

Background Notes for the GHS Patapsco River Tour

Hosted by the Granite Historical Society, June 4th, 2023

Woodstock College 1931 Map: *See Figure 1.*

St Alphonsus Cemetery – Established on land donated by the Woodstock Jesuits in 1914. Any number of prominent figures from Granite and Woodstock history are buried here: Samuel Brown, builder of the Mount Pleasant house and farm which still survives as the Howard County Conservancy; William Donovan, who owned “downtown Woodstock” in the early 1900s and built the dry goods store in Woodstock (later the George A Humphrey store); Evaristo Graziani, longest serving employee of Woodstock College (70 years); James Peach, last owner, along with 2 brothers, of the Fox Rock Quarry; and his spouse, Josephine Peach, nee Oliver, known as “Aunt Bodie”, who was the organist at St Alphonsus Church for over 60 years. Plenty of other Peach family members are buried here as well as a slew of Cavey family members. *Note: Samuel Brown, who died in 1880, was originally buried in the Brown family cemetery along Woodstock Rd. No one knows whether his body was actually disinterred and reburied at St Alphonsus or whether the Brown family marker at St Alphonsus which bears his name is a cenotaph.*

Site of St Alphonsus Church – Cardinal Gibbons laid the cornerstone on land donated by the Woodstock College in 1885, and over the next 4 years a church was constructed with “rubble” from the Fox Rock Quarry and with volunteer labor from the Jesuit College and the community. Originally the church was to be named “Church of the Holy Spirit”, but when Cardinal Gibbons returned in 1889, the church was dedicated to Alphonsus Rodriquez, a Jesuit brother who had been recently canonized. The church was destroyed by fire in 1968, leading to construction of the church we know today located further north on Old Court Rd. *See Figure 2*

Lower Ball Field – According to the Woodstock Letters, the first baseball game at Woodstock College took place on April 22, 1870 in a pasture along the river; the Philosophers beat the Theologians by a score of 26 to 8. Over the years the ball field was improved and hosted Woodstock & Granite Athletic Association and Granite Stars baseball games, jousting tournaments and plenty of St Alphonsus Church picnics. By 1930 most baseball games moved to the “upper ball field” (pictured on the attached 1931 site map) and the lower ball field eventually reverted to use as a pasture for Woodstock College dairy cows. In the attached 1936 photo of a horse show you can still see a back stop and pitcher’s mound located in the southeast corner of the pasture. *See Figure 3.*

Woodstock College Lower Gate – Not long after the Woodstock College opened in 1869 a stone-chip road/path was established leading down the hill to Old Court Road at the bridge. An iron gate was installed set into poured concrete pillars. Old Court Road was then just dirt and ran from the bridge directly along the river bank until turning uphill just below the future site of St Alphonsus church. For 50 years that gate marked the primary entrance into the College, as most visitors to the campus arrived and departed from the train station just across the river in Woodstock. *See Figure 4.*

Woodstock Bridge – Various wooden bridges connecting Granite & Woodstock had been built and washed away by Patapsco floods before the first “iron bridge” was constructed in the early 1890s. It served Granite and Woodstock for 80 years until it finally succumb to waters of Hurricane Agnes in 1972. What remains of the bridge are pieces of “abutments” on both sides of the river. *See Figure 5.*

Fox Rock Quarry Road – When Caleb Owings began quarrying stone at Fox Rock in 1835 he obtained a right-of-way across the land of Noah Worthington in order to haul stone to the Patapsco river, a distance of a mile and half. A year later, he leased Fox Rock to Edward Green and the Wood Company (Charles Wood, Joseph Yeager & John Stewart), retaining a one-third interest for himself. The B&O Railroad paid for (at least partially) the construction of a road along the right-of-way because at that time they were using all of the quarried stone in construction of the Main Line. In 1866, after Woodstock College bought their first parcel of land and with it, acquired about one-half of quarry road which they leased to the quarry operators at \$100 a year. When the College bought the rest of the land around Fox Rock in 1881, they re-leased the road to Joseph Evans, who had formed the Woodstock Granite Co with William & Matthew Gault, and then re-leased the road again in 1901 when the three Peach brothers acquired the Woodstock Granite Co out of receivership. *Note: The road is now called the Quarry Trail on Patapsco State Park maps.*

Fox Rock Quarry Bridge - In 1854 Cyrus Gault (who operated the quarry along with John Emory) acquired a right-of-way from James & John Herbert in order to extend the Quarry Road across the Patapsco to the Howard County side of the river. Although no remnants of that bridge exist today, a 1872 *Woodstock College Map* locates the bridge about a hundred yards upstream from the public bridge. Presumably, before 1854, stone was hauled across the public bridge to the railroad siding at Woodstock.

