of this definition may not be surprising: it implies appropriateness in a given situation. But the two words with which the definition opens are unusual and incredibly important in the context of 21<sup>st</sup>-century museum philosophy. “Without construction” can be translated to mean lacking in structure – the equivalent of flexibility. While staying relevant as a museum involves being pertinent in and to its community, the concept of flexibility is key in remaining so.

Modern museum ideology argues that museums, as stewards of culture, should be explicitly cultural in their outlook. As culture and society are inseparable, this also means the museum is invested with a responsibility towards the society in which it is situated. It is not unreasonable, then, to believe that the museum might serve as a platform for dialogue and social change. But sadly, writes historian Richard Sandell, “many of the practices and structures to be found in museums, many of the

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<sup>4</sup> Donna Ann Harris, *New Solutions For House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America’s Historic Houses* (New York: AltaMira Press, 2007), p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “relevance,” Oxford English Dictionary, <http://dictionary.oed.com>.

goals that they articulate, and the philosophies and beliefs that underpin them, appear to deny their social agency and responsibility.”<sup>6</sup> While it is important to recognize that museums may have limitations in their role as envoys of social justice, limitations that may not be fully understood yet, they must be willing to change with the times in order to address the important issues of the day. Flexibility is what keeps museums relevant.<sup>7</sup>

Like the fictional White Row, Mount Clare struggles to maintain relevance in its local community. Other similarities between the two are striking. Like White Row, Mount Clare interprets the story of an early American patriot – in this case, Charles Carroll, Barrister, a planter, businessman, and drafter of Maryland’s Declaration of Rights. Like White Row, at some point the changes taking place in the neighborhood diverged from those taking place at Mount Clare – when and to what extent will be addressed in Chapter Two.<sup>8</sup> As an intern there this summer, I noted a lack of local visitors, which speaks to a disconnect between Mount Clare’s attempts to reach out to the community and the hoped for return it would bring in local participation and attendance. While one resident (the Baltimore bus driver mentioned in my preface) expressed interest in the historic site, I observed with surprise how many other visitors to the surrounding park seemed not to notice it – a trait which will become

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Sandell, ed., *Museums, Society, Inequality*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. xvii.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Trostel, AIA, *Mount Clare: National Historic House Museum, Baltimore, Maryland*, (Lawrenceburg, IN: The Creative Company, 2003), p. 5.

further illuminated in Chapter Three. And, similar to White Row, there have been break-ins at Mount Clare.<sup>9</sup>

*New Solutions for House Museums* provides answers to the problems detailed in the fictional scenarios with which Harris opens. The essence of the suggestions for the managing board of White Row may also benefit Mount Clare. There are two important steps: developing new programming that will engage community members and inviting local residents to actively participate in the museum and the manner in which it is run.<sup>10</sup>

For all their similarities, Mount Clare has a promising advantage over White Row. While the development of the neighborhood and the *museum* did diverge, the neighborhood and historic site are and have always been historically intertwined. Where it may be difficult for the staff and governing board of the fictional White Row to both interpret the story of Major White and remain relevant to its Chinese American neighbors, Mount Clare does not face so difficult a challenge. Baltimore has long been home to a large African American community, particularly burgeoning in colonial times under the unique atmosphere generated by the Revolutionary War and its geographic location.<sup>11</sup> African American history is also inextricably linked to the history of Charles Carroll, Barrister and Mount Clare. As a planter, Carroll held slaves who would have very much shaped his estate and daily life. In addition, he owned a massive ironworks, also run in large part by slaves and important to

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<sup>9</sup> Karen Gurman, Internship Journal, Summer, 2009 – June, 17.

<sup>10</sup> Donna Ann Harris, *New Solutions For House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic Houses* (New York: AltaMira Press, 2007), pp. 34-35.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*. (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997).

Baltimore's developmental history. Archaeological artifacts exist by which to interpret African American influence on and connection to Mount Clare within the context of the current interpretive period. In addition, scholarly research on African Americans at Mount Clare has been completed and submitted to the museum to facilitate interpretive reevaluation about slavery.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, with a little bit of elbow grease and an open mind, Mount Clare could very easily benefit by developing new, relevant and engaging programming interpreting African American histories.

Harris' second suggestion, to invite community members to participate on the museum board or as volunteers, may be a bit more difficult for Mount Clare than its fictional counterpart White Row, but it is nonetheless entirely feasible. While the governing board of White Row is not specified in detail, the governing board of Mount Clare is in large part composed of its stewards, the Maryland chapter of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America (NSCDA). Not many Colonial Dames reside locally, although they currently make up the Museum Properties Committee and majority of volunteers. The bylaws do not prevent non-Dames from volunteering and, while the chair of the Museum Properties Committee must be appointed by the president of the society, she is given free reign to select her committee members. The bylaws do not specify that the committee members must be Colonial Dames.<sup>13</sup> A deeper examination of the NSCDA's structure, bylaws, and its Maryland society is presented in Chapter Two. For the purposes of applying Harris'

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<sup>12</sup> Teresa Moyer, "Walking Tour: African American History at Mount Clare and Georgia Plantation," (walking tour, Mount Clare Museum House, Baltimore, MD, spring 2008).

<sup>13</sup> Bylaws of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America in Maryland, undated, printed August 15, 2008, Article IX.

criteria, it is merely important to note that there is plenty of room for the stewards of Mount Clare to invite and utilize the input of local residents in a very real sense.

## Chapter 2: Brief History and Current Governance

Noticeable in my research was the conspicuous compartmentalization of written histories on the subject of Mount Clare. Histories of Mount Clare, for example, were separate from histories of black Baltimoreans; histories of the neighboring community of historic Pigtown somewhat independent of Mount Clare. The first step in narrowing the gap between the museum and its community is to illustrate the many intricate ways in which their stories have informed each other. Dr. Teresa Moyer has made incredible strides in connecting Mount Clare to other histories, especially by connecting the stories of Mount Clare with those of the African Americans who made its very existence possible.<sup>14</sup> In this chapter, I will expand upon her work, merging her findings with a broad developmental history of Southwest Baltimore, the NSCDA, and the mission of Mount Clare.

### **The 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

Situated at the head of the Patapsco River that runs to the Chesapeake Bay, the city of Baltimore, named for an Irish barony of the same name, was founded in 1729.<sup>15</sup> That same year, Dr. Charles Carroll, an Irish immigrant of means practicing medicine and speculating in land, patented a tract of land called Georgia.<sup>16</sup> Eight

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<sup>14</sup> Teresa Moyer, “Gracious but Careless: Race and status in the history of Mount Clare,” (dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2010)

<sup>15</sup> *The Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Baltimore,” Encyclopedia Britannica, <http://www.search.eb.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/>.

<sup>16</sup> Teresa Moyer, “Gracious but Careless: Race and status in the history of Mount Clare,” (dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2010), p. 8.

enslaved individuals resided and worked at the plantation – individuals with their own motherlands and their own dispersed communities, blending new cultural traditions with old ones in the Chesapeake Bay region.<sup>17</sup>

Upon discovering that the lands he had purchased were rich in iron ore, Dr. Carroll diversified his investment. He sold the majority of Georgia plantation (all but 800 acres) to the Baltimore Iron Works, a company he co-founded and in which he held a vested interest.<sup>18</sup> Enslaved people made up a large part of the ironworks labor; in 1734, forty-three Iron Works laborers were enslaved individuals.<sup>19</sup> Upon Dr. Carroll's death, his son, Charles Carroll, Barrister inherited his property, transforming “his father's modest farmhouse on the property into a grand Palladian country seat” known then and now as Mount Clare.<sup>20</sup>

The growth of the Baltimore Iron Works in the mid-18<sup>th</sup>-century coincided with economic changes taking place in Maryland. The colony moved from a tobacco-based economy to one based on crop diversification and industrial development.<sup>21</sup> While the institution of slavery was still central to Baltimore's functioning and development, economic changes and Republican ideas associated with the Revolutionary War, among other factors, set the stage for change.<sup>22</sup> Although

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 7- 8.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Trostel, AIA, *Mount Clare: National Historic House Museum, Baltimore, Maryland*, (Lawrenceburg, IN: The Creative Company, 2003), p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Teresa Moyer, “Gracious but Careless: Race and status in the history of Mount Clare,” (dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2010), p. 54.

<sup>20</sup> Mary Ellen Hayward, *National Register Nomination for Pigtown Historic District*, (Baltimore, MD: The National Park Service, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Kristie Kendall, “Impact of Manumission on Agricultural Change, 1770 – 1830,” (term paper, University of Maryland, College Park, 2009), p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*. (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997), p. 3.

Baltimore was only home to one thousand free blacks in 1790, that number would skyrocket to over ten thousand in the following thirty years.<sup>23</sup> In the same three decades, the enslaved population increased by nearly four times.<sup>24</sup>

In 1763 Charles Carroll married Margaret Tilghman, who brought additional enslaved people to Mount Clare as part of her dowry.<sup>25</sup> While the Carrolls had split their time between properties in Annapolis and Baltimore, they settled permanently at Mount Clare during the Revolution.<sup>26</sup> When Charles passed away in 1783, Margaret chose to remain at Mount Clare.<sup>27</sup>

### **The 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

Margaret Tilghman Carroll was left a wealthy and well cared for widow and remained at Mount Clare until her death in 1817. While certain enslaved individuals gained their freedom in that time, fifty people remained on a delayed manumission track following Margaret's passing.<sup>28</sup> This did not guarantee immediate freedom, but rather "the promise of freedom at some point in the future."<sup>29</sup> Because the Carrolls had no surviving children, and in keeping with the standards of the period, the estate passed to their nephew, James Maccubin, who took the name Carroll as a condition of his inheritance.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 9

<sup>27</sup> Michael Trostel, AIA, *Mount Clare: National Historic House Museum, Baltimore, Maryland*, (Lawrenceburg, IN: The Creative Company, 2003), p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Teresa Moyer, "Gracious but Careless: Race and status in the history of Mount Clare," (dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2010), p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>30</sup> Mount Clare Museum House, "Introduction: Later Years," Mount Clare Museum House, <http://www.mountclare.org/index.html>.

