Background Information for the GHS Hamilton Quarry Hike, Nov 16th, 2025

Prepared by John Brantley

The Hike Plan (See Fig 1)

From out staging area to the Hamilton Quarry is only about half a mile, easy walking on mostly established path following along a small attractively rocky stream. There's not too much elevation to navigate as you can see from the attached topographical map, a little less than 100 feet down to start the hike and a little less than 100 feet up again to the quarry. The farmhouse foundation ruins which we will visit are about a quarter mile uphill from the quarry. That walk will be through some weeds and some brush. Hikers may choose to go there or not, at their pleasure.

Unfortunately, the surface of the water settled in the quarry is covered with algae these days, so this very appealing spot in the Granite woods is rather less appealing than it once was. But it can still be appreciated as one of Granite's small, almost totally forgotten, quarry operations.

Belts Park (See Fig 2)

Belts Park was a land patent of 462 acres claimed by two men, Charles Howard and Alexander Wells, in 1765. In 1772 Wells and Howard split the land into separate individual portions. Wells claimed the northern-most and western-most property. He fairly quickly sold a small strip of land (just 12 acres) on the northern edge to Walter O-Dell and sold the rest of it to Richard Owings, who in turn sold it Charles Fenton. In the 1820s William Knight bought the western portion of the Fenton property, 106 acres. William Knight is known to Granite history buffs as the father of Sarah Knight, wife to Joseph Bone Cavey. Their Cavey children, Beal, Ezekial and Rueben, among others, would father many children and spawn a huge Cavey family presence in Granite and Woodstock and Ellicott City for generations to come. The Belts Park Knight property is also known among local history buffs for the so-called "Knight-Cavey" cemetery (now located on the Baltimore County Landfill property).

The eastern and southern portions of Belts Park passed by will to Charles Howard's son, Brice Howard, and to his grandson, Robert Bradley. Bradley sold his portion of the land to Nicholas Owings and after a few intermediate transactions, Owings also acquired Brice Howard's holdings as well.

A survey of Belts Park was made in 1827 and is reproduced here. The survey was made in conjunction with an agreement to establish consensus on property lines between the various Belts Park landholders and the surrounding ones.

The Owings Family Quarries

In 1835 Nicholas Owings's sons, Beal, Cornelius and Caleb, leased a small parcel of land from their father which they called "Frog Field". This is the parcel of ground which would become the home to Fox Rock Quarry. About 6 months later Caleb Owings took over the lease from his two brothers and he first opened Fox Rock up to quarrying. But not long after that Fox Rock was leased to Charles Wood, Joseph Yeager and Edward Green. Wood and Yeager didn't last long. Edward Green soon owned the quarry

operations (not the land yet) himself. Nicholas Owings died in 1841 and his sons inherited his holdings. Cornelius Owings inherited the northern part of his father's Belts Park property. Caleb inherited the middle portion of his father's property, most of it on the east side of Hernwood Road, not part of Belts Park. Beal Owings inherited the southern part of Belts Park. He then sold it in 1842 to Edward Green, about 150 acres. This property was along the west side of Hernwood Road centered around what would later be called Possum Hollow Rd. Green died in 1851 and that property would be inherited by his wife, Lydia, who lived in a house built on the property with her son, another Edward, for another 20-some years. She would continue to lease Fox Rock Quarry to various contractors until her death.

Caleb Owings operated another quarry on his property east of Hernwood Rd. It was situated, more or less, behind his large 2-story stone house, known in more recent years as the "OB Smith House". That quarry was known originally as the "Chinkapin Quarry" after the type of oak growing in the vicinity. Upon Caleb's death, William Weller purchased Caleb's house and farm and quarry and then sold it to Joseph Oliver, the father of Granite's beloved Aunt Bodie, wife to James Peach. Patrick Feeney later purchased part of the former Caleb Owings holdings, including the Chinkapin Quarry site, and operated the "Feeney/Atherton Quarry" along with his partner, Frank Atherton. That quarry, which closed in 1922, was probably the most significant of the ***minor quarries*** in Granite. It's said the Feeney/Atherton Quarry employed ass many 60 men during the early 1900s.