The Beach – Actually, there are 2 sandbars along the Patapsco which, at various times, were named “The Beach” by Woodstock’s Jesuits. One was at a bend in the river just downstream from Theologian’s Rock (later) and the other (pictured here) was 150 yard or so upstream from the old Woodstock Bridge, a large sandbar just below a set of riffles where sand and silt tend to collect. For the Woodstock Jesuits, sitting on that sandbar facing southwest into the afternoon sun, was the best approximation of a beach experience that Woodstock could offer. *See Figure 7.*

Theologians Rock – An impressive rock outcropping just at the edge of the river beloved by the Jesuits and celebrated in an 1894 photograph taken by Father John Brosnan, a teacher at Woodstock College for 50 years and the official photographer for the Maryland Province. *See Figure 6.*

Gil Schmidt’s Bridge – No one knows who Gil Schmidt was, but a swinging bridge spanning the Patapsco is attributed to him in a 1916 photograph. Its location is marked on the *Woodstock College 1931 Map*. In an obituary for Father Thomas Martin published in the *Woodstock Letters*, the bridge is said to have been one of his favorite spots at Woodstock; Father Martin arrived at Woodstock in 1914. What remains of the bridge is a small piece of stone footing on the east river bank. *See Figure 8.*

Meditation Rock – Another large rock outcropping noted by the Jesuit scholastics. This is topped with a large flat rock which offers a grand view of the river below.

Brady’s Bluff – Not far upriver from Meditation Rock is an area of large, flat rocks projecting from the hill on the east side of the river. In 1929 a one-room Theologians “retreat house” was built on top of the hill above the rocks. The bluff was named after Father Robert Brady. Father Brady was born in Hancock and served as provincial superior of the Maryland Province in the 1880s.

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Figure 1 – Woodstock College Site Map, 1931



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Figure 2 – St Alphonsus Church



The remains of the original St. Alphonsus Church in Granite, MD after a fire in 1968.

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Figure 3 – Woodstock College Lower Ball Field, 1936



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Figure 4 – Woodstock College Lower Gate



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Figure 5 – Woodstock Bridge



Photo by
Father John
Brosnan,
1894



Remains of the abutment on
Howard County side of the
river, 2023

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Figure 6 – Theologians Rock



View from
Downstream,
1894



View from Upstream, 2023

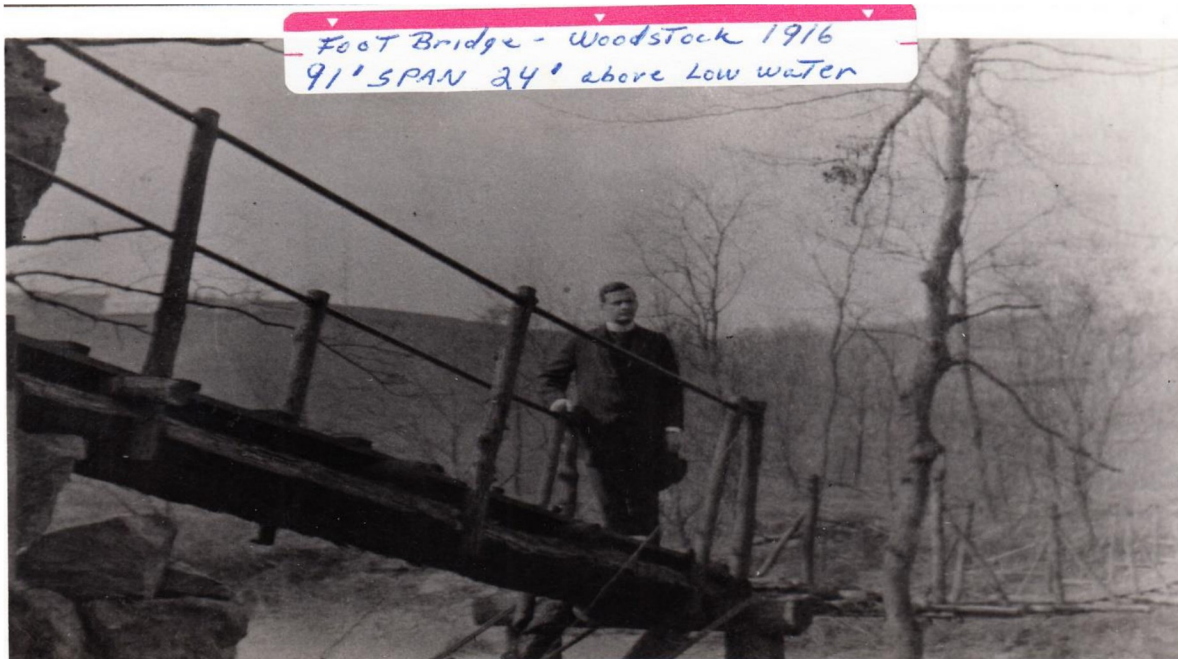
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Figure 7 – The Beach at the Patapsco, 2023 Photo



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Figure 8 – Gil Schmidt's Swinging Bridge



Remnant of Bridge Footing
on Baltimore County side of
the river, 2023