James Maccubin Carroll became the new tenant of Mount Clare and brought with him a new generation of slaves. Manumitted persons of the former generation may also have lived on or near the property as tenant farmers.<sup>31</sup> James also began to sell off portions of the estate to brick makers and brick making firms.<sup>32</sup> By 1827 the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad also took an interest in Mount Clare's lands. Engineers plotting the most efficient route west recognized a need to connect to Pratt Street, and through that, Baltimore City. The most logical way to do this was by cutting through Carroll's property.<sup>33</sup> When James sold a portion of his land that included the corner of Pratt Street to the railroad, Mount Clare, in a physical sense, became the contemporary connective tissue between the city of Baltimore and the wider world **(Figure 1)**.

James Maccubin Carroll, Jr. inherited Mount Clare from his father, who passed away in 1832. It is suspected that he may have lived at Mount Clare for the following four years before renting it out in 1836. While it is important to recognize that the Mount Clare mansion, the property on which it sat, and the people who

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<sup>31</sup> Teresa Moyer, "Gracious but Careless: Race and status in the history of Mount Clare," (dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2010), p. 224.

<sup>32</sup> Mary Ellen Hayward, *National Register Nomination for Pigtown Historic District*, (Baltimore, MD: The National Park Service, 2006), Section 8, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

owned it no doubt continued to interact and affect African Americans, the history of the enslaved population at Mount Clare is unrecorded during this period.<sup>34</sup>



**Figure 1: Map of Baltimore, 1851.**

The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad ran directly behind the Mount Clare property, where it can still be seen today. The Mount Clare Depot is also visible in the upper right.

Sidney & Neff. *Plan of the City of Baltimore, Maryland*. Baltimore: Lloyd van Derveer, 1851. From Library of Congress, *Map Collections*.

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?gmd:4:/temp/~ammem\\_2XOO](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?gmd:4:/temp/~ammem_2XOO):: (accessed February 24, 2010).

Early in the Civil War, Camp Carroll, also known as Camp Chesebrough, was established at Mount Clare and remained there throughout the war. Union troops

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<sup>34</sup> Teresa Moyer, “Gracious but Careless: Race and status in the history of Mount Clare,” (dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2010), p. 225.

utilized the house and grounds as a headquarters, with training exercises taking place nearby.<sup>35</sup>

Just a five minute walk from Mount Clare are the communities of the Pigtown Historic District, which reached its peak during the mid-to late 1800s as the B&O Railroad grew to prominence (**Figures 2 and 3**). At this time large immigrant communities, including Irish and German, settled in Baltimore to work for the railroad and the industries that arose to support it.<sup>36</sup> One of the goods brought to town by the B&O was livestock. Pigs, cattle and sheep were unloaded and penned in stockyards on the Mount Clare grounds. In fact, Pigtown received its name from the occasions on which pigs were herded through the streets to the slaughterhouses of southwest Baltimore. There were many German butchers in the area and the resultant pork products were often sold locally.<sup>37</sup>

German breweries and social clubs abounded in Pigtown neighborhoods during this era.<sup>38</sup> This trend extended to Mount Clare as well. An 1882 article notes that the Carroll heirs rented Mount Clare to the Western Schuetzen Park Association, a German shooting club that year celebrating its 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary.<sup>39</sup> The

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<sup>35</sup> Mount Clare Museum House, "History: Civil War," Mount Clare Museum House, <http://www.mountclare.org/index.html>.

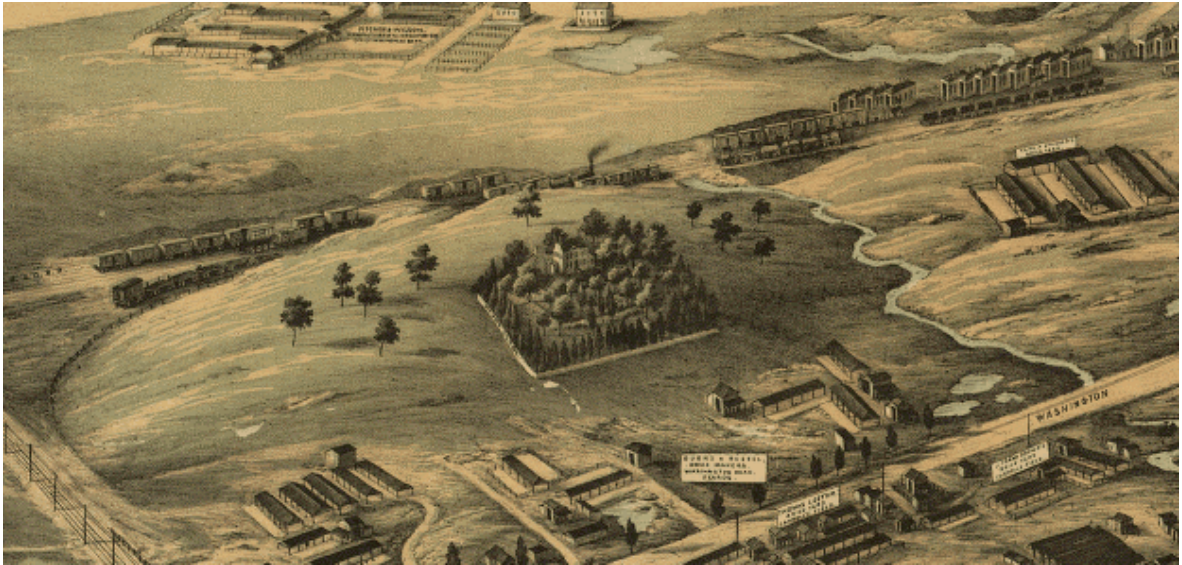
<sup>36</sup> Mary Ellen Hayward, *National Register Nomination for Pigtown Historic District*, (Baltimore, MD: The National Park Service, 2006), Section 8, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Mary Ellen Hayward, *National Register Nomination for Pigtown Historic District*, (Baltimore, MD: The National Park Service, 2006), Section 8, pp. 6-7.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Mary Paulding Martin, The Maryland chapter of the NSCDA: Super Scrapbook 2, "Crumbling to Dust: The Fine Old Carroll Mansion Given Over to Decay," unsigned article dated 1882.

Schuetzen Association also ran a beer garden on the grounds and erected a pavilion where band concerts were held.<sup>40</sup>



**Figure 2: Map of Baltimore, 1869, detail of Mount Clare and brickyards.**

This map of Mount Clare as it was in 1869 illustrates the dichotomy of belonging to and being apart from the city. In the foreground are the brickyards to which the Carrolls sold land in the 1820's. Behind the mansion runs the railroad. The tiny row of buildings to the right are the beginnings of Historic Pigtown.

E. Sachse, & Co. *Bird's Eye View of the City of Baltimore*. Map. Baltimore: E. Sachse & Co, 1870. From Library of Congress, *Map Collections*.

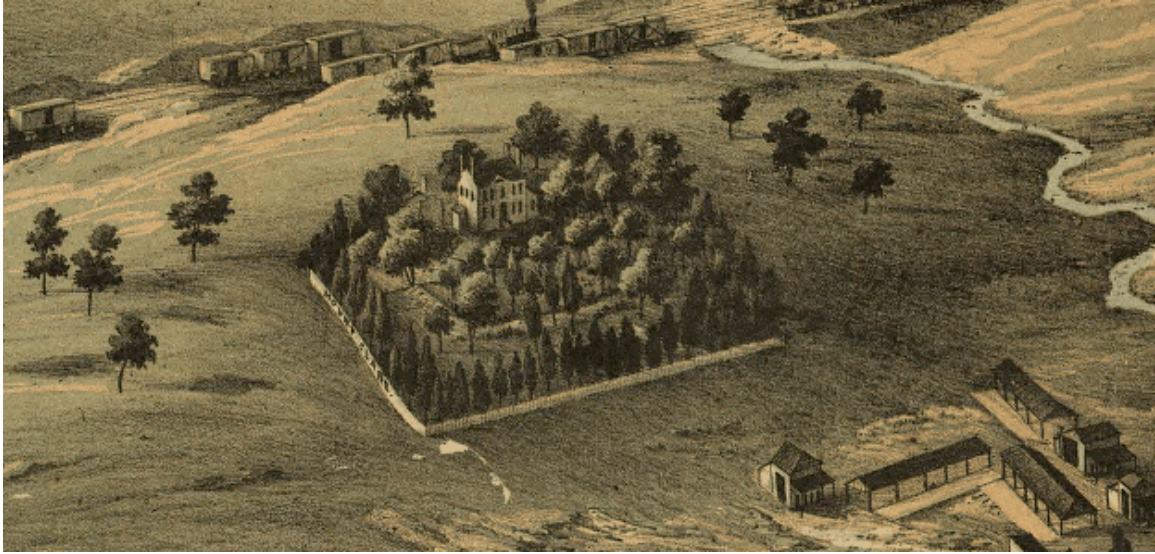
[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?gmd:6:./temp/~ammem\\_QpA9::](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?gmd:6:./temp/~ammem_QpA9::) (accessed February 24, 2010).

In conjunction with the City Beautiful movement, the city of Baltimore purchased Mount Clare mansion from the Carroll descendants in 1890, including twenty acres of grounds to be used as a public park. Carroll Park was designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, a proponent of equal rights whose vision of shared recreational facilities enlightening and bringing people together was soon to be destroyed by segregation.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Mary Ellen Hayward, *National Register Nomination for Pigtown Historic District*, (Baltimore, MD: The National Park Service, 2006), Section 8, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> Teresa Moyer, "Gracious but Careless: Race and status in the history of Mount Clare," (dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2010), p. 233.



**Figure 3: Map of Baltimore, 1869, detail of Mount Clare.**

A close up of the map illustrated in Figure 4, Mount Clare appears its own island, physically cut off from the changes taking place around it.

E. Sachse, & Co. *Bird's Eye View of the City of Baltimore*. Map. Baltimore: E. Sachse & Co, 1870. From Library of Congress, *Map Collections*.

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?gmd:6:./temp/~ammem\\_QpA9::](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?gmd:6:./temp/~ammem_QpA9::) (accessed February 24, 2010).