The destination of our upcoming GHS hike is the quarry which sits on the former Cornelius Owings farm property, the north-eastern part of Belts Park, now Baltimore County Landfill property. Cornelius was most often identified as Howard, his middle name. He lived on that property until his death in 1879 and then his son, Edward, and daughter, Sarah -- known also by her middle name, Sophia -- lived there. Shortly before Sarah's death, in 1915, the farm was sold to Louis and Eva Hamilton, who lived there for 10 years until they moved to St Paul Ave. The quarry on the farm is usually referred to as "The Hamilton Quarry." But this author has no knowledge that Louis Hamilton ever operated a quarry. This author's guess is that, given his history with other quarries, it was Howard Owings who opened the quarry, perhaps as early as the 1840s. It was obviously a small operation, but it must have had some significance because of the evidence of cut stone and discarded rubble scattered along the dirt road and stream bed leading away from the quarry towards the river. Unfortunately, This author has been unable to uncover any newspaper accounts of contracts awarded or stone delivered pertaining to this quarry. The only evidence for the quarry's existence are listings in various geological surveys, that and the fact that the quarry is obviously there and we can see it.

The Road to the River (See Fig 3)

It was previously mentioned that a gravel road ran from the quarry towards the river. Short sections of a gravel road are still apparent when you hike to the west of the Hamilton Quarry, head across the southern part of the Landfill property and then go further west towards the river. The property between the south-western line of Belts Park and the river, about 275 acres, was once called "Poole's Farm". Benjamin Poole bought the farm in 1916. Before that a politician from Howard County, Lester Patterson, owned it for 20 years or so. He rented out the farm to tenants and harvested timber from the extensive wood lots on the property. Originally, that part of the property was part of the "Worthington Purchase" in 1736. When Rezin Worthington controlled this property he operated a sawmill, probably a portable one. By the way, a foundation for the Poole's Farm house is still mostly intact and part of the chimney is still standing.