## The 20<sup>th</sup> Century

While both the Olmstead designed grounds and the mansion are still owned by the City of Baltimore, the NSCDA became stewards of the mansion in 1917.<sup>42</sup> In 1991 the Carroll Park Foundation, an organization interested in revitalizing and promoting the grounds as a heritage tourism site, gained stewardship of the easement-protected grounds surrounding the mansion.<sup>43</sup> The Carroll Park Foundation also currently maintains control of the archeological collections associated with Mount Clare.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> The Carroll Park Foundation, “Carroll’s Hundred,” The Carroll Park Foundation, <http://www.carrollshundred.org/save.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Teresa Moyer, “Gracious but Careless: Race and status in the history of Mount Clare,” (dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2010), p. 2.

Though possessed of rich histories and cultural perspectives, Baltimore today is experiencing intense levels of urban poverty. The life expectancies of residents are well below the national average and it has some of the highest rates for violent crime, homicide, and drug-addiction in the country. In particular, recent statistics show that residents of Pigtown, a community made up of 44.68% African Americans, contend with a 27.18% poverty rate, an average household income well below \$25,000, and a 48.49% rate of unemployment. In addition, 20.59% of the houses in the area are unoccupied.<sup>45</sup>

These woeful demographics beg the question how, just when meeting life's basic needs proves so difficult, can residents of Pigtown find a way to connect with Mount Clare? This question will be addressed in an analysis of community opinion in Chapter Three. Before embarking upon that analysis it is important to have an understanding of the museum's governing board and its current mission.

### **The NSCDA**

In the shadow of the Civil War a patriotic reverence emerged for the memory of men deemed national heroes. As author Michael Kammen put it, "people still wished to be worthy of their progenitors," and many of them possessed an "eagerness for continuity."<sup>46</sup> This urge resulted in pilgrimages to places associated with our American forefathers that, in turn, actually compromised their physical preservation. When George Washington's estate, Mount Vernon, fell into disrepair in the 1850s, Ann Pamela Cunningham saw a need to prevent further degradation. She formed the

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<sup>45</sup> Michael Silk, "Postcards from Pigtown," *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies*, XX(X) 1 – 23, 2009, pp. 7-8.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), p. 216.

Mount Vernon Ladies Association, an organization that became and remains the steward of Mount Vernon, and a precursor to the preservation movement in America.<sup>47</sup>

In a similar vein, the National Society of Colonial Dames of America was founded in 1891 to perpetuate and preserve the colonial history of their ancestors and celebrate patriotism. In addition to carrying out this mission, membership was restricted to:

women who are descended in their own right from an ancestor of worthy life, who resided in an American colony prior to 1750 and rendered efficient service to his country during the Colonial period, either in the founding of a State or Commonwealth, or of an institution which had survived and developed into importance, or who shall have held an important position in a colonial government, or who, by distinguished services, shall have contributed to the founding of our nation.<sup>48</sup>

These are very specific membership rules, further supported by extensive details in chapter bylaws.<sup>49</sup>

Researchers have made the important point that the exclusive nature of organizations such as the NSCDA may in part contribute to the historic under representation or misrepresentation of cultural groups such as African Americans.<sup>50</sup> I would hope this is an issue with which the ladies of such organizations might sympathize and seek to address. Furthermore, preservation only remained women's work until it was professionalized in the 1920s and 30s at such places as Colonial

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<sup>47</sup> Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999).

<sup>48</sup> Diane Curtis, *A History of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America (1891 – 2007)*, (Lake Bluff, IL: Stark Printing Co., 2007), p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Bylaws of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America in Maryland, undated, printed August 15, 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Teresa Moyer, "Gracious but Careless: Race and status in the history of Mount Clare," (dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2010), p. 237.

Williamsburg, in which all the major players were white men.<sup>51</sup> Ironically, while African American men and women had little or no agency in promulgating their heritages, the preservation efforts of white women, too, became marginalized.

The exclusive nature of the NSCDA, in the past, and today, may be hindering its ability to be flexible. As in the White Row scenario introduced in Chapter One, it may be in the best interest of Mount Clare to recruit new, local residents to positions on the governing board in addition to those already held. It is important to note that reevaluation of the society and its operation of Mount Clare does not mean completely breaking with the past so important to its core. With flexibility, the traditional values held by the foremothers of the NSCDA can translate well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, during World War II president Grace Morris Poe wrote the following message to her fellows in the Maryland Chapter: “As a Patriotic Society we aim to preserve antiquities and stand for the same high ideals of our forefathers, therefore, is it not our duty to do all in our power to help in the present crisis?”<sup>52</sup> In other words, the society recognized its capacity to address a specific issue and serve its community.

Although not in the midst of a world war, the crisis situation on Mount Clare’s home front of southwest Baltimore also demands to be confronted in a straightforward and constructive way. It is well within keeping with the NSCDA’s goal of civic mindedness and service, as well as modern museum practice to explore

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<sup>51</sup> Charles B. Hosmer *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926 – 1949, Volume I*. “The Williamsburg Restoration”. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981).

<sup>52</sup> *The Maryland Society, Colonial Dames of America, Year Book*, “Report of the President: Grace Morris Poe,” (Maryland: The Maryland Society, Colonial Dames of America, 1942), p. 17.

ways in which Mount Clare Museum might tangibly serve and connect to its community.

### **Mount Clare Museum House Mission Statement**

As the current members of the NSCDA adhere to the same rules as their mothers and grandmothers, Mount Clare is missing a much broader story in which, if neighborhood demographics are any indication, the majority of the local community does not see itself reflected. Adding to this disconnect may be the narrow focus of the mission statement:

The purpose of the Mount Clare Museum House is to preserve the circa 1760 historic house and its supporting collections and to engage the public with the late Colonial and early Federal periods of Maryland's history and lifestyles, while focusing on the historic figures who contributed to the history of Mount Clare. Mount Clare, a National Historic Landmark, was built by Charles Carroll, Barrister and his wife Margaret Tilghman. The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in Maryland and the museum staff are dedicated to serving a diverse audience by carrying out the above goals through accurately interpreting the house and providing programs that offer a variety of learning experiences and enhanced educational opportunities to all visitors.<sup>53</sup>

While the "contributing historic figures" in this statement may be too narrowly defined, the public and diverse audience the museum seeks to serve also remains ambiguous. These combined factors may inhibit the growth that could occur through new interpretation, programming, and outreach efforts. If Mount Clare were to broaden its definition of contributing historic figures to include the African Americans so integral to its history, it may truly be able to implement the section of its mission which seeks to engage and enlighten a diverse audience.

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<sup>53</sup> Mount Clare Museum House Policies and Procedures, adopted October, 2008.

Although in a position to reevaluate and clearly describe the histories and audiences stated in its mission, it is important to reiterate that the colonial history of Mount Clare is deeply connected to the colonial history of many southwest Baltimore residents. This is one important fact in the fight for maintaining relevance. That said, it is not unreasonable to consider the problems specific to historic sites that attempt to interpret colonial era histories. Some might argue that the inorganic nature of a ‘frozen in time’ preservation practice may itself contribute to these sites becoming isolated from their communities. Perhaps the farther the story is removed from personal memory, the more difficult it is to understand colonial house museums as contributing to collective memory. In a sea of modern, changing landscapes, colonial structures, though unique, often appear odd or out of place. Museum professionals are coming to the conclusion that, while house museums can strongly contribute to a sense of place using well-established means of presentation, it is also necessary to incorporate less traditional means.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> David W. Young and others, “Not Dead Yet: Historic Sites Providing Community Leadership,” *History News*, Summer 2009.

## Chapter 3: Mount Clare Interpretation, Outreach and Community Opinion

A current assessment of Mount Clare's interpretation and outreach programming is essential before meaningful recommendations for improvement can be made. As one contributor to this paper put it, "you have to know where you came from to know where you're going."<sup>55</sup> This chapter seeks to describe Mount Clare's interpretation and outreach programming, both from my own viewpoint as a summer intern, and with interviews with key community residents. The four interviewees include Stephanie Stephenson, an American Studies major at the University of Maryland and native Baltimorean; Pastor Jeff Anderson of the Power House Church, adjacent to Carroll Park; and Gloria and Woodrow Pestrige, community activists and thirty-year residents of Pigtown. I will begin by detailing my own experiences of Mount Clare's interpretation and outreach, followed by an introduction to each of the resident participants, their views of Mount Clare, the ways in which those views have evolved over time, and their preliminary suggestions for the museum.

### **Mount Clare Interpretation**

Having worked at Mount Clare this summer, I had the opportunity to experience the guided tour on several different occasions wearing many different hats: first as a potential staff member, then as a staff member in training, then as part of a larger group of interns. The official tour begins in the Mount Clare library, a modest room off the side entrance with a large desk behind which a volunteer sits and greets you. There are some beautiful 19<sup>th</sup>-century red pine bookshelves on which are

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<sup>55</sup> Stephanie Stephenson, in discussion with the author, February 24, 2010.

housed antique volumes concerning colonial history, the decorative arts, and early Maryland genealogy that touches upon the Carrolls and families like them, many of whom I supposed to be progenitors of Colonial Dames. Tours depart from the library on the hour, and may take anywhere between forty-five and sixty minutes.<sup>56</sup> Guests are ushered into the hall, where they have the opportunity to watch a fifteen-minute video about Mount Clare. The video has a strong art historical component supplemented by Carroll's biography. Enslaved individuals are mentioned briefly twice in the video, both times at the very beginning, as part of a list of servants, tradesmen and others who participated in building and maintaining the house and grounds.<sup>57</sup>

The tour continues through the public and private rooms of the house, set up as they might have been in the Revolutionary and early Federal eras. I was impressed by the quality of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century decorative arts collection and felt it to be at the center of interpretation: that is, the Carrolls' story was used to explain the pieces rather than the other way around. Although the docent training manual encouraged guides to ask questions, questions, when asked, tended to warrant straightforward answers rather than to generate discussion as in the case of the Barrister's infamous 'chamber pot chair,' ('Do you know what this chair is?' as opposed to 'How do you suppose they used this chair?' or the more socially implicit question 'What does it say about Charles Carroll that he owned a 'chamber pot chair'?). I felt as if I were

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<sup>56</sup> Mount Clare Museum House, "Visitor Information," Mount Clare Museum House, <http://www.mountclare.org/visitorinformation/index.html>.

<sup>57</sup> Mount Clare Museum House, "Visitor Information – Video," Mount Clare Museum House, <http://letmeseethat.com/mountclare/welcomevideo.html>.

experiencing a very pretty and pleasant history, but mostly of things rather than people, and those things and people felt very far removed from me.<sup>58</sup>

To provide a more explicit example, I will describe my experience viewing the Carroll's dining room during my first tour as a docent-in-training. When my guide and I entered the room we stood in front of a velvet rope, behind which we viewed a table set with crystal and silver. Behind us was situated a period sideboard. We spent a good deal of time discussing the tableware, much of which was unusual to me. By the end of our time in that room, I could tell you that the small bowls on the table were used to rinse wine glasses, that the pineapples on the sideboard were symbols of hospitality, and that the cylindrical object near the fireplace served as a plate warmer. But I could tell you very little about who might have sat at that table, and what might have gone on there. And I could tell you nothing about those who would have prepared and served the meal.<sup>59</sup> The interpretation was less concerned with the interactions of society than with the objects of society.

Interestingly, in my later work, I discovered an article on file entitled "Stuff and Nonsense: Myths That Should by Now Be History," which described the quest of curators working for the Daughters of the American Revolution to debunk interpretive myths that are frequently passed down from docent to docent. I learned from this article that the pineapple is most likely not a symbol of hospitality, and that it is rarely represented in colonial decorative arts. Rather, pinecones, of classical

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<sup>58</sup> Karen Gurman, Internship Journal, Summer, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Karen Gurman, Internship Journal, Summer, 2009.

importance, are often mistaken for pineapples.<sup>60</sup> For me, this article illuminated three things. First, how simple it is to innocently misrepresent these fictions as fact in an attempt to enliven our interpretation of decorative objects. Second, the presence of the article in the museum's collection showed that at some point staff considered reevaluating and improving the interpretation taking place at Mount Clare. Third, it made me more cognizant of the things that were not being interpreted. It seemed to me that these types of errors were more likely to occur through interpretations revolving around things than those exploring individuals and their societies. Had we focused more on how the sideboard would have been used, who used it, and for whom it was used, it might have generated a more enlightening dialogue. While the presence of the article shows that docents remain conscientious in their interpretive efforts, a strong social history approach to interpretation might actually help eliminate some of these interpretive myths.<sup>61</sup>

As an individual who occasionally worked at the front desk greeting guests, I noticed that even though it was summer, not many people came in to take the tour during the week. Those who did tended to be history buffs or retirees visiting from other cities or states.<sup>62</sup>

### **Mount Clare Outreach**

As an insider, I know that Mount Clare attempts outreach on many different levels, including in-school programming, press releases, and collaborative programming with area museums. However, had I not worked there over the summer,

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<sup>60</sup> Miley Theobald, "Stuff and Nonsense: Myths That Should by Now Be History," *Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, Winter 2008.

<sup>61</sup> Karen Gurman, *Internship Journal*, Summer, 2009.

<sup>62</sup> Karen Gurman, *Internship Journal*, Summer, 2009.

I would be completely unaware of most of its efforts, which may indicate a need to reevaluate current outreach practices. The Mount Clare website is informative, but not very interactive. While the website features the informational video and virtual tour, they do not particularly enrich my understanding of the museum house in relation to Baltimore or myself, rather, they restate what I have learned from the timelines, histories, and pictures included elsewhere on the site.<sup>63</sup> I also found it a bit difficult to navigate. I know that Mount Clare is very proud of its library collection, as well it should be. When I searched for information about the library via the website, I found it tucked away under ‘visitor information’ – an appropriate place given the choices, but very likely to be overlooked.<sup>64</sup>

As part of the Greater Baltimore History Alliance (GBHA), Mount Clare has fostered important connections with other small area museums and historic organizations, connections that allow them to offer special opportunities to their interns. As with many small museums whose funds are in short supply, interns at Mount Clare are generally paid in valuable experience. Advertising GBHA opportunities may help to attract new interns.

A low local visitor count indicates that word of mouth is not currently an important way in which the museum becomes known. In fact, it was my experience that many local residents did not know what Mount Clare was or even that it

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<sup>63</sup> Mount Clare Museum House, “Visitor Information – Video,” Mount Clare Museum House, <http://letmeseethat.com/mountclare/welcomevideo.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Mount Clare Museum House, “Visitor Information: Mount Clare Library,” Mount Clare, <http://www.mountclare.org/visitorinformation/index.html>.

existed.<sup>65</sup> In addition, the website may not be the best way for Mount Clare to advertise itself to the local community, as some families do not own computers.<sup>66</sup>

Mount Clare was at one time closely connected to the Charles Carroll Barrister Elementary School. But discussions with staff left me unclear as to whether Mount Clare has established solid linkages with other area schools. It struggles to uphold the promising strides made in educational programming by its most recent education director in the face of her absence and limited staff.<sup>67</sup> Adding to the difficulties of school outreach, the Baltimore public school system itself struggles with insufficient funds and high turnover.<sup>68</sup>

Director Jane Woltereck has consistently supported my efforts as a student and made herself available to me, despite juggling more and more professional duties made necessary by the staffing crisis. In addition, she has put me in touch with a number of community resources who largely inform this paper.<sup>69</sup> Researchers and interns have time to devote to a deeper comprehension of Mount Clare that a busy staff may not. Candid discussion and transparency between researchers and the museum staff and governing board could only serve to enhance their understanding of this important Baltimore landmark.

### **Community Opinion**

Understanding the physical and imagined spaces that exist between Mount Clare and the surrounding communities may help to close the gap between them. To do this,

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<sup>65</sup> Karen Gurman, Internship Journal, Summer, 2009.

<sup>66</sup> Gloria Pestrige, in discussion with the author, March 24, 2010.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Jeff Anderson, in discussion with author, March 11, 2010.

<sup>69</sup> Jane Woltereck, in discussion with author, January 18, 2010.

I spoke with four individuals living in southwest Baltimore. Over the course of six, hour-long interviews, they shared with me their own place in the community, how they came to know Mount Clare, their current understandings of Mount Clare, and the ways in which they feel the museum might better connect with local people. As an intern, I sensed the historical importance of patriotic service in the Colonial Dames mission, with particular regard to the stewardship of historic properties. I therefore felt it was also important to engage my participants in a discussion about what patriotism means to them and how they interpret it in this day and age.

### **Stephanie Stevenson**

I first met Stephanie Stevenson at the University of Maryland student center, where she kindly took time to chat with me about growing up in Baltimore. Ms. Stevenson is a student in the American Studies Department, so we have the advantage of sharing a certain academic discourse in regards to social justice. In this, we speak a similar language.

Unlike me, Ms. Stevenson grew up on West Fayette Street, just a seven minute drive from Carroll Park, and so is able to paint a clear picture of life in one of the communities nearby Mount Clare (**Figure 4**). She remembers her neighborhood as primarily black and working class, with many multi-generational households. Often, cousins came to visit, and they would play on her block, under the watchful eye of her mother. Although it sometimes “felt kind of confined,” she understands her mother’s vigilance:

Without my parents, without the teachers I had...I think I would have fallen through the cracks. ‘Cause, there’s a lot out there. You get home sometimes, you know, your parents might be on drugs...I think every person knows somebody on drugs. Even if they don’t like what they’re doing, it’s just life

down there. It's really hard. You can fall into the wrong hands, even if you don't want to.<sup>70</sup>

**Figure 4: Map detailing West Fayette Street, Baltimore.**

At the top of the image, point A illustrates Stephanie Stevenson's block on West Fayette Street. The highlighted blue square in Carroll Park is roughly the position of Mount Clare Museum House. Though Ms. Stevenson's childhood home does not fall within the boundaries of Historic Pigtown, she lived only a seven-minute drive from the museum. Her block is representative of the other surrounding neighborhoods that are equally as important to consider in reevaluating Mount Clare.

Map data copyrighted by Google, 2010. Image adjusted by author.

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<sup>70</sup> Stephanie Stevenson, in discussion with the author, February 24, 2010.

Ms. Stevenson felt fortunate to have attended a good public school. She recognized her experience as unique when she compared it to that of her cousins, also enrolled in the Baltimore public school system. For her, school was a safe space where her teachers inspired her, and she credited them in part with her ability to succeed when she won a scholarship in sixth grade to attend the private Bryn Mawr school for girls. In addition, field trips provided her with a broader, more diverse sense of her history and community. She vividly recalled visiting the Blacks in Wax Museum, also located in Baltimore, at the tender age of seven:

The slave ship...I can still see it and hear it. They had sounds also in there...it was really dark. Just enough light to see the images. You get the feeling of being on a ship and...you would hear the waves and the cries. And, to be that young and to hear that...You knew about a slave, you knew about a master. But, you didn't know...truly the pain. Seeing all those graphic images and hearing them...I think I cried. A lot of the kids were crying when we went out, but I think we needed to go...I think going on field trips like that really helped, because...it gave you a deeper perspective – not another one – but a *deeper* one.<sup>71</sup>

This experience, which so deeply resonated with Ms. Stevenson, proves that the lessons learned at museums can last a lifetime, evolve inside an individual, and inform future decisions in ways we may never be able to completely define.

Despite living only seven minutes from Mount Clare Museum House, Ms. Stevenson was shocked to learn there was an 18<sup>th</sup>-century plantation home in her community. She first heard of the museum when another Maryland scholar, Teresa Moyer, presented her original research on Mount Clare's African American history and the need for its interpretation. Though Ms. Stevenson has not yet had the chance to visit, Ms. Moyer's presentation sparked her interest. She recalled a family reunion

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

she attended at Carroll Park, but had no recollection of the house on the hill – an interesting observation very much in keeping with my own summer experience of park patrons seeming detached from it.