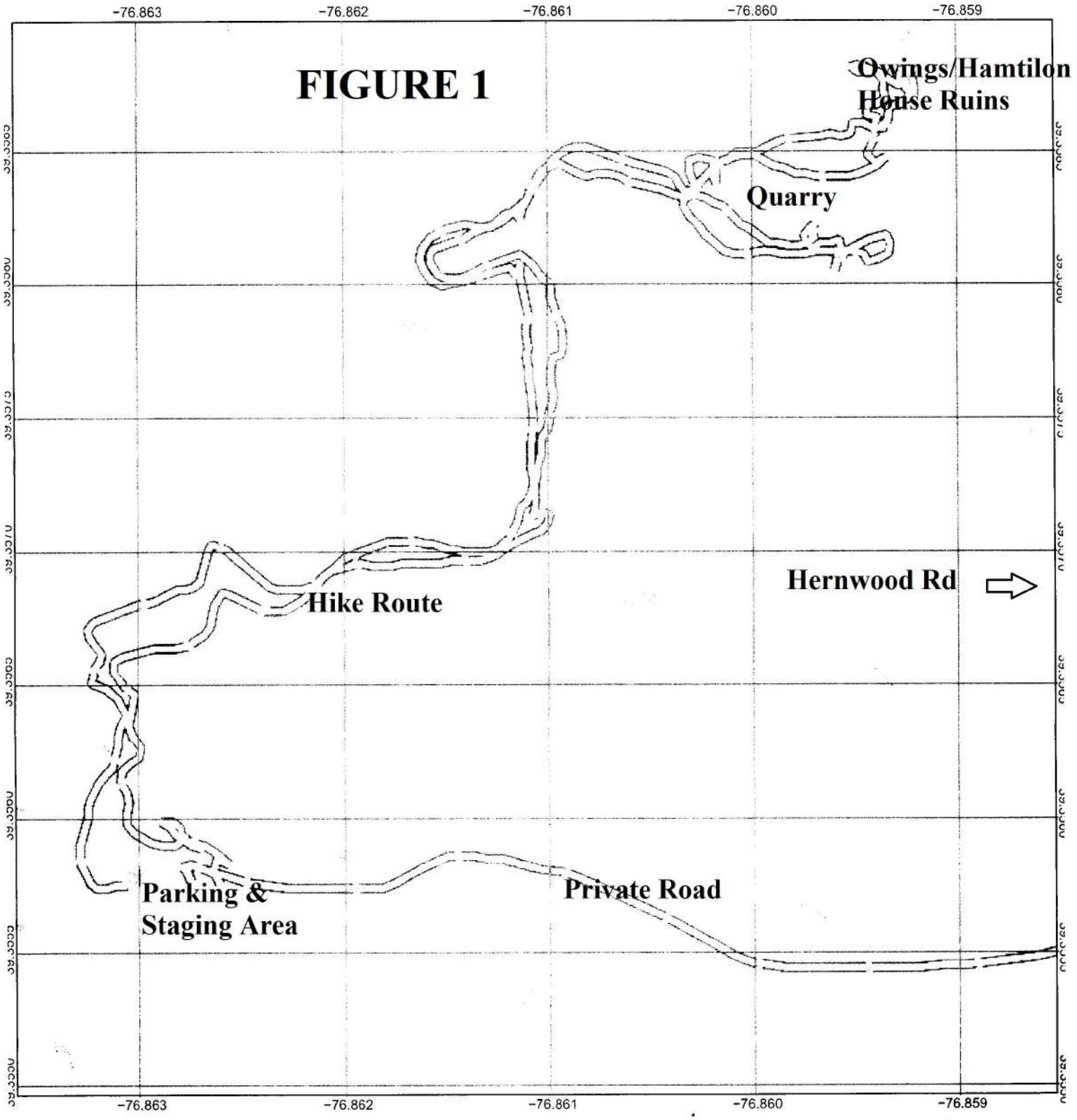
The deeds for both Patterson's purchase of the property and the Poole purchase include rights-of-way across the river and mention the right to use a B&O Railroad siding on the Howard County side. In 1871 Woodstock College produced what was called a ***vicinity map*** of the college property and it's surrounds. That map shows the location of a bridge across the river where the aforementioned right-of-way would've been. A 1931 Woodstock College ***site map*** also shows the location of that bridge, about a quarter mile upriver from the current gas pipeline which crosses under the river, for those of you who know where that is. This author's theory is that a dirt/gravel road for hauling stone by wagon once ran from the Hamilton Quarry to that railroad siding, a distance of about a mile and a three-quarters. There's a much smaller abandoned quarry hole on the Pools Farm identified as a feldspar quarry on a few geological maps. It seems likely that feldspar from this quarry was hauled over the same road and bridge to the Howard County siding. It also seems likely that Lester Patterson loaded timber onto the train from at the same location.

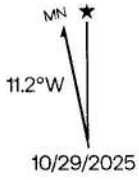
That's all speculation, of course. The author has reproduced a copy of the 1931 Woodstock College plan with his best guess as to where that gravel road would've been located. This plan also shows the location of the Hamilton Quarry and the Poole's farm feldspar quarry.

The Howard Owings/Hamilton Farm House (See Fig 4)

Our hike will also include a short walk up the slope from the quarry to the remains of a house foundation. There's not a whole lot of the foundation still intact, but based on the footprint of the foundation, it was obviously a sizable house. The best evidence – although fairly scant – is that Howard Owings had the farm house built in the early 1870s, not too long before he died. Louis and Eva Hamilton, after they bought the Howard Owings farm, lived in this house for 10 years and then after that, Otto Steinmetz and his wife, who bought the property from the Hamiltons in 1925. The attached photograph of the house comes courtesy of Pam Adams.

FIGURE 1



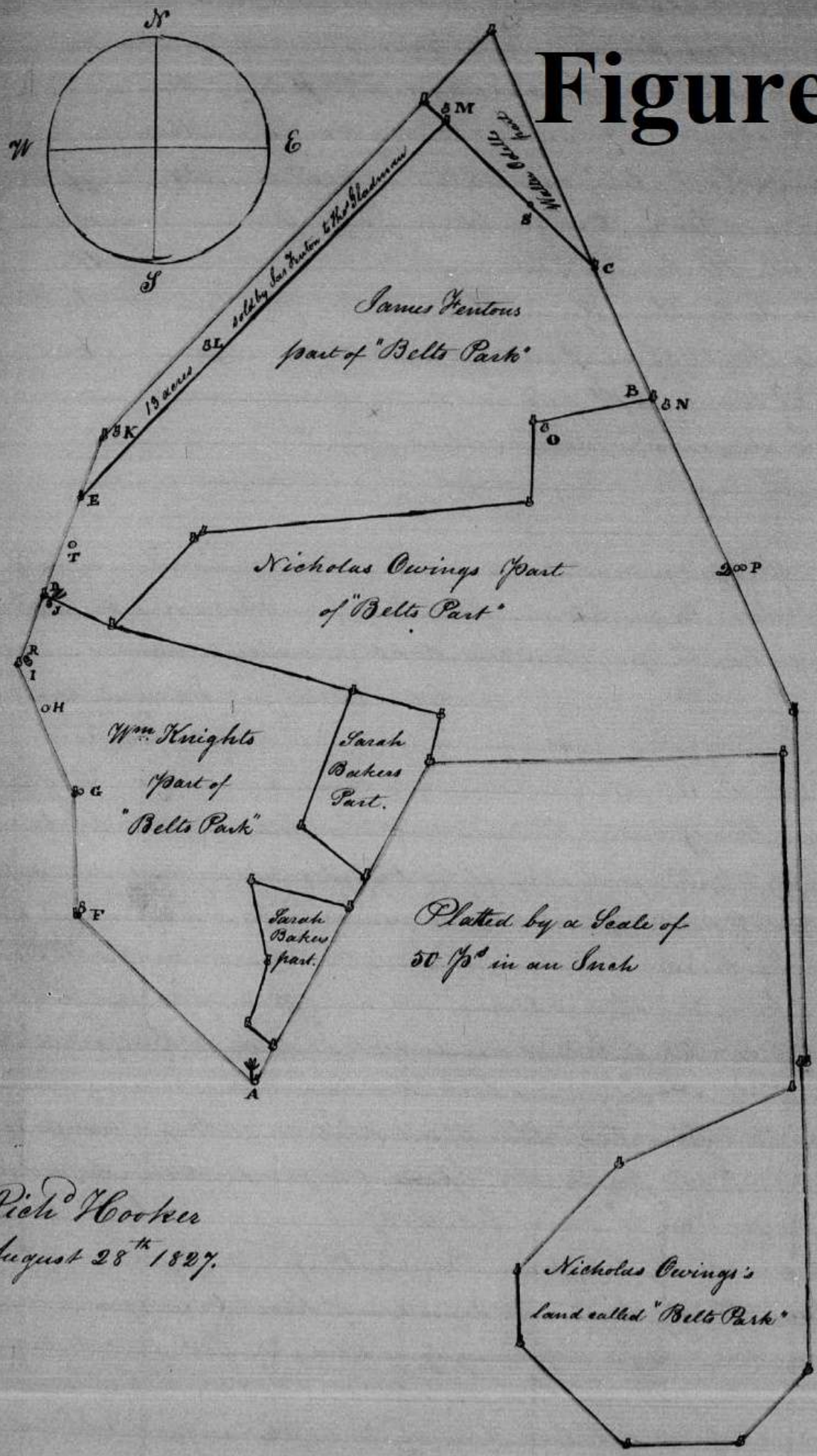


Scale 1: 2183 Datum WGS84

Afternoon hike at Dawn Randall Property Hike
Woodstock, MD

AllTrails

Figure 2



Richd Hooker
August 28th 1827.

Figure 3

1931 Woodstock College Site Map

Figure 4