A firm believer in the notion that “you can’t go forward unless you know your history,” Ms. Stevenson considers Mount Clare a valuable resource.<sup>72</sup> “If I knew there was a slave plantation so close to my house,” she said, “I think it would have changed or enhanced my understanding of it (slavery).”<sup>73</sup> But until slavery is openly addressed and interpreted at Mount Clare, it cannot serve this important community purpose. Ms. Stevenson acknowledges that slavery is often viewed as hurtful or taboo, and that institutions may avoid interpreting it because of the pain and the anger it could incite. But she stresses that this does not absolve museums from their responsibility to do so. Before new attempts at outreach can be made, it is absolutely essential to expand interpretation at Mount Clare to include black history in a meaningful and sustaining way:

I think what a lot of these societies don’t realize is that it’s more hurtful to leave it out than to talk about it. Because black history *is* American history. It’s a part of American history, and it’s just as important as anyone else’s history. And to leave it out is wrong.<sup>74</sup>

For Stephanie Stevenson, patriotism means loving one’s country enough to criticize it. And she extends that criticism to the historical, interpretive trend of representing the founding fathers as flawless:

These ideas of national values and patriotism, and yet the horrible things George Washington did, and most of our presidents (who dealt with slaves).

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Stephanie Stevenson, in discussion with the author, March 3, 2010.

Don't get me wrong, I love this country, it's my home, but I can also criticize it, because if I didn't, it wouldn't get better.<sup>75</sup>

She further challenges us to reevaluate the concept of founding fathers in general:

I think some white Americans don't consider what it means to feel connected to forefathers and maybe why some black people don't feel connected to something like that, because it's very painful. Like, why should I consider that my forefather when he didn't do anything for me...or, he did a lot *to* me, but not *for* me.<sup>76</sup>

Her criticism stems from a patriotic desire to improve her country and our understandings of it, and she is not short of encouragement or suggestions for the staff and governing board of Mount Clare:

You have to recognize that plantations were built off of slave labor. That's the first narrative that needs to be added. Slavery was not pretty. It wasn't people that chose to be there...Enter the dialogue with the attitude that it's not going to incite hate. It doesn't have to incite hate from blacks to whites. That's not the purpose. That shouldn't be the purpose. And I think if they (the museum staff and governing board) are open and honest more respect will be given to them, because they were brave and open enough to discuss the truth.<sup>77</sup>

Ms. Stevenson strongly advocates intern projects and involvement as a resource for the museum in revising its current interpretive plan. She also suggests reaching out to the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of African American History and Culture, a Smithsonian Institution Affiliate.<sup>78</sup>

### **Pastor Jeff Anderson**

The Power House Church, located on James Street, is a stone's throw away from Carroll Park and at the heart of historic Pigtown (**Figure 5**). Mount Clare is a

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<sup>75</sup> Stephanie Stevenson, in discussion with the author, February 24, 2010.

<sup>76</sup> Stephanie Stevenson, in discussion with the author, March 3, 2010.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid

five-minute stroll from the church. I left my car in front of the museum and walked there, arriving in plenty of time for my meeting with Pastor Anderson.

**Figure 5: Map detailing James Street, Baltimore.**

Point A illustrates the location of the Power House Church, where I met with Pastor Anderson. It falls within the Pigtown Historic District. Mount Clare Museum House is highlighted in blue to the left and is within walking distance of the church. The mansion can be viewed from the playground in Carroll Park, located just off of Bayard Street.

Map data copyrighted by Google, 2010. Image adjusted by author.

Pastor Anderson has been living and working in Pigtown for twelve years. He and I share a couple of important traits that make him an invaluable guide as I attempt to navigate the communities of southwest Baltimore. Like me, Pastor Anderson grew up in a fairly homogenous town where his geographic sense of community was much

broader than it is in Baltimore, and often car-based. In addition, the Power House Church puts an emphasis on keeping things local and on community ownership, two concepts that are very popular in 21<sup>st</sup>-century preservation practice. “We didn’t find a cluster of members and then put a church there, it was the other way around,” says Pastor Anderson. “It was intentional to focus on a few blocks of Pigtown to be the main center of what we do and where the ministry would be...we’re very involved in the lives of the people who live around here, whether they’re active in the church or not.”<sup>79</sup>

Having spoken with Stephanie about her geographically narrow sense of the neighborhood she grew up in, with social life not extending too far beyond her own block, I was very interested in understanding Pigtown residents’ concepts of space and community. Pastor Anderson helped to explain how understanding the intense concentration that occurs in cities can help me to navigate various boundaries that are currently invisible to me:

There are a lot of divides. There are a lot of racial issues in the neighborhood, there’s long term vs. short term...and they’re not all that different from what you get anywhere, it’s just condensed and on top of you here, so you don’t have an issue with something going on around the corner – it’s twelve inches from you. Even if it’s three houses down, we’re only talking thirty-six feet away from you. So all of the problems squeeze out onto the street.<sup>80</sup>

Traditionally the schools, grocery store, pharmacy and community centers have all been within walking distance of resident homes. In addition, people feel a sense of ownership that extends to certain pieces of Carroll Park, and not others. The

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<sup>79</sup> Jeff Anderson, in discussion with author, March 11, 2010.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

playground and the skate park, which occupy the side of the park closest to James Street, are often as far into the park as residents care to go.<sup>81</sup>

In reality, several communities comprise Historic Pigtown, and each is unique and incredibly complex. In Pastor Anderson's community there exists an intriguing dichotomy of constancy and flux:

There's an interesting blend here. Because we have people who have lived here forever, in the same house. They're in the house that they were born in that their grandfather purchased brand new in 1897 and next door is my niece, and across the street my sister, and down around the corner is – and so we have a lot of stability that way, when at the same time we have a very decent percentage of the population that moves every couple of months.<sup>82</sup>

Gentrification and the dire state of the economy have combined to make things even more difficult for a community that already had one of the highest poverty rates in the country. The grocery store and pharmacy have closed. So have the community centers and one of the elementary schools. Keeping food on the table, the children in school, and the substance abuse problem under control, already challenging, is becoming quite daunting.<sup>83</sup>

Despite these problems, the residents of James Street in Pigtown are plucky, loyal to the people and places they love, and like to have a good time! Socializing is very important. Pastor Anderson notes that “the typical thing to do on a summer evening is to sit out on your front deck. And sit around and visit with your neighbors.”<sup>84</sup>

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81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

Pastor Anderson and the Power House Church became somewhat connected to Mount Clare through the volunteer organization, the Friends of Carroll Park. What started as an organized response to improve the deplorable conditions of the playground turned into continuous advocacy for the community's recreational spaces, as various players competed over park use.<sup>85</sup>

The full and varied history of Mount Clare speaks to many chapters in local history and has the potential to contribute to creating a sense of place and deeper understanding of the community today. "It's a huge part of the history here and why things are the way they are now," Pastor Anderson says, "You could trace some of the positive and the negative right back to what was going on when the land was first settled here." While he believes preservation to be important, Pastor Anderson feels that community buy-in is necessary in order for it to be successful. Though connecting the museum with his corner of the community presents many challenges, he believes it can happen. "It's going to be tricky, and creative, but it's possible," he says.<sup>86</sup>

Because residents face the very real question of day-to-day survival, visiting the museum may not be high on their list of priorities. Disposable income is rare, and people often work evenings and weekends, when major events might commonly be held at the site.<sup>87</sup> The physical position of Mount Clare also makes it inaccessible. "It's away from the houses, it's set back, it's up on the hill...and that's part of the

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

plantation aura anyway,” remarks Pastor Anderson (**Figure 6**).<sup>88</sup> In fact, he himself lived several years in Baltimore before visiting Mount Clare and taking the tour.<sup>89</sup>



**Figure 6: Mount Clare, as viewed from the playground near Bayard Street.** Eighteenth-century spatial politics give the mansion a distant, inaccessible air, working against Mount Clare’s twenty-first century role as a museum open to the public. Photograph taken by the author. Carroll Park, site visit, March 2010.

Though the museum is ill suited to serve the immediate needs of community members, Pastor Anderson sees a unique possibility in the unfortunate rash of closings and change taking place throughout Pigtown:

We are having fewer and fewer places of common experience, whether it’s good or bad. So, really, this is a chance to step up and help fill that gap.

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<sup>88</sup> Jeff Anderson, in discussion with the author, March 25, 2010.

<sup>89</sup> Jeff Anderson, in discussion with the author, March 11, 2010.

Having that common experience and common place, really is, I mean...in that there is opportunity.<sup>90</sup>

Places of shared experience engender a sense of ownership that is at the heart of real community. The Pigtown community may not be the demographic to target for fundraising, but gaining local backing is just as important. “When they own it, they own it,” Anderson says with a smile, “if you can tap into that, and leverage it...you don’t get a better benefit than that here. And if somebody tries to mess with the mansion, they’ve messed with the wrong crowd.”<sup>91</sup> That kind of support is invaluable.

Pastor Anderson suggests that “the...best way to get to ownership is through the schools.”<sup>92</sup> He mentions an art contest Mount Clare once held, with a reception for the top entrants at the rental property, the stables, as having received positive community feedback. Like Ms. Stevenson, he feels field trips provide an excellent opportunity for connection. Pastor Anderson recommends in-school or in-house programming with solid, grade specific curricula. Continuing to make the stables and outside spaces surrounding the mansion as available and inviting to community members as possible can only serve to strengthen ties. For Anderson, consistency is key. He stresses making a long-term plan and becoming a long-term presence.

Beyond reaching out to Pigtown residents, Pastor Anderson suggests connecting with the employees who work for the businesses in the Montgomery Ward Building, just southwest of the museum, perhaps in the form of a boxed lunch event for them to enjoy during a lunch break in Carroll Park. The businesses of the

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Montgomery Ward Building are also disconnected from the community, having hired few locals. In Pastor Anderson's view, the more connections that are made, the better. "Breaking down some of those walls as well," he remarks, "certainly wouldn't hurt."<sup>93</sup>

The concept of patriotism in connection to Mount Clare is one Pastor Anderson finds difficult:

...it was a plantation. That's not looked upon as that part of our history and culture that we most want to preserve and glorify and edify and all the other 'fies.' Patriotism at Fort McHenry – that's an easy one. Patriotism and the mansion...that's a little harder. *History* and the mansion and the development of things – so many neat things happened on that piece of land and the piece of land we're sitting on right now...It's all right there. And that's patriotic, but it doesn't necessarily bring out fireworks and flag waving.<sup>94</sup>

The pastor's comments make an excellent case for expanding the interpretation of Mount Clare, not only to include histories that are *not* celebratory, but perhaps also to utilize features of the landscape to illustrate its history through the colonial era and beyond.

### **Gloria and Woodrow Pestridge**

The first time I sat down with Ms. Pestridge, it was in one of the common rooms of Power House Church. Our following meeting was spent chatting in her lovely home, looking at scrapbooks across the kitchen table, where we were joined by her husband, Woodrow Pestridge, just in time to contribute to our discussion about why places like Mount Clare are important (**Figure 7**).

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<sup>93</sup> Jeff Anderson, in discussion with the author, March 25, 2010.

<sup>94</sup> Jeff Anderson, in discussion with the author, March 11, 2010.

**Figure 7: Map detailing South Carey Street, Baltimore.**

Point A illustrates the Pestrige's block. It falls within the Pigtown Historic District. Mount Clare is highlighted in blue to the left, and is within walking distance of South Carey Street.

Map data copyrighted by Google, 2010. Image adjusted by author.

Ms. Pestrige is a native Baltimorean, and has been living in Pigtown for over thirty years. Like Pastor Anderson, she became very involved with the Friends of Carroll Park in the effort to clean up the playground, and has remained extremely active with the organization ever since. She describes the mission of Friends of Carroll Park as, “trying to connect the park and things in the park with the

community.’<sup>95</sup> Recent initiatives have included a fitness trail, concerts in the park, and the creation of a walkability map connecting Carroll Park to other parks and trails. But, Ms. Pestridge notes that it is often difficult to get the immediate community involved in things.

Part of the disconnect, she feels, might stem from the physical sense of community many of her neighbors have:

It’s...these three blocks, say, here...possibly don’t know what’s going on in the next three blocks. It’s always been that way. I’ve heard people say, you know...people sit out and you talk and everything. And I’ll say:  
‘I haven’t seen you in a while, where have you been?’  
‘Well, I moved out of the neighborhood.’  
‘Well, where do you live now?’  
‘I live on seven hundred block Washington Blvd.’  
It’s just two or three blocks away but to them it’s out of the neighborhood.<sup>96</sup>

This notion of intensified locality is very much in keeping with Ms. Stevenson’s description of keeping to her block, and Pastor Anderson’s sense of a concentrated neighborhood, with the resulting concentration of both drawbacks and benefits.

Ms. Pestridge paints a rich picture of her corner of Pigtown:

There are people who have lived here all their lives. Some people still live in the houses they were born in. This has always been a real diverse community, as far as ethnically, income, education wise, you know, it’s always been that way. And it still is, since I’ve lived here.<sup>97</sup>

She also recognizes the strain that local business closings have put on the neighborhood. In fact, the Friends of Carroll Park were directly affected when the bathhouse closed. A structure with a history all its own, the bathhouse was used as the headquarters for various community organizations, including Friends of Carroll Park

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<sup>95</sup> Gloria Pestridge, in discussion with author, March 24, 2010.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

at its inception. From the beginning they have kept it as their mailing address, but since the bathhouse has closed its doors, they have had to make a change.

In keeping with its mission to tie park resources to the local community, the Friends of Carroll Park have worked with Mount Clare on a number of occasions. Most popular is the annual ‘Tour du Parks’ bike ride, or, as it is affectionately called by Baltimoreans, the ‘Tour dem Parks, Hon’ bike ride, which kicks off in Carroll Park. The Mount Clare stables are made available to event coordinators and local vendors and organizations set up booths. However, Ms. Pestridge points out that most of the bicycle riders come from outside the community and, outside of community activists and organizers, the local presence is not as hearty as it might be.<sup>98</sup>

Ms. Pestridge speaks fondly of her organization’s collaborations with Mount Clare staff and the Colonial Dames, and notes that some among them are members of the Friends of Carroll Park. But, like Pastor Anderson, she details how Mount Clare’s ‘plantation aura’ was initially off-putting:

In regards to the museum house, I felt the same way that a lot of people do around here. When I first moved here, I thought that house was unapproachable, it was some ritzy people lived on the hill and don’t get caught going up there. You know, it was kind of ‘stay away,’ you know? I never knew that it was a museum house with a lot of history to this area that was open to the public. And that is the misconception of a lot of people around here. They are really surprised to know that that is a museum. And that some very valuable artifacts have been found on the grounds up there that really lend themselves to the history of Baltimore...<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

The artifacts Ms. Pestridge makes mention of are those under the control of the Carroll Park Foundation.<sup>100</sup> Dr. Moyer makes clear in her work the interpretive value of the artifacts in talking about black history at Mount Clare.<sup>101</sup> In our discussions, Ms. Pestridge repeatedly brought up the interest of her neighbors, Friends of Carroll Park meeting attendees, and other community activists in seeing and learning about this important collection.<sup>102</sup>

Woodrow Pestridge recognizes places like Mount Clare as valuable to American history. Gloria Pestridge expands upon that, pointing out that Mount Clare is also a place rich in local history, and therefore remains relevant in the context of Baltimore. Mr. Pestridge, like Stephanie Stevenson, encourages Mount Clare to continue its formation of partnerships with other area museums, in particular those that might be facing similar challenges, such as the B&O Museum and the Edgar Allan Poe House.<sup>103</sup> Strengthening ties with the Greater Baltimore History Alliance and maintaining a strong presence there could help facilitate this. In addition, Ms. Pestridge recommends that the museum try and gain publicity via an attention grabber – sending an educator or liaison out, perhaps in costume, when community events are taking place in the park. Like Pastor Anderson, she recognizes the importance of being a constant physical presence in the community. “I think they have to more or

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<sup>100</sup> Teresa Moyer, “Gracious but Careless: Race and status in the history of Mount Clare,” (dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2010), p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> Teresa Moyer, “Gracious but Careless: Race and status in the history of Mount Clare,” (dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2010), p. 3.

<sup>102</sup> Gloria Pestridge, in discussion with author, March 24, 2010.

Gloria Pestridge and Woodrow Pestridge, in discussion with author, March 30, 2010.

<sup>103</sup> Gloria Pestridge and Woodrow Pestridge, in discussion with author, March 30, 2010.

less come down to the community,” she points out, “I don’t think the community’s gonna go up there.”<sup>104</sup>

Love of country is at the core of Mr. and Ms. Pestridge’s ideas of patriotism. At the same time, considering and accommodating for change is a necessary part of patriotic service in its fullest sense. As Ms. Pestridge eloquently considered:

You love the country, you live here, you support it... You know, things change, times change, maybe certain rules change, but as long as it’s for the country’s good as a whole...and it’s the right thing. As long as it’s the right thing – to the best of your knowledge.<sup>105</sup>

This definition also highlights the importance of doing the best one can with the knowledge that one has.

## **Conclusion**

Although interpretation at Mount Clare paints a very pleasant picture, it lacks the elements of depth and truth found in its full history. African American and other aspects of social history are little addressed in the interpretation of Mount Clare or not addressed at all, despite the rich and varied histories the museum is in a position to share. We, myself and the resident participants, see Mount Clare as having great potential to provide a community experiencing difficulties with a sense of pride in their local history and importance. Those same community difficulties, including problems of poverty, unemployment, education and substance abuse, are challenges to overcome in changing interpretation and, in particular, improving outreach. In this chapter, resident participants in this project offered a number of specific suggestions

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<sup>104</sup> Gloria Pestridge, in discussion with author, March 24, 2010.

<sup>105</sup> Gloria Pestridge and Woodrow Pestridge, in discussion with author, March 30, 2010.

through which I was able to identify recurring themes: the importance of diverse histories, outside spaces, local support, and in-school educational programming. I will address these themes in greater detail in the final chapter.

## Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

Governing boards, mission statements, interpretation, outreach and community opinion shape and ensure a museum's continued relevance. Mount Clare Museum House must be willing to embrace change and practice flexibility and community inclusiveness in order to remain current and become meaningful to its location.

The 18<sup>th</sup>-century spatial politics governing plantations continue to apply to Mount Clare in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century. Where the Carrolls may have wanted their home to be set apart, today its separateness seems to work against the museum's mission to engage the public. Yet, despite its physical isolation, Mount Clare has a rich and varied history in which it engaged with various communities throughout the centuries. One might feel visiting today that its halls were only graced by presidents, generals and the ladies of high society. But in addition, and with much greater frequency, its rooms and grounds were occupied by enslaved people, indentured servants, soldiers and immigrants.

To uphold its current mission "to engage the public with the late Colonial and early Federal periods of Maryland's history and lifestyles" Mount Clare must include under the plural 'lifestyles' the day-to-day existence of enslaved individuals.<sup>106</sup> This would help locals to feel invested in its preservation while keeping within the current interpretive periods. However, expanding the interpretive periods to include Mount Clare's connection to the railroad and immigrant populations would also help to make

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<sup>106</sup> Mount Clare Museum House Policies and Procedures, adopted October, 2008.

the space more meaningful to sectors of the community with ties to those histories. Furthermore, it would illustrate that history after the 18<sup>th</sup>-century is also important.

Although the National Society of Colonial Dames of America has historically been an exclusive organization, the bylaws of the Maryland chapter do not appear to prevent non-members from being appointed to sub-committees. My experience with community members provided me with great insight, fresh ideas, and showed me that, despite the challenges involved, there is a belief in the neighborhood that Mount Clare can engender support and be locally meaningful. The museum properties committee might want to invite interested residents to join them in decision making processes, or otherwise provide them with the opportunity to voice opinions and suggestions involving museum programming and outreach.

In Chapter Three, the challenges facing some of the communities surrounding Mount Clare, which are in turn challenges for Mount Clare in connecting to those communities, were identified by area residents. In my recommendations I intend to look at the innovative ways in which another historic site, the Tenement Museum, addresses the challenges of interpretation and outreach, highlighting those techniques which I feel would most benefit Mount Clare. I will craft recommendations based on Tenement Museum techniques and the interviews of Chapter Three that are specific to Mount Clare. Finally, I will offer a recommendation in connection to the artifacts discovered at Mount Clare, and summarize the importance of efforts like these in the preservation movement today.

## Tenement Museum Interpretation

Assessing and reconsidering Mount Clare's interpretation and outreach programming is an essential step in upholding its mission to engage the public. As discovered in Chapter Three, the museum may achieve better local support through sensitive interpretation that establishes a connection between the history of the building and collections and the personal histories of area residents.

In the vanguard of house museums exploring innovative approaches to interpretation and outreach is the Tenement Museum of New York. Located at 97 Orchard Street on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, the Tenement Museum was established by Ruth Abram in the late 1980s. A virtual time capsule, the building had been unoccupied for over fifty years and still exhibited many signs of the immigrant communities who had called it home.<sup>107</sup>

My experience of the Tenement Museum began when we gathered around our guide on the steps of 97 Orchard Street to start our tour (**Figure 8**). As she discussed the history of the museum and postulated what the streetscape might have looked like in the early 1900s, an immediate connection was drawn between the house, the historical streetscape, and the street we were standing in today (**Figure 9**). The second thing she did was to ask members of the tour group to share something about their heritages. We were a group of about ten, collectively boasting African, Irish, Italian, German, Russian, Jewish, Barbadian, English and Welsh backgrounds. The Welsh couple was in the U.S. on holiday, my mother and I are from Pennsylvania, and the remaining members from the greater New York area, with a few visiting

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<sup>107</sup> The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, "About Us: Our Story," Tenement Museum, <http://www.tenement.org/about.html>.

friends and cousins they had brought along hailing from elsewhere. Upon taking in this information, our guide pointed out that, like the immigrants who came to reside in this tenement, we all came from someplace else in one way or another. By drawing a parallel between us and the people whose lives we were about to see interpreted, she not only created a context for us, but gave us some access as insiders; even the Welsh couple, who were not American, felt invested in this place.<sup>108</sup>



**Figure 8: A tour group outside the New York Tenement Museum.**

A tour group gathers outside the Tenement Museum. Beginning tours outside allows visitors to better understand the physical context of the building that is being interpreted.

Photograph taken by Catherine Matthews and Tanveer Chowdhury. The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, site visit, February 13, 2010.

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<sup>108</sup> The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, site visit by the author, December 2010.



**Figure 9: Orchard Street, the Lower East Side, Manhattan, New York.**

A photograph of the block where the Tenement Museum is located. Visitors get a feel for the surrounding community by taking in the streetscape.

Photograph taken by Catherine Matthews and Tanveer Chowdhury. The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, site visit, February 13, 2010.

As we entered the building, our guide asked that we try to refrain from leaning up against the walls, but there were no velvet ropes partitioning us from the history we sought to access. She painted a vivid picture of what it must have been like to live in such cramped conditions, and in doing so asked us to try and imagine what it must have been like. At least half of the tour was geared towards asking questions – but not just any questions – questions that would generate discussion about the experiences had there, the experiences *we* were having there, and how they reminded us of experiences we had in our own daily lives.<sup>109</sup> It colored and informed our frame of reference. In the words of David W. Young, a museum director with the National

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<sup>109</sup> The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, site visit by the author, December 2009.

Trust Property of Cliveden in Pennsylvania, “At their essence, historic sites show people the meaning of where they live.”<sup>110</sup> My observations led me to believe that the Tenement Museum serves this purpose for local communities and visitors.

I did not have as much time to explore the Tenement Museum as I would have liked, having scheduled an appointment to speak with its Director of Curatorial Affairs, David Favaloro, for that afternoon. So a few weeks later, I asked friends, Catherine Matthews and Tanveer Chowdhury, to spend a day at the museum and write to me about their experiences. Ms. Matthews expressed that everything about the museum and the day had a local feel. She and Mr. Chowdhury spoke to several people on the tour, asking them in some detail about where they came from and what brought them to the museum. Again, the majority of visitors were New Yorkers, a number from Brooklyn. Conversations about the museum invariably turned to conversations about other businesses in the area: “A man recommended we check out a local pickle joint on Orchard,” writes Matthews.<sup>111</sup> This illustrates the ability of a museum to add to the economic value of its community. Ms. Matthews also noted that “whether or not an actual family member resided in these particular tenements, this is the feel / impression I got from the museum: that this *could* be my history, and that it is all our history, anyway, as a result of our immigrant past.”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> David W. Young and others, “Not Dead Yet: Historic Sites Providing Community Leadership,” *History News*, Summer 2009.

<sup>111</sup> Catherine Matthews and Tanveer Chowdhury, *The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, Reflections on site visit, February 13, 2010.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Mount Clare and the Tenement Museum Interpretive Approach**

The Tenement Museum has the advantage of interpreting a period still in the living memory of some.<sup>113</sup> In addition, 97 Orchard Street is still very much reflective of parts of the New York cityscape, which is itself noted for physical diversity, in contrast to Mount Clare, whose architecture makes it stand apart from the surrounding neighborhood. Despite these differences, the general practices of beginning the tour outside, establishing an initial connection with the visitor, and generating discussions about social history are all interpretive methods Mount Clare could employ.

Optimizing outside space is an important way to begin breaking down walls between Mount Clare and local communities. The Dames could utilize the walking tour concerning African American history created by Teresa Moyer as part of her dissertation research. In addition, beginning traditional tours outside, not only allows the guest to view the surrounding neighborhoods, but neighborhood residents and park patrons are able to view the guest. This would help to establish the fact that Mount Clare *is* a museum open to the public, which sometimes comes as a surprise to residents, as it was to both Gloria Pestridge and the bus driver whose inquiries in part inspired this paper. In addition, describing the landscape in connection with the house lends itself to new and varied interpretations. Being outside, the guide and guest have physical access to the orchards, the grounds, the park, the cityscape and the railroad tracks. These visual markers could generate social history conversations on any of the following topics:

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<sup>113</sup> The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, “About Us: Our Story,” Tenement Museum, <http://www.tenement.org/about.html>.

1. The importance of the Mount Clare gardens, such as who ran them, how they were run, and who they were intended for;
2. The archaeological collections, such as how and where they were discovered, what they contain, whose presence they speak to, what we might infer from them;
3. The history of public and private park uses, including current ones;
4. The development history of Mount Clare in connection to Pigtown and other area neighborhoods, other historic or cultural landmarks in southwest Baltimore, and current residents; and
5. The history of Mount Clare in connection to the B&O railroad, railroad workers and community.

It may not be easy for the visitor to feel an immediate cultural connection with the house itself, given its history as a plantation and symbol of a class to which few of us can claim direct ties. Understanding the other peoples and histories connected to this place could create an atmosphere of inclusivity that would bring one closer to establishing a connection.

### **Tenement Museum Outreach**

Outreach at the Tenement Museum exists on three important levels: commercial, community, and educational. While each sphere certainly informs the others, for the sake of clarity in launching new and creative outreach initiatives at Mount Clare, it may be helpful to consider each as distinct.

Museums cannot survive on good will alone. As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, they must remain financially solvent while simultaneously upholding

their mission. The Tenement Museum benefits from traditional museum finance practices that include seeking donations and membership fees, renting out rooms, ticketing special events and tours, and selling related merchandise, both online and through the gift shop. Their target audience includes young, local professionals, businesspeople and companies with disposable income and funds to spare, and in New York City, they are in no short supply.<sup>114</sup>

Interestingly, the neighborhoods immediately surrounding The Tenement Museum, though very recently experiencing some gentrification with all the perceived complications and/or benefits that brings, have not traditionally been home to the young, affluent professionals that financially support the museum. Rather, they have been home to recent immigrants, including the outskirts of Chinatown and a substantial Dominican population. Although these communities are not in a position to become the museum's main source of income, the museum continues to seek ways to serve, engage and connect with these individuals. Having established itself as *the* place, on a national level, to discuss the immigrant past, the Tenement Museum leverages this position to embark upon discussions about immigration issues today. Staff are currently working up new interpretations to begin sharing the stories of more recent immigrants to America, stories that speak to the histories of the Tenement Museum's immediate neighbors. In addition, the museum partners with classes for English as a second language to provide workshops designed to encourage practical language practice. Staff also collect oral histories from residents, and

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<sup>114</sup> The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, "Support Us: Our Supporters," Tenement Museum, [http://www.tenement.org/support\\_funders.html](http://www.tenement.org/support_funders.html).

involve them in the curation process.<sup>115</sup> The website includes a section called ‘Webcomics,’ the virtual equivalent of comic strips, detailing the lives and experiences of three present day young immigrants.<sup>116</sup> By helping local communities to feel proud of and invested in their institution, the museum earns a kind of support that is just as valuable as financial support. Their good reputation solidifies their place in the community and ensures their preservation in future.

Educational outreach is a valuable way for museums to interest people in their mission and work. Families often take an interest in what their children are learning and accomplishing at school. The Tenement Museum provides workshops for teachers on how to integrate, among other things, narrative history into the social studies curriculum.<sup>117</sup> Although the Tenement Museum offers many resources for in-school programming, the nature of their physical situation make field trips a popular choice. School group tours are designed to engage young minds by focusing on “contemporary dimensions and decision making, such as the ‘moving in’ activity in which students are asked to grapple with decisions new immigrants might have to make.”<sup>118</sup>

### **Mount Clare and the Tenement Museum Outreach Approach**

Adopting a three-pronged approach to outreach, similar to that of the Tenement Museum, may help Mount Clare Museum House to better identify its strengths and available resources. Ideally, this would enable the museum to better

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<sup>115</sup> David Favalaro, in discussion with author, January 22, 2010.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, “Education: Agents for Change” Tenement Museum, <http://www.tenement.org>.

<sup>118</sup> David Favalaro, in discussion with author, January 22, 2010.

connect with local communities while simultaneously refocusing financial opportunities necessary to institute some new programming. This section will explore commercial, community, and educational outreach platforms in connection to Mount Clare Museum House.

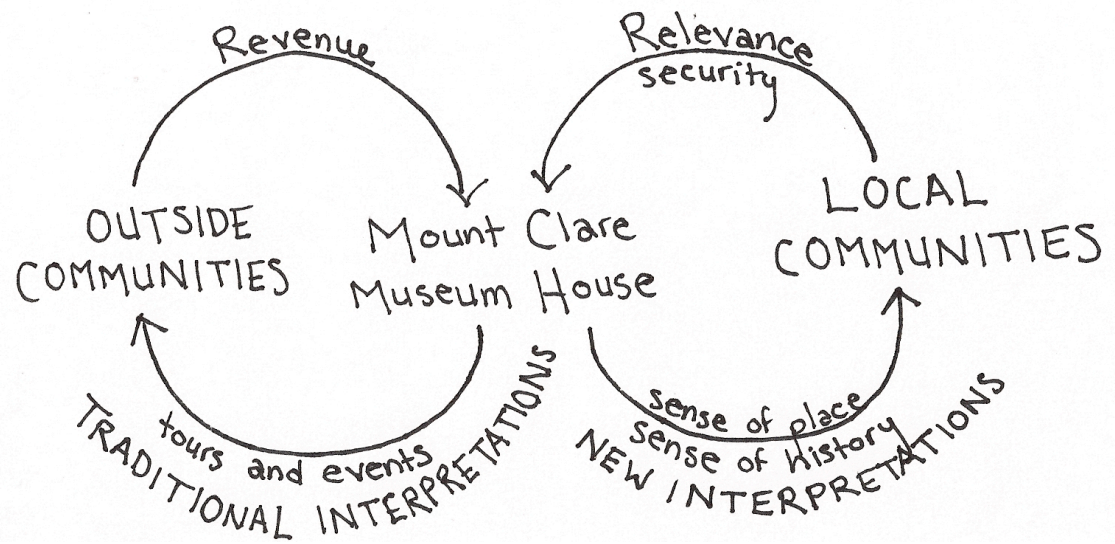
Currently, Mount Clare is making efforts to advertise traditional tours and events to local communities, disseminating literature through partner organizations and publishing press releases in local papers.<sup>119</sup> Based on the information garnered in Chapter Three, there may be several difficulties in this approach. For the purposes of considering commercial outreach, I will first address the financial ones. Despite the seemingly reasonable admission price of six dollars, it has been suggested that a majority of local residents might not have the necessary combination of time, money, and interest to spend in touring or attending events at Mount Clare.<sup>120</sup> My experiences this summer taught me that, as currently interpreted, the decorative arts collection tends to interest a mature audience, often residing outside of Baltimore. It remains crucial to expand and reconsider interpretation at Mount Clare. It might also be helpful to simultaneously target a different audience where traditional tours and events are concerned (**Figure 10**). Take stock of where most visitors come from and advertise in those venues. For example, make connections with restaurants, bed and breakfasts, and other museums that might also be attractive to the same demographic, so that they can make a day or weekend of it, by creating packages to promote with the Convention and Visitors Bureau.

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<sup>119</sup> Gloria Pestrige, in discussion with author, March 24, 2010.

<sup>120</sup> Mount Clare Museum House, "Visitor Information: Admission," Mount Clare, <http://www.mountclare.org/visitorinformation/admissionhours.html>.

Jeff Anderson, in discussion with the author, March 11, 2010.



**Figure 10: Diagram of community spheres of influence.**

Currently, Mount Clare could benefit by commercially targeting outside communities. This revenue stream would be contingent upon new marketing approaches. At the same time it is necessary to reach out to local communities who can truly provide a sense of security. The sense of local ownership and investment needed to create this security would be contingent upon new interpretive and outreach programming. Diagram drawn by author, 2010.

To achieve community status and local support, it is crucial to also engage with immediate neighborhoods. As Mount Clare’s capacity and the needs of area residents are very unique from those associated with the Tenement Museum, it is important to recognize Mount Clare may not be ideally suited to fulfill the basic, day-to-day needs of its neighbors.<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, there are ways in which the museum could make itself more inviting. Traditional modes of advertising may not be well suited to local communities.<sup>122</sup> Word of mouth is important. Ms. Pestridge described the success of fellow community organizers as connected to their making themselves known as a sustainable, positive presence. “People know them,” she says, “And they

<sup>121</sup> Jeff Anderson, in discussion with the author, March 11, 2010.

<sup>122</sup> Gloria Pestridge, in discussion with author, March 24, 2010.

know the good things that they're doing."<sup>123</sup> Bring the museum outside to the people. As suggested by Ms. Pestrige, make a splash in costume at a community event. Continue to offer the stables and grounds to community organizers, but perhaps also host free barbeques or picnics geared towards community *members*. Ask for local residents' input and ideas for creative interpretation and new events. As Mount Clare begins to develop and implement interpretations of greater interest and meaning to the community and become a local presence, it might also want to create protocols for engaging curious passersby and making the museum and grounds an inviting atmosphere for them.<sup>124</sup> Giving people good reason to feel invested in the organization and the building and grounds is crucial. As Pastor Anderson so eloquently put it, if buy-in weren't possible, the museum would have to "get stronger alarm systems, and bigger bars on the windows. If people don't feel like they own it then they feel like they can steal it."<sup>125</sup> Without local support and contributing to local meaning, the preservation and continued relevance of Mount Clare will always be threatened (**Figure Ten**). And if that is the case, for whom is it being preserved?

Educational outreach is a key component to success in the view of all three resident participants. Ms. Stevenson stresses that interpretation must be changed to include black histories before educational outreach can begin to connect the museum to the community in a meaningful way.<sup>126</sup> In her dissertation and walking tours, Teresa Moyer has provided the museum with valuable research, resources, and plans

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Jeff Anderson, in discussion with the author, March 11, 2010.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Stephanie Stevenson, in discussion with the author, February 24, 2010.

that can be easily and inexpensively implemented.<sup>127</sup> Ms. Stevenson also suggests reaching out to the Reginald F. Lewis Museum and engaging interns to help bring about this change.<sup>128</sup> Mount Clare could advertise internship opportunities with area universities. Johns Hopkins University, George Washington University and Georgetown all have graduate programs in Museum Studies. In addition, both the University of Maryland and George Washington University have graduate programs in historic preservation. And Morgan State University has just launched a graduate program in museum studies and preservation. Social justice, local investment, and community curation are important topics in modern museum and preservation practice and Mount Clare could speak to all three. Helping museum staff to implement new interpretation would be a tremendous opportunity for a young professional. Once interpretation has been addressed, Mount Clare can institute age appropriate curricula for new school programming and events with renewed vigor and the support of its community.

### **The Artifacts**

The Baltimoreans with whom I spoke expressed a sincere interest in learning more about the archaeological collections associated with Mount Clare. The artifacts, resulting from numerous excavations since the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century, are a point of interest to the community and a valuable way in which to engage residents. In addition, they are useful in facilitating and enhancing Dr. Moyer's African American

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<sup>127</sup> Teresa Moyer, "Walking Tour: African American History at Mount Clare and Georgia Plantation," (walking tour, Mount Clare Museum House, Baltimore, MD, spring 2008). Teresa Moyer, "Gracious but Careless: Race and status in the history of Mount Clare," (dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2010).

<sup>128</sup> Stephanie Stevenson, in discussion with the author, March 3, 2010.

interpretive plan. I recommend that the Mount Clare Museum House staff and governing board spearhead efforts to reach a collaborative agreement with the Carroll Park Foundation in regards to their access and interpretation by adding it to the agenda of the next Carroll Park Advisory Committee.

### **Mount Clare, Community and Preservation Practice**

Traditionally, the preservation movement has dealt with the formal, physical preservation of architecturally classic structures, often deemed important at a national level. This approach not only assumed a narrow definition of what was worthy to preserve, but also, a narrow definition of national importance. As the participants in this exercise have taught me, what one American may deem nationally important, another American may not. Recent preservation practice has embraced diverse definitions of what is worthy to preserve, in the process posing questions about the people for whom those spaces are being preserved. Buildings are not relegated to serving a national purpose or none at all, but their import is also considered at state and local levels. As a result, professionals have begun to take a critical look at those traditional buildings, preserved under the traditional sense of what is nationally important, addressing how and if they make sense in their current spaces.

It is the opinion of the author that Mount Clare is one of these traditional buildings, traditionally preserved, and struggling to make sense of its location and purpose today. In the spirit of local-mindedness with which preservation is currently so invested, I sought to look at Mount Clare from the outside in, to understand what values seemingly disconnected communities might assign to it. It was touching, heartening and completely unexpected that of the four Baltimoreans I spoke with, all

saw the promise of preserving Mount Clare. Not because it belonged to one of America's forefathers, or one of Maryland's patriots, but because they each recognized, despite long-standing and limited interpretations to the contrary, something of their local selves in its history. And that, with a little open-mindedness and understanding, it could be something to be proud of in a difficult time, something lasting in a rapidly changing world, something that says "this place matters."

Throughout my career as a student of historic preservation, my instructors have stressed the importance of local ownership, community involvement, social justice, and professional responsibility in undertaking any planning or preservation activity. Their lessons to me invoked that I take a holistic approach to understanding one museum. In so doing, I discovered that in addition to having an exceptional example of 18<sup>th</sup>-century architecture in Mount Clare, Historic Pigtown is a complex community where a host of other preservation issues are taking center stage. The Mount Clare house museum is located on a state easement-protected historic zone and has been the site of a number of archaeological digs. The historic zone is part of Carroll Park, designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, and at the center of a sometimes intense struggle for competing uses. Pigtown, one of Mount Clare's neighborhoods, is an economically and culturally diverse historic district, where gentrification is causing problems of displacement, and buildings have been left vacant. Some of those vacant buildings, such as the bathhouse, were once stunning examples of adaptive reuse.

I have learned immensely from my documentation, research and studio experiences, but feel they fell somewhat short of serving the level of social justice

and inter-disciplinary collaboration so impressed upon me by my department. Historic Pigtown and the surrounding sites provide opportunity to apply both, and would surely benefit from such an approach. It is therefore my sincere recommendation that the University of Maryland School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation strongly consider undertaking an inter-disciplinary initiative in the communities of Historic Pigtown, or make it the focus of a future studio course.

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